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ירושלים

LANGUAGE MIX AND MULTILINGUALISM IN ANCIENT PALESTINE: LITERARY AND INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCE[1]

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1. Introduction and Methodological Qualms

Early rabbinic literature has much to say about language: the language of creation; the language of the first humans; the language of revelation; the language of scriptural recitation, translation, and interpretation; the language of ritual performance; the language of prayer; the language of daily speech; and the language of mourning, among others. More properly, I should have begun by saying that early rabbinic literature has much to say about languages; that is, the multiplicity of languages that might be or have been employed in each of the preceding domains of speech, whether elevated or mundane. For although Hebrew, as לשון הקודש, or the "language of holiness/temple/God," theologically and culturally occupies a place of supreme privilege, it shares the stage with a variety of other languages, principally Aramaic (often referred to as סורסית or לשון סורסי in rabbinic sources), which is also honored for its

1 Given my incompetence in many of the matters discussed below, I had to lean heavily on a diverse assortment of colleagues, without whose assistance this essay would not have been possible: Moshe Bar-Asher, Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal, Jonathan Ben-Dov, Yochanan Breuer, Robert Brody, Aaron Butts, Peter Cole, Hannah Cotton, Yaron Eliav, Isaiah Gafni, Ithamar Gruenwald, Noam Mizraḥi, Yonatan Moss, Ophir Müntz-Manor, Shlomo Naeh, Hindy Najman, Rachel Neis, Micha Perry, Gary Rendsburg, Michael Satlow, and Holger Zellentin. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2009 meeting of the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and the 2010 meeting of the International Organization for Targumic Studies in Helsinki. For a Hebrew version of this article see *Leshonenu* 73 (2011): 273–307.

inclusion within sacred Scriptures, כתבי הקודש, the "writings of holiness,"[2] as throughout Jewish cultural history to the present.

Beginning at least as early as the Babylonian Exile in 586 BCE, Jewish communities were interspersed among those of other cultures and languages, and were thus required to adopt and adapt aspects of those cultures in order to survive, while needing to maintain a distinct identity among them so as not to perish – a balancing act of no small feat and of great historical importance (see, for example, Neh 13:24). Navigating the challenges of, what Uriel Weinreich (below, n. 101) called, "languages in contact," as much as, what we might call, "cultures in contact," was critical to the success of such survival strategies. With each succeeding wave of foreign conquest, domination, and dispersion, these strategies were tested and refined anew.

I wish to suggest that it is against this broad canvas of multicultural and multilingual intersection and interaction, especially in the cultural contexts of hellenization, Romanization, and Christianization, that the early rabbinic preoccupation with matters of language, especially multiple languages, needs to be, at least in significant part, understood. That is, multilingualism was not just of philosophical or theological interest, but of direct practical consequence. In Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine times, the Jews of Palestine, including the rabbinic sages and their followers – however few or many they may have been – lived mainly in villages and cities of mixed populations, religious cultures, and languages; the three main languages were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek (including the sub-dialects of each), with lesser exposure to others as well. In those villages and cities they would have heard and seen a variety of languages. The relative proportions of *frequency* of use of those languages to one another, their *functional mix* (that is, which language was used for which task), and the degree of *fluency* (oral, aural, reading, and writing) among mixed populations and diverse social strata, varied from place to place, even within a relatively narrow geographic range, as likewise over time. In short, the multilingual context was extremely complex but unavoidable.

In light of this complexity, it would be a mistake to assume, especially

2 For biblical Aramaic in all three sections of the *TuNa"Kh*, see *Gen. Rab.* 74: 14 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 871) to Gen 31:47; *y. Sotah* 7:2, 21c.

for the Land of Israel, that only one language, at any given time, would have been the "spoken" or "vernacular" or "dominant" Jewish language – that is, enlisted for everyday usage (whatever that means) – while the others were purely "literary" or "religious" or "scholastic." Certainly, the use of particular languages waxed and waned over time and place, but it did so within a broad range of performative domains. What is most striking about the evidence at our disposal, literary as well as archaeological, is the extent to which ancient Jewish society was *dynamically multilingual*. Thus, most linguists who concern themselves with the language mix in ancient Jewish society, especially in the Land of Israel, would consider it simplistic to ask, for example (to cite some recent scholarly titles), "Which Language did Jesus Speak?";[3] or, "Was Qumran Hebrew a 'Spoken Language'?"[4] – as if the answers to such questions could

3 James Barr, "Which Language did Jesus Speak? Some Remarks of a Semitist," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53 (1970): 9–29. See also H. Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Hist-Filos. Klasse, 1; Oslo: Dybwad, 1954). However, academic engagement with this question is much older, having occupied Gustaf Dalman already at the beginning of the twentieth century. See, for example, *Jesus–Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (trans. Paul P. Levertoff; New York: MacMillan, 1929; German original, 1922), 1–37 ("The Three Languages of Palestine in the Time of Jesus Christ"). The subsequent scholarly literature on this question is enormous.

4 Avi Hurvitz, "Was Qumran Hebrew a 'Spoken' Language? On Some Recent Views and Positions: Some Comments," in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde; STDJ 36; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 110–14. Contrary to his article's title, Hurvitz argues (against Elisha Qimron) for a more complex relationship between oral and written linguistic registers at Qumran. On the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls more broadly, see Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, "Traditions in the Hebrew Language, with Special Reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin; ScrHier 4; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1958), 200–214; Chaim Rabin, "The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew," in Rabin and Yadin, *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 144–61; Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); idem, "Observations on the History of Early Hebrew (1000 B.C.E.–200 C.E.) in the Light of the Dead Sea Documents," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 349–61; idem, "The Nature of DSS Hebrew and its Relation to BH and MH," in Muraoka and Elwolde, *Diggers at the Well*, 232–44; Shelomo Morag, "Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations." *VT* 38 (1988): 148–64; A. Sáenz-Badillos,

be reduced to checking the appropriate box. For the early rabbinic period, it is increasingly recognized that Mishnaic Hebrew is likely to have been a *spoken* language, at least in some places during the Tannaitic period, even as it was used for rabbinic scholastic discourse. As Mark Twain might have said, the reports of the death of Hebrew as a "living language" have been repeatedly premature and exaggerated.[5] As most linguistically attuned scholars fully

A History of the Hebrew Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130–46; Steve Weitzman, "Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?" *JAOS* 119 (1999): 35–45; William M. Schniedewind, "Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage," *JBL* 118 (1999): 235–52; idem, "Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew," in Muraoka and Elwolde, *Diggers at the Well*, 245–55; Joshua Blau, "A Conservative View of the Language of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in Muraoka and Elwolde, *Diggers at the Well*, 20–25; Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, "The Holy Language at the End of Days in Light of a New Fragment Found at Qumran," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 169–77 (Hebrew); Émile Puech, "Du bilinguisme à Qumrân," in *Mosaïque de langues, mosaïque culturelle: Le Bilinguisme dans le Proche-Orient ancient. Actes de la Table-Ronde du 18 novembre 1995 organisée par l'URA 1062 "Etudes sémitiques"* (ed. Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet; Antiquités Sémitiques 1; Paris: Maisonneuve, 1996), 171–89; Gary A. Rendsburg, "Qumran Hebrew (With a Trial Cut [1QS])," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at 60: Scholarly Contributions of New York University Faculty and Alumni* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and Shani Tzoref; STDJ 89; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 217–46. On the distribution of writings in Hebrew and Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Hebrew and Aramaic Writing in the Pseudepigrapha and the Qumran Scrolls: The Ancient Near Eastern Background and the Quest for a Written Authority," *Tarbiz* 78 (2008): 27–60 (Hebrew).

5 See Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew, Prolegomena* (Jerusalem: Ben-Yehudah, 1948), 83–254 ("עד אימתי דברו עברית?" ["Until When was Hebrew Spoken?"]). He titles the concluding section of his treatment (233–254), "ימיה האחרונים של הלשון" ("The Final Days of the Language"), a period that he identifies with the time of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, or shortly thereafter; and he ends with the epitaph: "עוד מעט, עוד דור אחד, והלשון העברית מתה בדבור־פה" ("A little longer, another generation, and the Hebrew language died as a spoken language," 254). There is an immense bibliography on these questions, which I will not labor to provide here. For a lengthy recent discussion, with reference to earlier treatments (but ignoring scholarship in modern Hebrew), and displaying a preoccupation with "spoken" Hebrew, see John C. Poirier, "The Linguistic Situation in Jewish Palestine in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Greco–Roman Christianity and Judaism* 4 (2007): 55–134. Similarly obsessed with the question of "spoken" language is 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: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95–147. For a more balanced

recognize, Hebrew remained a "living language" in a variety of domains, even if we cannot with precision determine to what extent it was or was not spoken at given times and places.

Even so, how does one determine the degree and domain of a "spoken" ancient language, given the absence of direct, disinterested informants or recording devices, the imprecision of ancient designations for related Semitic languages, and the rhetorically inflected nature of our primarily literary and inscriptional evidence?[6] For example, some scholars argue for rabbinic Hebrew (or for that matter, Qumran Hebrew) as a spoken dialect from the fact that it displays features of internal development, whereas others counter that a nonspoken language need not be a "frozen" language.[7] Or from another angle, do early rabbinic admonitions to speak, or teach one's son to speak, לשון הקודש attest to its practice or to countervailing pressures that militated against its practice?[8] In any case, can we extrapolate from such rabbinic texts

summary of the scholarship on language use in Hellenistic and Roman Galilee, see Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 247–50.

6 On the well-known difficulties of inferring spoken language from written documents, see Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power, and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past & Present* 148 (August 1995): 13: "In some cases writing may reflect no more than scribal practice. And in all cases writing is necessarily related to speech in highly complex and sometimes highly attenuated ways." It should be noted that I do not employ the sociolinguistic term "diglossia" for the relation between Hebrew and Aramaic in antiquity, as it derives from modern contexts in which language functions and domains can be directly observed; and, in any case, it is not plastic enough to describe the variable, deeply symbiotic relation between those two languages in antiquity. For recent surveys on the subject, see Gary Rendsburg, "Diglossia: (i) Biblical Hebrew," in *The Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Elitzur Bar-Asher, "Diglossia: (ii) Rabbinic Hebrew," in ibid. For the relation between Hebrew and Aramaic, as between Hebrew and its other partner languages throughout history, as a "symbiosis," see E. Y. Kutscher, "השפה העברית ובנות לוויתה במשך הדורות," *Hadoar* 47 (1968): 507–10, esp. 507.

7 For a summary statement of the view of Mishnaic Hebrew as a spoken dialect, see Elitzur Bar-Asher, "Hebrew," in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 713-715.

8 See *Sifre Zutta* to Num 15:38 (ed. Horovitz, 288); *Sifre Deut.* 46 (ed. Finkelstein, 104); *Sifre Deut.* 333 (ed. Finkelstein, 383); *t. Ḥag.* 1:2 (ed. Lieberman, 375); *y. Sheq.* 3:3, 47c (*baraita*). See also below, n. 21. See also Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World,*

to nonrabbinic contexts? In short, it seems to me, and recent sociolinguistic studies would concur, that the reductive question of the "spokenness" of Hebrew in early rabbinic times (and before) is neither the most important question to ask, nor the one most susceptible to being answered. Therefore, my interest is less in establishing a pecking order of language usage that privileges "spokenness" (and of what sort?) over other types of usage, than to view the very *variety* of linguistic expression as a subject of great significance in its own right.

