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0521854954 - The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today  
Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein

Excerpt

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## Introduction

### ON TRANSLATION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was a literary enterprise of immeasurable consequence in the history of western mankind. It has justly been called “the most important translation ever made”.<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, the first translation of a text from one language into another.<sup>2</sup> The practice of translation was old and well established in the Near East long before the translation of the Hebrew Bible, and translation techniques had existed for many centuries before the hellenistic age. Its products had long been known over wide areas. Such translations often served official and administrative purposes.<sup>3</sup> Literary bilingualism and translation technique were also widespread in the second millennium in Mesopotamia where Sumerian texts were regularly accompanied by Akkadian translations.<sup>4</sup> We know also of Babylonian interest in the grammar of the Sumerian language.<sup>5</sup> A number of official translations have survived, particularly such as glorified the conquests and commemorated the achievements of imperial rulers. Among the most famous of these are the Behistun (Bisitun) inscription, on the road from Babylon to Ecbatana, of the greatest of the Achaemenid kings, Darius I (521–486 B.C.E.), in Old Persian, Elamite and Assyrian.<sup>6</sup> The same ruler erected monuments inscribed on one side in

<sup>1</sup> Bickerman 1988:101. Cf. also Seeligmann 1990:169.

<sup>2</sup> For the somewhat over-stated claim that it was, see Frankel 1841:2.

<sup>3</sup> For translation for official and administrative purposes in the ancient Near East see Greenfield 1985; Tadmor 1989, with copious references to further literature.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Falkenstein 1953:14, et alibi; Hallo and Simpson 1971:165 et alibi; von Soden 1960; Sjöberg 1960; see also later references to pictorial representations.

<sup>5</sup> For the texts see Landsberger 1956; Civil, Gurney and Kennedy 1986; for studies see Black 1989; 1991; Reiner 1990.

<sup>6</sup> See Pritchard 1974, plates 249, 250, 462; and pp. 277, 302–03, for notes and bibliography; von Voigtlander 1978, with bibliography on pp. XIIIff.; Greenfield and Porten 1982, with bibliography, p. X. See also Sarre and Herzfeld 1910:189ff. with tables XXXIII–XXXV; Weissbach

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Persian, Elamite and Babylonian and on the other in Egyptian hieroglyphics, along the course of the canal connecting the Nile with the Red Sea in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Such triumphal inscriptions as that at Behistun were translated into Aramaic and thus “published” throughout the empire.<sup>8</sup> For translations of literary works, we need remind ourselves only of the ancient versions in various languages of the legend of Ahikar. Of this we have, for example, an Aramaic version, apparently of the fifth century B.C.E., among the papyri of Elephantine, the original of which may go back to the sixth or even seventh century B.C.E.<sup>9</sup>

It would be a mistake to suggest that the Greeks, who were well acquainted with many parts of the Achaemenid empire, were somehow not conscious of the variety of languages spoken by other nations, the βάρβαροι, “barbarians”, = non-Greeks. The Greeks certainly did not imagine that all the βάρβαροι spoke the same incomprehensible language. This common notion goes back to simplistic explanations of the meaning and the connotations of the term βάρβαρος. Such words as βάρβαρος, βαρβαρίζειν, βαρβαρισμός, βαρβαριστί, βαρβαρόγλωστος, βαρβαροστομία, βαρβαροφωνεῖν, and βαρβαρόφωνος are indeed often used for indiscriminate gibberish or broken Greek, generally referring to non-Greek speakers, βάρβαροι, but this does not mean that the Greeks thought all non-Greeks spoke the same language. It is true that Strabo suggests that the word βάρβαρος may have originated in onomatopoeia, but he says this in a context in which he refers to the characteristics of various different (non-Greek) languages. He tells us that to the Greek ear, non-hellenic languages sound harsh and perhaps also incomprehensible because they are unlike Greek, just as to some English ears all non-English languages sound “foreign”; but that does not mean that they all sound alike, let alone that they are all thought to be the same.<sup>10</sup> On the contrary, the Greeks were well aware that different so-called Barbarian nations spoke different non-Greek languages.<sup>11</sup>

1911:Xlff., 8ff. On the value of this inscription as a historical source see Bickerman and Tadmor 1978. This trilingual inscription was the main source of material for the first decipherment of cuneiform writing; see Daniels 1994.

