Envisioning Judaism

Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday

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Volume 1

Moses and Adam as Polyglots

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In recently published articles, I have been exploring both the practice of and attitudes toward multilingualism in ancient Jewish culture and society, both early rabbinic and non-rabbinic, using literary, documentary, and epigraphic evidence. While Jews were by no means unique in having to navigate language choice and valorization in the multilingual contexts of the ancient eastern Mediterranean world, early rabbinic literature provides particularly rich self-reflections on such questions, both in legal and narrative registers. To the extent that multilingual facility and practice are about the interrelations not just of languages but of cultures and societies, and hence of statuses and identities thereby reflected or effected, this topic (or cluster of topics) has the potential of opening onto a much broader canvas of sociocultural strategies (and fantasies), as well as their rhetorical implementations and ideological / theological underpinnings. In the present venue I wish to examine closely a pair of closely-connected late midrashic texts that bear directly and profoundly on this subject, but which I previously overlooked. Since this volume's honoree, Peter Schäfer, is himself a polyglot who has contributed mightily to the cross-cultural translation and transmission of ancient and medieval Jewish texts, I offer this study as a tribute to his life and scholarship, and in appreciation of his friendship.

The homiletical midrashic texts to be considered are from the *Tanhuma* literature of late-antique/Byzantine/early medieval rabbinic circles, most

¹ See S.D. Fraade, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence" [Hebrew], Leshonenu 73 (2011): 273–307; Fraade, "Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature," Diné Israel 28 (2011): 31*–68*. For the function of Aramaic scriptural translation (targum) in a multilingual setting, see 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. L.I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86; Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the Sifra," in Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs, ed. J. Magness and S. Gitin (BJS 320; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–22; Fraade, "Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," in Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies 39 (2006): 69–91; Fraade, "Targumin," in The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism, ed. J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1278–81.

likely originating in the Land of Israel.² Although it is safe to assume that these passages draw upon and creatively interweave earlier traditions, as is so typical of the *Tanhuma* literature, I have been unable to identify much by way of antecedents to their main components.³ Nor does it appear that they left much of a footprint on later sources. Thus, their significance lies principally in how they editorially combine those components so as to create a midrashic unit that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Tanhuma (Buber)

Since the version of the *Tanhuma* in Salomon Buber's edition is slightly shorter that the standard printed version, we shall begin with it:⁴

(ישעיה לה ו), אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה (דברים א א). זש״ה אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם (ישעיה לה ו),

[ב] בוא וראה כשאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה (לך) [לכה] ואשלחך אל פרעה (שמות ג י), א״ל משה בייא אתה מעביר עלי, לא איש דברים אנכי (שמות ד י),

[ג] א״ל שבעים לשון עומדין בפלטרין של פרעה, שאם יבא פרוזביטרון ממקום אחר מדברים עמו בלשונו, ואני הולך בשליחותך, והם בודקין אותי לומר שאני שלוחו של מקום. וגלוי לפניהם שאיני יודע להשיח עמהם, אין שוחקין עלי, לומר ראו שליח של מי שברא העולם, ואת כל הלשונות אינו יודע לשמוע ולהשיב, הוי בייא, לא איש דברים אנכי (שמות ד'י). (הן אני) [ואני] ערל שפתים (שמות ו יב)

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

,הרברים, אמר אלה דברים אנכי, אמר אלה הדברים,

² On this literature, see H.L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. M.N.A. Bockmuehl (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 302–6

[1] והנביא צווח ואומר אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם, למה כי נבקעו במרבר מים ונחלים בערבה (ישעיה לה ו), לכך נאמר אלה הדברים.

