Translators as Interpreters:
Scriptural Interpretation in the Septuagint

Martin Rösel

Everyone who is taking a close look at the research on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, will most likely come across two sentences.[1] The first is the "truism that any translation is an interpretation."[2] The second is a quotation from the introduction to the Greek translation of the book of Jesus Sirach, written by his alleged grandson: "For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this book, but even the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little when read in the original."[3]

These two statements suggest that some changes were necessarily made when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek and that these changes can be attributed to certain acts of interpretation that inevitably belong to the process of translation. If so, several subsequent questions arise:

1. In this chapter, the term "Septuagint" (and its abbreviation in Roman digits "LXX") is used for the Greek Bible in general, although it was originally coined as a designation for the Greek Pentateuch only. Also, the content of the canon of the Septuagint can differ between the manuscripts. Cf. Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 1-3, for the definition; Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*. OTS (London: T. & T. Clark, 2002); Mogens Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint*. JSOTSup 206. Copenhagen International Seminar 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), for the problem of the canon.

2. See, e.g., John W. Wevers, "The Interpretative Character and Significance of the Septuagint Version," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,* vol. 1.1: *Antiquity,* ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 84-107 (here p. 87). A very stimulating introduction into the problems of translation is Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003). It is interesting that even the translated title of Eco's book shows a certain degree of interpretation, because the Italian original reads *"dire quasi la stessa cosa"* ("saying almost the same"). The English title is taken from one of the examples discussed in the book.

3. Vv. 21-26 NRSV.

(a) How is it possible to trace these acts of interpretation?

(b) Is it possible to make a distinction between different kinds or levels of interpretation?

(c) Are the reasons for and strategies of scriptural interpretation in the LXX discernable?

(d) Are there any differences between the translations of individual books of the Hebrew Bible, and, if so, are different attitudes towards Scripture perceptible?

(e) Finally, is it possible to discern some general principles of scriptural interpretation that can be detected in all or at least in most of the books of the Septuagint?

These five questions will serve to outline the problem. They are kept rather general here to give an impression of the topics that are discussed in Septuagint research.[4] Because of the limited space of this article, it will not be possible to answer them in detail; they will nevertheless prove helpful to provide the heuristic horizon for our dealing with these texts.

The Lawgiver in Psalm 9:21 as an Example

Following these general questions, I will begin with a textual example from the book of the Psalms in order to illustrate the complexity of LXX exegesis and to justify the differentiation just presented. Psalm 9:21 the Hebrew Bible (MT) reads:

שִׁיתָה יְהוָה מוֹרָה לָהֶם
יֵדְעוּ גוֹיִם אֱנוֹשׁ הֵמָּה

Put fear to them, O LORD;
nations shall know that they are (only) human.

In the Greek version of the Septuagint, the verse sounds quite different:

κατάστησον, κύριε, νομοθέτην ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς,
γνώτωσαν ἔθνη ὅτι ἄνθρωποί εἰσιν.

Appoint, O Lord, a lawgiver over them;
nations shall know that they are humans.

4. A very stimulation collection of articles describing the current state of research in Septuagint studies is Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, eds., *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*. SBLSCS 53 (Atlanta: SBL, 2005).

When comparing the texts, it is obvious that every element of the Hebrew (suffixes included) has a counterpart in the Greek version; the syntactical sequence of the words is the same. This is a characteristic of what one usually calls a "literal translation"; it is one of the typical features of most translations of the LXX.[5] It should be noticed that the plural ἄνθρωποι ("humans") is used to translate the singular אֱנוֹשׁ ("man"), but since this word can be understood as a collective ("mankind") and the plural is signaled by הֵמָּה ("they") and גּוֹיִם ("nations"), the translation only makes this fact explicit. This can be understood as a linguistic interpretation, but since acts like these necessarily belong to the process of reading and translation, it may be more appropriate to label it as *linguistic decoding*.[6]

The most interesting and important deviation in this verse is the translation of מוֹרָה ("fear") by νομοθέτης ("lawgiver"). When returning to the question (a) posed above (How is it possible to trace acts of interpretation?), the initial answer is quite clear: the meaning of the translated word is completely different from its *Vorlage,* and, moreover, it changes the meaning of the whole verse. The nations are able to discern their humanity not through an abstract act of fear of God but through his Torah.

Who was responsible for this interpretation? Since the LXX is a translation, it is always possible that it refers back to a different *Vorlage* so that it faithfully reproduces the meaning of a different Hebrew version. This means that, after an initial comparison of the texts, we need to employ the help of textual criticism in order to determine whether the text we read in the modern *Biblia Hebraica* does in fact represent the same or at least a similar version as the one which the translator had as his *Vorlage.* And, is the modern edition of the Septuagint reliable, so that one can safely assume that this is the text that comes from the hand of the translator, not from any kind of later redaction?[7]

5. It is important to notice that this use of the terms "free" and "literal" is approximate. For an exhaustive treatment of the problem, see James Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations.* NAWG, Phil.-Hist. Kl. 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 294, for a list of six distinguishing features between literal and free translations.

6. See Folker Siegert, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament: Eine Einführung in die Septuaginta.* MJS 9 (Münster: Lit, 2001), 121, for this distinction.

7. The problems associated with the use of the LXX for the reconstruction of its parent Hebrew text and the text-critical search for the original LXX, the history of its revisions and modern editions, cannot be discussed here. It may suffice to refer interested readers to the introductions by Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research.* 2nd rev. ed. Jerusalem Biblical Studies 8 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997); and Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). It should be added that several scholars hold the opinion that in cases of larger divergences between MT and

In the case of Ps 9:21, there is in fact a variant in the Hebrew textual tradition concerning מוֹרָה ("fear"), the word in question. Several manuscripts read מוֹרָא, but this is only a orthographical variant that corrects the original, difficult reading to a more usual one. One can therefore conclude that the rendering "lawgiver" can be judged to be an interpretation as the result of the translation. Question (a) can thus be answered positively: Ps 9:21 is an example of scriptural interpretation.

The next question (b) concerns the kind of interpretation we can see in the current text. One should bear in mind that the translator read an unvocalized text (מורה). When decoding the verse, he obviously derived this word as a participle *Hiphil* from the root ירה III, which can mean "to instruct, to teach" (see *HALOT*). Thus the linguistic decoding would lead to the noun "instructor, teacher" (מוֹרָה). Moreover, it is also possible that he found an etymological connection to the word תוֹרָה ("law"), which can also be derived from the root ירה.[8] Thus one can assume a combination of linguistic signals that has led the translator to amplify the meaning "instructor" to "lawgiver." This interpretation is clearly a kind of theologically motivated interpretation, because in other psalms one can find more "literal" renderings of the verb ירה ("teach, instruct").[9] Since the Lord is addressed in this verse, the new interpretation has consequences which go even further: it is not the Lord but his helpful law that brings fear to the nations.

