THE USE OF INTERROGATIVES IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL AND THEIR TRANSLATION IN THE ANCIENT VERSIONS

Harry van Rooy
Faculty of Theology
North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus
Potchefstroom 2520
E-mail: Herrie.VanRooy@nwu.ac.za
(Received 02/11/2014; Accepted 14/11/2014)

ABSTRACT
The Hebrew book of Ezekiel contains more than 70 questions, many of them rhetorical. The questions are introduced by interrogative particles, such as קְרָא and לא, and interrogative pronouns. There are also questions without such particles. This paper investigates the construction and use of questions in the Hebrew Ezekiel and the translation of these questions into the Septuagint, Peshitta, Targum and Vulgate. The first section of the paper deals with the construction of questions in the Hebrew Old Testament as well as in the versions. The main part of the paper discusses a few of the different kinds of questions in the Hebrew Ezekiel, and their rendering into the versions. From the examples discussed, it is clear that the Targum normally follows the Hebrew closely. The LXX and Vulgate do not have fixed patterns, but use interrogative particles in the majority of examples. The Peshitta is close to the Hebrew in factual questions, but shows a variety of translations for yes-no questions, in most instances without any interrogative particles.

INTRODUCTION
More than 70 questions appear in the Hebrew book of Ezekiel, mostly introduced by interrogative particles, such as קְרָא and לא. This paper investigates the construction and use of questions in Ezekiel and the translation of these questions into the Septuagint, Peshitta, Targum and Vulgate. In the first section of the paper, some remarks are made about the way in which questions are structured in the Hebrew Old Testament, as well as in the four versions in question. The main part of the paper contains a discussion of

---

the variant kinds of questions found in the Hebrew Ezekiel, and their rendering into the four versions. Not all questions are discussed, but only a few examples selected from the different kinds of questions and particles found in the book.

QUESTIONS IN BIBLICAL HEBREW, GREEK, LATIN, SYRIAC AND ARAMAIC

In Biblical Hebrew, two kinds of questions can be distinguished, namely factual questions and questions requiring a “yes” or “no” answer (Van der Merwe, Naude & Kroeze 2004:321). The latter may also be called polar questions (Gibson 1997:183; Waltke & O’Connor 1990:315). Although questions can be structured without particles, particles usually form part of the questions. For yes-no questions the particles י and לא are normally used (Van der Merwe, Naude & Kroeze, 2004:321-322). They can also be used for rhetorical questions, especially לא. A double question is usually introduced by כי (1) ... כי. These particles can also be used for indirect questions. Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley (1966:473) call these questions “simple” questions. They say a special use of כי is found when the speaker is unsure of the answer (Gesenius, Kautzsch & Cowley 1966:474). The particle can, however, also be used in questions that expect a negative answer. לא is frequently used when a positive answer is expected (Gibson 1997:184).

A factual question can also be introduced by one of a several particles (for a detailed discussion of all the particles, cf. van der Merwe, Naude & Kroeze 2004:322-328; Waltke & O’Connor 1990:318-329). י (“who?”) is used for personal questions and can also be used in rhetorical questions or for a wish. מה (“what?”) is used for questions about things or the state of affairs. This particle can be joined to a number of prepositions for questions introduced by interrogatives such as “why?”, “how?” and “how long?” Other interrogatives such as מה (“which/what place?”), מה and מ (“in which/what place?”), מה and מ (“how?”), מה and מ (“to which/what place?”) are also used in Biblical Hebrew. Most of these particles are found in Ezekiel. In indirect questions, the interrogative is used without any change in sentence structure (Gibson...
Rhetorical questions are not questions asking for information, but the implied answer to the question is the information the speaker wants to convey (cf. Moshavi 2011:254-256).

