

Making History

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edited by
Carol Bakhos and Alyssa M. Gray

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STUDIES IN RABBINIC HISTORY,
LITERATURE, AND CULTURE
IN HONOR OF RICHARD L. KALMIN

Edited by
Carol Bakhos and Alyssa M. Gray

Brown Judaic Studies
Providence, Rhode Island

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>AJS Review</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DS (Rabb.)	<i>Rabbinowicz Diḳduḳé Sofrim</i> , 16 vols. (Variæ Lectiones &c.; D. S. Munich: H. Roesl, 1867–97)
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAJ	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
JAJSup	Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements
JAOS	<i>Journal of the Ancient Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series

JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed., with revised supplement (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996)
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
OTP	James H. Charlesworth, ed., <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985)
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
RAC	Theodor Klauser et al., eds., <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–)
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Translation and Authority

Three (Very Different) Cases¹

STEVEN D. FRAADE

Introduction

Does the translation of a text into another language enhance or diminish thereby its status or authority, whether within the source or the target language and culture? Conversely, does the target language or text thereby confer authority upon the source language or text? In either direction, does it matter whether the source language and text are considered “sacred” and/or revealed (that is, Scripture), or are otherwise privileged by their adherents in either or both cultures? These questions, though posed as if reducible to having either/or answers, are intended instead as being bipolar (rather than binary), being mappable as gradients along multiple, seemingly inconsistent vectors, in short, being dynamically dialectical.

The Letter of Aristeeas

Ground zero, as it were, for any discussion of the authority (or authorization) of scriptural translation of the Hebrew Bible (initially the Torah or

1. I offer these reflections in honor of my esteemed colleague and friend of many years Richard Kalmin, who has contributed to the subject of scriptural translation (*targum*) in rabbinic literature in several important writings of his own: Richard Kalmin, “The Miracle of the Septuagint in Ancient Rabbinic and Christian Literature,” in *Follow the Wise: Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine*, ed. Zeev Weiss et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 241–53; “Targum in the Babylonian Talmud,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan et al., with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, 2. vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:501–25; and *Migrating Tales: The Talmud’s Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 80–94 (update of Kalmin, “The Miracle of the Septuagint”).

Pentateuch) is the story of the origins of the Septuagint in mid-third century BCE Alexandria, as enshrined in the pseudepigraphic Letter of Aristeas (about a century later), the general outline of which I will assume is familiar to the reader. In ancient times it was similarly well known, including within the rabbinic circles that produced the Tannaitic midrashim in the early to mid-third century CE.² Although the bulk of the letter is not about translation at all, but rather narrates the lengthy philosophical symposium between King Ptolemy II and the seventy-two Jerusalem elders, as well as Eleazar the Jerusalem high priest's *apologia* for the Torah law, its narrative framing is the occasion for the translation, the description of which brackets the overall account. There are several select elements of authorization that I would here emphasize:

1. The translation into Greek of the Hebrew laws of the Jews is undertaken at the command, that is, under the authority, of the Egyptian king so as to complete the royal library (9–12).
2. It is reciprocally authorized by the exemplary character and radiance of the high priest Eleazar (96, 122–23).
3. The translation is overseen by Demetrius of Phalerum, chief librarian of the king's library.
4. The king's magnanimity and beneficence are demonstrated by his freeing of the Jews held as prisoners in Egypt so as to dispose the Jews well toward him (12–27).
5. Returning to the translation, it is to be made from the most accurate Hebrew originals, as determined by the scribal experts (30–32).
6. The bilingual elders are to be "men of the most exemplary lives and mature experience, skilled in matters pertaining to their

2. I do not treat here other versions of the story, especially that of Philo of Alexandria, or its history of reception, including rabbinic, but do so elsewhere, for which, and for many bibliographic recommendations, see Steven D. Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation in Ancient Judaism: Before and after Babel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 165 nn. 2, 3; see also 66 n. 31). Here I would add two recent articles that question the presumption of Alexandrian Jews having been monolingual (Greek), whereas the opposite presumption would open additional possibilities for how the Septuagint would have functioned culturally within the Jewish community there and elsewhere: René Bloch, "How Much Hebrew in Jewish Alexandria?," in *Alexandria: Hub of the Hellenistic World*, ed. Benjamin Schliesser et al., with the assistance of Daniel Herrmann, WUNT 460 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Dries De Crom, "A Polysystemic Perspective on Ancient Hebrew-Greek Translation," *JAJ* 11 (2020): 163–99. For rabbinic texts that show familiarity with this Hellenistic account, but take it in a different direction, emphasizing the specifics of how the Greek translators emended the Hebrew text of Scripture, see the following: Mek. of R. Ishmael Pisha 14 (ed. Lauterbach, 1:111–12; ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 50–51); y. Meg. 1:9, 71d; b. Meg. 9a–b; Mas. Sof. 1:7 (ed. Higger, 100–105); Mas. Sep. Torah 1:6 (ed. Higger, 22–24).

