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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series IV: Writings and Publications, 1952-1992, undated.

Sub-series A: Books, 1961-1990, undated.

Reel
71

Box
22

Folder
1390b

The Story of Scripture, draft, chapters 3 and 4, 1989.

Chapter 4

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

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The communities of West Asia had been subject to various Greek influences for some time before their conquest by Alexander and his armies in 330 B.C.E. But it was only after the Greeks established control over the area that the Greek cultural impact became pervasive. The Judeans of Palestine who had remained during the Persian period what they had always been, primarily an agricultural and pastoral community, now found themselves increasingly urbanized and engaged in commerce.

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Jerusalem, the capital, grew substantially. Under Persia Jerusalem was a theocracy where activity was carefully regulated by Torah rules which the priests insisted were God's Instructions. Since its reconstruction the Jerusalem Temple had become the unrivaled religious center of the whole Jewish world. Every Jew, no matter where he lived, paid an annual half shekel tax toward its upkeep.

Jews lived in Judea and throughout West Asia and Egypt. By the second century, Alexandria, the new city built in Egypt by Alexander's generals, was well on its way to becoming the region's most populous and prosperous city of Hellenistic times (late 4th century B.C.E.-1st century C.E.) and home to a sizable and increasingly prosperous and cultivated Judean population.

For the Greeks, with their lively interest in literature, books played a central role in the definition of culture. Beside numerous private collections, the Greeks established and lavishly endowed

libraries in Pergamon (by the Attalids), Antioch (by the Seleucids) and Alexandria (by the Ptolemies). By some estimates, in the first century B.C.E. half a million parchment or papyrus items were available in the Museum Library of Alexandria and another one hundred thousand in its companion across the park, the Serapeum. Unlike the peoples of Asia, Greeks wrote books and signed their names to their work. Under Greek influence, ^{for} the first time ^{the} West Asians began to recognize that a book could be a shaped and self-contained work which presented a consistent and individual point of view.

Greek scribes had refined the techniques of manuscript production and editing, and developed sophisticated techniques which enabled them to clarify the grammar and construction of classical texts, fix their presentation, and determine the most reliable of several manuscript traditions. "Authoritative" texts of many works were established and scholia--marginal comments which discussed doubtful spelling, the meaning of unusual words and forms, apparent omissions or repetitions, and so forth--were added to the more important works. Measured by these standards, Judean editorial work was quite primitive, but stimulated by contact with the Hellenistic ethos, local scribes soon caught up and a great age of writing and scroll production dawned.

The importance of the Greek alphabet's technical advance over the Aramaic and Hebrew, particularly its introduction of vowels, is evident in the greater number of works prepared for Greek-speaking

more these
Greek texts
authoritative
considered
sacred?

Jews compared with the number of works in Aramaic and Hebrew.

Greek works were easier to edit and read. A translation service from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek seems to have operated in Jerusalem, perhaps in The Temple itself. There is no record of a similar service designed to translate Greek scrolls into Hebrew or Aramaic. It was among the Greek-speaking diaspora population that the first tentative experiments with a vowel system for the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet appeared.

Literacy spread rapidly among the Judeans, as it tends to do among people who move from farms and villages into towns where commerce requires them to read contracts and do numbers. The number of available copies of well-known manuscripts increased significantly. We begin to hear of scrolls written by a single author on such diverse subjects as medicine, history, astronomy, and even the esoteric meaning of a prophet's speeches. Ben Sirah's academy in Jerusalem must have had a library of some size as did, we know, the monastic community of Qumran. Writing in the first century B.C.E., a courtier of the Hasmoneans reports, probably inaccurately, that Nehemiah in the fifth century had established a library in Jerusalem in which he had collected "books about the kings and prophets, the writings of David and Temple matters" (Ben Sirach). This may be simply a legend, but the report that Judah Maccabee in the middle of the second century B.C.E. "collected all the books that had been lost on account of the War" (2 Mac. 10-14) probably can be credited. The Temple had a sizable archives, as did most shrines, where scrolls were deposited for safekeeping.

Blasphemy long & advanced only for their own position.

Probably be. Judeans were interested in Greek pronunciation & writing techniques. (9) L. Sirach

? So many ill. books? 11. books?

by

where

It was the change from an oral culture to a manuscript culture which changed people's perceptions of what the early narratives meant. A written narrative takes on a non-emotional, linear, factual aspect. When a story becomes such a narrative readers judge its accuracy rather than its impact. Victor Hugo understood this transformation when in Notre Dame de Paris he portrays a scholar, examining the first printed book he has ever seen, who looks up from his desk toward the cathedral and muses, "Ceci Tuera Cela": "This will kill that."

The Hellenistic ethos was, at least among upper-class Jews, highly literate, book-oriented, and inclined to endow classic texts with an aura of sacredness and to discover in them depths of meaning which the original authors may well not have recognized. The Book, as Book, begins to play an increasingly central role and to be accorded an ever increasing degree of charisma. This process raised many questions. Which version of a work is the accredited one? What does it mean for a book to claim to be inspired by God? Which books are so endowed? Who determines what the written word means? On what basis? There would be many answers offered to these and related questions, but the important fact is the framework of the questions: that Jews have entered an age in which the community, or at least its leading spirits, begin to look to books for religious guidance and to assume that knowledge of what was in them provided a blueprint for community organization.

I don't understand this & can't read it
I don't understand this & can't read it
I don't understand this & can't read it

This is a Greek
book
of the Bible
of the Bible
of the Bible

Bohannon
people didn't
look to books
for guidance

Over the course of the generations which followed Ezra's mission to Jerusalem, the five separate scrolls which we now know as the Sefer Torah, the scrolls attributed to individual prophets, and the two extended histories edited by priest-scribes largely in Jerusalem, achieved approximately the form in which we know them. They were on the way to becoming the three-tiered Hebrew Scripture. The appearance in Egypt, beginning in the third century B.C.E., of Greek translations of some Hebrew scrolls, particularly the Septuagint, the first translation of the Sefer Torah done in any language, testifies to the access to books and the existence of scrolls of "the law and the prophets and other writings of the fathers" (Ben Sirach ^{Prologue (trans.Goodspeed P. 213)} 1:16). The discovery in the Dead Sea caves above Qumran of portions and fragments of various Hebrew texts is further testimony; some were destined for inclusion in the Hebrew Scripture and some were destined to be set aside as the faith tradition was redefined. Work on the translation of the Biblical corpus seems at first to have concentrated on the five scrolls of the Pentateuch but soon extended to the whole published text as the work of definition continued over half a millennium.

Rabbinic Judaism would assume the primacy of the Sefer Torah over the other books of the three-tiered Scripture. Only the Sefer Torah is kept in the synagogue Ark. Only the five scrolls of Moses, the Sefer Torah, are read through annually as an essential element of the Sabbath liturgy. The rabbis later added selections

believe that Talמוד Torah, the obligation of all Jews to study Torah,

from the other books (Haftarah) to this Torah reading ritual, but these are not used systematically or exhaustively.

The authority of the five scrolls rested on the fact that they were accepted as God's own words. Most researchers have taken for granted that in the early Hellenistic period primacy of place was already given to the Torah scrolls. But we really don't know which scrolls were on the meeting house shelves nor is it clear that the rabbinic doctrine of Moses' absolute superiority as prophet yet broadly held.

The rabbis of the Talmudic period (2nd century C.E.-6th century C.E.) would insist that since Moses' day the Torah had been fully shaped, the text carefully controlled, and its proper interpretation broadly acknowledged. They insisted that Talmud Torah, the obligation incumbent on every Jew to read and interpret the Torah, had always been fully recognized; that the reading (really, chanting) of the Torah during synagogue worship, Keriat-ha-Torah, was already established ritual; and that on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, sections from the Torah were read out as part of the service in The Temple--in short, that the Sefer Torah was, and had always been, acknowledged and revered as scripture.

While there are occasional references in the Hellenistic period to the study of the Pentateuch and other scrolls, there is no evidence that a regimen of reading from the Sefer Torah during synagogue worship was widely acknowledged and every reason to believe that Talmud Torah, the obligation of all Jews to study Torah,

What about
the 2nd century?
perhaps
the 3rd century?

Talmud was not
edited then. Talmud
earlier

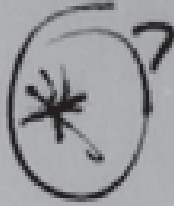
7/1/10
10/1/10
11/1/10

of the Pentateuch and other scrolls, there is no evidence that a regimen of reading from the Sefer Torah during synagogue worship was widely acknowledged and every reason to believe that Talmud Torah, the obligation of all Jews to study Torah, had not yet been clearly enunciated or widely accepted. Further, contrary to the later rabbinic claim, as we shall see, no scroll played a role in any Temple ceremony.

The first solid evidence that any group of Jews had adopted a discipline centered on the study of venerated texts comes from the records of the millennarian sect whose headquarters were at Qumran (2nd cent. B.C.E. - 1st cent. C.E.). "The many" were to study The Law and the prophets one-third of every night. ~~as~~ ✓ ✓

One man out of ten was appointed "to study The Law day and night, continuously for the improvement of all" ~~(N.D. 6:6-7)~~. ^{M.D. MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE VI: 4-8} The purpose of this study was to uncover "hidden things," a term which seems to include both the sect's special interpretations of the Torah laws and its understanding of God's plans for redemption and End Time. This sect sometimes called itself "those of the Torah" or the Essenes ^{C.D. DAMASCUS DOCUMENT III: 14, 15} ~~(C.D. 20:10, 11)~~ ~~(Don't check name)~~.

About the use of scrolls during the informal meetings which took place in those institutions which go by the awkward name of proto-synagogue, we know too little to speak with any confidence. On the Sabbath and holy day portions from a Torah scroll, the Psalms, or perhaps a prophet's message may have been recited or read but there was no formal schedule of readings and, where certainly never in one place, bound together, and designated as



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explain
synagogue
better

scrolls were chanted, practice must have varied from place to place. Such readings may have even occasionally been taken from works not destined to become part of the Hebrew Scriptures. We simply do not know which scrolls Ben Sirah's grandson had in mind when he described his grandfather's curriculum as "The Law, the Prophets and other Writings of the Fathers" (Y:11). There were individual scrolls but as yet no canonized scripture. Discussions continued in the early rabbinic period on the acceptability of Ezekiel and Esther, possibly also on Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Ben Sirah. It was only in the third century C.E. that the final selections were made, and there was still no agreement whether certain scrolls were to be listed in the section known as Prophets or in that known as Holy Writings and in which order they were to appear. Masoretic work of proper scriptural presentation under careful editorial supervision on textual matters, spelling, word division, and meaning went on for a millennium.

The ordinary Jew probably knew that the Exodus story was central and the story of Samson and Delilah less so since he rehearsed the Exodus deliverance every Passover and heard about Samson only on an occasional visit by a wandering storyteller or professional reader. If he thought about it, which he probably didn't, he might have sensed that there must be some gradations of authority among the scrolls. But he probably never saw all the scrolls which were finally included in the Hebrew Scriptures, certainly never in one place, bound together, and designated as

Prologue
§ 1

beginning
what?

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→ 63 HL want
available
see p. 201!