However, question (b) can be answered in yet another way, which leads us directly to the problems that have to be discussed with respect to question (c): the reasons and strategies for interpretation. Although the word νομοθέτης ("lawgiver") in Ps 9:21 is a *hapax legomenon* in the LXX, one can find similar interpretations. According to the difficult text in Ps 84(LXX 83):7, the pious can go through a valley that has been covered by the early rain with blessings:

עֹבְרֵי בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא מַעְיָן יְשִׁיתוּהוּ גַּם־בְּרָכוֹת יַעְטֶה מוֹרֶה

ἐν τῇ κοιλάδι τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος εἰς τὸν τόπον, ὃν ἔθετο·
καὶ γὰρ εὐλογίας δώσει ὁ νομοθετῶν.

LXX one has to assume the existence of a different *Vorlage* of the LXX, even if there is no witness for this text other than the translation itself. This position minimizes the possibility to attribute interpretations to the translators.

8. See Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, *La notion de Nomos dans le Pentateuque Grec.* AnBib 52. Recherches Africaines de théologie 5 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973), 131-35.

9. Ps 32(31):8; 45:4(5); 86:11; cf. Frank Austermann, *Von der Tora zum Nomos: Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungsweise und Interpretation im Septuaginta-Psalter.* MSU 27 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 177-78.

The MT reads מוֹרֶה ("early rain"). The translator of the LXX has chosen a similar linguistic and theological explanation of the Hebrew noun as in Ps 9:21, for we can read: "for the lawgiver (νομοθετῶν) will give blessings." Thus in Ps 84(83):7 the difficult metaphor of valley and rain has been avoided, and again the emphasis falls on the helpful, benevolent action of God and his law. Moreover, in other psalms one can also see that the verb ירה ("teach, instruct") has been translated by νομοθετήσει ("to be given the law").[10] Obviously the translator wanted to stress that the Torah is the only reliable base for instruction; therefore one can assume that he followed a particular strategy of interpretation when he translated a verse that speaks about instructions and teaching.[11]

This means that question (c) can be answered in the affirmative, too: in the book of Psalms there are strategies of interpretation concerning the idea of the Torah that affect individual renderings throughout the book.[12] But again, the question can be answered another way: the translation "lawgiver" in Ps 9:21 and elsewhere attests to the phenomenon of intertextuality.[13] By this I mean that a text can refer to other texts so that its meaning is enhanced. In the case of a translation, "intertextuality" can also mean that the translator has chosen his equivalents under the influence of other, previously translated texts. This can be due to the fact that in antiquity there has not been something like a lexicon;[14] it may be that he was not sure about the exact meaning of a Hebrew word, so that another translation served as an aid for orientation.[15] It is also possible that he wanted to create a connection between texts. In this case, the translation would refer to a wider horizon of thoughts and concepts than the original.

In the case of the "lawgiver" in Ps 9:21, the translation clearly depends on

10. Ps 25(24):8+12; 27(26):11, and esp. in the Torah psalm 119(118):33, 102, 104.

11. It is interesting to note that in the Psalms there are other interpretative translations that advance the idea of a divine education; cf. Ps 2:12; 90(89):10.

12. This is the most important result of the dissertation by Austermann, *Von der Tora zum Nomos.*

13. See Gilles Dorival, "Les phénomènes d'intertextualité dans le livre grec des Nombres," in *ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΥΣ Ο': Selon Les Septante. Festschrift Marguerite Harl,* ed. Dorival and Olivier Munnich (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 253-85, for an introduction to this field of research.

14. See for this problem Emanuel Tov, "The Impact of the LXX Translation of the Pentateuch on the Translation of the Other Books," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint.* VTSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 183-94; and the critical remarks by James Barr, "Did the Greek Pentateuch Really Serve as a Dictionary for the Translation of the Later Books?" in *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka,* ed. Martin F. J. Basten and W. Th. van Peursen. OLA 118 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 523-43.

15. Emanuel Tov, "Did the Septuagint Translators Always Understand Their Hebrew Text?," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible,* 203-18.

Exod 24:12 and Deut 17:10, where the verb ירה ("teach, instruct") refers to the tablets of the commandments, which God has given to instruct his people. In both instances, the Greek translations were using νομοθετέω ("to give the law"), thus introducing this compound verb into the biblical language and emphasizing the special kind of divine teaching. The translator of the Psalms ties his references to the teaching of the Torah back to the revelation of this law at Mount Sinai (or Horeb in Deuteronomy).

The Greek Bible as a Collection of Scriptures and the Question of Overall Concepts

The discussion of Ps 9:21 has served to give some exemplary answers to three of the five questions posed above. Questions (d) and (e) cannot be settled on the base of the exegesis of one verse only but require more information. As for the individual books of the Septuagint and the different attitudes of their translators towards their task, it is now clear from the results of modern research that every book has to be treated as a separate unity. As a rule of thumb one can start with the assumption that each book has been translated by an individual translator (or perhaps by a group with the same working method). Only occasionally have scholars found sufficient reasons to reckon with more than one translator; the most important case is the tabernacle account in the book of Exodus.[16]

Although research on the question of the chronological setting and geographical origins of these individual translations has in most cases not led to unambiguous results, it is clear that the books of the Hebrew Bible were translated in the time from the third century B.C.E. until the first century C.E. During this period some of the existing translations were reworked or replaced by revisions or new translations. This explains why we have duplicate editions, for example in the case of the book of Daniel, Judges, or the book of Kingdoms. Presumably, most translations were carried out in Alexandria in Egypt, where the largest Jewish community outside of Israel flourished and where the needs to possess the Holy Scriptures in Greek had been urgent. But it is also possible that some of the books were translated in Israel, in Antiochia, or in Leontopolis, another important Jewish settlement in Egypt, where even a second Jewish temple besides the one in Jerusalem was built.[17]

16. Martha Lynn Wade, *Consistency of Translation Techniques in the Tabernacle Accounts of Exodus in the Old Greek.* SBLSCS 49 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003).

17. For an overview, see the tables in Gilles Dorival, Marguerite Harl, and Olivier Munnich, *La Bible Grecque des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 93, 107, 111.

When working on the books of the Septuagint it is important to bear these different chronological and geographical milieus in mind as the background for the translator's hermeneutic, because the way Scripture is interpreted always depends on theological tendencies and religious experiences (e.g., the Maccabean crisis) that are dominant at that time and in that social group.

The fact that the Septuagint has to be seen as a collection of Scriptures from different historical periods and geographical regions has important ramifications for our answer to question (e), the question whether or not we can detect some overall principles of scriptural interpretation in the whole of the Septuagint. The answer cannot be positive. The differences between some translations are so important — for example, between the book of Job on the one hand and Qohelet on the other, or between Exodus and Samuel — that common characteristics in scriptural interpretation that apply equally to all of them cannot be found. However, if individual translations are grouped according to their translational characteristics, then it is indeed possible to see some lines of interpretation that can be regarded as typical for these groups of books.[18]

To illustrate this approach one can refer to the enhanced importance of the concept of νόμος ("law"). This Greek word has been used very frequently, not only for Hebrew תּוֹרָה ("law"), but also for other words like חֻקָּה ("ordinance") or מִשְׁפָּט ("judgment"); moreover, the opposite ἀνομία ("lawlessness") was used to render a wide variety of Hebrew words, denoting acts of sin, lawlessness, or unjustness. Therefore the idea of νόμος and the negative results of deviating from this νόμος are much more present in the Greek than in the Hebrew Bible. Thus the importance of God's law for Israel is emphasized in most of the books of the Septuagint. A similar process can be seen when looking at the concept of תּוֹרָה in the late books of the Hebrew Bible or in Qumran.[19] It is obvious that the individual translations are influenced by an overall theological concept that was common in the Hellenistic age. This means that a positive answer for question (e) is possible, as long as we are dealing with a specific topic only and with a limited number of books.

