

## The Relevance of Exegetical Commentaries on the Septuagint – LXX Proverbs 1:1-7 as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

*This article demonstrates the significance of construing exegetical commentaries of the Septuagint. It takes LXX Proverbs 1:1-7 as a pilot study and employs a contextual method of interpretation. The translator in broad terms followed the structure of the Hebrew of this chapter. Variation was clearly his aim and thus he made significant adjustments on a syntactical level, as well as on a stylistic one. Rhyme and alliteration are applied and some passages are harmonised. He used word combinations and contrasts. The theological or exegetical intention of the translator is evident. The first seven verses act as an introduction to the book as a whole and more specifically to chapter 2. In the final analysis these verses are aimed at indicating what true biblical wisdom is.*

### A INTRODUCTION

There is a difference of opinion on the question as to whether it is possible to formulate a theology of the Septuagint, as is done with the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> There are effectively two theoretical positions in this regard. The first is a minimalist view held by, among others, the Septuagint scholars Albert Pietersma and Raija Sollamo, who are more sceptical. But some scholars (Rösel, Schaper, etc.) adopt a maximalist approach. However, it has become clear that these scholars do not differ so much on the question of *whether* a theology (depending on definitions) of the LXX is viable, but rather on *how* this could in fact be achieved. As a matter of fact, the differences between these approaches seem to be rooted in questions of methodology.

In a keynote paper presented at the congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, I argued that it is possible to formulate a “theology” – or rather “theologies” – of the Septuagint.<sup>2</sup> One of the prerequisites I mentioned at that stage was that it is first of all necessary to prepare

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<sup>1</sup> See my main paper at the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) congress of Ljubljana 2007 in André Lemaire (ed.), “Towards the Formulation of a Theology of the Septuagint.” *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007*. VTS 133 (2010), 621-640.

<sup>2</sup> Cook, “Theology of the Septuagint”, 636.

exegetical commentaries<sup>3</sup> on each individual book of the Septuagint. It is the aim of this paper to demonstrate the importance of such commentaries for the theology of the Septuagint, in the broad sense of the word. Naturally it can deal with this question only within a limited scope and the results are applicable only to the book of Proverbs.

## B METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

For the sake of a contextual argument, this paper will focus on one translated unit, the book of Proverbs, always keeping in mind that this book cannot be deemed representative of the LXX. As is well known, this unit poses various problems, a prominent one being that the Old Greek has not yet been determined systematically. In the series of the *Septuaginta Unternehmen* in Göttingen, Peter Gentry is responsible for the book of Proverbs. As a result of this situation, the researcher should be aware of pertinent textual problems.<sup>4</sup> The pocket edition by Rahlfs<sup>5</sup> is used as the basis for this contribution. Basic to all interpretative endeavours is the issue of the way in which the translator(s) rendered the parent text. This unit is unique in that its translation technique can be defined as extremely free in some instances.<sup>6</sup> This means that one could expect the translator to interpret his parent text. Finally, the object of the interpretations in the exegetical commentary is the Old Greek text.<sup>7</sup> The reception of the LXX is therefore deliberately not included in this stage.

## C THEMATIC ISSUES

There are various issues that can be dealt with in an exegetical commentary. A prominent one is text-critical issues. I will refrain from dealing with this aspect, which has indeed dominated Septuagintal research in the past (see especially the ground-breaking work on the Pentateuch by John William Wevers from To-

<sup>3</sup> See my *Text and Tradition – An Exegetical Commentary on the Septuagint of Proverbs*. This monograph will be published by the *Society of Biblical Literature* as part of the Septuagint commentary series (in preparation). See also Johann Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs. Concerning the Hellenistic Colouring of LXX Proverbs*. VTS 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 44-65.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Cook, "Textual problems in the Septuagint of Proverbs," *JNSL* 26/1 (2000), 163-173.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graeca iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> Johann Cook, "Ideology and Translation Technique: Two Sides of the Same Coin?," in *Helsinki Perspectives on the Translation Technique of the Septuagint* (eds. Raija Sollamo & Seppo Sipilä. Finnish Exegetical Society: Helsinki/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 2001a), 208.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Pietersma, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: The Psalms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), x.

ronto). One of the definite advantages of an exegetical commentary is that one can analyse passages contextually.<sup>8</sup> This ensures that researchers do not fall into the trap of *ad hoc* interpretations. In this regard I will deal with one central issue in Wisdom literature, namely the role of wisdom. I focus on Proverbs 1:1-7 which acts as a small pilot study.

