

# **The Meaning of the Letter of Aristeas**

In light of biblical interpretation and grammatical tradition, and with reference to its historical context

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## Introduction

The *Letter of Aristeas* has been a puzzle and object of varying interpretations for several centuries, its structure being one of the most intriguing and unsettled questions. As is well known, the story of the translation is split into parts and forms a ring composition, with several much longer “digressions” inserted in the middle. The story of the translation is developed in *Let. Aris.* 9–12, 29–49 and at the very end of the text, in 301–11. Intermediate sections deal with the liberation of the Jewish captives by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (*Let. Aris.* 13–28); the description of items sent by the king as presents to the High Priest, the description of the Temple and the land of Israel (*Let. Aris.* 50–120); the apology of the food and purity restrictions in the Law given to Aristeas and his embassy (*Let. Aris.* 120–70); and the description of how the elders were received by the king and their conversation with the king at the symposium organised in their honour (*Let. Aris.* 171–300).

While rejecting the earlier tendency to deem the “digressions” later interpolations, scholarly opinion still does not see the principle and logic by which they are combined. An extreme approach is represented by G. Zuntz, who says that Aristeas is “unable, or unconcerned, to organise them into a sustained and credible unity”,<sup>1</sup> while an interpretation more favourable to the author considers that the subjects were accumulated in order to represent an example of the Hellenistic *poikilia*, i.e. a deliberate variety of genres (ekphrasis, historiography, symposium) intended to entertain the reader.<sup>2</sup> The only explanation for this selection is Aristeas’ wish to build up a comprehensive picture of Judaism.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the story of the translation is often taken to be the main subject of the composition.<sup>4</sup>

In recent decades, the growing trend in scholarship has been to deem the intended audience of the *Letter of Aristeas* Jewish.<sup>5</sup> This idea was proposed by V. Tcherikover and found substantial support in the study of H. Orlinsky, who

1 G. Zuntz, “Aristeas Studies II: Aristeas on the Translation of the Torah”, *JSS* 4/2 (1959) 109–26, on p. 111; repr. in G. Zuntz, *Opuscula selecta. Classica, hellenistica, christiana* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972) 126–43, on p. 128.

2 V. Tcherikover, “The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas,” *HTR* 51 (1958) 59–85, on p. 64; S. Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: a Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 14–19.

3 O. Murray, “The Letter of Aristeas”, in B. Virgilio (ed.), *Studi Ellenistici II* (Pisa: Giardini, 1987), 15–29, on p. 18; Zuntz, “Aristeas Studies II”, 109 (126 (1972)); Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 11, 29; T. Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

4 Murray, “The Letter of Aristeas,” 15; Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 29.

5 Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 11 et passim.



showed that the story of the translation contains many allusions to the Bible which imply that the Greek translation is identical to the Law given at Mount Sinai.<sup>6</sup>

This substantially affected the traditional understanding during the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the *Letter's* objective as apologetics (indeed it is not clear how this objective could accord with the hypothesis of an intended Jewish audience, although the tendency to explain it as an apology of Judaism targeted at the Jews is also present).<sup>7</sup> Scholars now tend to describe the general purpose of the book “Jewish propaganda”, although they may have different understandings of this term. Interpretations vary from the traditional idea of the presentation of the appealing and acceptable picture of Judaism<sup>8</sup> to the idea that the Jews, although deeply aware of their Jewishness, wished to express themselves using Greek cultural terms and in this way “articulate Jewish identity in the Graeco-Egyptian society”<sup>9</sup> or simply show (first and foremost to themselves) that they can readily adapt to Greek culture while remaining loyal to the ancestral religion.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that Aristeas extols the translation has generated a special cluster of opinions. Some scholars think that the purpose is to establish the sanctity of the translation as identical to the Hebrew original.<sup>11</sup> S. Honigman also stresses that Aristeas adopts Greek grammatical allusions and suggests that he does so in order to persuade the (Greek? Jewish?) reader of the highest quality of the translation, which was performed against the background of the editorial work of the Alexandrian grammarians on the texts of Homer, the main motive for this being that of prestige, i. e. the Jews wished to indicate the existence of an irrefragable, authoritative text comparable with Homer.<sup>12</sup> (She also projects it into historical reality, claiming that the LXX was indeed translated and later edited according to the example of Homer.)<sup>13</sup> Another ramification of this idea is the hypothesis that the *Letter of Aristeas* polemicises against a

6 Tcherikover, “The Ideology”, 60; H.M. Orlinsky, “The Septuagint as Holy Writ and the Philosophy of the Translators”, *HUCA* 46 (1975) 89–114, on pp. 94–97.

7 See Tcherikover, “The Ideology”, 61–2; See also the survey in J. Dorival/M. Harl/O. Munnich, *La Bible grecque des Septante: du judaïsme hellénistique au christianisme ancien* ([Paris]: Éd. du CERF [u. a.], 1988), 43.

8 Murray, “The Letter of Aristeas”, 18.

9 E.S. Gruen, “The Letter of Aristeas and the Cultural Context of the Septuagint,” in M. Karrer and W. Kraus (ed.), *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten: Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006* (WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 134–56, on p. 141.

10 Tcherikover, “The Ideology”, 69, 79–80; J.R. Bartlett, *Jews in the Hellenistic World. Josephus, Aristeas, the Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 12–13.

11 Orlinsky, “The Septuagint as Holy Writ”, 94–7; S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 47–52, 59–73; Dorival, *La Bible grecque des Septante*, 43; Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 136.

12 Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 137–8.

13 Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 137–8.

revision of the Septuagint, by defending the old Greek translation and proclaiming its unique sanctity.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the interpretations of the message of the book are numerous, and the hypotheses referred to above can be found in various, sometimes self-contradictory, combinations. In my study I will touch upon many of these theories, not because I aim to offer a comprehensive survey of them, but because the new approach that I adopt will necessarily cast new light on some of these questions.

The first part of my study will discuss the problem of the connection between the various parts of the *Letter of Aristeas*, i. e. the composition of the narrative. I think that the logic behind the parts can only be understood in the context of the Jewish tradition. It has been noted that one of the peculiar features of Aristeas' style is the merging of different patterns, both Greek and biblical, so that, as S. Honigman puts it, "his narrative emerges as both thoroughly Jewish and thoroughly Greek".<sup>15</sup> Several studies have discussed the "Greek face" of the intermediate parts.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, these studies do not highlight the logic behind the connection and even lead Honigman to the thesis of the intended variety of subjects. As mentioned, I believe the logic lies in the Jewish paradigm, with the Greek elements being forms of its adaptation to the taste and erudition of the general Alexandrian readership. Therefore I will not systematically discuss the features of the Greek genres adopted for the composition of the intermediate parts, although there are still many desiderata in these matters. In this part I hope to highlight the idea of the composition in its totality as it would have been evident to readers familiar with forms of biblical interpretation in the Second Temple period. This analysis will confirm that the readership able to grasp the peculiar idea of the composition was,

14 S.P. Brock, "To Revise or Not to Revise: Attitudes to Jewish Biblical Tradition", in B. Lindars, G.J. Brooke (ed.), *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Writings. Manchester 1990* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1992) 301–38; A. Lange, "Textual Standardization in Egyptian Judaism and in the Letter of Aristeas", in M. Karrer/M. Meiser/W. Kraus (ed.), *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse 2. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 23–27. Juli 2008* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 48–71.