- Laws" (32; OTP 2:15); "elders of exemplary lives, with experience of the Law and ability to translate it" (39).³
7. "Eleazar selected men of the highest merit and of excellent education due to the distinction of their parentage; they had not only mastered the Jewish literature, but had made a serious study of that of the Greeks as well" (121; OTP 2:21).
 8. Abundant gifts, sacrifices, and vessels are offered by both parties in mutual appreciation (40, 45, 172, 176, 319–20).
 9. There is a royal reception for the translators in Alexandria (178–186).
 10. Aristean praises the translators, emphasizing the accuracy of his account (295–300).
 11. Lodging and provisions are provided by Demetrius for the translators in an ideal setting without disruptions or intrusions (301, 303–307).
 12. The translation itself is achieved by "reaching agreement among themselves on each by comparing versions" (302; OTP 2:32).
 13. The translation is completed in seventy-two days, "just as if such a result was achieved by some deliberate design" (307; OTP 33).
 14. The translation is read in public at a crowded assembly in the company of the translators, who receive a standing ovation (308).
 15. After the transcription of the translation is completed, it is given to the Jewish leaders (309).
 16. While the translation is publicly read, the priests, translators, and other elders stand (310).
 17. A curse is proclaimed against anyone who would revise the text of the translation, "to ensure that the words were preserved completely and permanently in perpetuity" (311, OTP 2:33).
 18. The king rejoices greatly, comparing this glorious translation to its sorrowful (unauthorized) predecessors (312–16); that is, this was not the first such attempt.

Note well the multiple forms of public ratification and royal/priestly authorization. Many of these bring to mind the public ratification of the Sinaitic covenant and its written obligations in Exod 24:1–18, and its renewal in Exod 34:1–35. The production and proclamation of the Septuagint are a reenactment of the revelation of Torah (as later imagined) at Mount Sinai, with the king and librarian as latter-day Moseses (if not God), the high priest Eleazar as the successor to Aaron, the elders playing the roles of the elders, and the people serving as the people.⁴ Finally, in

3. R. J. H. Shutt, "Letter of Aristean," OTP 2:7–34, here 15.

4. For Aaron as a *meturgeman*, albeit of a different sort, see the targums to Exod 7:1 (and 4:16), as treated in depth by me in *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 6, section 7.

order that the authorized Greek version remain fixed without alterations, a curse is placed on anyone who would so violate the authorized Greek version (310–311), echoing what had been announced by Moses for the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:2; 13:11) and, by extension, for the Hebrew Torah as a whole. Notwithstanding this curse, in later times other Jewish Greek translations, for example, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, circulated—in the case of that of Aquila with rabbinic approval.

The translation (and through it the Jewish *nomos*) is publicly endorsed, and hence authorized, from both above and below. There would seem to be little room for ambivalence or second thoughts.

Targum as Reading: Whose Targum Is It?

Translation theorists argue that the sharp line that we sometimes draw between source (or “original”) text and its target translation, that is, between reading and translating, is not as sharp or clear as we might like to think: reading as translation; translation as reading.⁵ The confluence of the two can be seen in the following baraita (actually two), in Hebrew, and accompanying editorial glosses, in Aramaic, from b. Qiddushin 49a, the passage as a whole thereby being itself bilingual (according to Venice Printing, 1520):

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 מחורף 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*”:⁶ Once he has read three verses [of the Pentateuch] in the synagogue, she is betrothed. R. Judah [bar Ilai] [ca. 150 CE] 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

5. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Politics of Translation,” in Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 180: “Translation is the most intimate act of reading” (in a section titled, “Translation as reading,” followed by “Reading as translation”).

