

JAN JOOSTEN

Collected Studies  
on the Septuagint

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament*

83

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Forschungen zum Alten Testament

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83





Jan Joosten

# Collected Studies on the Septuagint

From Language to Interpretation and Beyond

Mohr Siebeck

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## Foreword

The so-called Septuagint, for a long time regarded merely as an ancient version (although the most important one) of the Hebrew Bible, has, over the last thirty years or so, emerged as an important corpus to be studied in its own right. This development is perhaps only partially perceived among biblical scholars specializing in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible or New Testament. Combined with the impetus given by the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is bringing about a profound change in the study of early Jewish and Christian Scripture: writings that had been marginal for a long time are taking center stage, long-standing theories disintegrate, and new continuities come to light.

The articles collected in the present volume seek to contribute to the study of the Septuagint in the framework of this new approach. Although some of the studies are relevant to textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, all of them focus on properties of the Greek texts themselves. What characterizes these studies, in the concert of recent Septuagint research, is their special attention to linguistic details. Typically, they take their point of departure in the observation of one or other curious philological phenomenon, for which an explanation is suggested that simultaneously sheds light on wider questions of interpretation, history, or theology. Two studies address questions of “translation technique” as defined by the Finnish School (Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen and his students): the variation in Greek renderings of specific Hebrew constructions. A dossier of as much as seven studies deals with different aspects of the question of the knowledge of Hebrew of the Septuagint translators. The “Seventy” knew Hebrew well, but the Hebrew they knew was not the classical language of the biblical authors, but a post-biblical variety somewhat akin to – although distinct from – Qumran Hebrew. Four studies analyse the process of interpretation: a complex one involving many steps. The article on “Exegesis in the Septuagint Version of Hosea” tries to draw up an inventory of factors that come into play, while the other articles pursue individual issues relevant to the question. Finally, four studies explore questions of historical milieu. Stylistic peculiarities and translational techniques may in certain cases throw light on the identity of the translators and on the project they were engaged in.

Most of the studies are by-products either of the graduate seminar on the Septuagint taught yearly at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Strasbourg since 1994, or of the research done in preparation of the volume on Hosea in the series *La Bible d'Alexandrie* (published in 2002). All but one of them were published in diverse journals and collective works between 1996 and 2008. A few mistakes have been silently corrected, but no effort has been made to update them in the light of more recent research, nor to harmonize them with one another. The one unpublished paper, on “Divine Omniscience and the Theology of the Septuagint”, was presented at the conference of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies in Basel, in 2001, the proceedings of which never materialized.

Thanks are due to my colleague, Eberhard Bons, and to other members of the research group on the Septuagint in Strasbourg, notably Philippe Le Moigne. Dr. Henning Ziebritzki of Mohr Siebeck suggested the idea of the present collection. I am much indebted also to my research assistant, Phoebe Woods, who translated the article on “ $\kappa\omicron\tau\tau$ , ‘Benevolence’, and  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , ‘Pity’” from French into English, and prepared the entire volume for publication. Funds for the publication were made available by the *Institut Universitaire de France* and by the *Equipe d'Accueil 4378*.

Strasbourg, May 2012

Jan Joosten

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## List of Abbreviations

AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
AB	Anchor Bible
AbrNSup	<i>Abr-Nahrain</i> . Supplement Series
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i> (Oxford 1907; repr. 1972)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHK	Biblia Hebraica. Ed. R. KITTEL
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BIOSCS	<i>Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
BSFE	<i>Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology
CBOT	Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament Series
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> . Monograph Series
CCL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
CRB	Revue biblique. Cahiers
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DNWSI	B. JONGELING, J. HOFIJZER, <i>Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> (2 vols.; Handbuch der Orientalistik 1/21; Leiden 1995)
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GKC	A. E. COWLEY (ed.), <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar: As Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch</i> , Oxford 1910 <sup>2</sup> (repr. Oxford 1990)
HAL	L. KÖHLER, W. BAUMGARTNER, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (5 vols.; Leiden 1994–2000)
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> . Supplement series

JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KBL <sup>3</sup>	L. KÖHLER, W. BAUMGARTNER, <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i> (2 vols.; Leiden 1967–1996 <sup>3</sup> )
KJV	King James Version
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSJ	H. G. LIDDELL, R. SCOTT, H. S. JONES, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (9th ed. with revised supplement; Oxford 1996)
LXX	Septuagint
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
MSU	Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen
MT	Massoretic Text
NBG	Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling
NETS	A. PIETERSMA, B. G. WRIGHT (eds.), <i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title</i> (Oxford & New York 2007)
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbus biblicus et orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OTS	Oudtestamentische studiën/Old Testament Studies
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
PG	J.-P. MIGNE (ed.), <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> [Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca] (162 vols.; Paris 1857–1886)
RAC	T. KLAUSER (ed.), <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart 1950ff)
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SSLL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TAD	B. PORTEN, A. YARDENI, <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i> (4 vols.; Winona Lake 1986–1999)
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum/Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TWAT	H.-J. FABRY, H. RINGGREN (eds.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (10 vols.; Stuttgart et al. 1973–2000)
TWNT	G. KITTEL, G. FRIEDRICH (eds.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> (10 vols.; Stuttgart et al. 1933–1979)
UUÅ	Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum. Supplements</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

## Translation Technique



# Elaborate Similes – Hebrew and Greek

## A Study in Septuagint Translation Technique

The imaginative, and down-to-earth, language of the Old Testament abounds in illustrations and comparisons of all sorts. In poetry, in particular, and in the record of direct speech, but occasionally also in narrative, the author will drive home a point, enliven the discourse or simply embellish the style by bringing a comparison from nature or from day-to-day life. A very frequent figure of speech may be termed the elaborate simile; it is defined here as a quasi-proverbial comparison expressed by a complete sentence. This definition seeks to exclude simple similes of the type “the LORD goes forth *like a hero*” (Isa 42:13) on the one hand, and comparisons with concrete events or circumstances as in “*As I have done*, so God has requited me” (Judg 1:7) or in “If we be circumcised *as they are circumcised*” (Gen 34:22) on the other.

Elaborate similes tend to be expressed by specific syntactic structures. Thus they make up an interesting corpus for studying a cross-section, as it were, of the Septuagint’s translation technique.<sup>1</sup> This study is an attempt to treat the way this figure of speech was translated from Hebrew into Greek. The focus is primarily on the translational process, while the implications for the relative and absolute chronology of the Septuagint will merely be touched upon. The investigation will be limited to the books of the Hebrew canon and their Greek translations.

### 1. Hebrew

Since the syntax of elaborate similes is not treated as such in the existing grammars,<sup>2</sup> and since a precise analysis of the Hebrew is of obvious rel-

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<sup>1</sup> The impetus for the present study was given by the remarkable nature of the optatives in similes occurring in a score of passages in the Septuagint (see below). For an adequate evaluation of this phenomenon, the entire problem of the syntactic structure of elaborate similes, in Hebrew and in Greek, had to be taken up.

<sup>2</sup> In all the grammars consulted, similes were thrown together with other comparative clauses. Moreover, in most grammars the description of these clauses is not complete. In

evance for the understanding of the translational process, our treatment of the Septuagint will be prefaced by a brief section on the grammatical possibilities of the source text.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1. Type 1: *ka<sup>a</sup>šer + yiqtol*

The most straightforward way of expressing an elaborate simile in Biblical Hebrew is by means of the relative particle *ašer* prefixed by the preposition *kē*. The composite particle is immediately followed by the verb in the imperfect expressing repetition or habit.<sup>4</sup> Example:

Deut 28:29

והיית ממשש בצהרים כאשר ימשש העור באפלה

“And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness.”<sup>5</sup>

This type of syntax allows for a certain amount of variation: the verb occurring in the simile may be identical to the main verb or it may be different; the subject in the simile may be named explicitly or it may be expressed only by the third person verbal form used impersonally; to the first verb of the simile further verbal forms may be added (see in particular Isa 55:10); the main clause may or may not be introduced by the correlative *kēn*; the simile may occur before or after the main clause. The following is a fairly exhaustive list of cases employing the syntax described in this section: Exod 33:11; Num 11:12; Deut 1:31, 44; 8:5; 22:26; 28:29, 49; Judg 7:5; 16:9; 1 Sam 26:20; 2 Sam 16:23; 17:12; 19:4; 1 Kgs 14:10; 2 Kgs 21:13; Isa 9:2; 25:11; 29:8; 31:4; 55:10; 65:8; 66:20; Jer 13:11; 43:12; Amos 2:13; 3:12; 5:19; 9:9; Mal 3:17.

### 1.2. Type 2: *kē + Infinitive Construct*

Elaborate similes may also be expressed by means of the infinitive construct preceded by the preposition *kē*. Example:

Num 22:4

עתה ילחכו הקהל את־כל־סביבתינו כלחך השור את ירק

“This horde will now lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.”

