CHAPTER SIX

THREE DIMENSIONS OF WORDS IN THE SEPTUAGINT

1. The LXX and post-Septuagintal literature

The LXX is a Greek text, and accordingly, its words should be investigated within the framework of the Greek language. However, the latter procedure alone cannot be satisfactory due to the inclusion within the language of the LXX of many non-Greek elements derived from the source languages. These elements must therefore be analyzed in the light of that translation and, as a consequence, the LXX deserves special attention within the lexical analysis of the Greek language.

Lexicographers analyze words in languages and literatures with the aim of describing their meanings in a dictionary. This task is not easy with regard to ancient literatures where there are no native speakers to be consulted. Equally difficult is the lexicographical description of translated words, as the language of a translation is often unnatural. These two difficulties are combined in the lexicographical description of an ancient translation—in our case, the LXX.

The issue under review is how and at what level are meanings of words in the LXX determined. Meanings of words in literary compositions are ascertained on the basis of both linguistic and contextual data. It is probably true to say that if an author wanted a word X to be understood by the readers as meaning a, then the meaning of that word X within the context under consideration is a. Such meanings can often be established by an analysis of the author’s intentions. By the same token, words in a translation should be taken in the way in which they were intended by the translator. Thus, in very abstract terms, the lexicography of a translation aims at recovering the meanings of the words that were intended by the translator(s). This definition will aid in the deciding of several practical issues, such as the one following.

A tension can often be recognized between meanings of words intended by a Greek translator and meanings attributed to the same words in the writings of the Church Fathers and in the translations made of the LXX. Three examples follow.
Gen 1:16 MT

LXX

La

(οὐ καὶ θεὸς ἥξιος ἐν χρόνῳ)


dρΧν is used in the LXX in many senses, especially since שֵׁה, its main equivalent in the source language, occurs in the Bible with a variety of meanings. As a result, several occurrences of dρΧν in the LXX can be understood in different ways. For example, although dρΧν in Gen 1:16 was undoubtedly meant by the translator as ‘governing,’ ‘regulating’—

cf. its Hebrew counterpart לֶחֶם לָכֵי—, the context also allows for other explanations. Thus the Old Latin translation (La) took this dρΧν as ‘beginning’ in accordance with its most frequent use in the LXX, a meaning which occurred also earlier in the chapter (Gen 1:1). Although the rendering initium in Gen 1:16 is understandable within its context, it does not represent the Greek translator’s intention.

Jer 17:27 MT

LXX

La

(aμφόδων ἡ ἁρχή ἡ ἀρισταῖστα ἡ ἴλαρα)

(aμφόδων ἡ ἁρχή ἡ ἀρισταῖστα ἡ ἴλαρα)

(aμφόδων ἡ ἁρχή ἡ ἀρισταῖστα ἡ ἴλαρα)

La, however, took the Greek word as ‘street,’ a sense which was contextually plausible.

Ps 23(24):10 (and elsewhere in the book):

MT

LXX

Ps. Rom., Ps. Gall. Dominus virtutum

The standard equivalent in the LXX of שֶׁבֶן, i.a. when used as ‘army,’ is δύναμις (see LSJ, s.v. 1. 3 for parallels in secular Greek). δύναμις is also used in this meaning in the phrase κύριος τῶν δύναμεων which renders

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1 See B. Fischer, Vetus Latina, vol. 2, Genesis (Freiburg 1951).
2 The plural nouns in the LXX probably reflect לֶחֶם לָכֵי.
3 See S. Lundström, Übersetzungstechnische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der christlichen Latinität (LUÄ NF I 51, 3; Lund 1955) 116–128 for additional examples of a misunderstanding of ων in La.
5 This word appears to have been difficult for the translators, see Tov, “Understand.”
6 E.A. Sophocles, Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (New York 1900), s.v., similarly explains the meaning of aμφόδων in Jeremiah as ‘street.’
three dimensions on 16 occasions. In Ps. Rom. and Ps. Gall., however, the Greek phrase has been misrepresented by *Dominus virtutum*, in accordance with the more frequent meaning of *dúnamis*. This understanding can be contrasted to that of Jerome: *Dominus exercituum*.