Scripture. In the way of laymen in all generations, he left these issues to the few who took them seriously.

As education began to be seriously encouraged, the layman began to be conscious of books and their potential importance, but as yet the concept of a scripture was not fully developed in his mind. There was no Ark in the local worship place. The armoria, the book case which contained his community's scrolls, may have included other rolls besides the Sefer Torah.

During this period the Prophets had a status equal to the Pentateuch as a source of ultimate truths and were avidly studied for their secrets. That the prophetic speech witnessed to God's justice and set forth the sacred promises in Hebrew, God's own language, commanded respect. Prophecy recorded God's original bond with their nation, proved His just treatment of them, and stated God's promise of national redemption. Obedience was crucial.

"If you agree and give heed you will eat the good things of the earth but if you refuse and disobey, you will be devoured by the sword" (Is. 1:19-20). The Teacher of Righteousness who in the second century B.C.E. founded the monastic community of Qumran drew his special knowledge primarily from his inspired understanding of the work of such prophets as Isaiah and Habakkuk.

When and why did the two histories (Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings and Chronicles) come to be treated as scriptural? The editors of these annals make no claim that they are setting down revealed or inspired material. These chronicles had been shaped to make the point that all that had happened to Israel and Judah was

Jo 1:19-20

for the mouth ¹⁹⁻²⁰ of the Lord has spoken sword (Is. 1:19-20)

But they
imply that it's
the truth

explained by the operation of the covenant. Israel's history was set forth as an object lesson in the value of covenant faithfulness. God's justice and mercy were revealed through His control of the destiny of Israel and the nations; as He had promised, so it had happened. God's dependability gave Israel reason for hope. God had told the people the consequences of covenant disloyalty and Israel had been punished, but God had also promised the people that His anger would not burn forever, and they would be redeemed. The histories tell them they could also depend on that promise.

During Hellenistic times an increasing number of Jews outside the priest class became literate and were able to study the writings. New issues emerge: Who had authority to interpret those texts: which texts were authoritative, how much authority is reserved for community practice, the unwritten tradition, what we would call common law.

Not all groups had the same writings of the Fathers. The Sadducees, a conservative land-owning group, accepted as authority--in addition to the Law, the Prophets, and other writings of the Fathers--a Book of Decrees of which unfortunately not a trace remains. The Pharisees, a table fellowship who had set for themselves particularly stringent standards of purity and tithing, and thought of themselves as another priestly elite accepted the Law and the Prophets and a limited number of writings of the Fathers together with an oral tradition based largely on text interpretations shaped in their circles. Groups of apocalyptic had their own

Synagogue?

rewrite
introduction
for comparison

understanding of the Prophets and their torot differed in part from those in the received text. There were ascetic communities like the Essenes who had, in addition to the Sefer Torah and the Prophets, their own scrolls, such as the Manual of Discipline. To a surprising degree, variety rather than uniformity was the hallmark of the age and, paradoxically, the emergence of accepted texts encouraged greater variety. As modern literary critics have shown, a text can be construed to mean almost anything.

Josephus revealed his hopes and those of the Pharisees among whom he had trained rather than the actual state of affairs in 1st century Judea when he wrote: "We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine and of them five belong to Moses which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death" (Contra Apion 1:8).

Torah in Hellenistic times meant law and, broadly, tradition. The prophetic books were trusted but treated separately from the five books of Torah. The "writings of the Fathers" seem to have been a varying list. Mikra, the rabbinic term for Scripture, does not appear as yet in the literature, nor does the acronym term for the three-tiered scripture, Tanakh, a concept of rabbinic times.

do you
explain
this
paradox
to me?

OK ✓

(cf. Shema 3
Leviticus)

There were many texts and more appeared all the time. Some were simply other versions of well-known narratives and oracles. Others were entirely new. An occasional work like Tobit floats outside the scope of scriptural narrative, but most of the story scrolls which were not canonized were somehow connected to the Biblical text. Susanna provided another illustration of Daniel's wisdom as does Bel and the Dragon. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men with their theme of religious loyalty were placed between two verses in the third chapter of Daniel. There is no way to know why such material as the prose biography of Jeremiah was canonized and the Epistle of Jeremiah was not. Perhaps it was simply that one tradition came into the hands of the right scribe at an appropriate time and the other did not. Some judgments reflect the seriousness of the material involved. Others were simply serendipitous. Contrary to most modern assumptions, the decisions to include or exclude were sometimes made for reasons as superficial as the fact that when a scribe had some empty space available at the end of a scroll he had just copied, he added something he liked to fill in the space.

Sometime in the third century of the Common Era, the rabbis finally settled on a table of contents for scripture, the order of which to this day governs the masoretic text. This table of contents numbered twenty-two books, the result of considering Judges-Ruth and Jeremiah-Lamentations as separate books. It seems to have been desirable to have twenty-two books in the Hebrew

scriptures to correspond to the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Since the alphabet was seen as containing all the building blocks out of which the universe is constructed, and served also as Israel's numeration system, this equation suggested that all knowledge was to be found in these texts.

No one could play such numbers games until there was a consensus on which books were accepted as scripture. Agreement was not fully achieved until the rabbis emerged as the leaders of a reconstructed Judaism in the period after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. There were many books in existence, all the books that became scripture and all which did not, and no one as yet felt a need to proclaim an official selection. We simply do not know what was included in "the other books of the fathers" (B.S. Intro 1.11).

In Hellenistic times no one claimed, as the subsequent rabbinic leadership so evidently did, that the Hebrew scripture was a Kol Bo, an anthology which contained all truth and wisdom. A first century C.E. scroll, 2 Esdras, describes how Ezra, under divine inspiration, produces a copy of all the sacred books after they had been incinerated in a fire. Ezra, we are told, dictated to secretaries ninety-two books. Ezra is told: "Make public the twenty-two books that you wrote first and let the worthy and unworthy read them: but keep the seventy that were written last in order to give them to the wise among your people for in them is the Spring of Understanding, the Fountain of Wisdom and the

I cannot find *(2 Es. has only 16 chapters)*
 "River of Knowledge" (2 Esdras 7:45-47). For the author of Esdras, as for the teacher of righteousness, who lived two centuries earlier, the most precious knowledge, essentially that which deals with eschatology, lay outside the twenty-two books which became scripture.

There is no thought in the Hellenistic centuries of a defined sacred anthology. Even as late as the early Talmudic period there are still debates about whether certain scrolls should be included or excluded from a collection which has not yet been named or defined. Editorial consistency is one hallmark of an active push for the text's unity, yet editors still seem not to have felt the need to remove or resolve all the divergent descriptions of the same event or different presentations of the same speech when these appear in the Deuteronomic and priestly histories. Even the ten commandments appear in slightly different forms in Exodus and Deuteronomy; vide their separate explanations for the rules of Sabbath observance. Nor do the scrolls present the ten instructions in the same order. "You shall not murder" precedes "You shall not steal" in the Masoretic, Samaritan, Qumran texts, and Josephus but follows it in the Septuagint and Philo.

Studies by J. A. Sanders of dead sea psalm manuscripts found in Caves 7 and 11 allow us to look at the editing and publishing process as it operated at a fairly late stage in the development of the psalter. Several psalms appear which are not found in our Psalter. There are differences in the brief programmatic notes

suggesting that these versions were accepted as complementary.

which preface psalms, variations in the order in which the psalms are presented, and slight textual variations in language between versions. A number of the Dead Sea texts, like that of Psalm 145, reproduce a congregational refrain after each verse--"Praised be the Lord and praised be His name forever and ever"--a practice only occasionally followed in the received text. Sanders argues that a broad consensus governing the presentations of the psalms was in place by the first century B.C.E., but that scribes still felt free to make additions, elaborations, or even revisions. Scrolls were formed but not yet fixed.

Variations are even more apparent in the sectarian literature and in individual works which were not accepted into the Canon. Jubilees presents a different version of the narratives of Genesis and of the early sections of Exodus. Jubilees differs from the Canon text in many details, most dramatically in certain torot and in describing a lunar calendar which differs considerably from that of the accepted text. Its presentation of the Sabbath laws, more detailed and stricter than those in the Sefer Torah, are described as having been revealed to Abraham rather than to Moses. Abraham's death bed valedictory admonishes his family to observe the laws requiring the death penalty for an adulteress, the prohibition against meat containing any residue of the animal's blood, and the proper ritual for a peace offering and other sacrifice (20:4, 21:6ff). Portions of several copies of Jubilees were found in the dead sea caves along with portions of the Pentateuch, suggesting that these versions were accepted as complementary.

Late in the Hellenistic period, the Pharisees would begin to press for a more rigorous definition of the acceptable and the unacceptable. Their way of faith depended on precision, but most Jews of the period were not particularly involved; as long as dues were regularly paid to The Temple and the cult was in operation, most were satisfied. The idea that Judaism could be defined by holy texts did not yet dominate most people's thinking, but we can see it beginning to emerge. We see it developing in the writings of the Essenes who reserved their secrets to the initiated and looked on any outside their circle as blind to the saving truths. In such sectarian circles conflicting claims as to Torahic authority could lead to bitter dispute. In one of the Hodayot or hymns of the Qumran community, the author speaks of "Teachers of Lies" who scheme to entice believers "to exchange the Torah engraved on my heart for the smooth things which they speak to thy people."

The Damascus Document which served as the constitution of the Qumran community openly challenged the claim that the lists of instructions in the five books contained the full text of revelation. "God established His covenant with Israel by revealing to them hidden things concerning which all Israel had gone astray" (6:10). When the Qumran hymns praise the Oseh Torah, those who follow the Torah law, they have in mind those who follow their Torah and calendar rather than the general run of Judeans who knew and obeyed only the generally accepted text.

okay
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 O.K.

Samaritan leaders cherished the five scrolls of the Torah and only those scrolls. Their text was similar to that of the Judeans but included in the ten commandments a requirement that an altar be built on Mt. Gerizim and sacrifices be offered there. It also changed Mt. Ebal to Mt. Gerizim in Deut. 27:4 as the place where the first altar was to be erected in the promised land, a change that made the Samaritans schismatics in the eyes of Judeans since it cast doubts on the primacy of The Temple in Jerusalem.

The recently published Temple Scroll (2nd cent. B.C.E.) included torot sacred to the Dead Sea community but unknown to the received text: animals could be slaughtered only by priests in The Temple and all sexual intercourse was banned in the holy bity. It also requires that priests celebrate an annual ordination festival and participate in several other unknown agricultural festivals, one celebrating the first fruits of the vine, another the first fruits of the orchard, and another the first waving of a newly cut barley sheaf. Various groups had their own narrative and law traditions, and unless we dismiss such works as deliberate forgeries or the idiosyncratic writings of some "inspired" individual, it is at least apparent that religious attitudes of one or another group of Judeans are reflected in such texts.

The decisions to include or exclude were ultimately determined by extrinsic as well as intrinsic factors. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms were the heart of the tradition and the first to be accepted by all. Other scrolls were judged by other

(1.2.27:4
Ebal)

(city)

criteria. That the canon turned out as it did is not a resolution of conflicting claims about which version God preferred but that certain scrolls were cherished by the group of sages who ultimately gained sway. In the end the sages limited the library of venerated work to the texts they found fully acceptable.