<sup>7</sup> The construction of the waterway between the Nile and the Red Sea was begun by Pharaoh Necho and completed by Darius I: Herodotus II. 158 and IV. 39, 42; see for the text and literature, Weissbach 1911:XXIf., 102ff.; see also H. R. Hall, in *CAH*, III, 1970, pp. 314ff., and T. J. H. James, in *CAH* (2nd ed.), III, 2, 1991, p. 722; Posener 1936:48ff.; 180f. with notes; Kraeling 1953:29; Ghirshman 1954:163ff.; Frye 1963:137; also Porten 1968:21f., with notes 78–80, for other multilingual inscriptions.

<sup>8</sup> For one such translation found at Elephantine see Greenfield and Porten 1982; Sachau 1911:185ff. with plates 52 and 54–56; and Cowley 1923:248–71.

<sup>9</sup> See Cowley 1923:204–48; Pritchard 1958:245ff. (trans. H. L. Ginsberg). For more on later translations see Conybeare, Harris and Lewis 1898; see also Charles 1913:715–84; Nau 1909; Baumstark 1922:11f., with valuable notes.

<sup>10</sup> Strabo, 14, 2, 28, with context.

<sup>11</sup> Though Greek and Latin writers occasionally express horror at the sound of “barbarian” languages (see Norden 1909 (1983): 60ff., especially n. 2), this is not the same as a confession of (or testimony to) ignorance of these languages.

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Similarly, there can be no doubt that translation was not as unfamiliar to the ancients, Greeks or Barbarians, as is sometimes thought.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Herodotus records, as a matter of fact not as an exotic marvel, the erection of two stelae by Darius I on the Bosphorus, one inscribed in Ἀσσύρια γράμματα, the other in Ἑλληνικὰ γράμματα.<sup>13</sup> It is not entirely clear whether Ἀσσύρια here refers to Cuneiform or to Aramaic, although in this case the former seems more likely. However that may be, the reference illustrates not only Persian translation activity but also Greek awareness of it as early as the fifth century B.C.E. The same author also records the existence of a whole class of ἑρμηνεῖς (“interpreters”) in Egypt, and he tells us that these were the descendants of Egyptian boys taught Greek by Ionian and Carian mercenaries in the service of Psammetichus I, the founder of the Saite dynasty.<sup>14</sup> It is in the context of this story (and with reference to Ionians and Carians) that Herodotus uses, for the first time in extant Greek literature, the word ἀλλόγλωσσος,<sup>15</sup> describing the difference between Egyptians and Ionians (and Carians) by a term referring merely to difference in language, not difference of ethnic or geographical origin. On the one hand, Herodotus is thus not using words such as ἀλλογενής, ἀλλοδοπάς, ἀλλοδημος, ἀλλοεθνής, or ἀλλόφυλος, most of which, in any case, are not found in literary use before the fourth century B.C.E. or later; on the other hand, ἀλλόγλωσσος is found in a graffito scratched by Greek mercenaries in the service of Psammetichus II on the lower part of a colossal statue of Ramses II before the temple of Abu Simbel in Nubia as early as the sixth century B.C.E., long before Herodotus.<sup>16</sup>

That Greeks themselves also translated, when the need arose, from oriental languages into Greek we know, e.g. from Thucydides who tells us of some letters sent during the Peloponnesian War by the King of Persia to Sparta; these were intercepted by the Athenians who had them translated (or, literally, “transcribed”, μεταγραψάμενοι: this word, and this distinction, will recur – see Chapter 1) from “Assyrian” (ἐκ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων γραμμάτων, here probably “Aramaic”) into Greek.<sup>17</sup> Thus there is no reason to think that translation from one language into another was regarded either by the Greeks or by orientals

<sup>12</sup> For the Latin and Roman situation, in the Greek world and in the West, see Rochette 1997; Adams, Janse and Swain 2002; Adams 2003.

<sup>13</sup> IV. 87.

<sup>14</sup> Herod. II. 154.

<sup>15</sup> Herodotus here (II. 154) refers to Ionians (and Carians) as ἀλλόγλωσσοι in an Egyptian context; cf. its correlative δμόγλωσσοι in 158, where we are told that the Egyptians called all men who did not share their language “barbarians”. Herodotus does not himself use the word βαρβαρόφωνος (for which he could have appealed to Homeric precedent, precisely in relation to the same Carians: II. II, 867), except where he quotes it from an oracle: VIII, 20; IX, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Meiggs and Lewis 1969:12–13 with literature cited there. It is dated by the editors in 591 B.C.E. Dittenberger in *SIG I* (3rd ed.), p. 1, no. I had dated it ca. 589 B.C.E.; cf. also *IG XII*. (3), 328, line 20 (from the third century B.C.E. in Thera).

