

# THE GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

STANLEY SCHNEIDER

## INTRODUCTION

There is a confusing plethora of opinion regarding how and why the Bible was translated into Greek. To complicate matters, there are conflictual rabbinic statements concerning the study and application of Greek ‘Wisdom’, in general, and the use of the Greek language specifically.

We will be studying the historical and sociological factors that impacted the various translations of the Bible into Greek and their ‘acceptance’ and ‘rejection’ by rabbinic authorities. This will also help us to better understand the effects of the spread of Hellenism among the Jewish population.

## LETTER OF ARISTEAS

One of the oldest accounts detailing the translation of the Bible into Greek, is the Letter of Aristeas. This is a pseudepigraphic<sup>1</sup> text of Alexandrian origin<sup>2</sup> that presents an account of the creation of a Greek text of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX). This work dates to the latter part of the second century BCE and tells the story of how 72 Jewish scholars (6 from each tribe) were sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria, Egypt, at the invitation of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BCE), who was pushed by his chief librarian Demetrios, and they translated the entire text of the Hebrew Bible from Hebrew into Greek, in 72 days. The Jewish scholars were sent by Eliezer, the High Priest in Jerusalem, with an authorized Hebrew text. There seemed to be two main reasons for this monumental translation endeavor: the Egyptians wanted to increase their vast collection of scrolls (over 700,000) with knowledge of the Hebrews who had become a large segment of Egypt’s population,<sup>3</sup> and the Jews wanted a valid and authenticated translation of the Hebrew Bible because many were more conversant in everyday Greek than in Hebrew.

King Ptolemy II was so pleased with the positive response he had received that he freed many of the Jews who were in captivity and sent lavish gifts to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews were so thrilled with the completed trans-

*Stanley Schneider, PhD., a graduate of Yeshiva University and its rabbinical school, was Professor and former Chairman of the Integrative Psychotherapy Program, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.*

lation that they placed a curse upon anyone who changes even one letter from the authorized translation.

This Letter is also mentioned and paraphrased in the works of two Jewish scholars: *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus (37-100 CE) and *Life of Moses* by Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE), and in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340 CE), a non-Jewish historian and polemicist.<sup>4</sup>

The legend of the Letter of Aristeas is not without criticism. Most scholars accept the thesis of the English theologian and scholar Humphrey Hody (1659-1707),<sup>5</sup> that the Letter of Aristeas was a late forgery produced by a Hellenic Jew. The great majority of modern scholars “recognise the unhistorical character of much of the story of Aristeas...(yet) The welcome accorded to the Greek version by the Jews of Alexandria was doubtless, as Aristeas represents, both cordial and permanent; nor need we doubt that Philadelphus and his scholars approved what had been done.”<sup>6</sup> The story seems to be an embellishment of a well-known legend and this is the reason why Hody and other scholars refer to the Letter of Aristeas as Pseudo-Aristeas. While I. Abrahams summarized many of the criticisms of the Letter of Aristeas, he emphatically noted, “If we suppose a body of Palestinian translators at work in Alexandria, with local Alexandrian Jews to help them, is not this precisely what would result? The vocabulary of the translation would be Alexandrian, the style and idioms Palestinian; and this is what the LXX is.”<sup>7</sup>

As Swete notes: “It was among the Jews who were brought into relation with Hellenic culture that the necessity arose for a written translation of the books of the canon. Egypt was the earliest home of the Hellenistic Jew, and it was on Egyptian soil that the earliest Greek version of the Old Testament was begun.”<sup>8</sup> This first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, the Alexandrian Greek version, came to be known as the *Septuagint*, the translation of the 70 scholars. While the Letter of Aristeas speaks of 72 Jewish scholars, Josephus and the Church theologians speak of 70.<sup>9</sup> This first translation became known in Greek as ‘The Translation of the Seventy’, and its’ abbreviation: LXX. “This was the ‘canonization’ of the Greek text of the Torah.”<sup>10</sup>

Several aspects of the Letter of Aristeas raise important questions regarding the historical veracity of the Letter. Who initiated the Greek translation? Was it the librarian Demetrius or King Ptolemy II Philadelphus? Was it to increase the library’s literary acquisitions and to learn more about the Hebrews who

now numbered over 1,000,000? Or was it initiated by Jews in order to enable the Alexandrian Jews the ability to understand the Bible, similar to Babylonian Jewry's usage of an Aramaic translation of the Bible? These thoughts have a major impact upon the acceptance of the Greek translation by rabbinic authorities.

