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# Analysis of אמצים ['mṣîm] in the Hexapla

Abstract: The term אמצים as encountered in Zech 6:3 and 6:7 has been interpreted in various ways by ancient translators, including the LXX, Peshitta, Targum, Vulgate, and the Masoretic Text. The ambiguity surrounding אמצים is further highlighted in Origen's Hexapla. Importantly, there is no agreement on the translation of אמצים in Zech 6:7. Aquila's translation is particularly significant, as it offers a unique interpretation of אמצים in Zech 6:3 that differs from his rendering in Zech 6:7. This article argues that Aquila's version of Zech 6:7 does not correspond to the Hebrew text that underlies the Masoretic Text, whereas both Symmachus and Theodotion are consistent with the Hebrew reading of the Masoretic Text. Textual criticism is utilized to support this claim.

**Keywords:** Zechariah, אמצים, Aquila's translation, Symmachus' translation, Theodotion's translation

#### 1. Introduction

The apparatus of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia addresses the ambiguous term אמצים found in the book of Zechariah. For instance, the Targum interprets אמצים in Zech 6:3 as radiant ash-colored horses, described as as וברתיכא רביעיתא סוסוון פּציחין קטמנין In contrast, the Septuagint presents a different depiction, referring to dappled grey horses with the phrase ἐν τῷ ἄρματι τῷ τετάρτῷ ἵπποι ποικίλοι ψαροί. The Peshitta, meanwhile, translates אמצים as parti-colored horses or אמצים באולם באולם

ובמרכבה הרבעית סוסים ברדים אמצים, respectively. This distinction arises because both the Latin Vulgate and the Masoretic Text vocalize with a ḥaṭaf pataḥ under the aleph, leading to the form אַמַאַים. Notably, the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) does not reference the Hexaplaric readings. Conversely, the Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ) includes the readings from the Hexapla, specifically those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. However, BHQ primarily addresses the reading of Aquila (Gelston 2010, 126).

Recent studies have also examined the term אמצים in the book of Zechariah, highlighting the complexities associated with its interpretation. These investigations reveal that ancient texts serve various functions and intentions – the Masoretic Text, Peshitta, Targum, LXX, and Vulgate – in translating the word אמצים in the book of Zechariah (Chia 2022, 1–5). Targum and the Septuagint (LXX) exemplify a commitment to a faithful and consistent adherence to the Hebrew text, presuming that the underlying text is אמצים. In contrast, the Peshitta consistently aims to accurately represent the colors of the horses as described in Zech 6:2–3 and 6:7. Notably, the Vulgate stands out as the sole ancient translation that interprets אמצים as "strong" in 6:3 and "the strongest" in 6:7 (Chia 2022, 1–5). However, recent studies have overlooked the significance of Origen's Hexapla. Consequently, this research will examine the translations provided by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion within Origen's Hexapla, offering a critical assessment of each rendition. The method employed will be that of textual criticism, which will facilitate a thorough analysis and evaluation of each witness (Barthélemy 2012, 92).

### 2. Methodology

Textual criticism involves the examination and analysis of textual variations arising from various manuscripts. This field serves two primary objectives. The first objective is to identify the theological implications present in the diverse translations. The second objective is to ascertain the original meaning of the autograph, given that the original texts of both the Old Testament and the New Testament

have been lost (Barthélemy 2012, 92). Having established the first objective, this research is focused on fulfilling the second.

## 3. The Structure of Origen's Hexapla

Origen organized the Hexapla into six parallel columns arranged in a specific sequence: 1. the unpointed Masoretic Text positioned on the left, 2. a transliteration of the Hebrew text rendered in Greek letters, 3. the translation by Aquila [ $\alpha'$ ] (cf. Hyvärinen 1977, 43–86; Natalio 2000, 116–18; Labendz 2009, 353–58), 4. the translation by Symmachus [ $\alpha'$ ] (see Salvesen 1991, 192; Natalio 2000, 128–32), 5. the Septuagint (LXX) denoted as ( $\alpha'$ ), and finally, 6. the column featuring the revision by Theodotion [ $\alpha'$ ] (Gentry 1995, 3). The placement of Aquila's translation adjacent to the Hebrew transliteration is due to its highly literal nature. Symmachus follows Aquila as it serves as a revision of his work. In contrast, Theodotion is a revision of the Septuagint, which justifies its position following the LXX.

