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30



Nicholas de Lange

Japheth in the Tents of Shem

Greek Bible Translations
in Byzantine Judaism

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

The present work is the fruit of many years' gestation. In many ways it can be attributed to a series of providential accidents.¹ I cannot hope to repay all the many debts of gratitude I have incurred. Rehearsing those to whom I owe special thanks will convey some idea of the history of the project. I apologise to those whose names I may have inadvertently omitted.

I studied Greek and Hebrew from a relatively early age. At Harrow County School for Boys I received a classical education of a sort that hardly exists today. Among several devoted teachers I should single out for special mention the late Kenneth Waller. I am deeply grateful too to 'my rabbi', the late Ignaz Maybaum, for instilling the rudiments of Hebrew grammar in me week by week and for insisting that I apply myself to Greek when I was under some pressure to concentrate on modern languages.

I read Classical Mods and Greats at Christ Church, Oxford, and I concurrently studied rabbinics at Leo Baeck College, a rabbinic seminary in London. (I did not realise at the time that this combination – classics and rabbinics, university and seminary – was usual in the 19th-century heyday of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement.) In retrospect I have to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to two teachers in particular for saving me from a possible feeling of split personality. My Greek history tutor at Christ Church, the late David Lewis, while teaching me about Athens in the 5th century BC, revealed a strong interest in Jewish history and literature in the ancient world. My rabbinic Hebrew teacher at Leo Baeck, the late Raphael Loewe, had had a classical education himself and was ever alert to the interplay of Greek and rabbinic culture. In addition, Cecil Roth, whose lectures I attended, imbued me with a lasting interest in Jewish history.

It might seem natural, given this background, that I should have opted to write a doctoral thesis on a Greek author who had a strong interest in Judaism, but in fact it was not my idea. Henry Chadwick suggested to me that I should study Origen and his relations with the Jews, and it was under his guidance that I brought together these two sides of my scholarly training. A key element in that topic is Origen's work as a biblical scholar, and particularly his edition of the Greek Old Testament with reference to the Hebrew

¹ I consider this phrase, selected by my teacher Geza Vermes as the title of his autobiography, particularly well suited too to my own trajectory.

and to various Jewish revisions and interpretations. That thesis was the seed out of which the present study eventually grew.

I received considerable encouragement at that time from Arnaldo Momigliano and Geza Vermes. Both these mentors, in different ways, were engaged in a similar quest to reconcile Judaism and Hellenism.

After I moved to Cambridge to teach rabbinic Hebrew in 1971 I discovered the Cairo Genizah, and among the mainly Semitic Genizah fragments I was naturally drawn towards the tiny minority that are in Greek, or more often a mixture of Greek and Hebrew. The first of these that I prepared for publication, a bilingual glossary, turned out to have some striking affinities with the preserved fragments of Akylas's translation. When I pointed this out to the then Regius Professor of Hebrew, John Emerton, he responded with enthusiasm and offered to publish my article in *Vetus Testamentum*, of which he was editor. I am deeply grateful to him for thus setting me on the long road towards this book. A couple of years later, in 1982, he published my editions of two more fragments, from another glossary and a translation, in a book he was co-editing (a Festschrift for our colleague Erwin Rosenthal). By now I was reading my way systematically through the Genizah collections, in Cambridge and elsewhere, and eventually, in 1996, I published a volume of Greek and Hebrew Genizah fragments, of which several related to the Bible, in the form of translation, glossary or commentary. All these fragments testify to the Jewish use of Greek Bible translations in the Middle Ages, and they constitute the nucleus of this book.

In September 1973 I attended the first international colloquium on Origen, in the monastery of Montserrat in Catalonia. There I met Marguerite Harl, together with her 'équipe', which included Monique Alexandre, Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec. This was the beginning of a deep friendship and a long and fruitful collaboration. Marguerite Harl and I published together a volume of Origen's writings on the subject of the Bible, and I came to be closely involved, from the outset, in the French Septuagint project, 'La Bible d'Alexandrie'. During this time I benefited greatly from the sympathetic interest and the erudition of the late Alexander Scheiber in Budapest, the late Evelyne Patlagean, Colette Sirat, Francis Schmidt and Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski in Paris, Natalio Fernández Marcos in Madrid, and Malachi Beit-Arié in Jerusalem.

In 1987 I decided to publish a regular information bulletin about research, publication and other activities in the area of Greek Jewish studies, as the scholarship in this subject seemed to me too dispersed and lacking in contact and coherence. The *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies* appeared twice-yearly for twenty-two years. I could not have compiled, printed and distributed the *Bulletin* without the participation of Judith Humphrey, whose death in September 1996 was a terrible blow. Judith possessed the requisite linguistic and

computing skills, but beyond that she was an unfailing source of practical wisdom, good humour and encouragement, and a gift for building the most improbable networks.

Over the past thirty years I have spoken about aspects of the subject at local, national and international gatherings too numerous to list here, beginning with the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in 1985. All these occasions enriched my reflections by valuable exchanges with other scholars. I should mention particularly in this regard two series of four seminars each at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, in February and March 2000 and March and April 2006, a Visiting Fellowship at the Center for Hellenic Studies, Princeton University, from December 2004 to February 2005, a conference on ‘Christians and Jews in Byzantium, from polemics to cultural dynamics’ at the Scholion Center, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in May 2006, and a Dumbarton Oaks symposium on ‘The Old Testament in Byzantium’ held at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C., in December 2006. My contributions to the last two meetings were published in the proceedings, and I am grateful to the organisers for offering me these opportunities to clarify my thoughts, as I am also grateful for the invitation to contribute a chapter on the Jewish tradition of Greek translations to the second volume of the *New Cambridge history of the Bible*, edited by Richard Marsden and Ann Matter.

From June 2006 to May 2009 I directed a research project, ‘The Greek Bible in Byzantine Judaism’, based in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. With the participation of two postdoctoral associates, Cameron Boyd-Taylor and Julia Krivoruchko, and with technical assistance from the Centre for Computing and the Humanities (now the Department of Digital Humanities) at King’s College London, this project resulted in the collection and publication of the fragments, from the Genizah and elsewhere, in a searchable digital corpus (available on line at gbbj.org). The project also held a series of colloquia and a conference at which specialists in a number of areas came together to exchange ideas, and to tackle some of the difficult problems associated with the interpretation of the material. It was in the framework of the project that the present volume was conceived.

In February 2014 and March 2015 I delivered a series of six Grinfield Lectures on the Septuagint at Oxford. I am grateful to Alison Salvesen, Martin Goodman and Hugh Williamson for their part in organizing these and related events, and to those who took part in the discussions, notably Sebastian Brock, Averil Cameron, Gillian Clark, Jan Joosten, Peter Mackridge, Fergus Millar and Tessa Rajak.

Palaeography has played a large part in my work, and I am fortunate to have been able to work closely with Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, who has shown unstinting generosity in placing her knowledge of Hebrew manuscripts

at my disposal. For Greek palaeography I have benefited from my collaboration with Natalie Tchernetska.

My Cambridge colleagues William Horbury, James Carleton Paget and James Aitken have accompanied this work at every turn, providing encouragement and friendly criticism. The Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge could not have been a more supportive setting in which to pursue this research. Cambridge also provided the support of specialists in adjacent disciplines, notably Joyce Reynolds for epigraphy, David Holton for medieval Greek language, and Ben Outhwaite for the Cairo Genizah manuscripts.

In lexicographical matters I have been fortunate to be able to draw on the skills of Shifra Sznol and, through her, on the records of the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem.