#### THE GREEK TRANSLATION – JEWISH SOURCES

There are several Jewish sources that tell the legend of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. While the Letter of Aristeas is dated to the latter part of the second century BCE, the oldest Jewish sources are from the later Tannaitic period.<sup>11</sup> We have two similar sources that are part of the collection of extra-canonical or minor tractates,<sup>12</sup> *Sefer Torah* and *Soferim*.<sup>13</sup> Another later source is found in TB *Megillah* 9a.

1. *Sefer Torah* 1:8-9: "The text of the scroll of the Law must not be written in old Hebrew, Elamitic,<sup>14</sup> Median<sup>15</sup> or Greek. Seventy elders wrote the whole Torah in Greek for King Ptolemy and that day was as ominous for Israel as the day whereon the Israelites made the golden calf, for the Torah could not be adequately translated. They changed thirteen passages in the Torah..."

2. *Soferim* 1:6-8: "The text of the scroll of the Law must not be written in old Hebrew, Median, Elamitic or Greek . . . . It once happened that five elders wrote the Torah for King Ptolemy in Greek and that day was as ominous for Israel as the day whereon the Israelites made the golden calf, for the Torah could not be adequately translated. It also happened that King Ptolemy assembled seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two separate rooms without telling them the reason for which he had assembled them. He then went to each one of them and said to him: 'write for me a translation of the Torah of Moses your master.' The Omnipresent inspired them and the mind of all of them was identical so that each on his own wrote the same translation of the Torah, introducing the same thirteen alterations . . . ."

3. TB *Megillah* 9a: "King Ptolemy assembled seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two separate rooms without telling them why he had brought them together. And he went to each one of them and said to him: 'translate for me the Torah of Moses your master.' The Omnipresent inspired

them and the mind of all of them was identical . . . (the Talmudic passage continues with a description of the alterations the elders made)”

We note that there are several interesting facts that emerge when comparing the three Jewish versions of the legend and the Letter of Aristeas.

1. King Ptolemy initiated the translation into Greek, not the librarian in Alexandria.

2. There is no mention in the Jewish sources of Eliezer the High Priest in Jerusalem, nor of the ‘original’ Torah scroll being sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria.

3. While the Letter of Aristeas mentions 72 scholars (6 from each tribe), the earliest Jewish source, *Sefer Torah*, mentions 70. The later Jewish sources *Soferim* and TB *Megillah*, also mention 72.

4. The Letter of Aristeas and *Sefer Torah* do not mention that the scholars were put in separate rooms in order to see if there were any discrepancies in their translations. Both *Soferim* and TB *Megillah* do mention their being ‘tested’ in order to produce an accurate translation and list the 13 alterations that were miraculously made by all the scholars who were placed in separate rooms. This was ‘the hand of the Omnipresent.’

5. *Soferim* notes that there were 5 elders who translated the Torah before the 72 elders were placed in 72 different rooms. This is a very unclear statement that has no corroboration in other texts, and may be an attempt to reconcile two different early traditions regarding how many sages participated in the translation.

6. Both minor tractates (*Sefer Torah* and *Soferim*) make a strong statement regarding the translation, “that day was as ominous for Israel as the day whereon the Israelites made the golden calf, for the Torah could not be adequately translated.” This declaration takes a strong stance negating the positive volition of the elders – they were forced and probably threatened to translate the Torah into Greek, because one could not properly translate the Torah adequately.