## 1 Wisdom in Proverbs 1:1-7

Chapter 1 acts as an introduction to the whole book of Proverbs. McKane<sup>9</sup> divides the Hebrew version into three pericopes; 1-7 (introduction), 8-19 (flee sin and violence) and 20-33 (Wisdom as preacher). To be sure this division agrees with the Massoretic division. This chapter contains many differences in comparison with the MT that could be the result of several theoretical possibilities: a different parent text, the translator's approach, or the transmission history of the manuscripts (mss).

Scholars differ as far as the literary role of this chapter is concerned. Gemser<sup>10</sup> and D'Hamonville<sup>11</sup> see the first 6 verses as a superscription to the whole book. Whybray<sup>12</sup> takes verses 1-5 as preface to Proverbs 1-9. McKane<sup>13</sup> argues that verses 1-7 act as an introduction to the book as a whole. In the LXX these verses form an introduction, since they define what true wisdom is.

### Verse 1

מִשְׁלֵי יְשׁוּעָה בֶן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל

The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

παροιμία Σαλωμώντος υἱοῦ Δαυιδ ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἰσραηλ  
Proverbs of Salomon, son of Daud, who reigned in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> *Text* and *context* should be accounted for in the exegesis of texts. Moreover, this translator had a contextual approach towards the parent text.

<sup>9</sup> William McKane, *Proverbs – a new approach* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 262.

<sup>10</sup> Berend Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 88.

<sup>11</sup> David-Marc d'Hamonville, *La Bible D'Alexandrie. Les Proverbes. Traduction du texte grec de la Septant* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2000), 158.

<sup>12</sup> Roger N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs – the Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 37.

<sup>13</sup> McKane, *Proverbs*, 262.

<sup>14</sup> The translation of the Hebrew is the NRSV and that of the Greek NETS (Albert Pietersma, A. & Benjamin G. Wright [eds.], *A New English Translation of the Septuagint. A New Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title*. Oxford-London: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The term παροιμία is used rarely in the LXX. In Proverbs it appears in Chapter 1:1 and in some mss in 25:1 as equivalent for מִשְׁלֵל. It is clear from the beginning that the translator interprets his parent text. In verse 1 the noun phrase מִלֵּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל is understood as a verbal phrase ὅς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἰσραηλ. All the other versions follow the construction in the MT. D’Hamonville<sup>15</sup> immediately involves the reception of the LXX, including the NT. As stated above, in the NETS project the intention is to focus on the Old Greek text and to discard the reception of the Septuagint for the purposes of the commentary.

## Verse 2

לְדַעַת חִכְמָה וּמוֹסֵר לְהַבִּין אִמְרֵי בִינָה  
For learning about wisdom and instruction,  
for understanding words of insight,

γνῶναι σοφίαν καὶ παιδείαν νοῆσαί τε λόγους φρονήσεως  
To learn wisdom and discipline and to understand words of  
prudence,

This verse is filled with sapiential terminology. Σοφία is a significant word in Proverbs, where it occurs 48 times, mostly as equivalent for חִכְמָה. The lexeme παιδεία is another typical wisdom term. It is used abundantly in Proverbs and Ben Sira and appears four times in the first chapter of Proverbs (1:2, 7, 8 and 29). In practically all passages in Proverbs it has מוֹסֵר as the underlying Hebrew reading. Both lexemes have the nuance of “instruction/education” as part of their semantic field.

Verse 2 is translated relatively literally, although the abundant use of the conjunction τε in the first 6 verses is a sign of the translator's literary style and first-hand knowledge of the Greek language. The same applies to the addition of νοῆσαί in verse 3, where an *ellipsis* occurs in the MT. I think the translator probably took verse 2 into account in this regard, harmonizing without a reference to an underlying Hebrew reading.

