THE STORY OF THE THREE YOUTHS (1 ESDRAS 3-4) —
TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF THE LANGUAGE OF ITS VORLAGE

Zipora Talshir and David Talshir

This study aims at looking again at the question of the original language of the Story of the Three Youths, a story which has come down to us in Greek alone, in the First Book of Esdras 3:1-5:6. Scholarly opinion rarely goes beyond a general impression of the subject, and all of it takes its cue from Torrey, who contended that the story was translated from a Semitic-language original. His most commonly noted piece of evidence is the frequent use, alien to the Greek language, of the word τότε, ‘then’, which he identified as a reflection of the common Aramaic word פָּרָא. He further adduced several other phrases that pointed in the same direction, and concluded that the original language of the story was Aramaic and not Hebrew.

1A Hebrew version of this article was published in Shat'arei Talmun (eds. M. Fishbane and E. Tov; Indiana 1992) 63*-75*. We thank Ann Brener for the English version.

2Naturally, those who argue that the story originated in Greek made do with a general impression, as though not on them the burden of proof. So, for example: O. F. Fritzsche, Exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen (Leipzig 1851) 1; H. Guthe, “Das dritte Buch Esra,” Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des AT, II (ed. E. Kautzsch; Tübingen 1900) 1. Jahn, on the other hand, offered a methodologically curious reconstruction of the entire book into Hebrew, including those parts which already have an Aramaic (!) parallel in the MT; G. Jahn, Die Bücher Esra und Nehemja (Leiden 1909) 177-188. The evidence adduced by Torrey, C. C. Torrey, Ezra Studies (Chicago 1910), is noted on pp. 23-25, 50-56, 125-131. Those who followed in his footsteps quoted the major part of his words. See for example P.E. Bayer, Das dritte Buch Esdras (Freiburg 1911) 123ff.; B. Walde, Die Esrasbücher der Septuaginta (Freiburg 1913) 119-120, and many others.

3More precisely, that most of the story was indeed Aramaic, with the exception of its last part (4:47ff), which was largely Hebrew, a lost part of the Proto-MT which originally came between Ezra 1 and 2. But what could have been the logic in quoting the letters of the last kings in Aramaic and the letters of Cyrus in Hebrew (as Torrey would have it, when 1 Esdr
Since that time, only Zimmermann has sought to continue in Torrey’s path and to uncover other Aramaic constructions hiding behind the veil of Greek.4

The question on the agenda is therefore twofold: was the story originally written in Greek, and, if not — was it written in Aramaic or in Hebrew? At the basis of the problem is the difficulty in making the material yield negative evidence, that is, evidence that specific expressions could not possibly have been written in a given language. On the surface there seems to be little difficulty in distinguishing between Greek and Hebrew or Aramaic; only, most claims of ‘barbarisms’ in the Greek may be countered by evidence of nuance or syntax that prove the ostensible ‘barbarism’ to be legitimate usage. Even if a parallel is not to be found in other Greek texts, one can always explain away the oddities as an idiosyncrasy on the part of the author, or attribute it to his cultural environment.5 Indeed, the problem is not a minor one since the Greek we are dealing with is koine, probably influenced by the local vernaculars, and since the story may have been created in a bilingual milieu.6

On the other hand, there is little point in hunting down constructions that could not possibly have been written in a Semitic language, since these can always be attributed to the individuality of the translator. To cite one example, let us take the concept of φίλανθρωπία, which is a Greek concept par excellence and hard to imagine as having an Aramaic or Hebrew source. Yet if its appearance in Addition E to Esther is adduced as evidence that this pericope was originally written in Greek, what happens when we find the term turning up in 1 Esdr, and not in the Story of the Three Youths, but in the translated parts, 8:10 (Ezra 7:12)? The fact that it has no clear equivalent here makes little difference at all. What is important is that it appears in the translated material, and thus totally undermines the basis of the conclusion in relation to Esther.

The same can be said for the attempt to distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic; these two languages coexisted over a long period of time, and there can be no

is speaking of Darius)? Nor would the content seem to justify the opinion that this part ever formed a bridge between Ezra 1 and 2.


5W. Rudolph, Esra und Nehemia (HAT: Tübingen 1949) viii–ix. These are precisely the two sides of the approach adopted by Rudolph: first of all, this is Judeo-Greek; secondly, every problem in the Greek text is necessarily rooted anywhere but in its Vorlage.

6Or even trilingual, see J. Barr, “Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age,” The Cambridge History of Judaism II (Cambridge 1989) 79–114.
telling when and where the forms and constructions common to one language might have strayed into the other.

Nevertheless, a more precise evaluation of the kind of Greek used in The Story of the Three Youths shows that it is translation-Greek, and investigation of the kind of language it reflects indeed tips the scales in favor of Aramaic.

I. The Kind of Greek Used in the Story

The language of the Story of the Three Youths has been described more than once as natural and free-flowing. However, in order to determine whether the language of the story is closer to original Greek or to translation-Greek it is essential to use criteria as precise as possible. As a rule, if the language of the story is compared with patterns of non-translation Greek and the Greek of the Septuagint, we find that it does not easily disengage itself from the latter. In order to set these assessments on a sound basis, we will employ the criteria established by the researchers of the New Testament language, in their search after its Vorlage.

Let us first recall a few phrases encumbering the fluency of the Greek in the story. Even if these examples are not enough to give the work the indelible stamp of translation, their presence does call for explanation.7

(1) The Semitic patterns of verba dicendi, such as: εὐλόγησεν ... λέγον (4:58); ἐφόνησεν καὶ ... εἶπον (4:41). Or, the use of πρός after verbs of saying, even if it is not a rarity in koine.8 ἐπέραν ἐτέρος πρός τὸν ἐπέραν (3:4).

(2) The same is true for the place of the pronoun in 4:16: ἐξήθρησαν αὐτοῖς τοὺς πατέρωντος.9

(3) Ἀρχεῖν, as an auxiliary verb meaning ‘to begin’, is not common in Greek,10 but it introduces the words of the youths: Καὶ ἔρχεται ὁ πρῶτος... καὶ ἔφη (3:17, and also in: 4:1, 13, 33).


10 Turner, Grammar, 20, 46.
(4) The particle ἵνα, which may possibly reflect the Aramaic τι, is also found, and the fact that it recurs in adjacent verses may be evidence of over-adhesion to a non-Greek Vorlage:

4:46 δέομαι οὖν ἵνα ποιήσης,
4:47 καὶ ἔγραψεν... ἵνα προπέμψωσιν.
4:50 καὶ ἵνα ὁ Ἰσραήλ ἀφιώσι.

(5) Let us also mention here the use of ποιεῖν, which may possibly reflect a causative verb in Hebrew or Aramaic: ποιεῖν πλούσιας... ποιεῖ λαλεῖν (3:20); καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτοῦς συναναβῆναι (5:3).