# 4. Origen's Hexapla

### 4.1. Aquila's Translation of אמצים

Prior to analyzing and assessing Aquila's translation, it is essential to examine the underlying principles guiding his work. A prominent feature of his approach is the commitment to a literal translation, demonstrating a strong fidelity to the source language. Aquila often opts for a direct Greek equivalent of Hebrew terms, which can occasionally result in translations that are contextually inappropriate. Jobes and Silva (2000, 39) note that Aquila's translation consistently reflects a Hebrew vocabulary, even at the expense of acceptable Greek usage. His extreme adherence to literalism is further evidenced by deviations from standard Greek grammar and syntax (Dines 2004, 88). Additionally, Aquila's translation exhibits a focus on etymology, as highlighted by Natalio (2000, 116). In essence, Aquila's work can be characterized as a faithful representation of the source language. In summary, Jobes and Silva (2000, 29) depict Aquila as a Jewish proselyte striving to meticulously convey every detail of the Hebrew text.

In Zech 6:3, Aquila interprets the term ממצים as καρτεροί (the strong ones). This Greek rendition indicates that Aguila understands the term as אָמְצִים, aligning his interpretation with both the Masoretic Text and the Latin Vulgate (Field 1875, 1021). Nevertheless, a complication arises in Zechariah 6:7. Aquila reads מאמצים as πυρροί (the fiery red ones). Syro-Hexapla also records that Aquila has ممتحده (the red ones). Both the Greek and Syriac translations indicate that "the red ones" corresponds to Aquila's translation. This observation prompts several inquiries. Firstly, Aguila exhibits inconsistency in his rendering of האמצים: translating it as "the strong ones" in 6:3 and "the fiery red ones" in 6:7. In Gelston's commentary on the critical apparatus of Zech 6:3, Gelston argues that Aquila emphasizes the horses' characteristics, while in 6:7 Aguila highlights the color of the horses. This inconsistency poses a challenge, as it deviates from Aquila's established translation principles. For example, in the book of Genesis, he uniformly translates אָסָ as ζῷον (1:24, 25, 28, 30; 2:19, 20) (Chia 2021, 120). Consequently, the validity of Aguila's translation choices comes into question. Secondly, the term  $\pi\nu\rho\rho$ oí, or "the fiery red ones," should logically derive from אַדְמִים (the Syriac Peshitta reflects this same translation). Aguila's fidelity to the source language raises the possibility that he may have utilized a different Hebrew text than the Masoretic Text.

To address Aquila's rendering of  $\pi\nu\rho\rho$ oí in Zech 6:7, this study will analyze all his translations found within Zech 6. Field (1875, 1021–22) documents seven Greek translations attributed to Aquila in Origen's Hexapla, albeit these translations are incomplete. The following table provides a summary of Aquila's Greek translations alongside the corresponding Hebrew text.

Aquila's Greek Translations in Zech 6		
Verse	Hebrew Text	Greek Translations of Aquila
3	אמצים	καρτεροί
4	אדני	κύριε ※ μου 🗸
7	אמצים	πυρροί
10	מחלדי ומאת טוביה ומאת ידעיה	παρὰ Ὁλδὰ καὶ παρὰ Τωβία καὶ παρὰ Ἰδέα
12	צמח	άνεφυή
13	הוד	ἐπίδοξότητα
14	לחלם ולטוביה ולידעיה	τῷ Ἑλέμ καὶ τῷ Τωβίᾳ καὶ τῷ Ἰδέᾳ

The preceding table indicates that Aquila's translation is characterized by a literal approach. The passages in Zech 6:3, 12, and 13 exemplify the literal nature of Aquila's work. Notably, Zech 6:3 illustrates that Aquila retains the first-person singular suffix, demonstrating his commitment to fidelity to the original language. Conversely, Zech 6:10 and 6:14 provide insight into the translation challenges presented in Zech 6:7. The Masoretic Text identifies three individuals in both Zech 6:10 and 6:14: ילדעיה (Heldai), ידעיה (Jobijah), and ידעיה (Jedaiah). While Zech 6:14 reiterates the latter two names, it introduces a different first name, הלדי (Heldai) found in verse 10. This raises the question of how the Syriac Peshitta and Aquila address this discrepancy within the Masoretic Text.

