

The Names of the 72 Translators of the Septuagint (Aristeas, 47-50)

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According to a well-known passage in the Letter of Aristeas (39f.) the work of translating the Hebrew scriptures into Greek was undertaken by a body of highly educated Jews representing the twelve tribes sent out from Jerusalem; men who were familiar both with their own sacred writings and with Greek literature (121-22). This list, like the Letter which enshrines it, has for long met with very different reactions. Thus, in 1900, Wendland¹ thought the occurrence of names like Mathathias, Iudas, Simon and Jonathan (the last three being repeated thrice in the list) offered evidence sufficient to date the list after the Macca-bean period; however Swete,² writing in 1914, pronounced the names "clearly imaginary." Nor has greater agreement been arrived at in more recent years. Thus Albright's statement in 1940 that "the list of the seventy-two Jewish translators of the Septuagint, though hardly quite authentic, reads like a list of contemporary names from the newly discovered inscriptions"³ contrasts with the more sceptical attitude shown by Hadas, in 1951, that the Hebrew part of the names "is biblical and must have been in common use before and after the Hasmonean age, so that no cogent argument for either early or late dating can be based on their use"⁴ (the non-Semitic Greek names he disregards for the purpose). Behind this there is the larger problem as to what extent the Palestinian element in the translation of the Scriptures into Greek, related in the Letter of Aristeas, may have any foundation in fact. While the Septuagint has long been regarded as an essentially Alexandrian creation by most scholars, the suggestion that an alternative version originated in Leontopolis has been made by Jellicoe following Klijn.⁵ A Palestinian origin for the Septuagint itself has been proposed by M. Gaster,⁶ while the participation of a Palestinian element in a mainly Alexandrian enterprise was envisaged by Albright in 1940⁷ and, more recently, in 1968, this interpretation was agreed to by Jellicoe.⁸

1 P. Wendland, *Aristeae ad Philocratem Epistula* (Leipzig, 1900), xxvii.

2 H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge, 1914), 15.

3 W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore, 1940), 268.

4 M. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates* (New York, 1951), 11.

5 S. Jellicoe, "The Occasion and Purpose of the Letter of Aristeas," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-66), 144-50; cf. A. F. J. Klijn, *ibid.*, 11 (1964-65), 154-58.

6 M. Gaster, *The Samaritans* (London, 1925), 112f.

7 Albright, *From the Stone Age*, 336, n. 18.

8 S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford, 1968), 56.

As these very divergent judgments show, the situation is obviously not without difficulties. There may, however, be a way worth trying out in dealing with *some* of these difficulties. In addition to the texts, such as Maccabees or Josephus, we now have handy and comprehensive works of reference which allow us to judge reasonably well what names were actually in use among Jews in Egypt and Palestine during the Hellenistic and Roman era. For the Hellenistic period we can turn to the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, by Tcherikover and Fuks;⁹ for the latter we may use Frey's *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*,¹⁰ supplemented by more recent epigraphic and documentary finds. These works enable us to see what names, Hebrew or non-Hebrew, were in *frequent use* (or, alternatively, were only occasionally, or perhaps never, employed) among Jews in Egypt (including Alexandria and other centers) during the period in question; the same applies to Palestine, including Jerusalem. We can, moreover, learn from these sources, not only the names but also the various *forms (transcriptions) of names* in use and the frequency of their employment—a very important factor, particularly where the Greek spellings of Hebrew names, hellenized perhaps by the addition of Greek inflectional endings, are concerned. A comparison on such a basis of the names of the members of the alleged Jerusalemite translation commission with those authentically attested as having been borne by Egyptian, and more particularly Alexandrian (as against Palestinian) Jews could possibly prove enlightening. It may similarly be useful to compare such Egyptian, and particularly Alexandrian as well as Palestinian Jewish name forms, as far as they are of Hebrew derivation, with those in the Septuagint. This is the task which this paper is intended to deal with.