6. 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, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 1042–43. On this term, see also Shlomo Naeh, “קריינא דאגרתא,” 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* [Hebrew], ed. Aharon Maman, Steven E. Fassberg, and Yochanan Breuer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 228–55.

literally, he is a liar; if he adds thereto, he is a blasphemer and a libeler.⁷ Then what is meant by “translation”? Our [authorized] translation.⁸ 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.⁹ (trans. Soncino modified)

What defines a “*karyana*” or “reader” for purposes of a man’s fulfilling this as his condition for betrothing a woman? Two opinions are given, the first being anonymous (but attributed to R. Meir in some talmudic manuscripts) and the second being attributed to R. Judah bar Ilai: (1) Read three verses of Scripture, presumably in Hebrew as part of the synagogue lection for that day, or (2) read and translate, presumably into Aramaic and also three verses. According to the second view, “reading” incorporates both reading and translating.¹⁰ The anonymous voice of the Gemara (switching from the Hebrew of the baraita to the Aramaic of the editorial layer) rhetorically asks whether he can fulfill the condition of betrothal by translating according to his own possibly spontaneous understanding of the Hebrew, for to do so risks the dual (universal) pitfalls of translating too literally or too freely, as expressed in the other baraitot attributed to R. Judah. This presumes that there are at least some bilingual auditors present who can judge the relation of the Aramaic translation to its Hebrew source text. Rather than run these risks of both too free and too literal translation, according to the anonymous voice of the Gemara, we should assume that, according to this objection, the translator does not translate

7. For the same statement by R. Judah, see t. Meg. 3:41. Later commentators, for example, Rashi and Tosafot, give targumic examples of each extreme. Defining the happy medium is more difficult. According to Tosafot, when Onqelos appears to add to the verse in translating it, he is not adding of his own accord but doing so “from Sinai,” that is, he is restoring what was revealed at Mount Sinai but forgotten in the interim, and restored by Onqelos (as had previously been done by Ezra). See b. Meg. 3a, treated below, and Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, 90 n. 10, 99, nn. 28, 29; 99–100 n. 30.

8. I take this to denote Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch or Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, or their antecedents, which acquired authoritative status in the Babylonian rabbinic academies, in contrast to the more paraphrastic and numerous “Palestinian” targumim of the land of Israel. So far as I have been able to discern, this is the only appearance of this phrase in early rabbinic literature. Much more frequently used, especially in the Babylonian Talmud and aggadic midrashim, are forms of דמתרגמינן / הכי דמתרגמינן (“thus / as we translate”). See Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 1231–32.

9. I understand “exactitude” (בדייקא) to mean “with precision, clearly enunciated.”

10. It is not clear whether this is 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 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: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86, here 257 n. 9, 258–59 n. 12. The Soncino translation translates loosely: “He must be able to read and translate it.”

spontaneously but does so from “our [authorized] translation,” that being Targum Onqelos for the Pentateuch (and Targum Jonathan for the Prophets) in Babylonia.

I would argue, however, 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. 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 in play.¹¹ We end up here, as well as elsewhere, with opposing attitudes toward the fixed versus fluid styles of targumic performance, with the former predominating in the Babylonian rabbinic schools (and possibly synagogues) and the latter in Palestinian rabbinic circles (and possibly synagogues). There are clearly advantages and disadvantages to both, even as somewhat greater predictability is attained by targum in rabbinic Babylonia compared to greater spontaneity and variety of targumic practice in rabbinic Palestine, where we also find many more targumic versions in circulation, perhaps as a reflection of the looser reins.

(How) Was the Targum Revealed?

The question of the relation of targum to sources of authority, especially by way of the privileging of the antiquity of origins, is taken up several times in the following unique composite passage from the Babylonian Talmud. The preceding context is the claim that certain things that might be thought to have been relative latecomers were there all along, but only suspended (or forgotten) and eventually restored¹² (as well as the link of repeated tradents).¹³ As we shall see, claims for antiquity, at least in traditional societies, are claims for authority (old is better than new; stability is better than innovation; even though pretenses of the former might simply mask the latter). To the extent that the antiquity of something is challenged, so is its authority.¹⁴ What is “lost in (English) translation” in the

11. For a similar understanding of this passage, see Kalmin, “Targum in the Babylonian Talmud,” 512–13. For targumic spontaneity in Palestinian synagogues, see Avigdor Shinan, “Live Translation: On the Nature of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 41–49.

