

# Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity

# Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies

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# Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity

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# Which Kind of Authority? The Authority of the Torah during the Hellenistic and the Roman Periods

STEFAN SCHORCH

It is in very different ways that a text can own authority for a community. In the following, I would like to address the question, which kind of authority the Torah owned for Judaism during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. However, authority presupposes and is closely intertwined with actual presence, and in order to own authority for a community, a text must above all be present. Therefore, I would like to start with the question, how the Torah was present in Judaism at what is sometimes called Late Second Temple period, although this concept is maybe too focused on Jerusalem, as will be shown later.

## 1. The Torah in the Judean Desert

Regarding the circulation of the Torah in that period, we are of course best informed by the manuscripts which were found in the Judean Desert, especially those from Qumran. According to Emanuel Tov, 105 manuscripts of the different books of the Torah turned up in Qumran:<sup>1</sup>

Gen 23  
Ex 21  
Lev 15  
Num 10  
Deut 35

In order to put these numbers in context, we may add that the Book of Psalms turned up in 36 copies, Isaiah in 21, Samuel in 4, as well as Enoch in 25 copies, and Jubilees in 21.

Thus, as evidenced by these numbers and as is well known, the book of Deuteronomy was especially popular among the five books of the Torah, although we should keep in mind that the interest in Deu-

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1 See TOV, Textual criticism, 96-97.

teronomy still seems to have been equaled or even exceeded by some other literary compositions.

The Qumran manuscripts of the Torah date from the late 3rd through the 1st centuries BCE, and they exhibit some significant textual variations, which are commonly attributed to different textual types, determined on account of textual characteristics and text-historical dependencies, the latter especially prominent regarding the so-called proto-Masoretic and pre-Samaritan text type. Apart from these two a number of further textual types left their traces in the Qumran finds but cannot easily be connected with certain streams of literary and textual tradition, as our knowledge is very fragmentary. However, the manuscripts from Qumran seem to create the picture of a Jewish sect in which different texts of the Torah were in parallel and contemporaneous use.

A very different picture emerges if we look at the manuscripts found at Masada, which date to the 1st and 2nd centuries CE., i.e. which are about 200 to 300 years younger. All the four Torah manuscripts from Masada, one containing the Book of Genesis, two Leviticus, and one Deuteronomy, belong to only one textual type, the proto-Masoretic, and the same is true for the other manuscripts attesting the books known from the later Biblical collection.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, although the small number of manuscripts calls for a cautious judgment, a certain change seems to have happened in the meantime, as in the Masada group only one textual type seems to have been in use, while other textual types are totally absent in this group. It seems that this evidence points towards the emergence of group specific texts, i.e. texts, which were specifically connected with a certain Jewish sect.

If we look back once again at the Qumran finds and their time, we will have to take into account yet further evidence regarding the presence of the Torah in ancient Judaism: The contemporary literary compositions demonstrate that the Torah was not only physically present in multiple copies, but that the text of the Torah was rather well known, as indicated by the fact that the textual sources from the late Second Temple period refer to it in paraphrases, quotations, re-worked compositions and so on. References to the text of the Torah are of course well known already from earlier compositions, which became part of the later Biblical collections, as for instance and most prominently Chronicles. However, the references to the Torah, which appear in Chronicles as well as in other Biblical books, are rather freely phrased, they generally allude to the content rather than to the external form of the quoted

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<sup>2</sup> See TOV, Textual criticism, 29.

text, or, more accurate, to the deep structure<sup>3</sup> of that text rather than to its surface,<sup>4</sup> e.g.:

1 Chron 16:40

“to offer burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the Lord (לכל הכתוב בתורה יהוה) that he commanded Israel.”

2 Chron 23:18

“Jehoiada assigned the care of the house of the Lord to the levitical priests whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the Lord, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses (ככתוב בתורה משה), with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David.”

