The double conversion of *Ben-Hur*

A case of manipulative translation

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Ever since the 18th century revival of Hebrew literature, translation has been considered an efficient tool for ideological manipulation. Christianity has been a traditional candidate for such manipulation. Fear and hatred of the "younger" religion may have accounted for the subversive treatment of Christian elements in Hebrew texts. Strategies varied, depending on period and norm, mostly involving omission of undesirable material, but often converting the text into a more acceptable ideological type. *Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ* (1880) by Lew Wallace is one of the novels most translated and most tampered with, and due to its predominantly Christian character, it can serve as an illuminating case study both for the subversion of Christian elements and for the more "creative" conversion into the "Few against Many" or "Jewish bravura against the Roman Empire" model.

Keywords: ideological manipulation; subversion of translated texts; self-censorship; Christianity & Judaism; Jesus in Jewish & Hebrew culture; fear of the "Other"; history rewritten; conversion and assimilation in translated literature; translation norms; shifting of norms; adaptation for children

Foreword

This article will attempt to throw some light on one of the most persistent and complex problems in the history of Hebrew literary translation, that of the ambivalent attitude towards Christianity. It is part of a more comprehensive study, which includes a larger corpus of texts, that I have undertaken in recent years within the framework of research into the ideological manipulation of translations and the subversion of texts. The discussion will be divided into two parts. The first will be in the nature of an overview, describing the historical and

cultural issue from several points of view, synchronically and diachronically, in various strata of the literary system; the second will concentrate on the specific test case of Ben-Hur by Lew Wallace (1880).

Part I

The Phobia: An overview

When, in the late 18th century, Hebrew literature began its process of revival, translation was one of its main vehicles, as is often the case with "young" literatures. In fact, for more than 150 years translation supplied not only texts but models, a repertoire of themes and heroes, literary and poetic devices - meanwhile operating as a language laboratory as well, helping to invent, exercise, enhance or renew words, phrases, collocations, speech forms, linguistic stratification and much more (Shoham 1996, Werses 1990).

For reasons that have to do with the development of the Hebrew language and culture, the norms that emerged in this historical re-birth, functioning largely as "formative years", have left their mark on generations to come. There were, of course, variations and fluctuations, periods when domestic norms were applied more rigidly, and others when translation had a predominantly innovative role to play. Yet some norms persisted over the years, and still do, though in modified forms, in certain cultural sub-systems (like literature for children and youth) and in certain genres. Most persistent were stylistic norms, like those that deem "high", "stylized" language more "proper" for literature; generic norms, that appraise certain genres as "higher" than others; and didactic norms, responsible for direct or indirect manipulation of the contents of translated texts. It is this last category that is most relevant to the discussion at hand.

Didactic manipulation of texts can be exercised for ideological reasons, and can take various forms. It can take the form of conversion of small-scale units (words or phrases), or the form of small-scale omissions. It can also take the form of large-scale omissions, and even influence the preliminary decision of whether or not to translate "problematic" texts in the first place.

Whether marked by large- or small-scale omissions, the translations do not announce or disclose having omitted any material. Moreover, even in the few cases where the text does not boast of being "complete and unabridged" but just "fuller" than previous translations, no allusion is ever made to the *nature* of the material omitted. Allusions to such ideological manipulations can be found, if at all, in letters or memoirs referring to the texts. The readers, therefore, especially young readers, are not aware of the manipulation and cannot develop methods of "subversive reading" (see Ben-Ari 2000, and discussion further on).

Due to the (defensive-aggressive) long-lasting mobilization of Hebrew literature, translation succumbed to various forms of manipulative ideological "censorship" of that kind. Particularly persistent in translated literature into Hebrew is the norm concerning the manipulation of non-Jewish material, mainly Christian material, so common in the literature of the Western world. For

generations, the existence of Christian elements in literary texts was regarded as problematic, as was co-existence with the Christian world, of course, and called for some kind of "approach" or "treatment", censoring the very translation of a text or interfering in various ways and degrees in the straightforwardness of operational stages of the translation.

The reasons are so manifold it would be presumptuous to attempt to analyze them within the framework of translation norms, unless the larger context of the Judaism-Christianity dichotomy is taken into account. More than in any other discussion of norms, the intertwined elements at work here exemplify the complexity of the issues involved in cultural interference and cultural research. In fact it seems that, in this case, the discussion of translation norms leads to questions pertaining to deeply rooted "national" phobias: fear of the Other and, more specifically, fear of Christianity.

At the risk of over-simplifying, I will try to briefly describe some of the complex historical aspects of these "fears".

Assimilation: Forced and voluntary

Of all factors at play, relatively easy to explain is the historical Jewish fear of assimilation.

Forceful conversion has been a continuous and very concrete threat since the earliest stages of Jewish history. Two well-known examples, the period of the Roman rule over Judea during the 1 st to 4th centuries and the Christian rule in Spain of the 12th to 15th centuries led to national catastrophes involving exile and a death toll, which has never been obliterated from Jewish collective memory. However, Jewish history is permeated with "lesser" episodes that led to a constant dwindling in numbers and resources. Faced with the constant threat of forceful conversion and in the absence of any other solution, martyrdom in the context of "kidush ha-shem" [sanctifying the Lord's name]'.was glorified. Until relatively recently, the collective suicide in Massada (A. D. 73), where the besieged Zealots and their families killed themselves rather than capitulate to the Romans, remained an act of heroism in national history. So did other, "minor", incidents of collective martyrdom like the suicide in the Mainz ghetto (1146), or the mass suicide of the Jews of York (1190). (For an illuminating discussion of the purpose and impact of "kidush, ha-shem" events see Yuval 2000:162-163, 175-218.)

Voluntary assimilation presented an even greater danger. Ever since the Hellenistic waves of assimilation in Judea starting with the Greek occupations in the 4th century BC and up to its capitulation to the Roman empire, Judaism

seemed obsessed with the fear of being rejected for the more "appealing", "aesthetic" Hellenistic world (for a thorough analysis see Y. Shavit 1997). However, if aesthetic attractions could be offset with arguments of shallowness and frivolity, Christianity could not be fought off so easily, for it had the aesthetic aura without frivolous undertones, and with all the appeal of a "younger", more "vital" religion. True, it was also a proselytizing religion, which Judaism never pretended nor wanted to be. On the contrary, Judaism was known to heap difficulties on those who wanted to assume the Jewish faith. But the fundamental danger lay much deeper than in the zeal and forcefulness of the Christian missionary vocation. Metaphorically functioning as the younger brother, Christianity seemed to be reaping all the advantages traditionally granted to this mythological figure. 2

For Jewish historiographic and literary writing the subject had always seemed problematic. From the outset, i.e. from the first century AD, Jewish writing used every possible strategy to tackle Christ and Christianity, sometimes separating between Jesus, the person, and Christianity, and endeavoring to present Jesus as a "good Jew". In other cases, they disclaim him, denying his existence or giving him derisive nicknames. Talmudic literature, which still considered him (and some of the Apostles) a Jew, referred to him as "that man", so as to avoid mentioning his name. However, ever since the Roman Empire accepted Christianity in the 4th century, and more so after the acceptance of the 4th century Marcan version of the part the Jews played in the Crucifixion, which resulted in persecution of the Jews by the Christian world, the relations between the two religions became more and more complex.' In the process, Jesus earned derisive nicknames like the initials "Y.SH.U - Yimach SHemo Ve zichro" [may his name and memory be erased] (Shin'an 1999:12, 42, 261). Ideological strategies against Christianity grew more militant and
more complex, and it was not until the 19th century and emancipation that some change could take place.

For generations, the ever-present danger of assimilation had to be fought off with various tactics: Self-imposed seclusion, suspicion towards innovations, rejection of the surrounding society, satanification of the "Other". But more than anything else, the battle was conducted against the converts, the Jews who had "betrayed" the old tradition in favor of the new one, and it was these Jews who were subjected to the fiercest attacks. Since literature had always been recognized as a useful tool, this tactic was soon applied in literature as well. Until the 19th century, when the German Jewish group of scholars known as "Wissenschaft des Judenthums" [The Science of Judaism] started a more

systematic historical research, assimilation, and converts, were treated by tactics of evasion and denial. The converts themselves were banned from society as outcasts and so was their historiographic work or, in the more popular historical novels, their literary counterparts. Josephus Flavius, formerly Yosef Ben Matityahu (34-95), had been shunned, then banned as a traitor. His Latin historical reports of the rebellion against the Romans (The Jewish War and Jewish Antiquities) had been banned by those scholars who dealt with Jewish history for many generations, and in spite of its more or less legitimate place in world history, hundreds of years passed before it could be accepted by early Jewish historiography as anything but the biased, fraudulent testimony of a traitor, let alone translated into Hebrew. The first to accept his testimony as a possible source for valid historical records was Markus Jost, the founding father of modern Jewish historiography, and indeed his history of the Israelites (Geschichte der Israeliten, 1824-1828) stirred much criticism and bitter debate (see Michael 1993:188-278).

Would-be Messiahs, whose downfall led to mass conversions, were regarded as public enemies. So was Reubeni, in the 16th century, so were Shabbatai Zevi, and his follower, Jakob Frank in the 17th century: they were criticized, dammned and shunned, as were their representations, if any, in historical reports. Fiction did not dare touch them until as late as the mid 19th century, when Hermann Reckendorf, following in the footsteps of Jost, told their story in his saga Geheimnisse der Juden (1856). Even then it was done with ambiguous feelings and sometimes as an involuntary reaction to German historical novels about them (see Werses 1988:191-245; Ben-Ari 1997: 162-186). Those who did choose to deal with the "forbidden" subjects met with bitter criticism and stirred up controversies often leading to chasms that tore apart whole congregations.