The following data also testifies to a Semitic construction, but in a more controlled way.

(6) Substantial evidence for the existence of a Semitic Vorlage emerges from the position of the particle πᾶς, a minor detail in itself, but one which assumes importance precisely for this reason. Of the four patterns in which the word can be used, the Story of the Youths shows a clear preference for the biblical patterns. The forms common to independently-written Greek, ὁ κ. πᾶς or ὁ πᾶς κ., both in the singular and plural, are represented in the story only three times, as opposed to the forms of πᾶς κ. and especially of πᾶς ὁ κ., generally in the plural, which appear some thirty times. There is a similar trend in certain parts of the New Testament, opposed to the trend increasingly evidenced by papyri beginning with the third century BCE in which a striking preference for the constructions of Classical Greek becomes apparent. It is not that the preferred constructions in the Story of the Youths are impossible in Greek, for they do appear dozens of times in the papyri. Yet had the story been written in Greek to begin with, we would have expected a different ratio between the various kinds of constructions.

(7) The same trend emerges in the following table, which presents the ratio between main and subordinate verbs.

---

The New Testament for every main verb: 0.4 subordinate verbs
Selected Papyri\textsuperscript{16} for every main verb: 0.7 subordinate verbs
Classical Greek for every main verb: 1.4 subordinate verbs
The Story of the Youths for every main verb: 0.5 subordinate verbs

The table shows that the story has more main verbs than subordinate verbs, indeed almost twice as many, totally in contrast to the trend of Classical Greek. Is this not indicative of a \textit{Vorlage} which prefers paratactic sentences?

The above-noted relationships assume even more importance in view of the following considerations. First of all, while there is little discrepancy between the Greek of the story and independently-written Greek when compared with the papyri from the same time span, one cannot define the story’s language simply as \textit{koine}, for the distance between them is still great, and paved with Semitic stumbling blocks. We must also lay stress on an additional point arising from another aspect in the study of 1 Esdr, namely, the study of the technique used by the translator in those parts where the \textit{Vorlage} has come down to us. An examination of his method reveals that he does not transmit the content together with the form, so to speak, but often exchanges a form of expression preferred in Hebrew and Aramaic for one more at home in the Greek language. If this is the kind of translator responsible also for the Greek in the Story of the Youths, we would hardly expect to find a profound difference between the language of his translation and that of the Greek of his own day. For this reason, these Semitic traces in the story are all the more significant and provide cogent support for our hypothesis that the story is indeed a translation.

This assessment is well illustrated by the relation between the verbs in main and subordinate sentences. In the translated parts paratactic constructions are exchanged for hypotactic constructions thirty-five times, and we could further mention no few number of places in which a subordinate clause replaces other syntactical constructions. In view of this, the two-to-one ratio between main and subordinate verbs in the story becomes highly important as proof that we are dealing with translation-Greek.

\textsuperscript{16}The findings from the papyri in this case are less conclusive due to their literary nature, which leaves little room for using complex constructions of main and subordinate sentences.
(8) In Sollamo’s tables of semi-prepositions, as she terms them, 1 Esdr ranks high as a book in which it is difficult to find mistaken, un-Greek like use of prepositions, and this is true for the book as a whole, both the story and the translated parts. Indeed, out of all the Apocrypha, 1 Esdr takes its place at the bottom rungs of the ladder, among those works which make the least use of prepositions derived from parts of the body.\(^{17}\) This is still not enough to draw it closer to the non-translated books,\(^{18}\) but it does give it a unique status among the other translations, and reveals its author as one who managed to free himself from the language of his Vorlage and preserve the vitality of the target language.\(^{19}\)

The relatively authentic Greek appearance of the Story of the Youths does not, then, constitute an anomaly within the larger framework of 1 Esdr. Similar to the translated parts, the story may also owe its elegant Greek to the translator.

In light of all the above, it is worth noting the internal relationships between the story and the translated parts of the book in connection with certain phenomena. Let us call into use here two of the criteria suggested by Martin.\(^{20}\)

(9) Martin examined the frequency of the preposition ἐν in relation to that of other prepositions, and reached the conclusion that in the original Greek material the latter appear far more frequently, whereas in the translations the opposite is true. Examination of this relationship in 1 Esdr, in the Story of the Youths on the one hand, and in the translated parts on the other, reveals that the entire book

---


\(^{18}\)In 1 Esdr there is one such preposition for every 16 verses, whereas in 2–4 Macc the ratio is 1:90, 1:277, 0:284, respectively.

\(^{19}\)Even so, every now and then the choice of prepositions is surprising, as in the use of ὑπέρ with νικάν. In 3:12: ὑπέρ δὲ πάντα νικάν ἡ ἀλήθεια; or εἰς with πλεῖν in 4:23: εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν πλεῖν. In Greek, one sails to a given place, but sails in the sea, or better yet: πλεῖν τὴν θάλασσαν, without any preposition at all. However, it is difficult to point with certainty to the nature of the original: Zimmermann, “The Story of the Three Guardsmen,” 200, suggested that the translator found אתפיש לפני before him, but no Aramaic usage such as this is documented, as opposed to Hebrew ארמור לפני המים, y. Mo‘ed Qatan, beginning of chapter 3 (81:3).

\(^{20}\)R.A. Martin, *Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents* (SCS 3; Missoula 1974) 5ff.
stands firmly in the no-man’s land between translated and original Greek.\(^{21}\)

(10) Another relation examined by Martin is the usage of καὶ versus δὲ. He found that translated Greek has at least two καὶ for every δὲ, whereas original Greek has significantly fewer καὶ than δὲ. In real samples the curve in the Septuagint moves from six καὶ for every δὲ (chapters from the Septuagint to Genesis and the Aramaic parts of Daniel), up to 343 καὶ for every δὲ (Theodotion for the Hebrew parts of Daniel). In contrast, in original Greek there are 0.06 καὶ for every δὲ (Polybius) and up to 0.39 καὶ for every δὲ (the papyri). A quick glance at 1 Esdr immediately reveals that the entire book, both the story and the parts parallel to the MT, aligns itself firmly on the side of the Septuagint in clearly making more intensive use of καὶ than δὲ. In the translated parts the ratio is 7:1, while in the story this ratio climbs even higher — 8:5:1. This criterion, similar to that which we have examined up till now, shows that the Story of the Youths like 1 Esdr in its entirety is closer to independent Greek than most books of the Septuagint, yet still shows clear signs of belonging to the circle of translated books.

II. Traces of the Process of Translation

We have sought to show that the language of the Vorlage left its imprint on the language of the story, and that this language is translation-Greek. Let us now examine the traces which the process of translation left in the story, both in the way the material was handled and in its language and content.