Most obviously, in these two examples as in the vast majority of explicitly marked inner-Biblical references to the Torah, the quotations are not word-by-word, but free. The only exception,<sup>5</sup> where ככתוב indeed introduces a virtually literal quotation from the Torah in Chronicles, is 2 Chron 25:4:

“But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses (בספר משה) ככתוב בתורה, where the LORD commanded, *The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins.*”

Freely phrased references to the text of the Torah can be found in compositions from Qumran as well. However, besides this kind of references literal quotations from the Torah are much more frequent in the compositions from Qumran than in late Biblical literature, pointing to the emergence of a new pattern. Literal quotations from the Torah are especially prominent in the halakhic composition 4QMMT, where references of the Torah are several times introduced by the quotation formula כהוב “it is written”, followed by the quotation itself appearing in direct speech. However, not always the passage referred to by כהוב seems to be a quotation in the strict sense, as the following example from 4QMMT may demonstrate:

3 For this terminology, see SCHORCH, “Libraries”, 179-180.

4 More or less the same conclusions have been drawn e.g. by Lars Hänsel and Thomas Willi, although their terminology is different: „Desweiteren hat sich gezeigt, daß die Bezugnahme mit ככתוב keine festgefügte Zitateinleitungsformel im Sinne einer *Textorientierung* oder gar *Textstellenorientierung* darstellt, sondern meist einen Bezug im Sinne einer *Stofforientierung* herstellt.“ (HÄNSEL, Studien zu Tora, 66); „Bei den genannten, immer wieder leicht abgewandelten Ausdrücken handelt es sich um *Schriftkonformitätsklauseln*, nicht um Zitationsformeln!“ (WILLI, Leviten, 86; Italics by the authors). A full list of the cases, where Chronicles employs ככתוב and similar readings for references to the Torah includes the following: 1 Chron 16:40; 2 Chron 23:18; 25:4; 30:5. 18; 31:3; 34:21; 35:12. 26.

5 Compare DÖRRFUSS, Mose, 221: „Ein Bezug auf die – geschriebene – Tora oder gar das Buch des Mose findet sich jedoch nur in IIChr 25,4b, der innerhalb der Chronikbücher ganz singulär ist.“

[ועל שא כתוב] איש כי ישחט במחנה או ישחט] מחוץ למחנה שור וכשב ועז  
 “[And re]garding what is written [If anyone of the house of Israel slaugh-  
 ters] an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or outside the camp.” (4QMMT  
 - 4Q394 3–7 ii, 14–15)

Most obviously, 4QMMT here quotes Lev 17:3. However, a close comparison with the Biblical text shows that the quotation is not quite literal:

MT	איש איש מבית ישראל אשר ישחט שור או כשב או עז במחנה או	אשר ישחט מחוץ למחנה	
4QMMT	איש	כִּי ישחט	איש
	במחנה או	ישחט מחוץ למחנה שור וכשב ועז	

Thus, a certain tension appears: On the one hand side, the quoting text (i.e. 4QMMT) seems to suggest that the quotation is literal: “as is written”. The quotation itself, on the other hand, doesn’t seem to be literal, to the best of our knowledge, at least it is not attested in one of the preserved manuscripts of the Book of Leviticus in the same form in which it appears in 4QMMT. Additionally, and maybe more importantly, the deviation of the quotation from the wording known from the Leviticus manuscripts follows a clear interest, as has been demonstrated by Reinhard Kratz: The verse seems to have been reworked with the aim to focus the verse on the exact localization of the offering place.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is likely that the wording of the quotation was intentionally changed by the author of 4QMMT, or maybe already by his *Vorlage*,<sup>7</sup> and that the literalness of the quotation is rather a fiction. This creates a difficulty, since 4QMMT attributes authority to the textual surface of the Torah, at the one hand, but seems to have changed this surface intentionally, on the other.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we can cautiously conclude at this point that 4QMMT attests a new tendency, namely to attribute authority to the wording of the Torah, although the textual surface is not yet a fixed entity, a fact which corresponds to the multitude of textual versions attested among the Qumran finds.

We should keep in mind, however, that Qumran could be a special case, and I therefore would like to proceed to the question whether the

6 See KRATZ, The place which He has chosen.

7 Compare MAIER, Die Qumran-Essener, 361.

8 Compare BROOKE, The explicit presentation of scripture, 85: “In particular the explicit citations of scripture, including those citations which are mild adjustments of scriptural word order or grammatical forms, show that the compilers of MMT had a lively attitude to scripture which was not bound by its precise letter but which was very careful to fit suitably, in its own phraseology, to the context of the debate.”



evidence from Qumran is part of a general development, or a rather esoteric feature.