In the final stages of the preparation of this book I have been enormously helped by the grant of a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship. Among other things, the Fellowship enabled me to secure the services of Max Kramer as an editorial assistant, without which the book would probably never have seen the light of day. Max went beyond the role of an assistant, in challenging and strengthening my arguments. I was also fortunate to be able to count on the editorial help of my pupil Martin Borýsek, and the indexing skills of Wendy Baskett.

Peter Schäfer has been a source of unfailing friendly encouragement over the years, and I am particularly grateful to him for agreeing to publish this book, as well as its two predecessors, in series that he co-edited at Mohr Siebeck.

To the staff at Mohr Siebeck I must extend my heartfelt appreciation and thanks, and particularly to Dr Henning Ziebritzki, who has accompanied this project for nearly a quarter of a century.

Cambridge
30 June 2015

Table of contents

Preface	IX
List of abbreviations.....	XV
Introduction.....	1
Part 1: Preliminaries	
<i>Chapter 1: Sources and studies</i>	13
<i>Chapter 2: Byzantine Judaism</i>	25
<i>Chapter 3: The ancient Greek translations</i>	39
Part 2: The Greek Bible in Byzantine Judaism	
<i>Chapter 4: Early Byzantium</i>	53
<i>Chapter 5: The 'Dark Ages'</i>	83
<i>Chapter 6: The age of the Genizah</i>	93
<i>Chapter 7: After the Latin conquest</i>	119
Part 3: Conclusions	
<i>Chapter 8: Conclusions</i>	139

Appendices

<i>Appendix 1: The manuscripts</i>	161
<i>Appendix 2: Later translations</i>	191
Bibliography.....	195
Scriptural index	211
Index of manuscripts	215
Index of subjects	217

Introduction

The Traditional Scenario

Until recently all introductory books on the Old or New Testament or the history of Judaism were silent about my subject, the medieval Jewish reception and transmission of Greek Bible translations. But they did have a narrative about the ancient beginnings. The following story, which I shall call the ‘traditional scenario’, was generally agreed:

In Ptolemaic Egypt, and perhaps elsewhere, the Hebrew scriptures, beginning with the Five Books of Moses, were translated into Greek, by Jews for Jews. These translations became the cornerstone of a rich Jewish literature in Greek, exemplified by the allegorical exegesis of Philo of Alexandria or the retelling of biblical history in Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*. As Jews in the diaspora lost the ability to read Hebrew the Greek scriptures became the nucleus of Jewish worship and study in the *proseuchai* or synagogues. They also played a key role in the dissemination of early Christianity. Some time in the generation or two after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans in AD 70, they were abandoned by the Jews.

There was universal agreement that the main reason for this decision was the use of the old translations by Christian apologists in their attacks on Judaism. Some authors adduced other additional reasons: the translations were increasingly out of touch with new developments in rabbinic exegesis; moreover they were based on a different Hebrew text from the one that had been officially adopted in Judaism.

Consequently the Rabbis commissioned a new translation, early in the 2nd century, from a proselyte to Judaism named Akylas.¹

This scenario is too well-known to detain us for long. Here are a few illustrations, from some of the most authoritative works:

1. William Robertson Smith (1846–1894) lays it out succinctly in his lectures on *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (1881):

¹ This is the way his name is written in both Greek and rabbinic sources, and hence is the form I shall use in this book. In Latin sources he is called Aquila. Both names refer to the same person and the same translation.

The Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews, the Septuagint, had formerly enjoyed very great honour even in Palestine, and is most respectfully spoken of by the ancient Palestinian tradition; but it did not suit the newer school of interpretation, it did not correspond with the received text, and was not literal enough to fit the new methods of Rabbinic interpretation, while the Christians, on the contrary, found it a convenient instrument in their discussions with the Jews. Therefore it fell into disrepute, and early in the second century, just at the time when, as we have seen, the new text of the Old Testament had been fixed, we find its use superseded among the Greek-speaking Jews by a new translation, slavishly literal in character, made by a Jewish proselyte of the name of Aquila, who was a disciple of the Rabbi Akiba, and studiously followed his exegetical methods. (76)

2. Emil Schürer (1844–1910), in his *History of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus Christ*, here in Miss Sophia Taylor's English translation (1898):

With Philo the text of the Septuagint is so far a sacred text, that he argues from its casual details, nay, not only did this translation universally penetrate into private use, but it was also used as Holy Scripture in the synagogue service. It was then transferred from the hands of the Jews to the Christian Church and regarded by it as the authentic text of Scripture. But the very circumstance of the Christian Church taking possession of this translation and deriving thence its polemical weapons in its conflict with the Jews, gradually co-operated in bringing the Septuagint into discredit with them and in giving rise to new Jewish translations, especially that of Aquila. . . . (163–4)

3. Henry Barclay Swete (1835–1917), in his *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1900), follows Robertson Smith and even at one point quotes him verbatim, but is also influenced by Schürer:

When the Lxx. passed into the hands of the Church and was used in controversy with Jewish antagonists, the Jews not unnaturally began to doubt the accuracy of the Alexandrian version. . . . But the dissatisfaction with which the Lxx. was regarded by the Jewish leaders of the second century was perhaps not altogether due to polemical causes. The Lxx. "did not suit the newer school of [Jewish] interpretation, it did not correspond with the received text." Attempts were made to provide something better for Greek-speaking Israelites. . . . (30)

Substantially the same story is told in much more recent works. For example Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895–1989), in *A social and religious history of the Jews* (vol. 2, 2nd ed., 1952), after speaking of rabbinic hostility to Greek culture from the second century on, turns to the biblical translations:

Against the Septuagint, the traditional Greek version, which by its numerous messianic implications and its deep roots in Hellenistic Jewry had served as an eminent vehicle of Christian propaganda, hostility was even sharper. Originally, to be sure, the Greek translators seem to have been in close contact with the contemporary developments of Palestinian hermeneutics. . . . The accelerated pace of reinterpretation, however, in the schools of Hillel and Shammai, and the new adjustments made necessary by the loss of state and sanctuary, left it far behind in the evolution of Jewish biblical learning. It completely outlived its usefulness to Jews when Christians started quoting it as a canonical

authority, even where, in Jewish opinion, it was clearly at variance with the Hebrew text. . . .

Unable, however, to check the use of a Greek version in both home and synagogue, the rabbis of the generation following the destruction encouraged Aquila, the proselyte, to undertake a new, more literal, translation. (142–3)

It hardly needs to be pointed out that beneath the Christian elaboration of this classic scenario there is a theological undercurrent. This is less true of my first witness, Robertson Smith. The context of the passage I have quoted from *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* is the fixing of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament by the Rabbis, and the replacement of the previously existing variety of texts by a single text resembling what later became the Masoretic Text. This is an historical argument. But when Schürer speaks of the LXX being ‘transferred from the hands of the Jews to the Christian Church’, echoed by Swete’s ‘When the Lxx. passed into the hands of the Church’, their framework is a theological view of salvation history according to which the revelation formerly vouchsafed to the Jews was taken from them and given to the Christians.

There is another aspect of this story that deserves our attention. For Baron as for Robertson Smith, the abandonment of the LXX is linked to the rise to power of the Rabbis, who sponsored the new translation of Akylas, better able to convey to Greek-speakers the elaborate system of exegesis that they were developing, based on the Hebrew text. Neither author specifically lays at the Rabbis’ door the responsibility for suppressing the Septuagint, but both convey the impression that it was a rabbinic decision.

