THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN JEWISH PALESTINE IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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It is widely recognized that Jewish Palestine, in the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods, was to some degree trilingual, with Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek all figuring in the mix. (The presence of Latin was so relatively slight that I do not need to discuss it here.)[1] Scholars did not come to this realization all at once, but only after they had long considered a heap of evidence that could seemingly be stacked in support of opposing scenarios. But to speak merely of 'trilingualism',

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1.   On Latin in Jewish Palestine, see Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 527-28; Joseph Geiger, 'How Much Latin in Greek Palestine?', in Hannah Rosén (ed.), *Aspects of Latin: Papers from the Seventh International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics, Jerusalem, April 1993* (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 86; Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1996), pp. 39-57; Stanley E. Porter, 'Latin Language', in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 630-31; Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (The Biblical Seminar 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 125-31, 148-53; Werner Eck, 'The Language of Power: Latin in the Inscriptions of Iudaea/Syria Palaestina', in Lawrence H. Schiffman (ed.), *Semitic Papyrology in Context: A Climate of Creativity: Papers from a New York University Conference Marking the Retirement of Baruch A. Levine* (Culture & History of the Ancient Near East, 14; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 123-44. On Jews and Latin more generally, see Jonathan J. Price, 'The Jews and the Latin Language in the Roman Empire', in Menachem Mor, Aharon Oppenheimer, Jack Pastor, and Daniel R. Schwartz (eds.), *Jews and Gen-tiles in the Holy Land in the Days of the Second Temple, the Mishna and the Talmud* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2003), pp. 164-80. Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.–IV Century C.E.* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), p. 17, noted an absence of Latin among the rabbis.

and leave it at that, is to leave a lot undone: presumably few individuals at the time were really trilingual, but many must have been bilingual. The distribution of languages certainly cannot be mapped in terms of one or two variables—as James Barr notes, it 'varied almost personal-ly'.[2] Yet, this in itself does not drain the meaning from the question of which language(s) had vernacular status. A growing number of scholars has argued that Hebrew, in Jewish Palestine in the first and/or the third centuries CE (that is, in the eras of the birth of Christianity and/or of the fledgling rabbinic community), was just as much of a vernacular lan-guage as Aramaic. This development calls for a new survey of the evi-dence. What was the relationship between these three languages?

A full treatment would involve a progressive account of the fortunes of Hebrew and Aramaic, concentrating first on the Second Temple peri-od, and secondly on the question of whether axial events like the destructtion of the Temple or the Bar Kokhba revolt caused a shift in this situation. This article instead approaches the issue of the languages in Jewish Palestine by discussing the place of each of the three langua-ges in question in essential isolation from the other two, as well as in interaction with the others. I discuss Aramaic first, followed by Hebrew, and finally Greek.

1. *Aramaic*

I begin the survey of first-century Palestinian Jewish languages with the one that (as I intend to show) was most widely spoken among the three. Aramaic entered Palestine at an early date. Already in Neh. 13.24, the enlarging presence of Aramaic was a matter of concern for Israel's national identity—although the concern in Nehemiah was not directly that of linguistic corruption per se but rather the interreligious mar-riages signified by that corruption.[3] (The degree to which Aramaic

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2.   James Barr, 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', in W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. II. *The Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 79-114 (112).

3.   Seth Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', *Past & Present* 148 (1995), pp. 3-47 (8), writes, 'There is in the entire Hebrew Bible a single passage in which Hebrew—now for the first time identified as a language separate from its neighbours ("Judahite")—is definitely associated with Israelite identity (Neh. 13.23-30)'. Francis J. Thomson, 'SS. Cyril and Methodius and a Mythical Western Heresy: Trilinguism: A Contribution to the Study of Patristic and Mediaeval Theories of Sacred Languages', *Analecta Bollandiana* 110 (1992), pp.

eclipsed Hebrew at this time, however, is sometimes exaggerated.)[4] Aramaic can be said to have been the lingua franca for a rather large region, including much more than just Palestine. Greek was also a lingua franca in many areas, and its area of dominance probably overlapped with regions supported by Aramaic. William V. Harris assumes that the Pentecost account in Acts 2 reveals the 'linguistic fragmentation' of the eastern Roman Empire: he believes that 'a miracle is necessary for Jews from all over the world to be able to understand the Galilaeans'.[5] But this inference is probably mistaken: the Acts narrative does not imply that the Jews assembled there could not understand what the apostles were saying without miraculous intervention, but rather that the Lord testified that what the apostles were about was true and holy. Scholars disagree as to whether the linguistic miracle at Pentecost denotes primarily a reversal of the Babel curse or a fulfillment of end-time prophecies about gathering the nations to Jerusalem, but either paradigm explains the miracle quite well without resorting to the idea that the miracle was necessary if all were to understand. In fact, this reading of Acts 2 is supported by the immediate sequel to the linguistic miracle: the miracle gathered a crowd, but there is no indication that the miraculous ability to understand in one's native language continued throughout Peter's preaching to that crowd. If a miracle had been necessary for all the pilgrims 'to understand the Galilaeans', then Peter's preaching presumably was lost on a large part of the crowd. Most likely, nearly everyone gathered at that first Christian Pentecost could understand Peter through natural ability. The language he spoke was probably Aramaic.

Well before the first century CE, Aramaic established itself as the most widely used language in Jewish Palestine. Although this view is

67-122 (79 n. 79), similarly notes, 'Nowhere [in the Hebrew Bible] is Hebrew referred [to] as a sacred language set apart from other tongues.' For evidence of Aramaic in Palestine in the biblical period, see Paul E. Dion, 'Letters (Aramaic)', *ABD* IV, pp. 285-90 (285). On Aramaic as the language of the lower class, see now Esther Eshel and Douglas R. Edwards, 'Language and Writing in Early Roman Galilee: Social Location of a Potter's Abecedary from Kh. Qana', in Douglas R. Edwards (ed.), *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 49-55.

4.   E.g. in Norman Perrin and Dennis Duling, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 2nd edn, 1982), p. 15.

5.   William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 185.

contested by a number of (esp. Israeli)[6] scholars, it is supported, as I will demonstrate, by a wealth of evidence. There are, in fact, two principal arguments for taking Aramaic to be the main vernacular in Jewish Palestine: (1) the weight of inscriptional and documentary evidence,[7] and (2) the practice of translating Scripture into Aramaic for the benefit of synagogue congregations. The former of these arguments applies with equal force to both the first century CE and to later centuries, while the latter (as explained below) is less suited for the first century CE, as circumstances appear to have mitigated against the widespread use of targums during that time.

Bezalel Porten, contrasting the Bible with a study that shows that the (Aramaic-speaking) Jews of Elephantine considered themselves 'Aramaeans' but were designated 'Jews' in dealings with non-Jews, notes that '[I]n the Bible…the more restricted term "Israelite" applied internally whereas the broader designation "Hebrew" is only used when the context introduces foreigners.'[8] Whether a contrast between the use of 'Jew' at Elephantine and the use of 'Hebrew' in the Bible is truly at hand will depend, of course, on whether 'Hebrew' functions in the Bible primarily as a national or a linguistic delimitation. The joining of Hebrew to national identity (see above on Neh. 13.24) must lag behind the emergence of that identity, of course, and perhaps also behind the investment of that identity in the Torah.[9]

6.   On the Zionist impulse behind many of the challenges to the Aramaic ascendency view, see the comments in Seth Schwartz, 'Historiography on the Jews in the "Talmudic Period" (70–640 CE)', in Martin Goodman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 79-114.

7.   Apart from the sources listed in this chapter, mention should be made of a forthcoming compendious collection of inscriptions that promises to be a tremendous boon to the study of the lingustic situation in Jewish Palestine. The work is being carried out by a team of eleven scholars, under the project name *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, and will include inscriptions of all languages except Arabic. See Hannah M. Cotton, Leah di Segni, Werner Eck, and Benjamin Isaac, 'Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae', *ZPE* 127 (1999), pp. 307-308. See also Jonathan Price and Ada Yardeni, *Corpus of Jewish Inscriptions from the Near East, from the Hellenistic through the Byzantine Periods*, forthcoming.

8.   Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 33-34 n. 27.

9.   See John G. Gammie, 'From Prudentialism to Apocalypticism: The Houses of the Sages amid the Varying Forms of Wisdom', in John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (eds.), *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 479-97 (492-96).

Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek are all represented in Palestinian Jewish inscriptions. The ratio of one language to another changes according to locale and context. As one scholar noted long ago: 'The conclusion based on the inscriptions and literary documents found in one region, are often invalidated by inscriptions and other literary remains found in another region.'[10] A number of Aramaic ossuary inscriptions have survived, including an impressive lot belonging to the Caiaphas family.[11] Other types of funerary inscriptions also appear in Aramaic, including the 'Abba' inscription from Giv 'at ha-Mivtar, written in paleo-Hebrew script.[12] According to Eric Meyers and James Strange, 26% of inscribed Palestinian ossuaries are either Hebrew or Aramaic, and another 9% are a combination of Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic.[13] Unfortunately, these ossuaries cannot be neatly divided between Hebrew and Aramaic, because most of them preserve only names and stylized elements like שלום. But the rest of them appear to be written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Seth Schwartz notes that 'Aramaic and Greek are used almost to the exclusion of Hebrew' on 'the hundreds of inscribed ossuaries from first-century Jerusalem'.[14] Admittedly, it is a matter of debate whether ossuary inscriptions bearing בר should be bracketed from the list of Aramaic inscriptions—it is

10.　J. Courtenay James, *The Language of Palestine and Adjacent Regions* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), p. 115.

11.　See Ronny Reich, 'Ossuary Inscriptions of the Caiaphas Family from Jerusalem', in Hillel Geva (ed.), *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), pp. 223-25. Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus–Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1929), p. 7, notes, concerning ossuaries, 'Hebrew and Aramaic seem to interchange here without any fixed principle.' Charles Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*. I (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1899), p. 385, refers to the ossuaries he encountered long ago as being written in 'Hebrew, and…Greek', but the details of his report suggest that these terms refer to the alphabets rather than the languages employed.

12.　See Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), p. 76.

13.　Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 65.

14.　Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 15. He notes this also of 'the vast collection of ostraca used at the southern Judaean fortress of Masada in 66–74 C.E.'. See William F. Albright, 'The Nash Papyrus', *JBL* 56 (1937), pp. 145-76 (158-60); H. Ott, 'Um die Muttersprache Jesu: Forschungen seit Gustaf Dalman', *NovT* 9 (1967), pp. 1-25 (6).

perhaps questionable whether the use of בר rather than בן can be taken as an indication of Aramaic, as the former may have been adopted as a Hebrew colloquialism. Charles Clermont-Ganneau noted long ago that 'the Jews used indifferently either the pure Hebrew form *ben*, or the Aramaic form *bar*', and Gerard Mussies has shown that these two forms can even be used together within the same inscription.[15] (Joseph A. Fitzmyer notes that texts from Murabba'at illustrate the use of בר in Hebrew texts and of בן in Aramaic texts.)[16] This sort of bleeding over from Aramaic to lower-level Hebrew has led those who think that Hebrew was the principal vernacular to disregard the use of בר as an indication of language use. One wonders how often this objection can be made, however, before the linguistic situation that it masks begins to show through: individual cases apart, a preponderance of בר within a large collection of inscriptions certainly implies a preponderance of Aramaic, and L.Y. Rahmani reports that, among the 233 inscribed ossuaries in his *Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, '*bar* and *barath* appear two or three times more often than *ben* and *bath*'.[17] It should also be noted what the direction of bleeding over (viz. from Aramaic to Hebrew) says about the linguistic situation: how did בר become a colloquialism for בן if Aramaic were not the more common language?

The language of synagogue inscriptions presents a special problem, since there are almost certainly religious motives behind the use of Hebrew in that setting. Many of the Hebrew inscriptions found in synagogues cannot be read as straightforward registers of the vernacular language. To take a rather obvious example, the words אמן אמן סלה שלום in a synagogue at 'Ein Nashôt (in the Golan)[18] no more reflect the language of the parties responsible for the inscription than the use of 'amen' reflects the language of American religionists today. As Francis E. Peters writes, of synagogue inscriptions,

15.   Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*. I, p. 393; Gerard Mussies, 'Greek as the Vehicle of Early Christianity', *NTS* 29 (1983), pp. 356-69 (362).

16.   Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', in his *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS, 25; Chico: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 29-56 (45).

17.   L.Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israeli Antiquities Authority, 1994), p. 13.

18.   See Robert C. Gregg and Dan Urman, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in the Golan Heights* (USFSHJ, 140; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), p. 95.

> Neither the architecture, the language of the dedications, nor, indeed, the names of the donors, I submit, tell us anything about the native or common language of the people who worshipped in those buildings, any more than similar dedications in English on the walls of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem say anything about the native language of the students who study inside. All authors crave readers, but the authors of dedicatory plaques may have the most limited readership in literature: themselves, their family, and the unseen epigrapher.[19]

The most trustworthy records of a dedicant's or builder's language are probably those cases in which the language of the inscription switches when credit is being given, as in the following inscription found at Dabbura (in the Golan):

אלעזר בר ו...[ר]בה עבד עמו דיה דעל מן
[PO]YCTIKOC EKT[ICEN...ימיה] וּפّצّ וּפתה
El'azar the son of…made the columns above
the arches and beams…Rusticus built (it).[20]

The inscription is Aramaic, but switches to Greek for the sake of Rusticus. Another example of this same pattern (in which donors are named in Aramaic and builders in Greek) can be found in the floor of the Beth Alpha synagogue.[21] Although we cannot know in the case of Rusticus, the names of the builders at Beth Alpha (Marianos and his son Hanina) suggest that they are Jewish. Of course, these diglossic inscriptions are rare. For most inscriptions, we cannot know for certain whether the language of the inscription reflects the daily language of those attending the synagogue, or a language deemed more appropriate (viz. sacred or decorous) for the synagogue.

A number of archives discovered in the area of the Dead Sea contain letters and documents written in Aramaic. Excluding Qumran, the majority of the writings in these archives are in Aramaic. Even the Bar Kokhba archive, connected as it is with intense nationalistic feelings, contains more letters in Aramaic than in Hebrew (a fact often ignored

19. Francis E. Peters, 'Response' (to Jonas C. Greenfield), in Herbert H. Paper (ed.), *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations: Proceedings of Regional Conferences of the Association for Jewish Studies Held at the University of Michigan and New York University in March–April 1975* (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1978), pp. 159-64 (160-61).

20. Dan Urman, 'Jewish Inscriptions from Dabbura in the Golan', *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 16-23 (17).

21. Gregg and Urman, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in the Golan Heights*, p. 126.

by those who appeal to this archive as evidence of Hebrew's ascendancy over Aramaic).[22] Taken together, the inscriptional and documenttary evidence leads Meyers and Strange to the conclusion, based on 'overwhelming' evidence, that 'Aramaic was far more widely used in Palestine than Hebrew'.[23]

Aramaic documents from a later time have been found elsewhere in the Dead Sea area. A contract or IOU from the second year of Nero's reign (56 CE) has been found at Wadi Murabba'at, and an invoice on an ostracon has been found at Masada. (Meyers and Strange assign [p. 77] special significance to the fact that Aramaic was found on 'the most humdrum items' [viz. various vessels] at Masada.) Somewhat later are the archives found at Wadi Habra and Wadi Seiyal. Other documents from Wadi Murabba'at (those belonging to Yeshua b. Galgoula and his family) and the rich find from the Cave of Letters, belong to the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The latter contains the celebrated archive of Babatha, a well-to-do woman who 'must have spent most of her life in litigation'[24] and whose stash of documents is a matter of particular interest for historians. She left thirty-five documents: three in Aramaic (including a marriage contract and a property deed), six in Babatha's native tongue of Nabatean, and twenty-six in Greek. Nine of the Greek documents contain subscriptions/signatures in Aramaic or Nabatean. The fact that none of the documents is in Hebrew is significant, given the nature and multilingualism of the archive, although the late date of Babatha's transplantation from Mahoza to En Gedi probably bears upon the absence of Hebrew.[25] It is possible that Aramaic functions within

22.   Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 77 (emphasis added), exaggerate, however, when they refer to Aramaic as '*by far* the most popular language of the [Bar Kokhba] letters'. According to Millar's handlist, the Bar Kokhba cache contains 14 writings in Aramaic, 11 in Hebrew, 2 in Greek, and 1 in a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew (*The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337*, pp. 548-52).

23.   Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 78. Meyers and Strange's more complete verdict is that Greek was even more widely used than Aramaic.

24.   Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Last Jewish Revolt against Imperial Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 222.

25.   Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, pp. 77-78; Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', p. 39. On the Babatha archive more generally, see Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba*, pp. 222-53; G.W.

this archive as an official language for contracts, so as not to reflect Babatha's own tongue (Greek or Nabatean).[26] Nevertheless, the absence of Hebrew probably still counts for something. Of course, the fact that a significant portion of the writings in most archives from this area is in Greek or Hebrew might detract from the view that Aramaic was the dominant language, but some of these non-Aramaic writings actually support this view in their own way. For example, a number of scholars have noted that the Hebrew of the Bar Kokhba archive has been heavily influenced by Aramaic.[27]

Considering the statistical prominence and ideological importance of Hebrew at Qumran (see below), one can easily forget how much of the Qumran corpus is actually in Aramaic.[28] Of particular interest are the two copies of a Job targum (4Q157 = 4QtgJob [Job 4.16–5.4] and

Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 76-80; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 69-71. Yadin suggests that Babatha's move from Mahoza to En Gedi was precipitated by the Bar Kokhba revolt (*Bar-Kokhba*, p. 252), while Bowersock tentatively suggests that Babatha fled from a pogrom conducted by the governor Haterius Nepos (*Roman Arabia*, p. 108). On the location of Mahoza, see now Hannah M. Cotton and Jonas C. Greenfield, 'Babatha's *Patria*: Mahoza, Mahoz 'Eglatain and Zo'ar', *ZPE* 107 (1995), pp. 126-34.

26.   Naphtali Lewis, 'The Demise of the Aramaic Document in the Dead Sea Region', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 20 (2001), pp. 179-81 (180), counts the Babatha archive as something like Aramaic's last breath in official business documents in the Roman East, noting that 'from Antiquity no Aramaic commercial document has yet turned up bearing any date later than 135 CE'.

27.   See J.T. Milik, 'Une lettre de Siméon bar Kokheba', *RevBib* 60 (1953), pp. 276-94; Roland de Vaux, 'Quelques textes hébreux de Murabba'at', *RevBib* 60 (1953), pp. 268-75; Stanislav Segert, 'Zur Verbreitung des Aramäischen in Palästina zur Zeit Jesu', *Archiv Orientálni* 25 (1957), pp. 21-37 (31-33); Mussies, 'Greek as the Vehicle of Early Christianity', p. 363; J.C. Greenfield, 'Aramaic in the Achaemenian Empire', in Ilya Gershevitch (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*. II. *The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 698-713 (707).

28.   In 1974, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic in the Study of the New Testament', *NTS* 20 (1974), pp. 382-407 (404-406), could list only 61 items. That list has now doubled. See Devorah Dimant, '4Q127: An Unknown Jewish Apocryphal Work?', in David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (eds.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 805-13.

11Q10 = 11QtgJob [Job 17.14–42.11]), as well as fragments of a targum of Leviticus (4Q156). Palaeographically, 11QtgJob dates from the first century CE, although its language is said by some scholars to be older than that of the *Genesis Apocryphon*.[29]

The Qumran targum texts bring us to the second argument for Aramaic as the vernacular of Palestinian Judaism: the practice of translating synagogue Scripture readings into Aramaic, a practice presumably based upon linguistic needs. While a good case for the Aramaic scenario can be made on inscriptional and documentary evidence alone, the regularity of the practice of translating Scripture into Aramaic may represent a more powerful argument that a large segment of the population could not understand Hebrew. But this argument is more at home when discussing the third-century CE situation, as the first century is largely devoid of targums. (The aforementioned Job and Leviticus targums found at Qumran are exceptions.)[30] The simplicity of the 'linguistic necessity' explanation is just too great to be offset by the attempts to hold the targums in orbit around the Hebraic scenario. By comparison, the alternative explanations on offer look like special pleading.

2. *Hebrew*

Although scholars disagree on the role of Greek and Aramaic in Jewish Palestine, the more significant disagreement has to do with the role of Hebrew. Was Hebrew a living vernacular at any time between the first century BCE and the sixth century CE? Or was it used almost exclusively

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29.   See J.P.M. van der Ploeg, A.S. van der Woude, and B. Jongeling (eds.), *Le Targum de Job de la Grotte 11 de Qumrân* (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen; Leiden: Brill, 1971); Randall Buth, 'Aramaic Targumim: Qumran', in Evans and Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, pp. 91-93. Barr contrasts those who differentiate Aramaic dialects on the basis of chronological and geographical distinctions with those who differentiate on the basis of generic (oral versus literary) distinctions ('Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', pp. 91-92).

30.   Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 241, strangely refers to the R. Gamaliel story as evidence of a long-continuing practice of making targums, as if there were a whole slew of pre-common era targums: 'In the first century AD the leading scribes were still fighting against the spread of Aramaic translations of the Old Testament.'

in liturgical and academic contexts? If Hebrew was taught to male youths, how widespread and inclusive was this program of education? Opinions vary greatly on all these questions. I hold a (somewhat) minimalist position on these matters, and in what follows I give my reasons.

The prevailing view in the nineteenth century was that Aramaic had completely replaced Hebrew as the daily spoken language during or shortly after the Babylonian captivity, and that knowledge of Hebrew was preserved mainly by priests and sages. This view was formulated in 1845 by Abraham Geiger, the founder of Reformed Judaism (and a founder of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*).[31] The confusion that ensued in the twentieth century (and which is still with us today) has to do with the interpretation of apparent counterevidence to this view. In the early part of the twentieth century, M.H. Segal struck a decisive blow against the view of Geiger, persuasively arguing that the Mishnah was written in a form of Hebrew that had evolved beyond the language of the Bible, a development (he claimed) that pointed to a vernacular context. According to Segal, 'It is clear from the facts presented by its grammar and vocabulary that MH [=mishnaic Hebrew] had an independent existence as a natural living speech, growing, developing, and changing in accordance with its own genius, and in conformity with the laws which govern the life of all languages in general, and the Semitic languages in particular.'[32] If Hebrew had been merely a liturgical or academic language, he argued, it could hardly have developed as far as the Mishnah showed. Segal apparently intended the broadest sort of revisionism: not only was Hebrew not completely dead, but it was widely spoken in the centuries leading up to the Mishnah: 'The home of MH was Palestine. So long as the Jewish people retained some sort of national existence in Palestine, MH continued to be the language of at least a section of the Jewish people living in Palestine.'[33] Hebrew only came to be isolated

31. See Abraham Geiger, *Lehr- und Lesebuch zur Sprache der Mischnah* (Breslau: Leuckart, 1845).

32. M.H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 9. Abba Bendavid argues the same view in exhaustive detail in *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2nd edn, 1967) (Hebrew). See Moshe Bar-Asher, 'The Study of Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar Based on Written Sources: Achievements, Problems, and Tasks', in Moshe Bar-Asher (ed.), *Scripta Hierosolymitana*. XXXVII. *Studies in Mishnaic Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998), pp. 9-42.

33. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 10. Segal (p. 17) correctly allows that Aramaic was more widespread in the Galilee.

from daily life as the Jewish nation came to be torn from the land of Palestine, and 'towards the end of the Mišnaic period, became confined to the learned in the schools and academies'.

Segal's conclusion was adopted by a number of scholars, and, as mentioned above, it has found an especially warm reception among Israeli scholars. Most scholars, however, accepted a less sweeping accommodation of Segal's views: there were indeed contexts in which Hebrew continued to be spoken, but these were localized, either geographically (i.e. in the hills of Judea), professionally (i.e. among priests and sages), or along sectarian lines (i.e. among the Qumranites). The chronological dimension also opened up a multitude of different scenarios: the equilibrium between Hebrew and Aramaic was for many a punctuated equilibrium at best, with peaks in Hebrew activity coinciding with national crises and triumphs (e.g. the Maccabean and the Bar Kokhba revolts). (Fitzmyer suggests [albeit with little conviction] that the prevalence of Hebrew at Qumran may be related to the Qumran community's possible connection with the Maccabean revolt.)[34] Although Segal may have permanently displaced the Aramaic-only views of Geiger's generation, his own view has won the day only in a qualified sense—that is, in the form of the many attempts to properly qualify Geiger's opposing view.

Unfortunately, the discussion of the role of Hebrew has often been driven by ulterior concerns. Seth Schwartz has noted that the hebraeophone view of Jewish Palestine is often motivated by Zionistic feelings.[35] We make take W. Chomsky as an extreme example of this tendency. His importation of Zionistic ideals into his view of the matter is so heavy-handed that he even spells 'aramaic' in all lower-case letters (except on the first page of his article) while capitalizing the first letter in 'Hebrew'. (The same show of disdain was used by Theodore Polikarpov against Latin, when listing the three languages on the superscription of the cross as '*Hebraeam, Graecam et latinam*'.)[36] According to Chomsky, the belief that Jews began to speak Aramaic during their exile in Babylonia and that this was a Jewish vernacular when the exile ended 'is utterly without foundation': 'It is quite inconceivable that the

34.   Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', pp. 29-30.

35.   Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 16.

36.   See Thomson, 'SS. Cyril and Methodius and a Mythical Western Heresy', p. 84.

exiles who, according to the Psalmist, "sat down by the rivers of Babylon, weeping as they remembered Zion", would in so short a time abandon their language and adopt the language of their hated captors, as their vernacular.'[37] He continues: if the people left their native language, why did Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah not remonstrate against this development, especially in light of the fact that Nehemiah 'coming from a less cohesive Jewish community' (pp. 195-96) would later do so? Chomsky thinks it significant that 'Nehemiah imputes the use of a corrupt Hebrew speech only to the children of non-Hebrew mothers' (p. 196), apparently unaware that the real object of Nehemiah's scorn is not language at all, but bloodlines and religious exclusivity. (The linguistic corruption was merely emblematic of the real corruption.) As for Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, it is anachronistic (by several centuries) to impute a linguistic ideology to these writers: as Schwartz notes, 'the Israelites shared a language but tended not to consider it an essential component of their corporate identity'.[38] Chomsky explains the Jewish use of Aramaic as a strategic move, uniting Jews universally through the use of an international language, and even claims that Aramaic was a 'prestige' language (a judgment that G.H.R. Horsley rightly denounced as 'baseless').[39] Chomsky's position on Aramaic would re-appear three years later in an essay by Harris Birkeland, who considered Aramaic 'a language of high reputation'. By making Aramaic ideologically valuable, Birkeland attempted to invert the reasoning behind the debate over praying in Hebrew versus Aramaic: 'Aramaic was a language of high reputation. Therefore, it was used for religious purposes, in divine sayings, in prayers, and in religious speeches… Prayers are spoken in a more solemn and literary language than everyday Hebrew.'[40] Birkeland even thought that this could explain the use of Aramaic targums: 'For interpretation of the Holy texts only a dignified language of high repute could be considered, not a simple

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37.   W. Chomsky, 'What was the Jewish Vernacular during the Second Commonwealth?', *JQR* 42 (1951–52), pp. 193-212 (195).

38.   Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 12.

39.   Chomsky, 'What was the Jewish Vernacular during the Second Commonwealth?', pp. 205-206. See G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. V. *Linguistic Essays* (Sydney, Australia: Macquarie University Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1989), p. 22.

40.   Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1; Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954), p. 12.

dialect.'[41] These interpretations of the use of Aramaic are utterly with-out foundation in the sources. As Chaim Rabin notes, Aramaic was 'a means of communication, no more'.[42]

What are the pros and cons of Segal's view? Whether there is a case to be made for widespread use of Hebrew in Palestine depends largely on how one counts evidence, particularly regarding (1) synagogue inscriptions, (2) rabbinic traditions about widespread Torah education in Jewish Palestine in tannaitic times (and earlier), and (3) the use of Hebrew at Qumran. While these arguments are self-standing, however, they are also merely supplementary to Segal's guiding supposition: that linguistic development only takes place in spoken languages. Unfortunately for Segal, this supposition does not always hold: in the words of Joshua Blau, 'even dead languages, only used in literature, change'.[43]

I now turn to the three above-mentioned arguments supporting Segal: synagogue inscriptions, traditions about widespread Torah education in Jewish Palestine, and the use of Hebrew at Qumran. How well do these three arguments stand up? First, how should one interpret the discovery of Hebrew in synagogue remains? Hebrew is used within synagogue inscriptions throughout Palestine, alongside Aramaic and Greek inscriptions. Does this mean that Hebrew was the normal language of those who commissioned or carved these inscriptions? Given the liturgical setting, as well as the sanctity of the synagogue (whether functional or permanent), it is only natural that Hebrew should be the preferred language of synagogue inscriptions.[44] The same qualification applies to inscriptions from the Temple Mount: although Meyers and Strange are keen to point out that the Temple inscriptions were

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41.   Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus*, p. 32. Abba Bendavid also associates Aramaic with the higher elements of society (*Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, pp. 87-97, 150-59).

42.   Chaim Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. II (CRINT, 1/2; Assen: van Gorcum, 1987), pp. 1007-39 (1032).

43.   Joshua Blau, 'A Conservative View of the Language of the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (STDJ, 36; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 20-25 (20) (emphasis removed).

44.   Dalman writes, 'That Hebrew benedictions should be inscribed at entrances to synagogues…is natural' (*Jesus–Jeshua*, p. 29).

'intended to be read', reflecting the 'language habits of at least some of the people', it is reasonable to assume that the choice of language in these inscriptions reflects the context and that the principal readers for many of these inscriptions were priests.[45]

It is widely recognized that the use of Hebrew was a house rule at Qumran.[46] Although 15% of the Qumran cache is in Aramaic and 3% is in Greek,[47] only a portion of the Hebrew writings found there exhibits signs of having been written there. Although it is not clear how the Aramaic and Greek components of the Qumran cache served the Qumran community, it is clear that they were not produced at Qumran, and Armin Lange is quite justified in using Hebrew as a criterion of Essene authorship for a writing found at Qumran.[48] The form of Hebrew in

45.   Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 69.

46.   Stanislav Segert, 'Die Sprachenfragen in der Qumrāngemeinschaft', in Hans Bardtke (ed.), *Qumran-Probleme: Vorträge des Leipziger Symposions über Qumran-Probleme vom 9. bis 14. Oktober 1961* (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 42; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), pp. 315-39 (330), refers to Hebrew as the 'Amtssprache' of the Qumran community.

47.   These percentages increase to 17% and 4% respectively when we bracket the biblical scrolls.

48.   Armin Lange, 'Kriterien essenischer Texte', in Jörg Frey and Hartmut Stegemann (eds.), *Qumran kontrovers: Beiträge zu den Textfunden vom Toten Meer* (Bonifatius: Paderborn, 2003), pp. 59-69. See William M. Schniedewind, 'Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage', *JBL* 118 (1999), pp. 235-52 (242). The Hebrew-only policy of Qumran may have been flexible enough to accommodate a minority of native Greek speakers. A.R.C. Leaney, 'Greek Manuscripts from the Judaean Desert', in J.K. Elliott (ed.), *Studies in New Testament Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (NovTSup, 44; Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 283-300, discusses the finding of Greek texts in caves 4 and 7, including the implications of this find for Qumran membership. See Leonard J. Greenspoon, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek Bible', in Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998–99), I, pp. 101-27 (112-13). On the use of Greek at Qumran, see also J.N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?: How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* (NovTSup, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 151-54. On separating Qumran sectarian compositions from other works found at Qumran, see Devorah Dimant, 'The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance', in Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H. Schiffman (eds.), *'Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness': Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–90* (STDJ, 16; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp.

which the Qumranites wrote, moreover, differs considerably from that of the Mishnah. This difference appears to have been conventional rather than habitual, as shown by contrasting the language of most of the Qumran compositions with the more mishnaic Hebrew of 4Q229,[49] the Copper Scroll (3Q15)[50] or 4QMMT (4Q394-399).[51] Since 4QMMT

23-58. For a more precise breakdown of Qumran manuscripts by language, and categorized as biblical versus non-biblical, see Émile Puech, 'Du bilinguisme à Qumrân?', in Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet (ed.), *Mosaïque de langues, mosaïque culturelle: Le bilinguisme dans le Proche-Orient Ancien: Actes de la table-ronde du 18 novembre 1995 organisée par l'URA 1062 'Etudes Sémitiques'* (Antiquités Sémitiques, 1; Paris: Maisonneuve, 1996), pp. 171-89 (176). If one accepts E.W. Tuinstra's argument that the Qumran Job Targum was composed at Qumran ('Hermeneutische Aspecten van de Targum van Job uit Grot XI van Qumrân' [unpublished ThD dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen, 1970], pp. 69-70), a view now made more acceptable by Sally L. Gold's contribution, 'Targum or Translation: New Light on the Character of Qumran Job (11Q10) from a Synoptic Approach', *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 (2001), pp. 101-20, but which still falls short of proving that there is anything specifically Qumranic (as opposed to generally Essenic) in the targum, this might alter the picture somewhat.

49.   Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997–98), I, p. 484, entitle this work '4QPseudepigraphic work in Mishnaic Hebrew'.

50.   J.T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (SBT, 26; London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 130, refers to the Hebrew of the Copper Scroll as mishnaic Hebrew. Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', p. 1018, thinks that the Copper Scroll 'is a form of witnesses' deposition, whether real or pretended, and its language is meant to represent the *ipsissima verba* of those who gave the evidence'. Meyers and Strange write, 'Presumably [the Copper Scroll] was intended to be a permanent record that only a Jew could read, in fact, perhaps only a member of a priestly, or rabbinic, family' (*Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 67). Arguments for and against classifying the Hebrew of the Copper Scroll in relationship to mishnaic Hebrew can be found in J.T. Milik, 'Le rouleau de cuivre provenant de la grotte 3Q (3Q15)', in M. Baillet, J.T. Milik, and R. de Vaux (eds.), *Les 'petites grottes' de Qumrân* (DJD, 3; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 201-302 (236-58); Jonas C. Greenfield, 'The Small Caves of Qumran', *JAOS* 89 (1969), pp. 128-41; Al Wolters, 'The Copper Scroll and the Vocabulary of Mishnaic Hebrew', *RevQ* 14 (1990), pp. 483-95; Peter Muchowski, 'Language of the Copper Scroll in the Light of the Phrases Denoting the Directions of the World', in Michael O. Wise, Norman Golb, John J. Collins, and Dennis G. Pardee (eds.), *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Real-ities and Future Prospects* (Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 722; New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), pp. 319-27; John F. Elwolde, '3Q15: Its Linguistic Affiliation, with Lexicographical

is undoubtedly a Qumran composition, we may presume that its departure from the more biblicizing style of the other Qumran writings represents a form of Hebrew more common among the Temple priesthood (to whom it was addressed). Elisha Qimron's contention that Qumran Hebrew 'is not an imitation of BH [=biblical Hebrew] but rather a continuation of it'[52] does not appear likely: among other things, it requires one to explain the language of 4QMMT as a conscious imitation of extra-Qumranic Hebrew (viz. that of the Temple administration) rather than as a simple code-switching from an artificial literary Hebrew to a more common dialect. It should also be noted that anticipators and supporters of Qimron's view have sometimes been forced to resort to some rather unlikely constructs as props for certain corollaries, as with Rabin's backward suggestion 'that the Pharisees abandoned the use of biblical Hebrew in order to set off their own teaching clearly

Comments', in George J. Brooke and Philip R. Davies (eds.), *Copper Scroll Studies* (JSPSup, 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 108-21; John Lübbe, 'The Copper Scroll and Language Issues', in Brooke and Davies (eds.), *Copper Scroll Studies*, pp. 155-62. It is in keeping with these observations that the Copper Scroll is the only Hebrew work found at Qumran containing Greek loanwords—see Florentino García Martínez, 'Greek Loanwords in the *Copper Scroll*', in Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (eds.), *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst* (JSJSup, 82; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 119-45.

51. William M. Schniedewind, 'Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew', in Muraoka and Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, pp. 245-55 (252) gives an explanation for the non-biblicizing Hebrew of 4QMMT that the writing reflects a period before the community adopted a linguistic ideology. On the Hebrew of 4QMMT, see Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (DJD, 10; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 65-108 (101-108); B.W.W. Dombrowski, '4QMMT after DJD 10, Qumran Cave 4, Part 5', *Qumran Chronicle* 5 (1995), pp. 151-70; Pablo-Isaac Kirtchuk, 'Some Cognitive and Typological Semantic Remarks on the Language of 4QMMTa', in Muraoka and Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, pp. 131-36.

52. See Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS, 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), p. 116. Cf. Mayer Gruber, 'Language(s) in Judaism', in Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (3 vols.; New York: Continuum, 1999), II, pp. 783-97 (785-87). Shlomo Morag gives eleven reasons for thinking that Qumran Hebrew was spoken ('Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations', *VT* 38 [1988], pp. 148-64).

from that of the sectarians'.[53] The Qumranites' attention to orthographical matters may also suggest that they consciously shaped their writings at the linguistic level.[54] Their efforts to biblicize their Hebrew is best explained along ideological lines: they saw themselves as an exclusive remnant of Judaism's biblical heritage.[55] In other words, they represent a form of 'introverted sectarianism'.[56]

53.	Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', p. 1015. See Chaim Rabin, 'The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew', in Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin (eds.), *Scripta Hierosolymitana*. IV. *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2nd edn, 1965), pp. 144-61 (160-61).

54.	Schniedewind, 'Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage', p. 248, suggests that 'The purpose of the peculiar orthography seems…to be to mark off the sectarian texts from other Jewish literature in their library.' See the comments on the archaic orthography of Qumran Hebrew in E.Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Complete Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaᵃ)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 4-8, 96-125; David Noel Freedman, 'The Massoretic Text and the Qumran Scrolls: A Study in Orthography', in Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon (eds.), *Qumrân and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 196-211; Emanuel Tov, 'The Orthography and Language of the Hebrew Scrolls Found at Qumran and the Origins of These Scrolls', *Textus* 19 (1986), pp. 31-57; Frank Moore Cross, Jr, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 3rd edn, 1995), pp. 174-77. See also the response to Kutscher in Arie van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches: Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte des Alten Testaments* (OBO, 35; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 1981), pp. 74-81. See Mireille Hadas-Lebel's remarks on Qumranic Hebrew in *Histoire de la langue hébraique des origines à l'époque de la Mishna* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1981), pp. 105-108. Unlike Tov, Eugene Ulrich is not convinced that orthography can be used to determine whether a biblical manuscript was copied at Qumran: 'orthography was expanding generally in Palestine in the latter Second Temple period; expanded use of *matres lectionis* was the tendency' (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* [Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], p. 104). Ulrich is concerned to show that the tracing of orthographic conventions is a red herring for the delineation of biblical text types. In the end, this concern is perhaps not relevant to what Weitzman *et al.* argue in connection with sectarian documents, but if biblical orthography was as important to the Qumranites as Weitzman and Schniedewind imply, then the Mishnah's inclusion of later forms of Hebrew within the 'holy language' would comprise a liberal attitude by comparison. See Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 2. Cf. the use of *plene* spellings in mishnaic Hebrew, on which see Bar-Asher, 'The Study of Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar Based on Written Sources', pp. 17-18.

55.	Jonathan Campbell writes, '[T]here is evidence to suggest that Hebrew was special for the Qumran community and the preferred medium for expressing its

There is universal agreement that the Hebrew of most of the writings found at Qumran is closer to the biblical idiom than to mishnaic Hebrew. There is little agreement, however, on how to explain this fact.[57] Some scholars think that Qumran Hebrew was an artificial language, highly literary and hardly spoken at all. Others maintain that the Hebrew of these scrolls represents what was spoken at Qumran. Of course, the former scenario does not imply that the Qumranites did not speak Hebrew: they may have spoken in the idiom represented by 4QMMT. Without insisting on one position or another, I would only point out that a priestly community like Qumran could have functioned in Hebrew, despite the artificiality of the scrolls' language or the like-

history, identity, worship and study of scripture. This doubtless reflects something real about the sect, at least at the level of its idealized self-understanding and its desire to form a link—exclusive in its own eyes—with the biblical past' ('Hebrew and Its Study at Qumran', in William Horbury [ed.], *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999], pp. 38-52 [47-48]). The importance of Hebrew for Qumran identity is also noted in Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), pp. 171, 173-74; Stanislav Segert, 'Hebrew Essenes–Aramaic Christians', in Zdzislaw J. Kapera (ed.), *Mogilany 1995: Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls Offered in Memory of Aleksy Klawek* (Kraków: Enigma, 1998), pp. 169-84. The question of the end to which the Qumranites wrote in a biblical idiom held little currency for the earlier generations of Qumran studies, so much so that Rabin could write, 'As far as is known to me, the question has never been asked why the non-Biblical Scrolls are written in BH at all' ('The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew', p. 144).

56.   The term was coined by Bryan Wilson and applied to the Qumran community by Philip F. Esler. See Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 70-91.

57.   Steve Weitzman writes, 'the use of Hebrew at Qumran [should] be viewed as part of a larger sociolinguistic trend in Judea in the Hellenistic period, one probably tied to the increasingly central role of biblical literature in the formulation of Jewish identity' ('Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', *JAOS* 119 [1999], pp. 35-45 [36]). See also Stefan C. Reif, 'The Second Temple Period, Qumran Research, and Rabbinic Liturgy: Some Contextual and Linguistic Comparisons', in Esther G. Chazon (ed.), *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 19-23 January, 2000* (STDJ, 48; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 133-49. Segert's denial that Qumran had a clear 'Sprachpolitik' stems from his failure to differentiate between the sectarian and the nonsectarian works found in the cache ('Die Sprachenfragen in der Qumrāngemeinschaft', pp. 315-39).

lihood that most of the rest of Palestine spoke only Aramaic and/or Greek.[58] On the basis of an allusion to Zeph. 3.9 in 4Q464, it has been argued that the Qumran community enacted a return to Hebrew as a condition for the eschatological community. Steve Weitzman claims that the 'use of Hebrew [in 4Q464 and *Jubilees*] is represented as the linguistic prerequisite for membership in a supernatural community, either the community at the End of Days or that of the angels in the heavenly temple'.[59] But there is in fact no indication that 4Q464 uses Zeph. 3.9 in this way, or that 4Q464 is even an eschatological text (as its modern editors have supposed).[60] Although the image of the Qumran community as a surrogate for the Temple may imply a realm in which the holy tongue is spoken, and given the practical possibility of achieving that ideal in a community organized around a core of priests, it is another question altogether whether the Qumranites spoke in the artificial language in which they wrote. It is not impossible, but it seems unlikely. The view that Qumran literary Hebrew was both artificial and influenced by spoken Hebrew seems to fit with Avi Hurvitz's argument that Qumran Hebrew 'preserves imprints of a spoken language' yet

58.   As Puech notes, the number of copies of certain Qumran texts that have been found suggests a great number of readers at Qumran ('Du bilinguisme à Qumrân?', p. 178).

59.   Weitzman, 'Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', p. 45. See Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, 'The Holy Tongue in the Last Days in the Light of a Fragment from Qumran', *Tarbiz* 62 (1992–93), pp. 169-77 (Hebrew). Cf. Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, 'An Exposition on the Patriarchs (4Q464) and Two Other Documents (4Q464a and 4Q464b)', *Le Muséon* 105 (1992), pp. 243-64; Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, '4QExposition on the Patriarchs', in Magen Broshi *et al.* (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4*, XIV. *Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (DJD, 19; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 215-30. The upshot of this reconstruction of 4Q464, and of the readings in parallel, is (according to Eshel and Stone) that the Qumran community believed Hebrew to be the eschatological language. The community insists upon using Hebrew because it sees itself as the endtime community. Weitzman contrasts the view of 4Q464 with that of Philo, who rejects Babel as the origin of the earthly languages and accordingly accepts the validity of other languages for Jewish expression (cf. Philo, *Conf.* 191): 'In contrast to Philo's linguistic claims…which amount to a justification of the Jewish use of Greek, 4Q464's description of Hebrew seems to presuppose a deliberate rejection of the need or utility of using languages other than Hebrew' (Weitzman, 'Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', p. 40).