## 2. The Torah – esoteric or public among Jews of the Hellenistic and Roman periods?

The view that the Torah is a public text emerges for the first time in Deuteronomy: According to Deuteronomy, the Torah is presented by Mose to Israel (e.g. Deut 4:44), it is published on stone tablets after the crossing of the Jordan river (Deut 27:2f), and the Book of the Torah is to be kept not in, but rather beside the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:26), i.e. not hidden, but with open access.

In which measure this claim for publicity was put into effect during the Hellenistic and Roman times is difficult to determine exactly. However, we seem to have a few leads:

(1) The public access to and maybe even the private property of manuscripts of the Torah, as well as the wide circulation of Torah manuscripts is presupposed by 1 Makk 1:54–57 for the first half of the 2nd century BCE:

And on the fifteenth day of Cheseleu in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, he constructed an abomination of desolation on the altar, and in the cities around Iouda they built altars and burnt incense at the doors of the houses and in the city squares. And the books of the law which they found (καὶ τὰ βιβλία τοῦ νόμου ἃ εὗρον) they tore up and burned with fire. And wherever there was found in someone's possession a book of the covenant, or if someone was confirming to the law (καὶ ὅπου εὕρισκετο παρά τινι βιβλίον διαθήκης καὶ εἴ τις συνευδόκει τῷ νόμῳ), the judgement of the king put them to death.<sup>9</sup>

This source implies that a multitude of Torah scrolls were publically available in different Jewish places, and some of these scrolls seem to have been in private hands.<sup>10</sup>

Starting from the 1st century CE onward the view that the Torah is a public document became a topos, well attested in Philo, Josephus and Rabbinic sources, as has been shown by Albert Baumgarten.<sup>11</sup>

(2) Further clear evidence that the Torah was accessible by a wide public is the multitude of textual versions of the Torah as attested by

9 Translation by George T. ZERVOS (NETS).

10 It is less important here, whether τὰ βιβλία τοῦ νόμου and βιβλίον διαθήκης refer to the Torah as a whole, or rather to certain parts of it, as for instance the Book of Deuteronomy. For a discussion of this problem see RAPPAPORT, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 120, and ABEL, *Les Livres des Maccabées*, 26.

11 See BAUMGARTEN, *The Torah as a public document in Judaism*.

the Qumran manuscripts. The fact of their textual diversity can only be explained when we acknowledge that a relatively high number of copies of the Torah circulated in different Jewish circles, which were not directly connected one with the other, and it may be not superfluous to note that this observations contradicts the theory that a library in the Temple of Jerusalem housed a standard text of the Torah. In fact, there is barely evidence for a library like this.<sup>12</sup>

We may therefore conclude, again with some caution, that the physical existence, circulation, reception and transmission of the Torah during the Hellenistic and Roman period took place in the environment of a wider Jewish public, and not only within the circles of a small Jewish elite. Therefore, there seems to be no reason to interpret the evidence from Qumran regarding the presence of the Torah as a group specific feature.

The same seems to be the case regarding the turn from a content-focused towards a form-focused or access to the text of the Torah, which is evidenced by some Qumran texts for the 2nd century BCE. Admiel Schremer and other scholars have pointed out the clear evidence that the same development is visible within the traditions which were incorporated in the early Rabbinic sources, although there it took place at a somewhat later time. In a clear and obvious opposition to the general trend in Rabbinic literature, halakhic arguments and decisions attributed to the authorities before the first century CE do generally not refer to scriptural quotations, and even the halakhic decisions attributed to Hillel the elder, who lived at the turn from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE, and whom Rabbinic traditions regards as the founder of scriptural hermeneutics, in their vast majority do not appeal to scripture, which seems to be an indication that even within proto-Rabbinic movement this kind of authority feature was not common in the early 1st century CE., although it was wide spread already during the 2nd century CE.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the same developments with regard to the attitude towards the text of the Torah were at stake in the Qumran community as well as in the proto-Rabbinic and Rabbinic tradition of Judaism, although there is a significant difference regarding the time when these changes happened, since in the proto-Rabbinic movement this same development happened around 150 years later, and this difference in time needs to be explained in order to connect the two processes.