## Verse 3

לְקַחַת מוֹסֵר הַשְּׂבֵל צְדָק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִיִּשְׁרָיִם  
for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice,  
and equity;

<sup>15</sup> D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 158.

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δέξασθαι τε στροφὰς λόγων νοῆσαι τε δικαιοσύνην ἀληθῆ  
καὶ κρίμα κατευθύνειν  
and to grasp subtlety of words and to understand true righteousness  
and to direct judgment

Verse 3 contains laden renderings such as στροφὰς λόγων for מוֹסֵר. The Greek word στροφή occurs only four times in the LXX, in Sap Sol 8:8; Sir 39:2; Ps Sol 12:2 and here in Proverbs. It is used frequently in other Greek sources. Sir 39 (1-11) is instructive in this regard; it is devoted to the wise, describing the true, enigmatic nature of his studies. In this context the combination στροφᾶς παραβολῶν is used to describe the “problematic” nature of the sayings studied by the wise. The same nuance is found in Sap Sol, where this lexeme is used in conjunction with ἀνιγμᾶ, that also occurs very rarely in the Septuagint (cf. Prov 1:6). In the context of Sap Sol 8:8 wisdom is described as the source of knowledge concerning “the past, the future, the intricate nuances of arguments and riddles, and even signs and wonders.” To be sure the same combination of στροφὰς λόγων occurs also in this passage (Prov 1:3). It seems to be a technical term, even though it does not appear frequently. It is therefore evident that the translator of Proverbs had the same intention of stressing the nuance of “problematic, complicated” in using these words. If he therefore actually had the same Hebrew reading as MT,<sup>16</sup> then it would seem as if he interpreted מוֹסֵר deriving from the verb סוּר (the Hophal masculine participle) “to turn aside, to withdraw, to evade.” A hint as to the possible interpretation of this lexeme is in fact found in Sir 6:22, where the Hebrew indeed reads מוֹסֵר.<sup>17</sup> The stich provides the necessary semantic contents: “For discipline is like her name: she is not obvious to many.” According to this interpretation מוֹסֵר indeed has to do with the “enigmatic, problematic.”<sup>18</sup>

On the one hand, it is possible that the verbal form νοῆσαι could be an infinitive as a rendering of the Hiphil infinitive of שָׁבַל. On the other hand, it is also possible that the infinitive was added in conjunction with the previous verse. However, this would then leave שָׁבַל unaccounted for. In this regard the combination of στροφὰς λόγων is instructive, for λόγων seems to have been added in conjunction with the previous verse in order to explicate מוֹסֵר. The translator consequently probably created the antithesis of the combination

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<sup>16</sup> Andre Barucq, *Le livre des Proverbes*. Sources bibliques 2. (Paris: Gabalda, 1964), 48.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick W. Skehan & Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira. A Translation with Notes*. (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 191.

<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately the Greek version of Sir 6:22 does not have the lexeme στροφή.

λόγους φρονήσεως in verse 2. Contrasting is indeed a specific technique that is used extensively in the LXX of Proverbs.<sup>19</sup>

The final two stichs in verse 3 also do not represent a literal rendering of the MT. Δικαιοσύνη is probably taken from צְדָקָה, but ἀληθῆ seems to be an addition either as an adjective or as a noun referring to “truth” (τὰ ἀληθῆ). The translator seemingly glossed צְדָקָה with δικαιοσύνη ἀληθῆ. I also think κρίμα is the equivalent for מִשְׁפָּט, whereas κατευθύνει has been introduced in connection with ישר (מִישָׁרִים) by the translator. This Greek verbal form occurs in Prov 1:3 (מִישָׁרִים); 4:26 (כוון); 9:15 (ישר); 13:13 (-); 15:8 (ישר) and 21 (ישר); 21:2 (תכון); 23:19 (אשר) and 29:27 (ישר). All these lexemes are semantically related.

