

In Zechariah 6:7, the word 'אֲמָצִים' is translated in three different ways rather than two (compare Zch 6:3). Again, both the Latin Vulgate and the Masoretic text speak of the character of the horse, *qui autem erant robustissimi exierunt* and *וְהָאֲמָצִים יָצְאוּ*, respectively. They vocalise 'אֲמָצִים' with hataf patah under the aleph 'אֲמָצִים'. The LXX and Targum, on the contrary, keep vocalising 'אֲמָצִים' with patah under the aleph 'אֲמָצִים'. Thus, they speak of the colour of the horse. Although the Syriac Peshitta still discusses the colour of the horse, the Peshitta changed 'אֲמָצִים' from Zechariah 6:3 to 'אֲדָמִים' in Zechariah 6:7. As a result, the colour 'red' appears in the Syriac Peshitta's translation.

The interpretation of 'אֲמָצִים' in Zechariah 6:3 and 6:7 in *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*

An anonymous reviewer of *Verbum et Ecclesia* shares critical apparatus notes of Zechariah 6:3 and 6:7 in *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ) to capture the difficulty of the word 'אֲמָצִים' through different translations. The apparatus notes of Zechariah 6:3 argues that 'אֲמָצִים' means 'strong', while the LXX and Targum mistakenly assumed that 'אֲמָצִים' refers to the colour of the horse. Both the LXX and Targum continue to choose the colour's translation in Zechariah 6:7. The Syriac translation, however, omits 'אֲמָצִים' in Zechariah 6:3 but translates it as 'red' in Zechariah 6:7. The apparatus notes opine that this omission in Zechariah 6:3 might be accidental, or it was felt to be unintelligible in this context. The 'red' translation in Zechariah 6:7 might be triggered by the difficult reading in the Hebrew text, and the Syriac chooses the fourth colour from Zechariah 6:2–3 (Gelston 2010:126).

The interpretation of 'אֲמָצִים' in Zechariah 6:3 and 6:7 in Hebrew lexica

The difficulty of the meaning 'אֲמָצִים' is also revealed in Hebrew lexica, as they propose two different meanings. The following lexica were used: Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB), the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), Holladay and the Dictionary of Classical Hebrew.

A pure consonantal text of 'אֲמָצִים' raises problems both in ancient translations and modern Hebrew lexicons, because it could be either אֲמָצִים or אֲמָצִים. The difference is on the first vowel: *hataf patah* (translation: strong) and *patah* (translation: skewbald). Brown-Driver-Briggs, for example, has *hataf patah* of 'אֲמָצִים'. Thus, the translation is 'strong' as an adjective masculine plural absolute from the word 'אֲמָץ' for both Zechariah 6:3 and Zechariah 6:7 (BDB 1996). The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler, Walter & Richardson 2000), on the contrary, translates from *patah* of 'אֲמָצִים'. This word is derived from an adjective masculine plural absolute from the word 'אֲמָץ'. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2000) mentions that this word appears only once in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, the colour of the fourth chariot is reflected in their translation as 'skewbald' (fresh-coloured). Holladay (1972) also has a colour description in its translation. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Botterweck & Helmer 1974) and the

Dictionary of Classical Hebrew volume 1 (1994) are aware of the difficulty of the word 'אֲמָצִים'. Although they translate 'אֲמָצִים' as 'skewbald' and 'dapple-grey', they recognise that the very same word could have a different meaning, namely 'strong'.

In summary, the word 'אֲמָצִים' seems to have two meanings. The first meaning focuses on 'strength'. This translation is attested by BDB only. The second meaning focuses on the colour of the fourth chariot, thus 'skewbald' and 'dapple-grey'. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Holladay, TWOT and the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* support this second meaning.