All three Jewish sources bring this legend as ‘proof’ that one cannot use the Greek language in order to write a Scroll of the Law, mezuzot or tefillin.<sup>16</sup>

THE GREEK LANGUAGE AND GREEK WISDOM

The Mishnah *Sotah* (9:14) teaches:

During the war of Titus,<sup>17</sup> it was decreed that no man should teach his son Greek.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear from the Mishnah whether the ban on Greek refers to the Greek language or to what is known in the Talmud as Greek Wisdom. TB *Sotah* 49b explores this issue and brings an example of the dangers of Greek Wisdom: “When the kings of the Hasmonean house fought one another, Hyrcanus was outside and Aristobulus within.<sup>19</sup> Each day they used to let down *denarii*<sup>20</sup> in a basket and haul up for them (animals for) the continual offerings. An old man there, who was learned in Greek Wisdom<sup>21</sup> spoke with them in Greek saying, ‘As long as they carry-on the Temple Service, they will never surrender to you.’ On the morrow they let down *denarii* in a basket and hauled up a pig. When it reached half-way up the wall, it stuck its claws (into the wall) and the Land of Israel was shaken over a distance of four hundred *parsangs*.<sup>22</sup> At that time, they declared: ‘Cursed be a man who rears pigs and cursed be a man who teaches his son Greek Wisdom.

It seems clear that this Talmudic commentary on the Mishnah went to great lengths to prove that the rabbinic ban was on Greek Wisdom and not on the Greek language.

Mishnah *Megillah* (1:8) even takes a strong positive stance on the Greek language: “Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel<sup>23</sup> says that Books (of the Scriptures) also were permitted to be written only in Greek.” TJ *Megillah* 1:9 brings Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel’s statement more forcibly: “Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: even in Books (of the Scriptures) they only allowed them to be written in Greek. They checked and found that the Torah could not be translated totally (properly) except in Greek.”

The Greek language and translating Hebrew Scriptures into Greek do not seem to be a problem to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. Being an important political figure, he would be called upon to intervene with Roman officialdom<sup>24</sup> and this required a knowledge of foreign languages.<sup>25</sup> He was knowledgeable in Greek philosophy and the Greek language and even had several of his children/students schooled in Greek philosophy.<sup>26</sup>

Maimonides takes the position that the learning or translating into Greek is not the issue that is discussed in rabbinic discourse but rather Greek Wisdom. Maimonides sees Greek Wisdom as referring to secretive ideas. “The Greeks had special ideas unique to them that are expressed as ‘hints’ (*remazim*) and

'riddles' (*chidot*)...and I am sure that this was in the past and does not exist today.<sup>27</sup>

The fear of Greek Wisdom impinging upon Jewish ethical and moral values caused rabbinic authorities to place the study of Greek Wisdom, and by extension, the translation of Scriptures into the Greek language, off-limits. Although Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel took a positive approach, we can understand how translating the Torah into Greek would provoke fears.

Saul Lieberman noted the changing attitudes of the rabbis to the study of Greek (language and Wisdom) and even refers to this as "The Alleged Ban on Greek Wisdom."<sup>28</sup> He adds an interesting caveat,<sup>29</sup> that the ban on Greek was the fear of informers whose familiarity with Greek (language and Wisdom) would tempt them to be treasonous.<sup>30</sup>

Menachem Ha-Meiri (1249-1315), a Talmudist and Maimonidean, noted that the reason that the rabbis were fearful of Greek Wisdom and the Greek language was because it enticed people to enjoy the Greek cultural and academic environment and would entrap them and erode religious strictures and Jewish learning and observance would suffer.<sup>31</sup>

How much Greek (language and culture) was known to the Jewish population outside of the Greek empire? Joseph Geiger, a Classics scholar, has written: "The total disappearance of Jewish Greek literature after the Bar-Kokhba rebellion is one of the more enigmatic phenomena of Jewish history in the Roman empire."<sup>32</sup> The 'disappearance' of Greek seems strange considering that "the primary language of the Jews in the Diaspora, numbering several million,<sup>33</sup> was Greek."<sup>34</sup> We know that the Talmud (both Jerusalem and Babylonian) as well as the Midrashim oftentimes use Greek terms or names in their discussions. And the Greek author Homer is even mentioned in rabbinic literature,<sup>35</sup> but "it is very hard to prove that the Rabbis made direct use of the Odyssey or Iliad (of Homer)."<sup>36</sup>

Clearly Greek as a language and culture was allowed by rabbinic decree as well as Greek Wisdom, provided that there was no deterioration in Jewish learning or praxis.