15 Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 141.

16 G. Zuntz indicates the importance of the Hellenistic treatises on kingship with regard to the symposium part (G. Zuntz, "Aristeas Studies I: The 'Seven Banquets'", *JSS* 4/1 (1959) 110–25). O. Murray gives a critical survey of Zuntz's suggestions (O. Murray, "Aristeas and Ptolemaic Kingship", *JTS* 18(2) (1967) 337–71). S. Honigman (following in the steps of E. Bickerman) stresses the importance of peripatetic historiography with regard to the description of the Land (Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 17–25; E. Bickerman, "Zur Datierung des Pseudo-Aristeas", *ZNW* 29 (1930) 280–98, on pp. 294–5). J.M.F. Heath touches upon Hellenistic theory of ekphrasis in connection with the description of the royal gifts (J.M.F. Heath, "Greek and Jewish visual piety: Ptolemy's gifts in the *Letter of Aristeas*", in Sarah Pearce (ed.), *The Image and its Prohibition in Jewish Antiquity* (*JJS* Sup 2; Oxford: Journal of Jewish Studies, 2013) 38–48).

indeed, Jewish. This in turn will help us to form a more precise notion of the message intended for the Jewish audience.

I will explore a different perspective in the second part by discussing the meaning of grammatical terminology in the story of the translation. The story of the translation has been approached from both Jewish and Greek sides, with the results of both being pivotal to our understanding of its meaning. H. Orlinsky, as I mentioned, investigated the story in the context of biblical texts, showing that it is constructed according to the pattern of the presentation of the Torah to the Jewish people. These findings are very important in the discussion of the meaning of the entire composition in Chapter 1. At the same time, G. Zuntz, O. Murray and A. van der Kooij stressed that its language was connected with Alexandrian grammatical terminology (the last named scholar providing brief, but highly illuminating insight into these matters). However important these observations may be, in my opinion this aspect of the story of the translation deserves more study against a wider Greek scholarly context. Only correct understanding of the grammatical message conveyed by the story can permit theories to be substantiated about Aristeas' intention in extolling the quality of the translation. I hope that this investigation will certainly reduce the number of untenable theories and will bear relevance to the early history of the LXX.

Despite my own arguments in Chapter 1, I disagree with the claim that the Jewish audience was the only intended readership of the *Letter*. Aristeas' posing as a Greek, his constant concern about educated secular readers (clearly visible in the intermediate parts), who often have superficial, and not always positive views of the Jews, i. e. who know no more about them than about any ethnic barbarian community, confirms this. We find a clear apology in *Let. Aris.* 120–70 and traces of it *passim* in the text.<sup>17</sup> The literary method of

17 Tcherikover suggested (and his idea is often repeated by scholars) that the apology in *Let. Aris.* 120–70 is targeted at the Jews, rather than at the Greeks, because the latter would have an interest in such key aspects as circumcision, the Sabbath and the main holidays, rather than in food and purity restrictions, which are the subject of the apology (Tcherikover, “The Ideology”, 62). Tcherikover's idea implies that the Greeks should approach Judaism from a theological point of view. However, it should be noted that the apology in the *Letter of Aristeas* pertains to those aspects of Judaism which (unlike circumcision and feasts celebrated within an ethnic community) become evident and must draw the particular attention of non-Jews in everyday usage, namely in situations when the Jews are intermixed with the gentiles, but try to keep to some food and purity restrictions. This is confirmed by the words of Aristeas himself, who says that his explanation refers to “our abstinence from the use of some things and our *participation* in the use of others”, ἀφ' ὧν ἀπεχόμεθα κατὰ τὴν χρῆσιν, καὶ οἷς συγχρόμεθα (*Let. Aris.* 143). It is logical that this apology is targeted at non-Jewish colleagues and fellows. Moreover, Aristeas stresses that this apology is aimed at defending against the charge of superstition (δαισιδαμονία, *Let. Aris.* 129), which is a traditional accusation made against the Jews by the Greeks (M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.* (3d edn; Tübingen: Mohr, 1988), 470, 475 n.27). Cf. also the arguments for the intended Greek audience (along with the Jewish) collected by O. Murray in Murray, “Aristeas and Ptolemaic Kingship”, 345.

merging patterns implies a combined audience. This opinion of mine also derives from a general awareness that Ptolemaic Alexandria was not a place where texts could be written exclusively for cultural minorities: this city did not know cultural ghettos.

Chapter 2 will show that the language in which the story of translation is written implies a very high level of Hellenistic education, which of course the educated Jews possessed, but which overall was typical of high Hellenistic society in general, rather than of the general Jewish audience. The question arises as to what kind of audience was targeted by the message expressed using grammatical terminology in the story of translation. If this intended audience was not only a likely fairly thin layer of Jewish intellectuals, but an intelligent Greek readership as well, we should inquire what Aristeas intended this Hellenistic readership to learn from his presentation. I will discuss these and other complicated questions in historical perspective in Chapter 3, in which I will seek to scrutinise the meaning of both messages (that of the Jewish biblical paradigm and that of the Greek grammatical paradigm) in their interaction in the historical context of the Ptolemaic state.

# Chapter 1: The biblical paradigm, or the *Letter of Aristeas* as *Rewritten Scripture*

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד  
(Deut 6:4)

## 1.1 The liberation of Jewish slaves in connection with the translation as elaboration on Deut 30:1 – 3

The story about the liberation of all Jewish slaves in Egypt, ordered by Ptolemy II upon the suggestion of Aristeas and other courtiers as a gesture to the High Priest in Jerusalem in connection with commissioning of the translation of the Law, cannot be historically correct.<sup>1</sup> Although some Jews may have been brought to Egypt as prisoners of war in the course of the conquests of Judea by Ptolemy I,<sup>2</sup> mainstream Jewish immigration to Egypt in the Hellenistic period was essentially voluntary, as is also reflected by the account in Ps. Hecataeus (apud Jos. C. Ap. 1.186–9), which is diametrically opposed to that of Aristeas.<sup>3</sup> Several elements of Aristeas' narrative betray its fabulous character. Aristeas pretends that the liberation concerned not only the slaves captured by Ptolemy I, but also all the Jewish slaves brought to Egypt previously or subsequently (*Let. Aris.* 20, 22); the decree, allegedly issued by Ptolemy, contains such elements as the three-day period within which the liberation has to be performed, the denounced becoming the property of their denouncers, and the philosophical motivation for the liberation (*Let. Aris.* 22–5).<sup>4</sup>

