

A Textual-Critical Analysis of Achsah's Story With Focus on the Characterization

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1. Introduction

The story of Achsah has attracted great attention due to the fact that it has two and similar versions in Joshua 15:15-19 and Judges 1:11-15. The story has also been noticeable because Achsah is depicted as the active figure who requests pluckily her father for a field and gains it, which is comparable to the negative descriptions of biblical females, especially women in Judges such as “Jephthah’s daughter, Samson’s wife, the Levite’s concubine, and the women of Jabesh-gilead and Shiloh.”¹⁾ Thus, Achsah is generally regarded as an able strategist and “a shrewd negotiator.”²⁾ However, the statements concerning Achsah’s incitement of Othniel in the Masoretic Text (MT; e.g. Jos 15:18a; Jdg 1:14a) have been treated as being in need of reconsideration, for it is absurd for Othniel to disappear suddenly from the passages³⁾ and instead Achsah asks her

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1) Richard D. Nelson, “What Is Achsah Doing in Judges?”, Calvin J. Roetzel and Robert L. Foster, eds., *The Impartial God: Essays in Biblical Studies in Honor of Jouette M. Bassler* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 21.

2) *Ibid.*, 22.

3) Othniel reappears in Jdg 3:7-11 where he is described as a deliverer for the Israelites. Sok-Chung Chang provides a helpful analysis of the identification of Othniel as a judge through the translation of the verb **בָּרַח**. Sok-Chung Chang, “A Proposal for the Korean Translation of

father for the field in the next verses, despite the previous verses that Othniel was requested by Achsah.⁴⁾ In addition, the textual issue of the MT is complicated by the unclear object whom Achsah came and incited (Jos 15:18a and Jdg 1:14a can be literally translated, “when she came to *him*, she incite *him* to ask her father for a field”).

Interestingly, on the one hand, the description of the Septuagint (LXX) concerning the incitement is different from that of the MT in two aspects: Achsah counsels her husband and has her own saying, “I will ask my father for a field” (15:18), in the passage of Joshua, whereas it is not Achsah but Othniel who urges to ask a field of Caleb in the version of Judges. While Achsah is defined as the more active female in the LXX Joshua, Othniel is regarded as the negative male who is not satisfied with his bride’s dowry in the LXX Judges.⁵⁾ On the other hand, the portrayals in Joshua and Judges of the Targum are almost similar to that of the MT except one thing: Achsah in Targum does not incite her husband but counsels him. Thus, Achsah does not appear to be a shrewd strategist who employs the transaction between her and her husband, unlike the case of the MT. In these respects, the LXX and the Targum seek to resolve the textual tensions of Achsah’s story in the MT where there are several ambiguities. Dealing with the textual ambiguities of Achsah’s story in the MT, the LXX and the Targum result in the different characterization of Achsah. While the LXX makes Achsah the passive female who is incited by her husband and the submissive one who forcefully conforms his authority, the Targum describes Achsah as the mild figure who advises her husband.

In doing a textual-critical analysis of Achsah’s story, this paper focuses on the differences of the texts and their subsequent characterizations. To accomplish such an objective, I first analyze the differences among the MT, the LXX, and the Targum of Joshua 15:15-19. Then, I comparatively deal with the three texts of Judges 1:11-15. Finally, I probe how the actions of characters are differently described in the three texts focused on Judges 1:14 that has textual variants.

the Verb אָפֶּטַח in Judges: Focused on Judge Othniel”, *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 39 (2016), 7-25.

4) Paul G. Mosca, “Who Seduced Whom?: A Note on Joshua 15:18//Judges 1:14”, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984), 19.