12. On memory loss and restoration, see n. 24 below.

13. Both here and in the preceding unit we find the attribution: “R. Jeremiah—or some say R. Hiyya bar Abba—also said.”

14. See Judah Goldin, “On Change and Adaptation in Judaism,” in *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature*, ed. Barry L. Eichler and Jeffrey H. Tigay, JPS Scholar of Distinction Series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 215–37.

following is the way in which the composite text switches back and forth between Hebrew and Aramaic, as is common textual/rhetorical practice in both Talmuds.¹⁵

B. Megillah 3a (according to MS Munich 95)¹⁶

[A] ואמר רבי ירמיה ואיתימא רבי חייא בר אבא: תרגום של תורה – אונקלוס הגר אמרו מפי רבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע. [B] תרגום של נביאים – יונתן בן עוזיאל אמרו מפי הגי זכריה ומלאכי, [C] באותה שניה ונזדעזעה ארץ ישראל ארבע מאות פרסה על ארבע מאות פרסה. יצתה בת קול ואמרה: מי הוא זה שגילה סתריי לבני אדם? [D] עמד יונתן בן עוזיאל על רגליו ואמר: אני הוא שגלית סתריך לבני אדם; גלוי וידוע לפניך שלא לכבודי עשיתי, ולא לכבוד בית אבא, אלא לכבודך עשיתי שלא ירבו מחלוקת בישראל. [E] ועוד ביקש לגלות תרגום של כתובים, יצתה בת קול ואמרה לו: דייך! מאי טעמא – משום דאית ביה קץ משיח. [F] ותרגום של תורה אונקלוס הגר אמרו? והא אמר רב איקא בר אבין אמר רב חננאל אמר רב: מאי דכתיב [נחמיה ח:ח] ויקראו בספר תורת האלהים מפרש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא. ויקראו בספר תורת האלהים – זה מקרא, מפרש – זה תרגום, ושום שכל – אלו הפסוקין, ויבינו במקרא – אלו פיסקי טעמים, ואמרי לה: אלו המסורת. – שכחום וחזרו ויסדום. [G] מאי שנא דאורייתא דלא אודעזעה, ואדנביאי אודעזעה? – דאורייתא מיפרשא מלתא, דנביאי איכא מילי דמיפרשן, ואיכא מילי דמסתמן. [H] דכתיב [זכריה יב:יא] ביום ההוא יגדל המספד בירושלם כמספד הדרמון בבקעת מגדון, ואמר רב יוסף: אלמלא תרגומא דהאי קרא לא ידענא מאי קאמר: ביומא ההוא יסגי מספדא בירושלם כמספדא דאהב בר עמרי דקטל יתיה הדרדרימון בן טבריימון ברמות גלעד, וכמספדא דיאשיה בר אמון דקטל יתיה פרעה הגירא בבקעת מגידו.

[A] R. Jeremiah [ca. 350 CE]—or some say R. Hiyya bar Abba [ca. 300 CE]— also said: The targum of the Pentateuch was composed by Onqelos the proselyte from the “mouth” of R. Eliezer (b. Hyrcanus) and R. Joshua (b. Hananiah) [both ca. 100 CE].

[B] The Targum of the Prophets was composed by Jonathan ben Uzziel [ca. 50 CE] from the “mouth” of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi [ca. 500 BCE].¹⁷

[C] At that moment, the land of Israel quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs¹⁸ by four hundred parasangs, and a heavenly voice [*bat*

15. For such linguistic code-switching more broadly, see Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, 1–19, with abundant reference to previous scholarship.

16. Cf. y. Meg. 1:8 (9), 71b. Many have commented on this passage. Among them, I would recommend Willem Smelik, “Translation as Innovation in BT Meg. 3A,” in *Recent Developments in Midrash Research: Proceedings of the 2002 and 2003 SBL Consultation on Midrash*, ed. Lieve M. Teugels and Rivka Ulmer, *Judaism in Context* 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2005), 25–49; Kalmin, “Targum in the Babylonian Talmud.”

17. Other traditions (e.g., b. Sukkah 28a) identify him as a student of Hillel (ca. 50 CE).

18. A Persian measure of distance, equaling about four miles or six kilometers each.

qol] came forth and exclaimed, “Who is this that has *revealed*¹⁹ my secrets to humankind?”