---

spite of its brevity, the treatment in Joüon’s grammar – both in its original French edition and in the English revision by T. Muraoka – is more exhaustive than most, see P. JOÜON, T. MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma 1991) § 174. See also E. JENNI, *Die hebräischen Präpositionen*, Band 2: *Die Präposition Kaph* (Stuttgart 1994) 88–96.

<sup>3</sup> The focus of interest is on the common function of the different constructions discussed in the following sections. Nuances of expression might well exist, but these must be left for further investigation. See, however, n. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Note that this type of syntax is not limited to similes.

<sup>5</sup> The English translations follow the RSV (1952), except where it was necessary to stress a certain syntactic point.

This construction shows the same versatility as the previous one. Indeed, there seems to be very little functional difference between the two types of syntax. The following examples have come to my attention: Gen 33:10; Num 22:4; Judg 14:6; 2 Sam 3:34; 6:20; Isa 5:24; 7:2; 10:14, 15; 17:5, 12; 19:14; 25:10; 34:4; 64:1; Jer 5:26; 6:7; Ezek 23:44; 26:3; Zech 13:9; Ps 66:10; 68:3; 103:11, 13; Job 2:10; 5:26; 10:4; 13:9; Prov 7:23; 26:8.

### 1.3. Type 3: $k^e$ + Noun + Asyndetic Relative Clause

A third type of syntax employed to express elaborate similes is limited to poetic texts.<sup>6</sup> It consists of the preposition  $k^e$ ,<sup>7</sup> followed by a noun – as in simple similes – to which an asyndetic relative clause has been added.<sup>8</sup>

Example:

Ps 42:2

כאֵיל תִּעְרַג עַל־אֲפִיקֵי־מַיִם כֵּן נַפְשִׁי תִּעְרַג אַלֶּיךָ אֱלֹהִים

“As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God.”

Again, this type of syntax does not seem to express a different meaning from the types discussed above.<sup>9</sup> The examples are: Deut 32:11; Isa 53:7; 61:10, 11; 62:1; Jer 23:29; 48:28; Hos 6:3; 11:10; Hab 2:14; Ps 17:12; 42:2; 58:5; 83:15; 90:5; 125:1; Prov 7:22; Job 7:2 (twice); 9:26; 24:24; 32:19 (twice).<sup>10</sup>

### 1.4. Type 4: Simple Juxtaposition

In the sententious poetry typical of Israelite wisdom, elaborate similes are often not marked as such in any specific way. The mere juxtaposition of a well-known phenomenon with a new observation indicates that the first functions as a simile illustrating the second. Example:

Prov 26:14

הַדֶּלֶת תִּסּוּב עַל־צִירָהּ וְעַצֵּל עַל־מַטָּתוֹ

“As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.”

<sup>6</sup> The limitation to poetic texts is a simple corollary of the fact that asyndetic relative clauses are almost wholly restricted to poetry.

<sup>7</sup> The opinion has been expressed that in this type of syntax the preposition functions as a conjunction. As is remarked by JOÜON, MURAOKA, *Grammar*, § 174, this explanation is contradicted by the fact that  $k^e$  is always prefixed to the noun and never to the verbal form. The traditional analysis of these cases is therefore preferable.

<sup>8</sup> This type of syntax is found in Ugaritic, see, e.g. *Keret* I, 103f (and parallels)  $k \dot{\bar{y}}by \dot{t}škn \dot{s}d$ , “... as locusts settle on a field”.

<sup>9</sup> In a few cases the focus of the comparison is on the noun, and not, as in Types 1 and 2, on the action expressed by the verb, see Isa 62:1; Jer 23:29; 48:28; Ps 58:5. In the other cases, however, the comparison bears on the action, exactly like in the other types.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ps 58:5b where instead of  $k^e$ , we find  $k^emo$ .



In both ancient and modern translations these implicit similes are often explicitly rendered as such. However, since in Hebrew they are not marked in a clear way, identifying these cases sometimes involves a measure of subjectivity. They have not been collected exhaustively for this study. See however the following examples: Jer 17:11; Prov 26:7, 9; Job 5:7; 7:9; 24:19.

