

The Diaspora as a Word and Concept in Early Judaism

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The divine promise that the Israelites will establish themselves in the land promised to the Abrahamic family is perhaps the foremost unifying theme of the Hebrew Bible. Its countertheme, the possibility that the Israelites might be displaced from this land, undergirds much of the Hebrew Bible as well, and the threat of exile looms large in the Deuteronomistic History and prophetic literature.¹ Peaceful settlement in the promised land was viewed as an indicator of God's satisfaction with Israel, while displacement signified just, divine punishment for Israel's sins.² The biblical prophets exploited the Israelites' fear of displacement by warning them of potential exile should they not repent of their sins. These warnings were realized with the Babylonian exile, an event that the Hebrew Bible refers to as the גולה (*gôlâ*), a term that appears forty times in the Hebrew Bible.³ It is unclear whether the postexilic biblical authors viewed

1. Robert Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourses in the Prophetic Literature," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (ed. James M. Scott; JSJSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 63–88.

2. On the theology of the exile, see A. Thomas Kraabel, "Unity and Diversity among Diaspora Synagogues," in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987) 49–60, here 49.

3. 2 Kgs 24:14–16; Jer 28:6 (LXX 35:6); 29:1 (LXX 36:1); 29:4 (LXX 36:4); 29:16, 20, 31 (LXX 36:31); 46:19 (LXX 26:19); 48:7 (LXX 31:7), 11 (LXX 31:33); 49:3 (LXX 30:19); Ezek 1:1; 3:11, 15; 11:24–25; 12:3–4, 7, 11; 25:3; Amos 1:15; Zech 6:10; 14:2; Ezra 1:11; 2:1; 4:1; 6:19–21; 8:35; 9:4; 10:6–8, 16; Neh 7:6. גולה also appears in six Qumran fragments (1QM 1.2, 3; 4QpNah [4Q169] 3–4 iv 1; 4QapocrJerC^a [4Q385a] 17a–e ii 7; 4Qpap psEzek^e [4Q391] 77.2; 6Qpap apocrSam–Kgs [6Q9] 1.2).

the Babylonian exile as having come to a close following Cyrus's edict permitting the exiled Judeans to return to Yehud, since most Judeans did not return at that time. By the late Second Temple period, most Jews lived outside of Judea.

Scholars disagree as to whether Jews living in the Greek and Roman diaspora viewed the concept of diaspora, and their lives in the diaspora, as an extension of the biblical curse of גלות ("exile"). A. Thomas Kraabel has argued that diasporan Jews living in the Greco-Roman world did not view their lives as fulfillments of the biblical גלות, but viewed the two categories as being entirely distinct.⁴ W. C. van Unnik, however, has posited that diasporan Jews viewed their lives as embodied fulfillments of scriptural promises to punish Israel with exile.⁵ Both positions lack the nuance that is required to assess the attitudes of a diverse Jewish population spread across a massive region over the course of six centuries.⁶

While current scholarship tends to follow Kraabel's positive view of the diaspora, studies of the Jewish diaspora in antiquity generally neglect a thorough examination of the use of the word *διασπορά* in Second Temple literature. It is van Unnik who argues for a negative diasporan self-understanding. He analyzes the word *διασπορά* as it appears in Greek and Roman sources, concluding that the Septuagint's authors adopted the term *διασπορά* from these sources, which use the word in the context of colonization. According to van Unnik, Jewish authors borrowed the term and reframed it as a referent to the divine punishment of Israel. As later scholars have shown, however, van Unnik's research contains significant errors.⁷ Most problematically, van Unnik presumes that the

4. Kraabel's claim that, at this early stage, "Diaspora was not Exile; in some sense it became a Holy Land, too," is an unverifiable overstatement (A. Thomas Kraabel, "The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions," *JJS* 33.1-2 [1982] 445-64, here 452).

5. W. C. van Unnik, *Das Selbstverständnis der jüdischen Diaspora in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit* (ed. Pieter Willem van der Horst; AGAJU 17; Leiden: Brill, 1993) 95-101.

6. James M. Scott takes a middle ground by asserting that scholars must "reckon with the probability that Jews living in foreign lands represented a whole spectrum of different perspectives on their Diasporic situation, depending in part on time, place, and circumstances" ("Exile and the Self-Understanding of Diaspora Jews in the Greco-Roman Period," in Scott, *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, 173-218, here 182).

7. While van Unnik notes that *διασπορά* appears in the writings of Thucydides (*Peloponnesian War* 2.27), for example, the word used there is in fact *σπείρω*, which is related but not identical to the verb *διασπείρω*. The verb *διασπείρω* appears as early as the fifth century B.C.E., but the noun first appears only in the Septuagint. Stéphane Dufoix points out that, despite van Unnik's claims that *διασπορά* appears in Greek

literary function of a word correlates with a lived reality, which leads to his claim that, because *διασπορά* was used negatively, diasporan Jews must have perceived their lives negatively.⁸

Stéphane Dufoix has recently complicated this presumption in his study of how early Jewish writers deployed the word *διασπορά*. He argues that *διασπορά* is a neologism in the Septuagint and does not appear in earlier extant sources. Moreover, the Septuagint does not use *διασπορά* to translate the Hebrew words for banishment and exile (גלות and גולה), and גלות and *διασπορά* cannot, therefore, be equated. Instead, the authors of the Septuagint use *διασπορά* in the context of a divine punishment that transcends a particular past event, and, with the exception of one appearance in the Book of Judith, the term refers to a potential future event.⁹ The correlative relationship between how *διασπορά* appears in the Septuagint and how Jews living outside of Judea assessed their diasporan lives is thus more complex than most scholars have assumed.