H. Orlinsky in an important article<sup>5</sup> argues that the narrative of *the Letter of Aristeas* contains clear allusions to the presentation of the Torah to the Jewish

- 1 M. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates* (New York: Harper, 1951 (repr. New York: Ktav, 1973)), 28–32; J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 21–2; Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 53–6; H.J. Gehrke, “Das sozial- und religionsgeschichtliche Umfeld der Septuaginta”, in H.J. Fabry/U. Offerhaus (ed.), *Im Brennpunkt: die Septuaginta. Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der Griechischen Bibel*, v. 2 (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, 2001) 44–60, on p. 46; V. Tcherikover, “Prolegomena”, in V. Tcherikover/A. Fuks/M. Stern (ed.), *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (3 vol.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957–1964) 1.1–111, on p. 4.
- 2 Cf. Tcherikover, “Prolegomena”, 3; P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vol.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 1.57; 2. 974, no.126.
- 3 The place suggested by Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 55.
- 4 Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 28–32.
- 5 Orlinsky, “The Septuagint as Holy Writ”, 89–114.

people at Mount Sinai in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy and in Jerusalem in 2 Esdras. He stresses that the idea of *reading the Bible aloud* in front of the *gathering of the Jewish people* and the *gathering's approval/acceptance of the Law*, described in *Let. Aris.* 308–11, reflect a clear biblical pattern contained both in the book of Exodus (24:3–7) and in 2 Esdras (18:7–8), and that the ban on addition and deletion from the Thora in *Let. Aris.* 310–11 is modelled on the corresponding ban in Deut 4:2.<sup>6</sup> Orlinsky keenly notes that the introduction of the twelve tribes of Israel in connection with the number of those who take part in producing the text of the Law (six men from each tribe) is inspired by the same Exodus pattern, because the twelve tribes of Israel are involved in the Presentation of the Torah in Exodus (by setting up twelve pillars under the altar in Exod 23:4).<sup>7</sup> S. Honigman, in her important book, tries to explain the liberation of the Jewish slaves, building on the allusions to Exodus suggested by H. Orlinsky. In particular, she thinks that Aristeas wishes to mould the situation in Egypt on the reverse of the situation in the book of Exodus.<sup>8</sup> She interprets this event in the *Letter* as that of the non-Exodus: the king-Pharaoh willingly liberates the slaves himself and, instead of leaving Egypt for the Law, the Jews remain there and the Law comes to them.<sup>9</sup> I agree that the liberation of slaves should be explained against a biblical paradigm, but I think that, upon closer inspection, the Exodus paradigm, when taken in the narrow meaning of the term (that is the paradigm contained in the book of Exodus), does not suffice to explain even the episode of the liberation, let alone be useful in understanding the entire composition. However important and frequent the allusions to Exodus may be in the narrative, I think that a different paradigm, not disconnected from that of Exodus, but one that may have absorbed it, is in play behind the principle of the introduction and combination of subjects.

Aristeas refers several times to those-to-be-liberated as “those in slavery” (οἰκεῖταις, *Let. Aris.* 14, 15, 16, 24). However, of the seven times that the word οἰκέτης occurs in the book of Exodus, only two (in one and the same passage) refer to the Jews in Egypt with a meaning which is close to being figurative. The Jews in Egypt are never said in the book of Exodus to have been formally enslaved, although they were dependent, oppressed, and treated badly. When “the officers of the children of Israel” say to Pharaoh: “Wherefore dealest thou thus with *thy servants?*” (Exod 5:15,16), this reference has a largely figurative

6 Orlinsky, “The Septuagint as Holy Writ”, 94–6.

7 Orlinsky, “The Septuagint as Holy Writ”, 98.

8 Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 56. See also P. R. Davies, “Didactic Stories,” in D.A. Carson (ed.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (WUNT 2/140; Tübingen: Mohr; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 99–133, on p.121.

9 For some important additional parallels confirming that the image of the king-Pharaoh is intentionally depicted as the opposite of the Pharaoh of the Bible, see A. Kovelman, *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 105–8.

meaning, particularly if we remember that all the subjects of Pharaoh are his "slaves" (cf. Deut 34:11). The presentation of the theme of slavery in Egypt drastically changes in the book of Deuteronomy. Of the nine times that the word occurs in this book, seven refer to the people of Israel with the direct meaning of slave (Deut 5:15; 6:22; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18,20,22). In two of these occurrences it is said that God "redeemed, freed" (ἐλυτρώσατο) the Jews from slavery in Egypt (Deut 15:15; 24:18). The root also occurs in connection with the Jewish people in Egypt in the book of Exodus (ἐλυτρώσω, Exod 15:13). However, formalisation of the notion of slavery with regard to the position of the Jews in Egypt and its combination with that of "redemption, liberation", expressed using this root, is only testified in Deuteronomy. Thus, when we find the idea of the liberation from slavery in Egypt expressed using these two roots in the *Letter of Aristeas* (*Let. Aris.* 12: τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως; *Let. Aris.* 20: ἀπολυτρώσαι; *Let. Aris.* 33: ἀπολύτρωσιν), we have reason to think that the book of Deuteronomy serves Aristeas as the immediate point of reference for this topic, rather than the book of Exodus.

Moreover, in *all seven* cases of this usage in Deuteronomy, a direct connection is made between the Jews in Egypt having been freed from slavery and the necessity of observing the statutes of the Law, for example, Deut 15:15 (= 24:18):

Remember that you were a slave (οικέτης) in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed (ἐλυτρώσατό) you; therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing (τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο) today. (NET).

Liberation from slavery being referred to as the argument for the observance of the Law corresponds to the combination of themes at the beginning of the *Letter*. We should keep in mind that the idea of liberation from slavery is introduced in direct connection with the purchase of the Greek Law (*Let. Aris.* 11–12; 15; 34, 35, 38), which, while formally destined for the royal library, is also handed over to the Jewish community in Alexandria, where it is supposed to be followed.

In order to see that the book of Deuteronomy served Aristeas as an important point of reference, we can consult Meecham's study, where citations and references to the Greek Pentateuch have been collected.<sup>10</sup> However, several lexical references also suggest that it was an important point of reference in constructing the narrative about the translation (Deut 4:2 is referred to in *Let. Aris.* 310–11; Deut 1:5 is alluded to in *Let. Aris.* 305).