[D] Jonathan ben Uzziel [ca. 50 CE] thereupon arose and said, “It is I who have *revealed* your secrets to humankind.²⁰ It is fully known to you that I have not done this for my own honor or for the honor of my father’s house, but for your honor I have done it, that dissension may not increase in Israel.”²¹

[E] He further sought to *reveal* [by] a targum [the inner meaning] of the Writings, but a heavenly voice [*bat qol*] went forth and said, “Enough!” What was the reason?—Because the end-time of the Messiah is foretold in it.²²

[F] But did Onqelos the proselyte compose the targum to the Pentateuch? Has not R. Ika bar Abin [ca. 350 CE] said in the name of R. Hananel [ca. 300 CE], who had it from Rab [ca. 250 CE]: What is meant by the text, “And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, with interpretation, and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading?” (Neh 8:8).²³ “And they read in the book, in the Torah of God”: this refers to the [Hebrew] text of Scripture; “with interpretation”: this refers to the targum; “and they gave the sense”: this refers to the verse stops; “and caused them to understand the reading”: this refers to the accentuation, or, according to another version, the masoretic notes?—These had been forgotten, and were now established again [by Ezra].²⁴

19. Note the use of revelatory language (the verb *גלה* in the *piel* stem), emphasized here by editorial italics, as twice more below.

20. On secret wisdom not to be shared with humankind as a whole or the unworthy among them, somewhat like the myth of Prometheus, see Deut 29:28 (29) (as understood in the Dead Sea Scrolls): “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever to observe all the words of this Law” [NRSV]; Sir 3:21–24; 1 En. 6–10; Let. Aris. 315; 4 Ezra 14:45–47; Pesiq. Rab. 5 (ed. Friedmann, 4b), the last referring to the rabbinic oral teaching (*mishnah*) as “mysteries” vis-à-vis the non-Jews (Christians), on which see Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, 166–70.

21. For the same or similar expressions, see b. Ta’an. 20a; b. B. Metz. 59b; Avot R. Nat. A 6 (ed. Schechter, 32); Yal. Šim’oni Devarim 809; Midr. Haggadol Lev 11:35 (ed. Steinsaltz, 283).

22. Possibly referring to the book of Daniel, which in Christian Bibles (presumably going back to the Jewish Greek Scriptures) is included in the Prophets, whereas in Jewish (rabbinic) Bibles it is included in the Writings.

23. For similar understandings of this verse, see y. Meg. 4:1, 74d (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language, 768); Gen. Rab. 36:8 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1:342).

24. For other uses of the idea of lost and recovered tradition in the time of Ezra and others, see the top of the column of b. Meg. 3a; 18a; b. Shabb. 104a; b. Yoma 80a; b. Sukkah 44a; y. Shabb. 1:4, 3d; y. Sukkah 4:1, 54b; y. Ketub. 1:8 (11), 32c; Yal. Šim’oni Behuqqotai 682 (2x). For discussion, see Steven D. Fraade, “4 Ezra and 2 Baruch with the (Dis-)Advantage of Rabbinic Hindsight,” in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini, JJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 366–71; Fraade, “Biblical Law and Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Law and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Bruce Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), section on “Memory Loss”; Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, 82–101. This is a fear frequently expressed in Tannaitic texts, especially in Sifre Deuteronomy. See Shlomo Naeh, “Omanut

[G] How was it that the land did not quake because of the [translation of the] Pentateuch, while it did quake because of that of the Prophets?—The meaning of the Pentateuch is expressed clearly, but the meaning of the Prophets is in some things expressed clearly and in others enigmatically. [H] [For example,] it is written, “In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon (Zech 12:11).²⁵ Rav Joseph [ca. 330] [commenting on this] said: “Were it not for the targum of this verse, we should not know what it means.”²⁶ [It runs as follows in Aramaic]: “On that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem like the mourning of Ahab son of Omri who was killed by Hadadrimmon son of Rimmon in Ramoth Gilead (see 1 Kgs 22:34–36) and like the mourning of Josiah son of Ammon who was killed by Pharaoh the Lame in the plain of Megiddo [see 2 Kgs 23:29–30; 2 Chr 35:20–27].” (trans. Soncino modified)