We may begin by reviewing the names of Jews from Alexandria figuring in Appendix III of the third volume of the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, which can be augmented by a close study of the materials listed in Appendix II and especially inscriptions no. 1424f.¹¹ The amount of information to be gleaned here is very limited, and only a fraction of the names date from the pre-Roman period. Deleting women's names, and also what are obviously Latin names in transcription, we obtain the following list:

Ϝ'ΑΒΒΙΒΑ (1446), Ἀλέξανδρος (142-43), Ἀλυπος (1432), Ἀπολλό (δαρος) (1425), Ἀρτέμων (1447), Βαραχίας (1438), Βαρζοχο (ρίας) (1435), Βαρούχ (1438), Δωσίθεος (127a-e, cf. vol. I:xix), Ἐλενος (151.2), Ἐρμογένης (144.6, 8 etc.), Ἡρακλείδης (144.5), Θεόδωρος (142-43, etc.), Θεόδωτος (149.3, 21), Ἰσάκις (149.4, 22), Ἰώσηπος (1427), Λυσίμαχος (149.3, 21), Νικόδειμος (142.2, 5 etc.), Νίκων (1447), Νόννος (1435), Σαμουήλ (1435), Σαμβαθίων (144.3 etc.), Σιμων (145.2), Τρύφων (149.2, 151.2, etc.), Φίλων (1428), Χελκίας (145.16), Ψύλλας (1431).

9 V. A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1957); vol. 2 (1960); vol. 3 (with M. Stern and D. M. Lewis) (1964). This latter volume contains indices particularly useful for our purpose.

10 J. B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1936, 1952).

11 *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 3:197f.; cf. 167f.; 138f.

To these might be added the names of Alexandrian Jews attested outside Egypt, such as the well-known ΝΕΙΛΙΑΝΩ who made the temple gates (Frey, *Corpus*, no. 1256), but this is unlikely to add much of value, and no systematic collection of such names has been undertaken for the purpose of this study.

It will be obvious at once that there is no particularly close relation between the names borne by actually known Alexandrian Jews and the names listed in Aristeas. Only ΘΕΟΔΩΤΟΣ corresponds exactly, and Σαμούηλ and Ἰσάμης correspond nearly, to the forms employed in the Letter. If the list is the free invention of an Alexandrian author, then it does not seem likely he made it up from the kind of names which were familiar to him in his own city, and which would naturally have occurred to him. He might, of course, have been aware that Palestinian Jews had customarily rather different names and thus made up his list—still a free invention—accordingly; this is a possibility we shall deal with later.

If the field of comparison is extended so as to include, not only the rather badly known names of the Jewish community in Alexandria, but the names borne by Jews in the whole of Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman period, then the number of parallels with the names in Aristeas is indeed increased. However, a good many among the latter still cannot be matched. These include:

Ἀβραῖος, Ἀδαῖος, Ἀρσαμος, Βασέας, Δαδαῖος, Δάμης, Δανίηλος,
Ἐζεκιῆλος, Ἐλισσαῖος, Ἐνδεμίας, Ἐσχλημίας, Ζαχαρίας, Ἰησίας,
Ἰερεμίας, Ἰσαήλος, Λευίς, Ματταθίας, Ναθθαῖος, Νεεμίας,
Ὀρνίας, Σεδεκίας, Σελεμίας, Χαβρίας, Χαβεῦ

Furthermore, among the Hebrew names, some which do occur on both sides do not correspond exactly in form in the list in Aristeas and in the Egyptian texts. Among these latter we list the following pairs:

Aristeas	Egypt (Tcherikover & Fuks)
Βανέας (50)	Βάνις (501.6)
Ἐζεκίας (47)	Ἐζεκιίας (29.2)
Ἰσαμὸς (48)	Ἰσάμης, Ἰσάμ (several examples)
Ἰσαχὸς (49)	Εἰσααμ (469.16) Ε(ἰ)σάμης (1482)

Even if chance and the results of possible scribal corruptions in the text of Aristeas are taken into account, the relation between the two lists is still not yet a very close one, and what was said earlier about possible relations between the list in Aristeas and Alexandrian Jewish names applies also to the names of the Jews in Egypt as a whole.