### 1.5. Other Constructions

Finally, a small number of similes are expressed by constructions which seem to be limited to one or two examples. Twice the simile is introduced by the conjunction *ki* (Isa 55:9; 62:5). It is possible, however, that we should emend the text in these verses to read  $k^e$  + infinitive construct (cf. Type 2).<sup>11</sup>

An altogether peculiar construction is found in the following case:

Isa 11:9

כִּי־מִלְאָהּ הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת אֶת־יְהוָה כְּמַיִם לִים מְכֻסִּים

“For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Greek

Turning toward the Greek renderings of elaborate similes, we should at once be aware that the syntactic structure of the Greek language is very different from that of Hebrew. To begin with,  $\omega\varsigma$ , the natural equivalent of  $k^e$ , is not a preposition but a relative adverb etymologically related to  $\delta\varsigma$ . If it is followed by a noun, the noun will be in whatever case is required by the grammar of the clause. Moreover, as an adverb, it may in principle precede a finite verbal form. Secondly, the way the infinitive construct is used in Hebrew Type 2 was practically impossible to imitate in Greek.<sup>13</sup> And finally, Greek has no construction comparable to the Hebrew asyndetic relative clause. As a result, the Greek renderings generally show a certain disregard for the variety of Hebrew constructions: the translators simply attempted to render accurately the sense of the source text.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For Isa 62:5, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> actually supports this conjecture.

<sup>12</sup> The same picture is expressed by Type 3 in Hab 2:14.

<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the infinitive has greatly expanded its functions in Septuagint Greek in comparison with classical Greek. Even so, the Greek infinitive never becomes quite as versatile as its Hebrew counterpart.

<sup>14</sup> In a number of cases the Massoretic Text has an elaborate simile which is not rendered as such by the Septuagint: Deut 28:49; Isa 10:14; 25:11; 53:7; 61:10; Jer 5:26; Hos 6:3; Hab 2:14; Ps 125:1; Prov 26:8; Job 2:10; 9:26.

On the other hand, Greek itself turns out to possess quite a variety of means to express elaborate similes. The different types will be classified below according to their main feature, the type of verbal form they contain.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.1. *Optativus in Simili*

A first possibility for rendering an elaborate simile is by means of the relative adverb ὡς introducing a clause with the optative,<sup>16</sup> usually in the aorist.<sup>17</sup> This type of syntax is found in Classical Greek starting with Homer.<sup>18</sup> The examples from the Septuagint seem to be the last attestations of a dying usage.<sup>19</sup> Example, with simple ὡς:

Num 22:4

νῦν ἐκλείξει ἡ συναγωγὴ αὕτη πάντας τοὺς κύκλω ἡμῶν ὡς ἐκλείξει ὁ μόσχος τὰ χλωρὰ ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου

“Now this assembly will lick up all that is around us, as a calf would lick up the herbs of the field.” (Hebrew Type 2, see above)

Other cases: Deut 32:11 (Hebrew Type 3); Isa 11:9 (Hebrew Section 5).

With ὡσεὶ:

Deut 28:29

καὶ ἔση ψηλαφῶν μεσημβρίας ὡσεὶ ψηλαφήσαι ὁ τυφλὸς ἐν τῷ σκότει

“And you shall grope at mid-day, as a blind man would grope in the darkness.” (Type 1)

Other cases: Exod 33:11 (Type 1); Num 11:2 (Type 1); Deut 1:31 (Type 1); 1:44 (Type 1); 8:5 (Type 1); Judg 14:6 (A) (Type 2); 16:9 (B) (Type 1); Ps 82:15 (MT 83:15; Type 3); 89:5–6 (MT 90:5–6; Type 3); with ὡσπερ εἶ: Prov 25:26 (Type 4).

<sup>15</sup> The adverbs and adverbial expressions used to introduce the simile are all more or less synonymous; in any case they are syntactically equivalent.

<sup>16</sup> Some examples of this construction were collected by H. G. J. THIERSCH, *De pentateuchi versione alexandrina libri tres* (Erlangen 1841) 101. Except for a brief remark by Thackeray (see n. 19), it seems this syntactic phenomenon has not been treated since then.

<sup>17</sup> The exceptions are Prov 25:26, where the two verbal forms are in the present optative, and the curious occurrence of a future optative in Judg 16:9 (B). The restriction of the optative to the aorist does not only occur in similes. In the Septuagint, cases of the present optative are limited to verbs lacking an aorist, and to some more literary books like Job.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. R. KÜHNER, B. GERTH, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (Hannover & Leipzig 1904) § 580.2, § 399 n. 1. In classical writings, however, the optative always remains one possibility among many, whereas in the Greek Pentateuch it is used exclusively.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H. ST. J. THACKERAY, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge 1909; reprint: Hildesheim 1987) 24, 193, n. 1.