60.   See John C. Poirier, '4Q464: Not Eschatological', *RevQ* 20 (2002), pp. 583-87.

should not 'be defined in terms of a spoken language'.[61] The sacred use to which the Qumranites put their language most likely would have caused them to guard against Aramaic influences—Schniedewind points to 'a studied avoidance of…Aramaisms'[62]—and it is this attempt to keep Hebrew pure that led to the artificial language that we encounter in the Qumran writings.[63]

61. Avi Hurvitz, 'Was QH a "Spoken" Language? On Some Recent Views and Positions: Comments', in Muraoka and Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, pp. 110-14 (113).

62. Schniedewind, 'Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage', p. 242; see also *idem*, 'Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew', pp. 245-55. James H. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 20, accepts Schniedewind's characterization of Qumran Hebrew as an 'antilanguage', claiming that the language of the scrolls has been shaped by 'Qumranology and isolation'. Schniedewind compares the Qumranic Hebrew 'antilanguage', which he thinks was spoken at Qumran, with the Jacobean dialect of nascent Quakerism ('a kind of "God-talk"'), even comparing the Quaker use of 'thee' and 'thou' with the Qumranic use of הואה and היאה (for הוא and היא respectively; 'Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew', p. 246). As far as I can tell, however, the reasons he adduces for describing Qumran Hebrew as an 'antilanguage' would still hold if the language in question were merely literary. Catherine Hezser thinks it 'more likely…that such an "antilanguage" was not *spoken* by the sectarians but used by their scribes in writing only' (*Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* [TSAJ, 81; Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck, 2001], p. 228 n. 13). On Qumranic Hebrew as an 'antilanguage', see Martin G. Abegg, Jr, 'Hebrew Language', in Evans and Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, pp. 459-63 (461).

63. This is not to say that Qumranic Hebrew was totally uninfluenced by Aramaic. See M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, 'Linguistic Structure and Tradition in the Qumran Documents', in Rabin and Yadin (eds.), *Scripta Hierosolymitana*. IV. *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 101-37. Segert writes, 'Während des Bestehens der Qumrāngemeinde wurden in Palästina zwei semitische Sprachen von den Juden verwendet, das Aramäische als Umgangssprache und als Sprache zur Verständigung mit den anderen orientalischen Völkern und das Hebräische als Sprache des Gottesdienstes und des Rechts, die Verwendung des Hebräischen im täglischen Leben ist für diese Zeit nicht ganz eindeutig bezeugt' ('Die Sprachenfragen in der Qumrāngemeinschaft', pp. 315-39 [316]). Segert (p. 330) points to a limited use of Aramaic in the Habbakuk *pesher*. On the influence of Aramaic on Hebrew outside of Qumran, see Barr, 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', p. 87; Bar-Asher, 'The Study of Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar Based on Written Sources', p. 20; Baruch A. Levine, 'Hebrew (Postbiblical)', in John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie (eds.), *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for Biblical Hebrew and Related*

From what we know of the Pharisees, on the other hand, they appear to have geared their expressions of piety toward mass participation, and there is no *a priori* reason to suppose that they would have exalted Hebrew in the same way as the Qumranites. It needs to be said, therefore, that the long-held view that the Pharisees taught their halakhic system through Hebrew, a view specifically promulgated by Rabin,[64] has little going for it. Rabin formulated this view in dependence on a hebraeophone view of Second Temple Jewish Palestine, and on the belief that the Mishnah, as the eventual deposit of pharisaic thinking, represented the language of the Pharisees. That Hebrew was widely spoken in Second Temple times is debatable at best (as I have tried to show), and, as Hezser points out, 'the fact that the Mishnah was composed and written in Hebrew does not necessarily imply that the statements and traditions it contains were originally formulated in that lan-

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Languages (SBLRBS, 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), pp. 157-82 (160).

64.   Rabin held that the Qumranic references to the 'blasphemous tongue' (לשון גדופים; CD 5.11-12), 'halting language' (ל[ו]ע[ג] שפה; 1QH 12.16 [was 4.16]), and 'uncircumcised language' (ערול שפה; 1QH 10.18 [was 2.18]) of their opponents were aimed at the Pharisees, who (Rabin believed) used mishnaic Hebrew (as opposed to the quasi-biblical Hebrew of Qumran) as their language of instruction ('The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew', pp. 144-61). Schniedewind accepts Rabin's view that Qumran's opponents spoke Hebrew, but he argues that these opponents were not the Pharisees but rather the Temple adminis-tration, who spoke and wrote in a jargoned and orthographically corrupt form of Hebrew ('Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage', pp. 235-52; see *idem*, 'Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew', pp. 245-55). Schniedewind believes that the Qum-ranites' use of Isa. 28.10-11 entailed an implicit appeal to Isa. 28.14's reference to those 'who govern…in Jerusalem', despite the fact this phrase from Isa. 28.14 is nowhere quoted or alluded to in 1QH, and despite the fact that there is a clear reference to the Pharisees later within the same stream of invective in 1QH ('seek-ers of smooth things' [10.30-32]). Jacob Kremer also argues that 1QH 4.17 was directed against 'der maßgeblichen Führer Jerusalems' (*Pfingstbericht und Pfingst-geschehen: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Apg 2, 1-13* [Stuttgarter Bibel-studien, 63/64; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1973], p. 40). Contrary to Rabin's and Schniedewind's assumptions, it is more likely that the 'blasphemous' tongue of Qumran's opponents is Aramaic, and that what made it 'blasphemous' was precisely the audacious act of conveying holy traditions with it. On the phrase 'seekers after smooth things' as a reference to the Pharisees, see Albert I. Baumgarten, 'Seekers after Smooth Things', in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. Vander-Kam (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 857-59.

guage', that is, this language could well have been (and almost certainly was) Aramaic rather than Hebrew.[65] Hezser has recently added support for this scenario:

> If informal and private written notes existed, the language of these notes may have been Aramaic rather than Hebrew. This phenomenon may be indicated by Y. Kil. 1.1, 27a, where an Aramaic list of various kinds of produce allegedly written 'on the wall' (of the house or study room?) of Hillel b. Alem is quoted, which appears in Hebrew in M. Kil. 1.1.[66]

It would appear, therefore, that the Qumranites and the Pharisees represent opposing tendencies in the debate over whether adherence to Hebrew forms of expression takes precedence over forms that most synagogue congregations could understand. Although the rabbis inscribed the Pharisees within their own historical identity, the dominant language policy of the third-century rabbis, at least on the surface, appears to have had more in common with the Qumranites. As Hezser writes, 'The ritual reading and listening to the Hebrew original was obviously more important to the rabbis than the audience's ability to understand what was read, as T. Meg. 2.6 and 3.13 already suggest.'[67] The rabbis' rejection of the Pharisees' views on the matter is best explained along sociological lines.

Yet there was also a difference between the rabbis and the Qumranites in connection with the use of Hebrew, a difference that is sociological in its main lines. There are, in fact, two very different types of ideological commitments to holy languages. The one that we find at

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65. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 242 n. 127. Hezser writes (p. 246), 'Hebrew may have been used for the formulation and writing of the Mishnah and other tannaitic works, but it was not necessarily the language in which the tannaim actually spoke.' As Schwartz argues, 'the decision to compose the Mishnah (the earliest rabbinic document, *c.* 200 C.E.) in Hebrew—and in a type of Hebrew which was especially associated with the temple, as the Rabbis themselves knew—constituted an act of appropriation, an assertion of rabbinic control over what was symbolically central to Judaism' ('Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 34). On the ideological aspect of the use of Hebrew in the Mishnah, see André Paul, 'La Bible grecque d'Aquila et l'idéologie du judaïsme ancien', *ANRW* 2.20.1 (1987), pp. 221-45 (238-39).

66. Catherine Hezser, 'The Mishnah and Ancient Book Production', in Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner (eds.), *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective* (Handbook of Oriental Studies: Near and Middle East, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 167-92 (179).

67. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 248 n. 164.

Qumran is borne of sectarian social dynamics ('We're in and you're out'), and involves a 'righteous-remnant' mentality calling forth an antiquarianizing or scripturalizing approach to language. (Cf. Schniede-wind's comparison of Qumran Hebrew with Quaker English.) The rabbis represent another type of ideological commitment, one that is motivated simply by a sort of 'Scripture principle' (broadly construed), having nothing to do with sectarian versus non-sectarian dynamics: it involves a simple acceptance of the holy language as the language of religion, without any pretensions about antiquarian forms of that language.[68] This difference in the sociological components of the Qumran-ic and rabbinic approaches to Hebrew answers the objection, sometimes voiced by those adhering to the modern Israeli understanding of the linguistic situation in classical Jewish Palestine, that the rabbis made no effort to biblicize their Hebrew, or to keep it free of aramaisms and graecisms.

Outside of synagogues and the Temple, there is little in the way of inscriptions to suggest that Hebrew was known at all. Fitzmyer points to the 'sons of Hezir' tomb in the Kidron Valley as 'almost the sole exception'.[69] From the amoraic period, we also possess the Hebrew inscriptions from catacomb 20 at Beth She'arim, but the use of Hebrew in this catacomb (alone of all the burial chambers at Beth She'arim) probably rests on the fact that it represents an important rabbinic family.[70] It is hardly the case that all rabbis were memorialized in Hebrew,[71]

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68.   It should be pointed out that the Qumranic approach actually represents a combination of both paradigms: the sectarian aspect of Qumranic self-definition brought the former paradigm into play, while the priestly aspect brought the latter. At any rate, the Qumran model is a poor example for what we should expect from groups affirming a 'holy language' ideology per se, especially from groups (like the rabbis) that were socially expansionist.

69.   Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', p. 44. See Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 69.

70.   See Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1989), p. 50. Of the Hebrew used at Beth She'arim, Tessa Rajak writes, 'The language has been judged "pure Mishnaic", but the fragmentary texts do not permit confidence' ('The Rabbinic Dead and the Diaspora Dead at Beth She'arim', in Peter Schäfer [ed.], *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture I* [TSAJ, 71; Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck, 1998], pp. 349-66 [364 n. 40]).

71.   E.g. see the several examples in Baruch Lifshitz, 'Beiträge zur palästin-ischen Epigraphik', *ZDPV* 78 (1962), pp. 64-88.

but when one catacomb out of several shows a marked preference for Hebrew, its explicit rabbinic associations are probably the determining factor.

The schools that became more common in the third century CE were run by the rabbis and aimed to equip their students with the skill to read Torah. The rabbis recognized the importance of teaching reading skills, not only for the sake of Torah piety itself, but also 'in order to create a support base for themselves'.[72] Even for the third century CE, however, it would be a mistake to assume that a majority of school-aged males received any type of education outside the home, institutionalized or otherwise. We will look at the issue of institutional education in more detail when we discuss the third century CE, but for now it suffices to mention that only parents who could afford tuition and do without their sons' share of the work burden were able to send their sons to school.[73] This is true even more of the first century CE than of the third.

There are a number of minor arguments for and against the vernacular status of Hebrew that I have not yet mentioned. Some of the more intriguing arguments involve the New Testament: What, for example, should we make of Luke's three references to 'the Hebrew dialect' (τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ; Acts 21.40; 22.2; 26.14)? The first two references are in the context of Paul's addressing a mob in Jerusalem in that language, and the third refers to the language used by the heavenly Jesus when speaking to Paul (Saul) in his Damascus road christophany.[74] The most common rendering of τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ has been 'the language of the Hebrews', that is, not Hebrew but Aramaic, and one popular biblical translation (the NIV) has even rendered this phrase as 'in Aramaic'.[75] Despite the universal appeal of this rendering, it is based on a singularly poor piece of philology, and those who insist that 'Hebrew' still means 'Hebrew' have sufficient

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72. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 39.

73. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 41.

74. For a more detailed version of this discussion of Luke's references to τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ, see John C. Poirier, 'The Narrative Role of Semitic Languages in the Book of Acts', *Filología Neotestamentaria* 16 (2003), pp. 91-100.

75. E.g. Dalman writes, 'The utterance of the voice heard by Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus was in "the Hebrew language" (Acts xxvi. 14), i.e. in Aramaic, the language in which our Lord used to speak, and which was also that of Saul' (*Jesus–Jeshua*, p. 18). Ernst Haenchen, forgoing philological niceties, flatly declares, 'that Jesus speaks Aramaic to Paul' is 'here expressly noted' (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971], p. 685).

cause to complain. Philology is on the side of τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ meaning 'the Hebrew language'. In the words of Birkeland, 'The conclusion…seems to be unavoidable, that Hebrew really means Hebrew.'[76] This understanding of the scenario is supported, in a certain manner, by Paul's apparent use of Aramaic and Greek at other points in the story: when Paul addresses the crowd in τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ, they immediately fall silent, greatly surprised (and respectful?) at his choice of language. This indicates that Paul's earlier exchange with the mob was *not* in τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ. But could it not be that Paul had earlier addressed the mob in Greek? No, for then the tribune would not be surprised to hear Paul address *him* in Greek. In other words, no matter what τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ means, the narrative implies that Paul addressed the mob in two different languages, and that *neither* of them was Greek.

Unfortunately for the Hebraic vernacular scenario, however, winning back the reference to Hebrew in τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ means losing the narrative's support for the vernacularity of Hebrew. Virtually all interpreters of Acts 21–22 seem to have missed Paul's reason for speaking in Hebrew, which has less to do with insuring that he is understood by the Jewish mob (although it of course matters to him that he should be understood by a good many of them), and more to do with insuring that he is *not* understood by the Roman tribune. After the tribune gives Paul permission to address the crowd, he does so in τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ, a tactic which apparently took the tribune by surprise. (The tribune surely expected Paul to address the mob in Aramaic. Johannes Munck's contention[77] that Paul 'had been expected' to address the crowd in Greek cannot be upheld, as the tribune's forging of a possible connection between Paul's ability to speak Greek and the crimes of 'the Egyptian' strongly suggests that Greek-speakers were few on that occasion. This also implies that the tribune's own direct questioning of the crowd was probably in Aramaic.) After the ensuing

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76.   Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus*, p. 13. For a similar argument, see Jehoshua M. Grintz, 'Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple', *JBL* 79 (1960), pp. 32-47 (42-45); Paul Ellingworth, 'Hebrew or Aramaic?', *BT* 37 (1986), pp. 338-41; Ken Penner, 'Did Paul Speak Hebrew? Ancient Names for Hebrew and Aramaic', paper delivered at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies Annual Meeting, May 30, 2003.

77.   Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AB, 31; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 217.

tumult, the tribune is ready to have Paul 'examined by flogging' (22.24) in order to find out what he said that incited the crowd. (That neither the tribune nor any of his coterie could understand Paul is proof enough that τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ does not mean 'Aramaic'. Presumably just about any Roman soldier on the Eastern frontier could have understood Aramaic [see Josephus, *War* 4.1.5].) That Paul's use of Hebrew was at least partially motivated by the secrecy it provided in the presence of Roman officials is suggested by Paul's unwillingness to confess what he said. This use of Hebrew for speaking secrets in the presence of a non-Jewish dignitary is actually paralleled in Jewish sources: it is found in *4 Maccabees* 12 (which may have provided some of the inspiration for Paul's actions).[78] In other words, Paul's use of Hebrew was both tactical and unexpected, and cannot be used as evidence that Hebrew was the vernacular of first-century Jerusalem. Ironically, the side that wins the philological battle over τῇ Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ is the one guarding against the negative implication that the surrounding narrative has to offer.[79]

78.   Jan M. Bremmer suggests a similar explanation for why Perpetua suddenly spoke Greek (rather than Latin) in *Passio Perpetuae* 13.4: she 'wanted to speak to Optatus and Aspasius without being understood by other people' ('The Vision of Saturus in the *Passio Perpetuae*', in García Martínez and Luttikhuizen [eds.], *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome*, pp. 55-73 [68]).

79.   To take a similar case, Grintz refers to Josephus, *War* 6.96 as evidence that Hebrew was 'the language of the "multitude" of Jerusalem, the vernacular': 'Thus it can be taken for granted that when Josephus talks (*Bellum Judaicum* VI.2.1 § 96) about a speech he delivered by the command of the emperor in Hebrew:– Ἰώσηπος ὡς ἂν εἴη μὴ τῷ Ἰωάννῃ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐν ἐπηκόῳ στὰς [*sic*] τά τε τοῦ Καίσαρος διήγγελλεν ἑβραΐζων... "standing so that his words might reach the ears not only of John but also of the multitude, (he) delivered Caesar's message in Hebrew"—he means precisely what he says: Hebrew and not Syrian. Hebrew then was not the language of the literary circles or of the learned few; it was also the language of the "multitude" of Jerusalem, the vernacular' ('Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple', p. 44). Contra Grintz, it is not at all clear that Hebrew is used in this instance out of pure linguistic necessity, nor is it clear that everyone in the city would have understood Josephus: the Romans probably instructed Josephus to use Hebrew because of the special attention Jerusalemites would have given that language. This is the more natural inference, in my opinion, especially in view of the fact that Josephus bothers to specify which language he used. (If it were simply the normal language for addressing Jerusalemites, there would be little need to mention it.) While the Romans themselves could have addressed 'the multitude' in Aramaic,

And what about Paul's references (in Acts) to Jesus speaking Hebrew? Although the account of Paul's Damascus Road experience is narrated three times, it is still too brief to interpret with the same confidence as Paul's ordeal with the Jewish mob. But can we not say that if Paul is careful to mention that Jesus spoke Hebrew, that this implies that Hebrew was *not* the language that Jesus was normally expected to speak? This answer, I am sure, is not ultimately satisfying for some, who will want to know why Jesus *did* speak to Paul in Hebrew. Here I will only suggest that the reason Jesus spoke to Paul in Hebrew might be related to the reason Paul spoke to the Jewish mob in Hebrew: in order *not* to be understood by certain others who were present (in this case, by the rest of the Damascus-bound coterie).

3. *Aramaic versus Hebrew*

It is difficult to give an adequate statement about the linguistic situation of third-century Jewish Palestine, especially in connection with the arguments regarding the place of Aramaic vis-à-vis Hebrew, so in what follows I present more of an outline of the arguments that impress me. In addition to providing this outline, this section responds to Steven Fraade's defense of Hebrew as a vernacular language during this period.

Of those scholars who believe that Hebrew was the dominant language for at least part of the period under consideration, some think that it was dominant in the pre-Bar Kokhba era, but that it retreated before the spread of Aramaic and Greek after the revolt (e.g. Segal, Grintz, Gafni),[80] while others imagine the reverse scenario, in which the

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only a fellow Jew, and a Jew among Jews at that, could have addressed the crowd in Hebrew.

80. E.g. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 15; Grintz, 'Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple', p. 44; Isaiah M. Gafni, 'The World of the Talmud: From the Mishnah to the Arab Conquest', in Hershel Shanks (ed.), *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), pp. 225-65 (234). Rabin believes that the events of 70 CE caused Hebrew to retreat ('Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', p. 1036), and so apparently does Bernard Spolsky ('Jewish Multilingualism in the First Century: An Essay in Historical Sociolinguistics', in Joshua A. Fishman [ed.], *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages* [Contributions to the Sociology of Jewish Languages, 1; Leiden: Brill, 1985], pp. 35-50 [40-41]).

nationalizing impulse of the revolt marked the beginning of brighter days for Hebrew as a spoken language (e.g. Yadin, Rosén).[81] My own view is that Hebrew was a minority language in Jewish Palestine throughout the entire period that I am discussing, but that there was always an element who spoke it.[82]

81.   Yadin writes, 'possibly Hebrew had just lately been revived by a Bar-Kokhba decree' (*Bar-Kokhba*, p. 124). See also Haiim B. Rosén, 'Die Sprach-situation im römischen Palestina', in Günter Neumann and Jürgen Untermann (eds.), *Die Sprachen im römischen Reich der Kaiserzeit: Kolloquium vom 8. bis 10. April 1974* (Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher, 40; Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1980), pp. 215-39 (225-26). Birkeland thinks that mishnaic Hebrew was 'nothing else than a literary language created by Jewish religious–nationalistic extremists on the basis of [biblical Hebrew] and of dialects' (*The Language of Jesus*, p. 23). Mussies suggests that Yadin's posited Hebrew revival did not last beyond the failed revolt ('Greek as the Vehicle of Early Christianity', pp. 362-64). As Yadin notes, Bar Kokhba's strenuous effort to obtain the 'four species' of Sukkoth during the war 'is…a testimony to Bar-Kokhba's strict religious piety' (*Bar-Kokhba*, p. 128). A religious motivation behind Bar Kokhba's insistence on Hebrew would seem to stick well. Yadin claims (p. 181) that Hebrew may have become more important as the conflict matured, and that one's choice of language mattered less in the early years of the revolt and in the time preparatory to it: 'It is interesting that the earlier documents are written in Aramaic while the later ones are in Hebrew.' Not every-one, however, is convinced of Yadin's claim: cf. Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd edn, 1973–87), II, p. 28 n. 117: 'the available evidence does not altogether bear out this claim, and the com-plete publication of the finds must be awaited before a definite conclusion can be reached'. Millar's 'hand-list' of the Bar Kokhba documents (*The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337*, pp. 548-52) allows a view to Yadin's contention that Hebrew became more prominent as the revolt dragged on: Year One documents (dated): 1 Hebrew, 3 Aramaic, 0 Greek; Year Two documents (dated): 2 Hebrew (one with Greek signature on verso), 0 Aramaic, 0 Greek; Year Three documents (dated): 3 Hebrew, 2 Aramaic, 1 Hebrew(?)/Aramaic; 0 Greek; Year Four documents (dated): 1 Hebrew, 0 Aramaic, 0 Greek; documents not internally dated: 4 Hebrew; 9 Aramaic, 2 Greek. Although the pattern of the evidence lines up in the direction of Yadin's claim, it does not do so in a particularly demonstrative way. For Barr, the fact that Aramaic is found at all in the Bar Kokhba correspondence is proof enough that the leader of the revolt did not invoke a linguistic ideology ('Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', p. 98).

