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## Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries

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### *I. Introduction*

Anyone who approaches ancient rabbinic texts with the intention of using them to reconstruct some aspect of ancient Jewish history, society or practice must confront the challenges posed by their deeply rhetorical nature. The literature of the rabbis is not so much one which simply seeks to represent the world outside it; it ultimately seeks to transform that world by the force of an illocutionary world, or web, of representations, both halakhic and aggadic, into which it dialogically and, hence, transformatively, draws its society of students in the very process of creating and conveying its meanings. By no means do I wish to deny the possibilities of using rabbinic literature for purposes of historical reconstruction, but to caution that such uses are fraught with great difficulty. Even as rabbinic texts might be critical of and seek to transform the contexts of which they provide fragmentary and often contradictory representations, they are nevertheless culturally rooted in those contexts, in relation to which they would have had to have made communicative sense for them to have been rhetorically effective.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the theoretical and bibliographical underpinnings of this opening statement, see the introductory chapter and the introductions to the successive chapters of my book, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany, 1991).

In what follows, I wish to offer one case-in-point for consideration: the practice of Aramaic translation of Scripture, or Targum, in the ancient Jewish social contexts of worship and study. For descriptions of such practice, both legal and narrative, we have only one source—rabbinic literature. Notwithstanding speculation about the practice of Targum in pre-rabbinic times (i.e., pre-70 C.E.) or in extra-rabbinic contexts, we have no direct evidence for such practice from pre-rabbinic or extra-rabbinic sources. Although we have fragments of an Aramaic translation of two non-continuous sections of Leviticus (4Q156) and parts of two copies of an Aramaic translation of the book of Job (11QtgJob and 4Q157) from Qumran, both of these being fairly literal in their translations, we have no way of knowing what their purpose or what their function (not necessarily lectionary) would have been within that community or its larger movement; and although we have several descriptions in Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament of the reading and interpretation of Scripture in the synagogues of Palestine and the Diaspora, none of these mentions the rendering of Hebrew Scripture into Aramaic as a way of conveying its meaning or interpretation to a synagogue audience.<sup>2</sup> This is not to deny that such a practice could have existed in pre-rabbinic times, but simply to state that we have no direct evidence for it.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, our earliest rabbinic documents, having been created in their present forms beginning in the early third century C.E., contain a rather large corpus of both legal and narrative representations of such practices, which were well established already in the so-called tannaitic collections.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Philo, *Hypothetica* 7, 12–13; *Spec. Leg.* 2, 62; *Quod. Omnis.* 82; *Somn.* 2, 127; *Leg.* 156–157; *Mos.* 2, 215–216; Josephus, *Ant.* XVI, 2, 4, 43; *Ag. Ap.* 2, 17, 175; Luke 4:16–22; Acts 13:13–16, 27; 15:21.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbinic traditions which trace Targum to the time of Ezra (e.g., B Megillah 3a [= B Nedarim 37b]; J Megillah 4, 1, 74d; Genesis Rabbah 36:8) are all amoraic or later, whereas tannaitic passages which mention the recitation of Scripture in Second Temple times make no mention of the practice of Targum in such settings. However we understand *mephorash* of Neh. 8:8 (for the scholarly view that it denotes translation, see H. H. Schaefer, *Esra der Schreiber* [Tübingen, 1930], 51–59), this passage as it stands refers to a one-time event of covenantal renewal. The later rabbinic texts, however, view it as the origin and prototype of the practice that they knew and sought to validate and regulate: weekly Torah readings accompanied by oral translation/explication. Cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), 113, who argues that a lectionary ceremony like that described in Neh. 8 was already the established practice of regular Jewish communal worship during the Babylonian exile. This is unprovable and improbable.

<sup>4</sup> To give a rough sense of the extent of this wealth of rabbinic texts relevant to the status of targumic texts, the practice of Targum, the *meturgeman*, and the statuses of

What picture of the practice of Targum emerges from these rabbinic sources? First, it is important not to homogenize, as is often done, rabbinic representations of targumic practice in diverse rabbinic collections that span close to a millennium and derive from both Palestinian (by which we generally mean Galilean) and Babylonian contexts. Here, however, space will only permit a summary of the results of my analysis of the rabbinic evidence, with particular attention to the rather large number of sources deriving from the Galilee from the early third through late fifth centuries. Finally, I shall consider extra-rabbinic types of evidence, both literary and archeological, that will allow us to view the rabbinic portrayal of the practice of Targum in the broader language setting of the Galilee of this period, a setting which I shall argue was much more multilingual (Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew) than has heretofore been appreciated. The resulting picture will call into question a conventional view of the function of Targum as serving a popular Jewish synagogue audience that no longer understood Hebrew and needed to be provided with an Aramaic rendering of Scripture as its substitute. For an illustration of this conventional view, a single citation will suffice:

The Targums—or early Aramaic translations of the Bible—have their origin in the synagogue, in a period when the Aramaic-speaking masses of Jewish people no longer understood biblical Hebrew, and had to have the weekly Pentateuchal reading translated into their vernacular. This is similar to the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Bible), which originated in the Greek-

Aramaic and Hebrew, the following discussion is based on 46 passages from tannaitic texts (Mishnah, Tosefta, and tannaitic midrashim), 20 from talmudic *baraitot*, 21 from the Palestinian Talmud, 20 from the Babylonian Talmud, 6 from the amoraic midrashim, 10 from extra-canonical talmudic tractates, 8 from post-amoraic midrashim, and 8 from geonic sources. These sources are collected, translated, and analyzed in greater detail in my forthcoming book, *Targum and Torah: Early Rabbinic Views of Scriptural Translation in a Multilingual Society*. It needs to be stressed that the evidence of rabbinic sources can only tell us how those sources chose to portray the practice of Targum. To what extent these are representations of what actually was the contemporary practice, which in any case must have varied over place and time, and to what extent these are portrayals of what the “authors” of these sources thought that practice ought to be is impossible to determine in the absence of any evidence external to rabbinic literature. See the example given below, n. 9. For another survey of many of these same sources, coming to both similar and different conclusions, see P. S. Alexander, “The Targums and Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum,” in: *Congress Volume: Salamanca, 1983 (Vetus Testamentum Supplement, 36)*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden, 1985), 14–28.

speaking Alexandrian Jewish community of the early Hellenistic period (3rd Century BCE).<sup>5</sup>

## II. Legal Traditions

To begin with, several tannaitic sources presume the existence and legitimacy of written Targums. Their interest, especially in the Mishnah and Tosefta, is in clarifying the liminal status of such texts. Scrolls of translated Scriptures, like scrolls of Scripture, are considered "holy writings" (*kitve qodesh*) and therefore require *genizah*, or withdrawal from circulation, when they become unfit for use.<sup>6</sup> As we now know from the Cairo Geniza, many targumic texts, to our good fortune, were so withdrawn rather than destroyed. Furthermore, according to most interpretations of a difficult mishnah (Shabbat 16:1), such texts of translation, like texts of Scripture, may be removed from a burning building on the Sabbath, even if it involves the performance of an otherwise prohibited act of work.<sup>7</sup> Yet, if Targum texts share with scriptural texts the status of "holy writings," they are still of a lower canonical and hence ritual status than Scripture itself, as indicated by M Yadayim 4:5: they do not "defile the hands." The very fact that texts of translation do not "defile the hands" and therefore do not require being copied and handled in the limiting manner prescribed for scriptural scrolls may even have facilitated their broader circulation and utilization for purposes that will be considered below.

While the tannaitic sources presume both the existence and acceptance of texts of Targum, the same sources suggest that such texts were not to be employed in the synagogue service for the recitation of the Aramaic translation that accompanied the reading of the Torah and the Prophets from scrolls. However, it should be noted that while this distinction is clearly implied in the tannaitic sources, it is only stated

<sup>5</sup> M. L. Klein, "The Palestinian Targum and Synagogue Mosaics," *Immanuel* 11 (1980), 33-45.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., T Shabbat 13:1-3; M Shabbat 16:1.

<sup>7</sup> T Shabbat 13:2 makes the rescue and withdrawal of texts of Targum, per se, obligatory. For the famous story of Rabban Gamaliel I having ordered a Targum of Job to be withdrawn from circulation, perhaps because it was not part of the lectionary cycle and therefore would cause people in their private reading of it to neglect the house of study, see T Shabbat 13:2-3, and parallels in J Shabbat 16, 1, 15b-c; B Shabbat 115a; Tractate Soferim 5:17; 15:2. Alternatively, Rabban Gamaliel might have had it removed since it was a defective or unapproved translation.

explicitly in amoraic and post-amoraic sources.<sup>8</sup> The basic procedure for the targumic rendering of Scripture in the synagogue, as specified in the Mishnah and Tosefta, is as follows: the reader recites a verse of Torah from the scroll, after which the translator renders the same verse in Aramaic, followed immediately by the reader's recitation of the next verse in Hebrew. In the case of the reading of the Prophets, three verses at a time could be so read and translated. It is repeatedly stressed, at least with respect to the Torah, that the reading and translation be conducted in such a way that the two voices, of reader and translator, be clearly distinguishable from each other, each in its successive turn, with neither rising in volume above the other.<sup>9</sup> The combined effect of the implementation of these rules would be for the audience to experience the aural equivalent of an interlinear or parallel-column bilingual text, with the two alternating voices complementing one another in their counterpointal reading.

<sup>8</sup> Note especially M Megillah 4:6, where a blind person is allowed to translate but not to read the Torah as part of the synagogue service. Such a person would certainly translate without a text before him. Similarly, T Sukkah 2:10 implies that while one needed to free one's hands in order to read Scripture, this was not necessary for translation. For an amoraic text that explicitly precludes the reading from a targumic text in the context of the synagogue lection, see especially J Megillah 4, 1, 74d. In B Megillah 32a, the view is ascribed to Ulla that the reader cannot assist the translator lest the synagogue audience think that the targumic translation is written in the Torah scroll. Although it is generally assumed that the rule not to read the translation from a text already applied in tannaitic times, it should be noted that B Megillah 18a interprets M Megillah 2:1 ("One who recites it [the Scroll of Esther] in Targum does not fulfill his obligation") to refer to the reciting of the Targum from a written targumic text. Does this presume that such a practice existed, even though it could not substitute for reading the Scroll of Esther in Hebrew, or is this simply raised as a hypothetical possibility? Similarly, according to B Shabbat 115a, R. Huna understood it to have been a matter of dispute among tannaim whether one could read from a written text of Targum of the Writings (at least on the Sabbath). In both cases, however, it is unclear whether the reference is to public reading in the synagogue or to the private reading of such targumic texts.

<sup>9</sup> See M Megillah 4:4; T Megillah 4 (3):20; J Megillah 4, 1, 74d; B Megillah 23a-b; B Sotah 38b (in R. Hisda's name); and the *baraita* cited in B Berakhot 45a. On the question whether these rules were actually followed in ancient synagogues (see above, n. 4), note the story told in J Megillah 4, 5, 75b, about R. Simeon the Scribe of Terakhon in Transjordan: the congregation wished him to read only half a verse of the Torah at a time, presumably followed by its Targum (see commentaries), so that their children could follow along better. When, after seeking rabbinic advice, he refused to bend the rabbinic rule to accommodate the community's desire, they forthwith fired him.