The fact that מוֹסֵר is rendered differently in these two verses is interesting. The Hebrew lexeme occurs 28 times in Proverbs. In practically all these passages one Greek lexeme, παιδεία, was used as the equivalent. This is not the normal practice of this translator, since he tends to vary expressions. In verse 2 מוֹסֵר is thus translated relatively literally as a noun παιδεία; however, in verse 3 it is brought into connection with the root סור. Again, this could be the result of the translator's free approach, or he could have misunderstood the Hebrew. De Lagarde<sup>20</sup> suggests another possible Hebrew reading, but I think this particular reading is not applicable.<sup>21</sup>

#### Verse 4

לְתַת לְפִתְאִים עֲרֻמָּה לְנֶעַר דַּעַת וּמְזִמָּה

to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young –

ἵνα δῶ ἀκάκοις πανουργίαν παιδὶ δὲ νέῳ αἴσθησίν τε καὶ ἔννοιαν

in order that he might give shrewdness to the innocent and both perception and insight to the young child.

In verse 4 the infinitive is expressed differently from the way it is done in previous examples. Whereas the final clauses in verses 2 and 3 were expressed by means of infinitives, in this verse the translator uses the particle ἵνα plus a

<sup>19</sup> Johann Cook, “Contrasting as a Translation Technique in the LXX of Proverbs,” in *The Quest for Context & Meaning. Studies in Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* (eds. Craig A. Evans & Shemaryahu Talmon. Leiden: Brill, 1997a), 403-414.

<sup>20</sup> Paul A. de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1863), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 51.

subjunctive. Only the Latin evidence exhibits a similar possible construction. All available material has the phrase “*ut detur parvalis...*” This is an indication of the translator’s intention to create cohesion between these verses.<sup>22</sup>

The object of the first stich is πανουργία, which appears seven times in the LXX, consistently as a rendering for עָרְמָה. This Hebrew lexeme has the connotation of “shrewdness” as part of its semantic field in certain contexts such as Gen 3:1. This is in accordance with the way πανουργία is used, for example, by Aristotle (HA 488b20)<sup>23</sup> for describing the “cunning” of animals. The nuance of “clever, smart” also applies in Arist EN 1144a28 and Plu 2.28a.

Ἄκακος appears 9 times in Proverbs, 1:4 (פְּתִי); 22 (פְּתִי); 2:21 (תְּמִימִים); 8:5 (פְּתִי); 13:7 (חָם); 14:15 (פְּתִי); 15:10 (\*) and 23 (\*) and 21:11 (פְּתִי). Here it has פְּתִי as *Vorlage*, a Hebrew lexeme that is rendered in various ways in chapter 1. In verse 22 ἄκακος is used, but in verse 32 νήπιος is the equivalent. In the other passages the distribution of פְּתִי is as follows: 7:7 (ἄφρονων); 8:5 (ἄκακος); 9:4 (ἄφρων) and 16 (ἄφρων); 14:15 (ἄκακος) and 18 (ἄφρων); 19:25 (ἄφρων); 21:11 (ἄκακος); 22:3 (ἄφρων) and 27:12 (ἄφρων). Three lexemes are thus used as equivalents for פְּתִי, with the cluster of lexemes concerning ἄφρων the most frequently used, namely seven times. Four examples are of ἄκακος, with νήπιος as the apparent exegetical rendering.

There is a pertinent difference between ἄκακος and ἄφρων in Greek literature. The first denotes the innocent in many contexts. In the LXX, for instance, Job is called an ἄκακος ἀνήρ. This is also the case in Plato’s *Timeaus* 91d, where the innocent are described as ἄκακοι ἄνδρες. Philo Judaeus (*Spec Leg III*, 119) uses this term in connection with innocent children. He also applies a related term, ἄκακία in order to depict the state of existence in paradise. Ἄφρων, on the other hand, expresses a more negative nuance in most contexts. The Hebrew lexeme נָבֵל (fool) is, *inter alia*, rendered by means of this Greek equivalent in the OT. It is also used to render אִילָּה and אִילָּל in both the Psalms and Proverbs.

The adjective νέος has no equivalent in MT, although נָעַר does have the connotation of youth (as does *adulescentus* in V) or novice as part of its semantic field, which probably led to the explanatory addition. This is an example of a combination of words that the translator uses in order to make evident his understanding of the parent text. He is clearly distinguishing

<sup>22</sup> Gerhard Tauberschmidt, *Secondary Parallelism. A Study of Translation Technique in LXX Proverbs* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2004), 112.