The common denominator of the three above-mentioned examples is that the words under review are polysemous—i.e., they were used in different senses in Greek—and that they, almost by implication, were also interpreted in different ways. Amidst the plurality of internally possible interpretations of a given word in the LXX, the only correct interpretation is often indicated by the Hebrew source.

The examples establish beyond doubt the existence of at least two different dimensions of biblical words, viz. the meaning of a biblical word as intended by the translator in a given context, and the different meanings which were applied to that word after the completion of the translation. To be sure, this distinction is made with regard to all texts which have been interpreted.

LXX lexicology must concentrate on the intentions of the translators, mainly by an analysis of the translation techniques employed. However difficult it may be to grasp these intentions, only they determine the real meaning of words in the LXX. Consequently, while it is interesting to study meanings which were applied to biblical words by later generations, and, while such information is often helpful for establishing the meanings of the biblical words themselves, by its very nature this is a secondary source for LXX lexicology.

A distinction was thus made between meanings of words intended by the translators and meanings attached to the same words after the completion of the translation. However, even within the LXX such developments may be detected. In some cases one can distinguish between two dimensions of meanings which were intended by the translators in different contexts (in addition to a third dimension after the translation).

2. Lexicography and translation technique

An analysis of lexical Hebraisms should help us in determining the nature of the lexicographical description. A Hebraism may be defined as

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8 Meanings of this type may be recognized in all sources which regard the LXX as a Greek text, in isolation from its Hebrew source, such as the Church Fathers and the daughter versions of the LXX.
9 The bibliography on this aspect of the language of the LXX is very extensive. Early studies are discussed by J. Ros, *De studie van het Bijbelgrieks van Hugo Grotius tot Adolf*
a Greek word, phrase, or syntagma which expresses certain characteristic Hebrew elements in Greek in an non-Greek fashion. Sometimes an isolated parallel to the Hebraism may be spotted in a secular Greek source, but the word or element should nevertheless be considered a Hebraism if the great frequency of its occurrences shows that its appearance is conditioned by Hebrew rather than Greek usage. This phenomenon is closely related to the translators’ approach to the technique of translating, that is, the occurrence of a Hebraism is a direct result of the system of stereotyped (automatic) representation of Hebrew words in the LXX. For a detailed description, see TCU, 20–23.

Since the consistent representation of Hebrew words by one Greek equivalent was often more important to the translators than contextually plausible renderings, their technique was bound to do injustice to several Greek words. For the translators also often used a stereotyped equivalent when the meaning of the Hebrew did not suit that of the Greek. In this way non-Greek elements, usually named Hebraisms, were introduced into the vocabulary of the LXX.

At the level of lexicography, Hebraisms do not function as ordinary Greek words possessing Greek meanings, but they are used as mere symbols representing Hebrew words, as in the case of "שלום" and εἰρήνη. Not infrequently is used not only as ‘peace,’ but also as ‘welfare’ and ‘health,’ and these meanings should have been rendered into Greek by words other than εἰρήνη. Nevertheless, the wish for stereotyped representation often led a translator to render such occurrences of "שלום" also with εἰρήνη. E.g., 2 Sam 11:7 (יוֹשֵׁבָה) - εἰς εἰρήνην τοῦ πολέμου and Judg 18:15b - καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτοῦ εἰς εἰρήνην. Would it be correct to record in a Greek dictionary ‘welfare’ or ‘health’ as a special meaning of this εἰρήνη, explaining it as ‘to greet a person, inquire after their health’ (thus LSJ), on the basis of evidence from the LXX only?

Deissmann (Nijmegen 1940). Later studies are analysed by Lee, Lexical Study, ch. II. See further U. Rapallo, Calchi ebraici nelle antiche versioni del “Levitico” (Roma 1971); Walters, Text, 143–154; Tov, TCU, 22–24.