With ὡς ἄν:

Gen 33:10

εἶδον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου ὡς ἄν τις ἴδοι πρόσωπον θεοῦ

“I have seen your face, as one would see the face of God.” (Type 2)

Also Isa 66:20 (Type 1).

In one case we find the optative in a simile introduced by the relative phrase ὃν τρόπον:

Prov 23:7

ὃν τρόπον γὰρ εἶ τις καταπίοι τρίχα οὕτως ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει.

“As one who swallows hair, so he eats and drinks.” (Hebrew differently)<sup>20</sup>

To these 17 passages should be added one example where the optative has not been printed in the text of the Göttingen edition of the Septuagint:

Deut 22:26

ὅτι ὡς εἰ τις ἐπανασταίη ἄνθρωπος ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον καὶ φονεῦσαι αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν, οὕτως τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο

“For as when a man rises against his neighbour and slays him, so is this matter.” (Type 1)

For the two optatives in the simile (ἐπανασταίη and φονεῦσαι), the main manuscripts read subjunctives (ἐπαναστῆ, φονεύσῃ), and these latter forms are retained by Wevers in his edition of the Greek text. Several reasons can be advanced, however, which should incline us to view the optatives as representing the more original text:

a) The optative is used in all the other cases of elaborate similes in the Pentateuch, five of which occur in Deuteronomy (Gen 33:10; Exod 33:11; Num 11:12; 22:4; Deut 1:31, 44; 8:5; 28:29; 32:11). Since the translator of Deuteronomy seems to have used this construction consistently, we may suppose the optative to be original in 22:26.

b) The text as it stands in the Göttingen edition is anomalous: in the Septuagint the conditional particle εἰ is practically never followed by the subjunctive.<sup>21</sup>

c) Later scribes were poorly acquainted with the use of the optative in similes, as is attested by the many variants in almost all the places where the editors did print the optative.<sup>22</sup> The majority reading in Deut 22:26 conforms to a general tendency to change this remarkable syntax in similes.

<sup>20</sup> Although the Massoretic Text does not contain an elaborate simile, we may submit that in the eyes of the translator the Hebrew text which he was working on – and which may have been very close to the Massoretic Text – did contain one.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. F. C. CONYBEARE, ST. G. STOCK, “Grammar of Septuagint Greek”, in idem, *Selections from the Septuagint* (Boston 1905) § 99. See also, for Hellenistic Greek in general, F. BLASS, A. DEBRUNNER, F. REHKOPF, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen 1990<sup>17</sup>) § 372.4.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., the apparatus in the Göttingen edition to Exod 33:11; Num 22:4.

d) Finally, the manuscript support for the optative in Deut 22:26, though limited, is not weak. The optative is attested for the two verbs by the venerable Codex Washington of the fifth century.

As can be seen from the above, the construction with the optative is used to render every possible type of Hebrew construction. Even within one book (Deuteronomy, Isaiah), different Hebrew constructions may be rendered by means of the optative. Evidence exists, however, which seems to indicate that the translators did attempt to reflect the syntax of their *Vorlage* to a certain extent. Thus in Numbers and Deuteronomy, the conditional conjunction  $\epsilon\iota$  is added to  $\omicron\varsigma$  in order to render the Hebrew type 1, whereas it is omitted to render type 2 (Num 22:4) or type 3 (Deut 32:11). This seems to indicate that the Greek conjunction is meant to reflect the Hebrew  $^a\check{s}er$ . Similarly, in Isaiah the simple  $\omicron\varsigma$  seems to reflect  $k^e$ , with  $\omicron\varsigma \check{\alpha}v$  reflecting  $ka^a\check{s}er$ . One may object that the cases are not sufficiently numerous to establish this hypothesis; at any rate, the examples from Judges and Psalms do not support it.

A difficult question remains to be answered: what is the linguistic status of the optative in these examples: is it an artificial imitation of a classical usage, or is it representative of genuine Greek style of the Hellenistic period?<sup>23</sup> In favour of the first possibility is the fact that this usage of the optative is quite isolated in Septuagint Greek. The optative is almost entirely limited to the expression of wishes etc.<sup>24</sup> It is rare as an expression of the *potentialis*, and extremely so in dependent and conditional clauses.<sup>25</sup> It is certainly very remarkable to find in similes a verbal form which usually expresses a wish. On the other hand the distribution of the cases in the Septuagint favours the view that we have to do with genuine Koine Greek. The optative is used in books which are certain to have been translated by different persons. It is unlikely that translators of such different profiles as those of Deuteronomy on the one hand and of Proverbs or Isaiah on the other would independently perpetrate such a remarkable usage, unless it really was a syntactical possibility in their language. To this, one could object that the cases in the later books (Judges, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah) might be due to imitation of the syntax of the Greek Pentateuch, since influence of the Pentateuch on the other books is well attested. Such influence, however is contradicted by the fact that the similes in Prov 23:7; 25:26 are