<sup>17</sup> IV, 50.

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as anything other than a commonplace activity in response to a frequently encountered need.<sup>18</sup>

That activity rested on a continuing awareness of linguistic variety. It is well to remember that as early an author as Homer was aware (and made his audience aware) not only of linguistic diversity between Greeks and “Barbarians” but also of the fact that the latter differed among themselves in language:

for there are many allies throughout the great city of Priam, and tongue differs from tongue among men from many lands: let each one give the word to those he leads, and them let him lead out, when he has marshaled the men of his own city. (trans. A. T. Murray, Loeb series; *Iliad* II, 803–06)

(This is Iris addressing Hector; it comes immediately before the enumeration of the troops of Priam’s allies.)<sup>19</sup> It is an engaging conceit of some eminent modern scholars to pretend to think that “the Greeks”, when faced with speakers of foreign languages, simply spoke Greek more loudly in order to be understood, almost like some latter-day Anglo-Saxon travellers and empire builders *in partibus infidelium*.<sup>20</sup> I am aware neither of any evidence that would entitle us to accept such a generalisation nor even of any anecdotal illustration that would tempt us to think it a *storia ben trovata*.<sup>21</sup>

Nobody in antiquity could have been more aware than the Greeks of the existence and diversity of foreign languages, and translation was evidently an activity well known and much practised in antiquity both among Greeks and among orientals. It is interesting that we actually have, *inter alia*, pictorial representations, from the eighth century B.C.E., of simultaneous translation. On these we see, for example, an Assyrian official reading, from a document probably written in Aramaic, a surrender demand addressed in their own language to the defenders of a city under siege.<sup>22</sup>

#### JEWES IN EGYPT: THE PRE-HELLENISTIC PERIOD

There had been Jews in Egypt long before the hellenistic age. We have some evidence of a Jewish presence in Egypt before the Persian period, which began

<sup>18</sup> So commonplace that, in the first century B.C.E., we find Sallust, in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, claiming to use a Latin translation of “*libri Punici*”; the demonstration by Oniga (1995) that the work in question was almost certainly written in Greek and that this is at base a literary conceit does not affect the truth of this point.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also *Iliad*, IV. 433–38.

<sup>20</sup> See Grafton 1990:17 with n. 25, citing Momigliano 1976 (the correct date should be 1975).

<sup>21</sup> But see Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1061 (with Frankel’s note) and Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 4.5.33.

<sup>22</sup> Tadmor 1989; cf. Naveh and Greenfield 1983:116; see *ibid.* for simultaneous translation by scribes. See on this also Greenfield 1985:698 with n. 5 for reliefs and wall paintings from the time of Tiglath Pileser III onwards showing pairs of scribes, one writing in Aramaic and the other in Akkadian; cf. *ibid.*, 704, 708–09; and see Schaefer 1930:5ff.; Ghirshman 1954:163.

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with the conquest by Cambyses in 525 B.C.E. Jewish mercenaries were employed there perhaps as early as the seventh, certainly in the sixth century B.C.E. Some were stationed in a military colony established in Elephantine in Upper Egypt, near the First Cataract, to help defend the southern border of Egypt against Nubian incursions.<sup>23</sup> Following the Babylonian conquest of Palestine in 587 B.C.E., the prophet Jeremiah was forced to go to Egypt with refugees from Judea, after Gedaliah, the Jewish governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, had been murdered.<sup>24</sup>

In the fifth century Aramaic documents from Elephantine, claims are made that imply not only a contemporary Jewish presence in Egypt but also the existence of a considerable Jewish population there before the Persian conquest. Thus, in a petition addressed to the Persian satrap Bagoas = Bagothi in Jerusalem, dated 408 B.C.E., the Jews in Elephantine complain about the destruction of the temple of their community and request its rebuilding. In this petition they argue that their forefathers had built this temple (described in the document as a splendid and costly edifice) in the Pharaonic age before the coming of Cambyses, and, although petitioners are known occasionally to magnify their grievances and to exaggerate their losses, the documents give an impression of a numerous and prosperous community.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, the fifth century B.C.E. papyri which testify to the existence of numerous Jewish communities in Egypt do not give us any reason to think that these communities were large in number by the standards of the hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods.