What none of the authors I have singled out for mention, or their contemporaries, explains is what happened to the Greek translations in Judaism after the time of the early Rabbis and Christian Fathers. Some of them mention that Origen, in the third century, had a high opinion of Akylas’s translation, and that he states, in his letter to Julius Africanus (§4), that Jews who do not know Hebrew prefer to use it, considering it the most successful of all the translations. Akylas is referred to by the Rabbis, who quote some of his renderings (as they do from the Septuagint). In the middle of the 6th century Justinian’s Novel 146 encourages the Jews to use the Septuagint in synagogue readings, but also permits Akylas – presumably because of the aforementioned preference. And a late rabbinic text (*Soferim* 1.7, probably not earlier than the 8th century) likens the day on which the Septuagint was translated to the day on which the golden calf was made. We even read, again in a late text (*Ta’anit*), of an annual fast-day on the day the translation was completed. But that is all we are told about the use of Greek Bible translations in the synagogue.² While that may not be surprising in the case of scholars like Robertson Smith or Schürer, who are exclusively concerned with the ancient

² See further Smelik, *Rabbis, Language and Translation*.

period, it is striking that Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, which insists on the place of the LXX in the Christian Church and its influence on Christian theology and liturgy, has virtually nothing to say about the Greek Old Testament in Judaism. As for Baron, whose subject is Judaism down the ages, in his chapter on the Bible in medieval Judaism he includes extensive discussions of various Aramaic and Arabic translations, and even speculates about Persian and Latin ones, but has not a word on Greek translations.

This, then, is the gap that I propose, however inadequately, to address in this book.

New light on the traditional scenario

Before moving on to the Middle Ages, I must dwell a little longer on the ancient period, because our understanding of the ancient foundations critically affects our view of what comes later. A good deal of new light has been shed on different aspects of the traditional scenario I have been describing.

In the first place, the scenario tends to take for granted a model of early Christian-Jewish relations that can be conveniently termed 'the parting of the ways'. This is the title of one of the chapters in James Parkes's classic book, based on his Oxford DPhil thesis, *The conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (1934). Parkes suggested that by the end of the first century Christianity had emerged as a separate religion, and he subscribed to an established view that the rabbinic authorities assembled in council at Yavneh or Jamnia formally excommunicated the Jewish Christians and instituted a malediction against them into the synagogue liturgy.

This is too large a question for me to do justice to here. Let me just say that I do not think that, in the light of subsequent research, it is possible to maintain this thesis today. I do not know any reputable authority that still believes in the 'Council of Jamnia', or indeed that the Rabbis had the power at the end of the first century, or even much later, to impose their will on the whole of Jewry. I have argued elsewhere that the institution of a malediction of the Christian Church belongs to a much later period, after the Church became identified with the Roman empire. Consequently I do not see that there is any scope today for thinking in terms of a formal and effective condemnation by the Rabbis of the Septuagint translation. As Parkes himself was aware, Origen in the third century and John Chrysostom in the fourth criticised Christians who attended synagogues to imbibe the teachings dispensed there. Neither of these Fathers hints that there might be any practical barrier to a Christian following the scriptural reading or arguments based on it.

On the other hand, Robertson Smith's understanding of a move from a previous variety of Hebrew biblical texts in the late Second Temple period to

a uniform adoption of a proto-Masoretic text under the authority of Scribes and Rabbis has stood the test of time, and indeed the discoveries in the Judean Desert have strikingly confirmed the earlier variety of Hebrew texts. At the same time, Greek biblical manuscripts discovered both in the Judean Desert and in Egypt have demonstrated the fluidity of the Greek text too. Manuscripts that clearly belong to the Septuagint tradition contain significant textual variants.

Most important of all, the manuscript of the Greek Minor Prophets from Nahal Hever, which has been dated on palaeographical grounds by Peter Parsons to the latter part of the last century BC, is agreed to represent an attempt to revise the Septuagint in the direction of the proto-Masoretic text type.³ It is hard to believe that this is an isolated case; more likely it was part of a wider trend. This was certainly the view of Dominique Barthélemy, who, on the basis of specific features of the revision, identified a cluster of extant Greek texts as belonging to this tendency. The feature that has given the cluster of texts a name, first suggested by Barthélemy, is the translation of the Hebrew *gam*, 'also', by *kaige*.

Barthélemy's book *Les devanciers d'Aquila* (1963) was the starting point of what has been called 'a Copernican revolution' in the study of the Greek Old Testament.⁴ From our point of view, its achievement is the discovery, not seriously challenged in its broad outlines, that, far from being a brand-new translation or revision, Akylas is a link in a chain that goes back several generations, to a time before the developments in rabbinic exegesis with which Akylas has been associated. I shall try to show that this chain also continued for many centuries after Akylas.

So far I have not paid much attention to the geographical setting. We know, from Philo and other Greek Jewish authors as well as from papyri, that the Septuagint Pentateuch, at least, was well known and had authoritative status in Egypt. It is generally accepted that it, as well as the prophetic books which were translated later, originated there. This happens to be by far the best-documented part of the Jewish Diaspora, and we know very little about what kinds of Greek translations were used in Antioch, Asia, and other parts of the Diaspora. The *kaige* texts, on the other hand, all seem to belong to Palestine.

Akylas's translation, so far as we can tell from the fragments that survive, was very close in its techniques of translation to the *kaige* tradition. There is no reason to doubt that, like the *kaige* revisions and some new translations (Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Ruth) it was made and circulated in Palestine.

³ Tov, *The Greek minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever*, 25–6.

⁴ Bogaert, 'Les études sur la Septante', 175.

Palestine is also the area where Rabbinic Judaism developed. The precise relationship between the *kaige* texts and Rabbinic Judaism has not yet been properly explored, and we probably lack the means to elucidate it in detail. The traditional scenario associates Akylas with the Rabbis, mainly on the basis of texts in the much later Palestinian Talmud in which Rabbis of the early second century are said to have praised his translation, and which could be taken as implying that they commissioned it. There may well be an element of truth in this, although it is something of a leap to suggest that their purpose was to eradicate the use of the Septuagint from synagogues.

Let us be clear that the traditional scenario does not relate the supposed abandonment of the Septuagint to a claim that the Jews abandoned Greek in favour of Hebrew. On the contrary, Akylas's translation was said to be intended for Greek-speaking Jews. This is stated specifically by Robertson Smith (76), and we may recall the words of Origen, 'Jews who do not know Hebrew are particularly given to using it' (ὁ μάλιστα εἰώθασιν οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες τὴν Ἑβραίων διάλεκτον χρῆσθαι).⁵

The persistence of Greek-speaking Judaism long after the time of Origen was a point made forcefully by Marcel Simon in his ground-breaking book *Verus Israel*.⁶ In Simon's view, however, although the use of Greek Bible translations was still a living issue in the sixth century, from that time on there was a withdrawal from Greek culture. 'Judaism became more rigidly devoted to meditation exclusively on the law, and to the practice of its ancient rituals. This was the point at which the divorce from Greco-Roman civilization became absolute.'⁷ This view, now widely held, requires modification, however, not least in the light of the evidence presented in this book.

Aim of the present book

My aim in the present book is, firstly, to demonstrate that Greek-speaking Jews continued to use Greek translations long after the early rabbinic and patristic times. In fact, the practice has a documented unbroken history from Ptolemaic Egypt to the present. This study, however, focuses on the period of the Byzantine empire, that is from the fourth century to the fifteenth. Byzantium is a convenient reference-point, but I have allowed myself a certain latitude, both geographically and chronologically. Greek-speaking Judaism has never been limited to a single political entity. As we shall see, there were Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the Middle Ages, and in the Byzantine territories that came under Latin domination after the Fourth Crusade, at the be-

⁵ Origen, *Letter to Africanus*, 4.

⁶ Simon, *Verus Israel*, esp. 344–51 (ET, 296–301).