All of these rules presume (even if ideally) an audience that was attentive both to the Hebrew reading and to the Aramaic translation, which together constituted the publicly performative recitation of Scripture. The Aramaic translation could never substitute for the Hebrew reading which it accompanied. Nor is it ever stated or presumed in a single Galilean rabbinic source that the Aramaic translation was intended for a common crowd which did not understand Hebrew.<sup>10</sup> This is in contrast to the translation of the Torah and the Scroll of Esther into other languages, especially Greek, which, according to tannaitic rules, could be performed from written texts in lieu of the reading from a Hebrew scroll in congregations in which the Hebrew original was not understood or in which a competent Hebrew reader could not be found.<sup>11</sup>

But if the practice of public Aramaic translation was placed almost on a par with that of Hebrew reading (at least for the Torah) as its accompaniment and not substitute, even as it was distinguished from it, its status was still a notch lower. Thus, our rabbinic sources require that a person of lesser status, such as a minor or student, recite the Targum in response to the reading by a person of a higher status, such as an elder or teacher, just as Aaron acted, it is said, as Moses' "translator" before Pharaoh.<sup>12</sup> This is consistent with the proximate yet inferior status of targumic texts relative to those of Scripture.

<sup>10</sup> The idea that the Targum was intended for the unlearned "women and *'amme ha-aretz*" is a view commonly expressed since medieval times. See, for example, Rashi to B Megillah 21b. Note also Qorban Ha-'edah to J Megillah 4, 1, 74d, but this view receives no expression in tannaitic sources. Only one amoraic source, and a Babylonian one at that, raises this possibility, only for it to be rejected. See B Megillah 18a, to be discussed below. See also Tosafot to B Berakhot 8a-b. The view that the targumic translation was intended for the common people, the women, and the children is also found in Tractate Soferim 18:6, Higger, p. 317, but, as Higger indicates in his introduction (p. 29), this is a later addition from a Babylonian source.

<sup>11</sup> See M Megillah 2:1; T Megillah 2:6; 4 (3):13; and *baraitot* in B Megillah 18a. For subsequent discussions, see J Megillah 2, 1, 73a; 4, 3, 75a; J Sotah 7, 1, 21b; B Megillah 8b-9a; 18a. There remains a division of opinion whether a Greek speaker who understands Hebrew but hears the Scroll of Esther read in Greek from a Greek scroll has fulfilled his obligation. For the special status of the Greek translation, especially for the Torah but also, according to some, for the Scroll of Esther, see M Megillah 1:8 (the view of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel); J Megillah 1, 11(9), 71c; B Megillah 8b-9a (*baraita*), 9b (the view of R. Yohanan), 18a (the view of Rav and Samuel); Genesis Rabbah 36:8; Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:1.

<sup>12</sup> T Megillah 4 (3):21. Some take this to refer to people not of lesser and greater age but to lower and higher status. See S. Lieberman's discussion in *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah* (10 vols.; New York, 1955-88), V, 1195. Either interpretation suits my argument. For the minor allowed both to read Torah and to translate, see M Megillah 4:6. However, that

Not only was the synagogue *meturgeman*, or translator, not to read from a text, but his rendering was not to be a recitation of an established text of translation that he had memorized; he was to render the Hebrew into Aramaic as he heard it. However, his freedom of translation was to be governed and constrained by certain traditions and principles of translation which, if not fully spelled out in our sources, are at least exemplified: certain changes could be made to clarify the meaning of Scripture, but others which might distort that meaning, as the sages understood it, could not. As an example of the latter, it is stated that if the translator sought to blunt Scripture's reproof of those who engage in unacceptable sexual conduct by changing the second person ("your father") of Lev. 18:7 to the third ("his father"), he could be silenced.<sup>13</sup> The difficult line that the public translator had to tread, between fidelity to the biblical text and the freedom to render it for his audience, is summed up by the famous dictum of R. Judah b. 'El'ai: "One who translates literally (*ke-tzurato*) is a liar while one who adds is a blasphemer."<sup>14</sup> As this example and

same text permits a blind person and one poorly dressed (in torn clothes) to translate but not to read the Torah. For the targumic rendering of "prophet" of Exod. 7:1 as *meturgeman*, see Tg. Onq., Tg. Neof. ad loc. On the age of the *meturgeman*, cf. B Hagigah 14a, where the following opinion is attributed to R. Abbahu (ca. 280): "They do not appoint a *meturgeman* over the public who is less than fifty years old." The *meturgeman* referred to here, however, is most likely not one who translates Scripture in the synagogue but one who communicates a sage's homily to the public as a professional duty (also known as an amora). See Rashi ad loc. On the *meturgeman* to the sage; see below, n. 20.

<sup>13</sup> See M Megillah 4:9. That the reference is to the translator and not to the reader, see C. Albeck, *Six Orders of the Mishna, Mo'ed* (Jerusalem, 1959), 505. For the understanding of M Megillah 4:9 as referring to a change of "your father" to "his father," etc., see J Megillah 4, 10, 75c; B Megillah 25a. The Mishnah offers as a second example of a forbidden translation a rendering of Lev. 18:21 (forbidding passing one's children [seed] through a fire for Molech) so as to refer to impregnating a gentile woman (as we find in Tg. Ps.-J.). For another example of an unacceptable translation (of Lev. 22:28), see J Megillah 4, 10, 75c and J Berakhot 5, 3, 9c; cf. M Megillah 4:9. But the Palestinian Talmud specifically states that such forbidden translations (and, we may assume, other constraints on the *meturgeman*) apply to the public translation of Scripture, whereas in private study and teaching such explanations are permitted.

<sup>14</sup> T Megillah 4 (3): 41. Much has been written on the tension between free and literal translation. For recent treatments of this theme in relation to the ancient translation of Scripture, see S. P. Brock, "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint," in: *The Witness of Tradition*, (OTS 17; Leiden, 1972), 11-36; idem, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979), 69-87; J. Barr, "The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translation," *Nachrichten der Akad. der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* 11 (1978), 279-335. In antiquity, cf. in particular Cicero, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* 5, 14 (trans. H. M. Hubbell, LCL, p. 365):

others suggest, while rules and traditions of translation could only serve to guide the *meturgeman* in his translation, it was he who had to make difficult translation decisions in the live, public context of the synagogue lection.

A further way in which the recitation of the Targum is distinguished from that of Scripture is that certain embarrassing sections of the Torah, notably Reuben's indiscretion with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22) and the second account of the golden calf incident, in which Aaron bears responsibility for the people's sin (Exod. 32:21–25, 35), are "read but not translated" in public.<sup>15</sup> The public translation of such texts was problematic since to translate them literally would only reinforce the public dishonor which they communicated, whereas to provide a translator's cover-up would be recognized as such. Although it has been suggested that these passages were not translated so that the synagogue audience (presumed not to understand Hebrew) would be unaware of their contents,<sup>16</sup> the Tosefta, in the name of R. Simeon b. El'azar (ca. 200 C.E.) implies the opposite: in publicly translating the second account of the golden calf one might, like Aaron, try to justify what happened, perhaps leading some to believe that what happened was not so terrible after all.<sup>17</sup> In such cases it is better simply to acknowledge what Scripture says without either interpreting or enunciating it in the form of translation.

This restriction, it should be stressed again, applies only to the public translation of Scripture. Thus, the Tosefta, after listing passages which are not to be translated and, in the case of some passages in the Prophets, are not to be read either, states: "But the teacher of Scripture [*sofer*]

And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same idea and the forms, or as one might say, the 'figures' of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language. For I did not think I ought to count them out to the reader like coins, but to pay them by weight, as it were.

In a similar vein, see Cicero, *De Finibus* 3, 4, 15.

<sup>15</sup> See M Megillah 4:10; T Megillah 4 (3):31–38; J Megillah 4, 11, 75c; B Megillah 25b; Tractate Soferim 9:9, 10. On these rules and their relation to extant targumic texts, see P. S. Alexander, "The Rabbinic Lists of Forbidden Targumim," *JJS* 27 (1976), 177–191; M. L. Klein, "Not to be Translated in Public – לֹא מְתוּרְגָמִים בְּצִיּוּרָא," *JJS* 39 (1988), 80–91. Cf. Josephus' skipping of the golden calf incident entirely in his retelling of the events at Sinai in *Ant.* III, 5, 8, 99; see note "c" there, *LCL*, pp. 362–363.

<sup>16</sup> See Albeck's note to M Megillah 4:10. Cf. above, n. 10.

<sup>17</sup> T Megillah 4 (3):37. For discussion, see Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah*, ad loc. A slightly different version, cited as a *baraita*, appears in B Megillah 25b.

teaches [these passages] in his usual way." Here an important distinction is drawn between the translating of scriptural passages in the public context of the synagogue liturgy and the interpretation (including perhaps translation) of those same passages in the less public context of the school or the house of study.<sup>18</sup> At issue, it would appear, is not whether the synagogue audience understood biblical texts which dishonor Israel's forebears, but what the effect of public translations of such passages would have been upon an audience which understood both Aramaic and Hebrew and was attentive both to the reading of Scripture and the recitation of its Targum. If these passages must be read publicly, better they be read without either the literal enunciation or apologetic elucidation of translation.<sup>19</sup>

Given the fact that the synagogue translator had the difficult task of rendering the Hebrew of Scripture into Aramaic as he heard it recited, without being either too literal or too free, it is surprising that we find no evidence in our early rabbinic sources for this translator serving as a "professional" synagogue functionary, as is often presumed.<sup>20</sup> Just as a

<sup>18</sup> T Megillah 4 (3):38. Thus, while Reuben's deed (Gen. 35:22) is not to be translated in the context of the synagogue service, it is apologetically translated in Tg. Ps.-J. (as well as to Gen. 49:4) and similarly whitewashed in B Shabbat 55a. See above, n. 10, as well as the following note. The cited passage from the Tosefta may suggest that elementary education included not simply the ability to recite correctly Scripture in Hebrew, but also to translate it "correctly" into Aramaic. For a *sofer* functioning as a *meturgeman*, see J Megillah 4, 1, 74d.

<sup>19</sup> The extant targumic texts treat these passages differently, either by translating them fairly literally (Tg. Onq.), by repeating the Hebrew of the lemma (the Palestinian Targums) or by providing a euphemistic paraphrase (Tg. Ps.-J.). Marginal or interlinear glosses to these texts, and the Masora to Tg. Onq. specify that such passages—and there are several others—are not to be translated "in public." Where translations are found in our extant Targums, they are to be used in study or preparation but not as part of the synagogue service. See the important evidence marshalled by Klein, "Not to be Recited in Public," especially a Cairo Geniza fragment containing a masoretic notation to a Palestinian Targum of Exod. 32:22 (Leningrad Antonin Ebr. III B 32, first published by G. E. Weill in *Textus* 4 [1964], 45 and cited by Klein, *ibid.*, 88): "For those verses which are not translated in public there is [nevertheless written] targum."