Let us break it down. Section [A] identifies the “author” of the targum to the Pentateuch as the proselyte Onqelos, who was taught/directed/authorized by Rabbis Eliezer (b. Hyrcanus) and Joshua (b. Hananiah), two leading Tannaim, who lived around the end of the first century CE. In a sense, Onqelos’s translation is an extension of their teaching. Although these two are known for their extensive learning (although meeting very different ends), and hence might be thought to lend authority to Onqelos’s translation, they are relatively “recent” with respect to other claims of translation pedigree. The passage shows no familiarity with the fact that

ha-zikkaron: mivnim shel zikkaron ve-tavniyot shel tekst be-sifrut hazal,” in *Mehqerei Talmud III: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach*, ed. Yaakov Sussmann and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 543–89; 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), 105–19 (on Sifre Deut. 48); Marc Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E.–350 C.E.: Texts on Education and Their Late Antique Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31–48 (“Sifre Deuteronomy: The Precariousness of Oral Torah”). Most recently and astutely, see Alyssa M. Gray, “The Motif of the Forgetting and Restoration of Law: An Inter-Talmudic Difference about the Divine Role in Rabbinic Law,” in *Land and Spirituality in Rabbinic Literature: A Memorial Volume for Yaakov Elman, z”l*, ed. Shana Strauch Schick, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 175–207.

25. It is not clear what mourning of Hadadrimmon is being referenced, since none by that description is to be found in Scripture.

26. A parallel appears in b. Mo’ed Qat. 28b. The same statement is attributed to Rav Joseph in b. Sanh. 94b, similarly in interpreting a verse from the Prophets (Isa 8:6). Rav Joseph, a Babylonian sage, is often said to cite targumic renderings in support of an argument, even though his targumic proof texts are rarely successful in determining the outcome and could be detached from their editorial contexts without effect. See n. 29 below. He does so twelve times in the Babylonian Talmud (and four times in parallels in Yal. Šim’oni): Ber. 28a; Pesah. 68a; Yoma 32b, 77b; Mo’ed Qat. 26a; Ned. 38a; Nez. 3a; Qidd. 13a, 72b; B. Qam. 3b; Avod. Zar. 44a; Menah. 110a.

there were other targumim to the Pentateuch circulating in Palestine, whether in writing or orally or some combination of the two.

Moving from the highest sanctity (Pentateuch) to somewhat less sanctity (Prophets), if only gauged by the frequency and amount of text recited in the synagogue, assuming a degree of coherence between rabbinic rules and synagogue practice, the question of the origins of the targum to the Prophets is next raised in section [B]. The proposed answer is anachronistic: the targum to the Prophets is said to have been composed by Jonathan ben Uzziel from the “mouth” of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the last of the classical prophets roughly around the time of Ezra (500 BCE), even though, as previously noted, he is elsewhere said to have been a disciple of Hillel’s (ca. 50 CE), a rather large chronological gap to bridge. Perhaps, in effect, the claim is being made for direct continuity between the end of the prophets and the beginning of the targumic composition, transmission, and interpretation. Being inspired by the (inspired) prophets is of a higher or more direct line of authority than being inspired by two Tannaim, however much esteemed they were. Alternatively, the two sources of authority (rabbinic and prophetic) are being metonymically associated with one another.

In section [C] the heavenly and earthly reactions to the act of prophetic targumic disclosure are, well, literally earthshaking, causing a heavenly divine voice [*bat qol*] to intervene: Who is responsible for this breach of prophetic esotericism, revealing the heavenly, divine “secrets” to humankind, with potentially catastrophic consequences?²⁷ Like Jonah (Jonah 1:7–15) before him, Jonathan ben Uzziel (section [D]) owns up to being the source of the catastrophic (even cosmic) response, but protests that his motives are pure. He is not in it for personal or family gain or fame. Like Amos’s protest to Amaziah (Amos 7:14), he is not a professional prophet (or prophet’s son). Rather, Jonathan translated the Prophets for God’s honor so as to minimize interpretive conflict within Israel, that is, to establish a reliable, normative rendering of the Prophets that would be consensually followed, in large part due to his prophetic teachers and seemingly heavenly assent.²⁸ It would appear that no targum, or authorized targum, of the Writings existed at this time and that targum more generally was accorded relatively little importance and legal authority in Babylonia.²⁹

27. For other ancient sources, see n. 20 above.

28. For similar apologetic arguments employing the same or much the same language, see n. 21 above.

29. This is the view of Kalmin, “Targum in the Babylonian Talmud,” 502–3, 508, 515. However, the Babylonian Talmud is familiar with earlier disagreements regarding the status of a targum to the book of Job (part of the Writings). See b. Shabb. 115a, based on earlier traditions in t. Shabb. 13:2–3 and y. Shabb. 16:1, 15 b–c. For an in-depth discussion, see Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 5.