In this essay, I will suggest that the debate over whether diasporan Jews viewed the diaspora positively or negatively can be mapped onto negative literary usages of *διασπορά* and positive lived *realities* of the diaspora. In other words, texts that use *διασπορά* speak of it negatively, but texts about the diaspora that do not use the word speak positively about the diaspora as a place where Jews can thrive as practitioners of their ancestral customs. Instead of concluding that the negative uses of *διασπορά* in the Septuagint indicate a negative attitude toward diasporan Jews' lived reality, I will suggest that there was a dissonance between the negative connotation of the word *διασπορά* in the Septuagint and the positive lived reality within the diaspora, which caused later Jewish authors writing about the diaspora in the late Second Temple period to avoid using the term.¹⁰

literature in reference to displacement and colonization, “of all the occurrences of diaspora in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) . . . none refer to colonisation” (*The Dispersion: A History of the Word diaspora* [Brill’s Specials in Modern History 1; Leiden: Brill, 2017] 29). Dufoix suggests that the identification of *διασπορά* as an originally non-Jewish Greek term “lies in a desire to constitute a concept applicable to several populations—this is particularly so in the contemporary context in which the term has assumed positive connotations” (30–34, here 34).

8. Dufoix, *Dispersion*, 30–37; Scott, “Self-Understanding of Diaspora Jews,” 183–84.

9. Dufoix, *Dispersion*, 47; Stéphane Dufoix, “Diaspora before It Became a Concept,” in *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies* (ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer; New York: Routledge, 2019) 13–21; Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas* (trans. William Rodamor; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

10. I refer to the Septuagint as a collection of texts produced over the last three

■ CAPTIVITY AND DISPLACEMENT: αἰχμαλωσία AND ἀποικία

The Septuagint authors use three words to refer to Israel's experience of exile, each of which refers to a separate stage of its experience: αἰχμαλωσία ("captivity"), ἀποικία ("displacement"), and διασπορά ("dispersion"). Of these, the Greek word for captivity, αἰχμαλωσία, which also denotes spoils of war, is the most common, appearing 124 times in the Septuagint. Later Jewish authors made regular use of αἰχμαλωσία as well. Josephus uses the word twenty-nine times, but Philo uses it just once (*Leg.* 2.35), in a citation of the Septuagint's rendering of Num 31:25–26, verses that concern the laws of taking spoils in war. Αἰχμαλωσία also appears twenty-two times in other Jewish texts, including the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a collection that recounts the final words of Jacob's twelve sons on their deathbeds and uses the word fifteen times.¹¹ The *Testaments* inter-

centuries of the Second Temple period that was read by most Greek-speaking Jews as authoritative Scripture. While distinctions between scriptural and nonscriptural documents were fluid and varied from community to community (and also generation to generation), I will speak of the Septuagint as a family of texts that can be read in conversation with Hellenistic Jewish texts composed in the diaspora that were not, as far as I know, candidates for scriptural status, and do not use the word *diaspora* (but could easily have done so based on their subject matter). Such texts include Alexandrian documents like the *Letter of Aristeas* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, as well as the writings of Philo of Alexandria, who uses the word twice, but not in reference to contemporary Jewish life outside the Land of Israel. Though a detailed examination of these documents lies beyond the scope of this essay, it is sufficient for our purposes to note that the positive attitude toward diasporan Jewish life expressed in these writings, along with their thorough knowledge of the Septuagint, suggests a desire to dissociate from scriptural curses envisioning a diaspora. On the notion of canonicity in this period, see Timothy H. Lim, "A Theory of the Majority Canon," *ExpTim* 124.8 (2013) 365–73; idem, ed., *When Texts Are Canonized* (BJS 359; Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2017).

11. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* depicts the captivity of Jacob's family in Egypt as a divine punishment for the family's sins that seems to correlate with the suffering of Judean Jews in the first and second centuries. Despite its Jewish origins, the *Testaments* probably came to their final form in at least the second century at the hands of Christian redactors, and therefore αἰχμαλωσία, as an overarching theme in the collection, may represent the work of an early Christian editor. See Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of Their Text, Composition, and Origin* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975) 128; Elias J. Bickerman, "The Date of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *JBL* 69 (1950) 245–60, here 260. Since there is no mention of the Roman Empire in the list of rulers in the *Testament of Naphtali* (5:8), the earliest stage of composition likely predates 63 B.C.E. The text's reliance on the Septuagint indicates a *terminus post quem* of 250 B.C.E, while references to the *Testa-*

pret the impending slavery of Jacob's descendants in Egypt and the Babylonian expulsion of Judeans many centuries later as predictable outcomes of Israel's failure to comply with the covenantal agreement between the elected people and God.¹² The *Psalms of Solomon*, a collection dated to the late first century B.C.E., also mentions *αἰχμαλωσία* in the context of Jewish captivity, as do other texts that were likely written shortly after the fall of the Jerusalem temple: 3 *Baruch*, 4 *Baruch*, 4 *Ezra*, and a fragment in Clement of Alexandria that is attributed to a Jew named Demetrius.¹³

While *αἰχμαλωσία* is the most common term for exile in Hellenistic Jewish literature, *ἀποικία* is more rare, appearing just twenty-eight times in the Septuagint, all in *Ezra-Nehemiah*, *Jeremiah*, 3 *Maccabees*, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and *Baruch*, which use the term in reference to the recent past or to the people's contemporary displacement as a result of the exile.¹⁴ Some references to *ἀποικία* in these texts are translations of the Hebrew גולה.¹⁵ *Ἀποικία* also appears forty-four times in the writings of Philo, who uses it in reference to the two-phased experience of departing from one's ancestral homeland and colonizing another land, mostly in passages regarding the biblical patriarchs.¹⁶ Philo views displacement and colonization positively, perhaps because he was influenced by the Egyptian tradition that communities throughout the world derived from

ment of Reuben in Origen's homilies and references to the *Testament of Naphtali* by Jerome suggest a *terminus ad quem* of the third century C.E.