82.   I agree with the formulation of Pinchas E. Lapide: 'In the days of Jesus the common language of most Palestinian Jews was Aramaic…But Hebrew remained the language of worship, of the Bible, and of religious discourse; in a word, it remained the sacred language (*lšwn hqdwš*) well into the period of the early

There are two principal arguments for viewing Aramaic as the main vernacular in Jewish Palestine during the period we are considering. The first is based on the preponderance of inscriptional and documentary evidence. The second is based on the prevailing custom of providing an Aramaic translation of Scripture in the synagogue. Despite the strength of the case that can be made on inscriptional and documentary evidence (see above), the second argument may be the more powerful of the two. This is not because of any quantitative evidentiary advantage, but because of the considerable difficulty of accommodating the practice of targum to a hebraeophone scenario.[83] Although a number of scholars have tried to float explanations for the practice of targum within a supposedly Hebrew-rich culture (see my discussion of Fraade and Tal below), none of their attempted explanations can challenge the simple beauty of the most practicable and obvious explanation, that is, that synagogue-goers needed a translation in order to understand what was being said. That the general populace did not understand Hebrew well enough to get anything out of the weekly Scripture reading is by far the best explanation for the widespread existence of this practice. Together, these two arguments for widespread Aramaic (inscriptional/ documentary remains and the practice of translating Scripture in the synagogue) make it difficult to indulge the insistence of some scholars that Hebrew was widely spoken among the populace. These arguments can be supplemented by other miscellaneous evidence as well, such as Josephus' claim (*War* 4.1.5) that Roman soldiers, native to Syria, could understand the table talk of Jews in Gamala.[84] (Whether Josephus' presentation is factually correct is beside the point: it is enough that his account does not *anticipate* the existence of a language barrier.) For a later period, Joseph Yahalom has called attention to a tradition of

Church' (*Hebrew in the Church: The Foundations of Jewish–Christian Dialogue* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 1).

83.   Roger LeDéaut makes this same point (*Introduction à la littérature targumique* [Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966], pp. 26-27).

84.   Noted in Dalman, *Jesus–Jeshua*, p. 15. I disagree with Stanley E. Porter, who assumes that the centurion of Mt. 8.5-13 would not have understood Aramaic ('Greek of the New Testament', in Evans and Porter [eds.], *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, pp. 426-35 [433]).

Aramaic nonliturgical poetry, filling the living space that remained out of touch with the 'stylized erudition' of Hebrew liturgical poetry.[85]

The view that Hebrew was widely spoken has enjoyed a wide following since the time of Segal, who pointed out changes wrought in the Hebrew language during the time when it was widely thought to have been a dead language.[86] These changes indicated to Segal that Hebrew was still thriving in an oral environment. What are we to make of his contention that linguistic development takes place only in spoken languages? Does linguistic development imply a spoken context? Scholars have usually assumed that it does: twelve years before Segal's *Grammar* appeared, Max Radin wrote that Hebrew 'must have been constantly spoken among educated men, for the changes it continued to exhibit are not such as would occur if it had been quite divorced from life'.[87]

There are two things that must be said in response to Segal. The first is a qualification: that Hebrew was spoken somewhere does not mean that it was spoken everywhere. Would not Hebrew have developed even if it were spoken only in the Temple, or the study house? This is a com-monsense qualification, and one with which Segal expressly agrees, although he does not allow it to run as far as it will go. As Barr notes, 'the recognition of a colloquial basis for Middle Hebrew, and the aban-donment of the idea that it is an artificial jargon, do not in themselves prove that Hebrew was still generally spoken in the tannaitic period'.[88] Scholars now regularly acknowledge that Hebrew continued to develop, without going to the unwarranted extreme of concluding that this means that Hebrew must have been one of the main languages of Jewish Palestine. Consider, for example, Pinchas Wechter's well-nuanced assessment:

> With the…ascendancy of Aramaic as the vernacular of the people, Hebrew was primarily reserved for study, scholarly discussions and prayer. The שפת כנען 'the language of Canaan', and יהודית 'the Jews' language' became לשון הקדש 'the sacred tongue'.

85. Joseph Yahalom, 'Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity', *JJS* 47 (1996), pp. 33-44 (44).

86. M.H. Segal, 'Mishnaic Hebrew and its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic', *JQR* 20 (1908–1909), pp. 647-737; *idem*, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, pp. 1-20.

87. Max Radin, *The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1915), p. 119.

88. Barr, 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', p. 83.

Although not necessarily arresting its development, as evidenced by the emergence of scholarly and technically precise Mishnaic Hebrew, such limited use of the language resulted in rendering many biblical words and phrases unintelligible to scholars of later generations. Occasionally preceded by the phrase: לא הוו ידעין רבנן מאי 'Our teachers did not know the meaning of …', these words are explained or taken as the basis for homiletical interpretations by being compared to Aramaic, Persian, and Greek, which successively influenced the cultural life of Palestinian Jewry.[89]

There are those, like Rabin, who think that Segal's argument for the spoken nature of mishnaic Hebrew poses a problem for those who pit the practice of targum against the view that Hebrew was the dominant language.[90] But that manifestly is not the case: it is hard to see how the continuing development of Hebrew implies that Hebrew was the dominant language, or, more specifically, how the argument from the practice of targum is in any way undone.

The second thing that must be said about Segal's claim is not a qualification but a challenge: Is it really true that only spoken languages exhibit the kind of development that we find in mishnaic Hebrew? Yoḥanan Breuer counts sixteen features that distinguish amoraic from tannaitic Hebrew, demonstrating that development took place during a period when Hebrew is widely agreed to have been more of an academic than a vernacular language: 'We must conclude that written, non-spoken languages can develop.'[91] As noted above, Blau points out (responding to Elisha Qimron's arguments for the spoken nature of Qumran Hebrew), that even dead (strictly literary) languages evolve.[92] Blau supports this claim by examining changes in Middle Arabic texts: 'The Neo-Arabic elements attested in the Middle Arabic texts reflect, to be sure, a living language, yet many deviations from classical Arabic proper exhibit changes that affected a language no longer spoken, yet still used as a literary device, and depend on various traditions, genres,

89.   Pinchas Wechter, *Ibn Barûn's Arabic Works on Hebrew Grammar and Lexicography* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1964), p. 1.

90.   Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', pp. 1022-23.

91.   Yoḥanan Breuer, 'On the Hebrew Dialect of the *'Amōrā'īm* in the Babylonian Talmud', in Bar-Asher (ed.), *Scripta Hierosolymitana. XXXVII. Studies in Mishnaic Hebrew*, pp. 129-50 (149).

92.   Blau, 'A Conservative View of the Language of the Dead Sea Scrolls', p. 20.

fashions, scribal schools, and personal inclinations.'[93] These examples of linguistic development beyond an oral environment show that Segal's rule does not universally apply.

The belief that Hebrew was a principal language in Jewish Palestine is often wedded to the belief that an extensive educational system was in place from an early date, and that virtually all male Jewish youths were schooled in reading Torah. This was once a universal belief among scholars, and is still dominant in many circles. Haiim B. Rosén's opinion was once typical: he wrote that 'illiteracy hardly existed' among male Jews at the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt.[94] Consider also the opinion of Louis Feldman, who assumes that 'the Talmud (*Baba Batra* 21a) is correct in stating that Joshua ben Gamla in the first century introduced an ordinance requiring elementary education for boys'.[95] The examples could be multiplied. The source of this belief in widespread literacy (usually translated into terms of widespread Hebrew fluency) is found in a number of rabbinic passages glorifying the putative school system of the first century CE. Although these texts give wildly exaggerated counts of the number of schools in Palestine—that is, that hundreds of schools existed in pre-Destruction Jerusalem (*y. Meg.* 3.1 [73d] ‖ *b. Ket.* 105b), and that even a small town like Betar had 500 elementary schools at the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt, with at least 500 students in every one (*y. Ta'an.* 4.8 [69a])—many scholars have assumed that they present essentially reliable information about a

93. Blau, 'A Conservative View of the Language of the Dead Sea Scrolls', p. 21.

94. Haiim B. Rosén, *Hebrew at the Crossroads of Cultures: From Outgoing Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Orbis Supplementa; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), p. 11. Alan Millard also thinks that most first-century male Palestinian Jewish youths received a formal education (*Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 157-58). The classic case (I hesitate to call it an 'argument') for this view is found in Shmuel Safrai, 'Education and the Study of the Torah', in Safrai and Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century*, II, pp. 945-70. Safrai (p. 946) reads the rabbinic idealizations (including *m. Abot* 5.21!) as trustworthy accounts of the first century—e.g.: 'As early as the first century C.E. and perhaps even earlier, the majority of the children received education at school.'

95. Louis Feldman, 'How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?', *JSJ* 33 (2002), pp. 290-313 (303). See also Robert Doran's argument in 'The High Cost of a Good Education', in John J. Collins (ed.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 13; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 94-115, to which Feldman's article is a response.

fairly democratized school system (for males only) and a concomitantly high level of Hebrew literacy among male Jews.

Catherine Hezser has published a spirited and detailed response to the supposition that accounts of pre-amoraic elementary schools are trustworthy. She argues that the rabbinic references to an extensive pre-amoraic school system were idealizations based upon the amoraic school system and the image of a purely Torah-literate society. According to Hezser, the argument in favor of an early widespread school system

> is usually based on an uncritical understanding of later Talmudic texts which are not only anachronistic in associating the educational institutions of the amoraic period with pre-70 times, but also vastly exaggerate with regard to the number of educational establishments likely to have existed at either time. An examination of the sources shows that references to teachers and schools rarely appear in tannaitic documents and are much more prevalent in amoraic sources. It seems that especially from the third century C.E. onwards rabbis promoted a particularly Jewish type of primary education as an alternative to Graeco-Roman schools which must have been widespread in Palestine at that time.[96]

96.   Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 39. Hezser is by no means the first scholar to recognize the idealized nature of the rabbinic accounts. Even a staunch proponent of the hebraic scenario like Birkeland had to confess that, in some respects, the rabbinic accounts were more fiction than fact: 'When we read the informations on Jewish schools collected e.g. by Dalman…L.J. Sherrill…and T. Perlow…we get the impression that almost everybody could read and write, or was at least familiar with the Scripture. The rabbinic sources, however, do not reflect the real life in Palestine as a whole' (*The Language of Jesus*, p. 28). Birkeland apparently intended only a partial denial of the widespread view ('do not reflect…as a whole'), but he puts his finger on a real problem. Already in 1938, Morton Scott Enslin had expressed doubts about the extent of institutional education in Jewish Palestine, but his doubts were grounded in realistic thinking about logistics rather than on suspicions about idealization (*Christian Beginnings: Parts I and II* [New York: Harper & Row, 1938], p. 94). See Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 28. Schwartz elsewhere notes that reverence for a religious text does not necessarily lead to literacy (*Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE*, p. 11 n. 15). See also Meir Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries CE', in Simcha Fishbane, Stuart Schoenfeld, and Alain Goldschläger (eds.), *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society,* II (Montreal: Concordia University, 1992), pp. 46-61. Cf. Paul Foster, 'Educating Jesus: The Search for a Plausible Context', *JSHJ* 4 (2006), pp. 7-33 (12).

Although amoraic sources refer to an organized educational system going back to Second Temple times, the fact that these references are unsupported by tannaitic sources (or by Josephus, the New Testament, etc.) severely challenges their credibility. (It is not impossible, however, that a school of this sort existed at Qumran. Brian J. Capper suggests that a school at Qumran may have educated the children of non-Essenes for a fee.)[97] The amoraic claims appear to be idealizations, added to the tradition at a later date. Consider, for example, the passage mentioned in the above quotation from Feldman (*b. B. Bat.* 21a), concerning a supposed first-century ordinance making education compulsory. Hezser enlists the verdict of David Goodblatt, according to whom 'the reference to the development of primary education…does not seem to be a continuation of the statement attributed to R. Yehudah in the name of Rav, but should rather be seen as an addition explaining the words of Rav, attached by the Talmudic editors, which might be based on a *baraita*'.[98] The above-mentioned exaggerated counts of schools show the ideal nature of such a system. It is not until about the third century that synagogue-based schools began to proliferate, but these schools were run by the rabbis, who aimed to equip their students with the skill to read Torah, for the sake of Torah piety and also, as Hezser notes (p. 39), 'in order to create a support base for themselves'. She writes (p. 54), 'The increase of references to "schools" and elementary teaching in amoraic texts may…be directly connected with the emergence and spread of synagogues especially in the Galilee at that time.'[99] Even in the third century, the school system served only the select minority of students who had the time and money.[100] Barring this privilege, the duty of education remained with a boy's father. (The father is named throughout tannaitic sources and other contemporary

97.   Brian J. Capper, 'The New Covenant in Southern Palestine at the Arrest of Jesus', in James R. Davila (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Post-biblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St Andrews in 2001* (STDJ, 46; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 90-116. See Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 47.

98.   Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, p. 46.

99.   See Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity*, pp. 25-28.

100. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, 'The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society', in William Horbury, W.D. Davies, and John Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism.* III. *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 922-90 (934-35).

Jewish writings as the normal teacher, only occasionally replaced by a hired instructor. See *t. Ḥag.* 1.2; *t. Qid.* 1.1; *Sifre Deut.* 46; *y. Suk.* 3.12[15] [54c]; *y. Qid.* 1.7 [61a]; *y. Abod. Zar.* 4.4 [43d-44a]; *y. Qid.* 1.7 [61a].) Only those who could meet the cost of tuition while also forgoing their sons' contribution to the family income could afford to give their sons an education.

In addition to the questions of targumic reading and elementary education, we must consider the language used at Qumran and its implications for Palestinian Judaism in general. Does the situation at Qumran reflect that of the wider Palestinian milieu? Many scholars point to the fact that there is little support for a Hebrew vernacular outside of Qumran. As Fitzmyer writes, if Hebrew were the dominant vernacular in Judaea, 'one would expect more evidence of it to turn up—especially in the first century and in more widespread locales'.[101] But other scholars regard the Qumran cache as precisely the type of evidence Fitzmyer demands. Thus Abraham Tal writes that '[t]he cardinal discoveries in the Judean Desert…anchor the vitality of Hebrew in Palestine during the Second Temple period', even to the point of problematizing the existence of a Palestinian targum during this period.[102] This argument might find acceptance among those who think that Qumran practices and beliefs reflect Palestinian religious–literary conventions in general,[103] but it is precisely this thought that must be rejected, especially in connection with linguistic policies. Qumranic writings attack their opponents for using the wrong language (CD 5.11-12; 1QH 10.18; 12.16; see below), so it is not possible to infer from the use of Hebrew at Qumran that Jewish Palestine in general used Hebrew. While many questions remain, the basic shape of the evidence suggests that the role of Hebrew at Qumran hardly represents the linguistic situation of Jewish Palestine.

101. Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.', p. 45.

102. Abraham Tal, 'Is There a Raison d'Être for an Aramaic Targum in a Hebrew-speaking Society?', *REJ* 160 (2001), pp. 357-78 (357-58).

103. It also works for those few scholars who think that the Dead Sea scrolls do not represent the library of the Qumran community, but that position is problematic, to say the least. As Puech writes, 'l'hypothèse d'une origine non essénienne des manuscrits ne rend pas compte du nombre de copies d'œuvres d'opposition aux partis religieux en place à Jérusalem et de l'absence pour le moins surprenante de compositions qu'on pourrait qualifier de pharisiennes et de sadducéennes!' ('Du bilinguisme à Qumrân?', p. 174).

Some scholars have argued recently that the simple linguistic necessity of an Aramaic translation or paraphrase would not have been felt. Accordingly, they seek other explanations for the practice of translating the lection into Aramaic. These alternative explanations for the practice of targum, however, fail for two reasons: (1) they mishandle the evidence concerning the linguistic situation in first- to third-century Palestine, and (2) they offer overly intellectualizing explanations for the targums, which can hardly counter the intrinsic likelihood of the much simpler explanation (viz. that the Aramaic translation was made primarily for those who understood Hebrew either poorly or not at all).

Although evidence for Scripture reading is found in the New Testament (Lk. 4.16-30; Acts 13.14-15; 15.21), Josephus (*Apion* 2.175), and even as far back as the translation of LXX Ezekiel,[104] there is no firm evidence for the practice of *targum* reading in the first century.[105] Some

104. See David J. Halperin, 'Merkabah Midrash in the Septuagint', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 351-63.

105. Scholarship today is filled with warnings that the extant targums are fairly late, but these warnings impinge upon the present question only in a rather indirect way, if at all. For the most part, objections to the use of targumic evidence are aimed at a different application altogether, that is, the use of targumic readings to illuminate the New Testament. In this connection, we must say that at least one of the arguments once offered for an early date for the targums is no longer convincing. It was once commonly held that the affinities of a given targumic rendering with a scriptural citation within the New Testament (e.g. Mt. 27.46, Eph. 4.8) proved that the targum was either very old, or based on an older targum (e.g. Roger LeDéaut, 'The Targumim', in Davies and Finkelstein [eds.], *The Cambridge His-tory of Judaism*. II. *The Hellenistic Age*, pp. 563-90 [573]; Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, I, p. 102). That explanation no longer convinces: it is now considered more likely that the New Testament and the targumic text share a common (non-Masoretic) textual tradition. The fact that the Mishnah presupposes the practice of targumic reading (*m. Meg.* 4.4; cf. *y. Meg.* 74d-75a; *b. Meg.* 23a-b) supports the view argued here, despite the fact that some of the extant targums may have been connected with the school rather than the synagogue. See Anthony D. York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue and in the School', *JSJ* 10 (1979), pp. 74-86; Philip S. Alexander, 'The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', in John A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Salamanca 1983* (VTSup, 36; Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 14-28; Charles Perrot, 'The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue', in Martin Jan Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (CRINT, 2/1; Assen: van Gorcum, 1990), pp. 137-59. Scholars pointing to the antiquity of targumic reading often refer to Neh. 8.8, but however paradigmatic that

scholars have assumed that some form of translation of the biblical text into Aramaic must have been a part of worship in the synagogue from the beginning of that institution,[106] but there is good reason to suppose that the controlling powers opposed that practice. Some explanation of this state of affairs is perhaps necessary. What should one infer from the absence (or paucity) of targums in the first century? (Whether it is an *absence* or only a *paucity* depends on whether the Qumran Job targum was an import from the East, as Takamitsu Muraoka has argued.[107] But there is still the matter of the Qumran Leviticus Targum.) Those who view Hebrew as a vernacular language in the first century seem to think that the absence of targums is telling evidence in their favor. In point of fact, such an absence of targums is perhaps to be expected, given the probability that the synagogues at that time were probably controlled by priestly and/or scribal groups.[108] For the centuries for which we know that targums *were* used in the synagogues, we also know that not everyone was happy about that fact. It is entirely in keeping with a 'linguistic necessity' explanation for the targum, therefore, to say that the practice of targumic reading could not be instituted

verse might appear, it probably repre-sents a special case. The procedure related in Neh. 8.8 looks a lot like the later practice of targum, but there is little reason to allow this one *ad hoc* procedure to speak for the silence of the following centuries. Instead, we must work our way back from the surviving targumic fragments and from the halakhic material in the Mishnah.

106. E.g. Martin McNamara, 'Some Targum Themes', in D.A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. I. *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (WUNT, 140; Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck, 2001), pp. 303-56 (308).

107. See Takamitsu Muraoka, 'The Aramaic of the Old Targum of Job from Qumran Cave XI', *JJS* 25 (1974), pp. 425-43; Takamitsu Muraoka, 'Notes on the Old Targum of Job from Qumran Cave XI', *RevQ* 9 (1977), pp. 117-25.

108. See the Theodotus inscription (Jean-Baptiste Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum: Recueil des inscriptions juives qui vont du IIIe siecle avant Jesus-Christ au VIIe siecle de notre ere* [2 vols.; Vatican City: Pontificio Instituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1936–52], no. 1404). An early date for this inscription is defended in E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 341; Rainer Riesner, 'Synagogues in Jerusalem', in Richard Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 194-200; Pieter W. van der Horst, *Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* (CBET, 32; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), pp. 55-57. See Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337*, p. 365.

within the synagogue until control of the synagogue came to be more in the hands of private (non-priestly, non-scribal) individuals or groups. In the century or so after the first revolt, the absence of any strong controlling group allowed the synagogue service to go in a more democratizing direction. It should also be noted that, given the power scramble that apparently went on at this time, concessions to popular piety would have been politically expedient.

Before examining particular examples of the revisionist scenario, I should point out that certain aspects of this scenario have been anticipated for half a century in the form of scholars' explanations for the continuance of targum in a supposed post-third century Hebrew-speaking setting. Birkeland sought such an explanation in 1954, and it was put forth again by Barr in 1970. According to Barr,

> [T]hough the Targum originated in communities in which the knowledge of Hebrew was negligible, it came to spread by adoption to communities in which both Hebrew and Aramaic were known. It functioned not simply as a straight translation of the Hebrew Bible, but as a paraphrastic interpretation…we have to distinguish between two things: difficulty in understanding the Old Testament is one thing, and complete ignorance of Hebrew is another. A person who could speak Hebrew in the first century, and even one who could write—or could even speak!—'biblical' Hebrew, as some of the Qumran people could, could still be in difficulty with the actual biblical text. The text was now holy, and it was not possible to bring it up to date by a rewriting in a more contemporary Hebrew. Hebrew com-mentaries (the *pesher* type) existed, but not modernizations of the actual text. For those who knew Hebrew, the Aramaic version functioned as a more or less authoritative interpretation, which both elucidated the linguis-tic obscurities of the original and smoothed out its religious difficulties.[109]

Thus the expansionist nature of targum is made the decisive feature, and the translational nature is made either functionally secondary or is tied to a need to identify targum over against Scripture for the sake of allowing the expansions. The more recent revisionist scenarios (discussed below) differ from Birkeland and Barr in their fixation on

109. James Barr, 'Which Language did Jesus Speak?—Some Remarks of a Semitist', *BJRL* 53 (1970), pp. 9-29 (24-25). Birkeland writes, 'In the Mishnah the Aramaic translation appears as an old *traditional usage*, no new institution. And we know that in the third century it was required that even one who knew Hebrew, when reading the Law privately, should add the traditional Targum. But once this custom must have been provoked by a real need' (*The Language of Jesus*, p. 30).

the *origin* of targum, rather than on the continuation of targum in the midst of a more Hebrew-conversant population. Whether Birkeland's and Barr's insights about the continuation of targum (if correct) can be transmuted into an explanation for the rise of targum in the first place is the question at hand. (Birkeland, for one, supposes that targums functioned primarily as a translation at a very early date, but that this function receded from view when [he supposes] Hebrew became nearly universal in the late Second Temple period.)[110] Those scholars who imagine Aramaic as having always been held under the thumb of Hebrew are forced into some really unnatural explanations for the practice of targum. Tal criticizes Barr for 'still pay[ing] tribute to the conception of a Targum as a linguistic necessity and attribut[ing] its composition to "communities in which the knowledge of Hebrew was negligible"'.[111] But it is Barr (not Tal) who provides a thorough survey of the evidence for and against the vernacular status of Hebrew in Jewish Palestine in late antiquity. Rather than attempt to answer Barr's discussion of the evidence, Tal invokes a supposed (but completely false) shift of consensus and presents Barr as a hanger-on to a toppled state of affairs.