5) *Ibid.*

2. The Textual-Critical Analysis of the Three Texts of Joshua 15:15-19

When the MT, the LXX, and the Targum of Joshua 15:15-19 are compared, the first and the third texts are similar but different from the second text. In verse 15, regarding who went up against the inhabitants of Debir, the MT and the Targum implicitly express the subject as the third masculine singular (וַיַּעַל/וַיִּסְלֵק). In contrast, the LXX clarifies the subject by inserting the personal name, Chaleb (Χαλεβ). Besides, the MT defines the former name of Debir as Kiriath-sepher (קִרְיַת־סֵפֶר). Seemingly, the name is a proper noun for a certain area, but it is likely to be derived from the combination of ‘city’ (קִרְיַת) and ‘letter’ (סֵפֶר). Thus, the LXX elucidates the name as “city of Letters” (Πόλις γραμμάτων) without transliterating it. However, as the MT does, the Targum also reads the previous name of the city as “Kiriath-arke” (קִרְיַת אַרְכֵי).⁶⁾ The previous name of Debir can be understood as “city of archives” or “city of the Book” in the Targum.⁷⁾ Perhaps, as Marten H. Woudstra suggests, the name indicates “the repository of a library” in the ancient world.⁸⁾ In particular, the LXX B (*Codex Vaticanus*) of Judges 1:11 provides the comparable expression, “Kiriathsophar, city of Letters” (Καριαθσωφαρ, πόλις γραμμάτων). Thus, the editor of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) suggests that קִרְיַת־סֵפֶר should be read as קִרְיַת־סֵפֶר (“city of scribes”), but it is not necessary to change the word because the LXX and the Targum have the same meaning.

Second, in verse 18, the MT describes Achsah as the one who urged Othniel to ask her father for a field, whereas the LXX changes her as the figure who counseled him, saying, “I will ask my father for a field” (αἰτήσομαι τὸν πατέρα μου ἀγρόν).⁹⁾ Such a modification of the LXX is contrastive to the conflicting MT where Achsah requested Caleb in verse 15, despite that Othniel was supposed to do so in verse 14. As a result, in the LXX, Achsah’s actions to

6) Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, The Aramaic Bible 10 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 41. The authors do not translate but transliterate the former name of the city.

7) J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua: A Commentary*, R. A. Wilson, trans., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 166.

8) Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 241.

9) Leonard J. Greenspoon, “Jesus”, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 186.

counsel and say are understood in the sense that she obtained her husband’s consent before putting her plan in action.¹⁰⁾ The Targum generally follows the MT, but it uses another word, ‘to advise’ or ‘to counsel’ (וּמַלְכִּיָּה) rather than ‘to incite’ (וַתְּסִיֵּתֶהוּ) of the latter. Thus, the Targum defines Achsah’s action for Othniel as advice or counseling, which is similar to that of the LXX. Nonetheless, the MT, the LXX, and the Targum have something in common that they do not change the subject who incites or counsels him but keep Achsah in the place.

In verse 18, the MT and the LXX regard what Achsah attempts to ask as a field (שָׂדֵה/ἀγρόν). The designations of the two texts seem to be reasonable because Achsah complains to her father about the land of Negeb in verse 19. Although the texts do not explain what condition the land of Negeb is, the area is generally located in the south wilderness and thus is likely to be “arid” in the metaphorical sense.¹¹⁾ Moreover, it is questionable why Achsah first requests a field and then demands springs of water, but the barren land which she received from Caleb makes her two different requests reasonable.

However, the LXX does not present a clear explanation of what Achsah requested the second time. In verse 19, the LXX reads ‘Golathmain’ (Γολαθμαιν) for the phrase, ‘springs of water’ (גְּלֵת מַיִם) of the MT. The reading of the LXX is regarded as a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase. But, as the editor of the BHS points out, there is a difference concerning the number between the two expressions because the Hebrew phrase is a plural form but the Greek word is a singular one. The transliteration seemed to result from that the ancient translators of the LXX did not know the Hebrew word (גְּלֵת) whose meaning was “bowls”.¹²⁾ Furthermore, the LXX does not differentiate ‘springs of water’ (גְּלֵת מַיִם) from ‘spring’ (גְּלֵת) by translating all of them as “Golathmain”. Nonetheless, if one supposes that the term of the LXX would result from the transliteration of a Hebrew phrase, he/she can assume that the *Vorlage* of the LXX would have the expression, גְּלֵת מַיִן, even though its exact meaning is not known. Thus, it is possible to conjecture that the LXX would not know but have other texts which were not identical to the MT.

10) Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary 7 (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 180.

11) Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 189.

12) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Judges Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), 42*.

Unlike the MT and the LXX, the Targum uses the word, ‘inheritance’ (אֲנִשְׁתָּהּ) rather than ‘a field’. Regarding the difference among the three texts, Willem F. Smelik’s suggestion is helpful, even though his explanation is based on the text of Judges. According to him, the Targum attempts to harmonize verses 18 and 19 of the MT because Achsah advised Othniel to ask her father for the field in verse 18 but actually made a request for springs of water in verse 19.¹³⁾ Changing the word from ‘a field’ to ‘inheritance’, the Targum makes the logical connection between verses 14 and 15 more consistent and harmonious. However, the Targum’s expression is less pointed and more abstract than those of the MT and the LXX.¹⁴⁾ While Achsah requested an intangible portion or inheritance in the Targum, she bravely demanded a tangible field in the MT and the LXX.