Related to the presumption of a monolingual "spokenness" is a presupposition that only one language is the native or "vernacular" form of speech, whereas all others are imposed (or absorbed) from without, that is, from the majority non-Jewish society. This fails to take into account what has been called by Max Weinreich (with respect to the much later relation between Yiddish and "Loshn-koydesh," itself comprising an amalgam of Hebrew and Aramaic), "*internal* Jewish bilingualism," in which the interpenetration of the two "internal Jewish" languages is so extensive as to render both of them "living languages," even as they function in separate, but overlapping and variable, discursive domains; and even as what George Steiner calls "internal translation" occurs between them.[9] I wish to suggest that such a model be considered for the relation between Hebrew and Aramaic (and possibly Greek) in late antiquity, a subject to which I shall return shortly.[10]

and the East, Volume 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), 479–80; Alison Salvesen, "A Convergence of the Ways? The Judaizing of Christian Scripture by Origen and Jerome," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adan H. Becker and Annette Y. Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 233–57.

9 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"). Yiddish is considered a "Jewish language," even if it is largely Germanic, just as dialects of Aramaic might be considered "Jewish," even though they are part of a larger family of dialects shared with non-Jews (Syriac, Palmyrene, Samaritan Aramaic, Nabataean, etc.). For "internal translation," see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 28–30, 45–47.

10 The relation between Greek and Latin in some ancient contexts may be similarly

2. Early Rabbinic Literature Thematizes Multilingualism

Since I have previously discussed, in some detail, ways in which early rabbinic literature thematizes multilingualism,[11] here I will just itemize some such traditions without detailing them:

1. According to one Palestinian Amoraic view, Gen 11:1(ויהי כל־הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים: "Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words") is understood to mean that the seventy nations (see Gen 10:1–32) already spoke seventy languages (שהיו מדברים בשבעים לשון) *prior* to the Tower of Babel, the difference being that before Babel they understood one another (the many languages being, in a sense, one) whereas thereafter, they did not.[12]

construed. See J. N. Adams, "Bilingualism at Delos," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and Written Text* (ed. J. N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103–27 (esp. 125: "informal bilingualism in action"); idem, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

11 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: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86, esp. 267–71; idem, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 31*-69*.

12 See *y. Meg.* 1:11, 71b. This is the view of R. Eleazar (ca. 300). The view of R. Yoḥanan (ca. 280) is that they were all speaking בלשון יחידו של עולם בלשון הקודש (Hebrew) prior to Babel. The same talmudic passage cites, in the name of Bar Kappara (ca. 230), an interpretation of Gen 9:27 as "they would speak the language of Japheth (Greek) in the tent of Shem," and be understood. This would appear to be a middle position between those of R. Eleazar and R. Yoḥanan, conferring privileged, primordial status to Greek. For such a privileging of Greek, compare the view of Rabban Shimʿon ben Gamliel in *m. Meg.* 1:8; *y. Meg.* 1:11, 71c; *b. Meg.* 8b–9b; 18a. For the view that Hebrew was the "single language" (Gen 11:1) spoken by all creatures in the Garden of Eden, but ceased to be so with the expulsion of Adam and Eve, only to be resumed by Abraham, see *Jub.* 3:28; 12:25–27. For Hebrew as the single language of Gen 11:1, see also *Tg. Ps. J.*, *Tg. Neof.*, *Frg. Tg.* V on Gen 11:1. For Hebrew (לשון הקודש) as the language by which the world was created, see *Gen. Rab.* 18:4 (ed. Theodor–Albeck, 164–65). For the view that Hebrew (לשון הקודש), as the universally spoken language by which the world was created, ceased to be universally spoken with the Tower of Babel, and that it will only be restored in the "world to come," see *Tanḥ. Noaḥ* 28 (ed. Buber, 28b), citing Zeph 3:9. For the view that Adam (and, presumably, Eve) spoke Aramaic, attributed to Rab Judah in the name of Rab, see *b. Sanh.* 38b. For further discussion, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," 267 n. 37; Willem Smelik, "Language Selection and the

Thus, the divine punishment of that generation was not so much the "division" of languages as their confusion.[13] Multilingualism, according to this view, is that which primordially defines the full range of linguistic expression and understanding (at least from the origin of the seventy nations, prior to the Tower of Babel).

2. According to a Tannaitic midrashic tradition, the Torah was divinely revealed at Mt. Sinai in four languages (לא בלשון אחד אמר להם אלא בארבעה לשונות): Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Aramaic, just as God revealed himself from all four directions.[14] Later sources speak of God's utterances issuing at Sinai

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, N.J.: Gorgias, 2008), 95–99; idem, "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: de Gruyter, 2007), 140; Eshel and Stone, "לשון הקודש"; idem, "464a. 4QNarrative E (Pl. XXIX)," in *Qumran Cave 4.XIV: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (ed. Magen Broshi et al., in consultation with James M. VanderKam, DJD 19; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 219–21; Avigdor Shinan, "'The Language of the Sanctuary' in the Aramaic Translations of the Pentateuch," *Beth Mikra* 66 (1976): 472–74 (Hebrew). On the difficulty of rendering Gen 11:1, and for its broader ancient Near Eastern implications for multilingualism and translation, see William W. Hallo, "Bilingualism and the Beginnings of Translation," in idem, *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. For the Syriac Christian view that Syriac was spoken in the Garden of Eden, 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.

13 For this distinction see Philo, *Conf.* 191.

14 *Sifre Deut.* 343 to Deut 33:2 (ed. Finkelstein, 395). See Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," 267 n. 36. The specific languages are determined by the exegetical exigencies. The word וְאָתָה of Deut 33:2 is understood to be Aramaic and hence to represent the Aramaic language, even though the *Sifre*'s subsequent interpretations of this word are based on word plays that presume it to be Hebrew. Note that God communicated *with Israel* (להם; "to them") in all four languages, not via different languages for different peoples. On multilingual puns as the basis for rabbinic interpretation, see below, n. 37. On the four directions (representing the full compass), compare *Sifre Deut.* 306 (ed. Finkelstein, 340), interpreting the four hemistichs of Deut 32:2: Moses summoned the four winds, from the four directions, to serve as witnesses (together with heaven and earth) against Israel.

in seventy languages.[15] Since the numbers four and seventy are "complete" numbers, totality of revelation is understood as the totality of its linguistic expression, which is here understood in its multilingual plenitude.

3. Early midrashic passages stress that Moses transcribed the Torah in the "language of holiness" (Hebrew), exactly as it was divinely dictated to him.[16] However, according to another early rabbinic tradition, contested by some, had it not been for Moses, the Torah might have been revealed to Ezra in the Aramaic language and writing (script). Instead, it was *re*-revealed through Ezra, retaining its original Hebrew language while changing its writing to "Assyrian" (i.e., Aramaic). This is linked to an understanding of משנה תורה in Deut 17:18 as "the Torah destined to be changed."[17] According to one version of this tradition (b. Sanh. 21b), it was the Israelites of Ezra's time who chose, as a sort of compromise, to retain the Hebrew language of the Torah but change its script to Assyrian/Aramaic, which is how it is preserved. Thus, the Hebrew language and the (original) Hebrew script are not inextricably linked to one another. This is, most likely, a retrojection from a later time when Hebrew and Aramaic vied with one another (as with Greek) for cultural priority; especially with respect to scriptural reading (Hebrew), translation (Aramaic), and interpretation (mainly Hebrew), but also, as we shall see, in the realms of linguistic realia.

4. Mishnah *Soṭah* 7:5 retells Deuteronomy 27's account of the covenantal ceremony in which the people, after crossing the Jordan, are instructed to build an altar: וכתבת על־האבנים את־כל־דברי התורה הזאת באר היטב; "And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching (Torah) most distinctly"

15 *B. Shab.* 88b and parallels, for which see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," 267 n. 37.

16 See *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, Baḥodesh* 2 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 207); *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, Baḥodesh* 9 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 238; cf. ed. Lauterbach, 274–75, following MS Oxford). For the Torah having been given in Hebrew from the very beginning, see *Gen. Rab.* 18:4; 31:8.

17 See *Sifre Deut.* 150 (ed. Finkelstein, 211); *t. Sanh.* 4:7–8; *y. Meg.* 1:11 (71b–c); *b. Sanh.* 21b-22a; *4 Ezra* 14:42; Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin; 7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913–1938), 4:355–56; 6:443–44 nn. 41–44; Shlomo Naeh, "The Script of the Torah in Rabbinic Thought (A): The Traditions Concerning Ezra's Changing of the Script," *Leshonenu* 70 (2008): 125–43 (Hebrew).

(Deut 27:8; NJPS). The Mishnah interprets these words as follows: וכתבו עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזאת בשבעים לשון (MS Kaufmann); "They inscribed on [the altar stones] all the words of the Torah in seventy languages." The biblical expression בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב is taken to mean not the physical clarity with which the words of the Torah were to be inscribed, but their translation into all seventy languages. As hard as it is to conceive of the practicality of this interpretation, it suggests that to fully and clearly articulate the meaning of the Hebrew text of the Torah would require its being translated into the totality of human language.[18]

5. Several other passages state that the knowledge of "seventy languages" empowers interpretation and judgment. For example, according to *m. Šeqal.* 5:1, (פתחיה זה מרדכי.) למה נקרא שמו פתחיה? שהוא פותיח דברים ודורשן ויודע בשבעים לשון. (MS Kaufmann); "(Petaḥiah is also called Mordechai.) Why is he called Petaḥiah? For he would explain (*pôtēaḥ*) matters [or words] and interpret (*dôrēš*) them, for he knew seventy languages."[19]

18 See Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," 268 with n. 38; Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1973), 8:699–701; Marc Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), 108–13 (Hebrew); Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 76–79; Smelik, "Code-switching," 138–41. Note especially *t. Soṭah* 8:6 (followed by *y. Soṭah* 7:5, 21d), in which the nations translate from the monolingual Torah text inscribed on the stones. Compare *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Deut 27:8; *Frag. Tg-P* and Cairo Genizah fragment (MS T.-S. B 8.8 f. 1v); as well as *Frag. Tg-VNL* and *Tg. Neof.* ad loc., which suggest an oral translation into seventy languages rather than inscribed translations.

19 On Petaḥiah/Mordechai and seventy languages, see *y. Šeqal.* 5:1, 48d; *b. Menaḥ.* 65a (with Rashi ad loc.); *b. Meg.* 13b; *Pirqe R. El.* 50. The source of the explanation of the name Petaḥiah-Mordechai is Neh. 7:7 and Ezra 2:2, where Mordechai, one of those who returned from the Babylonian Exile, is immediately followed by Bilshan. If the two are taken as one name, then by a word play it could mean Mordechai, the master of languages (*ba'al lāšôn*), or the mixer of languages (*bālal lāšôn*). The Mishnaic passage clearly associates the skill of interpretation with the knowledge of seventy languages. According to *b. Sanh.* 17a (with which compare *t. Sanh.* 8:1 and *y. Šeqal.* 5:1, 48d); *b. Menaḥ.* 65a; and *b. Meg.* 13b, a qualification for membership in the Sanhedrin was knowledge of the "seventy languages." In *b. Soṭah* 33a, 36b it is said that the archangel Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages so he could rule. Compare the requirement (CD 14:10) that the Qumran *mĕbaqqēr* ("Overseer") know כל לשון משפחותם ("all the languages of their families"), according to some reconstructions of the text. See Philo, *Conf.* 13 for a positive view of those who know

6. Returning to the rubric of four languages, we have the oft-cited view of R. Jonathan of Bet Gubrin (ca. 250): ארבעה לשונות נאים שישתמש בהן העולם. ואילו הן. לעז לזמר. רומי לקרב. סורסי לאילייה. עברי לדיבור ויש אומ׳. אף אשורי לכתב. "Four languages are pleasing for use in the world: Greek for song, Latin for battle, Syriac (Aramaic) for dirges, Hebrew for speech. And some say, Assyrian for writing."[20] While much ink has been spilled on the specific implications of this saying (especially with respect to Hebrew),[21] its sentiment is that each language is especially well-suited to a particular kind of expression.[22] While we might presume that each language is suitable for use by a particular nationality or ethnicity, here it is suggested (ideally at least) that all people (העולם; "the world") would be well-served to employ all four of these languages, each for

many languages, and compare Josephus, *Ant.* 20:264, for a negative view.