#### LATER GREEK VERSIONS

The Alexandrian translation, the LXX, was considered "with a reverence scarcely less than that which belonged to the original. It was the Bible of the

Egyptian Jews.”<sup>37</sup> During the Apostolic age, the LXX was accepted by the Greek speaking Jews and also by the Hellenistic non-Jewish world. This text was used through the Apostolic age.<sup>38</sup> During this period the New Testament books were written and the foundations were laid for the new religion Christianity and the new Christian church. Since the early Christian groups were comprised of Jews, this ‘breaking away’ from Jewish tradition led Jews to view the LXX as a text for the Christians and not the Jews. In addition, since “Christianity made many converts among Greek-speaking Jews”,<sup>39</sup> the LXX was seen as a subterfuge for proselytizing. In the course of time, after undergoing several recensions, it became the canonical Greek Bible of the Christian Church. Beyond the fact that the LXX had been adopted as Sacred Scripture by Christianity, it was also rendered unwelcome to the Jews due to its divergence from the accepted Masoretic text.

The Greek speaking Jewish population needed a different translation that was not tainted by non-Jewish influences. Three versions of the Bible (Torah and Prophets) were made during the second century CE (130-180 CE) that served as replacements for them. These “later Greek versions...are evidently based on a Hebrew text substantially identical with ours (without our vowel points and accents), and the Tannaite Midrash...”<sup>40</sup>

1. Aquila: A Jewish proselyte<sup>41</sup> who lived during the reign of Hadrian (117-138 CE). In the era of the Christian theologian, Origen (184-253),<sup>42</sup> Aquila was trusted in Jewish circles and his translation was used by non-Hebrew speaking Jews. Swete noted “that it was widely accepted by the Greek synagogues of the Empire can only have been due to the prejudice created in its favour by its known adherence to the standard text and the traditional exegesis.”<sup>43</sup>

2. Theodotion: A Jewish proselyte who lived toward the end of the second century. He was a native of Ephesus<sup>44</sup> and made a second revision of the Septuagint. His revision, also, is in the nature of a reversion back to the Hebrew text, but he avoids entirely the pedantry of Aquila, and his Greek gives a more readable text. The Christian theologian Jerome<sup>45</sup> thought that Theodotion was an Ebionite<sup>46</sup> who had embraced Ebionitic Christianity.

3. Symmachus: He was thought to be an Ebionite or a Samaritan<sup>47</sup> who converted to Judaism. His translation was less a formal translation and more

of a summation and paraphrasing. Some have identified Symmachus with the figure in the Talmud of the same name, a disciple of Rabbi Meir.<sup>48</sup>

These three translations followed the first Greek translation, the Alexandrian Greek<sup>49</sup> LXX. The translators were Jewish converts, Samaritans or Ebionites. Clearly one can understand why the Rabbis were fearful of Greek translations. Even Jerome, cast suspicion on the validity of these three translations, stating “Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion were heretical Jews.”<sup>50</sup>