Nunn (1922) has a brief discussion of the use of interrogatives in ecclesiastical Latin, comparing it to classical usage, which is different in some instances. Direct questions that may be answered positively or negatively are formed by adding *ne* to an emphatic word at the beginning of a sentence. In the Vulgate, however, there are questions without particles; the fact that they are questions is indicated by the context (Nunn 1922:97; Collins 1985:50). A question expecting a positive answer is introduced by *nonne* (cf. Collins 1985:223) and also by *an* in the Vulgate (Nunn 1922:97). If a negative answer is expected, *num* is the usual particle in Classical Latin, whereas *numquid* is used in the Vulgate (although *num* is also found in the Vulgate of the Old Testament) (Nunn 1922:97; Collins 1985:223-224). *Si* may also be used for direct and indirect questions (Nunn 1922:97; Collins 1985:224). In indirect questions, the subjunctive is frequently used. Interrogative pronouns may be used, as well as compounds, including an interrogative pronoun such as *quomodo* (Nunn 1922:97). Alternative questions are structured in such a way that the first and the second of the coordinated clauses are introduced by *utrum* and *an* respectively; or, only the second clause is introduced by *an* (Nunn 1922:98). *Quis* and *quid* are used as interrogative pronouns (Collins 1985:225). The interrogative adjectives *qui*, *quae* and *quod* are also used to phrase questions (Collins 1985:83-84).

As far as Aramaic is concerned, Dalman (1981) has an extensive discussion, spread throughout his work (cf. e.g., 1981:119-121, 208, 212, 218-220), of different particles used, but he does not treat the construction of questions as such. It is, however, interesting to note that the Hebrew interrogative particle הֲ (and הֲלֹֹ֨א) does not normally occur in Aramaic. An exception is Biblical and Jewish Aramaic (only in the Targum; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:236; 2000:1857).

Muraoka (1997:21, 63) briefly discusses the interrogative particles in Syriac, but does not discuss the construction of questions. Brockelmann (1979:50) lists the interrogative pronouns used in Syriac, such as ☃ (“who?”) and ☃ (“what?”). He
H. van Rooy says indirect questions can follow a verb directly, but they can also be linked by ܕ (Brockelmann 1929:121-122). Indirect questions of which the answers are unsure (Indirekte Zweifelsfragen) can be introduced by ܐܢ or ܕܐܢ (Brockelmann 1979:122). Nöldeke (1904:181-183) has a more complete discussion of the interrogative pronouns in Syriac. He says (1904:267) there are no formal markers for direct questions having the meaning “whether?”. This statement refers to the yes-no questions mentioned above. The interrogative particles usually stand at the beginning of a sentence, but may be moved further, although not to the position after the verb (Nöldeke 1904:267-268). He has an extensive discussion of indirect questions in Syriac (1904:303-307). For “if” or “whether” in indirect questions, the particle ܐܢ is used when the question is related to the entire predicate. For the other particles, no clear distinction appears in the construction of indirect questions, even when ܐܢ is prefixed to the particle.

Funk (1973) has a systematic discussion of questions in Hellenistic Greek. Questions are usually, but not always, introduced by interrogative particles. These particles may be interrogative pronouns or interrogative adverbs (Funk 1973:392). The word order of interrogative sentences is not fixed and such sentences follow the same basic word order as declarative sentences (Funk 1973:393). It is interesting to note the use of εἰ in direct and indirect questions. In Classical Greek, it is used in indirect questions, but it has become the normal interrogative particle, also for direct questions in Biblical Greek (Conybeare & Stock 1988:90-91). Caragounis (2004:208-216) discusses this development in detail. He thinks that in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament, εἰ was confused with ἢ (Caragounis, 2004:216). He notes that ἢ μήν occurs eleven times in Rahlf’s edition of the Septuagint, and εἰ μήν nine times (Caragounis 2004:214; also notes 263 and 264). Of these nine appearances of εἰ μήν, five are found in Ezekiel (33:27; 34:8; 35:6; 36:5; and 38:19). Muraoka (2009:190) regards the use of εἰ as interrogative particle for direct and indirect questions as a usage that does not predate the Septuagint.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT INTERROGATIVE PARTICLES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Questions are also structured without any interrogative particles, using only intonation, as is done in many languages. In Ezekiel, a possible example is found in 20:31:

נִבְשָׂאֵֵ֣תֲמַתְׂנֹֹֽתֵיכֶֶּ֡םֲבְֹֽׂהַע בִירֲ֩בְׂנֵיכֶֹּ֨םֲבָּאֵֵ֜שֲׁאַתֶּםֲ֩נִטְׂמְׂאִ ֲֹ֨
יִםֲלְׂכָּל־גִלֹֽוּלֵיכֶּםֲ֙עַד־הַיּ֔וֹםֲ
וַא נִִ֛יֲ
אִדָּרֵ֥שֲׁלָּכֶ֖םֲבֵֵ֣יתֲיִשְׂרָּאֵ֑ל
חַי־אָָּ֗נִיֲנְׂאֻםֲ֙א דֹנֵָּ֣יֲיְׂהוִ֔הֲאִם־אִדָּרֵֶ֖שֲׁלָּכֶֹּֽם

NIV: “‘When you offer your gifts – the sacrifice of your children in the fire – you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. **Am I to let you inquire of me, you Israelites?** As surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘I will not let you inquire of me.’”

The statement before the boldface sentence and the oath following it are proof that the enclosed sentence cannot be taken as a statement that the Lord will be available to his people (cf. Zimmerli 1979:402; Block 1997:645, especially note 163; and Cooke 1970:225). An indication of an interrogative sentence may be the fronting of the personal pronoun in this instance. Below is found a discussion of a similar example from 20:3, where the Hebrew uses the particle ה, thus increasing the probability that the relevant sentence is indeed meant to be a question.

The LXX translates the sentence without any particle: καὶ ἐγὼ ἀποκριθῶς ὑμῖν, οἶκος τοῦ Ἱσραήλ. The *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Hubler 2007:961) translates it as the following question: “And am I to answer you, O house of Israel?” This is probably done on account of the context.

In Latin, questions such as these may be structured without an interrogative particle, or with *-ne* or *num*. In this instance, the Vulgate does not have an interrogative particle, but it translates the oath correctly by using a negative particle:

et in oblatione donorum vestrorum cum transducitis filios vestros per ignem vos polluimini in omnibus idolis vestris usque hodie et ego respondebo vobis domus Israel vivo ego dicit Dominus Deus quia non respondebo vobis

However, the translation, “et ego respondebo vobis domus Israel” (“and shall I
answer you, house of Israel”), indicates that the translator understood the phrase as a question and translated it into Latin to convey the meaning of the Hebrew rhetorical question, thus agreeing with the translation of the Septuagint.

The Targum also has a translation without a particle and follows the Hebrew almost verbatim:

The Peshitta translation is fairly free, but the sense is clear so that it can be assumed that the translators also understood the text as a question:

It may be translated as a question: “And do you want to consult with me, house of Israel? As I live,’ says the Lord of Lords, ‘I will not give you a word.’”

In this instance, all the versions follow the Hebrew in not using an interrogative particle, although it is clear that the translators understood the Hebrew correctly.

**FACTUAL QUESTIONS (WH- QUESTIONS)**

There are not many questions with interrogative particles such as אֵי (“which place?”), אַיֵּה and אי (“in which place?”), אַךְ and אי (“how?”), אָּנָּה and אי (“to which place?”) in Ezekiel. אֵי is found in Ezekiel 13:12:

NIV: “When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, ‘Where is the whitewash you covered it with?’”

The “where” question follows a rhetorical question. This pattern occurs frequently in the book, usually in direct speech. In instances like this, a corresponding interrogative particle is usually found in the versions:

LXX: Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ὄλοιφῃ ὑμῶν ἢν ἤλειψατε.

Vulgate: ubi est litura quam levistis
All four versions follow the word order and meaning of the Hebrew closely, even with respect to the use of related nouns and verbs at the end of the sentence.