Minor textual variations could become significant. Yigael Yadin, in his careful analysis of the Temple Scroll, has shown how the author quotes from a text substantially similar to the known text but at times in a slightly different mode. Such "slight" differences must not be overlooked since a different text inevitably led to interpretations other than the normative ones. The Temple Scroll declared that the king may not marry more than one wife and insisted that his wife be from his father's tribe and family, a rule apparently based on the textual tradition which also lies behind the Septuagint rule governing the marriage of a high priest: "He shall take to wife", wife, not wives, "A virgin of his own people," not from another family. The rabbinic tradition based on Deuteronomy ^{vss. 14-20} 17 would rule that the king "may choose for himself wives, of the daughters of priests, Levites or Israelites," in short, any Jewish woman (Tos^{for} San. 4:2).

Various scrolls circulated which contained versions of the early narratives and variant lists of torot as well as speeches and biographies of the prophets. At the end of the scrolls of Jeremiah and II Kings, there are several chapters concerning the last days of the Kingdom of Judah which are in all respects identical.

spelling, and grammar, but also in content. Such variations testify

✓ Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 present an identical end-of-days oracle. The scrolls which include such repetitions seem to have developed independently and circulated independently.

In this late Hellenistic period it is perhaps best to think of books rather than the book. People assumed they all fit together, but the effort to actually weave the texts into a single design had not yet fully begun: this would be the work of the early rabbis of the second and third centuries. In the quiet studies of the priest-scribes, as among the general community, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms were venerated, but the task of sorting out what other scrolls should be included under the rubric of 'divinely inspired' had not yet been taken up. In many cases there were still open questions about which text tradition of a particular scroll was the authentic one. Corrections made by a scribe to one of the Dead Sea scrolls are almost all in the direction of the version that became the accepted text; corrections made by another scribe to a scroll of Deuteronomy take it further away from our text. Our Jeremiah text differs considerably from scrolls which served as the basis of the Septuagint translation. A psalm scroll from Qumran divides some of the poetic units differently than the accepted text does and contains several hymns not included in the one hundred and fifty presented in the Psalter. The two Isaiah scrolls found in Cave 1 differ from each other and from our text not only in script--one was written in the old Ketav Ivri, the other in the newer square Ashurit--spelling, and grammar, but also in content. Such variations testify

to an active interest in literature and to an attitude which did not yet consider such works as sacrosanct. These distinct textual traditions were not yet sufficiently disturbing to prompt the community to appoint a commission to declare one scroll authorized and another suspect. Scribes and readers chose whichever version appealed to them, or perhaps simply whatever text was available.

While the Talmudic "history" written later must be rejected as anachronistic, still, there was by late Hellenistic times a broad acceptance of a particular textual stream for the five Torah scrolls and the prophetic books, and an acknowledgement of their special role in the community's life. A faith which had been essentially bi-polar--tradition and The Temple--was becoming tri-polar: Tradition, Temple, and text. Two of these three foci, Temple and text, were controlled by an elite disparate, but nonetheless, an elite, those who were born to the priestly caste and those who could read and took the effort to master the texts.

Besides the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Hellenistic Jewish scribes in Palestine worked on histories, wisdom, and, increasingly, on apocalypse (Daniel, the last half of Zechariah, Enoch, Esdras). Apocalyptic interests peaked during the Maccabean revolt and the early Roman centuries when there was a widely held belief that the millennium was at hand and the kingdom of God just beyond. Apocalypse presents the history of the future and deals with such themes as the ultimate fate of Israel and the nations. It generally took the form of a report by someone who had been allowed to enter heaven and to read there from the book of the

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this
refer?

Jubilees 12:12

future or who had heard from some heavenly personage revelations about the future. Apocalypse might also be presented as an esoteric commentary on some well-known prophecy which revealed the razim, secret information about End Time. The Essenes treasured scrolls of Pesharim, eschatological interpretations of Biblical material (Habakkuk, Isaiah, Nahum, Micah, Hosea and Psalms) in which the sect's founder, the teacher of righteousness, passed on esoteric explanations of textual meaning. The scrolls which contained these secrets were zealously guarded by the Essenes lest their secrets be revealed to the unworthy. Had they been of critical interest to the later rabbis, some of this material would undoubtedly have been included in the scriptural anthology.

For the first time in Palestine and the diaspora, there were writings authorized or authored by known contemporaries: Ben Sirach, the Teacher of Righteousness, Artapanus, Ezekiel the Tragedian. Histories appear (the Hasmonean Chronicles, Artapanus) as do collections of Wisdom (Ben Sirach), Novella (Tobit, Judith) and Hymns (Qumran's Thanksgiving Hymns).

The Hellenistic world delighted in moralistic biography, books designed to provide readers with upright and virtuous heroes whose lives could serve as compelling examples of noble character. In addition to Daniel, Judith, Hannah, and the Maccabees, the patriarchs were generally portrayed costumed in nobility. Abraham is zealous for God even to the point of burning down an idolatrous shrine (~~and the~~). He meets every test of loyalty to

Jubilees 12:12

God with patient endurance and is often depicted, as are the other patriarchs, giving high-minded advice to his family gathered about his death bed.

Interest in literature was apparently even greater in the Greek-speaking Egyptian diaspora than in Judea. Philo devoted a whole volume to a panegyric to Moses (Vita Moysis). There historians (Artapanus, Eupolemos), philosophers (Philo), and even playwrights (Ezekiel) plied their trade. The Greek-speaking world produced histories, books of wisdom, novellas, testimonies, and extensive commentaries.

Not all contemporary lists of venerated scrolls are identical or even complete. The Greek-speaking diaspora developed its own Table of Contents, those scrolls which came to be known under the umbrella label of Septuagint. The sectarians at Qumran also developed their own consensus over several hundred years.

There was as yet no agreed-on formal method for the presentation of venerated writings. Most scrolls were set out in the new square script (Ashurit), but others continued to be written in the old Ketav Ivri. Still, the scrolls had achieved a recognizable role in the life of the community. Among the scribes and those who cared there was a heightened interest in establishing a textus receptus - a 'received' or 'correct' text. Many questions of orthography, spelling, and word division were resolved. Versions were compared and decisions made as to the correct reading. Issues of particular concern included syntax, spelling, word division, and pagination as well as scribal glosses or corrections which had mistakenly entered into the body of the text, often

resulting in a conflated reading.

Standardization was in the air, but it was not yet fully achieved. Nor was establishing an authorized text seen as an absolute necessity. During Hellenistic times the scribes who worked on these scrolls did not feel constrained from making minor changes in spelling, orthography, even from deleting sentences. Torah and Prophetic rolls found in the Qumran caves included letters which had been struck out and words inserted above other words. Rabbinic Judaism would later require that a scribe who made an error in copying a single letter of a Torah scroll carefully erase it and get it right; mortals are not allowed to tinker with God's words.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms carried a large and increasing measure of authority, but in these pre-rabbinic centuries had not yet fully graduated to the rank of scripture, in which it is crucial that every word and every letter be presented accurately and copied faithfully.

Judean scribes began to develop a Masorah, a tradition of proper scriptural presentation, and soon Hebrew scholia began to appear. Although no text of the early Masorah survives, some of its methods can be deduced from Qumran scrolls which survive from this period and from comments on masoretic issues which found their way into rabbinic writings, including numerous observations such as: "Ha-Er is written, but we read Hatzer", (b. Erv. 26A 2K 20:4). Researchers have discovered among the various manuscript fragments of the Sefer Torah in the Qumran materials evidence of textual and orthographic variations. Most of the Qumran

What were they concerned?

before

(example) 12:32-33

manuscripts were written with care and represent a single text tradition. Editorial judgment comes into play. Rather elegant theories of textual criticism are discussed. Scholarly and literary motivation play increasingly important roles in what can for the first time honestly be called a literary enterprise.

The Torah scrolls and those of the prophets were among the first on which this effort was concentrated. Great care was taken to establish their correct texts. The Talmud describes Magihei Sefarim, investigators of texts, who were responsible for examining Torah scrolls to insure that they were free from error, and suggests that these scribes were paid from Temple funds (b. Ket. 106a). Such detail puts a bit too much of an administrative gloss on what was certainly a less than formally organized process, but editorial work was in progress. Hebrew scrolls were beginning to get the attention Greeks normally gave to written documents.

Most of the community was not unaware that much of this technical interest had been stimulated by the Hellenistic environment. A number of legends surrounded the 'officially accepted' Torah translation into demotic Greek, the Septuagint. These legends suggest a felt need among Jews to confirm that they treated their books with at least the same care as the Greeks.

Scholars would work for almost a thousand years before the masoretic effort established a fully accredited written text. At this early stage of that effort a more significant purpose was to insure the proper reading-chanting of the text. In a world where no one read silently, it was only natural that scribes

by Conroy
Schubert
the

give example?

should think first of how a text would sound rather than of how it looked. Since books were always read aloud, the Hellenistic Jewish world instinctively associated the written and spoken word. In many of the Qumran texts, the word adonai was written above God's name, YHWH, to insure that the reader would not utter God's most powerful name. A typical early masoretic effort inserted weak consonants in words where their presence would help the reader properly sound the unvocalized text: The Vov was used to indicate 'o', the Yod, 'i'. These so-called Matres Lectiones helped to insure accurate pronunciation but did not provide a full-blown system of vowel notation, and none was developed during the Hellenistic centuries. An uninstructed reader could not be fully confident of his recitation; still, much had been accomplished. The Greeks had significantly improved the usefulness of the alphabet when they introduced, perhaps in the sixth century B.C.E., vowel signs into their texts. Vowels so markedly reduced the uncertainties in sounding phrases that a person could pick up a voweled text and be fairly sure that he could read it aloud accurately.

Koine, the popular Greek dialect, became the vernacular of the large Egyptian-Syrian diaspora and was even spoken by some in Judea. Jews who could write and read Greek could take advantage of Greek books and culture. Perhaps Koine's widespread use was one of the reasons literary interest was more highly developed in the diaspora than in Judea. A knowledge of everyday Greek was, however, no guarantee that a person could read the Iliad or

what about
oo

Plato in the classic tongue. Philo's catholic knowledge of the classic Hellenistic curriculum was, as far as we know, unique among diaspora Jews, but there can be little doubt that the intelligentsia of the large Jewish community of Alexandria had access to that city's libraries and that they were influenced by Greek literary forms and interests, and even by the contents of the Greek classics.