⁷ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 350 (ET, 301).

ginning of the thirteenth century, Greek continued to be the language of most Jews and they retained strong ties with Byzantium. The end of the Byzantine empire is conventionally dated to 1453, the date of the conquest of the capital, Constantinople, by the Ottoman Turks under Sultan Mehmet II, but for our purposes a more realistic date is 1492, when large numbers of Jews from Spain began to arrive in the former Byzantine territories, and the character of Judaism there was changed for ever. Soon afterwards, the Hebrew printing press was introduced, and Hebrew printing was mainly in the hands of Spaniards and other westerners. The period covered by this book is, therefore, an age of manuscript, and the book is grounded in the close study of manuscripts.

A second aim of the book is to set these manuscripts against their historical background in the Judaism of these territories, which is not very familiar, even to many students of Jewish history.

Thirdly, I wish to study, so far as possible, the character of the translations used by the Jews. On the basis of this study I shall argue that there is a striking and important continuity in the translations. This continuity, of language, style, exegesis and even wording, makes it reasonable to speak of a tradition, not merely in the sense of a continuous practice, but in the specific sense of an unfolding sequence of actual translations, each one developing from its predecessors. I hope to demonstrate that this tradition can be traced back ultimately to the Septuagint, Akylas, and the other ancient translations.

Finally, I want to explore some of the wider implications of these discoveries for our understanding of the nature of Byzantine Judaism, and the relations between Jews and Christians in Byzantium, as well as between Byzantine Jews and those in other countries.

I have deliberately limited the scope of the investigation to conclusions that I believe are well founded. In an area which has been too much exposed at times to speculative and insecure generalisations, I have tried to stay close to the evidence, and avoid letting my imagination take flight, however tempting this may have been. I leave it to others to push the evidence beyond the limits I have set myself.

Structure of the book

Three preliminary chapters set the scene, in different ways, for the main body of the investigation. The first of these sets out the history of research and the new discoveries of manuscripts on which this study is based. The second introduces the history and culture of Byzantine Jewry. The third briefly presents the ancient Greek translations of the biblical books, from the beginnings to the third century and the eve of the Christianisation of the Roman empire.

The next four chapters constitute the core of the book. The chronological span of the study, from the fourth to the fifteenth century, is divided into four periods. Each chapter begins with a brief historical introduction, and continues with a study of the evidence for Jewish use of Greek biblical translations in the respective period.

Chapter Four is concerned with the early Byzantine period, down to the seventh century. During this period Palestine, together with Syria and Egypt, formed part of the empire, before they were all conquered by the Arabs in the 630s. Attention is therefore paid to the nature and life of the synagogue in Palestine and elsewhere, and particularly to the public readings from the scriptures. A key witness concerning these readings is a Roman legal text, a declaration issued by emperor Justinian I on 8 February 553. This document testifies to a deep rift between Jews who support a reading in Greek and those who favour a reading in Hebrew. It affords us, I suggest, a unique insight into the arguments deployed by those Jews who wished to defend the traditional reading in Greek against those (probably representing Rabbinic Judaism) attempting to introduce a reading in Hebrew. The emperor insists that the scriptures must be read in Greek, so that the people may understand, but permits the use of Akylas, the translation favoured by the Rabbinic party. We then investigate whether any actual Greek biblical manuscript fragments survive from the early Byzantine synagogue. Special attention is focused on two manuscripts representing the translation of Akylas, which are probably Jewish, although this cannot be proved with absolute certainty.

Chapter Five is devoted to the most obscure period in Judaeo-Byzantine history, the seventh to tenth centuries. We have hardly any sources to illuminate the darkness. All the more interest, therefore, attaches to a scrap of parchment bearing a fragment of a glossary, giving biblical Hebrew words with their Greek translations. This fragment represents, in a sense, the transition from Greek to Hebrew as the high cultural language of the Jews in the empire: the Greek words are written in Greek letters, but the whole manuscript reads from right to left, i.e. it is a Hebrew book. Yet Greek is still important, and the influence of Akylas on the translations is very strong.

Chapter Six addresses the period from the late tenth to the beginning of the thirteenth century, a period for which we are fortunate to have a number of manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, as well as other sources. These enable us to trace the use of Greek translations in some detail, although many questions remain. This is a period marked by conflict between Karaites and Rabbanites, yet it is clear that both groups make use of Greek translations. There is also some interesting evidence of the Jewish translations crossing over into Christian manuscripts. Once again we can discern the influence of Akylas and the other ancient translations.

The last period takes us from the Fourth Crusade to the end of Byzantine Jewry in the fifteenth century. It becomes clear that, despite the dominance of

Hebrew in the synagogue, the Greek translations hold their own after the dismemberment of the empire by the Latin conquerors. We witness, for example, the survival of an ancient custom of reading the Book of Jonah in synagogues in Crete under Venetian rule. We also consider the most extensive surviving translation, a rendering of the entire Pentateuch into Greek, which although found in a later printed book indubitably represents the medieval tradition.

The final chapter draws some general conclusions. The most striking thing about the tradition of Greek translation, apart from its persistence down the centuries, is the strong influence of ancient translations, not only Akylas but also the Septuagint and other translations. The survival of elements from ancient Greek-speaking Judaism raises an important question about Byzantine Judaism: is it limited to biblical translations, or are there other ways in which the ancient 'Hellenist' faction succeeded in stamping the culture of later generations of Greek-speaking Jews? The use of Greek translations may also potentially have something to say about relations between Jews and Christians in Byzantium.

Two appendices bring up the rear. The first lists the manuscript sources that provide most of the evidence for the enquiry, with short descriptions and bibliographies. The second is an inventory of later manuscripts and printed works containing translations in the same tradition, tracing the tradition down to the end of the nineteenth century.

Part 1

Preliminaries

Chapter 1

Sources and studies

Early studies

Very little interest was taken in any aspect of our subject before the latter part of the nineteenth century. At that time a number of developments impacted on our subject: the beginning of the rigorous study of Jewish history in the so-called *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement, the birth of Modern Greek philology and of Byzantine history, and a renewed interest in early Christian manuscripts.

The *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement inaugurated a new era in Jewish studies. As the Jewish scholars tended to have a classical as well as a Hebraic education several of them took an interest in Greek-speaking Judaism. The advent of Byzantine studies as a separate discipline (which may be conveniently dated to the foundation of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* by Karl Krumbacher in 1892) encouraged a few of them to venture into the new field. In the second issue of the *Zeitschrift* (1893) Joseph Perles, the rabbi of Munich, who was a graduate of the Breslau Rabbinic Seminary (a key institution for the development of Jewish studies) as well as Breslau University, published a pioneering essay entitled 'Jüdisch-byzantinische Beziehungen'.¹ This article was an early precursor of the first book-length study on the subject, Samuel Krauss's *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdischen Geschichte* (1914). Krauss, who had studied at the Budapest Rabbinic Seminary and later at the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums (Berlin) and at the universities of Berlin and Giessen, had a strong interest in the Greek language. His doctoral dissertation (Giessen, 1893) had been on Jewish sources for Greek and Latin lexicography, and he subsequently published a monumental dictionary, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter in Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (2 vols, Berlin 1898–9). In the *Studien* he devotes a chapter to the Greek language, in the course of which he briefly mentions some biblical translations: a Greek Pentateuch printed in Constantinople in 1547, a Greek translation of Jonah, and another of Job.

¹ Perles, whose Ph.D. dissertation (Breslau, 1859) was on the Syriac Bible, had previously published an article of Byzantine interest: 'Thron und Circus'. The *BZ* article was his last work, before his untimely death at the age of 57 in 1893. There is a fine appreciation of Perles by Wilhelm Bacher in *JQR* 7 (1984–5), 1–23.