Steven Fraade's revisionist account of the origins of targum is by far the most thorough, and (I suppose) the most honest. Although the title of his article refers to the amoraic period and later (specifically, 'Third–Sixth Centuries'), much of his argument bears directly on the tannaitic period as well. He argues that the practice of translating the weekly lection into Aramaic was not borne of communicative necessity. According to Fraade, Galilean Jews in the third to sixth centuries were thoroughly conversant in Hebrew, and the linguistic situation of the Galilee cannot explain the practice of targum. He devotes the bulk of a 34 page study to the linguistic evidence,[112] yet how he handles this

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110. Birkeland admits that the targumic 'custom must have been provoked by a real need', but he imagines this situation as existing 'very early, without any doubt as early as the Persian era' (*The Language of Jesus*, p. 30). For a later time, when (Birkeland thinks) Aramaic was not so widely understood, he explains (p. 32) the use of targums (incredibly) as a dignification of Scripture study through the use of a prestigious language.

111. Tal, 'Is There a Raison d'Être for an Aramaic Targum in a Hebrew-speaking Society?', p. 367.

112. Steven D. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries', in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of

evidence, and the rather simplistic models of multilingualism that he fits it into, betray the better parts of his analysis. For example, before mentioning that at least seven synagogues feature Hebrew inscriptions, he writes, 'It would be wrong to read such inscriptions as being simple markers of what language the people of a particular place "actually" spoke, since they are stylized and often two or more languages are used within a single location, even within a single inscription.'[113] It is not clear why Fraade thinks that Hebrew inscriptions reflect the vernacular of those attending the synagogue, especially when he has just told us that the choice of language could be based on style. Certainly, stylization is more likely in the case of a religiously valuated language like Hebrew, and the fact that 'the vast majority of synagogue inscriptions are in Aramaic' should be taken to reflect the linguistic norm of the synagogue congregation.

To clear space for a different explanation of targum, Fraade argues that Hebrew would have been understood by virtually all synagogue goers: the Galilee, Fraade writes, was trilingual, speaking Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew. By calling attention to the multilingual situation of the Galilee, Fraade intends to 'call into question a conventional view of the function of targum as serving a popular Jewish synagogue audience that no longer understood Hebrew and needed to be provided with an Aramaic rendering of Scripture as its substitute'.[114] Of course, it is one thing to say that a region was trilingual, and quite another to say that virtually everyone in that region was trilingual. As Hezser points out (p. 227), the descriptors 'multilingual' and 'triglossic' are 'much too general to be useful as a description of the linguistic situation in Roman Palestine'. Fraade's careful wording shows an awareness of the difference between a sort of distributive multilingualism and a multilingual vernacular, but he does not pay sufficient attention to how the evidence might look different in these two cases. It is here where his argument begins to break down: he takes evidence for the existence of Hebrew to

America, 1992), pp. 253-86. Fraade's analysis 'is based on 46 passages from tannaitic texts (Mishnah, Tosefta, and tannaitic midrashim), 20 from talmudic *baraitot*, 21 from the Palestinian Talmud, 20 from the Babylonian Talmud, 6 from the amoraic midrashim, 10 from extra-canonical talmudic tractates, 8 from post-amoraic midrashim, and 8 from geonic sources' (pp. 254-55 n. 4).

   113. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 277.
   114. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 255.

constitute evidence that Hebrew was the vernacular of the Jewish population:

> Having examined all the rabbinic stories and sayings which, when interpreted as simple representations, are said to prove that Hebrew had already died among all except the sages, and among them it had weakened, I find that each and every one can just as easily be interpreted to suggest that Hebrew and Aramaic continued to coexist, even as they were in competition with one another, and therefore significantly interpenetrated each other.[115]

The position that 'Hebrew and Aramaic continued to coexist' is by no means ruled out by the majority of scholars who argue that Aramaic was the vernacular, and that Hebrew was less widespread. Merely proving that Hebrew continued to be spoken by *some* does not carry much force when seeking to overturn the view that targumic renderings were intended to translate the lection into the vernacular of the synagogue congregation.

Fraade writes that it is never 'stated or presumed in a single Galilean rabbinic source that the Aramaic translation was intended for a common crowd which did not understand Hebrew':

> The idea that the Targum was intended for the unlearned 'women and *'amme hā-'aretz'* is a view commonly expressed since medieval times. See, for example, Rashi to B Megillah 21b. Note also Qorban Ha-'edah to J Megillah 4, 1, 74d, but this view receives no expression in tannaitic sources. Only one amoraic source, and a Babylonian one at that, raises this possibility, only for it to be rejected. See B Megillah 18a…See also Tosafot to B Berakhot 8a-b. The view that the targumic translation was intended for the common people, the women, and the children is also found in Tractate Soferim 18.6, Higger, p. 317, but as Higger indicates in his introduction (p. 29), this is a later addition from a Babylonian source.[116]

In response: it might be asking too much to expect statements or presumptions to the effect that the targum was intended for a stratum of the congregation that could not understand Hebrew, and that, notwithstanding the silence of the texts, such a scheme continues to provide the most efficient explanation for the use of an Aramaic translation. The problem needs to be clearly understood: although the intrinsic likelihood that targum was necessitated by the linguistic situ-

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115. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 274.
116. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 258 with n. 10.

ation of many Jewish communities is perhaps not *total*, it is at least compelling enough to overturn the opposing argument from silence. It is not enough to show that a given body of evidence for an Aramaic vernacular is equivocal: one must also be able to show that the Aramaic vernacular view is untenable. Fraade's argument fails not only for not respecting the difference between a distributive multilingualism and a multilingual vernacular, but also for adopting a defensive strategy (viz. 'I find that each and every one can just as easily be interpreted to suggest that Hebrew and Aramaic continued to coexist') for an argument that needs to take the form of a frontal assault.

Fraade believes that 'Targum' possesses a primarily symbolic value. It symbolizes the mediation of God's word: 'Rabbinic sources conceive of Targum…as a bridge and buffer between written Scripture and its oral reception and elucidation.'[117] He finds support for this theory in the rabbinic use of Moses' role at Sinai as a model for 'Targum', a role which, he claims, does not support the view that the targum arose as a linguistic necessity, since (according to Fraade's rabbinic sources) 'both God and Moses spoke Hebrew'.[118] If Moses' act of mediation does not involve a linguistic translation, and if the sources set up that act as a model for targumic translation, then (according to Fraade) it stands to reason that the purpose of the targum cannot be to bridge a language gap. Fraade notes that other rabbinic writings refer to a multilingual revelation of God's word at Sinai (alternatively in four or seventy languages), but he meets the challenge that this poses for his interpretation with a symbolic rendering: 'Since the numbers four and seventy are whole numbers, totality of revelation is expressed in the totality of its linguistic expression, which is understood here as a multilingual expression':[119]

> Thus, to translate a text of Scripture into one of these languages may be thought of not so much as a distancing from Sinai as a return to it. As one mishnaic passage suggests, to fully comprehend the written record of revelation, in a sense, to penetrate its seemingly unilingual writing,

117. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 282.

118. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 266.

119. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 267. For the revelation of Torah in seventy languages, see *t. Soṭ.* 8.6-7; *y. Soṭ.* 7.5 (21d); *b. Soṭ.* 35b; *b. Sanh.* 88b; *b. Šab.* 88b; *Midr. Ps.* 92.3; *Exod. R.* 5.9; 28.6; *Tanḥ. Deb.* 2. See also *m. Soṭ.* 7.5; Sacha Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (AGAJU, 23; Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 211.

> requires reverting it to the fullness of the seventy languages in which it was originally heard by Israel…Thus, translation is itself a form of explication, and no less so for those who 'understand' the language of its source. In a sense, then, the original, pre-literary 'text' of revelation is itself multilingual, and translation is one means of apprehending another one of its many faces.[120]

As we can see, when the rabbinic account expresses no bridging of a linguistic gap, Fraade takes the act of mediation to be the point of the account, and when the account expresses the bridging of multiple linguistic gaps, Fraade takes the 'totality of revelation' to be the point. The upshot of all this, for Fraade, is that the translation of the lection into Aramaic can serve a symbolic role quite independent of any supposed need for translation due to a simple language gap. Fraade writes,

> Implicit in the Palestinian sources considered here is the rabbinic understanding that Targum is intended for an audience, whether in worship or in study, that comprehends both Hebrew and Aramaic but nonetheless is served in their reception of Hebrew Scripture through the mediating interpretation of its Aramaic translation. This is not to suggest that the rabbis or their students experienced no language gap with the Hebrew of Scripture. Quite the contrary, they admitted that the Hebrew they employed in their discourse was different from that of the Bible. R. Yoḥanan is reported to have stated, 'The language of the Torah is one thing and the language of the sages is another.'[121]

Unfortunately, it is problematic to read rabbinic images as efficient extended metaphors, especially when those images are used to make a particular point. In all probability, the purpose of comparing 'Targum' to Moses' mediation of God's word was to express the practical importance of presenting the people with an *accessible* form of that word, to accompany the reading of that word in its pure form (i.e. Hebrew). It is doubtful that the originators of this comparison intended the lack of a God–Moses linguistic gap (in the first rabbinic account) to bear on the meaning they wanted to convey. Likewise, when the rabbis spoke of the Law being revealed in seventy languages, it is more likely that this was meant theologically to underwrite the practice of translating the Torah into other languages. (The observation that the 'numbers four and seventy are whole numbers' is *very* strange: Who in the world would have used a non-whole number within this context?) At any rate, it is

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120. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 267.
121. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 272.

very unlikely that the fact that Moses understood God's language in the *monolingual* account of the giving of the Law was ever intended as a hermeneutic key to the interpretation of the *multilingual* account.

Fraade's attempt to hold the points of the different rabbinic accounts of the giving of the Law together points up one of the methodological problems with his argument: he studiously avoids any sort of conflictual understanding of alternative rabbinic accounts, as if all the rabbinic traditions agree in their basic intent. This refusal to read alternative accounts as conflicting leads Fraade to seek a single overriding rabbinic policy that can accommodate the different attitudes towards the use of Aramaic in religious contexts. The result is that Aramaic is changed from being a *controverted* language to being a language with 'something of an anomalous status'.[122] By this move, Fraade is able to make conflicting statements concerning the status of Aramaic support a single unified view: '[T]he rabbis employed the instrument of Aramaic to distinguish the voice of interpretive paraphrase from that of Scripture, so that the two might be heard and studied as distinct voices in dialogical interrelation to one another, with neither swallowing the other.'[123] In fact, Fraade's resistance to a conflictual understanding of rabbinic traditions is at times so apparent that one wonders whether this resistance might explain his position on the linguistic situation of late antique Palestine.

Fraade is not the only scholar to write a revisionist account of targumic origins. Among other things, Rabin suggests that the purpose of the targum was to provide assistance with biblical words that had passed out of daily use![124] This certainly seems like a stretch. As John P. Meier writes,

> [Rabin] realizes that the existence of Aramaic targums in and before the early 1st century A.D. poses a major problem to his view that in Judea the major spoken language among Jews was a type of Mishnaic Hebrew. He struggles to answer the objection with various, perhaps even contradictory, proposals (Aramaic-speaking Jews from elsewhere had migrated to Judea; the targum was more of a guide for those who already understood the

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122. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 271.
123. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 284.
124. Rabin, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century', pp. 1029-30.

Hebrew words), but he never really finds a solution to the problem posed by the relatively literal *Targum of Job* from Qumran.[125]

Tal's basic approach and position are in many ways similar to Fraade's (whom he never cites), but unfortunately his sweeping generalizations about the linguistic situation at the time of the first targums are given in lieu of an account of the evidence, and misrepresent both the evidence and the scholarly discussion of that evidence. By Tal's account (p. 357), 'scholars involved in Aramaic studies' were caused 'some embarrassment' by the discoveries at Qumran, Naḥal Ḥever, and Wadi Murabbaʿat. Tal fails to tell us who these scholars were. And while it is true that these discoveries helped to change 'the general attitude vis-à-vis the position of Second Temple Hebrew' (p. 359), it is not at all true that these changes amount to the position that 'everyone speaks Hebrew' (as Tal would have it). Tal construes evidence that Hebrew was spoken somewhere as a support for the universality of Hebrew. According to the evidence that he cites (the *Copper Scroll* and the Bar Kokhba letters), the most that can be said is that Hebrew sometimes shows up in religious or nationalistic contexts. In response to Rashi's belief that the targum was 'aimed at women and commoners', Tal claims (p. 366) that '"the masses" were not unfamiliar with Hebrew at the time when Onqelos was composed', but he provides no real evidence to support this view. He also writes (p. 368) that, if the targum was produced within a Hebrew-speaking community, 'then the Targum was not imperative in order to make Scripture accessible to the masses. It was rather intended to protect Scripture from the masses!': since the Hebrew Scriptures could not be glossed, the desire to insert explanatory glosses made it necessary to use an Aramaic translation in lieu of Scripture. All that needs to be said at this point is that Tal badly mishandles the argument for a Hebrew-speaking society, and his explanation for the use of targums is far too flimsy to stand without that argument.

Although I dissent from Fraade's view that Hebrew was so widely understood at an early date, I would point out that the degree and the manner in which Hebrew *did* penetrate Jewish society was not necessarily a constant throughout the years of Aramaic ascendancy. As I read the evidence, Hebrew served different purposes for different people, and the main motivation for its revival in the early Middle Ages

125. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. I. *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 296 n. 51.

perhaps had little to do with R. Yochanan's main motivation for pro-scribing Aramaic prayer outside the synagogue. Among other things, the messiness of the scenario presented by a lengthwise appreciation of the fortunes of the holy language suggests that there may be more mes-siness within the individual redactional complexes of rabbinic literature than the traditional mining for attitudes to Hebrew and Aramaic would reveal: the importance and role of Hebrew to the redactor may have differed from that of the original tradents. Furthermore, we might be inclined to understand *Mekhilta de R. Ishmael*'s claim that God told Moses to address Israel 'in the holy language' (*Bachodesh* 9)[126] dif-ferently according to whether we date this writing to the early Middle Ages, as Wacholder and Neusner suggest,[127] or assign it a more tradi-tional (early) date. No matter how assertive the third-century rabbis were on the religious value of Hebrew, we should not automatically cast their linguistic policies in the shape of medieval or early modern policies.

According to Hezser (p. 72),

> In the elementary school context the Aramaic-speaking pupils seem to have needed to acquire a passive knowledge of Hebrew only…The ruling in T. Hag. 1.2, that a minor, '[if] he knows how to speak, his father teaches him the *Shema*, the Torah, and the holy language', does not necessarily imply that the child learned spoken Hebrew. The version of the tradition in Sifre Deut. 46 (p. 104 in the Finkelstein ed.) explicitly mentions the speaking of Hebrew: 'When a child begins to speak, his father speaks with him in the holy language [אביו מדבר עמו בלשׁון הקודש]', but this speaking of Hebrew is directly connected with—and was probably limited to—the loud reading of the Torah, since the text continues: 'teaching him Torah. But if he does not speak with him in the holy language teaching him Torah, he is as if he would bury him.'

It may be that this goes a bit too far: one need not understand the term 'holy language' as suggesting that the use of Hebrew was geared primarily to religious contexts, as Hezser does (in the sequel to the

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126. 'And God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, [that is], in the language that I say [these things] to you, you shall speak to the children of Israel, [that is] in the holy language"'

ויאמר יי אל משה כה תאמר אל בני ישראל בלשון שאני
אומר לך בו תדבר אל בניי בלשון הקודש

127. Ben Zion Wacholder, 'The Date of the Mekilta De-Rabbi Ishmael', *HUCA* 39 (1968), pp. 117-44. See Jacob Neusner, review of Daniel Boyarin's *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, in *JSJ* 21 (1990), pp. 254-58 (255).

passage quoted above). The term 'holy language' would also be useful within rhetoric supporting the use of Hebrew in daily contexts, playing on the idea of Israel as a holy people or holy remnant. In fact, the importance of Hebrew for Palestinian Jews in the Byzantine era might be shown by the Rehob inscription, which reproduces in Hebrew what the Palestinian Talmud gave in Aramaic (see *y. Dem.* 2; *y. Šeb.* 6; cf. *t. Šeb.* 4; *Sifre Deut.* 51).[128] But the Rehob inscription is usually dated to the seventh century CE, and so we are beginning to move into a different age, when Hebrew was about to be more successfully reinstated as *the* language of the Jews.

Excursus: The Qumran Job Targum as a Window into Second Temple Judaism[129]

Before drawing conclusions from the relative lack of targums at Qumran, one needs to appreciate the special circumstances represented by Qumran's outlook on Hebrew and Aramaic. If the Qumran community was as averse to clothing its religiosity in Aramaic as recent scholarship has argued, then it would be wrong to draw a negative conclusion about the use of Aramaic *beyond* Qumran based on what we

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128. On the inscription in general, see Yaakov Sussmann, 'An Halakhic Inscription from the Beisan Valley', *Tarbiz* 43 (1974), pp. 88-158; *Tarbiz* 44 (1975), pp. 193-95 (Hebrew); Yaakov Sussmann, 'The Inscription in the Synagogue at Rehob', in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), pp. 146-51; Saul Lieberman, 'Regarding the Halakhic Inscription from the Beisan Valley', *Tarbiz* 45 (1976), pp. 54-63 (Hebrew); Aaron Demsky, 'Holy City and Holy Land as Viewed by Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Period: A Conceptual Approach to Sacred Space', in A. Houtman, M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives, 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 285-96. For Fergus Millar, the fact that the Rehob inscription provides in Hebrew what the Palestinian Talmud had supplied in Aramaic shows that 'Jewish religious prescriptions could be current in both an Aramaic and Hebrew version' ('Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East, AD 325–450: Language, Religion, and Culture', *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 [1998], pp. 159-76 [173]). If we follow the more widely accepted seventh-century date for the inscription, then its comparison with the text of the Palestinian Talmud might accentuate change more than static variety.

129. This excursus makes verbatim use of a response that I posted in 2003 at jerusalemperspective.com. That material is used by permission.

find (and do not find) *at* Qumran.[130] In other words, asking 'Where is the Aramaic Bible at Qumran?'[131] might be like asking 'Where is the lunch meat in a vegetarian's refrigerator?' The fact that a number of Aramaic texts *were* found at Qumran does not substantially alter this picture, except that we are then forced to say that the Qumranites did not look upon Aramaic as religiously evil *per se*, but only as an inadequacy for true piety and communion with God. (The Aramaic works found at Qumran were almost certainly not written there.)[132]

Given the pivotal role of targumic practice within the argument against a Hebrew vernacular, it is not surprising that the Qumran Job Targum has become a storm center in the debate over the principal language(s) of Jewish Palestine. Scholars who believe that Hebrew was the vernacular language typically object to the use of this particular targum as evidence for the linguistic situation in Palestine. They emphasize that the Job Targum is just one targum, representing only one book of the Bible. 'Where are all the other targums?' they ask. This tactic effectively turns the Job Targum's role in the argument for an early targumic corpus on its head: rather than try to explain the existence of this targum, scholars are now forced to explain the sparseness of the Qumran targumic library. Although this is an argument from silence, one cannot simply say that, for that reason, it fails to be probative: for a corpus of writings as large as that found at Qumran, a properly constructed argument from silence can indeed be probative to some extent.

How then does one explain the sparseness of the Qumran targumic corpus? J.T. Milik suggested that 'such translations were little needed in the highly educated milieu of the Essene Community'.[133] The plausibility of Milik's suggestion increases with every new study of Qumran's language ideology: the use of Hebrew appears to have been a house rule at Qumran. But we are still left to explain the existence of

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130. See Puech, 'Du bilinguisme à Qumrân?', pp. 171-89; Segert, 'Hebrew Essenes—Aramaic Christians', pp. 169-84; Schniedewind, 'Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage', pp. 235-52; Weitzman, 'Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', pp. 35-45; Poirier, '4Q464', pp. 583-87.

131. This question comes from the title of a paper delivered by Randall Y. Buth at the 2002 Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Toronto.

132. The extra-Qumranic origins of the Aramaic corpus at Qumran is argued by Stanislav Segert, 'Sprachliche Bemerkungen zu einigen aramäischen Texten von Qumran', *Archiv Orientální* 33 (1965), pp. 190-206.

133. J.T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, p. 31.

two copies of the Job Targum. Scholars have offered a couple of answers. Perhaps the Hebrew text of Job presented special difficulties (a suggestion made by Abraham Berliner in 1884 and recently echoed by Philip R. Davies).[134] Unfortunately, this explanation can be pushed to support two different views of the targumic situation beyond Qumran: that is, it can explain why Job and no other books (except Leviticus) were found at Qumran, or it can explain why Job and no other books (except Leviticus) have been found in first-century Palestine in general.

An alternative suggestion takes note of the fact that a copy of biblical Job written in paleo-Hebrew script (4Q101) was found at Qumran. The fact that a paleo-Hebrew script was usually reserved for books of Moses suggests that the Qumranites may have held to Mosaic authorship for the book of Job, a minority view attested in rabbinic sources (*b. B. Bat.* 14b). A belief in Mosaic authorship would certainly raise the value of a Job Targum, and there are other indications, apart from such a belief, that Job held a certain prestige within early Judaism.[135] Julio C. Trebolle Barrera notes the special prestige of Job at Qumran, as well as indications of its relative prestige beyond Qumran; that is, he associates the stability of the book's textual tradition with its prestige, and notes the significance of the fact that it was sometimes placed between the works of David and Solomon.[136] Unfortunately, these arguments are similarly equivocal: they do not tell us whether the paucity of targumic texts at Qumran reflects a paucity of targumic texts beyond Qumran. Mosaic authorship of Job can explain why the Qumranites would have

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134. Abraham Berliner, *Targum Onkelos: Einleitung in das Targum* (Berlin: Gorzelanczyk, 1884), p. 90; Philip A. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), p. 154. As Joseph A. Fitzmyer writes, '[W]as the Hebrew text of Job so difficult even for this community of Jews that it had to have recourse to it in an Aramaic verison [*sic*]? Such a question is not easily answered' ('Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11', *CBQ* 36 [1974], pp. 503-24 [511]).