<sup>20</sup> Here, once again, it is important to distinguish between the *meturgeman* to the synagogue reader and the *meturgeman* to the rabbinic sage, although there is some overlap between them in amoraic times. For the *meturgeman* to the sage being paid for his services, even on the Sabbath, see B Pesahim 50b (*baraita*). Note that while synagogue inscriptions contain several references to the office of *hazzan* (see J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic* [Jerusalem, 1978], 40–41 [Hebrew]), there is no reference in any inscription to a *meturgeman*. The arguments by S. Lieberman ("*Hazzanut Yannai*," *Sinai*

qualified member of the congregation could be called upon by the synagogue supervisor (*hazzan*) to read or "pass before the ark," so, too, a qualified member of the congregation, including a minor, could be called upon to translate.<sup>21</sup> Finally, while the Mishnah prohibits one who finds a lost scroll of Scripture from studying from it, lest he causes it damage, the Tosefta defines such study either as reading the weekly lection and then repeating or reviewing it or reading the lection and translating it, perhaps verse by verse, into Aramaic.<sup>22</sup> Although such reading and translating from a found scroll is not likely to have occurred in the context of the synagogue service, this passage reinforces the idea that the ability to read Scripture and render it in Aramaic was not limited to a specific group of synagogue functionaries but could be presumed to have been a commonly cultivated skill, at least within the circles to which such rabbinic rules were expected to apply. Persons with facility in the reading and proper translation of Scripture could be called upon from among the congregation to provide a responsive yet rule- and tradition-governed Aramaic translation as an accompaniment to the reading of the weekly lection in Hebrew from a scroll.

This brings us to our next topic, one often ignored in the discussion of Targum—the place of targumic text practice within the rabbinic

4 [1939], 223–224 [Hebrew]) and E. Y. Kutscher (*Words and Their History* [Jerusalem, 1961], 47 [Hebrew]), citing J Megillah 4, 1, 74d, that one of the regular functions of the *hazzan* official in amoraic times was to translate Scripture in the synagogue, are unconvincing. For different conclusions regarding the synagogue *meturgeman* as a professional functionary of the synagogue, see A. Shinan, "The Form and Content of the Aggadah in the 'Palestinian' Targums on the Pentateuch and Its Place within Rabbinic Literature" (doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University; Jerusalem, 1977), 23–25 (Hebrew). For a broader and more detailed discussion of the *meturgeman* to the sage, see my forthcoming book, *Targum and Torah*.

<sup>21</sup> See especially T Sukkah 2:10, in the name of R. Zadoq (ca. 100 or 150 C.E.): the same person who came to synagogue with his *lulav* in hand could be called to recite the 'Amidah on behalf of the congregation, read from the Torah, recite the priestly blessing (if a priest), and translate. A parallel but variant *baraita* in B Sukkah 41b and J Sukkah 3, 14 (11), 54a (where it is cited as a Babylonian *baraita*) does not mention translating. Similarly, T Megillah 4 (3):30 associates those who translate, read, pass before the ark, and raise their hands. For other early sources that presume that one competent to read Scripture in the synagogue might be expected to be able to translate it into Aramaic, see the *baraita* cited in B Qiddushin 49a, with the opinion of R. Judah. See also above, n. 18, for the possibility that elementary teaching of Scripture may have included instruction in its Aramaic translation.

<sup>22</sup> M Bava Metzi'a 2:8; T Bava Metzi'a 2:21. This appears, with slight variation, as a *baraita* in J Bava Metzi'a 2, 9 (10), 8d and B Bava Metzi'a 29b–30a.

curriculum of Torah study both in private and in schools.<sup>23</sup> Here we find our evidence not so much in the Mishnah and Tosefta, with their concern for differentiating between Torah and Targum in the public space of the synagogue, as in the so-called tannaitic midrashim, with their frequent delineation of the rabbinic curriculum of Torah-study as comprising *miqra'*, *mishnah*, and *talmud* (or *midrash*), plus others.<sup>24</sup> In Sifre Deuteronomy 161 we find: *miqra'* (recitation of Scripture from a text) leads to *targum* (Aramaic translation), which leads to *mishnah* (oral teaching), which leads to *talmud* (engaged study), which leads to *ma'aseh* (performance), which leads to *yir'ah* (the fear of God). Thus, the rabbinic study of Scripture begins with its translation before proceeding to its more advanced and dialectically complex forms.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Targum is poised between scriptural reading (*miqra'*) and oral teaching (*mishnah*). This liminal position is also expressed by a passage from the Sifra, in which it is asked whether Targum belongs with *midrashot*, *halakhot*, and *talmud* as a form of (oral) "instruction" (*hora'ah*). According to R. Yose b. Judah (ca. 200 C.E.), Targum, unlike Scripture (*miqra'*), is considered oral teaching.<sup>26</sup> The mere fact that R. Yose's question needed to be asked suggests the Targum's gray position between Scripture and oral teaching.

The place of Targum as the first step in the study of Scripture is spelled out more clearly in two, admittedly later, texts, where it is said

<sup>23</sup> For earlier recognitions of Targum's pedagogic function, see A. D. York, "The Targum in the Synagogue and in the School," *JSJ* 10 (1979), 74–86; and D. M. Golomb, *A Grammar of Targum Neofiti* (Chico, 1985), 2–8; P. S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures," in: *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder (Assen and Philadelphia, 1988), 238–241; idem, "The Targums and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum," 22–23.

<sup>24</sup> See L. Finkelstein, "Midrash, Halakhah and Aggadot," in: *Yitzhak F. Baer Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, eds. S. W. Baron et al. (Jerusalem, 1960), 28–47 (Hebrew); J. Goldin, "The Freedom and Restraint of Haggadah," in: *Midrash and Literature*, eds. G. H. Hartman and S. Budick (New Haven, 1986), 57–58. For other examples, see my book, *From Tradition to Commentary*, chapter 3, nn. 92, 96, and 111.

<sup>25</sup> Deut. 17:19, upon which this passage is a commentary, reads, "And it [the Torah scroll] shall be with him [the king], and he shall read from it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God." Thus, his "learning" is midrashically fleshed out to include targum, mishnah, and talmud, in that order, all of which lead to fulfillment in practice and fear of God.

<sup>26</sup> See Sifra, Shemini, 1:9, according to early manuscripts and not the printed editions, which have been corrupted under the influence of B Keritot 13b. For a fuller treatment of this text, with a discussion of its variants, see my forthcoming book, *Targum and Torah*.

that R. 'Aqiva the student would enter the school house where he would first learn a scriptural section (from a tablet), then its Targum, and then its derived halakhot, aggadot, etc.<sup>27</sup> It is not clear from such passages whether the pedagogical exercise implied here is the recitation of Targum, like Scripture, from a text, or its oral generation.<sup>28</sup>

A similar ambiguity underlies the well-known rule found in the Babylonian Talmud but attributed to two third-century Palestinian amoraim, R. Joshua b. Levi (ca. 230) and R. Ami (ca. 300): "A person should always complete his [private study of the] weekly lection together with the public: twice Scripture and once Targum." Whereas later, and especially Babylonian, traditions understood the fulfillment of this dictum to involve the recitation of both Scripture and Targum from authorized texts, this need not have been the original intent of the Palestinian (Galilean) practice.<sup>29</sup> As a previously cited tosefta dealing with the study of a found scroll suggests, private scriptural study, at least in Palestine, may have involved the reading of the weekly lection, its repetition (either from the scroll or from memory), and its unaided rendering into Aramaic, perhaps verse by verse.<sup>30</sup> However, since it is clear that the

<sup>27</sup> ARN B 12 and 28, Schechter, pp. 29 and 58, respectively. The latter text also appears in Tractate Soferim 16:6, Higgen, p. 289. In the first passage, R. 'Aqiva goes to the school to learn the weekly lection of the Torah. He begins by reading Scripture from a tablet. After he has learned the written text he proceeds to its Targum, then its halakhot, then its aggadot (according to some mss. but not others), and then to other types of derived interpretations. In the second passage, it is said that R. Yohanan b. Zakkai did not fail to learn a single weekly lection of the Torah. He would first master the written text, then its Targum, halakhot, aggadot, etc. For related texts which do not include Targum, see ARN A 14; B Sukkah 28a; B Bava Batra 134a. For the possible inclusion of scriptural translation in elementary school training, see above, n. 18.

<sup>28</sup> For the existence of written aids in the study of the rabbinic oral Torah, see S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*<sup>2</sup> (New York, 1962), 87–88.

<sup>29</sup> B Berakhot 8a–b; see, e.g., Tosafot ad loc. Similarly, the medieval codes (e.g., Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hil. Tefillah 13:25; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 285, 2) rephrase the talmudic text so as to denote a threefold reading, twice from Scripture and once from a text of Targum, in accord with what had become the practice, even though this is not stated in the talmudic text.

<sup>30</sup> T Bava Metzi'a 2:21. It is clear from the formulation *parashiyotav*, "his [weekly] lections," in B Berakhot 8a–b, that a person's private reading, reviewing, and translating of the lection is intended. By geonic times, however, there developed the custom in some places of fulfilling this requirement communally by reading the lection twice in Hebrew and once in Aramaic in the synagogue on Sabbath morning before reading it liturgically from the Torah scroll. See *'Otzar Ha-ge'onim*, Lewin, p. 19, responsa to Berakhot 8b. R. Judah b. El'ai's opinion, that to be a *qore'*, "reader," is to read and translate Scripture, is later interpreted in the Babylonian Talmud (Qiddushin 49a) to

existence of written Targum texts are both attested and accepted in tannaitic sources (at least for scriptural texts which were part of the synagogue lectionary practice), it may be that such texts were used for private study and preparation even though they could not be read from as part of the synagogue service. In either case, private preparation of the weekly lection meant recitation both of its Hebrew text and its Aramaic translation. Clearly, the latter could not replace the former, and the obligation to recite the former twice while the latter only once, may serve again to reinforce the superior status of the former even as it was accompanied by the latter. Such a practice not only presumes the individual's knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic and his ability to move freely between the two, but also serves to reinforce such facility.<sup>31</sup> In other words, comprehension of both Scripture and its language, at whatever level, is reinforced in private as well as in school study by shuttling between the biblical Hebrew of Scripture and the Aramaic of its translation. This would be the textual equivalent of the oral synagogue practice of inter-linear translation previously described. Such pedagogic employment and strengthening of literary bilingualism would not have been unusual in the ancient world.<sup>32</sup>

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refer to translating according to "our Targum" (Onqelos) and not "on one's own"; it is precisely the latter that is more likely to have been the intent of the earlier tannaitic tradition. This Babylonian transformation of a Palestinian teaching reflects a Babylonian tendency to restrict the practice of Targum to the reading of an authorized text. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the conferring of authority on particular texts of Targum is found in the Babylonian Talmud (Megillah 3a) but not in any Palestinian rabbinic sources.