12. See, e.g., *T. Naph.* 5:8. In certain passages of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the word means "spoils of war" (*T. Jud.* 4:3; 5:6; 6:3; 7:8; 23:5). Though the term is used occasionally to specify incidents of captivity in the lives of the patriarchs (*T. Jos.* 1:5), most use *αἰχμαλωσία* to refer to the Israelites' slavery in Egypt in ways that potentially allude to later exiles as well (*T. Benj.* 7:2; *T. Dan* 5:11; *T. Naph.* 4:2, as well as *T. Dan* 5:7–8; *T. Levi* 13:6–7; and *T. Naph.* 5:8).

13. *Pss. Sol.* 2:6; 4 *Ezdr* 14:21–22; 3 *Apoc. Bar.* 0:2–3; 4 *Bar.* 6:19; 4 *Ezra* 5:16–18; Demetrius frag. 6:1, preserved in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.141ff. *Αἰχμαλωσία* also appears in the *Lives of the Prophets* 12:1–2 and 20:1, but the provenance of this text is contested and may originate from a later Christian source.

14. *Ezra* 1:11; 2:1; 4:1; 9:4; 10:6, 16; *Neh* 7:6; 3 *Macc* 6:10; *Wis* 12:7; *Jer* 13:9; 30:19; 31:7; 35:4, 6; 36:1, 4, 22, 31; 37:3; 39:44; 40:7, 11; 47:11; *Bar* 3:7–8.

15. 2 *Kgs* 24:14–16; *Jer* 28:6 (LXX 35:6); 29:1 (LXX 36:1); 29:4 (LXX 36:4); 29:16, 20, 31 (LXX 36:31); 46:19 (LXX 26:19); 48:7 (LXX 31:7), 11 (LXX 31:33); 49:3 (LXX 30:19); *Ezra* 1:11; 4:1; 6:19–21; 9:4; 10:6–8, 16; *Neh* 7:6. The Septuagint also occasionally renders גולה as *αἰχμαλωσία*: 2 *Kgs* 24:14; *Ezek* 1:1; 3:11, 15; 11:24–25; 12:3–4, 7, 11; 25:3; *Amos* 1:15; *Zech* 6:10; 14:2; *Ezra* 2:1; 8:35; *Neh* 7:6.

16. Philo, *Opif.* 135; *Conf.* 77–78; *Migr.* 176; *Her.* 98; *Congr.* 84; *Fug.* 36, 95; *Abr.* 66, 68, 72, 77, 85; *Mos.* 1.71, 103, 163, 170, 195, 222, 233, 236, 239, 254–55; 2.232, 246, 288; *Spec.* 2.25, 146, 150, 158; 3.111; 4.178; *Virt.* 77, 102, 219; *Praem.* 16, 80; *Contempl.* 22; *Flacc.* 46; *Legat.* 281; *Q.G.* 1.27.

Egypt.¹⁷ Josephus likewise uses ἀποικία to refer to colonization, using the word eight times.¹⁸

Of the three words used in the Septuagint to denote captivity, διασπορά is by far the most rare, appearing just twelve times. Though captivity and displacement are conceptual precursors to the diaspora, the Septuagint authors use διασπορά as an umbrella term that includes the experiences of captivity and displacement.¹⁹

■ THE SCATTERING: διασπορά

The word διασπορά derives from the Greek prefix δια-, which indicates a motion of moving through or over a particular space, and here likely refers to separation or division, and σπείρω, which means “to sow.” The word would have conveyed an image of seeds being scattered upon foreign lands. Besides its twelve appearances in the Septuagint, διασπορά appears twice in the writings of Philo of Alexandria: in a citation of the Septuagint (*Conf.* 197) and in a metaphorical comment about how vice leads to the dispersion of the soul (*Praem.* 115). Philo does not show awareness of διασπορά as a reference to Jewish populations outside of Judea. Nor does the word appear in the writings of Josephus. Διασπορά does, however, appear in three collections that date to the first century B.C.E. or the first century C.E.: the *Pss. Sol.* 8:28; 9:2; *T. Asher* 7:2; and the New Testament.

■ Διασπορά IN THE SEPTUAGINT

The authors of works preserved in the Septuagint do not use διασπορά to translate any particular word of the Hebrew Bible. In three instances, the word is used to translate מְצֻרִים (“scattered ones”), which indicates that διασπορά was understood to be a population instead of (or in addition to) a designated space.²⁰ More often, however, the Septuagint translators

17. On this tradition in Egypt, see Diodorus Siculus, 1.28.1–3. See Scott, “Exile and Self-Understanding,” 183; idem, “Philo and the Restoration of Israel,” in *SBL 1995 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 553–75; Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) 242. Philo, *Conf.* 17.77–78; cf. *Flacc.* 7.46–47.

18. Josephus uses the word in *Ant.* 1.110–12, 120, 216, 255; 10.223, and in *Ap.* 2.38.

19. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “διασπορά,” *TDNT* 2:98–104.

20. Deut 30:4; Neh 1:9; Ps 147:2.

employ *διασπορά* to interpret an unrelated word in the context of divine punishment, or as an editorial insertion.

