

Social History of the Jews in Antiquity

Studies in Dialogue with Albert Baumgarten

edited by

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and Jonathan Ben-Dov

Mohr Siebeck

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“Reading Leads to Translating” in a Multilingual Context

The View from Early Rabbinic Texts (and Beyond)

Steven D. Fraade¹

“In the beginning was the word” (John 1:1). Or we might say, from the Hebrew biblical perspective, that the world is created and sustained through *words*, that is, a pre-existent language, or according to some ancient interpreters, *languages*. For according to one view, the first human, Adam, spoke and understood seventy human languages (not counting those of the animals), the full panoply of semantic meaning, even before there were seventy nations (as listed in Gen 10).² According to this view, what happened at Babel (Gen 11) was not a splintering of one language into seventy, but a linguistic dispersion, a loss of the originary ability of the speakers of seventy languages to understand one another, that is, to be fully multilingual, a condition only to be restored in messianic days.³ In-

¹ It is a pleasure to offer this article as a tribute to Al Baumgarten, who, within a wide range of important subjects, has contributed to our appreciation of the bilingual context of scriptural translation: Albert I. Baumgarten, “Bilingual Jews and the Greek Bible,” in *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism*, ed. James L. Kugel, JSJSup 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13–30. In what follows, I have benefited from comments on earlier versions from Philip Alexander, Yair Asulin, Harold Augenbraum, Peter Cole, Noam Mizrahi, Hindy Najman, and Tessa Rajak. Needless to say, its shortcomings are mine alone.

² For broader discussion of “seventy languages,” see Steven D. Fraade, “Moses and Adam as Polyglots,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra’anan S. Boustán, Klaus Hermann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:185–194; idem, “Before and After Babel: Linguistic Exceptionalism and Pluralism in Early Rabbinic Literature,” *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 31–68, esp. 39–45, 49–55; idem, “The Torah Inscribed/Transcribed in Seventy Languages,” in *Hebrew Between Jews and Christians*, ed. Daniel Stein Kokin, Studia Judaica (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming). For broader studies on multilingualism in ancient Judaism and Jewish societies, see Steven D. Fraade, “Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence,” *Leshonenu* 73 (2011): 273–307 (Hebrew); idem, “Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence,” *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 1–40 (English version of previous).

³ For an association between nation and language already before Babel, see Gen 10:31. Gen 11:7 could be read similarly. For the rabbinic view that humans spoke seventy languages even before Babel, based on Gen 11:1, see y. Meg. 1:11 (71b) (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 748), discussed by Fraade, “Before and After Babel,” 42–43. For the same idea in Arabic Muslim sources, especially the tenth-century grammarian Ibn Jinni, see Abdelfattah Kilito, *The*

creasingly, theorists (and practitioners) of translation recognize that the model of translation as a bilingual mediation between a self-contained monolingual source culture on one side and another self-contained monolingual target culture on the other, between which translation seeks to transfer information, does not sufficiently take into account the extent to which all societies are, at some level, multilingual and to which each contains a variety of languages and dialects in a variety of modes of contact with one another. In this view, “internal” translation or code-switching within a single culture is at least as prevalent as “external” translation across cultures and nationalities.⁴ This is certainly the case for the ancient cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, to one of which I will now turn my attention. In what follows I wish to examine a cluster of ancient rabbinic sources of the early first millennium CE, for which the very act of reading (and understanding) entails translation by the same, presumably bilingual (Hebrew and Aramaic, at the very least) individual subject.⁵

1. The King’s Torah⁶

Deut 17:14–20 legislates a set of rules that mandate (or allow) the installation of a human king of Israel, but only on the conditions that his royal prerogatives and

Tongue of Adam, trans. Robyn Creswell (New York: New Directions, 2016), 27–31. Here I define “multilingualism” as “the knowledge of more than one language by a person or a social group and the ability to switch from one language to another in speech, in writing, or in speaking.” This is from Benjamin Harshav, *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 23–40 (“Multilingualism”), citing from 25. Harshav further clarifies that multilingualism can be “personal, social, or inter-subjective,” that is, not all members of a society need to be equally multilingual to characterize that society as being multilingual.

⁴ For the phrase “internal translation,” see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 28–30, 45–47. See also Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble, Yale Language Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 247–314 (chap. 4, “Internal Jewish Bilingualism”).