It is clear that in the fifth century, the language of these Jews was Aramaic. But this changed gradually with time. In the period following the Persian domination, although a few Jewish inscriptions found in Egypt are written in Aramaic, most are written in Greek.<sup>26</sup> These few Aramaic inscriptions may indicate that Aramaic did not entirely disappear as a language used by Jews in Egypt, at least in the earlier part of the Ptolemaic period after the death of Alexander in 323 B.C.E. Some Aramaic may have survived from the Persian

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Porten 1968:16ff.; and on the earlier use of Jewish mercenaries in Egypt see *ibid.*, 8ff.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 40ff.; II Kings 25, 22ff.

<sup>25</sup> The text is in Cowley 1923, no. 30 (and no. 31, a copy of no. 30): from Pap. 30, lines 13–14 (Cowley, p. 113). The satrap's answer is in Cowley 1923, no. 32; and cf. Sachau 1911:3–27; plates I–III; see also *ibid.*, pp. 28ff. and plate IV. See also Porten 1968:110ff.; Pritchard 1950:491–92 (see also Pritchard 1958:279ff. for translations (by H. L. Ginsberg) of the petition and the satrap's answer).

<sup>26</sup> For Jewish inscriptions in Egypt see Frey, *CJJ*, II, 354ff.; see also D. M. Lewis, in *CPJ*, III, 138ff. The vast majority of these are in Greek. A few, from the early Ptolemaic period, are in Aramaic; and the equally small number of Hebrew inscriptions (see Lewis, *op.cit.*, 165) are too late to be of interest here. For other Aramaic documentation from hellenistic Egypt see Hengel, *CHJ*, II, 195 and notes there.

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period;<sup>27</sup> the earliest of the new settlers would have brought their Aramaic speech with them. In any case, migration of Aramaic-speaking Jews into Egypt continued into the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, in the first century. In spite of this, after the middle of the second century B.C.E., Aramaic seems to have disappeared from the written documentation of Egyptian Jewry.<sup>28</sup>

In the Persian period, there is no evidence of Jewish contact with Greeks in Egypt, no travellers, traders, or permanent inhabitants in Egypt (as in Naukratis), and no evidence elsewhere in north Africa, such as in Cyrene. It is not known how long the Jews who were settled in Egypt before Alexander survived as Jews and whether any significant number remained in the second half of the fourth century, although it has been suggested that some of the Jewish settlements still existing in Ptolemaic Egypt went back to the Persian period.<sup>29</sup> We can discern no continuity in religious practice or cultural tradition between the Aramaic-speaking Jews who had long been settled in Egypt and Alexandrian Jewry in the hellenistic period. The pre-Ptolemaic Jewish settlers seem to have inherited pre-exilic Judaism; they seem to have known little or nothing of the Judaism that developed in Palestine after the return from the Babylonian exile. It has been pointed out that in the Aramaic papyri there is no reference to the Law, no memory of the Exodus, no allusion to the Sabbath.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it has been claimed, perhaps too radically, that the Jews of Elephantine were polytheists who believed in the God of Israel as the chief, but not the only, god.<sup>31</sup> Whatever their reasons or methods, they succeeded in preserving some kind of Jewish identity, along with their Aramaic speech, for a fairly long time.

#### JEWIS IN HELLENISTIC EGYPT

With the Macedonian conquest, a radical demographic change took place in the Jewish diaspora: the Jewish population in Egypt increased rapidly and dramatically. Although we cannot estimate reliably how many Jews there were, all our evidence indicates that they were very numerous in Egypt practically from the start of Macedonian rule.<sup>32</sup>

Is it conceivable that what appear to be large concentrations of Jews in the hellenistic diaspora could have originated in what was, after all, a geographically

<sup>27</sup> In the Persian period Aramaic in Egypt was not confined to Jews; it was the language of the Persian administration in that country. See Gardiner 1966:369f.

<sup>28</sup> See Tcherikover, *CPJ*, I, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Bell 1957:32; and see Hengel, in *CHJ*, II, 187ff.

<sup>30</sup> But there are indications of Sabbath observance on ostraca; see Porten 1968:126f., with notes. For Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, see pap. 21 (in Cowley 1923), and for ostraca see Porten 1968:131ff. with notes.