3. The Textual-Critical Analysis of the Three Texts of Judges 1:11-15

As the MT and the Targum are different from the LXX in the texts of Joshua, their relationship is repeated in the passages of Judges 1:11-15. Before analyzing the three texts of Judges 1:11-15, it is needed to explore shortly the texts of the LXX. As J. Alberto Soggin points out, the texts of the LXX imply their very complicated history.¹⁵⁾ Such a situation arises from the fact that there are a lot of differences between the LXX A (*Codex Alexandrinus*) and the LXX B (*Codex Vaticanus*) since Alfred Rahlfs worked the critical edition of the LXX with the double layers of upper text (LXX A) and lower text (LXX B).¹⁶⁾ Thus, some suppose that the LXX A and the LXX B would represent “two different and independent translations”, with the assumption that the text of the LXX A would be older and more superior than that of the LXX B.¹⁷⁾ However, such a

13) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, Oudtestamentische Studiën, XXXVI (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 340.

14) L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua*, Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 202.

15) J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 12.

16) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, “The Hebrew and Greek Texts of Judges”, Adrian Schenker, ed., *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible: The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies 52 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 2.

17) J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges*, 12.

supposition has been rejected by others who argue not only that the two codices of the LXX would present successive revisions of the same text,¹⁸⁾ but also that they could be “traced back to a single translation.”¹⁹⁾ In particular, regarding the relationship between the two texts of the LXX, Walter Ray Bodine argues as follows:

However, it can now be said assuredly that the peculiar problem presented by the extensive differences between the texts of the A and B families is resolved in large measure. The latter (*The LXX B*) constitutes a part of the revision of a form of the Old Greek toward the developing Hebrew text carried out near the turn of the era and known as the *κατῆ* recension, while the former (*The LXX A*) represents a later form of text which is influenced primarily by Origen’s fifth column (insertion mine).²⁰⁾

Philip E. Satterthwaite also emphasizes that neither the LXX A nor the LXX B definitely stands for the Old Greek because the former “stands somewhat closer to it but still contains many examples of kaige revision and Hexaplaric contamination.”²¹⁾ In these respects, it is unclear which text represents the Old Greek, but it is accepted that the two codices of the LXX would present the recensions of a single text, even though there are considerable variants between them. Concerning Judges 1:11-15, the LXX A and the LXX B furnish few variants, but the latter tends to provide several clearer expressions than the former does.

In verse 11, the MT uses the word ,¹¹ which means “and he (Caleb) went”. Regarding the term, the LXX A uses the verb, ἐπορεύθησαν (“he went”),

18) Barry G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 214; Peter J. Gentry, “The Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament”, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16:2 (2006), 214.

19) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, “The Genuine Text of Judges”, Yohanan A. P. Goldman, Arie van der Kooij, and Richard D. Weis, eds., *Sófer Mahir: Essays in Honour of Adrian Schenker Offered by Editors of Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 110 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 34–35. Marcos provides the exemplary scholars who undergird Walter Ray Bodine’s argument as follows: O. Pretzl, I. Soisalon-Soinien, B. Lindars, and J. Targarona.

20) Walter Ray Bodine, *The Greek Text of Judges: Recensional Developments*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 23 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 186.

21) Philip E. Satterthwaite, “Judges”, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 195.

whereas the LXX B employs the verb, ἀνέβησαν (“he went up”). Thus, the LXX A reflects ָלַךְ of Judges 1:11, whereas the latter follows ָלַךְ of Joshua 15:15. The editor of the Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ) suggests that the reading of the latter would represent the Old Greek and the Old Latin.²²⁾ As the Targum follows the MT in the passage of Joshua, it also does so by using the word, ָלַךְ , which means “he went”. The difference between ‘to go’ and ‘to go up’ does not produce a critical significance but a geographical viewpoint. In other words, Debir would be located in a higher place than the area where Caleb lived.