⁵ This bilingual performance by a single individual is distinct from the rabbinically prescribed *public* synagogue ritual in which the Hebrew reader and Aramaic translator are to be separate persons, alternating between the reading of a written Hebrew verse and its oral Aramaic rendering for each successive verse in turn. See Philip S. Alexander, “The Targumim and Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of Targum,” *VTSup* 36 (1985), 14–28; Steven D. Fraade, “Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–286.

⁶ For fuller treatments, see Steven D. Fraade, “‘The Torah of the King’ (Deut. 17:14–20) in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Law,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Post-biblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001*, ed. James R. Davila, STDJ 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 25–60 (= Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages*, JSJSup 147 [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 285–319); idem, “Priests, Kings, and Patriarchs: Yerushalmi Sanhedrin in its Exegetical and Cultural Settings,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and*

excesses be limited. Verses 18–19 add the requirement that he shall always have a Hebrew Torah scroll (presumably of Deuteronomy) with him to read regularly, so that he may learn to revere God, and obey his teachings and laws:

וְהָיָה כָּשֶׁבֶתוֹ עַל כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ וְכָתַב לּוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר מִלְּפָנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם:
וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כְּלִי־יָמֵי חַיָּיו לְמַעַן יִלְמַד לִירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת
וְאֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:

18 When he is seated on his royal throne, he shall have a copy of this Teaching written for him on a scroll by the levitical priests.

19 Let it remain with him and let him read in it all his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God, to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching as well as these laws. (NJPS)

In short, the king is to be accompanied and guided by the Torah in all his deeds. In the hands of a rabbinic midrashist of *Sifre* Deuteronomy, however, the verb “learn” is unpacked so as to produce a progressive series of steps in the rabbinic study curriculum, of both written and oral Torah, each one of which “leads to” the next:⁷

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

“Let it (the Torah scroll) be with him and let him read in it all his life ... so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God” (Deut 17:19): This teaches that the sight (Vatican MS) (of it) leads to reading (*miqra*’/Scripture), reading leads to translation (*targum*), translation leads to oral teaching (*mishnah*), oral teaching leads to dialectical study (*talmud*), dialectical study leads to performance (*ma’aseh*), performance leads to reverence (*yir’ah*) (of God).⁸

Graeco-Roman Culture, ed. Peter Schäfer, TSAJ 93, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 315–333 (= Fraade, *Legal Fictions*, 323–344).

⁷ *Sifre* Deuteronomy 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 212). On the rabbinic study curriculum, see Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 51, 97, 116, 214 n. 131, 239 n. 69, 243 n. 92, 244 n. 111, 254 n. 179, 256 n. 201. See also m. Ned. 4:3. Note especially Louis Finkelstein, “Midrash, Halakhah and Aggadot,” in *Yitzhak F. Baer Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S.W. Baron et al. (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1960), 28–47 (Hebrew).

⁸ *Sifre* Deut 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 212). My translation follows Finkelstein’s edition, with the exception that “sight” renders *hammar’eh* found in MS Vatican, and the texts of the commentaries of Rabbenu Hillel, R. Suleiman, and David Pardo, as well as Genizah fragment TS 12.852a (unavailable to Finkelstein). Finkelstein has *hammorā’* (“fear”), which is found in MSS Oxford, London, and the *editio princeps* (Venice, 1545). As I understand the midrash, by having the Torah with him at all times, the king sees it, which leads to his reading it, etc. This makes more exegetical sense than beginning the chain of study with “fear,” which doesn’t appear until later in the verse. David Weiss Halivni has kindly pointed out to me that this is an unusual use of the word *mar’eh*, which usually denotes “appearance,” as in the appearance of a symptom of skin disease. However, in one other place the *Sifre* uses *mar’eh* in the sense of the seeing