#### AFTERWARD

Historically, Jews lived under many regimes and leaders. Some were more tolerant towards them and some more restrictive. When Hellenism appeared as a major cultural influence, they were faced with a dilemma: how to integrate into a Hellenistic society without losing their own cultural and religious heritage. The translation of the Torah into Greek offered to Jews who were not able to fully understand the Hebrew texts, the ability to be better Jewish adherents to their heritage. In addition, since they were living in a Hellenistic society, and spoke Koine (Alexandrian basic) Greek, the Greek translation enabled them to successfully merge into Hellenistic society.<sup>51</sup> The difficulty was how one can integrate without losing the Jewish ‘self.’ Elias Bickerman, an historian who specialized in Greco-Roman history and the Hellenistic world, when discussing the Maccabean period noted, “Hellenistic notions were appropriated only after their poison had been drawn. The recipe was very simple: the new was fitted into the system of the Torah and was employed the better to serve the God of the fathers, not to elude Him the more adroitly... Thus Judaism was able to enrich itself with new and foreign ideas and to be saved from the mummification that overtook the religion of the Egyptians, for example, which shut itself off from Hellenism completely.”<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, there were those who felt that the “Greek foundations and the idolatrous society” didn’t allow other religions and cultures to flourish.<sup>53</sup> This was the Greek Wisdom and Greek language that frightened rabbinic sanctioning and was expressed as rabbinic reticence in acceptance of the Greek translation. In addition, the emergence of Christianity which arose out of a group of Jewish teachers and leaders, further complicated the use of the Septuagint which began to be used in polemical discourse in attempts to convert the Jews.

This also accounted for the traditional story of 70/72 Rabbis being forced to translate the Torah into Greek and having to change 13 passages in order to preserve intact the intent of the Masoretic text. No wonder rabbinic tradition looks in askance upon the Septuagint<sup>54</sup> – in any and all of its translations. This would have a tremendous impact upon the works of Philo and Josephus who both used the Greek translations in their thinking and writings, functionally excluding them from rabbinic discourse.

## NOTES

1. Pseudepigraphic refers to falsely attributed texts whose claimed author may not be the actual author and/or the text may span several historical periods.
2. Most probably of Jewish origin.
3. During the Greek and early Roman periods, the Jews were 40% of the population in Alexandria. They occupied 2 of the 5 quarters of the city. TB *Sukkah* 51b describes the extremely large synagogue in Alexandria where the leader of the prayers would have to wave a kerchief so that the entire congregation could answer ‘Amen’ in unison.
4. F. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Bridgeport: M. Sherman, 1828); Philo, *Life of Moses*, retrieved from: <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book25.html>; On the life of Eusebius, retrieved from: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05617b.htm> .
5. H. Hody, *Contra Historium de LXX: Interpretum Aristee Nomine Inscriptam Dissertatio* (Oxford: Oxford, 1705). This was Hody’s dissertation at Oxford and established him as an authority on the Septuagint.
6. H.B. Swete (Revised by R.R.Ottley), *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Ktav Publishing House, 1900/1968), pp.15, 22. Appended to this crucial volume for understanding the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible is the Letter of Aristeas in an edited version in Greek by H. St. J. Thackeray.
7. I. Abrahams, “Recent Criticism of the Letter of Aristeas,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 14 (1902), p.341.
8. Swete, *op cit*, p.3. See also: I.H. Weiss, *Dor ve Dorshav* (Tel Aviv, Ziv, 1871/n.d.), pp. 90-91 (Hebrew).
9. The Greek title is: ‘The Translation of the Seventy.’ In Latin: *septuaginta*, ‘seventy.’ The number seventy may also be influenced by the Jewish version of the legend.
10. A. Pelletier, “Josephus, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint,” In L.H.Feldman & G.Hata (eds.), *Josephus, the Bible and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p.107.
11. The Tannaitic period ranged from 10-220 CE. This is the time frame of rabbis belonging to the Mishnaic period.
12. H.L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Harper Torchbooks/Harper & Row, 1931/1965), p. 73.
13. Michael Higger, *Seven Minor Treatises* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1930), pp. 5-6, dates the Minor Treatises to “Tannaitic sources. The compiler was a Palestinian and lived before the completion of the Babylonian Talmud.” The Soncino English translation, *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1965), p.xiv, notes in their Preface: “The trans-

lators in this volume incline to the opinion of Higger that in their original form many of the tractates belong to a comparatively early date and were subsequently revised." Higger (p.6) was also of the opinion that *Sefer Torah* was older than *Soferim*. Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (New York: Atheneum, 1955/1970), p. 166, was of the opinion that "Among the products of the codifiers of the geonic period should be reckoned the seven small treatises."