Fiction has subtle ways of manipulation: one of them is the organization and presentation of characters in paradigms of "good" and "evil", "hero" and "villain". Traditionally, converts have always occupied the bottom part of the scale. In fact they were placed much lower than the "enemy", the "rival" or the "antagonist". Such is the case in Ludwig Philippsohn's *Sepphoris and Rom* (1866), for instance, where the Jewish rebel, Patrika, and the Roman Governor, Ursikinus, play the respective (and respectable) roles of protagonist and antagonist, while, at the bottom of the hierarchy lurks the morally evil and physically repugnant figure of Joseph the Convert (for a more thorough discussion see Ben-Ari 1997:137). Symbolically enough it is he, not the Roman emperor, who is responsible for the final destruction of the Temple, after Justinian grants permission to rebuild it.

The 19th century with its promise of emancipation and equal rights in central Europe brought on wave upon wave of calculated conversion. It is not surprising, therefore, that 19th century authors who had converted to Christianity, even for reasons of "billet d'entrée" into society were looked upon as a "menace", especially the more successful ones, like Heinrich Heine and Berthold Auerbach. Unlike the Christian-born Lessing, whose *Nathan der Weise* made him a favorite of Jewish culture (Shoham 1981, 1996:141-175), Heine was deliberately ignored in his time and for more than half a century after his death in 1856. His place in the realm of Jewish genius was granted grudgingly, like Spinoza's, apparently only after it had been established in Russian culture and via the mediation of the latter (Toury 1995:141-142). A national poet of the caliber of Bialik was required in order to rehabilitate Heine in the early 20th century, yet the rehabilitation was in terms of accepting the "prodigal son" back "home". In a ceremonious appeal Bialik advocated exercisng the "mitzvat pidyon shevuyim" [literally: ransom money for prisoners] and translating into Hebrew the poems of "this Jew, whose torments had long atoned for his sins, and whose death had made peace between him and the God of Israel" (Bialik 1953 [1913]:199). It took almost another century of bitter debate, upheld mainly by Heine's faithful Hebrew translator Shlomo Tani, until in 1993(!) a street was named after Heine on the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

When Berthold Auerbach's novel *Barfüssele* was translated into Hebrew in Frankfurt in 1922, about 56 years after its publication in German, he was introduced to the reader by the translator Y. Shaf as "one of the prisoners of the Diaspora" [echad mi-shvi ha-gola] and his biography glorified his Jewish roots. Only very careful scrutiny, as well as acquaintance with the literary code, could decipher any hint as to his possible conversion. The biography proudly relates his long and respectable line of ancestors, leading back to Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (eight lines devoted to the history of this medieval Rabbi). With much flourish and happy detail it describes his Jewish childhood and his love of the Jewish world and tradition that were "forever engraved in his tender heart". Much is related about his rabbinical education and his literary career. By contrast, the part that relates his career as a German writer is minor, and there is no direct allusion to his theological studies at the universities of Tübingen and Heidelberg or to any formal estrangement from Jewish tradition. The last paragraph vaguely refers to a terrible calamity that befell him: "he drank from the poison chalice that the enemies of Israelites poured to German Jews ... and on his deathbed (he died in July *1882),* as hatred of Jews grew stronger and stronger and its waves engulfed the Jews of Ashkenaz [Germany], Auerbach cried in

submission and broken heart `in vain have I lived and labored'" (Auerbach *1922:* v-vii). This normative vagueness is typical of the attitude to the problem in children's literature; a more explicit `defense' of Auerbach's faithfulness to Judaism is to be found in Meyer and Brenner's *1996 German Jewish history in Modern Times. "As* far as we know, Auerbach never even considered baptism. He remained an unhesitatingly identifying Jew, who cherished ongoing relations with German-Jewry's religious and political leadership, with Geiger and with Riesser" *(219).* His estrangement "from the theology texts and from the observance of Jewish law" is accounted for by his explanation that he was a "Jew only on account of history and birth", and that he "trusted the Germans and was an ardent German patriot" *(219-220).* Yet Auerbach never lived to see his books translated into Hebrew, and the translations, when eventually made, were published fifty years and more after their original publication. Auerbach's *1837* historical novel *Spinoza* was translated only once, and appeared *61* years after its original publication in *1898,* and once more in *1917* (Sheffi *1998:93).* It never enjoyed any success in Hebrew culture, probably because of ambivalent feelings towards writer and subject alike.

The mobilization of literature, be it in its "higher" or in its more popular forms, to ideological causes of all kinds has always been part of Jewish tradition, where literature, and literariness, have been highly regarded. This has, of course, intensified along with the spread of education to new reading publics, such as the lower classes, on the one hand, or women and children on the other. The Enlightenment for its part enhanced the book's accessibility thanks to new forms of transportation, inexpensive publication, door-to-door book vendors, periodicals, public libraries, translations. The process of emancipation and the gradual dissolution of the Ghetto walls involved fierce struggles around ideological questions where age-old values like tradition, nationality, religion and even identity had to be re-considered and perhaps re-shaped and re-formed (Katz 1973, Volkov 1992, Feiner 1995, Ben-Ari 1997). From its inception, the Jewish Enlightenment movement mobilized literature as an ideological tool, and literature, in these early stages, relied heavily on translation. Translation into Hebrew, both of European literature and of the writings of the relatively small group of Jewish cultural "agents", functioned as a tool for the dissemination of ideology, and was recognized as such from the start of the Revival. Within the context of the gulf between Orthodoxy and Reform, with, in the background, the fast-growing numbers of assimilated Jews and the desire of German Jews to become nationalized in their new homeland, the German Jewish second and third generations of Enlightenment began to tackle some of the "dangerous", "forbidden" themes. The historical novels then written, especially by writers from the Reform movement like Hermann Reckendorf, Eugene Rispart (alias

Isaac Asher Francolm), Phoebus Philippson and Ludwig Philippson, tried, among other things, to close the gap between Jews and Christians and describe the advantages of co-existence. The boldest, but also most controversial, was Hermann Reckendorf's *Geheimnisse der juden* already mentioned above, a popular history of the Jews following the scions of the House of David. This voluminous five-band saga started with the fall of the 2nd Temple and ended with Moses Mendlessohn and the promise of the Enlightenment. The book was divided into 22 "Sabbath readings" and included episodes never dealt with before, like the lives of the notorious converts: Flavius, Spinoza and Uriel d'Acosta, Shabbatai Zevi and Jakob Frank. Most daring of all, one of the 22 episodes was consecrated to Jesus Christ.

These historical novels met with enormous enthusiasm in Eastern Europe, and were fervently translated into both Hebrew and Yiddish. However, against the background of evergrowing oppression and a surge of devastating pogroms, the translations in Russia and Poland were undertaken with a completely different ideology, and in fact played an important part in the formation of pre-Zionist feelings in Eastern Europe. The themes of Christianity and conversion were prohibited once again. Reckendorf's popular saga of the House of David, translated (`adapted' by today's norm) by Avraham Friedberg in Warsaw in 1893-1897, presented a different periodization and a selection of the significant periods or leading figures in Jewish history. Chapters like the one consecrated to Jesus were omitted altogether because "they reeked of Missionarism" (Friedberg's words in his letter to Hebrew novelist Avraham Mapu, see further discussion in Ben-Ari 1997:194). Chapters about Shabbatai Zevi and Jakob Frank were omitted in the same spirit from Avraham Kaplan's somewhat more adequate earlier attempt at partial translation of Reckendorf's novel. Kaplan, also a friend and follower of Mapu, explains that he had omitted them "because in these two Sabbaths the Ashkenazi [German] author followed a road adhering neither to our respect nor to our faith" (Kaplan's introduction to Reckendorf 1863). The German-Jewish attempt to attenuate the horrors of persecution and pogroms, torture and the Inquisition, edicts, defamation and blood libels initiated by Christians met with the opposing tendency in Eastern Europe to describe them as harshly and as realistically as possible, for this was closer to the reality and goals of the Revival. The Diaspora, to them, was not a substitute for the ancient land of Zion, as it became for the emancipated German Jew, but a punishment for the sins of generations past.

Christian elements were again censured. Very famous novels were tampered with. George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) was cut in half by the 1893 translation (undertaken by David Frishmann, himself a well-known author and Zionist leader) omitting the whole story of Deronda's Christian lady friend, Gwendolen. The translator justified his decision saying that no Jew could be interested in the fate of this Christian lady. The second half of the novel was translated and acclaimed with gusto. There Deronda, an English nobleman whose Jewish origin was hidden from him, discovers his true faith (in the love of Mirah and the tutorship of her Messianic brother Mordecai) and returns to his people, to

lead them back to Zion, another prodigal son saved from "worse than death". So great was the force of the new ideology that it actually drove people to leave family and friends behind and emigrate to settle in Eretz Israel.

The pioneering years prior to the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel were again characterized by a militant rejection of Christian elements. To the original fear of assimilation one should perhaps add a feeling of insecurity not only in terms of the definition of national political boundaries, but also in terms of creating a firm national identity. This insecurity was reflected in a massive mobilization of literature, original and translated, to ideological purposes. Fierce debate developed when some Hebrew men of letters were drawn to the forbidden Christian world and wrote about it in a conciliatory way. To cite but two famous examples: Joseph Klausner, the renowned historian who studied the beginnings of Christianity and saw Jesus as a Jew and a moralist was fiercely attacked for his liberal attitude (Shin'an 1999:219*).* Joseph Chaim Brenner, the pioneer journalist and writer, started a scandal verging on culture war when he published, in November *1910,* an article about conversion to Christianity in his column in *Ha-po'el ha-tsa'ir* (see Govrin 1985 about the "Brenner affair"). His article, expressing the view that conversion was no threat to the Jewish people and advocating a search for a new way of life won him the titles of "missionary" and "instigator". Moreover, the "Choveve Zion" Committee in Odessa stopped the financial backing of the journal unless its editors and contents were re-placed. Fifty leading Jewish personalities took part in the public debate, which stormed in about twenty journals throughout the Jewish world. It seems that more than the ambivalent feeling toward Christianity (Brenner referred to it as "the younger daughter"), what was at stake was the formation of a new national identity. And so long as the character of "the New Hebrew person" had not been clearly defined and secured (see B. Even-Zohar 1988), fear of the menacing "Other" prevailed.