- [A] "These are the words which Moses spoke" (Deut 1:1). This [should be understood in relation to what] is said by the verse, "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud" (Isa 35:6).
- [B] Come and see how when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, "Go, I will send you to Pharaoh" (Exod 3:10), Moses said to him, "You are treating me unjustly!" "I am not a man of words" (Exod 4:10).
- [C] He [Moses] said to him [God]: "There are seventy languages spoken in Pharaoh's palace, so that if an ambassador comes from another place they can speak to him in his own language. And I am going as your emissary and they will examine me to say [whether] I am the emissary of the Omnipresent. It will be evident to them that I do not know how to converse with them. Will they not mock me, saying, 'Look at the emissary of He who created the universe, but who does not know how to understand or respond in all seventy languages'? Such injustice! 'I am not a man of words' (Exod 4:10), 'and I am a man of impeded speech' (Exod 6:12)."
 - [D] The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Behold the first man, whom no creature taught. From whence did he know seventy languages? For it is said, 'And he called them by names' (cf. Gen 2:20). 'A name for each animal' is not written here, but 'names.'" [Who gave speech to Adam that he could give 'names,' a name to each and every one in (each of) the seventy languages?]
 - [E] The mouth which said, "I am not a man of words" (Exod 4:10), said, "These are the words" (Deut 1:1).
- [F] And the prophet cries out, saying, "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud" (Isa 35:6a). How so? "For waters shall burst forth in the desert (במרבר), streams in the wilderness (בערבה)" (Isa 35:6b). Therefore it says, "These are the words [which Moses spoke ... in the desert (בערבה) in the wilderness (בערבה)]" (Deut 1:1).
- [A] The midrash begins as a comment on Deuteronomy 1:1, the narrative opening to Moses' long swan song to the Israelites in the land of Moab, forty years after the Exodus and just prior to his death and the people's entry into the land. That verse is immediately connected to Isaiah 35:6, the exegetical significance of that juxtaposition being the work of the midrash to uncover. At the very least, the two verses are about verbal expression ("spoke" and "shout"). However, the astute scholar of Scripture might already know that the continuation of *both* verses mentions the "desert" (מרבר) and the "wilderness" (ערבה), as if to say that the two verses are very similarly sited. This semantic link will not be made explicit by the midrash until its very end.
- [B] The midrash next flashes back from the end of Moses' career to its beginning, in which he repeatedly resists (strongly protests in the midrash's retelling) his commission to be God's prophetic mouthpiece to both Israel

³ See J. Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1931), 1:646, lines 47–49. This is a book inventory from the Cairo Geniza, which lists a book called אגדה הדברים ("Aggadah [Midrash] on 'These are the words'"), which begins: אלה הדברים זה הוא שאמר הכתוב אז ידלג כאיל פסח וג' מ' היה זה משה ("These are the words' [Deut 1:1]. This [should be understood in relation to what] is said by the verse, 'Then the lame shall leap like a deer' etc. [Isa 35:6]. Who was this? This is Moses.") None of the extant parallels begins with this question and answer.

⁴ Midrash Tanhuma, ed. S. Buber (Wilna, 1885; repr. Jerusalem: Orstel, 1964), 5:3-4. Buber prints this as an "addition," based on "manuscript 5 from Oxford and a Sephardic manuscript." See Buber's note ad loc., as well as his "Introduction," 143-47, 150. See also M. Kasher, Torah Shelemah (Jerusalem: Beth Torah Shelemah, 1992), 1:239, no. 264 with note. The translation is my own and can be compared with that of J. T. Townsend, Midrash Tanhuma, vol. 3: Numbers and Deuteronomy (Jersey City: KTAV, 2003), 275-76. For a paraphrase, see L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, trans. H. Szold (Philadelphia: JPS, 1969), 2:322-23. I have divided the text into sub-units to facilitate analysis and comparison.

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and Pharaoh by claiming to be hampered by a speech defect. The laconic Moses of Horeb is a far cry, as it were, from the loquacious Moses of Moab. What a difference forty years of leadership can make, we might be tempted to say. Perhaps as a signal of things to come, the phrase that I have translated as Moses' protest, "you are treating me unjustly," renders what appears to be a Greek loan word: בייא = $\beta i\alpha$ = an act of force or violence.⁵ It may be that its use here derives from an interpretation of Exodus 4:13: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנֵי :שְלַח־נָא בִּיִר־תִּשְׁלָח: ("But he said, 'Please, O Lord, make someone else your servant'"), where the Hebrew word '3 is interpreted as if it were the Greek word bla. This is explicitly indicated in Midrash Legah Tov to Exod. 4:13.6 If so, we have here a case of a midrashic phenomenon in which the Hebrew of Scripture is interpreted as if it were another language. We, the midrashic readers (or auditors), know from our advantage of hindsight that Moses' protests will be to no avail and that he will eventually become an excellent orator.8