<sup>31</sup> Bell 1957:28ff.; cf. also Meyer 1912:38ff.; 67ff.; 91ff.; and Porten 1968:173ff.

<sup>32</sup> See on this especially Wasserstein 1996a.

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very small area, Palestine? Egypt offers a good case in point and is especially relevant to our concerns here. Whatever its exact size, the Jewish population of Alexandria was undoubtedly large. From the earliest times onwards our documentation for these Jews is, for practical purposes, all in Greek. These two facts inescapably lead us to the conclusion that the origins of the Jews of this city cannot be sought only in Palestine.

We can account for some of the Jews of Egypt. A good number were captives or descendants of captives who had been brought to Egypt from Palestine by Ptolemy Soter. We are told that their numbers amounted to more than one hundred thousand, of whom about thirty thousand are said to have been stationed in fortresses or military settlements. Even if the numbers are exaggerated, they must still have been considerable.<sup>33</sup> Other settlers had come earlier, to take part in the foundation of the city; more are said to have come after Alexander's death.<sup>34</sup> In any case, there is ample evidence throughout the centuries, in papyri and in inscriptions, of a Jewish presence in the *chora*; and from these communities, whether they survived from the Persian period or were newly formed following the Greek conquest, some must eventually have come to Alexandria.<sup>35</sup>

Even so, this alone cannot satisfactorily account for the large number of Jews in Alexandria in the first century, unless we assume massive and large-scale proselytization among Greek-speaking elements of local populations, in Alexandria as elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

In all such estimates and in all calculations based on them one must remember that it is only in Egypt that we have more than isolated pieces of information on Jewish population sizes; practically everywhere else in the Diaspora our information is poor, sketchy and mostly unrelated to the wider picture. Even when we have welcome and sometimes striking evidence of Jewish presence in places other than Palestine and Egypt, our witnesses testify to the presence of Jews – to the time of their arrival, to their social status, to their degree of hellenization – but on the whole they are unhelpful where statistical questions are involved. In metropolitan Greece, for example, we have evidence of Jews very early: an inscription from the Amphiareion of Oropus securely dated to the first half of the third century B.C.E. concerns the manumission of a Jewish slave, Moschus the son of Moschion. The fact that the slave's father has a Greek

<sup>33</sup> *Letter of Aristeas*, §§4, 12f.; and Tcherikover, in *CPJ*, I, 4 with n. 10; Tcherikover 1959:273; Baron 1952:I, 172; Fraser 1972:I, 57 and II, 141, n. 162; Tramontano 1931:20ff.; Bell 1957:32. See Hengel, in *CHJ*, II, 187–94, and Harmatta 1959 (quoted by Hengel, *loc. cit.*, at 187, n. 2). See also, in *CPJ*, III, 197ff., Appendix III, for a list of places of Jewish habitation in Egypt.

<sup>34</sup> Hecataeus ap. Jos. *c. Ap.* 1.194; and see Stern 1974:I, 43.

<sup>35</sup> See *CPJ*, I–III, *passim* (especially vol. III, Appendix II: Prosopography of the Jews in Egypt; and Appendix III: Places of Jewish habitation in Egypt); and *CJ*, II, 355–446.

<sup>36</sup> See on this theme Harnack 1924:13ff. with copious notes.



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name clearly points to the arrival of Jewish captives in Greece not long after the beginning of Macedonian expansion outside Greece. As is stressed by D. M. Lewis, the contents of the inscription bear witness to the advanced stage of hellenization of both father and son. But there is nothing here to help us with estimates of numbers.<sup>37</sup>

Still, even with such reservations, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that many Gentiles, mostly of Greek-speaking origin, though possibly with an admixture of hellenized or semi-hellenized non-Greeks, joined the Jewish communities in various places in the newly hellenized world: in Asia Minor, in the Syrian area, in Egypt, and even in north Africa to the west of Egypt.<sup>38</sup> We can only speculate about the elements in pre-destruction Judaism that attracted such proselytes. But there seems to be no doubt that, whatever their motives, many men and women were attracted to Judaism. Jewish proselytization seems to have begun as early as the Persian period. Despite what the Bible reports about the origin of the Samaritans, their cult, in one way or another, may well reflect the effects of some kind of missionary activity or of other reasons for conversion to Judaism. In Egypt under Persian rule, too, there is some evidence for non-Jews joining the Jewish community; thus, the occurrence of Egyptian theophoric names in the Elephantine papyri has been understood as providing evidence for such a process.<sup>39</sup> But the catalyst for the process of large-scale conversion to Judaism was probably the cultural and moral character of the society that emerged from the meeting and mingling between hellenism and oriental civilizations after the conquests of Alexander.