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12 For a discussion of the theory that a library in the temple of Jerusalem was the driving force behind the canonization of the Biblical text see SCHORCH, *Communio lectorum*, 174-176; idem, *The libraries*, 173-174.

13 See SCHREMER, *They did not read*, 116.

Regarding this difference, I would like to suggest that a further factor should be taken into account, namely the emergence and creation of Jewish sub-groups with their own and distinct identities, which happened within Judaism during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. As a part of this process, group-specific forms of literature and textual compositions started to emerge, and as regarding the different versions of the Torah, at least some of these groups seem to have shaped their identity by choosing one specific textual form of the Torah as their group specific text. This development, which lead from a multitude of textual versions of the Torah, accessible to a wide Jewish public, as can be observed for the first half of the 2nd century BCE, towards group-specific textual versions of the Torah as part of the identity of these groups, can be described as a process of esoterization of the Torah, insofar at the end of this process only the members of a specific group had access to a specific version of the Torah. The first group-specific text of the Torah seems to have been created in the late 2nd century BCE as part of the creation of a distinct Samaritan identity.<sup>14</sup> More such group-specific texts may have been created, but did not materialize in the sources which survived, especially since our knowledge about the different Jewish groups of that period is of course very fragmentary.

Thus, to the best of my knowledge, only two groups can be clearly connected with specific textual versions of the Torah, which is the Samaritans and the proto-Rabbinic/Rabbinic movement. Therefore, I would like to turn now to these two groups and their respective texts, in order to outline this process of the creation of group-specific textual versions of the Torah, or, in other words, this process of esoterization of the Torah. My examples will be taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, since it seems to me that in this composition the process is the most obvious, as will be seen. Additionally, we should keep in mind that Deuteronomy was the most read book of the Torah, according to the evidence from Qumran<sup>15</sup> and appears therefore especially relevant.

### 3. The Samaritan and the Jewish Deuteronomy

As is well known, one of the central issues of Deuteronomy is the question of the chosen place. The formula “the place that the LORD your God will chose” (הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יבַחֵר הַיהוָה) appears in Deut 12:5 for the first time, and it is repeated within the book another 21 times. We are used to read this formula as reference to the temple in Jerusalem, and this

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14 See SCHORCH, La formation de la communauté samaritaine, 10-14.

15 See above.

seems at least to be justified by many passages from the Book of Kings and Chronicles, e.g.:

“Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel (לֹא בָחַרְתִּי בְעִיר מִכָּל שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) in which to build a house, so that my name might be there, and I chose no one as ruler over my people Israel; but I have chosen Jerusalem in order that my name may be there (וַאֲבָחָר בִּירוּשָׁלַם לְהִיּוֹת שְׁמִי שָׁם), and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.” (1 Kings 8:16 LXX // 2 Chron 6:5–6)

Within the Book of Deuteronomy itself, however, we seem to encounter a different identification of the chosen place, namely that the chosen place referred to in Deut 12 is the altar which the Israelites are commanded to erect after entering the Holy Land, according to Deut 27:

**Deut 11:31–12:18**

**Deut 27:2–7**

<p>11:31 When you cross the Jordan (כִּי אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים),</p> <p>to go in to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you ...</p>	<p>On the day that you cross over the Jordan (תְּעַבְרִי)</p> <p>into the land that the LORD your God is giving you ...</p>	<p>27:2</p>
<p>12:4-5 ... you shall seek the place that the LORD your God chose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there.</p>	<p>So when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Garizim, and you shall cover them with plaster. And you shall build an altar there to the Lord your God, an altar of stones ...</p>	<p>27:4-6a</p>
<p>12:6 There you shall bring your burnt offerings (עֹלֹתֵיכֶם),</p> <p>and your sacrifices (זִבְחֵיכֶם),</p> <p>your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.</p>	<p>Then offer up burnt offerings on it (וְהֵעַלְתֶּם עֹלֹת) to the LORD your God,</p> <p>make sacrifices of well-being (זִבְחַת שְׁלָמוֹם)</p> <p>–</p>	<p>27:6b</p> <p>27:7</p>
<p>12:7 And you shall eat (וְאָכַלְתֶּם) there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households together,</p> <p>rejoicing (וְשִׂמְחָתֶם) ...</p>	<p>and eat them (וְאָכַלְתָּ) there,</p> <p>rejoicing (וְשִׂמְחָתָ) before the LORD your God...</p>	