<sup>31</sup> Note in this regard that many of the Palestinian targumic texts recently published from the Cairo Geniza contain not a continuous targumic (Aramaic) text, as we find in the texts of Targum among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but each scriptural verse appears first in Hebrew, in its entirety, and then in Aramaic. For such texts, see M. L. Klein, *Geniza Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (2 vols.; Cincinnati, 1986). Other Geniza texts, and later manuscripts of the other Targums, usually have simply the first word or words of the scriptural verse 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 made by S. P. Brock, "Translating the Old Testament," in: *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture – Essays in Honor of Barnabas Lindars*, eds. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge, 1988), 92–95.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, C. H. Moore, "Latin Exercises from a Greek Schoolroom," *Classical Philology* 19 (1924), 317–328 (Virgil and Cicero in Latin and Greek in facing columns). For further discussion, see V. Reichmann, *Römische Literatur in griechischer Übersetzung* (Leipzig, 1943), 28–61; H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (New York, 1956), 342–356. On the phenomenon of translation for a

## III. Narrative Traditions

Thus far, I have concentrated on Palestinian legal traditions relating to the practice of Targum in the synagogue and in study. To understand not simply that practice but its purpose, or how the rabbis conceived of its purpose, we need to consider some narrative traditions, also from Palestinian sources although somewhat later (third–fourth centuries), that are often attached to the legal sources for elucidation.

First of all, the practice of Targum as it mediates the reading of Scripture in the synagogue is compared in several texts to what is rabbinically understood to have occurred at Mt. Sinai, of which, in a sense, it is a performative reenactment. Just as God's word was "given in reverence and fear," and just as it was "given by way of a middleman (*sirsur*)," being Moses, so, too, the public reading of Scripture must be reverently mediated by a *meturgeman*. In order to maintain this dramatic experience of scriptural reception through its live mediation, the *meturgeman* must be distinct from the reader; unlike the reader, he may not recite from a written text. Yet, like the reader, he must conduct himself in a manner befitting the importance of his role.<sup>33</sup> A similar tradition relates that just as God's voice and Moses' voice complemented each other at Sinai, so, too, the voices of Torah-reader and translator must accommodate one another so that neither rises above the other. Thus, both at Sinai and in the synagogue it is by a dialogical combination of voices that revelatory communication is effected.<sup>34</sup> It is curious that Moses' mediation of God's word at Sinai should be taken as a model for the practice of Targum in the synagogue, given the fact these rabbinic sources presume that at Sinai both God and Moses spoke Hebrew. But it is not so strange when we consider that it is the mediated or translated nature of revelation, even if within the same language (what is called "internal translation"), that is here

bilingual audience, especially for didactic purposes, see Brock, "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint," 29–31; L. Forster, "Translation: An Introduction," in: *Aspects of Translation*, eds. A. D. Booth et al. (London, 1958), 9–11. Since, as we saw, lay members of a congregation as well as minors could serve as synagogue translators, such weekly preparation of Scripture with its Aramaic translation, whether in private or in school, would have prepared them to assume such public roles.

<sup>33</sup> See the three stories, all of late third–early fourth-century Palestinian amoraim, found in J Megillah 4, 1, 74d. On Moses' role as middleman at Sinai, see Josephus, *Ant.* III, 5, 3, 87, as well as the rabbinic sources listed in Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 81–82, n. 271.

<sup>34</sup> See B Berakhot 45a, in the name of R. Simeon b. Pazi (Palestine, ca. 280), with an attached *baraita* on the rule that the translator cannot raise his voice over that of the reader.

taken to be the Sinaitic model for the synagogue lection, as it is for the sage's teaching by way of his *meturgeman*.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, in other Palestinian texts revelation itself is conceived of as having been multilingual. That is, the Torah is said to have been issued at Sinai in many languages even though it was textually recorded in one. Thus, Sifre Deuteronomy 343 interprets Deut. 33:2 to mean that God revealed himself to Israel not by speaking to them in one language, as might have been expected, but in four languages—Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Aramaic—just as he revealed himself to them from all four directions.<sup>36</sup> Later texts speak of God's utterances issuing at Sinai in seventy languages.<sup>37</sup> Since the numbers four and seventy are whole numbers, totality of revelation is expressed in the totality of its linguistic expression, which is understood here as a multilingual expression.

<sup>35</sup> There is no indication, as is sometimes presumed, that the rabbinic *meturgeman* to the sage (or amora), in mediating the latter's teachings to his students or to the public, translates from Hebrew to Aramaic. It was befitting a sage, and particularly one of great stature, that his teachings be mediated to an audience. In fact, several Palestinian sources (e.g., Sifre Numbers 140; Sifre Deuteronomy 305) stress that the very presence of a *meturgeman* to a sage was a sign of the sage's importance. Thus, rabbinic teaching, like divine revelation, is mediated communication. The expression "internal translation," to denote the interpretive "reading" of any text out of one's own language and literature, is borrowed from G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York/London, 1975), 28–30, 45–47.

<sup>36</sup> This is based on taking Sinai to represent Hebrew, Se'ir (= Edom) to represent Latin (*leshon romi*) (see Gen. 32:4), Paran to represent Arabic (on the basis of Gen. 21:21), and the word *ntah* to represent Aramaic. Notice that in the Sifre's subsequent interpretations, this word is interpreted through word plays as if it were Hebrew.

<sup>37</sup> See B Sanhedrin 88b; Midrash Psalms 92:3; and Exodus Rabbah 5:9; 28:6. On the multiplicity of voices, see also Mekhilta, Yitro, 9; PRK, Bahodesh hashelishi, 25; Yalqut Shim'oni, Psalms 709 and 843 (*Yelammedenu*). The understanding that the seventy Sinaitic languages were intended each for a different nation is only expressed in the later formulation of Exodus Rabbah 5:9. But cf. next note. For seventy languages as the totality of linguistic expression, see also J Megillah 1, 11 (9), 71b, where there is a debate between R. El'azar (ca. 300) and R. Yohanan (ca. 280) as to whether humankind prior to Babel spoke seventy languages and understood one another or one language (Hebrew). According to the former view, Sinai would represent a brief return to the primeval ideal of multilingualism. On seventy languages, note also that according to B Sanhedrin 17a (with which cf. T Sanhedrin 8:1 and J Sheqalim 5, 1, 48d), B Menahot 65a, and B Megillah 13b, a qualification for membership in the Sanhedrin was knowledge of the "seventy languages." In B Sotah 33a it is said that the archangel Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages so he could rule. Cf. the requirement that the Qumran "Overseer" (*mevaqer*) know "all the languages of their families" (*kol leshon mishpehotam*). But cf. Josephus, *Ant.* XX, 12, 1, 264.



Thus, to translate a text of Scripture into one of these languages may be thought of not so much as a distancing from Sinai as a return to it. As one mishnaic passage suggests, to fully comprehend the written record of revelation, in a sense, to penetrate its seemingly unilingual writing, requires reverting it to the fullness of the seventy languages in which it was originally heard by Israel. Thus, in retelling the account in Deut. 27 of the covenantal ceremony in which the people, after crossing the Jordan, were to build an altar and write upon its stones "all the words of this Torah very plainly (*ba'er hetev*)" (Deut. 27:8), the Mishnah interprets these words as follows: "They inscribed on [the altar] all the words of the Torah in seventy languages." The biblical expression *ba'er hetev* 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. The implication is that to articulate fully the meaning of the Hebrew text of the Torah would require its translation into the totality of human language.<sup>38</sup> Thus, translation is itself a form of explication, and no less so for those who "understand" the language of its source. In a sense, then, the original, pre-literary "text" of revelation is itself multilingual, and translation is one means of apprehending another one of its many faces.

<sup>38</sup> The biblical verb *be'er* is mishnaically construed not in its root meaning, to incise or articulate (see Z. Ben-Hayyim, "The Contribution of the Samaritan Inheritance," in: *Proceedings of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 [1969], 166–168), but in its extended post-biblical meaning, to interpret (here, multilingually). The same interpretation of Deut. 27:8 is repeated in B Sotah 36a. For the view that the translation into seventy languages made the Torah, or some part thereof, accessible to the seventy nations, see T Sotah 8:6–7; Mekilta to Deuteronomy (ed. S. Schechter in: *Tiferet Yisra'el: Festschrift for Israel Lewy* [Breslau, 1911], 189); J Sotah 7, 5, 21d; B Sotah 35b. The idea of multilingual translation as a form of explication is similarly applied to Moses' teaching of the people in Tanhuma, Deuteronomy 2, and Midrash Petirat Moshe (*Bet Ha-Midrash*, Jellinek, I, p. 122). Compare the following text of M Sheqalim 5:1:

And these are the ones who were appointed to serve in the sanctuary: . . . Petahiah over the bird offerings. Petahiah is also called Mordechai. [If so,] Why is he called Petahiah? For he would explain [*poteah*] matters [or words] and interpret [*doresh*] them, for he knew seventy languages.

The source of the explanation of the name Petahiah-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 lashon*). Cf. B Menahot 65a; B Megillah 13b; Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 50. The mishnaic passage clearly associates the skill of interpretation with a knowledge of seventy languages.

Just as different languages may correspond to different "faces" of the divinely revealed Torah, so, too, different languages may better suit different types of human discourse. Thus, the Palestinian Talmud attributes to R. Jonathan of Beth Guvrin (ca. 300) the view that there are "four languages which are pleasant for the world to use . . . Greek [*la'az*] for song, Latin for battle, Syrian [Palestinian Aramaic]<sup>39</sup> for dirges, and Hebrew for speech [*dibbur*]." <sup>40</sup> I will return to the significance of the last two shortly, but for now simply note that once again we have four languages and once again we have languages with which the Jews of Palestine would have been familiar, albeit to differing degrees, in rabbinic times.

If it goes without saying that among all the languages Hebrew, as the "language of holiness," has a special status, then it needs to be stressed,

<sup>39</sup> That *sursi* designates Aramaic (in particular Galilean Aramaic) is clear from J Sotah 7, 2, 21c and B Sotah 49b (and its parallel in B Bava Metzi'a 82b–83a).