Since this brings us to the heart of our present concern we should look more closely at these.

The Constantinople Pentateuch, a polyglot edition containing the Hebrew text, Aramaic targum of Onkelos, and two further translations, in Spanish and Greek, as well as Rashi's commentary, all in Hebrew characters, was printed by Eliezer Soncino, a member of an important Italian family of Jewish printers. It has always been a rare book. A number of authors mention it in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries (Johannes Buxtorf, John Selden, Richard Simon, Shabbetai ben Joseph Bass, Humphrey Hody, Jacques Le Long and Andreas Gottlieb Masch). The Hamburg Hebraist Johann Christoph Wolf returns to it several times in the successive volumes of his *Bibliotheca Hebraea* (1715–33); in the fourth and last volume he copies the first three chapters of Genesis and some verses of Genesis 49 in Hebrew characters.² The eminent Hellenist Émile Legrand included a description of it in volume two of his *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés en grec par des grecs aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles* (1885), stating that this was the first translation of any part of the Scriptures into vulgar Greek to be printed.³ He, too, transcribed the opening verses of Genesis. In 1890, at Legrand's suggestion, Lazare Belléli, a philologist from Corfu who was living in Leghorn, went to Paris to study a copy of the translation. He published two articles about it, one in the young *Revue des études grecques* on the Greek language of the translation, and a more general description in the *Revue des études juives*.⁴ The former includes a transcription, with notes, of the first four chapters of Genesis. In the latter he points out that the translation is the work of Rabbanites, not Karaites, as had sometimes been asserted, and gives it as his opinion that it was read publicly in the synagogue (perhaps in special Sabbath gatherings) with an educational aim. He had been told that in western Greece it was still used (even though the language seemed outmoded and outlandish), demonstrating the authority it enjoyed.

In 1897 the Dutch Hellenist D. C. Hesseling published the first complete transcription of the Pentateuch into Greek characters, together with an extensive study of its language and a glossary.⁵ Belléli, who had been hoping to find funding to produce his own edition, wrote a critical review of this im-

² *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, vol. 4, 1219–26. In vol. 3 he had given the first six verses of Genesis in Greek and Spanish, both in Hebrew characters and in transliteration. There are other references to the book in vol. 2, 355, 440–8.

³ Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique*, vol. 2, 160. As L. Belléli has observed ('Deux versions', 262 n.1), this is not strictly correct: it was preceded by a version of the Psalms made by a Cretan monk named Agapius, and printed in Venice in 1543.

⁴ Belléli, 'Une version'; *idem*, 'Deux versions'.

⁵ Hesseling (ed.), *Les cinq livres*.

portant book.⁶ In Hesseling's view there was no connection between this Greek translation and either the Septuagint or the later revisions included in Origen's Hexapla.⁷

The Greek translation of Jonah is preserved in two Hebrew manuscript prayer books for the festivals (Jonah is the prescribed prophetic reading for the afternoon of the Day of Atonement). Once again, Belléli was of the opinion that it was read publicly in the synagogue service.⁸ Hesseling published a Greek transcription of this text too, editing it from the two manuscripts.⁹

The translation of Job was apparently made by Moses Fabian or Fobian and published in Constantinople in 1576, as a contribution to the teaching of the Hebrew language, but little is known about it.¹⁰

Another landmark publication of this period was a new edition of the *Graecus Venetus* (Venice, Marcianus gr. VII), a translation of the Pentateuch with Ruth, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and Daniel. The edition, by Oscar von Gebhardt (1844–1906), accompanied by an introduction by the Leipzig biblical scholar and theologian Franz Delitzsch (1813–90), was published in Leipzig in 1875.¹¹ The translation is found in a unique manuscript in Venice, dated to the 14th century. It is unusual, to say the least. According to Gebhardt it was made directly from the Masoretic Text, but makes use of the Septuagint, Akylas, and other Greek versions, and is also heavily influenced by the dictionary and commentary of David Kimhi (ca 1160–1235), a Jewish scholar of Narbonne whose works were written in Hebrew. Moreover, the pages of the manuscript are arranged from right to left, like a Hebrew book. On the other hand the language is a highly literary Greek which is far removed from the kind of Greek used in the other documents I shall be discussing. Since this translation is not part of the Byzantine Jewish tradition proper, it will not be discussed in the body of this book, but I shall return to it in Chapter 8.

In the same year as von Gebhardt published his edition of the *Graecus Venetus* another publication appeared that was to have a seminal place in the study of Greek Bible translations: a new edition of the fragments of Origen's Hexapla by the Englishman Frederick Field (1801–85).¹² Field's ambitious project was magisterially executed. In his Prolegomena he comprehensively surveys the various Greek translations included in the Hexapla, but does not

⁶ Belléli, 'D. C. Hesseling'. Hesseling responded in the same issue, see Hesseling, 'Correspondance'.

⁷ The Constantinople Polyglot translation is discussed in Chapter 7 below.

⁸ Belléli, 'Deux versions', 251.

⁹ Hesseling, 'Le livre de Jonas'. This translation, too, is discussed further in Chapter 7 below.

¹⁰ See Appendix 2.

¹¹ Von Gebhardt, *Graecus Venetus*.

¹² *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, ed. Field.

Scriptural index

Books are listed in the order of the MT, with additional books from the LXX at the end. References in parentheses are LXX, where the numbering differs from the MT. Page numbers with n refer to footnotes.

<i>Genesis</i>		49:19	133
1:1	132	49:21	133
1:4	132–3	49:27	102–3, 111, 148
1:5	133		
1:16	133	<i>Exodus</i>	
1:18	133	4:11	111, 134
2:7–3:8	71	6:6	111
2:23	46n18	9:31	89
3:2	132	13:4	89
3:8	116, 147	14:4	133n65
4:7	133	14:20	133n65
4:26	116–17	14:24	133n65
6:9	117	16:13	89
16:8–12	71	16:14	111, 146
19	71	16:31	110
24:2	102	18:2	111n55
24:11	133	18:8	89
24:65	102	19:12	89
29:25	134	19:16	134
36	72	26:19	89
37:2	102	28:14	89, 134
40:9	110n52	28:17	134
41:44	133	30:13	134
42:37	133	30:24	134n68
43:11	110n52	32:17	133n65
43:30	133	36:3–39:13	
46–7	71	(36:3–26)	111n53
47:31	110	38:24 (39:1)	134n68
48:1	114	40	71
48:14	106–7		
49:9	133	<i>Leviticus</i>	
49:10	102, 116, 148	16.33–4	72
49:10–11	147	19:27	134–5
49:11	103, 111		

<i>Numbers</i>		7:23	127
6:22–7	69	7:25–10:21	106, 178
31:18	130n47	7:27	101
		7:29	106, 127, 148
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		7:36	127, 146
20:12	135	7:46	127, 148
24–9	72	7:50	106, 148
26:2–4	114	8:7	101
28:20	99n17	8:13	101
32:1–3	75	8:27	127
32:39	156	8:37	101
		20(21)	72, 76
<i>Joshua</i>		20(21):11	79
6:11	134	20(21):12	77
7:5	108	20(21):16	77
9:22	134	22:38	108, 128
10:4	112, 135, 148	23:15	79
10:11	108	23:19	79
10:19	112		
10:21	109	<i>2 Kings (4 Reigns)</i>	
10:25	109	8:15	108, 128, 148
11:3	108	10:22	128
11:8	108	23	72, 76
13	103	23:24	76, 79, 161
13:21	109		
15:9	108	<i>Isaiah</i>	
17:10	109	5:2	103, 147
18:14	108	7:14	68
20:43	109	13:6	114
		13:12	100
<i>Judges</i>		47:3	109
8:12–11:18	181	48	72
14–16	69–70		
15:8	127	<i>Jeremiah</i>	
		1:6	128, 145
<i>1 Samuel (1 Reigns)</i>		2:12	128
6:12	127	3:3	128
13:20	109	4:1	128
13:21	127	4:24	128
17:5	109, 127, 145, 148	5:8	89
		5:10	89
<i>1 Kings (3 Reigns)</i>	98	17–18	72
6:18–8:37	100–1, 170	36:22 (43:22)	89
6:20	100	46	72
6:21	101		
6:35	127n29	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
6:36	101	8:3	105
7:9	101, 146	10:5	105, 134n67
7:21	179	13:18	104–5