<sup>23</sup> I use the abbreviations of Henry G. Liddel & Robert Scott (eds.) (revised by Henry Stuart Jones), *A Greek - English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1968.

between and describing different groups of people. This verse mentions the innocent and the inexperienced, who are in need of prudence, insight and knowledge.

Αἴσθησις occurs 22 times in Proverbs and, according to HR, consistently as the equivalent of תְּבִינָה. The nuance of “insight” is therefore the prevailing one (cf. too Plu Luc 11; Pl Ap 40c and Plot 4.7.15). Ἐννοια, on the other hand, appears 12 times in Proverbs. In 1:4; 3:21 and 8:12 it is used in conjunction with βουλή, whereas in 5:2; 8:12 (2x); 18:15; 23:19 and 24:7 it is applied in the context of σοφός/σοφία. These contexts stress the nuance of “knowledge,” as is the case in Plu Def 414a and 2.1077d.

### Verse 5

שִׁמְעוּ חָכְמָה וְיִוָּסֵף לָקַח וְנִבְוֶן תְּחַבֵּל וְתִיָּקֶה

let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning  
acquire skill.

τῶνδε γὰρ ἀκούσας σοφὸς σοφώτερος ἔσται Ἡ δὲ νοήμων κυβ  
έρνησιν κτήσεται

for by hearing these things the wise will become wiser  
and the discerning will acquire direction,

The alliteration in this verse is striking. Syntactically LXX differs from MT since the Hebrew imperfect/jussive is rendered by means of a participle. In addition τῶνδε γὰρ has no equivalent in MT and is an attempt to relate verse 5 and the previous verses 2-4, which in their turn refer to the proverbs of Salomon. לָקַח וְיִוָּסֵף is interpreted freely as σοφώτερος ἔσται. According to KB, the lexeme לָקַח has the connotation of “understanding” in Is 29:24; Prov 1:5 and 9:9. In the context of Proverbs 1 it is particularly the wise that have understanding.

Κυβέρνησις occurs only in Proverbs, namely 1:5; 11:14 and 24:6 and is also used rarely in Greek writings. Pl R 488b applies it in the sense of “steering” and in Plu 2.162a and in the NT (1 Corinthians 12:28) it has the connotation “government, administration.” According to HR the Hebrew word תְּחַבֵּל which, according to KB, has “skilful direction, steering” as part of its semantic field, is the basis for these passages. The Greek is therefore an obvious equivalent for this Hebrew lexeme.



**Verse 6**

לְהַבִּין מְשָׁל וּמַלְיָצָה דְּבַרֵי חֲכָמִים וְחִידוֹתָם

to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

νοήσει τε παραβολὴν καὶ σκοτεινὸν λόγον

ῥήσεις τε σοφῶν καὶ αἰνίγματα

and he will understand an illustration (analogy) and an obscure

word, both the sayings and the riddles of the wise.

Παραβολή occurs only this one time in Proverbs. Here it is the equivalent for מְשָׁל as is the case in practically all of the 41 examples in the Septuagint. It is used by Arist Rh 1393b3 in the sense of “illustration, analogy.” The NT usage of “parable” is also well known. αἰνίγμα appears very rarely in the Septuagint (Num 12:8; Deut 28:37; iii Kings 10:1; ii Chron 9:1; Prov 1:6; Sap Sol 8:8; Sir 39:3 and 47:11 and Dan 8:23). This is in fact the sole occurrence in the book of Proverbs, where it renders חִידָה. This is also the only example of the Hebrew lexeme in Proverbs. In Sap Sol it is wisdom which provides insight into the solving of riddles, whereas in Sir 39 it is the wise in general and in Chapter 47 more specifically Solomon who have the necessary insight to interpret the αἰνίγματα. In Proverbs these Greek lexemes all have related semantic fields. This applies to their counterparts in other Greek sources too.

Ῥῆσις appears almost exclusively in the book of Proverbs; in 1:6 (דְּבַר) and 23 (-); 2:1 (אָמַר); 4:5 (אָמַר) and 20 (דְּבַר); 7:24 (אָמַר); 15:26 (אָמַר); 19:27 (אָמַר); 27:27 (\*) and 31:2 (-). The only other passage where it is found is ii Es 5:7. It is applied in a variety of contexts, for example, in Homer Od 21.291; Pi N 1.59; Hdt 8.83 and Plu Prov 1.62.