10 For this terminology, cf. the title of D. Hill, Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings (Cambridge 1967). See Tov, “Greek Words.”

11 In the LXX, "שלום" is rendered by εἰρήνη in 178 instances and further by 18 different equivalents all of which occur only once or twice. Conversely, εἰρήνη represents nearly exclusively "שלום". εἰρήνη is thus the main equivalent of "שלום", often used automatically. The choice of εἰρήνη was natural since the most frequent meanings of "שלום", 'peace,' 'peace from war,' and 'tranquility' are well represented by the most frequent meaning of the Greek word, viz., 'peace from war.'

12 Contrast the contextual translation equivalent of LXXA... καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτῶν.
Invoking the principle that LXX lexicography must endeavor to record the meanings which were intended by the translator(s), we suggest that some translators did not use ἐφήμη in accordance with ordinary Greek usage, and that they did not have a definable meaning of ἐφήμη in mind. They simply equated ἢλκα with ἐφήμη on a practical level. Consequently, one might say that for many of the translators ἐφήμη was merely a symbol representing ἢλκα. Accordingly, a Greek lexicon should not create a new meaning of ἐφήμη on the basis of the LXX alone, claiming, as it were, that the translators enlarged the semantic range of ἐφήμη. Such a claim cannot be made, for most translators were probably not aware of the semantic implications of stereotyping.

Two notes are appended to this analysis.

1. Beyond the LXX the Hebraistic use of ἐφήμη and of similar words occurs also in the New Testament and in other sources which were based on the LXX. The lexicographical description of these post-Septuagintal sources should be separated from the lexicographical description of the LXX.

2. When LSJ quotes ἐρωτήσαι τινα εἰς ἐφήμην, its description is marked as ‘Hebraism in LXX.’ Although incomplete, this information is helpful for the reader. In many other instances, however, LSJ does not describe satisfactorily the Septuagintal background of those words which received a special meaning in the LXX, especially Hebraisms. See, e.g., s.v. δόξα, ἐξομολογέομαι, προσήλυτος, χειμάρρους (cf. Tov, ‘Greek Words’).

The analysis of a second Hebraism, προσήλυτος, and its biblical equivalent is complicated by the change in meaning of the latter in the postbiblical period. In the Bible denotes the ‘stranger’ and ‘sojourner,’ but in postbiblical times it was used as ‘someone who joined the religion of the Israelites,’ especially in the phrase Ἀλληλούϊα (cf. also the Aramaic σάρμα, ‘proselyte’). The Greek translators, in accordance with the linguistic reality of their own times, represented almost exclusively with προσήλυτος, a word which apparently was coined to denote the special meaning of in postbiblical times. Consequently, προσήλυτος of the LXX was bound to misrepresent many occurrences of . While sometimes could conceivably be rendered by προσήλυτος, especially in the Priestly Code, its inappropriateness is felt particularly in a verse such

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as Exod 22:20 - ἦτε γάρ προσήλυτοι ἐν γῇ
Αἰγύπτῳ. In this verse the Israelites are called ‘sojourners in Egypt,’ but in the LXX they are, as it were, ‘proselytes in Egypt’ (similarly Lev 19:34 and Deut 10:19). The lexicographer wonders whether there was a separate meaning ‘stranger’, ‘sojourner’ for προσήλυτος, as suggested by LSJ on the basis of evidence from the LXX. It seems that such a meaning cannot be supported by evidence from the LXX because within that translation προσήλυτος was merely a symbol for יָרָד. This view is based on renderings such as Exod 22:20, analyzed above.

In the preceding paragraphs some lexicographical implications of the use of stereotyped equivalents in the LXX have been elaborated upon. We believe that if a certain Greek word represents a given Hebrew word in most of its occurrences, it has become almost by implication a mere symbol for that Hebrew word in the translation. Thus, if a lexeme as πατήρ represents בָּשׁ almost exclusively, its lexicographical description could be identical to that of the Hebrew word, because it follows its Hebrew equivalent in all its meanings and usages. Similar conclusions could be drawn with regard to many of the standard equivalents of the LXX. Thus ψυχή follows זְרֵע. υἱός follows בֶּן, even in such combinations as 1 Sam 26:16 בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל - υἱόι θανατώσεως, δόξα follows תָּרָם, etc.