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[C] Moses now provides an additional argument to those provided in Scripture for his being unsuited to the mission on which God seeks to send him: the officials in Pharaoh's palace (a Greek loan word), wherein are spoken all seventy of the world's languages so as to converse with any foreign ambassador (another Greek loan word), would expect the ambassador of God (who is the source of all languages) to be fluent in all of them. 9 Being mono- (or at most bi-) lingual, Moses' credentials as God's emissary would be mocked. There are several parallels (with variations) to this tradition within the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu literature, but which lack the editorial context of our passage. 10 On their own, they simply provide another aspect of Moses' self-described speech impediment, but no suggestion of how he might overcome it. A widely attested rabbinic tradition speaks of Joseph having been fluent in all seventy languages, as they were revealed to him by the angel Gabriel, as a necessary precondition for his assuming the office of Egyptian viceroy. 11 Together, these traditions suggest an understanding (or idealization) of statesmen as polyglots.

[D] God's midrashic response to Moses (missing in some parallels) is that the knowledge of multiple languages is bestowed upon humans, beginning with Adam, by God. This link between Moses and Adam is occasioned. although not explicitly stated, by Exodus 4:11, God's response to Moses' claim not to be "a man of words" (4:10): ניאמר יהוה אליו מי שם פה לאדם או מיי ישום אלם או חרש או פקח או עור הלא אנכי יהוה ("And the Lord said to him, 'Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'"), where אדם ("man") could easily be understood to refer to the first man, Adam. This verse (uncited but implied in our midrash), with its use of אלם ("dumb"), also resonates with Isaiah 35:6, with which our midrash explicitly began and with which it will explicitly conclude. 12 Our passage derives Adam's multilingual facility from Genesis 2:20, wherein the plural "names" is used with the singular "animal," understood to suggest that Adam bestowed upon each animal not its name in a single language (presumably Hebrew), but its name in all seventy languages. 13 Such a reading of the verse would suggest not only that Adam knew all seventy languages, but that such knowledge was conveyed to him by God, as it could

⁵ See Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, Aruch Completum, ed. A. Kohut (Vienna: Brog, 1878-1892), 2:45; M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Jerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Choreb, 1926), 160; H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (9th ed. with supp.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 314; I. Wartski, לשון המדרשים (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1970), 198.

⁶ See Midrash Legah Tov to Exod 4:13 (ed. Buber, 22), with note. ⁷ For more on this phenomenon, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 47* n. 38.

⁸ While in the immediate continuation of the narrative we might assume that Moses speaks through his brother Aaron (Exod 4:14-16; 7:1), by the time he arrives at Moab for his final orations, we may assume that he is speaking on his own, as Aaron had died six months earlier (Num 20:23-28; 33:38; Deut 10:6).

⁹ On the seventy nations (Gen 10) and their seventy languages in rabbinic literature, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 39*, 42*-43*, 48*-58*, 60*; L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: JPS, 1925; repr. 1968), 1:173, 5:194-95.

¹⁰ See the Cairo Geniza text (T-S C1 46) analyzed by M. Bregman, The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2003), 114-16, 222-23, 297 (lines 8-12) (Hebrew), 8* (English); and first published by J. Mann, The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1940), 1:37 lines 8-12 (Hebrew section). In this version, there is no sense that Moses is expected to know all seventy languages, as in our text, but only that his

speech impediment would be all the more evident to members of Pharaoh's court who are fluent in all seventy languages (including, presumably, Hebrew). For another variant see L. Ginzberg, Geniza Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter, vol. 1: Midrash and Aggadah (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928), 28, 49 lines 23-24 (Hebrew). For a comparison of these passages with ours, see Bregman, Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature, 114-16. I wish to thank Marc Bregman for bringing these to my attention, as well as for having commented upon an earlier version of this article. For later imprints of our tradition, see Midrash Legah Tov to Exod 4:10 (ed. Buber, 22/11b), Midrash Sekhel Tov to Exod 4:10 (ed. Buber, 26), Midrash Aggadah to Exod 4:10 (ed. Buber, 108).