On a syntactic level the translator does not use an infinitive as in MT, however he utilises the same verb, νοέω, he had used in verse 2 - in both passages the Hebrew verbal form is לְהַבִּין. The phrase σκοτεινὸν λόγον is the equivalent for מַלְיָצָה. The Hebrew form is a noun which, according to KB, is in the final analysis derived from לִיץ and which in the Hif expresses the nuance “to interpret” in some contexts. There are only two occurrences of the noun מַלְיָצָה; in the Hebrew Bible, Prov 1:6 and Hab 2:6; according to KB, in both contexts the translation “allusive saying” is applicable.

The first six verses are grouped together closely by the translator, that is, by means of the conjunction τε. It is part of the introduction of the wisdom book and stresses the need for the wise to have wisdom, instruction, insight, prudence, eloquence (dealing in words), direction, discernment and to

understand true justice and to make correct decisions. Verse 6 is particularly instructive for it contains suggestive concepts relating to the unknown, the enigmatic and the uncovered. The final segment in the introduction is verse 7, which acts as a clear statement of the way the wise should endeavour to solve all the riddles and enigmas referred to earlier.

### Verse 7

יְרֵאָת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית חֵכְמָה וּמוֹסָר אֱוִילִים בְּזוּי

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ  
 σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν  
 εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως  
 σοφίαν δὲ καὶ παιδείαν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξουθενήσουσιν

Beginning of wisdom is fear of God,  
 and understanding is good for all those who practice it,  
 and piety unto God is the beginning of perception;  
 the impious, however, will despise wisdom and discipline.

The addition of two stichs represents the first major plus in the Septuagint of Proverbs. There are conspicuous correspondences and differences between the texts under discussion. Even though the contents of the words in the first stich are formally the same as in the MT, the order of these words is inverted. Moreover, the last stich seems to be a relatively literal rendering of the second stich in MT and the third stich of MT 7a. Finally, the second stich has no equivalent in MT or in any of the other versions. The most conspicuous characteristic of these stichs is the fact that a and b correspond to a large extent with Ps 110 (LXX) verse 10 which reads as follows:

ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου  
 σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν  
 ἢ αἴνεσις αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος

The MT (Ps 111:10) of this verse reads:

רֵאשִׁית חֵכְמָה יְרֵאָת יְהוָה  
 שְׂכָל טוֹב לְכָל־עֹשֵׂיהֶם  
 תְּהִלָּתוֹ עֲמֹדֶת לְעֶד

In the Septuagint versions of Psalms and Proverbs the first two stichs correspond to a large extent. There are only two differences. The first concerns the name of God. Mss 23, S, B, Arab, Syh, La, 248mg and Ach all read θεοῦ.

The second is a typical feature of the translator of Proverbs, namely the abundant application of particles, in this case δέ. It is therefore possible that the translator of Proverbs in fact used the Psalm text in this regard. This at least provides an interpretation for the second stich in the current verse in Proverbs that has no equivalent in MT. Moreover, translators used additional textual material, whereas Origen was less apt to apply external material, mostly sticking to his Hebrew text. If the translator in this case actually used the material from the Psalms, then it would naturally mean that the translator of Proverbs already knew the Psalms version of the Septuagint.<sup>24</sup>

It is rather difficult to determine which of these stichs in the Septuagint are original. If one follows a theory according to which the Hebrew of the translator did not differ substantially from MT, then it would seem as if stichs a and d are the logical candidates for the OG. As already stated, however, one problem in this regard is that the order of the first stich is reversed in comparison with MT. On the one hand, one could therefore argue that there are significant differences between the two, an argument which De Lagarde<sup>25</sup> apparently accepts. On the other hand, the translator varies constructions at times for literary effect. Thirdly, a similar stich occurs in Prov 9:10a, but here the LXX follows the order of the Hebrew (MT). It is therefore possible that the translator changed the order of one of the phrases in the light of the other. Fourthly, Weingreen<sup>26</sup> has argued that this verse actually contains an example of rabbinic-type exegesis.