Διασπορά first appears in the Septuagint in Deut 28:25, in a passage that lists a series of curses that God will exact upon the Israelites should they violate the covenantal laws.²¹ The Masoretic version of this passage first refers to Israelites being subject to foreign colonization in Deut 28:36, which declares that “the LORD will bring you, and the king whom you set over you, to a nation that neither you nor your ancestors have known.”²² The Septuagint translator transfers this punishment to the opening pericope by rendering Deut 28:25’s “You shall become an object of horror [היהיית לזערה] to all the kingdoms of the earth,” as “You shall be in dispersion [ἐν διασπορᾷ] in all the kingdoms of the earth.” In defining *הושי* as *διασπορά*, the translator clarifies that Israel’s dispersion will be a source of horror to others, intended to publicly expose Israel’s broken covenantal relationship to the nations, who will take note of Israel’s fate and be reminded of God’s fearsome power.

While the Septuagint’s earliest reference to *διασπορά* links Israel’s expulsion with public shame, its second reference to *διασπορά* appears shortly afterward in the context of restoration. In the Masoretic version, Deut 30:4–5 reads, “Even if your spread-out ones [גדודך] are at the edge of the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back. The LORD your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.”²³ By rendering *גדודך* as *διασπορά*, the translator implies that the shameful status of the dispersed people envisioned in the earlier pericope is temporary.²⁴ The juxtaposition of these two references to *διασπορά* points to the word’s dual aspect: the diaspora will exacerbate the deteriorating relationship between God and Israel but will also be a harbinger of their future reconciliation.

The Septuagint renders *הושי* as *διασπορά* in one other biblical verse, Jer 34:17 (LXX 41:17), which warns that, just as the people have not granted financial releases to their neighbors, God will not release the people from punishment. Instead, they will become a source of horror to

21. *διασπείρω* (“scatter”) appears sixty-six times in the Septuagint and is most often used to translate *נפץ* (“shatter”).

22. All English translations of the Hebrew Bible are from the NRSV unless specified otherwise. English translations of the Septuagint are from *NETS*.

23. In Deut 30:4–5 I have replaced the NRSV’s translation “Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world,” with my own more literal translation.

24. “If your dispersion [ἐάν ᾗ ἡ διασπορά σου] be from an end of the sky to an end of the sky, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you” (Deut 30:4).

other nations.²⁵ The Septuagint translator clarifies that this horror will be experienced through the diaspora:

Therefore, thus did the Lord say: You have not obeyed me by calling for a release each pertaining to his fellow. Behold, I am calling for a release for you to the dagger and to death and to the famine, and I will give you as a dispersion [*εις διασποράν*] to all the kingdoms of the earth.²⁶ (Jer 41:17 LXX)

The translator builds on the Hebrew version's reference to דרור, a term that elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible refers to the nullification of land contracts in the Jubilee year, to clarify the quid-pro-quo nature of the people's punishment: because they refused to grant such releases, the people will lose their own land (Lev 25:10).²⁷ Clarifying God's punishment as dispersion resolves another difficulty concerning the Hebrew verse: How can the people be a horror to all the kingdoms, when they reside in Judea? The answer is that they will not reside in Judea: they will be dispersed throughout the world, and this very dispersion will constitute the source of their humiliation.

Besides Deut 30:4, the Septuagint translates נדחים as *διασπορά* in two other passages: Neh 1:9 and Psalm 147.²⁸ The author of Nehemiah alludes to Deuteronomy 30 in Nehemiah's prayer, which asks God to remember the promise to gather the outcasts of Israel from exile.²⁹ Like its transla-

25. Jer 34:17 MT: "Therefore, thus says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by granting a release [דרור] to your neighbors and friends; I am going to grant a release [דרור] to you, says the Lord—a release to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine. I will make you a horror [לזעור] to all the kingdoms of the earth."

26. Besides Deut 28:25, זעור appears in Jer 15:4; 24:9; 29:18; 34:17; Ezek 23:46; and 2 Chr 29:8. All but Ezek 23:46 refer to the forced displacement of the people as being a product of God's anger. זעור is not translated as *διασπορά* in the Septuagint in these verses (Jer 29:18 may be an exception, but no Septuagint translation of this passage survives). In some of these verses, translating זעור as *διασπορά* would make some sense in context, such as in Jer 15:4: "I will make them a horror [ונתתי לזעור] to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what King Manasseh son of Hezekiah of Judah did in Jerusalem." זעור appears again in Jer 24:9, which likewise speaks of the upcoming exile, but the Septuagint uses *διασκαρπισμόν* ("scattering") to translate זעור. The fact that the Septuagint authors did not render זעור as *διασπορά* in all verses that use זעור in the context of exile suggests an unsystematic approach toward זעור as a categorical experience.

27. The word also appears in conjunction with the release of captives (Isa 61:1; Jer 34:8, 15; Ezek 46:17). It occasionally means "sparrow" (Ps 84:4; Prov 26:2).

28. Of the twelve references to *διασπορά* in the Septuagint, six have no Hebrew equivalent, and six are translations of a Hebrew word.

29. Neh 1:8–9: "Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and

tion of נדחך in Deut 30:4 as διασπορά, the Septuagint translates Nehemiah's נדחכם as διασπορά, suggesting that the author of Nehemiah LXX noted the link between the two passages and viewed the returnees to Yehud as the diasporan Israelites alluded to in Deuteronomy 30.³⁰ The Septuagint also renders נדחי ישראל as τὰς διασποράς in its translation of Ps 147:2, which imagines God gathering the outcasts of Israel back to Jerusalem.³¹ Given the association of נדחים and διασπορά, it is probable that, just as נדחים is associated in the Hebrew Bible with a group that experiences reconciliation following divine punishment, the translators associate διασπορά with punishment and reconciliation. When it comes to Psalm 147, therefore, the Septuagint translator might have intentionally translated נדחים as διασπορά in a verse that emphasizes divine compassion in the form of restorative ingathering.

