This collection of essays has its origins in a special session of the Society of Biblical Literature conference held in St. Andrews, Scotland, July 7–10, 2013. The session itself, was held in honor of Bezalel Porten and was organized by Kristin de Troyer. It took place on July 7–8. The essays collected here stem from the desire of the participants to make their papers available to a wider public of students and scholars. For unforeseen reasons, the publication of this volume took longer than I hoped.

All the papers that were read over the two days of the session are published in this volume, with one exception. The essays in this volume bring together a wide array of approaches and subjects: archaeology (Cornelius von Pilgrim), criminal law (Alejandro Botta) and family law (Annalisa Azzoni and Hélène Nutkowicz), ostraca as an invaluable source of information for the religious life of the Elephantine Judean community (André Lemaire), Elephantine and the Bible (Lester L. Grabbe), literary works (Reinhard Kratz and Ingo Kottsieper), identity (Becking), and the Aramaic language (Margaretha Folmer). The volume also includes an article with the publication of fourteen new ostraca from Aswan (Bezalel Porten and André Lemaire, with contributions by Beatrice von Pilgrim [descriptions of the pottery], Ran Zadok [comments on the names], and Ada Yardeni ז״ל [handcopies]).

Elephantine scholars are as diverse a community as the fifth century inhabitants of that island. While some speak of Judeans from Elephantine, others refer to them as Yehudites or Jews. Their approach to the divine name also varies. In this book, the name (as found in the Elephantine papyri) is rendered as YHW (in several cases YHH). I have tried as much as possible to avoid vocalized renderings of the divine name, except in cases where the author insisted on a vocalized version of the name for a specific reason (von Pilgrim).

As to the spelling of personal names from Elephantine, I have adopted the standardized spelling used in B. Porten and J. Lund’s book Aramaic Documents from Egypt: A Key-Word-in-Context Concordance (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002). With regard to the spelling of other divine names, the SBL Handbook of Style has been followed as much as possible. Further names have generally been spelled according to the conventions of Eisenbrauns and SBL.

Readers of this volume also have access to an interview that Margaretha Folmer conducted with Bezalel Porten in London on November 18, 2014. The interview
can be found on the Eisenbrauns website (https://www.eisenbrauns.org/books/titles/978-1-64602-163-5.html). In this interview, “Mr. Elephantine” speaks freely about his youth, his education, and his long career in Elephantine Studies.

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—Margaretha Folmer, spring 2020