Multilingualism *and* Translation *in* Ancient Judaism

Before and After Babel

Steven D. Fraade

Multilingualism and Translation in Ancient Judaism

In this book, Steven D. Fraade explores the practice and conception of multilingualism and translation in ancient Judaism. Interrogating the deep and dialectical relationship between them, he situates representative scriptural and other texts within their broader synchronic Greco-Roman context, as well as their diachronic context – the history of Judaism and beyond. His careful selection of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek primary sources, here fluently translated into English, best illustrate the fundamental issues and performative aspects relating to translation and multilingualism. Fraade scrutinizes and analyzes the texts to reveal the inner dynamics and the pedagogical-social implications that are uncovered when multilingualism and translation are paired. His book demonstrates the need for a more thorough and integrated treatment of these topics, and their relevance to the study of ancient Judaism, than has been heretofore recognized.

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To Raziel Dov, who in two years has revealed to us much of the mystery of life and language.

Contents

Preface *page* ix
Note on Abbreviations and Transliterations xv

1 **Introduction: Multilingualism in the Neighborhood** 1

2 **Before Babel** 20

3 **Seventy Languages (and Translations) for Seventy Nations** 48

4 **Ezra the Scribe and the Origins of Targum** 82

5 **Out of the Fire and Into the Wall** 102

6 **"Reading Leads to Translation" Whether Public or Private** 125

7 **Be Careful What You Wish For** 162

8 **Afterword** 187

Bibliography 195
Ancient Sources Index 219
Modern Scholars Index 227
Subject Index 230

Preface

The long and winding journey of this book spans my academic career, from my first days as a graduate student in Oriental (later, Near Eastern) studies at the University of Pennsylvania to my present days as Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Yale University. Over that almost half century, I have been intrigued by the relationship between Hebrew, in all of its stages, and Aramaic, in all of its varieties, and the nature and role of translation (*targum*) between them, as between Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek, in both their textual and inscriptional manifestations.

My interests in such translations gradually deepened into an interest in the multilingual cultural contexts from which those translations grew and to which they contributed. This, in turn, was increasingly informed by a transhistorical and theoretical interest in the ways that the dynamics of cultures in contact produce and are nourished by languages (and scripts) in contact. This, we could say, is the story of Jewish history and culture overall, from around 500 BCE (Persian conquest) until the present, in both Israel and its perpetual diasporas. Although in the final chapter (Chapter 8, "Afterword") I will return to that *longue durée*, the preceding chapters more directly engage the wealth of *ancient* Jewish reflections on multilingualism and translation, wherein, I would argue, lies the basic multilingual template for the richness of subsequent historical and cultural manifestations, hopefully to be taken up by others with other areas of expertise. Similarly, this is not a book about translation theory or sociolinguistics, to both of which I am indebted for having enriched

my reading of the ancient sources. For my particular dependencies, see the cumulative Bibliography at the end of the book.

Even so, my aim is less to be comprehensive than to construct a series of micro-histories (on which term, see Chapter 1) based on a selection of texts that I find to be particularly evocative of the larger dynamic of multilingualism and translation. If the focus is largely on the languages, translations, and transcriptions of *sacred* (that is, scriptural) sources, that is because that is where the ancient texts focus *their* attention. As I indicate in the introductory Chapter 1 (especially nn. 18–21), there is another type of evidence, that I do not consider extensively in this book, that is, *inscriptional* (and documentary) evidence, mainly in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in the ancient Greco-Roman world. That is because I have discussed that evidence at length in previous publications (in Hebrew and in English), to which I direct the reader, again via the Bibliography, for a better understanding of the thick multilingual cultural realia that stand behind the present textual studies.

As previously indicated, I have spent my whole scholarly life engaged with the topic(s) of this book. My dissertation (1980) and its revision as my first book contained sections on ancient Greek (koine and patristic) and Aramaic (including Syriac and Samaritan) scriptural translations as forms of both scriptural text criticism and interpretation.[1] I gave my earliest lecture related to *targum* (and midrash) upon making the transition from graduate student to faculty member in 1979, and published my first article on the subject in 1985. From then until now I gave and continue to give many scholarly lectures and published and continue to publish many articles, not to mention having taught several graduate seminars on the present subject at Yale. As always, my students continuously open my ears and my eyes. Thus, very many colleagues and students contributed critically to the evolution of my thinking, their

[1] Steven D. Fraade, *Enosh and His Generation: Pre-Israelite Hero and History in Post-Biblical Interpretation*, SBLMS 30 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984).

being innumerable for purposes of my acknowledging and thanking them all. My appreciations that follow, therefore, are regrettably incomplete and selective.

The following scholars gave me valuable feedback on individual chapters of this book, or their antecedents as published articles (on which, see later in this preface):

Chapter 2: Harold Augenbraum, Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal, Peter Cole, Edward Greenstein, and James Prosek.
Chapter 3: Katell Berthelot, Yair Furstenberg, and Daniel Stein Kokin.
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Chapter 7: Maren Niehoff, Anita Norich, and Yonatan Sagiv.

Shoni Lavie-Driver was generous to share with me his unpublished work on multilingualism at Caesarea.

Katell Berthelot kindly and generously shared with me her important article, directly relevant to Chapter 3, prior to its publication.[2] It augments my argument but from a somewhat different contextual angle.

Special thanks and appreciation go to three excellent scholars and generous colleagues, who carefully and astutely read the manuscript in its penultimate entirety and provided apposite suggestions and criticisms that greatly improved the final product: A. J. Berkovitz, Peter Cole, and David Stern. Peter, in particular, was ever present with support and encouragement, beyond his critical eye and pencil.

[2] "Rabbinic Universalism Reconsidered: The Roman Context of Some Rabbinic Traditions Pertaining to the Revelation of the Torah in Different Languages," *JQR* 108 (2018): 393–421.

I benefited tremendously from the detailed and penetrating comments of two Cambridge University Press anonymous readers, one of whom read the manuscript *twice*. Thank you, whoever you are.

I had the honor to attend and contribute earlier forms of some chapters to conferences dealing specifically with language and translation (and more). I thank the organizers for the opportunities and the audiences for the receptions (in quotes are the names of the conferences; in parentheses are the primary organizers):

"Translation in Jewish Culture." University of Maryland at College Park, 1986 (David Goodblatt).

"First International Conference on the Galilean Studies in Late Antiquity." Kibbutz Hanaton, Israel, 1989 (Lee Levine).

"Descriptive Translation Studies and LXX." XIIth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Leiden, 2004 (Albert Pietersma).

"Translatio: Translation and Cultural Appropriation in the Ancient World." Center for the Ancient Mediterranean, Columbia University, 2006 (David Damrosch).

"Keynote." International Organization for Targum Studies. Helsinki, 2010 (Willem Smelik).

"Hebrew between Jews and Christians." Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg, Greifswald, Germany, July 2, 2012 (Daniel Stein Kokin).

"Multilingualism and the Transfer of Cultures in Antiquity." Yale University, 2014 (Hindy Najman and Zev Weiss).

"Languages of the Roman Empire: Culture, Power and Cross-Fertilization." Beit Daniel, Zichron Yaʿakov, Israel, 2016 (Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price).

"The Bible and the Humanities." Centre for the Study of the Bible in the Humanities, Oriel College, University of Oxford, 2018 (Hindy Najman).

"Reading the Bible in the First and Second Centuries: Christians, Jews, Pagans and Gnostics." Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2019 (Esther Chazon).

"Beyond Translation: Vernacular Jewish Bibles, from Antiquity to Modernity." Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, 2020 (David Stern).

Other universities at which I gave single lectures relating to this subject were Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, University of California Los Angeles, University of Haifa, the University of Toronto, and Yale University.

I would also like to thank the Academy of the Hebrew Language, and its president, Professor Moshe Bar-Asher, for its support, recognition (as an honorary member) and the opportunity to both publish (in Hebrew) and lecture (in English) on this and related subjects under its auspices.

For almost two years (2018–19, terminated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic), I had the honor and pleasure of convening a Yale faculty seminar on the subject "Translation: Sacred and Profane." It was enthusiastically supported by the then Dean of the Humanities, Amy Hungerford, as part of a humanities initiative and co-convened by my dear colleague Shawkat Toorawa, to both of whom I am deeply appreciative. Around a dozen colleagues met monthly to share with each other the place of translation, especially of sacred texts, in the very varied cultures and languages that they command. I had the precious opportunity to present there several of the texts highlighted in this book.

Three chapters (Chapters 3, 4, and 6) were previously published in preliminary forms.[3]

[3] Chapter 3: "The Torah Inscribed/Transcribed in Seventy Languages," in *Hebrew between Jews and Christians*, ed. Daniel Stein Kokin, Studia Judaica 77 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 21–47; Chapter 4: "Ezra the Scribe and the (Purported) Origins of Targum, in *A Sage in New Haven: Essays on the Prophets, the Writings, and the Ancient World in Honor of Robert R. Wilson* ed. Alison Acker Gruseke and Carolyn J. Sharp, ÄAT 117 (Münster: Zaphon, 2023), 343–50. Chapter 6: "'Reading Leads to Translating' in a Multilingual Context: The View from Early Rabbinic Texts (and Beyond)," in *Social History of the Jews in Antiquity: Studies in Dialogue with Albert Baumgarten*, ed. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal and Jonathan Ben-Dov, TSAJ 185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 217–31.

Research expenses were partly defrayed with support from Yale's Judaic Studies Program (Rifkind Research Fund) and the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale.

This book would not have found its way to print or to digitalization without the constant support and sage counsel of Beatrice Rehl, my editor at Cambridge University Press. She maintained her commitment to the project while keeping her sense of humor, thereby sustaining mine, when things were moving tiresomely slowly during the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adroitly and patiently guiding the final steps toward production at the press were Elliot Beck as editorial assistant and Nicola Maclean as content manager, and Santhamurthy Ramamoorthy as project manager. My appreciation goes to all four and to CUP more broadly. The indexes were meticulously and tirelessly prepared by Connor Boyd of the University of Edinburgh, for which I am deeply grateful (again).

Note to the reader: It is my intent that you can either read the chapters in sequence as they interplay with and reinforce one another, with the book as a whole being greater than the sum of its parts, or you can read them individually or in any order, as they are each self-contained and self-sufficient essays.

Having previously dedicated books to my parents, wife, children, and grandparents, I dedicate this book to Raziel Dov, our two-year-old grandson. Raziel in Jewish angelology is the angelic revealer of divine mysteries. *Targum*, the rabbinic translation of Scripture from Hebrew into Aramaic, is similarly said to reveal heavenly secrets to humankind, especially those of the Prophets (b. Meg. 3a). While we lack the ability to prophesy who Razi will become, he daily reveals to us life's inner mysteries, especially as he now explores the meaning(s) and uses of language, while we find ourselves needing to translate his language into ours.

Note on Abbreviations and Transliterations

Abbreviations and transliterations of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are according to *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed., ed. Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

1 | Introduction

Multilingualism in the Neighborhood

This book will explore not simply the practice and conception of multilingualism and translation (mainly of Scripture) in ancient Judaism as separate subjects, but the deep and dialectical relationship between them, especially in view of their broader synchronic (Greco-Roman) and diachronic (the history of Judaism and beyond) contexts. It is the exploration of this interconnection, with particular emphasis on multilingualism, to be defined shortly, that, I believe, makes this volume novel. In brief, I argue that ancient Jewish, especially rabbinic, translation, both as practiced and as thematized, has to be understood in dynamic relation to a multilingual backdrop.

This work does not seek to be comprehensive or complete, but illustrative; neither systematic nor schematic, but performative. It will present ancient texts, mainly in Hebrew and Aramaic, but also Greek, that profoundly plumb the inner dynamics and pedagogical-social implications of this fundamental and generative pairing. The pedagogical agency and identity bestowing function of multilingualism and translation will be emphasized throughout.

So as to practice what I preach, ancient sources are presented in both their original extant languages and in (mainly my) English translations. Each of the six core chapters attends to a particular text, or, more often, cluster of texts, that I have found, in my own teaching, to be particularly rewarding, but also challenging; sometimes confounding. Herein lies, I wish to demonstrate, the textual beauty and transcendence of their own language and rhetorical strategies. This is not a book of theory, of either multilingualism or

translation. However, it is deeply and broadly informed by both, in an unabashedly synchronistic and anecdotal way. In short, this is a book of six distinct "case studies" or "micro-histories" (on which, more later) that I have sought to combine so as to reveal a much broader and longer history, that is, story, both Jewish and universal. In other words, this book seeks to address, and hopefully enrich, several audiences at once as they both read me and read with me.

Translation (and its presumption of multilingualism, and vice versa) is a universal practice extending back as far as human cultural history will take us, certainly to some of our earliest known written cultures, for example, Sumerian/Akkadian bilingual clay tablets in the third millennium BCE, with alternating languages in alternating lines (the "interlinear" model). Even then, the expressed purpose of such bilingual tablets is often *pedagogical*, that is to say, deeply concerned with social and cultural (not simply linguistic) transfer and reproduction.[1] We shall see much the same emphasis on pedagogical function and practice according to rabbinic literature of the early centuries CE (later on, especially Chapter 6). Although the Jewish (and before it, ancient Israelite) practice of translation in a multilingual society and culture is not nearly as hoary as its Babylonian forebears, it is well attested from the sixth century BCE (later on, especially Chapter 4) until the present. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that the *unbroken* history of Jewish writing, reading, and

[1] For starters, see Jerrold S. Cooper, "Bilingual Babel: Cuneiform Texts in Two or More Languages from Ancient Mesopotamia and Beyond," *Visible Language* 27 (1993): 69–96; C. Jay Crisostomo, "Language, Translation, and Commentary in Cuneiform Scribal Practice," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 5 (2018): 41–56; C. Jay Crisostomo, *Translation as Scholarship: Language, Writing, and Bilingual Education in Ancient Babylonia*, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 22 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019). My thanks to my colleague Eckart Frahm for his guidance. As this book was going to press I came across the following title: Marc Van De Mieroop, *Before and after Babel: Writing as Resistance in Ancient Near Eastern Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), which has much of relevance to the Ancient Near Eastern background to multilingualism and interlinear bilingual texts (e.g., 29–30, 33–34, 80–81, 87–88, 132–33).

translating has a *continuous* chronological and geographic span that is un- or rarely surpassed.

While the mainly early rabbinic texts that will be our primary focus will be considered initially for their creative interplay with one another, they will be viewed as well within the context of the wider and deeper history and theorizing of translation, both within the ancient history of Judaism and well beyond it. As we shall see, the Rabbis themselves presumed a central role for multilingualism and translation not just in Revelation, but in Creation, that is, as a core element of the human (and divine) practice of dynamically making and conveying meaning, as well as the forging of social identities with respect to and in contact with other peoples and their languages.

Although a larger, more detailed history of multilingualism and translation, both as practiced and as thematized, both Jewish and universal, is well beyond the scope of this book and its author, it will be signaled frequently, especially in the Afterword (Chapter 8). The multilingual templates founded in antiquity, especially by the ancient rabbinic sages, continue to serve what we might think of as the "people of translation," as all peoples of translation, and those who study them. This book might be thought of as an initial down payment toward a robust mutual engagement between "translation studies" and "Jewish studies," lest they become self-enclosed with respect to this subject (and others). In short, it asks, for the specific times and places on which it focuses, what is the social and cultural "work" that is both performed and contested in ancient Judaism, especially in its early rabbinic variety, but as viewed within its broader chronological and spatial contexts? What role does translation, especially of canonical scriptures, play, and how and why does it do so, in the Jewish (already inner-biblical) vocation of serving as interlocutors and mediators between competing literate and visual cultures, whether locally, regionally, or internationally? While the chapters of this book are partly designed to be read as self-contained "micro-histories," it is hoped that their shared

purpose and authorial oversight, as articulated in this Introduction, will enable them to illumine one another and their shared subject of inquiry.[2] In short, translation, as a form of both communication and interpretation, is a two-way discursive street that is at the heart of verbal meaning making, which is to say, at the core of human culture. Regarding the universality of translation, George Steiner says, "Translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in *every* act of communication, in the emission of each and every mode of meaning."[3]

In this opening chapter, I will emphasize the place of ancient scriptural translation, especially from Hebrew (Scripture) to Aramaic (*targum*), within the broader context of multilingualism and translation in the ancient Greco-Roman world, the "neighborhood" of this chapter's title.[4] I will also make occasional nods, synthetic rather than systematic, to the broader-still fields of translation studies and sociolinguistics. In the Afterword (Chapter 8), I will contextualize my mainly synchronic focus during the course of the book within a more diachronic overview of the multilingual nature of Jewish society and culture from ancient to contemporary times, and the persistent role of translation across that history and its frequent upheavals. In short, I hope to bring profoundly endearing and enduring texts to new eyes and minds, but to familiar ones as well, in the hope of mutual intellectual stimulation. I should emphasize at the outset that we will be looking less at texts of translation and more at texts *about* translation, although we will engage some examples of the former as well, especially at the ends of Chapters 3 and 6. That is because the early rabbinic texts with

[2] On my use of "micro-history," in conjunction with "new historicism," see Steven D. Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages*, JSJSup 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 4–7.

[3] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xii (emphasis in original).

[4] For the wealth of recent scholarly literature dealing with translation and multilingualism in the ancient Greco-Roman world, see Chapter 3, n. 1.

which we shall engage are a particularly rich and plenteous source of reflection on and contention with both language and languages as conveyers of revelatory meaning through human as much as divine speech.

It would not be hyperbolic to say that the ancient Rabbis (like their intellectual forebears and heirs) were obsessed (no slight intended) with language(s) both for its mystical and for its destructive powers, from its tiniest units on up, and from its human to divine articulations, usually in dialogue, sometimes fraught, with one another, as in prayer. As famously stated in Proverbs (18:21): מָ֣וֶת וְ֭חַיִּים בְּיַד־לָשׁ֑וֹן ("Death and Life are in the Power of the tongue"), and even more so "tongues."[5] This applies as much to communication between humans and one another as between humans and God, in the domain of the holy as in the domain of the secular, especially when they intrude upon one another, as they do in scriptural translation into the vernacular.

I seek to fill a lacuna in scholarship, whereby anthologies of texts and essays relating to multilingualism and translation, hot topics now in the humanities and social sciences, generally either ignore or are unaware of the rich sources of ancient Jewish, and rabbinic

[5] The bibliography of such subjects would be immense, and many such references can be found in the successive notes and chapters and in the cumulative Bibliography. Here, I'll just give a very brief and diverse sampling: Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Vol. 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 62–75; Fergus Millar, "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East, AD 325–450: Language, Religion, and Culture," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 159–76; Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past & Present* 148 (1995): 3–47; Willem F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Steiner, *After Babel*. Smelik's book covers much the same material as do I, but less in terms of the broader cultural context and resonances with translation theory, and less essayistically. Steiner's book mimetically inspired the title of Chapter 2.

in particular, reflection on these subjects.[6] This nearsightedness is largely true as well for those interested in multilingualism and translation in Jewish societies of medieval, for example, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, and modern, for example, Hebrew, Ladino, and Yiddish, times.[7] If I can correct these oversights, even if only by a little, I will feel justified in having explored these long-overlooked texts and insights with a broader audience in mind and in view. While seeking to use the best critical evidence to ground my discussion, I do not pursue text-critical or philological matters for their

[6] For example, Michael Ballard, *De Cicéron à Benjamin: Traducteurs, traductions, réflexions*, Etude de la traduction (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1992); André Lefevere, ed., *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1992); Douglas Robinson, ed., *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2002); Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

[7] See Robert Singerman, *Jewish Translation History: A Bibliography of Bibliographies and Studies*, *with an Introductory Essay by Gideon Toury*, Benjamins Translation Library 44 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002). In Toury's excellent introduction ("Translation and Reflection on Translation: A Skeletal History for the Uninitiated") to Singerman's bibliographies, he notes this absence of works dealing with ancient Jewish translation, providing a curious excuse, by stating (xiii), "This period [of the Mishnah], which was *rich in manifestations of both translation and reflection on it*, later became one of the most researched fields, especially the translation of the Bible into Aramaic, Greek and Latin (which is why the compiler of the bibliography has decided not to include it in the list, lest all the rest be overshadowed by it)" (emphasis added). I will have more to say about this in the Afterword (Chapter 8). For a good overview of multilingualism in Second Temple Judaism, see Timothy H. Lim, "Multilingualism," in *The Eerdman's Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 373–75. For a survey of the scholarly literature on multilingualism (and by extension, translation) in modern Jewish history and culture, see Afterword (Chapter 8), n. 9. For an excellent historical overview of Jewish translation, that asks, among other questions, "What's Jewish about Jewish translation?" see Naomi Seidman, "Sacred Tongue, Translated People: Translation in the Jewish Tradition," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, ed. Hephzibah Israel (Oxford: Routledge, 2023), 334–47 (thanks to the author for sharing it with me prepublication).

own sakes, except to the degree that they affect textual meaning in a way that informs my discussion.

To begin with, I offer a definition of multilingualism, which, while formulated by Benjamin Harshav, a scholar and late colleague, who worked with Jewish languages of an entirely different time and place, serves well my purposes: "the knowledge of more than one language by a person or a social group and the ability to switch from one language to another in speech, in writing, or in reading."[8] Harshav further clarifies that multilingualism can be "personal, social, or inter-subjective," that is, not all members of a society need to be equally multilingual to characterize that society as being multilingual. Within such a society there can be great variability as to the degree and nature of language priority and dominance, for example, urban/rural, coastal/inland, socioeconomic elite/non-elite, professional/manual, teacher/student. It is not simply a question of which language, assuming there is only one, is used in which linguistic domain, for example, speech/writing, reading/listening, business/ritual, home/market. Rather, key to Harshav's definition for my purposes, as I will expand upon shortly, is his emphasis on "the ability to switch between one language to another." Similarly critical to my interest in this subject as per Harshav's definition is the social dimension of multilingualism, that is how it enables or dis-enables communication and interactions between and among social groups or strata, as between Jews and non-Jews (Chapter 3),

[8] Benjamin Harshav, *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 23–40 ("Multilingualism"), citing from 25. One could add, as an indicator of language knowledge, if not literacy, in a largely oral culture, the ability to decode the spoken word pronounced by others. Not all four aspects of language performance need to be present, let alone in equal measure, for a person to be considered "lingual" in a number of languages. I do not intend to enter the fraught debate concerning ancient Jewish literacy, for which see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). For rabbinic texts emphasizing the important duty of a father to teach his son to *speak* Hebrew, see Steven D. Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 33*–35*.

and between Jews and Christians (Chapter 7). It should be stressed, as I hope to exemplify, that both multilingualism and translation occur as much *within* societies and *between* them.

How does my understanding of ancient Jewish multilingualism affect my view of translation, mainly scriptural but not only, in that broader context? It begins with a generally held, but overly simplistic, view of the practice of translation that can be represented as follows: Monolingual person A, let us say, a native speaker of the French, writes or says something in French. Monolingual person B, a native speaker of, let us say, German, does not understand what A has said or written. Monolingual person B engages bilingual person C, who speaks and writes both French and German (at least), to translate (in the sense of its Latin etymology, "*transferre/ transfero*," to carry across) the words of person A for the cognitive linguistic benefit of person B. Once done, mission accomplished!

The only one who we can presume knows French *and* German (at least) is person C. We might further presume, by extension but without warrant from the existence of such translations, that the culture of person A, like that of person B, is predominantly monolingual, even if it contains a smattering of multilingual exceptions, who are, as it were, free for hire. Those monolinguals who have access to the translation into their own language have no further need for the "original," which, for all practical intents and purposes, is of no further use to them. It is as if the untranslated original has disappeared, having been superseded by its translation, regardless of the degree to which the latter is deemed to be "accurate."

But what if the available evidence – for my purposes a combination of literary, documentary, and epigraphic – suggests that Jewish society in Palestine, and perhaps to a lesser extent in the diaspora (depending on where) was multilingual, following Harshav's definition and qualifications? To ask this question in terms of our hypothetical French–German model, why would someone conversant (functionally bilingual) in *both* French and German bother to read or consult a French–German interlinear or parallel-column

translation? Presumably so as to read or hear one version in light of the other, or, in other words, to structure a bilingual, dialogical *hermeneutic* between them. At least, this is how the Rabbis, undoubtedly bilingual in Hebrew and Aramaic, and presumably other cultural elites, would have experienced the performance of *targum*, whether in scriptural study or recitation. How this would have resonated for monolinguals is linked to the question of the overall diffusion and maintenance of Hebrew in ancient Jewish society more broadly, about which there is significant disagreement among scholars. In any case, there is no "one size fits all" in this regard. The same question can be raised with regard to bilingual inscriptions and documents, the overt intention of whose inscribers is generally not known.

At its core, translation is interpretation, regardless of whether the real or ideal target audience is within or without the linguistic society (or circle) of the text.[9] If that society is bilingual (at least), the translation ceases to be a one-way transference, but a two-way (even if just rhetorically) dialogue. In such a culture, translation does not occlude the "original" but enhances and expands it, even as it interrogates it. Its bilingual audience can challenge the performed translation.[10] To quote the great scholar of rabbinic literature, Saul Lieberman: "But the first rudiment of the interpretation of a text is the ἑρμηνεία, the literal and exact equivalent of the Hebrew תרגום, which means both translation and interpretation."[11]

[9] I elide the question of whether it is always self-evident which is the original text and which is its derivative translation, or even whether they are original and/or translation to one another at all. Perhaps there are better ways to characterize their interrelation, including those that do not prioritize between them to begin with. I will leave this chicken and egg for another meal, even though we will nibble it shortly.

[10] See for example, m. Meg. 4:9.

[11] Lieberman continues: "The elementary task of the interpreter of the Bible was to explain the *realia* and to render the rare and difficult term in a simpler Hebrew, or, sometimes, in Aramaic." Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 48 and n. 15. See Chapter 4, n. 12; Chapter 6, n. 13. Note how the amoraic Palestinian sources atomistically cite discrete

They are hermeneutical partners. Similarly, in the words of Walter Benjamin, a literal translation "reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation." Continuing, he says:

> A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully.[12]

Translation and interpretation, while being linguistically discrete, are partners in disclosure.

Compare this with a recent article on ancient Hebrew–Greek translations (e.g., the Septuagint), whose author, Dries De Crom, decries what he terms the "directional fallacy":

> In this period [late second century BCE to second century CE] it was common for translations to circulate alongside originals and to be read by those capable of reading the source as well as translation. In such a system traditional ideas of translation and replacement are not always useful or appropriate. The study briefly explores multilingualism (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic), which may affect translations both on the level of their production by a bi- or trilingual translator and their reception in a multilingual community. . . .[13]

If translation in the previous largely monolingual and unidirectional model of translation as replacement can be termed "external" (i.e., exporting cultural goods from one monolingual society to another),

Greek translations of Aquila (תרגם אקילס) in the same manner in which they cite discrete units of rabbinically attributed midrash. See Jenny R. Labendz, "Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives," *HTR* 102 (2009): 364–70.

[12] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens," in *Illuminations*: *Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 79.

[13] Dries De Crom, "Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition," in *Complicating the History of Western Translation: The Ancient Mediterranean in Perspective*, ed. Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino (London: Routledge, 2011), 77–87 (from "abstract," 77).

that is, from "within" to "without," translation within a multilingual society can be termed "internal" (following George Steiner[14]), that is, serving the needs of those who have some level of command of both the language of the source text (or object) and that of its translation, and capable of "switching," whether through speaking or writing, hearing or reading. Sociolinguists refer to this as "code-switching," which has been defined as follows (in contrast to loanwords or "lexical borrowing"): "the use of overt material (from single morphemes to entire sentences) from Language B in Language A discourse."[15]

Code-switching denotes language *choice*, whether by individuals or societies or both. I like to compare multilingualism to someone who is in possession of multiple passports (in multiple languages), who has to choose at each border crossing or identity check which to display. Language choice (like multiple passports) is both an expression and a determinant of social identity. And since social identity is always, in a sense, competitive, translation in a multilingual society is by its nature dialogical and dialectically fraught, as we shall see later, particularly in Chapters 3 and 7, but also throughout.[16]

[14] Steiner, *After Babel*, 29–31, 47–49. A close, inseparable relationship between multilingualism and translation also undergirds Benjamin's seminal essay, "The Task of the Translator," for which see n. 12; also Chapter 2, n. 3; Chapter 3, n. 15; Chapter 6, n. 17.

[15] Ad Backus and Margreet Dorleijn, "Loan Translations versus Code-switching," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-switching*, ed. Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Torbio, Cambridge Handbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75–93 (here 76). For code-switching from Aramaic to Greek in Dan. 3, see Benjamin D. Suchard, "The Greek in Daniel 3: Code-switching, Not Loanwords," *JBL* 141 (2022): 121–36, who argues for a multilingual author/editor and audience. For code-switching, both in *targum* and the Jerusalem Talmud, see Willem Smelik, "Code-switching: The Public Reading of the Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek," in *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, Ägyptologische und altorientalistische Perspektiven*, ed. L. Morenz and S. Schorch (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 123–51; Willem Smelik, *Bilingual Rabbis: Code-switching in the Yerushalmi* (in press).

[16] For more on ancient languages as shapers of collective (Jewish) identity, see Seth Schwartz, "Hebrew and Imperialism in Jewish Palestine," in *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos, JSJSup 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 53–84;

These insights generate profound questions that extend far beyond the particular focus of this book: What, more precisely, does language choice and code-switching between languages express and effect in social terms, both intra- and intersocietally? Which language (or combination of languages) should/may be used for which social occasion and cultural location (domain), whether private or public? For example, as the Mishnah addresses at some length, can rituals be performed in whatever language is best understood by the participants, or only in the "Holy tongue" of Hebrew so as to best unleash their performative power?[17] What is the dynamic relationship between language status and social status, as well as between personal and collective self-esteem? What is the special status of Greek (the Septuagint and its offshoots) in scriptural translation, or of Syriac (the Peshiṭta), or of Latin (the Vulgate), and so on, in relation to Hebrew with respect to Creation and Revelation, study and prayer?

Such linguistic code-switching is abundantly evident not only in rabbinic literature (especially the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, where it is employed on virtually every "page"), as we shall soon see, but also in synagogue and funerary inscriptions (juxtaposing or combining Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek),[18] legal

Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine." The former is a reframing and modification of the latter. See also Millar, "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East"; Fergus Millar, "Inscriptions, Synagogues and Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine," *JSJ* 42 (2011): 253–77; Hayim Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity," in *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. Eric M. Meyers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 239–68; David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49–70.

[17] See m. Soṭah 7:1–8:1; 9:1.

[18] For details see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of *Targum*, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 277–82; Steven D. Fraade, "The Reḥov Inscriptions and Rabbinic Literature: Matters of Language," in *Talmuda de-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine*, ed. Steven Fine and Aaron Koller, Studia

documents of the Bar Kokhba-era Judean Desert caves,[19] magical bowls and amulets,[20] and even *piyyut* (liturgical poetry) in the late Roman and Byzantine periods,[21] all in the broadly approximate geographic and chronological "neighborhood." It will, therefore,

Judaica 73 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 225–38; Steven D. Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 21*–39*; Steven D. Fraade, "עירוב לשונות ורב־לשוניות בארץ ישראל בעת העתיקה: ממצאים ספרותיים ואפיגרפיים," *Leshonenu* 73 (2011): 273–307. Jean Gascou, "The Diversity of Languages in Dura-Europos," in *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos*, ed. Jennifer Y. Chi and Sebastian Heath (New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, 2011), 74–96; Jennifer A. Baird, *Dura-Europos*, Archaeological Histories (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 74–77. On bi- and multilingual inscriptions in the Greco-Roman ancient world, as intended to be read in some degree of *parallel* by a bi- or multilingual audience, in both practical and symbolic (that is, ideological, e.g., identity, legitimacy, and prestige) ways, see Jennifer Larson, "Bilingual Inscriptions and Translation in the Ancient Mediterranean World," in *Complicating the History of Western Translation*, ed. McElduff and Sciarrino, 50–61. One language does not replace or displace the other(s), but they work in performative tandem.

[19] See, most recently, Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Uri Mor, "Language Contact in Judea: How Much Aramaic Is There in the Hebrew Documents from the Judaean Desert?" *HS* 52 (2011): 213–20. The Bar Kokhba letters of the Cave of Letters in Naḥal Ḥever (P. Yadin 49–63) are variously in Aramaic (9), Hebrew (4), and Greek (2). See Hanan Eshel and Boaz Zissu, *The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Archaeological Evidence*, The David and Jemima Jeselsohn Library (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2019), 86–90.

[20] For specifics, see Chapter 6, n. 43; as well as Chapter 2, n. 36.

[21] Such poetry is written and recited in both Hebrew and Aramaic, with the two languages (and sometimes Greek) often "intermingling" if not code-switching. I intentionally beg the question of what level of comprehension of either language can be presumed, as if "one size fits all." For my argument, see n. 8. For examples of Hebrew and Aramaic intermingling and more in *piyyut*, see Wout-Jacques van Bekkum, "Hearing and Understanding Piyyut in the Liturgy of the Synagogue," *Zutot* 1 (2001): 58–63; Shulamit Elizur, "The Congregation in the Synagogue and the Ancient Qedushta," in *Knesset Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue: Studies Presented to Ezra Fleischer*, ed. Shulamit Elizur, Moshe David Herr, Gershon Shaked, and Avigdor Shinan (Jerusalem: Yad Izak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 171–90 (Hebrew); Michael Rand, "Observations on the Relationship between JPA Poetry and the Hebrew Piyyut Tradition: The Case of the *Kinot*," in *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and*

be a central and recurring aim of this book to view the interlinear (or, interversal) alternation between Hebrew and Aramaic in early rabbinic literature within this larger multilingual cultural milieu. The performative aspects of such code-switching, in both private and public settings, will be highlighted in what follows, especially in Chapters 3, 5, and 6,[22] and for the *longue durée* down to the present, in the Afterword (Chapter 8).

Translation as a form of code-switching is particularly apt when the "original" and its "translation" are performed or inscribed in close proximity to, that is, in cultural contact with, one another, which leads to their mutual interpenetration, for example, Hebraisms in Aramaic and Aramaisms in Hebrew.[23] They may accompany one another in such a way as to belie a unidirectional distinction between original source text and derivative target text. The same can be said of ancient Jewish (and non-Jewish) bi- and trilingual inscriptions.[24] Such combinations of languages produce what Gideon Toury (citing Brian Harris) terms a "bi-text."[25] This will become clearer through the textual samples that will be presented in the following chapters. Although such diads (internal/external) can be heuristically instructive, it is in their blurriness and

Worship: New Insights into Its History and Interaction, ed. A. Gerhards and C. Leonhard (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 127–44; Michael Rand, "New Data on Aramaic in Classical *Piyyut* – תשמיע ניחומים ללישה, : *A Silluk* for Shabbat *Shimʿu* by Yoḥanan ha-Kohen," *AS* 13 (2015): 128–60. The Samaritan mixing of Hebrew and Aramaic (and Greek and later Arabic) in liturgical and ritual poetry (*piyyut*) should also be considered, but not here. For now see Laura S. Lieber (who assisted me with this note), "No Translating Needed: Hebrew in Two Samaritan Aramaic Hymns," in *The Poet and the World: Festschrift for Wout van Bekkum on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Joachim Yeshaya, Elisabeth Hollender, and Naoya Katsumata, Studia Judaica 107 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 161–82.

[22] See also Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism," 19*–21*.

[23] See Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism," 15*–17*.

[24] See n. 18.

[25] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), 96–99, quoting from Brian Harris, "Bi-text: A New Concept in Translation Theory," *Language Monthly* 54 (1988): 8–10.

porousness that we can gain the greatest insights. Speaking *across* Jewish history, Max Weinreich speaks of "internal Jewish bilingualism" as a constant.[26]

Another aspect of the performative role of translation in a multicultural society is that of pedagogy, or paideia, or Torah learning.[27] Scriptural translation is a branch of a much larger and intersecting curriculum of Torah study, in which *targum*, as Aramaic scriptural translation, functions as both a dynamic bridge and a buffer between written Scripture and its oral interpretation, simultaneously stabilizing and destabilizing the border lines between sacred and profane, between Jews and others, between homeland and diaspora, and between the multiple interior strata of Jewish culture and society. This liminal role between written and oral with respect to language choice, as well as its social ramifications, will be particularly well illustrated in Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7.[28] With due respect to other bridge languages across Jewish history (e.g., Yiddish, Ladino, and Judaeo-Arabic, all written in Hebrew script, as is Jewish Aramaic), Aramaic holds a uniquely elevated place as a bridge language due to the fact that it, alone among the others, is also a scriptural (and

[26] Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble, Yale Language Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 247–314 (chap. 4, "Internal Jewish Bilingualism").

[27] See n. 1.

[28] See also Steven D. Fraade, "Scripture, *Targum*, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, BJS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–22; Steven D. Fraade, "Locating *Targum* in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," in *BIOSCS* 39 (2006): 69–91. For translation as a component of a larger "polysystem," see Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," in *Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies*, ed. James S. Holmes et al. (Leuven: Acco, 1978), 117–27; Itamar Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics; Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) = *Poetics Today* 11.1 (Spring 1990). For an application of Even-Zohar's "polysystem" to Hebrew–Greek translation, see Dries De Crom, "A Polysystemic Perspective on Ancient Hebrew–Greek Translation," *JAJ* 11 (2020): 163–99; as well as De Crom, "Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition."

hence, in a sense, revealed) language, found, to differing degrees in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, hence even as a vernacular language, it is a quasi-sacred language.[29]

In nearing the conclusion to this Introduction, and to highlight the perpetual relevance of this book's pedagogical understanding of the dynamic interplay between translation and multilingualism, I offer the following true modern story, already burnished with time: In March of 1987, I gave my first paper on the pedagogical function of *targum* as interversal bilingual performance at the monthly meeting of the Oriental Club of New Haven (since dissolved). In a sense, that talk sowed the early seeds of this book.

During that year, the famed Hebrew biblical scholar Moshe Greenberg was a visiting professor at Yale, and was in attendance at the Oriental Club to hear my talk. He was teaching a seminar on the book of Ezekiel, to which he was preparing a commentary for the Anchor Bible series, long before it was acquired by Yale University Press. Greenberg's Ezekiel seminar at Yale was taught in English, but it was based on the Hebrew biblical text, whereas the equivalent Ezekiel seminar that he usually gave at the Hebrew University was taught in Jerusalem in modern Hebrew, but based on the same Hebrew biblical text. Needless to say, as a young assistant professor, I was very nervous at Greenberg's presence.

After I finished my talk Greenberg raised his hand to make a lengthy comment. Since his seminar at Yale, he explained, required knowledge of biblical Hebrew, but assumed knowledge of English, he found himself with a bilingual class of students. He followed the format, which many of us employ in such text seminars, which is to have each student in turn read each Hebrew verse in succession, render it spontaneously into idiomatic English, in effect, to see how, succinctly speaking, the student understands the verse, before proceeding to more in-depth discussion in English of its

[29] For details, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of *Targum*," 269–71.

details and implications, including alternative suggestions for the English translation, before turning to the next Hebrew verse (and English-speaking student) to be read in Hebrew, translated into English, and discussed in some combination of the two. To be fluent in reading and comprehending (to varying extents) the biblical text did not ensure conversational ease in modern Hebrew, thereby requiring an English translation, even if rough, to get the exegetical-pedagogical task done. As we shall repeatedly see, the oral translation was both a bridge and a buffer between the biblical text and its latter-day readers/learners, regardless of the level and extent of their bi- or multilingualism.

In his comment to me, Greenberg compared this method to that which he employed at the Hebrew University, of having each student read the Hebrew verse and then immediately launch into detailed discussion in modern Hebrew, *without* the intermediary translation of the verse into a language other than Hebrew. It is, after all, not called the *Hebrew* University for nothing.[30] Perhaps Arabic, or in another time and place, Yiddish, could have played the traditional pedagogical role of the Aramaic *targum* (still employed in public recitation in Yemenite synagogues to this day), as a performative link in the exegetical chain.

Anyway, Greenberg thanked me for having helped him to understand why he found teaching the book of Ezekiel at Yale bilingually to be more satisfying (and perhaps pedagogically more effective) than it had been for him to do so monolingually at the Hebrew University in Hebrew. In a subsequent private discussion with me of my paper, he bemoaned the degree to which the Hebrew University, and perhaps the Israeli academy and Israeli society more broadly, had become less multilingual than in previous times, a Zionist cultural victory of sorts, but not without its costs, or, might we say, its losses without translation.

[30] I will not here go into the extent to which biblical and modern Hebrew as languages are more or less alike.

This story highlights some of the motifs that will repeatedly surface, or lie just below the surface, in the wide range of ancient texts, and their modern interpreters, that we will encounter. Most notably we will uncover the dynamic relation between Scripture, translation (*targum*), and interpretation (specifically, *midrash* and *mishnah*) against the background of ancient multilingual cultures and societies more broadly. As I have noted at the outset of this chapter, the core six chapters that will now ensue are each formed around an ancient text or cluster of texts that are deeply expressive of the profoundly dynamic and dialectical nature of translation in a multilingual setting. However, in form, they are each a self-contained discrete study, but in their structured juxtaposition, and as linked by a network of cross-references between them (mainly in the notes), they reverberate with one another, loose ends and all. They will substantiate the intertwined, shared themes of translation as a dynamic, two-way performative practice, especially in a multilingual context, as enunciated in this Introduction, and as will be extended in time from ancient to modern Jewish (and beyond) culture, in the Afterword (Chapter 8).

One of the anonymous external pre-publication readers of the manuscript suggested an overarching structure for the book's chapters that might aid the book's post-publication readers' apprehension and appreciation of its decentered and unfinished coherence. The reader uncovered a narrative arc, or at least bipartite structure, to the order of the substantive chapters. The first three chapters (2, 3, and 4) deal, respectively and progressively, with multilingualism in relation to Creation (pre-Babel); the first transcription of the multilingual Torah, as per Moses' instructions, upon entering the Land of Israel, an extension of Revelation; and finally, the origins of *targum* and translation more broadly, in the post-Exilic period, as attributed to Ezra (a second Moses, as it were).

The last three chapters (5, 6, and 7) deal respectively with *materiality* (the sacral status of scrolls of scriptural translation as physical objects); *performativity* (the use of scriptural translation in private

study and public worship); and *ideology* (the consequences and challenges of multilingualism, especially the role of translated scriptural scrolls in Jewish–Christian identity dispute); that is, one might say, with multilingualism's multifaceted meta-life across sacro-historical time, material form, ritual performance, and ideological function. In a sense, the six micro-histories, as herein (loosely) combined and arranged, point to a much more far-reaching macro-history of translation and meaning.

So, let us begin at the beginning, that is, the (minority) view of multilingualism as having been there all along, whether in God's speech commanding Creation into being through the universal (multilingual) language(s), the language by which God communicated with the first humans, and they with one another, as their naming of and communication with the animals. This is a radically different understanding of the origins of multilingualism than that which attributes it to the "confusion of tongues" as a consequence of the divine punishment for the building of the Tower of Babel according to Genesis 11, which presumes a monolingual situation prior to Babel and multilingualism as a degenerative condition.

2 | Before Babel

2.1 Introduction: In the Beginning

This chapter focuses less on translation per se, than on the origins of multiple human languages, with an underlying presumption, on my part, that the two (multilingualism and translation), are never far apart, and with attitudes toward one underlying those toward the other.

If we begin our tour at the beginning, as it is biblically narrated in Hebrew, we begin with language and perhaps, as we shall see, with languages. From the perspective of the opening of the book of Genesis, the world was created through words, which is to say, through language, for example, Genesis 1:3, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר ("God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" [NJPS]).[1] There was a preexistent language, or *Ursprache*, which was the language of Creation (and later, of Revelation), spoken in the Garden of Eden as in heaven. It alone was the Holy Language, which served equally as the language of divine–divine (e.g., "Let us make human," Gen. 1:26), divine–human (e.g., "and God said to them, 'Be fertile and increase,'" Gen. 1:28), and human–human communication (e.g., "Cain said to his brother Abel …," Gen. 4:8), even though Cain's words are not preserved in the Masoretic Text.[2]

[1] This is at the heart of the Logos theology of Philo, the Gospel of John, and the early medieval Sefer Yetṣira, and many theologies of Judaism, especially mystical ones, beginning with the identification of God with language and letters.

[2] Interestingly, this is the first time that direct human–human communication is recorded, outside the Garden of Eden, but never between Adam and Eve, unless

The dominant view over the millennia has been that at this pre-Babelian stage in human (and linguistic) development, only one language was used and comprehended, and it was Hebrew. However, since ancient times, there have been other contenders for the distinction of being the originary language of Creation and Eden, namely Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic among their respective speakers.[3] Yet, an alternative view is expressed in early rabbinic

we construe Gen. 2:23, "This one shall be called Woman" (or Gen. 3:20, "The man named his wife Eve") as representing direct communication between the two, which, explicitly at least, it is not. The preponderance of communication immediately following Creation is between God and humans. On the Torah (presumably in Hebrew) having preexisted and having been consulted by God in his Creation, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913–38), 1:3–4, with notes. For a similar claim for the preexistence of "wisdom," see Sir 1:4; 24:9.

[3] For Aramaic, see n. 14. For Syriac, see Yonatan Moss, "The Language of Paradise: Hebrew or Syriac? Linguistic Speculations and Linguistic Realities in Late Antiquity," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 120–37. For Arabic, see Abdelfattah Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, trans. Robyn Creswell (New York: New Directions, 2016), to be discussed later in the chapter. There is an extensive scholarly literature on the meaning of the Tower of Babel story and on the linguistic state pre- and post-Babel, as well as on the relation of such inquiries to the formation of racist ideologies, including anti-Semitism (see especially Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, on "Semites" versus "Aryans"). In addition to those just cited, a selection would include the following: David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011), esp. 325–38; Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 253–62 (orig. in French, 1923); Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*, 6 vols. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1957–63), esp. 1:227–92; Hubert Bost, *Babel: Du texte au symbole* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1985); Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165–248; Edward L. Greenstein, "Deconstruction and Biblical Narrative," *Proof* 9 (1989): 43–71; Edward L. Greenstein, "A Pragmatic Pedagogy of Bible," *Journal of Jewish Education* 75 (2009): 290–303; Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language* (New York: Zone, 2005), esp. 19–25, 203–18, 219–31; Maurice Olender,

(and later Islamic) literature, that is, that humans (and perhaps by extension, God) utilized the full panoply of languages already well before Babel in their ideal life in Eden and even after their expulsion therefrom. In other words, the first humans were, to begin with, polyglots, beginning with Adam.[4]

Unfortunately, the Torah itself does not explicitly identify the language (or languages) of Creation or of the first humans.[5] One could easily argue that just because the Torah is narrated, with attributed quotes (even to God), in Hebrew does not necessarily mean that the original language (as actually spoken or written) was Hebrew. Perhaps, Hebrew was only introduced by "Abraham the Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13), the progenitor of the Hebrew nation, with the first eleven chapters of Genesis having been transmitted (that is, translated), but not having originated, in Hebrew for the benefit of Abraham and his Hebrew-speaking descendants.[6]

The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); François Ost, *Traduire: Défense et illustration du multilinguisme* (Paris: Fayard, 2009); George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Paul Zumthor, *Babel, ou l'inachèvementi* (Paris: Seuil, 1997); Marc Van De Mieroop, *Before and after Babel: Writing as Resistance in Ancient Near Eastern Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 190–93.

[4] For Adam as a polyglot, see nn. 17, 18.

[5] For the view that it is impossible to know what the original language was, see Friedrich Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1885), 1:143–51, esp. 148. Use of the word "Hebrew" to denote the Hebrew language per se first appears in the Prologue to Ben Sira (ca. 130 BCE). But cf. Jub. 12:25–27 (ca. 150 BCE). Within the Hebrew Bible the preferred designation is *yəhûdît* (Judean), as we find in 2 Kings 18:26, 28; Isa. 36:11, 13; Neh. 13:24; 2 Chron. 32:18.

[6] The designation of Abraham and his descendants as Hebrews (*ʿibrîm*) has several popular derivations (see Gen. Rab. 41 [42]:8 [ed. Theodor-Albeck, 414]), the most common ones being: 1. Abraham is a descendent of Eber (*ʿēber*), son of Shem (Gen. 10:21, 24–25; 11:14–17, 26). 2. Abraham came from "across (*mēʿēber*) the Euphrates" (Josh. 24:2–3; cf. LXX Gen. 14:13).

2.2 Hebrew Lost (at Babel) and Found (through Abraham)

Interestingly, the book of Jubilees (ca. 150 BCE) attempts to reconcile the two possibilities:[7]

> [3:28] On that day [= expulsion from Eden] the mouths of all animals, the cattle, the birds, everything that walks and everything that moves about were made incapable of speaking because all of them used to converse with one another in one language and one tongue.[8]
>
> [12:25–27] Then the Lord od said to me [= the angel]: "Open his [= Abraham's] mouth and his ears to hear and speak with his tongue in the revealed language." For from the day of the collapse [of the Tower of Babel] it had disappeared from the mouth(s) of all mankind. I opened his mouth, ears, and lips and began to speak Hebrew with him – in the language of the creation. He took his fathers' books (they were written in Hebrew) and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand). He studied them throughout the six rainy months.[9]

In Jubilees 3:28 the "confusion of tongues" (at least among the animals) is retrojected from the Tower of Babel incident (Gen. 11) to the expulsion from Eden (Gen. 3), in a sense, to a more originary point of rupture, without explanation, but with a paraphrase of what appears to be Genesis 11:1. However, in Jubilees 12:25, the Tower of Babel incident is identified with the cessation of human use of

[7] On the book of Jubilees and the nature of its biblical paraphrase, see Steven D. Fraade, "The Temple Scroll as Rewritten Bible: When Genres Bend," in *Hā-ʾîsh Mōshe: Studies in Scriptural Interpretation in the Dead Seas and Related Literature: Studies in Honor of Moshe J. Bernstein*, ed. Binyamin Y. Goldstein, Michael Segal, and George J. Brooke, STDJ 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 136–54.