14. Elamite is an extinct language, once spoken in southwest Persia/Iran (2800-550 BCE).

15. Median was the language of the Medes; it was an old Persian/Iranian language (500 BCE-500 CE).

16. According to TB *Megillah* 9a, it may be permissible to write the Torah in Greek, although this is not allowed in the case of tefillin or mezuzot (see *Sefer Torah*, Soncino translation into English, p.632, fn.14).

17. "Who destroyed the Temple" (Commentary: *Tiferet Yisrael*, by Israel Lipschitz, 1860-1782).

18. The commentators, Israel Lipschitz and Obadiah of Bartenura (1445-1515) specifically noted that the ban was on Greek Wisdom and not on the Greek language.

19. The Hasmonean Civil War (67-63 BCE) was between two claimants to the kingship and it resulted in Roman involvement in the conflict. Hyrcanus had the assistance of Rome when they besieged Jerusalem and is referred in this Talmudic passage as "outside" and his brother, Aristobulus is referred to as "within."

20. Denarius (plural: denarii) was a silver coin in the Roman era.

21. "Sophistry" (London: Soncino Press, 1965, pp. 268, fn. 7).

22. An Iranian unit of distance, equivalent to the European 'league,' that originated in the Ancient Persian Empire. It appears in Greek as 'parsanges.'

23. A third generation Tannah and President of the Great Sanhedrin. He escaped the massacre during the Bar Kochba rebellion (132-135 CE).

24. Oftentimes leaders of the Jewish communities needed to travel to see political officials in order to properly represent their constituents. See TB *Berakot* 27b: "to give-and-take with the ruler in order to represent (properly) the Jews."

25. Tosaphot on TB *Menahot* 64b: "Rabban Gamliel allowed Greek Wisdom because they were close to the political rulers (*krovin la-malchut*)...and there was a public need (*tzorech tzibur*)."  
See also TB *Baba Kamma* 83a.

26. TB *Sotah* 49b: "the Greek language is one (issue) and Greek Wisdom is another (issue)...1000 children (students) were in my father's (Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel) house. 500 learned Torah and 500 learned Greek Wisdom, and of these there remained (after the wars and the fall of Beitar) only me (Shmuel) and the son of my father's brother in Assia (near Tiberias)."

27. In his commentary on *Mishnah Sotah*, end of the ninth chapter.

28. S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), pp.100-114.

29. This is based on TJ *Sotah* 9:15 ("because of the informers" – *mesorot*). Lieberman does not give the source. Moshe Margolies (1710-1780), in his commentary (*P'nei Moshe*) on this passage remarks: "the reason one should not teach his son Greek, is so that he wouldn't become knowledgeable in the underlying messages of the Greek Wisdom and its language and then become associated with the Court of the Rulers, and become an informer."

30. These treasonous informers were called *delatores* (Latin: a denouncer, an informer). In ancient Greece, they were called *rhetores* (Greek: orators, prosecutors).