Sometimes a Greek word equals a Hebrew word only in certain translation units; see, e.g., the different equivalents of רוּחַ in the Prophets (mainly πνεῦμα).

The point of departure in this section was an investigation of the lexicographical implications of lexical Hebraisms. Many such Hebraisms resulted from stereotyped representations of Hebrew words. Tov, “Greek Words”* further elaborates on δικαίωμα and related words.

The lexicographical implications of etymologizing renderings, forming a special group of Hebraisms (cf. Tov, “Understand”* and TCU, 172–180), are analyzed next. In the sections ascribed to καίγε-Θα as well as in the ‘LXX’ of Ruth (probably ascribed to the same revision; see Barthélemy, Devanciers, 47), יָרָד was rendered by ἰκανός. This rendering

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14 Similar views have been expressed by several scholars with regard to individual words: L. Prestige, “Lexicon of Patristic Greek—Hades in the Greek Fathers,” JTS 24 (1923) 476: ‘In both LXX and N.T. the precise sense of ὁδός varies as does the particular conception of ὁδός in any given passage.’ C. Mohrmann, “Note sur doxa,” in Festschrift A. Debrunner (Bern 1954) 322: ‘On peut dire que tous les sens dont kabod est susceptible se trouvent dans δόξα et que, d’autre part, δόξα dans les LXX n’a jamais un sens étranger à ceux de kabod.’ N.M. Watson, “Some Observations on the Use of δικαίωμα in the Septuagint,” JBL 79 (1960) 266: ‘Our conclusion is that the LXX translators intended δικαίωμα to carry substantially the same range of meanings as that carried by קָבָד, and that, when they used the Greek verb, they did have the picture of a judge as clearly in their minds as did the authors of the Hebrew Bible when they used the Hebrew equivalent.’
is based on the interpretation of יְהֹוָה as se-day, that is, ‘He who is sufficient,’ an etymological conception which is known also from rabbinic sources. Consequently, if this Greek rendition closely follows a certain interpretation of the Hebrew, conversely that interpretation must be taken as a source for explaining the meaning of the Greek word. We must therefore ascribe to ἰκανός that meaning of the Hebrew word which the translator had in mind and not the one which we ascribe to the Hebrew word. Hence, ἰκανός in the LXX of Ruth does not mean ‘the Almighty,’ as in LSJ, s.v., but ‘He who is sufficient-competent.’

3. The LXX and pre-Septuagintal meanings

The lexicographer of the LXX attempts to grasp the intention of the translators because only that intention determines the meanings of words in the LXX. This understanding was applied to lexical Hebraisms with the suggestion that the meaning of such words is identical to the Hebrew word they represent. The main dimension of LXX lexicography thus pertains to the meanings of the words in the LXX, followed by the dimension of meanings applied to them in the post-Septuagintal literature. However, beyond these two dimensions the descriptions must be expanded to include the pre-Septuagintal meanings of LXX words. This earlier dimension will be demonstrated by returning to some of the words which were discussed above.

According to the preceding analysis, the lexical meaning of παντοκράτωρ in Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets is Ὄχθων (throat) because it reflects only this Hebrew phrase (114 x) and no other renderings of this phrase are used in these books. However, this lexicographical description does not do justice to the Greek word because there is more to παντοκράτωρ than just Ὄχθων. The Greek word had a meaning of its own before it was used in the LXX and this meaning must have influenced the translator(s) when they decided to use it as an equivalent of Ὄχθων. The Hebrew phrase is usually translated as ‘Lord of hosts’ and these ‘hosts’ were interpreted differently in biblical and modern times. The Greek word is normally translated as ‘omnipotent’ and