[8] For the "myth" that the animals originally shared a common language, with each other as well as with the first humans, see Philo, *Conf.* 6. Similarly, see also Josephus, *Ant.* 1.4.

[9] Jub. 3:28; 12:25–27 (trans. VanderKam). See the excellent commentary of James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary in Two Volumes*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 1:228–29, 456–58.

Hebrew, only to be *restored* with Abraham, the first "Hebrew."[10] Note how the revelation (or restoration) of Hebrew, the language of Creation, to Abraham coincides with his copying and studying of sacred texts recorded by his earliest ancestors, presumably when they still knew Hebrew, for which he relies on divine inspiration for understanding. He had a lot of reading to catch up on, since the ancestral books had been either unavailable or incomprehensible to him. Thus, Hebrew, having begun as the language of Creation and of all creatures, including the earliest humans, is restored after a hiatus of nine generations through "Abraham the Hebrew." Hebrew would seem to be both the divine language of Creation and the human language of Abraham and his descendants, but with a sizable loss in between. Now that the earliest fragments of the books of Enoch (seventh generation) have been discovered written in Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls, one wonders what the status of Aramaic would have been in the interim between Hebrew and Hebrew.

2.3 The Hebrew of the Torah Is Indeed the Language of Creation and the First Humans

One rabbinic passage from Genesis Rabba, ca. early fifth century CE, brings us back to the question of whether the Hebrew of the Torah is its original language, and thereby the language by which God created the world and communicated with the first humans and they with one another:

> "לזאת יקרא אשה כי מאיש לקחה" וגו' (בראשית ב:כג). מיכן אתה למד שניתנה התורה בלשון הקודש, ר' פינחס ור' חלקיה בשם ר' סימון כשם שניתנה בלשון הקודש כך נברא העולם בלשון הקודש, שמעת מימיך אומר גיני גיניה, איתא איתתא, אנתרופי אנתרופייא, גברא גברתא, אלא איש ואשה, למה שהלשון הזה נופל על הלשון הזה.[11]

[10] See Gen. 14:13 and n. 6. Note that, according to the biblical genealogy, there were ten (a "complete" number) generations between Adam and Noah and another ten between Noah and Abraham.

[11] Gen. Rab. 18:4; 31:8 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 164–65, 281).

> "She shall be called, woman (*ʾiššâ*), because she was taken out of man (*ʾîš*)" (Gen. 2:23). From this you learn that the Torah was given in the holy language. R. Phinehas and R. Ḥelkiah in R. Shimʿon's (ca. 300 CE) name said: Just as it was given in the holy language, so was the world created with the holy language. Have you ever heard one say [in other languages], *gini*, *ginia*; *itha*, *ittha*; *antropi*, *antropia*; *gabra*, *gabretha* [that the word for "woman" is the feminized form of the word for "man"]? [No.] But ʾîš and *ʾiššâ* [are used in Hebrew in such a correspondence]. Why? Because the two expressions [grammatically] correspond to one another.

At issue here, of course, is not whether the Torah, as we have it, is written in Hebrew, but whether it was originally delivered in Hebrew and whether as such it preexisted its formal revelation at Mt. Sinai all the way back to (even preceding) Creation. The key to this understanding is here located in Genesis 2:23, according to which the designation by God of man (*ʾîš*) and woman (*ʾiššâ*) by terms that are assumed to be linguistically related to one another, that is, that woman derives, according to Genesis 2:23, from man both physically and linguistically in Hebrew, as is not the case in other languages.[12] Thus, the Hebrew biblical text as we know it cannot be a translation from an ur-text in another language, since in no other language does this grammatical link between "man" and "woman" exist. According to the midrash, since Hebrew is instrumental in the designation of the first humans as *ʾîš* and *ʾiššâ* at the time of Creation, it must also have been the language of the divine speech by which the world was created (Gen. 1).

Thus, Hebrew is shown to have been the language of both revelation and Creation, and, implicitly, the language by which God

[12] Ironically this is *not* true for Hebrew. The Hebrew for "man" (*ʾîš*) and "women" (*ʾiššâ*) are from different verbal roots, meaning that one cannot grammatically derive from the other. At most this constitutes a nongrammatical wordplay, which works in Hebrew but not in translation, as most wordplays are "lost in translation," e.g., see n. 20. However, this linguistic exceptionalism holds true for English: in no other language does "woman" *sound* like "man."

addressed the first humans and in which they communicated with one another (the words from Gen. 2:23 having been spoken by the first man). Hebrew alone was the language of divine and human communication before there were multiple nations speaking multiple languages, of which Hebrew would have been one among many. Thus, to begin with at least, Hebrew alone was the language of holiness as well as of primordial humanity, but also of cosmogony.

Nonetheless, the question of the original language must have persisted. Aside from the language of divine revelation (Torah), what language did Adam (and Eve) *speak* (e.g., to one another)?[13] The following passage from the Babylonian Talmud (b. Sanh. 38b) underscores the question:

> אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: אדם הראשון בלשון ארמי ספר שנאמר "ולי מה יקרו רעיך אל" (תהלים קלט:יז). והיינו דאמר ריש לקיש: מאי דכתיב "זה ספר תולדת אדם" (בראשית ה:א) – מלמד שהראהו הקדוש ברוך הוא דור דור ודורשיו, דור דור וחכמיו. כיון שהגיע לדורו של רבי עקיבא שמח בתורתו ונתעצב במיתתו, אמר "ולי מה יקרו רעיך אל."

> Rab Judah also said in Rab's (ca. 230 CE) name: The first man spoke Aramaic, for it is written, "How weighty are your thoughts to me, God" (Ps. 139:17). And that is related to what Resh Lakish (ca. 250 CE) said: What is the meaning of the verse, "This is the book of the generations of Adam" (Gen. 5:1)? It is to intimate that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, showed him [= Adam] every [future] generation and its expositors, every generation and its sages. When he came to the generation of Rabbi Akiba, he [= Adam] rejoiced at his [= Akiba's] learning but was grieved at his [martyr's] death, and said: "How dear are your friends to me, God."

From its biblical context, Psalm 139:17 is presumed to have been spoken by Adam (since the immediately preceding verses are rabbinically understood to identify the speaker as Adam). Rab Judah

[13] This might reflect the situation in rabbinic times when the spoken language (vernacular) and that of study and prayer would have been different from one another, if only by degrees.

notices that the verse contains two Aramaisms in the words for "weighty" (יָּקְרוּ) and "thoughts" (רֵעֶיךָ), indicating thereby that Adam spoke Aramaic (but also understood Hebrew). By contrast, another interpretation of the same verse, by Resh Laqish, understands the words in question to be proper Hebrew for "dear" and "friends" with respect to R. Akiba's learning and martyrdom. At issue, therefore, appears to be which of two related Semitic (and Jewish) languages was primarily spoken by Adam, Hebrew or Aramaic, for which we have two unresolved answers. Of course, one could reconcile the two views by saying Adam was bilingual, speaking, to whatever extent, both Hebrew and Aramaic and switching mid-sentence between them, a subject to which we now turn.[14]

2.4 Seventy Languages from the Beginning

Contrary to the common view that all of humanity employed a "single language," *śāpâ ʾeḥād* (Gen. 11:1), until the dispersion of the nations, as recounted in Genesis 11:1–9, there is a significant minority view, to which we now turn. According to it, multilingualism – in rabbinic terms, the existence of a symbolic seventy languages (seventy being a doubly "complete" number as the product of two

[14] The meaning of the passage is less certain than I have presented it. Commentators differ whether the verse is said to contain two Aramaisms, or only one in the word for "weighty" (יָּקְרוּ), in the positive sense of "honored" and the negative sense of "heavy." It is not clear whether Resh Laqish cites the same verse to denote the same Aramaisms or to claim that one or both of the words in question is/are proper Hebrew. Thus, it is unclear whether Resh Laqish's use of Ps. 139:17 is intended to support that of Rab Judah's (Adam spoke Aramaic), or to refute it (Adam spoke Hebrew), or is neutral, simply adducing another interpretation of the same verse in a different context. On Syriac as the primordial language, see n. 2. On the question of the original language of humankind, see Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), esp. 95–103; Milka Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity," *JJS* 49 (1998): 306–33; Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel*, 1:227–92.

other "complete" numbers, seven and ten) corresponding to seventy nations – obtained from the very beginning, and even defined the Edenic ideal prior to Babel.[15] This construction of pre-Babelian multilingualism is occasioned, at least in part, by several textual cues in the Hebrew biblical text of the narrative.[16]

For example, according to one tradition, Adam employed seventy languages in his naming of the animals, based on Genesis 2:20 (וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁמוֹת לְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה ["And the man gave names (pl.) to all the cattle (sing.)," etc.]). In response to Moses' demurral that he is unfit to lead the Israelites from Egypt since he is "not a man of words" (Exod. 4:10), God invokes the precedent of Adam as a gifted, multilingual speaker, whose knowledge of all seventy languages was not acquired but inspired. God's response to Moses is that if Adam could speak seventy languages, God would enable Moses to do the same:[17]

> א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא והרי אדם הראשון שלא למדו בריה, מנין היה יודע שבעים לשון, שנאמר ויקרא להם שמות (בראשית ב כ), שם לכל הבהמה אין כתיב כאן, אלא שמות, [מי שם פה לאדם שהיה קורא שמות שם לכל אחד ואחד משבעים לשון],

[15] On seventy nations and languages, and the symbolic value of the number seventy, see nn. 33, 36; as well as Chapter 3.

[16] Here I again use Benjamin Harshav's definition of multilingualism. See Chapter 1, n. 7.

[17] Midr. Tanḥ., ed. S. Buber, 5 vols. in 2 (Wilna, 1885; repr. Jerusalem: Orstel, 1964), 5:2a–b. Buber prints this as an "addition," which is "based on "manuscript 5 from Oxford and a Sephardic manuscript." See Buber's note ad loc., as well as his "Introduction," 1:72b–74a, 75b. See also Menahem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* (Jerusalem: Beth Torah Shelemah, 1992), 1:239, no. 264 with note. The translation is my own and can be compared with that of John T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanḥuma*, vol. 3: *Numbers and Deuteronomy* (Jersey City: Ktav, 2003), 275–76. For a paraphrase, see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:322–23. For my broader treatment of the larger Tanḥuma passage, in comparison with the version found in the standard printed Tanḥuma, see Steven D. Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:185–94. For a humorous feminist rereading of Adam's naming of the animals, see Ursula K. Le Guin, "She Unnames Them," *The New Yorker*, January 21, 1986, 27.

> The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to him [= Moses]: "Behold the first man, whom no creature taught. From whence did he know seventy languages? For it is said, 'And he called them by names' (Gen. 2:20). 'A name for each animal' is not written here, but 'names.' [Who gave speech to Adam that he could give 'names,' a name to each and every one in (each of) the seventy languages?]"

Since "names" in Genesis 2:20 is in the plural, applying to each type of animal in the singular, Adam must have given multiple names (in multiple languages) to each species. Since the total number of human languages is understood to be seventy, Adam must have had facility in all seventy languages, giving seventy names (horse, *sus*, etc.) in seventy languages to each species. To stress again, Adam (and later, Moses) did not so much acquire his multilingual facility through study or travel as through divine inspiration (however he learned Hebrew). The Hebrew Bible (and its interpreters) repeatedly assumes that a name (whether of a person, deity, place, or thing) encapsulates its character or essence. Therefore, to fully capture the quality of a named thing (here, animal) would require knowledge of, reflection on, and even interlingual punning on the full linguistic range of its names.[18]

However, taking a step back, it is unclear whether or not, according to this tradition, the seventy names for each animal preexisted Adam's multilingual act of naming them. That is, were their polyglottal names inherent to the nature(s) of each animal, or were those names Adam's linguistic "inventions," as it were? Stated differently, did Adam *disclose* their preexistent names (and thereby characters) or did he *bestow* them on the basis of his inspired zoologically insights?

The question of which language or languages were spoken by the first humans prior to the physical and linguistic dispersion of the

[18] For the similar rabbinic interpretation of Gen. 2:20 to denote Adam as a polyglot, see n. 16. For Adam as the "inventor" of the seventy languages, see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:62; 5:83–84.

generation of the Tower of Babel is given its most direct expression in the following passage from the Jerusalem Talmud:

כתיב "ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים" (בראשית יא:א). רבי לעזר ורבי יוחנן חד אמר. שהיו מדברים בשבעים לשון וחורנה אמר. שהיו מדברין בלשון יחידו של עולם בלשון הקודש. תני בר קפרא "יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם" (בראשית ט:כז). שיהו מדברין בלשונו של יפת באוהלו של שם.[19]

It is written, "Everyone on earth had the same language and the same [or, multiple] words" (Gen. 11:1): R. Eleazar (ca. 300 CE) and R. Yoḥanan (ca. 280 CE): One said that they spoke seventy languages, and the other said that they spoke the language of the Single One of the World [= God], the holy language. Bar Kappara (ca. 250 CE) taught: "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 9:27): That they may speak the language of Japheth [= Greek] in the tents of Shem [= the Hebrews].

Assuming that to R. Eleazar is attributed the first view, he interprets Genesis 11:1 to mean that the seventy nations (Gen. 10:1–32, immediately *preceding* the story of the Tower of Babel), already spoke seventy languages *prior* to the "confusion of tongues," to use Philo's term.[20] The association of national or ethnic identities with specific languages is implied in Genesis 10:31 (again, prior to Babel): אֵלֶּה בְנֵי־שֵׁם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לִלְשֹׁנֹתָם בְּאַרְצֹתָם לְגוֹיֵהֶם ("These are the descendants of Shem according to their clans and languages, by their lands, according to their nations"), as it is in 10:5 and 10:20 for the descendants of Yapheth and Ham respectively.[21] Similarly, Genesis 11:7–9

[19] Y. Meg. 1:11, 71b (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 748). For the favored status of Greek, see also n. 27.

[20] Philo, *Conf.*, e.g., 9. The title of this tractate in Latin is *De Confusione linguarum*. This is based on the wordplay Babel/confusion in Gen. 11:9, original to the Hebrew (בָּבֶל as בלל) but imported into the Greek (as Σύγχυσις from the verb συγχέω, to mix or pour together), where the pun is lost. The same wordplay is evidenced in the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1QM X, 14; and possibly 4Q464 (4Q Exposition of the Patriarchs) 3 I, 5 (DJD 19:218–21).

[21] For the association of nationhood with language, each nation having its own distinct and exclusive language, see Esther 1:22; 3:12; 8:9; Dan. 7:14; Neh. 13:23–24; Adele

could be understood to suggest that the existence of multiple languages was a condition for the confounding (mixing) of their speech(es), rather than its consequence.[22] Perhaps it is their geographic dispersal that results in their no longer being able to understand one another's language, as they previously had been able while they were in close physical and social contact with one another.

R. Eleazar (I presume) arrives at this understanding, it would appear, by taking Genesis 11:1 to mean that a single (meta)language (*langue* = שָׂפָה אֶחָת) comprised multiple "utterances" (*paroles* = דְבָרִים אֲחָדִים).[23] By this interpretation, the difference between pre- and post-Babel is that humankind previously spoke many (in fact, all) languages and *understood one another*, whereas subsequently they collectively still spoke multiple languages, but each "nation" only spoke and understood its own language. Thus, the divine punishment of that generation was not so much the multiplication of

Berlin, *JPS Bible Commentary: Esther* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 76. For the same association, see 4Q266 (4QD[a]) 11 10: יסדתה [ע]מים למשפהותיהם ולשונות לאומותם ("You established [pe]oples in accordance with their families and tongues for their nations"). Note the later rabbinic expression כל עם ולשון ("every nation and [its] language"). For the maintenance of Israelite identity through the preservation of Hebrew while slaves in Egypt, see Mek. of R. Ishmael Pisḥa 5 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 14–15; but cf. ed. Lauterbach, 1:34–36, following MS Oxford).

[22] This would require Gen. 11:7 to be understood to mean that they previously spoke different languages, now to be "confused" so that they would no longer understand one another's "language(s)," rather than "speech" (as in NJPS and NRSV). This is certainly a possible reading.

[23] The adjective אֲחָדִים, in the *plural* can mean "several." For other rabbinic traditions that interpret the meaning and plurality of אֲחָדִים, see Gen. Rab. 38:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 353–56); and Rashi to Gen. 11:1. See as well, Adiel Kadari, "Same Language Different Words: The Story of the Tower of Babel in Bereshit Rabba and Tanhuma," in *Carmi Sheli: Studies on Aggadah and Its Interpretation Presented to Professor Carmi Horowitz*, ed. Naḥem Ilan, Avraham Grossman, Arnon Atzmon, Michael Schmidman, and Joseph Tabori (New York and Boston: Touro College Press, 2012), 177–91 (Hebrew). In particular, he treats Gen. Rab. 38:6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 354); Tanḥ. Noaḥ 22, 24–25, 27, 28 (ed. Buber, 51, 53, 55, 56); Tanḥ. Noaḥ 16, 18, 19 (printed); and b. Sanh. 109a. The Septuagint and all of the *targumim* render the phrase in the *singular*.

languages as humans' cognitive confusion in conjunction with their geographic dispersal. In other words, the human consequence of Babel was primarily social dislocation and fragmentation and only secondarily, as its consequence, linguistic splintering. I am not arguing that this is the plain sense of the biblical narrative, but that it could provide through its difficult wording the multiple understandings that undergird R. Eleazar's view.[24]

By contrast, R. Yoḥanan takes both שָׂפָה אֶחָת and דְבָרִים אֲחָדִים to refer, by a wordplay, to the language of the "Single One (יחיד) of the World" (= God), that is, to Hebrew as the singular language of the singular holiness (of God). According to him, all of humankind spoke Hebrew prior to the Tower of Babel, but that thereafter the single language of the Single One was divided into many (presumably seventy) languages.[25] Both views begin with the ideal of

[24] For a consonant understanding to that of R. Eleazar, that the multiple languages that preceded Babel were "confused" (i.e., mixed-up), rather than one language having been "divided" or "separated" into many, see Philo, *Conf.* 191–92 (but cf. 8), based on Gen. 11:9. For further discussion, see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 267 n. 37; Willem Smelik, "Language Selection and the Holy Tongue in Early Rabbinic Literature," in *Interpretation, Religion and Culture in Midrash and Beyond: Proceedings of the 2006 and 2007 SBL Midrash Sessions*, ed. L. Teugels and R. Ulmer (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 95–99; Willem Smelik, "Code-switching: The Public Reading of the Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek," in *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, ägyptologische und altorientalistische Perspektiven*, ed. Ludwig Morenz and Stefan Schorch, BZAW 362 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 140; Esther Eshel and Michael E. Stone, "The Holy Language at the End of Days in Light of a New Fragment Found at Qumran," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 169–78 (Hebrew) on 4Q464 (4Q Exposition on the Patriarchs) 3 I, 8 (לשון הקודש ["holy tongue"]), for a sectarian belief in the eschatological reunification of all human language (on which see n. 30); Esther Eshel and Michael E. Stone, in DJD 19 (1995): 218–21; Avigdor Shinan, "'The Language of the Sanctuary' in the Aramaic Translations of the Pentateuch," *Beth Mikra* 66 (1976): 472–74 (Hebrew).

[25] For Hebrew as the single language of Gen. 11:1, the language of Creation, see also Tg. Ps.-J., Tg. Neof., Frg. Tg. (MS Vatican) Gen. 11:1. On the difficulty of rendering Gen. 11:1, and for its broader ancient Near Eastern implications for multilingualism and

originary linguistic unity, however for one it is the unity of a single holy language, whereas for the other it is the unity of many human languages communicating in mutual comprehension.

The same talmudic passage cites, in the name of Bar Kappara, an interpretation of Genesis 9:27 as "that they may speak the language of Japheth (= Greek) in the tent of Shem (= the Hebrews)," and be understood.[26] This would appear to be a middle position between those of R. Eleazar and R. Yoḥanan, conferring a privileged status to Greek in particular, thereby allowing for the possibility of Hebrew–Greek translation, presuming thereby Hebrew–Greek bilingualism as an ideal at least for some, *prior to* Babel.[27] Alternatively, Greek is employed here as a societally familiar example of the sort of multilingual exchange that was possible for the descendants of Noah, in one another's tents, as it were, prior to the Tower of Babel, and possibly again in messianic times.

For an appreciation of multilingualism as a societal advantage and ideal, rather than a curse or punishment, see Philo, *Conf.* 13, who expresses some of the same ambivalence regarding one versus multiple languages, writing in a predominantly Jewish Greek cultural milieu:

> κἂν εἰ μέντοι τις ἀνὴρ πλείους ἀναμάθοι διαλέκτους, εὐδόκιμος εὐθὺς παρὰ τοῖς ἐπισταμένοις ἐστὶν ὡς ἤδη φίλιος ὤν, οὐ βραχὺ γνώρισμα κοινωνίας ἐπιφερόμενος τὴν ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασι |συνήθειαν, ἀφ᾽ ἧς τὸ ἀδεὲς εἰς τὸ μηδὲν ἀνήκεστον παθεῖν ἔοικε πεπορίσθαι. τί

translation, see William W. Hallo, "Bilingualism and the Beginnings of Translation," in William W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 154–68.

[26] One of the sons of Japheth is Javan (Greece), according to Gen. 10:2, next cited in our text. Similarly, Abraham is a descendent of Shem (Gen. 10:10–26), the progenitor of the Semites. See also n. 19; and Chapter 7, nn. 22, 23.

[27] For the privileging of Greek, compare the view of Rabban Shimʿon ben Gamliel in m. Meg. 1:8; y. Meg. 1:11, 71c (ed. Academy of Hebrew Language, 749); b. Meg. 8b–9b; 18a; this book, Chapter 7, Section 7.3.

> οὖν ὡς κακῶν αἴτιον τὸ ὁμόγλωττον ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἠφάνιζε, δέον ὡς ὠφελιμώτατον ἱδρῦσθαι;
>
> Further the acquisition of languages other than his own at once gives a man a high standing with those who know and speak them. They now consider him a friendly person, who brings no small evidence of fellow-feeling in his familiarity with their vocabulary, since that familiarity seems to render them secure against the chance of meeting any disastrous injury at his hands. Why then, they ask, did God wish to deprive mankind of its universal language as though it were a source of evil, when He should rather have established it firmly as a source of the utmost profit?[28]

Multilingualism could have been a source of social harmony as a result of mutual cultural, that is, linguistic respect. God, as it were, should have known better than to separate peoples because of their linguistic differences, thereby giving rise to confusion.

2.5 Seventy Languages as Eschatological Anticipation

If, as the German expression *Endzeit gleicht Urzeit* ("the end of time corresponds to the beginning of time") would have it, the human condition at the end of time mirrors or is foretold by that of the beginning of time, like two chronological bookends facing one another. We might expect that either of the two views of the origins of language that we have seen, one/many (seventy) languages at Creation and in Eden, might be restored in the world to come. Then, either the single language of the Single One will be uniquely restored to its linguistic monopoly, or the multitude of languages will be restored to their originary, mutual comprehensibility. For the former expectation (in accord with the view of R. Yoḥanan), turning back to Hebrew, see the following late midrash from the Tanḥuma:

[28] LCL 4:16–17.

"הבה נרדה [ונבלה שם שפתם]" (בראשית יא:ז), שעירבב הקב"ה את לשונם ולא היה אחד מהם יודע לשון חבירו, מה היה אותו הלשון שהיו מדברים בו,לשון הקודש היה, שבו נברא העולם. בעולם הזה היו האומות והבריות חולקין על הקב"ה, אבל לעולם הבא כולן שוין כתף אחד לעבדו, שנאמר "כי אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה [לקרוא כולם בשם ה' לעבדו שכם אחד]" (צפניה ג:ט) ...[29]

"Let us, then, descend [and confound their speech there]" (Gen. 11:7): When the Holy One, Blessed Be He, mixed up their language, not one of them knew his companion's language. What was that language which they had been speaking? It was the holy language through which the world had been created. In this world nations and peoples take issue with the Holy One, Blessed Be He, but in the world to come all of them will be like a single shoulder for serving Him, as it is said, "For then I will make the peoples pure of speech [so that they all invoke the Lord by name and serve Him with one shoulder]" (Zeph. 3:9).

The mixed-up languages of the nations post-Babel will be restored to the singular Holy Language by which the world was created. The eschatological ideal of all of humanity serving God in unity will require the replacement of the cacophony of languages with the single, unadulterated שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה ("pure" or "clear" language") of Creation.[30]

Just as, according to some, Adam speaks seventy languages in Eden, and Moses overcomes a speech defect so as to reveal the Torah in all seventy languages at revelation and in the wilderness, so too, the continuation of the Tanḥuma midrash imagines, the stopped-up streams of Torah teaching will flow again freely without linguistic obstruction in messianic times, parsing Isaiah 35:6:[31]

[29] Tanḥ. Noaḥ 28 (ed. Buber, 28b). Also in Tanḥ. Noah 19 (printed).

[30] For a single language being connected to a single counsel (עיצה), see Frg. Tg. (MS Vatican) Gen. 11:1: והוון כל דרייא דארעא לישן חד וממלל חד ועיצה חדא ארום בלישן קודשא הוון ממללין דבה איתברי עלמא מן שירוייה ("And all the inhabitants of the earth had one language and one word and one counsel, because they spoke in the holy language, by which the world was created in the beginning"). See also n. 24.

[31] For the text (and parallels), see n. 17.

הפה שאמר "לא איש דברים אנכי" (שמות ד י), אמר "אלה הדברים" (דברים א א), והנביא צווח ואומר "אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם" (ישעיה לה ו), למה? "כי נבקעו במדבר מים ונחלים בערבה" (ישעיה לה ו), לכך נאמר "אלה הדברים".

> The mouth which said, "I am not a man of words" (Exod. 4:10), said "These are the words" (Deut. 1:1). And the prophet cries out, saying, "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing aloud" (Isa. 35:6a). How so? "For waters shall burst forth in the desert (במדבר), streams in the wilderness (בערבה)" (Isa. 35:6b). Therefore, it says, "These are the words [which Moses spoke … in the desert (במדבר) in the wilderness (בערבה)]" (Deut. 1:1).

It is unclear whether the bursting multiple linguistic streams of Isaiah 35:6 are contained within the single "pure language" of Zephaniah 3:9, or are superseded by it. Moses here both fulfills and anticipates the prophetically foretold linguistic wonder of linguistic unity of purpose.

2.6 The Function of Seventy Languages for Israel and the Nations

The existence of seventy nations is derived from Genesis 10 (one chapter *prior* to the story of the Tower of Babel in Gen. 11[32]), the so-called Table of Nations, which traces the descendants of Noah's three sons in terms of their expanding familial-national identities. The number seventy, being the product of two smaller "complete numbers," ten and seven, has great typological significance as it denotes completeness on a grand scale. It is frequently employed as such in the Hebrew Bible and beyond.[33] That each nation has its

[32] For this reason, some text critics have suggested that Gen. 10 belongs *after* Gen. 11.

[33] For the typological significance of the "seventy nations" of Gen. 10, see Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 69 (and nn. 1–3 on 357). See also n. 37 this chapter; as well as Steven D.

particular language, and that the complete number of human languages is thereby seventy, rests on the direct association of language with nationality, an association made explicitly in Genesis 10:31 and implicitly perhaps in Genesis 11:7–9.[34] While the typological significance of the number seventy is already scriptural,[35] as is, implicitly at least, the total number of seventy nations (Gen. 10), the existence of seventy *languages* is first explicitly expressed in early (tannaitic) rabbinic texts.[36]

Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 39* n. 18; 48* n. 41.

34 See n. 21.

35 For example: Jacob's seventy offspring go down to Egypt: Gen. 46:27; Exod. 1:5; Deut. 10:22. Moses creates a council of seventy elders, seventy-one if Moses, sitting at the head of the council, is in addition to the count of seventy: Exod. 24:9; Num. 11:16, 24; cf. Ezek. 8:11. Jeremiah predicts seventy years of exile: Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10; expanded to seven times seventy by Daniel: Dan. 9:2, 24. The number of elders who translate the Torah into Greek (seventy-two, also referred to as "the seventy" as in the term "Septuagint"), is based on six translators from each of the twelve tribes; they take seventy-two days to do so: Let. Aris. 46, 50, 273, 307. I will return to traditions concerning the translation of the Torah into Greek in Chapter 7.

36 The earliest occurrences are in m. Soṭah 7:5 and m. Šeqal. 5:1, to be discussed in Chapter 3, Sections 3.3 and 3.4. There are two additional occurrences in the Tosefta (Soṭah 8:6–7), but they are derivatives of m. Soṭah 7:5. The Great Sanhedrin has seventy-one members (based on seventy elders plus Moses, an odd number, so as to avoid a tie vote): m. Sanh. 1:5, 6. The unusually large number of seventy bulls sacrificed over the week-long Shukkot festival (Num. 29:12–34) is rabbinically understood (b. Sukkah 55b) to represent offerings on behalf of, that is, in atonement for the sins of the seventy nations. The list could go on. For the typological significance of seventy languages in later Jewish mysticism, see Moshe Idel, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 172. On the later expression "seventy faces of (to) the Torah," see Hananel Mack, "The Torah Has Seventy Aspects: The Development of a Saying," in *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift: Collected Papers in Jewish Studies*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1992), 449–62 (Hebrew); Shmuel Ashkenazy, "Shivim Panim la-Torah," in *Alfa Beta Kadimta de-Shmuel Zera*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2011), 844–45 (Hebrew). For the rabbinic idea that revelation at Sinai was in simultaneously multiple (either four or seventy) languages, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 45*–49*. I consider the Hebrew Testament of Naphtali (8:3–6; 9:1) to be a medieval work in its extant form. It describes the angelic revelation of seventy languages to the seventy nations, with

If the existence of seventy languages for seventy nations has the effect, post-Babel, of separating them from one another, as each one employs its respective language in ignorance of the others, then the role of translation, practically speaking, is to connect them enough to facilitate mediated communication between them. For example, Joseph acquired knowledge of all seventy languages in order for him to fulfill his diplomatic functions in Egypt as emissaries came from all over to obtain provisions (Gen. 41:57).[37] Similarly, the members

Hebrew residing among the sons of Shem and Eber, after which it was assigned only to the "house" of Abraham," their descendent. For the Hebrew text, see S. A. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1950–53), 1:196. For an English translation, see H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, Appendix I (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 449. Compare Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 11:8; Pirqe R. El. 24 (ed. Warsaw, 57b; trans. Friedlander, 176–77). Interestingly, the phrase is inscribed in an Aramaic magical bowl (possibly Manichaean): C. D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, MT: Scholars' Press, 1975), 113; J. BeDuhn, "Magical Bowls and Manichaeans," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 419. My thanks to Sara Ronis for bringing this to my attention. See also Geoffrey Herman, "Jewish Identity in Babylonia in the Period of the Incantation Bowls," in *A Question of Identity: Social, Political and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and Other Contexts*, ed. Dikla Rivlin Katz, Noah Hacham, Geoffrey Herman, and Lilach Sagiv (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 131–52, esp. 135 and n. 19 (IM 6519):חרשין דמיתעבדין בשבעין לישנין ("sorcery produced in 70 languages"), cited also in Chapter 6, n. 43. For an early Christian, but possibly Jewishly dependent, reference see *Ps.-Clem. Homilies* 18.4 (brought to my attention by Yakir Paz), where the seventy languages of the seventy nations are linked to the seventy descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt (see n. 35). The same association is made in Tg. Ps.-J. Deut. 32:8, as in Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 69. For more on seventy languages, see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5:194–95 n. 72. For there being 140 nations/languages (brought to my attention by Gideon Bohak), see Sifre Deut. 311 (ed. Finkelstein, 352); Song. Rab. 6.19 (to 6:8); Num. Rab. 9.14; Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine in the II–IV Centuries C.E.*, 2nd ed. (New York: Feldheim, 1965), 15 n. 3; Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1994), 100–2; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5:195. For more on the symbolism of the number seventy, as well as the relationship between multilingualism and magic, see Chapter 1, n. 15; Chapter 3, n. 19.

[37] See b. Soṭah 36b; Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 56*–57* and nn. 65–66; Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," 189 and n. 11.

of the Sanhedrin are said to have known seventy languages (ideally at least) so they could receive testimonies directly from witnesses without the need for intermediary translators.[38]

But what would have been the purpose of the ideal of seventy languages (and of translation between them) prior to Babel, even as far back as the first humans in Eden, when it would have served no *practical* purpose, strictly speaking?[39] To answer that question more fully, we will look, in Chapter 3, Sections 3.3 and 3.4, at the two earliest occurrences of the expression "seventy languages" in the Mishnah (or anywhere): m. Soṭah 7:5 and m. Šeqal. 5 (on which see n. 36). Although, as we shall see, later rabbinic texts understand the "seventy languages" of the first of these two mishnaic passages as referring to their use by the seventy nations (one language per nation), in light of the second mishnaic passage, the knowledge of seventy languages is necessary for purposes of interpretation, or clarification, by Moses himself and by the Israelites as a single people. In a sense then, the rendering of a discrete monolingual expression into the panoply of seventy languages may be said to be *restorative* of language to its originary linguistic fullness. Again, this will be argued much more fully in Chapter 3, in the context of the broader history of rabbinic reception of m. Soṭah 7:5.

2.7 Multilingualism in Eden with an Islamic Echo

Returning to the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel, we have seen two views of earliest multilingualism, especially within rabbinic literature. The more commonly held one is that from Creation until the dispersion resulting from the Tower of Babel, humankind

[38] See b. Sanh. 17a–b; Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 55*–56* and n. 64; Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," 189 n. 11.

[39] Cf. Philo, *Conf.* 13, for the social advantages of knowing multiple languages, cited in n. 28.

utilized the single revealed or implanted language of Hebrew (or Aramaic, or Syriac, or Arabic). After the dispersion, in order to curb human hubris and designs, the single language of Creation multiplied, as it were, into seventy languages for seventy nations, with most people having monolingual facility in the language of their nation alone.[40]

The alternative view, expressed with varying degrees of explicitness in rabbinic texts, is that language originated as seventy divinely revealed or implanted languages, with all of them coexisting in the Garden of Eden and spoken by and between the first humans and their creator, and perhaps between them and the animals. All language and languages are presumed to have been created by God prior to the creation of the physical world and divinely imprinted within the first humans (like the "image of God"). According to this view (or combination of views), the first humans were able to communicate in all seventy languages without having been taught to do so. It was only after the incident of the Tower of Babel, with the geographic dispersion of humanity, that each language was employed and understood by a specific monolingual nation alone (except for the bilingual [at a minimum]) translators among them, with learning of any other language, for most (but not all), requiring great effort. Thus, and here I lean on Philo, at Babel, for the first time, the many languages of Creation and the first humans were "confused," rather than "divided" from one original language, as this story is commonly understood.

After Babel, full multilingual facility (fluency in all seventy languages) became a distant ideal that was achieved by select individuals or groups alone – Adam (and Eve?), Joseph, Moses, the members of the Sanhedrin – with others needing to rely on multilingual (or at a minimum bilingual) translators or scribes to communicate

[40] For recent critiques of this dominant understanding of pre- and post-Babel, more consonant with the alternative rabbinic view which I shall next summarize, see the works of Bellos, Kilito, and Ost, fully referenced in n. 3.

across linguistic boundaries. Linking some of the rabbinic texts, that are not in themselves explicitly linked, I surmise: Just as Adam, in order to fully establish the identities (and characters) of the animals, needed to assign to them their names in all seventy languages, so too to fully signify the meaning(s) of a text (principally the Torah) required being able to read or recite it in its full plenitude of meaning, that is, in all seventy languages. Here I lean heavily on my understanding of the two mishnaic passages that are the earliest texts which evince the idea that knowledge or writing of all seventy languages is for purposes of interpreting or obtaining the clearest or fullest meaning of a speech act performed in one of those languages: m. Soṭah 7:5 and m. Šeqal. 5:1. Ideally speaking, to most comprehensively and comprehensibly "read" (or "translate") a text (or other sort of object) requires viewing it through the lens (or lenses) of all seventy languages, in effect, reverting back to or inverting Adam's Edenic naming of the animals, and presumably being able to switch freely between them, as context required.

Multilingualism, therefore, as viewed according to this model, is a lost ideal that only fully existed pre-Babel, rather than being, in the word of David Bellos, a "Dreadful Mess."[41] It is a desirable linguistic state that humans post-Babel can only approach partially and episodically. To quote Bellos at greater length:

> Babel [as usually understood] tells the wrong story. The most likely original use of human speech was to be different, not the same.… Let us therefore abandon the old image of linguistic diversity as a picture of rivulets splitting and dividing as they course down the mountainside from the single glacier tip. We should see it rather as the always provisional result of a multiplicity of springs, wells, ponds, and snowmelts furrowing down into valleys to meet and merge in broader, deep rivers.[42]

[41] Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*, 326.

[42] Ibid., 336–37.

Perhaps, to a degree at least, as interpreted by some of the rabbinic (and pre-rabbinic Jewish) texts we have examined, the Tower of Babel tells a story closer to the "right" one of linguistic diversity being as close as we can get to the origins of human language and humanity itself.

In a recent book, Abdelfattah Kilito devotes a chapter to "A Babelian Eden,"[43] in which he summarizes the views of traditional Islamic thinkers with respect to our topic, with particular attention to the tenth-century grammarian Ibn Jinni. Contrary to the common view that the multitude of languages derive from a single original language (most commonly thought by Arabic speakers to have been Arabic), Ibn Jinni argues that the first humans spoke the full panoply of languages, and that this will be the linguistic state which will prevail in paradise, but with full interlingual comprehension. *E pluribus unum*, as it were.

According to this view, all languages, being equal in God's eyes, will reunite through Islam, as a restoration of pre-Babelian multilingual unity. According to Ibn Jinni, Adam spoke all languages, having been taught them by God. This is based on the Koran's version of Genesis 2:20 (Koran 2:31), according to which God, holding all languages in esteem, taught Adam the names of all things, especially the animals, from which it is surmised that God conveyed to Adam all of the languages.[44] According to Kilito,[45] these were seventy-two in number (his source for which is not evident, but this number is also found in late antique Christian sources, which reckon Gen 10 as referring to seventy-two nations, on which, see Minets 2021: 147). This can be compared to the rabbinic idea of seventy languages/nations of rabbinic literature, with seventy and seventy-two (and seventy-one) being closely connected to one another.[46]

According to Ibn Jinni, Adam and his children continued to speak to one another in seventy languages ("internal translation,"

[43] Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, 25–34.

[44] In Gen. 2:20, by contrast, Adam is told by God to name the animals of his own accord, without having been taught those names by God.

[45] Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, 26.

[46] See n. 35.

in a sense, to borrow George Steiner's term[47]) after their expulsion from Eden. Only gradually did they forget the languages other than their own national language over time.[48] Quoting Kilito paraphrasing Ibn Jinni, both of whose words deserve to be read at some length:

> Adam and his children spoke them [= the seventy-two languages], and afterward the children scattered across the earth: each adopted one of the languages, which marked him more and more deeply until he forgot the others. In the beginning, then, Adam and his children knew all languages. They could speak one as easily as the next, and it was deemed praiseworthy to use several languages at once. Depending on taste, time, and circumstances, they would use the language most appropriate to their needs and desires.[49]

Continuing, he writes:

> In the early days, multilingualism was the rule – a multilingualism that was commonly practiced and even nurtured. All languages had the same value; none had precedence; none suppressed or excluded the others. All languages were sanctified because they were taught by God. The plurality of tongues was synonymous with cohesion – diversity with unity. There was no such thing as a native tongue or a mother tongue. Even Eve, the first mother, wasn't attached to any particular language. The milk that flowed from her breasts tasted the same to all her children. She didn't have to teach them to speak because language was God's gift. Cain, Abel, and the others could speak all tongues at birth and they didn't have to learn any of them.[50]

[47] Steiner, *After Babel*, 29–31, 47–49.

[48] For an emphasis on the forgetting of languages with respect to the story of Babel and Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, 1.9.6–7, see Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias*, 219–31.

[49] Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, 27–28.

[50] Ibid., 28.

Similarly:

> This harmonious multilingualism wasn't unique to paradise. The original sin didn't bring it to an end, or at least not right away. Adam and Eve continued to live in many tongues; the only souvenir from their time in the garden was their knowledge of languages.… It was the same with their immediate progeny, who, despite being born after the fall, lost nothing of the original multilingualism. Life on earth was certainly hard for those exiled from paradise, but they spoke to one another without any difficulty. No matter what language they used, no incomprehension, no misunderstanding arose at the level of speech.[51] And then slowly things began to change. From unity in the diversity of tongues came disunity in the monotony of single tongues.… Moving away from the original place meant moving away from multilingualism, which slowly slipped out of memory. They [= each nation] forgot all the languages except one. So began the era of ethnicities, of communities irremediably divided from one another – in other words, the era of mother tongues.[52]

While much of this rings surprisingly true with the rabbinic alternative view of language(s) in Eden (and implicitly post-Babel), other aspects resonate less so (e.g., the Rabbis' designation of Hebrew alone as the "holy tongue").[53] According to Ibn Jinni,

[51] Ibid., 29.

[52] Ibid., 29–30.

[53] For Hebrew as the "holy tongue," see n. 24. Nevertheless, in y. Meg. 1:11, 71b (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 748), four languages are singled out for special merit, with no sense of Hebrew being above that of the other three: אמר רבי יונתן דבית־גוברין. ארבעה לשונות נאים שישתמש בהן העולם. ואילו הן. לעז לזמר. רומי לקרב. סורי לאילייא. עברי לדיבור. ויש אומרים אף אשורי לכתב. ("Said R. Jonathan of Bet Gubrin [ca. 250 CE]: 'Four languages are pleasing for use in the world, and these are they: Greek for song, Latin for battle, Sursi [Aramaic] for dirges, Hebrew for speech.' And some say, 'also Assyrian for writing'"). See Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 59*–60*; as well as Chapter 7, Section 7.3. Elsewhere, the Torah is said to have been revealed in four

the linguistic "fall" from the ideal of Eden is a *gradual* ("slow") one and not the product of a single "original sin." This can be positively compared to the rabbinic characterization of the collective decline of humankind from Adam to Abraham as a gradual process of cultural decline, a sort of inverse cultural primitivism, in rabbinic terms, *qilqûl haddôrôt*, which translates best as the "degeneration of the generations," gaining in its translation).[54] Noteworthy, in particular, is Ibn Jinni's and the Rabbis' inversion of the unity/diversity dialectic usually applied to the Babel narrative, what Kilito characterizes as "turning the story inside out,"[55] moving from many languages to one per nation, instead of from one language to many. It is precisely the multilingual diversity of languages in Eden (and thereafter), denoted by Kilito as "original" and "harmonious multilingualism," that marks humankind's and other creatures' cohesion, whether in the *Urzeit* or the *Endzeit*. By contrast, it is the monolingual nature of each of the dispersed nations after Babel that marks their linguistic diffusion, or confusion, through loss of linguistic memory. We might say that harmonious multilingualism was gradually succeeded by cacophonous monolingualism. Multilingualism, which had been thought of as a "fall," or punishment, akin to the expulsion from Eden, is now thought of as a primeval and paradisiacal ideal, not in the mere sense of there existing many languages in isolation from one another, but of a social context in which all languages and their elect speakers are inclusive of one another in their mutual and comprehensive comprehensibility.

languages, these being Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Aramaic, as exegetically derived from Deut. 33:2 in Sifre Deut. 343 (ed. Finkelstein, 395). See Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 45*–49*. For the Torah revealed in seventy languages, see n. 36.

[54] See Steven D. Fraade, *Enosh and His Generation: Pre-Israelite Hero and History in Post-Biblical Interpretation*, SBLMS 30 (Chico, CA: Scholars' Press, 1984), index s.v. "cultural primitivism."

[55] Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, 30.

2.8 Conclusion: Looking Forward from the Beginning

In sum, "The idea of an original [and ultimate?] multilingualism is a happy one."[56] It is impossible to know whether there were any direct or indirect connections between the minority view of the Rabbis and that of Ibn Jinni regarding the linguistic condition of pre-Babelian humanity (and other creatures). To my eyes and ears, the overlaps (*mutatis mutandis*) are too profound and specific to be coincidental. But where lie the bridges between their parallel traditions is impossible (for me, at least) to determine based on the textual evidence.[57] While the rabbinic traditions in their present form most likely predate those expressed by Ibn Jinni, we do not know (so far as I know) what preexistent traditions, or cultural contexts, whether Jewish or Islamic, upon which he draws. In any case, holding them up against one another enriches our consideration and appreciation of their converging multilingual imaginations. While readers of either tradition might find it more satisfying to inhabit an imagined final Babelian reversion to an ample multilingualism of "seventy" languages, rather than one alone, the traditions we have examined are, whether in their respective or conjoined aggregates, less sure of which to anticipate and celebrate, an ambivalence that we shall witness repeatedly in the rabbinic sources still to be considered.

Moving along in biblical chronology, we progress from the pre-Israelite human condition of multilingualism, either already at Creation or only as a consequence of the Tower of Babel, to a

[56] Ibid., 30.

[57] I am reminded of Erwin R. Goodenough's (apocryphal?) statement that, by definition, parallel lines could never meet, no matter how far they extend. For an important qualification – that literature behaves differently than mathematics – see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Paulist, 1992), 111. Stated differently, for every diagnosis of "parallelomania" (Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 [1961]: 1–13) there is one of "parallelophobia (Israel Yuval, orally).

fascinating cluster of rabbinic texts that discuss the translation or transcribing of the Torah into seventy languages just subsequent to Joshua's leading of the Israelites into the Promised Land, and the performance of a series of covenant-renewing public ceremonies (Deut. 27–29). Here, we will encounter multiple views (no surprise) of the relation of multilingualism and translation to Israel's place among the nations, each with its own distinctive language. In short we may ask, what happens to the status of the Torah once translated into the national languages of the non-Israelite nations?

3 | Seventy Languages (and Translations) for Seventy Nations

3.1 Introduction: The Biblical Base(s)

This chapter will return to the mishnaic passages briefly mentioned in Chapter 2 (e.g., n. 36), dealing with early rabbinic interpretations of biblical instructions and narratives regarding the ritual inscription of the Torah (variously understood) on stones soon after the Israelites entered the Land of Israel under Joshua's leadership and following Moses' death. I will do so against the backdrop of the recent plethora of scholarship on multilingualism and translation in ancient Judaism and its broader Greco-Roman cultural context, but will extend our analysis to later rabbinic receptions and understandings of the meager mishnaic passages upon which they rest.[1] At heart here, is the question of what purpose is served by

[1] The mishnaic passages herein considered (m. Soṭah 7:5; m. Šeqal 5:1) were briefly noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.6, but will now be considered in their broader biblical and post-biblical contexts, especially for the hermeneutical basis they provide for the rabbinic tradition of the Torah having been revealed in seventy languages respectively to the seventy nations. For my own previous publications on these intersecting subjects see as follows: Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86; Steven D. Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, Brown Judaic Studies 320 (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1998), 109–22; Steven D. Fraade, "Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," *BIOSCS* 39 (2006): 69–91; Steven D. Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 31*–68*; Steven D.

the translation and/or transcription of the Torah into the *universal* roster of national languages, in the very context of the renewal of Israel's *unique* self-defining covenant with God. That is, how does it reflect upon and contribute to the tension between universal and particular understandings of language and translation within the broader biblical historiographic scheme, questions to which we will return repeatedly in future chapters, especially Chapter 7.

Fraade, "עירוב לשונות ורב־לשוניות בארץ ישראל בעת העתיקה: ממצאים ספרותיים ואפיגרפיים", *Leshonenu* 73 (2011): 273–307; Steven D. Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 1*–40*; Steven D. Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:185–94; Steven D. Fraade, "The Reḥov Inscriptions and Rabbinic Literature: Matters of Language," in *Talmuda de-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine*, ed. Steven Fine and Aaron Koller, Studia Judaica 73 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 225–38. More recently and extensively, see Willem F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For the broader recent study of multilingualism in Greco-Roman antiquity, see James N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain, eds., *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); James N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, Jonathan J. Price, and David J. Wasserstein, eds., *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Arietta Papaconstantinou, ed., *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the Abbasids* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Alex Mullen and Patrick James, eds., *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Randall Buth and R. Steven Notley, eds., *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea*, Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels 2, Jewish and Christian Perspectives 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Olivia Elder and Alex Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters: Bilingual Epistolography from Cicero to Fronto*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. chap. 10; Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, vol. 3: *The Greek World, the Jews, and the East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino, eds., *Complicating the History of Western Translation: The Ancient Mediterranean in Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2011).

