

Grammar of  
PALESTINIAN JEWISH  
ARAMAIC

BY

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Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic  
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## P R E F A C E

THIS introduction to Palestinian Jewish Aramaic presupposes a general knowledge of Hebrew or of some other Semitic language, such as Syriac or Arabic. It is intended primarily to equip students for the reading of the Targums (OJ) and the Aramaic portions of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim (PTM), and to provide a help to the study of the Aramaic elements contained in the writings of the New Testament.

The Aramaic of the books of Ezra and Daniel is perhaps best learned after a study has been made of one of the dialects just named. Its forms and uses, therefore, are noted in a supplementary way throughout the grammar. At the same time those who choose to begin with Old Testament Aramaic (OTA) may do so with the help of the special paradigms at the end of the book and by concentrating chiefly on the notes marked OTA, which have been placed towards the close of most of the sections into which the grammar is divided.

The pioneer work of Gustaf Dalman is everywhere presupposed and made use of. His grammar of OJ and PTM formulates the now accepted principles of their treatment (see p. 9) and provides an inexhaustible store-house of material for further investigation. In accordance with his conclusions the punctuation of the supra-linear MSS. is taken as a standard, although transliterated uniformly into the familiar sublinear system and so, in some particulars, made more precise (see § 2).

Dalman's grammar does not include syntax, so that the notes on syntax are a special feature of this grammar and are based almost entirely on the writer's personal observations. The references

added to the syntactical notes, and in other cases also, are intended to show the range of the evidence found, and to make it easy to test and supplement the conclusions drawn. They are not intended to be used by beginners. The evidence for the syntax of PTM has been taken wholly from the texts of Dalman's *Dialektproben*.

The scantiness of the material available for the study of OTA often makes the formulation of general statements about it difficult and practically inexpedient. The method adopted, therefore, has frequently been that of giving a precise numerical statement of the facts. The paradigm of the verb, also, has been made, more closely than is usual, a reproduction of existing verbal forms. Strack's edition of the texts, in his *Biblical Aramaic Grammar*, is assumed to be referred to, except when otherwise stated. Special note has been made of the evidence of the supralinear MSS. of OTA, of which Strack gives specimens.

References to the Targum of Onkelos are made implicitly to the supralinear editions of Kahle, Merx, and Praetorius, so far as they go (see Literature, p. 8). In the case of Gen. 1-4 and 24, the source is Merx's *Chrestomathy*, for other parts of the Pentateuch, Berliner's *Onkelos* is used. The references to Dalman's *Dialektproben* are made by means of figures referring to the page, paragraph, and line, generally without mention of the title, sometimes with the abbreviation Chrest. prefixed.

Much of the material in most sections of the grammar may be passed over on a first reading. Students working without a teacher are recommended to confine themselves at first to the notes marked with an asterisk. One or two sections which should be read completely are similarly marked. Those who have a fair working knowledge of Hebrew may begin to read the chapters of Genesis contained in Merx's *Chrestomathy* after they have completed § 8 of the *Grammar*. Only texts with a supralinear vocalization should

be used at first. Dalman's interesting *Dialektproben*, if it can be obtained, may be commenced at p. 14, after a few chapters of the Targum have been read. Unfortunately the *Dialektproben* is now out of print and there is no immediate prospect of its re-issue. The publication of further selections from the Aramaic portions of the Jerusalem Talmud, with an English vocabulary, would be of great assistance to English students of this literature.

The language of the *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, recently edited and translated by A. Cowley (1923), is closely related to the idioms of OJ, PTM, and OTA. The announcement by the editor of his intention to publish a grammar of the dialect of these papyri makes it superfluous to apologize for its exclusion from the scope of the present work. Still it may be said that, on the scale of treatment here attempted, no more than three dialects could properly be included. A more comprehensive work must be preceded by other detailed studies, which do not yet exist.

It is a very pleasant duty to acknowledge the help and encouragement the writer has received from the members of the *Society for Old Testament Study*, both individually and collectively. Without the assurance of their support and interest this grammar would never have been published nor expanded into its present form. Special thanks are due to my friend, the energetic and resourceful secretary, Dr. T. H. Robinson, of Cardiff University College.

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WM. B. STEVENSON.

Glasgow, 5th March, 1924.

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# PALESTINIAN JEWISH ARAMAIC

## § 1. INTRODUCTION

DALMAN'S *Grammar of Jewish-Palestinian Aramaic* (Leipzig, 1894) opened a new period in the study of the Aramaic dialects. It separated clearly for the first time the dialects of the Targums, Talmuds, and Midrashim, and it supplied a coherent and correct vocalization of the grammatical forms of the Targum of Onkelos and of the related dialect used in the Palestinian Talmud. The vocalization was based upon Yemenite MSS., which employed supralinear vowel signs. The second edition of Dalman's grammar (1905), along with his dictionary (1901), supplemented and revised his early work, but did not change its fundamental character.

It was now made clear that the Targums of Onkelos (Pentateuch) and Jonathan (Prophets) were written in practically the same Aramaic dialect (OJ), somewhat modified by the influence of the Hebrew originals, and that the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim preserved the remains of another dialect (PTM), closely related to the former. Because of this relationship Dalman supplied the unvocalized texts of PTM with vowels determined for the most part by the analogy of the supralinear tradition of the Targums. In this whole literature he saw, with good reason, the best avenue of approach to the Aramaic speech of Palestine in the time of Christ and a valuable help to the study of the language and thought of the New Testament.

The origin, character, and variations of the supralinear MSS. of

the Targums have been greatly elucidated by the patient and extensive researches of Paul Kahle (published in 1913). His conclusions may be summarized as follows. The oldest and best tradition of the Aramaic of the Targums is contained in MSS. of Babylonian (i.e. Mesopotamian) origin. The Yemenite MSS. represent this tradition modified by the principles of the school of Tiberias in Palestine. The measure of Palestinian influence increased as time went on, so that the older Yemenite MSS. are nearer to the Babylonian tradition than the later. The sublinear vocalization of Berliner's edition of Onkelos goes back ultimately to a MS. which used the supralinear system. The forms of Berliner's edition are not real Aramaic forms, but through them we may reach a supralinear tradition similar to that of the MSS. which employ a supralinear vocalization.

The texts of PTM are to a large extent stories written in a simple popular style. The language, according to Dalman, is that of Galilee in the third and fourth centuries A.D. Part of what is contained in the Midrashim may be dated as late as the sixth century. There are some differences of vocabulary between the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, but no very obvious differences of grammar. The Aramaic of these Targums has a more literary character than the language of the Galilean stories, and is supposed to have been moulded first in Judea. The Targums themselves may not have received their final literary form before the fifth century, but the idiom in which they are written probably goes back at least to the second century and perhaps earlier. Dalman's interpretation of the phraseology of the New Testament in the light of Aramaic usage proceeds on the view that we have in OJ and PTM, respectively, close approximations to the literary and popular forms of the language of Palestine in the time of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See especially Dalman's *Words of Jesus*, Introduction, section viii. The most recent attempt to show the influence of Aramaic upon a NT writer is