What is retrojectively ascribed to the king, or we might say, is projectively modeled by the king, is the sequence of reading, translating, study, and practice for people in general (ideally, at least). Each stage of performance draws the performer to the next, as if they were intrinsically interconnected.⁹ Thus, having the Torah scroll by his side in all of his activities, in such contexts as are specified in m. Sanh. 2:4 and *Sifre Deut* 161 (ed. Finkelstein, 211), leads him to read it. Note, in particular for our purposes, the liminal role of targum (translation) as a buffer or bridge between *miqrà* (Scripture/written Torah) and *mishnah* (oral teaching).¹⁰ Having read a section of Scripture (presumably as little as one verse), one recites its translation (presumably into Aramaic), before preceding in turn to the rabbinic oral (or mishnaic) teaching and dialectical interpretation, leading in the end to performance and reverence of God. Note the change in order from the scriptural text, thereby enabling the process to begin with *mar'eh* ("sight," from the root *r'h*) and to end with *yir'â* ("reverence," from the root *yr'*), creating an inclusio based on a word play. For our purposes, translation immediately follows the reading of Scripture and precedes its rabbinic interpretive expansion, presumably in Hebrew. Compare Saul Lieberman's observation: "But the first rudiment of the interpretation of a text is the ἐρμηνεία, the literal and exact equivalent of the Hebrew תרגום [targum], which means both translation and interpretation."¹¹

Note, as well, the bilingual (or even trilingual) nature of this pedagogic exercise, at least as it would have been practiced, however widely or narrowly, in Palestine in tannaitic times: Scripture is read in (biblical) Hebrew, targum

of something. In *Sifre Deut* 339 (ed. Finkelstein, 388) Moses, in pleading with God not to die, says: "Would it not be better for the people to say 'Moses is good' from seeing [him] than ... from hearing [about him]?"

⁹ For a similar biblical sequence and midrashic interpretation, see *Deut* 31:12 as commented upon by *Midrash Lekah Tov* (ed. Buber, 5:105): מלמד שהשמיעה מביאה: "למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו": מלמד שהשמיעה מביאה: "למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו": "ושמרו לעשות." והיראה מביאה לידי שמירה. ("That they may hear and that they may learn": This teaches that listening leads to study and study leads to reverence [of God]. 'And they observed to do': And reverence leads to observance"). The *Sifre* commentary is not extant for this verse. Compare *Sifre Deut* 106 to *Deut* 14:23 (ed. Finkelstein, 167, with note): "למען תלמד ליראה את ה' אלהיך": מגיד שהמעשר מביא את האדם לידי תלמוד תורה. ("So that you may learn to revere the Lord your God": This tells us that tithing leads to study of Torah"). I have not found any other passages that follow this exegetical pattern, except for a *baraita* in b. *Menah.* 43b:

ותניא אידך: "וראייתם אותו וזכרתם ... ועשיתם": ראייה מביאה לידי זכירה, וזכירה מביאה לידי עשייה. ("It is taught elsewhere, 'Look at it [*šišit*] and remember [all the commandments of the Lord] and observe [them]' [Num 15:39]: Looking leads to remembering, remembering leads to observance").

¹⁰ For a similarly ambiguous placement of targum between written Torah and oral teaching, see *Sifra Šemini* 1:9 to *Lev* 10:10–11, discussed by me in "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, *BJS* 320 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–122.

¹¹ Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 48, with n. 15.

is recited in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, and oral teaching is in early rabbinic (mishnaic) Hebrew. Aramaic targum here is hardly a substitute for Hebrew Scripture but its accompaniment, or, in Walter Benjamin’s term, its flowering.¹² I presume that while Scripture was read from a written text (scroll), targum, like the other rabbinic components of the oral study curriculum, was recited either spontaneously or from memory, or some combination of the two, but not from a written text.¹³ Thus, while translation is an immediate extension of reading, it is linguistically and performatively distinct from it, even as it serves as a bridge to the oral forms of rabbinic interpretive teaching that follow. This is similar to the public (synagogue), liturgical reading of the Hebrew of Scripture and the counterpointal oral recitation of targum, except that there it is to be performed interversally by two distinct persons (reader and translator),¹⁴ whereas here, in private study, the two are performed by the same person (e. g., the king).

2. Two Tales of Leading Rabbis

Lest we think that the king’s Torah reading, translating, and study are unique to him, or that he is exceptional in this regard, note how similar are the portrayed reading and study practices attributed to two leading rabbis of the tannaitic period (although the collection in which they appear is considerably later):¹⁵

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

[R. Akiba] said: ... I will go and study a section of Torah. He went to the schoolhouse and began to read from a student’s tablet, he and his son. He studied Scripture, Targum,

¹² See Fraade, “Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum”; Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens*,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 68–82 in.