The parallel structure of Deut 12 and Deut 27 seems to leave no doubt that for Deuteronomy itself, in the textual state which is preserved in both MT and the Samaritan Torah, the chosen place is explicitly mentioned in Deut 27:4. If we look at the different textual traditions regarding Deut 27:4, however, we encounter a further problem, namely that the Masoretic text and the Septuagint place this altar on Mount Ebal, the mount of curses (compare Deut 27:13), while the Samaritan Torah and the Old Greek translation<sup>16</sup> localize this altar on Mount Garizim, which is the mountain of blessing, according to Deut 27:12:

“So when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on [MT/LXX:] *Mount Ebal* / [SP/Old Greek:] *Mount Garizim* and you shall cover them with plaster. And you shall build an altar there to the LORD your God, an altar of stones on which you have not used an iron tool.” (Deut 27:4)

From a text-historical point of view this evidence clearly indicates that the oldest version of Deut 27:4 located the altar on Mount Garizim, since otherwise the reading “Garizim” would not be part of the Old Greek text, which is anything but suspect for pro-Garizim and anti-Jerusalem tendencies. On the other hand, the re-location of the altar from Mount Garizim to Mount Ebal turns out to be a text-historically secondary endeavor of followers of the Temple in Jerusalem, which tried to delegitimize the sanctuary on Mount Garizim, being claimed by the Samaritans as the only legitimate cultic place.

Yet a further textual correction of Deuteronomy seems to have entered the text in this context: The formula pointing to the chosen place, already quoted above and attested for the first time in Deut 12:5, is preserved in the Samaritan Torah and in the Old Greek version of the Pentateuch as: “the place that the LORD has chosen” (הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר יְהוָה), while the later, and again deliberately corrected reading of the Masoretic Text contains: “the place that the LORD will choose” (הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה).<sup>17</sup>

The background of this change seems to be that the future verbal form can be understood as referring to a place beyond Deuteronomy, thus creating the identificatory link with Jerusalem as seen above. Therefore, both textual corrections, from Garizim to Ebal in Deut 27:4, and from “the LORD has chosen” to “the LORD will choose” in the deuteronomic centralization formula were carried out as part of a conflict about the localisation of the one and only legitimate sanctuary, be it

16 See SCHENKER, *Le Seigneur choisira-t-il le lieu de son nom*, and idem, *Textgeschichtliches zum Samaritanischen Pentateuch*.

17 The textual evidence was gathered and presented by Adrian Schenker in his two articles mentioned above, note 16.

Mount Garizim, as claimed by the Samaritans, or be it the Temple in Jerusalem, as presupposed by Jews.

The two textual corrections within the text of Deuteronomy can be dated with reasonable certainty: The Old Greek translation of Deuteronomy, dating to the 3rd century BCE exhibits the unchanged text of Deuteronomy, i.e. the reading Garizim in Deut 27:4 and the verbal form in the perfect “he has chosen” in the centralization formula. The reference to the centralization formula contained in 4QMMT (written around the middle of 2nd century BCE) preserves the reading in the perfect “he has chosen”, while the Temple scroll (late 2nd century BCE) already contains the verb in the future:

**4QMMT:**

[... ירושלים היא מחנה הקדש היא מקום שבחר בו מכל שבטי ישראל] – “For Jerusalem is the holy camp. It is the place that He chose from all the tribes of [Israel ...]” (4Q394 f8 iv:9–11)

**Temple scroll:**

לפני תאוכלנו שנה כשנה במקום אשר אבחר – “You are to eat those before Me annually in the place that I shall choose.” (11Q19 52:9)

ושמחתה לפני במקום אשר אבחר לשום שמי עלי – “and rejoice before Me in the place that I will choose to establish My name” (11Q19 52:16)

Thus, the textual change from “he has chosen” (בחר) to “he will chose” (יבחר) seems to have taken place around the middle of the 2nd century BCE.