A. Issues of Form

(1) We first mention a verse whose form would seem to actually prove that the story is indeed a translation: οἱ σωματοφύλακες οἱ φυλάσσοντες τὸ σῶμα τοῦ βασιλέως ²¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Septuagint</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>1 Esdr</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Original Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>διὰ</td>
<td>0.01–0.18</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.19–3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εἰς</td>
<td>0.01–0.49</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.79–11.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατὰ</td>
<td>0.01–0.19</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.26–2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>περὶ</td>
<td>0.01–0.27</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.28–1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πρὸς</td>
<td>0.01–0.024</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.19–0.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὑπὸ</td>
<td>0.01–0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.13–0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the translated parts of 1 Esdr: διὰ, περὶ, ὑπὸ border on the LXX, εἰς, πρὸς are in the middle, while κατὰ borders on the original language. In the story: διὰ, περὶ border on the original language, κατὰ, πρὸς, ὑπὸ are in the middle, and εἰς borders on the LXX.
(3:4). Whatever the language of the Vorlage, this text is best explained as a double translation.22 What was the point of explaining the term οἱ σωματοφύλακες by its literal components οἱ φυλάσσοντες τὸ σῶμα, if not because of the influence of an original itself formed of separate parts?23

(2) The appearance of different wording in a place where one might expect repetition can also testify to the transition between languages. In listing the high privileges due to the lad found to be wise, the youths cry out: καὶ δεύτερος καθιέται Δαρείου (3:7). When the time comes for the king to keep his word he says: καὶ ἐχόμενός μου καθήσῃ (4:42). That 4:42 fulfills the promise made in 3:7 is clear from the other components common to these texts. Only something happened in the course of translation: though the royal promise in the Vorlage was probably made with the same idiom in both places, the translator conveyed the former in one way, and the latter in another.

(3) Finally, a stylistic detail suggesting that the text originated in another language. 4:7–9 contains seven pairs of verbs. In six of them the pair is comprised of two forms of the same verb, while a seventh makes use of two different verbs: ἐὰν εἴπῃ ἀποκτείνω ἀποκτέννεσθαι... ἀφεῖναι ἀφοῦσιν... πατάξας τὰ ἐκκόπτουσι... ἐρμοῦσιν... ὡκοδομῆσαι ὡκοδομοῦσιν... ἔκκόψας ἐκκόπτουσιν... φύτεύσαι φυτεύοντως. The exception would seem to be the result of translation, rather than an original formulation.24

22The same can be said for ἐπιστάτων τῶν ιερῶν ἐργῶν... ἱεροστάτων (7:2). Even though its parallel in Ezra 6:13 has no clear equivalent, this is probably nothing more than a double translation. Cf. the kind of double translation which repeats only one of the elements, e.g., Gen 39:21–23: ὁ θεὸς τῆς θείας κράτους ἐποίησεν τὸ δεσματήριον. See Z. Talshir, “Double Translations in the Septuagint,” VI Congress of the IOSCS (SCS 23; Atlanta, Georgia 1987) 21–63.

23We could not find an attested term in either Hebrew or Aramaic to answer to the Greek terminus technicus σωματοφύλαξ. In 1 Sam 28:2 שמר כלא is ingeniously rendered by ἀρχισωματοφύλαξ. The latter stands also for שמר in Esth 2:21. In Josippon’s version of our story he retranslates the Greek into שמר שמר שמר שמר שמר שמר שמר (6:30, 35); however, there is no evidence for the use of שמר שמר שמר שמר שמר in the technical meaning of ‘bodyguard’ before Josippon.

24See another list of verbs which is repeated with some variation in Greek in 4:23–24. A few other things, tempting to believe but difficult to prove, are the possibility of the intentional alliteration of לֹעַל in the discourse on truth (4:36–37); or, the possible reflection of the phrase בְּנֵי נַפְשֵׁי in 6:31; 50:11, and see LXX-Isa 52:1), or in Aramaic רֵדָע (cf. Onkelos for רע רע רע רע רע רע in Gen 4:21), divided between two hemistichs in 4:17 καὶ αὐτῷ ποιήσῃ οἱ καύσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ αὐτὰ ποιήσει δόξην τῶν ἀνθρώπων. This is possible even though the second hemistich should probably be understood literally.
B. Linguistic Patterns

The use of biblical phraseology is not necessarily indicative of a translation, though it is worth stressing that the language of the story does bear the biblical influence, as we see for example in:

1. 4:54 τὴν ἱερατικὴν στολὴν ἐν τίνι λατρεύοντι ἐν αὐτῇ, cf. Ezek 42:14
   בְּנֵדְרְיָד מַשְׁרַת בֵּן, ‘their vestments in which they minister’.

2. 4:60 εὐλογητὸς εἴ τις ἐξοδικάς μοι σοφίαν καὶ σοι ὁμολογῶ δέσποτα τῶν πατέρων,
   has a close parallel in Dan 2:23
   λόγος ἅλως ἀβρααμίων μενεδρα δεν δεν καραμε ανα Ῥ Ἰ Καραμε αναβαρνα ἔλλος
   ἐν αὐτῷ, ‘I acknowledge and praise you, O God of my fathers, you who have given
   me wisdom and power’, and also in 1 Chr 29:10–12.

3. 4:63 τὸ ἱερὸν οὗ ἀνομώσθη τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπ’ αὐτῶ, cf. Jer 7:10
   μεταλλάκατο περι Λου φιλοσόφων, ‘in this house which is called by my name’, and elsewhere.

4. (It is particularly worth noticing places such as 3:6 καὶ πορφύρων περιβαλέσθαι
   καὶ ἐν χρυσόμασιν πίνειν καὶ ἐκ χρυσοῦ καθεύδειν καὶ ἀρμα χρυσοχάλινον καὶ κίδαριν
   βουσίνην καὶ μανιάκην περὶ τὸν τράχηλον, a verse echoed in both content and terminology
   in Dan 5:7 ἀργυρίων ὑπεντεὶματα μεθατα ἕξεν ἀργυρίῳ ὑπεντείματα, ‘shall be clothed in purple
   and wear a golden chain on his neck’, and similar to this in vv. 16, 29),
   and cf. also Esth 1:6–7; 8, 15.

5. (The list in 3:14 καὶ σατράπας καὶ στρατηγός καὶ τοπάρχας καὶ ὕπατους is
   identical with the Septuagint to Dan 3:2
   ἀραχνυφαινινατι γαμενα μεθατα ἀραχνυφαινινατι.

These examples show the proximity between the story and certain biblical passages. They also reveal that phraseology imbuing the Greek with a dimension of authenticity, especially in the use of court language, may nevertheless be the result of translation.

Beyond the general similarity in linguistic pattern, a number of phrases foreign to Greek also stand out. These are best defined as loan-translations.