31. Menachem HaMeiri, *Beit HaBechirah* on TB *Sotah* 49b.
32. J. Geiger, "Cleopatra the Physician," *Zutot: Perspectives on Jewish Culture* 1 (2001), p. 32.
33. S.W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), vol. I, p.170. According to Baron there were over eight million Jews in the middle of the first century, most in the Diaspora.
34. L.H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.49.
35. S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-114. Also, D. Sperber, *Greek in Talmudic Palestine* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2012), pp. 135-138.
36. S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, *op. cit.*, p.113.
37. H.B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
38. The Apostolic age was the early period of Christianity during the time of the Twelve Apostles until the death of the last Apostle, John, in 100 CE.
39. G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), vol. I, p. 92.
40. *Ibid*, p. 101.
41. See TJ *Megillah* 1:10, where Aquila is referred to as a proselyte: "Aquila the proselyte translated the Torah before {his teachers} Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua and they praised him and said: 'You are fairer (*yafyafita*) than the children of men' (Psalms 45:3)." Interestingly, Obadiah of Bartenura in commenting on the Mishnah *Megillah* 1:8 that Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel allowed translation into Greek, explained: "And the reason that translation into Greek, more than other languages, was allowed was because of the verse: 'God enlarge Yafet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem' (Genesis 9:27)...the nice language...and there is no nicer language among the children of Yefet than Greek." TJ *Megillah* uses a different biblical verse than Obadiah of Bartenura. But both play on the name Yefet – either as 'enlarging' or 'nice' or 'fair. And the name Yefet is chosen because he is identified with the Greek nation. There are some who even noted a relationship to Iapetus, who in Greek mythology was a Titan, the son of Uranus and father of Atlas and Prometheus. Iapetus, known as Japetus in Ancient Greek, was the progenitor of mankind and has been equated with Yefet, Noah's son.
42. Origen produced the *Hexapla*, the first critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, which contained the original Hebrew text as well as five different Greek translations of it, all written in columns, side-by-side.
43. H.B.Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, *op. cit.*, p. 41. See F.C.Burkitt, "Aquila," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 10 (1898), pp. 207-216.
44. An ancient Greek city, part of the Ionian League that came under control of the Roman Republic in 129 BCE.
45. Saint Jerome (347-420) was a priest and theologian who translated the Bible from Hebrew into Latin; known as the Vulgate ('*version vulgate*' = common translation).
46. Ebionites (from the Hebrew: '*ebyonim/evyonim*' = the poor ones) were a 'Jewish Christian' movement that existed during the early centuries of the Christian era. They viewed Jesus as the Messiah but rejected his virgin birth and divinity, and followed Jewish law. See: Kaufmann Kohler, *Ebionites*, in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906). Retrieved from: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5411-ebionites>.

47. Samaritans are part of a religion, Samaritanism. They claim they are descended from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasheh and the Levites. In the Talmud they are referred to as Kutim. They are required to undergo a formal conversion if they want to be considered as Halachic Jews.
48. Rabbi Meir (139-163) was one of the greatest Tannaim.
49. The Alexandrian dialect of Greek was also known as Hellenistic, Biblical or Koine Greek. Koine means the 'Common' dialect.
50. "*Iudaeus Aquila, et Symmachus et Theodotio Judaizantes haeretici*," found in: H.B.Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, op. cit.*, p. 43.
51. The original Greek translation followed the Jews even into the Middle Ages even though there was a "cultural disengagement with Hellenism in the wake of the Bar Kochba revolt (CE 132-135)" C.Boyd-Taylor, "Echoes of the Septuagint in Byzantine Judaism," In W.Krauss, M.Karrer & M.Meiser (eds.), *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse* {The Septuagint: Text, Theology and Influence} (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), p.272. Recent studies have proved the thesis of the Jewish philologist, D.S.Blondheim, "Échos du judéo-hellénisme (étude sur l'influence de la Septante et d'Aquila sur les versions néo-grecques des Juifs)," *REJ* 78 (1924), 1-14, that medieval texts were influenced by ancient Greek versions. See also: N.de Lange, "Jewish Transmission of Greek Bible Versions," In M.K.H.Peters (ed.), *XIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), pp. 109-117. There are also scholars who question whether the Aquila fragments found in the Cairo Genizah were of Jewish or Christian origin. See: E.L.Gallagher, "The Religious Provenance of the Aquila Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 64 (2013), pp. 283-305.
52. E. Bickerman, *The Maccabees* (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), pp. 116-117.
53. J. Klausner, "Jesus the Christian" (Yeshu HaNotzri), *HeAtid* 1 (1908), p. 1 (Hebrew).
54. The restriction has been codified in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim*, 580:2 : "On the eighth of Tevet the Torah was written (translated) in Greek, during the reign of King Ptolemy, and there was darkness in the world for three days."