An example of a question with�אֵ֥י occurs in 33:10:

**NIV:** “Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’”

This question can be seen as stating the despair of the people (Zimmerli 1983:187). In this instance, the versions again use a corresponding interrogative particle:

- **LXX:** καὶ πῶς ζησόμεθα
- **Vulgate:** quo modo ergo vivere poterimus
- **Peshitta:** לֶָּ֥מָּה נֶָּ֥קָּמִּים וֲַּאֵָ֥יךְ נֶָּ֥קָּוְׂכֶַּ֖ים וְׂאֵֵ֥יךְ נִֵּ֖וְׂיֵֶ֑ה

It is interesting to note that the Peshitta stands alone in translating the verb as a participle.

In 18:31, a question withךְַּ֥בָּּ֝אַתֵָּֽהֲ occurs:

**NIV:** “Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel?”

This question is rhetorical and it is a clear warning to the people to choose life (cf. Zimmerli 1979:386). The LXX, Targum and Vulgate again use particles here:

- **LXX:** καὶ ἢνα τί ἀποθνησκετε, οἷκος Ἰσραηλ
- **Vulgate:** et quare moriemini domus Israel

িষָּּ֥א דֵַּ֖וְׂנַיֵָּ֥וְׂרַּ֐וְׂה is used to translate the Hebrew particleךְַּ֥בָּּ֝אַתֵָּֽהֲ. (Cf. Muraoka, 2009:341 for uses of this combination to indicate discontent, displeasure or incredulity.)
Targum: וּלמָא תְמוּתון בֵּית יִשְרָאֵל

The Peshitta has a free rendering of the question, without an interrogative particle:

This rendering can be regarded as a final or result clause: “… so that you do not die, house of Israel”. It follows the rhetorical function of the Hebrew question. Among these examples, the Peshitta translation of the question in Ezekiel 18:31 is the only translation that does not use a corresponding interrogative particle.

FACTUAL QUESTIONS (מִֶ֖מי – “WHO?” AND מָֹּֽה – “WHAT?”)

Questions about persons (“who?”) occur only three times in Ezekiel, using the particle מִֶ֖מי. A typical example is found in 31:2:

NIV: “Son of man, say to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to his hordes: ‘Who can be compared with you in majesty?’”

The versions typically use the corresponding particle. This holds true for מִֶ֖מי, as in the example above, and for מָֹּֽה in the next example.

LXX: Τίνι ὁμοίωσας σεαυτόν ἐν τῷ ψευτί σου
Vulgate: cui similis factus es in magnitudine tua
Peshitta: לֵפָאֶֽה מַמָּלֵת מַמָּלֵקֶה
Targum: לַפַּאֶֽה קַמַּיְמָֽם בְּכַפְּךָ

The same pattern is followed for questions that use the particle מָֹּֽה (“what?”). A typical example occurs in 12:22:

NIV: “Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel...?”

LXX: Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, τίς ὕμιν ἐν παράβολῃ αὐτῇ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.
Vulgate: fili hominis quod est proverbium istud vobis in terra Israhel
Peshitta: בֵּרַאֲם מַחְדִּיסְהֶל הָוָה לְבָעַו אֶל־אָדָָּם יִשְׂרָאֵל

NIV: “...”
Targum: בַר אָדָּם מִתְכַּלֶּא לָנֹֹ֨א לְכֹּון עַל אֲרֻאָא דְי שרָאֵל
The versions do not experience any problems with these kinds of questions, as they use the corresponding particles and apply them according to the normal style of their respective languages. Examples are the declensions of the interrogative pronouns in Greek and Latin.

**YES-NO QUESTIONS**

A greater variety occurs in those questions where a “yes” or “no” answer is expected. All the versions do not have particles corresponding to the Hebrew ה or ה ל, thus, they have to find different ways to render these kinds of questions into their respective languages. A typical example of a question with ה occurs in 20:3:

**NIV:** “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will not let you inquire of me,” declares the Sovereign LORD.’”