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<sup>23</sup> We may exclude the possibility that the optative was used to reflect the verbal form used in the Hebrew, since, as was remarked above, the optative renders not only the Hebrew imperfect but the infinitive construct as well.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. THACKERAY, *Grammar*, 24, 193, n. 1; CONYBEARE, STOCK, *Grammar*, § 75.

<sup>25</sup> In the Greek Genesis I counted 23 cases of the optative; 20 of these express a wish or a blessing, only two cases express possibility (with  $\check{\alpha}v$ ): Gen 23:15; 44:8. The remaining case occurs in the simile in Gen 33:10.

introduced in ways unattested in the Pentateuch (with ὥσπερ εἰ and ὄν τρόπον εἰ). If the translator had been imitating the style of the Pentateuch, surely he would have introduced the similes with ὥς (εἰ). These reflections are merely tentative, however, and a definitive answer could only be given after a comparison with the syntax of similes in other writings of the Hellenistic age.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2. Present and Future Indicative

Outside the Pentateuch the usual construction of the elaborate simile employs the present indicative. The simile may be introduced in a variety of ways (with ὥς, ὥσπερ, καθώς, καθάπερ, ὄν τρόπον). Example:

1 Kgd 26:20

ἐξελήλυθεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραηλ ζητεῖν τὴν ψυχὴν μου καθὼς καταδιώκει ὁ νυκτικόραξ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν

“The King of Israel has come out to seek my life, as the night-raven hunts in the mountains.” (Hebrew type 1)

Other cases: Judg 16:9 (A) (Type 1); 2 Kgd 6:20 (Type 2); 17:12 (Type 1); 19:4 (Type 1); 3 Kgd 14:10 (Type 1); 4 Kgd 21:13 (Type 1); Isa 19:14 (Type 2); 25:10 (Type 2); 29:8 (Type 1); 34:4 (Type 2); 64:1 (Type 2); Jer 6:7 (Type 2); 13:11 (Type 1); 50:12 (MT 43:12; Type 1); Ezek 23:44 (Type 2); 26:3 (Type 2); Amos 2:13 (Type 1); 9:9 (Type 1); Zech 13:9 (Type 2); Mal 3:17 (Type 1); Ps 41:2 (MT 42:2; Type 3); 65:10 (MT 66:10; Type 2); 67:3 (MT 68:3; Type 2); 102:13 (MT 103:13; Type 2); Prov 7:22 (Type 3); 17:3 (Type 4); 25:13 (Type 4); 25:20 (Type 4); 26:2 (MT different<sup>27</sup>); 26:14 (Type 4); Job 10:4 (Type 2).

In two cases we find the future indicative: Isa 5:24 (Type 2); Judg 14:6 (B) (Type 2).

Again, one may observe that the Greek indicative is used to render different Hebrew constructions. No effort is made by the translators to reflect the syntax of their source text.

## 2.3. Attributive Participle

Although ὥς and its cognates may introduce a clause with a finite verb, the possibility of expressing a verbal idea in a non-finite form also existed in

<sup>26</sup> In the New Testament I counted eleven elaborate similes. Of these, nine employ the present indicative (Matt 6:2; 23:37; 24:27; 25:32; Luke 17:24; John 15:4; Rev 2:27; 6:13; 10:3). One case constructs the simile as a conditional clause (cf. section 4 below): 2 Thess 2:7. The syntax of the final example, Mark 4:26, is not entirely clear (subjunctive without ἄν).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. n. 20.

Greek. This type of syntax is sometimes exploited to form elaborate similes. The comparison is marked by ὡσπερ (in Job in all cases), ὡσεὶ (in Ps 57:5) or ὡς (all the other cases). Example:

Job 5:26

ἐλεύση δὲ ἐν τάφῳ ὡσπερ σίτος ὄριμος κατὰ καιρὸν θεριζόμενος

“You shall come to the grave as ripe corn reaped in its season.”