* * * * *

By the second century B.C.E. there is little doubt that most diaspora Jews could no longer speak or understand Hebrew. For a Greek-speaking Jew to have mastered the Hebrew texts would have been a significant accomplishment, requiring learning not only an unfamiliar alphabet but also the sounds of a language rarely heard or used. Greek translations were an absolute necessity. Despite the claim of The Letter of Aristeas, a late second century B.C.E. text, that the Ptolemaic court had ordered the Septuagint translations, there is little, if any, evidence that the Greeks of West Asia were interested enough in the sacred literature of their oriental subjects to have any of it translated. This was a task for Jews.

cf b. megilla
9a-b

Hebrew was losing out on all fronts. Aramaic was becoming the vernacular of Palestinian Jews as Koine was for diaspora Jews. An editor of the priestly history has Nehemiah say that on arrival in Jerusalem he found among its citizens many whose "children spoke the language of Ashur. . . and could no longer speak the language of Judah," one of several texts which point to the spread of

Aramaic as a vernacular among the Jews in Judea. Beside the Aramaic material which found its way into the Bible, Aramaic texts found at or near Qumran include fragments of a prayer ascribed to the Babylonian King Nabonidus, sections of Tobit, Enoch, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, a translation of Job and The Genesis Apocryphon. There is also in Aramaic a Megillat Ta'anit, a small scroll listing 36 days on which fasting is prohibited, which some regard as a document of a rebel party fighting Rome, apparently written in haste and for popular consumption, shortly before the temple's destruction in 70 C.E. Josephus wrote the text of The Jewish Wars in Aramaic and then arranged for its translation into Greek (Josephus, Introduction).

Despite the dethronement of Hebrew as the national vernacular, schooling and custom insured that familiar hymns, stories, phrases, and idioms in the old speech remained part of an active universe of discourse. But the oral tradition in its original form was no longer of a piece with the community's daily speech, a change that served to spur interest in written texts. As contemporary culture no longer reinforced the classic tradition, the study of Hebrew texts increasingly became the preserve of a segment of a literate elite who, increasingly and sometimes without consciously planning it, found themselves determining and shaping tradition through their ability to interpret the revered texts.

Any text requires interpretation, if only to put the bare words in some appropriate context. Who but a well-informed

commentator could provide that understanding? Those who knew Hebrew were obviously the only ones who could provide background and context and also derive from the texts written in Hebrew new levels of meaning. During this period Hebrew became for Judean intellectuals what Latin was for Europe's best and brightest during the Middle Ages: a proof of status, a means of self-conscious academic communication, and the basis of a claim to religious authority.

Men wrote in Hebrew for many of the same reasons and particularly to associate their words with God's speech, to dress them up in holiness. The Temple Scroll, Jubilees and the Pesher on Habbakuk were written in Hebrew. So was the Wisdom of Ben Sirah, so were Tobit and Judith. The fact that a book had been written in Lashon Ha-Kodesh (Hebrew, the holy tongue) rather than in Aramaic or Mishnaic Hebrew, a contemporary scholar's vernacular, seems to have played a role in rabbinic times in determining whether it made the final cut. But in the history of these changeful times nothing is uncomplicated: the existence of a work in Aramaic or Mishnaic Hebrew, a contemporary scholar's vernacular, seems to have played a role in rabbinic times in determining whether it made the final cut. But in the history of these changeful times nothing is uncomplicated: the existence of a work in Aramaic was not a compelling reason for exclusion -- vide the Aramaic portions of Ezra-Nehemiah and Daniel--or a work in Hebrew for inclusion--vide Ben Sirah, Judith, and Tobit.

→ 10. doesn't Mishnah at times reveal deep meanings of text-level -- ?

One bit of evidence from rabbinic times of the synagogue's emergence as Mikdash Me'at, a small sanctuary which possessed some of the redemptive power once associated with The Temple, was the deliberate retention of some Hebrew in the worship service and the requirement of public readings from the scrolls in their original Hebrew. Theoretically, one could pray in any language--there were Aramaic and Greek prayers--but the sense of power and mystery associated with Hebrew tended to outweigh more practical considerations. Hebrew was, for the most part, deliberately kept alive in the house of prayer. Much of the power implicit in the liturgy lay in the participant's use of God's language. Hebrew was the language in which God had addressed Israel and it was the language in which Israel felt it proper to address God. Though it is not generally considered in this light, the rabbinic ritual of Keriat Ha-Torah--reading the Torah--for which every male was trained was shaped to be a rite of communion. A reader read God's own phrases in God's own tongue.

It was an age of intellectual ferment. New ideas circulated about the after life, personal immortality, and the individual's fate -- as well as the nation's, about the Messianic promise, martyrdom, and the secret, deeper meaning of certain cherished texts. Midrash, that massive interpretive effort through which Jews examined every aspect of their scripture and in so doing changed its thrust and nature, begins here. Midrash emerges as a full-blown discipline which required ingenuity and intellectual legerdemain since the texts were old, in a sacred language, dealt with limited subjects.

→ i.e. doesn't Midrash at times reveal deep meanings of Gen 2-3...?

more complex than that

matter, and sometimes seemed at odds with the needs and sensitivities of the cultural milieu in which Jews now found themselves. Midrash inspires awe and sometimes bemusement at its ingenuity, but we must not forget that at Midrash's heart lay the conviction that the sacred texts meant more than they seemed to mean. There was more in them than context, logic, or common sense readily suggested, which is another way of saying that even as Jews began to accept the concept of a holy scripture, the leaders pressed vigorously to insure that the community accept these texts in a proper light -- theirs. The sages did not rewrite these texts. They reinterpreted them. They held the texts sacred, but this did not bar their reading into them unexpected meanings.

Despite the increased importance and visibility of written scrolls in late Hellenistic times, the oral traditions continue to exert a powerful, though no longer totally dominant, influence. Toward the end of the period Philo felt it appropriate to make clear the importance and force of the non-written tradition.

Deut 19:14 You shall not move your neighbor's landmark, set up by previous generations (Deut. ¹⁹19:14). This law applies not merely to allotments and boundaries of land. . . but also to the safeguarding of ancient customs. For customs are unwritten laws, the decisions approved by men of old, not inscribed on monuments nor on leaves of paper which the moth destroys but on the souls of those who are that God had specifically laid out what Israel must do. A text

partners in the same citizenship, for children ought to inherit from their parents, besides their property, ancestral customs which they were reared in and have lived with even from the cradle and not despite them because they have been handed down without written record (De. Spec. Legibus 4:149).

If anything, the emergence of separate texts added to the importance of the envelope of oral custom, ancient practice, and familiar precedent which framed the text. Various groups used elements from the ocean of the oral tradition to make sure a text was understood in a particular way. The Sefer Torah would be placed in the synagogue Ark unencumbered, a pristine symbol: but it would not be read in the synagogue without Targum, an interpretive Aramaic translation, or studied in the schools without commentary. The Pharisaic habit of thought which became the dominant one in the centuries after 70 C.E. emphasized the careful definition of texts. Until quite recent times the masters in the yeshivot seriously frowned on a student found reading Biblical texts without the mantle of Targum and commentary into which the rabbis had woven their interpretations.

No group within the late Hellenistic Jewish communities would have appreciated the early Protestant insistence on each individual's right and duty to approach Scripture with an open, unencumbered mind. Jews saw such an approach as a guarantee of division within the community. Moreover, it ran counter to the Biblical belief that God had specifically laid out what Israel must do. A text

(did not have)

What does this refer to specifically?

What about 7:133?

How old is concept of Israel? 500 BCE? 1000 BCE?

'might have many legitimate levels of meaning, but at each level only one interpretation was acceptable.

The more widely literacy spread, the more easily the community accepted the idea that there was a particular set of sacred writings: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Tradition and the texts are not complementary but not identical. Tradition spreads a wider net. A critical shift in perspective began to take place. The written text had been largely a repository of tradition. It now begins to be seen as the place where investigation and discussion start, the source from which the tradition flows. Scribes and others began to study the texts to fully understand doctrine and discipline and for their secrets. The texts began to shape tradition.

The change was first manifested among the literate who cared about religious ideas, had access to the texts and valued them. Trained as editors and scholars, they gravitated naturally to the analysis and the interpretation of texts and, inevitably, not only new insights but differences of opinion began to emerge. Philo and the Pharisee drew quite different theologies and definitions out of the same text.

This change of perspective appears first in the use of the various Biblical prophecies as sources for messianic and millenarian expectations. Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness took this approach to services in the Pesharim on various prophetic books which he prepared for his followers. The Essenes venerated their founder, the teacher of righteousness, as an inspired interpreter of the

OR vice versa?

how about 2 or 3 examples to flesh out this point?

*
✓
Torah and prophets: "God had made known (to him) all the secrets of the words of His servants to the prophets" (4Q¹ Pg 37~~1~~).

check
This translates to mean that he had examined the texts of various prophets and been inspired to discover in them eschatological information. His Pesharim developed the esoteric truths which sustained his followers. They studied the commentaries and writings and other books that they considered "biblical" to understand what the teacher had uncovered when "he had ^{"dugged"} ~~the~~ well" ^{of plentiful waters} (C.D. III:16) and to make sure that they kept the law of God as it should be kept. As they studied the original Torah and its prophets, they discovered ^{"every matter"} ~~"things"~~ hidden from Israel" which they would make known to their brothers and sisters but not to outsiders (M.D.

○ VIII:11-12).

Two different Midrashic techniques were adopted quite early by all groups. Peshat, a straight-forward contextual analysis of a passage's implications which made reasonable deductions from the text, filling in details and making connection between one text and another; and Derash, a more imaginative and artful approach, and in early rabbinic times (2nd/3rd centuries C.E.) a more important one, using imaginative etymologies, assuming connections between homonyms or meaning in sentences containing the same word which otherwise have nothing to do with each other. Derash provided detail for sparsely sketched incidents and assured that the ancestors' actions were put in a good light. The Pharisaic sages did not invent these two forms of Midrash. One finds both already in the Bible. One example: There are two scriptural versions of

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(Nagari 236)

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K. 6
"PICKN JK"
"SIT-222"

The emergence of commentary significantly enlarges the authority of tradition, defines a particular stream of meaning, and is strong evidence that we have entered a world where the books of the Bible have begun to be seen as constitutive. Later, in rabbinic times, instead of asking priests to consult the oracles, people will ask their sages to ascertain God's will from holy texts.

BB. 12a ✓
 ? Since? {

The rabbis would later insist that prophecy had ceased in Israel soon after the exile. It had not. People turned to texts more often than to prophets, but prophets continued to speak and to be consulted on public and private matters. In post-exilic times there are numerous references to what had been said before. The editors of Chronicles had the Deuteronomic histories in mind. Jubilees knows Genesis. Jonah is a novella built around a well-known prophecy concerning the destruction of Nineveh and a known historical figure. Increasingly, texts provided a place from which could be drawn the process of defining and extending the covenanted way of life. No one could predict what a latter-day Amos might claim to be God's will, but the text was there, solid, fixed.

The text had another virtue. The scrolls were available to anyone who could read. The power that accompanied the interpretation of texts served well the religious concerns and ambitions of many in the growing literate sections of the community. The priest-scribes of The Temple may not have used the texts in Temple ritual, but they were available, and anyone who could write or hire a scribe could acquire a copy. History is full of paradoxes. One of my favorite is the proposition that if Israel's scripture had had a more exalted birth the text probably would have been shut away as a prerogative of the priests; but since the texts had begun life simply as records of well-known oral traditions or as

But when they were recognized
as Divine - people were encouraged to study
them.

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It was not pure logic that carried the day. The sages had followed the advice of their early leaders and raised up many disciples. Confident of their approach, they were ready and willing to fill the power gap which opened after the revolt of 68-72 was crushed and The Second Temple destroyed. Their Midrashic technique

was not unlike contemporary Greek techniques used in interpreting Homer, little more than ingenious, sometimes elegant, ways to discover meanings that were not self-evident. The Pharisaic way would ultimately be the Jewish way.