¹¹ For sources and discussion, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 56*-58*, as well as Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 2:68-69, 72-73, 151-52; 5:343, 344, 371. According to this tradition, Pharaoh is said to have known all seventy languages except for Hebrew, which he was unable to learn, rendering him inferior to Joseph. Compare the rabbinic tradition that members of the Sanhedrin, ideally at least, should be knowledgeable in all seventy languages. See Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 55*-56*; Ginzberg, Legends of the Tews, 4:382; 6:458-59.

¹² For a similar connection between Moses and Adam, but without reference to seventy languages, see Alphabet of R. Akiva (the letter D), in A. Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrasch: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur, (Leipzig: Vollrath, 1853-1877), 3:42-43.

¹³ Compare Midrash Aggadah to Exod 4:10 (ed. Buber, 108).

be to Moses, thereby obviating his excuse.¹⁴ This concords with other rabbinic traditions that understand the existence and use of seventy languages to originate prior to, rather than as a consequence of, the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. Multilingualism is, therefore, primordial rather than the consequence of a linguistic "fall."¹⁵ Our passage is less clear whether Adam came up with the name for each animal in seventy languages on his own, or only announced their pre-existent names, this ambiguity resting on two ways of understanding the verb RTP as "call."

[E] With Moses' excuses (scriptural as well as midrashic) for not serving as God's prophetic emissary denied, our midrash brings us back to the lemma, Deuteronomy 1:1, with its use of דברים ("words") contrastively linking it to the same word in Exodus 4:10, framing thereby Moses' career with a question: how could the very same man who had trouble speaking at the beginning of his prophetic career know no verbal limits at its end?

[F] The answer is provided by returning to the complementary verse to the lemma, with which the midrash began and with which it concludes, Isaiah 35:6. While that verse in its own scriptural context speaks of an eschatological and universal longing, through its verbal linkage with Deuteronomy 1:1 ("desert" and "wilderness") it is made to speak of Moses in particular as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the dumb shouting aloud, as one who was transformed by God from being "not a man of words" to the speaker of many (multilingual) "words." While we might think of revelation (and creation) as pointing forward to redemption, here it is a vision of redemption that informs our understanding of revelation.

Tanhuma (Standard)

The standard printed version of the *Tanhuma* is very close to the version published by Salomon Buber, yet seems at several points to be more replete, perhaps reflecting an internal process of editorial elaboration¹⁶ In what follows, the text as underlined appears here but not in the Buber version:

[א] אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה וגו' <u>אמרו ישראל אתמול אמרת לא איש דברים אנכי ועכשיו אתה</u> מדבר כל כך, א"ר יצחק אם אתה חייך שנה את התורה והתרפא משה כבר למד את כל התורה, במדבר בערבה מול סוף, זשה"כ אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם (ישעיה לה). [ב] בא וראה כשאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לך ואשלחך אל פרעה א״ל משה בייא אתה מעביר עלי לא איש דברים אנכי,

[ג] א"ל שבעים לשון עומדין בפלטרין של פרעה שאם יבא אדם אחד ממקום אחר מדברים עמו בלשונו ואני הולך בשליחותך והם בודקין אותי לומר שאני שלוחו של מקום וגלוי לפניהם שא"י להשיח עמהם אין שוחקין עלי לומר ראו שליח של מי שברא העולם ואת כל הלשונות אינו יודע לשמוע ולהשיב הוי בייא לא איש דברים אנכי, הן אני ערל שפתים (שמות ו).

[ד] א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא והרי אדם הראשון שלא למדו בריה מנין היה יודע שבעים לשון שנאמר (בראשית ב) ויקרא להם שמות, שם לכל הבהמה אין כתיב כאן אלא שמות, <u>ואתה אומר לא איש דברים אנכי, בסוף ארבעים שנה שיצאו ישראל ממצרים התחיל מפרש התורה בשבעים לשון, באר את התורה הזאת,</u> (דברים א ה)

ָה] הפה שאמר לא איש דברים אנכי אמר אלה הדברים,

[ו] והנביא צווח ואמר אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם, למה כי נבקעו במדבר מים ונחלים בערבה, לכד נאמר אלה הדברים.