20 See *y. Meg.* 1:11, 71b; *y. Soṭah* 7:2, 21c; *Esther Rab.* 4:12 (to 1:22).

21 For Hebrew speech, see above, n. 8. The word דבור can cover a wide range of types of speech, from everyday to oratory. See Philip S. Alexander, "How Did the Rabbis Learn Hebrew?" in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (ed. William Horbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 71–89. E. Y. Kutscher ("The Language of the Hebrew and Aramaic Letters of Bar-Koseba and His Contemporaries," *Leshonenu* 26 [1961–1962]: 22 [Hebrew]) comments that since R. Jonathan flourished in the second half of the third century, his statement may reflect the continued use of Hebrew as a spoken language that late, at least in southern Palestine (Judea, where Bet Gubrin is located). But since R. Jonathan's saying is transmitted, without dissent, in a Galilean Palestinian source, there is no reason to assume that its sentiment would not have been endorsed in the north.

22 "Syriac (Aramaic) for dirges" finds confirmation in recently uncovered Aramaic *piyyuṭim* for occasions of mourning, e.g., eulogy and consolation. See Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff, "Aramaic Piyyutim from the Byzantine Period," *JQR* 75 (1985): 309–21; Joseph Yahalom, "סורסי לאילייא: ארמית מארץ־ישראל תצווח", *Proceedings of the Academy of the Hebrew Language* vol. 33, 177th–178th meeting (1986) (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1989), 133–37; idem, "Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity," *JJS* 47 (1996): 33–44; Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry in Late Antiquity: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999) (Hebrew); Joseph Yahalom, "'Syriac for Dirges, Hebrew for Speech': Ancient Jewish Poetry in Aramaic and Hebrew," 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, P. J. Tomson; CRINT 2.3b; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 363–74.

the particular kind of discourse to which it is best suited. Needless to say, these four languages would have been recognizable, at the very least, to inhabitants of ancient Palestine.

7. The following rhetorical statement, attributed to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, appears twice in the Babylonian Talmud, once marked as a *baraita*: בארץ־ישראל לשון סורסי למה. או לשון[ה]קדש או לשון יונית ; "In the Land of Israel, why [use] the Syrian (=Palestinian Aramaic) language? Either [use] the Language of Holiness (Hebrew) or the Greek language." To this responds a later Babylonian *'amora*, Rav Joseph: בבבל לשון ארמי למה. או לשון ה[קדש או לשון פרסי; "In Babylonia, why [use] the Aramaic language? Either [use] the Language of Holiness (Hebrew) or the Persian language."[23] Rabbi Judah the Patriarch's statement has been repeatedly invoked as incontrovertible proof that Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language in the Land of Israel by the time of Judah the Patriarch.[24] By the same logic, we would have to say the same for Greek. Whatever the state of Hebrew usage at his time, this ironic 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 by their ancestral language (Hebrew) or to adopt that of the ruling elites (Greek), with Aramaic being neither (albeit previously

23 See *b. Soṭah* 49b (MS Munich); *b. B. Qam.* 82b–83a (introduced as a *baraita* [והתניא]). In the printed editions of the Talmud, the latter source has R. Jose instead of Rab Joseph. However, most manuscripts (including the Munich MS) have Rab Joseph (bar Ḥiyya, ca. 300), a Babylonian *'amora*, to whom is traditionally credited the targum to the prophets (see *b. Pesaḥ.* 68a, *b. B. Qam.* 3b). It would appear that his statement, not originally part of the *baraita*, has been appended to it.

24 E. Y. Kutscher (*The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* [Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 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," 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 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 it has in mind.

having been an imperial language), Aramaic usage is, ironically, an anomalous third possibility. In a sense, however, Aramaic, while being neither native nor foreign, is something of both: a very close cognate to Hebrew, but also a language shared with the surrounding non-Jewish cultures (e.g., Samaritan, Christian, Nabataean, Palmyrene) among whom Jews dwelled. 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 Jewish languages throughout subsequent history. It would be like asking of Eastern European Jews, "Why use Yiddish? Use either Hebrew or Polish (or Romanian, etc)." At the very least, our talmudic passage is evidence of Jews navigating between, and in some cases combining, three language options, and of rabbinic literature thematizing the dilemma of such language selection. We shall shortly see ample evidence of such multilingual language use and selection in inscriptional realia.

8. Up to now, the rabbinic passages that we have discussed have almost all been aggadic. A somewhat more restrained attitude toward multilingualism (that is, making more limited allowance for other languages) is evidenced in numerous halakhic passages that deal with the question of the acceptable language to be used in fulfilling halakhic obligations, such as reading (and hence writing) Scripture; writing *mezuzot* and *tefillin*; reciting blessings, curses, and oaths; reciting the Shema and prayers; sacrificial declarations; and performing other rituals such as those of the *Soṭah*, the *Yevamah*, and the anointed war priest. While the overall preference is for these to be fulfilled through the use of Hebrew, there is considerable debate as to the circumstances in which another language may be employed (especially Greek, but others as well) – whether due to the lack of a competent person to perform the obligation in Hebrew or due to a desire for the audience or participant to be able to understand what is being read or recited. However, in most cases, the desired default is Hebrew, even at a sacrifice of comprehension.[25] I will not discuss

25 See, for example, *m. Meg.* 1:8; 2:1; *m. Soṭah* 7:1–4; 8:1; *t. Meg.* 2:6; 3:13; *t. Soṭah* 2:1; 7:1, 7; *Sifre Num.* 12 (ed. Horowitz, 18); *y. Meg.* 2:1, 73a; *y. Soṭah* 7:1, 21b; 8:1, 22b; *b. Meg.* 18a (*baraita*). Still relevant is Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the II–IV Centuries C.E.* (2d ed.; New York: Feldheim, 1965), 29–67 ("Greek in the Synagogue").

these passages in detail here since I have already done so in print in previous articles on targum,[26] and since we now have an excellent treatment of them by Willem Smelik.[27] The important point to be made here is that the rabbinic texts presume and acknowledge Jewish communities with a variety of linguistic competencies, and are thereby confronted with a variety of language situations to be normativized. While preferring Hebrew for the fulfillment of verbal ritual performances, they allow for some of those ritual acts to be performed in other languages, especially Greek. In the case of scriptural reading and study (both public and private), the rabbinically preferred practice is bilingual: Hebrew and Aramaic performed in tandem. Interestingly, while use of a foreign language for or by a foreign language speaker is, in many cases, permitted (e.g., the recitation of the Shema in Greek), the use of Aramaic *alone* for an Aramaic speaker is *never* even considered. While bilingual Hebrew-Aramaic scriptural reading is the rabbinic norm, the possibility of a monolingual Hebrew reading (if a suitable translator is not available) or monolingual Greek reading (for a Greek-speaking audience) is allowed, and a bilingual Hebrew-Greek reading is conceivable;[28] the possibility of a monolingual Aramaic scriptural reading, however, is nowhere specifically entertained.[29] We may presume that Aramaic is too close to Hebrew in character and status to constitute an entirely separate language for such ritual purposes.

26 Fraade, "Rabbinic Views"; idem, "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; idem, "Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," in *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 39 (2006): 69–91.

27 Smelik, "Language Selection"; as well as idem, "Code-switching."

28 See Smelik, "Code-switching," 14 (drawing on earlier work of Nicholas De Lange and Philip S. Alexander), 141–47; idem, "Language Selection," 151.

29 As I have argued elsewhere ("Locating Targum"), there was no rabbinic "Aramaic Bible" apart from the Hebrew Bible that it accompanied. The only possible exception that I have been able to find is in *b. Meg.* 18a, where, in a *baraita*, the obligation to read the Scroll of Esther can be fulfilled from a written text "in Hebrew to Hebrews," where "Hebrew" is understood by some talmudic commentators (e.g. Rashi ad loc.) to be a Mesopotamian dialect of Aramaic, it not being clear whether this would have been a Jewish or non-Jewish dialect of Aramaic. See, most recently, D. R. G. Beattie and Philip R. Davies, "What Does Hebrew Mean?" *JSS* 56 (2011): 71-83.

3. Early Rabbinic Texts Practice Internal Jewish Bilingualism

Early rabbinic Judaism not only thematizes and legislates about multilingualism, but through its own discourse demonstrates at a deep level an "internal bilingualism" of the closely related dialects of rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic.[30] Time constraints allow me to deal here with three types of Hebrew/Aramaic internal bilingualism within rabbinic literature:[31]

1. Interpenetration:

The Hebrew and Aramaic languages are deeply intertwined in rabbinic texts, whether the dominant register is Hebrew or Aramaic. The two rabbinic languages have deeply penetrated one another in the realms of both lexicon and grammar. While the "influence" of Aramaic on rabbinic Hebrew, more pronounced in terms of lexicon than in grammar, has received more notice,[32] the direction of the process runs also from rabbinic Hebrew to Jewish and Samaritan Aramaic.[33] The vacillation between the two directions of impact

30 Here I will not address the well-trodden ground of the frequent appearance of Greek and Latin loanwords within Hebrew and Aramaic rabbinic texts, nor the way in which Greek and Latin terminology has influenced rabbinic parlance. For a recent overview, with a bibliography of past scholarship, see Daniel Sperber, "Rabbinic Knowledge of Greek," in Safrai et al., *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, 627–39. On the internal multilingualism of rabbinic literature, see 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: Benjamins, 1987), 141–52.

31 I intend this typology heuristically since the boundaries between my three types are porous. For example, what is here designated as "interpenetration" could also be seen as a subtype (or level) of "code-switching," as could what is designated as "internal translation."

32 The term "influence" is problematic since it presumes active and passive parties. Perhaps a better expression would be "accommodation," or even "hybridization," which could occur mutually. On this matter of word choice, see Adams, "Bilingualism at Delos," 126.