1. (The first of these is καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν παρ’ αὐτὴ λαμβάνειν πρόσωπα oúde diáfora
   (4:39). One cannot imagine a phrase such as λαμβάνειν πρόσωπα in Greek. It must

(c.f. Esth 1:20)

25 And cf. also 4:40 with Dan 2:37; 7:14, 27.

26 Admittedly, the cognate words ἀντικινέω (originally Persian) and μανιασχής (which, like βοσσινος, is borrowed by the Greek from Aramaic) may mislead us into exaggerating the similarity between the texts.
have originated in the Hebrew נס or the Aramaic נס; cf. Deut 10:17, ‘who shows no favor and takes no bribe.’

The authenticity of the Aramaic expression emerges from its independent use in the Aramaic translations.

Moreover, the first part of the sentence καὶ οὖν ἐστὶν παρή ἀρτή, and its parallel in v. 36 καὶ οὖν ἐστὶν μετ’ ἀρτή also bear a Semitic stamp. The entire verse finds a close parallel in 2 Chr 19:7 καὶ ἀπέκτενεν ἡ οὖν ἡμέρα τοῦ πονήματος, ‘for there is no injustice or favoritism or bribe-taking with the Lord our God.’

(2) 4:38, 40: εἰς τὸν αἰώνα... εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ αἰῶνος... τῶν πάντων αἰώνων apparently reflect the common expressions of ἡμέρα πολὺ παρὰ τῆς σκινίνης, Ἡμέρα παλιάς ἡμέρας, and ἡμέρα παλιάς ἡμέρας.

(3) 4:18 καλὴν τῷ εἰδεί καὶ τῷ κάλλει is an expression foreign to Greek; one may reasonably assume that this is a translator’s solution to an expression such as יאָה בִּיר הָיוֹר הָוֶה הָוָה רָמָה, or its Aramaic counterpart יאָה בִּיר הָיוֹר הָוֶה הָוָה רָמָה.

Though the Aramaic formulation exactly corresponds to that of the Greek, a Hebrew

---

27 Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, ix, argues that the Semitic expression also needs a verb before διάφορα, i.e. ἔσταν; this does not invalidate the former conclusion, even though there is a certain justice to his words. One might say that the lack of a second verb or *nomen actionis* before ‘bribery’ proves that we are dealing with a Greek that used Hebrew expressions freely. This elliptic form, however, is still proper usage in Hebrew and Aramaic, though not in Greek. The fact remains that λαμβάνειν τρόσσωσα is not Greek. It should also be noted that a similar phenomenon is found in the translated parts, 1:46 (2 Chr 36:13) ῥίξα τῷ ὀφραίῳ ἁρμνόμενος καὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ; again two verbs are condensed into one. It is interesting that καλὴν τῷ εἰδεί καὶ τῷ κάλλει is also a kind of abbreviated translation for an expression made up of a recurring element; see below, note 32.

28 Onkelos changed the structure in Deut, ibid., to דְּלִיתָה קְרֶמָה מַמְבָּא אֶפְקִי; Neophyti also translated Deut 1:17: וְנָס בְּאָמֵר נָס אֱפִי לֹא תַכִּירוּ מִנְיָמָם; and in the Peshitta נס בְּאָמֵר נָס אֱפִי לֹא תַכִּירוּ מִנְיָמָם is common.

29 εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ αἰῶνος is used for ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ in the literal translation of Psalms, but also in LXX-Dan 12:3 (and see also Susanna 64).

30 כֶּלֶל is found in Ps 145:13, and for the Aramaic literature, in the Genesis Apocryphon 2:7 (also common in Tobit). In independently written Greek, πᾶς would have been added to the singular.

31 Torrey, *Ezra Studies*, 53, note e, defined it as a barbarism.

32 The repeated פִּי is represented only once; see above, note 27.

33 This is the formulation e.g., in the Fragments of the Palestinian Targum to Gen 29:17 (MS E), see M. L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, I (Cincinnati 1986) 41; similarly in the rest of the Targumim.
Vorlage is just as plausible, since other translators similarly replaced the constructs יישוּת מת נאָר מֶרָה with the dative case. In the contemporary apocryphal psalm 151 our phrase occurs in the construct state: יישוּת מת נאָר מֶרָה, ‘handsome of figure and appearance’ (v. 5), alongside the alternative form with ב in other expressions: נביה בָּקֶרֶת, ‘tall of stature and handsome of hair’ (v. 6).

(4) Since there is no such phrase as 3:1 ἐποίησεν δοξήν, one doubts whether a Greek writer would have used it of his own accord; whoever used it belonged to the milieu of translators accustomed to rendering עשת מษา (in Esther), or תבר מלח (in Daniel) as ποιεῖν δοξήν.

C. Issues of Content

Finally, infelicities of content may be the result of a mistake in translation, a phenomenon second to none in disclosing the fact that a work indeed originated in another language.

(1) A mistake is probably at the basis of 4:4 ἐὰν δὲ εξαποστείλῃ αὐτοὺς πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους, βαδίζοντι καὶ κατεργάζοντα τὰ ὄρη καὶ τὰ τεῖχη καὶ τοὺς πύργους. Why, after setting out against the royal enemies by command of the king, was it precisely the mountains they conquered, together with the walls and the towers? One possibility is that in the Vorlage, the walls and towers were linked to cities, and not to mountains. The mistake could have occurred in a text having either Hebrew וירז/חירז or Aramaic וירר/חירר, but not in a Greek one.

(2) There is a striking contradiction in the course of the story between 3:3 καὶ έκομψηθὰ καὶ έξυμνός έγένετο and 3:13 καὶ ὑπεέξεγερθη. First we are told that the king was awake and then, that he awoke from his sleep. How did this come about?

34Cf. Gen 29:17; 1 Sam 25:3; Esth 2:7. We thank Prof. T. Muraoka for these references and considerations.


36As suggested by A. Kahana, The Apocrypha I (Jerusalem 1930) ad loc (Hebrew). And cf. 2 Chr 14:6: יָאָמָר לְיוֹדְוָה נָנֵב אֵת חֵרִים מַחָּלָה יָנֵב חֵרִים מַמְרֹלֵים דַּלְתָּה בוֹרָיוֹת. ‘He said to Judah let us build up these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars.’