Part II

The double "conversion" of *Ben-Hur*

In Israel, the norm of manipulating Christian material persisted long after the establishment of the State and the development of modern Hebrew literature, in fact long after the immediate "danger" of assimilation had subsided. There are or conversion. They can be classified according to the "amount" of deviation from the original, that is, by a purely quantitative assessment of changes in the text. Yet,

from the point of view of translation within culture research, this is far less interesting than analyzing the shift in model introduced by these manipulations of the original.

The present part of the article will concentrate on two manipulative tactics: elimination of "undesirable" Christian elements and conversion of the translated text to a more "desirable" model. The "double" conversion will thus be that of Ben-Hur (the person) back to the Jewish faith and that of the novel to a "Jews against Romans" model. Part of this double conversion has to do with the transformation of the text into a book for youth, where didactic norms were, and still are, much more rigid than in literature for adults, and where the "danger", so to speak, posed by Christianity against the tender child seemed more countless cases of such manipulation, expressed in varying degrees of omission imminent.

Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ

The case of *Ben-Hur* by Lew Wallace is a useful test case, mainly because the novel won its fame as a Christian book General Wallace, a lawyer, statesman and soldier, Civil War hero, admits to having undergone a transformation while writing the novel, becoming, as the work progressed, more deeply religious (see Preface to Wallace 1898: v-ix). He first wrote the story of the birth of Christ, *The first Christ*mas, and later decided to devote a whole novel to the life of Christ, though with a different protagonist Following the immense success of the novel, he wrote two less known books about Judaism and Christianity: *The boyhood of Christ* (1888) and *The prince of India* (1893), the first a moralistic tale for children, the second a two-volume stereotypical story of the satanical Wandering Jew.

Ben-Hur announces its Christian character quite clearly, by means of subtitle and motto: *Ben-Hur, A tale of the Christ. Two* quotations serve as motto. One is by Jean Paul E. Richter,[4] from his idyllic 1795 novel *Hesperus*

But the repetition of the old story is just the fairest charm of domestic discourse. If we can often repeat to ourselves sweet thoughts without ennui, why shall not another be suffered to awaken them within us still oftener.

This is followed by two excerpts from Milton's *Christ's nativity. The Hymn:*

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wisards haste with odours sweet
****
But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began;

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The winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the water kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean-
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
     While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

Why Ben-Hur

The following reasons make *Ben-Hur* and its many Hebrew translations an invaluable corpus for research into ideological manipulation:

a.   The predominantly Christian ideology of the original. *Ben-Hur* joins quite a number of 19th- and 20th-century historical novels that glorify the Christian faith in its beginnings, in its pure form, so to speak.[5] American novels permeated with fervent Evangelical sentiment abounded long before *Ben-Hur,* one of the more renowned being Joseph Holt Ingraham's biblical trilogy, centering on Moses *(The pillar of fire*, 1859), David *(The throne of David* 1860) and Jesus *(The prince of the House of Davi*d, 1855). It seems that the specific religious experience of the American people during the 19th century brought forth hundreds of novels dealing with the Jew of Biblical and early Christian times (Harap 1974:10). The belief in the return of the Jews to Palestine and the ensuing Second Coming (ibid.: 137), together with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the strengthening of Western interests in Palestine produced wave after wave of pilgrims and travelers, some of them quite famous, as well as numerous travel books and guidebooks. This was, of course, part of a universal trend, and the rejuvenated myths of Christ and the Apostles and the heroism of the first Christian martyrs was a central theme in several European best-selling novels such as *Quo vadis* (1896) by Henryk Sienkiewicz, Nobel Prize winner (1905), defined in catalogues as a narrative about the primitive and early church. The growing European and American interest in early Christianity was repeated in the Hebrew literary world. Among the poets and authors attracted to the theme which had been forbidden in the past were Aaron Avraham Kabak (*Ba mish'ol ha zar* [On the narrow path], 1937), Zalman Shneur (*Divre Don Henrikis* [The Story of Don Henrikis], 1924), Chaim Hazaz (*Elu hem* [Those are], part of a novel, printed in the daily Davar, 1947-1948) or later Pinhas Sade (Ha *hayim ke mashal* [Life as a metaphor], 1958) and Benjamin Galai (*Sipur ha ach ha nidach* [The story of the lost brother], 1983). The case of Hazaz is perhaps the most revealing for this study, since he wrote in the tradition of the saga, covering large periods of Jewish history, and focused, like Reckendorf, on unknown territory (Yemen) and "subversive" personalities like Jesus and Shabbatai Zevi.

b. The many translations and adaptations of *Ben-Hur* over the years, eight in all, including a translation that was done in 1990 and hasn't been published yet,' reflect the success of the Hebrew versions in the target public; still, it is an unusual case. Neither the successful reception nor the shift in linguistic norms can, in themselves, explain such an abundance or variety of

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translations, which may signify that other norms, didactic or ideological, have been at play. Moreover, the translations have "related" to one another, maintaining a certain dialogue that throws light on their change of attitude and allows us to follow the behavior of the norm over the years, both in adult and children's literature.

     c.   The span of time between the first translation and the last is a valuable "asset" in terms of semiotic research, for each translation was done in different socio-cultural circumstances (Toury 1980:140-141).

Almost three quarters of a century elapsed between the first and the last translations of *Ben-Hur,* during which Hebrew culture underwent several transitions. The relatively long and culturally significant span of time between the 1924 translation and its followers in 1959-1960 is of great importance. Whereas the period before the establishment of the State may be regarded as one of transition, of regeneration along with the perpetuation of old phobias and previous norms, the Fifties and Sixties no longer seem to have necessitated a "mobilization" of literature. And yet, the later translations still treat Christianity with suspicion and derision, and apply various types of ideological censorship.

The relatively short but culturally significant span of time between the "modern" translations, 1959-1979, is no less edifying. These twenty years in the cultural history of Israel represent a period of growing "normalization", when adult literature gradually ceased to be institutionally and ideologically mobilized. Translations began to reflect this normalization, as is illustrated by the preliminary norms determining the choice of literary texts to translate. The attitude towards German literature, for example, unofficially rejected during and after World War II, became somewhat more lenient, though categories like Exile literature or German-Jewish literature were still preferred (see Toury 1980:142-151; Ben-Ari 1992). However, this updating of norms was delayed in children's literature, as is usually the case in this sub-system.

The 1990 "blue print" translation is most significant as an illustration of the persistence of the norm until the present, both because of yet another "solution" it supplied to the problem of representing Christian ideology and especially because it has not actually been published, in spite of this adaptation. Its category of "unpublished" book may reflect upon the present state of the norm. Chana Livnat, the translator, had prepared a full translation. The editor, Yechiam Padan, responsible for the alterations in the translation, concludes his preface with the following words:

The Hebrew edition is not only *full of* maps and illustrations that make the period more vivid, but is also the *fullest translation of* all those published todate. We too *had to shorten the*

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book, but we retained everything that did not have to be omitted. ("blue print" *p. 5;* my emphases)

d. Most *Ben-Hur* translations adapted the novel for youth or children, applying various tactics in doing so. The transition from adult to youth or children's literature is a valuable tool in analyzing the application of translation norms, since children's literature seems to conserve and even fossilize norms long after they have been discarded by literature for adults, and since it is, by definition, more prone to didactic interference (Toury 1980:140-151;1. EvenZohar 1990; Z. Shavit 1996). Only one of the *Ben-Hur* translations was outwardly presented as a book for adults; namely, the Meron translation of 1960, undertaken after the release of the Hollywood film and issued in a cheap pocket-book format. Among the published translations it is the one that claims to be complete and unabridged - an unfounded claim, since it is in fact a complete rendition of an *abridged* American version. It is difficult to determine whether either the publisher or the translator was aware of the fact that the "source" was not the full original. The 1959 Hashavia translation was published in a series called "Mo'adon ha-sefer ha-tov" [Good Book Club], "for readers aged 13 to 90". It does not claim to be complete, only "fuller" than the previous shortened editions "made for children". The others were marked as youth or children's books by the use of illustrations, subtitles, bigger letters and vowel signs for easier reading.

e.   The interaction with the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture, directed by William Wyler, is illuminating. Ever since 1959, information about the movie, at various levels of detail, has been included in the blurb on the cover, sometimes confined to photographs or drawings of the famous chariot race. Under certain circumstances the movie could have a rectifying effect on the translation, for the audience would tend to compare and perhaps demand accuracy. On the other hand, many translations done worldwide after 1959 may have been motivated by the movie and based on an abridged version of the novel, as stated in the 1961 German translation. The making of the movie was described in several books (see for example Freiman 1959), and could serve for further research into the Hollywood adaptation of the Christian elements of the original. One thing is clear from the outset: the movie did not obliterate the Christian character of the book. Even Freiman's documentation of the MGM movie is called *The story of the making of Ben-Hur, A tale of the Christ.* Furthermore, three of the Ben Stahl's paintings appended to the text (so that they might be "cut carefully and removed for framing", as indicated) depict the Christian scene: The Magi visiting Mary and her baby in the stable, the Sermon on the Mount and the Crucifixion.