18. A fuller methodological discussion of the possibilities and limitations of such a summarizing "theology" of several books of the Septuagint can be found in Martin Rösel, "Towards a 'Theology of the Septuagint,'"in Kraus and Wooden, Septuagint Research, 239-52.

19. For a fuller treatment of this problem, see Martin Rösel, "Nomothesie: Zum Gesetzesverständnis der Septuaginta," in Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta, vol. 3: Studien zur Theologie, Anthropologie, Ekklesiologie, Eschatologie und Liturgie der griechischen Bibel, ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry and Dieter Böhler. BWANT 174 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 132-50.

A Minimalistic Objection: The Paradigm of Interlinearity

The exegesis of Ps 9:21 and the five questions to classify elements of scriptural interpretation in the LXX are based on the assumption that most of the translators wanted to produce a text that could be read and understood independently of its Hebrew *Vorlage*. Obviously they were aware that they were translating and thereby producing a canonical text.[20] Moreover, they were also willing — although to a different extent — to correct obvious mistakes, clarify dubious passages, avoid misinterpretations, or bring the texts in line with its common interpretation in the religious community of the translator. While it is obvious that during the later *reception* history, especially in Christian communities, some new interpretations came to be associated with the texts (e.g., some messianic readings),[21] it is also clear that already the act of *producing* the translation involved several processes, some linguistically, and others culturally and theologically motivated (questions b, c + e).

The basic idea of how to approach the LXX is challenged by a new paradigm, which has been worked out by Albert Pietersma and his colleagues.[22] His concept has become very important, because the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) is based on its principles. NETS is undoubtedly becoming very influential for the evaluation of the Septuagint in the English-speaking world. According to Pietersma, many of the translations in the LXX are not meant to be read independently. The Greek text was translated as a tool to understand the Hebrew, a "crib for the study of the Hebrew."[23] Only at a later stage in the history of reception were the Greek texts read independently. The paradigm is called "interlinear" because Pietersma compares the Septuagint with bilingual texts that were used in Hellenistic schools. These papyri originally had a Latin text (mostly by Vergil) in one column and its translation into Greek in the other.[24] The lines of these columns were very short, containing no more

20. Wevers, "Interpretative Character and Significance," 95.

21. For the necessary differentiation between production and reception, see Albert Pietersma, "Messianism and the Greek Psalter: In search of the Messiah," in *The Septuagint and Messianism,* ed. Michael A. Knibb. BETL 195 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 50-52. I disagree with his overall approach.

22. Albert Pietersma, "A New Paradigm for Addressing Old Questions: The Relevance of the Interlinear Model for the Study of the Septuagint," in *Bible and Computer: The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference: Proceedings of the Association Internationale Bible et Informatique,* ed. Johann Cook (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 337-64.

23. Pietersma, "A New Paradigm," 360.

24. Robert Cavenaile, *Corpus papyrorum Latinarum,* 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958); Johannes Kramer, *Glossaria bilinguia altera (C. Gloss. biling. II).* APF, Beiheft 8 (Leipzig: Saur, 2001), 28, and pp. 100-104 for a fable by Aesop.

than one up to a few words. According to this hypothesis it can easily be explained why in the LXX the Greek translation very often follows the word order of the Hebrew slavishly, which leads to a syntax that must have sounded very strange to Greek-speaking people. The hypothesis can also answer the question of why there are inconsistencies in the translations: if the translator was mainly thinking in small units as a short line of a column, it is understandable that he was not aiming for the same translation of one Hebrew word throughout the book. Furthermore, Pietersma argues that the connotations of the Greek words stay in the semantic range of the Hebrew. Even if a word like *psychē* or *kosmos* has a specific significance in the Greek-speaking world, only the meaning of its Hebrew counterpart can safely be applied in the translation. Applying its usual Greek meaning would mean that the reception overrules the original meaning of the text. Finally, Pietersma asserts that, like the parallel bilingual papyri, the origins of the Septuagint must also be seen in the educational goals of schools.[25]

This theory is the basis for one of the most significant features of the new translation of the LXX into English (NETS), which has been shaped under the editorial leadership of Albert Pietersma. It uses a translation of the Hebrew Bible, the NRSV, as the basic referential document, which is accepted also as the translation of the Greek Bible as long as its rendering can be seen as correct.[26] This means that the English translation of the LXX does not stand alone either but also refers back to the Hebrew text.[27]

Although this paradigm can in fact shed some light on obscure phenomena of the translational process, some serious problems remain. First, it should be stated that the bilingual Vergil papyri are not attested prior to the third century C.E. From the first century C.E. we have some comparable texts with verses by Homer in two columns, one in classic Greek and one in Koine. There is no proof that these aids existed as early as in the third century B.C.E. Moreover, those texts were not produced to learn basic Latin, but perhaps to give students an impression of the exemplary syntactical style of the poet. The Greek transla-

25. But see Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt.* ASP 36 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 28, who argues against the view that these bilingual papyri were written for educational purposes in schools.

26. Cf. Albert Pietersma, "To the Reader of NETS," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title,* ed. Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiii-xx.

27. For the problem of how to deal with books without a Hebrew original, see Joachim Schaper, "Translating 2 Maccabees for NETS," in *XII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leiden 2004,* ed. Melvin K. H. Peters. SBLSCS 54 (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 225-32.

tions in these papyri are at times fragmented and nearly unintelligible. They are not coherent texts but lists of words and phrases that should be used as examples.[28] Second, when comparing different papyri in which the same text from Vergil is translated, one can see a high degree of variance between the translations. The aim of these texts has obviously not been to produce something like an authoritative Greek version of Vergil or Cicero. Therefore these bilingual papyri are not comparable to the LXX, because from the translation of Genesis legible and coherent texts were produced, even if their Hebraistic syntax may have sounded strange for Greek-speaking readers.

A third and even more important objection concerns Pietersma's focus on small translational units. According to his view, "the primary reason for a word's presence in such a translated text is to represent the Hebrew counterpart, rather than its appropriateness to the new context that is being created."[29] This does include, as mentioned earlier, the assumption that the Greek equivalents chosen by the translators have no other meaning than that of their Hebrew counterparts. Pietersma himself labels this position a kind of "linguistic heresy."[30] However, if this were a correct assumption, one could not explain why there are so many newly created Greek words *(neologisms)* in the Septuagint, for example, why the translators have carefully avoided words like βωμός ("altar") — except for heathen offerings — and only used θυσιαστήριον ("place of offering") for the true cult of the God of Israel (cf. Num 4:11 and 23:3).