135. Noted by LeDéaut, 'The Targumim', p. 571. See van der Ploeg, van der Woude, and Jongeling (eds.), *Le Targum de Job de la Grotte 11 de Qumrân*, p. 6.

136. Julio C. Trebolle Barrera, 'Origins of a Tripartite Old Testament Canon', in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), pp. 128-45 (143). See Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 203, 209.

singled out this targum as one deserving of their care and attention, but it can also suggest that this targum might have been produced years ahead of other targums. The question of how to dispose of translated texts was a matter of debate among the Tannaim, and we do not know what criteria the Qumranites might have accepted. Despite the fact that the Job Targum was written in Aramaic (manifestly a substandard language at Qumran), the conceit of Mosaic authorship may have guaranteed the Job Targum a permanent place in the Qumran holdings, while other targums (brought in by new recruits or donations) were summarily destroyed. We have no indication that the Qumran aversion to Aramaic moved them to destroy Aramaic texts, but the rabbinic proscriptions against written targums show that a disdain for the religious use of Aramaic could extend to the disapproval of Aramaic texts. How one deals with these texts would then be dependent upon one's view of which texts retain their sanctity after being translated.

Proponents of a vernacular Hebrew scenario well recognize that the existence of one or two targums at Qumran could be more damaging to the thesis argued here than the existence of *no* targums at Qumran would be. But whether it ultimately *is* more damaging will depend on the relationship between Qumran ideology and the Qumranic Job Targum. The liberation of the Qumran library has brought about a renewed appreciation for the fact that most of the material found at Qumran was not penned there, and so it cannot be used to provide specifics about Qumran ideology. With the notable exception of E.W. Tuinstra,[137] scholars are convinced (for good reasons) that the Qumran Job Targum was not the product of the Qumran scriptorium. The more we understand the language ideology of Qumran, the more difficult it becomes to imagine the Qumranites writing a targum of Job. And the fact that the Qumran Job Targum is based on a Hebrew *Vorlage* differing from the Hebrew text of Job found at Qumran (cf. esp. the reading of Job 33.28-30 in 2Q15) supports this verdict in a big way.[138]

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137. See Tuinstra, *Hermeneutische Aspecten van de Targum van Job uit Grot XI van Qumrân*, pp. 69-70. In Fitzmyer's opinion, 'the evidence cited in support of [Tuinstra's reasoning] is so slight that it is not convincing' ('Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11', p. 512).

138. See Fitzmyer, 'Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11', pp. 523-24.

The well-known account of R. Gamaliel I disposing of a copy of a targum of Job by ordering it to be immured within a wall (*t. Šab.* 13.2-3; *y. Šab.* 15c; *b. Šab.* 115a) certainly sheds light on the issue:[139]

> *b. Shab.* 115a. Rab Huna said [would say?] to you, 'It is Tannaitic, for it was taught (דתניא): if they were written in targum (*viz.* Aramaic) or in any language, they may be saved from a fire.' R. Jose said, 'They may not be saved from a fire.' Said R. Jose, 'It happened that Abba Halafta went to Rabban Gamliel Berabbi at Tiberias and found him sitting at the table of Yochanan ha-Nazuf, and in his hands was a targum of the book of Job and he was reading it. He said to him, "I remember Rabban Gamliel your grandfather, that he was standing in an elevated place on the Temple Mount, and there was brought before him a targum of the book of Job, and he said to the builder, 'Bury it under the bricks.' Then he (*viz.* Gamliel Berabbi) ordered them and they hid it."'

The context of this passage is a halakhic debate concerning the disposal of targums, but the story may provide clues to the earlier Gamaliel's theological/halakhic assessment of this particular targum as well. Since the rabbinic tradition says nothing about the condition of this copy (if damaged or soiled, it would have needed retiring), Gamaliel's verdict presumably reflects his disapproval of this targum. Scholars have frequently noted that the tannaitic rabbis often disapproved of targums, and assumed that this explains Gamaliel's negative judgment.[140] But this disapproval probably had nothing to do with a general rabbinic aversion to Aramaic holy texts, for otherwise it would have been unnecessary for the Talmud to identify the offending targum as that of a particular book of the Bible. It remains, therefore, to suggest that there was something unacceptable about this targum, something that was different from other targums. Perhaps, in spite of its non-Qumranic origination, it represented sectarian associations for the rabbis. If that is the case, its presence at Qumran can be more readily understood in the context of the absence of other contemporary targums. We must remember that 'Essene' represents a wide set, of which 'Qumranic' is merely a subset, and that many who aligned themselves with general Essenic piety and thinking probably did not accept the linguistic learning curve

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139. See LeDéaut, *Introduction à la littérature targumique*, pp. 68-70.

140. Fitzmyer writes that Gamaliel's reaction against the Job Targum 'probably should…be explained as part of the general early prohibition of "writing down" what was normally transmitted by oral tradition' ('Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11', p. 515 n. 49).

imposed by Qumran. The offending targum may well have represented this wider group, which undoubtedly comprised a large segment of ancient Palestinian Judaism. To a large degree, this segment may have represented the generality (viz. *'am ha'aretz*) against which rabbinic self-definition was hammered out.

This explanation for Gamaliel's reaction has been challenged by those who oppose an early date for targums of biblical books in general: they often point out that the Qumran Job Targum is devoid of the sort of sectarian additions that would have annoyed Gamaliel, or point to linguistic signs of that targum's foreign origin.[141] But while the Qumran Job Targum does not contain any clear sectarian additions, and although its minor departures from the canonical text happen to include exegetical principles shared by the rabbis (cf. at 21.20; 39.23; 41.14 [permutation of consonants] and at 29.7 [*'al tiqre*]),[142] it does possess one characteristic that troubled the rabbis a great deal: it failed to neutralize the biblical anthropomorphisms (see esp. 11QtgJob 25.5; cf. Job 34.49), a celebrated concern of the later targums (and one that the later *rabbinic* Job Targum would heed).[143] The troubling nature of any

141. See Alexander's discussion of literal versus paraphrastic targums ('The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', pp. 14-15).

142. See LeDéaut, 'The Targumim', p. 588.

143. See Fitzmyer, 'Some Observations on the Targum of Job from Qumran Cave 11', pp. 517-18, 522. As Alexander writes, 'It is…possible that [the targums'] extremely reverential tone and elaborate anti-anthropomorphism reflect their liturgical setting, and spring from a desire to avoid expressions that could be misunderstood by the uninstructed. The frequent and often startling anthropomorphisms of the Talmud stand in striking contrast' ('The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', p. 27). Depending on where one places Targum Onkelos, these talmudic anthropomorphisms do not necessarily represent the academy's lower criteriology of discourse: rather, they may reflect a new openness toward mystical speculation in Babylonia. James, writing long before the Qumran targums were known, correctly notes that the avoidance of anthropomorphisms in Targum Onkelos cannot be used as a basis for dating the writing (*The Language of Palestine and Adjacent Regions*, p. 251). See Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, I, p. 100. This may show that anti-anthropomorphic concerns were also alive in Babylonia, although many scholars view Targum Onkelos as a redactionally complex work, and as a product of both the Palestinian and Babylonian communities. According to the revised Schürer (I, p. 100), 'the affinity of the language of Onkelos to Qumran Aramaic, first shown convincingly by E.Y. Kutscher, appears to favour strongly the thesis of a Palestinian origin for Onkelos. A study of its interpretative features points in the

translation policy that did not neutralize anthropomorphisms probably lies behind R. Judah bar Ilai's famous censure of the one who translates literally: 'The one who translates a verse according to its form is a liar, and the one who adds (to it) is a blasphemer' (*t. Meg.* 4.41).[144]

In other words, the rabbis might have regarded the Job Targum found at Qumran as an essentially Essene product, although, being Aramaic, it does not reflect the more narrow linguistic ideology of the Qumran branch of Essenism. I am not suggesting that this targum was composed by the Essenes—there are real problems with that view. (There is a possible ideological contact between the Job Targum and the Qumran community in the use of 'plantation' in 11QtgJob 35.10, but as van der Ploeg, van der Woude, and Jongeling note, the source of the term in 11QtgJob is probably the biblical Psalms.)[145] Muraoka's argument that its dialect points to a Babylonian origin may well be correct.[146] An

same direction.' (Kutscher's argument appears in 'The Language of the "Genesis Apocryphon": A Preliminary Study', in Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin [eds.], *Scripta Hierosolymitana*. IV. *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 1-35 [9-11].) On the targums' avoidance of anthropomorphisms and other challenges to God's transcendence, see LeDéaut, 'The Targumim', 586-87. Paul writes, 'La traduction des textes sacrés a toujours été une question grave pour les juifs, surtout les juifs anciens. Traduire est de soi une impiété: c'est en effet toucher, en surface comme en profondeur, au texte divin et donc risquer de le transformer, souiller et profaner. Les juifs de l'Antiquité répugnaient volontiers à traduire l'Ecriture tout comme ils s'interdisaient toute représentation divine, plastique mais aussi linguistique: le nom de Yahvé, on le sait, n'était ni écrit ni même prononcé' ('La Bible grecque d'Aquila et l'idéologie du judaïsme ancien', pp. 230-31).

144. After first offering an unconvincing explanation for Gamaliel's action (viz. that 'it was not part of the lectionary cycle and therefore would cause people in their private reading of it to neglect the house of study'), Fraade 'alternatively' suggests that Gamaliel 'might have had it removed since it was a defective or unapproved translation' ('Rabbinic Views', p. 256). See Alexander, 'The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', pp. 25-26. Alexander writes (p. 26), 'Normally…censure appears to have been in the hands of the congregation.' In later Christian expressions of the supposed apophatic nature of theology, propositionalism in general could be held to be blasphemous, so that even expositing biblical propositions was problematic: as Yves M.J. Congar notes, 'To each of her propositions about God, St Catherine of Genoa added: "I blaspheme!"' (*The Word and the Spirit* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986], p. 2).

145. van der Ploeg, van der Woude, and Jongeling, *Le Targum de Job de la Grotte XI de Qumrân*, p. 6.

146. Muraoka, 'The Aramaic of the Old Targum of Job from Qumran Cave XI', pp. 425-43; *idem*, 'Notes on the Old Targum of Job from Qumran Cave XI', pp.

Eastern origin fits well with the patterns of anthropomorphic views of God that we find in some Eastern strains of Judaism (especially as later reflected in the Karaites) and Christianity (cf. the Audians). This targum may not be Essene in origin, but it conforms more to Essene views than to protorabbinic views, most notably in issues of paramount concern to the rabbis. Of course, all this hardly counts as an argument that targumic texts proliferated in the Second Temple period, but it does show that, as an argument from silence, the evidence of Qumran does not work in the other direction either.

It should be noted that the hebraeophone view's argument from the sparseness of the Qumran targumic corpus is more a smokescreen than a reasoned response to the argument from the existence of the Job Targum. Once the smoke is cleared away, the latter argument can be seen still standing. As Maurice Casey writes, the existence of such a literal translation 'is pointless unless there were Jews who wanted to know what the book of Job said, and who could understand an Aramaic translation but not the Hebrew text'.[147] Muraoka's argument for an eastern origin may weaken the argument somewhat as it appears in this specific form, but we are still left with a need to explain the fact that at least two copies of this work circulated in Palestine.

Finally, mention should be made of the early date that scholars have assigned to the fragments of a Palestinian targum in the Cairo genizah. But if neither this targum nor any other outside of Qumran goes back to the Second Temple period (which is presently unknown), that would not mean that the practice of translating the Scripture into Aramaic

117-25. But cf. Kutscher's explanation for the presence of 'eastern' vocabulary in the *Genesis Apocryphon*: 'The centre of the Persian empire being in the east, including the territory that was to become the domain of the (later) Eastern Aramaic, it was only natural that especially in the lexical field the "Reichs-aramäisch" should be coloured by the eastern dialects' ('The Language of the "Genesis Apocryphon"', p. 14). See A. Diez Macho, *El Targum: Introducción a las traducciones aramaicas de la Biblia* (Barcelona: Consejo superior de investigaciones cientificas, 1972), pp. 41-42. See the remarks on the 'Imperial Aramaic' and the foreign borrowings of the Qumran Job Targum in Geo Widengren, 'Iran and Israel in Parthian Times with Special Regard to the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*', in Birger A. Pearson (ed.), *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity: Essays in Conversation with Geo Widengren* (Series on Formative Contemporary Thinkers, 1; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 85-129 (96).

147. Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel* (SNTSMS, 102; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 33-34.

within the synagogue service is not a Second Temple practice. The rabbinic proscriptions against reading the translation from a written text at least show that this was an ideal, and the incorporation of prepared Aramaic texts into the study regimen of those preparing for the weekly service was surely gradual rather than immediate.

4. *Greek*

Although Aramaic appears to have been the most widely spoken language in Jewish Palestine in the Second Temple, tannaitic, and amoraic periods, Greek was also widely used. Indeed, some scholars speak almost in terms of Greek's virtual conquest of Palestine.[148] Be that as it may, my comments on the use of Greek are mostly intended to show that it was widely used, and as long as the reader will agree that Aramaic was more widely used than Hebrew, it matters little to the present study whether in fact more people spoke Greek in Jewish Palestine (although I certainly doubt that that was the case).

The linguistic situation outside of Palestine appears to be much clearer than that within Palestine: most Jews in the western diaspora spoke Greek as their first language.[149] James Barr notes that the Greek writings of diaspora Jews are not filled with semitic 'interference', as we might expect if these authors' first language was Aramaic or Hebrew, but that the authors of these works usually wrote Greek in its own idiom.[150] This makes sense, as there is no discernible reason for these

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148. E.g. according to Meyers and Strange, 'Aramaic…suffered a strong eclipse in favour of Greek' (*Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 91). According to M. Smith, 'at least as much Greek as Aramaic was spoken in Palestine' ('Aramaic Studies and the Study of the New Testament', *JBR* 26 [1958], pp. 304-13 [310]). Already in 1915, Radin argued that Greek had replaced Aramaic as the urban language, with the latter becoming merely the 'language of peasants' (*The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans*, p. 119). Rosén thinks that Greek was the principal language of Jewish Palestine (*Hebrew at the Crossroads of Cultures*, p. 12). Gafni argues that, judging from the intensification of Greek cultural influence in the third and fourth centuries CE, it is 'a good guess' that the Amoraim knew more Greek than the Tannaim ('The World of the Talmud', p. 234).

149. See Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Atheneum, 1959), p. 348.

150. Barr, 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', p. 107. Gerard Mussies has argued the case for Semitic interference in Revelation in detail (*The Morphology of Koine Greek As Used in the Apocalypse of John* [NovTSup, 27;

authors, at least the ones writing primarily for other Jews, to have chosen a language other than the one in which they were most comfortable. I say this in order to contrast the views of scholars who limit the use of Greek in Jewish Palestine more than the evidence warrants. It is still often assumed that Greek was the language of a tiny minority within Palestinian Jewry, so much so that attributing a Greek writing to a Palestinian Jewish author (e.g. the epistle of James) is often discussed in terms of a problem that needs explaining.[151] Simon J. Gathercole notes that the two-volume *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. Charlesworth) shows an uncritical tendency to attribute Greek works to a diaspora provenance simply because they are written in Greek.[152] This seems to be a case either of text-bound scholarship failing to catch up with the archaeological record of Jewish Palestine, or of the blinding effect of an ingrained dichotomizing of the adjectives 'Greek' and 'Palestinian'. Richard Bauckham offers a corrective to this unwillingness to attribute quality Greek writings to Palestine: noting

Leiden: Brill, 1971]), but, as Barr (who praises Mussies' study) points out, Revelation may be the product of a 'religious upset' that entailed a change of language ('Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age', pp. 109-10). Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman refer to this as 'substratum interference' (*Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], pp. 38-39). Horsley argues that Greek-speaking Jews in general did not have a distinctive language (*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. V. *Linguistic Essays*, pp. 5-40): 'the only aspect of Jewish use of Greek which may have been distinctive is that of phonology' (p. 6). His argument was anticipated by Herbert C. Youtie, 'Response' (to Jonas C. Greenfield), in Paper (ed.), *Jewish Languages*, pp. 155-57. On Jews writing in Greek in general, see Carsten Colpe, 'Jüdisch-hellenistische Literatur', in *Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike* (Stuttgart: Darückenmüller, 1967), II, pp. 1507-12.

151. For those who reject the pseudepigraphy of the Epistle of James, the high quality of the Greek found there is often explained by the use of helpers.

152. Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 27. Cf. James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85). To note but one example of how scholarship has been effected by this question, Johannes Tromp discusses the effect that such assumptions about the linguistic abilities and preferences of Palestinian Jews has had on attempts to discern the original language of the *Assumption of Moses* (*The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* [SVTP, 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993], pp. 93-94, 117-18). See also Albert C. Sundberg Jr., 'The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism', in McDonald and Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate*, pp. 69-90 (83-90).

that the phenomenon of hellenization surely had more gradients than Martin Hengel allows for, he writes that it 'can no longer be argued… that a work shows such proficiency in Greek and such acquaintance with Hellenistic culture that a Palestinian Jew could not have written it'.[153] As Harris notes, 'No great fuss is made in the New Testament about the transition backwards and forwards between Aramaic and Greek, because the latter, besides being the language of the texts themselves, is a standard feature of Judaean life.'[154]

Scholarship is still coming to terms with the extent to which Greek was at home in Palestine.[155] P.J.B. Frey lists some 530 Palestinian inscriptions in his *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, of which fully 52% are in Greek.[156] Anyone who has observed how often Greek shows

153. Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 22. In an earlier work, Bauckham had noted, 'it is difficult to estimate how competent in Greek a Galilean Jew could have been' (*Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990], p. 177). Sevenster's book *Do You Know Greek?* was organized around the question of how James' Greek governs the question of the book's pseudepigraphy. See also Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974). As Anders Gerdmar notes, some aspects of Hengel's analysis look like an attempt to make the hellenization of Judaism into a *praeparatio evangelica* (*Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy: A Historiographical Case Study of Second Peter and Jude* [ConBibNT, 36; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001], pp. 251-55). Similar suspicions regarding the Christian basis of Hengel's analysis can be found in Fergus Millar, 'The Background to the Maccabean Revolution: Reflections on Martin Hengel's "Judaism and Hellenism"', *JJS* (1978), pp. 1-21. But cf. Mark A. Chancey's argument that Greek was not common in Jewish Galilee prior to the Roman occupation of c. 120 CE (*Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* [SNTSMS, 134; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], pp. 122-65 [141]).

154. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 188.

155. See J. Andrew Overman, 'The Diaspora in the Modern Study of Ancient Judaism', in J. Andrew Overman and Robert S. MacLennan (eds.), *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 63-78 (65-68).

156. Frey (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*. Baruch Lifshitz's catalogue of the Greek inscriptions appearing in Palestinian synagogues is also helpful (*Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives: Répertoire des dédicaces grecques relatives à la construction et à la réfection des synagogues* [Cahiers de la Revue Biblique, 7; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1967], pp. 50-73). Lifshitz does not offer dates for seven of the inscriptions that he discusses (68 [Caesarea], 69 [Azotos], 73

up in inscriptions must admit that *somebody* knew Greek. But how representative are these inscriptional remains? Do they reflect only the upper crust of Jewish society? (Morton Smith saw the increased use of Greek in Jerusalem after Alexander's conquest to have been especially hard-hitting on Hebrew, which he took as an 'upper-class, quasi-literary language' at the time.)[157] Or do they reflect only a widespread epigraphical convention? Philip Alexander lists a number of considerations that might wreck our confidence in what we can determine from the amount of Greek used in inscriptions. Citing the above figures from Frey, he notes that such 'crude statistical arguments' must be used cautiously. For example, ossuary inscriptions are often regarded as accurate portrayals of the daily language of the deceased,[158] but we must

[Gaza], 77a [Beth-Shean], 77b [Beth-Shean], 77c [Beth-Shean], 81 [Huldah]), but he dates the rest as follows:

    64 (Caesarea): fourth century CE
    65 (Caesarea): fifth–sixth century CE
    66 (Caesarea): sixth century CE
    67 (Caesarea): fourth–fifth century CE
    70 (Ashkelon): seventh century CE
    71 (Azotos): fifth century CE
    72 (between Jaffa and Gaza): sixth century CE
    73a (Gaza): fifth century CE
    74 (Sepphoris-Diocaesarea): fifth century CE
    75 (Capharnaum): third century CE
    76 (Tiberias): fourth century CE
    77 (Beth-Alpha): sixth century CE
    78 (Gerasa): fifth century CE
    79 (Jerusalem): first century CE
    80 (Salbit): sixth century CE

Although nearly all of these inscriptions are Amoraic or later, and *could* reflect a relaxing of the rabbinic language ideology in the centuries after the Mishnah, they at least show the staying power of Greek in Jewish Palestine. See also Lifshitz, 'Beiträge zur palästinischen Epigraphik', pp. 64-88; Baruch Lifshitz, 'Beiträge zur griechisch–jüdischen Epigraphik', *ZDPV* 82 (1966), pp. 57-63.

157. Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn, 1987), pp. 142-43.

158. Meyers and Strange report the following distribution of languages on ossuaries: out of 194 inscribed ossuaries, 26% are Hebrew or Aramaic, 64% are Greek, and another 9% are Greek *and* Hebrew/Aramaic (*Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*, p. 65). The appearance of Rahmani's *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* offers a base for a recount, but it unfortunately contains only ossuaries found in collections within Israel today, and,

take account of the fact that the stone ossuaries found in museums and collectors' living rooms represent only one type of ossuary, and that a second type, namely *wooden* ossuaries, has disappeared altogether, leaving only the nails that once held them together. These wooden ossuaries presumably would have represented a lower class of Jewry than the stone ossuaries did, and Alexander wonders whether the distribution of languages on these wooden ossuaries would have matched the distribution of languages among extant (stone) ossuaries: 'If we had some inscriptions from the wooden artifacts, then the statistics might well change significantly.'[159] Alexander also thinks that it is problematic to assume that the bulk of the Greek inscriptions found in the necropolis at Beth She'arim necessarily represent the daily language of Palestinian Jews. He points out that the burial of Palmyrene Jews at Beth She'arim ceased when the Romans destroyed Palmyra (272–73 CE), which indicates that these were probably imported burials rather than the burial of displaced Palmyrenes who lived in Palestine. Another section of the necropolis was reserved for Jews from southern Arabia. It therefore follows that some of the Jews whose epitaphs are in Greek might also have been imported, so that the amount of Greek found at Beth She'arim might not be representative of the Palestinian natives buried there. (Lifshitz lists the following foreign places referred to in the Beth She'arim necropolis: 'Byblos, Tyrus, Sidon, Beirut, Antiochia, Phaine, Palmyra, Jahmur, Mischan in Mesopotamien, Asia [Esion-Geber bei Aila], Himiar in Arabia Felix'.)[160] The amount of Greek spoken in the coastal towns was most likely inflated by the number of

as Alice J. Bij de Vaate notes, this excludes the sizeable collection of Dominus Flevit ossuaries found on the Mount of Olives (Alice J. Bij, 'Note on L.Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, nos. 319 and 322', *ZPE* 113 [1996], pp. 187-90 [187 n. 1]). On the other hand, the figures cited by Meyers and Strange *include* the Dominus Flevit ossuaries. See Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', p. 15 n. 22.