[A] "These are the words which Moses spoke" etc. (Deut 1:1a). Israel said: "Yesterday you said, 'I am not a man of words' (Exod 4:10), but now you speak so much." R. Isaac said: If you have a speech impediment, study the Torah and be cured. [Similarly.] Moses already studied the whole Torah [over forty years], "in the desert, in the wilderness, opposite Suf" (Deut 1:1b). This [should be understood in relation to what] is said by the verse, "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud" (Isa 35:6).

[B] Come and see how when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, "Go, I will send you to Pharaoh" (Exod 3:10), Moses said to him, "You are treating me unjustly!" "I am not a man of words" (Exod 4:10).

[C] He [Moses] said to him [God]: "There are seventy languages spoken in Pharaoh's palace, so that if a person comes from another place they can speak to him in his own language. And I am going as your emissary and they will examine me to say [whether] I am the emissary of the Omnipresent. And it will be evident to them that I do not know how to converse with them. Will they not mock me, saying, 'Look at the emissary of He who created the universe, but who does not know how to understand or respond in all of the languages'? Such injustice! 'I am not a man of words' (Exod 4:10), behold, 'I am a man of impeded speech' (Exod 6:12)."

[D] The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Behold the first man, whom no creature taught. From whence did he know seventy languages? For it is said, 'And he called them by names' (cf. Gen 2:20). 'A name for each animal' is not written here, but 'names.' And you say, 'I am not a man of words' (Exod 4:10)." At the end of forty years from when Israel left Egypt he [Moses] began to interpret the Torah in seventy languages, [as it says,] "He expounded (NS) this Torah" (Deut 1:5).

[E] The mouth which said, "I am not a man of words" (Exod 4:10), said "These are the words" (Deut 1:1).

[F] And the prophet cries out, saying, "Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud" (Isa 35:6a). How so? "For waters shall burst forth in the desert (בערבר), streams in the wilderness (בערבה)" (Isa 35:6b). Therefore

¹⁴ On Joseph having been taught the seventy languages by the angel Gabriel, see above. For Adam as culture hero in this regard, see Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 1:62; 5:83-84 (n. 31).

¹⁵ See Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 42*-45*. For Adam as the "inventor" of the seventy languages, see Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 1:62; 5:83-84.

¹⁶ While I do not wish to deliberate with certainty whether this repleteness reflects a later or earlier stage of transmission, the main differences appear to me most likely to be additions.

it says, "These are the words [which Moses spoke ... in the desert (במדבר) in the wilderness (בערבה) (בערבה) (בערבה)

I will focus on the underlined "additions":

[A] The "added" words bring to the beginning of the midrash the contrast between Deuteronomy 1:1 and Exodus 4:10, for which we would otherwise have to wait (as in the Buber version) for it to be explicitly stated in Section E. This contrast is placed into the mouths of the Israelites who notice (somewhat mockingly) the sharp contrast between Moses' reticence to speak at the beginning of his career and his verbosity at its end. As a general rule it prescribes Torah study as a cure for speech impediment.¹⁷ This suggests that Moses' remarkable transformation from laconic to loquacious was the product of his studying/teaching all of the Torah for the forty years in the wilderness, prior to ("already") arriving at Moab, the site of his lengthy orations in the Book of Deuteronomy. By citing here the second half of Deuteronomy 1:1, the midrash signals that Moses studied/taught Torah throughout the length of the wilderness wandering, with "desert," "wilderness," and "opposite Suf" understood to denote in abbreviated form the full itinerary (in reverse direction) of the forty years of desert wandering and Mosaic Torah study. 18