33 See E. Y. Kutscher, "השפה העברית ובנות לוויתה במשך הדורות", *Hadoar* 47 (1968): 507–10; Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, "The Contribution of the Samaritan Inheritance to Research into the History of Hebrew," in *Proceedings of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 (1969–1970): 63–69 (Hebrew); (1969): 162–74 (English); idem, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans* (Jerusalem: The Academy

can be so pervasive as to be unnoticeable unless one is on the lookout for it. Similarly, it is not uncommon for rabbinic exegeses to presume a knowledge of both languages (and sometimes Greek), as in the case of multilingual exegeses and wordplays. For example, in *Mek. R. Ishmael Bo'* 4 to Exod 12:4,[34] the Hebrew scriptural verb תֻּכְּסוּ, from the root כסס, meaning to compute,[35] is construed as Aramaic (לשון סורסי), from the root נכס, meaning to slaughter.[36] To support this interpretation, the midrash provides a comparison to everyday speech, in which the Aramaic verb is employed in an otherwise Hebrew sentence: כאדם שאומר לחבירו כוס לי טלה זה; "Like a man who says to his fellow, 'Slaughter for me this lamb.'"[37]

In a review of Sokoloff and Yahalom's edition of *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry in Late Antiquity*, Ephraim Hazan states as follows:

> [A] central and extremely conspicuous phenomenon in these Aramaic poems is the extensive use of Hebrew words within the Aramaic text, either in direct quotations or adaptations from the sources . . . [T]he poem expects its public to be able to thoroughly understand the inserted

of the Hebrew Language, 1977), 5:251–59 (Hebrew); Abraham Tal, "Between Hebrew and Aramaic in the Writings of the Samaritans," in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 7 (1987–1988): 239–55 (Hebrew); Yochanan Breuer, "The Hebrew Component in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud," *Leshonenu* 62 (1999): 23–80 (Hebrew).

34 Ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 12; parallels: *y. Pesaḥ* 5:3, 32a; *b. Pesaḥ* 61a.

35 BDB, 493.

36 Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (2d ed.; (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 351.

37 See Yochanan Breuer, "The Aramaic of the Talmudic Period," in Safrai et al., *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, 599. For another example, see above, n. 14. On multilingual puns in rabbinic literature, see Daniel Boyarin, "Bilingualism and Meaning in Rabbinic Literature"; Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Almost Invisible Presence of the Other: Multilingual Puns in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 222–39. For a Hebrew version of the same see eadem, "משחק במילים יוניות בחידות עבריות־ארמיות: מגעים בין תרבותיים במדרשי האגדה?" in *Studies in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature: In Memory of Tirzah Lifshitz* (ed. Moshe Bar-Asher, Joshua Levinson, and Berachyahu Lifshitz; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2005), 159–71. See also Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 29–67.

> Hebrew and decipher the accompanying allusions and connotations. . . . [T]he weaving of Hebrew into Aramaic shows that such a continuum seems natural to the author, and that the Hebrew element is an integral component of all the languages and communities of the Jews.[38]

Similarly, Shulamit Elizur has demonstrated the extent to which Aramaic elements have penetrated Hebrew *piyyut*.[39] The same can be said for the interweaving of Aramaic elements into early rabbinic Hebrew texts, and vice versa,[40] as well as the employment of Aramaic phrases in the Hebrew Hekhalot texts.[41]

2. Internal Translation:

As I have elsewhere argued at length and in detail, early rabbinic literature conceives of Aramaic translation of Hebrew Scriptures not as a substitute for but as an interpretive accompaniment to the reading of Hebrew Scripture, stipulating that the two be performed interlinearly; the Aramaic version often requires the Hebrew original for the Aramaic to be fully understood.[42] Much

38 Ephraim Hazan, review of Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry in Late Antiquity: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999) (Hebrew), in *JQR* 93 (2002): 293–98 (298).

39 Shulamit Elizur, "The Incorporation of Aramaic Elements in Ancient Palestinian Piyyutim," *Leshonenu* 70 (2008): 331–48 (Hebrew) (English summary, xix–xx).

40 See most recently Moshe Bar-Asher, "Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey," in Safrai et al., *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, 567–95, esp. 586–88. Note, for example, how *m. Soṭah* 9:15 switches repeatedly between Hebrew and Aramaic and back: רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר: מיום שחרב בית המקדש שרו חכימיא למהוי כספריא, וספריא כחזניא, וחזניא כעמא דארעא, ועמא דארעא אזלא ונדלדלה, ואין מבקש; על מי יש להשען? על אבינו שבשמים. בעיקבות משיחא חצפא יסגא ויקר יאמיר, הגפן תתן פריה והיין ביקר, והמלכות תהפך למינות, ואין תוכחה . . .. However, this is not considered an original part of the Mishnah but rather a later edition, even though it does appear in somewhat different wording in MS Kaufmann (it is absent, though, in MS Parma).

41 See Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 23, 122.

42 Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," and "Locating Targum." The same has been argued for the relation of the Jewish Greek Bible to the Hebrew text of Scripture, at least in its early history of reception. For bibliography, see "Locating Targum," 81–82 n. 47. The so-called targumim from Qumran do not display such an interlinear, bilingual relation of

the same internal bilingual interplay is at work in the role of Aramaic targum as a bridge between scriptural reading and interpretation in the performative context of instruction and study.[43] A similar pedagogic function has been argued for ancient Greek–Latin bilingual texts.[44] This interlinear relation is physically evident in the textual forms of our earliest rabbinic targumic manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah.[45] Finally, a similar interlinear interpretive function can be

Aramaic to Hebrew, nor do they follow the Hebrew word order in the same way as do the rabbinic targumim. See David Shepherd, "Will the Real Targum Please Stand Up? Translation and Coordination in the Ancient Aramaic Versions of Job," *JJS* 51 (2000): 88–116; idem, *Targum and Translation: A Reconsideration of the Qumran Aramaic Version of Job* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 45; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004); idem, "What's in a Name? Targum and Taxonomy in Cave 4 at Qumran," *JSP* 17 (2008): 189–206. In a recent paper ("Can Anything Targumic Come from Qumran? Revisiting Klaus Beyer's 'Targums' of Tobit and Isaiah," International Organization for Targumic Studies, Helsinki, Finland, August 5, 2010), Shepherd extends his argument to the fragments of the Book of Tobit in Aramaic (4Q196–199) and Hebrew (4Q200) among the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as a fragment of a possible Aramaic rendition of Isa 14:31–32 (4Q583). None of these displays the characteristic targumic method of following the word order of the Hebrew being rendered. Whether the Qumran Aramaic fragments of Tobit are based on the Hebrew or vice versa is an open question. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 18–27.

43 Fraade, "Locating Targum"; idem, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction"; Sebastian P. Brock, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979): 69–87 (esp. 73); Philip S. Alexander, "How Did the Rabbis Learn Hebrew?"

44 J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*; C. H. Moore, "Latin Exercises from a Greek Schoolroom," *Classical Philology* 19 (1924): 317–28 (Virgil and Cicero in Latin and Greek in facing columns); Victor Reichmann, *Römische Literatur in griechischer Übersetzung* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1943), 28–61; Henri I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (trans. George Lamb; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 342–56.

45 The Palestinian targumic texts published from the Cairo Genizah contain not a continuous targumic (Aramaic) text, as we find in the texts of targum among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but present each scriptural verse first in Hebrew and then in Aramaic. For such texts 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). Other Genizah texts, and later manuscripts of the other targumim, usually have simply the first word or words of the scriptural verse in Hebrew before its Aramaic renderings. But they still suggest that, unlike the continuous Aramaic translations from Qumran, these were to be keyed to the reading or studying of the Hebrew original and not to substitute for it. The same point is

seen in the alternation between Hebrew verses and their Aramaic renderings within the rabbinic Hebrew "*Kedushah de-Sidra*" prayer (which thereby fulfills the rabbinic obligation of study).[46]

3. Linguistic Code-switching:

Aside from the interpenetration of Hebrew–Aramaic lexicon and grammar, rabbinic literature is noteworthy for the degree to which it "code-switches" between Hebrew and Aramaic in a variety of ways (besides targum); that is, each language is assigned particular discursive tasks to be performed, a phenomenon which is more pronounced in Amoraic than in Tannaitic collections.[47] For example, sayings (*pitgamim*) are typically in Aramaic,

made by Sebastian P. Brock, "Translating the Old Testament," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honor of Barnabas Lindars* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 92–95.

46 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" *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 Press, 1986]): 91–99; idem, "Bilingualism and Meaning in Rabbinic Literature," 150. Note that the *Kaddish* prayer, while Aramaic, concludes with a Hebrew line, which may be considered a paraphrastic variation of the preceding Aramaic line. For an example of interlinear translation in a magic bowl, see next note.

47 "Interlinear" translation, as in the case of targum, is also a type of "code-switching." However, for present purposes, I am using the term here, and below, to denote cases where the switching is not between expressions that are representations of one another. Code-switching is also evident in ancient Jewish/Aramaic magical texts, which are sometimes framed in Hebrew while their spells are in Aramaic (which was thought to be incomprehensible to angels). For examples, see Joseph Naveh, "A Good Subduing – There is None Like It: An Ancient Amulet from Ḥorvat Marish in the Galilee," *Tarbiz* 54 (1984–1985): 378–79 (Hebrew); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1985), 222–24, 237–38; Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor–Schechter Box K1* (STS 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 69–82. Note as well a bilingual magical bowl which is inscribed with alternating biblical verses and their Aramaic translations: Stephen A. Kaufman, "A Unique Magic Bowl from Nippur," *JNES* 32 (1973): 170–74. For the idea of angels not understanding Aramaic, see *b. Šabb.* 12b (with *tosafot*); *b. Soṭah* 32b–33a.

while anecdotes (*ma'asim*) are in Hebrew, regardless of the language of their textual contexts. In the Talmuds, Hebrew and Aramaic have been assigned particular functions by the redactors of those documents. Hebrew is generally the language of teaching, whether that teaching takes the form of a *baraita* or of a saying of an Amoraic sage, even an *'amora* of the later generations, while Aramaic is the language of debate, question and answer, and the editorial connecting and framing structures. It is as if the text is written in two colors, or two scripts, so as to distinguish its layered voices, differentiating those of the Tannaitic and Amoraic teachers from those of the anonymous redactors who interwove their teachings so as to create a cross-generational dialectic.[48]

48 See Eliezer Margoliot, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Talmud and Midrash," *Leshonenu* 27 (1962–1963): 20–33 (Hebrew). Abba Bendavid (*Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* [Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1967], 1:134–35 [Hebrew]) follows Margoliot in this regard, going on to draw a connection between the bilingualism of the Talmud and that of those who attended the synagogue. However, as much as Hebrew and Aramaic are somewhat functionally differentiated in the Talmud, they are also more complexly intermixed than Margoliot's study would suggest. See in this regard, Shamma Friedman, "A Critical Study of Yevamot X with a Methodological Introduction," in *Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America* (ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977–1978), 1:301–302 (Hebrew), in criticism of Hyman Klein, "Gemara and Sebara," *JQR* 38/1 (1947): 67–91. I have been unable to consult Jacob Neusner, *Language as Taxonomy: The Rules for Using Hebrew and Aramaic in the Babylonian Talmud* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). I am not familiar with similar discussions of the mix of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Palestinian Talmud; however, I would expect the functional assignments to be pretty much the same, but with a significantly higher proportion of Hebrew use. On the combination of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Palestinian homiletical midrashim, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views," 276 n. 53; Burton L. Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates: Studies in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (TSAJ 94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 41–47. On interpenetration of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Babylonian Talmud on the linguistic level, see Breuer, "The Hebrew Component in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud." For linguistic code-switching in the modern performance of Talmud study, see Samuel C. Heilman, "Sounds of Modern Othodoxy: The Language of Talmud Study," in *Never Say Die. A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Life and Letters* (ed. Joshua A. Fishman; The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1981), 227–53; idem, *The People of the Book: Drama, Fellowship, and Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). For the interplay of Hebrew and Aramaic in the shaping of the Bavli's redacted discourse, see most recently, Moulie Vidas, "Tradition and Formation of the Talmud" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2009).