This example is typical of rhetorical questions in Ezekiel. In this case, a positive answer is expected. Questions like this one frequently occur to introduce a message from the Lord to the people (or the elders in this case). Three of the versions use interrogative particles:

**LXX:** Ει ἐπερωτήσητε μὲ ὑμεῖς ἔρχεσθε

Here the LXX uses the particle ει with the indicative to express the question. This is not a construction found in Classical Greek, as has been shown above. It is also found in the New Testament and may probably be regarded as a Hebraism (Blass, De Brunner & Funk, 1974:226).

**Vulgate:** num ad interrogandum me vos venistis

The particle *num* in Latin usually indicates that a negative answer is expected. In this case, the Hebrew expects a positive answer and the Latin does not. In Latin, *-ne* is
neutral as far as the answer expected is concerned, while *nonne* indicates that a positive answer is expected, as indicated above.

**Targum:** 

The Targum uses the same particle as the Hebrew. The particle is not used in non-Biblical Aramaic, so that its usage here can be regarded as a Hebraism.

**Peshitta:** 

The Peshitta does not use a particle, but the context makes a question probable.

There are instances where a question with **ה** is followed by an indirect question in the Hebrew Ezekiel, as in 8:6:

NIV: And he said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the utterly detestable things the Israelites are doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable.”

The main question expects the positive answer that the prophet is indeed seeing what the people are doing.

The Targum follows the Hebrew closely, using the same interrogative particle for the main question as the Hebrew:

The LXX does not use a particle for the main question and uses **τί** for the indirect question: καὶ ἐπε τρός με Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἔδρακας τί οὕτω ποιοῦσιν.

The same kind of construction is used by the Peshitta (וַאֲמַרְלֵּכֶלְלָהּ אֶלְמַנְעַנֶּז קְדוֹמִי אָתָּךְ אַתְּן).

The Vulgate uses the particle **-ne** for the main question and **quid** for the indirect question. The particle **-ne** usually leaves the answer to the question open: “et dixit ad me fili hominis putasne vides tu quid isti faciant abominationes magnas quas domus Israel facit hic”.

What is interesting in this translation is the use of *putas* with *vides*, making the question almost hypothetical: “Do you suppose you see...?”
In 8:17, a second direct question follows the first one, both introduced by ה:  

NIV: He said to me, “Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the people of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here?”

This example is discussed by Moshavi (2011:255) as one of the questions where a positive rhetorical question expects a positive answer, different from the usual pattern. The Targum follows the Hebrew in the double use of the interrogative particle:

LXX: καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Ἑόρακας, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου; μὴ μικρὰ τῷ οἴκῳ Ιουδα τοῦ ποιεῖν τὰς ἁνομίας, ἃς πεποίηκασιν ὅδε

The first question is without a particle, while the second one begins with μὴ. This construction is used, as in Classical Greek, to indicate a negative answer is expected (Blass, Debrunner & Funk 1974:220).

The Vulgate has a free rendering of the Hebrew, making the first question a statement, and the second an indirect question: “et dixit ad me certe vidisti fili hominis numquid leve est hoc domui Iuda” (“And He said to me: ‘You certainly saw, son of man, how insignificant this is for the house of Judah ...’”).

Interestingly, the Peshitta does the same as the Vulgate, just without a qualifier like certe: נאָמִר לְהַדְוִיָה בֵּר אֱדֹמְצִיָּה לְבֵית הָיוֹדָה מְלַעֵמָבִי. הָכִּׂל תַּוְּעָבּוֹת

A typical example of a question with אָלַָהּ expectising a positive answer is found in 13:7:  

NIV: “Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations...?”

The Targum follows the Hebrew:  

In this instance, the LXX uses the particle ο🎦, expecting a positive answer: ο总产值 ψευδὴ ἑοράκατε καὶ μαντείας ματαίας εἰρήκατε.
The Vulgate uses *numquid*, which is usually the interrogative for a question that expects a negative answer: “*numquid non visionem cassam vidistis et divinationem mendacem locuti estis*”.

The Peshitta does not use a particle:

A similar example can be found in 21:5 (MT):

NIV: Then I said, “Sovereign LORD, they are saying of me, ‘Isn’t he just telling parables?’”