Moreover, there is an overwhelming number of examples — some of them are given in the next sections — where the translators did not only look for a quantitative equation between the Hebrew text and the Greek version but were also trying hard to produce an appropriate meaning, as we have seen in the case of the "lawgiver." Finally, it should be stated that in the translations of the Septuagint numerous instances can be seen where a translation goes far beyond the level of the small unit of a single line. Mention has already been made of the phenomenon of intertextual translations. One can also refer to renderings in which the Greek text is stylistically improved over the Hebrew,[31] as well as to harmonizations between biblical texts, e.g., in the account of the creation in Genesis 1 or in the flood story in Genesis 6–8. One can add that the first known translation of the LXX, the book of Genesis, is of high quality and shows such lexical consistency as is hardly conceivable if we presume that it was produced

28. These arguments are based on Robert E. Gaebel, "The Greek Word-Lists to Vergil and Cicero," *BJRL* 52 (1969-70): 284-325, esp. 298-301.

29. Albert Pietersma, "Exegesis in the Septuagint: Possibilities and Limits (The Psalter as a Case in Point)," in Kraus and Wooden, *Septuagint Research,* 38.

30. Pietersma, "Exegesis in the Septuagint," 38.

31. See, e.g., Amos 1:13–2:6, and Gen 1:2, in Dines, *The Septuagint,* 54-57.

in a school.[32] It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the hermeneutical presuppositions that lie behind the paradigm of interlinearity do not fit the exegetical problems of the Greek Bible; the paradigm poses more questions than it is able to answer.

Examples of Interpretations in the Septuagint

Interpretations were introduced into the Greek text for different reasons. They were used *inter alia* because the translators wanted to clarify obscure passages, to harmonize or improve texts, or to avoid possible misunderstandings. In a number of cases they also wanted to refer to other biblical texts or to theological or cultural contexts. Moreover, one can also see that texts were applied to a new social or historical situation, mostly because of the fact that the translation was carried out in the Diaspora. The remainder of this article will illustrate these phenomena by collecting some striking examples and arranging them in a systematic order. The examples will be taken mainly from the books of the Greek Pentateuch and the Psalms, because a lot of important research on these books has been carried out. It is also interesting to see how the translators were interpreting in the context of narratives or liturgical texts. In the prophetic texts and in the book of Proverbs one can find an even higher degree of scriptural interpretation, because from the start prophecies were used for different applications, and educational texts were intended to be actualized.[33]

The following examples are related to questions (b) and (c) posed at the

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32. See Arie van der Kooij, "Perspectives on the Study of the Septuagint: Who Are the Translators?" in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism. Festschrift Adam S. van der Woude*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Edward Noort. VTSup 73 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 214-29, for a more convincing theory that the translators must be seen as well-trained scribes. I for myself have proposed to see the origins of the Greek Pentateuch in an academic milieu like the *museion* of Alexandria; cf. Martin Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung: Studien zur Genesis-Septuaginta.* BZAW 223 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 254-60. This theory was accepted and expanded by Siegfried Kreuzer, "Entstehung und Publikation der Septuaginta im Horizont frühptolemäischer Bildungs- und Kulturpolitik," in *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta*, vol. 2: *Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der Griechischen Bibel*, ed. Kreuzer and Jürgen P. Lesch. BWANT 161 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 61-75.

33. On Proverbs, see Johann Cook, "The Ideology of Septuagint Proverbs," in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo 1998*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor. SBLSCS 51 (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 463-79; on Isaiah, see Arie van der Kooij, "The Septuagint of Isaiah: Translation and Interpretation," in *The Book of Isaiah — Le Livre d'Isaïe: Les Oracles et leurs Relectures, Unité et complexité de l'ouvrage*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen. BETL 81 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 127-33.

beginning of this article. It will be demonstrated what kinds or levels of inter-
pretation one can find in the Septuagint and what reasons one can assume that
have led the translators to produce the renderings in question. I have chosen a
rough system of classification, which begins with cases in which the translators
refused to interpret their text and thus created a version that called for an inter-
pretation on the side of the readers. I then move to instances in which the inter-
pretations are the result of linguistic problems. Finally, we will look at texts that
prove that the translators were actively attempting to improve their text, to en-
hance it, or to give it a specific interpretation.[34]

No Interpretation Means: Interpreting Differently

First there are several instances in which the translators obviously avoided in-
terpreting the text in order to provide their own interpretation.

Gen 6:14
קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַתֵּבָה
"make it an ark with compartments"

νοσσιὰς ποιήσεις τὴν κιβωτόν
"you shall make the ark with nests"

Well known is the translation νοσσιά ("brood, nest"; also "beehive") for קֵן
("nest") in Gen 6:14, where Noah is ordered to make the ark with compartments.
According to James Barr, the translator was not able to understand this passage
and transferred the problem to his readers by using a literal rendering.[35]
　　Another example of this type can be found in Gen 11:1.

Gen 11:1
וַיְהִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ שָׂפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים
"And the whole earth had one language and the same words."

Καὶ ἦν πᾶσα ἡ γῆ χεῖλος ἕν, καὶ φωνὴ μία πᾶσιν.
"And the whole earth was one lip, and there was one speech for all."

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34. Detailed discussions of the crucial texts can be found in Wevers on the individual
books of the Pentateuch (e.g., *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*), and in the volumes of the *La
Bible d'Alexandrie*: e.g., vol. 1: *La Genèse, Traduction du texte grec de la Septante: Introduction et
Notes par Marguerite Harl* (Paris: Cerf, 1986).

35. Barr, *The Typology of Literalism*, 293; cf. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der
Auslegung*, 168.

According to the Hebrew text the whole earth had one language (שָׂפָה אֶחָת). In the LXX this has been translated quite literally by χεῖλος ἕν, "the earth was one lip,"[36] which sounds quite strange. The interesting fact is that in both contexts the translator has demonstrated his willingness to explain difficult passages by referring to other biblical texts (6:14) or by adding a word (11:1), so translating more freely.

This phenomenon occurs more often, also in other translations. In the book of Kingdoms, for example, one can find the tendency to transcribe obscure words (4 Kgs 20:12; 23:7).[37] In an important article on Ps 29(28):6, Adrian Schenker has demonstrated that in some cases the translator obviously wanted to keep the meaning of some passages obscure. The Greek text reads: "He will beat them small," instead of "He makes Lebanon skip."[38] It is possible that even this refusal to interpret is the expression of a certain theological assumption that the words of Scripture can transfer their meaning even if they are hardly comprehensible.[39]

Linguistic Decoding and Interpretation

As argued earlier, usually the act of vocalizing the Hebrew consonantal text can not be seen as an act of interpretation but as necessary linguistic decoding. But there are numerous instances where the boundaries between decoding and interpretation are porous. A specific decision how to vocalize or to deduce a word in its context can change the meaning of the passage in question.

Hab 3:5

לְפָנָיו יֵלֶךְ דָּבֶר וְיֵצֵא רֶשֶׁף לְרַגְלָיו

πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πορεύσεται λόγος,
καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, ἐν πεδίλοις οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ.

One of the most striking examples is Hab 3:5. The MT reads, "Before him went pestilence." The translator has derived the word דֶּבֶר ("pestilence") from דָּבָר

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36. Perhaps the translator did not intend the meaning "lip" but "bank," referring to a primeval bank of the waters where all humans lived prior to their dispersion over the world; cf. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung,* 214.

37. See Siegert, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament,* 284-86, for a more exhaustive discussion of these examples.