The main biblical base text, for our present purposes, is Deuteronomy 27:1–8, part of Moses' final instructions to the Israelites, in the Land of Moab, in preparation for their entry into the Promised Land and the performance of covenantal renewal ceremonies. As in much of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' concern is for the continuity of their memory of and adherence to the narratives and laws which constitute the preceding content of that book, especially in preparation for the absence of his charismatic, prophetic leadership and of God's visible presence in their midst:

[1] וַיְצַו מֹשֶׁה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָעָם לֵאמֹר שָׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם:
[2] וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעַבְרוּ אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ וַהֲקֵמֹתָ לְךָ אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת וְשַׂדְתָּ אֹתָם בַּשִּׂיד:
[3] וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּעָבְרֶךָ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבֹתֶיךָ לָךְ:
[4] וְהָיָה בְּעָבְרְכֶם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן תָּקִימוּ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּהַר עֵיבָל וְשַׂדְתָּ אוֹתָם בַּשִּׂיד:
[5] וּבָנִיתָ שָּׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים לֹא־תָנִיף עֲלֵיהֶם בַּרְזֶל:
[6] אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהַעֲלִיתָ עָלָיו עוֹלֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
[7] וְזָבַחְתָּ שְׁלָמִים וְאָכַלְתָּ שָּׁם וְשָׂמַחְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
[8] וְכָתַבְתָּ עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב:

[1] Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying: Observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day.
[2] As soon as you have crossed the Jordan into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster
[3] and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching. When you cross over to enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you –
[4] upon crossing the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I charge you this day, on Mount Ebal, and coat them with plaster.

> [5] There, too, you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. Do not wield an iron tool over them;
> [6] you must build the altar of the Lord your God of unhewn stones. You shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God,
> [7] and you shall sacrifice there offerings of well-being and eat them, rejoicing before the Lord your God.
> [8] And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching most distinctly.[2]

Interpreters have long recognized that two sets of stones appear to be mentioned here.[3] Verses 1–4 would seem to refer to the erection of stelai, large stones with flat surfaces, which are coated with plaster, onto which are to be inscribed the words of "this Teaching," presumably the book of Deuteronomy or some antecedent form thereof. This is to take place soon, if not immediately, after crossing the Jordan River, although the specification, in verse 4, of this occurring at Mt. Ebal (more than a day's travel from the river crossing) would seem to suggest general but not immediate chronological (and geographic) proximity between crossing the Jordan and erecting, plastering, and inscribing the stones.[4] Mt. Ebal is also the site, along with Mt. Gerizim, of the immediately following ritual of blessings and curses as prescribed in Deuteronomy 27:11–28:68.

Verses 5–7 of chapter 27 would appear to refer to a different set of stones, altar stones that are unhewn (cf. Exod. 20:21–22), that is, without flat surfaces that can easily be plastered and inscribed. Therefore, to which stones (altar or stelai) does "those stones" of

[2] Translation from NJPS. "Teaching" here renders *torah*. Except for such citations from NJPS, I will use "Torah" without necessarily implying (pre-mishnaically) that the Pentateuch as a whole is intended. Unless otherwise noted, biblical citations are from NJPS, whereas translations of rabbinic texts are my own.

[3] The Palestinian Talmud (Soṭah 7:5, 21d) and the Babylonian Talmud (Soṭah 35b) both count three or more (but different) sets of stones.

[4] The Babylonian Talmud (Soṭah 36a) considers it a miracle that Israel would have covered so much ground in one day.

verse 8 refer, the altar stones as the immediate antecedents to that verse or the stelai stones of verses 2–4 as being more appropriate for inscribing? While we might presume that verse 8 resumes the instructions for writing of verses 2–4, with the building of the altar of unhewn stones in verses 5–7 being a narrative digression or insertion, it cannot be denied that the immediate antecedent of the stones of verse 8 are those of the altar in verse 6.[5] However we understand the editorial process (and purpose) behind the seemingly composite text as it is canonically composed,[6] later interpreters, already inner-biblically, had to determine how to understand what exactly was prescribed, that is, what was to be inscribed and where. Of course, the passage as we have it does not indicate the purpose of the inscribed stones (whichever they were), except to stress at the end of verse 8 that they were to be inscribed "most distinctly" (בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב), a phrase whose interpretation will preoccupy us shortly. At the very least, we can presume that the publicly inscribed words were intended to be read (and understood), but by whom and for how long?

These seeming textual irregularities and ambiguities in our unhewn scriptural text are smoothed out, as it were, in the account of the fulfillment of these instructions in Joshua 8:30–32, but not without leaving other questions unanswered:

[5] Compare the covenantal ritual of Exod. 24:4–8, which similarly combines the erecting of twelve (cf. Josh. 4, below) stelai (but without any mention of writing upon them) and the construction of an altar (presumably of unhewn stones) for sacrifice.

[6] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 161–62, suggests that verses 5–7 were inserted here so as to divert attention from the possible idolatrous nature of such erected stones (as *matsevot*; see Deut. 16:22) to the more proper form of worship though sacrifice on an altar. Conversely, Jeffrey H. Tigay (*The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 250, see also 488) suggests that verses 2–4 and 8, stipulating inscribed stelai, serve as brackets to verses 5–7, stipulating sacrifices, to the effect that "the text makes clear that the terms of the Teaching, and not the sacrifice, constitute the heart of the ceremony."

[30] אָז יִבְנֶה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר עֵיבָל׃
[31] כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּכָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הֵנִיף עֲלֵיהֶן בַּרְזֶל וַיַּעֲלוּ עָלָיו עֹלוֹת לַיהוָה וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שְׁלָמִים׃
[32] וַיִּכְתָּב־שָׁם עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֵת מִשְׁנֵה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

[30] At that time Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,
[31] as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded the Israelites – as is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses – an altar of unhewn stone upon which no iron had been wielded. They offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and brought sacrifices of well-being.
[32] And there, on the stones, he inscribed a copy of the Teaching that Moses had written for the Israelites.

In this internal passage of "rewritten Bible," with clear reference to the earlier passage in Deuteronomy ("as is written"), the inscribed stelai (or plaster) are not mentioned at all, leaving the only antecedent to "on the stones" to be the unhewn altar stones. It is upon those stones, at Mt. Ebal, that a "copy of the Teaching of Moses" (perhaps referring to the book of Deuteronomy) was inscribed in fulfillment of Moses' prior instructions. Should we presume from the textual sequence that the inscription on the altar stones followed sacrifice thereupon?

Prior to this passage in the book of Joshua, we find another ritual involving stones, this one without direct reference to Moses' prior instructions (Josh. 4:1–8,19–24). Here, immediately after crossing the Jordan River, God instructs Joshua to have twelve men, representing the twelve tribes, each take a stone from the river, from the places where the priests placed their feet in crossing the parted waters, and to bring them to their night encampment (מָלוֹן) at nearby Gilgal. These stones are to serve as a memorial to the miracle of the parting of the waters of the Jordan as the priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, crossed it. In addition, according to 4:9, another set of twelve stones were erected by Joshua in the middle

of the river. However, the twelve stones set up at Gilgal are to be a reminder of God's miracle not only to the Israelites, and especially to their children who ask about their meaning,[7] but to "all the peoples of the earth," כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ (4:24). These stones, both at and in the Jordan, unlike those of Deuteronomy 27:1–8, are entirely separate from those with which an altar is built and upon which the words of God's/Moses' Torah are inscribed (according to Josh. 8:30–32), but are similarly associated with the crossing of the Jordan and the entering into the Promised Land, with the difference that those that are erected at Gilgal are to be a *permanent* reminder of God's miraculous deeds on behalf of Israel, for the future benefit of both Israel and the other peoples. What is less clear, in the book of Joshua's narration of the fulfillment of Moses' instructions, is what happened to the large plastered stelai upon which, according to the book of Deuteronomy, were to be written, very clearly, the words of the Torah. What appear to be two conflated narratives in the book of Deuteronomy are unspliced, as it were, in the book of Joshua to produce two narratives (at least), but with questions remaining nevertheless, as we shall immediately see.

3.2 Sparse Second Temple Retellings

Before turning to our earliest rabbinic sources, it should be noted that the inscribing of the Torah, or a part thereof, whether as Moses' command or Joshua's deed, leaves very few interpretive traces in the Jewish writings of the late Second Temple period that have survived, and none that focus on the manner (or purpose) of the writing per se. This relative pre-rabbinic silence should cause us to ask (in an admitted argument from silence, but with some silences being more eloquent than others) what drew the rabbinic expositors to this passage that went so unnoticed by their interpretive

[7] As in Exod. 12:26; 13:14; and Deut. 6:20.

predecessors. For example, Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 21:7–8 harmonistically paraphrases Joshua 8:30–35 in conjunction with Deuteronomy 27:1–8:

> [7] Et descendit Ihesus in Galgala, et edificavit sacrarium lapidibus fortissimis, et non intulit in eos ferrum sicuti preceperat Moyses. Et statuit lapides magnos in monte Gebal et dealbavit eos et scripsit super eos verba legis manifesta valde. Et congregavit omnem populum in unum, et legit in aures eorum omnia verba legis. [8] Et descendens cum eis levavit supra sacrarium sacrificia pacifica, et hymnizaverunt omnes valde.

> [7] And Joshua went down to Gilgal and built an altar with very large stones and did not lift an iron tool to them as Moses had commanded. And he set up large stones on Mt. Ebal and whitened them and wrote on them very plainly the words of the Law. And he gathered all the people together and read out loud before them all the words of the Law. [8] And he came down with them and offered peace offerings on the altar; and all sang many praises.[8]

This retelling resolves several interpretive cruxes in the scriptural sources by carefully differentiating between the plastered and clearly inscribed stone stelai erected on Mt. Ebal, and the sacrificial altar of unhewn stones at Gilgal. Certainly, the Latin phrase here translated as "very clearly" (*manifesta valde*) is a gloss on Deuteronomy 27:8, בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("most distinctly" in the NJPS rendering. of the Hebrew text), indicating subtly that the inscription was made on the plastered stelai. The only role reserved for the altar of unhewn stones is the ritual sacrificial offerings. The inner-biblical contradiction or ambiguity is hereby resolved.

[8] For the Latin text, see *Pseudo-Philon, Les Antiquités Bibliques*, vol. 1: *Introduction et Texte Critiques*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sources Chrétiennes 229 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 174. The English translation is by Daniel J. Harrington, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:330.

Our only other significant interpretation of our passages from Second Temple times is by Josephus, who conflates the two, curiously combining Moses' instructions for reciting the blessings and curses of the covenant at Mts. Ebal and Gerizim with their being recorded, *by Moses* (presumably before his death on the eastern side of the Jordan). Once again we see a conflation of Deuteronomy 27: 1–8 with verses 9–14, whereby the words are inscribed on a sacrificial altar:

> ἀνέγραψε δὲ τὰς εὐλογίας καὶ τὰς κατάρας αὐτός, ὡς μηδέποτε ἐκλιπεῖν τὴν μάθησιν αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου, ἃς δὴ καὶ τῷ βωμῷ τελευτῶν ἐνέγραψε κατὰ πλευρὰν ἑκατέραν, ᾗ καὶ στάντα φησὶ τὸν λαὸν θῦσαί τε καὶ ὁλοκαυτῶσαι καὶ μετ᾽ ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν οὐκ ἐπενεγκεῖν ἱερεῖον ἕτερον, οὐ γὰρ εἶναι νόμιμον.

> These blessings and curses he [= Moses] put on record himself, to the end that their lesson might never be abolished by time, and indeed at the last he inscribed them upon the altar, on either side even where he said that the people were to stand and offer sacrifices and whole burnt-offerings, but after that day they should offer no further victim thereupon, that being unlawful.[9]

Here, clearly, the inscribed words of the Torah, now limited to the blessings and curses, are inscribed on the stones of the sacrificial altar, as might be inferred from the sequence of Deuteronomy 27:1–8 (and as it is understood by Josh. 8:30–32). Josephus stresses that the

[9] Josephus, *Ant.* 4.307–8 (LCL 4:625). Josephus has one other interesting conflational paraphrase relevant to our subject. In *Ant.* 5.20 (LCL 5:11), in the context of narrating the crossing of the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership (Josh. 4), Josephus states: Ἰησοῦς τε τόν τε βωμὸν ἐκ τῶν λίθων ὧν ἕκαστος ἀνείλετο τῶν φυλάρχων ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ τοῦ προφήτου κελεύσαντος ἱδρυσάμενος τεκμήριον γενησόμενον τῆς ἀνακοπῆς τοῦ ῥεύματος ἔθυεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ ("And Joshua, with the stones which each of the tribal leaders had, by the prophet's orders, taken up from the river-bed, erected that altar that was to serve as a token of the stoppage of the stream, and sacrificed thereon to God"). There is nothing in Scripture, except perhaps geographic proximity, to suggest that the commemorative stones taken from the Jordan River in Josh. 4:1–8 were the ones used to construct the altar in Josh. 8:30–32.

sacrifices at this altar are a *one-time* occurrence, presumably because they are not performed in a central temple, as required by the book of Deuteronomy (e.g., 12:8–12). This is a motif that will recur in later rabbinic accounts. Once the sacrifices were offered on this single occasion, the altar's only function was to continue to bear the inscription.

In contrast to these sparse exegetical "rewritings" of Scripture, the early rabbinic sources to which we now turn are more explicit and direct in engaging the actual words of Scripture in their several locations, producing thereby multiple mishnaic, midrashic, and talmudic understandings of what transpired and why. It is in these later (but relatively early in the rabbinic corpus) traditions that the idea of a multilingual (in seventy languages) revelation first appears, and without forewarning.

3.3 Mishnah Soṭah 7:5 (MS Kaufmann)

In the context of determining which ritual recitations must be said in Hebrew ("the Holy Language") and which are permitted to be recited in "any language," the Mishnah describes the procedure for the ritual recitation of blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27:15–28:68, which it deems can be recited only in Hebrew. As a continuation of this narrative, the Mishnah (Soṭah 7:5) describes the inscribing of stones with the words of Torah as follows:[10]

> ואחר כך הביאו את האבנים ובנו את המזבח וסדום בסיד וכתבו עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזאת [ב]שבעים לשון שנאמר "באר היטב". ונטלו את האבנים ובאו ולנו במקומן.

> And afterward they brought the stones and built the altar and plastered it with plaster. And they wrote on them all the words of this Torah in seventy languages, as it is written, "very clearly" (Deut. 27:8). And they took the stones and came and spent the night in their own place.

[10] There are no textual variants of significance between MSS Kaufmann and Parma, or the printed versions. I have treated this and the following rabbinic texts more

This mishnaic "rewritten" scriptural narrative is perplexing in several regards, in large part due to its brevity:

1. Contrary to Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8, it suggests that the stones were inscribed *after* the ritual recitation of the blessings and curses.
2. It makes no mention of the stelai of Deuteronomy 27, but assumes that the words of Torah were inscribed on the plastered altar stones (in accord with Josh. 8 and with Josephus' understanding of where Moses inscribed the blessings and curses, neither of which mentions plaster).
3. After the stones were inscribed, they were removed and brought to the place of the night encampment, presumably at Gilgal, following Joshua 4:3, 8, with respect to the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River. Were they there reassembled or abandoned? Perhaps the Mishnah reflects an understanding similar to that expressed by Josephus, that the altar stones inscribed with words of Torah could only serve as a sacrificial altar on one occasion. In accordance with the book of Deuteronomy's insistence on a single, centralized place for sacrificial worship, altars prior to the establishment of a centralized place of worship would be deemed temporary and in need of disassembly following their one-time use.[11] Here, as previously, the impracticality of plastering and inscribing unhewn altar stones with such a long text (or texts) is not considered.

briefly in "Before and After Babel," 49*–55*; "עירוב לשונות", 280; and "Language Mix and Multilingualism," 9*–10*. See also Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta, Part 8: Order Nashim* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminar of America, 1973), 699–702 (Hebrew); Marc Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), 108–13 (Hebrew); Azzan Yadin, "The Hammer on the Rock: Polysemy and the School of Rabbi Ishmael," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10 (2003): 15–17; Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 76–79; and, most recently, Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 29–32.

[11] See Section 3.7; and Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah*, 701.

4. Most striking and significant for our purposes, however, is the Mishnah's concise claim, not only that all of the words of the Torah (presumably the complete Pentateuch for the Rabbis, as they would have understood Deut. 17:18–20; Neh. 8:1–8; etc.) were inscribed on the unhewn plastered altar stones, but that they were so inscribed in "seventy languages," that is, the full roster of human languages (of the seventy nations of Gen. 10, as rabbinically understood), with each nation identified by its language. This is explicitly said to derive from the scriptural words "most distinctly," or very clearly (בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב). As we saw, this biblical phrase had not attracted any attention previous to the Mishnah in any of our extant sources. While the verb באר is biblically understood to refer to the physical clarity with which the words of the Torah were to be inscribed,[12] post-biblically the same verb increasingly acquires meanings relating to interpretation, as in to clarify the meaning of a text. Thus, the Mishnah seems to be saying that obtaining the clearest and fullest understanding of the meaning of the words of the Torah requires their being inscribed (and read) in all (seventy) human "tongues."[13] Compare in this regard the use of מְפֹרָשׁ in Nehemiah 8:8 for Ezra's clear reading of the Torah, rendered as "made distinct" by BDB (831), as "with interpretation" by NRSV, and as "translating it" by NJPS.[14]

Leaving aside, again, the seeming impracticality of such a vastly multilingual inscription, we might want to speculate on

[12] See Hab. 2:2; Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, "The Contribution of the Samaritan Inheritance," *Proceedings of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 (1969): 166–68.

[13] Compare the use of the verb בֵּאֵר in Deut. 1:5, understood by medieval exegetes (e.g., Rashi on this verse as on Deut. 27:8) to mean that Moses explicated the words of Torah that he taught (to Israel) in seventy languages. See my article, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," esp. 192–93 for the tradition that the number seventy derives by *gematria* from the word הֵיטֵב. For the typological significance of the number seventy, see Chapter 2, nn. 33, 35, and 36.

[14] For the last, see y. Meg. 4.1, 74d and parallels: מפורש זה תרגום ("'clearly,' that is the translation [*targum*]"), as rendered by Smelik, *Rabbis, Language, and Translation*, 195. See n. 44.

what understanding of language in general, or of revelatory language in particular, is being suggested or presumed here. The mishnaic text in its extreme but characteristic brevity provides little direct assistance to us in this task.[15] There is, as already noted by Willem Smelik,[16] an irony here – that in the mishnaic context of emphasizing that the ritual recitation of the scriptural blessings and curses was to be in Hebrew alone, the proximate (and in some sources, interlaced) ritual of writing the words of Torah as a whole was to be performed in all seventy languages – an irony with which other rabbinic versions of this tradition, as we shall soon see, appear to wrestle. Which is to say that in all of these regards, the Mishnah is as much interpreting (and interweaving elements of) its three biblical antecedents (Deut. 27:1–8; Josh. 4:1–8; Josh. 8:30–32) as offering up, as it were, its own text for subsequent interpretation.

3.4 Mishnah Sheqalim 5:1 (MS Kaufmann, with Later Gloss)

The expression "seventy languages" appears *only once* elsewhere in the Mishnah, unrelated to the inscribed stones of Deuteronomy and Joshua, but very telling for our purposes nevertheless:[17]

[15] The idea seems remarkably similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to Walter Benjamin's conceptions of language and translation, as expressed in his essays, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 253–62; Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926*, ed. Bullock and Jennings, 62–74. For explication, see Carol Jacobs, *In the Language of Walter Benjamin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), esp. 75–90. For the advantage of knowledge of multiple languages in the midrashic interpretation of Hebrew Scripture, see n. 19.

[16] Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 32.

[17] There are no textual variants of significance between MSS Kaufmann and Parma. The words in parentheses, presumably an explanatory gloss, appear in the printed versions.

אלו הן הממונין שהיו במקדש ... פתחיה על הקינין (פתחיה זה מרדכי) למה נקרא שמו פתחיה שהיה פותח בדברים ודורשן ויודע שבעים לשון.

> These are the officers who served in the Temple: … Petaḥiah was over the Bird-offerings. (This same Petaḥiah was Mordechai.)[18] Why was his name Petaḥiah? Because he would "open" (*poteaḥ*) matters, and interpret (*doresh*) them, and he knew seventy languages.

As in the previously considered Mishnah, seventy languages are again associated, although less directly, with the activity of interpretation, previously expressed by *beʾer* and now by *darash* (and *pataḥ*). Although not linked explicitly, Petaḥiah's interpretive renown is associatively connected to his knowledge of seventy (that is, all human) languages, based on a wordplay on his name.[19] Mordechai, which, according to a secondhand explanatory gloss, is Petaḥiah's cognomen, refers to the person by this name who is mentioned in Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7 as being among those who returned with Zerubbabel from the Babylonian Exile. His name is immediately followed by that of Bilshan. However, if the two are taken as one name, then, by a wordplay it could mean that said Mordechai was a master of languages (*baʿal lashon*), or even a mixer of languages (*balal lashon*). Thus, in both mishnaic passages, the knowledge of seventy languages (and presumably the ability to switch or translate

[18] This gloss is not in MS Kaufmann or the other early manuscripts. My argument would remain the same if this gloss were removed.

[19] For other individuals who are said, in rabbinic literature, to have known all seventy languages, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 55*–58*; Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots." For the expression, see n. 13. For the knowledge of multiple languages as an aid to interpreting Scripture through multilingual wordplays, see "Before and After Babel," 47* n. 38; "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," 188. For the verb *pataḥ* denoting exegetical activity, see Paul Mandel, "על 'פתח' ועל הפתיחה: עיון חדש," in *Higayon L'Yonah: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyut in Honor of Professor Yona Fraenkel*, ed. Joshua Levinson, Jacob Elbaum, and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 49–82, esp. 56. My understanding of this passage would be strengthened if we were to assume that the *waw* here were an explanatory waw ("*because* he knew seventy languages"), rather than a conjunctive waw (GKC 484). My appreciation to A. J. Berkovitz for this suggestion.

between them) is of assistance (or even necessity) in being able to fully clarify/interpret the meaning of texts or matters in general (m. Sheqalim) and of Scripture in particular (m. Soṭah).

3.5 Tosefta Soṭah 8:6–7 (MS Vienna, ed. Lieberman, 205)

We turn next to the Tosefta that is closely connected to m. Soṭah 7:5. As is often the case with Mishnah–Tosefta "parallels," the precise nature of their relationship (and chronological priority) is difficult to determine. To indicate two commonly proposed possibilities, does the Tosefta presume the Mishnah (or an antecedent), which it seeks to expand and/or interpret, or does the Tosefta represent the sort of "raw materials" from which the more concise and tightly structured Mishnah was editorially fashioned?[20] In the present case, either is possible but neither is certain.[21] I like to think

[20] For discussion of this question, see the following, the second of which deals with our Mishnah and Tosefta: Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 54*–55*; Shamma Friedman, "Mishnah and Tosefta Parallels (1): Shabbat 16:1," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 313–38 (Hebrew); translated and expanded as "The Primacy of Tosefta to Mishnah in Synoptic Parallels," in *Introducing Tosefta: Textual, Intratextual and Intertextual Studies*, ed. Harry Fox and Tirzah Meacham (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1999), 99–121; Shamma Friedman, "An Ancient Tosefta: On the Relationship of Parallels in Mishnah and Tosefta (2): The Story of Rabban Gamaliel and the Elders," *Bar Ilan Annual* 26–27 (1995): 277–88 (Hebrew); Shamma Friedman, *Tosefta Atiqta: Pesah. Rishon: Synoptic Parallels of Mishna and Tosefta Analyzed with a Methodological Introduction* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) (Hebrew); Judith Hauptman, "Mishnah as a Response to 'Tosefta,'" in *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 13–34; Judith Hauptman, "The Tosefta as a Commentary on an Early Mishnah," *JSIJ* 3 (2004): 1–24; Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Robert Brody, *Mishna and Tosefta Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2014). See also Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

[21] Cf. Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 109 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 109–24, who sees our Mishnah as a condensing of our Tosefta; Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 32 n. 69, rejects this view.

of the Tosefta as the pieces that were gathered and arranged from the "cutting-room floor," rather than discarded. In what follows, I will treat them as autonomous texts in their own rights. Unlike the anonymous Mishnah, the Tosefta takes the form of *two* accounts of the inscribing of the stones, each attributed to a different (but contemporaneous) tannaitic sage:[22]

[6] ר' יהודה אומ' על אבני מזבח כתבוה. אמרו לו היאך למדו אותן אומות העולם את התורה. אמ' להן מלמד שנתן המקום בלב כל אומה ומלכות ושלחו נטורים[23] שלהם והשיאו את הכתב מגבי אבנים בשבעים לשון. באותה שעה נתחתם גזר דינם של אומות העולם לבאר שחת.
[7] ר' שמעון או' על הסיד כתבו. כיצד, כירוהו וסדוהו בסיד, וכתבו עליו את כל דברי התורה בשבעים לשון, וכתבו מלמטה "למען אשר לא ילמדו אתכם" וגו', אם אתם חוזרין בכם, אנו מקבלין אתכם.

> [6] R. Judah says: They inscribed it [= the Torah] on the stones of the altar. They said to him: How did the nations of the world learn the Torah? He said to them: This teaches that the Omnipresent inspired every nation and kingdom to send their notaries (scribes) and they transcribed the writing from the stones in seventy languages. At that moment the verdict was sealed for the nations of the world to be consigned to the nethermost pit (as punishment).
> [7] R. Simeon says: They wrote it on plaster. How so? They laid it out and plastered it with plaster, and they wrote on it all the words of the Torah in seventy languages,[24] and they wrote below, "That they teach you not [to do after all their abominations]" (Deut. 20:18): "If you [non-Jews] repent, we shall receive you."

Unlike m. Soṭah 7:5, which, I have argued (especially in light of m. Šeqal. 5:1) understands the recording of the Torah in seventy languages to have an interpretive function (within Israel), both

[22] Smelik (*Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 31) strangely treats what is attributed to R. Judah, but not what is attributed to R. Simeon.

[23] I read as נוטרים = *notarii*. MS Erfurt has נוטירין. See Lieberman's note ad loc.

[24] "In seventy languages" does not appear in MS Erfurt.

views in the Tosefta understand the purpose of the inscription (or transcription) of the Torah in seventy languages to have been to make it accessible to the (seventy) "nations of the world." Note that *unlike the Mishnah*, neither R. Judah nor R. Simeon makes reference to "seventy languages" as deriving from the scriptural words בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("very distinctly") of Deuteronomy 27:8. However, it is possible that the phrase בְּאֵר שַׁחַת ("nethermost pit")[25] is an ironic wordplay on בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("very distinctly") of Deuteronomy 27:8, based on their sharing the consonantal homograph באר. It is the recording of the Torah ("very distinctly") that leads or will lead to the nations' destruction (in the "pit"). Alternatively, it may be that in an earlier version of the disagreement between R. Judah and R. Simeon, their dispute was limited to the question of where the words of the Torah were inscribed (altar stones or plastered stelai), without reference to the nations as readers or copyists of the inscription. Whereas R. Judah is explicit in saying that the words of the Torah were written upon the altar stones, R. Simeon says that they were written upon the plaster, which in light of Deuteronomy 27:2, 4 would seem to mean on the stelai, but in light of m. Soṭah 7:5 could mean on the altar. In either case, for the first time we see explicitly stated – something that we have assumed was the case all along – that the number of languages/translations correlated to the total number of nations; each nation with its respective language/translation.[26]

In its present redacted setting, R. Judah seems to be saying (the syntax is somewhat ambiguous) that what was written on the stones was the Torah in Hebrew alone, and that God inspired the (seventy) nations to send their (seventy) scribes (נוטרים = *notarii*, notaries) to transcribe (literally, "lift" or "elevate," but with meanings like "carry" and "convey" as well[27]) through spontaneous translation the Hebrew writing, each one into the language of

[25] E.g., Ps. 55:24.

[26] For the roots and development of this equation, see Chapter 2, n. 21.

[27] Similarly, the English/Latin verbs to "transfer" and "translate" are etymological kin. For this understanding of the *hiphʿil* of the verb נשא as to "lift," see Marcus Jastrow,

his particular nation.[28] The use of the Latin loan word *notarim* ("notaries" instead of the perfectly adequate סופרים ("scribes"), lends a sense of verisimilitude to the narration, to which we will return momentarily.

However, the purpose of making the Torah available to the nations in their own languages was hardly ecumenical. It denied the nations the excuse of not knowing the Torah's laws, that is, not having access to a copy of the Torah, each in their own national language. Without such an excuse, their doom is *immediately* sealed for their lawless behavior.[29]

By contrast, as incorporated in the present text of the Tosefta, R. Simeon's understanding is that the Torah in all seventy languages was inscribed on plastered stones, but that the purpose of so doing was more irenic: The nations whose doom has not yet been sealed are given the opportunity to learn from Israel's Torah, translated

A Dictionary of the Targum, the Talmud Babli and Jerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Choreb, 1926), 938, citing our passage. See also Saul Lieberman, *Studies in Palestinian Talmludic Literature*, ed. David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991), 57–58 (Hebrew); Shlomo Naeh, "'טובים דודיך מיין': מבט חדש על משנת עבודה זרה ב, ה", in *Studies in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature in Memory of Tirzah Lifshitz*, ed. M. Bar-Asher, J. Levinson, and B. Lifshitz (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2005), 418 n. 24. Similarly, see Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 31, 168–69, who ignores the opinion of R. Simeon (the whole Torah written in seventy languages) in t. Soṭah 8:7. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Soṭah 35b), and attributed to R. Judah, the inscription was made directly to the stones, after which it was plastered over. The notaries of the nations came and peeled off the plaster layer, onto which a (reverse) copy of the inscription was impressed, and carried this back (השיאוה) with them to their respective peoples.

[28] Alternatively, the Torah is already written in seventy languages on the stones, and notaries simply transcribe the translation that suits their nation. It is a question of whether "in seventy languages" modifies adjectivally "the writing," or whether it modifies adverbially "lifted." I favor the latter as better fitting the word order, but cannot deny the possibility of the former. We will see the same ambiguity in the Palestinian Talmud, but there the wording seems to me to favor the former understanding. For the Babylonian Talmud's understanding of this "lifting," see n. 27.

[29] Cf. Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 201.

into their respective languages, so that they may have the opportunity to repent (remove their abominations) and be received, rather than be destroyed (as per Deut. 20:15–18).

In light of a recent (2012) study of notaries in the Greco-Roman world, particularly in Egypt, more can be said of R. Judah's version of the story.[30] Each such notary, sent by his respective nation (אומה ומלכות ["nation and kingdom"]), need not have known all seventy languages, but only two: the Hebrew of the Torah and the language of the nation that sent him. That is, at the very least they can be presumed to have been bilingual. It is only collectively that they represented the linguistic totality of seventy languages (necessary, according to the Mishnah, for the full comprehension of the Torah). In real life, of course, such notaries would have had facility in the language of the ruling empire (e.g., Greek, or, in an earlier period, Imperial Aramaic) and their local language (e.g., Egyptian) and the ability to translate between the two in both directions. Thus, the story as attributed to R. Judah places Hebrew (Israel) in the position of the imperial language (and rulers), rather than that of one subject language/people among many, a fantasy of great significance for the privileged place of Hebrew (and the identity of Hebrew speakers, readers, or auditors) among the languages (and peoples) of the world.

I wish to emphasize that this version of the story might be thought of as a clever inversion of the famous story of the translation of the Torah into Greek (the "Septuagint") in Ptolemaic times, as it was surely known to the early rabbinic sages.[31] Rather than the Jerusalemite priesthood sending seventy-two (but often referred to as seventy)

[30] Marja Vierros, *Bilingual Notaries in Hellenistic Egypt: A Study of Greek as a Second Language*, Collectanea Hellenistica 5 (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2012). On the role of transcription as a means of transmuting cultures in ancient Judaism and the broader Greco-Roman world, see Jonathan J. Price and Shlomo Naeh, "On the Margins of Culture: The Practice of Transcription in the Ancient World," in *From Hellenism to Islam*, ed. Cotton et al., 257–88.

[31] See Mekilta of R. Ishmael Pisḥa 14 (ed. Lauterbach, 1:111–12); y. Meg. 1.9, 71d; b. Meg. 9a–b; Mas. Sop. 1.7 (6–8) (ed. Higger, 100–5); Mas. Sep. Torah 1.6 (8–9)

elders from the Land of Israel to Alexandria at the bidding of the Ptolemaic king to produce there a single, authoritative (and possibly inspired) translation into Greek for the benefit of Jews and non-Jews alike, and to the acclaim of all, here the seventy nations, at the bidding (and possible inspiration) of the sovereign of all the nations, send each one a notary/translator to the Land of Israel so as to produce seventy *different* translations of the Hebrew original,[32] with, according to R. Judah's telling, disastrous consequences for all but Israel.[33]

Compare further the expression used here for God's inspiring of the nations, שנתן המקום בלב כל אומה ומלכות ("God placed [understanding] in the heart of each and every nation and kingdom," and in the version in the Palestinian Talmud, to be treated shortly: נתן הקב"ה בינה בלב כל אומה ואומה), with that used in Mas. Sop. 1:8 (as in b. Meg. 9a MS Munich) for the inspiration of the seventy-two elders gathered by King Ptolemy: נתן המקום עצה בלב כל אחד ואחד ("God placed

(ed. Higger, 22–24). There is extensive scholarly literature on the rabbinic use of this story, which originates with the Letter of Aristeas in the mid-second century BCE (but narrating events of a century earlier). Most recently, see Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Giuseppe Veltri, "Deconstructing History and Traditions: The Written Torah for Ptolemy," in Giuseppe Veltri, *Libraries, Translations and "Canonic" Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, JSJSup 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 147–89; Moshe Simon-Shoshan, "The Tasks of the Translators: The Rabbi, the Septuagint, and the Cultural Politics of Translation," *Proof* 27 (2007): 1–39; Richard Kalmin, "The Miracle of the Septuagint in Ancient Rabbinic and Christian Literatures," in *"Follow the Wise": Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee Levine*, ed. Zeev Weiss, Oded Irshai, Jodi Magness, and Seth Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 241–53; Richard Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 80–94 (on early Christian adaptations). The rabbinic accounts stress (mock?) the *mistranslations* of the Septuagint, notwithstanding claims for its having been divinely inspired.

[32] There is some ambiguity whether the seventy nations/languages include Israel/Hebrew or not. Needless to say (see n. 13), "seventy" is a typological number, regardless of whether it is "actually" sixty-nine, seventy-one, or seventy-two.

[33] For the notion that the translation of the Torah into Greek had disastrous consequences for Israel, see Mas. Sop. 1:7; Mas. Sep. Torah 1:6; Pesiq. Rab. 5 (ed. Meir Friedmann, 14b; trans. William Braude, 93; ed. Rivka Ulmer, 51–52).

guidance in the heart of each and every one"). Needless to say, this narrative places the origins of scriptural translation much earlier than Ptolemaic times (mid-third century BCE), to the time of Joshua but in fulfillment of the command of Moses, as if to say that the totality of scriptural translation is a homegrown Israelite innovation, rather than a foreign import, produced under divine rather than imperial authorization. Also, no single translation (e.g., into Greek) is privileged over any other, with the benefit of all such seventy translations to their respective intended foreign audiences being dubious at best. Given the certainty that the tannaitic Rabbis (or a least some of them, such as R. Judah) were well aware of the widely disseminated story of the origins of the Greek Bible (n. 31), on which more to come in Chapter 7, the Hebrew narrative of the Tosefta (and the Jerusalem Talmud, to be examined shortly) is of profound rhetorical and exegetical ingenuity for its *barely* "hidden transcript."

3.6 Mekilta Deuteronomy (Geniza Fragment, ed. Kahana, 345)

We turn next to the last of our tannaitic sources, a Cairo Geniza fragment of a lost commentary to the book of Deuteronomy from the midrashic "school" of R. Ishmael. Discovered by Solomon Schechter and published by him in 1911, it was since lost, no small irony for our purposes, as we shall see. Saul Lieberman improved on Schechter's reconstruction, and it was most recently published by Menahem Kahana.[34] Any interpretations of the fragment must be qualified by recognition of its highly fragmentary and restored nature:

[34] Solomon Schechter, "The Mekhilta Deuteronomy, Pericope *Re'eh*," in *Tif'eret Ysra'el: Festschrift zu Israel Lewy's siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. M. Brann and J. Elbogen (Breslau: M. and H. Marcus, 1911), 187–92 (Hebrew); Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah*, 700–1 (Hebrew); Menahem I. Kahana, *The Geniza Fragments of the Halakhic*

בו ביום עברו ישראל את הירדן ונטלו את האבנים והעבירום והעמידום וכתבו על
[האבנים] אׄתׄ כל דברי התורה [בלשון הקודש]. ר' ישמעאל אומ' בשבעים לשון כתבו
[שנ' "באר היטב"]. רבי שמעון בן יוחאי א' לא כתבו עליה[ן א]ל[א את משנה] תורת
משה שנ' "ויכתב שם על האבנים את משנה תורת משה" וג'. ר' יוסה בן יוסי אומ' משום
ר' אלעזר בן שמעון לא כתבו עליהן אלא מה שאומות העולם רוצין כגון "כי תקרב אל
עיר להלחם עליה וקראת עליה לשלום אם שלום תענך" וג'. "כי תצור אל עיר ימים רבים"
וג'. על [אבני] [המזב]ח כתבום דברי ר' יודה. ר' שמעון א' על האבנים כתבום. [אמ']
[ר' נרא]ין דברי ר' שמעון שאמר על האבנים [כתבום] [שנ' "על] האבנים" מדברי ר'
יודה שאמר על המזבח כתבום. שאלו [על] המזבח כתבום האיך היו אומות העולם רוצין
לקרות דין. [ולמטה כת'] עליהם "כל הרוצה לקבל ימין יבוא ויקבל" וגנזום בו ביום.

On the same day that Israel crossed the Jordan, they took the stones, brought them across, and erected them and wrote on [the stones] all the words of the Torah [in the Holy Language]. R. Ishmael says, They wrote in seventy languages, [as it is said, "most distinctly" (Deut. 27:8)]. R. Simeon b. Yoḥai says, They did not write on the[m bu]t [a copy] of the Torah of Moses (or: the book of Deuteronomy), as it is said, "And there, on the stones, he inscribed a copy of the Torah of Moses" (Josh. 8:32). R. Yose b. Yosi says in the name of R. Eleazar b. Simeon,[35] They did not write on them but that which the nations of the world desired, such as, "When you approach a town to attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it responds peaceably," etc. (Deut. 20:10–11); "When you besiege a city for a long time,"etc. (Deut. 20:19). They wrote them on [the stones] [of the alta]r. These are the words of R. Judah. R. Simeon says, They wrote them on the stones (cf. Deut. 27:2–4). [Said] [Rabbi (?) I prefer] the words of R. Simeon, who said, They wrote them on the stones, to the words of R. Judah, who said, They wrote them on the altar. For if they had written them [on] the

Midrashim, Part I: Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmaʿel, Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimʿon ben Yohay, Sifre Numbers, Sifre Zuta Numbers, Sifre Deuteronomy, Mekhilta Deuteronomy (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 345 (Hebrew).

[35] As Lieberman notes (*Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah*, 700 n. 17), no tannaitic sage by this name is otherwise known to us, whether as Yose or Yosi, the two being variants of the same name.

> altar, how could the nations of the world who desired to read the law (been able to do so)? [At the bottom was written] on them: "Whoever wishes to receive right (forgiveness) shall come and receive!"[36] But the very same day they hid them (the stones of the altar) away.

To begin with, unlike the Mishnah and the view of R. Judah according to the Tosefta, the anonymous opening voice of the Mekilta Deuteronomy fragment endorses the view that the Torah was inscribed (presumably in Hebrew) on the stelai (or possibly the stones removed from the Jordan River according to Josh. 4). By contrast, R. Ishmael, citing Deuteronomy 27:8 (and the Mishnah's interpretation thereof), affirms that the Torah was inscribed on the stones (without specifying which) *in seventy languages*. I assume that the only difference between the anonymous opening and R. Ishmael is whether what was actually written on the stones (presumably the stelai) was the Torah (in its entirety) just in Hebrew (anonymous) or in all seventy languages (R. Ishmael, echoing R. Simeon of the Tosefta). I understand R. Simeon of Mekilta Deuteronomy to say (following the wording of Josh. 8:32) that it was only the book of Deuteronomy (מִשְׁנֵה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה), and not the whole Pentateuch, that was inscribed (presumably on the stelai), leaving unclear whether it was just in Hebrew or in seventy languages.

Strikingly different from any of the views thus far expressed as to how much was inscribed, and without parallel elsewhere, is the view of R. Eleazar b. Simeon, as transmitted by R. Yose b. Yosi, that all that was written (presumably both in Hebrew and the other languages) were several scriptural verses that relate somewhat sympathetically to non-Israelites in time of war, as if to gain thereby the nations' appreciation.[37] Alternatively, it is only such "universal" laws of warfare that would interest the bellicose nations, with

[36] On the difficulties of the text here, see Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah*, 701 n. 19.

[37] Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 201–2, refers to these as "international law." Alternatively, we might think of them as "ethics of law," erected just after

anything else being wasted on them.[38] Since these verses, or at least their being recorded at the boundary(-stone) crossing, are intended for the "ears" of the nations, they are presumably recorded in seventy languages, although this is not stated explicitly. This is reminiscent of Joshua 4:24, in which the erecting of commemorative stones is intended for the benefit of "all the peoples of the earth" (כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ).

Thus far, we have seen three different attitudes toward the non-Jews for whom the translated words of Torah are intended: cynical (only to condemn them), irenic (so they might repent and be "received" by Israel), and apologetic (only to convey to them what they want to hear), the last being possibly insulting or mocking as well.[39]

Again we encounter the persistent question of which stones were written upon, with R. Judah favoring the stones of the altar (as in the Mishnah), R. Simeon favoring the stelai, and Rabbi (?) preferring the words of R. Simeon (the stelai; contra the Mishnah). Rabbi (?) explains his preference for the view of R. Simeon (stelai) as follows: Had the words of Torah been written on the stones of the altar, they would not have remained there for long, since the inscribed altar stones would have been removed immediately after

crossing an international boundary, beyond which a conquering nation would expect to face hostility unless appeased. While we do not know how many such verses R. Yose had in mind, what is cited being examples of a larger class of laws, we can presume that the challenge of insufficient space for the inscription(s) was significantly mitigated by such a narrow selection of verses. Note that Deut. 20:15–18, calling for the genocide of the native nations, is elided in this selection of verses. Compare Gen. Rab. 74.15 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 872–73), where it is said that in David's time, the Edomites and Moabites produced stelai (אסטליות) with Torah verses (Deut. 2:3 and 2:9) that are favorable to these nations in avoiding combat with them.

[38] I thank Daniel Stein Kokin for this suggestion.

[39] Respectively: R. Judah in the Tosefta, R. Simeon in the Tosefta, and R. Yose b. Yosi in the name of R. Eleazar b. Simeon in Mekilta Deuteronomy. On the question of for whose benefit are the laws of the Torah, see the sources, primary and secondary, cited n. 51.

the one-time sacrifices were completed, as stated in the Mishnah (reflecting Josh. 4:3,8).

On this reading of R. Judah by Rabbi (?), even the irenic view of the public writing of the Torah in seventy languages (on the altar stones), so as to provide an opportunity for the nations to follow the Torah and be received by Israel (as per the added subscript of the inscription), was in reality a cynical, if not duplicitous, ploy, since the altar stones (with the Torah inscribed in seventy languages) did not remain in place for long enough to accomplish that purpose, as the midrash's conclusion confirms in its statement that the altar stones were "hidden away" (*ganzum*, from the same root as *geniza*) on the very same day that they were inscribed. But what of R. Simeon's implied view that the Torah (or at least the book of Deuteronomy), inscribed on stelai, remained accessible to the nations for some time? Did its inscription similarly have a subscript (as per the Tosefta) holding out the hope of the nations' repentance and acceptance? Or was it too simply a cynical ploy? Our fragmentary text eludes us on these questions.

As for the other (nonirenic) views represented here, the inscribing of the Torah in seventy languages was either to condemn the nations for their transgression or to gain their appreciation (however briefly), or, alternatively, to mock them for their warmongering, but not to join with them in the practice of Torah since that opportunity, according to this midrash in its final lines, was not truly provided to them. Perhaps it is an irony of history that the frank uncovering of the duplicitous nature of the seemingly irenic public disclosure of the Torah in seventy languages by Rabbi (?) is found only in this largely unknown ancient midrash, which was itself "hidden away" in the Cairo Geniza in medieval times, only to be discovered (and lost again) much more recently.[40]

[40] I have incorporated here some suggestions of Daniel Stein Kokin. Menahem Kahana, "דפים מן המכילתא לדברים פרשות האזינו וזאת הברכה," *Tarbiz* 57 (1988): 180–85,

3.7 Palestinian Talmud Soṭah 7:5, 21d (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 935–36)

Several familiar traditions, but with some new twists, are found in the Palestinian Talmud, presented as a *barayta*, as follows, presumably being either contemporary to the preceding passages we have examine, or, as I would favor, subsequent:

> תני. על אבני המלון נכתבו. דברי רבי יודה. רבי יוסי אומר. על אבני המזבח נכתבו. מאן דמר על אבני המלון נכתבו בכל יום ויום אומ' העולם משלחין נוטריהן ומשיאין את התורה שהיתה כתובה בשבעים לשון. מאן דמר על אבני המזבח נכתבו. לא לשעה היו ונגנזו. עוד הוא מעשה ניסים. נתן הקב"ה בינה בלב כל אומה ואומה והשיאו את התורה שהיתה כתובה בשבעים לשון.

> It was taught: [The words of the Torah] were written on the stones of the lodging place (Josh. 4:3, 8). These are the words of R. Judah. R. Yosi says: They were written on the stones of the altar. [With respect to] the one who says that they were [permanently] written on the stones of the lodging: Every day the nations of the world would send their notaries, who would transcribe the Torah which was written in seventy languages. [With respect to] the one who says that they were written on the altar, [how can this be?] Were they not (there) for only a short time before they were hidden away? [Rather,] this was another miracle. The Holy One, blessed be He, gave insight into the heart of each and every nation so that they transcribed the Torah that was written in seventy languages.

200–1 has argued that at least for some nonlegal sections (*Haʾazinu* and *Ve-Zoʾt Ha-berakha*) Mekilta Deuteronomy is more "universalistic" in its attitudes to non-Jews than is Sifre Deuteronomy to the same verses. See also Menahem Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages, Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. S. Safrai, Z. Safrai, J. Schwartz, and P. J. Tomson (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006), 51–52. A similar argument, it seems to me, cannot be made here, in part because the Sifre's commentary to Deut. 27:1–8 is not extant.

The disagreement over which stones were inscribed with the words of the Torah continues, although here R. Judah is associated with the view that the inscribed stones were those of the night encampment (Josh. 4:3,8), presumably the stelai at Gilgal, whereas in the Tosefta he is credited with the view that they were the altar stones at Mt. Ebal. Here that position is attributed instead to R. Yosi. In the first case it is assumed that the inscription was on *permanent display*, and that every day (and without rush) the seventy notaries of the seventy nations could transcribe the Torah, each in his own native language.[41] However, this would not seem to be possible according to the view that the Torah was inscribed on the altar stones, since they would have been disassembled and hidden away (as the Rabbis presume, in keeping with Deuteronomic insistence on centralized sacrificial worship) once the sacrifices had been performed.[42] It is in this event that God needed to inspire the notaries (presumably) so that they could miraculously complete their task of transcription and translation in the shortest possible time. Thus, in either case, whether of inscribing on the altar stones (and being divinely inspired) or on the stelai (and having plenty of time), the notaries would have succeeded at their task of either transcribing or translating the Torah in seventy languages.

However, the Palestinian Talmud does not indicate whether the intent of the translations (that is, of God's inspiring the nations or their notaries to transcribe them) was to condemn the nations for their knowing transgressions (as attributed to R. Judah in the Tosefta), or to allow for their repentance and acceptance by Israel (as attributed to R. Simeon in the Tosefta and in Mekilta Deuteronomy). My sense is that the tone of the Palestinian Talmud is more irenic than that of either the Tosefta or Mekilta Deuteronomy, since it removes the obstacle of insufficient time to complete the task of

[41] On my understanding of this verb as to transcribe and translate, and of the ambiguous syntax, see nn. 26, 27.

[42] See Section 3.3.

transcription/translation, whether on the altar stones or the stelai, without indicating any others. The toseftan version of the tradition conveys a greater sense of consensus, but not without disagreement. The rougher edges of the debate have been burnished but not removed.

3.8 Palestinian Targumim to Deuteronomy 27:8 (Fragmentary Targum MS Paris, ed. Klein, 111)

Finally, let us hear from those who translated the Torah into Aramaic, choosing one example that is representative of the Palestinian targumic tradition.[43]

ותכתבון על אבניא ית כל מילי שבח אוריתא הדא כתב חקק ומפרש טבא מתקרי בחד לישן ומתורגם בשבעין לישן.

> And you shall inscribe upon the stones all of the words of praise of this Torah, in engraved writing and very distinct; to be read in one language and translated into seventy languages.

In rendering the key phrase בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("most distinctly"), the *targum* employs a *double* translation, first fairly (but slightly expansively) literal as "in engraved writing and very distinct," before moving on to a more expansive gloss, "to be read in one language and translated into seventy languages."[44] This confirms my earlier understanding of the use of the verb נשא in the *hiphʿil* (by R. Judah in the Tosefta and, less certainly, in the Palestinian Talmud), as

[43] Much the same translation is found in other manuscripts of Frg. Tg. and from the Cairo Geniza, as well as in Tg. Ps.-Jon. Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg. MS Vatican are slightly different as I will note later in this section. Tg. Onq., the Peshiṭta, and Sam. Tg. are all fairly literal, lacking the targumic glosses that I will highlight.