In a recent article, "על איגרותיהם של הנשיאים,"[49] Isaiah Gafni convincingly demonstrates that letters from Jewish patriarchs to communities outside of the Land of Israel (covering matters of appointments, collections, and calendar), are almost always quoted in Hebrew within talmudic texts, even though the narrative frames in which they appear are usually Aramaic.[50] In other words, the talmudic texts "code-switch" from Aramaic to Hebrew when citing such letters. Gafni raises the question of whether this reflects the actual language of such letters or the literary-rhetorical work of the transmitters of these traditions. In the end, he leaves tantalizingly open and unanswered the historical question of whether such letters were, in fact, composed in Hebrew, and therefore read in Hebrew (or translated from Hebrew) by or for their recipients, or only literarily presented as such. I too will bracket for now this historical question, but shall return to it later. For my present purpose, suffice it to say that this is an excellent example of the sort of "code-switching," at least as a literary device, which is so widespread in early rabbinic literature.

4. Documentary and Inscriptional Multilingualism

We have no way of knowing whether or to what extent rabbinic rules for language selection were followed by anyone other than the rabbis (to the extent that they could agree among themselves). However, inscriptional and documentary evidence do provide us with valuable windows onto broader linguistic usage. Correlating these types of evidence, rabbinic and nonrabbinic, with one another, is no simple matter. Jonathan Price and Haggai Misgav, at the conclusion of their excellent recent survey of "Jewish Inscriptions and their Use,"[51] state: "[I]t is clear that the current corpus of Jewish inscriptions – both

49 In *"Follow the Wise": Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine* (ed. Zeev Weiss, Oded Irshai, Jodi Magness, and Seth Schwartz; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 3*–10* (Hebrew section).

50 His prime examples are drawn from *y. Sanh.* 1, 19a (=*y. Ned.* 6, 40a); *b. Ber.* 63a–b; *y. Ḥag.* 5, 76d; and perhaps *b. Sanh.* 12a; *b. Roš Haš.* 19b.

51 Jonathan J. Price and Haggai Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions and Their Use," in Safrai et al., *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, 461–83. Note especially the sections, "Epigraphic Cultures: Content and Language" (468–80) and "Relation to Rabbinic Literature" (480–83).

those from the Land of Israel and those of the Diaspora – reflect a different world from the one of the rabbis."[52] My interest here is not in whether or to what extent the rabbis determined what went on in synagogues and burial places (our two main sources of inscriptions), but how they might have been affected by what they saw and heard there; or at least, to what extent they cohabited a *shared* world of Jewish (and broader) multilingualism.[53]

I choose this way of asking the question because of two well-known methodological difficulties, each stemming from one of the two sorts of evidence that I wish to allow to reflect upon one another. 1. We cannot presume that rabbinic literature, given its highly inflected rhetorical and multivocal nature, is representational in any simple way of how nonrabbis conducted their lives or communal institutions. In particular, in our case, we cannot presume that rabbis (even if they could have agreed among themselves) governed how nonrabbis employed the three main languages (restricting myself here to Palestine) available to them: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. 2. Neither are inscriptions (or ancient documents) simple representations of how their creators, readers, or viewers employed the same three languages in a wide variety of functions. They too serve particular rhetorical purposes, are the creations of a limited subset of the larger Jewish population, and by and large follow stylistic conventions of their particular genre. In short, they

52 Ibid., 481. For other recent surveys of ancient Jewish inscriptions, see Hayim Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity," in *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. Eric M. Meyers; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 239–68; Haggai Misgav, "Synagogue Inscriptions from the Mishnah and Talmud Period," in *And Let them Make Me a Sanctuary: Synagogues from Ancient Times to the Present* (ed. Y. Eshel, E. Netzer, D. Amit, and D. Cassuto; Ariel: The Research Institute, The College of Judea and Samaria, 2004), 49–56 (Hebrew); Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 81: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 356–421.

53 I chose a similar tack in relating rabbinic texts to contemporary realia in "The Temple as a Marker of Jewish Identity Before and After 70 CE: The Role of the Holy Vessels in Rabbinic Memory and Imagination," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* (ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz; TSAJ 130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 235–63; and "Local Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine: The Case of the *Parnas* in Early Rabbinic Sources in Light of Extra-Rabbinic Evidence," in *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy* (ed. Albert I. Baumgarten, Hanan Eshel, Ranon Katzoff, and Shani Tzoref; JAJSup 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht , 2011), 155–173.

are expressions of, what has been called, the "epigraphic habits" of particular times, places, and social groups, making extrapolation and generalization with regard to language use for Jewish society as a whole a very risky business; even as distinctions between patterns of use in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora, between urban and rural locations, or between Jewish and non-Jewish Greco–Roman epigraphic habits can be instructive.[54] Would that it were so simple as tallying the numbers of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Jewish inscriptions (assuming we could tell in each case which is Jewish and which not, which is Hebrew and which Aramaic) for Palestine as a whole and thereby being able to answer the question of "How much Greek" (or Hebrew or Aramaic) "in Jewish Palestine."[55] Even as the evidence from Roman Palestine of the Amoraic period clearly points to an overall ascendancy of Aramaic over Hebrew in daily use, the preponderance of one over the other (as well as of Greek) is likely to have varied depending on geographical location, functional domain, and social class.

Moving away from an attempt to judge any one language the winner of such a popularity contest, what is most noteworthy is the very *ubiquitousness* of multiple language usage in a wide range of locations and across several centuries. While not every synagogue site has preserved inscriptions in all three languages, many, if not most, have two of the three, with obvious differences in concentration depending on region (coastal or inland) and type of settlement (city or village). As Fergus Millar has emphasized, "The first important feature, which is evident on even the most cursory inspection, is the

54 See Ramsey MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982): 233–46; Elizabeth A. Meyer, "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 74–96. For other methodological cautions regarding the identification and use of Jewish inscriptions, see Price and Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions," esp. 461–68; Smelik, "Language Selection," 144; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 400–401; Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions," 240–43.

55 I'm playing on the title of Saul Lieberman, "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine," *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. Alexander Altman; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 123–41. The same point is made by Hayim Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions," 246.

tendency of the synagogue mosaics to incorporate inscribed texts in two or three different languages."[56]

I hope to demonstrate, but given the limits of time will only be able to sketch an argument that the three categories of internal Jewish bilingualism displayed by rabbinic literature ("interpretation," "internal translation," and "linguistic code-switching") are also on display, *mutatis mutandis*, in nonrabbinic documents and inscriptions of roughly the same time frame and geographic area.

1. Interpenetration:

To begin with our first category, the mutual interpenetration of Hebrew and Aramaic, the evidence clearly points to a similar phenomenon in the Hebrew and Aramaic of the inscriptions; in some cases, the degree of hybridization is such as to make it difficult to tell which language is being employed. My prime example here is documentary rather than inscriptional, with the advantage of having been only recently published in קתדרה by Esther Eshel, Hanan Eshel, ז"ל, and Ada Yardeni, under the title, "'שטר מ'שנת ארבע לחורבן בית ישראל'".[57] The editors understand the latter phrase to refer most likely to the failed Bar Kokhba revolt, yielding a date of 140 CE; the document was drafted and hidden in the area just south of Hebron. It is a fifteen-line writ of release, signed by two witnesses and the scribe, issued by a woman named Miriam bat Ya'aqov, releasing the brother of her deceased husband from any further material obligations to her. This is a very interesting document for several reasons, but what interests me now is the document's language, which is an amalgam of Aramaic and Hebrew words and grammatical forms. When I first received a draft of the article, I found therein the authors' characterization of the document's language as follows: "לשונו ארמית ושולבו בו ביטויים עבריים"

56 Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East, Volume 3: The Greek World, the Jews, and the East*, 399.

57 Esther Eshel, Hanan Eshel, and Ada Yardeni, "A Document from 'Year Four of the Destruction of the House of Israel' in Which a Widow Declared that She Received All Her Rights," *Cathedra* 132 (June 2009), 5–24 (Hebrew) (English summary, 201). See most recently, idem, "A Document from 'Year 4 of the Destruction of the House of Israel,'" *DSD* 18 (2011): 1–28.

("Its language is Aramaic, but it is interlaced with Hebrew expressions"). However, in the published version of the article, the above sentence has been changed to read: "לשונו עברית ושולבו בו ביטויים ארמיים" ("Its language is Hebrew, but it is interlaced with Aramaic expressions"). When I asked one of the authors why the reversal, I was told that they had counted the number of Hebrew and Aramaic words and decided, as it were, אחרי רבים להטת. That is, since the Hebrew words outnumber the Aramaic words, the document can be characterized overall as Hebrew. However, in the same issue of קתדרה, Moshe Bar-Asher published his own analysis of the document's language, arguing, to my mind correctly, that it is overall in Aramaic, with strong Hebrew elements (as well as Hebrew–Aramaic blends), and that counting words is not the way to determine a document's language.[58] In any case, the fact that such distinguished Israeli scholars, steeped in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic texts, cannot concur among themselves as to whether the text is Hebrew with a lot of Aramaic or Aramaic with a lot of Hebrew speaks volumes about the interpenetration of the two languages in antiquity, not just in literature, but in real time, real place documents.[59] Since this document is reported to be part of a larger cache of documents from the same location that have not yet made their way into scholarly hands, stay tuned, as they say, for late-breaking developments.

58 Moshe Bar-Asher, "The Language of the Beir ʿAnan Document," *Cathedra* 132 (2009): 25–32 (Hebrew) (English summary, 201). However, Bar-Asher also detects a degree of "code-switching" (without using the term) in this document, since he sees its frame (lines 1–4, 12–15) as being primarily Aramaic, whereas as the core (Miriam bat Yaʿaqov's declaration) is primarily Hebrew (pp. 25–26). Nevertheless, it is the document's overall linguistic register, in this case Aramaic, that determines its overall language. In the most recent discussion (Eshel, Eshel, and Yardeni, "A Document from 'Year 4 of the Destruction of the House of Israel'"), the authors characterize the document as being "written in a idiom containing a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic elements" (p. 5), and observe that "the language is a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic" (p. 18).

59 In a literary text, which has been recopied as it has passed through many hands (and ears) over centuries, Hebrew elements can enter an otherwise Aramaic text, and vice versa, as a product of its long transmission.

2. Internal Translation:

Given the oral nature of targumic performance, it should not surprise us that there is no evidence for the inscription of targumic renderings of scriptural verses at synagogue or funerary sites.[60] When biblical verses or labels for biblical scenes are inscribed in stone or written in mosaics, they almost always occur in Hebrew, requiring, it would appear, no translation. For example, the synagogue complex at Meroth contains a Hebrew inscription using Deut 28:6 on a lintel and a mosaic inscription of Isa 65:25, accompanying a biblical depiction, on a floor, while a nearby mosaic *dedicatory* inscription is in Aramaic.[61] Two verses (Isa 40:31 at Caesarea and Ps 121:8 near Kibbutz Mesilot in the Bet Shean valley) are written in Greek in mosaics, but it is uncertain whether these are Jewish or Christian sites.[62] Nevertheless, several dedicatory inscriptions are bilingual in that the same wording, or a part thereof, appears sequentially in two languages, usually Greek and Aramaic.[63]

The best example of inscriptional "inner translation" is a bilingual Greek–Aramaic tombstone inscription from Zoar (for "Mousios son of Marsa"). Each section of the inscription employs a different dating system appropriate to its respective language and culture: the Greek section counting from the founding of the province of Arabia, and the Aramaic section utilizing the Sabbatical cycle and counting from the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.[64] Both systems yield a date of 358 CE. Thus, understanding bilingualism in this case is not

60 This is separate from the question of whether targumic *tradition* is represented in the rendering of biblical scenes. For an "internal translation" inscribed on a magical bowl, see above, n. 47.