38. Adrian Schenker, "Gewollt dunkle Wiedergaben in LXX? Am Beispiel von Ps 28 (29)," *Bib* (1994): 546-55.

39. Jan Joosten, "Une théologie de la Septante? Réflexions méthodologiques sur l'interprétation de la version grecque," *RTP* 132 (2000): 31-46, esp. 42-44.

("word, speech") — perhaps because he wanted to avoid the notion of God's disease — and therefore translated: "Before his face a word will go." Since the second part of the verse now no longer fitted this statement, it was changed to: "and he will go out — his feet in sandals." The Hebrew text has: "and plague followed close behind."[40]

Even today, the exact meaning of שַׁדַּי אֵל (usually translated "God Almighty") remains unclear. Already in the oldest translations we can find this uncertainty: The translator of the Greek Genesis has used ὁ θεός σου ("your God"; Gen 17:1) or ὁ θεός μου ("my God"; 48:3), thus stressing the personal relation between God and the fathers. It is possible that this rendering is based on the linguistic derivation of שַׁדַּי from Aramaic דִּי (+ the relative particle שֶׁ or שֶׁל), a particle of relation that could be used to mark a genitive. Later translators have used a different strategy of decoding, because in the book of Ruth one can find ὁ ἱκανός ("he who is sufficient"; 1:20) for שַׁדַּי אֵל. Here the rendering is based on the Hebrew דַּי ("sufficiency"); the theological meaning of this designation of God has completely changed. Moreover, in the translation of Job, which is generally judged to be much less literal than others, one can find a third solution of the problem: שדי was translated παντοκράτωρ ("Almighty"; 5:17), which has in other books been used for צְבָאוֹת ("God of hosts"; e.g., Hab 2:13); the problem is solved by intertextuality.[41] It is reasonable that the translation παντοκράτωρ ("Almighty") reflects the attempt to accentuate God's power.

Num 24:7

יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו וְזַרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים וְיָרֹם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכּוֹ וְתִנַּשֵּׂא מַלְכֻתוֹ

ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ
καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν,
καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἡ Γὼγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ,
καὶ αὐξηθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ.

Another interesting development from decoding to interpretation can be seen in Num 24:7. The Hebrew text starts with יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו ("Water shall flow from his buckets"). In the Greek version the text reads: ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ ("A man shall come out of his seed"). The translator

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40. The same confusion pestilence/word has happened in Ps 91(90):3, 6. For the difficulties in explaining the whole verse Hab 3:5, see pp. 289-90 in *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, vol. 23: *Les douze prophètes 4-9*, ed. Marguerite Harl et al. (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

41. On this problem, see Staffan Olofsson, *God Is My Rock: A Study of Translation Technique and Theological Exegesis in the Septuagint.* ConBOT 31 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 111-12; and Siegert, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament*, 207-8.

has obviously derived the verbal form יִזַּל I from Aramaic אזל ("go, come").[42]
This led him to parallel this verse with 24:17, where it is said that a star will
come out of Jacob and a man from Israel. Therefore he also translated 24:7 in
such a way that it is now the second important messianic announcement in the
Balaam narrative.[43] Admittedly, one cannot say definitely whether the transla-
tor came from the Aramaic meaning of the verb to the messianic interpretation
or from a preceding interpretation of the passage to this specific decoding and
rendering.

Num 16:15

וַיִּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־יְהוָה אַל־תֵּפֶן אֶל־מִנְחָתָם
לֹא חֲמוֹר אֶחָד מֵהֶם נָשָׂאתִי וְלֹא הֲרֵעֹתִי אֶת־אַחַד מֵהֶם

καὶ ἐβαρυθύμησεν Μωυσῆς σφόδρα καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς κύριον μὴ πρόσχῃς εἰς,
τὴν θυσίαν αὐτῶν· οὐκ ἐπιθύμημα οὐδενὸς αὐτῶν εἴληφα οὐδὲ ἐκάκωσα
οὐδένα αὐτῶν.

The same insecurity can be observed in an interesting case of orthographical
decoding. In Num 16:15 Moses states in the conflict with the group of Korah: "I
have not taken one *donkey* from them!" The Greek version has: "I have not
taken away the *desire* of any one of them." It is obvious that the translator has
read חמוד ("desire") instead of חמור ("donkey"); the confusion of *daleth* and
resh is quite frequent. But it is not clear whether this was mere accident or based
on the translator's idea that the notion of Moses stealing things should be
avoided.[44]

Ps 90(89):2b-3a

וּמֵעוֹלָם עַד־עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל
תָּשֵׁב אֱנוֹשׁ עַד־דַּכָּא

καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος σὺ εἶ.
μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς ἄνθρωπον εἰς ταπείνωσιν

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42. The problem of the linguistic development from spoken late Hebrew to Aramaic in the
Hellenistic period cannot be discussed here. See Tov, *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint*, 105-16;
Jan Joosten, "On Aramaising Renderings in the Septuagint," in Basten and van Peursen, *Hamlet
on a Hill*, 587-600.

43. For a fuller discussion of Numbers 24, see Martin Rösel, "Jakob, Bileam und der
Messias. Messianische Erwartungen in Gen 49 und Num 22-24," in Knibb, *The Septuagint and
Messianism*, 151-75.

44. Tov, *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint*, 101, who calls this phenomenon "tendentious
paleographical exegesis."

Another phenomenon that can be discussed under the header of "decoding and interpretation" is the problem of word and verse divisions.[45] In Ps 90(89):2-3 the translator has seen the last word from v. 2, אֵל ("God") as the opening of the next verse. Moreover, he understood it as the negation אַל, which completely changed the meaning of v. 3. It now reads: "Do not turn man back to the state of humiliation." The Hebrew text has the contrary: "You return man to dust."

Deut 26:5
אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיְמָה
Συρίαν ἀπέβαλεν ὁ πατήρ μου καὶ κατέβη εἰς Αἴγυπτον

A different division of two words can help to explain the deviation between LXX and MT in the confession Deut 26:5. While the MT has "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor," LXX reads "My father abandoned Syria." This can be seen as an improvement of the text because the narratives of the patriarchs do not state that the fathers, Abraham and Jacob, were Arameans but that they have come from Haran in Syria (Gen 11:31; 28:10). The rendering can easily be explained if one assumes that the translator has not read אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד ("a wandering Aramean") but אֲרָם יָאבַד ("Aram, he left"), then modernizing "Aram" to "Syria" and taking it as an accusative. Again, it is hard to decide whether this was an accidental misreading or an intended act of interpretation on the side of the translator. But since in later rabbinic sources this method of enhancing the meaning of a text by using new divisons of words *(notarikon)* is used frequently, one can assume that it was a deliberate exegesis carried out by the translator.[46]

From these few examples it has become clear that interpretation can often be induced by linguistic or orthographical peculiarities in the Hebrew text, which then led the translator to find a less ambiguous rendering. In this process, his own religious or theological convictions could easily guide the process of translating the word in question adequately.[47] This means that there has not been a uniform and overall strategy of interpretation but an openness on the side of the translator to update the text where it seemed suitable or necessary.