[44] For מפרש here as denoting the clarity of writing (and not interpretive exposition), see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, 3rd ed. (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2017), 512 ("it is explicitly written"), as well as ibid, 220 (for כתב חקק as "an engraved writing"). See also n. 15.

denoting that the words of Torah that were written on (and directly read from) the stones were in Hebrew alone, whereas what was "lifted" from the stones by the notaries were spontaneous translations into seventy (or sixty-nine) languages, thereby retaining their oral quality and status.[45] Only the Hebrew was privileged to be inscribed and read aloud (in public?) to all, whereas each of the individual translations was intended for the use of its particular linguistic society alone. Of course, given the relatively compact nature of the targumic translation, most of the questions that are addressed in other rabbinic sources – on which stones was the Torah inscribed? How much of the Torah was inscribed? For how long was it on public display? For what purpose was the Torah made available in translation to the nations? – are not addressed here.

That makes all the more remarkable what it *does* address: the difference between what was written on and read directly from the stones – the Torah in Hebrew – and what was subsequently translated spontaneously – the seventy translations.[46] Significantly, this is very similar to the rabbinically prescribed practice of *reading* Scripture from a written scroll and orally reciting *targum* without such a written aid as part of the synagogue service.[47] It is as if the written text of the *targum* here authorizes its own oral liturgical practice, not surprising given the fact that this text, presumably, was authored and performed by a targumist (*meturgeman*).

[45] See nn. 27, 28. On the "orality" of targum, see Chapter 1, n. 28.

[46] Tg. Neof departs slightly from this translation, being less explicit in this regard: ומתקרא ומתרגם בשבעים לשן ("to be read and translated into seventy languages"). However, this most likely has the same meaning: "to be read [in Hebrew] and [thereafter] translated into seventy languages." The same is true for Frg. Tg. MS Vatican.

[47] A similar point is made by Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 30. For the practice of *targum* in ancient synagogues according to rabbinic literature, see Philip S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of Targum," in *Congress Volume Salamanca 1983*, ed. John A. Emerton, VTSup 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 14–28; Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum." We shall return to this practice in Chapter 6.

However, one further detail may have eluded us: The fairly literal first part of the translation includes the phrase "all of the words of *praise* of this Torah" (כל מילי שבח אוריתא הדא). The word "praise" (שבח) may suggest a solution to the question, which we have previously raised, of how the whole Torah, not to mention its seventy translations, could have practically fitted on the stones, and further, whether the non-Jewish auditors have appreciated much of its contents (e.g., its laws and the attendant punishments for noncompliance). Perhaps, "words of praise" could have referred to the "Song of Moses," or *ha'azinu* (Deut. 32), which we know had something of a liturgical life of its own in ancient times.[48] In any case, we see here a common practice of the *targumim*, combining close attention to the biblical words and syntax, while using the Aramaic translation to allow for some translational freedom, often with the goal, as we saw in other rabbinic genres, of resolving interpretive cruxes in the biblical text.

3.9 Conclusion

We have seen two fundamentally different attitudes toward multilingual scriptural translation in the rabbinic texts herein surveyed. The first is typified by the Mishnah (and other early rabbinic texts on the multilingual nature of revelation, as I have discussed elsewhere[49]). According to it, it is in the very nature of the language of revelation (if not of language more broadly[50]) that interlingual translation (and maximally/ideally translation into every language) is necessary in order to fully uncover the plenitude of scriptural meaning.

[48] See Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 264–65 n. 22.

[49] See n. 14. For the knowledge of multiple languages for the midrashic interpretation of Hebrew Scripture, see n. 20.

[50] See n. 16.

The second is typified (but with significant variations) by the other rabbinic texts that we have examined as interpretations of the covenantal-renewal ritual prescribed in Deuteronomy 27:1–8 and described in Joshua 8:30–32, with assistance from Joshua 4. According to it, scriptural revelation, via translation into the languages of the "seventy" nations, defines Israel's often ambivalent relationship to those nations, and thereby its social and cultural identity and status with respect to them. Posed as a question, these two attitudes can be conveyed as follows: Does the translation of the Torah into all seventy languages enable its fullest possible meaning(s) to be apprehended, that is, for it to achieve its maximal polyglossic resonance, even if only *within* Israel, or is it simply a concession to the nations so as to assure their punishment, enable their repentance (but not really), or, by sharing with them only so much Scripture as they desire/need to know, to gain their favor (however briefly) or, alternatively, to mock them?[51]

Does the recording of the Torah in all seventy languages suggest that Hebrew is just one language among seventy, each one conveying the Torah's meaning in the respective tongue of each people, as the Babylonian Talmud (*Meg.* 18a) in a different context states, "Egyptian for the Egyptians, Hebrew for the Hebrews,[52] Elamite for

[51] The question of the extent to which the Torah was intended for all of humankind, or only a select part thereof, is a very old one. See, for example, Ben Sira (ca. 180 BCE), as demonstrated by Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 45–79; as well as Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World*. See also my treatment of the story in Sifre Deut. 344 (ed. Finkelstein, 400–1), and parallels, in Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 51–54; Steven D. Fraade, "Navigating the Anomalous: Non-Jews at the Intersection of Early Rabbinic Law and Narrative," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 152–54 (= Steven D. Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 355–57).

[52] "Hebrew" here may mean something other than the Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible or of the Rabbis, but for present purposes this question need not detain us.

the Elamites, and Greek for the Greeks"? Alternatively, does the view that only the Torah was inscribed on the stones, and that the nations had to send their notaries to transcribe and possibly translate the text in their own tongues (even if by divine inspiration), affirm the superior, exceptional status of the Hebrew *original* and the inferior, *derivative* status of all other translations (as well as languages and national identities)? The fact that most of our rabbinic texts do not answer these questions with a monological voice (even the Aramaic *targum* provides a "double translation") suggests that the *polyglossic* nature of revelation might be a correlate of its *polysemic* divine origins, human reception, and transmission.[53]

Although this chapter has focused intensely on the exegetical aspects of the texts considered, as interpretations of both Scripture (already inner-biblically) and (inner-rabbinically) of received rabbinic traditions, they are very much part of a larger multilingual cultural world, as revealed not just by literature, but by the archeological uncovering of ancient inscriptions, coins, and documents. Elsewhere,[54] I have explored in some detail the rich prevalence of multilingualism, but especially bilingualism in ancient Jewish society, and its surrounding and penetrating Greco-Roman world, whether as evidenced by synagogue and funerary inscription, coinage, legal documents, magical spells, or, of course, ancient literature, including rabbinic literature itself as a multilingual performance. I call this the *daily realia of multilingualism* that the Rabbis encountered at every turn (and virtually on every "page"). It is against that vibrant background of multiple cultures navigating their social and political boundaries via language(s) that the

[53] See, in this regard, the following exchange: Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization," *AJSR* 31 (2007): 1–40; Azzan Yadin-Israel, "Rabbinic Polysemy: A Response to Steven Fraade," *AJSR* 38 (2014): 129–41; Steven D. Fraade, "A Response to Azzan Yadin-Israel on Rabbinic Polysemy: Do They 'Preach' What They Practice?" *AJSR* 38 (2014): 339–61.

[54] See Fraade, "עירוב לשונות"; Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism" (translations of one another). See also Chapter 1, nn. 18–21.

rabbinic traditions regarding the inscribing of linguistic boundary stones need to be viewed, understood, and appreciated, Rosetta Stones, as it were, of a different time and place. The constant negotiation of "code-switching" and "bilingual interference," and their necessary assumptions about the role and status of each language in relation to and in contact with the others, suggests that what is at stake in the rabbinic texts we have examined is as much perennial *intellectual* questions of the contested role of language(s) in revelation, its transmission, and its decipherment, as perennial *practical* questions of the contested role of language in the arena of competing social identities.

We have come a long way from the mishnaic assertion, without explanation, that the biblical phrase בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("most distinctly") in Deuteronomy 27:8 signifies the inscribing of the Torah in stone in seventy languages, upon crossing the boundary of the Land (and people) of Israel. At heart there are (at least) three intersecting vectors, which will run as well through the following chapters: (1) What is the language(s) of divine revelation and its transmission, a single pure and holy language or all of human tongues combined? (2) In light of the observed widespread reality of social and cultural multilingualism, how does language choice (as a form of linguistic "code switching," as inherent as it is in task of translation) define the liminalities of social/national identity? (3) What is the nature and function of scriptural translation, in rabbinic terms *targum*, in light of such multilingualism, both in public liturgy and private study, where the reading of Hebrew Scripture and the declaiming of Aramaic *targum* alternate with one another to produce meaning and understanding.

We continue our chronological run through rabbinic texts on multilingualism and translation, beginning in the Beginning (Chapter 2), with a minority view that multilingualism (and by implication, translation), are as old as human and divine language; proceeding (Chapter 3) to the translation of the Torah into seventy languages shortly after Moses' death and its implications for Israel

among the nations; and coming next (Chapter 4), the association of the origins of *targum* with the figure of Ezra, a second Moses, as it were, both for renewing the covenant, and for authoring the dissemination of the Torah (and perhaps the Prophets and Writings) through the explication of translation for a new linguistic and Persian imperial condition.

4 | Ezra the Scribe and the Origins of Targum

4.1 Introduction: The Biblical Ezra as Scribe

This chapter continues the chronological progression from multilingualism in the Garden of Eden (Chapter 2); to the translation/transcription of the Torah of Moses into the universal seventy languages, upon the Israelites' crossing into the Land of Israel, as a part of a covenant renewal ritual between God and Israel alone at Mts. Ebal and Gerizim (Chapter 3); and now, to the career of Ezra the Scribe, and yet another covenant renewal ceremony, this time at the Second Temple Water Gate in Jerusalem.

Ezra is of interest with regard to our subject from several angles. The profession of the scribe, in its many aspects, was deeply tied to writing, and hence to language and, as will see, to multilingualism and translation under Persian imperial rule. In several contexts, perhaps already inner-biblically, but surely in the late Second Temple period, at the time when rabbinic Judaism and its Torah teaching surely had its roots, as difficult as they might be to excavate, Ezra emerges as a central figure in the renewal, yet again, of covenant and the teaching and transmitting of Torah law after the Babylonian Exile.

Ezra, as we shall see, is considered a second Moses, already in late Second Temple texts, and probably already hinted at in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and emerges as such in early rabbinic texts, in part for his attributed role as the restorer of the Torah, including its manner of writing, and is associated with the origins of Jewish scriptural translation, or *targum*. Another aspect of Ezra's

restoration of the Torah and its language is his innovation, as rabbinic lore has it, with respect to the written script of the Bible (such as it was). As we shall see, script is an aspect of scribalism as consequential for social and cultural identity as is language itself, with Hebrew written script by various names having a history as long and varied as that of the biblical text itself. In short, script (including orthography), and the variety thereof and changes thereto, is the primary physical representation of language. Like language, script also conveys meaning, identity, and status, and thereby warrants our attention.

One other aspect of the relationship of scribalism to reading, writing, and translating, and exemplified by Ezra, is its central role in the shaping, preserving, transmitting, and restoring of cultural, collective memory. From the preceding chapter, we should recall that the Hebrew scribes (סופרים) share with the non-Israelite notaries (*notarim*) not just the tasks of recording, reading, and copying of documents, but of translating them as well, in the case of the Torah, into every conceivable (seventy for the Rabbis) language.[1]

While in Chapter 2 we examined a view of multilingualism as extending as far back as Creation itself, and in Chapter 3 the origins of the full rendering of the Torah into the totality (seventy)

[1] On the נוטרים = *notarii* = scribes, see Chapter 3, nn. 23, 27, 28, 30. The bibliography on ancient Israelite scribalism, especially in its broader cultural context, is huge. Three recent excellent books are William M. Schniedewind, *Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), index s.v. "multilingual scribes" and "multilingual student exercises"; Sara J. Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 75–108, esp. 100. On Ezra as a scribe, the classic work is Hans Heinrich Schaeder, *Esra der Schreiber*, BHT 5 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1930). On scribalism as a backdrop to the emergence of rabbinic Judaism, see Michael Fishbane, "From Scribalism to Rabbinism: Perspectives on the Emergence of Classical Judaism," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 439–56.

of human languages, in this chapter we look at the origins of the translation of the Torah (as well as other books of Scripture) into "authored" (if only by attribution) and authorized "texts" (even if performed largely orally and encountered aurally). Underlying these traditions is a fundamental challenge, posed in particular by scriptural translation from Hebrew into non-Israelite languages in a multilingual context, that can be boiled down to the question: Whose (identity-bestowing, divinely inspired) Torah/Scripture is it anyway? This is a question that we shall return to repeatedly in this and the upcoming chapters (especially Chapter 7), in a large variety of rhetorical and hermeneutical forms and tones.

So, when and under what circumstances was the beginning not just of the activity of translating, but of the translation of the Torah as a whole (and other whole books of Scripture), verse by verse, from the holy tongue of Hebrew Scripture into the vernacular of Aramaic, as *targum*? A central figure, in one such account, is the priest and scribe Ezra, who, according to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, was known for his authoritative expertise in and teaching of the Torah's laws. In Ezra 7:6 he is identified by the "title" of וְהֽוּא־סֹפֵ֤ר מָהִיר֙ בְּתוֹרַ֣ת מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַ֥ן ה' אֱלֹהֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל ("A scribe expert in the Teaching [*tôrâ*] of Moses which the Lord god of Israel had given" [NJPS]).[2] Some modern critical scholars, like their ancient rabbinic predecessors, identify the founding event of scriptural translation, under Ezra's direction, with the narrative of Nehemiah 8:1–8, in which he plays the central role of reader and expositor (directing the Levites), which warrant citation and translation at length:

> וַיִּגַּע הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָרֵיהֶם: [1] וַיֵּאָסְפוּ כָל־הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הָרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמָּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְעֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: [2] וַיָּבִיא עֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הַקָּהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכֹל מֵבִין לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי: [3] וַיִּקְרָא־בוֹ לִפְנֵי הָרְחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם מִן־הָאוֹר עַד־מַחֲצִית

[2] Similarly, see Ezra 7:10, 12, 14, 21, 25–26; as well as n. 18.

הַיּוֹם נֶגֶד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַמְּבִינִים וְאָזְנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה: [4]וַיַּעֲמֹד עֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר עַל־מִגְדַּל־עֵץ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לַדָּבָר וַיַּעֲמֹד אֶצְלוֹ . . . [5] וַיִּפְתַּח עֶזְרָא הַסֵּפֶר לְעֵינֵי כָל־הָעָם כִּי־מֵעַל כָּל־הָעָם הָיָה וּכְפִתְחוֹ עָמְדוּ כָל־הָעָם: [6] וַיְבָרֶךְ עֶזְרָא אֶת־יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים הַגָּדוֹל וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל־הָעָם אָמֵן אָמֵן בְּמֹעַל יְדֵיהֶם וַיִּקְּדוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֻ לַיהוָה אַפַּיִם אָרְצָה [7] . . . וְהַלְוִיִּם מְבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם לַתּוֹרָה וְהָעָם עַל־עָמְדָם: [8]וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מְפֹרָשׁ וְשׂוֹם שֶׂכֶל וַיָּבִינוּ בַּמִּקְרָא:

> When the seventh month arrived – the Israelites being [settled] in their towns – [1]the entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the Lord had charged Israel. [2]On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding. [3]He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand; the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching. [4]Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden tower made for the purpose, and beside him stood …. [5]Ezra opened the scroll in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; as he opened it, all the people stood up. [6]Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," with hands upraised. Then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the Lord with their faces to the ground. [7]… and the Levites explained the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places. [8]They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading. (NJPS)

As we shall see in greater detail, among the many uncertainties in the English translation of this passage (including the Hebrew syntax, e.g., who is doing the actual reading of the Torah, Ezra or the Levites under his direction?), especially its final verse, is the Hebrew word here translated as "translating" (מְפֹרָשׁ), meaning some sort of activity that would enable the people to "understand the reading," which could yield other possible translations as well, for example, "distinctly." As we shall also see, the author(s) of Ezra-Nehemiah, if

he/they meant to denote translation per se, for example, from Hebrew to Aramaic, could have used a verbal form of the loan-word root תרגם, as in Ezra 4:7: מְתֻרְגָּם ("translated").

The scriptural passage narrates a one-time event in the career of the priest-scribe Ezra, some time soon after the return from the Babylonian Exile and the building of the Second Jerusalem Temple and restoration of divine worship therein, ca. 450 BCE. As a sort of covenant-renewal ritual, Ezra is said to have publicly read the "scroll of the Teaching (*tôrâ*) of Moses" to the multitude assembled just outside the eastern Temple Water Gate on the occasion of the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23: 23–25; Num. 29:1–6), in anticipation of the fall pilgrimage festival of Sukkot.[3] Clearly, the simple reading by Ezra was insufficient for conveying the full or correct meaning of the scriptural reading. It was critical that the people understood what they heard if they were to obey its words (Neh. 8:12): כִּי הֵבִינוּ בַּדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹדִיעוּ לָהֶם ("for they understood the things that they were told"; NJPS). Therefore, the reading needed to be accompanied by some sort of explanatory glosses, annotations, or translations (e.g., "translating it" in Neh. 8:8, as rendered above according to the NJPS, but "with interpretation" according to the NRSV), the key Hebrew word being מְפֹרָשׁ, which can have a wide range of meanings, such as "clearly," "distinctly" (as the LXX translates the word in Neh. 8:8), or "with meaning."

A translation, whether full or selective, would presumably have been from the original language of Hebrew to a vernacular dialect of Aramaic, a language presumed to have been better understood by the returnees from the Babylonian Exile. They now lived under Persian imperial rule, whose local administrative *lingua franca* was Aramaic, but whose imperial court language was Old Persian. Behind this presumption is one that the people required a rendition

[3] I assume that the text read was an early form of what would become the Pentateuch, or selections therefrom. Compare the septennial Torah reading ceremony mandated by Deut. 31:10–13 (הַקְהֵל).

of the Teaching of Moses that they could understand if they were to comply with and be held accountable to its commandments. As Jacob M. Myers surmises, but with caution, "Apparently Ezra read from the Hebrew while the Levites gave what he read in Aramaic and so assisted in making the law intelligible to the people, though the whole matter is far from clear."[4] The common assumption that the ceremony involved a word-by-word or verse-by-verse version of the complete Hebrew original in Aramaic translation has very little if anything to ground it in the Hebrew narration of the ceremony in Nehemiah 8:1–8. For example, the text could just as easily bear the meaning of the Levites circulating among the people explaining difficulties in the Hebrew scriptural reading, without necessarily denoting a single *continuous* translation heard by all alike, as usually envisioned by way of retrojection from later synagogue practices (earliest known from the Mishnah, ca. 220 CE).

[4] Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 14 (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 154, adding, "cf. P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 1st ed., 1947, p. 124, who thinks the Targum goes back to Ezra." For critical scholarship on Neh. 8:1–8 and 8:8 in particular as denoting translation/*targum*, see, among others, Schaeder, *Esra der Schreiber*, 51–59; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 113; Arie van der Kooij, "Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the 'Targum'-Tradition," in *Tradition of the Text: Studies Offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday*, ed. Gerard J. Norton and Stephen Pisano, OBO 109 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 79–90; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah," in *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 44–56; Michael LeFebvre, *Collections, Codes, and Torah: The Recharacterization of Israel's Written Law* (New York and London: T&T Clark, 2006), 40–47; Ingo Kottsieper, "'And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit': On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95–124; Sara Japhet, "The Ritual of Reading Scripture (Nehemiah 8:1–12)," in *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History: Essays in Honour of Hans M. Barstad*, ed. Rannfrid I. Thelle, Terje Stordalen, and Mervyn E. Richardsonx, VTSup 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 175–90; Mark Whitters, "The Persianized Liturgy of Neh 8:1–8," *JBL* 136 (2017): 63–84.

Note as well that the passage makes no direct reference to the "Hebrew" language, or to "Judean" (*yəhûdît*), as we find in Nehemiah 13:24,[5] or to Aramaic. Similarly, Philo (*Prob*. 82 [LCL 56–59]), in describing the Sabbath synagogue services of the Essenes, says, εἶθ' εἷς μέν τις τὰς βίβλους ἀναγινώσκει λαβών, ἕτερος δὲ τῶν ἐμπειροτάτων ὅσα μὴ γνώριμα παρελθὼν ἀναδιδάσκει ("Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood"), without suggesting necessarily a *continuous* translation, or commentary, or any difference between the language of the reading and that of the explanations.

The understanding of מְפֹרָשׁ (Neh. 8:8) as denoting translation relies on the use of the same word, but slightly differently vocalized, in Ezra 4:18, where it is in Aramaic, in which Artaxerxes I, the Persian king, is speaking in response to a petition to cease construction of the Temple:

נִשְׁתְּוָנָא דִּי שְׁלַחְתּוּן עֲלֶינָא מְפָרַשׁ קֱרִי קָדָמָי׃

> Now the letter that you wrote me has been read to me in translation. (NJPS)[6]

The original letter was written in Aramaic, but needed to be translated, presumably by bilingual scribes or administrators, into Persian for the king to understand.[7] This, in turn, refers back to Ezra 4:7:

[5] It also appears in 2 Kings 18:26, 28; Isa. 36:11, 13; 2 Chr. 32:18. The earliest use of the word "Hebrew" to denote the language per se, is in the Prologue to Ben Sira (ca. 130 BCE).

[6] Similarly NRSV, "[T]he letter that you send to us has been read in translation before me." Compare as well Isa. 8:1, בְּחֶרֶט אֱנוֹשׁ ("in common script" [NJPS]; "in common characters" [NRSV]), as rendered by Tg. Isa. as כתב מפרש ("distinct writing").

[7] For such professional translation and "language contact" by bilingual officials, see Aren Wilson-Wright, "From Persepolis to Jerusalem: A Reevaluation of Old Persian–Hebrew Contact in the Achaemenid Period," *VT* 65 (2015): 152–67.

עַל־אַרְתַּחְשַׁשְׂתְּ מֶלֶךְ פָּרָס וּכְתָב הַנִּשְׁתְּוָן כָּתוּב אֲרָמִית וּמְתֻרְגָּם.
אֲרָמִית:

> [they wrote] to King Artaxerxes of Persia, a letter written in Aramaic and translated.
> Aramaic: (NJPS)[8]

It would appear, then, that the passive verbal forms מְפָרַשׁ (Ezra 4:18) and מְתֻרְגָּם (Ezra 4:7) are synonyms meaning "translated" (here from Aramaic to Old Persian). Whether this meaning can be transferred to מְפֹרָשׁ in Nehemiah 8:8 (for translation from Hebrew to Aramaic, presumably), with a slightly different vocalization, as perhaps a calque, is reasonable, but not certain. The possibility remains viable that the text refers to the clarity of the script, and hence of its reading (see n. 6). In any event, the readers of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are presumed to be bilingual enough so as to follow the code-switching between Hebrew and Aramaic in these books, as in the book of Daniel.

4.2 4 Ezra: Ezra as a Latter-day Moses

Already in ancient rabbinic sources, amoraic but not tannaitic, Babylonian as well as Palestinian, Nehemiah 8:8 is understood to denote not just a targumic translation of the Torah in general, but the recitation and study of the specific, "authorized" Aramaic *targum* ("our *targum*") of Onqelos.[9] In this way, anachronistic as it is (Onqelos is said to have lived around 100 CE), the authority of Targum Onqelos derives from its being anchored to the figure of Ezra as a second

[8] NRSV: "the letter was written in Aramaic and translated." This rendering presumes that the second "Aramaic" refers to the letter that follows as being in Aramaic, rather than Hebrew, as is the narrative frame. We find a similar usage of the word "Aramaic" in Dan. 2:4. The ambiguity arises in part due to the absence of a preposition (e.g., "from" or "to").

[9] For this equating of מְפֹרָשׁ with "*targum*" (Onqelos), see b. Meg. 3a; b. Ned. 37b; y. Meg. 4:1, 74d; Gen. Rab. 36:8 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:342). The view of Targum Onqelos as being the

Moses, with a ritual enactment, as depicted in Nehemiah 8:1–8, mimicking and thereby experientially renewing the revelation at Mt. Sinai.[10] For those who simply identify the word מְפֹרָשׁ as denoting translation/*targum*, it is the targumic tradition and activity in general that is so anchored. A further step is to identify, in turn, that activity with a specific, known targumic text, whether written or oral. For the more generic sense, note the words of Saul Lieberman:

> But the first rudiment of the interpretation of a text is the ἑρμηνεία, the literal and exact equivalent of the Hebrew תרגום, which means both translation and interpretation. The Rabbis derived from the verse in Nehemiah (8:8) that Ezra performed the functions of a ἑρμ ηνευτής (translator and interpreter) and γραμματικός.[11]

"official" *targum* of the Pentateuch, as is Targum Jonathan of the Prophets, is more typically Babylonian. See, in particular, b. Meg. 3a, in which it is said that the *targum* revealed at the time of Ezra, according to Neh. 8:8, was forgotten over the generations and had to be reestablished by Onqelos in the first century CE. By this account, Onqelos is, in a sense, a latter-day Ezra. For the Torah having been forgotten by the people and restored by Ezra, see nn. 27–29. The same source in b. Meg. 3a attributes the *targum* of the Prophets to have been composed by/revealed through Jonathan ben Uzziel. Palestinian sources seem, at first at least, to view targumic translation as not being bound to any particular targumic version, and to have been more spontaneous in their performance, both in study and in synagogue recitation. For the Babylonian view, see as well b. Qidd 49a; Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 264–65 n. 30; and at greater length, Willem Smelik, "Translation as Innovation in BT Meg. 3A," in *Recent Developments in Midrash Research: Proceedings of the 2002 and 2003 SBL Consultation on Midrash*, ed. Lieve M. Teugels and Rivka Ulmer, Judaism in Context 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 25–49. B. Meg. 3a is also treated in "Translation and Authority: Three (Very Different) Cases." Since Neh. 8:1–8 is often viewed as a model (which it may have been) for what would eventually become the synagogue ritual for the public reading of the Torah in the synagogue, aspects of that later ritual are easily, but incorrectly, retrojected anachronistically onto the one-time ritual presided over by Ezra.

10 For such reenactments, see, in particular, y. Meg. 4:1, 74d, to be treated in Chapter 6.

11 Lieberman continues: "The elementary task of the interpreter of the Bible was to explain the *realia* and to render the rare and difficult term in a simpler Hebrew, or, sometimes, in Aramaic." Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 48. This is similarly cited in Chapter 1, n. 11.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that Ezra is portrayed as a second, latter-day Moses, already implicitly inner-biblically in Ezra-Nehemiah, but much more suggestively in the pseudepigraphic writing known as 4 Ezra, dating from the end of the first century CE, following the destruction of the Second Temple, presumably in Judea.[12] This idea subsequently finds even more concrete expression in later (yet still relatively early) rabbinic traditions regarding Ezra, where the emphasis is on renewed language and script, which we shall treat following our consideration of 4 Ezra.[13]

First and foremost, Ezra is portrayed as a second receiver and transmitter of divine revelation, with some striking similarities. Just as Moses is addressed by God from a bush (Exod. 3:1–6), so is Ezra, although it is not said to be burning (4 Ezra 14:1–2). Just as Moses is gone from the people for forty days and nights to receive revelation (Exod. 24:18), so is Ezra (4 Ezra 14:36). Just as Moses receives both exoteric and esoteric revelation (4 Ezra 14:6), so does Ezra (4 Ezra 14:26; 14:45–46).

But there are also differences, albeit not as much emphasized. For example, Moses ascends a mountain to receive revelation (Exod. 19), whereas Ezra goes to an uncultivated field (4 Ezra 14:37), although they both might be thought of as places of separation and solitude fitting for prophetic communication (Sinai being both a mountain and a wilderness). While Moses is said not to have eaten or drunk anything while on Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights, Ezra, according to 4 Ezra 9:24–25, subsisted in the field on a simple diet of flowers.[14] Whereas Moses records himself what is revealed

[12] For a recent introduction, translation, and commentary to 4 Ezra, see Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

[13] For a broader treatment of 4 Ezra (and 2 Baruch) in light of early rabbinic literature, see Steven D. Fraade, "*4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* with the (Dis-) Advantage of Rabbinic Hindsight," in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabrielle Boccaccini, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 363–78.

[14] According to rabbinic sources, Moses was like the celestial angels in partaking of neither food nor beverage while on Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights. See Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9,18; b. Yoma 4b; Gen. Rab. 48:14 (ed. Theodor-Alback, 491); AbotR.

to him (except perhaps for the last eight verses of Deuteronomy[15]), Ezra, according to 4 Ezra 14:24, is accompanied by five scribes who do the actual writing, in a previously unknown script (14:42).[16]

4.3 Rabbinic Sources: Ezra as a Latter-day Moses

While some of these traditions or motifs find expression in early rabbinic sources, others are unique (so far as I can tell) to 4 Ezra (e.g., Ezra being addressed from a bush). But overall, Ezra and Moses share being portrayed as foundational recipients and teachers of revelation, mainly exoteric for Moses in the Bible and largely esoteric for Ezra in 4 Ezra (ch. 14), although rabbinic literature and 4 Ezra have them both being the receivers and transmitters of both kinds of knowledge.

To begin with, early rabbinic texts make the comparison between Moses and Ezra much more explicitly, directly, and exegetically, already in the Tosefta:[17]

Nat. 1 (ed. Schechter, 1). For fasting or a vegetarian diet in preparation for receiving revelation or entering a spiritual state, see 1 Kings 19:8; Dan. 10:2–3; 2 Bar. 9:2; 20:5–6; 4 Ezra 5:13,20; 6:31,35; Apoc. Ab. 9:7; Philo, *Leg.* 3.138–45 (LCL 1:392–99); *Moses* 2.14 (68–70) (LCL 6:482–85); Matt. 4:2; Luke 4:2; Josephus, *Vita* 11 (LCL 1.4–7).

[15] On which see Sifre Deut. 357 (ed. Finkelstein, 427–28) and the sources cited in Finkelstein's notes ad loc. On the larger question of the role of Moses as recorder of revelation, both at Sinai and thereafter, see my article, "Moses and the Commandments: Can Hermeneutics, History, and Rhetoric Be Disentangled?" in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 399–422, with notes.

[16] See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913–39), 6:443–44 n. 44; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 410–11, 439.

[17] T. Sanh. 4:7 following MS Erfurt. The slightly variant wording in MS Vienna does not affect its meaning for present purposes. See the edition of Chaim Freiman. See also nn. 19, 22. The Tosefta is notoriously difficult to date, with its constituent traditions and tradents being tannaitic (first two–three centuries CE), but in its redacted form being considerably later.

ר' יוסי אומ' ראוי היה עזרא שתינתן תורה על ידו אילמלא קידמו משה נאמרה במשה עלייה ונאמרה בעזרא עלייה נאמרה במשה עלייה שנ' ומשה עלה אל האלהים נאמרה בעזרא עלייה הוא עזרא עלה מבבל מה עלייה האמורה במשה למד תורה לישראל שנ' ואתי צוה יי בעת ההיא ללמד אתכם חקים ומשפטים אף עלייה האמורה בעזרא למד תורה בישר' שנ' כי עזרא הכין את לבבו לדרוש בתורת יי ולעשות וללמד בישר' חוק ומשפט.

R. Yose says: Ezra was worthy for the Torah to have been given by him, had not Moses preceded him. It is said of Moses "going up," and it is said of Ezra "going up." It is said of Moses "going up," as it is said, "And Moses *went up* to God" (Exod. 19:3). It is said of Ezra "going up," as it is said, "That Ezra *came up* from Babylonia" (Ezra 7:6). Just as, in the case of "going up" which is said of Moses, he taught Torah to Israel, as it is said, "At the same time the Lord commanded me to teach you laws and rules" (Deut. 4:14), so, in the case of "going up" which is said of Ezra, he taught Torah to Israel, as it is said, "For Ezra had dedicated himself to study the Teaching of the Lord so as to observe it, and to teach to Israel laws and rules" (Ezra 7:10).[18]

Both Moses and Ezra ascended (Moses literally, Ezra figuratively), in order to teach Torah to Israel. The fact that Scripture uses much the same language to describe their ascending and teaching of Torah "laws and rules," suggests that Scripture itself is equating their roles, which it might, more subtly, be doing. Perhaps hyperbolically, for 4 Ezra, Moses's main advantage over Ezra is that he "got there first."

Similarly, the notice in 4 Ezra 14:42, that the five scribes who accompanied Ezra "wrote what was dictated, in characters that they did not know," is usually associated with an early rabbinic tradition of a changed Torah script (in the continuation of the previously cited passage from the Tosefta) to which we now turn:[19]

[18] Cf. p. Meg. 1:9 (11), 71b–c; b. Sanh. 21b–22a. For expressions of Ezra's pedagogic authority, similar to that of Ezra 7:10, see n. 2.

[19] T. Sanh. 4:7 (following MS Erfurt).

אף הוא ניתן בידיו כתב ולשון שנ' וכתב הנשתוון כתוב ארמית ומתורגם ארמית מה תורגומו ארמית אף כתבו ארמית ואומ' ולא כהלין כתבא למיקרי ופישרה להחוואה למלכא מלמד שבאותו היום ניתן ואומ' וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת וג' תורה עתידה להשתנות ולמה נקרא שמה אשורי על שום שעלה עמהן מאשור ר' אומ' בכתב אשורי ניתנה תורה לישראל וכשחטאו נהפכה להן לְרוֹעַץ וכשזכו בימי עזרה חזרה להן אשורית שנ' שובו לביצרון אסירי התקוה גם היום מגיד משנה אשיב לך.

Also through him [= Ezra] were given a script and a language, as it is said, "a letter written in Aramaic [script] and translated [into Aramaic]" (Ezra 4:7[20]). Just as its translation [language] was Aramaic, so too its script was Aramaic. And it says, "But they could not read the writing, nor make known its meaning to the king" (Dan. 5:8).[21] This teaches that on that very day [= in Ezra's time] it [= the changed Torah] was given. And it says, "And he shall write a copy [or, an altered version] of this law" (אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) (Deut. 17:18): a Torah which is destined to be changed.[22] And why was it [= the Aramaic script] called Assyrian? Because it came up with them from Assyria. Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] (ca. 200 CE) says, "The Torah was given to Israel [at Mt. Sinai] in Assyrian script, but when they sinned, it was changed to *Roʿaṣ* [= Samaritan script]. But when they merited it in the time of Ezra, it reverted for them back to Assyrian, as it says, 'Return to Bizzaron [= Samaria], You prisoners of hope. In return [I] announce this day: I will repay you double'" (Zech. 9:12).[23]

[20] On which, see n. 9.

[21] That is, they could neither decipher its script nor comprehend its language, both being in Aramaic.

[22] See nn. 17, 19. Cf. Sifre Deut. 160 (ed. Finkelstein, 211); p. Meg. 1:9 (11), 71b–c; b. Sanh. 21b–22a. See Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 4:355–56; 6:443–44 nn. 41–44; Shlomo Naeh, "על כתב התורה בדברי חז"ל (א): המסורת על החלפת הכתב בידי עזרא" ("The Script of the Torah in Rabbinic Thought [A]: The Traditions Concerning Ezra's Changing of the Script"), *Leshonenu* 70 (2008): 125–43. Most recently, see Adiel Schremer and Binyamin Katzoff, "Inseparable Considerations: The Origins, Redaction, and Text of the Baraita about the Script of the Torah in Tosefta Sanhedrin 4:7," *JSIJ* 22 (2022) (in Hebrew with English abstract).

[23] When they return from exile they will also (doubly) return to the Torah as it was originally revealed at Mt. Sinai in Assyrian (Aramaic) script. The Torah was changed

The Tosefta continues (4:8) with another possibility, attributed to Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar (ca. 200 CE), and based on Esther 8:9 (כִּכְתָבָם וְכִלְשׁוֹנָם; "according to their writing and language") that neither the language nor the script had changed from revelation to the present, language and script being, in a sense, mutually connected and inseparable. This, of course, directly contradicts the interpretation of Deuteronomy 17:18 (מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) as referring to "a Torah which is destined to be changed," whether in language, script, or both.[24]

The passage begins by crediting Ezra with having introduced both the "square" Aramaic (aka Assyrian) script and language (of *targum*), just as, it is presumed, Moses had previously introduced the Hebrew script and language at Mt. Sinai, script and language going, as it were, hand in hand. However, whereas the script of the Torah was permanently changed (from Paleo-Hebrew to Aramaic/Assyrian) by Ezra, its language (although perhaps briefly changed, as per Rabbi Judah the Patriarch) remained the same (Hebrew) as it had been. In other words, initially Moses revealed the Torah in the Hebrew language and Hebrew script, whereas Ezra, after having "come up" from Babylonia, reveals the changed Torah, now in the Aramaic language and Aramaic (Assyrian) script, presumably because the people after the Babylonian Exile were better versed (so to speak) in Aramaic language (*targum*) and Aramaic (Assyrian) script.

The continuation of the passage presents other rabbinic views that assert either that such a change of script did not take place, and that the Torah was always written in the Hebrew language and the Aramaic (Assyrian) script (as it is), or that if there had been a change in script, it had only been for a while, between Moses and Ezra, after which it was restored (not changed) by Ezra to its original

from what had been revealed at Mt. Sinai, but only temporarily, since ultimately it remained the same.

[24] See n. 23.

combination of Hebrew language and Hebrew script. The net result of this give and take is that a compromise, as it were, was reached. The Torah of rabbinic times (if not Ezra's) is presumed, in the end, to have been a partly altered or hybrid Hebrew language text in Aramaic/Assyrian script, rather than a pure, unalloyed Hebrew language and paleo-Hebrew script (e.g., Samaritan) or Aramaic language and script (e.g., Christian Syriac). Moses and Ezra, in addition to sharing the distinction of being teachers of Torah law are credited with the origins of its changing languages and scripts.

According to a later elaboration of this tradition,[25] it was the Israelite people of Ezra's time (by a unanimous vote, as it were) who chose, as a sort of diplomatic linguistic compromise, to retain the Hebrew language of the Torah (as revealed by Moses), but to change its script to Aramaic/Assyrian (as introduced by Ezra), a Moses–Ezra, Hebrew–Aramaic, language–script hybrid. Thus, the Hebrew language and the (original) Hebrew script are not inextricably linked to one another as it might seem. While the present Hebrew language of Scripture is imagined as going back to Moses, Aramaic script (if not, by association, the Aramaic translation as well) goes back to Ezra, or at least to his time.

This is, most likely, a retrojection from a later time when Hebrew and Aramaic vied with one another, as with Greek, for sociolinguistic priority and code-switching, especially with respect to scriptural reading (Hebrew), translation (Aramaic), and interpretation (mainly Hebrew) in the Land of Israel and in Babylonia, but not in the western diasporas. The same trilingual competition, as it were, is reflected in the multilingual diversity of synagogue and funerary inscriptions, both in the Land of Israel and in the Jewish diaspora (as discussed in Chapter 1).

Interestingly, the "newly" introduced Aramaic/Assyrian script has continued to be used by Jews down to the present, not just for the Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic languages, but for later Jewish

[25] Y. Meg. 1:9 (11), 71b; y. Soṭah 7:2, 21c; b. Sanh. 21b.

hybrid (or "bridge") languages across centuries and continents (Judeo-Arabic, Ladino, Yiddish, and many others). What begins as a simple reference to an unrecognized script in 4 Ezra develops into a complex discussion of the relation of language to script in revelation and its transmission, and of the ways in which Ezra was imagined not just as a belated Moses as teacher and transmitter of Torah, but as a scribal innovator of lasting consequence. This is not to presume that the early Rabbis knew of 4 Ezra (or vice versa), but it does suggest that they are employing, each in its own way and for its own purposes, a shared tradition of indeterminable origin, or at the very least a common motif.

As a coda to this section, and in anticipation of the Afterword (Chapter 8), it should be noted that after Ezra neither the Hebrew language nor the "Aramaic" script remained unchanged. Perhaps Deuteronomy 17:18 would be better understood as foreseeing the ever-changing "Torah" language and script. As much as both the Hebrew language and the specifically Jewish Aramaic script have been tied to Jewish identity and status, they have both continuously changed, largely in relation to the languages and scripts of the surrounding and "host" non-Jewish cultures, which they tend to mirror, but also due to inner linguistic propellants. Thus, the Hebrew script absorbs aspects of Gothic Latin script, or Arabic script, or Italian humanist script, each in due course and each as if nothing has changed. Yiddish, or Judeo Arabic, or Ladino may preserve their Hebrew (that is, "Assyrian") scripts, which serve as bulwarks against German, Arabic, and Spanish cultural dominance, as well as providing a sense of identity and continuity with the past, but they hardly come away unscathed by the culture wars that so often revolve around language choice and domination.

The idea, that we have examined, that changes in script might be thought of as being temporary or reversible is a fantasy of small imprint at first, but of great interest and importance in the aggregate. It might be argued, or here hinted, that preserving some continuous aspects of language and script enable others (including translation

and transliteration) to change, as it were, without notice. Like other traditional cultures and like other aspects of cultural adoption and adaptation across cultures, the more things change, the more they (are thought, ideally at least, to) stay the same.

4.4 Rabbinic Sources: Ezra as Repository of Collective Memory

Finally, I wish to add to the mix of traditions two that signal Ezra's unique role in the renewal and transmission of Torah, without reference to language and script, but with respect to memory, raising the question of the centrality of memory (and the anxiety of forgetting) to the scribal vocation as preserver and transmitter of collective memory. While the scribe is distinguished for his facility with written language and script, he not only copies from text to text, but also from the orality of memory. The following passages are tannaitic (first two centuries CE) and amoraic (next five centuries), Palestinian and Babylonian:[26]

מה אילו זה שעמד וקיים תורה בישראל לא היתה תורה משתכחת מה אילו לא עמד שפן בשעתו עזרא בשעתו רבי עקיבה בשעתו לא היתה תורה משתכחת.

> Were it not for those who arose and established the Torah, would it not have been forgotten from among Israel? Had not Shaphan in his time, Ezra in his time, and R. Akiba in his time stood up, would it not have been forgotten?[27]

[26] See Shlomo Naeh, "אומנות הזיכרון: מבנים של זיכרון ותבניות של טכסט בספרות חז"ל," in *Mehqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sussmann and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 543–89. See also n. 10.

[27] Sifre Deut. 48 (ed. Finkelstein, 112; trans. Hammer, 104), as well as the continuation, on which see my article, "Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization," *AJS Review* 31 (2007): 13–15.

שבתחלה כשנשתכחה תורה מישראל עלה עזרא מבבל ויסדה, חזרה ונשתכחה עלה הלל הבבלי ויסדה, חזרה ונשתכחה עלו רבי חייא ובניו ויסדוה.

> For in ancient times when the Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra came up from Babylon and established it. When it was again forgotten, Hillel the Babylonian came up and established it. When it was again forgotten, R. Hiyya and his sons came up and established it.[28]

In these passages, Ezra takes his place within a chronological chain of select learned figures who periodically reestablish the Torah by saving it from being forgotten, a chain that begins within the Bible and culminates with rabbinic sages, establishing, in a sense, a diachronic chain of memory (like the order of Chapters 2–4, on which see Chapter 1) that is repeatedly broken, presumably by the people as a whole, and heroically restored by leading individuals. Needless to say perhaps, the figure who implicitly precedes Ezra in these chains of forgetfulness is the Egyptian Moses (a near-immigrant), with whom revelation began before being repetitively forgotten. If any link in the chain had been "forgotten," the chain would have ceased to exist.[29] Interestingly, each of the figures in the second paragraph, beginning with Hillel, were Babylonian sages who immigrated to the Land of Israel, bringing with them, presumably, their diasporic (and hence multilingual) learning. It is as if to say that had they not migrated, geographically and linguistically, the Torah might not have survived and been "established," perhaps a polemical point, since the second tradition is found only in the Babylonian Talmud, whereas the preceding one is of Palestinian provenance.

[28] B. Sukkah 20a. For other rabbinic texts that speak of a practice having been forgotten and restored/arranged (שכחום וחזר וסדרום), see: b. Shabb. 104a; b. Yoma 80a; b. Sukkah 44a; b. Meg. 3a (treated in n. 19); 18a. For Hillel as a disciple of Ezra, see t. Soṭah 13:3 (ed. Lieberman, 231).

[29] See Fraade, "*4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*," 366–68 ("Torah Destroyed/Hidden/Forgotten and Restored"). For the idea that the prophets simply restored what had been forgotten since Sinai, and hence are not sources of new revelation, see b. Meg. 3a, with many parallels in both Talmuds, for which see Smelik, "Translation as Innovation," 35 n. 33.

In the former passage, the rescuers stood up (ʿ*āmad*), whereas in the latter they ascended (ʿ*ālâ*, that is, immigrated). The two verbs may serve as synonyms, but synonyms with a distinct difference in significance.

4.5 Conclusion

If previously Ezra is credited for his innovation of changing (or, according to some, restoring) the script (and, according to some, the language) of the Torah, from Hebrew to Aramaic (*targum*), here he is credited with restoring the continuity of memory (and presumably practice). Taking these texts together, Ezra stands as a model of the scribal vocation over all: mastery of language(s) and script(s) and repository of memory, in a sense generative and restorative, with each dyad being dynamically intradependent. Of course, the texts we have engaged – biblical, pseudepigraphic (4 Ezra), and rabbinic – are themselves innovative preservers and shapers of language and memory. Their full histories are beyond our ability, or collective memory, to reliably trace, even if they are imagined to have begun with Moses at Sinai (mountain and wilderness) as inscriber and teacher of texts and shaper of memories, of which his successors, select and nonselect, are worthy inheritors and innovators in their own successive times, places, and languages.[30] If memory predicates not just history but destiny, both are physically

[30] On law as legacy, focusing on a midrashic text that stars Moses and Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, see my essay, "'Enjoin Them upon Your Children to Keep' (Deut. 32:46): Law as Commandment and Legacy, Or, Robert Cover Meets Midrash," in *Law as Religion, Religion as Law*, ed. David C Flatto and Benjamin Porat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 273–90. On Moses as a polyglot in seventy languages, see my essay, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:185–94.

embodied in language and script as they continuously and interdependently switch and adapt. Ezra the Scribe is a model of the vocation of writing, in a world in which language and script are always taking on new forms, even as they anchor and are anchored by the fragility of collective memory across time and place.[31]

Our focus will next turn from diachronic sweep to a selection of rabbinic texts that deal in a variety of ways with *targum* in its material form as a written scroll, even as its orality is affirmed, accompanying the written scrolls of Scripture without displacing them in use or status.

[31] On collective memory in the reshaping of biblical models, see Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 1–22. For my own prior exploration of ritual and collective memory, see Steven D. Fraade, "Memory and Loss in Early Rabbinic Text and Ritual," in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz*, ed. Tom Thatcher, SemeiaSt 78 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 113–27.

5 | Out of the Fire and Into the Wall

5.1 Introduction

In the present chapter, adopting a more materialist and metahistorical frame, I shall explore two intersecting textual themes, one of law ("Out of the Fire" of the chapter title) and one of narrative ("Into the Wall" of the same), both relating to the liminal status of scriptural translation as, on the one hand, a representation of holy Scripture and, on the other, a human rendition of a sacred text in a non- or quasi-sacred tongue.[1] I should stress at the outset that these are difficult texts to understand, about which there has long been scholarly debate from ancient to contemporary times, largely unresolved.[2] I do not pretend that my understandings of them will

[1] I have dealt with this tension in several articles, for example, Steven D. Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, Brown Judaic Studies 320 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–22; Steven D. Fraade, "'Reading Leads to Translating' in a Multilingual Context: The View from Early Rabbinic Texts (and Beyond)," in *Social History of the Jews within the Ancient World: Studies in Dialogue with Al Baumgarten's Work*, ed. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal and Jonathan Ben-Dov, TSAJ 185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 217–31.

[2] For a summary of the difficulties in making sense of these rabbinic texts, beginning with the Mishnah, see, recently, Vered Noam and Elisha Qimron, "A Qumran Composition of Sabbath Laws and Its Contribution to the Study of Early Halakah," *DSD* 16 (2009): 81–82 n. 72. For a critical response, questioning the textual reconstructions of Noam and Qimron, see Richard Hidary, "Revisiting the Sabbath Laws in 4Q264a and Their Contribution to Early Halakha," *DSD* 22 (2014): 68–92. For a review of the rabbinic texts, see Noam and Qimron, "A Qumran Composition of Sabbath Laws," 81–87, as well as, in this book, n. 6.

be the last word. This is especially true of the mishnaic passage with which we will begin, due in part to its typically mishnaic concision and ambiguity.

However, the questions these texts raise are of central importance to the place and performance of translation universally. For example, does the status of a sacred text rub off, as it were, on its translation, about which the same can be asked of commentary? Or, and these are by no means mutually exclusive, does the very act of translation confer authority, for example, canonicity, to its source text and its language? Is there a difference between private and public readings or study of translation, that is, between the individual and the collective, for example, between weekday private study and Sabbath communal recital and interpretation? Again, which confers status or authority on which? Finally, does a sacred or quasi-sacred text have a "life" that needs to be ritually ended when it is no longer physically or ideologically usable. We shall progress through the texts in the rough chronological order of their composition so we can approximate how the traditions might have unfolded over time.

5.2 Mishnah Šabbat 16:1 (MS Kaufmann)

כל כתבי הקדש מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. בין שקורים בהן ובין שאינן קורין בהן. אף־על־פי כתובין בכל לשון טעונים גניזה. מפני מה אין קורים בהן. מפני ביטול בית המדרש. מצילין תק הספר עם הספר ותק תפילים עם התפילים אף על [פי] שיש בתוכן מעות. ולאיכן מצילין אותן. למבוי שאינו מפולש. בן בתירה אומר. אף למפולש.