Regarding the former name of Debir, the MT of Judges follows that of Joshua, employing the name, Kiriath-sepher (ָרִיַת־סֵפֶר). The LXX A of Judges also follows that of Joshua, using the name, “city of Letters” (Πόλις γραμμάτων). In particular, the LXX B inserts the transliteration of the Hebrew name of the city, “Kiriathsophar” (Καριαθσωφαρ) with the phrase of “city of Letters” (πόλις γραμμάτων) which the LXX A offers. Such a transliteration of the LXX B suggests that its *Vorlage* should have the form of (ָרִיַת־סֵפֶר) (“city of scribes”). The Targum of Judges also follows that of Joshua, by using the same words, “Kiriath-arke” (ָרִיַת אֶרְכֵי), which means “city of archives”. Harrington and Saldarini understand the meaning of the city as “court records”.²³⁾ In this sense, the MT and the Targum have a common meaning of Debir’s former name, but the LXX has a little different sense.

In verse 13, the MT defines the identity of Othniel as “son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother”. If the phrase, “Caleb’s younger brother” indicates Othniel, they have a relationship of brothers. However, if the phrase refers to Kenaz, Othniel is a nephew of Caleb. Such a reading is also found in Judges 3:9 where the phrase, ָרִיַת מִנְנֵי (“younger brother”), is used.²⁴⁾ Regarding the ambiguous relationship between Caleb and Othniel, the LXX A defines the latter as υἱὸς Κενεζ ἀδελφὸς Χαλεβ ὁ νεώτερος (“son of Kenez, Caleb’s younger brother”), whereas the LXX B identifies him as υἱὸς Κενεζ ἀδελφοῦ Χαλεβ ὁ νεώτερος (“the younger son of Kenez, brother of Caleb”). In comparison to the two codices of the LXX, the LXX A is closer to the MT than the LXX B. The Targum’s treatment of the identity of Othniel corresponds with that the MT, for the former defines him as “younger brother of Caleb,” like the latter. In

22) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Judges Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 41*.

23) Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, 59.

24) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Judges Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 42*.

particular, the Targum Jerushalmi adds מן אימיה (“from his mother”) in the margin to דְּכָלָב and, at the same time, it has another phrase, דִּילִידת אימיה לְקִנֵּז, which means that “(Caleb’s youngest brother) whom his mother begot for Kenaz.”²⁵⁾

Regarding the action to incite in verse 14, the LXX reads the Greek word, ἐπισειω (‘to urge’) for the Hebrew verb, סוּחַ (‘to incite’) of the MT.²⁶⁾ The LXX also produces the reverse result of the MT through the changes of the subject and the object in relation to the action to incite. While the MT states, ‘she incited him’, the LXX A provides a different statement, ‘he urged her’ (ἐπέσεισεν αὐτήν). What is more, the LXX B elucidates the subject who urged her (Achsah) by adding the name, Γοθονηλ. Consequently, the MT whose subject and object are implicitly expressed is contrastive to the LXX B whose subject is explicitly indicated by the personal name as follows: “Othniel urged her.” The change of the subject and the addition of Othniel reinforce his initiative in the relationship with Achsah. Therefore, the translation of the LXX sheds light on the fact that it is not Achsah but Othniel who “initiates the action”.²⁷⁾

Compared to other readings of the LXX A and the LXX B, the Targum does not change the subject or the object of the incitement of the MT but uses specific words whose meanings are not the same to those of the MT. While the MT portrays the movement of Achsah as a kind of consummation based on the use of the Hebrew verb, בּוֹא, that means “of bride coming into her husband’s house”, the Targum employs the Aramaic verb, עָלָל, which literally means a movement or an entrance into a place in the neutral sense.²⁸⁾ More importantly, the Targum uses the unemotional term, וּמְלַכְתִּיהָ, which means ‘to advise’ or ‘to counsel’.²⁹⁾ Thus, Achsah’s action for Othniel is regarded as advice or counseling in the Targum and, at the same time, it has a mild sense, compared to those of the MT and the LXX.³⁰⁾ The neutral meaning of the Targum corresponds with the usage

25) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 338.

26) Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 233.

27) Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 33.

28) *BDB*, 98; *HALOT*, 1949.

29) *HALOT*, 1917.

30) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 339.

of *συνεβουλεύσατο* (‘to advise’ or ‘to counsel’)³¹⁾ in the LXX of Joshua 15:18.³²⁾

While the MT and the Targum do not offer any statement of Achsah in verse 14, the LXX provides her obvious saying, “You have given me away into the land of the south” (εἰς γῆν νότου ἐκδέδοσαί με). It is noteworthy that not only is the same statement of Achsah repeated in verse 15 of the LXX, but the name, *Ασχα* (“Achsah”), is also added to the text. The LXX’s emphasis on the direct discourse of Achsah shows her complaint about the land of Negeb. The repetitive statements of Achsah are also likely to represent Othniel’s dissatisfaction with the land of the south because he incited her to ask her father for the field in the LXX. As a result, the direct speech of Achsah in verse 14 of the LXX justifies her or her husband’s request for the field.

In verse 15, the MT and the Targum states, ‘Caleb gave her’, whereas the LXX inserts the phrase, *κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῆς* (“according to her heart”), before the statements of the formers. Regarding the insertion, the editor of the BHS suggests that it might represent haplography of the Hebrew word, *כָּלֵב* (“Caleb”), and thus should be modified as *כְּלֵבָהּ* (“according to her heart”). Such a suggestion is valid because it can restore wordplay through *kaleb* and *kelibah*.³³⁾ Furthermore, the Hebrew verb, *נָתַן*, and the Aramaic one, *נָתַב*, can indicate the subject who gave her as Caleb without using his name. Yet, it is not clear whether the MT and the *Vorlage* of the Targum had the Hebrew word, *כְּלֵבָהּ*, or not.

Like the Targum of Joshua 15:18, that of Judges 1:14 reads *אחסנתא* (“inheritance”) for *הַשָּׂדֶה* (“the field”) of the MT, *τὸν ἀγρόν* (“the field”) of the LXX A, and *ἀγρόν* (“a field”) of the LXX B. Seemingly, there is no significant difference between the usages of the words in their own texts, but the term of the Targum functions as the harmonization verses 14 and 15.³⁴⁾ Although Achsah advised Othniel to ask her father for the field in verse 14, she actually requested springs of water in verse 15. Changing the word from ‘the field’ to ‘inheritance’, Achsah’s request and its subsequent result are more reasonable and consistent in the Targum.

31) Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 580–581.

32) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Judges Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 42*.

33) Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, The Anchor Bible 6A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 57.

34) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 340.

Finally, the MT and the Targum define what Achsah requested in verse 15 as ‘springs of water’ (גְּלוֹת מַיִם/בֵּית־שֶׁקֶנָּא דְּמַיָּא), whereas the LXX reads ‘redemption of water’ (λύτρωσις ὕδατος). On the one hand, the translation of the LXX results from its attempt to associate λύτρωσις with גְּלוֹת (singular construct of the noun, גְּלוֹתָהּ) rather than גְּלוֹת (plural construct of the noun, גְּלוֹתָהֶן), which can be regarded as ‘scribal error’ or ‘purposeful wordplay’.³⁵⁾ If the two suggestions for the translation of the LXX are accepted, the request of Achsah is colored with ‘covenantal blessing’ and ‘fertility’.³⁶⁾ On the other hand, since the transliteration (Γολαθμαϊν) of Joshua 15:19 and that (γολλάθ) of Aquila support the singular form,³⁷⁾ the editor of the BHS suggests that גְּלוֹת (plural form) should be read as גְּלוֹתָהּ (singular form). However, the Hebrew word, גְּלוֹת, can be understood as “a collective noun for water source”³⁸⁾ or as a local name as in the New Revised Standard Version’s translation, “Upper *Gulloth* and Lower *Gulloth*” (emphasis mine). Accordingly, there is no necessity for correcting the Hebrew word, גְּלוֹת, of the MT. It is also noticeable that the Targum inserts a word, אַתְרָא (‘the site’), before the phrase, “the Watering-place”.³⁹⁾ Such an additional expression of the Targum clarifies the inheritance which Achsah requested in verses 14 and 15 as the land rather than another kind of property such as money.

4. The Action and Its Subsequent Characterization in Judges 1:14

Founded on the previous analyses on the MT, the LXX, and the Targum of Achsah’s story, there are not a few differences among them. The differences sometimes arise from the clarification of the implicit expressions or the harmonization for the logical flow of the story. Yet, most of the variants do not give rise to a critical difference in the implication of the narrative. However, the variant readings in the MT, the LXX, and the Targum in Judges 1:14 bring out the significant difference not only in the meaning of the action between the male and the female, but also in the subsequent characterization. As mentioned in the

35) Susan Niditch, *Judges*, 33.

36) *Ibid.*, 34.

