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## Introduction

The so-called Ezequiel Papyrus is the oldest surviving document preserved in the National Library of Spain. This bibliographic gem, consisting of ten papyrus leaves inscribed on both sides, originally belonged to an exceptionally well-preserved codex (P967) that contained the Greek translation of several books of the Bible.

The exhibition traces the fascinating history of this documentary treasure, from its discovery to the present day, highlighting not only the significance of the earliest biblical translations, but also the challenges involved in preserving ancient heritage in a world where the antiquities trade often disrupted the integrity of countless historical artifacts.

An example of the vicissitudes endured by many papyrus books over the centuries, and thanks to the collaboration of partner institutions, the 200 extant pages of the original manuscript have now been digitally reunited and brought to life—through the use of technology—in a unique virtual experience. This immersive journey promises to transport visitors into the past, offering a glimpse of the codex as it once existed and providing a privileged window into one of the most remote chapters of the Bible.



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#### **Prophecies of Ezekiel [Fragment] (P967)** Fundación Pastor de Estudios Clásicos

On deposit at the National Library of Spain P.Matr. Bibl. 1 (pp. 65–66)

## The Bible in Greek

and The Codex P967

During the reign of Ptolemy II in the 3rd century BCE, and as part of the expansion program of the Library of Alexandria, the need arose to translate the Jewish Law into Greek. This translation, known as the Septuagint—a name derived from the legendary seventy two scholars who are said to have participated in its creation—became the sacred text used by Greek-speaking Jewish communities and, later, the Old Testament of the Christian tradition.

A witness to these early translations, the Ezekiel Papyrus, dated to around the 3rd century CE, contains a unique version—closely aligned with the ancient *Septuagint*—of the biblical books of Ezekiel, Daniel (including Bel and Susanna), and Esther.

פרדות מלמעלה לאיש שתיטווכרות אישושתים מכסות אתנויתיהנהי ואישארעברפניו רכואראשר יהיה שמההרוח ללכת ילכו יסבו ברכתן יורמות החיות מראיה פנחדיאשבערותכמראההדפריס היאמתהדכתבין החיותונה ראש 5 ושוכנמו החיתוהנהאופן אצרנחאתיא **נפניוימראה** נין הרשיט 177H DYJ91NA יבעתותראיהס NIG IN 72 IZO/ K 7107/E 4:4 

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Beginning of the Book of Ezekiel. Bible. Hebrew Bible [Tŵrah, nbi'imw-ktwbim]. [מיבותכו מיאיבנ, הרות]. BNE, VITR/26/6 (fol. 290r)

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A Greco, Michele. Ezechiel. BNE, ER/1284 (165)