13:20	116, 148	43	72
20:37	146	45:8	68
21:3	105	45:12	68
21:14	105	69(68)	72
21:16	105	81(80)	72
21:29	105, 146	90(89):17–	
32:30	109	92(91):10	72, 163
33–4	72	92(91):15	99
37:6	101	96(95):7–12	72, 163
		98(97):3	72, 163
<i>Joel</i>		102(101):16–	
1:14	105, 144	103(102):13	72, 163
		135:25	69
<i>Jonah</i>		<i>Job</i>	
1–4	123–6, 188, 189	26:13–30:16	99
1:4	125	28:15	100, 147
1:5	125	28:16	99–100
1:11	125		
1:13	125	<i>Proverbs</i>	
4:4	124	2–3	71
4:5	124	10:7	68, 70, 144
4:6	125, 145	17:16–19:3	180
<i>Micah</i>		<i>Ecclesiastes (Kohelet)</i>	
5:5(4)	109	2:13–23	95–8, 167
7:18–20	123, 124, 126n26	2:14	96–7
<i>Nahum</i>		2:16	98
3:5	127n31	<i>Daniel</i>	
<i>Habakkuk</i>		1	72
2:15	146	<i>Nehemiah</i>	
2:18	111, 134n66	3:34	100
<i>Zephaniah</i>		<i>Esther (LXX)</i>	86
3:8	112	<i>1 Maccabees</i>	86
<i>Malachi</i>		3:7	68n81
1:12	99	<i>2 Maccabees</i>	86
2:2	99		
3:2	100		
<i>Psalms</i>			
2:6	156		

Index of manuscripts

MANUSCRIPTS 1 TO 19 are listed at M; Papyri are listed at P. Other manuscripts are listed by place of repository.

Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria

Ms 3574A (Modona 12) *see*

MANUSCRIPT 18

Cairo ostrakon 215 71

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

Ms 364* *see* MANUSCRIPT 13

Cambridge, University Library

Add. 542 122n16

Lewis-Gibson Talmud 1.110 *see*

MANUSCRIPT 7

T-S 8H 22.4 123n18

T-S 12.84 72

T-S 12.182 161

T-S 12.184 *see* MANUSCRIPT 1

T-S 12.186 *see* MANUSCRIPT 2

T-S 12.187 *see* MANUSCRIPT 2

T-S 12.188 *see* MANUSCRIPT 2

T-S 16.374 104n30

T-S 20.50 *see* MANUSCRIPT 1

T-S 32.1 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S AS 78.412 78n117

T-S C2.87 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S C6.117 *see* MANUSCRIPT 7

T-S C6.133 *see* MANUSCRIPTS 8, 10

T-S F2(1).211 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S F17.4 *see* MANUSCRIPT 3

T-S K24.14 *see* MANUSCRIPT 6

T-S K25.288 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S K27.46 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S K27.47 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

T-S Misc. 28.74 *see* MANUSCRIPT 4

T-S NS 250.7–8 *see* MANUSCRIPT 12

T-S NS 309.9 *see* MANUSCRIPT 5

Jerusalem, National Library of Israel

NLI Heb. 4o 577.7/1 *see* MANUSCRIPT 9

MANUSCRIPT 1 (Fragments of 1 and 2

Kings (3 and 4 Reigns) in Greek)

72, 75–80, 144, 161–2

MANUSCRIPT 2 (Fragments of Psalms in

Greek) 72, 75–80, 144, 163–4

MANUSCRIPT 3 (A Hebrew-Greek

glossary to Exodus, Isaiah and

Jeremiah) 87–9, 90–1, 144, 146,

165–6

MANUSCRIPT 4 (Fragment of the book of

Ecclesiastes (Kohelet) in Greek)

21n28, 95–8, 144, 148, 149, 167–8

MANUSCRIPT 5 (A biblical glossary:

Zechariah, Malachi and Job) 99–

100, 144, 147, 148, 169

MANUSCRIPT 6 (Glosses on 1 Kings)

100–1, 127, 127n29, 144, 146, 148,

170–1

MANUSCRIPT 7 (Scholia on Genesis and

Exodus) 101–3, 148, 172–3

MANUSCRIPT 8 (Scholia on Genesis and

Joshua) 103, 174–5

MANUSCRIPT 9 (A commentary on

Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets)

104–5, 111–12, 134n66, 134n67,

144, 146, 147, 152, 176–7

MANUSCRIPT 10 (Commentary on 1

Kings) 106, 148, 153, 178–9

MANUSCRIPT 11 (Fragment of Proverbs

in Hebrew with Greek glosses)

106n36, 180

- MANUSCRIPT 12 (Fragment of Judges in Hebrew with Greek glosses) 106n36, 181
- MANUSCRIPT 13 (Hebrew Former Prophets with Greek glosses) 107–10, 127–8, 134–5, 144, 145, 148, 182–3
- MANUSCRIPT 14 (Greek Hexateuch with marginal annotations: Codex Ambrosianus) 21–2n31, 110–13, 133–4, 146, 147, 148, 156, 184–5
- MANUSCRIPT 15 (Greek Octateuch with marginal annotations) 22n31, 110n51, 156, 186
- MANUSCRIPT 16 (Greek biblical manuscript) 22n31, 110n51, 110n52, 122n14, 156, 187
- MANUSCRIPT 17 (Festival prayers (Romaniote rite), with Jonah in Greek [Oxford]) 15, 21n29, 123, 124–6, 128, 135, 145, 149, 188
- MANUSCRIPT 18 (Festival prayers (Romaniote rite), with Jonah in Greek [Bologna]) 15, 21n29, 123–6, 128, 135, 145, 149, 150, 189
- MANUSCRIPT 19 (A Glossary to the Prophets) 126–8, 145, 147, 148, 190
- Milan, Ambrosian Library*
A 147 inf. (Martini-Bassi 808) [Codex Ambrosianus] *see* MANUSCRIPT 14
- Oxford, Bodleian Library*
Heb.d.43, fol.25–6 *see* MANUSCRIPT 10
Heb.e.43, fol. 51 *see* MANUSCRIPT 11
Lewis-Gibson Talmud 1.110 *see* MANUSCRIPT 7
Opp. Add. 8vo 19 (Neubauer 1144) *see* MANUSCRIPT 17
- P. Alex. 203 72
- P. Antin. 8 71
P. Antin. 9 71
P. Antin. 10 72
P. Berlin 17035 72, 146
P. Berlin 17213 71
P. Egerton 5 74
P. Fouad 266b (848) 74
P. Giessen 13, 19, 22, 26 72
P. Harris 31 72
P. Lit. Lond. 202 71
P. Lit. Lond. 211 72, 146
P. Oxy. 1007 73
P. Oxy. 1007 (P. Lit. Lond. 199) 71
P. Oxy. 1075 (P. Lit. Lond. 203) 71
P. Oxy. 1166 (P. Lit. Lond. 201) 71
P. Oxy. 1225 72
P. Oxy. 2745 74–5
P. Oxy. 3522 73
P. Sorbon. 2250 72
P. Wien Rainer 18 [= Stud. Pal. ii.114, P. Vindob. G. 35782] 72, 146
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France*
Coislinianus gr. 1 *see* MANUSCRIPT 15
Reg. gr. 3 *see* MANUSCRIPT 16
- St Petersburg, National Library of Russia*
Evr. IIA 1980 *see* MANUSCRIPT 19
- Vatopedi, Mt Athos, Greece*
Vatopedinus 236 80
- Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana*
Marcianus gr. VII (*Graecus Venetus*) 15, 19, 20, 21, 99, 156–7
- Washington D.C., Freer Gallery of Art*
Codex Washingtonensis (Freer Gallery of Art, cod. V) 71