[A] All holy writings are rescued [from a building on the Sabbath] on account of fire,[3] whether they are [publicly] read or are not read [on the Sabbath]. [B] Even if they are written in any language, [if

[3] This is allowed even though such rescue constitutes a form of forbidden labor on the Sabbath: transferring something from the "private" to the "public domain." See m. Šabb. 7:2.

> they become unusable][4] they require being hidden away (*gənîzâ*). [C] Why [are some scrolls] not read [on the Sabbath]? Because [such reading would cause] neglect of the house of study.[5] [D] They rescue the case of the scroll with the scroll and the case of the phylacteries (*tefillin*) with the phylacteries, even if they contain coins. [E] And to where are they rescued? To an alley that is not open [as a public thoroughfare]. [F] Ben Batira says: Also to [an alley] that is open.[6]

Section [A] positively answers the question of whether "holy writings" – comprising Torah (Pentateuch), Prophets, and Writings (Hagiographa) – can be rescued from a burning building on

[4] Scrolls can be required to be hidden away either due to their poor condition or for their objectional content. Unless otherwise stated, I assume that the former obtains in the texts to be examined, notwithstanding some ambiguity. See n. 21.

[5] It is a bit confusing, perhaps due to an editorial conflation, but the first reference to books that are "not [publicly] read [on the Sabbath]" refers to books of Scripture (e.g., from the Writings) that are not read in *public* as part of the Sabbath (and festival) lectionary cycle. The second reference to "[scrolls] not read" refers to the same books not being read on the Sabbath by individuals in *private*. That is, they (books of the Writings such as Job) are neither read from liturgically in public nor privately in study on the Sabbath (and festivals). It would appear, then, that they can only be read (or studied) in private on days or times when the house of study is not in session. On the tension between private and public recitation of *targum*, see Chapter 6. We will return (in Sections 5.3–5.6) to this conflation in our consideration of rabbinic texts that prohibit the private reading of a *targum* of the book of Job. For a prohibition, with exceptions, of private reading of any holy Scriptures on the Sabbath, see t. Šabb. 13 (14): 1 (ed. Lieberman, 57). For a possible parallel Sabbath law among the Dead Sea Scrolls, prohibiting private scriptural reading of some books on the Sabbath, see 4Q264a (4QHalakhah B) 1 I, 4–5 (DJD 35:54–55, with Joseph Baumgarten's comment ad loc.), as newly reconstructed and interpreted by Noam and Qimron, "A Qumran Composition of Sabbath Laws," 80–88. They suggest that 4Q251 (4QHalakhah A) 1–2 5 (DJD 35:28–30, with note ad loc. by E. Larson, M. R. Lehmann, and L. Schiffman) may be similarly understood.

[6] Edition of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, 121. For a more detailed discussion, see Willem F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 240–46, as well as, in this chapter, n. 2. The following, presumably later, parallels will not be treated here: Sop. 5:17 (ed. Higger, 161–62); 15:1–3 (ed. Higger, 273–76); Addition 2, 8–9 (ed. Higger, 376–77).

the Sabbath, involving "labor" that is otherwise forbidden on the Sabbath.[7]

Section [B] would seem to address another question: Do all scriptural scrolls, or only those written in Hebrew, and not in translation, require being disposed of by being hidden (*gənîzâ*) in a place where they will naturally decay when they are no longer usable, rather than being actively destroyed. In other words, is this sign of textual status presumed to apply to all Hebrew scriptural scrolls, extending to those in translation (into "any language")? The mishnaic response is again positive.

However, the relation between sections [A] and [B] is unclear. Are they wholly separate from each other, or does [B] presuppose [A] to mean that the expression "all holy writings" includes Scriptures in translation, which similarly must be rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath [A], as well as require *gənîzâ* if unfit for use [B]? Although a positive response becomes, over time, the dominant view, the opposite view has long been argued across the history of mishnaic interpretation, that is, that whereas such scriptural scrolls in translation are *not* sufficiently holy to warrant the violation of the Sabbath to rescue them from fire, they are still entitled to the respect of *gənîzâ* (e.g., by virtue of their including expressions for the divine name). In other words, do scriptural scrolls in translation enjoy the *same* status as those in Hebrew *both* with respect to rescue from a burning building on the Sabbath and with respect to *gənîzâ* for unusable texts, or only the latter?[8]

The two sections might be associatively linked as follows: If damaged Scriptures in translation require *gənîzâ*, and rescued scrolls

[7] See n. 4. This may be compared to permission, even obligation, to violate the Sabbath in order to save a life (*piqqûaḥ nepeš*), e.g., Mek. Šabb. 1 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 340–41).

[8] Although, in these regards, scriptural scrolls in translation might be included under the classification of "holy writings," elsewhere (m. Yad. 4:5), as usually understood, scrolls of *targum* do *not* "defile the hands" (whatever that means), as do canonical Hebrew Scriptures. We shall return to this in Section 5.5, in discussion of y. Šabb. 16:1, 15b–c.

from a burning building on the Sabbath might be damaged by the fire, should they not be rescued so as to spare them such damage or destruction? Stated differently, if such scrolls are not rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath, they will be destroyed by fire rather than allowed to decay naturally in a place of *gənîzâ*. The liminal status of scriptural translations (between sacred and profane) is hinted at in the expression "even if" (אף־על־פי), that is, the fact that they are written in languages other than Hebrew might mean that they are of lower status, for which reason they would not require *gənîzâ*,[9] which the Mishnah denies. If such translated scrolls are not of a lower status with respect to requiring *gənîzâ*, likewise they should not be of a lower status with respect to being rescued from fire on the Sabbath, even if the Sabbath is desecrated as a result. So the argument would go.

Section [C] seeks to clarify the expression "whether they are [publicly] read [on the Sabbath] or are not read," with respect to saving scriptural scrolls from a burning building on the Sabbath. This is understood to mean that among the holy writings a further distinction (in a sense, a canon within a canon) is drawn between those scrolls that are publicly read as part of the Sabbath (and festival) lectionary cycle of the synagogue and those that are not (e.g., as we shall see, the book of Job among the Writings). While one might think that the latter should enjoy a somewhat lower status than the former due to their not being ritually performed in public, the Mishnah (section [A]) asserts that with respect to being rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath, there is no distinction to be drawn between the two: Both types of scriptural scrolls (publicly read and not read) are to be rescued from fire. Section [C]

[9] On the liminal status of *targum*, see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86; Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction," 109–22; Fraade, "'Reading Leads to Translating'"; as well as Chapter 6.

implicitly asks whether such scriptural scrolls that are not publicly read on the Sabbath or festivals can be read, presumably in private (and presumably on the Sabbath and festivals), for an individual's edification, and if not, why? The reason is that the private reading of such scrolls would cause their readers to neglect attendance at communal textual study at the house of study (*bêt midrāš*), which is of a higher socioreligious value.[10]

The remainder of the Mishnah (sections [D] through [F]) clarifies some further aspects of the rescue of scriptural scrolls from a burning building on the Sabbath, without further regard to the distinctions between Hebrew original and translations into other languages, or between scrolls liturgically read in public and those (Writings) read by individuals in private. The storage cases in which scriptural scrolls are kept have the same status as the scrolls themselves with regard to rescue from fire on the Sabbath, as do the storage cases of phylacteries (which contain tiny scriptural scrolls), even if such storage cases contain coins, whose handling is otherwise forbidden on the Sabbath. Finally, rescued scrolls (on the Sabbath) should not be transferred from the courtyard of the burning building (synagogue?) to an open thoroughfare, that is, from the private to the public domain, with an attributed, dissenting, more permissive opinion.

We turn next to the Tosefta, whose relation to the Mishnah, as we have previously seen in another set of passages, is fraught, notwithstanding their rough contemporaneity to one another.[11] At the risk of being overly reductive and repetitive, is the Mishnah composed from less fully edited traditions as they appear in the Tosefta, or does the Tosefta presume, and thereby implicitly comment on the text (or ur-text) of the Mishnah as we have it? We shall see some of

[10] A debate occurs in b. Šabb. 116b between Rav and Samuel as to whether this prohibition obtains for the entirety of the Sabbath (Samuel) or only for the hours in which the House of Study is in session (Rav).

[11] For previous treatment of the relationship between the Mishnah and the Tosefta, see Chapter 3, nn. 20, 21.

both, which makes it all the more important to attend to the Tosefta in its own right (as we did for the Mishnah), without presuming too linear and exclusive a relationship between them.

5.3 Tosefta Šabbat 13:2–3 (ed. Lieberman, MS Vienna)

[2] היו כתובין תרגום. ובכל לשון. מצילין אותן וגונזין אותן. אמ' ר' יוסה.
מעשה שהלך ר' חלפתא אצל רבן גמליאל לטבריא ומצאו שהיה יושב על שולחנו של
יוחנן בן נזיף ובידו ספר איוב תרגום והיה קורא בו. אמ' לו ר' חלפת. זכור הייתי ברבן
גמליאל הזקן אבי אביך שהיה יושב על גב מעלה בהר הבית והביאו לפניו ספר איוב
תרגום ואמ' (לבניו) [לבנאי] וגנזו תחת הנדבך.
[3] באותה שעה שלח רבן גמליאל וגנזו. ר' יוסה בי ר' יהודה או'. עריבה של
טיט כפה עליו. ר' אומ' שתי תשובות בדבר. טיט לא היה בהר הבית. דבר אחר. וכי
מאבדין אותן ביד אלא מניחין אותן במקום התורפה והן נרקבין מאיליהן.

[2] [A] If [scriptural scrolls] were written in *targum* [= Aramaic], or in any language, they rescue them and store them away. [B] R. Yose said: It once happened that R. Ḥalafta went to Rabban Gamaliel (II) in Tiberias and found him sitting at the table of R. Yoḥanan b. Nezif with a scroll of Job in *targum* in his hand, which he was reading.[12] [C] R. Ḥalafta said to him: I am reminded of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder (I), the father of your father, that he was sitting at the top of the stairway going up to the Temple Mount. They brought before him a scroll of Job in *targum*. He said to (his sons) [the builders], ["Store it away,"] and they stored it away [in a wall] under a course of stones. [3] [D] At that moment [upon hearing the story of Rabban Gamaliel (I)], Rabban Gamaliel (II) gave instructions and they hid it away.

[12] This should not be presumed to be the same as the *targum* to Job found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (on which, more below, n. 21), or the rabbinic *targum* to Job of significantly later times. It is unclear whether this was a scroll wholly written in Aramaic, that is, a continuous text of the book of Job in Aramaic (as is the Aramaic Job from Qumran), or an interversal text of Job in both Hebrew and Aramaic, alternating between the two languages, the rabbinic norm, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

> [E] R. Yose b. R. Judah says he [Rabban Gamaliel (I)] covered it over with a trough of mortar. Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] says [F], "There are two replies [= objections] to this [account]: There was no mortar on the Temple Mount. [G] Another [reply]: Do they destroy them by hand [= deliberately]? Rather, they leave them in an abandoned place and they decay of their own accord.[13]

It is difficult to understand this toseftan sequence without knowledge of the previously considered Mishnah, or some other mishnaic antecedent. I say this having already (at the end of Section 5.2) said that it is important "to attend to the Tosefta in its own right," lest we overly harmonize our understandings of the two texts. In this case, some mild "harmonization" is unavoidable. For example, we must presume that "rescue" is from a burning building on the Sabbath. The Tosefta (section [A]), in effect, clarifies the ambiguous sequence of the Mishnah by declaring that scriptural scrolls in translation require *both* being rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath *and* being stored away (*gənîzâ*) if they become unusable. In these ways in particular, scriptural translations share the same status as do "holy writings." But can we presume that this is equally so "whether they are [publicly] read from or are not read from [on the Sabbath]," as asserted by the Mishnah? The Tosefta does not explicitly consider this distinction.

According to the framing story (sections [B] and [D]), Rabban Gamaliel II was seen by R. Ḥalafta holding and reading an Aramaic translation of Job (in what format we cannot know) while sitting at another Rabbi's table. We are not informed that this takes place on the Sabbath or that the *targum* scroll is deemed unusable due to its condition. However, given the fact that the book of Job is part of the Writings and is never known to have been publicly read as part of

[13] For detailed notes, see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta, Part 3: Order Moʿed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 203–4. For a more detailed treatment, see Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 246–49.

the synagogue service, we might presume that the implied critique of Rabban Gamaliel II by R. Ḥalafta is that the former should have been engaged in the public study of the week's Torah lection, or some other form of textual study in the communal house of study. His private reading of the scroll of Job would constitute, thereby, "neglect of the house of study," for which reason it needed to be removed from circulation by *gənîzâ*. Even in its removal it is given respect. Writings that might be in fine physical form but whose private reading was considered unacceptable would require *gənîzâ*. Consequently, the *targum* of Job is removed from circulation so as not to cause "neglect of the house of study," and not because of its contents or condition.

But would that not have been the case if the text being privately read was a Hebrew scroll of Job, similarly a scriptural book not read publicly, and therefore if read in private, especially on the Sabbath or festivals, would have been an activity that could lead to or represented "neglect of the house of study?" Perhaps, as a tentative suggestion, the reasoning could be that if the Hebrew scroll of Job was of a lesser status with respect to books of the Torah and the Prophets that were regularly read in public, how much more so an Aramaic translation thereof, a writing of even lower status. Thus, choosing to read not just one of the Writings not read in public, but one such scroll in Aramaic translation, would have been considered doubly, as it were, disrespectful of the house of study (and the Hebrew language). Thus, a *targum* of Job would represent an extreme, boundary-defining case: having restored some of the ambiguous ritual status of scrolls of scriptural translation (allowed to be rescued from burning buildings on the Sabbath), but of lesser status in defining prohibited private study on the Sabbath and festivals.

In a sense, these stories of private reading of a *targum* of Job, and yet of its public consequences, blur the dichotomy of private and public, which difference this chapter seeks to highlight. This should not be surprising however, given the rabbinic penchant for

problematizing and upending seemingly firm dichotomies of all kinds, that is, rendering their boundaries porous, especially legal ones. Other reasons have been suggested for the perplexing treatment of the *targum* of Job, but before considering them let us continue with our text.

R. Ḥalafta is reminded of an incident involving Rabban Gamaliel II's grandfather, Rabban Gamaliel I on the Temple Mount. In that story, no one is said to have been reading the *targum* of Job. Neither is the scroll said to have been damaged. Nor is it said to have been the Sabbath. Presumably, again, the mere existence of such a scroll was sufficient for it to be hidden away so as not to provide an opportunity for "neglect of the house of study." The fact that in both stories the targumic scroll that is removed is from the Writings, and from Job in particular, suggests that scrolls of scriptural books that are regularly read in the synagogue and studied in the house of study would not have been so treated as scriptural translations into Aramaic, or "any language."

In the remaining sections, Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (section [F]) calls into question the verity of the inner story (sections [C], [E]) by raising two objections to the manner of disposal of the scroll of the *targum* of Job by Rabban Gamaliel I as recounted by R. Ḥalafta: It cannot be destroyed by being buried in mortar, first, ([G]) because mortar was not used for construction on the Temple Mount, and second ([H]), because the decomposition of withdrawn scrolls must occur of its own, rather than by, or accelerated by, human, physical means.

An alternative rationale for the *gənîzâ* of the *targum* of Job is said to have been a prohibition of writing the *targum* (of whatever scriptural book) on a scroll as part of a broader prohibition of recording the "Oral Torah" in writing or the performative reading from such a scroll in public ritual. The following from the Palestinian Talmud is sometimes cited in support of this view:[14]

[14] See also Pesiq. Rab. 5 (ed. Friedmann, 14a–b).

5.4 Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 4:1, 74d (MS Leiden)

> רבי חגיי אמר. רבי שמואל בר רב יצחק עאל לכנישתא. חמא חד ספר מושט תרגומא מן גו סיפרא. אמר ליה. אסיר לך. דברים שנאמרו בפה בפה ודברים שנאמרו בכתב בכתב.
>
> R. Ḥaggai said: R. Samuel b. R. Isaac once entered a synagogue where he saw a schoolteacher declaiming[15] the *targum* from the book.[16] He said to him: You are forbidden to do so! Teachings which were said [= revealed] orally [must be performed] orally and teachings which were said in writing [must be performed] in writing.[17]

This "book" (or scroll) could refer to a book of some part or parts of *Hebrew* Scripture, in which case the declaimer of *targum* would be reciting the *targum* either spontaneously or from memory, or a combination of the two, but being prompted by the reading of the written text of Scripture, which he follows with his eyes as he translates. Thus, it might *appear* to the congregants that he is reciting the Aramaic *targum* from a book containing it in written form. This would not be allowed since *targum* is understood to fall, albeit ambiguously, into the category of "Oral Torah." Alternatively, the translator is declaiming the Aramaic *targum* by actually reading it from a written copy, which would be similarly disallowed.

However, it is not clear from this passage whether the objection is to the *existence* of a written scroll of *targum* or to its being read from (rather than recited from memory or spontaneously rendered into Aramaic[18]) as part of the public ritual of scriptural reading in the synagogue, during which the distinction between Written

[15] For this understanding, see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, 3rd ed. (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2017), 262.

[16] On the form that such a book (scroll) might have taken, see n. 13. See also Chapter 6, n. 39.

[17] Edition of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, 768. This text is also treated in Chapter 6, Section 6.5.

[18] For which see b. Meg. 18a with respect to reciting the *targum* to the book of Esther.

Torah and Oral Torah is to be ritually reinforced through the manner of their being publicly performed. The fact that *targum* scrolls can be rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath (the dominant view) suggests that the use of such scrolls nonliturgically, for example, to be consulted, is not necessarily prohibited. Elsewhere (e.g., m. Meg. 1:8) the Mishnah clearly evidences the normativity of written scrolls of Scripture "in any language," but limits their public *performative roles*, especially vis-à-vis the reading and study of Hebrew Scripture.[19] In short, there appears to be no sanctioned *public* use of a *targum* scroll, but that does not appear to be the justification for the removal of a *targum* scroll of Job, in the mishnaic context of "[scrolls] not read [on the Sabbath]" due to "neglect of the house of study."

Another rationale for the removal (twice) of a *targum* of Job from circulation derives from the fact that the only extant ancient *targum* of the book of Job, or of any book of the Writings, was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in two copies (11QtgJob [11Q10] and 4Q157).[20] Even though there is no evidence that the Qumran *targum* of Job is of sectarian provenance, it has been argued (unconvincingly to my mind) that the removal of the *targum* of Job by the two Rabban Gamaliels (I and II) was because it was considered a sectarian (heretical) translation, if not the very copy discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This would be a case of consigning a text to

[19] For recent scholarship on the orality of Oral Torah, see Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Yaakov Sussmann, *Oral Law – Taken Literally: The Power of the Tip of a Yod* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2019) (Hebrew); Steven D. Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 33–51; Steven D. Fraade, "Concepts of Scripture in Rabbinic Judaism: Oral Torah and Written Torah," in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 31–46. See also Chapter 6, nn. 12, 18, 24.

[20] For Qumran fragments of an Aramaic translation of parts of Leviticus, see 4Q156 (to Lev. 16:12–15, 18–21), which may not be from a *continuous* scroll of *targum* to the book of Leviticus, but of separate verses recited liturgically.

gənîzâ not because of its condition or usability, but because of the unacceptability of its contents, which require its being taken out of circulation.[21]

In sum, the question of whether and in what manner scrolls of the *targum* of Job, and by extension of other books of the Writings, could be publicly and/or privately read and handled, exemplifies the ambiguous status of scriptural translations more broadly, even as the *targum* of Job is somewhat exceptional as scriptural translation, perhaps an extreme, marginal test. Were such translations subject to the same rules as divinely revealed Scripture, even as humanly rendered translations, or were they to be less revered materially? Yes and Yes.

We turn next to the Jerusalem Talmud's commentary on our Mishnah, with reference to our Tosefta:

5.5 Jerusalem Talmud Šabbat 16:1, 15b–c (MS Leiden)

."כל כתבי הקודש" כול'. מהו "בין שקורין בהן בין שאין קורין בהן". בין שיש בהן טעיות. בין שאין בהן טעיות. והא תני. ספר שיש בו שתים שלש טעיות בכל דף ודף מתקנו וקורא בו. ארבע אינו קורא בו. מן מה דתנינן. "מפני מה אין קורין בהן. מפני ביטול בית המדרש". הדא אמרה. בין תורה לנביאים. לכתבי הקודש. < >. אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. מאן דאמ'. מטמאין את הידים. מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. ומאן דאמ'. אין

[21] For the view that the Qumran *targum* of Job is not properly a *targum*, by comparison with the later rabbinic *targum* of Job and the Syriac translation (Peshiṭta) of the same, see David Shepherd, "What's in a Name? Targum and Taxonomy in Cave 4 at Qumran," *JSP* 17 (2008): 189–206; David Shepherd, "Will the Real Targum Please Stand Up? Translation and Coordination in the Ancient Aramaic Versions of Job," *JJS* 51 (2000): 88–116; David Shepherd, *Targum and Translation: A Reconsideration of the Qumran Aramaic Version of Job*, SSN 45 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004). For the twofold function of *gənîzâ* (removal because of condition or content), see Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza*, Jewish Encounters (New York: Nextbook and Schoken, 2011), 12–13, citing Elkan Nathan Adler, "Genizah," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 12 vols. (London and New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 5:612: "A genizah serves … the twofold purpose of preserving good things from harm and bad things from harming."

מטמאין את הידים. אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. התיבון. הרי עברי שכתבו תרגום הרי אינו מטמא את הידים ומצילין אותו מפני הדליקה. מן מה דתנינן. אע'פ (ש) ־[ש]כתובין בכל לשון טעונין גניזה. הדא אמרה. שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. מתנית' דר' שמעון. דר' שמעון אמ'. אין דבר משום שבות שעומד בפני כתבי הקודש. מה פליגין. תמץ מפני בזיונן. ברם הכא כל עמא מוריי שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. למי נצרכה. לרבן שמעון בן גמליאל. אע'ג דרבן שמעון בן גמליאל אמ'. "אף בספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית" <מגילה א, ח>. מודי הוא הכא שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. מעשה ברבן גמליאל שהיה עומד על הב(י)ניי(ם)[ן] בהר־הבית. והביאו לו ספר איוב כתוב תרגום. ואמר לבנאי וגנזו תחת הנדבך.

[A] "All holy writings," etc.: What is the meaning of "whether they are read from or are not read from"?[22] Whether they contain mistakes or do not contain mistakes. [B] But it is taught: "A scroll that has two or three mistakes on every page, can be repaired and read from. [If it has] four [or more], it cannot be read from." [C] But from what we have learned: "Why [are some scrolls] not read from? Because of neglect of the house of study." That is to say: [A distinction is made] between the Torah and the Prophets, and [the other] holy writings [= the Writings], [the latter of] which are not rescued [on the Sabbath] from fire. [D] [According to] the one who said, they [= holy writings including the Writings] defile the hands, they rescue them from fire.[23] And [according to] the one who said they do not defile the hands, they do not rescue them from fire. [E] They objected: Behold, Hebrew [Scriptures] that are written in Aramaic translation (*targum*) do not defile the hands, but are rescued [on the Sabbath] from fire. [F] This is based on what we have learned: "Even though it is written in any language, it requires being hidden away (*gənîzâ*)."[24] This is to say that they rescue them [= scriptural translations] from fire [on the Sabbath]. [G] The Mishnah accords with [the view of] R. Simeon, for R. Simeon said, "There is nothing prohibited for the sake of Sabbath rest that takes priority over

[22] M. Šabb. 16:1, with which we began.

[23] See n. 8.

[24] M. Šabb. 16:1.

> [the safeguarding] of holy writings."[25] Do they disagree? [There R. Simeon seeks to] avoid disrespectful treatment [of holy writings], whereas here everyone agrees that they rescue them [= holy writings in translation] from fire [on the Sabbath]. [H] For whom is this needed? For Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel. Even though Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel said, "Also regarding scrolls, they only permitted them to be written in Greek,"[26] he agrees that they may be rescued [from fire on the Sabbath]. [I] It once happened that Rabban Gamaliel (I) was supervising the builders on the Temple Mount. When they brought him a scroll of Job written in [Aramaic] translation, he instructed the builders to hide it under a course of stones.[27]

While the Jerusalem Talmud builds on traditions that we have already seen in the Mishnah and Tosefta, it includes new or alternative formulations. First (sections [A]–[B]), it provides an alternative explanation for the mishnaic phrase, "whether they are read from or are not read from," previously understood to differentiate between those scriptural books which are read as part of the liturgy (Torah and Prophets) and those which are not (Writings, e.g., Job). Now the distinction is not one of contents but of condition: Some books are not read because they are damaged. Presumably these are damaged scriptural scrolls, of any scriptural book, that have not (yet) been consigned to *gənîzâ*, perhaps because they can be repaired, but should, nevertheless, be rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath. In section [C], the previous distinction between books read (Torah and Prophets) and not read (Writings), with both requiring being rescued from a burning building, is reaffirmed.

In section [D], a new criterion is introduced for which books can be rescued from fire on the Sabbath and which not: Those that

[25] M. ʿErub. 10:3.

[26] M. Meg. 1:8; b. Meg. 18a.

[27] Edition of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, 436–37. For a more detailed treatment, see Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 254–58.

"defile the hands" (a mark of canonicity, however understood) and those that do not. The former can be rescued from fire on the Sabbath and the latter cannot. But an objection is raised ([E]): translated Scriptures (*targum*) transgress the model, for they do *not* "defile the hands"[28] ([F]), and yet *are* to be rescued from a burning building on Sabbath, as if they were, so to speak, a hybrid species: canonical but not, yet still somehow valued.

This is in accord with the view of R. Simeon ([G]), that rules of Sabbath rest (*šəbût*) are superseded by the need to both show respect for holy writings (through *gənîzâ*) and to rescue them from a burning building on the Sabbath. It is then asked ([H]), for whom is it necessary to state this? It is necessary for Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel, who only allowed the translation of holy Scriptures into Greek,[29] while allowing their rescue (presumably of Hebrew and Greek scriptural scrolls) from a burning building on the Sabbath. This, in turn, leads to the citing of an abbreviated version of the story of Rabban Gamaliel (I) on the Temple Mount, but without the framing narrative of Rabban Gamaliel (II) in Tiberias. Once again, Rabban Gamaliel has an Aramaic *targum* of the book of Job hidden away beneath the building stones as a form of *gənîzâ*.

In the end, the dominant view is much as we saw it in the Mishnah and Tosefta. Translations of Scripture are generally viewed as having a status akin to that of Hebrew Scripture, but with a consensus that they do not "defile the hands," a near consensus that they are to be rescued from a building on the Sabbath, a clear consensus that they require *gənîzâ* when no longer usable, and a nervousness that such translations of the books of the Writings such as Job might, through private, noncommunal study, cause "neglect of the house of study," the center of rabbinic community, at least on the Sabbath.

[28] See n. 8. Perhaps semisacred texts of *targum*, precisely because they do not "defile the hands," according to this view, could be more readily used for private study so as not to convey ritual impurity. This is speculation on my part, since I find no expression of it, either in traditions sources or modern critical scholarship.

[29] See n. 27.

5.6 Babylonian Talmud Šabbat 115a (MS Oxford)

Our textual tour continues with the Babylonian Talmud, where, as is typical, the plot thickens and the cast of characters widens.[30] Yet, the fundamental questions that we encountered in earlier texts continue to be asked, even as they resist linear, final answers:

"כל כתבי הקדש מצילין אותן". איתמ'. היו כתובים תרגום בכל לשון. רב הונא אומר. אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. רב חסדא אומ'. מצילין אותן מפני הדליק'. אליבא למאן דאמ'. (לא) ניתנו לקרות בהן. דכולי עלמא לא פליגי דמצילין. פליגי אליבא דמ"ד. לא ניתנו לקרות בהן. רב הובא אמ'. אין מצילין. דהא לא ניתנו לקרות בהן. ורב חסדא אמ׳. מצילין. משום בזיון דכתבי הקדש. מצילין אותן. תנן."כל כתבי הקדש מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. בין שקורי' בהן ובין שאין קורין בהן ואע"פ שכתובין בכל לשון". מאי. לאו "שקורין בהן" נביאי. ו"שאינן קורין בהן" כתיבי. ואע"פ שכתובין בכל לשון נמי לא ניתנו לקראת בהן. וקתני. מצילין. ותיובתא דרב הונא. אמ' לך רב הונא. ותסברא. אימא סופא. "טעונין גניזה". השתא אצולי מצלינן גניזה מיבעיא. אלא רב הונא מתריץ לטעמיה ורב חסדא מתרץ לטעמיה. רב הונא מתרץ לטעמיה. "בין שקורין בהן" נביאי. "ובין שאין קורין בהן" כתיבי. בד"א. שכתובין בלשון הקדש. אבל כתובין בכל לשון אין מצילין. ואפי' הכי בעו גניזה. ורב חסדא מתרץ לטעמיה. "בין שקורין בהן" נביאי. "ובין שאין קורין בהן" כתיבי. ואע"פ שכתובין בכל לשון נמי מצילין. והכי קאמ'. ומקק שלהן טעונין גניזה. מיתיבי. היו כתובין תרגום בכל לשון מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. תיובתא דרב הונא. אמ' לך רב הונא. האי תנא סבר. נתנו לקרות בהן. ומצילין אותם מפני הדליקה. ת"ש. היו כתובין גפטית מדית עברית עילמית יונית. אע"פ שלא ניתנו לקרות בהן מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. תיובת׳ דרב הונא. אמ׳ לך רב הונא. תנאי היא. דתניא. היו כתובין תרגום ובכל לשון מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה. ר' יוסי או'. אין מצילין. וא"ר יוסי. מעשה באבא חילפתא שהלך אצל רבן גמליאל בר׳ לטבריא ומצאו שהיה יושב על שלחנו של ר' יוחנן בן הנזיף ובידו ספר איוב תרגום והיה קורא בו. אמ' לו. זכורני את רבן גמליאל אבי אביך שהיה עומד על גב מעלה בהר־הבית והביאו לפניו ספר איוב תרגו'. ואמר לבנאי. שקעהו תחת הנדבך. אף הוא צוה עליו וגנזו. ר' יוסי בר' יהודה אומ'. עריבא של טיט כפו עליו. אמ' ר'. שתי תשובות בדבר. חדא. וכי טיט בהר־הבית מנין. ועוד. וכי מותר לאבדן ביד. אלא מניחן במקום התרופה והן מתאבדין מאיליהן.

[30] MS Bodleian 366 according to the database of the Academy of the Hebrew Language (*Ma'agarim*, as therein corrected).

[A] "All holy writings are rescued [from a building on the Sabbath]." [B] It was stated: "[Even] if they are written in [Aramaic] *targum* or in any [other] language":[31] R. Huna (ca. 280) said: "They do not rescue them [= scriptural translations] [on the Sabbath] on account of fire." R. Ḥisda (ca. 300) said: "They rescue them [on the Sabbath] on account of fire." [C] According to the view that it is permissible to read them [on the Sabbath], all agree that they are to be rescued. They differ with respect to the view that they are not to be read [on the Sabbath]: R. Huna says: "We may not rescue [them] since they are not permitted to be read." R. Ḥisda says: "We rescue [them]. Because of the disgrace to holy writings [were they to be burned], we rescue them." [D] We have learned: "All sacred writings may be rescued from the fire, whether we read them or do not read them, and even if they are written in any language." [E][32] Surely, "whether we read them" refers to the Prophets;[33] "or do not read them" refers to the Writings. [F] "And even if they are written in any language,"[34] though they may not be read, yet he [= the *tanna*] teaches that "they may be rescued,"[35] which seems to refute R. Huna. [G] R. Huna has an answer. R. Huna says to you: Is that logical? Consider the second clause: "They require being hidden" (*gənîzâ*):[36] Seeing that they must be rescued [according to your view], need hiding (*gənîzâ*) be mentioned?[37] [H] Rather, R. Huna explains it in accordance with his view, while R. Ḥisda explains it according to his view. R. Huna explains it in accordance with his view: "whether we read them" [refers to] the Prophets; "or do not

[31] T. Šabb. 13:2.

[32] Cf. m. Šabb. 16:1.

[33] As well as the Torah.

[34] M. Šabb. 16:1.

[35] Cf. t. Šabb. 13:2

[36] M. Šabb. 16:1.

[37] The argument goes like this: Seeing that (in your view) they are of sufficient holiness to be saved from a burning building, we can presume that they require *gənîzâ*, but not vice versa. Thus, you cannot say that their requiring *gənîzâ* requires them to be rescued from a burning on the Sabbath.

read them" [refers to] the Writings. That is, only if they are written in the Holy Tongue [= Hebrew], but if written in any [other] language, we may not rescue [them]. However, even so they require *gənîzâ*. [I] R. Ḥisda explains it according to his view: "whether we read them" [refers to] the Prophets, "or do not read them" [refers to] the Writings. [That is,] "even if they are written in any language, they are still rescued [regardless of whether they are read]." And this is what he states: "And [even] their worm-eaten [material] requires *gənîzâ*. [J] An objection: "If they are written in [Aramaic] *targum* or in any [other] language, they rescue them from fire [on the Sabbath]."[38] [K] This refutes R. Huna? R. Huna can say to you: This Tanna holds, "They may be read and be rescued from a burning [building on the Sabbath]."[39] [L] Come and hear: "If they are written in Egyptian, Median, Hebrew [script], Elamitic, or Greek, though they may not be read [on the Sabbath], they are rescued from fire [on the Sabbath]." [M] This refutes R. Huna? R. Huna can answer you: "It is [already a controversy of the] Tannaim." For it was taught: "If they are written in *targum* or in any language, they rescue them from a fire [on the Sabbath]. R. Yose said: They may not be rescued."[40]

[N] R. Yose said: "It once happened that my father Ḥalafta visited Rabban Gamaliel (II) Berabbi[41] at Tiberias and found him sitting at the table of R. Yoḥanan b. Nizuif with a scroll of Job in *targum* in his hand, which he was reading."[42] [O] He said he to him, "I am reminded of R. Gamaliel, the father of your father, who was standing at the top of the stairway going up to the Temple Mount, when they brought before him a scroll of a *targum* of Job, whereupon he

[38] T. Šabb. 13:2

[39] Cf. t. Šabb. 13:2.

[40] Ibid.

[41] An honorific patronym.

[42] This should not be presumed to be the same as the *targum* to Job found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (on which, see nn. 20, 21), or the rabbinic *targum* to Job of significantly later times.

> said to the builders, 'Bury it under a course of stones!'" [P] He [R. Gamaliel II] too gave orders, and they hid it. [Q] R. Yose son of R. Judah said: "They covered it over with a trough of mortar." [R] Said Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch]: "There are two objections to this [account]: First, from whence would mortar have come to the Temple Mount?[43] [S] Furthermore, is it then permitted to destroy them [= such scrolls] with [one's own] hand? Rather, they leave them in an abandoned place and they decay of their own accord."

While many of the traditions incorporated into the Babylonian Talmud are familiar from the considerably earlier Palestinian collections, several are unattested or weakly attested in earlier strata of rabbinic literature. First, what began as an ambiguity in the Mishnah (whether scriptural translations are rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath) that is resolved (positively) in the Tosefta continues to be argued in the Jerusalem Talmud. However in the Babylonian Talmud the disagreement is more strongly framed as a vigorous and sustained dialectical and dialogical debate between two third–fourth-century Amora'im: R. Huna (do not rescue) and R. Ḥisda (do rescue) (sections [B], [C], [F], [G], [H], [K], [M]). The Babylonian Talmud highlights the question of whether or not there is a correlation between reading and rescuing books: Books that are not publicly read on the Sabbath (the Writings) are not to be rescued from fire on the Sabbath (R. Huna) and vice versa (R. Ḥisda) (sections [C], [D], [E], [F], [H], [I], [K]). R. Ḥisda argues for rescuing scrolls in either case out of concern that it would be a "disgrace" to allow them to burn ([C]). As we have previously seen, but here now in a more sustained and personalized manner, the argument, in effect, is over whether (or not) the public performative reading of a book of Scripture determines its sacred status, with regards to overriding the Sabbath, rather than other more material considerations (e.g., language and script).

[43] Mortar was not used for construction on the Temple Mount.

Another link is adduced between rescuing scrolls on the Sabbath and disposing of them through *gənîzâ*: Books that are rescued can be presumed to require *gənîzâ*, but does the opposite obtain, that is, can it be presumed that texts that require *gənîzâ* merit can be rescued on the Sabbath? Not necessarily, and particularly not if the scrolls are in translation, irrespective of the translation language ([G], [L]). If there appears to be a continuing disagreement, especially on saving Writings from a fire on Shabbat, some solace can be had in recognizing that this is a debate that has remained much the same since tannaitic times ([M]), even if some of the named rabbinic voices have changed identities. Similarly, the double story of the two R. Gamaliels (I and II), and the proper disposal of the Aramaic *targum* of Job, remains much the same, perhaps since it has no bearing on the much debated question of whether scriptural scrolls, especially the Writings, whether in Hebrew or translation, should be rescued from fire on the Sabbath.

5.7 Conclusion

What can we take away from this collection of often ambiguous texts? The category "holy writings" is not a static one, as it encompasses texts of varied levels of holiness and written-ness. This is both with respect to material form and to public function, which I scale according to the descending order of textual status from Torah to Writings, Hebrew and translations, in correlation with four intersecting variables: source of ritual impurity; rescue from fire on Sabbath; disposal (*gənîzâ*); and public lection. A remarkably stable coherence emerges, notwithstanding all of the back-and-forth argumentation and ambiguity:

1. Highest status: Scrolls which defile the hands are to be rescued from fire on the Sabbath, require *gənîzâ*, and are publicly read on the Sabbath (and festivals). All agree that these are the books of the Torah and the Prophets in Hebrew.

2. Intermediate status: Scrolls which defile the hands, are/are not to be rescued from fire on the Sabbath, require *gənîzâ*, and are not publicly recited on the Sabbath (and festivals). All agree that these are the books of the Writings (e.g., Job) in Hebrew, but disagree whether they are to be rescued from fire on the Sabbath.

3a and b. Lowest or liminal status: Scrolls which do not defile the hands, are/are not to be rescued from fire on the Sabbath, do require *gənîzâ*, and are not publicly recited in Hebrew on the Sabbath (and festivals), as they are not part of the synagogue lectionary cycle. All agree that these are the scriptural scrolls in translation ("in any language"), especially of books of the Writings (e.g., *targum* of Job), which are not publicly read on the Sabbath, but the sages continue to disagree whether such scrolls are to be rescued from a burning building on the Sabbath. Notice that *targum* is of lower status than Hebrew Scripture, but the *targum* of the Writings (e.g., Job) is the very lowest. Yet, even these receive status and respect, albeit ambivalent, by virtue of their accompaniment to Hebrew Scripture.

In tabular form:[44]

Type of scrolls	Defile hands?	Rescue from fire?	Disposal (gənîzâ)?	Public reading?
Torah, Prophets 4.0	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0
Writings 3.0	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0	No = 0.0
Trans Torah & Prophets 2.5	No = 0.0	Dispute = 0.5	Yes = 1.0	Yes = 1.0
Trans Writings 1.5	No = 0.0	Dispute = 0.5	Yes = 1.0	No = 0.0

[44] The left column represents my division into "types of scrolls," in descending status, while the headings of the four columns to the right of the "types of scrolls" represent the four qualifications assigned or denied to each type of scroll. The numbers immediately to the right of each type of scroll represent its total score of qualifications satisfied, with 1.0 assigned to each fulfillment of the qualification, 0.0

Public reading of Scriptures confers authority on those texts (and, by extension, their readers), while private reading detracts therefrom. Translation of Scriptures is a kind of "reading," but not a proper "recitation" in its own right, both for its readers and auditors, as indicated by the unresolved dispute between sages regarding its liminal status vis-à-vis written and read Scripture.[45]

It is not until the Gaonic times and the Middle Ages, when the books of the Oral Torah, including *targum*, were committed to writing for the sake of their preservation, that the law (*hălākâ*) was determined to follow the view of R. Ḥisda: All scriptural books, whether in Hebrew or in translation, require rescue from fire on the Sabbath. It should not be surprising that such rescue is, as it were, the last holdout, since at stake is the ritually consequential question of which holiness supersedes which: holiness of time (Sabbath) or holiness of text. Both Torah scrolls and their translations (as well as their containers), have proved to be remarkably portable, but yet vulnerable, across place and time. Put differently and echoing R. Ḥisda, which covenantal marker (temporal Sabbath or material scrolls, including translations) is more readily and more fundamentally "disgraced" by acts of human hands?

Many of these themes, and their dynamic, liminal ambiguities, will cross over with us to the next chapter, where we will encounter even more directly the performative aspects of *targum* (and translation more broadly), both in public and private spaces, with renewed attention, at the end of the chapter, with the materiality of written *targum*.

assigned to each absence of the qualification, and lack of consensus assigned a score of 0.5. Thus, a maximum score would be 4.0 and a minimum score would be 0.0, with no type of scroll suffering such complete embarrassment.

[45] For further discussion of these dialectical dichotomies, with respect to a different set of rabbinic texts, see Chapter 6.

6 “Reading Leads to Translation” Whether Public or Private

6.1 Introduction

As we have seen, ancient scriptural translations had both private and public performative lives. That is, they functioned as aids to private (or semi-private) multilingual study of Scripture and its associated interpretive derivatives, as well as having a role in the public ritualized recitation of Scripture in the similarly multilingual context of the synagogue liturgy.[1] “Private” and “public” are employed throughout this chapter heuristically since they often overlap or intersect.[2] Yet, they presume different audiences and follow different modes and rules for their performance, which it is my intent to better expose for a fuller and more precise understanding of both their respective and their overlapping functions. While the latter setting (public/worship) is well recognized, the former (private/study) has received less attention. We have already seen one example of the former in Chapter 5 (the stories of individuals privately reading, that is, chanting a scroll of a *targum* of Job) and will see additional examples of both in this chapter.

My purpose here is to compare the two through our reading and analysis primarily of two very different rabbinic texts, in the hope that viewing each in the light of the other will cast both in

[1] For my working definition of “multilingual” and “multilingualism” see Chapter 2, n. 16.

[2] Nevertheless, it is a distinction, as we shall see, that appears in targumic manuscripts themselves. For the Aramaic expression, לא מתרגם בציבורא (“not to be translated in public”), see nn. 33, 67.

sharper relief. At the very outset I should state that in the ancient world, "reading," especially of the Torah, was done out loud, that is, chanted. To the extent that it was done in (relative) private, it was not what we would think of as silent reading. This should be kept in mind throughout what follows. Toward the end of this chapter (Section 6.7), we will examine in some detail an actual example of how *targum* functions as a bi- or bridge-text (as Aramaic is a bridge-language), that is, dynamically accompanying and interacting with the Hebrew scriptural verse, for a bilingual (if only modestly and ideally) audience, a central argument of both this chapter and the book as a whole.

6.2 The King's Torah

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 legislates a set of rules that mandate (or allow) the installation of a human king of Israel, but only on the conditions that his royal prerogatives and excesses be limited.[3] Verses 18–19 add the requirement that he always have a Hebrew Torah scroll, presumably of Deuteronomy or some part thereof, but rabbinically understood to be Torah writ large, incorporating written (Pentateuch) and oral (*mishnah*) with him to read regularly, so that he may learn to revere God, and obey his teachings and laws:

[3] For fuller treatments of the king's Torah, but for different purposes, see Steven D. Fraade, "'The Torah of the King' (Deut. 17:14–20) in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001*, ed. James R. Davila, STDJ 46 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 25–60 (= Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages*, JSJSup 147 [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 285–319); Steven D. Fraade, "Priests, Kings, and Patriarchs: Yerushalmi Sanhedrin in its Exegetical and Cultural Settings," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer, TSAJ 93, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 315–33 (= Fraade, *Legal Fictions*, 323–44). For a broader discussion of the "Torah of the King" in ancient Judaism, and its "afterlife," in terms of political philosophy and theology, see David C. Flatto, *The Crown and the Courts: Separation of Powers in the Early Jewish Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

וְהָיָה כְשִׁבְתּוֹ עַל כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר מִלִּפְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם: וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו לְמַעַן יִלְמַד לְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לַעֲשֹׂתָם:

> 18 When he is seated on his royal throne, he shall have a copy of this Teaching (Torah) written for him on a scroll by the levitical priests.
> 19 Let it remain with him and let him read in it all his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God, to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching as well as these laws. (NJPS)

The first thing to note is the king's posture: He is seated on this royal throne, presumably the source or symbol of his royal authority over his subjects.[4] The Sifre commentary however, inverts this presumption by saying:[5]

והיה כשבתו על כסא ממלכתו, אם עושה הוא כל האמור בענין כדיי הוא שישב על כסא ממלכתו.

> "When he is seated on his royal throne": If he does everything herein stated on this matter, he will merit sitting on his royal throne.

His royalty is a function of his practice of Torah and, as we shall see, his study thereof, and not vice-versa. Cause and effect are

[4] For the king's unique prerogative of sitting while (publicly) reading from the Torah as part of the septennial הַקְהֵל ceremony (Deut. 31:10–13), see m. Soṭah 7:8, which recounts a single exception on the part of King Agrippa II, who stands while reading, contrary to the usual royal custom. By contrast, according to the Mishnah, the High Priest stands when handing the Torah scroll to the seated king, and stands for his reading of the Torah (m. Sanh. 7:7). For the priest needing to stand for his priestly service to be valid, see Sifre Deut. 155 to Deut. 17:12 (ed. Finkelstein, 307). For the semiotics of sitting and standing in rabbinic group study, see Shimon Fogel, "Sitting or Standing? Teaching Postures in Early Rabbinic Literature," in *Rabbinic Study Circles: Aspects of Jewish Learning in its Late Antique Context*, ed. Marc Hirshman and David Satran, with the assistance of Anita Reisler, SERAPHIM 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 37–51.

[5] Sifre Deut. 160 (ed. Finkelstein, 211).

here inverted.[6] The second thing to note is the position of fear of God preceding, in order, the practice of Torah law, as if the former is a precondition for the latter.

Turning to the larger biblical unit, the king is to be accompanied and guided by the Torah scroll in all his activities. In the hands of the rabbinic midrashist of Sifre Deuteronomy, however, the verb to "learn" ("so that he may *learn* [*yilmad*] to revere") is unpacked so as to produce a series of nouns that represent successive forms of learning in the rabbinic study curriculum, of both Written and Oral Torah, each one "leading" (naturally, as it were) to the next. In Judith Newman's terms,[7] the king's composite learning constitutes a fully "augmented curriculum" of Torah Study midrashically derived, to begin with, from the Written Torah text at hand:[8]

(יט) והיתה עמו וקרא בו כל ימי חייו ... למען ילמד ליראה את ה' אלהיו: מלמד (שהמורא [כ"י רומי: שהמראה] מביא לידי מקרא, מקרא מביא לידי תרגום, תרגום מביא לידי משנה, משנה מביאה לידי תלמוד, תלמוד מביא לידי מעשה, מעשה מביא לידי יראה.

"Let it [the Torah scroll] be with him and let him read in it all the days of his life" ... "so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God" (Deut. 17:19): This teaches that the sight (*marʾeh*; Vatican MS) (of it) leads to reading (*miqraʾ*/Scripture), reading leads to translation (*targum*), translation leads to oral teaching (*mishnah*), oral teaching leads to dialectical study (*talmud*), dialectical study leads to

[6] For the same rhetorical pattern, see Sifre Deut. 55, 156, 160, 162, 170, 297 (ed. Finkelstein, 122, 208, 211, 212, 217, 316).

[7] Judith H. Newman, *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body and the Formation of Scriptures in Early Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[8] Sifre Deut. 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 212). Interestingly, the *targumim* to Deut. 17:18–19 including the Peshiṭta and the Samaritan Targum) cleave fairly closely to Hebrew Scripture. Therefore, they will not be considered in what follows. On the rabbinic study curriculum, see Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 51, 97, 116, 214 n. 131, 239 n. 69, 243 n. 92, 244 n. 111, 254 n. 179, 256 n. 201. See also m. Ned. 4:3. Note especially Louis Finkelstein, "Midrash, Halakhah and Aggadot," in *Yitzhak F. Baer Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. W. Baron et al. (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1960), 28–47 (Hebrew).

> performance (*maʿaśeh*), performance leads to reverence (*yirʾah*) (of God).[9]

Having the Torah with him at all times causes the king to see it,[10] which leads him to read (that is, chant) it, and so on. What is retrojectively ascribed to the king, or we might say, is projectively modeled by the king, is the sequence of reading, translating, study, practice, and reverence. Each stage of performance draws the performer to the next, as if they were intrinsically interconnected.[11]

[9] Sifre Deut. 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 212). My translation follows Finkelstein's edition, with the exception that "sight" renders *hammarʾeh* found in MS Vatican Assemani 32, as well as the texts of the commentaries of Rabbenu Hillel, R. Suleiman, and David Pardo, and the Genizah fragment TS 12.852a (unavailable to Finkelstein). Finkelstein has *hammorāʾ* ("fear"), which is found in MSS Oxford, London, and the *editio princeps* (Venice, 1545). "Sight" (*hammarʾeh*), seeing the scroll that constantly accompanies the king, makes more exegetical sense than beginning the chain of study with "fear," which does not appear until later in the verse. David Weiss Halivni has kindly pointed out to me that this is an unusual use of the word *marʾeh*, which usually denotes "appearance," as in the appearance of a symptom of skin disease. However, in one other place the Sifre uses *marʾeh* in the sense of the seeing of something. In Sifre Deut. 339 (ed. Finkelstein, 388), Moses, in pleading with God not to die, says: "Would it not be better for the people to say 'Moses is good' from seeing [him] than … from hearing [about him]?"