This compels me to investigate the role of Deuteronomy in the formation of the narrative of the *Letter* more closely. In particular, I wish to focus on the

10 H.G. Meecham, *The Letter of Aristeas. The Linguistic Study with Special References to the Greek Bible* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), 317–19.

possible combination of the themes of liberation from slavery and the acceptance of the Law. My attention is drawn by Deut 30:1 – 3:<sup>11</sup>

1. And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

2. And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

3. that then the LORD thy God will **turn thy captivity** ( ושב יהוה אל־היך את־שבוּתך ), and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

According to this interpretation, God promises the Jews ושב את־שבוּתך as a reward for wholeheartedly repenting and returning to the Law among the gentiles. The expression ושב את־שבוּתך has been translated in the LXX using the expression καὶ ἰάσεται κύριος τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου, “God will cure your sins”. This way of rendering the meaning of the expression is not unparalleled. LXX Job 42:10, for example, renders it using the collocation ἀφίημι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Nevertheless, in the rest of the Greek Bible this collocation is uniformly rendered using the expression ἀπο(ἐπι)στρέφω τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν, i. e. “to turn the captivity”: Jer 38:23 (=M 31:23); Ezek 16:53; 29:14; 39:25; Hos 6:11; Amos 9:14; Zeph 2:7; 3:20; Joel 4:1; Ps 14:7 (LXX 13:7); 53:7 (LXX 52:7); 85: 2 (LXX 84:2); 126:1 (LXX 125:1); Lam 2:14. The meaning of the expression is difficult and essentially allows for double interpretation.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the uniform rendering of it in all the prophets and psalms with the meaning of “turning the captivity” indicates that at a certain point, namely the time of the translation of the prophetic books, that is from the second century BC or earlier,<sup>13</sup> this interpretation absolutely prevailed in the Jewish milieu. In Lam 2:14 this translation is used even when the other translation would seem to be unequivocally preferable.

The question is whether this tendency influenced the history of the translation and interpretation of Deuteronomy and whether traces of it can be found in the Jewish Hellenistic tradition. P. Fouad does not contain any clear

11 Here and below the Hebrew Bible is quoted in King James Version (KJV), if not specified separately.

12 On the possible reasons for these different interpretations of the meaning of the root see HALOT s.v. שׁוּב, שׁוּבָה, שׁוּבָה. See also E. Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (Berlin/NY: de Gruyter, 1991), 161 – 4. Ben Zvi stresses that within the Hebrew tradition interpretation of the phrase as not referring to captivity is earlier than the second interpretation, which should be dated to the exilic and post-exilic period.

13 E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd edition, revised and expanded; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 131.



reading of the line in question.<sup>14</sup> However, Aramaic targums, Babylonian Talmud, and Peshitta indicate that the history of interpretation of this place in Deuteronomy is vexed. Several versions of the Targum Onqelos and the Babylonian Talmud follow the interpretation of “to turn your captivity”, while Targum Neophiti and that of Ps.-Jonathan are close to the interpretation preserved in the LXX.<sup>15</sup> The problem is clearly indicated by the three later redactions of the LXX by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, the first offering the interpretation ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπιστροφήν, while the two others translate as: καὶ ἐπιστρέψει (σοι) κύριος ὁ θεός σου τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν σου.<sup>16</sup> Peshitta has “bring back again your captivity” (Syr. Deut 30:3). Vulgata has *reducet Dominus Deus tuus captivitatem tuam* (Vulg. Deut 30:3).

Remarkably, Aristeas, when speaking about the liberation of the slaves, also refers to them as “captives” (*Let. Aris.* 12: ἡχμαλώτιζες; *Let. Aris.* 23: ἡχμαλωτεῦσθαι; *Let. Aris.* 33: ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν αἰχμαλώτων; *Let. Aris.* 35: αἰχμαλώτους; *Let. Aris.* 37: αἰχμαλώτων). Therefore, I wish to question which notion of the content of Deut 30:3 could have been familiar to Aristeas.

The question is all the more pertinent given that Philo of Alexandria, the only Jewish-Hellenistic author who refers to this place, definitely understands it in the sense of liberation of captives. According to the Supplement to *Biblia Patristica*, dedicated to Philo,<sup>17</sup> Philo closely follows Deut 30:1–10 by rephrasing and philosophically elaborating on it in *Praem.* 162–6.

Philo writes:

(162) I have now, then, without making any concealment of softening the truth in any degree, explained the curses and the punishments which it is fit for those persons to endure who have despised the sacred laws of justice and piety, and who have submitted themselves to the adoption of polytheistic opinions, the end of which is impiety through forgetfulness of the instruction originally imparted to them by their forefathers, which they learnt in their earliest infancy, when they were taught to look upon the nature of the One as the only supreme God, to whom alone those persons may properly be assigned as his inheritance who pursue the genuine truth instead of cunningly invented fables. — *This refers to Deut 29, where the ban on worshipping the*

14 Z. Aly/L. Koenen, *Three Rolls of the Early Septuagint: Genesis and Deuteronomy. A Photographic Edition Prepared in Collaboration with the International Photographic Archive of the Association Internationale de Papyrologues* (Bonn: Habelt, 1980), 104–5.

15 *Tg. Onq.* Deut 30:3 (see M. McNamara (ed.), *Tg. Onqelos to Deuteronomy* (transl. B. Grossfeld; vol.9 of *The Aramaic Bible*; Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1988), 84); *Meg.* 175; *Tg. Neof.* Deut 30:3; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 30:3.

16 In Field’s retroversion from Latin, based on the Syro-Hexapla: A.: convertet...conversionem tuam; Th.: convertet dominus deus tuus captivitatem tuam; S.: convertet tibi dominus deus tuus captivitatem tuam. F. Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt, sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum Fragmenta* (2 vol.; Oxford, 1875) 1.317.

17 J. Allenbach et al. (ed.), *Biblia Patristica, Supplément: Philon d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Éditions du centre nationale de la recherche scientifique, 1982), 87.

*pagan gods of the nations is expressed through execration, and to Deut 30:1, where the blessing and curse upon the Jews living in a polytheistic environment are mentioned.*

(163) If, however, they receive these exertions of power not as aiming at their destruction, but rather at their admonition and improvement, and if they feel shame throughout their whole soul, and change their ways, reproaching themselves for their errors, and openly avowing and confessing all the sins that they have committed against themselves with purified souls and minds, so as in the first place to exhibit a sincerity of conscience utterly alien from falsehood and concealing nothing evil beneath; and secondly, having their tongues also purified so as to produce improvement in their hearers, — *This refers to Deut 30:2, where the conversion ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου is mentioned.*

they will then meet with a favourable acceptance from their merciful saviour, God, who bestows on the race of mankind his especial and exceedingly great gift, namely, relationship to his own word; after which, as its archetypal model, the human mind was formed. — *This refers to Deut 30:3 καὶ ἐλεήσει σε.*