61 See Joseph Naveh, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies. Volume Twenty: Yigael Yadin Memorial Volume* (ed. Amnon Ben-Tor, Jonas C. Greenfield, and Abraham Malamat; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989), 305 (nos. 1–3) (Hebrew).

62 Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 362 n. 484.

63 See, for example, the two ossuary inscriptions treated by Price and Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions," 464. For Greek and Hebrew, see below, n. 77.

64 For discussion, see Price and Misgav, 471. For other scholarly treatments, see Haggai Misgav, "Two Jewish Tombstones from Zoar," *IMSA* 5 (2006): 35–46; Hannah Cotton and Jonathan J. Price, "A Bilingual Tombstone from Zoʿar (Arabia)," *ZPE* 134 (2001): 277–83; Joseph Naveh, "Two Tombstones from Zoar in the Hecht Museum Collection: The Aramaic Inscriptions," *Michmanim* 15 (2001): 5–7 (Hebrew).

a matter of determining which part of the inscription (Greek or Aramaic) is a translation of the other, since each reflects distinctive epigraphic conventions, while they mirror one another in content and function. What, we might ask, is the function of such a bilingual inscription, which says the same thing twice, but, according to different conventions, in two languages? Was the Greek part intended to convey *information* through the eyes and ears of Greek speakers only, and the Aramaic part intended to convey the same information through the eyes and ears of Aramaic speakers only, while never the twain do meet? If instead we follow J. N. Adam's approach to ancient Greek–Latin inscriptions at Delos (and a Latin–Palmyrene one at Shields), we must allow that, to quote Adams, their "bilingualism was in both directions" – similar to the function of bilingual Torah reading and study according to rabbinic targumic practice, as I and others have argued. To quote Adams further, "One of the main functions of a bilingual inscription was not so much to convey information to the maximum number of readers, but to project some sort of identity"; in this case what he calls a "double identity."[65] Thus, the bilingual inscription from Zoar, projecting a similar "double identity," would have been intended for *all* eyes (and ears).[66]

Another set of examples derives not far from Zoar, but closer to the heartland of Judea, in the early second century CE. These are the documents in Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic (the majority), Nabataean (Aramaic), and Greek from the caves of Wadi Murubbaʿat and Naḥal Ḥever along the western coast of the Dead Sea. Not only were documents in all four languages found stored together, but the languages are sometimes mixed within the same documents, subscriptions, and signatures thereto; e.g., Greek documents with Aramaic subscriptions and signatures, and Hebrew or Aramaic documents with Greek

65 Adams, "Bilingualism at Delos," 125. For language and language choice as an expression of Jewish ethnic/national identity, see Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine," 3–47; idem, "Hebrew and Imperialism in Jewish Palestine," in *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context* (ed. Carol Bakhos; JSJSup 95; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 53–84; Hayim Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions," 239–68; David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49–70.

66 Compare the widespread dual dating ("Hebrew" and "secular") in modern Israeli documents, even though one might have expected that the creation of a modern Israeli state would have resulted in the use of "Hebrew" dating alone.

signatures.[67] Sometimes we can tell the same scribe wrote in more than one language and that the same signatory signed in more than one language. As Hannah Cotton states, "[I]t can be shown that the same society represented in the Aramaic documents, and sometimes, the very same people, wrote documents, or had them written, in Hebrew and Greek as well. In other words it is *not* the case that documents in different languages represent different sections of Jewish society."[68] That is, to negatively paraphrase the Talmud (*b. Meg.* 18a), it is *not* a matter of Hebrew to the Hebrews, Greek to the Greeks, etc.

Here I wish to focus on two documents that exhibit *internal translation* between Greek and Aramaic, and between Aramaic and Hebrew. *P. Yadin* 27 (132 CE), from the legal archive of Babatha, is a receipt in Greek.[69] At the bottom (lines 11–14), Babatha endorses the receipt in Aramaic (in a second scribal hand) in the first person, followed by a word-for-word translation of her subscription into Greek (except for different dating conventions), written by the first scribal hand, who then signs the document in his own name in the first person. The translation into Greek is preceded by the word ἑρμηνεία (line 15), thereby designated as a "translation." Elsewhere, we find the same word used to introduce Greek translations of subscriptions, but without the appearance of the originals (presumably twice from Aramaic and twice from Latin).[70] Why

67 For multilingual legal documents and signatures in Tannaitic sources, see *m. Giṭ.* 9:6, 8; *t. Giṭ.* 7:11; *t. B. Bat.* 11:11. For Greek documents that end with Aramaic and/or Nabataean subscriptions and Greek and Aramaic signatures, see *P. Yadin* 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

68 Hannah M. Cotton, "The Languages of the Legal and Administrative Documents from the Judean Desert," *ZPE* 125 (1999): 220. Emphasis added. See also eadem, "Subscriptions and Signatures in the Papyri from the Judaean Desert: The XEIROXPHCTHC," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 25 (1996): 29–40; eadem, "'Diplomatics' or External Aspects of the Legal Documents from the Judaean Desert: Prolegomena," in *Rabbinic Law in its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (ed. Catherine Hezser; TSAJ 97; Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 49–61; eadem and Werner Eck, "*P. Murabba'at* 114 und die Anwesenheit Römischer Truppen in den Höhlen des Wadi Murabba'at nach dem Bar Kochba Aufstand," *ZPE* 138 (2002): 173–83.

69 See Naphtali Lewis, ed., *The Documents from the Bar-Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri* (Judean Desert Studies 2; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; The Shrine of the Book, 1989), 116–17.

70 *P. Yadin* 11 (126 CE), line 29, for a translation presumably from Aramaic to Greek, with Greek signatures on the reverse in different hands; *P. Yadin* 16 (127 CE), lines

the scribe of *P. Yadin* 27 uniquely translated the legally effective Aramaic subscription into Greek, *preserving both in the same document* (although this served no legal purpose), is not clear. Perhaps it was to guarantee the accuracy of the translation, or to symbolize the fact that the document was to function in two legal/cultural realms. In all of these cases, it is uncertain whether the scribe was also the (bilingual) translator.

An especially interesting (and unique) document is *P. Ḥever* 8 (135 CE), which is a bilingual, Aramaic–Hebrew deed of sale.[71] Like many documents from Wadi Murubbaʿat and Naḥal Ḥever, it is a "double" or "tied" document, with the top section (*scripta interior*) rolled, tied, and signed by witnesses for safekeeping, and the bottom section (*scripta exterior*) available for reading and consulting.[72] As best we can tell, the two texts appear to be identical, except that the upper half is in Aramaic while the lower half is in Hebrew (and poorly preserved). While it might be presumed that the Hebrew half is a translation of the "official" Aramaic half, the converse may as easily be the case, since generally the bottom text of such double documents was written prior to the

33 and 36, for translations presumably from Aramaic and Latin respectively to Greek, with signatures in Aramaic on the reverse; *P. Ḥever* 61 (127 CE), frg. b line 4, for a translation from Latin to Greek. Since *P. Yadin* 16 is explicitly said to be a verified copy, we might surmise that the original contained the subscriptions in Aramaic and Latin. However, *P. Yadin* 11 would appear to be an original (communication with Hannah Cotton), suggesting that the written translation (ἑρμηνεία) from Aramaic into Greek could be based on an originally *oral* declaration in Aramaic. For Aramaic subscriptions in Greek documents without translation, see above, n. 67. For a Greek document containing a subscription by Babatha in Greek, followed by one by Yehuda her guardian in Aramaic, followed by subscriptions in Nabataean and Aramaic, and concluding with the scribe's signature in Greek, see *P. Yadin* 15, lines 31–39.

71 Hannah M. Cotton and Ada Yardeni, *Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Documentary Texts from Naḥal Ḥever and Other Sites with an Appendix Containing Alleged Qumran Texts (The Seiyâl II)* (DJD 27; Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 26–33; Magen Broshi and Elisha Qimron, "A House Sale Deed from Kefar Baru from the Time of Bar Kokhba," *IEJ* 36 (1986): 201–214.

72 For the continuing use of such double documents in Judaea, long after they had ceased to be employed elsewhere in the Roman Empire, see Uri Yiftach Franko, "Who Killed the Double Document in Ptolemaic Egypt," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 54/2 (2008): 1–16. See also Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar-Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri*, 6–10.

top text.[73] In any case, we might ask, why employ two languages, Aramaic and Hebrew, for the otherwise identical texts of this double document, whereas others were always written in a single language (aside from the signatures), whether in Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic)? Cotton suggests an ideological reason:

> The inner text . . . , that is the part which is hidden, was written in Aramaic, whereas the outer text was written in Hebrew. In other words, the legally binding text, the inner one, was written in the normal language of legal documents at the time, whereas the Hebrew, displayed on the outside, advertises the ideology of the now independent Jewish state.[74]

If so the two halves, in two languages, confer status upon one another. In any case, regardless of whether we accept Cotton's ideological attribution to the Hebrew, we must presume that for practical purposes, it was the viewable Hebrew half that would have been available for consulting by the parties or their representatives, and not the legally binding but hidden Aramaic half. The two halves, in Aramaic and Hebrew, perform their legal and possibly ideological tasks in bilingual tandem.

3. Linguistic Code-switching[75]

As mentioned, it is not unusual to find within a single epigraphic site a mixture of Greek and Aramaic or Hebrew inscriptions, and in smaller less urban areas a combination of Aramaic and Hebrew, usually following patterns of language use specific to each language and its local "epigraphic habits."[76] Thus, to consider

73 Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar-Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri*, 9–10.

74 Cotton, "The Languages of the Legal and Administrative Documents from the Judean Desert," 225.

75 For Hebrew–Aramaic code-switching in magical texts, see above, n. 47.

76 The following cities and larger villages have ancient synagogue inscriptions in both Greek and Aramaic/Hebrew: Caesaria, Ashqelon, Gaza, Tiberias, Hammat Tiberias, Sepphoris, Bet Alpha, and Bet Shean. Smaller villages, regardless of location (but noncoastal), tend to have Aramaic/Hebrew only (no Greek): Kefar Habra, Kefar Kanah, Qorazim, Churbat Kanaf, Kefar Birim, Churbat Ammudim, Alma, Abellin, Er-Rama, Kefar Bar'am, Yesod Hama'alah, Chammat Gader, Naveh, Kokhav ha-Yarden, Bet Gubrin, Hebron, Estemoa, Churbat Susiya, Jericho, 'En Gedi. These lists are from Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 400.

the well-known fourth-century synagogue at Hammat Tiberias, Hebrew is employed for the twelve zodiac signs, while Greek and Aramaic are employed for dedicatory inscriptions. In the synagogue at Sepphoris we find an exceptional case, in which the labels of each of the four seasons of the zodiac are inscribed in *both* Hebrew and Greek. This is a unique example of a bilingual Hebrew–Greek *translation* within a synagogue inscription.[77] In general, however, Hebrew is most commonly employed for "literary" and "liturgical" inscriptions, including, as previously mentioned, scriptural verses or labels to scriptural scenes, and priestly courses, but also, though less frequently, for *communal* blessings and dedications, of which I count at least seven.[78]

With respect to linguistic code-switching, I would like to consider the mosaic in the east aisle of the synagogue at Hammat Tiberias, in which we find two inscriptions, placed immediately one above the other in a shared *tabula ansata*. In Greek: Σευῆρος θρεπτὸς τῶν λαμπροτάτων πατριαρχῶν ἐτελίωσεν εὐλογία αὐτῷ κὲ Ἰούλλῳ τῷ προνοητ[ῇ]; "Severos the *threptos* (disciple?) of the most illustrious patriarchs completed [this work]; a blessing upon him and also upon Ioullos the *parnas*." Immediately below it in Aramaic: יהי שלמה כל

77 See Zeev Weiss and Ehud Netzer, *Promise and Redemption: A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1996), 42; Zeev Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 2005), 200–201, 212–14. In one case, an originally Greek inscription at Sepphoris was replaced by an Aramaic one. See Weiss and Netzer, *Promise and Redemption*, 208 (no. B 11), 211 (C 4). Note Weiss and Netzer's comments (*Promise and Redemption*, 40) that, "The ratio of Greek to Aramaic inscriptions indicates that the Jewish community at Sepphoris was bilingual at this time," and that the Greek labeling of the seasons in the zodiac "cannot serve as evidence that Greek was more familiar to the local inhabitants than Aramaic or Hebrew" (ibid., 42); similarly, "The use of Greek and Aramaic in one mosaic demonstrates that the community in Sepphoris was bilingual in this period" (Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue*, 216).