[10] For the king's many activities during which the Torah scroll is by his side, see m. Sanh. 2:4; Sifre Deut. 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 211).

[11] For a similar biblical sequence and midrashic interpretation, see Deut. 31:12 as commented upon by Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov (ed. Buber, 5:105): "למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו": מלמד שהשמיעה מביאה לידי תלמוד והתלמוד מביא לידי יראה. "ושמרו לעשות". והיראה מביאה לידי שמירה ("'That they may hear and that they may learn': This teaches that listening leads to study and study leads to reverence [of God]. 'And they observed to do': And reverence leads to observance"). The Sifre commentary is not extant for this verse. Compare Sifre Deut. 106 to Deut. 14:23 (ed. Finkelstein, 167, and note): "למען תלמד ליראה את ה' אלהיך": מגיד שהמעשר מביא את האדם לידי תלמוד תורה. ("'So that you may learn to revere the Lord your God': This tells us that tithing leads a person to study of Torah"). I have not found any others passages that follow this exegetical pattern, except for a *barayta* in b. Menaḥ. 43b: תניא אידך: "וראיתם אותו וזכרתם … ועשיתם": ראיה מביאה לידי זכירה, זכירה מביאה לידי עשיה ("Another *barayta* taught: 'Look at [*ṣiṣit*] it and remember [all the commandments of the Lord] and observe [them]' [Num. 15:39]: Looking leads to remembering, remembering leads to observance"). For the idea that the various branches of the rabbinic curriculum are interconnected within the

Note, in particular for our purposes, the liminal yet critical role of *targum* as a buffer and bridge, or, we might say, gatekeeper, between *miqra*ʾ (Scripture/Written Torah) and *mishnah* (oral teaching).[12] Having read a section of Scripture (presumably as little as one verse), he recites its translation (presumably into Aramaic), before proceeding in turn to rabbinic oral (or mishnaic) teaching and dialectical interpretation, leading in the end to performance of the laws and reverence of God.

Note the change in order from the scriptural text, whereby "fear" ("reverence") is now at the end of the sequence, rather than the beginning, thereby enabling the process to begin with *mar*ʾ*eh* ("sight," from the root *r*ʾ*h*) and to end with *yir*ʾ*â* ("fear," from the root *yr*ʾ), creating an inclusio based on a word play between the two morphologically similar verbs. Fear of God is now the *outcome* of performance, rather than, as in the biblical lemma, its *precondition*.

Note how translation immediately follows the reading of Scripture and precedes its rabbinic interpretive expansion, presumably in Hebrew, thereby sequentially integrating them all while linguistically differentiating between them. We may once again compare Saul Lieberman's observation: "But the first rudiment of the interpretation of a text is the ἑρμηνεία, the literal and exact equivalent of the Hebrew תרגום [*targum*], which means both translation

scholar who learns them all, see ʾAbot R. Nat. A 8 (ed. Schechter, 35–36; trans. Goldin, 49–50), commenting on ʾAbot 1:6: טעם שהניח לו במשנה סוף שיאמרו לו במדרש ("The interpretation which he neglected to tell him in the study of Mishnah he will eventually tell him in the study of Midrash"), etc. For my discussion of the larger passage, see Steven D. Fraade, "The Vital Intersection of Halakha and Aggada," in *The Literature of the Sages: A Re-visioning*, ed. Christine Hayes, CRINT 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 463–71.

[12] For a similarly ambiguous, liminal placement of *targum* between Written Torah and oral teaching, see, Sifra Šemini paraša 1:9 to Lev. 10:10–11, discussed by me in "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, BJS 320 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–22.

and interpretation."[13] Or, in terms of translation theory: reading as translation; translation as reading,[14] producing what Gideon Toury (citing Brian Harris) terms a "bi-text,"[15] or, we might say, in this context, "multi-text." Historically speaking, this medial role of Aramaic *targum* may be compared to the connecting-bridge, administrative function that Aramaic played in communication between the Persian Empire and its vast subject peoples, including the Judeans, whose local language was still Hebrew, even if weakly. It is for this linguistic administrative role that Aramaic took the world stage to begin with.

Note, as well, the bilingual (or even trilingual) nature of this pedagogic exercise: Scripture is recited in (biblical) Hebrew, *targum* is rendered in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, and oral teaching is declaimed in mishnaic Hebrew. The king is imagined as linguistically code-switching between them. Stated differently, the alternating Hebrew and Aramaic performance constitutes what anthropologists call "ritual code-switching."[16] Aramaic *targum* here is hardly a *substitute* for Hebrew Scripture but rather its accompaniment and an extender to the more fully dialogical forms of *mishnah* and *talmud* (or *midrash*); in Walter Benjamin's term, *targum* is Scripture's "flowering":

[13] Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 48, and n. 15, previously cited in Chapter 1, n. 11; Chapter 4, n. 11.

[14] See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," in Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 180: "Translation is the most intimate act of reading" (in a section titled, "Translation as Reading," followed by "Reading as Translation"). If so, interpretation is only a little less so; if less intimate, then deeper and more sustained.

[15] For this term, see Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), 96–99, quoting from Brian Harris, "Bi-text: A New Concept in Translation Theory," *Language Monthly* 54 (1988): 8–10.

[16] Anderik Blom, "*Linguae sacrae* in Ancient and Medieval Sources: An Anthropological Approach to Ritual Language," in *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, ed. Alex Mullen and Patrick James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124–40 (126). On code-switching in the rabbinic contexts, see Chapter 1, n. 15.

> Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame. Contrary, therefore, to the claims of bad translators, such translations do not so much serve the work as owe their existence to it. The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering.[17]

Returning to our text, the king's recitation of *targum* does not replace his reading of Scripture but enhances and amplifies it.

I presume that while Scripture is to be chanted from a written text, *targum*, like the other rabbinic components of the oral study curriculum (*mishnah* in its broadest sense), is recited either spontaneously or from memory, or some combination of the two, but *not* from a set written text.[18] The king is not imagined as consulting his royal (rabbinic) physical library, but as beginning with the written scroll of Scripture from whence he is "led" to and through the successive steps of oral performance. While translation is an immediate extension of reading, it is physically, linguistically, and performatively distinct from it, even as it serves as a transition to the oral and dialogical forms of rabbinic interpretive teaching that follow, thereby integrating the curriculum as a whole in its relation to the scriptural lemma.

[17] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 72. For a more musical metaphor, see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86. See also Chapter 1, nn. 11, 13.

[18] For the condoning of written texts of *targum*, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum," 256. For the prohibition of their being read from in public worship, and hence their performative oral recitation, see ibid., 256–57. For the spontaneous (or semi-spontaneous) nature of such oral recitation, see ibid., 259–62. See especially y. Meg. 4:1, 74d, to be treated in Section 6.5.

Although, as previously noted,[19] there would have been occasions, if only imagined, for the king to read from the Torah as part of a septennial *public* ceremony (Deut. 31:9–13 as conflated with Deut. 17:18–20 in m.Soṭah 7:8, but without the king reciting *targum*), I presume that the practice that is midrashically described (if not prescribed) by the Sifre's commentary is one mostly performed in private, that is, without an audience, or with a very limited one. It would be performed for the king's own, what we might call "character development" (i.e., "reverence"), "all the days of his life," through the intertextual practices of reading, translating, oral dialectical study, and the embodied practice (*maʿaśeh*) of Torah law as rabbinically radically augmented. That this royal idealization mirrors the study practices of later Rabbis can be seen in the following two anecdotal passages from a later rabbinic collection. Even monoglottals, of whom there must have been a significant number (majority or minority we cannot know, and among the rabbinic sages were nary a one), in a predominantly multilingual society would have appreciated and gleaned something from the multilingual performance, whether as actually performed or rabbinically imagined.

6.3 Two Tales of Leading Rabbis

Lest we think that the king's Torah reading, translating, and study are unique to him, or that he is exceptional in this regard, note how similar are the portrayed reading and study practices attributed to two of the most venerated Rabbis of the tannaitic period (although the collection in which they appear here is considerably later):[20]

[19] See n. 4.

[20] There is little consensus regarding the dating of Avot deRabbi Natan, in either of its two recensions. As in all rabbinic anthologies, the dating of its constituent parts is likely to be earlier, but by how much, especially in the absence of earlier parallels, is impossible to determine. In any case, the two Rabbis portrayed here are dated to the

[אמר רבי עקיבא] אלך ואלמוד פרשה [אחת] מן התורה. הלך לו לבית הספר והתחיל קורא בלוח הוא ובנו. למד מקרא ותרגום ומדרש הלכות [ואגדות] שיחין ומשלים הכל למד.

> [R. Akiba] said: … I will go and study a section of Torah. He went to the schoolhouse and began to read from a student's [wax] tablet, he and his son. He studied Scripture, Targum, Midrash, Halaka, and Aggadah, (arcane) speech and parables; he studied everything. (Trans. Saldarini)[21]

אמרו עליו על רבי יוחנן בן זכאי שלא הניח פרשה אחת מן התורה שלא למדה ולמד מקרא ותרגום הלכות ואגדות שיחין ומשלות הכל למד:

> It is said of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai that he did not leave one section of the Torah unstudied; he studied Scripture and Targum, Halakah and aggadah, (arcane) speech and parables. He studied everything. (Trans. Saldarini)[22]

Once again, Aramaic *targum* functions as a buffer and bridge between written Hebrew Scripture and oral Hebrew rabbinic teaching, leading, as it were, from the former to the latter, yet differentiating between them even as translating (or transferring) between them. Is it possible that the king's reading and study practice corresponds to an actual practice with which the Rabbis would have been

late first and early second centuries CE. I hasten to add that I make no presumptions as to how widely or narrowly the practice portrayed here was actually performed. In this regard, the later date of the editing of Avot deRabbi Natan compared to that of the Sifre (mid- to late third century) allows us to consider the possibility (by no means certainty) that the representation of the practice of scriptural reading, translation, and study in these sources would have rung true over a considerable period of time, regardless of who practiced them.

21 Avot deRabbi Natan B 12 (ed. Schechter, 29; trans. Saldarini, 94–95, and notes on 95).

22 Avot deRabbi Natan B 28 (ed. Schechter, 58; trans. Saldarini, 166). This text also appears in *Sop*. 16:6 (ed. Higger, 289). A similar portrayal of rabbinic study according to its curricular divisions appears in Avot deRabbi Natan A 14 (ed. Schechter, 57; trans. Goldin, 74), once again depicting the practice of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, but *without* the element of *targum*. Similarly, see b. Sukkah 28a; b. B. Bat. 134a.

familiar? We know that his "curriculum" of reading and study, as portrayed by the Sifre commentary, with some variation, was not unique to the king. Rather, it represents an anachronistic projection of a later rabbinic pedagogic curriculum onto him, that is, the rabbinization of the king and thereby the interpretive authorization of the rabbinic practice. In the case of the passage about Rabbi Akiba, the pedagogic nature of this practice is made explicit in its locus ("schoolhouse," בית הספר) and medium ("tablet," לוח), as well as his being accompanied by his son. It is not clear, however, how much of what Rabbi Akiba recited or studied was written on the tablet.[23] I assume that what was written on the tablet was limited to scriptural verses, or mnemonic scriptural headings, with the other components of his study, beginning with translation, being generated from the scriptural reading, but oral in their performance.[24]

Nor can we presume from the formulaic listing of the components of oral teaching (*mishnah*) that these were fixed elements always studied in the same order, especially since not all such lists include the same components, with only these two passages (other than that of the Sifre regarding the king) containing the element of "*targum*."[25] In any event, both of our passages emphasize the all-inclusive nature of the exemplary study curriculum: "He studied everything." The Torah text, even as canonically "closed," is pedagogically wide open, hyperbolically speaking, to include "everything."[26]

Finally, in the absence of any audience for the study performances of Rabbis Yohanan Ben Zakkai and Akiba (except for his son), we

[23] On the performative use of tablets in the Roman world, see Elizabeth A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World:* Tabulae *in Roman Belief and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 73–90 ("Recitation from Tablets"). Such tablets could constitute "templates for speech" (74).

[24] On the orality of targumic performance, see nn. 12, 18. The broader question of the orality of rabbinic oral teaching is one that has long been vigorously debated. For recent scholarship, see Chapter 5, n. 19.

[25] See n. 22.

[26] Compare m. ʾAbot 5:22 (in Aramaic): בן בג בג אומר הפך בה והפוך בה דכולה בה ("Ben Bag-Bag said: Turn it and turn it again for everything is in it").

must assume that these were private performances, which, like that of the king, were for their personal learning, training, transformation, and perfection.

6.4 Reading Extends to Translation

We shall now look at other examples of rabbinic texts that portray translation (Aramaic *targum*) as an *extension* of reading (Hebrew *miqraʾ*), performed by the same person, who presumably understood both, to whatever degree. First, we need to look at the mishnaic backdrop to a passage from the Tosefta, m. B. Meṣiʿa 2:8a (MS Kaufmann):

מצא ספרים. קורא בהן אחת [ל]שלשים יום. ואם אינו יודיע לקרות () [גוללן]. אבל (אם) לא ילמד בהן בתחילה ולא יקרא אחר עמו.

> One who finds scrolls may read in them once every thirty days. But if he does not know how to read, he unrolls them. But he may not learn from them something new, nor may someone else read with him.

Someone who finds someone else's lost scrolls is responsible for maintaining their condition until they can be returned to their rightful owner. This entails minimal use, lest intensive use cause them damage. (It would be like my asking you to store my car while I'm away, to drive it around the block once a week so it will start when I return, but not to drive it over long distances.) In the case of lost scrolls, according to the Mishnah, reading them occasionally (once per month) so they do not become moldy, or, in case of someone unable to read, periodically rolling them from beginning to end is permissible (even advisory). However, intensely studying the lost scrolls, or having two people simultaneously read from them, would exceed the limited use rule and potentially cause damage to the scrolls or support a claim by the finder of having taken possession of the scrolls be virtue of use.

Along similar lines we find the following in the Tosefta (t. B. Meṣiʿa 2:21):

מצא ספרים קורא בהן אחד לשלשים יום, ולא יקרא בהן את הפרשה וישנה, ולא יקרא בהן את הפרשה ויתרגם, ולא יקראו שלשה בכרך אחד, ולא יפתח בספר יותר משלשה דפין, סמכוס או' בחדשים, אחד לשלשים יום, בישנים, אחד לשנים עשר חדש.

> One who finds scrolls, may read in them once every thirty days, but should not read in them the section and repeat (it), and should not read in them the section and translate (it). And three people should not read from a single volume (all at once), and one should not open a scroll more than three columns. Samkhus says: In the case of new ones, once in thirty days, but for old ones, once in twelve months.

Here too a balance is struck between reading the scrolls occasionally so they do not degrade, and using them in a way that will cause them damage. More specifically to our topic, simple reading (presumably in Hebrew) is permissible (if not advisory), but reading a section of Scripture twice, presumably for the sake of review or memorization, is not permitted, being comparable to the prohibition of "learning something new" in the related Mishnah. Similarly, reading *and translating* is comparable to reading twice (and perhaps to studying) and is therefore prohibited as excessive use. Perhaps the objection relates to the amount of time that the scroll is open for study and translating. As in the cases of the king and Rabbis Akiba and Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, I assume that the scroll that is read contains the biblical text (of whatever length) in Hebrew alone, while the translation is not read directly from a written text (whether a scroll or a tablet), but produced by the finder of the scroll either spontaneously or from memory, or by some combination of the two. The other details of this passage need not detain us for present purposes.

A somewhat similar understanding of the relation between reading and translating is found in the following *barayta* (actually two), in Hebrew, and accompanying editorial glosses, in Aramaic, from b. Qidd. 49a, the passage as a whole being itself bilingual, as is presumed of its subjects:

תנו רבנן: על מנת שאני קריינא, כיון שקרא שלשה פסוקים בבית הכנסת – הרי זו
:מקודשת. ר' יהודה אומר עד שיקרא ויתרגם. יתרגם מדעתיה? והתניא, ר' יהודה אומר:
המתרגם פסוק כצורתו – הרי זה בדאי, והמוסיף עליו – הרי זה מחרף ומגדף! אלא מאי
תרגום? תרגום דידן. והני .מילי דא"ל קריינ', אבל אמר לה קרא אנא, עד דקרי אורייתא
נביאי וכתובי בדיוקא

Our Rabbis taught: [If he says, "I will betroth you] on condition that I am a *karyana*'":[27] Once he has read three verses [of the Pentateuch] in the synagogue, she is betrothed. R. Judah (bar Ilai) said: He must be able to read and translate it. Even if he translates it according to his own understanding? But it was taught: R. Judah said: If one translates a verse literally, he is a liar; if he adds thereto, he is a blasphemer and a libeller.[28] Then what is meant by "translation"? Our [authorized] translation.[29] Now, that is only if he said to her "*karyana*ʾ." But if he says: "I am a *kara*ʾ," he must be able to read

[27] The talmudic manuscripts vary on the exact term, but the meaning is the same, as it is where it appears below in the text. For this term for "reader," see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 1042–43. On this term see also Shlomo Naeh, "קריינא דאיגרתא: Notes on Talmudic Diplomatics," in *Shaʿarei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher*, vol. 2: *Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic*, ed. A. Maman, S. E. Fassberg, and Y. Breuer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 228–55 (in Hebrew).

[28] For the same statement by R. Judah, see t. Meg. 3:41. Later commentators, e.g., Rashi and Tosafot, give targumic examples of each extreme. Defining the happy medium is more difficult. According to Tosafot, when Onqelos appears to add to the verse in translating it, he is not adding of his own accord but doing so "from Sinai," that is, he is restoring what was revealed at Mt. Sinai but forgotten in the interim, and restored by Onqelos (as had previously been done by Ezra). See b. Meg. 3a; and Chapter 4, nn. 10, 28, 29, 30.

[29] I take this to denote Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch or Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, or their antecedents, that acquired authoritative status in the Babylonian rabbinic academies, in contrast to the more paraphrastic "Palestinian" *targumim* of the Land of Israel. So far as I have been able to discern, this is the only appearance of this phrase in early rabbinic literature. Much more frequently used, especially in the Babylonian Talmud and aggadic midrashim, are forms of הכי דמתרגמינן ("thus we translate").

> the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings with exactitude.[30] (Trans. Soncino modified)

What defines a "*karyana*" or "reader" for purposes of a man's fulfilling this as his condition for betrothing a woman? Two opinions are given, the first being anonymous (but attributed to R. Meir in some talmudic manuscripts) and the second being attributed to R. Judah bar Ilai: (1) Read three verses of Scripture, presumably as part of the synagogue lection for that day; or (2) read and translate, presumably also three verses, not being clear whether this too is in the synagogue or in a more private setting.[31] According to the second view, "reading" (or chanting) incorporates both reading (chanting) and translating. The anonymous voice of the *gemara* (switching from the Hebrew of the *barayta* to the Aramaic of the editorial layer) asks whether he can translate according to his own understanding of the Hebrew, for to do so risks the dual (universal) pitfalls of translating too literally or too freely, as expressed in the famous other *barayta* attributed to R. Judah. This presumes that there are at least some bilingual auditors present who can judge the relation of the Aramaic translation to its Hebrew source text. Rather than run these risks of both too free and too literal translation, according to the anonymous voice of the *gemara* we should assume that the translator does not translate spontaneously but does so from "our [authorized] translation," that being Targum Onqelos for the Pentateuch (and Targum Jonathan for the Prophets) in Babylonia. However, I would argue that this does not express the view of the opening *barayta* (reflecting Palestinian rabbinic norms), which understands the translation to be "according to his own understanding," notwithstanding the risks

[30] I understand "exactitude" (בדיוקא) to mean with precision, clearly enunciated.

[31] Mishnaic law states that the same person cannot both read and translate during the same public synagogue service, but that might not reflect actual practice. See Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum," 257 n. 9; 258–59 n. 12. The Soncino translation translates loosely: "He must be able to read and translate it."

(of the second *barayta*ʾ). Once again, *targum* is viewed, at least by the anonymous voice of the opening *barayta*, to be a *spontaneous* product of its performer, which is not to deny the possibility that some mixture of memorization or familiarity with targumic tradition is at play.[32]

Our final rabbinic example in this section is from the Babylonian Talmud (b. Ber 8a–b), once again referring to private reading and translating:

אמר רב הונא בר יהודה אמר רבי אמי: לעולם ישלים אדם פרשיותיו עם הצבור שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום

Rav Huna bar Judah says in the name of Rabbi Ammi (Palestine, ca. 300):

> A person should always complete his *parashoth* (weekly lections) together with the congregation, [reading] twice the Hebrew text and once the [Aramaic] Targum. (Trans. Soncino modified)

This refers to private study during the week in preparation for the scheduled Torah lection of the upcoming Sabbath. It seems to me unlikely that the person described here would have had written copies of both the Torah lection and its Aramaic translation from which to read (as might have been the case much later). The primary status of Scripture vis-à-vis *targum* is signaled by the former being read twice, as compared to the latter being recited once. Assuming (if only ideally) that the person had some level of facility with both Hebrew and Aramaic, the Aramaic recitation, once again

[32] For a simila r understanding of this passage, see Richard Kalmin, "Targum in the Babylonian Talmud," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:512–13. For cases of the synagogue audience, or at least some of them, being able to reprimand (literally, silence) the Aramaic translator for taking liberties in translating the Hebrew text, presuming thereby that they were following the chanting in both languages, see m. Meg. 4:9. This Mishnah is also cited in Chapter 1, n. 10.

an extension of the reading of Scripture, is produced by him in the course of private study.

6.5 Four Anecdotes of Public Translation

The *public* performance of *targum* in the synagogues of ancient Palestine differs, according to rabbinic rules and narratives (regardless of their historicity), from its *private* performance in individual study in several regards. Most notably, the reader of written Scripture in Hebrew in public performance is a *different* individual from the person who orally declaims the Aramaic *targum*. They alternate between the reading of a written Hebrew verse by one (the "reader" or "chanter") and its oral Aramaic accompaniment, for each successive verse, by another (the "translator" or *meturgeman*). Similarly, the reader in public is of higher social status or seniority than the translator, and the latter cannot be so loud as to overshadow the former.[33]

These differences can be best illustrated by the following four anecdotes, from the Palestinian Talmud, of third- to fourth-century rabbinic sages entering a synagogue (or schoolhouse) and

[33] See Philip S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of Targum," *VTSup* 36 (1985): 14–28; Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum," 253–86, esp. 256–65. On the question of the difference between targumic texts being used in private or in public performance, certain scriptural verses that reflect negatively on Israel or its leaders are said to be "read but not translated" into Aramaic, notably Reuben's indiscretion with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22), and the second account of the golden calf incident, in which Aaron bears responsibility for the people's sin (Exod. 32:21–25, 35), However, targumic manuscripts often include such verses in Aramaic translation, but in some cases with a marginal note instructing, לא מתרגם בציבורא ("not to be translated in public"), meaning skip their translation in public reading and translation, but not private. In this regard, see Philip. S. Alexander, "The Rabbinic Lists of Forbidden Targumim," *JJS* 27 (1976): 177–91; Michael L. Klein, "Not to be Translated in Public – לא מתרגם בציבורא," *JJS* 39 (1988): 80–91. For more specifics and fuller discussion, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum," 260–61, esp. n. 15; see also, in this chapter, nn. 2 and 67.

responding to what they observe. Significantly, the talmudic text is itself bilingual, with the framing of each of the four narratives in Aramaic, followed by direct speech in Hebrew (the Hebrew speech is in bold print with its English translation below). Like the lectionary performance of alternating Hebrew Scripture and Aramaic *targum*, the talmudic text performs its own “ritual code-switching” between Aramaic frame and Hebrew speech.[34] Note as well the emphasis on sight rather than sound, the visual and the audible, although the audible is presumed. In all four cases, while the locus of the synagogue is stated explicitly, I have assumed that the scenes depicted occur during lectionary part of the public worship:[35]

[1] רבי שמואל בר רב יצחק עאל לכנישתא. [חמא] חד בר נש קאים מתרגם סמיך לעמודא. אמר ליה. אסור לך. כשם שניתנה באימה ויראה כך אנו צריכין לנהוג בה באימה ויראה.

[1] R. Samuel b. R. Isaac (ca. 280 CE) once entered a synagogue [where he saw] a man standing and translating [the lection] while leaning against a pillar. He said to him: **“You are forbidden to do so! Just as it [the Torah] was given in reverence and fear, so too must we relate to it in reverence and fear.”**

In this scene, the scriptural translator signifies by his leaning posture disrespect not only for the act of translation, but for the Torah itself as divinely revealed Scripture. Just as Israel *stood* at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah,[36] those receiving and transmitting it in the synagogues of

[34] For the expression “ritual code-switching,” see n. 16. For Hebrew–Aramaic ritual code-switching in the lectionary realm of the synagogue, see Willem Smelik, “Code-switching: The Public Reading of the Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek,” in *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, Ägyptologische und altorientalistische Perspektiven*, ed. L. Morenz and S. Schorch (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 123–51. For code-switching in the Yerushalmi more broadly, see Willem Smelik, *Bilingual Rabbis: Code-switching in the Yerushalmi* (in press).

[35] Y. Meg. 4:1, 74d, according to MS Leiden, for all four contiguous anecdotes.

[36] See Deut. 29:9; Neh. 8:5; Let. Aris. 310.

the present must do so with an attitude, conveyed by posture, of "reverence and fear." Like the Deuteronomic king, the synagogue reader and translator perform so as to induce "reverence and fear," but for them it is via an interversal, bilingual, bi-vocal, antiphonal recitation and response. As in the following vignettes, the Torah reading and translation in present-day synagogues is experienced as a reenactment of the originary, mediated revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

[2] רבי חגי אמר. רבי שמואל בר רב יצחק עאל לכנישתא. חמא חזנה קאים מתרגם ולא מקים בר נש תחתוי. אמר ליה. אסיר לך. כשם .שניתנה על ידי סרסור כך אנו צריכין לנהוג בה על ידי סרסור

[2] R. Ḥaggai (ca. 300 CE) said: R. Samuel b. R. Isaac once entered a synagogue where he saw the sexton standing, [reading and] translating without having appointed someone else under him. He said to him: **"You are forbidden to do so! Just as it was given by way of a middleman so too we must relate to it by way of a middleman."**

As noted, the *public* performance of Torah reading and translation (unlike their private performances) is to be enacted by two *separate* persons, or voices: that of the reader and that of the translator. The translator plays the mediating role that Moses, the ideal prophet, played at revelation. Just as the roles of God and Moses are not to be confused, neither are those of reader and translator to be conflated. Once again, the synagogue reading and translation are reenactments of originary revelation, which then, as "now," was a mediated, performative reception.

[3] עאל רבי יודה בר פזי ועבדה שאילה."אנכי עומד בין יי' וביניכם בעת ההיא להגיד לכם את דבר יי'".

[3] R. Judah [bar R. Simeon] b. Pazzai (ca. 300 CE) entered and provided a biblical prooftext: **"I [= Moses] stood between God and you [= Israel] at that time to declare to you the word of the Lord"** (Deut. 5:5).

Another Rabbi similarly enters the synagogue and, presumably, witnesses and objects to the same conflation of the roles of reader and translator, but provides a scriptural prooftext in support of his objection. With Scripture as proof, the translator serves as an intermediary to revelation just as did Moses, who interposed himself between God and the Israelite people at Mt. Sinai.[37] The requirement of mediated revelation is no longer simply a human opinion or preference but a latter-day embodiment of originary divine revelation itself. The fourth anecdote elevates the mediated nature of Torah recitation and reception to a fundamental ideological principle:

> [4] רבי' חגיי אמר. רבי שמואל בר רב יצחק עאל לכנישתא. חמא חד ספר מושט תרגומא מן גו סיפרא. אמר ליה. אסיר לך. דברים שנאמרו בפה בפה ודברים שנאמרו בכתב בכתב.

> [4] R. Ḥaggai said: R. Samuel b. R. Isaac once entered a synagogue where he saw a school teacher declaiming[38] the *targum* from the book (scroll).[39] He said to him: **"You are forbidden to do so! Teachings which were said [= revealed] orally [must be performed] orally and teachings which were said in writing [must be performed] in writing."**

[37] The verse, immediately preceding the utterance of the Decalogue, is better referenced as a whole: "I stood between the Lord and you at that time to convey the Lord's words to you, for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain" (NJPS). However, in the preceding verse (Deut. 5:4), not cited in the talmudic anecdote, Moses says that God's revelation to Israel was *unmediated* ("Face to face the Lord spoke to you on the mountain out of the fire" ([NJPS]).

[38] The meaning here is not certain. For this understanding, see Chapter 5, n. 16.

[39] This "book" (or scroll) could refer to a book of *Hebrew* Scripture, in which case the declaimer of *targum* would be reciting the *targum* either spontaneously or from memory, or a combination of the two, but being prompted by the alternating recitation of the written Hebrew text of Scripture, which he follows with his eyes as he translates, presumably verse by verse. Thus, it might *appear* that he is reciting the Aramaic *targum* from a book containing it. This would not be allowed since *targum* is understood to fall, albeit ambiguously, into the category of "Oral Torah."

The specific meaning of the forbidden practice in this anecdote is unclear,[40] but the underlying principle of the objection *is* clear: The *targum* is not to be declaimed from a written text, nor should the impression of such be allowed. Although the *targum* might share certain qualities of written Scripture, it is as much a form of oral teaching and should be differentiated as such, in part by posture with respect to the reading of written Scripture.[41] This should not be taken to mean that the existence or consulting of written scrolls of *targum*, whether wholly in Aramaic or in interversal Hebrew and Aramaic, is forbidden, but only that their *public* performance must serve to transmit the *targum* orally, as distinct from (but interwoven with) written Scripture, thereby actualizing the *targum*'s intermediary status and function in dialogical performance.

6.6 A Bilingual Liturgical Analogue

Turning to liturgical practice, while the rabbinic prayer service is mainly in Hebrew, some key prayers (e.g., Kaddish) are partly or fully in Aramaic. Close to our interests in the reading of Hebrew Scripture followed, verse by verse, by its Aramaic *targum*, we find an example of interversal translation of Scripture from Hebrew to Aramaic embedded in the "*Kedushah de-Sidra*" prayer. While it is recited overall in Hebrew, the three verses of the *Kedushah* doxology (Isa. 6:3; Ezek. 3:12; Exod. 15:18) are first recited, one by one, in scriptural Hebrew and then rendered in *paraphrastic* Aramaic

Alternatively, he is declaiming the Aramaic *targum* by actually reading it from a written copy, which would be similarly disallowed. It is unclear whether this would have been a scroll wholly written in Aramaic, that is, a continuous biblical text in Aramaic (as is the Aramaic Job from Qumran), or an interversal text in both Hebrew and Aramaic, alternating between the two, as are *targum* texts found in the Cairo Genizah, to which we will return.

[40] See nn. 38, 39. This part of the text is also treated in Chapter 5, Section 5.4, in a different context.

[41] For a similarly ambiguous status, see n. 12.

targum. Given the context, it is unlikely that these verses were so rendered so as to make them comprehendible to an audience who understood Aramaic but not Hebrew (however fluent they might have been in either), but to enhance and dynamically enunciate their dialogical significance and antiphonal performativity, whether between heavenly choruses of angels, the human prayer leader and the congregation, and ultimately between worshipers and God, but now with the added linguistic counterpoint of alternating Hebrew verses with their Aramaic paraphrastic renderings. Later commentators understood the function of this inner-translation as providing a modicum of scriptural study through the recitation of scriptural verses and their targumic interpretive accompaniments, with reading (chanting) and translating combined in alternation constituting the core or first stage of study.[42]

Finally, we find a similar alternation of biblical verses in Hebrew and their targumic translations in Aramaic in some of the predominantly Aramaic incantation bowls. Their bilingual purpose in this context is unclear and requires a detailed examination in the broader context of magical language(s), synagogue lection, and rabbinic scribalism. They would seem to suggest that the writing/recitation of alternating scriptural verses in Hebrew and Aramaic was not limited to rabbinic circles, depending on how one situates the bowls, their creators, and clients, vis-à-vis Babylonian rabbinism. However, unlike the other textual examples of bilingual interversal

[42] See b. Soṭah 49a (with Rashi ad loc.); Ruth Langer, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*, HUCM 22 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999), 206–14; Daniel Boyarin, "השיר והשבח: דו־משמעות ואמנות השיר בתפילת הקבע," in *Eshel Beer Sheva 3 (= Essays in Jewish Studies in Memory of Prof. Nehemiah Allony),* ed. Gerald J. Blidstein et al. (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University, 1986), 91–99; Daniel Boyarin, "Bilingualism and Meaning in Rabbinic Literature: An Example," in *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Yoël L. Arbeitman, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series 4, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 58 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988), 150. For a similar dynamic, compare the texts examined in Section 6.5.

recitation that we have encountered, both public and private, the bilingual bowls contain select verses for citation and translation (usually of Targum Onqelos), and not a sequential series of verses as in a continuous translation. Furthermore, these inscriptions, we might presume, were not ritually performed, except perhaps in the original act of their inscription and placement, before being, in effect, buried for their incantational "life."[43]

6.7 A Targumic Example

Let us look at one targumic example so as to model an approach that looks at *targum* as dynamically mediating between its biblical

[43] On the magic bowls inscribed with scriptural verses, see Stephen A. Kaufman, "A Unique Magic Bowl from Nippur," *JNES* 32 (1973): 170–74; Christa Müller-Kessler, "The Earliest Evidence for Targum Onqelos from Babylonia and the Question of Its Dialect and Origin," *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 (2001): 181–98; Shaul Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. M. J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 97–120; Mordechay Mishor, "Hebrew in the Babylonian Incantation Bowls," in *Shaʿarei Lashon*, vol. 2, ed. Maman, Fassberg, and Breuer, 204–27 (in Hebrew). I thank Gideon Bohak for these references, as well as Bohak, "Jewish Amulets, Magic Bowls, and Manuals in Aramaic and Hebrew," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter, RGRW 189 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 388–415. On bilingual aspects of ancient and medieval Jewish magic see Ortal-Paz Saar, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 151–55. I thank Alessia Bellusci for this reference. For the bilingual or multilingual competencies of the scribes of some magic bowls, see also Geoffrey Herman, "Jewish Identity in Babylonia in the Period of the Incantation Bowls," in *A Question of Identity: Social, Political and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and Other Contexts*, ed. Dikla Rivlin Katz et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 131–52, esp. 135 and n. 19 (IM 6519): חרשין דמיתעבדין בשבעין לישנין ("sorcery produced in 70 languages"). For more on multilingualism and magic, see Chapter 1, n. 19; Chapter 2, n. 36; Chapter 3, n. 13. For bilingual bowl inscriptions, alternating between Hebrew Scripture and Aramaic *targum*, see most recently, Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Babylonian Jewish Society: The Evidence of the Incantation Bowels," *JQR* 12 (2022): 1–30, esp. 11–14. They emphasize less the magical and more the scribal context and function. Some other relevant

source and its rabbinic target culture. The verse in question, Exodus 7:1, is part of God's charge to Moses and Aaron to return to Egypt to deliver a powerful message to Pharaoh, who claimed for himself divinity, to release the Israelites from servitude:[44]

Exod. 7:1 MT: ויאמר ה' אל משה ראה נתתיך אלהים לפרעה ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך.

The Lord said to Moses: Behold, I have set you [as] God before Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be [as] your prophet.

Tg. Onqelos: ואמר יוי למשה חזי דמניתך רב לפרעה ואהרן אחוך יהי מתורגם.

The Lord said to Moses: Behold, I have appointed you [as] master to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be [as] your *meturgeman*.

Tg. Neofiti: ואמר ה' למשה חמי דמניית יתך רב ושליט לפרעה ואהרן אחוך יהווי תרגמנך.

The Lord said to Moses: Behold, I have appointed you [as] master and ruler to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be [as] your *meturgeman*.

studies are: Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Who Were the Jewish 'Magicians' behind the Aramaic Incantation Bowls?" *JJS* 71 (2020): 235–54; Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Intersections between Law and Magic in Ancient Jewish Texts" (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2018), esp. 50–52; Marek Vinklát, "Nejstarší doklady Targumů z Babylónie" ("The Earliest Evidence for Targum in Babylonia"), in *Svět pro přišti generace. Zapasy současne teologie o realizaci zvěsti radosti a naděje pro tento svět*, ed. K. Veverková, J. Lášek, and J. Lukeš (Chomutov: n.p., 2014), 67–75 (in Czech), providing examples; Philip Alexander, "The Aramaic Bible in the East," *AS* 17 (2019): 39–66; Ohad Abudraham, "Features of the Hebrew Language on Babylonian Jewish Incantation Bowls" (שלושה קווים לדמות העברית של קערות ההשבעה היהודיות מבבל) *Leshonenu* 83 (2020): 24–58. In private conversation with James Nathan Ford, he provided me with two unpublished examples, one from the Schøyen Collection (MS 1927/27), including a highly fragmented citation of Exod. 15:26b (God as healer), and another with a string of biblical verses from various parts of Scripture, including the inscription of Deut. 33:2 in Hebrew followed by its *targum*.

[44] There appears to be nothing from the Cairo Geniza *targum* texts or from the Fragmentary Targum to this verse. Text editions from which the following are taken are Onqelos (ed. Sperber), Neofiti (ed. Diez Macho), and Pseudo-Jonathan (ed. Clarke).

Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan: ואמר ייי למשה למא אנת מסתפי חמי דכבר שוית יתך דחילא לפרעה כאילו אלהא דיליה ואהרן אחוך הוי נביא דילך.
The Lord said to Moses: Why are you afraid? Behold I have already made you awesome to Pharaoh, as if [you were] his god, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet.

Targum Onqelos follows Scripture very closely with three word changes:

(1) In place of the Hebrew verb *ntn* ("give," here rendered as "set") it uses the Aramaic verb *mny* ("appoint"), which is a stock substitute when the former verb is understood to denote the appointment of someone to a position of authority.[45] The latter verb, both in Hebrew and in Aramaic, is frequently used in rabbinic literature for the appointment of sages to positions of authority.

(2) More significantly, in place of "God" the *targum* uses "master" (*rāb*), which word, in both rabbinic Hebrew and targumic Aramaic, means, in general terms, one of superior authority or greatness, or more specifically a rabbinic master or teacher (a sage). This is one of only two places where Targum Onqelos makes this substitution. The other is Exodus 4:16, where it is said that Aaron will serve as Moses' "mouth" (translated as *meturgeman*) to the people, and that Moses will be to him (as) God.[46] In other passages where the word *ʾĕlōhîm* is taken to refer to a human or humans, Targum Onqelos translates it as "judge/judges" (*dayyānāʾ*/*dayyānayāʾ*), as in Exodus 21:6; 22:7, 8, 27, or as "great men" ([*bənê*] *rabrəbayāʾ*), as in Genesis

[45] For examples, see Targum Onqelos to the following verses: Gen. 41:41, 43; Exod. 18:25; Num. 14:4; Deut. 1:15; 16:18.

[46] There too Targum Onqelos substitutes *rāb* for "God," but Targum Pseudo-Jonathan expands it to "a *rāb* seeking teaching from before the Lord." The same idea is found in the translations of Targum Neofiti and the Fragment Targum (MSS V, B) to Exod. 4:16. Saadia renders *ʾĕlōhîm* in Exod. 4:16 and 7:1 as *ustadh* ("instructor"). Note that the Peshiṭta, which translates Exod. 7:1 literally, renders *peh* ("mouth") in Exod. 4:16 as *mtrgmnʾ*. Although "to him" in Exod. 4:16 refers to Moses, one later midrash, of unknown origin, takes it to refer to Pharaoh, under the influence of Exod. 7:1. See Midr Haggadol Exod. 4:16.

6:2, 4; 33:10, all in the plural. If the latter had been intended here by the *targum*, that is, Moses as a superior authority to Pharaoh, which is more likely the verse's simple meaning, the latter, more common translation would presumably have been employed.[47]

(3) Instead of "prophet" it uses *meturgeman* ("interpreter"), the only place where Targum Onqelos makes this substitution. This loan-word functions identically in rabbinic Hebrew as in targumic Aramaic. The usual targumic rendering of "prophet" is simply its Aramaic equivalent, *nəbiyyāʾ*. The word *meturgeman* is used in Targum Onqelos only in two other places: Exodus 4:16, where it also refers to Aaron (as Moses' "mouth"), and Genesis 42:23, where it renders *mēlîṣ* ("interpreter, translator"). Thus, Targum Onqelos achieves its translation without increasing or decreasing the number of scriptural words: Each word of the Aramaic *targum* can be directly "mapped" onto one of the Hebrew Scripture. In this sense (alone) it can be said to be "literal," even, as I shall now demonstrate, it has significantly transformed the verse's meaning.

The *meturgeman* referred to here is not one who translates Scripture in the synagogue (from Hebrew to Aramaic), but one who is appointed to a rabbinic master (*rāb*), as a kind of assistant, to communicate (within Hebrew) and mediate the master's teaching to his audience, an example of what George Steiner calls "internal translation."[48]

[47] But compare Targum Onqelos' use of *rāb* in Gen. 23:6 (for Hebrew *nāśîʾ*); Gen. 27:29, 37 (for Hebrew *gəbîr*); Gen. 39:9 (for Hebrew *gādôl*); Exod. 2:14 (for Hebrew *śār*). My point is not that Targum Onqelos could not use *rāb* for a human of superior authority, but that its substitution for *ʾĕlōhîm* in combination with *meturgeman* is unusual (except for Exod. 4:16), and hence more likely denotes "master" as "teacher," and not simply as someone of superior status. See n. 46.

[48] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28–31, 48–50. I could find only two examples of the *meturgeman* to the sage translating from Hebrew to Aramaic. In those cases he translates either an ambiguous phrase from Scripture (Gen. Rab. 70:16 and parallels) or one from the Mishnah (b. Yoma 20b) into Aramaic, presumably in the context of communicating the sage's teaching on that passage. In both cases the sage takes issue with his translation.

This position is already known from tannaitic sources,[49] but appears more prominently in amoraic sources (as the *ʾămôrāʾ*).[50] The practice appears to have been for a distinguished sage, either when delivering a homily to the public on the Sabbath or especially when teaching the disciples of the sages in the school, to speak quietly to the *meturgeman*, who, standing beside him, would broadcast the sage's teachings to his audience.[51] Such a human amplifier confers socioreligious status upon its speaking source as Moses did to God and as Aaron did to Moses, and vice-versa.[52]

Since the Hebrew words for "God" and "prophet" are very common in Scripture (as in postbiblical Hebrew) and have Aramaic stock-equivalents in Targum Onqelos, the present renderings respond to a stimulant not so much in the language of the individual words of the verse as in its contextual meaning, whether in the source text, the target culture, or, most likely, the

[49] See t. Meg. 3:41, where he is juxtaposed to the *meturgeman* of the Torah reader, on which see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta, Part 5: Order Moʿed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminar of America, 1962), 1221–23 (Hebrew); a *barayta* in b. Pesaḥ. 50b; Sifre Num. 140; Sifre Deut. 176, 305.

[50] For a fuller, albeit not historically critical, treatment of this figure, see Abraham Shaul Amir, *Institutions and Titles in Talmudic Literature* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1977), 76–101 (Hebrew).

[51] B. Sanh. 7b suggests that a judge would also employ a *meturgeman* (or *ʾamora*). On the *meturgeman* to the sage being paid for his services, even on the Sabbath, see b. Pesaḥ. 50b (*barayta*). Some sages appear to have had a regular *meturgeman*, e.g., R. Judah b.Naḥmani, who is frequently mentioned as the *meturgeman* to Resh Laqish: b. Git. 60b; Sanh. 7b; Ḥag. 16a; Soṭa 37b. The *meturgeman* could make minor changes to what he transmitted, e.g., in the attribution of a teaching, depending whether it is in the name of the father or teacher of the sage or of the *meturgeman*. See p. Meg. 4:10, 75c; b. Qidd. 31b. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah Hil. Talmud Torah* 4:3. See also b. Soṭah 40a. For later evidence of this practice, see Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, a Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 2: *Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 198.

[52] For example, according to midrashic tradition, when Moses transferred his teaching authority to Joshua (Num. 27:12–23), he signified the latter's elevation by assigning to him a *meturgeman*. See Sifre Num. 140 (ed. Horovitz, 186); Sifre Deut. 305 (ed. Finkelstein, 323–24); Avot deR. Natan 17 (ed. Schechter, 65).

former as transposed into the latter. Note, therefore, that all of the other ancient, nonrabbinic translations render the words of the verse routinely.[53] The biblical verse is obviously employing "God" and "prophet" as metaphors: Moses will speak to Pharaoh as authoritatively as if he were Pharaoh's God, and Aaron, serving as Moses' mouthpiece, will act the part of prophet. But the *targum* is uncomfortable with this metaphor and its potential meaning that Moses was elevated to the status of God, as are several midrashic comments to this verse.[54] So a different metaphor is substituted:[55] Moses is a rabbinic master (*rāb*) who teaches through the intermediary agency of a *meturgeman*. This rendering can work, except that the familiar combination of *rāb* and *meturgeman*, together with the verb *mny*, so much suggests a pedagogic context that it seems a bit out of place in the biblical narrative context in which Moses and Aaron are to command Pharaoh to release the Israelites from captivity.[56]

It is precisely because of this uncomfortable fit, I presume, that the more expansive Targum Neofiti translates *ʾĕlōhîm* with the double translation *rāb wəšallîṭ* ("master and ruler"), using two words for Scripture's and Targum Onqelos' one, and now making clear that Moses is to be Pharaoh's superior in *power*.[57] Having so translated, Targum Neofiti is able to retain the translation of "prophet" as *meturgeman*, the latter now denoting not so much a pedagogic as a bureaucratic interpreter, a well-attested usage for *meturgeman*.

[53] However, in Exod. 4:16 the Peshiṭta renders "mouth" as *mtrgmnʾ*.

[54] See Tanḥ. Wāʾērāʾ (ed. Buber) 7, 8, 9, for a collection; as well as Exod. Rab. 8:2.

[55] For metaphor substitution in translation, see Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 81–84.

[56] The combination works better in Exod. 4:16, where the biblical context speaks of Moses' need to address the *people* on God's behalf, with Aaron as his intermediary. It should be noted that elsewhere, Moses himself is conceived in relation to God as the *meturgeman* is to the Torah reader. See b. Ber. 45a.

[57] The phrase *rāb wĕšallîṭ* presumably derives from Dan. 2:10. It is used as a doublet frequently in Targum Neofiti, either as a substitute for a single scriptural word, or to fill in a perceived scriptural lacuna, in all cases referring to a human of stature

The even freer Targum Pseudo-Jonathan renders: "And the Lord said to Moses: Why are you afraid? Behold, I have already made you awesome (*dəḥîlāʾ*) to Pharaoh, as if (*kəʾîllû*) [you will be] his god, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet." Once this *targum* has paraphrastically explained and made explicit the comparison of Moses to God (as inducing fear in Pharaoh), it is able to render "prophet" literally without difficulty, but in so doing fully eliminates the rabbinic, pedagogic projection onto the relationship of Moses to Aaron.[58]

In contrast to these freer renderings, the semantic simplicity but contextual awkwardness of Targum Onqelos' rendering stands out. Whereas they might make sense as substitutes for the biblical lemma, Targum Onqelos would only do so with difficulty. It would be attractive to reinterpret Targum Onqelos in light of the other, more expansive targumic renderings, taking *rāb* to denote one of superior authority, but this should not be done for two reasons: First, if that had been Targum Onqelos' intended meaning it

or power. See Tg. Neof. to Gen. 27:29, 37; 39:2, 9; 41:41, 43; 44:15; 49:26; as well as marginal glosses to Tg. Neof. to Gen. 23:6; Deut. 7:24; 11:25; Tg. Ps.-Jon. Gen. 27:29; 49:26; Frg. Tg. Gen. 27:29 (MSS P,V,N,L); Deut. 11:25 (MS P,V,N); and Geniza MS E Gen. 39:9. On such doublets, see Michael L. Klein, "Associative and Complementary Translation in the Targumim," *ErIsr* 16 (1983): 134–40, esp. 138–39. A marginal gloss to Tg. Neof. Exod. 7:1, representing another but related targumic tradition, uses only *rbwn* (presumably, *ribbôn*), meaning "lord" or "master," thereby communicating the same sense with a single word. Otherwise, Targum Neofiti translates as does Targum Onqelos, substituting *meturgeman* for "prophet." Similarly, Rashi in his commentary to Exod. 7:1 renders "God" as *šôpēt ûrôdeh* ("judge and ruler"), even while citing explicitly Targum Onqelos' rendering of "prophet" as *meturgeman*.

[58] In Exod. 4:16, where the context is different (that is, pedagogic), Targum Ps.-Jonathan uses *mətûrgəmān* for "mouth" (Aaron) and *rāb* ("master," "teacher") for *ʾĕlōhîm* ("God"), but adds for the latter, "who seeks teaching from before the Lord." Note that Tg. Neof. and the Frg. Tg. (MSS V and B), render *ʾĕlōhîm* in Exod. 4:16 simply as "one who seeks teaching from before the Lord." For such metaphor shifts in translation, see n. 54. Nowhere else besides Exod. 7:1 does Targum Ps.-Jonathan render Hebrew *ʾĕlōhîm* with Aramaic *dəḥîlāʾ*.

could have used another word, for example, *rabrəbāʾ*.[59] Secondly, Targum Onqelos' interpretation of Exodus 7:1, that Moses and Aaron stand for master and *meturgeman*, is well attested in rabbinic midrashic sources, both early and late.[60] Earlier in this chapter we saw Moses as revelatory intermediary between God and Israel.