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15 The English translations of the LXX translate this ἰκανός in Ruth as ‘Almighty’ and ‘the Mighty One.’ See The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, with an English Translation by Sir Launcelot Lee Brenton (London, no date); The Septuagint Bible ... in the Translation of Charles Thomson ... as Edited, Revised and Enlarged by C.A. Muses (Indian Hills, CO 1954). For a correct interpretation of ἰκανός, see Jerome’s commentary on Ezek 3:10 (PL, XXV, 102). See further D.S. Blondheim, Les parlers judéo-romans et la Vetus Latina (Paris 1925) 3–15; Reider, Prolegomena, 152, and the literature listed there.

16 See B.W. Anderson, IDB (N.Y. 1962) s.v. ‘Host of Heaven’ and the literature quoted there.
hence the translation equivalent reflects the translator’s view of the Hebrew phrase. In order to do justice to the background and use of παντοκράτωρ in the LXX, one has to describe, i.a., its use in other parts of the Hellenistic world, when it was applied to other deities.\(^{17}\) This analysis implies that παντοκράτωρ in the LXX must be viewed at two different levels. The first level or dimension records the background of the lexical choice ἡμῶν (7) - παντοκράτωρ by the translators. An analysis of the meaning of παντοκράτωρ at this stage takes into consideration the etymological background of the Greek word, its use outside the LXX, and possibly also the translator’s exegetical motivations when using this word as an equivalent of ἡμῶν. The second level or dimension refers to the stage when the word came to be used in the LXX as the stereotyped equivalent for ἡμῶν (7) in Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets. At this stage the meaning of the Greek has to be expressed as ἡμῶν (7) since it represented that word in all its usages.

A similar analysis should be applied to ἀλλόφυλος in the LXX. The main meaning of this word at the second level is manifest since it renders almost exclusively ἐπειδὴ in the LXX from Judges onwards. The basic meaning of the Greek word at the first level is also apparent: ‘of another tribe,’ ‘foreign’ (indeed, it rendered יְהִשֵּׁר and בְּנֵי וָאֵשׁ in Isa 2:6 and 61:5). The lexicographical description of the first level of ἀλλόφυλος is somewhat complicated because of our uncertainty with regard to the specific interpretation of ἐπειδὴ and ἀλλόφυλος which brought about the present translation equivalent.\(^{18}\)

The lexicographical description of the standard equivalence פֶּרֶשׂ - διαθήκη is more complicated than the previous examples because διαθήκη in the LXX does not reflect the most frequent meaning of that word, i.e. ‘testament.’ Taking into consideration the implications of the Pentateuchal פֶּרֶשׂ between God and his people, the first dimension of διαθήκη may be reconstructed as ‘a unilateral agreement (cf. ‘testa-ment’) with strong bilateral overtones.’\(^{19}\) The second dimension of διαθήκη is


\(^{18}\) A few possibilities are analyzed by R. de Vaux, “Les Philistins dans la Septante,” Festschrift J. Ziegler (Würzburg 1972) 185–194. Even if de Vaux’s own suggestion is correct, it is likely that the resemblance between ἀλλόφυλος and φιλίτιστειμ (the equivalent of µτφτλ in the Hexateuch) somehow influenced the lexical choice.

\(^{19}\) Cf. MM, s.v. ‘... διαθήκη is properly dispositio, an ‘arrangement’ made by one party with plenary power, which the other party may accept or reject but cannot alter.’ See also
fully identical to מָשָׁה whose usages it follows almost exclusively. As a result of the stereotyped representation in the LXX, the LXX use of διαθήκη often does not suit its meaning in secular Greek.  

The distinction between the Septuagintal and pre-Septuagintal meanings of words is relevant to LXX lexicography. It has been applied to a few stereotyped renderings and to Hebraisms, so that two different levels could be distinguished. These two dimensions may be recognized in many lexical Hebraisms, and since a large part of the words in the LXX belong to this category, the distinction pertains to many words in the LXX.