78 Note the following Hebrew dedication from the synagogue in Kfar Barʿam (Birʿam) (the same synagogue also has a dedicatory inscription in Aramaic): יהי שלום במקום הזה ובכל מקומות ישראל, יוסה הלוי בן לוי עשה השקוף הזה תבא ברכה במע[ש]יו של[ו]ם ("May there be peace in this place and in all the places of Israel. Jose the Levite the son of Levi made this lintel. May his works be blessed. Peace"). See Joseph Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Carta; Maʿariv, 1978), 19–20 (nos. 1–2) (Hebrew). For virtually the same inscription in nearby ʿAlma, by the same artist, see below.

מן דעבד מצותה בהדן אתרא קדישה ודעתיד מעבד מצותה תהי לה ברכתה אמן אמן סלה ולי אמן; "May peace be [upon] everyone who has performed an act of charity (benefaction) in this holy place, and who will in the future perform acts of charity. May there be a blessing upon him. Amen, amen, selah. And also upon me, Amen."[79] Price and Misgav argue that

> the Aramaic text . . . records the same act [as the Greek]. That is, it concerns not a different benefaction but the same one: *the Greek and the Aramaic were meant to be read together* [emphasis added]. If this is the correct interpretation, and if the final two words in the Aramaic inscription do in fact mean 'and *upon me*, Amen,' then we see that not only different donors in the same pavements, but the same person in the same pavement, expressed himself in dramatically different ways in Greek and in Aramaic – in this case Severos would have circumvented the inevitable result of anonymity [in the Aramaic] by identifying himself in the Greek half of the dedication.[80]

I interpret the bilingual dual inscription differently. The Greek inscription credits the principal donor Severos, and secondarily Ioullos the *parnas*, who perhaps oversaw the project (as was one of the functions of *parnasim*),[81] by name. The Aramaic inscription is a collective blessing, of everyone who contributed to the project (כל מן דעבד מצותה בהדן אתרה), including Severos and Ioullos, but not by name, and, perhaps more importantly, those who would be inspired by their example do to so in the future, as additional renovations required funding. I take the final ולי אמן to be an unscripted addition by the artisan who produced the inscription, or perhaps of another donor who remains anonymous.[82] Thus, the two-part, bilingual inscription honors *particular donors* in Greek, and the

79 For texts and translations, see Price and Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions," 478. For the Aramaic, see Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 48–49 (no. 26) (Hebrew). For the Greek, see Lea Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1987), 72 (n. 18) (Hebrew). For both, see Moshe Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias: Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 53–54, 60, pll. 21.1–2, 35.3.

80 Price and Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions," 478–79.

81 See my article, "Local Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine: The Case of the *Parnas*."

82 See Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 49 (Hebrew); Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias*, 54.

community of donors in Aramaic, with language choice and switching having been determined by which language was considered appropriate to which discursive function. Notwithstanding this difference in interpretation, Price and Misgav and I agree that both parts of the bilingual inscription, the Greek and the Aramaic, "were meant to be read together."

The same pattern can be seen in a similar two-part, Greek–Aramaic bilingual inscription on the floor of the synagogue at Bet Alpha, where individuals are credited in Greek, but the community as a whole, who contributed proceeds from their wheat harvest, are blessed in Aramaic. In Greek: Μνισθοῦσιν ὑ τεχνῖτε ὑ κάμνοντες τὼ ἔργον τοῦτω Μαριανὸς καὶ Ἀνίνας ὑός; "May the artists who made this work be blessed: Marianos and Aninas (Hanina) his son."[83] In Aramaic: [הדין] פסי[פוסה אתקבע בשתה [. . . ל]מלכותה דיוסטינוס מלכה [. . . זבן חטייה מאת [סאין(?) . . . ד] אתנדבון כל בני ק[רתה . . .] בירבי א[. . . דכירין] לטב כל ב[ני קרתה . . . דכיר לט]ב; "This mosaic was set in the year . . . of the rule of Justinus the king [with the money from] selling the wheat, one hundred seahs worth(?), which was contributed by the villagers . . . the son of . . . may all the members of this town be remembered for good . . . remembered for good."[84] Hebrew is employed on the same synagogue floor for labels accompanying the depiction of the Akedah.

At a synagogue in ʿAlma (upper Galilee) we have a bilingual inscription on a lintel, containing a collective blessing in Hebrew for the inhabitants of that place and other places in Israel, and then, *switching to Aramaic* (but with some Hebrew), the artist's identification of himself: יהי שלום על המקום הזה ועל כל מקומות עמו ישראל [א]מן סלה אנה יוסה בר לוי הלו[י] אומנה דעבדת [הדין שקופה ...]; "[In Hebrew:] May there be peace on this place and on all places of His people Israel. Amen, selah. [In Aramaic:] I am Jose the son of Levi the Levite (in Hebrew), the artist who (I) made [this lintel]." Yet this very same artist "signs" virtually the same Hebrew blessing at nearby Barʿam in *Hebrew*, speaking of himself in the third person: ... יוסה הלוי בן לוי עשה השקוף הזה; "Jose the Levite the son of Levi made this lintel..."[85] I would suggest that when he wished to

83 See Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions*, 29–30 (no. 4) (Hebrew).

84 See Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 72 (no. 43) (Hebrew).

85 See above, n. 78.

identify himself in a more personal way (first person) he employed Aramaic, but when he wished to be more formal (third person) he employed Hebrew.

The final archaeological site that we shall consider in terms of multilingual language use is the synagogue at Rehov in the Bet Shean valley. Much discussion has rightly been focused on the lengthy "halakhic" mosaic inscription found in the narthex of the synagogue, dating to the 6th–7th century.[86] This is the longest

86 See Jacob Sussmann, "A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth-Shean Valley," *Tarbiz* 43 (1974): 88–158 (Hebrew) (English summary, v–vii); idem., "Additional Notes to 'A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth-Shean Valley'," *Tarbiz* 44 (1975): 193–95 (Hebrew) (English summary, viii); idem, "The Inscription in the Synagogue at Rehob," *Qadmoniot* 8 (1975): 123–28 (Hebrew); idem, "The Boundaries of Eretz-Israel," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976): 213–57 (Hebrew) (English summary, ii–iii); idem, "The Inscription in the Synagogue at Rehob," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (ed. Lee I. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 146–53; Saul Lieberman, "Regarding the Halakhic Inscription from the Beisan Valley," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976): 54–63 (Hebrew) (English summary, iv); idem, "A Note to Tarbiz XLV, p. 61," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976): 331 (Hebrew) (English Summary, vii); Fanny Vitto, "Ancient Synagogue at Rehov," *Atiqot* Hebr. Ser. 7 (1974): 100–104, Pls. XXXIII–XXXVII (English summary, 17*–18*); eadem, "The Synagogue at Rehob," *Qadmoniot* 8 (1975):119–23 (Hebrew); eadem, "The Synagogue of Rehov, 1980," *IEJ* 30 (1980): 214–17; eadem, "A Byzantine Synagogue in the Beth Shean Valley," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (ed. Avraham Biran; Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 164–67; eadem, "The Synagogue at Reḥob," in Levine, *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 90–94; eadem, "Le Décor Mural des Anciennes Synagogues à la Lunière de Nouvelles Découverts," *16. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Wien, 4.–9. Okt. 1981, Akten 2/5* (ed. Herbert Hunger and Wolfram Hörander; Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik 32/5; Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1981–1982), 361–70; eadem, "Jewish Villages around Beth Shean in the Roman and Byzantine Periods," *Bulletin of the Anglo–Israel Archaeological Society* 1 (1981): 11–14; eadem, "Rehob," in *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* IV (ed. E. Stern; Jerusalem: Carta, 1993), 1272–74; eadem, "The Interior Decoration of Palestinian Churches and Synagogues," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995): 283–300; Ze'ev Safrai, "The Rehov Inscription," *Immanuel* 8 (1978): 48–57; Joseph Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 79–85 (Hebrew); idem, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues," 308; Aaron Demsky, "The Permitted Village of Sebaste in the Rehov Mosaic," *IEJ* 29 (1979): 182–93; idem, "Holy City and Holy Land as Viewed by Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Period: A Conceptual Approach to Sacred Space," in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (ed. A. Houtman, M. J. H. M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz; Jewish and Christian Perspectives 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 285–96.

inscription of any kind surviving from the ancient Near East. The inscription deals with the practical matter of whether certain types of produce, from villages of mixed Jewish/non-Jewish populations, are subject to the laws of tithing and sabbatical years (*Shemitah*). In other words, which fruits and vegetables from which locations could or could not be consumed without requiring tithing and compliance with the laws of *Shemitah*. Much of the inscription is remarkably similar to passages from Tannaitic and Palestinian Amoraic rabbinic literature,[87] making it the earliest surviving attestation of rabbinic legal writing, albeit lacking the usual context of debate between named rabbinical sages, as found in its talmudic parallels.[88] However, two sections of the mosaic inscription, dealing with the parameters of Bet Shean (lines 5–9) and towns within the region of Sebaste (Samaria) (lines 26–29) – that is, sections with particular local relevance to the region of Rehov – are without direct parallels in rabbinic literature.

While the overall language of the inscription is Hebrew, many of the place names and names of produce are in Aramaic and aramaicized Greek. Given the locally applicable nature of its contents, especially the fact that the inscription's verbal map focuses on Bet Shean and the villages in the vicinity of Rehov, as well as the area around Sebaste, most scholars who have commented upon this inscription presume that it was of practical consequence to those who gathered in this synagogue and who observed the laws of tithing and *Shemitah*. As Yaakov Sussmann characterizes the mosaic inscription, it is formulated in a "straightforward and unambiguous" way, as "befits a text intended for the instruction of practical law. . . . [T]he pavement was utilized to bring to the notice of the community important matters concerning adherence to daily precepts, especially those of such importance to the Beth-Shean region"[89] This is not to say that everyone who entered the synagogue, and therefore had to traverse this inscription, could read or understand its contents. But certainly there were those who could, and who would have rendered the contents of the inscription for those who could not – which is simply to say that this mosaic inscription cannot be dismissed as

87 *Sifre Deut.* 51 (ed. Finkelstein, 117); *t. Šeb.* 4:10–11 (ed. Lieberman, 181); *y. Demai* 2, 22c–d; *y. Šeb.* 6:1, 36c.