The Septuagint authors' attitude toward διασπορά comes into full focus in their clarification of difficult Hebrew phrases. In Isa 49:6, God is cited as declaring that "it is too light a thing [נקל] that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel [ונצורי ישראל]; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."³² This verse presents a number of difficulties. The phrase "it is too light a thing that you should be my servant" implies that the prophet's burden should be even more difficult than it currently is. The particular identity of the "survivors of Israel" whom the prophet is meant to restore is also obscure. Finally, the verse's reference to the tribes of Jacob and the survivors of Israel seems repetitive. The Septuagint translator resolves all of these difficulties with the following rendering:

keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts [נדחכם] are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name." Nehemiah paraphrases the curses of Deut 30:4, changing נדחך to נדחכם, conveying a second-person plural audience.

30. 2 Esdr 11:8–9: "Remember now the word that you commanded your servant Moyses, saying, 'You, if you are faithless, I will scatter you among my peoples, and if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, if your dispersion [ἡ διασπορὰ ὑμῶν] is to the farthest skies, from there I will gather them and lead them to the place where I have chosen my name to encamp there.'" 2 Esdras 11 LXX corresponds to Nehemiah 1 MT.

31. Compare the Hebrew MT Ps 147:2: "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel [נדחי ישראל]" with the Septuagint Ps 146:2: "The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts [τὰς διασποράς] of Israel."

32. This verse appears in the second of four Servant Songs in Second Isaiah (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12).

And he said to me, “it is a great thing [Μέγα σοί ἔστιν] for you to be called my servant so that you may set up the tribes of Iakob and turn back the dispersion of Israel [καὶ τὴν διασπορὰν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψαι]. See, I have made you a light of nations, that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth.”

The translator renders the Hebrew phrase “it is too light a thing” as “it is a great thing,” clarifying that the servant’s stewardship of Israel is a crucial role. Next, he interprets וְנִצְרִי (“survivors”) as διασπορά, resolving the problems of repetition and the question of the survivors’ identities. These changes clarify that the servant’s job is to gather those who are scattered in the diaspora, and that the diaspora is a temporary state that culminates in divine restoration.

The Septuagint also uses διασπορά as a clarifying word in Jer 15:7, in which the prophet cites God as declaring, “I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land.”³³ The Septuagint translator interprets the verse’s winnowing imagery as a divine scattering of Israel into διασπορά:

And I will disperse them in a dispersion [καὶ διασπερῶ αὐτοὺς ἐν διασπορᾷ] in the gates of my people. I was made childless; I destroyed my people because of their evils. (Jer 15:7 LXX)

The translator replaces מִזְרָה (“winnowing fork”) with διασπορά, which denotes the dispersion of seeds. Besides the obvious agricultural connection, the passage’s broader context offers insight as to why the translator renders “winnow” as διασπορά. Jeremiah 15:1–4 reads:

Then the LORD said to me: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they say to you, ‘Where shall we go?’ you shall say to them: ‘Thus says the LORD: Those destined for pestilence, to pestilence, and those destined for the sword, to the sword; those destined for famine, to famine, and those destined for captivity, to captivity [לְשָׁבִי לְשָׁבִי]. . . I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what King Manasseh son of Hezekiah of Judah did in Jerusalem.’”

The translator extends the prediction of expulsion in Jer 15:2 by clarifying that the winnowing image in Jer 15:7 refers to the scattering of Israel. In doing so, the translator expands on the Hebrew’s agricultural imagery

33. Jeremiah 15:7 reads, “I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork [וְאִזְרִי בַמְזֹרָה] in the gates of the land. I have bereaved them, I have destroyed my people; they did not turn from their ways.”

while modifying the meaning of the verse. Whereas in the MT, God's winnowing the people is a punishment that takes place in the land, the translator envisions God scattering the people outside the land. This difference correlates with the rendering of the phrase "gates of the land" as "gates of my people," which allegorizes the image into one that alludes to the scattered community.³⁴ The Septuagint translator thus transforms this verse into a prediction of divine punishment through forced dispersion.

Other interpretive applications of *διασπορά* in the Septuagint build on its first appearance in Deuteronomy 28 by suggesting a connection between dispersion and collective shame. One such example occurs in the rendering of Dan 12:2. The MT reads,

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt [לחרפות ולדראון עולם].

This verse appears in a passage that fuses eschatological themes found in earlier prophetic texts concerning divine judgment in the end-time with the notion that the dead will be revived, envisioning a scenario in which the dead awaken to wonderful reward or terrible punishment.³⁵ The Septuagint translator situates this punishment within the experience of the diaspora:³⁶

And many of those who sleep in the flat of the earth will arise, some to everlasting life but others to shame and others to dispersion and contempt everlasting [οἱ δὲ εἰς διασποράν καὶ αἰσχύνῃν αἰώνιον]. (Dan 12:2 LXX)

The translator adjusts the repetitive לחרפות לדראון עולם by interpreting לדראון as *διασποράν*, thereby envisioning two distinct punishments. According to this version of this verse, only some people will be doomed to dispersion. Perhaps the translator viewed dispersion as an extreme form of punishment meant to shame only the worst sinners.

34. Cf. Isa 41:16 LXX, which renders the Hebrew's image of winnowing (תורם ורוח) תשאם וסערה תפיץ אותם, "you shall winnow them and a wind shall take them, and a tempest shall scatter them") as one of scattering by using the term *διασπείρω* (καὶ λιχμήσεις καὶ ἄνεμος λήμψεται αὐτούς, καὶ καταγίς διασπερεῖ αὐτούς).

35. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Cf. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones in Ezek 37:1–14.

36. Interestingly, the second-century Jewish Hellenistic scholar Theodotion removes reference to the dispersion in his Greek rendering of Daniel, closing Dan 12:2 with, "And many of those who sleep in a mound of earth will be awakened, these to everlasting life and those to shame and everlasting contempt."

Other late Second Temple texts use *διασπορά* in the context of salvation rather than punishment. In a letter appended to manuscripts of 2 Maccabees that was likely composed in the latter half of the second century B.C.E., representatives of the Jewish community in Jerusalem ask an Alexandrian Jewish priest named Aristobulus to ensure that he and his community observe the Purification holiday and “the festival of the fire” (2 Macc 1:10–2:18). The writers explain that this festival was instituted during the time of Nehemiah, after Judeans discovered a viscous liquid that had derived from the temple fire during the time of the First Temple and had been hidden by priests prior to their exile. When Nehemiah and other returnees from exile recovered the liquid and poured it onto an altar, it miraculously ignited, leading these Judeans to celebrate this event as a sign of God's divine favor. The letter recalls that a priest named Jonathan then offered a prayer that God

gather together our scattered people [*ἐπισυνάγαγε τὴν διασπορὰν ἡμῶν*],
set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles, look on those who are
rejected and despised, and let the Gentiles know that you are our God.
(2 Macc 1:27)

Jonathan's prayer links the experiences of Judean returnees from Babylonia with the authors' contemporary diaspora, suggesting that the authors expect Alexandrian Jews to hope for their own ingathering. Their reference to “our scattered ones” (*τὴν διασπορὰν ἡμῶν*) alludes not only to earlier scriptural references to the diaspora but also to the promised restoration that will follow.

Almost every reference to *διασπορά* in the Septuagint imagines a future scattering that will take place following Israel's abandonment of the covenantal laws. The sole exception appears in the Book of Judith, which treats the diaspora as a space occupied by Israel in the past. One of the book's central characters is an Ammonite named Achior, who, during a siege on the fictional Judean town of Bethulia, informs the enemy general Holofernes that the Israelites can be defeated only when they are disobedient to their God. In the past, Achior explains, God punished Israel for such disobedience with dispersion, but in recent times the Israelites have “come back from the places where they were scattered [*ἐκ τῆς διασπορᾶς, οὗ διεσπάρησαν ἐκεῖ*]” (Jdt 5:19). Besides its reference to a past diaspora, Judith is also unusual in its usage of *διασπορά* as a plural noun.³⁷ Perhaps the author, who likely lived in Judea under Hasmonean rule, was optimistic that Hasmonean autonomy would continue indefinitely, and

37. The only other appearance of a plural form of *διασπορά* appears in Ps 146:2.

he viewed the diaspora as a set of disparate spaces where the Jews once lived in a state of punishment.

While the authors of the Septuagint viewed the Hebrew Bible's predictions of divine curses as firmly situated within the experience of the diaspora, the word *διασπορά* rarely appears in other Jewish literature written under Greek and Roman rule.

■ ΔΙΑΣΠΟΡΆ IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

Outside of the Septuagint, *διασπορά* appears in only a few documents: once in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a text generally dated to the first century C.E. and likely edited in Syria;³⁸ twice in the *Psalms of Solomon*, a collection dated to the years following the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E.,³⁹ and three times in the New Testament.

In its edited form, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* underscores the themes of Israelite captivity and exile. Nevertheless, *διασπορά* appears just once, when Jacob's son Asher predicts Israel's future captivity and dispersion:

For I know that ye shall sin, and be delivered into the hands of your enemies; and your land shall be made desolate, and your holy places, and ye shall be scattered [*διασκορπισθήσθε*] unto the four corners of the earth; in the dispersion [*ἐν διασπορᾷ*] you shall be regarded as worthless, like useless water, until such time as the Most High visits the earth.⁴⁰ (*T. Asher* 7:2–3)

38. The collection as a whole derives from older Hebrew and Aramaic texts written in Judea; see n. 14 above.

39. Benedikt Eckhardt, "The Psalms of Solomon as a Historical Source for the Late Hasmonean Period," in *The Psalms of Solomon: Language, History, Theology* (ed. Eberhard Bons and Patrick Pouchelle; EJL 40; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015) 7–30. Unlike Dufoix, I treat the *Psalms of Solomon* as lying outside the Septuagint collective, since the *Psalms* only appear in the fifth-century C.E. Codex Alexandrinus manuscript of the Septuagint, and not in the early fourth-century C.E. Codex Vaticanus or Codex Sinaiticus. See Greg Goswell, "The Order of the Books in the Greek Old Testament," *JETS* 52 (2009) 449–66, here 466.

40. The passage continues, "He shall come as a man eating and drinking with human beings, crushing the dragon's head in the water. He will save Israel and all the nations, God speaking like a man" (*T. Asher* 7:3). The text "He shall come as a man . . . he will save Israel" suggests that at least part of this passage represents a later Christian interpolation, a suggestion made in H. C. Kee, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *OTP* 1:775–828, here 818. Either the entire passage was composed by an early Christian who viewed the fall of the temple and the consequent dispersion as a consequence of Israel's sins that was part of the divine plan from the early patriarchal

Given that this passage is set in the patriarchal period, one would expect Asher to predict the Israelites' upcoming slavery in Egypt. Instead, Asher envisions a series of dispersions in the distant future, implying that, for the author, biblical exile and contemporary diaspora are one and the same, and that scattering marks an ongoing and ever-present divine response to the sins of Israel.