The LXX uses οὐ to invite a positive answer: ὦχὶ παραβολὴ ἐστὶ λεγομένη αὕτη.

The Vulgate uses the same construction as in the previous example: “*numquid non per parabolas loquitur iste*”.

The Targum follows the Hebrew closely:

The Peshitta does not use a particle:

In 12:9, a question introduced by אֹמֵרֵּוֲּאֵלִֶּ֛יםֲהֹֽוּא is followed by a second direct question introduced by המֶָּ֖֜אֲאָּמְׂרִֵ֣יםֲלִ֖֔יֲה לִֹ֛֖אֲמְׂמַשֵֵ֥֖לֲמְׂשָּׁלִֶ֖֖֖וּא

NIV: “Son of man, did not the Israelites, that rebellious people, ask you, ‘What are you doing?’”

Both these questions follow the normal pattern of these two kinds of questions.

The LXX also uses a normal pattern, with the first question beginning with οὐκ and the second with τί: Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, οὐκ εἶπαν πρὸς σὲ ὁ οἶκος τοῦ Ισραηλ οἶκος ὁ παραπικραίνων Τί σὺ ποιεῖς.

The same pattern is used by the Vulgate: “fili hominis *numquid non dixerunt ad te domus Israhel domus exasperans quid tu facis*”. If *numquid* is used when a negative answer is expected, *numquid non* indicates a positive answer is expected: “This is what Israel did.”
The Targum follows the Hebrew closely again:

בַרֲאָדָּםֲה לָּאֲאִםֲיֵימרוּןֲלָּךֲבֵיתֲיִשרָּאֵלֲעַמָּאֲסָּרְׂבָּנָּאֲמָּאֲאַתֲעָּבֵיד

The only difference is the addition of אִם after the ה לָּא. The addition may be an attempt to emphasise the positive response that is expected to the first question.

The Peshitta also uses an interrogative particle before each question, using the particle אֲנ for the first question:

ܒܪܢܫܐ אܢ אܡܪܝܢ לܟܒܝܬܐܝܣܪܝܠܒܝܬܐܡܡܪܡܪܢܐܡܢܐܥܒܕܐܢܬܠܢܡܢܘܗܢܐܕܥܒܐܢܬ.

A question introduced by ה לֹֹֽא can also be followed by an indirect question, as in 24:19:

וַיֹּאמְׂרֵ֥וֲּאֵלֶַ֖יֲהָּעֵָּ֑ם לֹֹֽא־תַגִֵ֥ידֲלָּ֙נוֲּ֙מָּה־אֵ֣לֶּהֲלָּּ֔נֶהֲלָּּ֗ו לְגָּ֥רָהֲנָּאֲמָּאֲאַתֲעָּבֵיד

NIV: Then the people asked me, “Won’t you tell us what these things have to do with us?”

LXX: καὶ εἶπε πρὸς με ο λαός ὁ Υχ ἀναγγελεῖς ἢμῖν τί ἐστι ταῦτα, α σύ ποιεῖς

The use of the two particles (Ὁυκ and τί) fits into the patterns discussed above.

The Vulgate changes the first question from a yes-no question to a “why” question: “et dixit ad me populus quare non indicas nobis quid ista significet quae tu facis”.

The Peshitta retains the negative particle at the beginning of the first question. The context makes it clear that the first sentence must be regarded as a question.

אֵמָרָה לָא תָחְיו בַר לָא חוֹטָה לָא תָאַשׁ הָלֵא לָא דאָבָא עבֵיד

The Targum again follows the Hebrew closely:

ואמרה על מעמה שלמה תחור בר לאמ לא אלין לאמ לא דאאת עבד

In 18:23 and 25, examples of two questions occur, the first one introduced by ה and the second by אֲנ. The example in verse 23 will be discussed first:

הַחַפְּזוֹת חַפְּזוֹת וְּאַשְׁרֵי נָאָם אַשְׁרֵי נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם נָאָם نא

NIV: “‘Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?’ declares the Sovereign LORD. ‘Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?’”