¹³ For the condoning of written texts of targum, see Fraade, “Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum,” 256. For the prohibition of their being read from in public worship, and hence their performative oral recitation, see *ibid.*, 256–257. For the spontaneous (or semi-spontaneous) nature of such oral recitation, see *ibid.*, 259–262. See especially *j. Meg. 4:1 (74d)*.

¹⁴ See Fraade, “Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum,” esp. 283.

¹⁵ *Avot deRabbi Natan B 12* (ed. Schechter, 29); *Avot deRabbi Natan B 28* (ed. Schechter, 58). There is little consensus regarding the dating of *Avot deRabbi Natan*, in either of its two recensions. As in all rabbinic anthologies, the dating of its constituent parts is likely to be earlier, but by how much, especially in the absence of earlier parallels, is impossible to determine. In any case, the two rabbis portrayed are dated to the late first and early second centuries CE. I hasten to add that I make no presumptions as to how widely or narrowly the practice portrayed here was actually practiced. In this regard, the later date of the editing of *Avot deRabbi Natan* compared to that of the *Sifre* (mid- to late third century) allows us to consider the possibility (by no means certainty) that the representation of the practice of scriptural reading, translation, and study in these sources would have rung true over a considerable period of time, regardless of who practiced them.

Midrash, Halakhah, and Aggadah, (arcane) speech and parables; he studied everything. (trans. Saldarini)¹⁶

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

It is said of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai that he did not leave one section of the Torah unstudied; he studied Scripture and Targum, Halakhah and aggadah, (arcane) speech and parables. He studied everything. (trans. Saldarini)¹⁷

Once (or twice) again, Aramaic targum functions as a buffer and bridge between written Hebrew Scripture and oral Hebrew rabbinic teaching, leading, as it were, from the former to the latter, differentiating between them even as “translating” between them. Clearly, the king’s reading and study practice, as portrayed by the *Sifre* commentary, was not unique to him, but represents an anachronistic projection of later rabbinic practice onto him, that is, the rabbinicizing of the king and thereby the interpretive authorization of the practice. In the case of the passage about Rabbi Akiba, the pedagogic nature of this practice is made explicit in its locus (“schoolhouse,” בית הספר) and medium (“tablet,” לוח), as well as his being accompanied by his son. It is not clear, however, how much of what Rabbi Akiba recited or studied was written on the tablet. I assume that it was limited to Scripture, or mnemonic scriptural headings, with the other components of his study, beginning with translation, being generated from the scriptural reading, but oral in their performance. However, of this we cannot be certain.¹⁸ Nor can we assume from the formulaic listing of the components of oral teaching (*mishnah*) that these were fixed elements always studied in the same order, especially since not all such lists include the same components, with only these two passages (other than that regarding the king) containing “targum.”¹⁹ In any

¹⁶ Avot deRabbi Natan B 12 (ed. Schechter, 29; trans. Saldarini, 94–95, with notes on 95).

¹⁷ Avot deRabbi Natan B 28 (ed. Schechter, 58; trans. Saldarini, 166). This text also appears in *Sop.* 16.6 (ed. Higger, 289). A similar portrayal of rabbinic study according to its curricular divisions appears in Avot deRabbi Natan A 14 (ed. Schechter, 57; trans. Goldin, 74), once again depicting the practice of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, but *without* the element of targum. Similarly, see b. Sukkah 28a; b. B. Bat. 134a.

¹⁸ On the orality of targumic performance, see above, n. 13. The broader question of the orality of rabbinic oral teaching is one that has long been vigorously debated. For two very different recent approaches, see Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Yaakov Sus-smann, “Oral Law–Taken Literally: The Power of the Tip of a Yod,” in *Mehqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sus-smann and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 209–384 (Hebrew); as well as Steven D. Fraade, “Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim,” *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 33–51 (=Fraade, *Legal Fictions*, 365–379); idem, “Concepts of Scripture in Rabbinic Judaism: Oral Torah and Written Torah,” in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 31–46.

¹⁹ See above, n. 17.

event, both passages emphasize the all-inclusive nature of the exemplary study curriculum: “He studied everything.”