<sup>40</sup> J Megillah 1, 11 (9), 71b. The text next explains how the Israelites combined the Hebrew language with the Assyrian (Samaritan) script. I shall return to this tradition shortly. The same statement of R. Jonathan of Beth Guvrin is also cited in Esther Rabbah 4:12, but there the attribution is to R. Nathan of Beth Guvrin, and in place of Aramaic (*sursi*) we find Persian (*parsi*). E. Y. Kutscher, "The Language of the Hebrew and Aramaic Letters of Bar-Kosiba and His Generation," *Leshonenu* 26 (1961–62), 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 (in Judea, where Beth Guvrin 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. For the obligation to teach one's child to speak Hebrew (*leshon haqqodesh*), and the rewards thereof, see Sifre Deuteronomy 46, Finkelstein, p. 104, introduced by *mikkan ameru*. For Palestinian parallels, see Sifre Zutta 15:38, Horowitz, p. 288; and T Hagigah 1:2, Lieberman, p. 375; and perhaps J Sukkah 3, 15, 54a (*leshon Torah*). In all of the parallel Babylonian passages (B Sukkah 42a; B Qiddushin 29a), however, the teaching of Hebrew is omitted from the list of what a father should teach his son. For the importance and reward of speaking Hebrew oneself, see Sifre Deuteronomy 333, Finkelstein, p. 383, in the name of R. Meir (ca. 150 C.E.). For parallels, see J Sheqalim 3, 4 (3), 47c; J Shabbat 1, 3c. Although some (e.g., E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* [Leiden, 1974], 8–15) have interpreted these passages conversely, as last-ditch efforts to preserve Hebrew from death as a spoken language, there is no reason, it seems to me, not to take them at their face value, especially in light of other evidence that I shall present below. S. Lieberman, in: *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinical Literature*, eds. E. Y. Kutscher and M. Z. Kaddari (2 vols.; Ramat Gan, 1972–74), I, 107 (Hebrew), explains that Aramaic, as the Jewish "mother tongue" of the time, would have been a more spontaneous vehicle for the expression of mourning grief than Hebrew, but he does not reconcile this with the view of Hebrew as the preferred language of speech. On the use of Aramaic for dirges we now have new evidence, to be discussed below.

as do our rabbinic sources, that among all the languages Aramaic is closest but not quite equal in status to that of Hebrew, even as it accompanies Hebrew in several usages.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the Palestinian Talmud attributes to R. Yohanan (ca. 280) the view that Aramaic (*sursi*) should be treated with respect since it is employed in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings.<sup>42</sup> But Aramaic also has a special status close to that of Hebrew, as a revealed language and as a language of revelation, through its association with Ezra. According to the Tosefta, in a tradition attributed to R. Yose (ca. 150), the Torah would have been given through Ezra had he not been preceded by Moses, since both of them ascended in order to become teachers of Torah. Instead, Ezra gave Israel the Aramaic language and script (the square Assyrian letters), just as Moses gave them the Hebrew language and script (the cursive Samaritan letters).<sup>43</sup> Later reframings of this tradition in both Talmuds describe how Israel, when confronted in the time of Ezra with two Torahs in different revealed languages and scripts, chose to combine the Hebrew language of one with the Aramaic

<sup>41</sup> For example, both Hebrew and Aramaic are used in blessing and prayer, even though Hebrew is dominant in both of these usages. On Hebrew and Aramaic in blessing, see B Shabbat 12b. On the use of Aramaic in personal petitionary prayer, see B Sotah 32b, as well as B Shabbat 12b. Similarly, although the primary language in use in the Temple may be presumed to have been Hebrew, Aramaic is said to have been used for some functions (see M Sheqalim 5:3; 6:5). It is also stated (B Sotah 32b) that the intermediary divine voice (*bat qol*) communicates with humans both in Hebrew and in Aramaic. Note also the debate (B Sanhedrin 38b) whether Adam spoke Hebrew (Resh Laqish) or Aramaic (Rav). It may be coincidental, but the view that Adam spoke Aramaic is attributed to a Babylonian amora, while the view that he spoke Hebrew is attributed to a Palestinian amora (cf. the preceding note regarding a favorable attitude toward the teaching of Hebrew to one's children in Palestinian but not Babylonian sources). On the mishnaic distinction (Sotah 7:1-5) between those ritual recitations which are to be said in Hebrew and those which can be said in any language, see J Sotah 7, 2, 21c, where it is debated whether this distinction is a function which predates the giving of the Torah (and hence can be said in any language) or postdates the giving of the Torah (and hence must be said in Hebrew). Thus, there is an ambiguity whether Hebrew, the language of creation, was used immediately from creation or only after the revelation of the Torah, or, alternatively, whether it was spoken by Adam, subsequently suspended (with the fall or flood), and only restored at Sinai.

<sup>42</sup> J Sotah 7, 2, 21c. Examples are given from each: Gen. 31:47; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4. For rabbinic texts in which it is emphasized that Targum (Aramaic) occurs within the text of Scripture, see M Yadaim 4:5 and J Sanhedrin 10, 1, 27d. Note that according to the following texts, the Aramaic parts of Scripture would lose their sacred (scriptural) status were they to be translated into Hebrew: M Yadaim 4:5; a *baraita* in B Megillah 8b-9a, a *baraita* in B Shabbat 115b.

<sup>43</sup> T Sanhedrin 47-8.

(Assyrian) script of the other.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Aramaic language is elevated to a status approaching that of Hebrew, only to be lowered from that position by Israel themselves.<sup>45</sup>

From these rabbinic sources we see that Aramaic has something of an anomalous status, accompanying Hebrew in many usages but distinct from it, a revealed and scriptural language whose religious status is somewhat less than that of Hebrew, even as its script was combined with the language of Hebrew to constitute Scripture. But the anomaly of Aramaic, not in its scriptural status but in its common usage in rabbinic times, is also noted in a statement attributed to R. Judah the Patriarch in a *baraita* in the Babylonian Talmud: "Why [use] Aramaic [*sursi*] in the Land of Israel? Either *leshon haqqodesh* ["the language of holiness," i.e., Hebrew] or Greek."<sup>46</sup> The normal expectation would have been for the Jews of Palestine, especially in the Galilee, to either stick by their ancestral language or adopt that of the ruling culture, with Aramaic being neither. But, in a sense, while Aramaic was neither it was also something of both: a close cognate to Hebrew but also shared with the surrounding non-Jewish cultures among whom Israel dwelt.

<sup>44</sup> J Megillah 1, 11 (9), 71b; B Sanhedrin 21b-22a. We find the same in J Sotah 7, 2, 21c. According to R. Judah the Patriarch, the Torah was first revealed in the Aramaic (Assyrian) script, was changed to the Hebrew (Samaritan) script when Israel sinned with the golden calf, and was finally restored to the Aramaic script in the days of Ezra.

<sup>45</sup> None of these passages speaks of Targum *per se*, even though both Talmuds know of the association of Ezra's teaching activity with the origins of Targum. For this association, based on Neh. 8:8, see above, n. 3. This association is not found, however, in any tannaitic sources. For Ezra as a second Moses for his receiving of revelation, see also IV Ezra 14. Contrast B Sukkah 20a, which states that Ezra only re-established what had been forgotten by the people. Only Babylonian rabbinic sources identify Ezra as the author of or authority behind a particular targumic text (Tg. Onq.).

<sup>46</sup> B Bava Qamma 82b-83a. In the printed edition of the Talmud, the *baraita* continues with a similar statement attributed to R. Yose, asking about the reason for using Aramaic in Babylonia where either Hebrew or Persian would be the logical choices. But most manuscripts (including the Munich ms.) have Rav Joseph (b. Hiyya, ca. 300), a Babylonian amora who is the major Babylonian tradent of the Targum to the Prophets (see B Pesahim 68a; B Bava Qamma 3b). It would appear that his statement, not originally part of the *baraita*, has been appended to it. Kutscher's claim (*Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll*, 13) that our passage is irrefutable proof that Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of the Galilee by the time of R. Judah the Patriarch is, it seems to me, unwarranted, especially in light of other Palestinian rabbinic texts, and extra-rabbinic evidence, which presume their coexistence along with Greek.

Implicit in the Palestinian sources considered here is the rabbinic understanding that Targum is intended for an audience, whether in worship or in study, that comprehends both Hebrew and Aramaic but nonetheless is served in their reception of Hebrew Scripture through the mediating interpretation of its Aramaic translation. This is not to suggest that the rabbis or their students experienced no language gap with the Hebrew of Scripture. Quite the contrary, they admitted that the Hebrew they employed in their discourse was different from that of the Bible. R. Yohanan is reported to have stated, "The language of the Torah is one thing and the language of the sages is another."<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, we have stories of rabbis who were uncertain as to the meaning of biblical words and phrases and sought their meanings through parallel usages in Aramaic.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Aramaic, being close to yet still distinct from Hebrew,

<sup>47</sup> B 'Avodah Zarah 58b and B Hullin 137b. This is not to deny that the Hebrew of Scripture was rabbinically read and interpreted in terms of rabbinic (mishnaic) Hebrew idioms, or to claim that either was a monolith, but simply to state that they were distinguishable languages, even as they were intertwined in rabbinic discourse.

<sup>48</sup> See the story in Genesis Rabbah 79:7, Theodor-Albeck, pp. 946-948, about two third-century sages who went to an Arab market to learn the Aramaic equivalents of some scriptural words by listening to equivalent expressions in Hebrew and Aramaic spoken there. For this understanding, see Theodor's notes ad loc. Frequently cited in this regard is the story about the handmaid of R. Judah the Patriarch and his students: B Megillah 18a = Rosh ha-Shanah 26b. But the earlier Palestinian version in J Megillah 2, 2, 73a and J Shevi'it 9, 1, 38c is quite different. The sages come in search of the meaning of two mishnaic words and an answer to a question of rabbinic priority (age or learning). They learn the answers to all three from the handmaid's incidental comments to them (in Hebrew) regarding their manner of entering the house. The narrative voice of the story is in Aramaic. These stories denote not so much a general ignorance of Hebrew, whether biblical or rabbinic, as a phenomenon common in all societies: we learn the meanings of words from their application in social contexts. To the extent that such social contexts are multilingual, we learn the meanings of words of one language from their juxtapositions with those of another. Note also B Megillah 18a, where the view that only women and the unlearned are unable to understand Scripture is vigorously rejected: "Do we [sages] ourselves understand: *האחשוריים בני הרמכים* (Esth. 8:10)?" For another Babylonian source that stresses the interpretive importance of Targum to the sages themselves (who certainly knew Hebrew and shifted freely between it and Aramaic), see B Megillah 3a (= B Mo'ed Qatan 28b), where R. Joseph (ca. 300 C.E.) says of Zech. 12:11: "Were it not for the Targum of this verse we would not have understood it." His problem with the verse is not with the meaning of its words but with its seemingly elliptical contents, which the extant Targum to the Prophets fills out. For a similar statement, see B Sanhedrin 94b. The medieval Tosafot (to B Berakhot 8a-b) build upon R. Joseph's comment, as follows: "Targum clarifies what could not be learned from the [original] Hebrew [even for those who know Hebrew]." Note G. Steiner's comment (*After Babel*, 17) that, "Any

both in language and in status, provided a medium of interpretive reception, but only in dialogical accompaniment to the Hebrew original. Unlike translations into other languages (especially Greek) for audiences ignorant of Hebrew, the public translation of Scripture into Aramaic was, according to the rabbinic evidence, intended for an audience which could follow both the reading of Scripture in Hebrew and its responsive rendering into Aramaic, with the latter never upstaging or supplanting the former but drawing both interpretive and dramatic attention to it.<sup>49</sup> Thus, to Walter Benjamin's rhetorical question, "Is translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?"<sup>50</sup> we could have expected a negative rabbinic response.

#### IV. Rabbinic Literature Itself is Bilingual

I shall return now to my opening methodological caveat. If the picture that I have painted from Palestinian rabbinic sources of the practice of Targum both in the synagogue and in the context of study is correct, we need not assume that it is a simple representation of what actually took place in the synagogues and study houses of the ancient Jewish Galilee of the same time. Perhaps this is simply a picture that the rabbis sought to project onto those contexts—or how they sought to transform

thorough reading of a text out of the past of one's own language and literature is a manifold act of interpretation." The question that remains, then, and to which I shall return shortly, is: if such translation was necessary, even for those who knew Hebrew, why not translate the old Hebrew of Scripture into the new Hebrew of the sages?