The Peshitta has the same word order as the LXX in the first stich. This could naturally be an indication that there was a Hebrew *Vorlage* containing this order of words. However, the relationship between the LXX and the Peshitta is a complex one and I have demonstrated that the Peshitta translator in Proverbs followed the Septuagint only in a few cases.<sup>27</sup> This was seemingly the case when he experienced a specific problem in his Hebrew text. It could therefore be that the LXX and the Peshitta actually share a common Hebrew *Vorlage* for which there is unfortunately no evidence except these versions.

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<sup>24</sup> Johann Cook, "Inter-textual relations between the Septuagint versions of the Psalms and Proverbs," in *The Old Greek Psalter - Studies in honour of Albert Pietersma* (eds. Robert J. V. Hiebert, Claude E. Cox and Peter J. Gentry, Sheffield: University Press, 2001), 228.

<sup>25</sup> De Lagarde, *Anmerkungen*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Weingreen, "Rabbinic-type Commentary in the LXX version of Proverbs," in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol 1 (ed. Avigdor Shinan, Jerusalem 1973), 407-415.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Johann Cook, "On the relationship between the Peshitta and the Septuagint." *Textus XVII* (1993), 125. Cf. also the discussion of verse 5.

On the basis of external material Fritsch<sup>28</sup> deems stichs a and b as the Old Greek. He follows the Origenian sigla which were noted in the Syh and according to which stichs a and b have been tagged with the obelus. These instances he calls “Examples with the Origenian signs correctly noted.” If these sigla are in fact correct, then this is certainly a strong possibility, at least as far as the first stich is concerned. According to him, stichs c and d are closer to the Hebrew and are consequently hexaplaric.<sup>29</sup> He does not discuss the fact that Syh also has an obelus in connection with an additional stich that is vaguely related to the third stich in the LXX. De Lagarde,<sup>30</sup> contrary to Fritsch, seems to think that stichs a and b are secondary.

Evidently there is no consensus concerning these additions. The question as to what the origin of the added stichs is, thus remains unanswered. One possibility would be to take them as double translations according to the rules formulated by De Lagarde.<sup>31</sup> It is also a question of deciding which of these stichs would in fact be the doublets. One possibility is that stich c is a double translation of MT 7a<sup>32</sup> and stich d of MT 7b. Another viable option would be to argue that c and d actually represent the OG, as stich c is after all not that literal an equivalent of MT 7a. If this is the case, then one could argue that a and b are later additions, as argued by De Lagarde. It remains to determine what actually led to this extension and when this took place.

As far as double translations are concerned it remains difficult to determine whether such additions were brought about purposely by the translator.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore a question of whether it is possible that the translator thought the original statement in this verse somewhat abrupt and consequently decided to interpret it. In this case he could himself have been responsible for stichs c and d. As opposed to De Lagarde, it seems more than probable that the translator actually made use of Ps 110 (LXX) in the translation of this verse. The problem, therefore, remains that in a translation unit as freely rendered as Proverbs it is not easy to distinguish between the work of the translator and possible later hands. A lexical study of the lexemes in the pluses, for example, indicates that they are all used relatively regularly in the LXX Proverbs, which could point to the fact that the same person has added these stichs. One lexeme, ἐξουθενέω, is found only in this single passage in LXX Proverbs in stich d, but

<sup>28</sup> Charles T. Fritsch, “The treatment of Hexaplaric Signs in the Syro-hexaplar of Proverbs,” *JBL* 72 (1973), 170.

<sup>29</sup> Fritsch, “Hexaplaric Signs”, 170.

<sup>30</sup> De Lagarde, *Anmerkungen*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> De Lagarde, *Anmerkungen*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> This view is held by Barucq, *Le livre des Proverbes*, 48.

<sup>33</sup> Zipora Talshir, “Double Translations in the Septuagint,” in *LXX VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem 1986*. SCS 23 (ed. Claude E. Cox, Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 27.

this is the case with a number of other Greek words as well and which is typical of the translator of Proverbs. Therefore either the translator was responsible for this addition, or a later reviser who knew the subject-matter added this stich. Significantly this verse is also the end of the first pericope before the fatherly instructions follow. Perhaps this would naturally lead to explication.

