CHAPTER THREE

LATIN-INTO-HEBREW IN THE MAKING:
BILINGUAL DOCUMENTS IN FACING COLUMNS
AND THEIR POSSIBLE FUNCTION

Gad Freudenthal

In their article in this volume, “Latin into Hebrew—Twice Over!” Susan Einbinder and Michael McVaugh describe a document that is rather rare: it consists of two columns of text, one in Latin transcribed/transliterated in Hebrew characters, the other its Hebrew translation (Lyons, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 15, fols. 176v–173r). Here I will not be interested in the contents of the two texts, so well analyzed by Einbinder and McVaugh, but rather in the very structure of this remarkable two-column bilingual document. Documents of this kind have not been described or studied as such before, but they have an important bearing on the Latin-into-Hebrew theme. Consequently, after learning of the existence of this one I searched for others, and at present I am aware of three such manuscripts. Below I present them briefly and argue that together they instantiate a literary genre that has not been previously identified or discussed.

The three manuscripts with a Hebrew text and a transcribed Latin text in facing columns that have come to my attention so far are:

– Lyons, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 15, fols. 176v–173r, just described, is the object of the detailed studies by Einbinder and McVaugh, and by Aslanov in this volume. For a reproduction of one page of this manuscript, see the Appendix to the article by Einbinder and McVaugh, p. 468.
– Munich, MS Hebr 270, fols. 72a–112a, with Hippocrates’ Aphorisms, again in two facing columns: the left column is a transcription of

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1 As noted in the introduction to this volume (p. 20), “transcription” and “transliteration” are different things. To simplify, in what follows I will use the term “transcription” to refer to what strictly speaking should be “transcription or transliteration.”
Constantinus Africanus’ Latin version of the *Aphorisms*; the right column is its Hebrew translation by Moses ibn Tibbon.\(^2\)

- Munich, MS Hebr 249, fols. 48–70\(^b\), contains Gerard of Sabbioneta’s *Theoria* [or *Theorica*] *planetarium* in Latin transcription, with a facing Hebrew translation. The manuscript was described by Steinschneider, who also identified the text; the translator remains unknown.\(^3\)

Now the existence of texts in a language other than Hebrew, transcribed in Hebrew characters, is by no means exceptional, of course. Quite the contrary. Jews wrote all the languages they used in Hebrew characters, and the Hebrew alphabet is an essential component of the corresponding Jewish languages: Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish, Judeo-French, Judeo-Provençal, and the like.\(^4\) To take examples from the regions with which we are primarily concerned here: entire texts in Provençal and Old French were transcribed in Hebrew characters.\(^5\) In fact, Jews began using non-Hebrew alphabets (to

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\(^2\) My attention was drawn to this manuscript by Steinschneider’s list of translations of Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms*, included in Hillel of Verona, *Sefer Tagmulei ha-nefeš*, ed. Shlomo Zalman Hayyim Halberstamm (Lyck, 1874), pp. 24–26 (on p. 24). Steinschneider there also identifies the Latin version as being that of Constantinus Africanus; Katelyn Mesler kindly confirmed this identification. On the identification of M. Moses ibn Tibbon as the author of the Hebrew translation see M. Steinschneider, *Die hebraischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in Muenchen* (Munich: Palm, 1895), p. 103 (#3). It is indeed identical with that included in Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, Hebrew Translation by R. Moshe ibn Tibbon ed. by S. Muntner (= Medical Works, vol. 3), (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1961).

\(^3\) Steinschneider, *Die hebraischen Handschriften*, p. 94 (#4); idem, *Die Hebraischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), pp. 691–632. This text was brought to my attention by Reimund Leicht (Hebrew University of Jerusalem); I thank him for this valuable information.