(164) For even though they may be at the very extremities of the earth (ἐν ἐσχατιαῖς ὧσι γῆς), — *This refers to Deut 30:1 (οὐ ἔάν σε διασκορπίσῃ κύριος ἐκεῖ), Deut 30:3 (συνάξει σε ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἔθνων, εἰς οὓς διεσκορπίσέν σε κύριος ἐκεῖ), and particularly to Deut 30:4 (ἐὰν ᾗ ἡ διασπορά σου ἀπ' ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἕως ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἐκεῖθεν συνάξει σε κύριος ὁ θεός σου).*

**acting as slaves to those enemies who have led them away in captivity** (δουλεύοντες παρὰ τοῖς αἰχμαλώτους αὐτοὺς ἀπάγουσιν ἐχθροῖς), **still they shall all be restored to freedom** in one day (ἡμέρα μιᾶ πάντες ἐλευθερωθήσονται), as at a given signal; **their sudden and universal change to virtue causing a shock among their masters; for they will let them go, because they are ashamed to govern those who are better than themselves.**

(165) But when they have received this **unexpected liberty** (τῆς ἀπροσδοκίτου ταύτης ἐλευθερίας), those who but a short time before were scattered about in Greece, and in the countries of the barbarians, in the islands, and over the continents (οἱ πρὸ μικροῦ σποράδες ἐν Ἑλλάδι καὶ βαρβάρῳ κατὰ νήσους καὶ κατὰ ἠπείρους) — *This resumes the idea of “being scattered” as found in Deut 30:1,3,4.*

We can continue following the text of Philo, but this analysis will disclose the parallels with the further text of Deuteronomy. Deut 30: 1 – 5 have already been adapted. We can see that *Praem.* 162 – 5 contains allusions to almost every single thought found in Deut 30:1 – 5. However, no mention is made of “curing your sins”. Instead we find again a reference to “liberation from captivity”: δουλεύοντες παρὰ τοῖς **αἰχμαλώτους** αὐτοὺς ἀπάγουσιν ἐχθροῖς ἡμέρα μιᾶ πάντες **ἐλευθερωθήσονται**. Moreover, Philo uses the same collocation, as Aristeas (cf. *Let. Aris.* 37: ὑπὲρ δέκα μυριάδας **αἰχμαλώτων ἠλευθερώκαμεν**).

The root “sin”, used in the LXX (ιάσεται κύριος τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου), is used by Philo in the phrase “openly avowing and confessing all the sins that they

have committed (ἥμαρτον)” (*Praem.* 163). Nevertheless, this refers not to an action performed by God upon the Jews, which would have been expected if the expression “will cure your sins” had been alluded to, but to the action of those who repent “with all heart and soul”, which implies the idea of confessing sins. Thus, the use of the root cannot be unequivocally indicative of the influence of the LXX. Also, there is no allusion to “curing” (ιάσεται). However, even if we are inclined to think that the use of this root may somehow be influenced by the interpretation preserved in the LXX, we have to concede that the other version was also known to Philo and that this version was more important to him, given a clear and emphatic allusion to it in his interpretation.

Thus, Philo definitely was aware of an interpretation different from LXX Deut 30:3, which has come down to us. However, it would be rash to jump to the conclusion that Philo had a different version of the translation of LXX Deut 30:3 at his disposal. His paraphrase features a number of particularities, which I wish to draw attention to.

First, there is the idea found in *Praem.* 164 that the liberation from captivity is accompanied by the shame of the gentiles: they will let them go, being ashamed (αἰδεσθέντες) to govern them. Second, the liberation of the captives, which results from the sudden conversion of the Jews to virtue (i. e. the Law), also causes shock (κατάπληξις) to the pagan masters. Deut 30 makes no references to such feelings.

At the same time, the motif of the shame of the gentiles is found in LXX Zeph 3:19–20, one of the prophetic contexts, containing the expression similar to that of Deut 30:3 (בְּשֹׂאֲבֵי אֶת-שְׂבוּיָהֶם), and rendered in the LXX using the translation “to turn the captivity”. Although another interpretation is possible in which “shame” refers to the Jews (which is the interpretation accepted nowadays), the LXX interprets it as a feeling of the gentiles (cf. Ps. 132 (LXX 131), 18) and gives this translation ... καὶ κατασχυνθήσονται ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ ... ἐν τῷ ἐπιστρέφειν με τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ὑμῶν ἐνώπιον ὑμῶν, λέγει κύριος. (Zeph 3:20: “And they will be ashamed in that time when I do well with you...when I return your captivity before you, says the Lord.” (NETS)). This interpretation directly combines the shame of the gentiles with the liberation of the Jewish captives, as does Philo. Αἰδέομαι, used by Philo, is a regular synonym of κατασχύνομαι used in LXX Zephaniah.

The tendency to combine (juxtapose) a context from the Pentateuch with a context from a prophet, drawing on their common idea and on the synonymous or identical words used in them, is attested in the texts of the Second Temple period. Examples can be found in CD 5.15–17, 11QMelch 2, 1QS 5.15–17 and 4QFlor 3.12.<sup>18</sup> These parallels substantiate the hypothesis

18 CD 5.15–17 combines Deut 32:28 and Isa 27:11 as referring to “the people (nation) of no understanding”; 11QMelch combines Lev 25:13, Deut 15:2 and Isa 61:1, based on the synonymous expressions referring to the liberation (in the year of the jubilee and at the eschato-

that Deut 30:3 and Zeph 3:19–20 could have been combined in a source at Philo's disposal since they refer to the same idea and contain the same expression.

Shock, Κατάπληξις.

Similarly, Philo's reference to the astonishment of the gentiles suggests the combined character of his source. The Hebrew Deuteronomy and Exodus often repeat the fact that the exodus of the Jews from Egypt involved God's support, i. e. His intervention, specified using the word מִוֶּרָא (Deut 34:12; 26:8; 4:34) and the participle נוֹרָא (Exod 34:10; Deut 10:21). Exod 34:10 generalises the subject, stressing that amazing and fearful things will happen to the Jews in sight of every nation that the Jews in the future will pass through (dwell in) and that these nations will see what God does for his people:

וְרָאָה כָּל-הָעַם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בֹקְרָבוֹ אֶת-מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כִּי-נִוְרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ (Exod 34:10)

The LXX place even greater emphasis on the universal meaning by using the plural instead of the singular (ἐν οἷς):

LXX Exod: καὶ ὄψεται πᾶς ὁ λαός ἐν οἷς εἶ σύ τὰ ἔργα κυρίου ὅτι θαυμαστά ἐστὶν ἃ ἐγὼ ποιήσω σοι.<sup>19</sup>

The word נוֹרָא refers to something which inspires fear and awe, but also shock and astonishment.<sup>20</sup> The LXX are not able to render both meanings at once. They translate the word either using the word “fear” (φόβος), or “astonishment” (θαυμάσια/θαυμαστά), cf. Exod 15:11 and Deut 28:58 (astonishment) and Gen 28:17; 46:43; Deut 1:19 (fear). The word Κατάπληξις, used by Philo, combines the idea of fear with that of astonishment and shock (see LSJ s.v. καταπλήσσω, κατάπληξις) and properly describes the feeling (pathos) experienced by those who see נוֹרָא. Thus, Philo's reference to this feeling of the gentiles can be explained by the conflated character of his source, in which Exod 34:10 was combined with Deut 30:3, which is very plausible, as both contexts stress the universal aspects of the liberation of the Jews on their way to the Promised Land and use similar or identical expressions (cf. Deut 30:3: מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים, “from all the peoples” and Exod 34:10: כָּל הָעַם “all the people/ every nation”).