37) Natalio Fernandez Marcos, *Judges Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 42*.

38) Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary 8 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 6.

39) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 340.

introduction, Judges 1:14 which corresponds with Joshua 15:18 has been famous for its textual ambiguity and its subsequent conundrum, that is, ‘who incited whom?’ or ‘who is the subject of the action to incite and its object?’

Table 1. Judges 1:14 in the MT, the LXX, and the Targum⁴⁰⁾

(1) MT

וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאָהּ וַתְּסִיחֶהּ לְשֹׂאֵל מֵאִתְּ-אָבִיהָ הַשָּׂדֶה וַתַּצְנַח מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר
וַיֹּאמֶר-לָהּ כָּלֵב מִה־לֵּךְ׃

When she came to him, **she urged him** to ask her father for a **field**. As she dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?”(New Revised Standard Version)

(2) LXX A (*Codex Alexandrinus*)

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἰσπορεύεσθαι αὐτὴν καὶ ἐπέσεισεν αὐτὴν αἰτῆσαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς τὸν ἀγρόν καὶ ἐγόγγυζεν ἐπάνω τοῦ ὑποζυγίου καὶ ἔκραξεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποζυγίου εἰς γῆν νότου ἐκδέδοσαί με καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Χαλεβ τί ἐστίν σοι.

And it came about, when she entered, that **he urged her** to ask for **the field** from her father. And she **grumbled** upon her draft animal and **cried out** from where she was on her draft animal, “**You have given me away into the land of the south.**” And Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”⁴¹⁾

(3) LXX B (*Codex Vaticanus*)

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῇ εἰσόδῳ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπέσεισεν αὐτὴν Γοθονιηλ τοῦ αἰτῆσαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς ἀγρόν καὶ ἐγόγγυζεν καὶ ἔκραξεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποζυγίου εἰς γῆν νότου ἐκδέδοσαί με καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Χαλεβ τί ἐστίν σοι.

And it came about at her entrance that **Gothoniel urged her** that she should ask for a **field** from her father. And she **grumbled** and **cried out** from where she was upon her draft animal, “**You have given me away into the land of the south.**” And Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”⁴²⁾

(4) Targum Jonathan

וַהֲוָה בְּמִיעָלָהּ וּמִלְכָתֶיהָ לְמִשְׁאַל מִן אָבוּהָ אַחְסָנְתָּא וְאַתְרֵיכִינַת מֵעַל חֲמֹרָא
וַאֲמַר לָהּ כָּלֵב מָא לֵיךְ׃

When she entered [her father’s house], **she advised him** to ask her

40) I highlight the textual differences among the texts in bold type.

41) Philip E. Satterthwaite, “Judges”, 201.

42) Ibid.

father for **an inheritance**; and she dismounted from the ass and Caleb said to her: “What do you wish?”⁴³⁾

The literal translation of the MT of Judges 1:14, ‘when she came to him, she incited him to ask her father for the field’ is equivocal because Achsah does not need to incite the other to ask her father for the land.⁴⁴⁾ Furthermore, it is vague why the author uses the verb, סוּת, which is usually employed in the negative sense,⁴⁵⁾ for the description of Achsah’s action. The unclear object to whom Achsah came and incited also aggravates the textual conundrum of the verse. Even though Othniel is generally regarded as the object whom Achsah incited, the translation does not offer any clear solution for the question, “why does Othniel then disappear completely from the story and the actual request come from Achsah?”⁴⁶⁾

In response to the limited translation of the MT, Paul G. Mosca suggests the alternative translation by regarding לְשֹׂאֵל (‘to ask’) as a gerund (‘asking’) rather than an infinitive as follows: “when she arrived, she beguiled him, *asking* from her father arable land” (emphasis mine).⁴⁷⁾ Thus, Mosca takes Caleb as the direct object of Achsah’s incitement, not only because there is no other than Caleb stated in the verse, but also because the object of וַתְּסִיחֵהוּ (“she incited him”) is clarified by the immediately following word, אָבִיהָ (“her father”).⁴⁸⁾ As a result, a textual modification is not added any more to the MT and, at the same time, Othniel neither takes any role nor has to appear again after verse 13. In these respects, the textual inconsistency between Othniel’s appearance in verse 14 and his disappearance in verse 15 is resolved in the translation of Mosca. Yet, his translation does not present the reason why Achsah goes to her father and reiterates the same request in verse 15.⁴⁹⁾

Regarding the interpretational dilemma of verse 14, Tammi J. Schneider seeks to find a solution by viewing the movement (בְּבוֹאָהָ) as the sexual union and defining Achsah’s request as the logical result from the intercourse between her

43) Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, 339.