159. Philip S. Alexander, 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', in Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul Beyond the Judaism/ Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 63-80 (74). Gerdmar comments, 'it is adventurous to extrapolate that an equivalent percentage of the population was Greek speaking from the percentage of Greek inscriptions' (*Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy*, p. 267).

160. Lifshitz, 'Beiträge zur palästinischen Epigraphik', p. 77. But cf. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, pp. 145-48.

Jews who immigrated from the Greek-speaking diaspora.[161] It is not surprising, therefore, that Shaye J.D. Cohen should find that the coastal cities are absent from the lives of second-century rabbis in rabbinic literature.[162]

These are all worthy considerations, but how ruinous are they of the conclusions of 'crude statistical arguments'? First, it is worth remembering that the question we are seeking to answer differs slightly from the one that Alexander fields: that is, we want to know how widespread Greek was in Jewish Palestine, while Alexander seeks to find out how complex the phenomenon of hellenization was there.[163] It therefore matters little to us that many of the Greek-speaking Jews that we meet in the inscriptions might have immigrated from elsewhere (excepting, of course, those who 'immigrated' after death).[164] We need to

161. Noted by Alexander, 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', p. 74-75. See Martin Hengel, *The Hellenization of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1989), pp. 14-15.

162. Cohen, 'The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society', p. 937. Feldman notes that the fact that one of the rabbis in *y. Soṭ.* 7.1 (21b) was '*astounded*' when he witnessed the *shema* being recited in Greek in a Caesarean synagogue (c. 400 CE) shows that 'such an incident is not representative' ('How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?', p. 302 [emphasis original]), but it is helpful to reflect on the *way* in which it 'is not representative'. The scene may reveal something about how generally unacceptable Greek was as a liturgical language (at least beyond the coastal cities), and it may even reveal the existence of coastal pockets of *monolingual* Greek speakers, but it certainly does not reveal anything about how widespread Greek was among Palestinian Jews in general. The incident that Feldman mentions dates from c. 400 CE, however, at a time when Caesarea had a much greater rabbinic presence. If historical, the incident may reveal a rabbinic reaction to customs that took root before a rabbinic presence was established, although such an explanation is hardly necessary. On the use of Greek in Caesarea, see Lee I. Levine, *Caesarea under Roman Rule* (SJLA, 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 70-71.

163. On the relationship between the Greek language and hellenization per se, Gerdmar writes, 'There is no Greek world-view, Greek *Wesen* or "Greek spirit" which generally goes with the use of the language. However, the knowledge of a language can *facilitate* the encounter with e.g., philosophical and religious thought' (*Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy*, pp. 275-76). See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 278-79.

164. If we had a means of controlling the data closely enough, we could provide a rough estimate of the number of Jews who immigrated to Palestine by means of comparing the ratio of Greek to non-Greek funerary inscriptions, on the one hand, with the ratio of Greek to non-Greek nonfunerary inscriptions, on the other hand.

recognize, therefore, that one of Alexander's complicating factors affects our question tangentially at best. It should further be pointed out that Rajak has challenged the view that the extra-Palestinian place names in the Beth She'arim necropolis point to imported burials. She argues, for example, that 'the word rendered…as "laid", θήκατο, is translated misleadingly and tendentiously as "brought" by Schwabe, and others have followed suit'.[165]

What of Alexander's other two complicating factors (viz. the upper class associations of stone ossuaries, and the possibility of imported burials among the Greek inscriptions at Beth She'arim)? At least some of the evidence of Beth She'arim, as presented by Moshe Schwabe and Baruch Lifshitz, points in a different direction. For example, the name recorded in inscription no. 197 bears the ethnicon Μεωνιτον, signifying the Judean village of Ma'on (Μαών). This perhaps shows 'that Jews who lived in smaller settlements were also familiar with the Greek language'.[166]

Further confusion over the place of Greek in Jewish Palestine arises from the quality of the Greek found at Beth She'arim. Everyone agrees that the Greek found in these inscriptions does not measure up to textbook Greek, but there is wide disagreement on how to interpret this fact. Where Alon had appealed to the unlearned quality of these inscriptions as evidence that Greek was generally out of place in Palestine, Schwabe and Lifshitz pointed out that the prevalence of 'phonetic and grammatical vulgarisms' at Beth She'arim is no different 'from Greek inscriptions of the same type and period that have come to light in

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Assuming that most immigrants who could write continued to write in Greek after moving to Palestine, a high degree of immigration would presumably result in a higher percentage of Greek funerary inscriptions than of Greek nonfunerary inscriptions (since the writing career of an immigrant must be divided between their time in Palestine and their time elsewhere, while the fact of their being buried in Palestine is an indivisible datum). Although this actually appears to be the case, too many pockets of evidence are circumstantial to inspire confidence that immigration is the best explanation. In fact, the actual figures might equally support Alexander's suspicions that some of the Greek-speaking Jews buried at Beth She'arim represent imported burials.

165. Rajak, 'The Rabbinic Dead and the Diaspora Dead at Beth She'arim', p. 361. See Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*, pp. 154-55.

166. Moshe Schwabe and Baruch Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*. II. *The Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), p. 219.

Syria, in Asia Minor, and in other parts of the Hellenized Orient'.[167] In fact, they argue, the prevalence of these vulgarisms suggests that Greek was not the special province only of the intellectuals and urbanites. But this might be to swing the pendulum too far in the other direction: there is little reason to expect consistent spelling (as if the inscriptionists could have consulted a dictionary). As Pieter W. van der Horst points out (in connection with Jewish inscriptions in the city of Rome), 'orthographical confusion is not necessarily a proof of lack of education'.[168] As far as the evidence goes, the burials at Beth She'arim may well represent the well educated. (We cannot tell.) What is more certain is that these burials appear to represent the upper classes of Jewish society. As Lee I. Levine points out, even rabbinic literature refers to Beth She'arim as the final resting place for the upper classes (see *y. M. Qat.* 3.5 [82c]).[169] This class distinction affects our interpretation of the Beth She'arim evidence in the greatest way. As scholars continually point out, the well-to-do comprise a class for whom the Greek language was presumably attractive: 'A knowledge of Greek was the Oriental's indispensable entry-ticket into the Hellenistic club.'[170]

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167. Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim.* II. *The Greek Inscriptions*, p. 182. Schwabe and Lifshitz write (p. 221), 'The inscriptions give no evidence of a systematic learning of the language and its grammar. It does seem as though the authors of the inscriptions learned their Greek from their pagan neighbors and knew how to speak it, but only seldom did they have a broader educational background.' Saul Lieberman makes the same argument (*Greek in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the II–IV Centuries C.E.* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942], p. 30), as does Horsley (*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity.* V. *Linguistic Essays*, p. 21). W.W. Tarn makes a similar observation in connection with Doura (beyond Palestine): 'Inscriptions from Doura have given us some knowledge of the sort of Greek, alive enough but vulgarised, spoken by the less educated classes in the decay of what had once been a Hellenistic city, and its most marked feature is the substitution of genitive for nominative and the use of the two in agreement' (*The Greeks in Bactria and India* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951], p. 355).

168. Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE)* (CBET, 2; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), p. 32.

169. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity*, pp. 177-78.

170. Alexander, 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', p. 73. See Arnaldo Momigliano, *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism* (ed. Silvia Berti; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 13.

Understanding the extent to which Greek was used in Jewish Palestine is therefore a matter of striking a balanced interpretation of the evidence. In all likelihood, Greek was not the most widely used language, as Radin would have it. On the other hand, it would be wrong to think of Greek as a comparative rarity, as others have argued (e.g. Alon, Greenfield, Feldman).[171] Once again, although hellenization and the spread of the Greek language are related phenomena, it helps to remember that they are not the same thing. The desire to be numbered among the more hellenized segment of the population was certainly one of the driving forces behind the initial and continuing spread of Greek—the cultural ascendancy of Greek is best revealed in its chauvinism: Greek papyri from Roman Egypt reveal that an inability to write Greek passed under the terminology of 'illiteracy', even when the party in question was fully capable of writing in another language.[172]

The drive to attain a certain social status was hardly the only force behind the spread of Greek. It is in every way probable that Greek was sufficiently rooted in certain pockets of the population to have worked up its own momentum, quite separate from social and ideological forces. One of the celebrated Bar Kokhba letters shows that the ability to write in Greek could obtain in situations where the ability to write in Hebrew appears to have been ideologically preferable. I accept the reconstruction of G. Howard and J.C. Shelton (in contradistinction to that offered by Baruch Lifshitz, who had read ὁρ]μήν instead of ῾Ερ]μᾶν):[173]

ἘΓράφη
δ[ὲ] ῾Ελληνιστὶ διὰ
τ[ὸ ῾Ερ]μᾶν μὴ εὑρη-[]
θ[ῆ]ναι ῾Εβραεστὶ
γ[ρά]ψασθαι.

171. Jonas C. Greenfield compares the situation of Greek speakers in Jewish Palestine to that of English speakers in British India or Mandate-era Palestine ('The Languages of Palestine, 200 B.C.E.–200 C.E.', in Paper (ed.), *Jewish Languages*, pp. 143-54 [145-46]). Greenfield is responding to the views of Morton Smith and Martin Hengel.

172. See Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. V. *Linguistic Essays*, p. 13.

173. G. Howard and J.C. Shelton, 'The Bar-Kokhba Letters and Palestinian Greek', *IEJ* 23 (1973), pp. 101-102. Horsley apparently prefers Lifshitz's reconstruction: he refers to the 'plausible presence of the noun ὁρμή' (Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. V. *Linguistic Essays*, p. 23).

Howard and Shelton indicate two implications of their reading: (1) although the writer of the letter was a member of Bar Kokhba's army, he could not write in Hebrew or Aramaic (although he perhaps could speak one or both of them), and (2) there was only one man available at the moment who could write Hebrew or Aramaic: ['Ερ]μᾶς. 'If the average soldier had had this skill, there would have been no need to single out one individual by name or to write Greek because that man was absent.'[174]

Feldman's more recent remarks are more directly aimed at the scholars who write in qualified support of Martin Hengel's understanding of the hellenization of Jewish Palestine than at Hengel himself.[175] One of Feldman's consistent responses is that the written evidence of Greek represents a small portion of the population:

> Do these inscriptions belong to a very tiny upper class? Van der Horst concludes that this is not so, since there are numerous very simple and poorly executed tombstones with inscriptions in poor Greek that undeniably stem from lower strata of Jewish society. But, we must remark, the fact remains that we have a very, very small sample of what ordinary Jews in Palestine felt about the Greek language, let alone Greek culture… [Van der Horst] notes that a letter from the Bar Kochba archive bristles with errors and hence was not written by cultural elite, but again we must ask how representative one letter is. To be sure, however, he notes that of the thirty-six documents in the Babatha archive twenty-six are in Greek. But, we must remark, this is a single archive.[176]

Although the historian should avoid overestimating the representativeness of the evidence, it should be noted that Feldman leans too far in the other direction. Feldman believes that it is enough to note that the troublesome Bar Kokhba letter is not representative of the others in the collection, but we can see from his response to the Babatha archive that if that Bar Kokhba letter *were* representative of the whole lot, then he would presumably try to accommodate the evidence to his own understanding of the linguistic situation in Jewish Palestine by remarking, 'This is a single archive.' One must ask, at what point does the

174. Howard and Shelton, 'The Bar-Kokhba Letters and Palestinian Greek', p. 102.

175. Feldman, 'How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?', pp. 290-313. Feldman's article is a review of John J. Collins (ed.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 13; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

176. Feldman, 'How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?', pp. 301-302.

evidence become useful? It is no wonder that Gerdmar refers to Feldman's earlier work as an attempt 'to belittle Greek linguistic influence in spite of evidence for it'.[177]

This is not to say, of course, that some bodies of evidence in this discussion are not representative. Once again I must call attention to the nonrepresentativeness of the Qumran corpus. The fact that only 3% of the Qumran corpus is in Greek may be significant for our understanding of Qumran, but not for our understanding of Palestinian Judaism contemporary with Qumran. The most complete and nuanced appreciation of the Greek writings at Qumran can be found in a recent article by Emanuel Tov. He notes that, with one special exception, none of the 27 Greek writings found at Qumran are documentary in nature, although he admits that many of these (e.g. 4Q119–22, 126–27; 7Q1–19) are too fragmentary to be completely certain.[178] (It is often suggested that the Greek writings found at Qumran were brought there by new members, a view that corresponds with A. Dupont-Sommer's inferring from the camp inspector's need to know 'all sorts of languages according to their (various) families' [CD 14.9-10] as evidence that 'the recruitment of the sect was very varied'.)[179] The one exception is 4Q350 (4QAccount gr), a document of unknown provenance and nature written on the verso of a Hebrew literary text (4Q460 frag. 9), but Tov notes that Ada Yardeni raised 'serious doubts' about the Qumran origin of 4Q342–360 in an appendix to the Oxford edition of the text,[180] and he combines these doubts with Erik Larson's suggestion that the Qumranites would not have written a list of cereals in Greek on the verso of a scroll containing the tetragrammaton on the recto (4Q460 9 i 10)—allowing also Larson's suggestion that the cereal list might actually be

177. Gerdmar, *Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy*, p. 266.

178. Emanuel Tov, 'The Nature of the Greek Texts from the Judean Desert', *NovT* (2001), pp. 1-11 (1, 4); see Emanuel Tov, 'The Corpus of the Qumran Papyri', in Schiffman (ed.), *Semitic Papyrology in Context,* pp. 85-103; James C. VanderKam, 'Greek at Qumran', in Collins (ed.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel,* pp. 175-81.

179. A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 62 n. 1.

180. See Ada Yardeni, 'Appendix: Documentary Texts Alleged to be from Qumran Cave 4', in Hannah M. Cotton and Ada Yardeni (eds.), *Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Documentary Texts from Nahal Ḥever and Other Sites: With an Appendix Containing Alleged Qumran Texts (The Seiyâl Collection II)* (DJD, 27; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 283-317.

evidence of a post-68 CE resettlement.[181] As Tov notes, the linguistic profile of the Qumran cache contrasts sharply with that of other archives in the Dead Sea area.[182] That is, the Greek texts found in caves 4 and 7 at Qumran reflect a different attitude toward Greek than that found in other sites in the same general vicinity but unrelated to Qumran. (Although Tov's contention that cave 4 was not a library does not reflect the views of scholars in general,[183] he is probably correct in denying a connection between caves 4 and 7.) That the absence of Greek at Qumran was a matter of a concerted effort is supported by the way in which the Hebrew writings from Qumran seem deliberately to avoid the use of Greek loanwords.[184]

I have twice reminded the reader that the spread of the Greek language in Jewish Palestine is a separate question from the complexity of hellenistic influence within the same area. Yet these two questions are obviously materially related, and this leads us to the prohibitions on teaching 'Greek wisdom' and their relation to the teaching of the Greek language. David Rokeah has argued that the sources equate these two,

181. See Erik Larson, '4QNarrative Work and Prayer', in Stephen J. Pfann *et al.* (eds.), *Cryptic Texts and Miscellanea, Part 1* (DJD, 36; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 369-86 (369).

182. Tov, 'The Nature of the Greek Texts from the Judean Desert', p. 3. It should be noted that the fragments that Tov identifies as 'Ḥev/Se?' may actually be from a different vicinity altogether. Although J.C. Greenfield asserts that there can 'be little doubt that Naḥal Ḥever is the source for the so-called Ṣe'elim texts' ('The Texts from Naḥal Ṣe'elim [Wadi Seiyal]', in J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner [eds.], *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18-21 March, 1991* [STDJ, 11; Leiden: Brill, 1992], pp. 661-65 [662]). Hannah M. Cotton registers exactly the doubt that Greenfield disallows: 'One must never lose sight of the fact that this group of papyri was *not* found in the course of a controlled archaeological excavation, and there is even a remote possibility that Naḥal Ḥever and the Judaean Desert are not the provenance of this particular papyrus' ('Loan with Hypothec: Another Papyrus from The Cave of the Letters?', *ZPE* 101 [1994], pp. 53-60 [54]).

183. E.g. cf. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 193-95.

184. See Hannah M. Cotton, 'Greek', in Schiffman and VanderKam (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, I, pp. 324-26 (324); Martin Hengel, 'Qumran and Hellenism', in John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler (eds.), *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 46-56.

or rather that the original form of the rabbinic term often translated as 'Greek wisdom' used a construct form of 'wisdom' (חוכמת יוונית) that is seldom allowed to exert its force as a construct. According to Rokeah, learning חוכמת יוונית denotes learning the Greek language itself. He takes Lieberman to task for rendering the rabbinic term as 'Greek wisdom', even to the point of allowing the term חוכמת יוונית to be used in the Hebrew translations of his own books (which were 'checked by Lieberman himself'):

> It is curious that Lieberman, a master of manuscript versions, did not wonder about this extraordinary form [viz. חוכמת יוונית]. For there is no doubt that the true version is *hochmath*. Apart from the fact that it has been preserved in manuscripts, it is also to be found in the printed editions of the Talmud, even when it appears in shortened form (*hochm*) in the manuscripts. It is clear that the version *hochmath*, though the *lectio difficilior*, was left intact by the copyists because they considered it to be equivalent to *ḥochmah*. The Rabbis of the Middle Ages were not confronted by the problem of whether to study the Greek language, but rather of whether to study profane subjects. That is why they always interpreted *hochmath yevanith* as *hochmah yevanith*, that is, Greek philosophy and sciences. Lieberman accepts this interpretation, as well as their unfounded distinction between teaching one's son and studying oneself; the former, in their view, was prohibited, while the latter was permissable [*sic*].[185]

Rokeah contends that originally there 'was no distinction made at all' between Greek wisdom and the Greek language. A distinction later crept into the tradition as a result of the Babylonian Talmud's attempt to reconcile a *baraita* in *b. Soṭ.* 49b, which uses the term חוכמת יוונית in defining the content of a mishnaic prohibition with R. Yehuda the Patriarch's approval of teaching Greek.[186] The original mishnaic prohibition (*m. Soṭ.* 9.14) prohibited a man from teaching his son the Greek language, but the gemara capitalized on the *baraita*'s rendering of this prohibition in terms of חוכמת יוונית, resulting in the mishnaic prohibition being glossed in a way inconsistent with its original meaning. Thus חוכמת יוונית came to be defined as Greek wisdom rather than simply as the Greek language (as the *baraita* would have it).

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185. David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict* (SPB, 33; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), p. 202.

186. Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, pp. 202-203. On the relation of 'Greek wisdom' to the Greek language, see Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings*, pp. 176-81.

To be sure, not all of Rokeah's arguments against identifying חוכמת יוונית with 'Greek wisdom' are strong. For example, he regards the tradition, recorded in the name of Rabban Simeon b. Gamliel, that 500 children studied חוכמת יוונית in Yavneh as a support for his view, since it would be unlikely that children could study the sort of philosophy that is usually identified with 'Greek wisdom'. But it is difficult to accept this tradition as historically reliable: not only is the number 500 an obvious exaggeration, but traditions associating a widespread study of Torah with the Yavneh generation (as the corresponding other half of this tradition does) always look suspiciously like idealized accounts.[187] Rokeah's other attempts to equate the study of חוכמת יוונית with learning the Greek language show that his understanding of חוכמת יוונית *is compatible with* ('entirely possible') the language of the Talmud, but they do not show that the language of the Talmud *demands* such an interpretation. In other words, if the above-mentioned *baraita* truly shows that יוונית חוכמת once simply denoted the learning of Greek (as Rokeah plausibly argues), the talmudic evidence equally supports the supposition that this denotation had been eclipsed well in advance of the Babylonian Talmud's compilation.[188] This goes for *b. Soṭ.* 49b as well: Rokeah claims that the *gemara* attempts to 'extract' itself from the conflict between the original meaning of the *baraita* and the Greek-friendly view of R. Yehuda the Patriarch, but there is no reason to assume that the conflict was still terminologically active at the time at which this *gemara* was composed. Alexander, in particular, has emphasized that the difference between the Mishnah's and Tosefta's recorded bans on learning the Greek language and the

187. Alexander, discussing *b. B. Qam.* 83a, writes, 'The tradition hardly inspires confidence. It comes from a late stratum of a late source: the parallels in Bavli Gittin 58a, Yerushalmi Ta'anit 4.8 (69a), and Eikhah Rabbati III 51 §9 (ed. Buber, 138) make no reference to Greek wisdom, and it is clearly extraneous to the story. The two balancing groups of five hundred have a legendary ring' ('Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', p. 78).

188. Alexander writes, 'Bavli Bava Qamma 83a…is uncertain whether Greek Wisdom had ever been banned. It is inclined to think that it had. The evidence to the contrary relates to special circumstances. But it is noticeably relaxed about the issue. Whether or not there ever had been a ban seems to be a matter of indifference to the redactor. This indifference is most plausibly explained by supposing that no one in the redactor's milieu bothered to study Greek Wisdom. The question whether or not such study was permitted was, therefore, no longer a burning issue' ('Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', p. 78).