Index of subjects

- Aaron ben Joseph 'the Physician' 120
Ahimaas ben Paltiel, Chronicle of 28, 83, 85
Akylas (Aquila) 1–3, 5–6, 17, 46–7, 48, 75–80, 142, 143–4
– and *Arukh* 114
– Cairo Genizah palimpsests (MANUSCRIPTS 1 & 2) 72, 75–80, 144, 161–4
– and the Constantinople Pentateuch 132–5
– and Jacob ben Reuben 116–17
– in Justinian's Novel 146 64–5, 66
– and the LXX 64, 68, 77, 89, 96, 97, 133–4, 135
– and MANUSCRIPT 3 89, 91
– and MANUSCRIPT 4 96, 97
– and MANUSCRIPT 5 99–100
– and MANUSCRIPT 6 101
– and MANUSCRIPT 9 105
– and MANUSCRIPT 13 109, 110, 135
– and MANUSCRIPT 14 133–4
– and MANUSCRIPTS 17 & 18 125
– and MANUSCRIPT 19 128
– on the 'Phylactery of Moses' 75
– quoted by St Constantine (Cyril) 90
– Swete on 18, 19–20
– use in synagogues 57–8
Andrist, Patrick 155
Aquila *see* Akylas
Aristoboulos 42
Arukh (Nathan ben Yehiel) 113–14
Atumano, Simone 157
- Baron, Salo Wittmayer 2–3, 4
Barthélemy, Dominique 5
Beghi, Elijah Afeda 22, 191
Belléli, Lazare 14–15, 129–30
Benjamin of Tudela 26, 28–9, 93
- Berliner, Abraham 16
biblical commentaries 35, 114–17 *see also index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPTS 8, 9, 10
Biblical Jewish Greek (BJG) 96
Blau, Ludwig 22–3
Blondheim, David S. 21–3, 125
Burkitt, Francis Crawford 17, 76–7, 78, 79
Byzantine Judaism 25–37
– Christian and Jewish contexts 29–32
– continuing study of 158–9
– Hellenism vs Rabbinism 151–3
– historical overview 25–7, 53–5, 83–7, 93–4, 119–23
– literature 33–7
– sources for 27–9, 83–7
Byzantinische Zeitschrift 13
- Cairo Genizah texts 16–17, 23–4, 28, 36–7, 75–80, 87–9, 94–110
– Akylas palimpsests (MANUSCRIPTS 1 & 2) 72, 75–80, 144, 161–4
– commentary on 1 Kings (MANUSCRIPT 10) 106, 148, 153, 178–9
– commentary on Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets (MANUSCRIPT 9) 104–5, 111–12, 144, 146, 147, 152, 176–7
– glossary to Exodus, Isaiah and Jeremiah (MANUSCRIPT 3) 87–9, 90–1, 144, 146, 165–6
– glossary to Zechariah, Malachi and Job (MANUSCRIPT 5) 99–100, 144, 147, 148, 169
– glosses on 1 Kings (MANUSCRIPT 6) 100–1, 127, 144, 146, 148, 170–1
– Greek glosses to Hebrew manuscripts (MANUSCRIPTS 11, 12, 13)

- 106–10, 107–10, 127–8, 134–5, 144, 145, 148, 180, 181, 182–3
- scholia on Genesis and Exodus (MANUSCRIPT 7) 101–3, 148, 172–3
 - scholia on Genesis and Joshua (MANUSCRIPT 8) 103, 174–5
 - a translation of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) (MANUSCRIPT 4) 95–8, 144, 148, 149, 167–8
- calque translations 96, 140–1, 149, 150
- catenae* 33–4
- Cavallo, Guglielmo 76
- Ceulemans, Reinhart 80
- Christian sources 40
- biblical manuscripts with Jewish glosses 110–13
 - St Constantine (Cyril) 89–90
 - *Debate against the Jews* 121–2
 - distinguishing from Jewish 44, 69–70, 74, 79–80
- Christian transmission of Jewish texts 40
- Christian vs Jewish use of Greek biblical translations 1–3, 139–40
- Christianity, Byzantine 30–1, 32, 33–5
- Christian-Jewish relations 4, 19, 29–32, 35–6, 55, 62–3, 154–7, 158–9
- codex vs scroll format 58–9
- colloquial Greek translations 97, 147–8
- Colorni, Vittore 62, 63
- commentaries 35–6, 114–17 *see also index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPTS 8, 9, 10
- Constantine (Cyril), St 89–90, 99
- Constantinople Pentateuch 14–15, 22, 112, 114, 129–36, 147, 149
- contracted word forms 73, 79
- Cyril, (Constantine) St 89–90, 99
- Daniel 73, 146
- dating of sources 40, 71, 95, 129–30
- Declerck, José 80
- Delitzsch, Franz 157
- Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (anon) 80
- divine names 73–4, 76, 78, 79, 145
- divine titles 122–3
- Donnolo, Shabbetai 84, 85
- Ecclesiastes, Greek translation of 95–8, 128 *see also index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPT 4
- education 36–7, 113, 124–5, 131–2, 148–50, 151
- Esther 90
- Fabian, Moses 15
- F^b *see index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPT 14
- Fernández Marcos, Natalio 23, 130, 158
- Field, Frederick 15–16, 76, 77
- Fobian, Moses 15
- French: Old French glossaries 101
- funerary inscriptions 68–9, 70
- Gebhardt, Oscar von 15, 157
- glossaries *see index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPTS 3, 5, 6, 19
- glosses 106–13, 114–17 *see also index of manuscripts*: MANUSCRIPTS 11, 12, 13
- Graecus Venetus* 15, 19, 20, 21, 99, 156–7
- Greek
- biblical vs spoken 139–40
 - imitating sound of Hebrew 96, 97, 102, 109–10
 - importance for study of Byzantine Judaism 158
 - *see also* Greek vs Hebrew
- Greek vs Hebrew 31–2, 37, 142–3, 150–1
- Early Byzantium 56–8, 60–7, 81
 - Dark Ages 85–6, 91
 - post-Latin conquest 122
- Hadassi, Judah 151
- Hakhmoni* (Donnolo) 84
- Hanukkah 86
- Hebrew, Christian knowledge of 112–13
- Hebrew vs Greek 31–2, 37, 142–3, 150–1
- Early Byzantium 56–8, 60–7, 81
 - Dark Ages 85–6, 91
 - post-Latin conquest 122
- Hellenism and Rabbinism 151–3

