

It is not merely the *fact* of alliteration that matters; it is at least as much the way it *sounds*.

A random example of such a 'translated' alliteration may serve to illustrate my point; we take the first that offered in Buber and Rosenzweig's translation of Genesis 1: 2, viz. 'Irrsal und Wirrsal' as rendering of the Hebrew *tōhū wābōhū* ('without form and void', in the description of the state of the earth before the creation of light). Now *tōhū wābōhū* is a perfect sound-image: with its 'dark' rounded back-vowels and thudding plosives and its probably labiovelar *w* (=English *w*) in the middle, it sounds wild and chaotic; Dutch 'woest' is quite a good sound-equivalent with much the same effect. 'Irrsal und Wirrsal' on the contrary with its 'clear' unrounded front vowels and easily gliding consonants and its sharp German *w*, sounds piercing and thin, beside *tōhū wābōhū*. It is like the irritating giggles of an affected old maid. In its kind it is just as misleading as the translated 'Leitworte' are in theirs. How much better off is the reader who, through his own mother tongue, has an easy access to the Holy Book, and who then, enthralled by its contents, can find some good annotations which give him a glimpse of the Hebrew, where, in its original form, a 'Leitwort' is truly a *leading* word and a sound-image really an *image*.

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A NEW TRANSLATION OF LUKE 1: 20

While working through the first chapter of Luke's gospel I stumbled upon what appears to be a most interesting problem of translation. It involves the angel Gabriel's words to Zechariah after announcing the birth of John the Baptist, particularly the phrase *esē siōpōn kai mē dunamenos lalēsai*, for which there appear to be no variant readings, and which is rendered regularly, 'you shall be silent (or dumb) and not able to speak', in all of the 58 versions on my shelves. Because of this unanimous consensus of such a large number of translators, going all the way back to Wyclif, one must be most hesitant, indeed, to suggest a variant rendering, implying that the passage in question has been translated wrongly for 600 years by all translators (and one could go back another 1,000 years, and throw in the eminent Jerome as well)! Nevertheless, throwing all caution to the winds, it is here suggested that the true sense of the passage is, 'you shall be *deaf*, and unable to speak . . .'. The phrase under discussion is thus *esē siōpōn*.

The Evidence of the LXX

To begin with, one must keep in mind that this first chapter of Luke is one of the most Hebraistic passages in the entire New Testament corpus. Hebrew idioms, Hebrew syntax, Hebrew constructions abound; and it is generally agreed that Luke's source here was a Hebrew or Aramaic one. For this reason a study of the verb *siōpaō* in the Old Testament is strongly suggested as the proper starting point in determining its sense in the passage in question.

Hatch and Redpath record the fact that the verb *siōpaō* is used in the LXX manuscripts to render eight different Hebrew verbs, of which the three most common ones are *dāmam*, *hāraš*, *hāšah*. All of these have as their primary sense the idea of being silent, or dumb, or unable to speak. The interesting one of these is the verb *hāraš*, for which Brown, Driver and Briggs lists two senses, both, perhaps, secondary meanings, derived from the primary sense of ‘to *live* in silence’, which might refer either to muteness or deafness. At any rate, the second meaning listed is ‘to be *deaf*’, for which a much smaller number of references is given, but enough to establish this as a regularly accepted sense of the word among the Jews. Three instances are listed in which the verb clearly means ‘to be deaf’—1 Samuel 7: 8 (Hiphil); and Psalm 28: 1 and Micah 7: 16 (kal). And one might ask if Isaiah 64: 12 would not yield a better sense if the prophet’s words were to be rendered ‘will You be *deaf* (i.e. not hear our prayers), and afflict us forever?’ rather than the usual, ‘will You *keep silent*, and afflict . . .’. In passing, one might also note that the verb *hāraš* also has a third sense—‘to *make silent*’—in Job 11: 3, which would seem to correspond exactly to the Greek *siōpaō* in its primary causative sense (-aō ending).

Even more conclusive, however, is the use of the adjective, *hereš*, which has the plain meaning of ‘deaf’ at least eleven times in the Old Testament (Exod. 4: 11 (4), Lev. 19: 14, Psa. 58: 5, Isa. 29: 18 (3), 35: 5, and 42: 18 f.), and which is rendered always as *kōphos*, which, as we well know, can mean either ‘deaf’ or ‘dumb’. This is enough to establish beyond any doubt that the Hebrew root *h-r-š* and the Greek equivalent *siōpaō*, as used in Hebraistic circles, was used in current speech or literature to refer to deafness, as well as dumbness.

Corroborated by Greek Linguistics

Linguistically, all of the lexicons list the primary sense of *siōpaō* as ‘to keep silence’, which is regularly understood in the sense of not speaking. However, the original primary sense of the verb must have been something like ‘to *make silent*’—as in Job 11: 3 above, since the -aō ending is causative in sense. And it is thus clear that all of the meanings discussed are secondary in nature, being metonymically derived from the passive sense of the original. But this passive sense might just as well indicate ‘to *be* (live) in silence’ (i.e. to *hear* no sound, to be deaf) as ‘to *keep silence*’ (i.e. to *speak* no sound, to be dumb). Both would properly describe the object of the verb ‘to *make silent*’. Indeed, the various senses of the Hebrew root *h-r-š*, as given above, suggest that this is precisely the history of the word in Hebrew circles during the koine period. And, as we have seen, the evidence is clear that the Jewish translators of the LXX regarded the verb *siōpaō* as the proper equivalent of *hāraš*. Thus we see that no serious argument can be raised on the grounds of Greek linguistics to rendering the phrase *esē siōpōn* as ‘you will be deaf’ as well as ‘you will be dumb’.