Talmud's recorded bans on learning Greek wisdom involved but a slight shift in vocabulary.[189] (Greek wisdom is prohibited in *b. Men.* 64b, 99b, *b. Soṭ.* 49b, and *b. B. Qam.* 82b. For an example of the vocabulary shift, compare *b. Men.* 99b with *t. Abod. Zar.* 1.20.) It is very possible that *b. Soṭ.* 49b presupposes this shift. In fact, since the distance between *m. Soṭ.* 9.14 and the *baraita* recorded in *b. Soṭ.* 49b involves a substitution of vocabulary at some point, why must we accept, with Rokeah, that it was the *baraita* that made the substitution? It could just as easily have been the Talmud itself, in which event Rokeah's whole case for equating חוכמת יוונית with the Greek language vanishes.

The ban on teaching Greek is important for understanding the rabbinic attitude toward certain languages. This ban may originally have been 'a symbolic one and of short duration', as Rokeah believes.[190] Certainly *m. Soṭ.* 9.14 suggests that this ban may have been limited to a couple of years at the most: 'During the war of Quietus they forbade the crowns of the brides and that a man should teach his son Greek' (Danby, altered to reflect Cambridge text). As Alexander points out, however, *t. Abod. Zar* 1.20 may preserve an attempt to extend this ban indefinitely.[191]

At the end of the day, we cannot speak confidently about the spread of Greek into rural areas in Jewish Palestine. The best we can do is to take pot shots at the extreme positions (Greek as the dominant language versus Greek as barely present). I basically agree with the view of Anders Gerdmar: once we bracket the hellenistic cities from the picture, 'there is…evidence for a linguistic "patchwork" with a *ground* of Aramaic spread over almost all Jewish inhabitants, and both *patches* of Greek, and, all over this "patchwork" were *Greek speakers with different levels of proficiency*'. According to Gerdmar, the epigraphic evidence does not allow one to assume 'a *general* spread of Greek'.[192] This statement is true, as far as it goes, but a more balanced statement would indicate that we cannot assume a total absence of Greek in the rural parts either—on the basis of Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, Benjamin Isaac

189. Alexander, 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', pp. 76-78.

190. Rokeaḥ, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, p. 204.

191. Alexander, 'Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories', pp. 76-77.

192. Gerdmar, *Rethinking the Judaism–Hellenism Dichotomy*, p. 269.

has argued that even the smaller Palestinian villages in the early fourth century CE were multicultural. We can probably assume, however, that there was a smaller percentage of Greek usage in rural parts than in the larger cities.[193]

Excursus: The Language(s) of Jesus

The topic of the language of Jesus has been visited many times, and is presumably one of the main reasons readers might have been drawn to this article. Extending from the conclusions I have already drawn about the linguistic situation in Jesus' place and time, the obvious verdict is that Jesus' principal vernacular was Aramaic. That is almost certainly the language in which he taught, especially in situations like the sermon on the mount/plain. I see no reason to suppose that he did not also know Hebrew and/or Greek. (See below.) It has been argued by some that Jesus taught *principally* (or to a significant degree) in Greek.[194] It has likewise been argued that he taught in Hebrew.[195] Both of these

193. Benjamin Isaac, 'Jews, Christians and Others in Palestine: The Evidence from Eusebius', in Martin Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 65-74.

194. See James H. Moulton, Wilbert Francis Howard, and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. IV. Nigel Turner, *Style* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976). According to Turner, 'the isolation of *talitha cum* [Mk 5.41] and *ephphatha* [7.34] and the like, as Aramaic phrases surviving in the Greek gospels, might then be explained as rare instances where patients of Jesus comprehended only Aramaic' (p. 9). Stanley E. Porter is the leading proponent of a Greek-speaking Jesus today: see his 'Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?', *TynBul* 44 (1993), pp. 199-235; Stanley E. Porter, 'Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee', in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (NTTS, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 123-54; Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSup, 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Stanley E. Porter, 'Luke 17.11-19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited', *JSHJ* 1 (2003), pp. 201-24.

195. E.g. David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus: New Insights from a Hebraic Perspective* (Austin: Center for Judaic–Christian Studies, 1983); Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (Theological Inquiries; New York: Paulist, 1989), pp. 40-42; Brad H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); David Flusser, *Jesus* (rev. by R. Steven Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), p. 22.

positions are typically supported by arguments that tie Jesus' choice of language to what a given scholar holds to have been the dominant language of his place and time, so that if Jesus is supposed to have spoken (say) Hebrew, that is shown by the (supposed) dominance of Hebrew within his stratum of Jewish society.

The point of this excursus is to tie the question of Jesus' linguistic register to the question of his education level. If, in the dominantly Aramaic-speaking society of late antique Jewish Palestine, Greek and Hebrew are both (one way or another) 'prestige languages', associated with the cultural elite, then Jesus' reach of those languages might be viewed as an index of his education. Unfortunately, the question of Jesus' education is usually ignored altogether or judged by the canons of some really outdated assumptions (as in the portrait of the illiterate 'Jewish peasant' so crassly and uncritically drawn on in the work of J.D. Crossan).[196] As a result, the possibility that Jesus knew either Greek or Hebrew has sometimes not received the hearing it is due, especially by those envisioning (as I am) a dominantly Aramaic-speaking Jewry.

The question of Jesus' education was recently broached in an article by Paul Foster, who does a good job of exposing the web of unproven assumptions that underlies the usual thinking about this issue. Above all, he correctly notes that the 'illiterate peasant' view derives from a method not particularly suited for the situation in Jewish Palestine: 'the claims for Jesus being illiterate are dependent upon comparative social-scientific research dealing with literacy in antiquity, which may not be applicable to first-century CE Jewish culture'.[197] (I could not agree with Foster more on this: the heavy-handedness of the way in which [esp. North American] biblical scholars conduct social-scientific research is a pressing concern for many issues.) Foster ties his disowning of social-scientific method to a sharp qualification of William V. Harris's book on *Ancient Literacy*, arguing that the methods Harris employs are less

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196. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991). The usual judgment is like that of Ben F. Meyer: '[Jesus'] education was, no doubt, that typical of an ordinary villager' (*Christus Faber: The Master-Builder and the House of God* [Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 29; Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992], p. 258). Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. I. *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, pp. 268-78.

197. Foster, 'Educating Jesus', p. 32.

applicable to a text-based religious culture like that of late antique Judaism. Foster therefore dissents from Harris's extension of a 10% rate of literacy to Jewish Palestine (and the more so from Crossan's 3% to 5% rate).[198] But he is also judicious enough to recognize that the talmudic description of widespread education for boys cannot be un-critically applied to the first century, so that we are certainly not deal-ing with the sort of triumph of rabbinic education that Shmuel Safrai, Alan Millard, and others have imagined. Foster proposes placing Jew-ish literacy somewhere between the low figure of Harris and the high figure of Millard.[199] 'Undoubtedly', he states, 'the majority of Jews remained illiterate during the first century.'[200]

I consider Foster's article to be a step in the right direction—a step that some of us have been waiting on for a long time. (Prior to Foster, the only scholar in historical Jesus studies who gave serious enough attention to Jesus' education was David Flusser [see below], but Flusser's take on the issue suffered a little by an exaggerated view of first-century Jewish education in general.) But I think that the key to Jesus' education level lies more with the particularities of his career than with generalities about his culture. Jesus read the scroll in his hometown synagogue (Lk. 4.16-30), indicating that he had *some* educa-tion. His ability to read the scroll probably made him slightly excep-tional, but perhaps no more so than what going to some sort of graduate school accomplishes today. And, while Harris rightly faults C.H. Roberts for taking Jesus' opening shot 'Have you not read?' as an indication of widespread literacy, it would not be wrong to infer that we have here an indication that *Jesus* could read.[201] Both of these clues

198. Crossan's figures appear in his *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), pp. 25-26. Crossan gives no indication where he derived his figures. It is possible that they come from Bar-Ilan's study, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.', a study that is seriously flawed because it bases its conclusions strictly on a cross-cultural comparison with agri-cultural societies without factoring in the fact that a certain percentage of the Jewish population would have been priestly (and would have had something of a duty to become literate to some degree).

199. I refer here to Harris and Millard instead of to Hezser and Safrai, as Foster never cites the latter pair.

200. Foster, 'Educating Jesus', p. 28.

201. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 281 (responding to C.H. Roberts, 'Books in the Graeco-Roman World and in the New Tesament', in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans [eds.], *Cambridge History of the Bible*. I. *From the Beginnings to Jerome*

reveal a Jesus who not only could read, but who could read *Hebrew*. This ability would have opened him up to that segment of the population who (on occasion?) spoke Hebrew.

But there are more clues on which to hang this thesis: there are, in fact, indications that Jesus might have had some priestly associations of his own, associations that were downplayed (and so: *obscured*) in the tradition's pinning of a Davidic hope on him. Foster recognizes that these traditions have a considerable claim on the historical Jesus, but one that, for unclear reasons, is seldom explored in historical Jesus research.[202] There are, in fact, indications within the early tradition that Mary was of levitical descent: Luke's Gospel presents her as the blood relative (συγγενίς; Lk. 1.36)[203] of Elizabeth, who in turn is said to be 'of the daughters of Aaron' (ἐκ τῶν θυγατέρων Ἀαρών; 1.5). As Foster notes, 'it is possible that this specific detail may have originated from a desire on the part of the evangelist, or his tradent, to provide Jesus with a priestly pedigree'.[204] There are, in fact, a number of second- to fourth-century witnesses that point in this direction that Foster fails to mention. Early Christian tradition capitalized on Mary's inferred levitical descent, using it to ascribe both davidic and *levitical* messianism to Jesus. For our purposes, what is important is the fact that Luke tries to emphasize that Jesus is the *davidic* messiah, showing little interest in any sort of levitical association that Jesus might have had.[205] This in turn suggests that the tradition on which those associations are

[Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], pp. 48-66 [48]). As Harris notes, Jesus was speaking on these occasions (Mt. 12.3; 19.4; 21.42) to the intelligentsia, not the populace. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*. I. *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, p. 351; James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 314.

202. Foster, 'Educating Jesus', pp. 15-17.

203. Foster notes that συγγενίς 'uniformly refers to a female relative, linked by some kind of blood or adoptive bond of kinship' ('Educating Jesus', p. 16).

204. Foster, 'Educating Jesus', p. 17.

205. On davidic messianism in Luke–Acts, see Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke–Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (JSNTSup, 110; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). Ethelbert Stauffer's claim that we cannot 'discover any special bias on the part of the New Testament writers for a Davidic descent for Jesus' (*Jesus and His Story* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960], p. 14) is not patient of a redaction-critical analysis, esp. in connection with Luke–Acts, where (pre-Lukan) non-davidic associations are repeatedly blunted in the author's interest. Over-appreciations of Luke's literary skill have often obscured this fact.

based is older than Luke's Gospel. (Luke's modelling of Mary's pregnancy on that of Hannah in 1 Samuel might reflect this same pre-Lukan association, as Hannah bore a specially dedicated *priest*.)[206] A number of postcanonical works appeal to this tradition, enlisting Mary's relationship to Elizabeth as an indication of Jesus' levitical identity, often adding details independent of (and probably earlier than) the Lukan account. The highly christianized *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* more than once invoke a tradition of the Christ's double descent—from Judah *and* from Levi (cf. esp. *T. Jos.* 19; *T. Sim.* 7.2).[207] Augustine's Manichean opponent Faustus claimed that Mary was from a levitical line and that her father Joachim was a priest (*Faust.* 23.4, 9), perhaps deriving these from a different form of the *Proto-Gospel of James* than that which we possess today.[208] The tradition is at least as old as *1 Clem.* 32.2, and appears also in Hippolytus of Rome and in Origen.[209] Its remains are also present in Eusebius and in Epiphanius. This tradition fits hand-in-glove with otherwise inexplicable traditions about Jesus' brother James, who regularly invokes *priestly* rights and duties. William Adler has shown Epiphanius's inability to juggle *both* the idea of a levitical James *and* the idea of James' half-brother relation to Jesus:

> [H]ow could Mary issue from the line of David and Judah and at the same time be related to Elizabeth, a Levite (cf. Luke 1:5, 36)? Epiphanius' answer was well-known in the fourth century: through intertribal marriage, Mary was both a Levite and a descendant of David. The relevance of James' mixed genealogy to Epiphanius' argument was that it proved that James, although a Davidid, possessed the hereditary qualifications to officiate in the temple as well. But in order for James' mixed lineage to

206. See M.D. Goulder and M.L. Sanderson, 'St Luke's Genesis', *JTS* 8 (1957), pp. 12-30 (20); Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 450-51; Bart J. Koet, 'Holy Place and Hannah's Prayer: A Comparison of LAB 50-51 and Luke 2:22-39 à propos 1 Samuel 1-2', in A. Houtman, M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives, 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 45-72.

207. See H.W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (SVTP, 8; Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 76-79.

208. See H. Strathmann, 'Λευ(ε)ί, Λευ(ε)ίς', in *TDNT* IV, pp. 234-39 (238-39).

209. See L. Mariès, 'Le Messie issu de Lévi chez Hippolyte de Rome', *RechSR* 39 (1951), pp. 381-96; William Adler, 'Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah', *JTS* 48 (1997), pp. 24-47 (36-37).

have any material bearing on the subject of Mary's ancestry, one would have to assume that James was biologically related to Mary—a position that Epiphanius himself categorically rejects. This would seem to suggest that Epiphanius drew upon an older tradition or source about James as the biological brother of Jesus and that he only partially succeeded in adapting it for his own purposes.[210]

Adler's recent article turns a sharp eye to the whole set of traditions (esp. those in Eusebius and Epiphanius), which it shows to have been refashioned, as time went on, to conform with the Church's dedication to a *davidic* christology. Today's dedicants of an unchallenged davidic christology sometimes try to show these traditions to be late developments, but the arguments they present are seldom persuasive. Bruce Vawter, for example, thinks that it is 'more reasonable to suppose the Christian theorizing [along these lines] to be the result of this interpretation of Luke than to imagine Luke and the theorizing together to be dependent on some Jewish tradition of a Levitical Messiah', but the only support he gives for seeing this as 'more reasonable' is based on what Luke did and did not 'intend'—which is to say that Vawter leaves no room for seeing the presence of this tradition in Luke as a literary fossil of pre-Lukan traditions.[211] (Unfortunately, we live in a day when scholars often refuse to recognize literary fossils for what they are, preferring instead to ascribe every trace of an earlier complex as a part of the evangelists' program, even if that makes the program somewhat incoherent.)

Foster rehabilitates the image of a Jesus who can read, but does not attempt to show that his education went beyond this. My own starting point in thinking along these lines is nearer to that of Flusser than to Foster's. Flusser writes,

> Evidently…Josephus identifies Jesus with the Jewish Sages. The Greek word for 'wise' has a common root with the Greek term 'sophist', a term that did not then possess the negative connotation it has today. Elsewhere Josephus refers to two outstanding Jewish Sages as sophists, and this title was used regularly by him to designate prominent Jewish Sages. The Greek author, Lucian from Samosata (born ca. 120 and died after 190 A.D.) similarly refers to Jesus as 'the crucified sophist'…Josephus'

210. Adler, 'Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah', pp. 39-40.

211. Bruce Vawter, 'Levitical Messianism and the New Testament', in John L. McKenzie (ed.), *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), pp. 83-99 (93-94).

reference to Jesus as 'a wise man' challenges the recent tendency to view Jesus as merely a simple peasant.[212]

Flusser is not satisfied merely with outlining Jesus' ability to serve as a reader in the synagogue—he seeks to show that Jesus was educated beyond his peers (including his pharisaic interlocutors). Along the lines of Flusser's claims, there are, I think, numerous indications within Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees that suggest that Jesus was a better proto-rabbinic exegete than they were. Dalman's claim that Jesus, as a Galilean, 'would have [had] little contact with literary erudition' (and therefore that he 'did not come into contact with the Hebrew tongue')[213] strikes a chord with the usual image of Galilee as a sort of backwater in academic matters, but it does not match (even roughly) the evidence of either the Gospels or the early rabbinic writings. Consider, for example, Safrai's list of pre-Destruction sages from Galilee:

> Before he came to Jerusalem, R. Johanan ben Zakkai lived in Araba (= Gabara) in lower Galilee, and had in his school R. Hanina ben Dosa, who was also a native of that city. Just before and after the destruction of the Temple we hear of Galilean sages such as Abba Jose Holikufri of Tibeon and R. Zadok from the same place. R. Halaphta and R. Hananiah ben Teradyon had magnificent law courts, the former in Sepphoris and the latter in Siknin. Also the social and religious movements in Galilee and their customs which were praised in the tradition, are doubtlessly connected with Galilean midrash schools in one form or another.[214]

One need not agree with Safrai's exaggerated view of first-century education to appreciate the point made by his list of Galilean contributions to the sage tradition. First-century Jerusalem's association of Galileans with backwardness no more reflects the reality of being from Galilee than modern Hollywood's association of businessmen with criminality and exploitation reflects the reality about most businessmen.

By invoking Jesus' exegetical abilities as an argument for the high level of his education, I am assuming, of course, that at least some of these details of his exegetical arguments are historical. These details, I think, pose problems for the assumption that Jesus was uneducated. To

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212. Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 30-32.

213. Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 9-10.

214. Safrai, 'Education and the Study of the Torah', p. 962.

give one example: a close, contextual reading of Mk 7.1-13 suggests (at least to me) that Jesus' citation of Isa. 29.13 on that occasion was highly innovative, and that the reference in that verse to a people honoring God 'with their lips' becomes, in Jesus' hands, a creative synecdoche for the laws of mealtime purity.[215] This sort of rabbinic-style trope, I believe, would have made any sage envious. Has it here (in Mark's Gospel) been sprung by a total novice? *Perhaps* a novice might be capable of the sophisticated exegetical tricks that Jesus pulls, but I think that is a tall order. I am not suggesting that Jesus' skills in that department could not have been extraordinary—indeed I assume that they were—but even at that I find the thesis of a *totally* self-taught Jesus rather hard to accept. In this connection, it should be noted that there were a couple of currents within the developing Jesus tradition that struck against the image of an educated Jesus, and that these partly account for why that image has not been taken as seriously as it should: (1) there is a christological motivation for the tradition to soft-pedal any hints of an education (to the effect that, if Jesus knows all these things without having 'learned' them, then that would be a sign of his divine status), and (2) there was a downplaying of Jesus' priestly associations, in favor of casting him as a davidic royal messiah. The surprise expressed at Jesus' debate skills, I suspect, says more about his avoidance of school associations, and also about later christological developments.

It is therefore hazardous to say, with G.R. Selby, that 'Jesus only spoke in Aramaic'.[216] Dalman's view is only a slight improvement, for while he correctly identifies Aramaic as the main language of that time and place, he goes too far in excluding Hebrew even from the Temple service.[217] I would even back away from his claim that 'Hebrew does not come seriously into question' with respect to Galilee,[218] although it

215. See John C. Poirier, 'The Interiority of True Religion in Mark 7,6-8, with a Note on Pap. Egerton 2', *ZNW* 91 (2000), pp. 180-91.

216. G.R. Selby, *Jesus, Aramaic and Greek* (Doncaster: Brynmill, 1990), p. 4.

217. See Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, pp. 8-9. A number of items on Dalman's extended list of 'proofs' of Aramaic ascendancy are no longer tenable. His insistence on 'the custom of calling the Aramaic "Hebrew"' is a notable example. See the response to Dalman in Randall Buth and Brian Kvasnica, 'Appendix: Critical Notes on the VTS', in R. Steven Notley, Marc Turnage, and Brian Becker (eds.), *Jesus' Last Week: Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*. I (JCP, 11; Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 259-317 (268-73).

218. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 9.

certainly would have been encountered there much less often than in Jerusalem. The more widely subscribed view today—that Jesus spoke mainly Aramaic but probably also knew Greek and Hebrew—remains the more balanced one. But if Jesus could read and speak Hebrew, does that mean that he regularly *taught* in Hebrew? Hardly. There would have been little point in that, especially in an Aramaic-speaking society. Of course, Jesus might have debated the Pharisees and others in Hebrew, but, if so, his choice of language was probably not directed by a conviction, held by either party, that such discussion was more properly conducted in Hebrew: I have already explained that 1QH's invective against the use of a 'halting language' (לו[ע]ג שפה [12.16]) and 'uncircumcised language' (ערול שפה; [10.18]) was probably directed against the Pharisees' use of Aramaic (see above), which might suggest that at least some Pharisees felt no compunction about discussing halakhic matters in that language. Randall Buth and Brian Kvasnica have made a convincing argument that the original language of the vineyard parable in Mt. 21.28-40 and Lk. 20.9-16 was Hebrew.[219] In that case, however, Hebrew was especially appropriate, as we are told that the parable was directed against the Temple establishment (and the use of Hebrew would have brought that point home). The best thesis is that Jesus could read and speak Aramaic and Hebrew (and perhaps also Greek), but that, when he taught the multitudes or healed someone's child, he relied mainly upon Aramaic.[220]

5. *Conclusion*

This study has sought a balanced view of the linguistic situation of Jewish Palestine in late antiquity. The questions involved are not always easily answered, but a judicious arrangement of the thousands of pieces to the puzzle, to my mind, supports a sort of trilingualism of

219. The most convincing argument for a Hebrew origin of the vineyard parable revolves around the wordplay between בן ('son') and אבן ('stone'). See Randall Buth and Brian Kvasnica, 'Temple Authorities and Tithe Evasion: The Linguistic Background and Impact of the Parable of *The Vineyard, the Tenants and the Son*', in Notley, Turnage, and Becker (eds.), *Jesus' Last Week*, pp. 53-80; *eadem*, 'Appendix: Critical Notes on the VTS', pp. 298-302. The antiquity of the vineyard parable is also supported by its parallelism with the Naboth story in 1 Kings 21, a parallelism that casts the 'son' as Elijah. If the 'son' is Jesus, then we are in touch here with an early Elijianic christology.

220. Abegg reaches a similar conclusion ('Hebrew Language', p. 462).

Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, but one very noticeably tilted toward Aramaic. (Every survey of the linguistic situation in Palestine acknowledges the presence of these three languages, and the variation between scholars' accounts amounts to disagreements over the degree to which one of these languages was more widespread than the others.)[221] Aramaic certainly possesses more right than either Greek or Hebrew to be called a common vernacular for Jewish Palestine in the first through the third centuries CE, and for some time after that.

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221. See Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 158-71; Jonathan M. Watt, 'The Current Landscape of Diglossia Studies: The Diglossic Continuum in First-Century Palestine', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics* (JSNTSup, 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 18-36.