If Targum Onqelos' rendering is awkward in the context of the biblical narrative, it at least avoids the even more awkward possibility of the scriptural attribution of divinity to Moses. However, if we read the translation not as a substitute, continuous narrative but as an interlinear (or interversal) translation, that is, in relation to the verse of Hebrew Scripture which has preceded it and which it accompanies, whether in public recitation or in private study, it takes on a new meaning. So read or heard as a bi-text,[61] the biblical identification of Moses with God has been targumically supplemented with an even more daring (and in social terms more significant), albeit subtle, identification: that of the rabbinic master with God and of his *meturgeman* with the prophet, in both instances thereby enhancing the status of the sage. The former is not uncommon in rabbinic exegesis,[62] and neither is the latter: The *meturgeman* serves not simply as a translator in some ancillary sense, but as an essential component of the medium by which Torah teaching,

[59] See n. 56.

[60] See Exod. Rab. 3:17 (3); 8:3 (2) (ed. A. Shinan, 143, 205); Tanḥ. Wā.ērā. 10 (and parallels). But that this understanding is much older than these midrashic formulations can be seen from t. Meg. 3(4):21, which cites Exod. 7:1 in such a way as to presume that Moses represents the Torah reader (or in another context the rabbinic sage) and Aaron the 22.

[61] See n. 15.

[62] I have gathered several examples in "The Early Rabbinic Sage and His Torah in the Text of the Sifre," in *From Tradition to Commentary*, 69–121. One example will have to suffice here (Sifre Deut. 49): "'Loving the Lord your God, walking in all His ways, and holding fast [literally, attaching yourselves] to Him' (Deut. 11:22): But is it possible for a person to ascend to heaven and to cleave to fire? … Rather, attach yourselves to the sages and their disciples and I will account it to you as though you had ascended to heaven …."

like revelation itself, is mediated to the people, as it is between the master-sage and the disciples.[63]

Such an understanding of *rāb* in relation to *ʾĕlōhîm* and *mətûrgəmān* in relation to *nābîʾ* presumes an audience who heard and understood (however imperfectly) Hebrew Scripture and Aramaic *targum* in responsive, dialogical juxtaposition with one other.[64] In that case, the *targum* may be said not only to interpret Scripture but to require Scripture for its own interpretation, and to assume a bilingual audience (even if to a degree ideally) who could attend to this translational transition from Mosaic to rabbinic authority within the social pedagogic context in which such rabbinic empowerment mattered the most. So understood, the verse is no longer simply about God's historical bestowal of authority upon Moses, but about that divinely bestowed authority having been transmitted via Moses (as *rāb*) and Aaron (as *mətûrgəmān*), across history, to the rabbinic sages and their auditors, who in turn regard Moses as their originary master/teacher (*môšeh rabbênû*; "Moses, *our* master-teacher").

6.8 Conclusions

As anticipated at the outset of this chapter, I hope to have demonstrated that many of the performative strategies by which written or

[63] See y. Meg. 4:1, 74d, treated earlier in this chapter. For rabbinic interpretations of the mediated nature of Torah revelation and teaching, see Steven D. Fraade, "Moses and the Commandments: Can Hermeneutics, History, and Rhetoric Be Disentangled?" in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 399–422, with additional bibliography, 399 n. 1.

[64] On the question of the multilingual basis of certain midrashic interpretations, see, recently, Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Almost Invisible Presence of the Other: Multi-Lingual Puns in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Martin S. Jaffee and Charlotte Fonrobert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 222–39.

oral texts were scripturalized in Second Temple times (e.g., translation, commentary, "rewritten Bible") can be seen at work in early rabbinic literature, especially with respect to the dialectical *augmentation* of Torah via the dual activities of translation and study.[65] This is not to deny the importance of scriptural canonization as either process or product, but to argue that it allowed, and indeed *required*, that its protective curtain be porous, and did so not just with respect to *targum*, but with respect to every branch, as it were, of the rabbinic study curriculum. Even as the canonical text became closed and fixed, its human target audience, as well as their socio-cultural-political context, was constantly changing, both from within and from without, requiring that the continuation of revelation be, by necessity, humanly and communally mediated by a variety of performative media, including but by no means limited to translation/*targum*. However, in some contexts, *targum* was the first stage (after reading/chanting) in that interpretive *flowering*, to borrow Walter Benjamin's term. In short, revelation continued to require mediation, even if the forms and rationales for such mediation were fluid and variegated. A great variety of virtues were made of such necessity.

As we saw, such mediation, especially with respect to translation and study, could be *both* private and public, the former contributing

[65] For this use of "augmentation," see n. 7. For examples from my own scholarship that highlight the ways rabbinic texts (whether midrash, Mishnah, Talmud, or *targum*) expand the very concept of Torah so as to be (virtually) all-inclusive (see n. 26), especially with respect to the biblical book of Deuteronomy, itself an augmentation of the Tetrateuch, with important Second Temple antecedents, especially the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also Philo of Alexandria, see Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*; Fraade, *Legal Fictions*; Steven D. Fraade, "'If a Case is Too Baffling for You to Decide …' (Deuteronomy 17: 8–13): Between Constraining and Expanding Judicial Autonomy in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Scriptural Interpretation," in *of Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar, JSJSup 175, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1:409–31; Steven D. Fraade, "Between Rewritten Bible and Allegorical Commentary: Philo's Interpretation of the Burning Bush," in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes*, ed. József Zsengellér, JSJSup 166 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 221–32.

to the formation and perfection of the *individual* studying self, with the latter contributing to the formation and perfection of the studying *community*. In the rabbinic texts we examined, the individual could view himself as reenacting and embodying a study curriculum that extended back to the idealized exemplary figures of the Deuteronomic king sitting on his throne and the early rabbinic scholars and leaders, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai and R. Akiba, presumably standing with study tablets in hand.

By contrast, with respect to the public reading and translating of the Bible in the synagogue, the community could imagine itself standing at Mt. Sinai to receive the revealed and mediated Torah from God, but now via the human mediation of a trained (to varying degrees) translator. Whether in private or in public, the outcome was (as it always had been), to instill "reverence and fear." The Bible's performers, whether as readers (chanters), auditors, translators, worshipers, or students would perpetually stand facing Scripture as it was continually being received, performed, augmented, and transmitted, but now bilingually and antiphonally. It is not the only model for study of Scripture and Mishnah, but it is one that is pedagogically and performatively both affective and effective. In sum, scriptural reading alone, whether in worship or in study, is incomplete. Scripture's meaning(s) cannot reside in a single language alone, or be transferred unidirectionally, like a liquid, from one linguistic vessel to another, with the "original" vessel becoming thereby void of purpose. The two vessels, as it were, need to remain in dynamic dialogue.

6.9 Postscript: The Physicality of Targum as an Extension of Reading

Our earliest (ca. 1000 CE) scribal evidence for the format of Palestinian Pentateuchal targumic texts, as discovered in the Cairo Genizah, contains *not* a continuous targumic (Aramaic) text, as we find in the

texts of the Aramaic translation of Job among the Dead Sea Scrolls,[66] but each complete scriptural verse, first in Hebrew and then immediately following in Aramaic, employing the *same* stichography for each Hebrew verse and its targumic rendering. These texts appear on parchment in three continuous columns per page, the same format as the Hebrew Torah scrolls of the same period. Such interversal text formats would be unwieldy for someone interested in reading the Aramaic *targum* alone as a self-contained text, as it requires the reader to alternate between Hebrew and Aramaic for each successive verse, without demarcations between them. Therefore, it is a misrepresentation of this interversal placement of *targum* to represent it as if it were a continuous Aramaic translation alone.[67]

This practice, of writing verses in alternating sequence between Hebrew Scripture and Aramaic *targum*, continued well into the Middle Ages, especially in Germany, long after Aramaic ceased to function as a Jewish vernacular language. In other places, especially with the invention of printing, the *targum* (Onqelos) was moved, demoted as it were, to a side column of its own, in a smaller script, and subsequently replaced either by Rashi's commentary (especially

[66] On the relation of these Aramaic translations of Job to rabbinic *targum* of the same book, see Chapter 5, nn. 13, 22. On fragments of a *targum* to Leviticus, see Chapter 5, n. 20.

[67] For such texts of Palestinian *targum*, see Michael L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986). Note in particular MSS B, C, and D from the Cairo Genizah (ibid., 1:xxii). Alternatively, some manuscripts provide the first word or few words of the Hebrew scriptural lemma before providing the verse's Aramaic translation. This may be termed an abbreviated interversal format. Klein misleadingly translates the Genizah fragments that he edits into English, as if they represented continuous texts of Aramaic translation. See, for example 1:[2]–[3] in Klein's edition, where his transcription of the bilingual interversal text is correct, but his English translation on the facing page renders into English only the Aramaic translation, again giving the mistaken impression that there exist in this corpus running texts of Scripture Aramaic alone. That such *targum* manuscripts could have played a dual function of both private and public study/recitation is explicitly and graphically indicated with marginal instructions in some manuscripts to omit some targumic renderings when recited in public: לא מתרגם בציבורא ("not to be translated in public"). See nn. 2, 33.

in France) or Saadia's Arabic translation (especially in Spain), so that the placement of both Scripture and *targum* would now, for the first time, represent two continuous, self-contained texts, each unto itself, as they had not been previously: Scripture in one column and translation (or commentary, or translation as commentary) in another, giving the false impression that they are two separate texts placed side by side, rather than intertextually interlaced.[68] Thus, the *targum*'s relationship with the scriptural text was more like that of a running commentary, and no longer a bilingual, antiphonal performance, as it continues to be in Yemenite synagogues to this day. The chanter or auditor of an interversal text – in contrast to one who encounters *targum* in the format of parallel columns of self-contained Scripture and translation – would experience the two as a single braided whole, the format not being conducive to reciting one in isolation from the other. The midrashic words, "reading leads to translation" (and back again), with which we began, are substantiated across a long and broad textual history.

Thus, both physically and functionally, the Aramaic *targum* never existed apart from its Hebrew scriptural source in premedieval times, the two being recited, studied, and written (as best we can tell), as a "bi-text,"[69] with Hebrew and Aramaic alternating verse by verse so as to differentiate between the functions and statuses of Scripture and its interpretive accompanying translation. In short, we have little evidence for the existence of a free-standing

[68] For medieval manuscripts, see Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 151–56; Sarit Shalev-Eyni, *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 9–10, with photos on 132–34, 136; David Stern, "The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology," *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 11 (2012): 1–88 (www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/11-2012/Stern.pdf); Elodie Attia, "Targum Layouts in Ashkenazi Manuscripts: Preliminary Methodological Observation," in *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, and Hans-Martin Kirn (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 99–122.

[69] See nn. 15, 60.

Jewish "Aramaic Bible," at least as the Rabbis conceived of the place of *targum*, in relation to Scripture on the one hand and oral study on the other.[70] The same cannot be said for other ancient languages, especially the Greek of the Septuagint, but also non-Jewish Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible such as the Samaritan Targum and the Syriac Peshiṭta, which *do* exist as continuous texts of translation, with little evidence for how they would have been performed.

Rather, as I have argued in greater detail elsewhere,[71] the practice of *targum*, as performed both in the synagogue and in private study, should be seen as "internal translation," reflecting a broader social phenomenon, across ages and continents, of what Max Weinreich terms "internal Jewish bilingualism."[72] Reading (chanting) and translation, *miqra*ʾ and *targum*, are performatively interlaced for a shared audience. Here we may cite again Walter Benjamin, from his concluding words of his famous essay, "The Task of the Translator":

[70] For a laudable exception, translating Scripture and *targum* interversally, see *The Targum of Canticles*, trans. Philip S. Alexander, The Aramaic Bible 17A (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003). Alexander states (xi): "All the Targumim should be read in dialogue with the biblical text and not as free-standing translations." Another scholar whose scholarship is to be commended in this regard, but whose ideas and mine have converged only belatedly (in my view), especially with regard to *targum* as a part of rabbinic literature, is Alexander Samely, for whose scholarship see his listings in the Bibliography.

[71] See Steven D. Fraade, "Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 39 (2006): 69–91, here 81; Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction, 109–22; Steven D. Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 29. For evidence of a Greek translation being *read* alongside the Hebrew, see Justinian's Novella 146 (553 CE).

[72] For the phrase "internal translation," see Steiner, *After Babel*, 28–31, 48–50. See also Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble, Yale Language Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 247–314 (chap. 4, "Internal Jewish Bilingualism"). However, I use these designations heuristically since, as with the pair "public" and "private" (on which see n. 2), they can significantly overlap and intersect.

> For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings. The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation.[73]

Note the resonance of these concluding words of Benjamin with those of an article by Dries De Crom, regarding ancient Hebrew–Greek (and Aramaic) translation in the multilingual context, with which I conclude this chapter:

> Whereas the default view in modern-day Translation Studies has long considered translation as occurring between two homogeneous, monolingual cultural entities – no doubt still a legacy of the 19th century nation-state … the study of translation in the ancient world, especially in the Ancient Near East and in the margin of the dominant Greek and Roman cultures, opens up a different world: one where languages cut across cultural borders instead of creating them, where "sources" and "targets" are as manifold as the translators/authors that construe them and where translation is a symptom of multilingualism rather than of linguistic deficit.[74]

The next and final substantive chapter, Chapter 7, will take up related threads of language(s), translation, ideology, and identity, revisiting a question that we encountered previously in Chapter 3, with respect to translating the Torah into all seventy (or sixty-nine non-Jewish) languages, but now with seemingly greater urgency: Once the Hebrew Bible is translated into Greek (the Septuagint), in particular, and adopted by early Christians as the Old Testament, whose Bible is it?

[73] Benjamin, "Task of the Translator," 82. See also n. 17; Chapter 1, nn. 11, 13.

[74] Dries De Crom, "Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition," in *Complicating the History of Western Translation: The Ancient Mediterranean in Perspective*, ed. Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino (London: Routledge, 2011), 87.

7 | Be Careful What You Wish For

7.1 Introduction

As we saw in Chapter 3, seventy languages for seventy Torah translations for seventy nations could be viewed positively, negatively, or ambivalently. The availability of the Torah to each nation in its own language, rendering it thereby fit for universal study and practice, or polemic, could be viewed as a means to convert the non-Jews, if they embraced it, or to damn them, if they rejected it. However, in these traditions, no single translation language is singled out for elevation or denigration with respect to the others. The arguments themselves, whether positive, negative, or ambivalent, are universal, applying equally to each non-Jewish nation and its language. The possibility that any nation could be multilingual is not entertained, with each language metonymically standing for a nation (or people) and vice versa. If there has been a polemic in any of the texts that we have thus far examined, it has been mild, implied, or self-constrained.

The traditions to be considered in this chapter, by contrast, focus on one language, Greek, and its translation of the Torah (*νομός*), loosely designated as the "Septuagint," for the seventy (actually seventy-two) Judaean elders who are said to have produced their collective and consensual translation of the Pentateuch under divine providence in mid-third-century Alexandria, under

the royal patronage of the Ptolemaic king.[1] In our leadoff rabbinic text, in this chapter, the tone will become, as well, more sharply polemical.

[1] Aristobulus (ca. 160 BCE), frag. 3 in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 13.12.1–2 and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.22.150.1–3; *Let. Aris.* (ca. 150 BCE) esp. 301–11; Philo (ca. 20 BCE–40 CE), *Mos.* 2.25–44; Josephus (ca. 37–ca. 100 CE), *Ant.* 12.11–118, esp. 103–14; C. Ap. 2.44–47. For good introductions, see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 17–24; Benjamin G. Wright III, *The Letter of Aristeas: Aristeas to Philocrates, or On the Translation of the Law of the Jews*, CEJL 8 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 3–75. For a good recent treatment of the Greek sources, see Benjamin G. Wright III, "Translation as Scripture: The Septuagint in Aristeas and Philo," in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study and Translation of the Greek Bible*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 47–61. For the Letter of Aristeas in its Jewish (and Homeric) Alexandrian context, see recently, Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19–37. For the reception of the Letter of Aristeas in Hellenistic and early Christian writings, see Michael L. White and G. Anthony Keddie, eds., *Jewish Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt: The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature: Texts and Translations with Notes and Introductions*, WGRW 37 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 173–274. For rabbinic texts that show familiarity with this Hellenistic account, but take it in a different direction, emphasizing the specifics of how the Greek translators emended the text of Scripture, see the following: Mek. of R. Ishmael Pisḥa 14 (ed. Lauterbach, 1:111–12; ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 50–51); y. Meg. 1.9, 71d; b. Meg. 9a–b; Mas. Sop. 1.7 (ed. Higger, 100–5); Mas. Sep. Torah 1.6 (ed. Higger, 22–24). There is extensive scholarly literature on the rabbinic use of the story of Septuagintal origins. See Chapter 3, n. 31, including, recently, Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Giuseppe Veltri, "Deconstructing History and Traditions: The Written Torah for Ptolemy," in Veltri, *Libraries, Translations and "Canonic" Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, JSJSup 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 100–46; Timothy H. Lim, "The Idealization of Ptolemaic Kingship in the Legend of the Origins of the Septuagint," in *Times of Transition: Judea in the Early Hellenistic Period*, ed. Sylvie Honigman, Christophe Nihan, and Oded Lipschits (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 231–39; Moshe Simon-Shoshan, "The Tasks of the Translators: The Rabbi, the Septuagint, and the Cultural Politics of Translation," *Prooftexts* 27 (2007): 1–39; Richard Kalmin, "The Miracle of the Septuagint in Ancient Rabbinic and Christian Literatures," in *"Follow the Wise": Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee Levine*, ed. Zeev Weiss, Oded Irshai, Jodi Magness, and Seth Schwartz (Winona Lake,

At its most extreme expression in antiquity, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–40 CE) asserts that the original Torah in Hebrew and its translation into Greek were, for all intents and purposes, equal in meaning as in authority. In effect, nothing is lost in the translation. Philo describes the process in revelatory terms, possibly suggesting a reenactment on the desolate island of Pharos of the divine revelation in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai, whereby the translators, having been isolated from one another as from society, produced identical results: καθάπερ ἐνθουσιῶντες προεφήτευον οὐκ ἄλλα ἄλλοι, τὰ δ' αὐτὰ πάντες ὀνόματα καὶ ῥήματα, ὥσπερ ὑποβολέως ἑκάστοις ἀοράτως ἐνηχοῦντος ("They became as it were possessed, and, under inspiration, wrote, not each several scribe something different, but the same word for word, as though dictated to each by an invisible prompter"). He characterizes the Hebrew and Greek versions, καθάπερ ἀδελφὰς μᾶλλον δ' ὡς μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔν τε τοῖς πράγμασι καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι τεθήπασι ("as sisters, or rather one and the same, both in matter and words"), and the translators, οὐχ ἑρμηνέας ἐκείνους ἀλλ' ἱεροφάντας καὶ προφήτας προσαγορεύοντες οἷς ἐξεγένετο συνδραμεῖν λογισμοῖς εἱλικρινέσι τῷ Μωυσέως καθαρωτάτῳ πνεύματι ("not as translators, but as prophets and priests of the mysteries, whose sincerity and singleness of thought has enabled them to go hand and hand with the purest of spirits, the spirit of Moses"). True Hebrew–Greek bilinguals, or Hebrew speakers who learned Greek and Greek speakers

IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 241–53; Richard Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 80–94 (on early Christian adaptations); Shlomo Naeh, "The Script of the Torah in Rabbinic Thought (B): Transcriptions and Thorns," *Leshonenu* 72 (2010): 89–123 (Hebrew); Yael Fisch, "The Septuagint," in *Josephus and the Rabbis*, ed. Tal Ilan and Vered Noam, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2017), 1:145–67 (Hebrew). Fisch argues that the more negative rabbinic views of the Hebrew–Greek translation are later than the more positive ones, as does Dries De Crom, "Translation and Directionality in the Hebrew–Greek Tradition," in *Complicating the History of Western Translation: The Ancient Mediterranean in Perspective*, ed. Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino (London: Routledge, 2011), 82–83.

who learned Hebrew, as Philo puts it, could vouch for the precise identity of the Greek translation with its Hebrew original.[2]

Two hundred years prior to Philo, the author of the Letter of Aristeas is more subtle,[3] hinting at divine providence, that is, "deliberate design" in the seventy-two translators of the Septuagint completing their work in exactly seventy-two days (307), οἱονεὶ κατὰ πρόθεσίν τινα τοῦ τοιούτου γεγενημένου ("just as if such a result was achieved by some deliberate design").

Even so, the work of translation is here described in more collaborative and consensual than prophetic terms, οἱ δὲ ἐπετέλουν ἕκαστα σύμφωνα ποιοῦντες πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς ταῖς ἀντιβολαῖς· τὸ δὲ ἐκ τῆς συμφωνίας γινόμενον πρεπόντως ἀναγραφῆς οὕτως ἐτύγχανε παρὰ τοῦ Δημητρίου ("They set to completing their several tasks, reaching agreement among themselves on each by comparing versions") (302), publicly endorsed by the people and their leaders (308–11), παρόντων καὶ τῶν διερμηνευσάντων, οἵτινες μεγάλης ἀποδοχῆς καὶ παρὰ τοῦ πλήθους ἔτυχον, ὡς ἂν μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν παραίτιοι γεγονότες ("in the presence of the translators, who received a great ovation from the crowded audience for being responsible for great blessings") (308).[4]

However, for a less sanguine view of translation (and translators), including of Scripture (however delineated) from Hebrew

[2] Philo, *Mos.* 2.37–40 (LCL 6:466–69). For the revelatory origins of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, see b. Meg. 3a. For discussion of the revealed status of *targum* among the Geonim, see Marc Daniel Herman, "Systematizing God's Law: Rabbanite Jurisprudence in the Islamic World from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2016), 105–6. On Alexandrian Jewish bilinguals, see Albert I. Baumgarten, "Bilingual Jews and the Greek Bible," in *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism*, ed. James L. Kugel, JSJSup 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13–30; Arie van der Kooij, "The Origin and Purpose of Bible Translations in Ancient Judaism: Some Comments," *AR* 1 (1999): 204–14. Previously (Chapter 3, Sections 3.5 and 3.7), we saw rabbinic texts that stressed the seventy divinely inspired notaries, who translated the Torah into seventy languages in little time.

[3] English translations of the Letter of Aristeas are from *OTP*, vol. 2.

[4] For the people's approval, see also Josephus *Ant.* 12.107–8.

to Greek, note the Prologue to Ben Sira by his grandson (ca. 130 BCE): αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Εβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῇ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν: ("For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language") and, οὐ μικρὰν ἔχει τὴν διαφορὰν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λεγόμενα ("differ not a little as originally expressed" [NRSV]).

One can only imagine what a different course the history of Christianity (and by extension, Judaism) would have taken if its attitude to Greek Scriptures had followed Ben Sira's grandson's jaded view of scriptural translation rather than the more explicitly enthusiastic one of Philo, and implicitly that of the Letter of Aristeas with its royal, yet divine authorizing of the Septuagint.

7.2 Moses, Beware What You Wish For

In the following passage, from a relatively late (seventh-century?) composite midrash (Pesiqta Rabbati 5 [ed. Friedmann, 4b; cf. trans. Braude, 93]), the liminal relation of Scripture to translation is joined to that between written and oral modes of performance and transmission.[5] After stating that the synagogue Torah reader cannot publicly recite the weekly lection from memory, but must do so by reading from a written scroll, it adds that the person reciting the *targum* (herein considered of the class of Oral Torah) cannot do so while looking at a written text, whether of Aramaic *targum* or Hebrew Torah, lest it appear that he is reading the Oral Torah from a written scroll, thereby blurring the line between written and oral, and thereby between Scripture and *targum*, a rabbinic view that we encountered previously (Chapter 6, Section 6.5) in the Jerusalem Talmud. R. Judah

[5] Parallels can be found in Tanḥ. Ki Tissa᾽ 34 (ed. Warsaw, 127a); Tanḥ. Ki Tissa᾽ 7 (ed. Buber, 58b–59a), which might be antecedents to our passage based on source analysis, for which we cannot divert our attention now. For my purposes, the three passages reflect similar attitudes to the translation of the Torah into Greek, and the oral transmission of the Oral Torah.

ben Pazzi (ca. 350 CE) is said to derive both rules, and their underlying differentiation, from the successive halves of Exodus 34:27: "write down" and "by mouth" (על־פי). Hebrew Scripture and its Aramaic translation must remain both materially and performatively distinct from one another, notwithstanding their deep interconnection, lest they blur the distinction between written and oral, or at least give the impression of doing so. The midrash continues:

> אמר רבי יהודה ברבי שלום: ביקש משה שתהא המשנה בכתב. וצפה הקדוש ברוך הוא שהאומות עתידין לתרגם את התורה ולהיות קוראים בה יוונית ואומרים אין הם ישראל. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא הא משה עתידין האומות להיות אומרים אנו הם ישראל אנו הם בניו של מקום. וישראל אומרים אנו הם בניו של מקום. ועכשיו המאזניים מעויין. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לאומות מה אתם אומרים שאתם בניי. איני יודע אלא מי שמסטירין שלי בידו הוא בני. אמרו לו ומה הם מסטירין שלך. אמר להם זו המשנה.... אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה מה אתה מבקש שתהא המשנה בכתב. ומה בין ישראל לאומות מניין. (כך) [שכך] הוא אומר אכתוב לך רובי תורתי (הושע ח יב). ואם כן כמו זר נחשבו (שם).
>
> R. Judah the son of R. Shalom (ca. 375 CE) said: Moses requested [of God] that the oral teaching (*mishnah*) be written. The Holy One, blessed be he, foresaw that in the future the nations would translate the Torah and read from it in Greek and say, "They are not Israel." The Holy One, blessed be he, said to him, "O Moses! In the future the nations will say, 'We are Israel; we are the children of the Lord.' And Israel will say, 'We are the children of the Lord.' Now, the scales would appear to be balanced [between the two claims]." The Holy One, blessed be he, would say to the nations, "What are you saying that you are my children? I only recognize as my son one in whose hand are my 'mysteries.'"[6] They would say to him, "And what are your "mysteries?" He would say to them, the oral teaching (*mishnah*)." .... Said the Holy One, blessed be he, to Moses, "What are you requesting, that the oral teaching be written? What then would be the difference between Israel and the nations?" Thus, it

[6] On this Greek loan word, see n. 7.

> says, "Were I to write for him [= Israel] the fullness of my teaching (*torah*)"; if so, "they [= Israel] would have been considered as strangers" (Hos. 8:12).[7]

In this beautifully constructed, fanciful, and evocative exchange, Moses seeks God's permission to record the ever-expanding Oral Torah in writing, presumably in Hebrew, most likely so as not to be so dependent on memorization to achieve its preservation and transmission. God foresees that one consequence of reducing the Oral Torah to writing will be its translation into Greek, which would consign it to the same fate as the translation of the Written Torah into Greek (the Septuagint): It would no longer belong, as it were, to Israel alone. Israelites would no longer enjoy the unique status of being God's "children" by virtue of possessing the Hebrew Oral Torah alone. As the parallel in Tanḥ. Ki Tissaʾ 7 (ed. Buber, 58b–59a) puts it, "They [the teachings of the Oral Torah] separate/differentiate (מבדילין) between Israel and the nations of the world." But only if those teachings remain oral and untranslated. That is, the "internal" performative differentiation between written Hebrew Scripture and oral Aramaic *targum* (in the synagogue) facilitates and maintains the "external" separation between Israel and the other nations (in public view). Interestingly, it is the translation of the Torah (Written and Oral) into the Greek language *alone*, among the "seventy" languages of universal humanity, that is of concern here to God, as it should be to Moses. Furthermore, the translation

[7] On this passage, see Steven D. Fraade, "Concepts of Scripture in Rabbinic Judaism: Oral Torah and Written Torah," in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 39–40; Marc Bregman, "Mishnah and LXX as Mystery: An Example of Jewish-Christian Polemic in the Byzantine Period," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004), 333–42; Marc Bregman, "משנה כמסטירין" ("Mishnah as Mystery"), in *Meḥqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sussmann and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 101–9 (Hebrew).

of the Written Torah into Greek is understood to have been undertaken by and for "the nations," and not originally for the convenience of the Jewish community of Alexandria (as some have supposed),[8] presumably since Greek was the international lingua franca of the Eastern Mediterranean Roman rule (as had once been the role of Aramaic under Persian rule), thereby symbolically standing for the universal language of "the nations" as a whole.

However, it is safe to presume that since only one language, Greek, is mentioned here, "the nations" stands for (Western) Christians, who adopted the Greek Jewish Bible (Septuagint) as the first installment of their own two-part Bible. Who else among "the nations" would say, "We are Israel; we are the children of the Lord"?[9] In this passage at least, the translation of the Written Torah into Greek serves not all seventy of the nations but only the Christians for whom it, and not its Hebrew original, with some notable exceptions, serves as the first installment of what would become their dual Bible (Old Testament + New Testament). Once in possession of their own (more complete) authorized version of Scripture, the Christians would be able to claim that they are the true Israel and not the Jews, since the latter no longer have any advantage over the former in terms of their possession of self-legitimating Scripture, whether in Hebrew or Greek (or Syriac, or Latin, etc.).[10]

At first it would appear that the "scales are balanced" between Israel and "the nations" (here Christians) with each having a Written Torah (νομός) of its own and in its own language. However initially, Israel is in possession of an esoteric ("mystery"[11]) advantage, which is not (yet) in the possession of "the nations." It is the oral teaching (*mishnah*) possessed by Israel alone and committed

[8] See nn. 1–2.

[9] Perhaps the Samaritans, but they would not have needed their Torah translated into Greek for such polemical purposes.

[10] But see n. 2.

[11] On which see n. 7, especially the articles by Marc Bregman.

to memory rather than to writing. The assumption here is that so long as it remains unwritten it will not be translated, and hence remain the possession, and identity-granting medium, of Israel alone. Finally, and ingeniously, the Hosea verse is invoked as an exegetical proof text, by being, as it were, divided (in two) and conquered, so as to mean that so long as God's (oral) *torah* (or *mishnah*) remains unwritten and untranslated, Israel alone, in possession of God's "mysteries," will remain God's true intimates, rather than "strangers," being in sole possession of *both* Written and Oral Torah (the "fullness" thereof). In other words, Moses, in this multilingual marketplace of beliefs and identities, beware what you wish for, lest you lose your linguistic home advantage!

7.3 Positive or Ambivalent Rabbinic Views of Greek Language

This negative, dare I say threatening, view of translation (at least of Scripture from Hebrew to Greek), contrasts with that found, not surprisingly, in Greek-language Jewish texts, which view translation as a means of spreading the wisdom and renown of Jewish Scriptures and sole deity to an international audience, to Israel's benefit.[12] Yet, even within Hebrew texts of the early rabbinic sages, perhaps before Christianity had begun to pose a serious challenge to Jewish scriptural and social identity, we see a high regard for the Greek language, sometimes singled out among the putative languages of scriptural translation. We may recall here that Ben Sira, who wrote his wisdom in Hebrew, but which was transmitted in Greek (and other languages), initially by way of his grandson, similarly expresses an ambivalent view of the translation of Hebrew Scriptures and wisdom into Greek, with something gained and something lost in the transaction. Similarly, notwithstanding such

[12] See the sources listed and cited in n. 2.

ambivalence among the Rabbis, with regard to Greek as a language per se, they relate to it positively or at least neutrally.[13] For example, the following is an oft-quoted saying attributed to R. Jonathan of Bet Gubrin (Palestine, ca. 250 CE):

> אמר רבי יונתן דבית גוברין. ארבעה לשונות נאים שישתמש בהן העולם ואילו הן.
> לעז לזמר רומי לקרב סורסי לאילייא עברי לדיבור. ויש אומרים אף אשורי לכתב.

> Said R. Jonathan of Bet Gubrin (ca. 250 CE): Four languages are pleasing for use in the world, and these are they: Greek for song, Latin for battle, Sursi (= Palestinian Aramaic) for dirges, Hebrew for speech. And some say, also Assyrian for writing.[14]

The four languages, each credited as being superior for a particular type of speech, include Greek first for its suitability (and presumably beauty) for song (or poetry, which was typically sung). The other three languages need not detain us at present,[15] but it might be noted that elsewhere (in tannaitic midrash) the Torah is said to have been revealed (to Israel) in four languages (Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Aramaic), Greek not being included, perhaps simply for exegetical reasons.[16] In both cases the number four typologically denotes completeness, based on the four principal points of a compass, the four winds, the four seasons, and so on.

[13] For the widespread use of Greek, often alongside or alternating with Hebrew and Aramaic in inscriptional settings of synagogues and funerary sites, both in the Land of Israel and in the diaspora, see Chapter 1, as well as nn. 19–22 in this chapter.

[14] See y. Meg. 1:11, 71b (ed. Academy of Hebrew Language, 619); y. Soṭah 7:2, 21c (ed. Academy of Hebrew Language, 933); Esth. Rab. 4:12 (to 1:22). The reference to "Assyrian for writing" refers, presumably, to the adaptation of the "Assyrian" square Hebrew letters, of which we learned in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.

[15] See Steven D. Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 59*–60*.

[16] Sifre Deut. §343 (ed. Finkelstein, 395). For more discussion, see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 267 n. 36; Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 46*–48*.

Another well-known statement evidences ancient rabbinic familiarity with four languages, two of which (including Greek) were in active use in the Land of Israel, and the other two in Babylonia. The following rhetorical statement, attributed to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, appears twice in the Babylonian Talmud, once marked as a *barayta*. It is followed by a rejoinder from the Babylonian Amora Rav Joseph:

> והאמר רבי: בא"י לשון סורסי למה? אלא אי לשון הקודש אי לשון יוונית! ואמר רב יוסף: בבבל לשון ארמי למה? אלא או לשון הקודש או לשון פרסי!

> For Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] (Galilee, ca. 200 CE) said: In the Land of Israel, Why [use] the Syrian [= Palestinian Aramaic] language? Either [use] the holy language [= Hebrew] or the Greek language. And Rav Joseph (Babylonia, ca. 300 CE) said: In Babylonia, Why [use] the Aramaic language? Either [use] the holy language [= Hebrew] or the Persian language.[17]

Rabbi Judah the Patriarch's statement has been repeatedly invoked as self-evident and incontrovertible proof that Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language in the Land of Israel by his time.[18]

[17] B. Soṭah 49b; b. B. Qam. 82b–83a (*barayta*), where a sharp distinction is drawn between cultivating (teaching one's child) Greek language (approved) and inculcating Greek wisdom (disapproved). Whether such a separation can be achieved in pedagogical practice is another matter. See also nn. 34, 38.

[18] E.g., E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1959), 11 (Hebrew); English trans. (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 13, considers this passage to be irrefutable proof that Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of the Galilee by the time of R. Judah the Patriarch. Willem Smelik ("Language Selection and the Holy Tongue in Early Rabbinic Literature," in *Interpretation, Religion and Culture in Midrash and Beyond: Proceedings of the 2006 and 2007 SBL Midrash Sessions*, ed. Lieve Teugels and Rivka Ulmer [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008], 145) states: "Rav Yoseph's statement highlights the absurdity of Rabbi's claim [that Hebrew or Greek be spoken, but not Aramaic] and thus provides a highly ironic comment on the use of Aramaic in both areas. Rabbi's position must have been related to an ideology of Hebrew rather than a society in which the use of Hebrew was still a viable option for everyday speech." As indicated

By the same logic, we would have to say the same for Greek. Alternatively, scholars have taken this passage to reflect a devaluing of Aramaic (both Palestinian and Babylonian).[19] I see neither valuing nor devaluing here, but rhetoric. Whatever the state of Hebrew usage at his time, whether spoken or written, this passage is unable to bear the weight of such far-reaching historical conclusions. All it suggests is that while a normal expectation might have been for the Jews of Palestine either to stick with their ancestral language (Hebrew) or to adopt that of the ruling elites (Greek), with Aramaic being neither, Aramaic usage is, ironically, an anomalous third possibility. In a sense, however, Aramaic, while being neither wholly native nor foreign, is something of both: a very close cognate to Hebrew (and a biblical language), but also a language shared with the surrounding non-Jewish cultures (e.g., Samaritan, Christian, Nabataean, Palmyrene, but each with its own distinctive script or scripts) among whom Jews dwelled, and a former imperial language. It serves here as a connecting linguistic bridge, much as it served as a connecting administrative bridge, beginning under Persian imperial rule, as we saw in Chapter 4.

Rav Joseph's gloss avers that the question of such a seeming anomaly is not unique to the Land of Israel, but can be equally asked of Jewish use of Aramaic in Babylonia, and, one might add, of hybrid inside-outside Jewish languages throughout subsequent

earlier, determining monolingual spoken language is not my concern here, nor is it warranted by this text, which does not indicate what kind of language use or language domain it has in mind.

[19] See, for example, Moulie Vidas, "Greek Wisdom in Babylonia," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:287–305 (297): "While these statements about Aramaic are difficult to take at face value given the constant use of Aramaic by Rabbis, the negative value this passage attaches to Aramaic cannot be denied, and the audience of this text is thus invited to focus not on the endorsement of Greek but the rejection of Aramaic."

history. It would be akin to asking of Eastern European Jews, "Why use Yiddish? Use either Hebrew or Polish (or Russian, etc.)." At the very least, our talmudic passage is evidence of Jews navigating between, and in some cases combining, three language options: inside (Hebrew)/outside (Greek or Persian)/inside-outside or bridge language (Aramaic). Here we see a talmudic text rhetorically thematizing the challenges of such language choices, often through code-switching, as we see with *targum*.[20] Greek is the only non-Semitic language herein normativized as a dominant language (as is Persian in Babylonia).

I have previously treated another passage that would appear to grant Greek a favored status among the "seventy" languages, but in another context:[21]

תני בר קפרא "יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם" (בראשית ט:כז). שיהו מדברין בלשונו של יפת באוהלו של שם.

> Bar Kappara (Palestine, ca. 250 CE) taught: "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 9:27): That they may speak the language of Japheth [= Greek] in the tents of Shem [= the Hebrews].[22]

Genesis 9:27 is understood to foresee a time in which, by God's blessing, Greek language will feel at home in the dwellings of

[20] For this pattern of a tripartite Jewish language use across Jewish history, see Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), esp. 126. In previous work I have provided ample evidence of such multilingual language use and selection in inscriptional realia of the second through sixth centuries CE from the Land of Israel: "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 1*–40*. A Hebrew version appeared in *Leshonenu* 73 (2011): 273–307. See also n. 13.

[21] See Chapter 2, nn. 19 and 26. See also Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 42*–43*.

[22] Y. Meg. 1:11, 71b (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 748). One of the sons of Japheth is Javan (Greece), according to Gen. 10:2. Similarly, Abraham is a descendent of Shem (Gen. 10:10–26). See also b. Meg. 9b; Gen. Rab. 36:8

Semitic-language speakers, that is, the Hebrews/Jews. Stated differently, speakers of Greek, especially, but not only, in the Land of Israel, will be guests in the "tents" of Hebrews, rather than vice versa. The parallel in b. Meg. 9b paraphrases the verse, by way of a word play, to mean: *יפיותו של יפת יהא באהלי שם* ("May the beauty of Japheth be in the tents of Shem"), presumably referring to the beauty of the Greek language (and/or song).[23]

For another example of a positive outlook on the Greek language, and returning us to matters of scriptural translation, note the following mishnaic statement:

> אין בין ספרים [ל]תפילים ומזוזות אלא שהספרים ניכתבים בכל לשון ותפילים ומזוזות אינן נכתבות אלא אשורית. רבן שמעון בן גמליא' [אומ']. אף בספרים לא היתירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית.
>
> There is no difference between [scriptural] scrolls and *tefillim* and *mezuzot* except that the scrolls can be written in any language, but *tefillim* and *mezuzot* can only be written in Assyrian [letters in Hebrew language]. Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel [said], "So too with respect to scrolls [other than in Hebrew], they only permitted if they are written in Greek."[24]

(ed. Theodor-Albeck, 342). On other superiorities of the Greek language, see Gen. Rab. 16:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 158). See Willem F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 28 n. 60. See also Chapter 2, n. 26.

[23] For this understanding of "beauty" here as referring to the beauty of the "Greek *language*," see Midr. ʿAg. Gen. 9:29 (ed. Buber, 29a). For a radiant discussion of the "beauty of Japheth," see Emmanuel Lévinas, "The Translation of the Scripture: From the Tractate Megillah, 8b and 9a–9b," in *In the Time of the Nations*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 52–54. For other rabbinic understandings of Gen. 9:27, see Gen. Rab. 36:8 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:342); Deut. Rab. 1:1; and parallels.

[24] M. Meg. 1:8, according to MS Kaufmann. See also y. Meg. 1:11, 71c (ed. Academy of Hebrew Language, 749); b. Meg. 8b–9b; 18a; Sop. 15:1–2 (ed. Higger, 274–75). *Tefillim* and *mezuzot* contain tiny scrolls of parchment, on which are written scriptural verses, which are enclosed within small leather cases and not read, except by scribes who wrote or inspected them.

Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel presumably takes a more restrictive view of scriptural translations than do his rabbinic colleagues. According to them, unlike *tefillim* and *mezuzot*, which can only be written in Hebrew and in “square” script, perhaps because they are not publicly read, and hence do not require translation, but serve as talismans), scriptural scrolls can be written in any language (presumably of the seventy languages of humankind).[25] Apparently in a minority of one, Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel makes an exception for only one non-Hebrew language and translation, that being Greek. However, it is not clear whether this permission applies only to a particular Greek translation of Scriptures or to any, and what is there manner of writing. The question of language choice, between Hebrew and Greek, in liturgical settings is directly posed and debated in the following passage from the Jerusalem Talmud. It comments on m. Soṭah 7:1–2, which lists those rituals that can only be recited in the Holy Language (Hebrew; presumably so as to be performatively affective and effective) and those that can be recited “in any language,” including the twice-daily recitation of the Shemaʿ among the latter group:[26]

"וקרית שמע". דכת' "ודברת בם". ר' או'. אומר אני. קרית שמע אינו נאמ' אלא בלשון הקודש. מה טע'. "והיו הדברים האלה". ר' לוי בר חיתה אזל לקיסרין. שמע קלון קריין שמע אלוניסתין. בעא מעכבתון. שמע ר' יוסי ואיקפד. אמ'. כך או' אני. מי שאינו יודע לקרות אשורית לא יקרינה כל עיקר. אלא יוצא בכל לשון שהוא יודע. השיב ר' ברכיה. הרי מגילת אסתר. היה יודע לקרותה אשורית ולעז. אינו יוצא בה אלא אשורית. אמ' ר' מנא. מגילת אסתר היה יודע לקרותה אשורית ולעז אינו יוצא אלא אשורית. בלעז יוצא בה בלעז. וכן יוצא בה בכל לשון שהוא יודע.[27]

[25] As discussed in Chapter 3.

[26] Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num. 15:37–41; and their accompanying blessings.

[27] Y. Soṭah 7:1, 21b. The text is that of MS Leiden as per the edition of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, 933, with slight modifications. Compare y. Meg. 2:1, 73a; b. Soṭah 32b. For further discussion of this passage, see Joseph Geiger, “‘Voices Reciting the Shma in Greek’: Jews, Gentiles and Greek Wisdom in Caesarea,” *Cathedra* 99 (2001): 27–36 (Hebrew).

> "The recitation of the Shemaʿ" [can be rendered in any language,] as it is written, "And you shall speak of them" (Deut. 6:7).[28] Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] (ca. 200 CE) says, "I say, 'The recitation of the Shemaʿ is said only in the Holy Language.'"[29] What is its Scriptural basis? "And these are the [very] words …" (Deut. 6:6).[30] R. Levi bar ḥaitah (?) went to Caesarea. He heard them recite the Shemaʿ in Greek (אלוניסטין = ἑλληνιστί = Hellenistic). He wanted to stop them. R. Yose (ca. 250 CE) heard and was angered. He said, "Should I say, 'He who does not know how to read them in Assyrian letters [of Hebrew language] should not read them at all?' Rather, one fulfills his obligation in any language which he knows." R. Berekhiah (ca. 375 CE) replied, "With respect to the Scroll of Esther, if one knew how to read it in either Assyrian letters [of Hebrew language] or in everyday language,[31] he fulfills his obligation to read it only in Assyrian letters [of Hebrew language]." Said R. Mana (250 CE), "As to the Scroll of Esther, if one knew how to read it in Assyrian letters [of Hebrew] and in everyday language, he fulfills his obligation to read it only in Assyrian letters [of Hebrew language]. [If he knew how to read it only] in everyday language, he can fulfill his obligation to read it [by doing so] in everyday language. And so [at least in some circumstances] one fulfills his obligation to read it in any language which he knows."[32]

In short, while the ritual recitation of the Shemaʿ and the reading of the scroll of Esther should preferably be done in the Holy

[28] Meaning, you shall speak of them in the language that you speak.

[29] Interestingly, the position here attributed to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (the Shemaʿ can be recited in Hebrew alone) is contrary to the anonymous rule of the Mishnah, which composition is conventionally ascribed, at least in its later stages, to him.

[30] Meaning, these words are not to be altered through recitation in another language, but should be the very same words as uttered by Moses. For the same interpretation attributed to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, see t. Sot. 7:7 (ed. Lieberman, 193).

[31] While this could refer to any vernacular language, frequently, as most likely here, it denotes Greek in particular.

[32] It is unclear whether this refers to the recitation of the Shemaʿ, the reading of the scroll of Esther, or both.

Language of Hebrew, so as to achieve maximal ritual effect, according to one view, they can also be recited, especially by those who do not know Hebrew, in the language with which the speaker has greater facility and comprehension, with Greek being the only such language singled out here as an exemplar. In other words, better Greek than nothing! It is interesting that Caesarea is the locale in which the question of the preferred/allowed language for the recitation of the Shemaʿ is disputed, as it was a major urban center of Roman rule and culture on the Mediterranean coast, as well as a center of rabbinic learning at the time of the Mishnah's composition and beyond. Presumably the synagogue in question is one of Greek-speaking and comprehending Jews in the Land of Israel.[33]

Similar ambivalence, in a context not dealing with translation per se, surrounds the question of whether it is permitted (or even desirable) to teach one's son or daughter Greek language, in the earlier and Palestinian sources, or wisdom in the Babylonian Talmud, the difference between them not always being clear). R. Abahu (ca. 300), in the name of R. Yoḥanan (ca. 250), is said to have allowed a father to teach his daughter Greek (language, wisdom, or both?), "because it (= Greek) is a (beautiful) ornament (תכשיר) to her, once again stresses the beauty of (presumably) the Greek language."[34]

[33] I would guess that the recitation of the Shemaʿ doxology in modern diasporan synagogues is predominantly performed in Hebrew, rather than the vernacular, even if the congregants are functionally illiterate in Hebrew. For more on the question of "Japhet in the tents of Shem," see Maren R. Niehoff, "Homer between Celsus, Origen and the Jews of Late Antique *Palaestina*," in *Text and Intertext in Greek Epic and Drama: Essays in Honor of Margalit Finkelberg*, ed. Jonathan J. Price and Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 185–209, esp. 202–4, with reference to the copious previous scholarship on this question.

[34] The most recent detailed examinations of the sources are those of Vidas, "Greek Wisdom in Babylonia"; and Yael Wilfand, "The Roman Context for the Rabbinic Ban on Teaching Greek to Sons," *JAJ* 8 (2017): 365–87. See also nn. 17 and 38. The main primary sources are as follows, in rough chronological order: m. Soṭah 9:14 (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 110); t. Soṭah 15:8 (ed. Lieberman, 242); t. ʿAbod. Zar. 1:20 (ed. Zuckermandel, 461; ed. Freiman, 146), citing Josh. 1:8 (It is permitted to teach Greek to one's son so long as it is neither day nor night); y. Peʾah 1:1, 15c (ed.

This contrasts with, but does not necessarily negate, other early rabbinic teachings that emphasize the importance, especially in the Land of Israel, of teaching one's son Hebrew.[35]

Once again (see n. 24, for m. Meg. 1:8), it is Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel who appears more inclined toward favoring Greek, at least for the members of his "family," presumably due to his patriarchal position, whether real or imagined, vis-à-vis Rome, whose colonizing of the Eastern Mediterranean was conducted in Greek. Such use of Greek to communicate with Roman elites could either be traitorous (Greek-speaking Jewish informants,[36] who are compared to raisers of pigs[37]) or advantageous (Greek-speaking Jewish interlocutors), depending on who is using it and for which purposes.[38] In any case, it is a double-edged sword, leading some sages to forbid and some to permit.

Notwithstanding the calamitous view of the Torah having been translated into Greek (presumably referring to the translation commissioned by King Ptolemy in Alexandria in the mid-third century BCE), with which we began this chapter (Section 7.2), we know of at least three other ancient Jewish translations of the Torah into

Academy of the Hebrew Language, 79), on informants and daughters; y. Soṭah 9:14 (16), 24c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 950), on informants and daughters; y. Šabb. 6:1, 7d (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 395), sons and daughters in the Patriarch's "house," זקוקין למלכות ("dependent on the government"); y. ʿAbod. Zar. 2:2, 41a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1386), similar to previous; b. Soṭah 49b (story of siege and elder speaking Greek) with parallels: b. B. Qam. 82b–83a; b. Menaḥ. 64b; 99b; b. Menaḥ. 99b, citing Josh. 1:8. For the story of the siege of Jerusalem, but without any mention of Greek language or wisdom, see y. Ber. 4:1, 7b; as well as the parallel in Josephus: *Ant.* 14.25–28. Presumably the emphasis on Greek language or wisdom represents a later stage of transmission.

[35] For sources and discussion, see my article, "Before and After Babel," 33*–35*.