We must next investigate the relation between the names in the list in Aristeas and names borne by Jews in Palestine. (Whether we should assume the author of Aristeas freely created his list, or whether it may embody some genuine factual relationship is a question which may be left for treatment after this more basic problem has been dealt with). That certain names in Aristeas resemble those of certain very prominent individuals of the Maccabean period was,

as we saw,¹² noted by Wendland. If, however, we review as a whole the names of individuals who lived in Palestine during the Greco-Roman period and who are mentioned in the historical works of Josephus (the *Antiquities*, the *Jewish War*, and the *Life*¹³), then a more impressive list of correspondences may be produced. This will, in addition to the names already indicated by Wendland, also include, in particular, *Λευίς* which is, curiously enough, completely absent from the names in the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* covering the names of Egyptian Jews¹⁴ but which was just as obviously popular in Palestine. A review of the names mentioned in inscriptions, gathered in Frey's *Corpus*, leads to not dissimilar results.¹⁵ Again, there is indeed a fair residuum of names contained in *Aristeas* which cannot be paralleled in Josephus or the Palestinian inscriptions¹⁶ and, in addition, many of the more popular names are found in Egypt as in Palestine. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that with the occurrence in Palestine—but not, so far, in Egypt—of the *Ματθαίῳς* and *Λευίς* the correspondence between the names in *Aristeas* and the Palestinian names of Jews in the Greco-Roman period seems closer than the one between the List and the names of Jews in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt considered earlier. Against this we should set the absence in our Palestinian material of the forms *Σομοηλῖς*/*Σομόηλος* (as against *Σαμούηλος*).

But does such a relationship reflect a genuine element of truth in the account of *Aristeas* (who professed to give the facts about the Palestinian origin of the Septuagint) or, as has been recently suggested, at least some Palestinian participation in the enterprise? Is the list pure fiction (if perhaps well-based fiction) or could it be founded on fact in part? Some light may be shed on this difficult matter indirectly if we compare the epigraphically or historically attested name material from Egypt (and especially Alexandria) and Palestine, respectively, with the names in the Septuagint, taking into account in particular the phonetic (consonantal and vocalic) idiosyncrasies evinced in the transcriptions in each case. This will, therefore, be our next task. Furthermore, we may at this point refer to the comparison effected by Meecham,¹⁷ who also digested the older literature on the subject, between the names in *Aristeas* and those in the Septuagint. He noted, in particular tabulations,¹⁸ that, where Hebrew names

12 See above, n. 1.

13 The evidence is listed conveniently with a limited apparatus in A. Schalit, *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, (Leiden, 1968).

14 As was noted by the editors of the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 1:xviii, n. 6.

15 We may refer, e.g., to the occurrence of *Ματθαίῳς* (Frey, *Corpus*, no. 1276, and cf. in Hebrew nos. 1361, 1362), *Λευεῖς* (ibid., no. 1340), *Ἐζεκῖας* (ibid., no. 1229), *Ἰησοῦς* (ibid., no. 1231), *Ἰούδας* (ibid., no. 1283) (*Νεεμῖας*) / *נְהֵמְיָהוּ* (in Hebrew only, ibid., no. 1220), *Δημόνιος* / *Δοσίθεος* (ibid., no. 1358), *Ἐλεάζαρ* (ibid., no. 1387), from the tombs in the neighborhood of Jerusalem: later finds do not seem to affect the picture.

16 We list in particular *Ἀβιήτης*, *Ἀβραῖος*, *Βανέας*, *Βασέας*, *Δαδαῖος*, *Δάαις*, *Ἐνδεμῖας*, *Ἐσκλημῖας*, *Ἰσάηλος*, *Ὀρνέας*, *Σεδεκῖας*, *Σελεμῖας*, *Χαβεῦ*, *Χαβρίας*.

Some of the above occur as the names of biblical personages, but are not borne by Jews in the Greco-Roman period.

17 H. G. Meecham, *The Letter of Aristeas* (Manchester, 1935), 211f.

18 Ibid., 211-12.

are concerned, a fairly close similarity exists in a number of cases, but there is a greater tendency in Aristeas to Hellenize the Semitic forms by the addition of Greek inflexion endings. This is, of course, a further criterion worth remembering when the names in the LXX are compared with the Jewish names known to have been employed by actual living persons.