38Interestingly enough, Josippon introduces a doublet: וַאֲמַר צוֹמֵה לְ תפָקָר עוֹרִי הַפָּפָר אֶם אֵלָה מַחַלָה יָנֵב הוּא אֵלָה מַפָּרָה מַמְרֹלֵים דַּלְתָּה בוֹרָיוֹת. ‘And if they command to overthrow the cities they will overthrow, and if to cut through mountains they will cut through, and if to destroy walls they will destroy’ (6:65–66).
While it is possible that we have a combination of traditions here, a quite extreme solution, it is also possible that the translator failed to understand his Vorlage in one of the texts: (a) a straightforward explanation would be that the Vorlage of 3:13 had the verb מוק, implying that the king rose, and the translator understood it to mean that he woke from his sleep. In support of this cf. Dan 6:19–20 ושמת נברת,_ULחיינה יאדו בלא מלב אפרפריא, ‘and his sleep fled from him. Then at the first light of dawn, he arose’. (b) alternatively, 3:3 could have originally meant that the king fell asleep and the translator understood just the opposite. We may conjecture that he found something like שמת מלך גרה עליה לפני לו, meaning that sleep fell upon the king, which he took to mean that he was unable to sleep at all; cf. Dan 2:1 והнима רוח ושנתה נחרת עליה, ‘his spirit was agitated, yet he was overcome by sleep’ (others, however: ‘and he could not sleep’). Though this explanation is not solidly grounded in linguistic usage it is more in harmony with the spirit of the story, since the story is not based on the motif of insomnia but just the opposite: the contest is planned while the king is sound asleep. In addition, it is difficult to explain ἐνύπνεσεν ἐγενέτο as anything but an exact reflection of a Semitic expression.

It is clear therefore — even without committing ourselves as to the exact nature of the Vorlage — that certain elements in the content of the Story of the Three Youths, as well as in its language and external design, prove that the work is indeed a translation.

III. Hebrew or Aramaic?

Let us turn now to a closer examination of the Vorlage, in the attempt to discover whether its language was Hebrew or Aramaic. In the discussion below we will refer frequently to the important evidence adduced by Torrey, but will also attempt to refine and substantiate the evidence, while adding material of our own.

39Cf. 1 Sam 1:18 מפשי, מפשי, i.e. ‘her face did not fall’ (LXX: συνίστωσαν). In the language of the Tanna’im we find the expression שמת למז in the sense of ‘to fall asleep’, e.g., Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Shirah, 5 (Horovitz-Rabin, p. 134).
40Josippon is very articulate on this point: הימלך נ鼐 בשת ענ בימ in the sense of ‘and the king was heavily asleep since he got drunk’ (6:35).
41This pattern of translation is even more striking in the above-mentioned Dan 2:1 και ἐνύπνεσεν ἐγενέτο ἀπ’ αυτοῦ.
42Note that Torrey, Ezra Studies, did not attempt to show that Hebrew responds less to the text than Aramaic. So, for example, he suggested (p. 25) שמת נת as the original to πρὸς τὸ θότος (4:10, 41), on the basis of נב נת (Neh 5:13).
What, then, was the language of the Vorlage from which the translator worked — Aramaic or Hebrew? Does the Greek text reflect linguistic patterns found in only one of these languages? Does the meaning of the text offer a clue to the original language? This is no easy task, if only because it is difficult to make a Greek translation our yardstick for distinguishing between Hebrew and Aramaic. Moreover, our knowledge of these languages is based on limited sources and lack of documentation for either of these languages may well be a matter of chance. Finally, the affinity between Hebrew and Aramaic makes it harder to choose decisively between them, given the fact that we are dealing with a bilingual society, and linguistic patterns common to one could easily become part and parcel of the other. Nonetheless, there are a few cases where it seems that the Greek text before us can be well explained on the basis of an Aramaic Vorlage, while a Hebrew text would not fit the bill. On the other hand, it is hard to find evidence pointing exclusively to a Hebrew Vorlage alone, wherein features of language or content could not also be explained on the basis of Aramaic.

A. Linguistic Patterns

A few linguistic patterns reflect the Official and Middle Aramaic, but have no counterpart in Hebrew.

1. Let us first mention the conjunction noted by Torrey (pp. 23–24), and frequently repeated in the literature: the high frequency of the word τὸ ὕπαρξις in the Story of the Youths — 3:4, 8; 4:33, 41 (twice), 42, 43, 47, as in the rest of 1 Esdr (7 times). This is not characteristic of Greek, and its presence can only be explained by reference to the conjunction common in Official Aramaic: ייחודי (1).

2. 4:36 σῆματο καὶ τρέμει. This is practically a carbon copy of the Aramaic expression: רָאָא, see Dan 5:19; 6:27, or רָאָא in the Aramaic Book of Enoch 4QEn פ II, 30. This, then, is a common expression in Aramaic, while Hebrew has nothing like it.

3. 4:39 τὰ δίκαια ποιεῖ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἀδίκων. In Biblical Hebrew, the act of

43 The Hebrew parallel ייחודי is not frequently used as a conjunction, and the same is true for the later ייחודי.

44 And in reverse order: רָאָא, Genesis Apocryphon 3, K. Beyer, Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer (Göttingen 1984) 166.


46 The closest expression we found for this is רָאָא ייחודי (Jer 33:9).
wreaking vengeance (דשה מַשֵּׁתִים) is expressed with the preposition beth and not with mem, as in Exod 12:12, 'and I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt.' Torrey (p. 25) astutely indicated the use of the preposition alien to Greek, employed here by the Greek translator in an uncharacteristic moment of distraction, and suggested that the Greek originated in the Aramaic expression (Ezra 7:26). This is further born out by texts subsequently discovered, for example in the Aramaic Book of Enoch 4QEn 3:7, 3:8 and in the Bar-Kosiba letters, no. 1: מַכְנָה פַּרְעֹה נָמָה and דִּירָצָה רָבָּה יָד מְנֻנָּה יִשְׂכַּב. The Greek is even a more accurate reflection of the formulations in Qal, such as יִגְלּוּ נַחֲלֹת הַיְּבִיר in the Genesis Apocryphon 20:14 (similarly Onkelos to Deut 33:7), and note the striking resemblance between our text and 4QEn 3:7 IV, 16: וַיִּמָּכֶרוּ יִדּוּ מְנֻנָּה נַחֲלֹת תִּרְעָם.

(4) 4:42 εὐφρέθης σωφρότερος. Biblical Hebrew does not use מַכְנָה, 'found to be', in this manner, as an auxiliary verb acting as a copula in the sentence, but Biblical Aramaic does show this kind of usage; see Dan 5:27 מַשֵּׁתִים מְפַרְעֹה, 'found wanting.'