During Hellenistic times the texts were not the only source of authority. Until The Temple altar was forcibly closed in 70 C.E., people continued to consult the priests for oracles. Philo reports that the Therapeutae, a group of Egyptian Zenobites, sometimes spoke prophetically in their sleep. Daniel, which was probably written during the Maccabean revolt (168-165 B.C.E.) describes its hero as one "who had understanding of all visions and dreams" (1:17). God reveals to Daniel the context of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and then interprets its meaning. In his prayers Daniel thanks God "who gives wisdom to the wise. . . and reveals deep and mysterious things" (2:21). Daniel is both sage and seer whose knowledge comes equally from the mastery of texts and from purification and prayer. He eats only pure foods, fasts regularly, and prays three times a day. He interprets well-known traditions, such as Jeremiah's prophecy that the Judeans would return to Jerusalem after seventy years of exile, even as he receives knowledge of other secret things. Visionaries like Enoch are pictured entering heaven to receive the knowledge of the future which is available there. Leaders of all these groups claimed divine inspiration for their views and their interpretations of sacred texts.

perhaps
least
Egyptian
(Alexandrian
origins?)

Does scripture
view Daniel
as
prophetic?

2:21-22

The Judean sages who developed the Oral Law wanted to associate their formulations with Torah, but some could not use the classic language, Scriptural Hebrew, with ease. To remedy that lack they developed an updated Hebrew dialect, which we call Mishnaic, whose grammar, syntax, and vocabulary show significant Aramaic influence and include also a number of Persian and a greater number of Greek words. It is not clear to what degree those who spoke the revised Hebrew dialect could understand a tongue any more than a Greek speaker in Ptolemaic Alexandria who used Koine could understand a rhapsodist reciting Homer. Targumim, popular Aramaic translations of various scrolls, begin to appear. The original Hebrew speech becomes Lashon Ha-Kodesh, a sacred tongue, powerful because of its association with God's speech, revered for its identification with the ancient tradition and for its use by the priests when they conducted Temple ceremonies--all associations which helped raise the chosen Hebrew scrolls to the rank of Scripture.

It is not clear whether the preachers and religious teachers of the Greek diaspora could manage classic Hebrew. There is a long-standing scholarly argument whether Philo, the best trained Jewish scholar of the period, could read Hebrew: Philo's commentaries are seen to be based entirely on the Septuagint, which he apparently quotes from memory. That such a question is raised about the most scholarly preacher-teacher of this age and is still unresolved suggests the distance between Greek-speaking

Is this
a term relegated
to the
scripture?

who to our knowledge was

✓ Jews and their Hebrew traditions. If sections from the Hebrew scrolls were chanted during worship in the prayer halls of the Egyptian diaspora, the congregation must have felt quite at sea. This is one reason why one should be careful in locating the origin of the ritual of regular Torah readings from the original Hebrew texts in the proto-synagogues of the diaspora. For most diaspora Jews, understanding of the Hebrew text required their translation. The rabbinic rule that a Jew may speak his prayers in any language suggests the need to accommodate monophones.

Scrolls were probably read only in translation in most early diaspora synagogues, but this was not the case in Palestine, although there, too, comprehension sometimes required translation. Aramaic derives from the same Akkadian mother language as Hebrew and uses the same alphabet. Aramaic speakers could sound out a Torah text and make intelligent guesses at the drift of what was read, but for most this was difficult work, indeed. Aramaic-speaking Judeans must have understood the Hebrew scripture's sentences in much the same way a modern English-speaking audience hears and "understands" Chaucer or Marlowe.

It was likelier for Palestinian Jews to be bilingual, Aramaic and Hebrew. A Targum, an Aramaic translation or paraphrase of the synagogue reading, was necessary to give most audiences a full understanding of the text and not simply, as some would argue, to impose a particular interpretation of the text. We see here the separation of symbol from substance which will to some degree

turned tail. Farmers heard of Abraham's accomplishment and asked

characterize all subsequent treatments of scripture. The Targum was to be read aloud. It was not a sacred writing but a device to heighten understanding. Written versions did appear, but Targumim were never encrusted, as the Septuagint was, with legends designed to establish their perfection and thus their use as a primary resource.

Stories circulated in Hellenistic times in both oral and written form, were widely credited, and would be credited for centuries. History was still seen largely as story, and many imaginative products of this age, particularly the early Aggadah, can be understood only as story. Aggadah is the non-legal part of the post-biblical oral history embracing narratives, legends, parables, allegories, poems, prayers, theological and philosophical reflections.

The Mishnah literature, developed over more than a millennium, consists almost entirely of Aggadah, and much of the Talmud is aggadic.

Several examples will stand for many. According to Jubilees, when Abraham's father, Terah, was born, the satanic angel, Mastema, unleashed a plague of ravens against his birthplace, the city-state of Ur. It was the planting season. Ravens ate the seeds before the grain had a chance to grow. The community faced starvation and had no relief for many years, until Abraham grew up and came to the rescue. Abraham had developed special powers. He had acknowledged the one true God and had become a Shaman. When the flock of predator ravens returned, Abraham stood in the fields and ordered the birds "to return from whence you come." The birds turned tail. Farmers heard of Abraham's accomplishment and asked

What about
the version
of the
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in
the
Talmud
12:20

*
 this all-powerful sorcerer to protect their fields. He plied this trade successfully and profitably for a year, but not wanting to spend his life as a sorcerer-scarecrow, Abraham invented a mechanized substitute for his presence, a dispenser which fit on the front of the plow and drops the seed directly on the ploughshare and so into the furrow. The seed is safely in the ground before the bird can get at it (Jub. 11).

✓ How did Abraham come to acknowledge the one God? Jubilees offers two explanations. On the one hand, Abraham simply thought out the idea and God rewarded him by having the Angel of the Presence reveal to him theological secrets. And on the other, Abraham had noticed that the stars moved in irregular circuits through the heavens and had reasoned that if these bodies had been gods they would have arranged comfortable symmetrical circuits for themselves. Their erratic, rather than circular, paths meant that their movements were controlled from the outside. Man, Abraham reasoned, should worship the controller, not the object controlled (Ant. 1:7).

> Incidentally, in this period Abraham had quite a reputation as an astronomer. Josephus reported that Abraham had used the occasion of his visit to Egypt to teach Egyptian priests the astronomical knowledge of the Chaldeans (Ant. 1:81, (par # 2))

Other versions of the early life of Abraham departed even further from the official narrative tradition. A Latin translation of a Greek translation of what was probably a free-wheeling, first-century C.E. story-history in Hebrew, The Antiquities of the Jew, (Pseudo-Philo) dates the beginning of Abraham's career

There is a
 gap which
 needs to be
 filled

to the generation which tried to build the Tower of Babel. Abraham is one of twelve men who objected to the tower project and refused to work on it. Their reasons are not stated, but it is suggested that they knew that God opposed the project. The local building committee threatened the protesting twelve that they would be burned in a brick kiln on the construction site unless they relented immediately and participated. One committee member, Jaftan, disturbed by such an arbitrary threat, sets out to save the protesters. He pleads for time, a week, during which he suggests the twelve may change their minds. He promises to keep the prisoners under close arrest during the grace period. His colleagues grudgingly agree. The twelve are jailed in Jaftan's house and he arranges their escape. All are eager to go except Abraham who, apparently, feels perfectly safe since God protects the blameless. The others flee. Abraham stays. The week ends. The mob returns. Jaftan tries to save Abraham by telling the mob that everyone had escaped, but Abraham is discovered. At least there is one available victim. Abraham is cast into a fiery kiln. God protects His faithful. he sends an earthquake. The kiln cracks and its flames spread in all directions, killing those who stand about. Like Daniel, Abraham emerges unscathed. The tale, again like Daniel, applied to a generation which had to endure the harsh repression of Antiochus IV against whom the Maccabees rebelled. The story is pure invention, but like most ancient inventions, it is not without some link to tradition. Someone had noticed the similarity

by whom?
(in case)

if it has
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then it's
not
pure
invention
(is it?)

in sound between Ur, Abraham's birthplace, and Or, ^{Light} fire.

Abraham emerges safely from Ur-Or, having given proof that his faith is alight. After those events Abraham is rewarded with land and covenant. He settles in Canaan while the generation of the tower are scattered abroad.

Many portions of the written literature reveal the imprint of an oral culture's training in the use of memory aids. The frequent repetition of phrases, even of whole segments of a story, a prominent feature of Biblical narrative, was one way storytellers helped their audiences fix the story in their memories. Much Biblical prose is handled with great economy of language while also featuring repetitive patterns and word play. Here was a way audiences could hear the salient details they had missed the first time around. We have noted that certain psalms (111, 145) are organized on an acrostic pattern as are the first four chapters of Lamentations and the encomium to the "Woman of Valor" which closes Proverbs.

The chant was a traditional aid to memory. Rhyme, rhythm, and melody help fix lines in the mind. Hebrew poetry, following familiar West Asian poetic styles, depends on a pattern of parallel lines which develop or contrast related themes and on the use of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. Alliteration and word play, common stylistic elements, also helped memory.

No one confronted a manuscript as we do a book, as a silent, inert object. Oral tradition became the written text and was known as Mikra, that which is heard. Reading was never a silent activity. To those who read aloud, manuscript and speech were

James
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insights

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intimately identified. In his extensive commentaries on Biblical texts, Philo, whom we cite as representative of the scholarly elite of the Hellenistic diaspora, never cites a particular Septuagint translation; rather, he quotes from memory, as do the sages cited in Mishnah and Tosefta, where most citations begin, She-ne-emar, "as it is said," rather than Ka-katuv, "as it is written." ✓

Writing has become easier and swifter. Parchment is easier to come by. Scribes allow themselves greater latitude in descriptive phrases and detail. Some literature begins to show the signs of being just that. The priestly chronicles are expansive and full of lists. Novella like Esther are verbose. In Job the poet's imagination runs over any need for compression.

Written compositions begin to indulge in an elaboration and expansion of detail which was impossible when writing materials were scarce and writing techniques uncertain. Examples can be seen clearly in late rewritings like the Genesis Apocryphon, a Midrashic elaboration found among the Dead Sea scrolls. As an example, Abraham's visit to Egypt:

There was a famine in the land and Abraham went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. As he was about to enter Egypt he said to his wife Sarai, "I am well aware that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'She is his wife', and they will kill me, but let you live. Say then that you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you."

of their ideas and the reputation of their author.

define

Make clear what this is about for her.

When Abraham entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw how beautiful the woman was. Pharaoh's courtiers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace. And because of her, it went well with Abram, he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, males and female slaves, she-asses and camels.

But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abraham. Pharaoh sent for Abraham and said, "What is this you have done to me! Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"

Why did you say, 'she is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife: take her and be ^{gone} good. And Pharaoh put men in charge of him and they sent him away with his wife and all that he possessed.

*1/8 1.64
broken? 25e
1/1 1.64*

— Prolixity and--what cannot be seen from the translation--the fact that the work was in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew, are dead giveaways that the work was set down at a time when the art of reading had become relatively common. The author clearly wrote for readers and not for listeners who needed to memorize his story.