44) J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges*, 22.

45) According *HALOT*, the verb, סוּת, has the meanings of “mislead”, “entice away”, and “incite against”. *HALOT*, 749.

46) Paul G. Mosca, “Who Seduced Whom?”, 19.

47) *Ibid.*, 21.

48) *Ibid.*

49) Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 13.

and her husband.⁵⁰) In particular, Schneider thinks of the suffix of הָ as “the directional *h*” (*locale he*) of הָבִיִּחַ rather than that of the subject of the infinitive construct like the literal translation of the MT.⁵¹) The meaning of the verb הָבִיִּחַ based on the lexicons⁵²) and its usages also support her translation, “*he came (sexually) to her*” (emphasis mine).⁵³) Therefore, the fact that the action between Othniel and Achsah signifies the sexual nuance gives rise to the characterization of the latter who devises a scheme and puts it into action immediately in verses 14 and 15. In addition, Schneider’s translation enhances the consistency between Achsah’s motive and her request. However, her translation does not still furnish any obvious reason for Othniel’s sudden disappearance in verse 15. Viewed in this light, the MT of Judges 1:14 *per se* does not create any clear interpretation concerning the reason why Othniel suddenly disappears in verse 15 where Achsah requests her father for the land, even though Othniel is incited to ask it by her. Such an ambiguity and inconsistency cause one to expect how the verse is stated in the LXX and the Targum.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the LXX A and the LXX B of Judges 1:14a are different from that of the MT. First, the LXX A provides a statement where the subject and the object of the MT are reversed as follows: ‘*he urged her*’ (ἐπέσεισεν αὐτήν). Second, the LXX B clarifies the subject who ‘*urged her*’ by adding the name, Γοθωνιήλ, as follows: ‘*Othniel urged her.*’ According to the LXX A and the LXX B, the reason why Achsah asked her father the field is that she was incited by her husband, Othniel. In this sense, the readings of the LXX A and LXX B furnish the reader with the obvious reason why Achsah asked her father for the field,⁵⁴) in contrast to the MT where the reason is not clear. In other words, the LXX confirms that Othniel’s disappearance in verse 15 is valid, for he does not need to request again for the land to Caleb instead of Achsah. Therefore, the logical relationship between Othniel’s action to urge Achsah and her subsequent request is enhanced by the LXX.

Yet, unfortunately, the reading of the LXX generates a question as to whether

50) Ibid., 12-14.

51) Ibid., 12.

52) See footnote 29. *HALOT* suggests that the verb means to “move in (bride on her wedding day)”. *HALOT*, 113.

53) Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, 12. Schneider changes the subject of הָבִיִּחַ from Achsah to Othniel because the verb rarely takes its subject as a woman.

54) Paul G. Mosca, “Who Seduced Whom?”, 19.

Othniel is the honorable hero or not, especially related to his military achievement.⁵⁵⁾ As verses 13 and 14 imply, Othniel had already obtained the land of Negeb as well as his wife, Achsah, in return for his conquest of the city, Debir. In general, the land of Negeb which Caleb gave is regarded as “a dowry” for the marriage between Othniel and Achsah.⁵⁶⁾ In this regard, Othniel is characterized as the avaricious figure who is not satisfied with his bride’s dowry and thus devises a scheme through the incitement in the LXX. In contrast, Achsah of the LXX is described as the oppressed female who has to be incited by her husband and ask her father for the field instead of her greedy husband. Furthermore, Achsah is not an active figure who requests the field for herself and has hegemony over the relationship with her husband, but a passive and submissive female in the LXX of Judges 1:14.

Although Judges 1:14 of the Targum is not likely to be different from that of the MT, the former has a distinguishing understanding of the action between Achsah and Othniel from the latter. Unlike the MT and the LXX where Achsah appears to have sexual intercourse with Othniel,⁵⁷⁾ the Targum depicts her action as a movement into a certain place with the spatial sense through the word, עלל. Hence, one cannot find Achsah’s intention to use politically the sexual intercourse or her relationship with her husband for her purpose in the Targum. Moreover, the Targum regards Achsah’s action after her entrance into her husband as her advice for him rather than her incitement. Thus, the Targum portrays Achsah as the mild character who encourages and advises her husband to ask her father for inheritance. Compared to the descriptions of the MT and the LXX, that of the Targum makes Achsah the brave one who requests bravely inheritance in the patriarchal society as well as the less cunning one who does

55) Danna Nolan Fewell, “Deconstructive Criticism: Achsah and the (E)Razed City of Writing”, Gale A. Yee, ed., *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 128–129.