f.   The theme of conversion. The narrative of Ben-Hur, a fictitious character living in the same period as Christ is parallel to that of Christ. Ben-Hur and his family begin life as Jews and end up as Christians. In fact, some critics maintain that Wallace's treatment of the Jews in this novel depends on whether or not they later become disciples of Christ (Harap 1974:166). Thus, the original heroes are converts who, metaphorically, have to be brought "home", as tradition dictates. The translations seem to labor under the didactic assumption that fictitious souls, too, must be brought back to Judaism (as was done posthumously with historical figures like Heine or Auerbach).

g.   The conversion is also that of the Christian model to a Hebrew one. Much more than tampering with details of the narrative, the translation, mobilized to serve the requirements of Zionistic ideology, replaced the original model with one more congruous with contemporary needs. In fact, any discussion of the translation of such a Christian-oriented novel has to start with the question of why this novel had been chosen for translation in the first place. The worldwide popularity of the novel and its numerous translations cannot provide sufficient explanation, since *Ben-Hur* would not have been the first best-selling text to be prohibited for ideological reasons from translation into Hebrew, or any other language for that matter. Apart from the fact that this was "the best-selling novel of the 19th century", outsold only by the Bible for decades (www.benhur.com, p. 3), it seems that the potential for converting it and transforming it into the desired model must have been the original motive, at least in the case of the earlier translations. This may have changed after the production of the movie. The transformation of the model is made quite clear from the treatment of the title: the subtitle A tale *of the Christ* had been replaced by the Hebrew: *Sipur histori mi yme ha-bayit ha-sheni [A historical tale from the period of the Second Temple]*. Evidently, the transformation necessitated the omission of the Christian motto. Other forms of modification were applied to change the novel into what may be termed the "heroic battle of the Jews against the Greek/Roman Empire" or, more generally, the "Few against Many" model (Gertz 1988). This is quite apparent from external signifiers like the books' jackets, though the older ones are hard to find (see discussion below).

The transformation of the model is all the more significant in view of the fact that part of Wallace's ideology rests on his conception of Judaism as a religion of vengeance and hatred, as opposed to Christianity, the religion of Love and Peace: Ben-Hur does not become a true Christian until he relinquishes his vengeful feelings towards his personal enemy, Messala: the latter had confiscated his fortune, sent him to the galley and imprisoned his mother and sister, although they were all innocent, and Ben-Hur's initial reaction to this should rightfully be, "Revenge is a Jew's of right; it is the law" (Wallace 1959: 260). Yet the personal level is insufficient, and a higher stage is still to be achieved.

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His transformation demands relinquishing the intensity of his personal as well as his "national" hate, which identifies him as a Jew (see Harap 1978:167) that is, letting go of his dream of overthrowing the Roman rule over Judea. Thus, re-writing the model in reverse, so to speak, re-establishing the Roman-Jewish dichotomy as the central theme, ironically means re-establishing Ben-Hur's identity as a Jew in more than one way.

One short note as for Wallace's treatment of Jews in this novel: several researches refer to the subject (most edifying is Harap 1978 for treatment of Jews in 19th-century American literature; see also Fisch 1971, Mayo 1988). *Ben-Hur* does differentiate between Jews who are ready for Redemption and those who are not, but those who are not future converts are not protagonists. With the exception of the "rabble" described above, and the general guilt for the Crucifixion, the overall image of the Hebrews of Judea and the Galilee presented by Wallace is that of a brave and stubborn nation. In all, the Christian is presented as a "better Jew" who has shed extreme feelings of "hatred and vengeance". In other words, the manipulation of Christian elements in the translation cannot be attributed to any "anti-Semitic" traits of the original.

The corpus

The original corpus consists mainly of two versions, a full one and an abridged one. While it is possible to determine which served as the source text for each translation, the difference between them, though significant in volume, is slight insofar as it concerns the Christian character of the novel. There may have been other abridged editions, and there are and have been countless adaptations for children, which this study will take into account only if they are relevant to the discussion of ideological manipulation. One "adaptation" of the source text is particularly edifying in that it was done by Lew Wallace himself, who selected to cut out and publish the story of Jesus as an independent book for children, entitled: *The first Christmas: From Ben Hur.* This may have grown out of Wallace's original idea of writing the story of Christ. The first edition of this version appeared in 1898, with "silver and gilt cloth boards, illustrated on every page with drawings by William Martin Johnson", indicative of its value as a (Christmas) gift (quoted from the Barnes & Noble description of the book, still sold today, www.bn.com).

The following editions were used as source texts:

Eng.I Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ.* New York: Signet Books, 1959 [1880]. Complete and unabridged. 432 pp., small print.

Eng.II Lew Wallace. *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ.* New York: Bantam Books, 1956. The definitive modem abridgment. 282 pp*.,* small print.

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Heb.I [Phonetically] J. Uellas [Hebrew wrong spelling]. *Ben-Hur: A* historical *novel from the period of the Second Temple,* adapted by Ch. Dubnikow. Tel Aviv: lzreel, 1968 [19241. 274 pp., large print.

Heb.II Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* translated by Arie Chashavia. Tel Aviv: M. Mizrachi, 1959. 248 pp., small print.

Heb.III L. Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* translated and adapted by M. Harpaz. Tel Aviv: Amichai, , n.d. [1960]. 272 pp., large print.

Heb.IV Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* Hebrew: Uriel Meron. Tel Aviv: Ledori, 1960. 334 pp., small print.

Heb.V Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* translated and adapted by Ch. Tadmon. Tel Aviv: Sh. Friedman, 1962. 92 pp*.,* large print.

Heb.VI L. Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* adapted by Sh. Levavi. Tel Aviv: Shmuel Zimzon, 1962. [The rights are by 1961 Societé Nouvelle des Éditions BIAS, Paris, i.e., the translation must have been done via a mediating language.] 46 pp. large print, large illustrations. For small children.

Heb.VII Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* Hebrew: Joseph Katz. Jerusalem: Keter, 1979. 186 pp*.,* small print.

Heb.VIII Lew Wallace. *Ben-Hur,* translated from English by Chana Livnat. 334 pp., big format, large print, illustrations, maps, glossary according to Felix Gluck Press Ltd. Twickenham. Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, [1990]. [Unpublished. "Blue print" only.]

Some information about the Hebrew translators and the publishers could be useful for the sake of a minimal contextualization of each translation. The information was collected through the Jerusalem Jewish National & University Library website, and is probably incomplete. Most of the publishing houses no longer exist. The translators range from well known, to less known or almost unknown. A certain pattern seems to emerge in the three periods mentioned above, 1924-1960, 1960-1979*,* and 1979-1990*:* Risking over-simplification it seems that the first-generation translators were pedagogues and educators; the second (and third) generation were prolific professionals. The lists indicate that they are/were also authors in their own merit, of historiography, children's books, textbooks and popular novels.

Heb.I Chaim Eliezer Dubnikow (1876-1929) can be described as the prototypical pioneer translator in Hebrew culture: a Hebrew writer and pedagogue, the director of Jewish schools in Poland and later in Eretz Israel. In Warsaw he was one of the founders and editors of the Jewish pedagogical periodical *Tarbut.* After migrating to Israel in 1925 he was considered one of the

pioneers of educational literature (Ofek 1985:170). He wrote numerous textbooks for pupils and for teachers, a night school curriculum for adults, etc. The few translations he made are labeled "translated and adapted".

Heb.II Arie Chashavia (1931-), a writer and historiographer, is one of the most prolific translators in Israel. There are 278(!) books listed under his name in the Jewish National & University Library, most of them translations. Most are novels and history books, but the list also includes popular literature for youth such as *Tarzan.* The Mizrachi Publishing House Good Book Club was considered a commercial series with no specific ideological policy.

Heb.III (Moshe) Harpaz. There are 63 books catalogued under his name, many textbooks (English, History), manuals for teachers, and very many workbooks for children; yet his name is almost unknown. Harpaz translated some novels by Charles Dickens. "Amichai" published many popular books for children and youth.

Heb.IV Uriel Meron. 108 books are listed under his name in the National Library, mostly inexpensive pocket books. Many are books for children *(Bambi)* and youth, but most are detective stories and thrillers, among them novels by Agatha Christie and Alistair McLean. Most interesting is Meron's prolific production of pseudo-translations like the "Buck-Jones" series or the "Buffalo - Bill" series, supposedly "written" by "Archie Berman", then later by "Archibald G. Berman". The "translator's" name is usually given as Avner Carmon, sometimes also A. Ronen, A. Rodan, Ezra Mitzri. This fits in with the 1960 edition of *Ben-Hur,* which is, as mentioned above, the cheapest kind of pocket edition of the novel published in Israel and, perhaps not surprisingly, the least tampered with.

Heb.IV is in soft cover, cheap paper, and full of printing and translation errors. This kind of book was derisively referred to in the Fifties and Sixties as "pocket novel" [roman kis, roman za'ir]. "Ledori" Publishers was a commercial firm. The two translators, Arie Chashavia and Uriel Meron, collaborated on a translation of Jacob De Haas' historiography of Eretz Israel from the Roman rule to the British rule. This may be relevant to the discussion of their (separate) treatment of the historical material in *Ben-Hur.*

Heb.V Ch. (Chaim) Tadmon wrote 3 books and translated about 15. The publisher, Sh. Friedman is relatively unknown.

Heb.VI Sh. Levavi and the Zimzon Publishing House are relatively un-known. As already hinted, the book must have been translated from the French edition mentioned in the reference. No information was available as to why indirect translation was preferred, or why this particular version was chosen.