The above-noted idioms stand out clearly in the translation and constitute striking evidence of its reliance on Aramaic. Other examples are less clear:

(5) 4:6 וֹאֲנִיָּהוּ רֹפֵאִים וֶחָרָםִים. The word used to signify 'tax' in Official Aramaic is מַלְרִים (Ezra 4:13; 20; 6:8; 7:24), and in its wake the Hebrew מָרֹא (Neh 5:4). Could this have been the term which stood before the translator, who chose to render it in the plural מָרֹא? This might be the case, considering the custom in 2 Esdr. In 1 Esdr, however, מָרֹא is consistently rendered as מָרֹא. Hence it is difficult

\[\text{Cf. also Num 33:4, Ps 149:19. See, however, Ps 119:84, where the preposition has presumably been modified by the translator: מָרֹא מַלְרִים מַלְרִים.} \]

\[\text{Cf. also Judges 11:36, אָמַר הֲאָרָי אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ מָרֹא מַלְרִים מַלְרִים, 'seeing that the Lord has vindicated you against your enemies'.} \]

\[\text{We thank Prof. T. Muraoka for these references. These are hardly as straightforward an explanation as the Aramaic phrase.} \]

\[\text{Cf. also, however, our translator found an adequate verb to replace the entire Aramaic phrase, i.e., יְוַלְדוֹתְוָא, simply: they should be punished, 8:24.} \]

\[\text{E. Y. Kutscher, Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic (Jerusalem 1978) pp. מִלְחָדָא מִלְחָדָא (Hebrew).} \]

\[\text{There seems to be a similar use in late Biblical Hebrew, Esth 6:2 רִמְמָא כַּהֹן, also Dan 12:1, but the meaning of 'finding' is still apparent, as Neh 7:5 clearly shows. In Rabbinic Hebrew the use of מַשֵּׁתִים as an auxiliary verb is already common, possibly borrowed from Aramaic; see G. B. Sarfatti, "The Use of the Syntagm מַשֵּׁתִים in Mishnaic Hebrew," Language Studies II–III (Jerusalem 1987) 227–231 (Hebrew).} \]

\[\text{See 2:18; 6:27; 8:22 (Ezra 4:13; 6:8; 7:24) and cf. 2:23 (Ezra 4:20).} \]
to assume that φόροι lies at the basis of φόροι. Moreover, the verb chosen here, ἀναφέρειν, is never used with φορολογία; instead, the verbs δοῦναι and ἑπιβάλλειν are used, in keeping with δοῦναι ὁ Ἰσραήλ ἐν τῇ ἱδρυσίν of the Aramaic original, whereas ἀναφέρειν is the equivalent of תִּתְנִיחו (80 times). It seems, therefore, that ἀναφέροντα τοῦ φόρους is a reflection of a different phrase, betraying its Aramaic original in three:

(1) In Biblical Hebrew מִן, as in מִן עָבְד, means forced labor, corvée; (2) it is generally used in the singular;53 (3) the subject of לִתְנִיחו, ‘to raise the corvée’, is the ruler who imposes the corvée. From the Targumim, however, we learn that the Aramaic usage was different: (1) מִן was apparently not limited to corvée, but meant tax in general;54 (2) the word is always in the plural מִן; (3) and he who raises the taxes is not the recipient of the tax but the one who pays it.55 To be sure, the Aramaic evidence is not found in independently written literature, but in the Targumic literature the phrase is the translators’ own formulation, independent of the exact wording of their source. Our text in 1 Esdr is speaking about taxes on agricultural products which the subjects owed the king rather than forced labor and it therefore reflects in form and content an expression such as מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם.56

Let us mention briefly a few other such phrases:

(6) 4:5 καὶ τὰ ἀλλὰ πάντα may reflect the Aramaic כל מה. Support for this is found in the letter of the Jews of Elephantine to Bagohi (Cowley 30:11–12).57 The

52 We would usually expect the standard φέρειν (or another verb such as ἀπάγειν) in the context of raising taxes; ἀναφέρειν presumably takes the place of a causative verb in the translator’s source.

53 In the phrase שְׁרֵי מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם in Exod 1:11, the plural שְׁרֵי entails the plural of מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם, frequent in the Torah.

54 As testified by the Palestinian Targumim to Gen 49:15.

55 The following are telling examples. Deut 20:11 ‘they shall serve you at forced labor’ was rendered in the Jewish Targumim as מִן תַּחַת: (1) מִן was changed to מִן תַּחַת and (2) the מְסַקֶּן מָיִם are those who must pay it. The author of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets was forced to change 1 Kgs 5:27 מָלֵךְ שְׁלָמָה מָלֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל to: מָלֵךְ שְׁלָמָה מָלֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת מְסַקֶּן מָיִם (1) changing מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם into מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם, (2) supplying a verb not in his Vorlage (תַּחַת), and, once again, (3) making the מְסַקֶּן מָיִם those who pay the taxes.

56 מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם mentioned in the Amoraic literature (y. Dem. 22d; Sheb. 36c) is apparently a loan-translation of the Aramaic מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם, since the Aramaic evidence precedes this by hundreds of years.

57 The letter reads: מַעֲשֵׂי מְסַקֶּן מָיִם, which is generally translated as: ‘and (everything) else that was there, all of it they set on fire’, as if always were an adj. and used elliptically, without the noun; however, it might have been used as a substantive, which acquired, through metonymy, the meaning of ‘everything else’; cf. Dan 2:11; Kraeling 10:10.
phrase reoccurs in 6:4 (Ezra 5:3), without a direct parallel in the MT.

(7) 4:10, 31 πρὸς τούτοις. One wonders whether this is a literal rendering of לְכָל יָמִיו, or the more frequent כָל יָמִיו דִּצְרוּ, The real significance of the Aramaic is 'at that time,' 'then'; and as such fits the context. 58

(8) 4:22 δὲ iματο γνωναι. Torrey (p. 53) suggested that the translator chose this syntactical construction since the sentence hinged upon the Aramaic ראֳרִיך; cf. Ezra 4:14 וַתִּפְרֹץ אָרוּרִיך הַנַּחְתּוֹת, 'and it is not right that we should see.'

(9) Before turning to other matters, let us note the position of the verb at the end of the sentence, one of the trademarks of Official Aramaic. 59 There are several places in the story which would appear to testify to this Aramaic usage: 3:6; 4:42, 43, 44, 46, 50.

B. Issues of Content

Problematic elements in the content of the story can often be explained against the background of a misunderstood Aramaic Vorlage:

(1) 3:1 οἰκογενεῖς. In the beginning of the story mention is made of the guests summoned to the king’s banquet, and among these the οἰκογενεῖς receive a place of honor. The meaning of the Greek word, however, is 'houseborn slaves,' and this is highly incongruous under the circumstances. It seems that this infelicity is none other than a translation of בָּן בֵיתָא. In Official and Middle Aramaic בָּן בֵיתָא is a high-ranking official in the royal court, 60 whereas in Hebrew בָּן בֵית is a slave that was born into the house of his master. 61 The translator must have found בָּן בֵיתָא

58 On Torrey’s suggestions see above, note 42.

59 Official Aramaic inherited it from Akkadian, which in turn inherited it from Sumerian; cf. S. Segert, *Altaramaische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1975) 422. It is worth noting that this linguistic usage, alien to the Semitic languages, disappeared from the dialects which took the place of Official Aramaic.