Regarding the character of the text that Philo refers to, we can see that in the

logical time); 1QS 5.15–17 combines Exod 23:7 and Isa 2:22 based on the idea of keeping away from bad deeds and persons; 4QFlor 3.12 combines 2Sam 7:12–13 and Amos 9:11, which refer to the divine promise of raising up and establishing the kingdom of David. These passages share several similar or identical words.

19 The LXX emphasise the idea of the plurality of the nations by using the plural form ἐν οἷς, while the Hebrew text does not require this. However, the context of this verse makes it clear that the promise refers to all the nations (not the Egyptians) that the Jews will pass through on their way to the Holy Land. Thus the LXX emphasise the idea present in the Hebrew text anyway.

20 See BDB, s.v. יִרָא, niph. 2.

source at Philo's disposal the motifs were grouped around Deut 30:1 – 5, in particular around the topic of the reactions of the gentiles to the liberation of the Jews. This clearly tells us that this source was not originally composed on the basis of LXX Deut 30:3, because this Greek translation shows a different understanding of the expression and, consequently, would not have allowed the other places to be taken into account. The source was composed either on the basis of the Hebrew text and was later translated into Greek, or on the basis of a differently translated Deut 30:3.

However, the first option is preferable, not only because **לוגוס** is referred to using the more precise notion of *κατάπληξις*, which is not attested in the LXX, suggesting a direct translation from Hebrew, but also because Philo's paraphrase contains the notion of Logos exactly in this place, where all Aramaic targums of Deuteronomy 30 contain the notion of Memra (i. e. while paraphrasing Deut 30:2 – 3, see *Praem.* 163).<sup>21</sup> In Philo's paraphrase the reference to the notion of Logos, although it is expressed using Greek philosophical terms, is not philosophically motivated, and the inference lies close at hand that it entered Philo's text under the influence of a source containing the notion of Memra, which is natural in a Hebrew source retelling a biblical narrative. Of course, given the lack of certainty that Philo had any knowledge of Hebrew<sup>22</sup> it is unreasonable to suppose that it was Philo himself who translated this source. Rather, there was a source at his disposal, composed on the basis of Hebrew and translated into Greek sufficiently long ago as to be able to form a tradition which would compete with the LXX and even overshadow it. What is important is that the combined character of the source can explain why Deut 30:3 was understood differently from the tradition reflected in LXX Deuteronomy, i. e. not only because of a presumably later date of translation, when the other interpretation of the expression prevailed, but also because of the necessity to render the meaning of all combined places uniformly. Thus, the meaning of those places prevailed which appeared to be univocal and which were taken by a Hebrew author/redactor to complement and support the meaning of Deut 30:3. At the same time, the correspondence of the interpretation of Zephaniah 3:20 in the translation of the combined source with the existing Greek translation of Zephaniah 3:20 is also remarkable. However, this can be explained not by the immediate influence of the Greek Zephaniah, but by a roughly contemporary date of translation, when interpretation of a place in the Hebrew was more or less commonly accepted in translator circles.

The principle at work in the source behind Philo's paraphrase is known in

21 *Tg. Onq.* Deut 30:2 – 3; *T. Neof.* Deut 30:2 – 3; *T. Ps.-J.* Deut 30:2 – 3.

22 Cf. D.W. Gooding, "Philo's Knowledge of Hebrew, Underlying the Greek", in D. Winston/J. Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria. A Commentary on De Gigantibus and Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* (Brown University Judaic Studies, 25; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983) 119 – 25; S. Sandmel, "Philo's Knowledge of Hebrew", *SP* 5 (1978) 107 – 11; P. Borgen, "Philo", *ANRW* II 21,1 (1984) 98 – 154, on p. 123.

the Jewish tradition of the Second Temple period. It is particularly prevalent in the (*pre-*)*Samaritan Pentateuch* and the compositions known as the *Reworked Pentateuch*. We find in them either blending or juxtaposition of passages that are separate in the Masoretic Pentateuch, but deal with the same subject.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes the parallelism between the texts is strengthened by lexical parallels.<sup>24</sup> However, the principle in question is also found in the compositions known as the *Rewritten Bible*, where the combination of the biblical passages serves the more specific design of an individual author (*Jubilees*, *Temple Scroll*<sup>a</sup>, *Apocryphon of Moses*). It is attested in targums, which also use such methods.<sup>25</sup> These compositions testify to harmonisation being possible within one biblical book, as well as among several of them. In particular,

23 J.M. Allegro/A. A. Anderson (ed.), *Qumrân Cave 4.I (4Q158–4Q186)* (DJD V; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968); H. Attridge et al./J. VanderKam (ed.), *Qumran Cave 4.VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (DJD XIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); D.W. Parry/E.Tov (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, Part 3, Parabiblical Texts* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005), 238–312.

The following are some of the exemplary cases.

4Q158 1–2 links Gen 32:25–33, where Jacob wrestles with God, and Exod 4:27–9, where the encounter of Aaron with God is described (in the preceding verses God sought to kill Moses). 4Q158 4 links Exod 3:12 and Exod 24:4–6 combining also Exod 6:3–7 and Gen 17:7–8, both of which contain the promise of land and the promise that God will be God to the patriarchs. 4Q158 6 combines Exod 20:19–21 and Deut 5:28–9; 18:18–20,22, which refer to the idea that Moses is a prophet. 4Q158 7–9 combines and harmonises Exod 20 and Deut 5, both of which contain the Ten Commandments and ordinances given on Mount Sinai.

4Q158 14 paraphrases and combines Exod 6:3–8 and Exod 15, which contain the promise to liberate the Jews from Egypt and the description of this deliverance.

4Q364 4b, e ii combines Gen 30:26 and Gen 31:41 (both of which refer to Jacob's period of servitude).

4Q364 14 combines Exod 24:12–14 and Exod 19:7 on the subject of Moses ascending the mountain.

4Q364 21.1–2 combines Deut 1:17 and Deut 16:19 on the instructions to judges on how to judge righteously.