45. See Tov, *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint*, 117-21, for further examples.

46. See Siegfried Kreuzer, "Die Septuaginta im Kontext alexandrinischer Kultur und Bildung," in Fabry and Böhler, *Im Brennpunkt*, 3:49. The observation that some predecessors of the rabbinic rules stand behind some of the Septuagint translations goes back to the pioneering work of Zacharias Frankel, *Ueber den Einfluss der palästinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik* (Leipzig: Barth, 1851), where still a wealth of interesting examples can be found.

47. See also the different strategies to deal with unknown words, which Tov has systematized: contextual guesses and manipulations; reliance on parallelisms; employments of general words; or etymological renderings ("Did the Septuagint Translators Always Understand Their Hebrew Text?").

Improvements of the Text

As we have seen earlier, there is sometimes a tendency to keep literal translations, even if the text thus produced is hard to understand. On the other hand, in some cases we notice an effort to improve the text. One of the most striking phenomena of this kind is the frequently occurring harmonization. As an example, in Genesis 1 the translator has not only added several sentences that seem to be missing in the clearly structured Hebrew text. Moreover, he tried to smooth out the problem that there are two conflicting accounts of the creation. Thus he translated 2:3: "God ceased from all his works which he *began to do*," instead of: "God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (NRSV). In 2:9, 19 he added ἔτι ("*further* God made . . .") over against his parent text, thus emphasizing that there is only one act of creation. It should be added that the translator not only harmonized the texts of Genesis 1 and 2; from his choice of equivalents it is also clear that he used the platonic idea of a twofold creation of the immaterial and material world as a paradigm to understand the sequence of Genesis 1 and 2.[48]

Harmonizations can be found throughout the LXX. In some cases, as in Genesis 1 or in the account of the flood (e.g., Gen 7:3), texts were added so that different passages match each other. In Numbers 1 the list of tribes has been standardized by additions and omissions. Moreover, it has been rearranged to match the order of the sons of Jacob in Genesis 35 and 49. In other instances it was sufficient to use only one Greek equivalent for different Hebrew words, or to change the number of verbs or nouns. There are also cases in which one translator harmonized his text with passages from other books.[49] For example, Num 24:7, which we discussed above, obviously has been brought in line with Gen 49:10.

Another way to improve a text was to translate some of the stylistic features of the Hebrew into better Greek. The Hebrew narratives are characterized by the use of a paratactic syntax: the sentences are mostly connected by "and," which led to a rather clumsy style. The easiest way was to translate the conjunctive *waw* not only by καί ("and") but also by other particles like the adversative δέ ("but"). This can be easily seen in Genesis 3. In Gen 3:1 δέ is used to signal the new topic. In Gen 3:3 δέ stands to emphasize the central commandment, and in 3:17 one can find δέ in the final condemnation of Adam (this is also a harmoni-

48. For a detailed argumentation, see Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung*, 28-87.

49. See the instructive list in Gilles Dorival, *Les Nombres: La Bible d'Alexandrie 4* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 42-43, and the discussions of the texts in his commentary. It should be added that it is not always easy to distinguish harmonizations from intertextual translations; see pp. 66-72.

zation with v. 11). The same attempt to bring a clearer structure into the narrative can be seen in Gen 4:1. Here the use of "but" marks the beginning of the story, and in 4:5 emphasis is laid on the main problem: *but* God did not accept Cain's offering.

The account of the flood begins in its Greek version (Gen 6:5-6) with another stylistic improvement. Here the paratactical structure of the sentence ("and . . . and . . . and") was rendered into a hypotactical, subordinate one, using a participle: "When Lord-God saw. . . ."[50] This rendering is quite frequent in the Balaam narrative in Numbers 22-24 (but not in the surrounding passages); the Greek version of this account gives a much more dynamic impression. In other cases sentences have been changed from a prospective to a retrospective view by using the future tense in the Greek text for an imperfect in the Hebrew (Gen 22:14). In Num 14:3 one can see that a question of the Hebrew has been changed to an affirmative sentence in the Greek version.

Num 8:9

וְהִקְהַלְתָּ אֶת־כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

καὶ συνάξεις πᾶσαν συναγωγὴν υἱῶν Ισραηλ

Although some of the improvements have the effect that the translated text sounds more like a Greek text, it is also possible to find the contrary. In Num 8:9 the Hebrew "assemble the whole congregation" is translated as "you shall assemble all the assembly." The Septuagint version has a *figura etymologica*, which is not very common in Greek literature.[51] But there are also instances where this figure has not been translated, for example, in Gen 2:16 or in 11:3.

Gen 11:3

הָבָה נִלְבְּנָה לְבֵנִים וְנִשְׂרְפָה לִשְׂרֵפָה

Δεῦτε πλινθεύσωμεν πλίνθους καὶ ὀπτήσωμεν αὐτὰς πυρί

50. There are also cases in which the use of participles to avoid the paratactical structure of the Hebrew cannot be seen as an improvement; see the striking example in Gen 22:9-10, where a chain of seven *waw*-consecutive clauses has been used in the Hebrew to intensify the drama of the story. The LXX has used three participles and sounds much less dramatic. John A. Beck, *Translators as Storytellers: A Study in Septuagint Translation Technique*. Studies in Biblical Literature 25 (New York: Lang, 2000), 30, offers a lot of interesting examples for the stylistic intentions of the translators.

51. See, e.g., Emanuel Tov, "Renderings of Combinations of the Infinitive Absolute and Finite Verbs in the Septuagint — Their Nature and Distribution," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible*, 247-56; and Raija Sollamo, "The LXX Renderings of the Infinitive Absolute Used with a Paronymous Finite Verb in the Pentateuch," in *La Septuaginta en la Investigación Contemporánea (V. Congreso de la IOSCS)*, ed. Natalio Fernández Marcos (Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano," C.S.I.C., 1985), 101-13.

Here the first *figura etymologica* has been translated "let us brick-makingly make bricks," the second not: "let us burn them in fire" (the translator also added αὐτὰς ["them"] for the sake of clarification). There is no strategy discernable why the translators sometimes kept this Hebraism, sometimes skipped it, and occasionally imitated it.

Another characteristic feature of the Hebrew texts, especially from the Prophetic or the Wisdom literature, is the use of the *parallelismus membrorum.* Here the same multiplicity of approaches can be seen. Sometimes it is rendered quite literally, as in Gen 27:29: "accursed is who curses you, and blessed is who blesses you."

Num 27:17:

אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם וַאֲשֶׁר יָבֹא לִפְנֵיהֶם וַאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם וַאֲשֶׁר יְבִיאֵם
וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֲדַת יְהוָה כַּצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהֶם רֹעֶה

ὅστις ἐξελεύσεται πρὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν καὶ ὅστις εἰσελεύσεται πρὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν καὶ ὅστις ἐξάξει αὐτοὺς καὶ ὅστις εἰσάξει αὐτούς, καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ἡ συναγωγὴ κυρίου ὡσεὶ πρόβατα, οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ποιμήν.