This study reveals that Aquila aligns with the Syriac Peshitta in translating the red horses in Zech 6:7. Chia (2018, 19–25) posits that the impetus for the translation of red horses in Zech 6:7 by the Syriac Peshitta stems from a desire for consistency with the color scheme of the horses presented in Zech 6:2. This rationale is similarly evident in the way the Syriac Peshitta reconciles the differing names between Zech 6:10 and Zech 6:14 in the Masoretic Text. The Syriac Peshitta translates הלבי (Heldai) in the Hebrew text as (Heldai) (6:10) and translates הלבי (Heldai) (6:14) as well, although there are two different names in Hebrew. Aquila's Greek translation, on the other hand, is different than the Syriac Peshitta. Aquila translates הלבי (Heldai) and הלבי (Heldai) as 'Ολδά (Heldai) and Έλέμ (Helem) respectively. The translation provided indicates that Aquila remains unaffected

by the discrepancies in the name found in Zech 6:10 and 6:14. His fidelity to the source language is evident. This analysis suggests that Aquila maintains consistency in his translation relative to the source language, implying that he may possess a Hebrew text that differs from the Masoretic Text for Zech 6:7. Barrera posits that Aquila utilized a Hebrew text that predates the Masoretic Text, referred to as the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text (Barrera 1998, 313). In contrast, Swete contends that Aquila has access to the official Hebrew text in its most primitive form (Swete 2015, 288). Consequently, it is plausible that this proto-Masoretic Hebrew text offers a distinct witness compared to the Masoretic Text for Zech 6:7.

#### 4.2. Symmachus' Translation of אמצים

Jobes and Silva (2000, 29) characterize Symmachus as a meticulous translator who exhibits a notably literal approach while remaining attuned to Greek idiomatic expressions. Several distinctive features define Symmachus' translation style. Unlike Aquila, he does not consistently translate Hebrew terms with their Greek counterparts; instead, he demonstrates a keen awareness of the nuances of the target language or dialect (Salvesen 1991, 192; Swete 2015, 32). Furthermore, Symmachus adeptly conveys Hebrew concepts using natural Greek expressions, ensuring clarity in his translations (Field, Norton, Hardin, and Origen 2005, 61–71; Barrera 1998, 313; Natalio 2000, 130). Consequently, Jobes and Silva (2000, 41) conclude that the hallmark of Symmachus' translation is its diversity and clarity.

The Hexapla does not record Symmachus' Greek translation of אמצים in Zech 6:3 (Field 1875, 1021). Symmachus' Greek translation of אמצים in Zech 6:3. Symmachus translates it as συνεσφιγμένοι (from its lexical form: σύσφιγκτοι) which means having condensed (tight-bound together) (LSJ). This translation, nevertheless, is problematic because there is no correspondence with the Hebrew word אמצים. Field records another Symmachus translation in Syriac. Symmachus has אמצים and the meaning in adjective is tight, constant, or hard (strong bodied). Symmachus' translation in Syriac definitely helps the reader to understand the translation of συνεσφιγμένοι (σύσφιγκτοι).

Symmachus interprets אמצים not as a color of the horses, as Aquila does, nor as a characteristic, as Theodotion suggests. Instead, he perceives אמצים as a descriptor of the horses' physical state, indicating that they are closely bound together, which gives the impression of greater strength. This interpretation aligns with a notable aspect of Symmachus' translation style: its emphasis on variety. Rather than adhering to a literal translation, Symmachus opts for an elegant rendering of אמצים, equating strong horses with those that are tightly bound. While this approach highlights the element of variety, it also reflects Symmachus' comprehension and interpretation of אמצים, suggesting that he possesses a Hebrew text that corresponds with the reading found in the Masoretic Text.