3. Reading Extends to Translation

In the following early rabbinic passages, reading and translating are performed by the same person in such a way that the former (in Hebrew) *extends* to the latter (in Aramaic). First, we need to look at the mishnaic backdrop to a passage from the Tosefta, m. B. Meṣi’a 2:8a (MS Kaufmann):

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

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

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

Along similar lines, we find the following in the Tosefta (t. B. Meṣi’a 2:21 [ed. Lieberman, 70]):

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

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

Here too a balance is struck between reading the scrolls occasionally so they do not degrade, and using them in a way that will cause them damage. More specifically to our topic, simple reading (presumably in Hebrew) is permissible (if not advisable), but reading a section of scripture twice, presumably for the sake of review or memorization, is not; this is comparable to the prohibition of “learning something new” in the related mishnah. Similarly, reading *and trans-*

lating is comparable to reading twice (and perhaps to studying) and is therefore prohibited as excessive use. As in the cases of the king and Rabbis Akiba and Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, I assume that the scroll that is read contains the biblical text (of whatever length) in Hebrew alone, while the translation is not read directly from a written text (whether a scroll or a tablet), but produced by the finder of the scroll either spontaneously or from memory, or by some combination of the two. The other details of this passage need not detain us for present purposes.

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

תנו רבנן: על מנת שאני קריינא, כיון שקרא שלשה פסוקים בבית הכנסת – הרי זו מקודשת. ר' יהודה אומר:

עד שיקרא ויתרגם. יתרגם מדעתיה? והתניא, ר' יהודה אומר: המתרגם פסוק כצורתו – הרי זה בדאי, והמוסיף עליו – הרי זה מחרף ומגדף! אלא מאי תרגום? תרגום דידן. והני מילי דא"ל קריינא, אבל אמר לה קרא אנא,

עד דקרי אורייתא נביאי וכתובי בדיוקא.

Our Rabbis taught: [If he says, “I will betroth you] on condition that I am a *karyana*’,²⁰ once he has read three verses [of the Pentateuch] in the synagogue, she is betrothed. R. Judah said: He must be able to read and translate it. Even if he translates it according to his own understanding? But it was taught: R. Judah said: If one translates a verse literally, he is a liar; if he adds thereto, he is a blasphemer and a libeller. Then what is meant by “translation”? Our [authorized] translation.²¹ Now, that is only if he said to her “*karyana*’.” But if he says: “I am a *kara*’,” he must be able to read the Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa with exactitude.²² (trans. Soncino)

What defines a “*karyana*” or “reader” for purposes of a man’s fulfilling this as his condition for betrothing a woman? Two opinions are given, the first being anonymous (but attributed to R. Meir in some talmudic manuscripts) and the second being attributed to R. Judah bar Ilai: (1) Read three verses of scripture, presumably as part of the synagogue lection for that day, or (2) read and translate, presumably also three verses. According to the second view, “read-

²⁰ The talmudic manuscripts vary on the exact term, but the meaning is the same, as it is below. For this term for “reader,” see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 1042–1043. On this term, see also Shlomo Naeh, “קריינא דאיגרתא: Notes on Talmudic Diplomatics,” in *Sha’arei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher*, vol. 2: *Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic*, ed. Aharon Maman, Steven E. Fassberg, and Yochanan Breuer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 228–255 (Hebrew).

²¹ I take this to denote Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch or Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, or their antecedents, that acquired authoritative status in the Babylonian rabbinic academies, in contrast to the more paraphrastic “Palestinian” *targumim* of the Land of Israel.

²² I understand “exactitude” (בדיוקא) to mean with precision, clearly enunciated.

ing” incorporates both reading and translating.²³ The anonymous voice of the *gemara* (switching from the Hebrew of the *baraita* to the Aramaic of the editorial layer) asks whether he can translate according to his own understanding of the Hebrew, for to do so risks the dual pitfalls of translating too literally or too freely, as expressed in another *baraita* attributed to R. Judah. Rather than run these risks, according to the anonymous voice of the *gemara*, we should assume that the translator does not translate spontaneously but does so from “our [authorized] translation,” that being Targum Onqelos for the Pentateuch (and Targum Jonathan for the Prophets) in Babylonia. However, I would argue that this does not express the view of the opening *baraita* (reflecting Palestinian rabbinic norms), which understands the translation to be “according to his own understanding,” notwithstanding the risks (of the second *baraita*). Once again, targum is viewed, at least by the anonymous voice of the opening *baraita*, to be a spontaneous product of its performer, which is not to deny the possibility that some mixture of memorization or familiarity with targumic tradition is at play.