<sup>49</sup> For the possibility of rendering Scripture into other languages for those who did not understand Hebrew, and of those people using such translations as the texts of their readings, that is, as their Scriptures, especially in the case of Greek, see in particular B Megillah 18a, which treats the issue with respect to the Scroll of Esther. See as well M Megillah 1:8; 2:1; T Megillah 2:6; 4 (3):13; J Megillah 1, 11 (9), 71c; 2, 1, 73a; 4, 3, 75a; J Sotah 7, 1, 21b; B Megillah 8b-9a. It is clear from the various stories regarding the origins of the Septuagint that it was regarded as Scripture by the Jews of Alexandria, and eventually by other Greek-speaking Jewish communities and early Christianity. See in particular Philo, *Mos.* 2, 26-44, who claims not only that the translators were divinely inspired but that the resulting translation is the equivalent, "both in matters and words" (2, 40), of the Hebrew. Compare, however, the view of Ben Sira's grandson in his preface to his Greek translation of Ben Sira's wisdom (ca. 132 B.C.E.), that the Greek translation of "the law, the prophets and the other writings" does not accurately represent the Hebrew original. For the rabbinic practice of having Targum accompany Scripture rather than replace it, see also above, n. 31.

<sup>50</sup> W. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," *Illuminations* (New York, 1955), 69.

the practice of Targum as it had developed apart from rabbinic control—and even if they did so with some success, we cannot assume that they were equally successful in all places. Since we have no contemporary non-rabbinic sources for the practice of Targum against which we could check our picture so as to determine to what extent it is representative and to what extent it is rhetorical, we may have to remain content to say that this is how our Palestinian texts (with some important differences from their Babylonian kin) viewed targumic practice.

But there is another side to our picture, relating not so much to what our rabbinic texts assert as to what they seem to presume, and for which we have other types of evidence with which to compare. The presumption is that the targumic setting, both in study and in worship, was a bilingual one, wherein both Hebrew and Aramaic (besides Greek, of course) were widely used in Palestine as vehicles of creative expression and comprehension in the period, not simply up to the Bar-Kokhba revolt, as is now commonly held, but significantly thereafter as well. Since no ancient tape recorders have survived until our day, the question of what people “really” spoke is one we cannot answer with any certainty. However, even if we could, it is likely that we would find different answers at different times in different places among different classes and under different circumstances, and that even for a given time, place, class, and circumstance we could possibly hear a mixture of tongues, whether Hebrew and Aramaic, Aramaic and Greek, or even all three. All of our evidence is literary of some sort and, hence, with some rhetorical coloring—whether it be a rabbinic text, an inscription or a letter.

Having examined all the rabbinic stories and sayings which, when interpreted as simple representations, are said to prove that Hebrew had already died among all except the sages, and among them it had weakened, I find that each and every one can just as easily be interpreted to suggest that Hebrew and Aramaic continued to coexist, even as they were in competition with one another, and therefore significantly interpenetrated each other.<sup>51</sup> But here we are, still caught in the dilemma of rabbinic literature’s dual nature of rhetorical representation.

<sup>51</sup> For the most comprehensive assemblage of such sources, see E. Ben-Yehuda, “Until When Did They Speak Hebrew?,” in: *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew. Prolegomena* (Jerusalem, 1948), 83–254, esp. 201–254 (Hebrew). See also A. Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* (2 vols.; Tel-Aviv, 1967–71), I, 153–165. For examples, see above n. 48. Another such case is B ‘Eruvin 53a–b, often cited as evidence for the demise of Hebrew in the Galilee, which, in fact, simply attests to a Galilean tendency not to distinguish clearly between gutterals and other letters, not

Yet, even before we leave the rabbinic evidence, it is important to remind ourselves that rabbinic literature is itself bilingual: it employs both Hebrew and Aramaic, not just in different texts but in the same texts, albeit to different extents. I speak here not so much of Hebrew influences on rabbinic Aramaic or of Aramaic influences on rabbinic Hebrew, of which there are many, but of the way in which some rabbinic texts alternate between Hebrew and Aramaic: the two Talmuds, the amoraic midrashim, and parts of the liturgy. Especially in the Talmuds, Hebrew and Aramaic are assigned particular functions by the redactors of those documents. Hebrew is generally the language of teaching, be it in the form of a *baraita* or a saying of an amoraic sage, or even of an amora of the later generations, while Aramaic is the language of debate, question and answer, as well as the editorial connecting and framing structures. It is as if the text were written in two colors, or two scripts, so as to distinguish its layered voices, 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.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, texts of

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only in Hebrew but also in Aramaic. The same passage is followed by a series of riddles, by both sages and R. Judah the Patriarch’s handmaid, which in some cases depend on Hebrew/Aramaic word plays, and hence knowledge of both. While it is often noted that rabbinic Hebrew displays signs of Aramaic influence, this being a mark of Hebrew’s weakening, the converse is as true: Galilean Aramaic, unlike its eastern Aramaic cousins, displays the active influence of a living Hebrew. See Z. Ben-Hayyim, “The Contribution of the Samaritan Heritage to the Study of the History of Hebrew,” in: *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, III (Jerusalem, 1968), 63–69 (Hebrew); *ibid.* (Jerusalem, 1969), 162–174 (English); *idem*, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans*, V (Jerusalem, 1977), 251–259 (Hebrew); A. Tal, “Between Hebrew and Aramaic in the Writings of the Samaritans,” in: *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, VII (Jerusalem, 1987–88), 239–255 (Hebrew).

<sup>52</sup> See E. Margoliot, “Hebrew and Aramaic in the Talmud and Midrash,” *Leshonenu* 27 (1962–63), 20–33 (Hebrew). Abba Bendavid (*Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, 134–135) 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, S. Friedman, “A Critical Study of *Yevamot X* with a Methodological Introduction,” in: *Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, I (New York, 1977), 301–302 (Hebrew) in criticism of H. Klein, “Gemara and Sebara,” *JQR* 38 (1947), 67–91. I am not familiar with a similar treatment of the mix of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Palestinian Talmud, but would expect it to be pretty much the same yet with a higher proportion of Hebrew. While it is sometimes presumed that the *gemara* of both Talmuds is in Aramaic while the Mishnah upon which

aggadah, whether talmudic or midrashic, often switch languages as they shift from a story frame to its contained dialogue, sometimes with the frame being in Aramaic, sometimes in Hebrew, depending on the text. Similar language shifting between Hebrew and Aramaic can be seen in the liturgy, going back to rabbinic times, as well.<sup>53</sup> Literary bilingualism (and socio-linguists would extend this to language in general) constitutes a complex code in which switches between languages performatively denote switches in signification as well.<sup>54</sup> Such texts, of course, presume audiences which understand both Hebrew and Aramaic and are able to shift easily and unconsciously between the two, whatever their uses in other domains.

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they comment is in Hebrew, this is not true: the *gemara* itself, even when we discount scriptural citations and *baraitot*, is still about half Hebrew and half Aramaic. This was confirmed by Prof. M. Bar-Asher of the Academy for the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem. Similarly, Prof. M. Sokoloff, in a lecture at the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem on August 22, 1989, estimated that only ten per cent of the Palestinian Talmud overall is in Aramaic.

<sup>53</sup> To my knowledge, no systematic study has been made of the interrelation of Aramaic and Hebrew in the Palestinian homiletical midrashic collections of the period we are considering. They presume a reading audience with facility both in Hebrew and in Aramaic. But if these texts go back ultimately to oral preaching and teaching settings in the Galilean synagogues and study houses of the third through sixth centuries, are we to presume that the oral homilies upon which they are ultimately based were delivered in Hebrew, Aramaic or some combination of the two? Similarly, what language knowledge do they presume for their audience in order for their linguistically-based exegeses to have been understood? For one case of a halakhic homily that presumes knowledge of Hebrew on the part of its popular audience, see B Pesahim 42a (in the name of R. Mattena), cited in this regard by E. Y. Kutscher, "Some Problems of the Lexicography of Mishnaic Hebrew and Its Comparison with Biblical Hebrew," in: *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinical Literature*, I, 55 (Hebrew). For the use of targumic Aramaic in dialogical juxtaposition with scriptural Hebrew in ancient prayers, especially the *qedusha de-sidra*, see D. Boyarin, "The Song and the Praise: Dual Meaning and the Art of Song in Fixed Prayer," in: *Eshel Beer-Sheva*, III: *Essays in Jewish Studies in Memory of Prof. Nehemiah Alloni*, eds. G. J. Blidstein et al. (Beersheva, 1986), 91–99 (Hebrew). For the bilingualism of the synagogue service more generally, see A. Shinan, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the Literature of the Synagogue," in: *Tura: Studies in Jewish Thought – Simon Greenberg Jubilee Volume*, eds. M. Ayali et al. (Tel-Aviv, 1989), 224–232.

<sup>54</sup> For a much broader discussion of recent research on bilingualism in relation to the present topic, see my forthcoming book, *Targum and Torah*.

### V. Extra-Rabbinic Evidence for Bilingualism in the Galilee of Late Antiquity

One important extra-rabbinic source for language usage in the Galilee during the third through sixth centuries is the many inscriptions in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek found at ancient synagogues and related sites. It would be wrong to read such inscriptions as being simple markers of what language the people of a particular place "actually" spoke, since they are stylized and often two or more languages are used within a single location, even within a single inscription. Such inscriptions, no less than texts, are literary and hence convention-bound. Therefore, why a particular inscription appears in one language and not another, or in one language alongside another, may be a function of local conventions that governed the appropriateness of a particular language for conveying a particular type of information in a particular functional setting.

While the vast majority of synagogue inscriptions are in Aramaic, these are mainly dedicatory inscriptions, marking the building, repair or expansion of synagogue edifices, and crediting the donors who made these possible. Yet, at least seven synagogues have dedications in Hebrew and at least one synagogue (Kefar Bar'am in the Upper Galilee) has a dedicatory inscription in both Hebrew and Aramaic. In one synagogue ('Alma in the Upper Galilee) we have a bilingual inscription on a lintel containing a blessing in Hebrew for inhabitants of that place and other places in Israel, and then, switching to Aramaic, the artist's identification of himself: "I am Yose bar Levi the Levite, the artist who made [this lintel]." Yet this very same artist "signs" the exact same Hebrew blessing at nearby Bar'am in Hebrew, speaking of himself in the third person: "Yose the Levite the son of Levi made this lintel." Perhaps when he wished to 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. Nevertheless, in both cases we may presume that he knew both languages and expected those who attended the synagogue to know both as well (although we cannot infer their level of fluency in either).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> I have culled this survey from Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*. See also the comments of J. Yahalom in his review of the same, in *Kiryat Sefer* 53 (1978), 349–355 (Hebrew); and in an expanded English version of the same, "Synagogue Inscriptions in Palestine: A Stylistic Classification," *Immanuel* 10 (1980), 47–56. For additional inscriptions following much the same pattern from the Golan, see D. Urman, "Jewish Inscriptions of the Mishna and Talmud Period from Kazrin in the Golan," *Tarbiz* 53 (1983–84), 513–545 (Hebrew); idem, "Jewish Inscriptions from Dabbura in the Golan," *IEJ* 22 (1972), 16–23. Although I will not focus here on the Greek synagogue inscriptions, their presence is not insignificant, although appreciably less common in Pales-

Perhaps an analogous case, but now in a switch from Greek to Aramaic, can be seen in the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias. There we find, centrally located, a two-part inscription which, first in Greek, singles out two leading members of the community for having contributed to the completion of the synagogue renovations (as do other Greek inscriptions in this synagogue), and then switches to Aramaic to bless all the members of the congregation who have made or will make (so it is hoped) contributions to the synagogue.<sup>56</sup> Those who attended such synagogues are assumed to have been multilingual, with such multilingualism being literarily employed within the synagogue in order to differentiate between the distinct types of information communicated within it.