In fact, most scrolls composed and written in Aramaic or Greek during this period seem to have given little weight to the necessity of memorization. They not only tend to be wordy but they make less use of mnemonics, alliteration, word play, and the other techniques used in oral cultures to ease memorization. Increasingly, written works are attributed to specific authors and claim attention not because they are inspired but for the force of their ideas and the reputation of their author.

By contrast, the hebrew writings of the Pharisees and early rabbinic sages stands out from other writings of the time because they continue the emphasis on compactness. Their work shows little, if any, evidence of the changes which occur when an oral culture is transformed by the introduction of writing. Far from being verbose, these writings consist largely of discrete axioms marked by succinctness, economy of phrase, and the use of mnemonic devices and other aids to memory. The few statements cited in M. Pirke Avot (3rd cen. B.C.E.-1st C.E.) in the name of sages of the second and first century B.C.E., are so terse as to appear gnomic. The earliest statement attributed to any of these men, "be prudent in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah" (M. Pirke Avot 1:1), characteristically can be read in any number of ways depending on the context the reader assumes.

The Mishnah is a collection of compact sayings, statements of law, briefly noted incidents, and cryptic references to scholarly debates presented in the updated Mishnaic Hebrew without elaboration or connective tissue. Not one rabbi cited in the Talmud is reported to have written a book of his own. ~~It~~ can be said of the literary legacy of the Pharisees and their successors, the rabbis of the Talmudic Age, what critics have observed of the Shaker settlements, that you could look at any building they erected and not find a trace of ornamentation. Theirs was, however, not the unself-conscious use of compression by storytellers and earlier teachers who expected and desired that their words become a living part of

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P' 10

'the national memory. This was Torah - material which should be in the forefront of every Jew's mind because it revealed to him what he must do to please God.

All this suggests that in the pre-Mishnaic centuries (3rd century B.C.E.-3rd century C.E.) for the first time people begin to turn to texts for authority and consciously design texts to exert authority. Certain essential features of a scriptural tradition have emerged, the basis of the later Rabbinic teachings. Since, at least symbolically, a scripture serves as the court of final appeal on all issues that concern the basic requirements of a community's religious life, it must be understood as pregnant with good thoughts and examples. Essene commentators went to great lengths to protect the good name of the founders of the Davidic dynasty who, they believed, would rule again in Messianic times. God, Himself, had promised that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" and "that ^{? shoot} (sprigs) will grow from the ^{stump - 856} (root) of Jesse. . . ." (Is. ~~41~~ 11:1 ff). David and Solomon were not only renowned and successful kings but founders of the Messianic dynasty: yet, in violation of Torah law both men had taken gentile wives. How could this be? Apologetes told a story that the Torah had not been available to the great kings, "David read not in the book of the law." How could that be? From the time when Israel had sinned with the Golden Calf the Torah books had been sealed and placed in the ark: that seal was not broken until the time of the high priest Zadok (~~1 Kings 8:25~~ ^{C.D. II:2-5}). for what we would call a

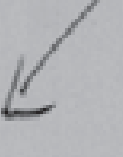
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Schooling in Judea remained as it had been, tutorial, conservative, concerned with imprinting the classic traditions and consensus values on the youth's mind: "Train up a child in the way that he should go" (Prov 22:6). As had been the case since time immemorial, most children did not learn to write or read. Imitation of the ways of their elders and immersion in an embracing and distinctive culture provided most of the young with the skills, conventional wisdom, and value system that they required. Only well-born or extremely fortunate young men were given the opportunity of a formal education.

Most book learning consisted primarily, as it had for centuries, of simple repetition until certain rudimentary texts were firmly fixed in the mind. We can describe only one school of this period, the early second-century B.C.E. Academy for the sons of Jerusalem's well-to-do, whose head master, Joshua Ben Sirah, fortunately for us, took the time to set down his favorite observations about morals and the nature of life for the benefit of his students and posterity.

An Egyptian grandson later added several paragraphs about his grandfather's school and methods. While Hellenistic schools for upper-class Greek youths were often situated in a campus-like setting which included various buildings for lectures, athletics, and communal eating, Ben Sirah's school undoubtedly was not so grand. Apparently, Judean schools met out of doors. The term Yeshivah, which became the designation for what we would call a

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secondary school or college, comes from the root 'to sit' and suggests that students met wherever the teachers were, perhaps where they lived. The master was the school, not the building. Even in winter any public place could do.

We do not know what Ben Sirah called his school. In a preface to the book his grandson called the school a Beit ha-Midrash, literally a place for the exposition of venerated traditions, and described a curriculum which aimed to provide students with considerable proficiency in the correct reading and understanding of "the law, the prophets and the other books of our Fathers" (Prologues 1:10). That is the wisdom which provides enlightenment. The grandfather's commonplace book contains observations on ethics, the arts, morals, manners, and the rules of literary interpretation.

Ben Sirah taught his students to read properly the texts that he believed should be known by any educated Jerusalemite. He seems to have believed, as did many Jews and non-Jews at the time, that a person is, and only can be, what the ideas he carries around in his mind allow him to be. Maxims were assigned not simply because they were memorable and useful as discussion starters but because they presented ideas that ought to be imprinted on the mind. Having the right thoughts was essential to the development of good character.

Ben Sirah considered a proper education the key to the good life. He insists that only education can implant the best thoughts in a person's mind, and appeals to his students, sons of privilege,

cf 12th c.
renaissance

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Greek?

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* you quote from vs 33 only
34 reads "yet they support the fabric of the world."

to recognize and appreciate their advantages. Farmers, tradesmen, and craftsmen have their necessary place, but their tasks deny them the opportunity "to study the law of the most high." A scholar's wisdom depends on ample leisure. If a man is to be wise, he must be relieved of other tasks. it is a given that literacy confers authority. "They, the peasantry and city laborers, are not sought out for the council of the people. They do not obtain eminence in the public assembly. They do not sit in the Judge's seat, nor do they understand the sentence of judgment" (38:33 ~~MA~~ ^{MA}).

His assumptions about the value of memorizing good thoughts were consistent with other ideas held in his day. The practice of using certain traditional affirmations as mantras was fairly common. Already in pre-exilic times, the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deut. 6:14), may have served in this way. During the Hellenistic period this practice of reciting key paragraphs from the tradition was expanded to include beside the Shema, other and longer sections from the five books (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21) and the Ten Commandments, which many recited twice a day. Among unlearned people such recitations not only fixed key ideas in the mind and so helped to keep people on the right path, but also served as talismen, protective formulae, which warded off evil thoughts and evil spirits.

Ben Sirah would have none of this. He concentrated on ideas and values that would help his young scholars make their way in the world and lead effective and responsible civic lives. In

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Deut 6:4-9
11:13-21

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✓ tune with Hellenistic pedagogical practice, he offered, beside good thoughts, a selection of role models. His book closes with a series of thumbnail biographies of the heroes of the past in which their civic virtues are highlighted. Abraham is presented as a model of faithfulness. Joseph is omitted; presumably his youthful egotism might have suggested to the boys that self-centeredness was a virtue. Ben Sirah often only suggests an incident in the lives of his heroes. He clearly expected that his charges could fill in the details, another indication if one is needed, of the community's broad familiarity with its early traditions.

The oral tradition remained very much alive. It had to be. Many Judeans still could neither read nor write. The growing importance of the Torah text did not mean that the oral traditions were cast aside or even reduced to the caliber of the legendary. The historical writers of this age--Eupolemus, Artapanus, Josephus of Tiberias and, of course, Flavius Josephus--used the oral tradition with the same ease and sense of reliability as they used the written texts.

How did Ben Sirah teach "the Torah, the Prophets and other works of the Fathers?" When we give students a book as a homework assignment we expect them to work out its argument on their own. Ben Sirah could not operate this way. Few homes had books. They were still too expensive. His pupils had to memorize. Learning required reading aloud and being corrected by the master--

Ben Sirah's book does not present itself as a commentary on any

Is that the reason
for the strength
of the oral tradition
directly or indirectly
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listening and repeating, listening and repeating. "Wisdom is known through speech and education comes through the spoken word" *Ben Sirah* (Deut. 4:24). Even with improved scribal techniques, books could not be instantly read. Ben Sirah must have used long familiar methods to teach students the correct reading of a manuscript. Though his goal was the mastery of a text, he probably gave an occasional lecture on ideas suggested by the reading. Hellenistic Judaism did not develop a systematic interpretive methodology. Neither Proverbs nor Ben Sirah concern themselves with what would be called today semiotics, a methodology for interpreting texts, nor do they present the steps through which an idea was winkled out of the text.

Ben Sirah believed that truth came from many sources. His student is to "investigate all the wisdom of the past." He studies the prophecies, preserves the sayings of famous men, and "penetrates the intricacies of parables and the hidden meaning of Proverbs. . . prepared in this way he will give sound advice and dispense knowledge. . . he will disclose what he has learned from his own education and still take pride in the law of the Lord's covenant" (). Knowledge, as Ben Sirah offered it, comes from inspired texts, experience, the intellectual deposit we call wisdom and probably from a variety of ideas that had simply caught his fancy. All wisdom is at base one, but Ben Sirah never imagined that all wisdom could be found in any one text. Ben Sirah's book does not present itself as a commentary on any

written text was frozen speech. They never saw it without hearing

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'scroll or set of scrolls but as an independently wrought synthesis of Torah and Wisdom. Though his language is replete with familiar Biblical phrases, he does not provide proof texts to support his teachings. The value of whole tradition, oral and written, is assumed.

The earliest source which speaks of a venerated text as the source of esoteric, religious traditions derives from prophetic literature. The Essene faithful held that their Teacher of Righteousness had [?]revealed to him the esoteric truths which lay embedded in the prophetic speech of Habakkuk and other prophets

~~He and his followers thanked God, for had God not taken away the veil that was before men's~~
^{He and} His followers thanked God, for had God ^{"caused me to know Thy wondrous mysteries"} ~~not taken away the veil that was before men's~~

~~eyes, he and they could not have known these wondrous things~~

~~(I Q H 8:19) ← not in 8:19 (g. 1. 10)~~

I Q H IV: 24-25

The prophetic texts are seen as containing apocalyptic teachings and millenarian secrets. In this sense they are the heirs of the Biblical writers who reinterpreted the seventy-year oracle spoken by Jeremiah so that it referred to later events (25:9-12, cf. 2 Ch. 36:19ff, Zech. 1:12, 7:5, Daniel 9) ^{vss 2, 24 ff}

The men of the Hellenistic age and the Talmudic sages after them looked on certain books as their forefathers had looked on certain oracles, as predictions of events yet to happen.

Accustomed to print and the linear, matter-of-fact thought patterns that silent reading imposes, we tend to assume a text is no more or less than it presents itself to be. To these men a written text was frozen speech. They never saw it without hearing

it read. hearing speech is a happening, an event, full of surprises. We hear with our eyes as well as our ears. We listen creatively and sometimes surprise ourselves in the way we respond. The language in which these men begin to talk of the meaning of the venerated texts is revealing. One who knows the texts "pours out teaching and prophecy" (B.S. 21:23). The psalmist asked God "unveil my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from out of Your Torah" (PS. 119:18).