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

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

Rav Huna bar Judah says in the name of Rabbi Ammi [(Palestine, ca. 300)]: A person should always complete his *parashot* [weekly lections] together with the congregation, [reading] twice the Hebrew text and [reciting] once the [Aramaic] Targum. (trans. Soncino, modified)

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

Turning to liturgical practice, while the rabbinic prayer service is mainly in Hebrew, some key prayers (e.g., *Kaddish*) are partly or fully in Aramaic. Close to our interests in the reading of Hebrew Scripture followed, verse by verse, by its Aramaic targum, we find an example of interspersal translation of Scripture

²³ It is not clear whether this is also performed in the synagogue or in private. Mishnaic law states that the same person cannot both read and translate during the same public synagogue service, but that might not reflect actual practice. See Fraade, “Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum,” 257 n. 9; 258–259 n. 12. Hence, the Soncino translation translates loosely: “He must be able to read and translate it.”

from Hebrew to Aramaic embedded in the “*Kedushah de-Sidra*” prayer. While it is recited overall in Hebrew, the three verses of the *Kedushah* doxology (Isa 6:3; Ezek 3:12; Exod 15:18) are first recited, one by one, in scriptural Hebrew and then rendered in paraphrastic Aramaic targum. Given the context, it is unlikely that these verses were so rendered so as to make them comprehensible to an audience that understood Aramaic but not Hebrew (however fluent they might have been in either), but to enhance and dynamically enunciate their dialogical significance and performativity, originally between angels and humans, but now with the added linguistic counterpoint of alternating Hebrew verses with their Aramaic interpretive renderings. Later commentators understood the function of this inner-translation as providing a modicum of scriptural study through the recitation of scriptural verses and their targumic interpretive accompaniments, with the combination of reading and translation constituting the core or first stage of study.²⁴

Finally, we find a similar alternation of biblical verses in Hebrew and their targumic translations in Aramaic in some of the incantation bowls. Their bilingual purpose in this context is unclear and requires a detailed examination in the broader context of magical language(s).²⁵

4. Conclusion

We have examined several rabbinic texts that speak of targum, mainly in the private context of study, as an extension of reading, and in some passages as the first step to more intensive study. Translation thereby serves as both a buffer and a bridge between reading and interpretation. It linguistically differentiates, while

²⁴ See b. *Soṭah* 49a (with Rashi ad loc.); Ruth Langer, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions Between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*, HUCM 22 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999), 206–214; Daniel Boyarin, “Hašir wəhašewaḥ: dū-mašma’ūt wə’ōmanūt hašir bitfīlōt haqewa,” in *Eshel Beer Sheva* 3 (=Essays in Jewish Studies in Memory of Prof. Nehemiah Almony, ed. Gerald J. Blidstein et al. [Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University, 1986]), 91–99 (Hebrew); idem, “Bilingualism and Meaning in Rabbinic Literature: An Example,” in *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Yoël L. Arbeitman, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series 4, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 58 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988), 150.

²⁵ For secondary literature, see Stephen A. Kaufman, “A Unique Magic Bowl from Nippur,” *JNES* 32 (1973): 170–174; Christa Müller-Kessler, “The Earliest Evidence for Targum Onqelos from Babylonia and the Question of Its Dialect and Origin,” *Journal for the Aranaic Bible* 3 (2001): 181–198; Shaul Shaked, “Rabbis in Incantation Bowls,” in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. M. J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 97–120; Mordechai Mishor, “Hebrew in the Babylonian Incantation Bowls,” in *Sha’arei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher*, vol. 2: Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic, ed. Aharon Maman, Steven E. Fassberg, and Yochanan Breuer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 204–227 (Hebrew). I thank Gideon Bohak for these references.

providing a hermeneutical and performative path between them. Those doing the reading, translation, and study can be presumed to be bilingual (at least). In terms of the broader phenomenon of the “internal” translation in multilingual societies, translation is as much aimed at a “target” audience within as without. If at the core of the human culture and society is language as a medium of communication, both between and within multiple nations, societies, and cultures, biblical translation, one of the longest standing and most broadcast of translations, has much more to teach us.