It is possible that the *Testaments'* reference to *διασπορά* and its broader emphasis on exile and captivity as divine punishments for Israel's sins derive from the work of an early Christian editor who viewed the dispersion as a signifier of God's rejection that was predicted in the patriarchal period. Yet many Jews who lived well before Jesus's time espoused the notion that dispersion is a sign of divine punishment. The *Psalms of Solomon*, for instance, depicts the *διασπορά* as a punishment, albeit a temporary one that will soon be resolved on account of God's mercy. Its two references to *διασπορά* read:

Gather together the dispersed [*τὴν διασποράν*] of Israel, with mercy and goodness. (*Pss. Sol.* 8:28 [8:34 in *OTP*])

The dispersion of Israel [*ἡ διασπορά τοῦ Ἰσραηλ*] (was) among every nation, according to the saying of God; that your righteousness might be proven right, O God, in our lawless actions. For you are a righteous judge over all the peoples of the earth. (*Pss. Sol.* 9:2)

The *Psalms of Solomon* may mark the only Second Temple source outside of the Septuagint and the New Testament to use the word *διασπορά*. The term would not come to designate a contemporary global community of believers until the late first century, when early Christians began to use the term subversively.

■ DIASPORA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The early followers of Jesus were the first to employ *διασπορά* as a designation for a community in which members were bound to one another in faith rather than in attachment to Judea as a homeland (John 7:35; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1).⁴¹ The earliest of the three New Testament documents to use

period, or *T. Asher* 7:4 represents an addition made by an early Jesus follower who qualified the preceding verses by overlaying them with a christology that presumes that Israel can be redeemed only through Christ.

41. See Shively T. J. Smith, *Strangers to Family: Diaspora and 1 Peter's Invention of God's Household* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016) 23–24. The verb *διασπείρω* appears just three times in the New Testament as well, with all verbal forms appearing

the word is the Letter of James, which uses *διασπορά* in its opening greeting:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion [*ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ*]: Greetings. (Jas 1:1)

References in James's letter to the synagogue, monotheistic ideas, divine law, and Old Testament imagery suggest that the author is addressing Jewish followers of Jesus who live in the diaspora.⁴² By referring to these followers as "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion," James roots the apostles' mission in a biblical tradition, implying that the apostles are actualizing the scriptural prediction that the exiled tribes of Israel would one day gather and galvanize the messianic age. Referencing the followers of Jesus as tribes also suggests that Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah are outsiders to the people of Israel and doomed to remain in exile.⁴³ Only followers of Jesus will be beneficiaries of the promises of restoration given to the Israelites.

Like James, 1 Peter addresses a community outside of Judea and weaves the nascent community of Jesus followers into the fabric of scriptural history by addressing the "exiles of the dispersion,"⁴⁴ a phrase similar to James's "twelve tribes in the Dispersion." Rather than expressing a yearning to return to a physical homeland, 1 Peter imagines the diaspora as a scattered population that will assemble together in a heavenly home following a temporary sojourn on earth.⁴⁵ Upon their arrival in heaven, the

in the Acts of the Apostles: 8:1, 4; 11:19. Narry F. Santos observes that these verses refer to Jewish followers of Jesus who served to expand their faith communities in areas of a non-Jewish majority ("*Diaspora* in the New Testament and Its Impact on Christian Mission," *Torch Trinity Journal* 13 [2010] 3–18, here 6). I question Santos's conclusion that "the *diaspeirō* and *diaspora* passages in the New Testament show how God used suffering, persecution, and dispersion as the context for expanding his kingdom [and] used the Jewish diaspora to expand the missionary work to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. . . . [T]he Jewish diaspora and the diaspora during the New Testament period prepared the way for Christian mission" (17–18). The argument that Jews function primarily as enablers of a Christian mission does not have a place in academic discourse.

42. See Jas 1:21, 24–25; 2:2, 8–13, 19; 4:4, 11–12 (Santos, "*Diaspora* in the New Testament," 4–5).

43. Herbert Basser, "The Letter of James," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (2nd ed.; ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 490.

44. 1 Pet 1:1: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion [*διασπορᾶς*] in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."

45. Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 46. On Peter's Jewish Christian and gentile audience, see Santos, "*Diaspora* in the New Testament," 5.

lives of those faithful to Jesus will truly begin and their spiritual diaspora will come to a close.

The Gospel of John references the diaspora in a more concrete and spatial manner. When the Pharisees attempt to have Jesus arrested at the temple during the Tabernacles holiday, Jesus predicts that he will soon depart and no one will find him. John describes the Jews' bewildered response to this prediction: "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks [εἰς τὴν διασπορὰν τῶν Ἑλλήνων] and teach the Greeks?" (John 7:35)

In John, the Jews become unknowing prophets of Jesus's teachings and the apostolic mission, which will spread word of Jesus's teachings to those outside Judea. Without understanding who Jesus truly is, the Jews foreshadow what Jesus will accomplish.⁴⁶ The Jews also do not comprehend that the diaspora will take on a new character once the mission arrives. No longer will this diaspora comprise Ἰουδαῖοι. Instead, it will comprise a new community of people, newly faithful to Jesus and his teachings.⁴⁷

The New Testament authors redefine διασπορά in ways that depict Jesus's followers outside Judea as participating in the scriptural promises of a divine plan that will end in reward and restoration. The diaspora was thus transformed into a literal map by which Jesus's followers could place themselves into the story of God's covenantal engagement, which entailed both dispersion and restoration.