56) Joseph Fleishman, “A Daughter’s Demand and a Father’s Compliance: The Legal Background to Achsah’s Claim and Caleb’s Agreement”, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 118 (2006), 355; Heidi M. Szpek, “Achsah’s Story: A Metaphor for Societal Transition”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40 (2002), 249.

57) Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 176. Compared to the MT, the LXX does not make clearly sexual connotation, due to the general meaning of the Greek verb, εἰσπορεύομαι (‘to enter’). Nonetheless, the verb is used for indicating the intercourse between God’s sons and humans’ daughter in Gen 6:4. Such a usage makes it possible to assume that the verb might have sexual sense in the verse.

not use the relationship with her husband. However, the Targum does not still provide the reason why Achsah requests inheritance from her father despite her advice for her husband.

5. Conclusion

As Achsah's story is differently read in the MT, the LXX, and the Targum of Joshua 15:15-19 and Judges 1:11-15, it gives rise to comparable interpretations and characterizations, especially in Judges 1:14. The MT characterizes Achsah as the shrewd and active figure who incites her husband for her desire for the field. In contrast, Othniel is portrayed as the passive and questionable figure who is incited by his wife but disappears suddenly. The LXX justifies Othniel's disappearance by making him the subject who urges his wife, but it ironically describes him as the insatiable person who wants the additional land in return for his conquest of Debir. Defining Achsah's action as the advice and harmonizing her contradictory request in verses 14 and 15, the Targum characterizes her as the more positive female, which is similar to Joshua 15:18 of the LXX where she is active and mild. Therefore, the LXX and the Targum solve the textual conundrums of Achsah's story in the MT by characterizing her as more passive figure or less active one than the MT does. Regardless of the complicated history of development of the three texts, the textual variants do not produce simple differences of words but different readings, especially different characterizations in the story.

<Keywords>

Achsah, Caleb, Joshua, Judges, Characterization.

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<Abstract>

**A Textual-Critical Analysis of Achsah’s Story
With Focus on the Characterization**

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In this paper, I argue that the textual variants of the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX), and the Targum give rise to different characterizations in the story of Achsah. This textual-critical analysis of Achsah’s story focuses on the differences of the three texts and their subsequent characterizations rather than the demonstration of the variants’ existence. The story of Achsah has attracted the biblical interpreters’ attention because unlike other biblical females, she is described as an able strategist and a shrewd negotiator who pluckily requests her father for a field and gains it in contrast to her husband Othniel who appears as a passive figure in the MT. Yet the portrayal of Achsah’s incitement of Othniel in the MT Joshua 15:18 and Judges 1:14 is ambiguous and thus gives rise to a conundrum, ‘who incited whom?’

Concerning the ambiguous description, the LXX attempts to harmonize it by changing the object of the incitement to the feminine pronoun and adding Othniel in the place of the subject (ἐπέσεισεν αὐτήν Γοθωνιήλ). Such a change of the subject solves the textual dilemma of the MT by providing the reason why Achsah asks her father for a field. However, the LXX ironically characterizes Othniel as the greedy son-in-law who is not satisfied with his bride’s dowry, unlike the previous depiction as the honorable hero who spearheaded the attack on the Canaanite city.

The Targum reconciles the MT with the LXX by defining the action of Achsah as advice or counseling through the verb, ומלכתיה. The Targum thus neutralizes the sexual connotation of the transaction between Achsah and Othniel in the MT, making her a more positive character. However, the Targum also does not furnish any reason for the sudden disappearance of Othniel. Therefore, the LXX and the Targum seek to resolve the textual tension of Achsah’s story in the MT where there are several ambiguities. While the LXX changes the subject of the action to incite, the Targum mitigates the effect of the

incitement by using the neutral term. Consequently, the LXX emphasizes the subjectivity of Othniel, whereas the Targum gives rise to the highly positive description of Achsah. Such modifications are comparable to the equivocal statement of the MT.