Demanded by the Larger Context

The arguments based on the evidence of the LXX and Greek linguistics, however, would be utterly inconclusive in themselves. It is the context itself

which forces us to consider the sense ‘you will be *deaf*’ as superior to the usual sense of ‘you will be *dumb*’. Specifically, it is the account of the circumcision of the child John, recorded in Luke 1: 59–66, and particularly verse 62, which argues most conclusively that the angel told Zechariah that he would be *deaf*, as well as *dumb*.

Here we read that after Elisabeth told the relatives that the name should be John, they were still unconvinced, and that ‘they asked his father, *using sign language*, what name he wanted the child to have’—*eneneuon tō patri autou*. . . . We can easily understand how Zechariah might use sign-language to communicate with his friends if he were *dumb*; but there would be no need for *them* to use sign-language to communicate with *him* unless he were deaf! If we translate, as do all the versions, in other words, *what possible sense* does verse 62 make? But if we know that Zechariah was stricken *both deaf and dumb*, then all becomes clear.

As a matter of fact, this suggested sense renders verse 22 much clearer than in the usual versions. After telling us that the people finally realized that Zechariah had seen a vision in the temple, Luke tells us that ‘As for Zechariah, he kept on talking to them in sign-language (*dianeuōn autois*), but *he remained deaf and dumb* (*diemenen kōphos*, remembering that *kōphos* means both deaf and dumb, and could have *both* senses here). After all, if Zechariah could *hear* their conversation to him, he could communicate with them very easily by simply nodding ‘yes’ and ‘no’ (which the verb *dianueuō* could mean; but it is usually rendered by the more radical sense of using sign-language, which suggests that he could not really understand what they were saying to him either). On the face of it, therefore, the context points rather conclusively to the fact that the angel told Zechariah that he would be *both deaf and dumb* until the time everything was fulfilled.

The peculiar Periphrastic Form

Accustomed as we are to Hebraisms in this section of Luke, it still remains a fact that the translator is puzzled by the peculiar periphrasis employed here—*esē siōpōn*. One must at least wonder whether Luke did not use this peculiar form with a purpose here. After all, he could just as well have used the simple future form—*siopēseis*, which was a word in current use at the time. And furthermore, we should note that almost all of the periphrastic constructions in the New Testament involve the *imperfect* tense, and are used, no doubt, to emphasize the durative aspect of that tense, a sense which the future does *not* have. Thus one must raise the question whether what Luke intended to say, after all, was something like this—‘you will *live in silence* (i.e. you will *be* in a state, or world, of silence), which could just as easily mean ‘you will be deaf’ as ‘you will be dumb’.

Fits the immediate Context perfectly

The final argument, of course, must take into consideration the immediate context itself, and the congruity of the newly-suggested sense thereto. And here, too, we find that if we take the first part of the angel’s prophecy to mean ‘you will be *deaf*’ instead of the more usual rendering, the whole passage gains in force and meaning. After all, this special punishment was inflicted

on Zechariah because he had not believed what he had *heard*. And, this being the case, was it not much more fitting that he should be stricken *deaf* (and dumb) because of this—that is, he would not henceforth *hear ANY words* until the angel's words were fulfilled? Nor would he be able to *speak* any words, since his spoken response was to question the truth of what he had heard.

Thus, when fully considered from all sides, it seems much more probable that the true sense of this verse is as follows: '... because you did not believe what I said, you will *hear no sound*, and you will be unable to speak until the day when everything that I have told you comes true. And it will all be fulfilled in due time.'

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INGYAPAM'S WORD: THE LENGUA NEW TESTAMENT

In order for both individual and group strength to be restored to an 'effective living' level, the tradition of the Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco dictated that they receive a 'chest-strength' (life) renewing message from *Ingyapam* 'our father'. At a designated time of the year each group seeking such a message erected a 'white' (with bark removed) pole in the centre of the open area of their usually circular villages. For this important event all the people washed themselves ritually, often with *palosanto* (a sweet smelling wood) scented warm water. Then they chanted and danced around the pole with expectant 'innermosts' until the word from the *Ingyapam* arrived. Once it 'came down from above' all the people knew that for another year their 'chests would be strong' and that everything would be well.

In April of 1968 a 'new word' from *Ingyapam* arrived, for the translation of the entire New Testament in Northern Lengua was completed. True it was still only a provisional mimeographed edition, but the whole New Testament was there (the Gospels and Acts printed in diglot form with the *Spanish Versión Popular* have just come from the press; the rest of the New Testament is now being set in type). The date marked the end of four years of intensive work by a missionary-national team of translators. As the individual books were completed and checked by the Translations Consultant, they were duplicated in limited editions. These editions served a double purpose: first, they made possible a widespread in-service check of the translation, but they also provided immediate access to the Scriptures for the rapidly growing indigenous Church among the Lengua.

In order to help national leaders, teachers, and preachers to use the Scriptures effectively, the missionary translator met periodically with them to study the individual books as they became available. The national leaders selected the passages most pertinent to the life of the Church and then jointly organized them for Bible studies and/or sermons to be used in the