46. Understanding how to translate Ἰουδαῖος can help one discern what the author means by διασπορά. In most English translations of John, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is translated as "the Jews," and in our verse, the phrase contrasts with Hellenists (τῶν Ἑλλήνων . . . τοὺς Ἑλληνας). The Jews thus comprise an entity that lies outside of Greek society, and they view Greeks as living outside of Judea, in the dispersion. The question of whether to translate Ἰουδαῖοι as "Jews" or "Judeans" determines the extent to which John views the Jews as collectively responsible for the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. Most English translations render οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as "Jews" because it parallels the reference to Greeks in the same verse, but I read the phrase as referencing Judean Jews who view the dispersion as a space outside of their immediate society. Some scholars who address the question of whether John intends to denote Jews or Judeans when referencing οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι miss the point that, by this period, the word almost certainly meant both things, and Jewish readers (not to mention the author of the Gospel himself) would have been sensitive to the word's ambiguity. See Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007) 457–512; and Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (Key Words in Jewish Studies 9; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

47. On the Jews as portenders of Jesus's mission, see Adele Reinhartz, "Judaism in the Gospel of John," *Int* 63 (2009) 382–93; Johannes Beutler, *Judaism and the Jews in the Gospel of John* (SubBib 30; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006).

■ CONCLUSION

The negative use of the word *διασπορά* in the Septuagint complicates the overly positive view among scholars that Jews in the Greco-Roman diaspora viewed their lives as a source of pride rather than shame.⁴⁸ With just one exception, *διασπορά* appears in the Septuagint in the context of a divine punishment that would mark God's response to Israel's abandonment of the covenantal relationship. It is not surprising that, as a word that was linked to divine rejection, horror, and shame, *διασπορά* barely appears in Jewish literature outside of the Septuagint, even in texts that take place within the diaspora. The Jews who authored Greek texts that depicted the diaspora as a thriving place where Jews could piously practice their ancestral laws avoided using the word, likely because they knew that it was associated with the divine rejection of Israel in the Septuagint. The literary use of the word *διασπορά* and its negative connotations are therefore in *tension* with the lived reality of a diaspora where Jews thrived.

Space restrictions prevent me from putting the Septuagint's negative applications of the word *διασπορά* into direct conversation with diasporan sources that interpret the diaspora in positive ways. These sources, which include passages from the *Letter of Aristeas*, the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and 3 Maccabees, have already been mined for clues regarding diasporan self-understanding by scholars such as John Barclay, Isaiah Gafni, and Erich Gruen.⁴⁹ My contribution here aims to set the stage for a future conversation that compares all of these sources alongside surviving personal letters from Judeans to Jews in the diaspora found at the beginning of 2 Maccabees, in Elephantine documents, and elsewhere, which instruct diasporan Jews on matters of ancestral practice and which pray for their permanent return to Judea. Taken together, all of these sources suggest that the diaspora was not a self-evident reality but a construction enforced by those who lived outside it. The authors of the Septuagint thus represent a particular viewpoint, explicit in Judean letters to Egyptian Jews, which

48. Kraabel, "Unity and Diversity," 49–60; idem, "The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions," *JJS* 33.1–2 (1982) 445–64; Isaiah M. Gafni, *Land, Center, and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (JSPSup 21; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Gruen, *Diaspora*.

49. John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Barclay later edited the volume *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire* (Library of Second Temple Studies 45; London: T&T Clark, 2004); Gafni, *Land, Center, and Diaspora*; Erich S. Gruen, "Diaspora and Homeland," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (ed. Howard Wettstein; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 18–46; idem, *Diaspora*.

linked the diaspora to sin and exile. Future analyses of Jewish attitudes toward the diaspora in the Hellenistic period must take into account the Septuagint writers' references to diaspora and exile as discursive efforts to participate in an ongoing debate regarding whether the establishment of Jewish communities outside Judea was theologically meaningful.

It would be only in the first century, as early followers of Jesus began to use *διασπορά* in ways that presented themselves as the dispersed faithful who would become the beneficiaries of God's biblical promises of restoration, that diasporan Jews began to regularly speak of their contemporary dispersion as the fulfillment of scriptural curses. This shift, most explicit in the rabbinic use of the Hebrew word גלות, would reimagine dispersion as a punishment presently endured by all Jews, even by those living in Judea. The earlier dissonance between the negative use of *διασπορά* and widespread positive attitudes toward the diaspora would dissolve into a cohesive view that allegorized the dispersion into a temporal rather than a spatial state of being that pushed a messianic restoration into the distant future.⁵⁰

Scholars today sometimes treat the Jewish diaspora as a terrible but just predicament and even depict the diaspora as a glorified space of powerlessness that has denied Jews the opportunities for oppressive colonization and has imbued them with integrity and resilience. The former view can serve to buttress the notion that Jews are a people rejected by God, and the latter view can serve to delegitimize aspirations for self-governance in a Jewish homeland. Given how widespread these presumptions are, it is a particular privilege to honor a colleague whose work makes no such assumptions, whose scholarship is guided by meticulous analysis and uncompromising integrity, and who is considered by junior and senior scholars alike to be a friend and role model. Leslie Hoppe's scholarship is sure to impact generations to come, and it is my wish for him that, like the biblical Abraham at the age of seventy-five, Leslie is granted a bounty of divine blessings.

50. An extreme version of this view is articulated in the Tosefta: "R. Simeon ben Eleazar says, Israel(ites) in the diaspora are worshippers of idolatry" (*t. Abod. Zar.* 4:6). On rabbinic attitudes toward גלות, see Chaim Milikowsky, "Notions of Exile, Subjugation, and Return in Rabbinic Literature," in Scott, *Exile*, 265–96; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Spaces of Dispersal," *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994) 338–44. Older treatments of the topic appear in the classic work Yitzhak Baer, *Galut* (New York: Schocken, 1947), and Gerald Serotta, *Galut in Rabbinic Literature* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974).