5. Afterword: The Physicality of Targum as an Extension of Reading

Our earliest (ca. 1000 CE) scribal evidence for the format of Palestinian Pentateuchal targumic texts, as discovered in the Cairo Genizah, contains not a continuous targumic (Aramaic) text, as we find in the texts of the Aramaic translation of Job among the Dead Sea Scrolls,²⁶ but each complete scriptural verse first in Hebrew and then immediately following in Aramaic, employing the same script for each Hebrew verse and its targumic rendering. These texts appear on parchment in three continuous columns per page, the same format as the Hebrew Torah scroll itself. Therefore, it is a misrepresentation of this interspersal placement of targum to represent it as if it were a continuous Aramaic translation alone.²⁷ This practice, of writing verses in alternating sequence between Hebrew and Aramaic targum, continued well into the Middle Ages, especially in Germany, long after Aramaic had ceased to function as a Jewish vernacular language. In other places, the targum (Onqelos) was moved, demoted as it were, to the side in a smaller script and subsequently replaced either by Rashi’s commentary

²⁶ On the relation of these Aramaic translations of Job to rabbinic targum of the same book (and the Syriac Peshitta), see David Shepherd, “Will the Real Targum Please Stand Up? Translation and Coordination in the Ancient Aramaic Versions of Job,” *JJS* 51 (2000): 88–116; idem, *Targum and Translation: A Reconsideration of the Qumran Aramaic Version of Job*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 45 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004); idem, “What’s in a Name? Targum and Taxonomy in Cave 4 at Qumran,” *JSP* 17 (2008): 189–206. Regarding rabbinic reports of a targum of Job (on which see my forthcoming book, *Before and After Babel*, chap. 5), we have no way of knowing whether it would have contained just the targum to Job, or an interlinear (interspersal) format of alternating Hebrew and Aramaic verses. The same can be said (also in chap. 5 of my forthcoming book) regarding different views on the rescue of scrolls of scriptural translation from a burning building on the Sabbath.

²⁷ For such texts of the so-called “Palestinian targum,” see Michael L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986). Note in particular MSS B, C, and D from the Cairo Genizah (ibid., I:xxii). Alternatively, some manuscripts provide the first word or few words of the Hebrew scriptural lemma before providing the verse’s Aramaic translation. This may be termed an abbreviated interspersal format. Klein misleadingly translates the Genizah fragments that he edits as if they were continuous texts of Aramaic translation.

(especially in France) or Saadia's Arabic translation (especially in Spain), so that the placement of both Scripture and targum would represent two continuous readings, as they had not existed previously.²⁸

Thus, both physically and functionally, the Aramaic targum never existed apart from its Hebrew scriptural source in pre-medieval times, the two being recited, studied, and written (as best we can tell), as what Gideon Toury (citing Brian Harris) terms a "bi-text,"²⁹ with Hebrew and Aramaic alternating verse by verse so as to differentiate between the functions and statuses of Scripture and its interpretive translation. In short, we have no evidence whatsoever for the existence of a free-standing Jewish "Aramaic Bible"³⁰ (as existed for other ancient languages, especially the Greek of the Septuagint, but also non-Jewish Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible such as the Samaritan Targum and the Syriac Peshitta). Rather, as I have argued in greater detail elsewhere,³¹ the practice of targum, as performed both in the synagogue and in private study, should be seen as "internal translation," reflecting a broader social phenomenon, across ages and continents, of "internal bilingualism."³² Reading and translation, *miqra* and targum, are performatively interlinked for a shared audience.

²⁸ For medieval manuscripts, see Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 151–156; Sarit Shalev-Eyni, *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 9–10, with photos on 132–134, 136; David Stern, "The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology," *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 11 (2012): 1–88 (<http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/11–2012/Stern.pdf>); Elodie Attia, "Targum Layouts in Ashkenazi Manuscripts: Preliminary Methodological Observation," in *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Eveline van Staaldoune-Sulman, and Hans-Martin Kirm (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 99–122.

²⁹ For this term, see Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), 96–99, quoting from Brian Harris, "Bi-text: A New Concept in Translation Theory," *Language Monthly* 54 (1988) 8–10.

³⁰ For a laudable exception, translating Scripture and targum interspersally, see Philip S. Alexander, trans., *The Targum of Canticles*, The Aramaic Bible 17A (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003). Alexander states (xi): "All the Targumim should be read in dialogue with the biblical text and not as free-standing translations."

³¹ See S. D. Fraade, "Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy," in *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 39 (2006): 69–91, here 81; idem, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," 109–122; idem, "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence," *Jewish Studies* 48 (2012): 29. For evidence of a Greek translation being *read* alongside the Hebrew, see Justinian's Novella 146 (553 CE).

³² For details, see above, n. 4.

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