#### 4.3. Theodotion's Translation of אמצים

Dines asserts that a primary characteristic of Theodotion's translation is its fidelity to the Hebrew text, while simultaneously adhering to the conventions of the Greek language (Dines 2004, 84–85). In essence, Theodotion approached the translation of the Hebrew text with a perspective that remained attentive to the Septuagint.

The translation of אמצים by Theodotion in Zech 6:3, similar to that of Symmachus, is absent (Field 1875, 1021). However, Theodotion does provide a translation of אמצים in Zech 6:7, which is present in both Greek and Syriac: ἰσχυροί (the strong ones) and (the powerful ones) respectively. The translations in question convey the meanings of strength or power. Thedotion's version indicates a preference for the Hebrew text over the Septuagint (LXX). In contrast, the LXX uniformly employs the term ψαροί in Zech 6:3 and 6:7. Similarly to Symmachus, Thedotion's translation suggests that he possesses a Hebrew text that aligns with the readings found in the Masoretic Text

### 5. Discussion: Evaluation of the BHS and BHQ Apparatus

BHS includes a commentary on Zech 6:3, indicating that there are omitted readings or glosses, and it suggests a comparison with the Syriac versio (dl var lect aut glo cf  $\mathfrak{S}$ ). BHS's commentary

lacks clarity for several reasons. Firstly, it fails to specify which manuscripts were affected by the ambiguous term in question. Secondly, *BHS* does not offer the various interpretations or glosses for the benefit of the readers. Consequently, readers are left without essential information concerning the manuscripts and their differing readings. This ambiguity regarding the manuscript list is similarly evident in *BHS*'s apparatus notes on Zech 6:7. However, in this instance, the apparatus notes are more explicit than those for Zech 6:3, as they document the different readings: such as מַּלִיאָנְרִץ הַּמְּצְרֵבְּ or הַּקְּרָם or הַּמִּרָם. In summary, extracting significant information from the apparatus notes of *BHS*, particularly in relation to Origen's Hexapla reading, proves to be a challenging task.

BHO includes annotations and commentary regarding the critical apparatus. In his analysis of Zech 6:3, Gelston observes that both Aguila and the Latin Vulgate interpret אמצים as "strong," deriving this translation from the hataf patah associated with the initial vowel, while 40XIIe has a lacuna אמיצן, and there is no vowel. BHO includes annotations and commentary regarding the critical apparatus. For LXX and the Aramaic Targum (cf. Cathcart and Gordon 1990), Gelston records that they have the translations: ψαροί or dapple-grey (Gelston 2010, 126). In Zech 6:7, Gelston posits that the interpretation of אַמָצִים significantly impacts the translations by Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Latin Vulgate. The Septuagint (LXX) and the Aramaic Targum uniformly adhere to the translation and characterization of the horses as presented in Zech 6:3. Conversely, Aquila and the Syriac Peshitta render the term as πυρροί or red in Zech 6:7 (Gelston 2010, 127). In other words, they have a different translation in Zech 6:7 than in Zech 6:3. Following the presentation of the apparatus notes, Gelston proceeds to provide his analysis of these materials. He contends that both the LXX and the Aramaic Targum erroneously interpret אמצים through a color-based translation. In contrast, the Syriac Peshitta has either intentionally or unintentionally excluded this term. Gelston suggests that this exclusion may stem from the translator's confusion regarding the intricate depiction of the horses in Zech 6 (Gelston 2010, 139).

The initial assessment of Gelston's interpretation in *BHQ* reveals a significant oversight in his consideration of various Hebrew lexicons (including HALOT 2000, 651; Holladay 1972, 21; TWOT 1974, 209–10; Clines 1994, 1:32). These four sources categorize אמצים as skewbald, attributing this classification to the identification of the first vowel in אמצים as pataḥ rather than ḥaṭaf pataḥ. In contrast, Gelston relies solely on the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon (1996, 55), which recognizes ḥaṭaf pataḥ as the initial vowel under the letter aleph. Consequently, Gelston's assertion that both the LXX and the Aramaic Targum erroneously interpret אמצים in terms of color may lack sufficient justification, given that four out of five Hebrew lexicons provide a color-related definition for as skewbald.