Equally interesting is the fact that what have been called "literary" inscriptions, that is, inscriptions whose language appears to be drawn from texts, are uniformly in Hebrew, whether they be biblical quotes ('En-Gedi and Beth Alpha),<sup>57</sup> an extensive halakhic text (Rehov) or lists of priestly cycles of service in the Temple (*mishmarot*).<sup>58</sup> Similarly, mosaic zodiacs contain the names of signs and seasons in Hebrew (Hammath Tiberias, Beth Alpha, Na'aran, and 'En-Gedi). In most cases, these Hebrew inscriptions are found in synagogues which also have Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions. Of particular interest is the sixth-seventh century halakhic inscription in the Rehov synagogue, in which place names and names of fruits and vegetables are in Aramaic and aramaicized Greek, while the connecting phrases and other comments are in Hebrew, which is the overall language of the inscription. Such an inscription was to be read and understood—so as to be applied—by those who attended

tine than in the Diaspora and more common in certain regions of the former (coastal and major cities) than in others (e.g., the Golan). As we shall soon see, Greek inscriptions in Palestinian synagogues can be found alongside Hebrew and Aramaic ones. For the Greek synagogue inscriptions, see B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Paris, 1967), nos. 64–81; and now, L. Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem, 1987) (Hebrew).

<sup>56</sup> For this dual inscription, set within a single *tabula ansata*, see M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias: Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains* (Jerusalem, 1983), 53–54, 60, Pls. 21.1–2, 35.3. Much the same pattern of Greek-Aramaic switching can be seen in a dual inscription at the entrance to the synagogue of Beth Alpha: first the two artists are blessed in Greek, then the members of the village as a whole are blessed in Aramaic for having contributed the cost of the inscription. In Hammath Tiberias the zodiac captions are in Hebrew, as are the biblical captions at Beth Alpha.

<sup>57</sup> Whereas at Dura Europos similar scriptural captions are in Aramaic.

<sup>58</sup> For the *mishmarot*, see Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, nos. 51, 52, 56, 106.

this synagogue, unless, of course, we consider it to have been merely decorative.<sup>59</sup> In the recently published synagogue inscriptions from the synagogue and what is said to have been a study hall at Meroth in northernmost Galilee (fifth-seventh centuries), we find a prominently displayed blessing in Hebrew (Deut. 28:6) for all who enter, the recording of a donor's or artist's name in Aramaic, a scriptural caption in Hebrew (Isa. 65:25), and an amulet which begins in Hebrew, switches to Aramaic for the body of its magical incantation, and concludes in Hebrew.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it would appear from Palestinian synagogue inscriptions that, while Aramaic predominates, Hebrew and Aramaic (as well as Greek) were employed alongside each other, even while somewhat functionally differentiated in their usage, and that in many places some knowledge of both languages (as well as Greek) on the part of those who frequented the synagogues may be presumed.

Another sort of recently expanded literary evidence, whose relation to rabbinical authority is uncertain but whose locus is generally thought to be the Galilean synagogue, is the literature of *piyyut* (liturgical poetry), beginning as early as 400 C.E. but certainly by 500 C.E. and largely unknown until it was brought to light from the Cairo Geniza. These liturgical-exegetical poems, which accompanied the weekly and festival Torah-readings or were commissioned by synagogue communities or by individuals for special occasions, are generally in Hebrew, the language in

<sup>59</sup> On the halakhic inscription at Rehov, see *ibid.*, 79–85, and the important articles by Y. Sussmann: "A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth-Shean Valley," *Tarbiz* 43 (1973–74), 88–158; "Additional Notes to 'A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth-Shean Valley,'" *Tarbiz* 44 (1974–75), 193–195; "The Boundaries of Eretz Israel," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976), 213–257; "The Inscription in the Synagogue at Rehov," *Qadmoniot* 8/32 (1975), 123–128 (all in Hebrew). Although Sussmann thinks that the inscription was made by an artist not knowledgeable in Hebrew, he argues that the purpose of this fifth-seventh century Hebrew inscription was to instruct those who attended the synagogue in the halakhic agricultural obligations that applied in their region (*ibid.*, 128). For this to have been the case, they must have had some understanding of the language of the inscription. The similarities between this text and its parallels in rabbinic sources suggest that this might have been a synagogue within the orbit of rabbinic influence, in which rules governing the practice of Targum might have been followed. Other, unpublished inscriptions from the same site are in Aramaic.

<sup>60</sup> See Z. Ilan and E. Damati, *Meroth: The Ancient Jewish Village* (Tel-Aviv, 1987) (Hebrew, with English summary). On the Hebrew-Aramaic amulet, see J. Naveh, "A Good Subduing, There Is None Like It: An Ancient Amulet from Horvat Marish in the Galilee," *Tarbiz* 54 (1984–85), 367–382 (Hebrew). On the Aramaic inscription, see also Y. Tsafir, "On the Word *mny* in a Synagogue Inscription at Meroth: A New Interpretation," *Qadmoniot* 21/81–82 (1988), 57–58 (Hebrew).

which they would have been recited in the synagogues. Since to our ears their language may seem strange and artificial, some have asserted that they were mere literary ornaments which need not have been comprehended at all by their audience. However, recent analysis of their language indicates that it would have been well-suited to a Galilean audience which understood both Hebrew and Aramaic, even if not everyone understood the intricate allusions and puns of these learned performances. Not only do these Hebrew poems presume a knowledge of contemporary Galilean Aramaic, but some of their word plays presume a knowledge of both Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>61</sup> In addition, even though they are in Hebrew, they seem to be closely related, in their language and in the traditions they presume, to the extant Targums which, of course, are in Aramaic.<sup>62</sup> But since these poems, unlike the Targums, were not read in direct juxtaposition with the Torah-reading, they did not need to be distinguished from it but could be read in Hebrew, the dominant language of the liturgy.

If synagogue poetry related to the Torah cycle was composed and recited in Hebrew in the Galilean synagogues, we now know of another type of poetry, from the Galilee of the very same period, which was composed and recited in Aramaic but which served a very different function. An extensive collection of Palestinian Aramaic poetry has been uncovered from the Cairo Geniza whose contents are words of eulogy for the deceased and consolation for their mourners.<sup>63</sup> This gives some

<sup>61</sup> In addition to the works by Ben-Hayyim and Tal cited above, n. 51, see A. Kor, "Yannai's Piyyutim (Liturgic Poems): Evidence to the Hebrew in Eretz-Yisrael during the Byzantine Period" (doctoral dissertation, Tel-Aviv University; Tel-Aviv, 1988) (Hebrew); R. Mirkin, "A Grammatical and Stylistic Examination of the Vocabulary of Yannai," in: *Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Judaic Studies*, II (Jerusalem, 1969), 437-441 (Hebrew); J. Yahalom, *The Language of the Ancient Israeli Liturgical Poem* (Jerusalem, 1985).

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed comparison, see A. Kor, "Yannai's Piyyutim." There is one case in which a Hebrew *piyyut* of Yannai (in: *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai*, ed. Z. M. Rabinovitz [2 vols.; Jerusalem, 1985-87], I, 216-217) is virtually identical to an Aramaic Targum (Klein, in: *Geniza Manuscripts*, I, 72-75); this has occasioned much speculation as to which derived from which; see Lieberman, "Hazzanut Yannai," 224, 243-244 (Hebrew); M. Zula, "Studies on Yannai," *The Proceedings of the Institute for the Study of the Hebrew Poem* 2 (1936), 270 (Hebrew); idem, *Zur Liturgie der babylonischen Juden: Geniza Texte* (Stuttgart, 1933), 64-65; Z. M. Rabinovitz, *Halakha and Aggada in Yannai's Liturgical Poems* (Tel-Aviv, 1965), 45-47 (Hebrew); idem, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai*, I, 59.

<sup>63</sup> For preliminary notices, see J. Yahalom, "Sursi le'ilya?" in: *Proceedings of the Academy of the Hebrew Language - 1986*, XXXIII (Jerusalem, 1989), 133-137 (Hebrew); J.

confirmation to the saying of R. Jonathan of Beth Guvrin that Aramaic, of all languages, is the best suited to lamentation.<sup>64</sup> The Palestinian Talmud distinguishes between the blessings of the mourners and their consolations in terms of their domains: the former in the synagogue and the latter in the open space of the mourners' "row."<sup>65</sup> From rabbinic literature we know that the language for blessing the mourners was Hebrew; we now know that the language for sharing in their grief was Aramaic.<sup>66</sup>

All of this evidence, as fragmentary as it is, suggests that the language situation in the Jewish Galilee in amoraic and post-amoraic times was much more complex than is generally presumed, having continued to be multilingual long after the Bar-Kokhba revolt. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek continued in simultaneous use, albeit to very different extents depending on geographic location and social strata, but even within a given locale and stratum they appear to have been used side by side, but in functionally differentiated ways. This provides a likely linguistic backdrop to the picture of targumic practice that emerges from rabbinic literature of the same setting. As late as the end of the ninth century, according to one testimony uncovered from the Cairo Geniza, an author of a Hebrew grammar, 'Ali ben Yehuda the Nazirite, reports that he would

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Yahalom and M. Sokoloff, "Aramaic Piyyutim from the Byzantine Period," *JQR* 75 (1985), 309-321. For the full publication, see *The Poetry of Israel: Poems in Aramaic of Jews of Eretz-Israel*, eds. J. Yahalom and M. Sokoloff (Jerusalem, forthcoming) (Hebrew).

<sup>64</sup> See above, n. 40.

<sup>65</sup> J Sanhedrin 6, 11, 23d; J Pesahim 8, 8, 36d.