- Hesseling, D. C. 14–15, 130
Hexapla 45–9, 143, 155
 – Field’s edition 15–16, 77
 – and MANUSCRIPTS 1 & 2 77, 78, 79–80
 – use of the tetragram in 74, 77
 historical writing 36
 hymnography 34–5, 122
- Ibn Ezra, Abraham 35, 121, 125
 inscriptions 54–5, 56, 59–60, 67–70, 84
 Isaiah of Trani 151–2
- Jacob ben Reuben 103, 116, 147, 148
 Jamnia, Council of 4
 Jerome 19–20, 103, 125, 147
 Job, Greek translation by Moses Fabian 15, 22, 191
 Jonah, Greek translation of 153 *see also*
index of manuscripts: MANUSCRIPTS
 17 & 18
 Josephus 36, 42–3, 152
 Judah ibn Moskoni 121
 Justinian I: Novel 146 3, 60–7, 81, 154
- kaige* texts 5–6, 49, 77, 97, 146–7
 Kapsali, Elijah 36, 123, 126
 Karaism 29, 35, 65, 115, 131, 151, 153–4
 Katzenellenbogen, Meir ben Isaac 123, 126
 Kimhi, David 15, 113
 Kraft, Robert A. 44
 Krauss, Samuel 13
 Krivoruchko, Julia G. 96, 110, 130
- Lanata, Giuliana 62–3
 Latin 22, 23, 62, 84
Lekah Tov (Tobias ben Eliezer) 35, 114–15
 Leon ibn Moskoni 121
Letter of Aristean 42, 43
 liturgical material 34–5, 122–3, 152
 loan translation (calque) 96, 140–1, 149, 150
 loanwords 157
 Lunt, Horace G. 90
- manuscripts
 – as historical source 28–9
 – Early Byzantine 70–80
 – Dark Ages 87–91
 – 11th and 12th century 95–117
 – post-Latin conquest 123–36
 – *see also index of manuscripts*
 Masorettes 88–9
 Meir of Constantinople 35
Meirat ‘eynayim (Elijah Afeda Beghi) 22, 191
 Meyuhās ben Elijah 120
 midrash 33–4
 mosaic texts 69
 Moschos, John 155
- Nahal Hever Minor Prophets scroll 5, 44, 73, 146
 Nathan ben Yehiel 113–14
 Nautin, Pierre 45, 46–7, 48
Nestor the Priest, Book of 16, 156
 Nikolaos of Otranto 121–2
- Old French glossaries 101
 Origen 45–9
 – on Akylas 3, 6, 19–20, 48
 – on Christians attending synagogues 4
 – on the LXX 48–9
 – on the tetragram 73–4
 Origen: *Hexapla* 45–9, 143, 155
 – Field’s edition 15–16, 77
 – and MANUSCRIPTS 1 & 2 77, 78, 79–80
 – use of the tetragram in 74, 77
- Papageorgios, Spyridon 20
 Parkes, James 4
 Pentateuch 41–2, 43–4, 59, 73 *see also*
 Constantinople Pentateuch
 Perczel, István 63
 Perles, Joseph 13, 130
 Philo of Alexandria 40, 41–2, 43–4, 152
 Phylactery of Moses (copper amulet) 75

- poetry 34–5, 37
- prayer books 122–3, 152
- proto-Masoretic text 5, 46, 58
- Pseudo-Aristeas 42, 43
- Quinta* (translation of the Psalms) 47, 49
- Rabbinic Judaism 25–6
- and Greek translations 3, 4, 6, 46, 56–7
 - and Hellenism 151–3
 - and Justinian's Novel 146 66–7
 - Origen's interest in 48–9
 - vs Karaism 29, 35, 65, 131, 151, 153–4
- Rapoport, Solomon Judah 114
- reading aloud of scripture 55–6, 57–8, 59, 86, 123, 126, 131–2, 148–9, 153
- Roberts, Colin 72
- Robertson Smith, William 1–2, 3, 4–5, 6
- Rutgers, Leonard 63
- Samaritans 68–9
- Samuel of Rossano 115
- Schechter, Solomon 17
- Schürer, Emil 2
- scripts 73–4, 76, 77, 79, 88, 91, 107, 112–13
- scriptures, public reading of 55–6, 57–8, 59, 86, 123, 126, 131–2, 148–9, 153
- scroll vs codex format 58–9
- Sefer ha-'Osher* (Jacob ben Reuben) 116
- Septuagint 1–6, 144–5, 153
- and Akylas 64, 68, 77, 89, 96, 97, 133–4, 135
 - and *Arukh* 114
 - and the *Book of Nestor the Priest* 156
 - Cambridge Septuagint 16
 - Christian use of 1–3
 - and the Constantinople Pentateuch 132–5
 - Ecclesiastes 96–7
 - in inscriptions 68–70
 - and Jacob ben Reuben 116–17
 - in Justinian's Novel 146 64, 66
 - and MANUSCRIPT 3 89
 - and MANUSCRIPT 9 105
 - and MANUSCRIPT 13 109, 135
 - and MANUSCRIPT 14 111, 112, 133–4
 - and MANUSCRIPTS 17 & 18 125
 - and MANUSCRIPT 19 128
 - Origen on 48–9
 - in Origen's *Hexapla* 45–6, 48, 74
 - Philo's account of its writing 41–2
 - Swete on 18
 - and Symmachos 89, 125, 133–4, 135
 - traditional scenario of abandonment by Judaism 1–6, 18, 19–20, 48, 66, 145
 - use in Early Byzantine manuscripts 73
 - use in Greek-speaking synagogues 58
 - *Yosippon* identifies Eleazar as one of the translators 86
- Shemariah ben Elia 'the Cretan' 120–1, 122–3
- Simon, Marcel 6
- Slavonic translations of the Bible 90
- Smelik, Willem 62
- Sobolevskij, Aleksej 90
- Soncino, Eliezer 129
- sources for Byzantine Jewish history 27–9, 54–5, 83–7, 119–23
- Steiner, Richard 106
- Swete, Henry Barclay 2, 4, 16, 17–20
- Symmachos 43, 46–7, 48, 58, 143, 145–6
- compared with LXX 89, 125, 133–4, 135
 - and the Constantinople Pentateuch 133
 - and Jacob ben Reuben 116, 117
 - and MANUSCRIPT 3 89
 - and MANUSCRIPT 6 101
 - and MANUSCRIPT 9 105
 - and MANUSCRIPT 13 109, 135
 - and MANUSCRIPT 14 111, 133–4
 - and MANUSCRIPTS 17 & 18 125
 - Swete on 18–19
- synagogue(s) 54, 55–60, 69–70, 79, 122–3, 148–9, 150

- Sznol, Shifra 109
- Ta-Shma, Israel 102, 120
- Taube, Moshe 90
- Taylor, Charles 17, 76, 78
- Tchernetska, Natalie 78
- tetragram 73–4, 76, 77, 78, 79
- Theodotion 45, 58, 73, 143, 146–7
- and the Constantinople Pentateuch 133, 135
 - and Jacob ben Reuben 116
 - and the LXX 73, 89, 125, 134
 - and MANUSCRIPT 3 89
 - and MANUSCRIPT 9 105
 - and MANUSCRIPT 13 109, 135
 - and MANUSCRIPT 14 134
 - and MANUSCRIPTS 17 & 18 125
 - Swete on 18–19
- Tobias ben Eliezer 35, 114–15
- Tobias ben Moses 28, 106, 115
- Torah (Pentateuch) 41–2, 43–4, 59, 73
- see also* Constantinople Pentateuch
- traditional scenario of Greek Bible
- translations in Judaism 1–6
- transliterations 109–10
- Traube, Ludwig 73
- Veltri, Giuseppe 62
- Vetus Latina* 22
- von Gebhardt, Oscar 15, 157
- Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement 13
- Wolf, Johann Christoph 14
- Yosippon* 36, 84, 85–6, 121, 15