Analysis of the word 'אֲמָצִים'

From the word 'בְּרָדִים'

The word 'בְּרָדִים' appears right before the word 'אֲמָצִים' in 6:3 and four Hebrew words before 'אֲמָצִים' in 6:6. This word appears four times in the Bible (Gn 31:10; 31:12; Zch 6:3; 6:6). It is always translated as 'spotted' or 'marked'. In Genesis 31:10 and 31:12, three ancient texts – the Hebrew Bible, Latin Vulgate and Syriac Peshitta – are rather *ambiguous* about the colour of the flock. Those ancient texts only describe the characteristic of the flock's appearance, such as spotted, speckled and variegated (highly decorated). The Targum Jonathan describes furthermore the colour of the flock, which is white. The LXX, on the contrary, is obviously communicating the colour of the sprinkled (spotted): the pale grey colour of ash. In summary, Genesis 31:10 and 31:12 reveal that the Targum Jonathan and the LXX's translations connect 'בְּרָדִים' with colour, while the Peshitta and the Vulgate remain unclear.

In Zechariah 6:3 and 6:7, the Targum and the LXX consistently translate the 'בְּרָדִים' with colour, just as in Genesis 31:10, 12: the shining (dazzling) with the ash horses and the variegated ones with the dapple-grey horses, respectively. The Latin Vulgate and the Syriac Peshitta, on the contrary, have different translations, while their translations are ambiguous in Genesis 31:10, 12. The Latin Vulgate has 'the strongest ones', while the translation of Peshitta 'אֲמָצִים' has no counterpart to the Hebrew text at all: 'the red ones'.

From geographical study

Nogalski (2011:877) argues that geography plays important role in these verses. Because of the geography of Palestine, all of Israel's enemies came against her from the north or south. Towards the east of Israel and Judah are the Arabian deserts. On the western side is the Mediterranean Sea. The appellation of north and south is related to geography. Old Testament prophetic texts display an ongoing tradition of the threat from the north. The north is the place from which attacks come from Assyria and Babylon (Is 14:31; Jr 1:14–15; 3:18; 6:1, 22; 10:22; 15:12; 16:15; 23:8; 25:9; 31:8; 46:20, 24; Ezk 26:7; 38:6; 39:2; Zph 2:13). Jeremiah 50–41, however, denotes that the phrase 'the land of the north' can also refer to the ascendant or ascending ancient Near Eastern power of the day, because there it refers to those who punish Babylon (50:9; cf. 50:3; Boda 2016:259–269).

The identity of the land of the south is ambiguous. Daniel 11 juxtaposes the kings of the south and the north, referring there to the post-Alexander Hellenistic kingdoms of the Ptolemies in Egypt (south) and the Seleucids in Syria (North). Another possibility is Edom, because it is often associated with the 'south' (Jos 15:1; Jr 40:20; Ob 8–9) and given the significance of Edom elsewhere in the *Book of the Twelve* as an enemy of God's people (Am 9:12; Ob 1:1; MI 1:4). While Babylon is the dominant nation linked to the destruction of the former kingdom of Judah and to the tradition of retribution for this destruction, Edom also is regularly associated with this disaster and retribution associated with it (Ps 137:7; Is 34:5, 6; 63:1–6; Jr 49:7–22; Lm 4:21; Ezk 25:12–14; 35:15; Ob; MI 1:2–5; cf. Ps 83; Am 1:9; Ezk 21:1–5 [20:45; 49]. Boda (2016:259–269) argues that Teman regularly features in prophecies of retaliations (Jer 49:7, 30; Ezk 30:26; 25:13; Am 1:12; Ob 9). In this way, then, the two major nations linked to the destruction of Judah would be punished. One interpretation is that this suspected nation is probably Egypt (Is 43:6). Petterson states that Egypt was an implacable and long-term enemy of the people of God, and Egypt was also the place to which some from Judah fled after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jr 44; Petterson 2015:178). As Baldwin (1972) offers a helpful summary of the passage's main emphasis:

[S]o far as the prophet's message is concerned the only group of importance is that which goes to the north, where the struggle for world domination had for centuries been concentrated. Egypt was still an important power, hence the mention of the south also, but to the west there was nothing importance going on to warrant special mention. From a stylistic point of view the prophet gains by leaving the other two directions vague. It is enough to know that the Lord is triumphant over the dominant world powers. The lesser are included with the greater. (p. 197)

Another interpretation is that the land of the south is merely used as a balance to the land of the north to indicate the universal scope of Yahweh's rule, and although the land of the north represents an allusion to Babylon and Assyria, the land of the south has no specific nation in mind (Boda 2016:259–269). In short, it was from the north and the south that the traditional enemies came into their land. It is these directions in which the horses and chariots go out.

All the ancient texts concur that both the black and white chariots go to the north – Assyria and Babel – to execute God's judgement, and the spotted chariots go to the south. The black horses and their chariot head north to assault Assyria and Babylon. Following the black horses, the white horses also head in a northerly direction. Note that no chariot travels to the east. Two reasons can be supplied why no chariot heads to the east. Firstly, east of Israel and Judah are the Arabian deserts. Secondly, the Temple faced the east because the Old Testament figuratively viewed the east as the direction from which the Lord would approach when he comes to establish his kingdom. One may then surmise that Zechariah understands that the Lord will come from an eastward direction (Klein 2008:512).

From ancient texts

Although TWOT supports the reading of the LXX and the Targum because the first three chariots are given colours and it seems incongruous to call the last pair 'strong' (Klein 2008:512), we cannot just claim that the Latin Vulgate's translation and the Peshitta text in Zechariah 6:7 are erroneous.

As this research has listed, the LXX, Syriac Peshitta and Targumic Aramaic *consistently* keep the depiction of the fourth chariot both in appearance and colour. Those translations see that the black ones were seen to issue forth to the north land, while the white ones came behind them and the dapple-grey came to the south (Didymus & Hill 2006:112). Although the Aramaic Targum, Septuagint and Syriac Peshitta reveal the colour of the fourth chariot in Zechariah 6:7, the translations of Targum and LXX consistently use the colour of 'the shining (dazzling) ones' and 'the variegated ones' in Zechariah 6:3 and 6:7, respectively. Although their consistency in these translations raises a problem (what happens to the red horses in Zechariah 6:2?), they seem to be content in omitting 'אֲדָמִים', just as in the Hebrew text. Briefly, translators of both the Targum and LXX are looking for consistency in the given colour for these horses – just as in the Hebrew text – without seeking any further explanation.

The Syriac Peshitta translates the Hebrew word 'אֲדָמִים' as 'the parti-coloured ones' in Zechariah 6:3. In Zechariah 6:7, however, the Peshitta translates 'אֲדָמִים' as 'the red ones' instead of 'the parti-coloured ones'. The Peshitta's translation is nowhere near to either the LXX and the Targum translations of 'the shining (dazzling) or the variegated' or the Vulgate's translation of 'the strongest ones'. The word 'the red ones' or 'אֲדָמִים' also has no counterpart to the Hebrew text at all in Zechariah 6:7. It seems that the *vorlage* of 'the red ones' or 'אֲדָמִים' is אֲדָמִים. The Hebrew word 'אֲדָמִים', however, appears in Zechariah 6:2. Therefore, it is obvious that the translation of 'the red ones' in 6:7 reveals the purpose of the Syriac Peshitta's translator, which is to match or to be consistent with the text of Zechariah 6:2. The other ancient texts above faithfully follow the Hebrew text in ignoring the information of the red horses in verse 7. The red horses appear in 6:2, but there is no further information in 6:7. This missing information about the red horses could raise unresolved question(s) to the readers. The translator of Peshitta, therefore, is driven to explain the destination and activity of *every* chariot by including the missing red ones which went and patrolled the Earth (6:7). The red horses went and patrolled the Earth (6:2 cf. 6:7). The black horses headed to the north (6:2 cf. 6:6). The white horses followed the black ones to the north (6:3 cf. 6:6). The dappled horses went to the south (6:3 cf. 6:6).