[36] For "informants" (מסורות) see p. Peʾah 1:1, 15c.

[37] B. Soṭah 49b and parallels.

[38] The Tosefta (Soṭah 15:8) allows the teaching of Greek to the "sons" of Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel on the grounds that they are קרובין למלכות ("close to the government"). See Rashi's gloss to "Greek wisdom" in b. Soṭah 49b: "'Greek wisdom': The language of wisdom which the members of the palace (בני פלטין) [= the Roman officials] speak, but with which the rest of the [= Jewish] people are not familiar." See also nn. 17, 34.

Greek with which the Rabbis knew and of which they appear *not* to have disapproved: those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (second–third centuries CE), all of which survive in fragmentary form and patristic citations.[39] The evidence for more direct rabbinic knowledge and approval is strongest for the translation attributed to Aquila.[40] In other words, it would appear that it was not the translation of Hebrew Scriptures into Greek per se that caused the trouble. Rabbinic literature overall is negative neither toward Greek as a language nor of translating the Torah into Greek.[41] At most, they were collectively ambivalent toward both.

7.4 Worst Day Ever

After these relatively positive, or at least mixed views of the Greek language and its employment for scriptural translation and ritual recitation, we return to our first passage (in which God warns Moses of the risks to Israelite identity were the Oral Torah to follow the fate of the Written Torah in being translated from Hebrew

[39] For introductions to these three translations, see Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 26–30.

[40] See Giuseppe Veltri, "Deconstructing Translations: The Canonical Substitution Aquila/Onkelos," in Giuseppe Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and "Canonic" Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 147–89; Jenny R. Labendz, "Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives," *HTR* 102 (2009): 353–88; Alison Salvesen, "Did Aquila and Symmachus Shelter under the Rabbinic Umbrella?" in *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis*, ed. Timothy Michael Law and Alison Salvesen, CBET 66 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 107–25. Rabbinic sources that mention Aquila are provided in Salvesen's "Did Aquila and Symmachus Shelter under the Rabbinic Umbrella?" 107 n. 1, and treated by Labendz, "Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity," 355–70 and Veltri, "Deconstructing History and Traditions," 176–85.

[41] For other early rabbinic texts that suggest a special status for Greek among the non-Hebraic languages, see m. Šeqal. 3:2 (Greek was used in the Jerusalem Temple); m. Giṭ. 9:8 (a bill of divorce and names of witnesses, both in Greek).

into Greek). Such writing and translating would render both the Written and the Oral Torah not just accessible, but the legitimizing possession of anyone who would translate it into any language, especially Greek. Turning back to the translation of the Torah into Greek in mid-third-century BCE Alexandria, we find in another relatively late (eighth-century?) text, the expression of another strongly stated repudiation of that Greek translation:

והיה אותו היום קשה לישראל כיום שנעשה בו העגל, שלא הייתה התורה יכולה להתרגם כל צרכה.

> That day [on which the Torah was translated into Greek under King Ptolemy] was as disastrous for Israel as the day on which the [Golden] Calf was made.[42] For the Torah could not be translated as it requires.[43]

There are two parts of this statement that do not sit so comfortably with one another. On the one hand, the making of the Greek Torah in Alexandria is said to have been as calamitous for (the true)

[42] This expression only appears in one other place in early rabbinic literature: t. Šabb. 1:16 (ed. Lieberman, 4), and parallels (e.g., y. Šabb. 1:4, 3c; b. Šabb. 17a), with regard to eighteen laws disputed by the Houses of Hillel and Shammai, which the latter decreed as they outnumbered the former. No further explanation is provided. The incident of the Golden Calf connects to *targum* in one other way: According to m. Meg. 4:10, "The first [account of] the incident of the [Golden] Calf (Exod. 32:1–20) is read and translated; the second (Exod. 32:21–35) is read but not translated." Much has been written regarding the "forbidden *targumim*." Recently, see Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*, 111, 201–18.

[43] Sop. 1:7 (ed. Higger, 102) // Sep. Torah 1:6 (ed. Higger, 22–24). The last sentence of the text might be a gloss. As it stands, does this sentence mean to say that the Torah is untranslatable into any language (except, we might presume, Aramaic), or is it specifically untranslatable into Greek? For its opposite (Greek alone is suitable), see the citation at the end of this note. For other accounts, see nn. 1–2. Smelik (*Rabbis, Language, and Translation*, 299) translates, "because the Torah cannot be translated appropriately" (perhaps meaning "accurately"). Compare y. Meg. 1:8, 71c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 749), where, using the same expression, it is said that *Greek alone* is suitable for translating the Torah כל צורכה ("as it requires"), certainly a much more favorable view of Greek language and translation.

Israel as was the making of the Golden Calf, for which, according to Exodus 32:10, God was ready to destroy Israel (save for Moses), as Moses had done to the tablets of the Pact, in Exodus 32:15. According to rabbinic tradition, not only was the making and worship of Golden Calf Israel's greatest sin of flagrant idolatry, but had they not so sinned, the revelation at Mt. Sinai would have restored the Israelites to immortality. The making and worship of the Golden Calf was, in effect, Israel's "original sin" as a people. Here is Louis Ginzberg's paraphrase:

> [F]or the worship of the Golden Calf had more disastrous consequences for Israel than any other of their sins. God had resolved to give life everlasting to the nation that would accept the Torah, hence Israel upon accepting the Torah gained supremacy over the Angel of Death. But they lost this power when they worshipped the Golden Calf.... [T]here is no sorrow that falls to Israel's lot that is not in part a punishment for their worship of the Golden Calf.[44]

Instead, Israel barely survived. That such an extreme punishment could have been caused, by analogy, by such a seemingly well-intended but possibly misguided translation (originally by Jews) of the Torah into Greek might appear to not rise to the level of "measure for measure." Was the Greek translation of the untranslatable text of divine revelation (as Ben Sira's grandson concurs) as egregious a transgression as the idolatrous construction and worship of the Golden Calf? So claims our text. But does it do so for any translation into any language (the Torah being untranslatable), or does it do so for this particular translation into Greek in particular? Lest we think the sages were univocal in this (or any) matter, compare y. Meg. 1:8, 71c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 749), where, using the very same expression as our text for

[44] Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913–39), 3:120, with notes in vol. 6 for the rabbinic sources.

the untranslatability of the Torah, it is said that *Greek alone* is suitable for translating the Torah *כל צורכה* ("as it requires"), certainly a much more favorable view of Greek language and translation, albeit from an earlier time.

We might contrast the catastrophic rabbinic view with the very enthusiastic response of the High Priest Eleazar, according to Let. Aris. 41–46, to King Ptolemy's request to have the Torah translated into Greek. There is not a hint of any suspicion of an impending calamity or of the impossibility of the translators' task here, but their very opposites. Perhaps Eleazar and his advisers simply lacked the prophetic foresight that was divinely granted to Moses. In hindsight, the author of the Letter of Aristeas views the translation of the Torah into Greek as the most effective enabler of a positive "merger" between Jewish-Greek social identities, a far cry from the rhetorical vanquishing of one "Israel" (Hebrew) at the hands of another (Greek/Christian), as per our later rabbinic texts. Some seventy years ago, Victor Tcherikover characterized the ideology of the Letter of Aristeas as follows: "The Torah in Greek would serve the Jews as a ticket of admission into the world of Greek culture and Greek society," rather than as a ticket of exclusion.[45] If the rabbinic texts, especially later ones, bemoan the translation of the Torah into Greek, the Letter of Aristeas celebrates it, that is, positively portraying the king and the people celebrating it (Let. Aris. 308–309, 312) and taking measures to ensure that it would never by altered (310–11). Philo (*Mos*. 2.41–43) reports the establishment of an annual celebration by the *Jews and non-Jews* of Alexandria to commemorate and give thanks to God "for the good gift so old yet ever young."[46]

[45] Victor A. Tcherikover, "The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas," *HTR* 51 (1958): 59–85 (77), originally published in Hebrew in 1949. Much more recently, see Noah Hacham and Lilach Sagiv, "Social Identity in the *Letter of Aristeas*," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9 (2018): 325–43.

[46] LCL 6:468–69.

7.5 Conclusion

Returning to our opening and closing rabbinic texts, if we read them in light of one another, we might find them, unexpectedly, to complement one another in their disagreement. It is only if the Hebrew Torah (νομός) is fully translatable into Greek, "as it requires," that the "nations" (Christians) could claim to be of (at least) equal status, that is, "the scales would appear to be balanced." Each would hold, as it were, an equal claim to being the true "Israel" and "the children of the Lord." The remaining question for the Rabbis is whether the existing Greek translation of the Septuagint is an accurate version, "as it requires."[47]

The making and worship of the Golden Calf threatened to undo everything that God and Moses had accomplished covenantally through the Exodus from Egypt and the revelation at Mt. Sinai. Similarly, a translation of the Torah into Greek, that could be claimed by Hellenistic Jews (and, in effect, by later Christians) to be indistinguishable, in sacred content and revelatory authority, from its Hebrew source, would lead to the same fate, threatening to undo (Jewish) Israel's claim to a special covenantal divine bond through the Sinaitic revelation to it alone.[48] Thus, the threat to Israel's identity as God's covenantal partner alone is the direct result not just of the translation of the Torah into Greek, but of the Christian claim, begun by Greek-speaking Jews such as Philo, that the resulting Greek translation was a "sister" (or "one and the same") to the Hebrew "original."

In sum, only if the unwritten Oral Torah (*mishnah* = God's "mysteries") remained oral and untranslated could Israel achieve

[47] For early rabbinic texts that highlight the *inaccuracy* of the Septuagint, see n. 1.

[48] Of course, what would become the Israelite covenant goes back to Abraham, but its collective consummation occurs at Mt. Sinai. For rabbinic accounts of the non-Jewish nations rejecting the Torah law offered to them by God, see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbis on Gentile Lawlessness: Three Midrashic Moments," in *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David Lincicum, Ruth Sheridan, and Charles Stang, WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 135–55.

and maintain a distinct advantage (as the Rabbis viewed it) vis-à-vis those who only possessed a Greek translation of the Torah, and an imperfect one at that. Israel's very identity, if not survival, depended on it.

But how are we to understand or explain the sharp differences, *mutatis mutandis*, between the earlier and later (chronologically speaking) texts that we have examined, with respect to both the scriptural translation and the Greek language, in relation to both of the other languages directly and daily encountered by the Rabbis (Hebrew and Aramaic), as well as the totality (seventy) of human languages? I would argue, but not here in any detail, that in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, Greek was associated with the Roman Empire, as that was the language of imperial power and privilege in the Eastern Mediterranean, areas which Jews populated. To aspire to social, cultural, economic, and political status, in effect, required some degree of both fluency in Greek language and a taste for Greek culture, obviously at different degrees in different local and socioeconomic strata. One could argue that rabbinic Judaism offered, to its limited but widening circles, a way to adopt, adapt, and resist, mainly inwardly, Rome's (that is, Greek's) hegemony.[49] The Rabbis resisted its inroads even as they were enamored of it, especially its Greek language.

But with the Christianization of the empire, beginning in the early fourth century and expanding gradually, Greek was increasingly associated with the dominance of Christianity. Now their converted "hosts" shared with them a degree of monotheism and a shared Scripture, albeit in Greek, over which to compete for favor and identity, such as had not existed, or exited much more limitedly, under the previous imperial regime, as well as those before it. No wonder that the prospect of the Oral Torah being translated

[49] For a lengthy and solid account, with reference to the prior history of scholarship, see Katell Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals: Pagan Rome's Challenge to Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021). See also nn. 17, 38.

into Greek represented, at least potentially, a game-changer of the gravest consequences. What changed, and it happened gradually, was not the language, but the empire that it represented, both practically and symbolically.

Needless to say, history is full of ironies. The Oral Torah *was* eventually (scholars debate when) written down, eventually printed, and more recently digitized, and circulated in many translations and scripts, via a wide range of communicative media. What's more, Jews and Christians and others of many denominations have continued to argue about its meaning, with no one assured the final say by God tipping the scale. But the written Oral Torah managed to preserve aspects of its orality, especially in its dialogical forms of discourse. And, when last checked, rabbinic Judaism and its written Oral Torah, with all of their argumentative diversity of form and content, continue to flourish. Just look at the thriving Jewish book market for rabbinic writings, whether physical or virtual. God forbid, was God wrong in his catastrophic prediction to Moses? Only time will tell.

8 | Afterword

It is in the nature of rabbinic literature that it resists closure. In part, this is a function of its anthological nature as a matter of open textual form, and in part it is due to the open-ended nature of its scholastic debates as an expression of its intellectual proclivities to revel in "disagreement for the sake of heaven." The two explanations certainly complement one another.[1] Notwithstanding our intensive readings and analyses of the texts before us, often juxtaposing them alongside one another, whether within or between the preceding chapters, they leave many questions un- or incompletely answered. Rather than seeing these loose ends as a misfortune, I have repeatedly, but from a variety of vantages, sought to illustrate the profundity of the liminal nature of translation in general, and of rabbinic translation of Scripture (*targum*) in particular. The very variety of the rhetorical forms of argument that we have explored is itself a cause for celebration, but also for collaboration.

[1] For recent debate on the rabbinic culture of debate, see the following essays that comment in turn on one another: Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization," *AJS Review* 31 (2007): 1–40; Steven D. Fraade, "A Response to Azzan Yadin-Israel on Rabbinic Polysemy: Do They 'Preach' What They Practice?" *AJS* 38 (2014): 339–61; Richard Hidary, *Dispute for the Sake of Heaven: Legal Pluralism in the Talmud*, BJS 353 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Moshe Simon-Shoshan, "These and Those Are the Words of the Living God, But …": Meaning, Background, and Reception of an Early Rabbinic Teaching," *AJSR* 45 (2021): 1–29; Azzan Yadin-Israel, "Rabbinic Polysemy: A Response to Steven Fraade," *AJS Review* 38 (2014): 129–41.

On the one hand, as I have tried to correct, targumic studies resides on the borderlines of rabbinic literature and those who study it are largely out of sight, just as rabbinic literature views *targum* as straddling the porous boundary between the Written and Oral Torah, whether as textual artifact or as textual practice, whether in private or public, whether as teaching or as liturgy, with gray areas between each pair, gray areas being the main ingredients in the rabbinic curricular diet. In a sense, *targum* is denied a place, or given a partial place, within the rabbinic "canon," if we can call it such. I have tried, rather, to bring front and center rabbinic views and practices of multilingualism and *targum*, in fact to celebrate their liminality on several fronts.

But I also hope to have opened some eyes between the academic fields of Jewish/Judaic studies and translation studies, there being precious little light cast between them.[2] The questions and issues posed in the Introduction (Chapter 1) should be of equal interest to both species of scholars, as should the profoundly remarkable texts upon which I built my arguments. In part, this is because the field of translation studies is more focused on multilingualism in modern times (as are scholars of multilingualism in Jewish studies). If so, then I hope to convinced both groups that multilingualism (and hence translation) and its "origins" reach far more deeply and widely back into antiquity (if not into the Garden of Eden [Chapter 2]), than is commonly presumed.[3] One of my readers suggested that Judaism, with its devotion to "The Book" in its "original" Hebrew language (unlike, say, most denominations of Christianity), could be presumed to frown on multilingualism and the translation of Scripture from Hebrew into vernacular tongues.

If I hope to have accomplished something in writing this book, it would be to have succeeded in dispelling such a simplification, by

[2] A notable exception is Willem F. Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), on whom see Chapter 1, n. 5.

[3] See Chapter 1, n. 1, for some bibliography.

painting a much more complex, nonessentialist, unhomogenized picture. Similarly, I hope to have dislodged the presumption that translation in general and *targum* in particular is intended (as medieval Rabbis would regrettably say) for "women and children," that is, for those who lacked access, for whatever reason, to the Hebrew "original." In each chapter, I hope to have demonstrated that (to varying degrees, of course) translation, especially of Scripture,[4] was understood as the first pedagogical and hermeneutical step in the dynamic process of interpretation, regardless of one's level of linguistic competency, and that Aramaic *targum* was Hebrew Scripture's hermeneutical and dialogical accompaniment, rather than its monolingual replacement. To what extent this is an idealization and not a reliable representation of real practice (as is commonly the case in rabbinic literature) is difficult to surmise, Once again, one size does not fit all.

Given that this final chapter is an afterword and not a conclusion, I wish to turn our attention from the ancient past to its successive futures.

Jewish multilingualism, and especially bilingualism, whether written or spoken, hardly ended with the death of Aramaic as a spoken Jewish language, but continued to flourish in many sociolinguistic settings across two millennia and almost every continent. It continued to play a central role in the history of Jewish identity-forming interactions with non-Hebraic neighbors, mainly Christians and Muslims, as much as among its internal Jewish denominations. Not only did Aramaic continue as a language of literary religious creativity (e.g., Aramaic as a language of talmudic commentary, as a language of legal writs, as a language of prayer, and as a language of mystical commentary), but other Jewish vernaculars took their places as vehicles of Jewish religious expression alongside and in dialogue with Hebrew as the ancestral "holy tongue." In the Middle Ages, such rabbinic masters as

[4] See Chapter 1, nn. 18–21, for other ancient manifestations of multilingualism.

Moses Maimonides, Judah Halevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Baḥya ibn Paquda, and Abraham ibn Ezra wrote some works in Hebrew and others in Arabic, a language and culture in which Jews in Islamic societies were deeply immersed over a long period of time.[5] Some of these were shortly translated from Arabic into Hebrew and circulated in both. In more recent times, Jewish writers, most notably Mendele Mocher Seforim and I. L. Peretz, employed both Hebrew and Yiddish in their writings. While these writers are exemplary, they are not exceptional. In Mendele's case, he wrote versions of his works in both Hebrew and Yiddish, each with a different intended quality, and in some cases translating his own works from one language to the other. These writers maintained and strengthened the dynamic, creative link between Hebrew as the permanent Jewish language and the temporal Jewish vernaculars which Jews adopted, adapted, and combined.

Even though this assembly of essays has focused on cultural products of the distant past, its dual subjects of multilingualism and translation have been perpetual markers of Jewish society, culture, and identity from its earliest days (sixth century BCE, with the Persian conquest) to today, across millennia and continents. The template that has largely sustained and strengthened Judaism from then until now has been one forged of three sociolinguistic vectors: (1) Hebrew as the eternal לשון הקודש ("holy tongue" or "language of holiness"); (2) the language(s) of the dominant surrounding culture (Greek in Greco-Roman antiquity, and Middle Persian in the eastern diaspora of Babylonia);[6] and (3) a "bridge" language between Hebrew and the dominant culture (Aramaic in antiquity), with the bridge language

[5] As robustly demonstrated by Shelomo Dov Goitein, *Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 2: *Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), as per Chapter 6, n. 51.

[6] For the dire consequences of not knowing the language of one's conquerors, see Deut. 28:49; Jer. 5:15. For the wealth of recent scholarly literature dealing with translation and multilingualism in the Greco-Roman worlds, see Chapter 3, n. 1.

typically being written in Hebrew characters, even as its language was largely non-Hebrew).[7] This dialectical linguistic triangle has proven itself to be remarkably sustainable, as well a culturally creative. In the words of Qohelet (4:12), וְהַחוּט הַמְשֻׁלָּשׁ לֹא בִמְהֵרָה יִנָּתֵק ("A threefold cord is not readily broken").

Not only does Judaism represent the (if not one of the) longest, continuous, multilingual translation projects of human history, but translation among a plethora of languages has been a central component of Judaism's cultural vitality, despite, or perhaps in response to, the vicissitudes of history, even as the specific "languages in contact" have changed (as has Hebrew from time to time and place to place).[8] Notwithstanding this longevity and centrality, we lack a historical, literary, and linguistic overview of multilingualism and translation in Jewish culture across time and place. It is hoped that this book will provide an impetus to such an intellectually urgent endeavor.[9] A further desideratum would be to expand the scope so

[7] See Chapter 7, n. 20.

[8] For the phrase, see Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953; repr. The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

[9] As a sampler of the smorgasbord: For the relationship of Hebrew to Aramaic representing Jewish multilingualism across history, see E. Y. Kutscher, "השפה העברית ובנות לוויתה במשך הדורות," *Hadoar* 47 (1968): 507–10; Micah Josef Berdichevsky (Bin-Gorion), "Hebrew and Aramaic," in *Poesy and Language*, ed. Emanual Bin-Gorion (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1987), 101–5 (Hebrew). For an excellent, but brief overview, see Gideon Toury, "Translation and Reflection on Translation: A Skeletal History for the Uninitiated," in Robert Singerman, *Jewish Translation History: A Bibliography of Bibliographies and Studies*, Benjamins Translation Library 44 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002), ix–xxxi. For an excellent historical overview of Jewish translation, that asks, among other questions, "What's Jewish about Jewish translation?," see Naomi Seidman, "Sacred Tongue, Translated People: Translation in the Jewish Tradition," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, ed. Hephzibah Israel (Oxford: Routledge, 2023), 334–47. Note as well the recent collection of essays on translation in Jewish history and culture, but which only begins with the seventeenth century CE: Marius Krah, Mirjam Thulin, and Biana Pick, eds., "Transformative Translations in Jewish History and Culture," in *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien e. V. / Journal of*

as to include reverberations, whether direct or indirect, among the two other "peoples of the book," and hence of translation between sacred and vernacular languages, in Christianity and Islam, as I have begun in Chapter 7 for the former and in Chapter 2 for the latter.[10]

the German Association for Jewish Studies 19 (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2019). Others who have taken in the wide view, seeing multilingualism as an essential source of Jewish creativity, include Dov Sadan, *Abne-Bedeq: ʿal siprutenu, masadah, weagapheha* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1962); and Shmuel Niger, *Bilingualism in the History of Jewish Literature*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990). For other relatively recent publications dealing with the modern bilingualism of Hebrew and Yiddish, see Steven D. Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné eIsrael* 28 (2011): 68* n. 90; Steven D. Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 40* n. 101. To those bibliographies can now be add the following: Naomi Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016); Kirsten A. Fuderman, *Vernacular Voices: Language and Identity in Medieval French Jewish Communities* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Adriana X. Jacobs, *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018); Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Anita Norich, "Under Whose Sign? Hebraism and Yiddishism as Paradigms of Modern Jewish Literary History," *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 774–84; Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, Afterlives of the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Abigail E. Gillman, "Between Religion and Culture: Mendelssohn, Buber, Rosenzweig and the Enterprise of Biblical Translation," in *Biblical Translation in Context*, ed. Frederick Knobloch, Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 19 (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2002), 93–114; Abigail Gillman, *A History of German Jewish Bible Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[10] For starters, see Tim Denecker, *Ideas on Language in Early Latin Christianity: From Tertullian to Isidore of Seville*, VCSup 142 (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Quran: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis*, Institute of Ismaili Studies Qur'anic Studies Series 7 (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2012); Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

As we began by considering rabbinic views of multilingualism as a creative blessing rather than a confusing curse, we ended with an acknowledgment of both the great rewards and the severe risks, especially societal, inherent in the translator's dynamic vocation. After our tour, I would hope that we would not embrace (as Walter Benjamin and George Steiner surely would not), Franz Rosenzweig's advice to the readers of his translation of Judah Halevi's poetry from Hebrew to German: "Dear Reader, study Hebrew and throw my version in the fire."[11] Similarly, he writes to Gershom Scholem, concerning his 1920 translation of the Grace After Meals: "If I happen to have a Jewish guest who can just read Hebrew – even if he cannot understand a sentence, and so to speak, not a word – I conceal the existence of the translation from him. The uncomprehended Hebrew gives him more than the finest translation."[12] This is not to say that Rosenzweig did not value the work of translation (especially scriptural), to which he dedicated so much of his waning energies, but that he intended his translations for Christians and Jews who did not read Hebrew and sought to communicate to them not just the meanings but the very qualities of the Hebrew source, as experienced by a Hebrew reader, in German, even when that meant employing what others considered "bad" German. For Rosenzweig, the translation, if "good," would replace, not complement, the Hebrew source.

Rather, Benjamin and Steiner, we might imagine, would have had Rosenzweig (as well as his readers, diners, and us) interlinearly recite and interpret texts in as many languages as possible so as to reveal thereby their fullest panoply of languages as language, of

[11] Franz Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi: zweiundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte deutsch* (Berlin: Lambert Schneider, 1927). For a fuller discussion of Rosenzweig as a translator, see William W. Hallo, "Notes on Translation," *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982): 99–105 (English section).

[12] The translation is from Nahum N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1961), 100–2.

meanings as meaning.[13] If nothing else, "dear reader," we can now better imagine and appreciate what a rich yet fraught discussion Benjamin, Rosenzweig, and Steiner, and the many theorists of language and translation that we have encountered, might have had with one another over the deeply vibrant texts that we have read and translated, if only they had been given the occasion.

[13] For Steiner on Benjamin, see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 66–68, where he groups Benjamin with Kafka and Borges as representing a "gnostic" or "kabbalistic" approach to translation. I have argued, in effect, that such an approach is nascently present, *mutatis mutandis*, already in many of the rabbinic texts that we have engaged, but without any claims for influence in either direction. On Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens," in *Illuminations*: *Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 69–82, and Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 253–62 (orig. in French, 1923), see Chapter 1, nn. 12, 14; Chapter 2, n. 3; Chapter 3, n. 15; Chapter 6, n. 17.

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Ancient Sources Index

HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
- 1, 25
- 1:3, 20
- 1:26, 20
- 1:28, 20
- 2:20, 28, 29, 42
- 2:23, 20, 25
- 3, 23
- 3:20, 21
- 4:8, 20
- 5:1, 26
- 6:2, 4, 150
- 9:27, 174–75
- 10, 36, 37
- 10:2, 33, 174
- 10:1–32, 30
- 10:10–26, 33
- 10:21, 24–25, 22
- 10:31, 30, 37
- 11, 19, 23, 36
- 11:1, 23, 27, 30–32
- 11:1–9, 27
- 11:7, 31, 35
- 11:7–9, 30, 37
- 11:9, 30, 32
- 11:14–17, 26, 22
- 14:13, 22, 24
- 33:10, 150
- 35:22, 141
- 41:57, 38
- 42:23, 150
- 46:26, 37

Exodus
- 1:5, 37
- 3:1–6, 91
- 4:10, 28, 36
- 4:16, 150, 152
- 7:1, 148, 149, 154
- 12:26, 54
- 13:14, 54
- 15:18, 145
- 15:26, 148
- 19, 91
- 19:3, 93
- 20:21–22, 51
- 21:6, 149–50
- 22:7, 8, 27, 149–50
- 24:4–8, 52
- 24:9, 37
- 24:18, 91
- 32:1–20, 181
- 32:10, 182
- 32:15, 182
- 32:21–25, 35, 141
- 32:21–35, 181
- 34:27, 167
- 34:28, 91

Leviticus
- 10:10–11, 102
- 16:12–15, 18–21, 113
- 23:23–25, 86

Numbers
- 11:16, 24, 37
- 15:37–41, 176
- 15:39, 129
- 27:12–23, 151
- 29:1–6, 86
- 29:12–34, 37

Deuteronomy
1:1, 36
1:5, 59
2:3, 71
2:9, 71
4:14, 93
5:4, 144
5:5, 143
6:4–9, 176
6:6, 177
6:7, 177
6:20, 54
9:9, 18, 91
10:22, 37
11:13–21, 176
12:8–12, 57
14:23, 129
16:22, 52
17:12, 127
17:14–20, 126
17:18, 94, 95, 97
17:18–19, 126, 128
17:18–20, 59, 133
17:19, 127
20:10–11, 69
20:15–18, 66, 71
20:18, 63
20:19, 69
27, 58
27:1–8, 50, 54–56, 60, 78
27:2, 4, 64
27:2–4, 69
27:8, 55, 57, 64, 69, 70, 80
27:9–14, 56
27:11–28:68, 51
27:15–28:68, 57
27–29, 47
28:49, 190
29:9, 142
31:9–13, 133
31:10–13, 86
31:12, 129
32, 77
32:46, 100
33:2, 45, 148

Joshua
1:8, 178
4, 52, 56, 70, 78
4:1–8, 56, 60
4:1–8, 19–24, 53
4:3, 8, 58, 72, 73
4:9, 53
4:24, 54, 71
8, 58
8:30–32, 52, 54, 56, 60, 78
8:30–35, 55
8:32, 69, 70
24:2–3, 22

1 Kings
19:8, 92
2 Kings
18:26, 28, 22, 88

2 Chronicles
32:18, 22, 88

Ezra
2:2, 61
4:7, 86, 88, 94
4:18, 88, 89
7:6, 84, 93
7:10, 93
7:10, 12, 14, 21, 25–26, 84

Nehemiah
7:7, 61
8:1–8, 59, 84, 87, 90
8:5, 142
8:8, 59, 86, 88, 89
8:12, 86
13:23–24, 31
13:24, 22, 88

Esther
1:22, 30
3:12, 30
8:9, 30, 95

Psalms
55:24, 64
139:17, 26

Proverbs
18:21, 5

Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)
4:12, 191

Isaiah
6:3, 145
8:1, 88
35:6, 35
36:11, 13, 22, 88

Jeremiah
5:15, 190
25:11–12, 37
29:10, 37

Ezekiel
3:12, 145
8:11, 37

Daniel
2:4, 89
2:10, 152
3, 11
5:8, 94
7:14, 30
9:2, 24, 37
10:2–3, 92

Hosea
8:12, 168

Habakkuk
2:2, 59

Zephaniah
3:9, 35, 36

Zechariah
9:12, 94

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew
4:2, 92

Luke
4:2, 155

ANCIENT BIBLE VERSIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Fragmentary Targum (P, V)
Gen 11:1, 32, 35
Exod 4:16, 149
Deut 27:8, 75

Peshiṭta
Exod 4:16, 152

Septuagint (LXX)
Gen 14:13, 22

Tg. Neof.
Gen 11:1, 32
Exod 4:16, 149
Exod 7:1, 148

Tg. Onq.
Gen 23:6, 150
Gen 27:29, 37, 150
Gen 39:9, 150
Gen 41:41, 43, 149
Exod 2:14, 150
Exod 7:1, 148, 154
Exod 18:25, 149
Num 14:4, 149
Deut 1:15, 149
Deut 16:18, 149

Tg. Ps.-J.
Gen 11:1, 32
Exod 4:16, 153
Exod 7:1, 148, 153

SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

Apoc. Ab.
9:7, 92

2 Baruch
9:2, 92
20:5–6, 92

Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus)
Prologue, 88
1:4, 21
24:9, 21

4 Ezra
5:13, 20, 92
6:31, 35, 92
9:24–25, 92
14, 92
14:1–2, 91
14:6, 91
14:24, 92
14:26, 91
14:36, 91
14:37, 91
14:42, 92, 93
14:45–46, 91

Jubilees
3:28, 23
12:25, 23
12:25–27, 22, 23

Letter of Aristeas
41–46, 183
46, 50, 273, 307, 37
301–11, 163
302, 165
308, 165
308–09, 312, 183
308–11, 165
310, 143
310–11, 183

JOSEPHUS

Ant.
1.4, 23
4.307–308, 56
5.20, 56
12.107–8, 165
12.11–118, 163
14.25–28, 179

C. Ap.
2.44–47, 163

Vita
11, 155

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

Conf.
6, 23
9, 30
13, 33, 39
191–92, 32

Leg.
3.138–145, 93

Mos.
2.14 (68–70), 92
2.25–44, 163
2.37–40, 165
2.41–43, 183

Prob.
82, 88

PSEUDO-PHILO

Lib. Ant. Bib.
21:7–8, 55

DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND RELATED TEXTS

1QM
X, 14, 30

4Q156, 113

4Q157, 113

4Q264a (4QHalakhah B)
1 I, 4–5, 104

4Q266 (4QD[a])
11 10, 31

4Q464 (4QExposition of the Patriarchs)
3 I, 5, 30

11QtgJob (11Q10), 113

RABBINIC LITERATURE: MISHNAH, TOSEFTA, AND TALMUD

MISHNAH

m. ʾAbot
1:6, 130
5:22, 135

m. B. Meṣiʿa
2:8a, 136

m. ʿErub.
10:3, 116

m. Giṭ.
9:8, 180

m. Meg.
1:8, 33, 113, 116, 175
4:9, 9, 140
4:19, 181

m. Sanh.
1:5, 6, 37
2:4, 129
7:7, 127

m. Soṭah
7:1–2, 176
7.1–8:1, 12
7:5, 37, 39, 41, 57, 62, 63
7:8, 127, 133
9:1, 12
9:14, 178

m. Šabbat
7:2, 103
16:1, 103, 115, 119

m. Šeqal.
3:2, 180
5:1, 37, 39, 41, 60, 63

m. Yad.
4:5, 105

TOSEFTA

t. ʿAbod. Zar.
1:20, 178

t. B. Meṣiʿa
2:21, 136

t. Meg.
3(4):21, 154
3:41, 138, 151

t. Šabbat
13 (14), 104
13:2, 119, 120
13:2–3, 108

t. Sanh.
4:7, 92, 93

t. Soṭah
7:7, 177
8:6–7, 62
8:7, 65
13:3, 99
15:8, 178, 179

t. Šabb.
1:16, 181

JERUSALEM/PALESTINIAN TALMUD

y. ʿAbod. Zar.
2:2, 41a, 179

y. Ber.
4:1, 7b, 179

y. Meg.
1:8, 71c, 181, 182
1:9 (11), 71b–c, 93, 94
1:9, 71d, 66, 96, 163

y. Meg. (cont)
1:11, 71b, 30, 44, 171, 174
1:11, 71c, 33, 175
2:1, 73a, 176
4:1, 74d, 59, 89, 90, 112, 132, 142, 155
4:10, 75c, 151
y. Pe'ah
1:1, 15c, 178

y. Šabb.
1:4, 3c, 181
6:1, 7d, 179
16:1, 15b–c, 105, 114

y. Soṭah
7:1, 21b, 176
7:2, 21c, 96, 171
7:5, 21d, 73
9:14 (16), 24c, 179

BABYLONIAN TALMUD

b. B. Bat.
134a, 134

b. B. Qam.
82b–83a, 172, 179

b. Ber.
8a–b, 140
45a, 152

b. Git.
60b, 151

b. Ḥag.
16a, 151

b. Meg.
3a, 89, 99, 138, 165
8b–9b, 33, 175
9a, 67
9a–b, 66, 163
9b, 174
18a, 33, 78, 99, 112, 116

b. Menaḥ.
43b, 129
64b, 179
99b, 179

b. Ned.
37b, 89

b. Pesaḥ
50b, 151

b. Qidd.
31b, 151
49a, 90, 137

b. Sanh.
7b, 151
17a–b, 39
21b, 96
21b–22a, 93, 94
38b, 26
109a, 31

b. Soṭah
32b, 176
35b, 65
36a, 51
36b, 38
37b, 151
49a, 146
49b, 172, 179

b. Sukkah
20a, 99
28a, 134
44a, 99
55b, 37

b. Šabbat
17a, 181
104a, 99
115a, 118
116b, 107

b. Yoma
4b, 91
20b, 150
80a, 99

OTHER RABBINIC WORKS

Abot R. Nat.
A 1, 91–92
A 8, 130
A 14, 134
A 17, 151
B 12, 134
B 28, 134

Deut. Rab.
1:1, 175

Esth. Rab.
4:12, 171

Exod. Rab.
3:17 (3), 154
8:2, 152
8:3 (2), 154

Gen. Rab.
16:4, 175
18:4, 24
31:8, 24
36:8, 89, 174, 175
38:6, 31
41[42]:8, 22
48:12, 91
70:16, 150
74:15, 71

Mas. Sep. Torah
1:6 (8–9), 66, 67, 163, 181

Mas. Sop.
1:7 (6–8), 66, 67, 163

Mek. Deuteronomy
345, 68

Mek. of R. Ishmael Pisḥa
5, 31
14, 66

Mek. of R. Ishmael Šabb.
1, 105

Midr. ʿAg.
Gen 9:29, 175

Midr. Haggadol
Exod 4:16, 149

Pesiq. Rab.
5, 67, 111, 166

Sifra Šemini
paraša 1:9, 130

Sifre Deut.
48, 98
55, 156, 160, 162, 170, 297, 128
106, 129
155, 127
160, 94, 127
161, 128, 129
176, 305, 151
305, 151
339, 129
343, 45, 171
357, 92

Sifre Num
140, 151

Sop.
1:7, 181
15:1–2, 175
16:6, 134

Tanḥ. Ki Tissa'
7, 166, 168
34, 166

Tanḥ. Noaḥ
16, 18, 19, 31
19, 35
22, 24–25, 27, 28, 31
28, 35

Tanḥ. Wāʾērāʾ
7, 8, 9, 152
10, 154

Tanḥ. (ed. Buber), append.
5:2a–b, 28

MEDIEVAL RABBINIC SOURCES

Rashi
Gen 11:1, 31
Exod 7:1, 153
Deut 1:5, 59
Deut 27:8, 59

Saadia
Exod 4:16,
149
Exod 7:1, 149

Modern Scholars Index

Abudraham, O., 148
Adams, J., 49
Adler, E., 114
Alexander, P., 76, 141, 148, 160
Amir, A., 151
Ashkenazy, S., 37
Assmann, J., 101
Attia, E., 159

Backus, Ad, 11
Baird, J., 13
Ballard, M., 6
Baumgarten, A., 165
Baumgarten, J., 104
BeDuhn, J., 38
Bekkum, W.-J. van, 13
Bellos, D., 21, 40, 41
Ben-Hayyim, Z., 59
Benjamin, W., 5, 10, 11, 21, 60, 132, 161, 194
Berdichevsky, M., 191
Berlin, A., 31
Berthelot, K., 185
Biguenet, J., 6
Blom, A., 131
Bohak, G., 147
Borst, A., 21, 27
Bost, H., 21
Boyarin, D., 146
Bregman, M., 168, 169
Brenner, N., 192
Brody, R., 62
Buber, M., 28
Buth, R., 49

Cole, P., 114
Cooper, J., 2
Cotton, H., 49
Crisostomo, C., 2

De Crom, D., 10, 15, 161, 164
Denecker, T., 192
Derrida, J., 21
Dorleijn, M., 11

Eco, U., 27
Elbogen, I., 159
Elder, O., 49
Elizur, S., 13
Eshel, E., 32
Eshel, H., 13
Even-Zohar, I., 15

Finkelstein, L., 128, 129
Fisch, Y., 164
Fishbane, M., 52, 83, 87
Fitzmyer, J., 46
Flatto, D., 126
Fogel, S., 127
Fraade, S., 4, 7, 12, 14–16, 23, 28, 32, 37, 38, 45, 48, 58, 59, 61, 62, 76, 78, 79, 90–92, 98–102, 106, 113, 126, 128, 130, 132, 139, 141, 154–56, 160, 168, 171, 174, 179, 184, 187, 192
Friedman, S., 62
Fuderman, K., 192

Gascou, J., 13
Geiger, J., 176
Ginzberg, L., 21, 28, 29, 38, 92, 94, 182
Glatzer, N., 193
Goitein, S., 151, 190
Goodblatt, D., 12

Greenberg, M., 16, 17
Greenstein, E., 21
Gross, S., 147

Hacham, N., 183
Hallo, W., 33, 193
Halperin, L., 192
Harrington, D., 55
Harris, B., 14, 131
Harshav, B., 7, 8, 28
Hasan-Rokem, G., 155
Hauptman, J., 62
Heller-Roazen, D., 21, 43
Herman, G., 38, 147
Herman, M., 165
Hezser, C., 7
Hidary, R., 102, 187
Hirshman, M., 58, 78
Hoffman, A., 114
Hollander, H. W., 38
Hoyland, R., 49

Idel, M., 37
Isbell, C. D., 38

Jacobs, A., 192
Jacobs, C., 60
Jaffee, M., 113
James, P., 49
Japhet, S., 87
Jastrow, M., 64
Jobes, K., 163
Jonge, M. de, 38

Kadari, A., 31
Kahana, M., 68, 72
Kahle, P., 87
Kalmin, R., 67, 140, 163
Kasher, M., 28
Katzoff, B., 94
Kaufman, S., 147
Keddie, G. A., 163
Kilito, A., 21, 40, 42, 43, 45
Klein, M., 141, 158
Kooij, A. van der, 87, 165
Kottsieper, I., 87
Krah, M., 191
Kutscher, E. Y., 172, 191

Labendz, J., 10, 180
Langer, R., 146
Lapin, H., 12
Larson, J., 13
Le Guin, U., 28
LeFebvre, M., 87
Lefevere, A., 6
Lévinas, E., 175
Levy, L., 192
Lieber, L., 14
Lieberman, S., 9, 38, 58, 63, 65, 68–70, 90, 109, 130, 131, 151
Lim, T., 6, 163

Mack, H., 37
Mandel, P., 61
Manekin-Bamberger, A., 147
McElduff, S., 49
Meyer, E., 135
Millar, F., 5, 12, 49
Milstein, S., 83
Mishor, M., 147
Mor, U., 13
Moss, Y., 21
Mullen, A., 49
Müller, F., 22
Müller-Kessler, C., 147
Myers, J., 87
Naeh, S., 65, 66, 94, 98, 138, 164

Newman, J., 128
Niehoff, M., 163, 178
Niger, S., 192
Noam, V., 102, 104
Norich, A., 192
Notley, R. S., 49

Olender, M., 5, 21
Ost, F., 22, 40

Papaconstantinou, A., 49
Pick, B., 191
Price, J., 49, 66

Qimron, E., 102, 104

Rand, M., 13
Ricci, R., 192
Robinson, D., 6
Rosenzweig, F., 193
Rubin, M., 27

Saar, O.-P., 147
Sadan, D., 192
Sagiv, L., 183
Salvesen, A., 180
Samely, A., 160
Sandmel, S., 46
Sarna, N., 36, 38
Schaeder, H., 83, 87
Schechter, S., 68
Schiffman, L., 87
Schniedewind, W., 83
Schremer, A., 94
Schulte, R., 6
Schwartz, S., 5, 11, 78
Sciarrino, E., 49
Seidman, N., 192
Shaked, S., 147
Shalev-Eyni, S., 159
Shepherd, D., 114
Shinan, A., 32
Silva, M., 163
Simon-Shoshan, M., 67, 163, 187
Singerman, R., 6
Smelik, W., 5, 11, 32, 49, 58–60, 63, 65, 76, 90, 99, 103, 109, 116, 142, 172, 175, 181, 188
Sokoloff, M., 75, 112, 138
Sperber, D., 38
Spivak, G., 131
Steiner, G., 4, 5, 11, 22, 43, 150, 160, 193, 194
Stern, D., 159
Stone, M., 32, 91
Suchard, B., 11
Sussmann, Y., 113

Tcherikover, V., 183
Thulin, M., 191
Tigay, J., 52
Toorn, K. van der, 83
Toury, G., 6, 14, 131, 152, 191
Townsend, J., 28

VanderKam, J., 23
Veltri, G., 67, 163, 180
Venuti, L., 6
Vidas, M., 173, 178
Vierros, M., 66
Vinklát, M., 148

Wasserstein, A., 67, 163
Wasserstein, D., 49, 67, 163
Weinreich, M., 15, 160, 174
Weinreich, U., 191
Wertheimer, S. A., 38
White, M., 163
Whitters, M., 87
Wilfand, Y., 178
Wilson-Wright, A., 88
Wise, M., 13
Wright, B., 163

Yadin, A., 58
Yadin-Israel, A., 79, 187

Zadeh, T., 192
Zissu, B., 13
Zumthor, P., 22

Subject Index

Abraham (the Hebrew), 22–24, 33, 38, 45, 174, 184
Adam, 22, 24, 26–29, 35, 40, 42–45
Akiba, Rabbi, 26, 98, 135, 137, 157
Aquila, 10, 180
Arabic, 21, 40, 42, 97, 158, 171, 190
Aramaic, 4, 9, 12, 14, 15, 21, 24, 26, 27, 40, 44, 66, 75, 77, 80, 86–89, 94–97, 100, 108, 110–12, 115, 116, 131, 134, 140, 142, 145, 146, 149, 150, 158, 167, 171, 173, 189
Aramaism(s), 14, 27

bilingual(ism), 9, 27, 33, 40, 66, 79, 80, 88, 89, 126, 131, 137, 139, 142, 143, 146, 155, 157, 159, 160, 164, 189
  bilingual inscriptions, 14
  Sumerian/Akkadian bilingual clay tablets, 2
bi-text, 14, 131, 154, 159
bridge language, 15, 126, 174, 191
bridge-text, 126

Cairo Genizah, 68, 72, 75, 145, 148, 157, 158
Christianity, 166, 169, 173, 184, 185, 189, 192
code-switching, 11, 12, 14, 80, 142, 174
confusion of tongues/languages, 19, 23, 30, 40

Dead Sea Scrolls, 24, 30, 104, 113, 156, 158
diaspora, 8, 15, 96

Eber, 22, 38
Eden, 22, 23, 28, 34, 35, 39, 40, 42–45, 82
Enoch, Book(s) of, 24
Ezra (the Scribe), 59, 81–87, 89, 91–101

Genizah, 104–106, 109–111, 114, 116, 117, 119, 120, 122
Greek, 6, 10, 11, 13–15, 30, 33, 37, 44, 66–68, 79, 96, 117, 120, 160, 161, 164–75, 177–80, 182–85
Greek Bible. *See* Septuagint
Greek Torah. *See* Septuagint

hermeneutic(s), 9
holy tongue/language, 12, 20, 25, 30, 33, 35, 44, 57, 84, 120, 172, 176–78, 190

Ibn Jinni, 42–46
interlinear (model), 2, 8, 14, 154, 161, 193
Islam, 22, 42, 46, 165, 192

Jewish studies, 3, 188
Jewish-Christian dispute/polemic, 19, 168
Job, targum of, 108–111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 120, 122, 123, 125, 158
Josephus, 56, 58
Jubilees, book of, 23
Judah (bar Ilai), Rabbi, 63–71, 73–75, 138, 139
Judah the Patriarch, Rabbi, 94, 95, 100, 109, 111, 121, 172, 177
Judaism, 1, 166, 188, 190, 191
  ancient, 1, 3, 48, 66, 126
  medieval, 6
  modern, 6
  rabbinic, 82, 83, 185, 186

karyana ("reader"), 138, 139
Koran, 42

Ladino, 6, 15, 97
language of Creation, 20, 21, 24, 32, 40
Latin, 12, 30, 44, 55, 65, 169, 171
Letter of Aristeas, 165, 166, 183

meturgeman ("interpreter"), 76, 141, 148–52, 154, 155
Mishnah, 12, 39, 48, 57–62, 64, 66, 70, 71, 77, 87, 106, 107, 109, 113–15, 117, 121, 136, 137, 156, 157, 178
Moses, 18, 28, 29, 35, 39, 40, 48, 50, 53, 54, 56, 58, 68, 69, 77, 80, 82, 84, 85, 90–93, 95–97, 99, 100, 143, 144, 148–55, 167, 168, 170, 177, 180, 182–84, 186
multilingualism, 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, 27, 32–34, 39, 41, 43–45, 46, 80, 82, 83, 125, 188, 189, 191, 193

notarim ("notaries"), 64, 65, 83

Onqelos, (Targum), 89, 138, 139, 147–54, 158

Pedagogy, 2, 15, 17, 93
Peshiṭta, 12, 160
Philo of Alexandria, 40, 88, 156, 164–66, 183, 184

rabbinic literature, 2–4, 9, 12, 14, 22, 37, 39, 42, 46, 48, 76, 77, 89, 92, 180, 187, 188
Rashi, 31, 59, 138, 146, 153, 158, 179

Samaritan
  culture/people, 169, 173
  language/script, 94, 96
  Targum, 128, 160
Sanhedrin, 37, 39, 40
scribe, 40, 63–65, 82–85, 88, 92, 93, 98, 100, 147, 175
Septuagint, 10, 37, 66, 160–62, 165, 166, 168, 169, 181, 184
seventy languages, 27–30, 32, 34, 35, 37–40, 42, 45–48, 57–61, 63–66, 70–75, 78, 80, 82, 84, 162, 165, 168, 174
seventy nations, 30, 36–40, 42, 48, 64, 67, 78, 169
socio-linguistics, 4
Symmachus, 180
synagogue, 76, 87, 96, 106, 107, 110–12, 123, 125, 138–44, 146, 150, 157, 159, 160, 166, 168, 178
Syriac, 21, 40, 96, 160, 169

Table of Nations (Genesis 10). *See* seventy nations
Talmud, 12, 26, 30, 67, 68, 73, 74, 78, 98, 99, 111, 112, 114, 116, 118, 121, 140, 141, 156, 172, 176, 178
targum, 9, 15, 16, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 89, 95, 101, 104, 108–112, 114, 115, 119, 120, 124, 126, 130–32, 134, 135, 140–42, 144, 145, 147, 150, 153, 156, 158, 159, 166, 188, 189
Theodotion, 180
Torah, 37, 45, 48, 65, 66, 69–80, 82–85, 89, 93–100, 104, 110, 122, 124, 126, 127, 151, 152, 154, 156, 165, 166, 181–84
  Oral, 111–13, 124, 128, 130, 144, 166, 168, 170, 180, 184–86, 188
  scroll, 126–29, 158
  written, 113, 128, 130, 168–70, 180
Tosefta, 62, 64, 65, 68, 70, 74, 92, 93, 95, 107, 109, 117, 136
Tower of Babel, 19, 22, 23, 28, 30–33, 35, 36, 38–42, 45, 46
translation theory, 5, 131
trilingual(ism), 10, 96, 131

universal language, 19, 34, 169

Vulgate, 12

word play, 61, 64, 130, 175

Yiddish, 6, 15, 97, 174, 190