However, the Book of Deuteronomy was of course already known in Judah long before this time, and thus long before this textual change, and there is no reason to believe that the centralization formula was taken by the Judeans as referring to any other place outside Jerusalem, even before the textual correction was carried out. Thus, how can be explained that the text was corrected only much later, around the middle of the 2nd century BCE? The answer to this question relies on the two observations already described above:

(1) On the one hand side, as was demonstrated, a new attitude towards the text of the Torah emerged during the 2nd century BCE. The central focus of this development was the creation of awareness of the textual surface, which increasingly attributed authority to the concrete wording of the text. Within the context of this new intellectual environment, it was the textual surface of the Book of Deuteronomy which became the basis for the mutually excluding holy geographies of Samaritans and Jews. The corrections carried out in the Jerusalem-text expressed the needs of the Jews who were followers of the Jerusalem temple.

(2) On the other hand side, and closely interrelated with the first development in the field of textual awareness, the 2nd century BCE saw the emergence of groups with distinct identities, which started to use their group specific textual versions as an esoteric medium of delimitation, as can be observed especially regarding the Samaritan community and their Torah. Most obviously, however, the creation and establishing of the Samaritan sect as an independent community cannot be separated from the challenges posed by the Hasmonean policy to sharpen the profile of Judean identity. The quarrels between pre-Samaritans and Jews culminated in 129/128 BCE, when the Hasmonean John Hyrkan destroyed the sanctuary on Mount Garizim, causing thereby the final break between the two communities and the break of a literal culture into two.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. The question of languages and the Greek tradition

If we look at this outline of the presence and the authority of the Torah within the Judaism of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there emerges the picture of a development, which started in the 2nd century BCE and was effective at least until the 2nd century CE, a development which led from multitude of textual versions shared by all followers of the ancient Israelit-Judean traditions, towards a group specific and esoteric textual uniformity. In the course of this process, the attitude to the text of the Torah changed from a focus on the content towards a focus on the textual surface. In light of this latter point, we should try to clarify yet another question: How these changes affected the Hellenistic Jewish literary tradition, i.e. the Jewish literature in Greek, and especially the attitude towards the Septuagint? – In order to analyze this problem, it seems above all important to deal with the question of the different languages used by the Jews of this period and their respective role.

It has been demonstrated elsewhere<sup>19</sup> that within the Palestinian Jewish tradition, the 2nd century BCE saw the emergence of a new concept of Hebrew as the Holy language. Most prominently, this new concept is expressed in Jubilees 12:

“Then the LORD God said to me: ‘Open his mouth and his ears to hear and speak with his tongue in the revealed language.’ For from the day of the collapse<sup>20</sup> it had disappeared from the mouth(s) of all mankind. I opened

18 See SCHORCH, *La formation de la communauté samaritaine*, 10.

19 See SCHORCH, *The Pre-eminence of the Hebrew Language*, 47-48.

20 I.e., of the tower of Babel, see VANDERKAM, *The Book of Jubilees*, 73.

his mouth, ears and lips, and began to speak Hebrew with him – in the language of the creation. He took his fathers' books (they were written in Hebrew), and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand).” (Jub 12:25-27)<sup>21</sup>

Hebrew appears here as that language, which was used by God in the creation of the world, which was the only language until the tower of Babylon was destroyed, and which was used for composing the holy scriptures. According to Jubilees 12 this forgotten language was taught to Abraham in a revelatory act, and it was used by him and his seed as a sign of their being God's elected ones. Being the original and godly language, Hebrew thus became the central element of an exclusive revelation and the holy language of Judaism. The first explicit reference to this new concept is found in a fragmentary text from Qumran (4Q464), dating to the 1st century BCE, where the term לקודש “holy language” is used *expressis verbis*.<sup>22</sup>

The prologue of the Greek translator of Ben Sira shows that these concept of Hebrew as the holy language was augmented with a further concept by the end of the 2nd century BCE, namely that due to this special status of Hebrew texts cannot be translated adequately:

οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Ἑβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῆ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν· – “For those things originally in Hebrew do not have the same force when rendered into another language.”