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that the Torah's super * * * * * ed from its author--not unlike

It is hard to assess how much impact Greek assumptions about the importance of a constitution had on the emergence of the five scrolls as preeminent within the Jewish tradition. In the Greek-speaking diaspora Nomos, law, was the term most often used to translate Torah (cf. Septuagint Ex. 28:12 etc.). On the one hand, Nomos suggested a narrower range of meanings than Torah, law rather than tradition. On the other it extended the meaning of Torah by associating it with the idea of a constitution. Constitutions were much prized in the Hellenistic world. They provided the basis of social order and in so doing defined the right and set standards for every citizen. To have a constitution was proof that one belonged to a civilized community.

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 does not
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 Ex 28:12

In the apologetic literature we find Moses pictured as a Hebrew Solon and the claim, which seems to have satisfied the Jews who made it, that they possessed not only a constitution but the constitution, God's own. Jews could and did say not only 'we,

'too, have good laws' but also 'our law is older and better.' Apologetes knew few limits to their enthusiasm for the law. One wrote, 'Moses taught law to Plato.' A philosopher such as Philo took the matter more seriously. His depiction of Moses in Vita Moysis as a paragon who embodied all the accepted virtues was his way of underscoring the unique virtues of the law itself. Moses' law was a reflection of his moral and spiritual perfection. We also find Philo making the somewhat inconsistent argument that the Torah's superiority derived from its author--not unlike Solon or Lycurgus, mere mortal, but God.

It is not irrelevant that the author of Aristeas translated Torah as Nomos, law, and most of the Greek writings by Jews follow suit. This translation may only respond to The Letter of Aristeas invention that Ptolemaic administrators had encouraged the Septuagint because they needed a constitutional document to guide them in their relationship with this particular millet community. But he also goes to some length to indicate how central this law was to Jews. Such an approach would not have seemed strange to Hellenistic Jews. Ezra's use of a Torah scroll was, in its own way, constitutional: 'Here is your law, O Israel' (Ezra [indeed]). Having become in a relatively short time both numerous and prosperous, Alexandrian Jewry needed a constitution for practical political reasons and for cultural self-respect.

Aristeas describes how an authoritative translation of the five books of Moses into demotic Greek was completed in Alexandria

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'during the reign of Ptolemy II (ca. 280 B.C.E.). This translation of the five scrolls, commonly called the Septuagint on the basis of Aristeas' report that seventy-two scholars had worked in separate cells on the translation and that their individual efforts had agreed in every detail, became for the Jews of the Egyptian diaspora the equivalent of Solon's laws, a divinely-appointed constitution for their community. Constitutions were considered by the Greek culture the vitalizing structure of a city, an attempt to manage properly a human community in ways which conformed to the laws of the universe, not only as to the will of the gods but as necessary guidance in the organization of the social order.

The account is highly legendary, probably written in Palestine rather than Egypt well over a century after the events it claims to describe. The author seems to have had several purposes in mind: to validate the miraculous accuracy of the translation against all challenges; to suggest that it contained all meanings and, therefore, shared the authority God had placed in the Hebrew original; and to praise its value as a constitution so Jews need not feel culturally inferior to the Greeks to whom a constitution was the absolutely indispensable foundation of any civilized community. Indeed, Jews could legitimately feel superior because the Jews' constitution alone was divine.

Aristeas reports that the court of Ptolemy was urged by one Demetrius, the founding administrator of the famous Museum Library, to request a translation of the five scrolls. Demetrius, we are

told, informed his royal patron of the library's need for a Greek language version of the "Book of the Law of the Jews", presumably so that the court would have access to reliable information about the laws of a sizeable segment of the Alexandrian community. Jews had flourished there since the king's father and city founder, Ptolemy I, fearful of populating his new capital with potentially rebellious natives, had brought a Judean labor battalion down to Egypt to help build his city and protect his rule, and then had allowed them to stay. Alexandria was from the first a remarkable success and the Jews had flourished with it.

Demetrius asks for translators "who have led exemplary lives and are experts in their own law. . .so that when we have examined wherein the majority agree, the work of making an accurate translation can proceed" (1:32). His letter indicates that the library owned manuscripts of the five books "written in Hebrew characters and in the Hebrew tongue. . .committed to writing experts, not

adequately" (1:30). In short, that Hebrew manuscripts existed but they did not meet the standards Greeks expected of major manuscripts.

The meaning of "not adequately" is unclear. It may suggest scrolls written in the old, hard-to-read Ketav Ivri script or that the manuscripts in the library's collection were, for one reason or another, suspect. Perhaps there were questions whether the scribe(s) who had made them had worked from a reliable master copy, had done their work carefully or had filled the margin with

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'corrections. Whatever the explanation, that the existing scrolls were unreliable is taken for granted, and there was anxiety that a translation based on such a text would be inadequate.

According to Aristeas, written more than a century after the event, the king passed on his librarian's request to the Jerusalem High Priest, Eleazer, who, as Ptolemy's subject; was quick to do his overlord's will and dispatched Temple scribes to sort out textual problems and prepare a usable translation. A skilled courtier, Eleazer dispatched not merely the requested scholar translators, six from each of the twelve tribes, but sent along several scrolls which could serve as a secure textual basis for the translation. There is no indication that the scrolls he sent were handled in any special way or treated as sacred objects. In Alexandria the scrolls were "uncovered" and "unrolled" in the king's presence so that his curiosity about them could be satisfied. Aristeas shows no concern about a violation of ritual purity--a holy object was exposed to contamination by contact with those who were ritually "impure," that is non-Jews (1:176-8), an event which would have horrified later generations. Eleazer requested that his scholars be returned, but there is no mention that the master scrolls should be returned.

There are many problems with this version of events, not the least that Demetrius did not hold the librarianship under Ptolemy II and that when the translation was completed it was not shelved

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 'in the library but proclaimed by the Jewish community as their law. The library, after its initial efforts, seems profoundly indifferent to the work it had commissioned. It seems unlikely that a dependable translation became possible and was, in fact, accomplished when Alexandrian Jewry finally acquired a clear text, possibly an Ashurit scroll. Scrolls in this square script were prized for their legibility. A sage quoted in the Palestinian Talmud explains that Ashurit has the meaning of "the even writing" (P.T. Meg 1:71b).

check > The Greek-speaking diaspora seems to have accepted a version of the Septuagint Pentateuch as constitutional, to have used copies of this translation in their schools; to have accepted it to be what their religious leaders told them it was, a translation which was as good as the original, and to have used it as such.

In the translation which became normative, attempts were made to pick up some of the nuances of the Hebrew original. "I" in Greek is Ego: in Biblical Hebrew it is Ani and in rare cases Anochi; in the Septuagint Ani became Ego and Anoch Eim. Such uses opened up many interpretive possibilities; at the least is suggested the importance of attention to language. No wonder Philo called these translators "prophets and priests of mysteries, whose sincerity and singleness of thought has enabled them to concur with the purest of spirits, the spirit of Moses" (Vita Moysis 2:7-41).

did not feel → If the original purpose was to develop a Greek translation which was useful for administrative and constitutional purposes, the existence and popularity of this particular translation

insured that it would not be seen simply as a translation but as a primary text which included the original speech of God. Many in the diaspora must have believed that God spoke Greek. The Greek diaspora came to prize this translation, lavishing effusive praise on it. The Septuagint Pentateuch played so central a role in the Greek-speaking diaspora that elaborate legends (such as Aristeas) were told about its translation, apparently to defend it against Palestinian detractors who objected to the various ways it differed from their understanding of the Hebrew text.

Despite such pious legends as Aristeas, the facts suggest that several translations circulated until one version gained widespread approval and became in the diaspora the basis of schooling, storytelling, ceremony, and preaching. The analogy that suggests itself is to the impact on English life and thought of the King James translation of the Bible which became after its appearance in the seventeenth century not only the authentic word of God, who many in the Anglican church assumed spoke English, but the standard for centuries of English style and speech.

In this Hellenistic world inspired texts were deemed worthy of the most careful study. So, as with Homer, scholars coned the text for its deep meanings. Some interpreted the text contextually, others allegorically. Among the intelligentsia there were extreme allegorists who treated the letter of the law "with easygoing neglect" and literalists who paid little, if any, attention to its philosophic implications (Philo, De Migratione ^{Lib. 1} ~~Lib. 1~~).

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'Abrahmi (9-93). All groups acknowledged the text's importance.

There is a possibility that the Torah scrolls first began to be read publicly in the diaspora as part of an organized ceremony. The final scene of Aristeas' little drama describes a public reading of the newly completed translation to "the community of Jews," their acclamation of the text, and the uttering of a curse against anyone who would in the future alter it in any way (I:308-315). Though Temple scribes worked on Torah texts and were encouraged to do so by the hierarchy, the texts were never used liturgically. The Temple dominated Jerusalem and priestly conservatism dominated the use of the Temple scrolls. Readings had played no role in the ancient cult. The Temple was sacred to Alexandrian Jews who paid their annual dues toward its operation; but day-in-day-out local practice in the diaspora developed its own ritual forms. Religious life was organized around prayer halls (Proseuchai) and informal meetings. By the turn of the millennium, we hear of buildings set aside for public worship. Subjects relating to various Torah texts seem to have been discussed sermonically in these diaspora proto-synagogues, though it is not clear whether there developed a formal schedule of public readings from the Septuagint.

Much depends on how we interpret Philo's comment: "so on each Sabbath there stands wide open in every city thousands of schools of good sense, temperance, courage, justice and the other virtues in which the scholars sit in order, quietly, with ears alert and allegory since they think that the words of the literal text

with full attention, so much do they thirst for the draught which the teachers' words supply, while one of special experience rises and sets forth what is best and sure to be profitable and will make the whole life grow to something better. But among the vast number of particular truths and principles, these studies, there stand out particularly high above the other two main ones: Duty to God as shown by humanity and justice" (De Specialibus Legibus 8:62-63, 282). Philo speaks here of a sermon rather than specifically of a Torah reading, but it is reasonable to conjecture that such sermons were tied in some way to a reading or recitation as were, in fact, his own sermons. This certainly became synagogue practice.

We do not really know why and when the practice of the public reading from a Torah scroll began. Qumran's Manual of Discipline (1st cent. B.C.E.) describes a practice of that community which may go back to the second century B.C.E. A member of the order was appointed to read aloud during meals and at certain convocations, but it is not clear whether such readings were limited to the five scrolls of The Law, whether other texts were read, or whether any prescribed order was followed.

Philo's description of the Jewish monastic sect, the Therapeutae, may reflect a similar discipline though it is not clear that he describes a public function. "They read the whole law book and seek wisdom from their ancestral philosophy by taking it as an allegory since they think that the words of the literal text

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are symbols of something whose hidden nature is revealed by studying the underlying meaning. They also have writings of men of old, the founders of their way of thinking who left many memorials of the form used in allegorical interpretation and these they take as a kind of archetype and imitate the method in which this principle is carried out" (The Contemplative Life 28:29).