60 The list may possibly name the high-ranking officials according to their hierarchical importance, with the οἰκογενεῖς at the top. Indeed, בָּן בֵיתָא is the title of Arsham, one of the senior officials of the Persian government (Driver, letters 1, 2, 3, 5) and cf. Beyer’s reading of the Genesis Apocryphon 19:24 הַלֹּא בַּנֹּי מַרְבֻּרָן מָרָן, 'three men from among the nobles of Egypt of the princes of Pharaoh of Zoan,' Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 173; the text, however, is dubious. It is difficult to accept Rundgren’s position, which attributes the Aramaic meaning to the Greek on the basis of the word’s usage here; F. Rundgren, “Zur Bedeutung von οἰκογενεῖς, 1 Esra 3,1,” *Eranos* 55 (1957) 145–152.

61 In Gen 15:2–3 בָּן בֵית is a synonym for בָּן מַשָּׁא בֵית; unfortunately the meaning of the latter is dubious, but see especially Eccl 2:7 וַיִּמְסֹרֵהוּ אֲבוֹרֵם וְסָפָתוּת בָּן בֵּית היה, 'I bought male
in his Vorlage and made a literal translation of its different components, even though it is very much out of context here.\(^62\)

(2) 4:14 is something of a locus classicus to any discussion of this kind: οὐ μέγας ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ πολλοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἵσχυε. The usual meaning of πολλοὶ ill accords with the context, since one would expect the emphasis to fall on power, or magnitude, and not on number. Rudolph (p. ix), as is his wont, plowed through the sources and found that the Greek word also carries a nuance of ‘strong.’ It is doubtful, however, whether a Greek author would have settled precisely on this word, when its primary meaning is ‘numerous.’ This is evidently nothing but a mistranslation. Torrey (p. 24) claims that the translator erred in translating the Aramaic word רָבָרָים, ‘great men, nobles,’ in the sense of its Hebrew counterpart רֵיחָם, ‘numerous.’ On the other hand, if we assume that the translator worked from an Aramaic text such as אֶתְנָו יִנְשָא בֵין אַדְמוֹת, everything slips into place, since everything in Aramaic has connotations of both number,\(^63\) and magnitude.\(^64\) The translator chose the first of these meanings, when he should have chosen the second.

(3) One wonders whether Zimmermann was correct in suggesting (pp. 187-188) that the ambiguous בַּלָא in Aramaic led to a mistranslation in 4:27, since the translator preferred the nuance of ‘to sin’ over that of ‘to owe.’ The latter nuance seems to be no more in keeping with the verbs alongside it than the first.

(4) Another mistranslation much better explained against the background of Aramaic usage than against that of Hebrew can also be found in chapter 4, vv. 49ff. Time and again the Greek text gives the impression that the king is busy dashing off letters to the Judeans about to leave his kingdom, the priests, the Levites and the guards of the city. Since לָו means ‘to’ as well as ‘about,’ the translator erred in thinking that the king’s letter was addressed to the Judeans etc. In fact, the documents were designated for the authorities in Coele-syria and Phoenicia, as written in v. 48, and their content was about the Judeans. The ambiguity of the word לָו is daily fare of Official Aramaic, but neither, it must be admitted, is it lacking in Hebrew (cf. Ezra 4: 6, 7).

and female slaves, and I acquired stewards.’ Zimmermann, “The Story of the Three Guardsmen,” 199, was imprecise in this matter.

\(^{62}\) Admittedly, the term expected to underlie the title οἰκονόμος in 4:47, 49 is also בַּלָא. In this case, it is not quite clear why he introduced an unsuitable term here.

\(^{63}\) Cf. לָו, ‘many years’ Ezra 5:11.

\(^{64}\) Cf. לָו, ‘a big statue,’ Dan 2:31, מַתְנִין רְבָיָה מַנְפָּה, ‘many great gifts,’ ibid., v. 48; and a similar usage in the Palestinian Targumim, as in the Targum to Gen 4:13.
(5) 4:36 καὶ οὖν ἔστιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἀδικον οὐδὲν; 4:40 εὐλογητός ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας. Many have noted the difficulty presented by the unexpected mention of God in the discourse about truth, 4:35, 36, 40. If we understand v. 35 οὖχι μέγας ὡς ταῦτα ποιεῖ as a continuation of the discourse on the subject of the sun and not as a definition of God, not explicitly mentioned in the verse, the fact that God does appear in vv. 36 and 40 can be explained as a mistranslation of the Aramaic Vorlage. Torrey (pp. 55–56) suggested a solution in this direction but contended that the translator’s change was tendentious, and that he sought to glorify God in a speech which praised the superiority of the creation without mention of the creator. Had Torrey taken into account the masculine gender of the Aramaic קדושה, קדוש, none of this would have been necessary. It is precisely because of the feminine gender of אמת and ἀληθεία and the masculine gender of קדוש that the Aramaic original of the story is revealed. Verse 36 revolves around the subject of truth and it is thus quite reasonable for its ending to do just the same: καὶ οὖν ἔστιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἀδικον οὐδὲν, that is ἐκεῖνο ὡς τὸν ῥήτορα, ἐκεῖνο ὡς τὸν ὥρτον ἐκεῖνον καὶ ἐκεῖνον, ‘it [the truth] has no iniquity’. In the Vorlage, the pronoun (הומ) refers not to God but to קדוש; the translator should have switched to the feminine in keeping with the Greek ἀληθεία. However, he erred and did not make the change, thus leaving the masculine pronoun to refer to God. And in v. 40 εὐλογητός ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας, the translator might have had before him: מברך/ברך שלח, that is, ‘God-blessed is the truth,’ which he understood to mean as ‘Blessed is the God of truth.’

IV. The Language of the Redaction

If we have succeeded in bringing sufficient evidence — and indeed the evidence has accumulative significance — showing that the story was translated from a Semitic language, apparently from Aramaic, this still does not tell us how it came

65Thus in all the Aramaic dialects קדוש is masculine, and even in Syriac, in which the form is פשך (through dissimilation of the emphatic consonants) and the taw could have been understood as denoting the feminine; Bar ‘Ali explicitly says: ירברב עתר אלא נקבא, ‘masculine and not feminine’, R. Payne Smith, Thesaurus Syriacus II (Oxford 1901) 3773.

66 Predicate is the word contrasting קדושה both in the Aramaic Book of Enoch, see 4QEn‘1 V, 3, Milik, The Books of Enoch, 189: מברך עליה המ יאכיתת ותמאו מברך קדושה ‘and destroy iniquity... and let the plant of righteousness appear,’ and in Syriac (Payne Smith, op. cit.).