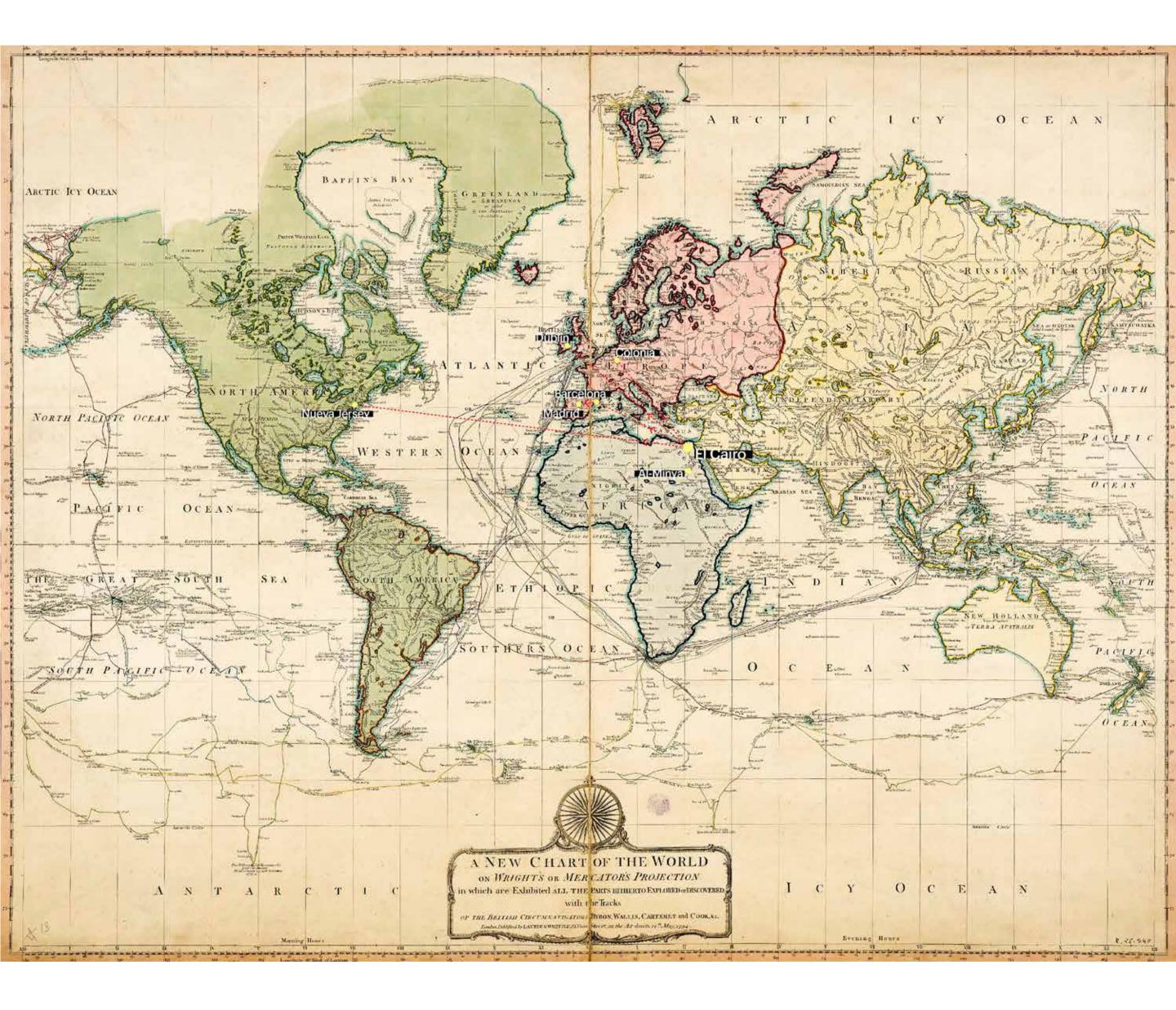
Bruin, Georges. Alexandria, vetustissimum Aegypti emporium, amplissima civitas. In: Theatre des Principales Villes de Tout L'Univers, Second Volume. BNE, R/22249(2) (Pl. 56)

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## **History** of a dispersion

No one knows with certainty when or where the Ezekiel Papyrus was unearthed from the sands of Egypt. Some indications suggest that it was discovered between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, under unknown circumstances, in a tomb within the necropolis of Mir, near Asyut.

Following its discovery, this valuable manuscript embarked on a long and eventful journey. Between the 1930s and 1950s, its unbound pages were sold on the antiquities market to collectors such as Alfred Chester Beatty, William H. Scheide, Ramon Roca-Puig, and Pénélope Photiadès, who each acquired parts of the codex for their prized private collections—collections that are now preserved in various institutions around the world.



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The Dispersion of the Manuscript Reflected on the Map of Robert Laurie y James Whittle. A New Chart of the World on Wright's or Mercator's Projection in which are exhibited all the Parts Hitherto Explored or Discovered with the Tracks of the British Circumnavigators Byron, Wallis, Carteret and Cook & c. BNE, MR/3/I, Serie 1/13

The ten folios acquired by Pénélope Photiadès—core element of this exhibition—form part of the papyrological collection of the Fundación Pastor de Estudios Clásicos. Since 1983, they have been held on deposit at the National Library of Spain, where their preservation and accessibility for researchers and interested members of the public are ensured.



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Pascal Sebah, Magasin d'Antiquités, 19<sup>th</sup> cent. Minneapolis Institute of Art

### The Ezekiel papyrus The history of the codex P967

#### From May 8 to November 1, 2025

Anteroom of the María Moliner Reading Room Paseo de Recoletos, 20-22 28071 Madrid 91 580 78 00 – 91 580 78 03/48 info@bne.es / www.bne.es

> Monday to Friday, 09:30 to 20:00 Saturdays, 9:30 to 14:00 Sundays and holidays closed

Free admission until full capacity BNE guided tours: pre-registration required Group visits, with or without their own guide, 5 to 10 people: pre-registration required Information and registration at: www.bne.es/agenda

Capacity: 10 people Approximate visit duration: 30 minutes Last admission: 30 minutes before closing Metro: Line 4, Colón and Serrano stations Buses: 1, 5, 9, 14, 19, 21, 27, 37, 45, 51, 53, 74, 150 RENFE local trains: Recoletos Station

> **Curated by:** Raquel Martín Hernández Sofía Torallas Tovar

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