88 But note the attribution to Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch?) in line 10.

89 Sussmann, "The Inscription in the Synagogue at Rehob," 150, 151.

mere ornamentation. At the very least (or most), the inscription establishes the deep and lasting connection between the village and the region of Rehov and the halakhic geography of תחומי ארץ ישראל מקום שה[חזיקו] עולי בבל;"the territory of the Land of Israel, the place which was secured by those who came up from Babylonia" (line 13), thereby expressing and reinforcing a sense of what Sussmann terms, "regional 'patriotism,'"[90] coupled perhaps with what I would call "linguistic patriotism." Those who frequented this synagogue were not mere itinerants in the Land of Israel, even as they needed practical halakhic guidance when they traveled through it.[91]

However, even more significant for our purposes are two inscriptions that have *not* yet been published. Sharing the narthex with the Hebrew halakhic inscription was an as yet unpublished mosaic dedicatory inscription of four lines in Aramaic, standard in its language, but including a *Hebrew* reference to the Temple.[92] Thus even before entering the nave of the synagogue, one would encounter a large Hebrew inscription containing Aramaic elements, alongside a smaller Aramaic inscription with Hebrew elements. To the extent that Hebrew was the dominant language in a "literary" inscription and Aramaic was the dominant language in a dedicatory inscription, this scene would have been consistent with the bilingual division of labor, yet interpenetration, of these two languages that we have seen elsewhere.

But that is not all. In an earlier phase of the synagogue, about a century previous (fifth century), one would have seen within the Rehov synagogue eight columns, each with a different inscription written with ink on plaster, of

90 Ibid., 151. See also Safrai, "The Rehov Inscription," 57.

91 For the practical aspect of the information conveyed in the halakhic inscription, see in particular the articles by Sussmann, Safrai, and Demsky (above, n. 86); especially Demsky, "The Permitted Village of Sebaste," on the usefulness of the inscription to travelers from the north, coming to Jerusalem, who would need to traverse Samaria. Demsky ("Holy City and Holy Land") also emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the inscription for those who viewed it, as it defined and secured their relationship to the halakhic geography of the Land of Israel.

92 For an allusion to this unpublished inscription, see Naveh, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues," 308; Vitto, "Rehov" (1993), 1273. My more specific knowledge is from a forthcoming article by Haggai Misgav, "The List of Fast Days Found in the Synagogue of Rehov," *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology* (forthcoming), which he was kind enough to share with me.

which only fragments survive. Seven of those inscriptions were in Aramaic, including at least two dedications, a list of fast days, a list of priestly courses (משמרות), a list of dates in the life of the congregation (denoted according to Sabbatical years), and a liturgical or magical text.[93] The Hebrew inscription on the remaining column was virtually identical to the halakhic inscription that was cast as a mosaic about a century later in the narthex. However the fresco inscription on the column lacked the final three lines listing towns within the region of Sebaste (which, again, have no parallel in rabbinic literature). Without these lines, the inscription began and ended with the word שלום. Following the closing שלום, in place, as it were, of the lines listing towns within the region of Sebaste (in the mosaic inscription), the fresco inscription concluded with an *Aramaic* blessing of the community, "Peace upon all the people of the town. . . ." This led Fanny Vitto, the archaeologist for the site, to conjecture:

> It seems that this inscription is a copy of a letter sent to the local community in answer to questions about certain localities in their region – Beth-Shean, for example, which had a mixed population of Jews and pagans. This is indicated by the first word of the inscription (*shalom*, or "peace"), the emphasis on Beth-Shean (the region of the synagogue) [lines 5–9], and the blessings at the end.[94]

Vitto's suggestion is tantalizing, especially in light of Gafni's recent study of Hebrew patriarchal letters set off in Hebrew from their Aramaic narrative frames (see above). However, שלום at the beginning and end of the Hebrew fresco inscription is not sufficient to characterize it as a letter. Its opening and closing with שלום, together with its prominent position (both as fresco and as mosaic) within the synagogue space, does at the very least suggest, whatever its origin, that it was intended as a public notice of interest and importance to those who attended the synagogue, both practically and symbolically. As Catherine Hezser notes:

93 From Misgav, "The List of Fast Days." Misgav is preparing the plaster fragments for publication under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

94 Vitto, "Rehov" (1993), 1274.

> The inscription must be seen in connection with inscriptions in pagan temples, where treaties and laws were publicly exhibited, the engraving of Roman edicts – which already existed in document form – on stone, and also, perhaps, with the Christian practice, observable from the fourth century C.E. onwards, of inscribing *tituli* on the walls of churches. The inscription on stone of texts which already existed in written form, at places where they were generally visible, will have served the purpose of a greater publicity and an *expression of power*. [emphasis added][95]

Although we find no evidence in rabbinic literature for the practice of inscribing rabbinic edicts, laws, or patriarchal missives on floors or walls of synagogues (as we do for pictures),[96] it is noteworthy that once in the Palestinian Talmud (*y. Kil.* 1:1, 27a), we find the view that a list of kinds of produce (for purposes of observing the law of "diverse kinds"):/אשכחון כתיב על כותלא דר׳ הלל ביר׳ אלס ; was "found written on the walls of R. Hillel b. R. Eles/Valis. . . ."[97]

For present purposes it is sufficient to note the code-switching from Hebrew "literary" inscription to Aramaic blessing formula, which is very reminiscent of the second-longest synagogue inscription from ancient Palestine, that from ʿEn

95 Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 411, with references in nn. 465–68.

96 See *y. ʿAvodah Zarah* 3:3, 42d, as found in a Cairo Genizah text first published by J. N. Epstein ("Yerushalmi Fragments," *Tarbiz* 3 [1931]: 15, 16, 20 [Hebrew]).

97 Sussmann's edition of MS Leiden, 145: ר׳ יונה בשם ר׳ חייא בר ווא. אשכחון כתיב על כותלא דר׳ הלל ביר׳ אלס. Other versions have ר׳ וולס (Valis). A preceding tradition, attributed to R. Yose in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Va, says that the list was written in a notebook (פנקס) of R. Hillel b. R. Eles/Valis." The list of produce that follows is in Aramaic, even though its Mishnaic parallel (*m. Kilayim* 1:1) is in Hebrew. Poirier ("The Linguistic Situation," 77), uses this as evidence to support the rather farfetched conclusion that the Hebrew Mishnah is a translation of an Aramaic original. See Baer Ratner, *Ahawath Zion We-Jeruscholaim* (9 vols.; Vilna: Rom, 1901–1912; repr. Jerusalem, 1967), 4(1907):2, who cites the Mishnah commentary of Samson b. Abraham of Sens (12th–13th century); the commentary of R. Isaac b. Malkisedeq of Siponto (ca. 1090–1160) to *Mishnah Zeraʿim*; and Alexander Kohut, *Arukh Ha-Shalem* (8 vols.; Vienna: G. Brog, 1878–1892), s.v. פול, where the talmudic text is said to include the Hebrew name for each plant followed by its Aramaic equivalent. I owe this reference to *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation, Vol. 4: Kilayim* (trans. Irving J. Mandelbaum; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 295 n. 50. For other rabbinic references to writing, including writs, on walls (but not of synagogues), see *t. Šabb.* 17: 5, 6, 8; Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fschuṭah*, vol. 3 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 285.

Gedi (also found in a mosaic in the narthex, and also in a synagogue with only Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions, but from an entirely different region). The first eight lines of that inscription comprise various lists: the names of thirteen "universal" (pre-Abrahamic) scriptural ancestors (from 1 Chron 1:1–4); the twelve signs of the zodiac; the twelve Hebrew months; and two triads of Israelite biblical figures, ending respectively with שלום and שלום על ישראל – all in Hebrew. The second half of the inscription (ten lines but occupying the same amount of space as the first eight lines), following a horizontal line for a break, *switches from Hebrew to Aramaic* as it turns to communal affairs: two dedications naming members of the community (presumably benefactors of the mosaic) bracket a set of curses upon community members who act wrongly toward one another or who reveal רזה דקרתה (line 12; "the secret of the town"); the whole inscription ends with "שלום".[98]

5. Conclusions

We have barely scratched the surfaces of multilingualism in early rabbinic literature and in the chronologically and geographically proximate material evidence of ancient Jewish inscriptions. Notwithstanding significant local variations, we have seen certain patterns, epigraphic and literary "habits" that appear to have been widespread and persistent, across chronology, geography, and social location. It is fair to say that the cultures reflected in both the literary and material evidence were deeply bi- or trilingual in the several senses that we have examined: interpenetration, internal translation, and linguistic code-switching. That is not to say that all consumers of rabbinic literature or all who entered ancient synagogues were equally competent (whether in reading, writing, listening, or speaking) in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. But we can say that they were all exposed, whether through seeing or hearing, to multiple languages, and that that exposure exerted an important influence upon and projected a powerful expression of their intersecting identities, however complexly experienced and navigated, as citizens of both the "house of Israel"

98 For text and further analysis of the relation of the parts to one another, and the meaning of the whole, see Lee I. Levine, "The Inscription in the ʿEn Gedi Synagogue," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 140–45; as well as Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 105–9 (no. 70).

and the larger multilingual and multicultural world of Greco–Roman late antiquity. Instead of dual passports, they carried multiple languages, which they variously mixed and switched.

In summation, I cannot concur with the statement of Price and Misgav, that "it is clear that the current corpus of Jewish inscriptions – both those from the Land of Israel and those of the Diaspora – reflect a different world from the one of the rabbis."[99] At least with respect to the challenges of multiple language selection and combination, and the issues of identity and power thereby reflected and projected, rabbinic and nonrabbinic Jews alike inhabited the same multilingual world, even if they navigated it differently, with evidence of their *diverse* multilingual practices casting much light with which to illumine one another.[100] In the broadest sense, the important and complex story of Jewish multilingualism that began in antiquity continues through the centuries and across the continents to the present day.[101]

99 "Jewish Inscriptions and Their Use," 481.

100 I should be careful to stress that I am not suggesting that the language, whether Hebrew or Aramaic, of nonrabbinic documents and inscriptions was the same as that of rabbinic literature (a comparison worthy of study in its own right), but that they share a common multilingual environment.

101 For important contributions to the study of Jewish multilingualism in modernity, see Itamar Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics; Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) = *Poetics Today* 11/1 (Spring 1990); Yael S. Feldman, *Modernism and Cultural Transfer: Gabriel Preil and the Tradition of Jewish Literary Bilingualism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985); Joshua A. Fishman, *Language in Sociocultural Change: Essays by Joshua A. Fishman* (selected and introduced by Anwar S. Dil; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Benjamin Harshav, *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 23–40 ("Multilingualism"); Shmuel Niger, *Bilingualism in the History of Jewish Literature* (trans. Joshua A. Fogel; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990); Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish–Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); eadem, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, 247–314 ("Internal Jewish Bilingualism"); Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953; repr. The Hague: Mouton, 1974). For the relationship of Hebrew to Aramaic as representing Jewish multilingualism across history, see Micah Josef Berdichevsky (Bin-Gorion), "Hebrew and Aramaic," in idem, *Poesy and Language* (ed. Emanuel Bin-Gorion; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1987), 101–5 (Hebrew).