[D] Although Moses' forty years of teaching Torah cured him of his speech impediment, it is only at the end of that period that he begins to expound (שרשה) the Torah in seventy languages, an idea absent from the Buber version of our midrash, as from other parallels. The Moses who used his lack of knowledge of seventy languages to avoid his being sent to Pharaoh, in whose palace all languages are spoken, now applies his own knowledge of seventy languages to interpret the Torah to Israel. This is derived from the use of the verb (בַּאַר) in Deuteronomy 1:5, understanding it to mean not simply "to set forth or state in detail," or "clearly," but "to explain," "to clarify," as do the ancient translations. While this could mean that Moses produced interpretations (or translations) of the Torah in all seventy languages, it could just as well mean that he employed his knowledge of seventy languages to interpret the Torah in all of its linguistic plenitude. Although, once again, I can find no clear antecedent to this tradition, it very likely is influenced by the Mishnah's interpretation (Sotah

7:5) of Deuteronomy 27:8, בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב ("most distinctly"), to mean that Moses instructed the people to inscribe the Torah on stones in seventy languages.²⁰ Later commentators derive this interpretation from the gematria of the word היטב, calculated from the sum of its successive stages of formation: $(\pi = 5) + (\pi = 15) + (\pi = 24) + (\pi = 26) = 70^{21}$ While some understand the interpretation of the Torah in seventy languages to be for the sake of those who did not understand Hebrew (either among the Israelites or the other peoples), others understand it to be for the sake of the fullest possible disclosure of the Torah's meanings. In any case, the transformation of Moses as orator is not simply in his ability to speak clearly and convincingly, but in his ability to master and convey the potential linguistic plentitude of the Torah by enlisting all of the languages spoken by humans and created by God.²² While Adam appears to have been able to employ the seventy languages from the very beginning (implanted within him, as it were, by God at his creation), Moses, it would appear, acquires the ability to employ the seventy languages, only at the very end of his life, as a consequence of his forty years of study and teaching. Thus, the linguistic "fall," if we can call it that, whether after Adam or after the Tower of Babel, is the difference between knowing all seventy languages "naturally" or through studied acquisition.

Conclusions

As stated at the outset, the passages that we have examined, with their recurring emphases on multilingualism, need to be understood within the broader contexts of rabbinic literature's frequent thematizing and practice of multilingualism as well as that of the surrounding cultures, both Jewish and non-Jewish, both literary and material. We have encountered several motifs that are editorially combined and juxtaposed in the examined midrashim of the *Tanhuma* literature in ways not fully evidenced elsewhere: multilingualism associated with the practice of statesmanship, with the study and teaching of Torah, and with primordial speech of the first human, and especially with Moses as both leader and teacher. Multilingualism is viewed as something "natural" to creation, divinely revealed, and acquired through study. The editorial combining and shaping of received traditions

¹⁷ For this understanding of היך (deriving from הן, "palate"), see E. Ben Yehuda, מילון השנה הוחשה (Jerusalem: Makor, 1980), 3:1531, citing our passage. I thank Robert Brody for assistance with this. For Torah as a cure for speech impediments, using Moses' life as as evidence, see *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 1:1. Cf. b. Arakhin 15b.

¹⁸ On the difficulties of understanding Deut 1:1b in the context of Deut 1:1-3, see J. H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 3.

¹⁹ See Tigay, JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy, 5, with notes. For this interpretation of Deut 1:5, see Midrash Leqah Tov to Deut 1:5 (ed. Buber, 3) and Rashi to Deut 1:5.

²⁰ For a detailed treatment of this passage and its parallels, see Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 49*–55*.

²¹ See the medieval super-commentaries of R. Judah Löw b. Bezalel (*Gur Aryeh*) and R. Elijah Mizrahi to Rashi to Deut 1:5 and 27:8.

²² Compare traditions that the Torah was revealed at Sinai in multiple (four or seventy) languages. See Fraade, "Before and After Babel," 45*–49*; Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 3:97, 350–51, 439; 6:39 n. 214, 121 nn. 710, 711, 150 nn. 898–99.

produces midrashic amalgams that are themselves multivocal and fluid. My intent has been neither to homogenize nor harmonize these elements, but to offer them, in both their concordance and discordance, which is to say in their redactional complexity, in tribute to a master teacher and scholar who moves between several languages as deftly as he does between the subjects and disciplines of Jewish literature, history, and thought to which he has and will continue to contribute so much substance and insight.