The second assessment of Gelston's work on the BHQ indicates that he does not adopt Aquila's translation style in his interpretation of Zech 6:7. In his commentary regarding the critical apparatus for this verse, Gelston notes that both Aguila's rendering and the Syriac Peshitta replace אַנמים in the Masoretic Text with אַנמים. He suggests that this alteration likely arises from a discomfort in interpreting the Masoretic Text. Consequently, this challenge prompts Aquila and the Syriac Peshitta to select the red translation as the fourth color referenced in Zech 6:2–3, substituting it for אמצים (Gelston 2010, 139). Notably, the LXX and the Aramaic Targum render אמצים in a manner consistent with Zech 6:3 (Gelston 2010, 139). However, this perspective fails to account for Aquila's established translation practices as previously outlined. This study illustrates that Aquila remains unaffected by the difficulties associated with understanding passages in Zech 6, such as verses 6:10 and 6:14. His fidelity to the source language is evident, with a clear emphasis on maintaining consistency in his translation of the text at hand. Therefore, Gelston's conclusions regarding Aquila's translation approach do not align with the actual translation methodology employed by Aquila.

#### 6. Conclusion

This article presents a novel investigation into the translations of אמצים found in Zech 6:3 and 6:7, as documented in Origen's Hexapla, with a particular focus on the versions offered by Aguila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. The result is that Aguila's translations in Zech 6:3 and 6:7 are literal translations. This research indicates that Aquila's rendering of אמצים in Zech 6:3 is a direct and literal translation. In contrast, Aquila offers a markedly different interpretation in Zech 6:7. Instead of having καρτεροί (the translation of אמצים), Aguila has πυρροί or the fiery red ones. This "red" translation is also present in the Syriac version: ممحمه. A thorough examination of Aquila's translation of Zech 6 suggests that Aquila likely possessed a distinct Hebrew text compared to the Masoretic Text. This alternative Hebrew text includes the reading אָדמים. Symmachus and Theodotion, conversely, present an identical Hebrew text that aligns with the Masoretic Text. Theodotion offers a direct translation of אמצים as ἰσγυροί and השלאט. whereas Symmachus provides a more refined interpretation of אמצים, rendering it as συνεσφιγμένοι (σύσφιγκτοι) and < سنب

In the realm of theological interpretation, Aquila's translation exemplifies a dedication to a literal approach, exhibiting scant concern for the inconsistencies in color descriptions present in Zech 6:3 to 6:7. His primary emphasis lies on his own rendition, with little effort directed towards correcting or improving the original text. Conversely, Theodotion seems to align closely with the Masoretic Text, suggesting that the translations of the powerful horses are intended to inspire and encourage the people of God during difficult periods. In a similar vein, Symmachus conveys a comparable theological purpose but engages with the text through a more sophisticated and polished enhancement.

### Analiza אמצים ['mṣîm] w Heksapli

**Abstrakt:** Termin אמצים występujący w Za 6,3 i 6,7 był interpretowany na różne sposoby przez starożytnych tłumaczy – LXX, Peszittę, Targum, Wulgatę i tekst masorecki. Niejednoznaczność otaczająca אמצים jest dodatkowo podkreślona w Heksapli Orygenesa. Co ważne, nie ma zgody co do tłumaczenia אמצים w Za 6,7. Tłumaczenie Akwili jest szczególnie znaczace, ponieważ oferuje unikalna interpretacje אמצים w Za 6,3, która

różni się od jego interpretacji w Za 6,7. Artykuł dowodzi, że wersja Za 6,7 autorstwa Akwili nie odpowiada hebrajskiemu tekstowi, który stanowi podstawę tekstu masoreckiego, podczas gdy zarówno Symmachus, jak i Teodocjon są zgodni z hebrajską interpretacją tekstu masoreckiego. W celu poparcia tego twierdzenia została wykorzystana metoda krytyki tekstu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Księga Zachariasza, אמצים, tłumaczenie Akwili, tłumaczenie Symmacha, tłumaczenie Teodocjona

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