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Heb.VII Joseph Katz. Translated 8 books, mostly adventure novels. The series "Kitri" by "Keter" specialized in adaptations of world classics for a youthful reading public. The editor of the series, Ada Tamir, did not attempt or pretend to produce adequate translations, but rather to acquaint the young reader with world literature in abridged editions.

Heb.VIII Chana Livnat is known to do adequate, meticulous translational work and can be considered among the new generation of professional translators with academic training in Translation Studies. Moreover, her major topic of research is children's literature. However, she apparently clashed with the editor of *Heb.VIII,* Yechiam Padan, who has had long experience in editing books for children and youth with various publishers, and is more didactically oriented. Zmora-Bitan is a commercial publisher. So far, the publication of the "blue print" has been delayed for more than 10 years because of the "problematic" Christian contents (according to publishers O. and Z. Zmora, personal communication, January 2000).

A comparative study of the Hebrew translations reveals the following general results:

Large-scale omissions

Generally speaking, the most common phenomenon is large-scale omissions. The omissions are of three types: omissions of generic characteristics pertaining to the historical novel; omissions of normative character, due to simplification for youth and children; and, mainly, omissions (or obliteration) of Christian elements. Most of the translations completely disregard the Christian nature of the book. The second translation *Heb.II* accounts for a very small number of Christian elements, but sometimes manipulates them in a derisive manner. The fourth "full" translation by Meron *Heb.IV* accounts for the Christian character of the novel, but does not refrain from omitting certain "undesirable" elements. Its matrix organization as well as its contents is equivalent to the abridged form *(Eng.II),* and it is to be assumed that the latter served as its source text, so that any omission in *Heb.IV* must be considered in relation with *Eng. II.* But whereas *Eng.II* calls itself "the definitive modern abridgment" (front cover), *Heb.IV* does not admit to being anything but full. The "blue print" *Heb.VIII is* relatively "full" and includes most of Book First, but the editor managed to manipulate the material in such a way that Christ himself is absent. The relevant chapters (see below) refer to "salvation"   [ge' ula] but not to the Savior ["go'el"].

The Hebrew translations do not announce the large-scale omissions, nor do they admit to obliterating Christian elements, a fact that is in complete accordance with the principles of ideological manipulation mentioned above (see also Ben-Ari 2000:40-44). Normatively prone to omissions of this kind, the line between translation and adaptation (especially in literature for children and youth) cannot be clearly defined. *Heb.I, Heb.III, Heb.V* and *Heb.VI* hint at it by using the terms

"adapted" or "translated and adapted" in the subtitles. *Heb.II* advertises on the back cover that the previous translation was an abridged version for children, while the present translation is "fuller and addressed to readers 13-90 years old". *Heb.IV,* which followed the version done after the success of the 1959 MGM motion picture refrains from indicating its abridged source and announces "the full story of Ben-Hur" (back cover). As mentioned before, it is not impossible that those responsible for it believed *Eng.II* to be the original. *Heb.VII* admits to slight omissions. It makes the customary promise of "fullness" with the contradictory "obligation" to omit certain passages: "The new translation which you have in front of you is the fullest one ever made for children and youth. However, we must note that we found it necessary to omit a few passages, in order to make it easier for the young reader to cope with this fascinating classic" (p.6).

A similar approach is adopted by the newest translation, *Heb.VIII.* It boasts of being "the fullest translation ever printed", but admits that certain omissions *had to* be made. The words "had to" occur twice: "we too *had to* shorten the book, but retained everything that did not *have to* be omitted" (Editor's Note, p. 5; my emphases).

No Hebrew translation brings the original subtitle or any of the mottos. Neither, by the way, do abridged editions like *Eng.II* or *Germ.f,* though they otherwise remain true to the Christian spirit of the book.

Thus, no Hebrew translation is a full one, in spite of their respective claims. In some translations, particularly for smaller children, only a crude core of the original narrative remains. The original *Ben-Hur is* based on the life of Christ as a framework. The hero's life runs in parallel lines to that of Christ, moreover, he is acquainted with the details of the mythical birth, and is aware of the link between their destinies. He yearns for the coming of the "King of the Jews", though at first he does so because he hopes it would announce the end of Rome and the redemption of the people of Judea. He follows Christ for three years and "witnesses" the miracles he performs. By and by he realizes that the "Kingdom" is not supposed to be an earthly one. This does not undermine his decision to seek *national* redemption from the Roman rule, but it leads to his decision to seek *personal* redemption in becoming a Christian. The Crucifixion is a turning point, a moment of revelation in which he fully assumes the faith of Love and gives up the battle for national independence and the ensuing use of force. The whole novel is thematically centered round this ideological axel, and Ben-Hur's personal development, so to speak, is not only from Jew to Christian but from a freedom fighter to a true Christian in the "moral" sense of the word. Several key-passages in the novel lead to this denouement. Some of the passages are written in the form of reported thoughts or conversations about Christ and Christianity, mainly held with Balthazar, one of the three Magi who becomes one of Ben-Hur's closest friends; others are an integral part of the narrative or the plot. Omission of passages of the first type is relatively "simple" and requires no more than "technical" matrix changes. Omission of passages of the second type, however, requires more "creative" solutions, mainly in the form of alterations

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and additions to the plot. In other words, large-scale omissions are necessary in order to obliterate the Christian ideology. Reversing the plot so that it culminates in Ben-Hur becoming a freedom fighter requires more manipulation.

The original novel, abridged or unabridged, starts with "Book First" which provides the Christian context and background, the announcement of the birth of Christ, the journey of the Magi, the intervention of King Herod and the birth itself. In fact, Book First preceded *Ben-Hur* chronologically, as it was published as a separate book, and was only later used as the first part of the novel. The dramatic narrative of the novel ends with the Crucifixion, though it is followed by a short aftermath, concluding the story of Ben-Hur and his family. All translations but two *(Heb.IV* and *Heb.VIII)* omit Book First. *Heb.IV,* roughly speaking, brings about half of Book First but, as mentioned above, must be compared with *Eng.II,* to determine what further omissions were made, if any, and what selection tactics were used (see discussion below).8 *Heb.VIII* includes a large part of Book First, but omits its final chapters, which describe the birth of Jesus. In this way the Magi follow the star to Bethlehem in order to see the second revelation of God, they look for "the newborn King of the Jews", but they do not witness it, since the chapter comes to an abrupt end. One chapter, Chapter 9, is replaced with a new one written by the editor and providing a different (Hebrew) historical background. Only *Heb.IV* brings a short version of the Crucifixion. *Heb.II* sums it up in a few derisive sentences. *Heb. V,* the shortest one, adapted for small children, excludes all Christian elements, although in a roundabout way it does refer to the first meeting between BenHur and Jesus (see discussion below).
All translations except *Heb.IV* re-model the story of Judah Ben-Hur within the historical context of the dichotomy Jerusalem - Rome.

The problematic of Book First *(Heb.IV* and *Heb.VIII)*

Heb.IV, a so-called "complete and unabridged" version, reduces Book First to 11 out of 14 chapters and to approximately half its size, 37 pages out of 62. (This is a rough estimate, since Hebrew is a more concise language.) In this *Heb.IV* follows its "source", the "Modern Abridgement" (11 chapters, 29 pages). Since the main tactics applied in both entail obliteration of information, it is important to look into the nature of these omissions. Deviations from the "source text" are few and generally irrelevant to the discussion.

Omitted (from both) on a large scale is information of two categories:

1. Signifiers of the historical novel, i.e. characteristics of the 19th-century genre, especially pseudo-scientific background material, but also addressing the reader in person, through conventional formulas.
2. Christian material, pertaining to the model.

The historical novel, especially that of the 19th century, prides itself on being partly "scientific". In fact, this may have accounted for its tremendous popularity in the 19th century- the century of history and historiography. A rather precise formula was observed by novels of this genre ever since Walter Scott combined "fact and fiction" or "poetry and history" (more about this subject is found, for instance, in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* Preminger 1974, under "poetry" and "fiction"; Kerr 1989; for more references see Ben-Ari 1997:106-107). This usually meant that a pseudo-historical, cultural and/or geographical background was supplied in the beginning of key chapters. It could take the form of panoramic descriptions of scenery, complex geographical or topographical data, philological data etc., depending on the subject. The descriptions were not at all simplistic or short, but rather detailed and "scholarly". They usually came in separate segments, before or between narrative parts. Since they are not an integral part of the plot, even matricially speaking, they are the most "natural" candidates for omission of all degrees, especially in simplified editions or in the transition to youth or children's books.

The historical novel signifiers omitted in *Eng.II* and *Heb.IV* consist of background information of all kinds - historiographic, geographic or cultural. Whole paragraphs, sometimes whole chapters of description are omitted, depicting the desert, the scenery, the traveler's attire, the camel and its charge, the language and customs of the desert dwellers, the reasons why man may be attracted to the desert. Omitted are foreign words, mostly Arabic ("jewel" for mountain appearing five times in the three-page Chapter I, "kufiyeh" for the head kerchief, "manzil" for halt, "tell" for hummock, "saat" for hour). These words are strewn profusely in the original, though on a rather elementary level, functioning as *couleur locale,* but also as an indication of erudition on the writer's part and therefore as credibility-building factors. Omission of such elements may undermine the writer's claim to erudition and "omniscience", and thus call his "credibility" into question.

The lengthy and detailed cultural information supplied by the three Magi, the Egyptian, the Hindu and the Greek, about their faiths (again involving an abundance of foreign words and names) is shortened significantly.