Next in sequence are the Writings, which Jonathan ben Uzziel intends to translate as well ([E]), perhaps assuming that he has convinced God (the *bat qol*) of his pure intentions in translation as a means to achieving peace within Israel. Once again, the heavenly voice intervenes forcefully, saying enough is enough! That is, permission denied. The anonymous (Aramaic) voice of the Talmud (*stam*) asks, “How come?,” thereupon responding to its own rhetorical question: Because the Writings (perhaps referring to the book of Daniel) contain hints of the end of historical time and the advent of the Messiah. Were such hints to be disclosed (whether truly or falsely) via targum, surely messianic internecine disputes would only increase in Israel (as attested to in the not-too-distant history, viz., Bar Kokhba).

Returning to the role of Onqelos in composing the targum to the Pentateuch [F], the Talmud rhetorically asks whether, in fact, Onqelos had been the (first) composer of the pentateuchal targum, citing a tradition that traces the origins of targum back to Ezra’s public reading of the Torah according to Neh 8:1–8, long before Onqelos.³⁰ According to that tradition, the word תרגום (Neh 8:8) refers to targum.³¹ That targum could not have been the work of Onqelos, since it predates him by some five hundred years. The seeming contradiction is not resolved, except if we presume that the “historical” Onqelos was not the originator of the targum to the Pentateuch, but the composer of what would become its authorized edition. The targum to the Pentateuch is thus given a *dual* pedigree or authorization: it goes back to Ezra’s reading and explication of the Torah, and with the attribution to Onqelos, it goes back to the teachings and/or inspiration of two leading Tannaim: R. Eliezer and R. Joshua. Perhaps, just as with other fine points in the reading of the Torah Ezra simply restored what had previously been forgotten, so too Onqelos restored the (official) targum to the Pentateuch to its rightful authoritative place, from which it had been lost, perhaps forgotten, after Ezra.³²

Next ([G]) the anonymous (Aramaic) voice of the Talmud, returning to a previous section ([C]), asks why the translation of the Prophets into Aramaic by Jonathan ben Uzziel caused the land to shake (and the *bat qol* to intervene), but there was no such negative heavenly response to the translation of the Pentateuch by Onqelos. The answer is that the Pentateuch is fairly straightforward to read and translate, whereas the Prophets

30. For parallels, see n. 23 above. Originally, this interpretation of Neh 8:8 had nothing to do with the specific targum to the Torah that is attributed to Onqelos, but with the practice and process of spontaneous oral translation. Only later, as in our passage from the Babylonian Talmud, is this verse understood to refer to the specific corpus, whether written or oral, of a particular translation attributed to Onqelos.

31. For the history of this understanding, among both traditional tradents and modern critical scholars, see Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 4, especially nn. 5, 10.

32. For this motif of loss and restoration because of failed memory, see above, n. 24.

are more commonly difficult to understand and, hence, to translate in an authoritative manner. Perhaps the Christian employment of verses from the Prophets so as to prefigure the advent of Jesus lies here in the unspoken background. Such “sectarian” understandings are best left untranslated, or only translated in a (rabbinically) authorized translation, with all others being, in rhetorical effect, banned. In short, with respect to the targum of the Prophets at least, proceed with great caution!

Finally (for us), the Talmud ([H]) provides an example of a verse from the Prophets (Zech 12:11) whose seeming inscrutability, according to Rav Joseph, requires the targum of the same verse, with information derived from other prophetic verses, for its meaning to be clear: “Were it not for the targum of this verse, we should not know what it means.”³³ The prophetic verse of Zechariah mysteriously refers to “the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo,” which is nowhere else referenced in Scripture. The targum, according to Rav Joseph, draws on events of mourning for Josiah son of Ammon in 1 Kgs 22:34–36, and for Josiah son of Ammon in 2 Kgs 23:29–30 (and 2 Chr 35:20–27) to fill out the allusion in Zech 12:11. While this targum might provide contexts for the mourning of Zech 12:11, it does not appear to be revealing any divine secrets as suggested above, both by the heavenly voice (*bat qol*) ([C]) and by Jonathan ben Uzziel ([D]). Given the composite nature of the talmudic text, such internal consistency might be too much to expect.