If we begin by juxtaposing the names borne by Alexandrian Jews, listed above, p. 192, with the names of persons in the Septuagint, then this discrepancy between uninflected LXX forms and inflected actual names confronts us at once in the cases of Ἰσ(α)άκι (LXX) Ἰσάκις and Ἰωσήφ (LXX) Ἰώσηπος. No truly significant parallelisms will appear in any case: the limited data from Alexandria do not seem to demonstrate, or even hint, that the name forms found in the Septuagint originated in that city. However, we have, of course, evidence from the works of Philo that the LXX-forms of Hebrew names were known, and indeed regarded as authoritative, in his hometown of Alexandria, for he employs them throughout, and bases his etymological explanations on them. Yet these very etymologies introduce an element of complication, for they seem at times to reflect pronunciations of Hebrew different from what the transcriptions in the Septuagint mostly imply. Thus, Philo's glossing of the name Ἐνώχ as Χάρις σου¹⁹ seems to imply a pronominal suffix הַי, where the *τ* is pronounced *ō* not *ā*. Here it is relevant to recall that a similar pronunciation seems also implied in the Alexandrian name referred to earlier, Βορούχ equalling בְּרוּךְ,²⁰ related is *ā* = *ō* in Βορζοχό(ρις)²¹ (equalling בְּרִיכָהּ). Other instances could be quoted which hint that Philo could draw on pronunciations of Hebrew differing from what predominant tendencies in Septuagint transcriptions would lead one to expect, and that such dialectical variations coexisted to some extent with "Septuagintal Hebrew" pronunciation in Alexandria.

If, in order to widen our sphere of reference, we compare the names in the Septuagint with those borne by Jews in Greco-Roman Egypt as a whole, there is likewise no significant correspondence. Not only were most Egyptian Jewish names Hellenized by the addition of Greek inflectional endings (which on the other hand, are absent in the Septuagint in most cases), but even when the name-forms left after inflectional terminations have been removed are compared with their opposite numbers in the LXX, there are significant differences. Among these we may mention the frequent occurrence in Egypt of the forms Ἰσαιοῦβις/Ἰαίουβος for Jacob, as against the rarer Ἰάιοβος/Ἰάιωβ(ος);²² in the Septuagint, Ἰαῖώβ is the standard form; in Egypt, Ἰώσηπος is preferred over Ἰώσηρος,²³ while Ἰωσήφ is normal in the LXX. Limited data available suggest that for Samuel, Egypt tends to use Σαμοῦις, Σαμόηλος (Σαμῆλος is perhaps the same name), while Σαμουήλ

19 E.g., *De Confusione Linguarum*, 122-23.

20 Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus*, 1438.

21 Ibid., no. 1435.

22 Cf. list in Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus*, 3:179.

23 See list, *ibid.*, 181-83. Cf., also, the remarks by H. St. J. Thackeray, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint* (Cambridge, 1909), 106, referred to by Meecham, *Aristeas*, 212, no. 4.

is rare;²⁴ the LXX has Σαμουήλ. This would not seem to suggest that the forms embodied in the Septuagint are the natural offshoot of the traditions in the matter of Hebrew names, and more especially the Hebrew pronunciation implied in these names, which were current among Egyptians Jews. If there ever was a Leontopolitan Version of the Hebrew, then, on the strength of the name forms listed in Appendix III of the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*,²⁵ the same criteria would apply. (These name forms may, nevertheless, be worth keeping in mind for another reason: if the inhabitants of Leontopolis were to any significant extent the descendants of the group of emigrants who left Judea together with the son of Onias III,²⁶ then the pronunciation of Hebrew implied in this admittedly very limited material may to some extent reflect the one in use among conservative High Priestly circles in Jerusalem at the time.)

Turning now to Palestine, we find that among the names which seemed of special diacritical value, Ἰάωβ (ος) is the form almost universally used in texts and transcriptions.²⁷ In the case of Joseph, the form Ἰώσηπος is dominant early, especially in inscriptions from Jerusalem, where its continual use may partly be an archaism.²⁸ It seems strongly attested, also, in the manuscript tradition in Josephus.²⁹ The form Ἰωσήφ on the other hand, tends on the whole to occur in the first century A. D. and, later, in the New Testament, as well as in inscriptions.³⁰ In Egypt, Ἰώσηφρος is once attested in the second century B. C. (Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus*, no. 240.1) but Ἰώσηπος otherwise prevails. As for Samuel the form Σαμουήλος is almost exclusively the one in use in Palestine³¹ (Σομοηλ (ος/ις) may, however, have been known in the region, if the name of the pre-Islamic Arabic Jewish poet Samaw' al (likely to stand for the pronunciation Samō' ael) can be used as a clue.³²) Of the three names, Samuel would thus show Palestinian rather than Egyptian analogies for the forms employed in the Septuagint; the same is true for Jacob, though the case is less clear with Joseph.

Taking the evidence together, it would then seem that, so far as personal names are concerned, the Septuagint was indeed a Version known and greatly respected at Alexandria,

24 Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus*, 3:189, 191.