Strangely enough, allusions to the Old Testament are omitted in both. Omitted too is all historical background about Jerusalem from its Jebusite days until the reign of Herod. The original description is generally "unfavorable", permeated with the "criticism" that Jerusalem has changed from the jewel that it used to be to an imitation of Rome, the site of pagan power, with no sign of God:

In other words, Jerusalem, rich in sacred history, richer in connection with sacred prophecies - the Jerusalem of Solomon, in which silver was as stones, and cedars as the sycamores of the vale - had come to be but a copy of Rome, a center of unholy practices, a seat of pagan power ... and of God not a sign. (*Eng.I*, p.33)

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Yet, since this has been omitted from the abridged edition as well, it may well be accounted for by the need for abbreviation.

All mottos in the source text, preceding every "Book", are quotations from world classics and may also come to reflect on Wallace's cultural world. They are from "Childe Harold", Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra,* Schiller's *Don Carlos,* Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thomas Baily Alderidge, Keats, and the line from the New Testament: "I am the resurrection and the life" *(Eng.I, p. 367).* Except for the latter, no quotation is typically "Christian". They were omitted from the abridged edition, and thus are not present in *Heb.IV* nor in any of the other translations.

Apart from undermining the novel's/writer's claim to erudition and credibility, the omission of local color material is a "homogenizing" factor, which deprives the text of its "uniqueness". However, since this was undertaken by *Eng.II,* closely followed by *Heb.IV,* the explanation must lie in the general nature of adaptations of the 19th century novel, perhaps even in the MGM movie, although the latter took more liberties in terms of plot.

Although Heb.IV is a relatively adequate rendition of *Eng.II,* there are certain omissions in it as well. Some are mainly for the sake of further abbreviation. Others may have been caused by a certain disinclination on the part of the translator to render very Christian elements adequately. (Examples appear in the discussion of the Crucifixion scene below.)

Heb.VIII manipulates Book First in such a way that the Christian material remains, withoutthe figure of Christ himself. The Magi travel to the East because they have heard that Redemption is near. They look for the newborn King of the Jews, but there is no mention of the baby Jesus. The historical background supplied by the editor describes the hardship of life under Roman rule.

Ideological Manipulations in Book Second-Book Eighth

The ideological manipulations of Christian material other than Book First are significant in that they required more than a blunt omission of the "background story", and cannot be attributed to abbreviation or simplification alone. Here are some key examples that have to do with the three main "Christian episodes" of *Ben-Hur.*

1.   *The first meeting between Ben-Hur and Christ*

in the source text, young Judah Ben-Hur first meets Jesus in Nazareth, when the Roman soldiers take Ben-Hur around the country, humiliated and chained, on his way to serve his lifelong punishment in the galley. His journey through the country is a literary anticipation of the Via Dolorosa, described towards the end of the novel. The meeting between the two takes place when the soldiers pause for a drink at the well. Joseph appears, a venerable old man in a "full turban" with white locks and beard (p. 99). The women present call him Rabbi Joseph and ask him to

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enquire about the prisoner. Behind him steps a youth, and unobserved, offers Ben-Hur a drink of water, a human gesture which BenHur will reciprocate in the Crucifixion scene. To strengthen the parallelism, the boy is "about his own age". The look of pity and compassion that he gives Ben-Hur "melts the prisoner's spirit". The scene ends with the sentence: "And so, for the first time, Judah and the son of Mary met and parted" (p.101).

The scene bears a thematic significance in that it draws the parallel with Jesus, but it also introduces the first Christian virtue. In the course of the novel the act of giving water comes to symbolize Charity, as presented in the scene where a Christian man gives the leprous women his gourd of water with the words: "The world hath long known the word charity without understanding it" (p.385). The same man introduces himself as a Jew "and better; I am a disciple of the Christ".

Only one translation, *Heb.IV,* brings the first meeting scene fully (pp. 60-63). The other translations employ various tactics to obliterate Christ from the scene:

a.　　　Omission of the whole scene.
In *Heb.I,* the second chapter ends in the sentence given to Ben-Hur, and the third chapter opens "Three years afterwards" (p.29). In *Heb.VII,* the previous chapter ends with the sealing-off of the house of Ben-Hur, and the next chapter opens on the galley, with no indication of the span of time between them.

b.　　　Retaining the scene but omitting or manipulating the Christian elements in it. *Heb.II* keeps the figure of the old man, called Rabbi Joseph as in the original, but changes his origin to Sepphoris. Rabbi Joseph is presented as a dignified old Jewish carpenter. He is not accompanied by a youth. No water is given to the prisoner. Only readers familiar with the parallel in the original may understand the allusion to Joseph husband of Mary.

Heb.III follows the scene from *Heb.II,* but depletes it of any remaining Christian allusions: Nazareth changes into "a village in the Galilee" and Rabbi Joseph loses his identity and becomes a nameless old man. For some reason he is presented as even older than before [yashish], which may be accounted for as reverting to a schematic character in Jewish tradition, like the prophet Elijah. The scene was turned into direct speech, for a more dramatic effect.

Heb.VI changes the scene: Ben-Hur is not alone; he is part of a group of prisoners. In "a village in Galilee" (no mention of Nazareth) a tall youth with a yellow beard gives all the prisoners water. The youth is not mentioned by name and is presented as "wondrous" [my translation to the Hebrew "peli"]. He is much respected by the villagers, "even the Roman officer, when the young man turned to him, was filled with good will and answered him courteously" (p.14). No mention is made of old "Rabbi Joseph". No contact, not even eye contact occurs between him and Ben-Hur. Moreover, there is no thematic or narrative parallel between the youth and Ben-Hur, since this "wondrous" youth no longer reappears in the story. The description of the scene is preceded by a large illustration. The body of the youth and his hand holding the jar are shown; the face

is not shown. (No further comment on the translation can be made without referring to the French immediate source.)

Heb.V shortens the scene and does not mention the boy.

Heb.VIII reduces this encounter to one sentence, without referring to Jesus, saying that a young boy secretly gave Ben-Hur some water to drink, out of pity, and that in all his wanderings Ben-Hur could not forget the water the boy gave him (p.79).

2. *The cure of leprosy*

Ben-Hur's mother and sister are originally contracted by leprosy, which progresses monstrously during their eight years of confinement in order to amplify the miraculous nature of the healing by Christ. The illness, its terrible progress and its cure are described in great realistic detail. With the figure of Christ absent from most translations, the Hebrew translators had to find ways of re-writing this episode. *Heb.IV is* the only translation that describes the illness and its cure as in the original, though in a considerably abbreviated form (pp. 234-235; 294-296). The other translations deal with it in various manipulative ways:

a. By omitting the leprosy altogether *(Heb.I, Heb.III).* The two women are not ill, in fact no detail is given as to their whereabouts during all the years of Ben-Hur's absence, except for an allusion made to an imprisonment. The happiness of the reunion is described in a few lines *(Heb.I, p.246; Heb.III, p.269).*

b. By providing a "rational" explanation. Explaining that the women only "thought" they had leprosy, while in fact they may have suffered from a different illness, which passed when they could wash and eat properly:

They had been indeed in a cellar where lepers had been imprisoned, but maybe the leprosy did not touch them. Maybe their faces and bodies were full of injuries caused by mal-nutrition, dirt and the inability to wash for several years. ... They themselves remembered that a holy man had blessed them recently, and believed his blessing had cured them. We shall never know the real cause of their cure. (Heb.VII, p.176)

The same attempt at a "rational" "natural" cure, though without denying the leprosy, is provided by *Heb.V* which is an adaptation for children: Amra, the servant cries: "They had been cured from their leprosy by fresh air and sunlight!" (p.89).

c. By granting the healing powers to the Jewish priests. The text even "defies" the powers of Christ and "challenges" the God of Israel: the two women seek the help of the Jewish priests, saying that they had heard about the wonders performed by

Christ in healing lepers, and urging them to prove that the God of Israel can do no less:

Pray to God, o priests, and ask him to give us a sign that he is a keeper of his people of Israel, so that Gentiles do not say that He has abandoned us and that Foreigners are ruling over us and we have no shield.... Give us health and others will see it as a sign and their hearts will turn back to our God. *(Heb.II*, p.243)

d. By avoiding any explanation, except for the benevolence of God, again in an adaptation for young children: Amra the maid meets Ben-Hur and the two women, and cries:

"Oh, *my* lord, God is benevolent! Look how these two were cured of their leprosy!" Ben-Hur turned and saw his mother and sister. *(Heb VI,* last page)

e. By briefly narrating the story of a wondrous healer, a "miracle maker", but keeping him nameless *(Heb.VIII,* the "blue print").

3.   The Crucifixion

The Crucifixion (pp. 405-428 in the 1959 edition) is present in three of the translations only: *Heb.II, Heb.IV* and *Heb. VIII.* And whereas in the original it is one of the key scenes, a complex and long one where Ben-Hur's destiny is interlaced with that of Christ, in all three translations it is shortened considerably and played down.

The Crucifixion scene in the source text is presented as the culmination of three years in which Ben-Hur follows Christ in his wanderings and gives a report, much similar to that of the Apostles, of his acts. He does so with the vague aim of understanding the nature of the future "King of the Jews", of using his power in a possible uprising against Rome and of coming to his rescue if necessary. The Crucifixion is a moment of revelation in which Ben-Hur realizes that the "Kingdom" is not to be of this earth.

The Crucifixion has a powerful impact on Ben-Hur and changes his destiny as a "freedom fighter". In fact, the last chapter of the book depicts the new Ben-Hur (with Esther as his wife) as a Christian, and the very last paragraph of the original presents Ben-Hur's new vocation of mobilizing not his force but his fortune to erect a tomb for the Christian martyrs in Rome.

The shortest account of the Crucifixion is in *Heb.II,* which brings a brief indirect report of the event and manipulates it in a derisive way: according to this version, Ben-Hur himself has not had any contact with Christ and is not present at the scene. He has been counting on the help of the Christians in his rebellion against the Romans (p.226). He is glad to hear that "many follow the Messiah and

the end of Rome is near" (p. *236)*. He is therefore disappointed to hear that Christ has been crucified and no help can be expected of his followers. He expresses his scorn for the followers who stood back and did nothing to help their leader (p.242).