Two possibilities are stated in this verse, with the first one expecting a negative answer and the second an affirmative answer.
The Targum follows the Hebrew closely:

The Targum follows the Hebrew closely:

LXX: μὴ θελήσει θελήσω τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ἁνόμου, λέγει κύριος, ὡς τὸ ἀποστρέψαι αὐτὸν ἐκ τῆς ὀδοῦ τῆς πονηρᾶς καὶ ζῆν αὐτὸν

“For my will do I actually will the death of the lawless one,’ says the Lord, ‘rather than for him to run back from his wicked way and live’” (Hubler, 2007:959).

For the first question μὴ is used, indicating a negative response. The second question is translated by a comparative clause that follows ὡς.

The Vulgate uses numquid for the first question, expecting a negative answer. The second question is linked to the first one with et non. This is a good but freer rendering of the Hebrew: “numquid voluntatis meae est mors impii dicit Dominus Deus et non ut convertatur a viis suis et vivat.”

The Peshitta renders the two rhetorical questions by statements, reflecting the expected answers to the two questions:

Ezekiel 18:25 reads as follows:

NIV: “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust?”

This is a very interesting example, also as far as the versions are concerned. The LXX uses the particles μὴ and οὐ, viz. μὴ for ל and οὐ for לא. In the first question, both the Greek and Hebrew expect a negative reply (“No, the Lord’s ways are not wrong!”), and both expect an affirmative answer to the second question (“Indeed, the ways of the people are wrong!”).

LXX: καὶ εἴπατε Ὑπὸ κατευθύνει ὡς ὄδὸς κυρίου. ἀκούσατε δὴ, ὁ Ἰσραήλ: μὴ ὡς ὄδὸς μου ὑπὸ κατευθύνει; οὖχι ὡς ὄδὸς ὑμῶν ὑπὸ κατευθύνει
In this instance, the Targum is very interesting, not so much for the translation of the question, but because of the theological problem posed by the first part of the verse. The Hebrew states a challenge of the people that the ways of the Lord are not just. This was too harsh for the translator of the Targum (cf. van Rooy, 2013:17):

אמריםת לא מפרשים לאה אורותת נ>windowbox.EmptyCell</windowbox>רי שמעי בית ישראלי אורותת טוב ли

The statement at the beginning is changed to read that the people said, “The good ways of the Lord were not explained to us.” The first question is then also changed, as far as the content is concerned, to follow this statement. In both questions, the Targum follows the construction of the Hebrew.

The Vulgate transforms the two questions into one: “et dixistis non est aequa via Domini audite domus Israel numquid via mea non est aequa et non magis viae vestrae prvae sunt”. The first question begins with numquid, expecting a negative answer. The second question is incorporated and begins with non magis: “Is it not rather the case that your ways are crooked” (a good translation of the Hebrew). The first part of the combined question implies a negative answer and the second a positive one, in agreement with the Hebrew.

The Peshitta does not use questions at all, but transforms the rhetorical questions into statements:

ܘܐܡܪܬܘܢ ܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܢܐܘܪ ܐܘܪ ܚܬܗ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܫܡܥܘ ܗܟܝܠ ܕܒܝܬ ܐܝܫܪܝܠ ܐܘܪ ܚܬܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܐܘܪ ܚܬܝ ܕܝܠܝ ܫܦܝܪ ܢܐ(la ܫܦܝܪ ܢܐ)

("Israel, my ways, Israel, are good, but your ways are not good.")

In the examples discussed in this group of questions, the Targum follows the Hebrew very closely, using the corresponding particles in most instances. Of the nine examples the Targum has the corresponding particles seven times. In 12:9, the Targum has אִם, as opposed to the הֲלֹֹ֨א of the Hebrew. This may be an attempt to emphasise the positive response expected to the first question. As discussed above, the Targum does not follow its normal practice in 18:25, where the first question is rendered by a statement. The Targum probably reflects a theological problem by the first question,
and thus the change into something acceptable.