4Q364 23ab contains a similar juxtaposition of Num 20:14–18 and Deut 2:8–14 on the topic of hostile peoples and places that Jews have to travel through on their way to the Promised Land. 4Q365 6b 4–5 links Exod 15:19–20 with Exod 14:29 (referring to the passage through the Sea of Reeds).

4Q365 28 combines Num 4:47–9 and 7:1 on the topic of the service of the tabernacle.

4Q365 36 combines Num 27:11 and 36:1–2 on the topic of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophahad.

4Q366 2 combines Lev 24:20–2 and Lev 25:39–43 (see the discussion on the possible common grounds in M.M. Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture, Composition and Exegesis in the 4Q Reworked Pentateuch Manuscripts* (STDJ 95; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 123–5).

4Q366 4 unites Num 29:32–30:1 and Deut 16:13–14 (both referring to the legislation for Sukkot).

See the discussion of the reasons for the harmonisation in M. Segal, "Biblical Exegesis in 4Q158: Techniques and Genre," *Textus* 19 (1998) 45–62; S.W. Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in the Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 39–59; Zahn, *Rethinking*, 25–134.

24 For instance, 4Q158 1–2, 14, see Zahn, *Rethinking*, 62.

25 M. McNamara, "Introduction", in M. McNamara (ed.), *Targum Neophiti 1: Deuteronomy* (vol. 5 A of the Aramaic Bible; Colledgeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997) 1–15, on pp. 2–3.

examples of the combination of Deuteronomy with Exodus (as a parallel to the combination suggested concerning the idea of shock in Philo's paraphrase) are attested both in the *Reworked Pentateuch* (4Q158 6;7-8) and in the *Rewritten Bible*, like the *Temple Scroll*<sup>a</sup> (11Q19 2; 66), or the *Jubilees* (1.1-3).

It is now time to return to the *Letter of Aristeas* and to question whether anything in the text suggests that Aristeas too was familiar with a source with the conflated understanding of the biblical material.

In *Let. Aris.* 155, in the process of (allegorical) interpretation of the Law, Aristeas says:

Διὸ παρακελεύεται καὶ διὰ τῆς γραφῆς ὁ λέγων οὕτως· (1) (a) **Μνεῖα μνησθήσῃ (b) κυρίου τοῦ ποιήσαντος ἐν σοὶ τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά.** Κατανοούμενα γὰρ καὶ (2) **μεγάλα καὶ ἔνδοξα** φαίνεται·

And therefore does he admonish us through Scripture, when he says, “thou shalt well remember what great and marvellous things the Lord thy God did in thee”; when clearly understood they do indeed appear “great and glorious”.<sup>26</sup>

This is a direct reference to the Scripture and the addition “when clearly understood” (Κατανοούμενα) marks its borders, making it clear that the quotation continues up to the words “great and marvellous things”; the words “great and glorious” are a quotation as well. However, the quoted words are a combination of different places in Deuteronomy.

The expression Μνεῖα μνησθήσῃ corresponds to Deut 7:18, where this collocation is uniquely present in the Greek Pentateuch and corresponds to the expression זכר הזכר, which is uniquely used in the MT of the Pentateuch:

LXX: οὐ φοβηθήσῃ αὐτούς **μνεῖα μνησθήσῃ** ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεός σου τῷ Φαραῶ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις

MT: לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם זָכַר תּוֹכַר אֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָרְעֹה וּלְכָל-מִצְרַיִם

The second part (τοῦ ποιήσαντος ἐν σοὶ ...) does not correspond directly either to the LXX or to the MT, although it is relevant to the sense of the phrase. Meecham suggests that Deut 10:21 is also in play here: οὗτος καύχημά σου καὶ οὗτος θεός σου, ὅστις ἐποίησεν ἐν σοὶ τὰ μεγάλα καὶ τὰ ἔνδοξα ταῦτα, ἃ εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου. However, we can see that μεγάλα καὶ ἔνδοξα appear in the second quotation only (2), whereas in the second part of the first quotation (1b) only the collocation ἐν σοὶ and the adjective μεγάλα exactly correspond to the Greek translation of Deut 10:21. The participle ποιήσαντος and the adjective θαυμαστά are not found in LXX Deut 10:21.

Let us look at the Hebrew Vorlage in Deut 10:21:

הוא תהלתך והוא אלהיך אשר-עשה אתך את-הגדלת ואת-גוראת האלה אשר ראו עיניך

26 Here and below transl. of M. Hadas with my emendations.

את-הגדלת ואת-גוראת האלה are the object of God's activity. As we noted in the discussion of Philo's source, judging from the LXX, the adjective θαυμαστός was one of the regular translations of the word גורא.<sup>27</sup> Given this, Aristeas' variant τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά could have been a regular translation of את-הגדלת ואת-גוראת האלה, although this translation differs from the LXX.

Thus, Meecham's suggestion proves to be even truer than he thought (as he did not take into consideration the Hebrew Vorlage). The analysis reveals that the first part of the phrase in the *Letter of Aristeas* could be a translation of two combined places in Deuteronomy 7:18 and 10:21, which refer to the same idea and contain similar expressions (cf. לֹא תִירָא Deut 7:18; תִירָא Deut 10:20; עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ Deut 7:19; 10:21). This combination was performed on the basis of the Hebrew text, and translated into Greek with a certain degree of freedom, with the participle replacing a personal form (as is also necessitated by the verb μνησθήσῃ (μυμνήσκομαι), which is commonly used with the Genitive case) and τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά replacing τὰ μεγάλα καὶ τὰ ἔνδοξα.

At the same time, it seems that the translation of the LXX had a significant influence on the author of the new, combined translation. He borrows the remarkable collocation μνεῖα μνησθήσῃ (which is *hapax* in the LXX Pentateuch), and also repeats the expression ἐν σοί (Deut 10:21), which renders אַתָּךְ, which is also the sole case of such a translation of this form of the pronoun in the entire Pentateuch. Even the use of θαυμαστά instead of ἔνδοξα may reflect the choice of one of the possibilities found in the language of the LXX (as may be recalled, this is the translation found in Exod 15:11; 34:10 and Deut 28:58).

Moreover, when Aristeas says that “clearly understood they do indeed appear ‘great and glorious’ (μεγάλα καὶ ἔνδοξα)”, “they” referring to τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά, it is difficult to avoid the inference that Aristeas is comparing the translation from the combined source with the translation from the LXX, claiming that both translate the same idea.<sup>28</sup> Neither the idea of comparison between the combined source and the LXX, nor Aristeas' claim that they have the same import seem surprising in light of the method of translation, revealed by the analysis of the first part of the quotation. This method implies necessary or deliberate changes going hand in hand with close attention and orientation to the translation of the LXX. The translators of the combined source did consult the LXX and, given the character of the borrowings, did not intend to contrast their work with it, exactly as combined and rewritten compositions in the Hebrew tradition were hardly meant to substitute or displace the “canonical” books, but were in parallel with them.<sup>29</sup>

27 Exod 15:11; Deut 28:58; Ps 45:5 (LXX 44:5).

28 Aristeas, when making this claim, may also have had in mind LXX Exod 34:10, where ἔνδοξα and θαυμαστά are used in reference to the same object. ἔνδοξα renders the Hebrew word נִפְלְאוֹת (cf. Job 5:9, 9:10; 34:24), while θαυμαστά renders גִּוְרָא. If this is the case, it would also testify to the work of bringing together passages referring to the same subject.