Heb. VIII, the newest translation, omits most of the scene, from p. 405 to *428*. It also omits the last paragraph and the conversion of Ben-Hur and his family to Christianity.

Heb.IV follows *Eng.II.* The relevant chapter, Chapter *8,* nearly *7* pages in both, follows the parallel Chapter 8 of *Eng.II,* with certain small omissions. The longest is a whole paragraph on p. 269 starting with "The demonstration was fanatical and bloodthirsty", describing the rabble following the procession as a bloodthirsty mob. A similar passage is omitted on p. *271* of "the vast multitude" in contrast with the Nazarene - "he who loved them all, and was about to die for them". Omitted is also a passage where the Nazarene is heard to say: "I am the resurrection and the life" and the effect of the words on the mob and on Ben-Hur (p. 272). A passage describing the strange "perfect peace" descending on Ben-Hur "hesitating on the verge of belief' (p. 276) was also omitted. So was another passage describing the reaction of the multitude to the news of the Nazarene's death (p. 278) "The people had their wish. The Nazarene was dead; yet they stared at each other aghast. His blood was upon them!" Since, otherwise, most of the omissions in this translation are insignificant in terms of Christian contents, the ones cited above stand out as a somewhat uneasy reaction to unfavorable description of the Jews and their part in the Crucifixion, as described by Wallace.

Ben-Hur: Jewish bravura against the Roman Empire

The neutralization of the Christian character of *Ben-Hur is* only part of the conversion of the novel. Via the translation, the text was remodeled and appropriated into Hebrew culture, to be mobilized as part of the larger inventory of "Few against Many" or the more particular "Jewish bravura against Greek/Roman Empire". This article will not go into the political, social and cultural reasons that led to this mobilization, prior to the establishment of the state and after it. Suffice it to say that original Hebrew literature participated in the ideological mobilization, but so did translated literature, in its policy of choosing books for translation as well as in the more subtle manipulation of the translated texts.

Some sort of differentiation must be made between the re-modeling process in the versions for adults (and youth) and for children (and youth), though the line between them is sometimes hard to draw. The two versions for small children *(Heb.V* and *Heb.VI)* retain only the very core of the plot, turn the protagonists into the most banal clichés from the inventory of the historical genre heroes and

present a very unrefined version of the new model. The three versions for youth *(Heb.II, Heb.VII* and *Heb.VIII)* use more "creative" manipulation. *Heb.IV,* the version that follows the abridged *Eng.II, is* interesting in the discrepancy between its contents, which does not eliminate the Christian ideology, and its advertisement on the book's cover. The most interesting version in this respect is *Heb.I,* being the first translation and a sort of normative "guide" that, in terms of ideological modifications, paved the way for the following ones.

Dubnikow, the first translator of *Ben-Hur,* or his publisher, who replaced the Christian subtitle with a Hebrew one, must have undertaken the manipulation of the model quite consciously. He didn't have a previous (Hebrew) translation to relate to, but he must have had a whole "tradition" of Hebrew translations of historical novels in his repertoire (see Part I).

Dubnikow's followers could have adopted the same model more automatically, relying on its success with the reading public, until the production of the MGM movie or the slackening of the need for literary mobilization. *Heb. VIII,* the last translation, was made at a time when such mobilized literature would be sneered or laughed at, which accounts for its rejection of the blunt "national" model. In fact, the clash between the translator, Livnat, who made a full and rather adequate translation, and the editor, Padan, reflects the persistence of the old norm, surviving the disintegration of the model.

The remodeling of *Ben-Hur* was done using many techniques, some very obvious and some more refined.

1.   *Titles and subtitles*

As mentioned before, all Hebrew translations omitted the original subtitle, which announces the original intention of the novel, A *tale of the Christ. Heb.I* announced the transformation, therewith supplying the subsequent translations with a basis for a new direction.

Instead of the numerical organization of chapters in the original text, *Heb.I* supplied titles for each chapter. Some of them may serve as manipulative reading instructions. The first chapter, for example, is entitled: "A Jew and a Roman". The second: "The disaster".

In *Heb.III* the new subtitles follow the same pattern in a rather simplified manner. For some reason, one of the chapters is entitled "Eli Eli al na ta-azveni" (p. 55 [My God, my God, please do not forsake me]), which could have been a sort of reverse allusion to Jesus (Matthew 27:46, for example), if the reading public had been aware of the connection.

2.   *Texts on jackets, back of books, front page*

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The source text, even the abridged one, presents the novel within its Christian framework. Here is the synopsis from the front page of the "definitive modern abridgement" *(Eng.II,* my emphases):

This amazing book is more than one of the world's great historical novels, it is a vivid panorama of the whole Roman world *at the time of Christ,* and it tells, in marvelous detail, *the story of Christ and His followers.*

Its hero, Judah Ben-Hur, scion of an old and eminent Jewish family, is a patriot - a proud representative of a splendid culture. His adventures take him from Jerusalem to Rome, back to Antioch and to a life sentence in the Roman galleys. His escape, his revenge, his search for his lost mother and sister, *all lead to his meeting with Christ. The awesome and sublime spectacle of the Crucifixion itself becomes the climax of this extraordinary novel.*

All Hebrew texts I found (most of the books are old and no longer have any jackets, if they ever did) describe the novel in the terminology of the new model; this is true even of a relatively full translation like *Heb.IV,* which does not eliminate the Christian material.

Within the overall tone of praise for the novel, its author and its worldwide fame, the following characteristics, relevant to the 'new model', are accentuated:

a.　　　The relevance of the book to the (modern) Israeli reader.
b. The personal confrontation between Ben-Hur and Messala as a symbol of the confrontation between the Jewish rebels and Rome.
c.　　　The noble origin of the Ben-Hur family.
d. The "mythical" bravery of the Jewish heroes.
e. The ideal to fight for - national freedom and independence.
f.　　　The Israeli actress Haya Harareet in the role of Esther (after the MGM movie).

Here are a few examples, in (my) literal translation. The key sentences will be categorized (in brackets) according to the characteristics mentioned above. Some, of course, are overlapping:

Heb.II:
The plot of the novel fascinates every reader - especially the Hebrew reader (a): Its hero is Judah Ben-Hur, descendant of a family of presidents [Nesi'im] in Judea in the days of the Roman conquest (c). A vehement discussion held by Judah and his noble Roman friend Messala awakens in Ben-Hur feelings of national zealousness [kana'ut le'umit] (b) and estranges him from his friend.
The book was filmed into a great movie in which one of the main actors is Haya Harareet. (f)

Heb.IV:

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The full story of Ben-Hur, son of a Jerusalem prince (c), whose boyhood friend sent him to be a slave on a Roman galley, yet he lived to see the day of greatness and vengeance (b). The people of Israel in a stormy period (a, b) - filled with hope, though also disappointments - in a colorful tale not to be forgotten.

Ben-Hur was filmed by MGM starring Charlton Heston as Ben-Hur and Haya Harareet as Esther (f), in the brilliant direction of William Wyler. It won 11 Oscars, more than any other film in the history of cinema, and was accorded "best movie of the year" by the American Academy of Art and Science.

Heb.VII:

Ben-Hur, the protagonist of this book, has become with the years a hero admired by youth all over the world. Millions of readers see in him the symbol of beauty, bravery, love and faith (d) united in this young Jewish boy who did not yield to his fate and returned to his oppressed people (b) the desire for freedom and independence (e). The writer Lew Wallace describes life of the Jews (a) in Jerusalem, Greece and Rome in the days of the Roman conquest and shows us a stormy existence, full of battles (b), loves, intrigues and disappointments. The reader is engulfed in the plot and becomes a partner (a) to all the fascinating events that befall the magnificent heroes (d).

Heb.V:

The success of this novel is not without cause: Ben-Hur is a symbol (d) for any proud rebel (e) who fights a foreign hateful oppressor (b); his life and his battle bear a meaning at any time, including the present time (a).

3. *Additions and modifications necessitated by the new model*

Large-scale ideological omissions require active intervention in the text, particularly when the omissions are part of the plot. But even when background material is omitted for ideological purposes, other material may need to be inserted in its place. The size and character of the additions vary, of course, according to the ideological need, the degree of liberty the translation/adaptation is willing to undertake, the translator's position in the target culture and the current norms. However, in recent years, due to shifts in the norm, they are usually not as large in proportion as the omissions they are meant to replace.

The latest translation of *Ben-Hur, Heb.VIII,* has, surprisingly enough, the largest-scale addition in the *Ben-Hur* versions. The addition is announced in a footnote signed by the editor: "Chapter 8 in the translation comes to substitute for Chapter 8 in the original. Y. R". The original chapter describes Joseph arriving from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Mary riding a donkey and looking for a place for the night. It is replaced by lengthy historical information about the fall of the First Temple, the Babylonian exile, the Return to Zion, the suffering under the Greek empire, the House of Hashmonai, the internal chasm in the Jewish nation. It ends with a description of the ardent desire for redemption and a seemingly "innocent" remark concerning the abundance of false prophets in such a period (pp. *34-36).* This didactic addition, and the explicit interference in the

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text, reflects the inherent assumption that the [young] Israeli reader does not know his own people's history.

Following this (added) historical information, the rest of Book First has mostly been omitted. Omitted are the birth of Christ, the announcement to the shepherds, the approach of the three Magi (Chapters 9-12 of the original). Chapter 13, the Magi's visit to Herod's castle, has been considerably shortened. Chapter 14, with the Magi's visit to Mary and the baby has been omitted. No footnote accounts for these omissions. In fact, the existence of the footnote in Chapter 8 may easily lead the reader to deduce that the remaining chapters have not been tampered with.