25 Tcherikover and Fuks, *ibid.*, 204-5. They include Ἰάμουβος, cf., possibly also Ἰάωβος (no. 1482), Σομόηλος and Ἰώσηφρος, but not at present Ἰώσηπος.

26 Tcherikover and Fuks, *ibid.*, 1:3f.

27 There are several entries in Josephus, cf. A. Schalit, *Concordance*, 56, beside which this form also occurs in the New Testament; early inscriptional evidence seems to be poor, but the name is found later, as at Beth She'arim (Frey, *Corpus*, 1017, 1095. The forms Ἰμουβος and Εἰμουβος which also occur there (*Ibid.*, nos. 1117, 1119) are isolated.

28 Cf. Frey, *Corpus*, nos. 1350, 1355, 1368. It is still found at Murabba'at (P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, R. de Vaux, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (Oxford, 1961), 2: no. 89f. The archaizing tendency would parallel the Hebrew spelling יְהוֹשֻׁפָּט habitually found at Jerusalem. Cf., also, the remark by Thackeray quoted above in n. 23.

29 It is the form chosen by Niese in his edition, and Schalit, *Concordance*, 68, only gives this form.

30 See, e.g., P. B. Bagatti, and J. T. Milik, *Gli Scavi del "Dominus Flevit,"* (Jerusalem, 1958), 1:89, quoting *Kedem* 2:29f. Cf. Frey, *Corpus*, nos. 908, 1038, 1043, 1044.

31 There is no entry with Σομοηλος/ις from Palestine in Frey, and I can recall no other case.

32 For Samaw' al, see *Encyclopedie de 'Islam*, 4:138.

but it seems difficult to explain satisfactorily the forms of personal names used in it if the LXX was a purely Alexandrian or even Egyptian product. Rather, it would seem that we are dealing here with the result of the acceptance in Alexandria of a standard derived from outside; and there are hints that the region was Palestine. If this is true, then additional support would thus be given to the assumption that learned participation from Palestine did form an important element in the rise of the Septuagint.³³ To complete the argument satisfactorily it would be desirable to show how and where in Hellenistic Palestine the pronunciations underlying the name forms used in the LXX are to be placed as a whole. This cannot at present be done; but it may be worth keeping in mind that, according to the Letter of Aristeas, the seventy-two translators were overwhelmingly a lay body, and not a priestly delegation. Their type of Hebrew might thus reflect a pronunciation not universally shared among the Hellenistic Jews of Judea and Jerusalem. Perhaps these points deserve further attention by Septuagint scholars.

Regarding the names of the seventy-two elders given in Aristeas, more of them can be matched in Palestine than in Egypt, though a number is shared in both countries. Others at present resist analysis, whether due to insufficient epigraphic evidence or manuscript corruption. One or two names like Σομοῦλῆς/Σομώηλος are perhaps better placed in Egypt than in Palestine. But if there is some likelihood that the account of Aristeas reporting a Palestinian element in the LXX has some foundation in fact, then there may well be some truth in his account about the embassy also, and it need not entirely be the result of the inventive talents of the well-informed writer of an historical novel.

This short study is dedicated to Professor T. H. Gaster as a small token of thanks for much kindness shown by him to the Department of Semitic Studies in the University of Leeds, and to the writer, while he stayed with us as Montague Burton Visiting Lecturer in 1958-59, and in 1963-64.

נְבִיר־הֶכֶם בָּעוֹן וְאִישׁ דָּעַת מֵאַמְצִיבָה:

33 We must not forget that the Hebrew names, and the Hebrew pronunciations embodied in them which we had to deal with in Egypt are likely, to some extent at least, to reflect older Palestinian Hebrew imported with the earlier settlers. Here it may be interesting to note the isolated occurrence of the form Εἰδάουβος at Chrysopolis in Pontos (Frey, *Corpus*, no. 801), where the Jewish diaspora is likewise to go back some time; Ἰδάουβος in 1 Esdras 9:48a, might then also be a form represented originally in Palestine, but which had become nonstandard by the time our Palestinian textual and epigraphic evidence speaks clearly. Other forms in which an alternative pronunciation with ū rather than ō survived can be adduced, such as Γελβουέ (for Gilboa) in Josephus as well as the LXX. In the case of Ἰώσηπος/Ἰώσηρος, we may be dealing with the result of a replacement of a once widely current type pronunciation by a later one.