29 Cf. M. Segal, “Between Bible and Rewritten Bible”, in M. Henze (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation at*



Lastly, several words should be said concerning the motives for the use of this quotation within the context of the High Priest's explanations. The High Priest explains food and purity restrictions as symbols that serve as reminders of just and unjust behaviour, which is directly connected with true (or false) worship of God (*Let. Aris.* 157–8; cf. 134–41). Thus, abiding by the restrictions in everyday usage makes one constantly remember God and His justice (*Let. Aris.* 132–3). The prescriptions that he explains derive, as a complex, from the book of Deuteronomy (*Let. Aris.* 150–4 correspond to Deut 14:4–8 (cf. also Lev 11:2–8) and *Let. Aris.* 158–60 correspond to Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; 22:12). The quotation discussed is found between these two places. Thus, the reference to a place in the same book of Deuteronomy appears to be appropriate as an example of the interpretation of a text using ideas contained in the same text. It is possible that Aristeas may have partly reinterpreted its connotations for the sake of the context (by interpreting τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά as referring not to the miracles of liberation, but to aspects of the physical and psychological constitution of men). However, that does not make the principle used of bringing together different passages from Deuteronomy less important. This point may indirectly support my arguments above that the quotation in *Let. Aris.* 155, whatever complexity it displays, derives from Deuteronomy.

Thus, this quotation testifies to the fact that

1. Aristeas used a source in which the parallel passages in Deuteronomy, referring to the same subject, were treated together. In this text, the phrase was composed of different elements from various passages in Deuteronomy.

2. This source was composed on the basis of the Hebrew text, rather than on the Greek one, and was rendered into Greek, with due regard to the LXX, but differently from it.

3. He refers to this source as Scripture when quoting it, meaning that for him it had the value of the Scripture. At the same time, the word “Scripture” in Aristeas’ phrase refers to the LXX as well. The conclusion we have arrived at here remarkably accords with those made on the basis of the *Reworked Pentateuch* from Qumran (both (pre-)Samaritan *Pentateuch*<sup>30</sup> and *Reworked Pentateuch*).<sup>31</sup> Many scholars think that these reworked compositions were regarded as regular Pentateuchal texts, with all the authority of the Torah.<sup>32</sup>

*Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 10–29, on p. 11: “Indeed, the rewritten composition was not composed with the purpose of *replacing* the biblical texts, for without the Bible itself the rewritten composition loses its legitimacy”. See also E.G. Martínez, “Temple Scroll”, in H. Schiffman/J. VanderKam (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vol.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 2. 927–33; P. Flint/J. VanderKam, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 212. This thought can be applied *a fortiori* to a minor rewriting, like the *Reworked Pentateuch*.

30 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup>, 4QNumb, the *Samaritan Pentateuch*.

31 4QRP<sup>a-c</sup> (4Q158; 4Q364–7).

The Nash Papyrus, our only Hebrew text from Egypt,<sup>33</sup> can substantiate the conclusions drawn from the analysis of Aristeas' quotation. The papyrus contains 24 lines of the Hebrew text with a *mixed* formulation of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2 – 17 and Deut 5:6 – 21, the subjects also combined in 4Q158 7 – 9), and the addition of Deut 6:4 – 5, the so-called Shema, which is another formulation of the first commandment. Some scholars think that the core text for the mixed Decalogue was that of Deuteronomy,<sup>34</sup> though the subject seems to be vexed.<sup>35</sup> The papyrus is dated between the middle of the second and the middle of the first century BC, and the earlier date is possibly preferable.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the purpose of this text, it testifies to the presence in Egypt of the compositions, based on the Hebrew text, in which passages from Pentateuch, and particularly within the book of Deuteronomy, were blended and juxtaposed on the basis of their common idea. Given the speed of the Hellenisation process among the Egyptian Jews, there can be little doubt that such compositions used to be translated into Greek. However, the mixed character of quotations, suspected in the source behind Aristeas' quotation and testified by the Decalogue in the Nash Papyrus, must have put the translators of such compositions in a difficult position. Even if they had great respect for the existing translations of the Pentateuch and wished to conform

- 32 E. Ulrich, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Biblical Text", in L.W. Schiffman/E. Tov/J.C. VanderKam (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20 – 25 1997* (Jerusalem: Israel exploration society, 2000) 51 – 9; M. Segal, "4Q Reworked Pentateuch or 4QPentateuch?", in L.W. Schiffman/E. Tov/J.C. VanderKam (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20 – 25 1997* (Jerusalem: Israel exploration society 2000) 391 – 9; Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*, 56 – 7; E. Tov, "Reflections on the Many Forms of the Hebrew Scripture in Light of the LXX an 4QReworked Pentateuch"; in A. Lange/M. Weigold and al. (ed.), *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with Emanuel Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (FRLANT 230; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009) 11 – 28; [www.emanuelov.info/docs/varia/216.4grp.varia.pdf](http://www.emanuelov.info/docs/varia/216.4grp.varia.pdf); E. Tov, "From 4Q Reworked Pentateuch to 4Q Pentateuch (?)", in M. Popovic (ed.), *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (JSJSup 141; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010) 73 – 91. Tov refers to a case similar to that found in the *Letter of Aristeas* in discussing the arguments for the authoritative character of 4QRP: "Thus, while the first biblical quotation in the sectarian composition 4QTestimonia (4Q175) is close to SP, the third one, from Deut 33:8 – 11, is very close to 4QDeut<sup>h</sup>, and may have been based on that scroll or a similar one. These two quotations show that the author of 4QTest quoted from at least two Scripture scrolls of a different character, a pre-Samaritan text and 4QDeut<sup>h</sup>, a textually independent text" (Tov, "From 4Q Reworked Pentateuch", 88).
- 33 S.A. Cook, "A Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus", *PSBA* 25 (1903) 34 – 56; N. Peters, *Die älteste Abschrift der zehn Gebote, der Papyrus Nash* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1905); W.F. Albright, "A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: The Nash Papyrus", *JBL* 56 (1937) 145 – 76.
- 34 Albright, "A Biblical Fragment", 175 – 6; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 118.
- 35 Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*, 32 – 3.
- 36 Albright, "A Biblical Fragment", 149; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 118; Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*, 32.