The last ancient text to analyse is the Latin Vulgate. This text follows the Hebrew Bible, the Targum and the LXX in respect to omit the red horses in 6:7. Also, the Vulgate consistently uses the word 'strong' for both 6:3 and 6:7. The difference, however, is that verse 3 uses a normal adjective 'fortes', whereas verse 7 employs the superlative form in the verse 7

(‘issimi’ in Latin). Whether the usage of the relative pronoun *qui* in the beginning of verse 7 modifies the fourth chariot only or the whole chariots, this superlative form is unique because it is not attested in *any* ancient texts (Chia 2018). As Boda believes that ‘אַמְצִים’ should be considered an additional descriptor for all the teams of horses rather than being an additional descriptor for the spotted horse, this final descriptor accentuates the different functions of the horses when pulling a chariot for military offense in 6:1–8, rather than when carrying a human mount for military reconnaissance in 1:1–17. The horses here are all described as powerful, emphasising their function as offensive military weaponry (Boda 2016:359–369). It seems that the translator of Vulgate is driven to remind and encourage the reader that Yahweh is the true king over all the earth (14:9); he will judge his enemies (1:21; 2:9; 6:8–9) and save his people (2:11; 8:20; 9:7; 14:16); and he is in control. The presence of war horses already symbolises the Lord’s omnipotence and dominion over all creation (Klein 2008:512). The historical background of the book of Zechariah is the prophet served in the latter half of the 6th century (in 520 B.C), 20 years after the first Jews returned from exile in Babylon. Although the Jews were not in bondage anymore, the exiles fell far short of promising the return and restoration of Israel’s glory (Pettersen 2015:91). God’s people were disheartened after their fortunes had not been restored, and Jerusalem was only partially rebuilt because of a continuous threat from surrounding nations. It seemed that God did nothing for their restoration. Zechariah kept calling the people to trust and obey God’s word regardless of their situations. The Vulgate captures Zechariah’s exhortation and encouragement, and it is reflected in its translation. Although the people of God fall short of promising and restoration of Israel’s fortune, the imagery of the strong chariots (verse 3) – even the strongest chariot(s) of God (verse 7) – that go and patrol the Earth confirms Zechariah’s message: God is in control and God is more powerful than their situation. Therefore, the translator of the Vulgate is driven by a psychological and theological purpose (cf. Aquila and Theodotion’s translation in Field 1875:1021).

Conclusion

The different translation of the word ‘אַמְצִים’ in the Hebrew text is not only because the word may have two different meanings but also because there is a *purpose* behind the selection of the meaning. Klein (2008:512) states that the Targum and the Septuagint, for example, *consistently* and *faithfully*, maintain the harmony of colours of all horses (6:2–3): red, black, white and spotted-grey (ash). Then, when the red horses are missing from the Hebrew text, they *faithfully* omit the red horses (6–7). These translators are driven by a Hebrew text purpose. The Syriac Peshitta, on the contrary, *consistently* preserves the harmony of colours like the Targum and the Septuagint (6:2–3), but it does not *faithfully* commit to the Hebrew text. Rather, the Syriac Peshitta has the word ‘red’ as a substitute of ‘אַמְצִים’ so that the Peshitta could be *consistent* to verses 2–3 and provide *clearer information* about the red horses that is missing in all ancient manuscripts (6:6–7). This translator is influenced by the

context of the text’s purpose (cf. Didymus & Hill 2006:112). The Latin Vulgate is the *only* ancient manuscript that employs the word ‘strong’ (6:3). This uniqueness continues to verse 7, when the Latin Vulgate uses the superlative form that is not even attested in Hebrew text. This research conveys that the Latin Vulgate is probably eager to encourage the people of God amid their unpleasant situation (*theological implication*). The Vulgate is driven by a psychological and theological purpose (cf. the translation of Aquila and Theodotion in Origen Hexapla in Field & Origen 2005).

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