The LXX does not always follow a fixed pattern, but uses interrogative particles in most instances. It is fairly consistent in its rendering of הֲלֹֹֽא, using οὐ in 13:7, 21:5, 12:9, 24:19 and 18:25. In the second question in 18:23, הֲלֹֹֽא is rendered by a comparative clause. For indirect questions, it uses τί, as in 8:6 and 24:19, as well as for a direct question following a yes-no question, as in 12:9.

Further, the LXX has different renderings for הֲ. It does not use a particle in 8:6; in 20:3 it uses εἰ; and in 8:17, it does not use a particle for the first הֲ, but it uses μή for the second. In the double question in 18:23 and 25, it uses μή for the הֲ at the beginning.

Although the Vulgate is more consistent than the LXX, it also does not always follow the same pattern. It uses num for הֲ in 20:3 and 8:6. For the two double questions in 18:23 and 25, it uses numquid in both verses for the first question with הֲ, and et non and non magis for the two second questions introduced by הֲ. Both in 8:6 and 24:19, it uses quid for the indirect question that follows the first question; also for the direct question in 12:9. In 18:7, it renders the first question as a statement and changes the second question into an indirect question with numquid. It uses numquid for הֲ in 13:7, 21:5 and 12:9. In 24:19, it changes a yes-no question into a “why” question. It seems as if good Latin style plays an important role in the rendering of the different questions within different contexts.

In many instances of הֲ and הֲ, the Peshitta is the only version not using interrogative particles. Verses in the Peshitta in which particles do not occur are 20:3, 8:6, 13:7 and 21:5. In several of these examples, the Peshitta changes a rhetorical question into a statement, as in 13:7. In 12:9, it uses the particle . As indicated below, this particle is also used in the double question in 22:14. In 24:19, a particle is not used, but the context makes it clear that a question is implied. The two double questions in 18:23 and 25 are transformed into statements. In 8:17, it is close to the Vulgate in not rendering the first particle and changing the second into an indirect question by . It uses for indirect questions in 8:6, 12:9 and 24:19.
DOUBLE QUESTIONS WITH הֲ AND אִם

There is only one double question with הֲ and אִם in Ezekiel, viz. in 22:14:

הוֹמֱךְ לַבְּךָ אֲסֶרֶחַמֵּךְ וּדְיַלְדַּיָּהֲיָדַּיִךְ אֲפִיִּמָא אַשְרָא אֶעַשָּא אָתָךְ

NIV: “Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you?”

The Targum follows the Hebrew again as far as the construction is concerned:

הוֹתִיךְ לַבְּךָ אֶשֶׁר יַחַסְּנָּןְיָדָּךְלְׂיוֹמַיָּא נָּאֲעַתִידֲלְׂמַע בַדֲעִמִיך

Although it is not related to the question as such, the translation of נָּאֲעַתִידֲלְׂמַע בַד for the Hebrew participle is very interesting, showing insight into the syntax of the Hebrew participle.

The Vulgate uses numquid (expecting a negative answer) as the introductory participle and links the first and second questions with aut: “numquid sustinebit cor tuum aut praevalebunt manus tuae in diebus quos ego faciam tibi”.

The LXX uses the particle εἰ to introduce both questions: εἰ ύποστήσεται ἡ καρδία σου; εἰ κρατήσουσιν αἱ χεῖρές σου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις, αἱ ἦγῳ ποιῶ ἐν σοί.

The Peshitta goes in the same direction, only adding “and” to the second אַנָּ תַּקָּףֲלִבִיךֲאִםֲיִתחַסְׂנָּןֲיְׂדָּךֲלְׂיוֹמַיָּאֲדַא ֲ נָּאֲעַתִידֲלְׂמַע בַד

CONCLUSION

From the examples discussed, it is clear that the Targum normally follows the Hebrew closely. The LXX and Vulgate do not have fixed patterns, but use interrogative particles in the majority of examples. The Peshitta is close to the Hebrew in factual questions, but shows a variety of translations for yes-no questions, and in the majority of instances, does not use any interrogative particles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