It is difficult to reach a definite conclusion in this instance. Before proposing a conclusion, therefore, it is important to determine to what extent this translator did indeed make use of quotations from other biblical passages. The external data, especially Syh, attest to stichs a and b being part of the OG. It would then be possible that stich c, being a relatively literal translation of the Hebrew of stich a and d of MT stich b, is part of the hexaplaric text. This conclusion is problematic for it does not follow logically from the rules of thumb formulated by De Lagarde, because the third stich is not a strict literal translation of the MT. The solution is to be found in a more holistic approach to these first seven verses. As I stated above, they act as an introduction to the book as a whole. These verses give an indication of what a wise man needs in order to be wise, or to become even wiser (verse 5); he needs the παροιμίαι Σαλωμώντος. However, says the translator, the most fundamental aspect of wisdom - the beginning thereof - is the φόβος θεοῦ. Consequently, no specific form of wisdom, or some speculative or even esoteric knowledge, is basic to understanding, but a religious phenomenon, the fear of God. This is of course the intention of the Hebrew too, but the translator adds the passage from Ps 110 (LXX) in order to underscore this meaning.

It is possible that this is a rabbinic-type of commentary as suggested by Weingreen. It is also clear to me that the translator deliberately quotes from the Psalm in order to make a clear statement as to where knowledge and wisdom originate. This is of course an indication of the “ideological” orientation of the translator, for by implication he is remaining within his Jewish tradition by referring to this biblical text. It is moreover interesting that Ben Sira also uses the phrase or idea of “the fear of the Lord” extensively (verses 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 27, 28 and 30) in his opening chapter. Smend and Hengel<sup>34</sup> take this as an indication of the apologetical stance of Sira *vis-à-vis* the Hellenism of his day. In this regard these authors speak of “die Kriegserklärung des Judentums gegen den Hellenismus.” Not all scholars agree with this point of view.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. V. Chr.*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1973), 252.

<sup>35</sup> Jessie F. Rogers, *Is Wisdom a Mediatrix in Sirach? A Study of the Wisdom Poems*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2000,

In the final analysis I therefore take all four stichs as the Old Greek. The first two are a direct quotation from the Psalms by the translator, who is also responsible for the last two, which are renderings of the Hebrew that in this instance corresponds with MT.

To summarise; these first seven verses have been rendered coherently by the translator and they make excellent sense - the sense he intended his audience to understand. Or as Van der Kooij<sup>36</sup> states fittingly about the book of Isaiah (LXX), it is at the same time an appropriate *translation* and *interpretation*. The translator saw these verses as the introduction to the chapter (and to the book as a whole), even though he had a different view on the syntactic coherence of the verses and the chapter as a whole for that matter. The particle τε is, for example, employed extensively to connect the different stichs syntactically. This makes the introduction a closer knit unit than is the case in MT.

## D CONCLUSION

The translator in broad terms followed the structure of the Hebrew of this chapter. Hence there are no major additions or minuses, except for verse 7. Variation was clearly his aim and thus he made significant adjustments. This can be seen on a syntactical level where he followed the syntax of the Hebrew to some extent, but structured the individual clauses in a typically Greek linguistic way. Sometimes he is guided by religious considerations such as contrasts, e.g. verses 2 and 3. On a stylistic *niveau* the translation is creative as can be observed from his application of Greek particles. Rhyme and alliteration are applied and some passages are harmonised. The way he used word combinations is a definite characteristic of this translator. The theological or exegetical intention of the translator is clear. The first seven verses are aimed at indicating what true biblical wisdom is.

In this pilot study I have demonstrated that the translator of the Septuagint Proverbs adopted a contextual approach towards the parent text. Hence inter- and intra-textual interpretations abound. In some instances he applied external exegetical perspectives, primarily Jewish-orientated traditions in order to formulate an ideological view. Hence in order to determine exegetical, theological perspectives (or a theology for that matter) of the Septuagint, it is first of all necessary to prepare exegetical commentaries.

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135 and John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic age*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 135.

<sup>36</sup> Arie van der Kooij, "The Old Greek of Isaiah 19:16-25: Translation and Interpretation," in Cox (ed.), *VI Congress*, 127.

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