With the exception of the adaptations for small children *(Heb.III, Heb.V, Heb. VI)*, the other translations that eliminated Book First did not introduce large-scale additions. They settled for an adaptation of the first chapter of Book Second *(Eng.I,* pp. 63-65), supplying a substitute historical background, invariably about Judea under the yoke of Rome. The original Chapter I depicts the severe historical conditions that led to the destruction of Judea. It presents the reader with a comprehensive and complex picture, though some of it from a Christian perspective, such as the death of "Herod the Great, one year after the birth of the Child - died so miserably that the Christian world had reason to believe him overtaken by the Divine wrath" (p. 63). Hebrew tradition would avoid referring to King Herod as "the Great", nor would it connect his death with his persecution of "the Child". But the manipulation of the model did not necessitate a complex picture, nor dwelling on the part of the internal Jewish quarrels in the impending catastrophe. Rather, it supplied the reader with most banal clich6s.

Heb.I summarizes the three pages of the original in one short paragraph, prior to the meeting of Ben-Hur and Messala, confining the description to the cruel rule of the Roman Empire over Judea. The paragraph ends with the words: "The people of Judea saw the wrong that was done to them in their own land, but had to keep silent" (p. 3).

Heb.II shortens the original account into two pages (5-6), mainly eliminating two elements: the role of Herod and the role of the internal Jewish wars in the deterioration of the situation in Judea. Rome is left as the sole factor.

Heb.VI shortens the account to about one and a half pages, providing yet another variation on the historical background (first chapter, pp.9-10). The book is meant for a youthful reading public and uses exclamatory style. Following, perhaps, the excavations in Massada in the 1960s and the reappearance of Herod's name in historical records, it opens with the death of Herod and even takes up his original epithet, but it eliminates all Christian connotations: "In the 2nd year A. D. Herod

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the Great died. He died in great agony, which led people to believe that it was a punishment from heaven for his foul deeds" (p. 9).

The new model demanded rewriting the end of the novel as well. The original ending is a double one: in the framework of plot itself, Ben-Hur determines to go to Rome, and devote the whole fortune he had inherited from his friend and protector, Sheik Ilderim, to burying the bones of the Christian martyrs; Esther, his wife, approves and promises to go with him; in a concluding note, separated from the text by asterisks, the writer adds a personal address to the reader, with a description of the success of Ben-Hur's effort - the Catacomb of San Calixto - and the victory of Christianity *(Eng.I, p.* 432; *Eng.II,* p. 282 in simpler words, with no personal address to the reader):

If any of my readers, visiting Rome, will make the short journey to the Catacomb of San Calixto, which is more ancient than that of San Sebastiano, he will see what became of the fortune of Ben-Hur, and give him thanks. Out of that vast tomb Christianity issued to supersede the Caesars.

The only version that brings the ending adequately is *Heb.IV* (p.334). The adaptation for small children, *Heb.VI* is satisfied with the personal victory of the hero over his wicked Roman friend and ends with the happy reunion of Ben-Hur and his mother and sister right after the chariot race. All others invent a national victory which has no basis either in the source text or in historical fact. [9]

In *Heb.I,* Ben-Hur declares his decision to devote all his fortune to the freedom of his nation, as he has vowed. His battalions in all the cities and villages, so he says, are awaiting his call. Moreover, he has consulted with the present king, King Agriphus (spelled thus), and has the King's consent: all his richness and possessions will be consecrated to the holy war against Rome. Esther, his devoted wife, expresses her consent and says she will help him in all she can. The next day Ben-Hur discloses all this to King Agriphus, and in a short time workers begin to fortify Jerusalem and the fortifications in the Galilee. Agriphus subsequently sends word to the kings of the neighboring lands to make an alliance against Rome. This is far either from the original ending or from historical fact in that the historical Herod Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great) was an enemy to the early Christians and is not mentioned in the novel. Furthermore, he managed to stay on friendly terms with both Roman emperors Caligula and Claudius[10] and was their protege. Agrippa II, his son, practically collaborated with Titus during the siege of Jerusalem.

Heb.III is a simplistic variation of *Heb.I.* A few months after the reunion with his family, Ben-Hur says to his young beloved (not his wife) Esther, that he must "act for his people". He will gather around him thousands of young men, from Judea and Galilee, burning with love of freedom, and will "raise his hand" against Rome. He adds that the yoke of Rome is growing heavier, and that many will participate in the rebellion, including the people of the desert. Esther gives him her blessing and promises to remember him and be his forever. "Then he left and set out on his long and dangerous road" (p. 270, 272).

Heb.II invents yet another ending: the letter from Ilderim does not make Ben-Hur his heir but urges him to "come back East and stand at the head of his troops". Contrary to historical fact it adds that the commanders he left in the Galilee have gathered an enormous army and are ready to go to war.

And Ben-Hur realized that the time had come for him to leave his peaceful abode and go back to his oppressed people, for his soul would not rest until the people of Judea came to peace and the Holy City would be cleansed of Romans. (p.248)

Heb.V supplies the most "creative" ending and the most erroneous one historically speaking. Far more than the mere preparations for the rebellion, it describes the rebellion itself and crowns it with outstanding victory. It concludes with the words: "A few years have passed and not one Roman was left in Judea" (p.92).

On the whole, the alterations are a schematization of the original historical background, and these endings present yet another aspect of the by-now familiar model of oppressor versus oppressed.

Some points for conclusion

Ben-Hur is but one typical example of many Hebrew translations over the years which obliterated or manipulated Christian material. The novel's exceptional value for research lies in the combination of several crucial factors: the apparent clash, as viewed by cultural agents in the form of translators and publishers, between its Christian character and its ideological potential as a Jewish heroic tale, which, combined with its outstanding popularity, leads to repeated translations/ adaptations.

Fear of assimilation and a certain uncertainty concerning the identity of the New Hebrew can perhaps have accounted for this phenomenon before and shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel. In the present translations this behavior may illustrate either the complex nature of the "problem" or the slowness of procedures that involve a shift in persistent norms.

The manipulation performed by the translators is not overtly "announced", nor is the reason disclosed, unless in roundabout "encoded" formulations. This is congruent with the normative operation of ideological manipulation in translation, especially in periods where opposition to such manipulation begins to develop, together with a growing emphasis on the need for adequacy as the primary norm.

The tactics employed vary, though usually large- and small-scale omissions are involved. They vary according to two criteria: the period and the target public. The shift in norms, requiring more adequacy in translation, is one of the factors responsible for the change in attitude in the Israeli cultural scene after the 1960s. So is the diminishing role of

"mobilized literature", original or translated. Yet, despite the shift in norm in literature for adults, literature for children and youth did not follow suit as rapidly. And 19th century historical novels have grown to be regarded as raw material for adaptations for children and youth.

Obliteration of "undesirable" material is not necessarily a sufficient end in itself. Other tactics are employed in order to re-shape texts into the formula of a more "acceptable" model. In the case of *Ben-Hur* not one of the eight Hebrew translations copes with the original "Tale of the Christ" as is. The closest is a cheap pocket-book edition for adults, usually sold in kiosks, which did not even appear to bother to look up the full source text. In most translations, especially the early ones and all those meant for children and youth, omissions are used to obliterate the Christian elements, while the necessary additions are made to convert it into the traditional mobilized "Few against Many" "Jews against Romans" bravura model.

Notes

1. Square brackets will be used for Hebrew-English translation or transcription. All translations, including back-translations from the Hebrew, are mine.

2. The Jacob and Esau myth and its connotations within Jewish-Christian typology is discussed, e.g., in Yuva12000:16-40.

3. Brandon 1969:223-237 analyzes the possible historical reasons for the Gospel of Mark depicting Jesus as a threat to the Jews rather than a rebel against Rome. See Kremers 1980 for debate about the part of the Jews in the Crucifixion.

4. The German novelist Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825).

5. This trend may be comparable to the 18th century Jewish Enlightenment attempt to return to the roots of the true Hebrew faith, termed Mosaism, as opposed to "Rabbinism" (see, for instance, Schorsch 1994:213).

6. I examined it in "blue print" in the Zmora Publishing House.

7. Every "Book" is preceded by a motto, which is a quotation from the "classical" repertoire. Most of them bear no connection to the Christian theme, yet they have been omitted, presumably as a result of the initial omission of the Christian ones.

8. This, by the way, is the tactic adopted by the German 1961 translation, which renders all the chapters of Book First, but not in full.

9. It is hard to account for the deviation from historical fact, both in the genre, the historical novel, and on the part of teachers or historiographers.

10. For a full account of Herod Agrippa's life see Schwartz 1987.

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Résumé

Depuis le réveil de la littérature hébraïque au XVIIIe siècle, la traduction a été considérée comme un levier puissant de manipulation idéologique. Le christianisme a été l'objet d'une telle manipulation. Tant la peur que la haine de la religion « plus jeune » peuvent rendre compte du traitement subversif d'éléments chrétiens dans les textes hébreux. Selon les époques et les normes en cours, les stratégies manipulatrices ont varié, conduisant le plus souvent à l'omission d'éléments indésirables, mais transformant aussi le texte en un produit plus acceptable. *Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ* (1880) par Lew Wallace est l'un des romans les plus traduits et les plus manipulés en hébreu. II se prête aussi bien a l'étude de la subversion des éléments chrétiens qu'à celle d'une conversion plus « créatrice », suivant le modèle « Peu contre Beaucoup » ou « La bravoure juive contre l'Empire romain ».

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Source: *Target*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2003, p. 263-301.