Thus, according to the Greek translator of Ben Sira, there is no there is no ἰσοδυναμία “equal force” between the Hebrew and the Greek version of a text, and both do not have the same effect on the reader, since the Hebrew text is more meaningful and important from the outset.<sup>23</sup> Although the Hebrew text is not totally untranslatable, and even has to be translated for practical reasons, it is effected for bad by the translation in both its content and its meaning, and the reason is that the text doesn't use the holy language anymore. Thus, there cannot be real equivalence between the original Hebrew and the Greek translation.

We may therefore conclude that the translator of Ben Sira claims an exclusive authority for the Hebrew text. Without totally disapproving of translations, he declares them as being of secondary importance only, and thus applies the concept, that it is the surface of the text, which is granted authority, on the question for the status of translations. Obviously, this view must have posed a challenge to the translation of the Septuagint. However, among the Jews of Alexandria, this challenge seems not to have been realized, or it was unknown to them.

21 Translation by VANDERKAM, The Book of Jubilees, 73-74.

22 See ESHEL/STONE, The holy language, 170-174.

23 See SCHORCH, The Pre-eminence of the Hebrew Language, 49-51.



At least the Letter of Aristeas seems to show no traces of this challenge, as it bases the authority of the Septuagint on the acclamation of the Jewish community. It is only in Philo that the legend about the origin of the Septuagint<sup>24</sup> appears in a form which declares the external textual shape of the Greek text as holy, when the story says that 72 independently working translators produced exactly the same text, the consequence of which is that the text is inspired. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first attestation that the surface focused concept of text arrived in Alexandria's Hellenistic Jewish community and was applied to the Greek Torah.

Unlike Philo, Josephus repeats the legend about the origin of the Septuagint more or less in the same version as it is found in the Letter of Aristeas, which is maybe an indication that the concept of the Greek Torah as an inspired text was not adopted among the Greek speaking Jews of Palestine. This impression is even enforced when we look at the quotations from the Old Testament which the writings of the New Testament use, exhibiting features well known from the Biblical quotations in the Qumran texts:<sup>25</sup>

Thus, on the one hand side, the quotation formula which marks quotations from the Old Testament (e.g. καθὼς γέγραπται, λέγει) obviously displays awareness that the textual surface is acknowledged as authority. On the other hand, however, the quoted text *de facto* seems to have been rather flexible and could be changed by the author of the new composition in order to fit the aim of the quoting text. An illustrative example is found in Eph 4:7–8:

“But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, *When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.*”<sup>26</sup>

The text refers to the text of Psalm 68:19 (= Psalm 67 LXX). However, this verse originally uses the 2nd person:

“You ascended on high; you led captivity captive; you received gifts by a person [...]”

Most obviously, the author of Ephesians (or his *Vorlage*) re-phrased the original quote in the 3rd person, and created thus a scriptural proof-text which could be understood as a reference to Christ. This procedure of re-phrasing a given quotation seems even to have been augmented towards the creation of pseudo-quotations, i.e. verses which are intro-

24 For an overview about the history of the LXX-legend in Hellenistic antiquity see WASSERSTEIN/WASSERSTEIN, *The Legend of the Septuagint*, 19-50.

25 See above, p. 3.

26 Translation by Albert Pietersma as published in NETS.

duced and used as scriptural references, but do not appear to have their origin in the Old Testament writings. The books of the New Testament contain a number of such pseudo-quotations. One example is 1 Cor 2:9, where Paul says:

“[...] as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.”

However, although Paul seems to claim so, this quotation appears in none of the writings available to us, and in light of the developments outlined before it seems much more likely to suggest that 1 Corinthians in that case used the quotation formula only for the sake of providing, or forging, higher authority to a certain view expressed in the pseudo-quotation.

To us, this attitude may seem problematic. Paul, however, and most obviously, just used a literary technique, which was in complete accordance with the contemporary ideas about scriptural authority in Palestinian Judaism.

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