67Perhaps the Vorlage read: מברךżyq ליתו קדוש ‘may the truth be blessed’ and the translator understood the verb ליתו as the name of God. Cf.: ליתו הריך ויד קדוש in the Aramaic Enoch 4QEn‘1 XI, 2, Milik, The Books of Enoch, 218.
to form part of 1 Esdras. It might have been included by an "Aramaic" or "Hebrew" redactor, but it might also have been in its Greek form that the story first reached the book. This is more than a hypothetical question, since the answer has ramifications for the same traits distinguishing 1 Esdr from the MT and connected to the inclusion of the Story of the Youths. If the story was first included in 1 Esdr when already in Greek, the changes this involved must first have been written in Greek as well.

In the course of examining 1 Esdr's characteristics we noted a number of points seeming to indicate intervention on the part of the translator, and which nevertheless conform with 1 Esdr's unique redaction. As a result, the question arises if these changes might not be indicative of similar elaborations: should they all be explained as originating from the hand of the translator, even though they would seem more indicative of a different Vorlage? We reject this possibility out of hand. Even if the translator was responsible for some significant changes he certainly did not author the redaction as a whole. Since the evidence presupposes relations between a source and its translator the supposition that the redaction was Greek also forces us to conclude that the redaction was made by the translator, and that we are not dealing with the redaction of an existing Greek translation. This would mean that in order to include the Greek story he undertook quite a comprehensive piece of translation, and during the course of translation also changed its structure and adapted its content. This scenario, which places all the work squarely on the shoulders of the translator is not entirely logical, to say the least. Even were we to say that this translator who gave himself a free hand in everything concerning linguistic usage also intervened in matters of content, we would still be a long way from explaining the evolution of 1 Esdr in its entirety. To be sure, details always make for a certain skepticism and foster a greater readiness to attribute the change to the translator. Such is not the case, however, when the discrepancy is on a larger scale. And indeed, when we come across a passage like 1:21–22 in 1 Esdr, unparalleled in the

---

68 This is the case for 2:18 (Ezra 4:14), in which the expression מַלְכַּה בְּרֵכָא מְלֹתֵא is translated by καὶ ἐπεὶ ἐνεργεῖται τὰ κατὰ τῶν ναῶν, introducing the work at the Temple into the complaint, together with the choice of equivalents for the root of יָרָר in 5:52–60 (3:6–12), as well as the attribution of the title Ἠσαχής to Zerubbabel in 6:28 (6:8–9). Indeed, these changes are best explained on the assumption that the translator elaborated his Vorlage. But they also join two trends of redaction in 1 Esdr: the first two changes adapt the text to the different place of the letter of complaint in 1 Esdr, and the last accords with Zerubbabel's special role in the Story of the Three Youths.
MT, we would hardly attribute the addition to the translator, since the shadow of the Hebrew original is evident for each and every word.

The major evidence that the inclusion of the story, and the changes in the book that it involved did not take place at the level of Greek is found in the passage linking the Story of the Youths to the rest of the book (5:1–6). This passage could have been written in Aramaic, and it could have been written in Hebrew, but it is hard to believe that it was written in Greek if only for the reason that here, more than anywhere else in the book, the writing least fits the Greek pattern.\(^{69}\) The following provide a number of examples:

1. Three consecutive main sentences begin with καὶ (vv. 2, 3, 4), evidence sufficient enough to cast strong doubt on the claim that the passage was originally written in Greek.

2. Both μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα (v. 1) which starts the first part of the passage, and καὶ ταῦτα τὰ ὁνόματα (v. 4) which starts its second part, reflect Semitic patterns.

3. The depiction of the groups of returning exiles: κατὰ πατριάς αὐτῶν εἰς τὸς φυλὰς ἐπὶ τὴν μεριδαρχίαν αὐτῶν (v. 4) is pure biblical formulation.

4. The manner of noting the month by μηνὶ Νισάν τοῦ πρώτου μηνὸς (v. 6) is again a biblical formula which a 'Greek' writer would hardly use.

5. Finally, it would seem that behind the awkward Greek text in v. 5 stands a mistranslation of the Vorlage: οἱ ἱερεῖς τινες Φινεέες τινοι 'Ααρών Ίσασον ὁ τοῦ Ἰωσεβίξ τοῦ Σαραίου και Ἰωακείμ ὁ τοῦ Ζοροβαβέλ τοῦ Σαλαθίῆλ. The opening with οἱ ἱερεῖς, 'the priests,' calls for more than one priest but only one priest is mentioned. Moreover, Joiakim was the son of Jeshua the son of Jozadak (Neh 12:26) while no son of Zerubbabel is known by this name. The leaders mentioned must have been the priests Jeshua, his son Joiakim, and Zerubbabel. The pronoun of וה or וה defining Joiakim as the son of Jeshua must have been overlooked, and Joiakim thus turned into Zerubbabel's son. The words the translator found before him, then, were:

\(^{69}\) There is no logic in Fritzsche's assumption, *Exegetisches Handbuch*, that the story was written originally in Hellenistic Greek, and that the ending (5:1–6) is a translation whose Vorlage has not come down to us. If the passage linking the story to its context was originally Hebrew or Aramaic, the story could not possibly have been written first in Greek. The Semitic nature of this passage also refutes a conjecture like that of Pohlman, who argues that the story was included in 1 Esdr only after the book reached its Greek form, as a translation of 2 Chr 35–36, Ezra 1–10, Neh 8, and that only the inclusion of the story within the book led to the changes, at the level of Greek, in its internal order; K. F. Pohlmann, *Studien im dritten Ezra* (Göttingen 1970) 35–52.
According to this evidence, then, the interpolation of the story in the book as well as the changes made in the book in order to accommodate it were accomplished before the translator set to work on the book. Should this be the case the Greek of the entire book, both the Story of the Youths and the other parts, is by one and the same hand. And indeed, the story and the sections parallel to Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah all bear the same stamp. In our discussion we noted a similar distribution of linguistic usage between the story and the rest of 1 Esdr. Let us illustrate the common style with a few examples: the phrase καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα comes both in 6:4 (Ezra 5:3) and in the story 4:5; χρυσόμαχα serves both 3:5 and 8:56 (Ezra 8:27); and in 8:51 (Ezra 8:22) the escort along the road is described as προπόρια, and in the story, 4:47, as ἵνα προπέμψωσιν αὐτόν; the region is called Κοίλη Συρία καὶ Φοινίκη in both the story at 4:48, and numerous times throughout the rest of the book; the Temple is called τὸ ἱερὸν in the story, vv. 51, 63, and in numerous other places in the book. All of these are unusual expressions in the corpus of the Septuagint.

In sum, it is not to the evolution of the Greek corpus which 1 Esdr attests, but rather to the evolution of a late redaction of a section of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.⁷¹

⁷⁰The omission of one or more wawas before the letter zayin can be explained by the similarity between the letters, cf. טו in 2 Chr 36:16, as opposed to וּבִית in 1 Esdr 1:49.