In sum, this passage presents several authorizing strategies, with varying degrees of explicitness and with varying degrees of certainty (roughly in order of appearance):

1. Onqelos is authorized to translate the Pentateuch by two leading Tannaim, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, ca. 100 CE ([A]).
2. Jonathan b. Uzziel is authorized to translate the Prophets by the last of the classical prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, ca. 500 BCE ([B]).
3. While the *bat qol* (speaking for God) initially objects to Jonathan b. Uzziel’s translation of the Prophets, it would appear to accede to his argument that he did so for the honor of God and for the sake of peace among Israel, ca. 100 CE ([C] and [D]).
4. The translation of the Writings is not authorized, or barely so ([E]).³⁴
5. The earliest translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic is understood to have been performed in conjunction with Ezra’s public, ceremonial reading of the Pentateuch in Neh 8:8 (ca. 500 BCE), thereby, implicitly at least, authorizing Onqelos’s translation as the successor to the same around 100 CE [F].

33. See n. 26 above.

34. See n. 29 above.

6. The unique value of the targum to the Prophets for understanding their sometimes inscrutable meanings is affirmed by Rav Joseph, ca. 350 CE ([H]).

Conclusions

We have seen a wide range of strategies for lending authority or legitimacy to scriptural translation, in some cases through attributions of inspired origins, although even these are sometimes challenged or qualified. Expressions of ambivalence regarding scriptural translation are products or by-products of translation's liminal status as being not quite Scripture, yet integrally tied to it. In other words, does it claim, if only implicitly, to be a form of Scripture (Written Torah) or only a vehicle for orally clarifying Scripture's meaning, whether as a component of public lectionary worship or of private study? Interestingly, although in some contexts targum might be included within the category of "oral teaching" (mishnah), in others it is a bridge (or buffer) between Scripture and mishnah.³⁵ In no case, however, so far as I am aware, is targum claimed to have its origins at Sinai via Moses, as such a claim is made for mishnah (and halakhah), as is implied by m. Avot 1:1.³⁶ Targum, like all translation, can be seen either/both as an extension of reading or/and a segue to commentary.³⁷ As a result, perhaps, of its liminal status as translation, its authority, especially in Babylonia, is very soft, as its text becomes increasingly hard (and "official"). It is, nevertheless, no less illuminating as an important form of scriptural reading.

This is in sharp difference from the enthusiastic reception accorded to the Septuagint by the Letter of Aristeas and others, especially Philo, and

35. On targum's liminality between Scripture and oral teaching, see Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum," 253–86; Fraade, "Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the *Sifra*," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, BJS 320 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 109–22; Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapters 3, 5, and 6.

36. More explicitly see, e.g., t. Sotah 7:11–12 (b. Hag. 3b); b. Eruv. 54b. On the first two, see Steven D. Fraade, "'A Heart of Many Chambers': The Theological Hermeneutics of Legal Multivocality," *HTR* 108 (2015): 113–28. Note, however, that in one tradition, Moses is said to have known all "seventy" languages and to have used them in instructing the Israelites during their journey to the promised land. However, it does not go so far as to claim Sinaitic origins for targum per se. See Steven D. Fraade, "Moses and Adam as Polyglots," in Boustan et al., *Envisioning Judaism*, 1:185–94. In another context, the Deuteronomic king's reading of Torah (Deut 17:19) is accompanied by his recitation of its targum. See Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 6; and for the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 27:8 as referring to the rendering of the Torah in seventy languages, see chapter 3. But here, too, the focus is not the origin of targum per se.

37. See especially, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 6.

the resulting authority, overall, that it long enjoyed in Hellenistic Judaism and in what would become Christianity. By contrast, the Aramaic targum never acquired an unambiguous revelatory status, neither in Palestine nor in Babylonia, that would allow it to supplant Hebrew Scripture as happened with the Septuagint, beginning in Hellenistic Alexandria and continuing through Christendom.³⁸

38. For an expression of fear of such possibly dire consequences of translation, see *Pesiq. Rab.* 5 (ed. Friedmann, 4b), as discussed also with regard to other later rabbinic texts, see Fraade, *Multilingualism and Translation*, chapter 7.