In other cases it is changed as if the translator wanted to play with words. See, for example, Num 27:17, where the Hebrew text has the verbs בוא ("come") and יצא ("go out"). In both parts of the parallelism, the translator has used ἔρχομαι ("go") in the first stichos and ἄγω ("go, lead") in the second, differentiating them by two different prefixes. Finally, sometimes one can find texts in which the translator is constructing a new parallelism; this phenomenon is frequent in the Psalms and in the book of Proverbs, and it can already be found in the book of Deuteronomy (32:23).[52]

There can be no doubt that in most cases there is no possibility to explain those improvements of the text with the assumption of a diverging *Vorlage.* Therefore these phenomena prove that some of the translators, especially those of the books which were translated first, wanted to produce a text that could stand on its own and does not refer back to the Hebrew original in any detail. Obviously they thought that some corrections or alterations might be in order, if these served to improve the persuasiveness of the Scriptures.

52. See Gerhardt Tauberschmidt, *Secondary Parallelism: A Study of Translation Technique in LXX Proverbs.* Academia Biblica 15 (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), for an extensive discussion of this phenomenon in the book of Proverbs.

Identifications and Actualizations

Another possibility to improve a translation and to bring it closer to the reader is to modernize the text. As we have already seen in Deut 26:5, the ancient "Aramean" has been rendered by "Syria," which was easily recognizable as the territory of the Seleucids. For Padan-Aram, where Jacob's relative Laban dwelled, Mesopotamia was used (Gen 28:5). Other actualized names include Idumea for Edom (Gen 36:16) and Heliopolis for On (41:45). And even the third river of paradise in Gen 2:14 has been explicitly identified with a well-known stream, the Euphrates.

Especially in the Joseph story one can find a lot of Hellenistic designations for professions. Most striking is the fact that in Gen 50:2 the word הָרֹפְאִים ("doctors") was translated ἐνταφιαστής, which means the "embalmer" well known in Egypt. According to the Greek book of Numbers, the tribes of Israel are not segmented into clans (מִשְׁפָּחֹת) but into *dēmous* (δήμους, 1:20), the usual designation for ethnic groups in Hellenistic Egypt. In the account of the wandering through the desert the Israelites' way of life has been accommodated to modern times. In the Hebrew text of Num 19:14 the Israelites live in tents, but according to the LXX they live in houses. The officials of the Israelites are now called σύγκλητοι βουλῆς ("councilors"); according to the Hebrew text they were only chosen from the assembly (קְרִאֵי מוֹעֵד, Num 16:2). It is obvious that outdated or unknown elements of the Scripture were identified with more modern terms. This is also true for God's blessing after the flood (Gen 8:22). In the Hebrew text God promises that "seedtime and harvest, summer and winter" shall not cease. The LXX has "summer and spring," which at first is quite astonishing. But in the Egyptian agricultural year there were only three seasons, the folding of the Nile in the winter, the heat of the summer, and sowing and harvesting in the spring. It is therefore easy to understand why the translator chose "spring" to designate the third season of the Egyptian year.

There are many other modernizations or actualisations like these.[53] Well known is the example of the Ibis in the list of unclean animals in the book of Leviticus, who replaces the owl (Lev 11:17). Because the Ibis was the holy bird of the Egyptian god Thot, it is clear that a pious Jewish translator wished to have

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53. See, e.g., the path-breaking article by the Egyptologist Siegfried Morenz, "Ägyptische Spuren in der Septuaginta," in *Mullus. Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, ed. Alfred Stuidber and Alfred Hermann. JAC, Erg. 1 (Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1964), 250-58; Armin Schmitt, "Interpretation der Genesis aus hellenistischem Geist," *ZAW* 86 (1974): 137-63. See most recently Manfred Görg, "Die Septuaginta im Kontext spätägyptischer Kultur," in *Im Brennpunkt*, vol. 2: *Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der griechischen Bibel*, ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry and Ulrich Offerhaus. BWANT 153 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 115-30.

the bird of this pagan god in the official list of detestable animals and therefore skipped the owl. On the other hand the hare is missing in the Greek lists of unclean animals (Lev 11:6; Deut 14:7), because the usual Greek translation Λαγώς sounded too similar to the byname "Lagos" of the Ptolemaic king Ptolemy I.

One final example in this category will demonstrate that even a kind of demythologization could take place. In the account of the flood in Genesis 6–9, the Hebrew word מַבּוּל ("flood") has been translated by the Greek κατακλυσμός ("deluge"; e.g., Gen 7:6). Upon closer examination one can see that this word has a special meaning. According to a theory by the philosopher Eudoxos from Knidos, the term designates regular catastrophes when all the planets are properly aligned. This theory has also been accepted by Plato (*Timaeus* 22a-g; 39d). The Greek text brings the biblical tradition in accord with the philosophical knowledge of its time. Moreover, the flood is now a kind of a natural phenomenon rather than a punishment by an angry God.[54]

Besides this rendering there are many others which prove that the translators had a good knowledge of the philosophical and religious discussions in the cultures around them.[55] They are not hesitant to adopt those concepts. It is also interesting to see that the translator of Genesis corrected the whole chronology in Genesis 5 and 11, presumably to bring the biblical chronology in line with the Egyptian reckoning of dynasties.[56] But there are also limitations to this approach. One important line that is never crossed is the idea of God. This will be illustrated in the next section.

Corrections, Expansions, and Explanations: Theological Exegesis

The last example has already shown that the Greek version reveals aspects of a specific theology. Recent research has brought up numerous examples in which the Greek version shows distinctive deviations when it comes to anthropological, messianic, cultic, or theological topics.[57] Only a small selection of these can be given here, but they suffice to demonstrate that the translators were also theological thinkers.

54. See Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung,* 169-70, for a fuller discussion of this topic.

55. See for the book of Proverbs, Cook, "The Ideology of Septuagint Proverbs."

56. Genesis has a "long" chronology that shows that the Second Temple was built in the year 5000 *anno mundi*; see Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung,* 129-44.

57. See Emanuel Tov, "Theologically Motivated Exegesis Embedded in the Septuagint," in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible,* 257-69; and, for my own approach, Rösel, "Towards a 'Theology of the Septuagint.'"

Gen 2:2, 3

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

. . .

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ
כִּי בוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

καὶ συνετέλεσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, ἃ ἐποίησεν . . .
καὶ ηὐλόγησεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἑβδόμην καὶ ἡγίασεν αὐτήν, ὅτι ἐν
αὐτῇ κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι.

Genesis 2:2-3 shows how translators were at the same time theologians. The He-
brew text reads: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had
made. . . . And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because on it he
had rested from all his work which God created and made." The Greek text is
rather different. "And God finished on the *sixth* day his works which he
made. . . . And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he
ceased from all his works which God began to do." Verse 3 has already been
cited to demonstrate that the translator wanted to bring the two accounts of the
creation into line with one another. Moreover, it was also important for him
that God did not perform any kind of work on the Sabbath, which is why he
had God finish work already on the sixth day.[58]

Gen 4:7

הֲלוֹא אִם־תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ
וְאֵלֶיךָ תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל־בּוֹ

οὐκ, ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς, ἥμαρτες; ἡσύχασον· πρὸς
σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ σὺ ἄρξεις αὐτοῦ.