(Hebrew different)

Other cases: Isa 9:2 (Type 1); 17:12 (Type 2); 61:11 (Type 3); 62:5 (Hebrew section 5); Jer 23:29 (Type 3); 31:28 (MT 48:28; Type 3); Ps 57:5 (MT 58:5; Type 3); Job 6:16 (Type 4); 7:2 (Type 3); 7:9 (Type 4); 11:16 (MT different); 15:24 (MT different); 24:24 (Type 3); 29:23 (MT different); 32:19 (Type 3); Prov 7:23 (Type 3).

In some of these examples the construction is used to indicate that the focus of the comparison is on the noun and not, as in the cases listed in the previous sections, on the action expressed by the verb (see Jer 23:29; 31:28; Ps 57:5; Prov 7:23).<sup>28</sup> However, in the other examples the point of the comparison is the action expressed by the verb, exactly as in Hebrew Type 3 discussed above. Note that in the Book of Job this is practically the only type of structure attested, rendering several types of Hebrew syntax.

#### 2.4. Subjunctive in a Conditional Clause

In a sprinkling of cases, the simile is constructed as a conditional clause with εἰ or ὅταν followed by the subjunctive.<sup>29</sup> Example:

Judg 7:5 (A)<sup>30</sup>

πᾶς ὃς ἂν λάψῃ τῇ γλῶσση αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ὡς ἐὰν λάψῃ ὁ κύων στήσεις αὐτὸν κατὰ μόνας.

“Every one that laps the water with his tongue, as the dog laps, you shall set him apart.”

(Type 1)

Other cases with εἰ: Isa 10:15 (Type 2); 17:5 (Type 2); 31:4 (Type 1); 55:10 (Type 1); with ὅταν: Isa 7:2 (Type 2); Amos 3:12 (Type 1); 5:19 (Type 1).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In all these cases the Hebrew employs Type 3; cf. above n. 9.

<sup>29</sup> In the cases of εἰ followed by the optative discussed in section 1, one may claim that they formally constitute conditional clauses as well. Since, however, the particle may be omitted, and since normal conditional clauses never employ the optative, we may submit that these clauses would not have been analysed as such by their authors.

<sup>30</sup> The B text is substantially the same.

<sup>31</sup> Ziegler adopts εἰ in his edition of the text, but ὅταν is supported by many important manuscripts.

### 2.5. The Elaborate Simile in the Different Books of the Septuagint

The following chart gives a synopsis of the number of passages (each of which may contain several verbal forms) employing the four types of syntax in the different books of the Septuagint. Books which can be characterized as a translation unit have been taken together.<sup>32</sup> The A and B texts of Judges are listed separately, because the renderings of the simile illustrate beautifully the complexity of the problem of the Greek texts of Judges.

Chart 1

	Optative	Indicative	Participle	Condition
Pentateuch	10			
Judges A	1 (14:6)	1 (16:9)		1 (7:5)
Judges B	1 (16:9)	1 (14:6)		1 (7:5)
1–4 Kingdoms		5		
Isaiah	2	6	3	5
Jeremiah		3	2 <sup>33</sup>	
Ezekiel		2		
Minor Prophets		4		2
Psalms	2	4	1 <sup>33</sup>	
Proverbs	2	5	1 <sup>33</sup>	
Job		1	8	

A number of implications may be briefly pointed out:

– The Pentateuch stands quite apart with its exclusive use of the optative. If indeed, as has been tentatively argued above, this is genuine Greek syntax, we may suppose that it represents an older stage of the Greek language.<sup>34</sup> The sporadic use of the optative in Judges, Isaiah, Psalms and Proverbs does not contradict this view.

<sup>32</sup> The syntax of elaborate similes provides no indications for distinguishing translators within the same translation unit. Thus 1 Kgds 26:20 and 2 Kgds 6:20 belong to the older parts, 2 Kgds 19:4 and 4 Kgds 21:13 to the younger parts, and 3 Kgds 14:10 to secondary additions of the Greek version of Samuel–Kings. In all five cases, however, the simile is constructed with *καθώς* and the present indicative.

<sup>33</sup> In these cases the structure with the participle expresses a distinct function. See above, at n. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. THACKERAY, *Grammar*, viii: “We are, then, in the Hexateuch taken back to the dawn of the *Koinḗ*, to a period when certain forms and usages were in existence which had already become obsolete in New Testament times. Some of these are moribund survivals from classical Greek, others are experiments of the new language on their trial.”

– The books classified by Thackeray in the categories “Indifferent Greek” and “Literal or unintelligent versions” remain true to style with their almost exclusive use of the present indicative.<sup>35</sup> The two cases of the optative in Psalms are remarkable in this regard.