<sup>66</sup> Two other types of non-rabbinic literature might also be mentioned here. The first is the *hekhalot* texts (in Hebrew), which D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen, 1988), has argued derive from the "popular" setting of the synagogue; the second is the extensive corpus of Jewish magical texts found in the Cairo Geniza, most of which have not yet been published. According to an oral report by P. Schäfer at the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem on August 22, 1989, these magical texts are in both Hebrew and Aramaic, often mixed in a single text, with instructions to their users (the "simple people," according to Schäfer) often appearing in Hebrew. These texts appear to derive from Palestine from the late Roman or early Byzantine period. For examples, see T-S K1.127, in: J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1985), 237-238; T-S K1.143, in: J. Naveh, "A Good Subduing, There is None Like It," 378-379; and T-S K1.18/30, in: L. H. Schiffman and M. D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Geniza: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (forthcoming). Note as well a bilingual magical bowl which is inscribed with alternating biblical verses and their Aramaic translations in: S. A. Kaufman, "A Unique Magic Bowl from Nippur," *JNES* 32 (1973), 170-174.

sit in the squares and courtyards of Tiberias listening to the speech of the crowd in both Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>67</sup> Sitting in a synagogue, our grammarian would have heard mainly Hebrew, but not without its Aramaic accompaniment which, if the rabbinic picture is at all representational, was intended for an audience that was accustomed to switching between the two languages.

### Conclusions

Let us then return to that rabbinic picture so that we may understand it once again in its own right. Rabbinic sources conceive of Targum, both in its liturgical and study contexts, not as a substitute for Scripture but as its mediating accompaniment, as a bridge and buffer between written Scripture and its oral reception and elucidation. The status of Targum in both these contexts is rabbinically portrayed as being close to but still less than that of Scripture. We have seen this approximation yet differentiation of status between Targum and Scripture with regard to their recitations, their reciters, their texts, and their languages.

<sup>67</sup> See N. Alloni, "Ten Words of Spoken Hebrew in the Tenth Century," *Leshonenu* 32 (1969), 153-172 (Hebrew); idem, *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature: Collected Papers* (Jerusalem, 1988), II, 303-324 (Hebrew). For a striking example of the continued use of Hebrew in Palestine for private letter writing, at least into the fifth century, see M. Mishor, "A New Edition of the Hebrew Letter: Oxford MS Heb. d. 69 (P)," *Leshonenu* 53/3-4 (1989), 215-264. The evidence presented here suggests, however, that the creative survival of Hebrew was not restricted to southern Palestine (Judea), as is often suggested. My survey of the extant synagogue inscriptions shows no appreciable preponderance of Hebrew over Aramaic inscriptions in the south as compared to the north. Before the discovery of the Bar-Kokhba letters, it was assumed by some that Hebrew had died as a spoken language already in Second Temple times. Those letters provide striking evidence to the contrary, pushing up the date of Hebrew's "death" (see, for example, Kutscher, "Hebrew and Aramaic Letters of Bar-Kosiba," 21-22). Further evidence suggests that even that death announcement was premature. For earlier studies which emphasize the multilingualism of Palestine up to the time of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, see H. Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo, 1954); Ch. Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in: *The Jewish People in the First Century*, II, eds. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen and Philadelphia, 1976), 1007-1039; B. Spolsky, "Jewish Multilingualism in the First Century: An Essay in Historical Sociolinguistics," in: *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, I, ed. J. A. Fishman (Leiden, 1985), 35-50. For the most recent treatment of Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek bilingualism, with substantial reference to the sociolinguistic literature on bilingualism in the ancient world and in general, see G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, V: Linguistic Essays* (Australia, 1989), 40-50. 5-40.

To employ a musical metaphor, the performance of Targum may be said to have been neither that of a soloist nor that of an equal partner in a duet, but that of an accompanist to the principal performance of the scriptural recital. The significance of this function should not be underrated. Just as the musical accompanist enunciates and thereby enhances the performance of the soloist through the subtleties of his or her interpretations, so, too, Targum in relation to Scripture. But in both cases, the accompanist must share the stage unobtrusively, that is, without drawing attention away from the principal performer. It is for both of these reasons that the accompanist performs on a different instrument than that of the performer. For the *meturgeman* this different instrument was the Aramaic language. The use of Aramaic as such an instrument served two interrelated functions: first, by translating Scripture into another, but closely related language, the "correct" meaning (i.e., interpretation) of Scripture could be conveyed while remaining close to the cadence of the language of Scripture. Second, by employing a language other than that of Scripture, translation would remain clearly distinguishable from Scripture, just as it was important that the *meturgeman* remain clearly distinguishable from the reader, the former rendering orally what the latter read from a text. If the proximity yet recognizable differences between Hebrew and Aramaic as languages suited this purpose, so did the rabbinic understanding of Aramaic's semi-sacred status. Thus, voices of Torah and Targum, of Hebrew and Aramaic, worked well in the performative ritual of scriptural enunciation and elucidation, even while the two remained visibly and aurally distinct from one another in quality and status.

Much the same can be said of Targum's role in the realm of study and teaching, where it served as the first and bridging link between a fixed scriptural text and its dialectically fluid explication, that is, as the first movement in the shuttle of interpretation. Liminality—and, therefore, somewhat ambiguously—poised between Scripture and rabbinic teaching, Targum was able to partake of something of the quality and status of each. As translation, it followed the text of Scripture and was accorded some of the respect accorded to Scripture. But as interpretation, it gave succinct expression to a received understanding of Scripture—one that not only could be communicated in the course of a Sabbath lection but also could be mastered in the course of a week's study of the same.

The advantage of Targum—its succinct incorporation of rabbinic interpretation into the very fabric of Scripture—poses a serious danger: people might confuse its version of revelation with the original. From



Second Temple times we have, in fact, several biblical paraphrases, both legal and narrative, written in Hebrew which claimed, explicitly or implicitly, to be revealed Scripture.<sup>68</sup> The early rabbis, as we have seen, considered it important to distinguish the text of Torah both from its translation and from its interpretation, in part so as to allow the living elasticity of the latter two, in part so as to maintain the immutability of the former. In the case of midrash this is not a problem, since the very way in which scriptural verses are midrashically cited and set off by rhetorical terminology and attributions to named sages makes fairly evident the line between Scripture and its interpretation, even as both are in Hebrew and even as the two are dialectically interconnected. But in the case of an extensive scriptural paraphrase this line could not as easily be maintained. It is for this reason, at least in part, that the rabbis employed the instrument of Aramaic to distinguish the voice of interpretive paraphrase from that of Scripture, so that the two might be heard and studied as distinct voices in dialogical interrelation to one another, with neither swallowing the other.

Here it needs to be reiterated that Targum as translation never replaced the text or reading of Torah within rabbinic culture, as did the Septuagint in Greek-speaking synagogues and eventually in the Church.<sup>69</sup> Not coincidentally, neither did Aramaic replace Hebrew as the principal language of religious discourse within the former, as Greek and later Latin did among the latter. Rather, targumic translation, both in worship and in study, continued to provide Scripture's ritual and interpretive accompaniment long after Aramaic ceased to be a spoken

<sup>68</sup> Most significant of these is the so-called Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11. Similarly, we now have sections of the ancient Hebrew text of the Book of Jubilees. See J. C. Vanderkam and J. T. Milik, "The First Jubilees Manuscript from Qumran Cave 4: A Preliminary Publication," *JBL* 110 (1991), 243-270. Of course, within Scripture itself Hebrew to Hebrew interpretive paraphrases exist (notably the books of Chronicles), but by virtue of their inclusion in a single canon they have acquired equal status. Whether the same was the attitude of the Qumran sectarians regarding the canonical status of their rewritten scriptures in relation to the books of Scripture is a matter of scholarly debate, since it is not clear whether all scrolls found in the Qumran "library" are by virtue of their inclusion there of equal canonical status. Compare Z. Ben-Hayyim's suggestion ("The Contribution of the Samaritan Inheritance," p. 170) that certain "variants" in the Samaritan Pentateuch reflect an interpretive "translation" of biblical Hebrew into the later idiom of a spoken Samaritan Hebrew which was very close to mishnaic Hebrew.

<sup>69</sup> See above, n. 49, and cf. above, n. 31.

language for Jews.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Aramaic Targums are themselves at times difficult to understand without a knowledge of Hebrew and the Hebrew text of Scripture which they interpret, and often, even when the meaning of the words of a Targum are clear, their interpretive significance can only be grasped in relation to the scriptural text they render.<sup>71</sup> Thus, just as in the live setting of the synagogue the translator and the reader are portrayed as being mutually responsive to one another, so, too, the texts of Targum and Scripture may be conceived of as being mutually interdependent, notwithstanding the important differences in status between them. It may be said that by performatively linking Targum to Torah, and hence Aramaic to Hebrew, the rabbis kept Hebrew alive at a time when, in the multilingual setting of the Galilee, it might have been swallowed by Aramaic. Subsequently, when Aramaic died as a spoken language, this linkage preserved Aramaic when it might have been swallowed by the next vernacular, Arabic.<sup>72</sup>

By bringing together intra-rabbinic and extra-rabbinic evidence, I have not sought to use the latter to establish the representational reliability of the former's portrayal of the practice of Targum in the Galilee of late Roman and Byzantine times. Rather, I have sought to use extra-rabbinic evidence to establish the probability of a multilingual Galilean context, in which the rhetorical and hence transformative force of rabbinical representations of targumic practice would have made sense. If Targum, from the rabbinic perspective, was to be practiced by and for an audience which understood, to whatever extent, both Hebrew and Aramaic, and if that audience were expected to attend both to its Hebrew original and to its Aramaic rendering in their interlinear, responsive reading or recitation of both, then the restless balance of fidelity and freedom in translation<sup>73</sup> was to be achieved in an ongoing dialogue between Scripture and

<sup>70</sup> On the question of the continued use of Aramaic Targum long after Aramaic had ceased to be a Jewish vernacular, see the Tosafot to B Berakhot 8a-b; and the responsum of Rav Natronai Gaon to Megillah 21b in *ʿOtzar Ha-gebnim*, Lewin, pp. 30-31. Similarly, Aramaic continued as a language of sacred discourse in legal, liturgical, and exegetical realms.

<sup>71</sup> For this reason, the Aramaic syntax of the "translation parts" of the extant Targums represents a kind of "translation language" different from the non-translational expansions in the same targumim. For these differences, see J. Lund, "A Descriptive Syntax of the Non-translational Passages According to Codex Neofiti I" (M.A. thesis, Hebrew University; Jerusalem, 1981).

<sup>72</sup> Of course, the same can be said for the intertwining of Hebrew and Aramaic both in talmudic study and, to a lesser but no less significant extent, in the liturgy.

<sup>73</sup> See above, n. 14.

its translation which sought both to draw Scripture's receivers into its text and language, and its text and language into their world.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Cf. W. Benjamin's statement (in: Steiner [ed.], *After Babel*, 308), that ideally "literalness and freedom must without strain unite in the translation in the form of the interlinear version. . . . The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the archetype or ideal of all translation." In some of our earliest manuscripts rabbinic Targum is written interlinearly with Hebrew Scripture (see above, n. 31), just as, according to rabbinic rules, it is to be performed, certainly in the synagogue and perhaps in the study, interlinearly as well. For a fuller statement of these conclusions in relation to other models of translation, and in relation to the larger history of Jewish multilingualism, see my forthcoming *Targum and Torah*. I must stress that my focus here has been on how rabbinic literature describes the practice of Targum and not on the actual extant targumic texts that have come down to us. How such texts, both the more literal translations of Targum Onqelos and the freer ones of the other Targums, are to be viewed in relation to this rabbinic picture of Targum in the contexts of both worship and study is a matter for future consideration.