The general critique of “contemporization” given in chapter six must yield to exploration of whether the translator infused Isaiah’s images of a tyrant afflicting Israel with allusions to Antiochus IV and prohibition of Torah study and practice during Jerusalem’s Hellenistic crisis of the early second century B.C.E. As a first step, we must note that the translation does reflect the practice, common among Hellenistic rulers, of heavily taxing subjected peoples.

Fiscal oppression

This leitmotif, indebted to ideas extrinsic to the translator’s source text, is noticeable in three passages, the first of which is 3:12–15:


2 V. 12–1QIsaa reads נֶג רֶנֶב נֵעְרֶנֶג רֶב for כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, and has a yod written above the כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, while the top of a lamed is visible, although the top of a lamed is visible, as is a final שׁוּנ. S reformulates as נֶג רֶנֶב נֵעְרֶנֶג רֶב for כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, likely attributable to the translator supplying a pronoun parallel to כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר (cf. lxx, V, T); its translation of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר by כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר parallels תָּרֵסָסָס סינ (cf. its rendering of מֶשֶל in v. 15). V reads ipsi te decipient | כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר (cf. lxx & S). T’s expansion of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר into כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר parallels כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר; its rendering of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר by כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר is inscrutable; like lxx, S, and V, it provides a pronoun in its rendering of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר (cf. its rendering of מֶשֶל in v. 15). V reads in domo vestra for כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר. T generalizes the sense of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, translating it with כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, but concretizes כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר with כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר.

3 V. 13–1QIsaa does not attest the initial שׁוּנ of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר (it reads a שׁוּנ mater after שֵׁנ). S reads שׁוּנ for שׁוּנ. V presupposes a Vorlage = mt, as does T’s expansive rendering.

4 V. 14–1QIsaa = mt. 4QIsaa preserves only כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר and כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, although many letters are indistinct. S accords with the mt. V reads in domo vestra (singular) for כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר. T generalizes the sense of כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, translating it with כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר, but concretizes כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר with כַּפַּרְס הַנָּעָר.
Especially revealing is the translation of ἱθωμεν by οἱ πράκτορες ὑμῶν,7 the sole occurrence of this noun in the LXX.8 BDAG (s.v.) defines πράκτωρ as a technical term “designating certain officials, esp. tax-collectors and other finance officials,” while Moulton and Milligan report that “the πράκτωρ in Ptolemaic times was specially concerned with the execution of fines or payments.”9

The reasoning behind the translator’s use of πράκτωρ is disclosed by his choice of καὶ οἱ ἀπαιτοῦντες (‘and those who demand payment’), a verb frequently used in the papyri for the collection of taxes.10 The translator evidently construed ἱθωμεν as a participle from ἱθαι (= ἱθῶ), helping him also arrive at οἱ πράκτορες ὑμῶν for ἱθωμεν, for which he later

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5  V. 15–1QIsaa = μτ in 15a–b, while ἱθαι is written superlinearly over ἱθωμεν in 15c (not attested in the LXX). 4QIsaa preserves only ἱθωμεν, although several letters are indistinct. S reads ἱθαι as a participle from ἱθωμεν, like κατασχύνετε (cf. its rendering of ἱθωμεν in v. 12); whether its ἵσταται attests the absence of ἱθαι [cf. 1QIsaa] or simply a collapsing of ἱθαι is uncertain. V accords with the μτ. T gives the obscure equivalent ἱθαι αὐτῶν for ἱθωμεν for which he later.

6  The LXX lacks the phrase ἱθωμεν as a participle in v. 15c.

7  While οἱ πράκτορες might reflect ἱθωμεν (rather than ἱθαι) in the Vorlage (with οἱ πράκτορες expressing the collective 2ms suffix—cf. οἱ μακαιροῦντες ὑμᾶς [ ] ἵσταται, τὸν ποδὸν ὑμῶν [ ] ἱθαι), it is also possible that the translator adjusted the pronoun under influence of ἵσταται (understood as a vocative), since elsewhere he altered pronouns to produce homogeneity (cf. 3:7, where ἵσταται ἀρχηγός [ ] ἱθωμεν is likely due to the parallelism with ὢκ ἵσταται σου ἀρχηγός [ ] ἱθωμεν earlier in the verse). Similarly, while (κυρεύοντις) οἱ πράκτορες might reflect ἱθωμεν for ἱθαι, and πλανώσας οἱ πράκτορες might attest ἱθωμεν instead of ἱθαι (καί/mén confusion in paleo-Hebrew?), the translator’s tailoring of pronouns elsewhere suggests he likely created these differences. He was certainly responsible for supplying ὑμῖν as the direct object of κατασχύνετε.

8  ἱθωμεν is rendered variously in LXX-Isaiah. In 14:2 ἱθωμεν is translated with οἱ κυρεύοντες αὐτῶν, while in 60:17 ἱθωμεν is translated τῶν ἀρχηγῶν σου (the Vorlage suffered transposition of ἱθωμεν and κυρεύοντις). On the other hand, in 9:4 (3) ἱθωμεν is represented by τῶν ἀπαιτοῦντος (see below), while in 14:4 ἱθωμεν is represented by ὑμῖν.

9  James H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930) 533.

10  Ibid., 52. Ziegler reports that ἀπαιτητής in the papyri designates a tax collector (Untersuchungen, 200). Cf. Ottley’s translation of οἱ ἀπαιτοῦντες κυρεύοντις ὑμῶν: ‘the tax gatherers shall lord it over you’ (The Book of Isaiah, 1:73).