– The use of four different types of syntax in Isaiah illustrates well the freedom of the translator of this book, which has been sufficiently established on other grounds.

– The fact that Job and Proverbs exhibit very different syntactic patterns in their use of the elaborate simile practically excludes the possibility that the two books are due to the same translator.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

If one more simile is allowed, the present study may be likened to a tiny piece of an enormous jig-saw puzzle, fitting in with several other pieces of Septuagint studies. It seems to uphold the established general chronology of the different books, while stressing the fact that within this chronology the Pentateuch stands at the beginning and that it stands there alone. Whether the type of syntax found in the oldest part of the Septuagint is attested in contemporary Greek literature remains to be established. The investigation supports various other groupings and categorizations of books: Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve are close to one another, and not very different in their general character from Kingdoms; Isaiah stands quite alone in magisterially alternating between several different types of syntax.<sup>37</sup> A connection between Proverbs and Job, however, which has been mooted on general grounds, is contradicted by it. Other pieces of the puzzle, particularly within the translation technique of the individual translation units, could certainly be found to fit.

These multiple connections, which remain to be fully explored, make up the value of the study of translation technique within Septuagint studies. Much work remains to be done on the syntactical aspects of the translation technique exhibited by the Septuagint. The task is an arduous one, demanding a mastery of both Hebrew and Greek grammar which few scholars will have at their command (the present writer keenly feels his deficiency in

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<sup>35</sup> THACKERAY, *Grammar*, 13: Kingdoms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets, Psalms.

<sup>36</sup> Identity of the two translators has been proposed by G. Gerleman and contested by J. G. Gammie. It seems to be accepted by G. Dorival, cf. M. HARL, G. DORIVAL, O. MUNNICH, *La bible grecque des Septante* (Paris 1988) 108–109, with bibliography.

<sup>37</sup> Another well-known tendency of the translator of Isaiah, namely to deviate from his source, is illustrated by the fact that many elaborate similes are not rendered as such, see n. 14.



Greek). It would be ill-advised, however, and unduly restrictive to set up translation technique as a self-contained field of study. A better understanding of the Septuagint as a version can, and ought to, lead on to larger historical, literary and theological questions.

# A Septuagintal Translation Technique in the Minor Prophets

## The Elimination of Verbal Repetitions

On the gliding scales of literalness,<sup>1</sup> the Greek translation of the Minor Prophets occupies a peculiar position.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, various indications of literal translation are in evidence. Each element of the source text is rendered by one element in the translation, Hebrew words have standard equivalents, and the word order is scrupulously adhered to. Hebraisms, such as the renderings of the Hebrew paronomastic infinitive (e.g., Hos 1:2 ἐκπορνεύουσα ἐκπορνεύσει, “whoring she will whore”) or of composite prepositions (e.g., Hos 5:5 εἰς πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, “to his face”), are not rare. In difficult passages, the translation is at times no more than a word-for-word calque of the Hebrew as it was read by the translator.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, signs of freedom on the part of the translator are unmistakable. Occasionally the context inspires an original, or even a unique choice of words.<sup>4</sup> A figure of speech may be decoded. Or a word may be added in order to bring out the perceived meaning of the Hebrew more clearly.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the best way to characterize the approach of the translator is to say that it is creatively faithful: faithful, because the overriding concern is to bring out the precise meaning and import of the Hebrew text; creative, because much more is done than mechanically to transcribe the words of the source text. In view of the translational approach observed in the Greek

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<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of literalism in the Septuagint, see J. BARR, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (MSU XV; Göttingen 1979); E. TOV, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem 1981) 50–66.

<sup>2</sup> For the unity of the translation of the Minor Prophets, see T. MURAOKA, “Introduction aux Douze Petits Prophètes”, in J. JOOSTEN, E. BONS, S. KESSLER, *Les Douze Prophètes: Osée* (La Bible d’Alexandrie XXIII/1; Paris 2002) I–XXIII, esp. IX–X.

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see J. JOOSTEN, “Exegesis in the Septuagint Version of Hosea”, in J. C. DE MOOR (ed.), *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel* (OTS 40; Leiden 1998) 62–85, esp. 74 (see below, 123–145, esp. 134–135).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Hos 4:16 (JOOSTEN, “Exegesis”, 71); Hos 13:8 (E. BONS, “La signification de ΑΡΚΟΣ ΑΠΟΡΟΨΜΕΝΗ en LXX Osée XIII 8”, *VT* 51 [2001] 1–8).

<sup>5</sup> For examples, see JOOSTEN, “Exegesis”.