However that may be, there is no reason to doubt that the process of Jewish proselytisation continued throughout the Ptolemaic and early imperial periods. Proselytization no doubt added much to the numerical strength of Diaspora Jewry. The proselytes themselves, by virtue of their backgrounds, must have contributed no less to the hellenization of that Jewry.

The Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt used Greek at a very early stage of their settlement there. We have Greek papyri written by or for Jews from the middle of the third century B.C.E.<sup>40</sup> Synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews seem always to have been known as *προσευχή*.<sup>41</sup> They are documented in Egypt as early

<sup>37</sup> See D. M. Lewis 1957.

<sup>38</sup> On this and on Jewish proselytism among populations of non-hellenic, for example, Phoenician, origin, see Baron, 1952:I, 172ff. with notes.

<sup>39</sup> See Meyer 1912:39.

<sup>40</sup> Cf., for example, *CPJ*, nos. 12 and 13 (Fayyum), probably from the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; and other papyri in the same collection. Cf. also no. 18, *ibid.*, of 260 B.C.E.

<sup>41</sup> For the term *προσευχή*, see *CPJ*, III, 35, on no. 473, line 7. The word *συναγωγή* is often applied to Jewish communities: see *CPJ*, I, 7, n. 21; Schürer 1973–87:II, 439f., with notes, nn. 60f.; III.1, 90ff.; but often, especially outside Egypt, it was also used for the place of worship.



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as the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 B.C.E.), in the middle of the third century, and through the second century and into the first.<sup>42</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the Jews of Egypt early felt the need to translate into Greek, the language of their daily life, at least those portions of their scriptures that were read as part of the service in their synagogues. Yet although προσευχαί are attested in Ptolemaic Egypt already in the third century B.C.E., we know too little of the forms of the order of service in these synagogues and we know little of how worship – and the concomitant instruction of the faithful – was organized in contemporary Palestine, outside the Temple in Jerusalem, in the villages and towns of the countryside.<sup>43</sup> Moore suggested that the synagogue as a fixed institution may have originated in spontaneous gatherings of Jews in Babylonia and other lands of their exile on Sabbaths and feasts and fast days.<sup>44</sup> Ezra Fleischer has argued plausibly and forcefully that the synagogue before the destruction of 70 C.E. was not a place of prayer and worship at all but solely and exclusively an institution for reading and studying the Scripture;<sup>45</sup> its function was purely didactic, not at all liturgical. If Fleischer is right, that would further strengthen the argument that the Greek translation of Scripture was made to fill a role in the prime function of the synagogue. It is true that Fleischer's case may not be fully applicable to the Jewry of Ptolemaic Egypt. The usual name for the synagogue in Egypt was, as has been seen, προσευχή. This name for the institution seems to have been coined by the hellenistic Jews in Egypt and is attested, as has been seen, as early as the third century;<sup>46</sup> the term clearly denotes a place of prayer, and it leads inescapably to the conclusion that organized communal prayer was an essential part of the function of the institution. But even so there can be no doubt that in Egypt as in Palestine the reading and study of the Law played an exceptionally large, important and central part in the service of the Synagogue.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See D. M. Lewis on the inscriptions numbered 1440 (Schedia-Kafr ed Douar) and 1532a (Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis), in *CPJ*, III, 141, 164. See also Schürer 1973–87:II, 425, with notes. For synagogues in hellenistic Egypt in general see *CPJ*, I, 7ff.; Krauss 1922:261ff. For the second century see *P. Tebt.* I, 86, 18 (Arsinoe, cf. *CPJ*, I, 247ff.) and for the first century Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium*, 132ff.; in *Flacc.* 41ff.; *Sp. Leg.*, II, 62; *Hypothetica*, ap. Eus. *PE* VIII, 7, 12–13. See also Hegermann in *CHJ*, II, esp. 137 and 151ff.; Hengel, *CHJ*, II, 196f.