4. The post-Septuagintal literature

Returning to the dimension of meanings of LXX words attached to them in the post-Septuagintal period, we note that LXX lexicography must disregard these later developments, but nevertheless the background of this third dimension should be analyzed as a necessary step in the understanding of LXX lexicography.

Many a word in the LXX was understood by later generations in a way different from that intended by the translator(s). The examples analyzed above referred to Greek words which were polysemous at the time of the LXX, but in other cases the added layer pertains to meanings which were created in the LXX itself.

The texts in which one searches for examples of the above-mentioned type are the New Testament and the writings of the Church Fathers, two sources which depended to a great extent on the LXX. The post-Septuagintal use of ἐξωμολογέομαι may serve as an example. Before the time of the LXX this verb was used mainly as ‘to confess,’ and as such it was used in the LXX as a translation equivalent of יהוה. However, the Hebrew verb denotes not only ‘to confess,’ but also ‘to thank,’ and several translators who did not recognize the latter meaning, Hebraistically rendered both meanings of יהוה by ἐξωμολογέομαι. According to the previous analysis, the lexical meaning of this ἐξωμολογέομαι in the LXX has to be expressed as יהוה. The non-Greek use of ἐξωμολογέομαι in the LXX as ‘to thank’ resulted from the artificial nature of the translation language and was not used as such in the Greek language. However, when the special meaning of ἐξωμολογέομαι was

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the subsequent discussion of this word in MM. For bibliography on διαθήκη in the LXX, see ThWNT and Bauer, Wörterbuch, both s.v.

20 See, e.g., the treaty between Abraham and the Philistines described in Gen 21:27 as καὶ διέθετο ἀρμόστηροι διαθήκην and that of Israel’s enemies described in Ps 82(83):6 as κατὰ σοῦ διαθήκην διέθετο.
quoted from the LXX and used outside the framework of that translation, it became part and parcel of the Greek language. For a detailed analysis, see Tov, “Greek Words.”

Likewise, the choice of σάρξ as the main equivalent of רָעָב was natural because of their close meanings. However, the Greek word was used also for רָעָב when denoting ‘body’ and even in the phrase לְכָל-רָעָב - ‘all living beings.’ Consequently, while the basic meaning of σάρξ in the LXX was ‘flesh,’ its main lexical meaning should be expressed as רָעָב. At a third level the Hebraistic σάρξ - ‘body’ and πᾶσα σάρξ - ‘all living beings’ were used in the New Testament and in the writings of the Church Fathers on the basis of the LXX.

Of the LXX words which have been introduced for the first time in their new, ‘biblical,’ meaning in post-Septuagintal contexts, we may mention the following words in the New Testament: 

- δόξα ('fellow man'), δόξα ('honour', 'glory'), ἐθνη ('other nations beside Israel'), ἐπισκέπτομαι ('to care for'), ἐρωτῶ εἰς εἰρήνην ('ask after [a person’s] health = ’greet’, ‘salute’).

The distinction between the Septuagintal and post-Septuagintal use of biblical words is important, especially with regard to words and usages which were unknown in the Greek language before the time of the LXX. Such a distinction is often lacking in the entries in LSJ. For example, ἐξομολογοῦμαι is often used as ‘to thank’ in post-Septuagintal sources on the basis of the LXX. However, when LSJ quotes for the meaning ‘make grateful acknowledgements, give thanks, sing praises’ evidence from the LXX, Philo, and the New Testament, the notation is correct for the latter two, but has to be refined for the LXX.

The distinction between three different dimensions of lexicographical description will be to the benefit of LXX scholarship: the meaning of the words in the pre-Septuagintal stage, the meaning in the LXX itself as intended by the translators, and the meaning of the words as quoted from the LXX.

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22 Cf. especially C. Mohrmann, “Note” (see n. 14 above).
24 For the complexity of this analysis, see J.A.L. Lee, “Equivocal and Stereotyped Renderings in the LXX,” RB 87 (1980) 104–117; see further Muraoka, “Septuagint Lexicon.”