Another important deviation can be seen in the crucial story of Cain and
Abel in Genesis 4. The Hebrew text of v. 7 is very difficult to understand, per-
haps because it is damaged. "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if
you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you
must master it" (NRSV). The translator tried to make sense out of his diffi-
cult *Vorlage* and was also driven by "a desire to understand why God should
be upset with Cain for bringing an offering that is approved in the Mosaic

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58. This variant is also present in the Samaritan Pentateuch, in the Peshitta, and in *Jub.* 2:16,
25. Therefore the possibility cannot be ruled out that this deviation has already been in the
Vorlage, but most scholars now opt for an interpretation of the translator; see Jobes and Silva,
Invitation to the Septuagint, 98; Susan A. Brayford, *Genesis.* Septuagint Commentary Series
(Leiden: Brill, 2007), 225.

legislation."[59] Thus his rendering reads: "Have you sinned if you have [in fact] brought it [the offering] rightly, but not rightly divided it? Calm down, to you shall be its [the sin's] return, and you shall rule over it."[60] Although this version, too, is not easy to understand, the problem is solved: Cain has not divided the offering in a ritually correct way (the verb διαιρέω, "divide," is the same as in Gen 15:10); therefore God is not guilty of not accepting his offering without a reason.

The Greek version of Genesis 4 is revealing in yet another aspect. The Hebrew text is using the *tetragrammaton* YHWH to refer to God's actions throughout this section. The Septuagint distinguishes between two designations for God: It is ὁ θεός ("God") who is looking upon Abel and his offering; in verse 6 κύριος ὁ θεός ("Lord God") is speaking to Cain, and in verses 9-10 ὁ θεός ("God") is accusing the murderer, who in verse 16 is going forth from the presence of God (τοῦ θεοῦ; MT: מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה "Lord"/YHWH). It is interesting to see that in this section there are two verses, 3 and 13, in which the regular use of κύριος ("Lord") for the *tetragrammaton* can be seen. These texts speak about Cain's offering (v. 3) and Cain's prayer to the Lord (v. 13). Thus one has to conclude that κύριος is avoided when it is about the punishing or judging aspects of God. This view is confirmed by several other texts from the book of Genesis,[61] so that the translator of Genesis must have seen a theological differentiation between the two most used designations for God — YHWH/Lord on the one hand and *elohim*/God on the other. Moreover, he has made use of this differentiation to correct the text or to avoid a possible misunderstanding that God acts unjustly (see especially the translations in Gen 38:7, 10).

Again, this phenomenon can also be seen in other translations of the LXX.

Exod 15:3

יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ

κύριος συντρίβων πολέμους, κύριος ὄνομα αὐτῷ.

According to Exod 15:3 the Lord is not a warrior, as the Hebrew text suggests, but someone who is breaking wars; the meaning has been reverted.[62] In Num 16:5, 11 and Deut 2:14 one can detect the same hesitation to say that the Lord has killed someone; therefore *elohim*/God is used although the *Vorlage* has had the

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59. Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 213.
60. For the translation, see Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, 104-7.
61. Cf. Martin Rösel, "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 411-28, for details.
62. See also Ps 9:21; God brings his law, not fear, to the people.

tetragrammaton.[63] Moreover, there are other texts where one can see that several aspects of the picture of God have been changed: it is no longer possible to see God, but only the *place* where God stood (Exod 24:10); not only blaspheming the name of the Lord carries the death penalty but already *naming* his name (Lev 24:16). Some of the translators seemed also to avoid anthropomorphic renderings.[64] Others avoided metaphorical designations, like God as a rock, as in Ps 78(77):35, where צוּר ("rock") has been translated by βοηθός ("helper"),[65] or in Ps 84(83):12, where God is no longer sun or shield (MT), but he loves mercy and truth.

Conclusion

Many more examples could be given to demonstrate different phenomena of interpretation in the Scriptures collected under the label "Septuagint," and many more topics like messianism or cultic terminology or the depiction of biblical persons like Moses could be treated.[66] One should also bear in mind that in this article I have separated the text examples from their contexts and arranged them in a systematic way. Usually one should clarify the specific profile of an individual translation as the first methodological step. But in spite of these — in the present context justifiable — shortcomings, it has become clear that the Greek translation of the Bible reflects the earliest stages of the history of interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. Therefore it is good to see that in recent years the focus of scholarship has moved from text-critical to exegetical questions. Only after the different levels of linguistic and theological interpretation of a Greek translation have been described can it be used also for purposes of textual criticism.[67]

63. One could add that there is also a hesitation to use *kyrios* — the translation of the *name* of the God of Israel — together with foreigners, which can easily be seen in the Balaam story in Numbers 22–24; cf. John W. Wevers, "The Balaam Narrative According to the Septuagint," in *Lectures et Relectures de la Bible. Festschrift P.-M. Bogaert,* ed. J.-M. Auwers and André Wénin. BETL 144 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 133-44.

64. See, e.g., the classic study by Charles T. Fritsch, *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch.* Princeton Oriental Texts 10 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943).

65. Olofsson, *God Is My Rock.*

66. Moreover, much more secondary literature could have been cited. Instead, readers are referred to reference works like Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint;* Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context;* Dines, *The Septuagint;* or the systematically arranged bibliography by Cécile Dogniez, *Bibliography of the Septuagint — Bibliographie de la Septante (1970-1993).* VTSup 60 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

67. Martin Rösel, "The Text-Critical Value of the Genesis-Septuagint," *BIOSCS* 31 (1998):

When comparing the individual profiles of scriptural interpretation in the books of the LXX with the Tärgumim[68] or with contemporary literature like the Hellenistic-Jewish texts or the texts from Qumran,[69] it becomes clear that the approach of the Greek translators was different. Their aim was not to rewrite the Bible[70] or to comment on it, but to produce an authoritative Greek version that was suitable for the needs of Jewish groups in the Hellenistic world. Because they were aware that they were translating and producing not an ordinary text but Scripture, they obviously felt restricted in how they could treat this text. It is interesting to see that those translations that were done first are less literal than later ones. One can assume that the circulation of the Greek Pentateuch has caused discussions about the question of the extent to which deviations from the original are acceptable. But even a more literal translation like the Greek Psalms shows a dynamic understanding of how to render these highly important texts. Even if cast in a new language, they will still be able to speak directly into the new situation and provide confidence in the God of Israel and his just government of the whole world. Thus scriptural interpretation in the LXX is not an end in and of itself or an academic exegetical game. Instead, it manifests the ways in which the translators and their community understood Scripture and how they thought it should be understood. Therefore, the Greek translation is a pivotal part of the earliest reception history of the Hebrew Bible.

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62-70; and Theo A. W. van der Louw, *Transformations in the Septuagint: Towards an Interaction of Septuagint Studies and Translation Studies*. CBET 47 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 368-73.

68. Roger Le Déaut, "La Septante, un Targum?" in *Études sur le Judaïsme Hellénistique: Congrès de Strasbourg, 1983*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann and Jacques Schlosser. LD 119 (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 147-95.

69. See the fine introduction by James C. VanderKam, "To What End? Functions of Scriptural Interpretation in Qumran Texts," in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and the Septuagint: Essays Presented to Eugene Ulrich on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Peter W. Flint, Emanuel Tov, and VanderKam. VTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 302-20.

70. The Septuagint of Job can be seen as an exception; see C. E. Cox, "The Historical, Social, and Literary Context of Old Greek Job," in *XII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leiden, 2004*, ed. M. K. H. Peters. SBLSCS 54 (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 105-16.

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