<sup>43</sup> On the origin of the synagogue and its function as a house of study no less than as a house of prayer see Schürer 1973–87:II (Eng.) 415–63, with additional references; Krauss 1922:50–102; Elbogen 1931:passim, esp. 444ff.; 1972; Moore 1932–40:I, 281ff. (with nn. in vol. III).

<sup>44</sup> Moore 1932–40:I, p. 283.

<sup>45</sup> Fleischer 1991.

<sup>46</sup> The word προσευχή does not normally seem to have been used in that sense in Palestine; for apparent exceptions see Fleischer 1991:408; and Schürer 1973–87:II, 439ff., with n. 61. Schürer notes that the occasional pagan use may be due to imitation of the Jewish expression.

<sup>47</sup> On the connection between liturgy and the origin of the Septuagint see Thackeray 1923.

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The Jews of Alexandria, in translating the Law into Greek, were responding precisely to the same need as their Aramaic-speaking co-religionists in Palestine and Babylonia. Those Jews, when they lost their familiarity with Hebrew, made arrangements for the Hebrew text to be translated (during the reading of the Law in the synagogue) into Aramaic for the benefit of those congregants who no longer had a sufficient knowledge of the Holy Tongue. This at first was done orally.<sup>48</sup> In the course of time a more or less “standard” version may have become both familiar and crystallized; and at some stage this was fixed in a written form. Some elements of extant *targumim* may predate the Christian era by some centuries.<sup>49</sup> The custom of having the text of Scripture translated into the local vernacular during divine service was long-lasting and widespread and was later inherited by the Christians from their Jewish forebears. Its existence in Christian congregations (from Greek into Aramaic) is reported from Scythopolis (now Beth Shean) in the third century and from Jerusalem in the fourth;<sup>50</sup> the synagogal office of the *meturgeman* (translator) was paralleled and performed in the Church by an officer bearing the same title translated into Greek, ἑρμηνευτής.<sup>51</sup>

Although the earliest Jewish settlers in Alexandria no doubt brought with them their Aramaic speech and some degree of familiarity with Hebrew at least as a literary and liturgical language, they soon learned to speak Greek and forgot Hebrew.<sup>52</sup> As early as ca. 310 B.C.E. we hear of a Jew in Egypt bearing a

<sup>48</sup> See Elbogen 1931:186ff.; Krauss 1922: index s.v. Dolmetscher, and Hebrew index s.v. תורגמן, מורגמן. On the regulations concerning the *meturgeman* see, for example, PT Megilla, cap. 4, 74f. and Massekhet Sopherim, for example, cap. 9, cap. 11, cap. 12. On the term תורגמן (מ) see Bacher 1899 (1965):206.

<sup>49</sup> On written *targumim* see Schürer 1973–87:II, 452–53 with notes. It is remarkable that our written Targumim include those passages which, by rabbinic injunction (Megilla IV.10; Tosefta, Megillah IV,31, and more on p. 228 of Zuckerman’s edition; cf. PT Megillah 75c; *Siddur* of R. Sa’adya Gaon (ed. Meqitsei Nirdamim), Jerusalem 1949/1:368. Cf. Elbogen 1931:189–90 with notes), were expressly excluded from the public translation of the lesson from the Law.

<sup>50</sup> See Violet 1896:110, on Procopius of Scythopolis, who served in the church as ἀναγνώστης and ἑρμηνευτής (lector and translator); and cf. *ibid.*, 4. Cf. also *Peregrinatio Egeriae* (ca. C.E. 400), cap. 47 (*PL*, Suppl. I, Paris, 1958, col. 1091), who describes translation from Greek into Syriac in Palestine and also reports that in Jerusalem lessons were translated into Latin as well, for those who knew neither Greek nor Syriac.

<sup>51</sup> See previous note; Epiphanius, *Expositio fidei*, 21 (GCS p. 522.22; M.42.825 A) mentions ἑρμηνευταί in Christian churches both for the scriptural readings and for the sermons (προσομιλία). See Schürer 1973–87:II, 453, n. 131; Harnack 1924:654; Krauss, 1922:134 and 176–79, also for the rabbinic sources; Schlatter 1898:52f.; Lieberman 1942:2, citing also the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, 1881:19, and n. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Hebrew survived, in some parts of Palestine at least, for longer than some scholars used to think. See now J. Barr, in *CHJ*, II, 79ff.; but see Schwartz 1995. However, in the hellenized Diaspora, Hebrew was soon forgotten so thoroughly that in the course of time, its name came to be