The public reading from the Torah on Sabbath, holidays, and market days seems to have its origin somewhere in the early history of the synagogue. Such readings had never been part of Temple practice. Here was a way to immerse oneself in God's instructions and listen again to His words without intruding on the religious forms that the priests declared to be reserved for The Temple. As the synagogue's familiar name, Beit Ha-Kenesset, place of assembly, suggests, the meeting rather than the building came first.

The synagogue came into being to fill a community need for a local gathering place where political or guild issues could be discussed and religious practices given an intimacy which the magnificent ceremonies of The Temple could not provide. Debate over the synagogue's origins is unresolved. Some trace it back to informal meetings presumedly organized during the Babylonian Exile. Some locate it in the Ma'amadot, the local groups raised in the towns of Judea after the Exile when it was their turn to provide The Temple with a delegation to assist at the communities outside Jerusalem for institutions more intimate than the national shrine. It is evident that meetings of various

kinds developed in different locations as Jews sought ways to keep their customs alive, satisfy God through worship, and renew their knowledge of and attention to sacred customs and lore. When there were at last scrolls considered sacred, reading and recitation of them inevitably played an increasingly important role at such meetings.

As we have seen, already in the late Persian period Levites traveled through the villages of Judea carrying scrolls and teaching the law. Some of these men may have read from their scrolls during local meetings and followed the reading with an explanation in the vernacular. About the only certainty in this complex history is that the practice of Torah reading cannot be traced back, as some have attempted to do, to Temple practice. The Torah never played a role in Temple ceremony.

Whatever form these meetings took, they differed from those in The Temple in that they were not the responsibility or province of the priests. The ancient priestly traditions make no mention of them. Priests organized the sacrificial cult. Strict rules of ritual purity surrounded the lives of the priests. Such rules did not apply to those who led whatever worship took place in the synagogue. The synagogue had no altar. Familiar hymns could be sung and traditional narratives could be retold. Someone might read from a text which had somehow come into his hands or recite a list of torot which applied to the Sabbath or a holiday. The same worship calendar was observed as in The Temple, though the

religious exercises appropriate to the Sabbath and holy days differed.

Yoma 7:1 The rabbis had a tradition which they codified in two Mishnah texts (early 3rd century C.E.) which indicate that portions from the Torah had been read during certain Temple ceremonies. Yoma 7:1 and Sotah 7:7 describe an elaborate Yom Kippur rite in the course of which the high priest presumably read certain Torah portions to the assemblage. According to the Yoma description the high priest conducted this reading clothed in white linen garments at a time which coincided with the most important Yom Kippur sacrifice, an offering of a bullock and a he-goat on the high altar. The reading is said to have taken place at some distance from the altar so that a spectator could not see both the activity around the altar and the high priest reading from a Torah scroll. The reading was surrounded with ceremony. Three officials hand the scroll from one to the other (Segan, Rosh Ha-Hakeneset, Chazan Ha-Hakeneset). The last of the three presented it to the high priest who received the scroll while standing and read it standing. The reading consisted of sections from Leviticus which describe how the Yom Kippur rites are to be observed (Lev. 16; ²³23:26-32). ✓ When the reading was completed, the High Priest rolled up the scroll, put it in its case, spoke a formula, "more is written than I have read out to you," and recited by heart a short list of Yom Kippur laws taken from another section of the Torah scroll (Num. 29:7-11). ✓ He then completed this section of ceremony by reciting eight

✓ blessings listed by title in the Yoma description.

Profusion of detail, of course, is no proof of authenticity. Nor does the appearance of a historical note in the body of the Mishnah guarantee its facticity. The Mishnah was edited over a century and a half after The Second Temple was destroyed, and some of its historical notes reflect not eye witness testimony but "recollections" of what Temple practice was imagined to have been by men confident that their practices were based on sacred precedent--in this case, the belief that Torah readings on a holy day had been a Temple practice.

There is no reference to such a ceremony in any of the surviving literature written during the period when The Temple was still standing. A careful examination of the Mishnah's description also raises doubt as to its accuracy. The rituals of Yom Kippur were carefully choreographed. "Every ceremony of Yom Kippur was carried out according to prescribed form. If one act was done out of order it lost all its force. . ." (M. Yoma 5:7). Yet, we are told: "Those who saw the sacrifice could not see the reader and those who saw the reader could not see the sacrifices" (7:2). It is hard to believe that priests would have organized the drama of Yom Kippur in such a way as to prevent those in attendance from observing two of its most important moments, since these would take place at the same time and at some distance from each other. But the most intractable barrier to accepting the text is that

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 it requires the High Priest to be at two different places at the same time; he presides at the sacrifice and reads the Torah portions. The only explanation possible requires us to assume that two high priests were involved. In late Temple times the title of high priest seems to have been both specific to the priest who had effective authority over The Temple and an honorary title borne by those who had served in this office and by other senior members of Zadokite families. But there is no suggestion here or anywhere else in the literature that on Yom Kippur any but the current high priest conducted the rituals which were crucial to the nation's future.

The description in M. Sota 7:7 also deals with a Yom Kippur reading though it focuses more directly on the portions of the five books to be read on that holy day (Lev. 16:1ff, Lev. 23:²⁶1ff and Num. ²⁹28:7ff) and the specific blessings to accompany the ritual. The impression is inescapable that the purpose of this section was to enhance the emotional power of the Yom Kippur reading in the synagogue by attaching to it a precedent in the practices of the Temple. This is a habit not uncommon in rabbinic thought.

Another report which deals with a public reading of the Torah in the Temple follows immediately on the above. This subsequent paragraph describes a reading by "the King" said to have taken place on the first day of the Festival of Succoth during successive sabbatical years. According to the Mishnah, a temporary wooden

temporary platform erected on the Temple Mount but outside The

these 3 references were already detailed p. 255 (bot)

Illustration?

platform was built in the temple court, the scroll to be used was ceremoniously handed to the king by four officials (Chazan Ha-Keneset, Rosh Ha-Keneset, Segan, and High Priest): the King received the scroll standing but read seated; the reading consisted of certain portions from Deuteronomy (Deut. 1:1-^{6:9;}~~6:9~~, 11:1-12:1, ^{13:21}~~13:21~~, ²²⁻²⁹~~14:1-16~~, Deut. ^{26:12-15}~~17:1-16~~, ^{17:14-20}~~28:1-5~~), concluding with the same eight blessings which the High Priest is described in Yoma as using on Yom Kippur. A specific instance is cited: King Agrippa had participated in such a ceremony.

This ritual may have been observed, albeit in not quite so elaborate a form and not necessarily regularly. Unlike the high priest's reading on Yom Kippur, the Succoth practice has some support in the Torah. In Deut. 31:10-13 Moses instructs the priests that during the Succoth Festival when the holiday occurs on a sabbatical year, "You shall read this teaching aloud in the presence of all israel" as long as "they (your children) live in the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to occupy." This tradition may lie behind the association of Ezra's reading with Succoth and the ruling, also in Ezra, that such readings should be repeated each sabbatical year. The Tosefta (late third century C.E.) specifically quotes Nehemiah 8 in this connection and goes on in some detail about the trumpet flourishes and royal pomp with which the ceremony was managed. According to Chronicles, Ezra's reading took place on a temporary platform erected on the Temple Mount but outside The minor roles in this ritual. The Segan, like the high priests,

'Temple proper before the Water Gate. The Mishnah places the King's reading outside the sanctuary proper in The Temple court. The corresponding Tosefta speaks only of some place, undesignated, on the Temple Mount. The Septennial reading was a political, not a priestly, ceremony. No special rites of purification are indicated as required of the participants nor are we told that special vestments were worn (T⁴ Sota 7:13-17). ^{8-9 (Vilna, I don't have 6.12 or 2.12 or 2.12 or 2.12)} The ceremony as described lacks all the distinctive elements of shrine ritual, including the most important of all, location in the shrine itself.

The purpose of this septennial ceremony seems to have been the desire to sanctify two political pieties: 'The king derives his authority from God's law' and 'the king must obey God's law.'

For a Hasmonean or Herodian dynast this ceremony would have been of practical benefit as a way of validating both title and authority. The portion he was asked to read includes: "After you have entered the land that the Lord your God has given you. . . you shall be free to set a king over yourself, one chosen by the Lord your God" (Deut. ¹⁷14-15). To gain this cachet, he need make only a symbolic submission to God's overriding authority: "to observe (faithfully) every word of this teaching. . . to the end he and his descendants may reign long in the midst of Israel"

✓ (Deut. 17:19-20). Kings find acts of symbolic submission to God infinitely preferable to actual constraints imposed by public law or a constitution.

An unlikely list of Temple personnel are listed as playing minor roles in this ritual. The Segan, like the high priests,

was a Temple official; but the other two who are named bear titles which derive from synagogue administration. The Chazan Ha-Keneset role is unclear, but his title implies he was specifically associated with the synagogue. The Rosh Ha-Keneset was the synagogue's paid administrator who, among his other functions, had charge of preparing the scrolls, bringing them into the synagogue from the chests where they were stored, and selecting those who were to read (E. Meg. 75b ff). Neither official needed to be a priest or a Levite. I find it hard to imagine that a high priest would share Yom Kippur, his great day, Israel's most momentous occasion, with officials of a non-Temple institution or allow non-priests to play a significant role in the ceremony.

Some explain the presence of these officials by the assertion that the Temple complex included a synagogue, that in the synagogue the Torah scrolls were kept, and that these officials were involved because they were the keepers of the scrolls. Those who describe such a synagogue offer as evidence the list of synagogue officials found in this Mishnah. There is no other evidence. We can suggest how the legend developed that a synagogue had been located in the Temple. A portico which surrounded The Temple Mount on all sides included meeting rooms used for various purposes. Scribes taught and worked in some of these rooms and work on the Torah scrolls must have been carried on there. Since the definition of the synagogue was not yet specific and the early synagogue included priests did not feel the need to reserve the scrolls. Not being

'study rooms--and places to eat and rest as well as for worship--any of these spaces might well have been identified by later generations as a synagogue, a place of meeting and reading.

The argument that synagogue officials lent their scroll to the temple for this ceremony makes no sense. As the national archives, the temple possessed its own Torah scrolls. Aristeas assumes that the High Priest has the most accurate scrolls in his possession. The priests had long supported scribal activity. Had a scroll been needed for the Yom Kippur ceremony, The Temple had its own. Temple worship was elaborate and highly formal. Great care was lavished on the shrine's apparatus. Utensils used during the sacrifices had to be without blemish and in a state of purity. Surely, if shrine ritual had required a Torah scroll the priests would have had one of appropriate sanctity and would not have used a scroll whose sanctity they could not vouch for. The priests would not have had to borrow a synagogue's scrolls.

In understanding the emergence of the Sefer Torah as scripture, it is important to recognize the role almost inadvertently played by the conservative formalism of the priests. The fact that they had no interest in using these scrolls in Temple liturgy made them open-handed with the Torah scrolls and assured their availability to the general community. In Egypt and Babylonia the priests withdrew books of sacred magic and lore from circulation. Priests tend to be jealous of their prerogatives. Israel's priests did not feel the need to reserve the scrolls. Not being

'one of the Temple's sacred implements meant that the Sefer Torah could be seen as "the inheritance of the whole congregation of Israel." Anyone could read a scroll, own a scroll, or study it and, in fact, was encouraged to do so.

