Comments on the Expression of Hope in LXX
Lamentations 5:19-22

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ABSTRACT

In the writings of the HB, hope appears to be an attitude in which human beings look forward and wait in expectation for the advent or arrival of what is considered to be future possibilities. This often involves a measure of uncertainty and/or tension between the present situation and the state or conditions that are hoped for. Furthermore, the acts and words of YHWH have a central place in the worldview in which the hopes are grounded. Lamentations 5:19-22 is an interesting example of such an attitude of hope in the HB. The Hebrew wording (as represented by the MT) is, however, not the only legitimate representative of the content of these verses. The Greek translation (LXX Lam) is another important witness to the text and content of Lam 5:19-22. The purpose of this study is to determine how LXX Lam presents the hope that is expressed in these verses and thereby to gain a better understanding of it as a representative of the content of Lamentations.

Key concepts: hope, Septuagint (LXX), Lamentations, textual representative, ancient translation.

A INTRODUCTION

In the writings of the HB, hope is expressed in multiple ways and in a variety of literary contexts.1 Biblical Hebrew does not have a clearly fixed terminology for hope. A number of verbs and their nominal derivatives have connotations of hope as part of their semantic potential.2 These words include קוה (“to wait for”), תָּקָה (“hope”), מַכָּה (“to wait”), יִאְל (“to wait”), רָאוֹחַ (“hope”), הַבּ ("to wait"/"to await"), נַפְשַׁ (“to hope”/“to wait”; noun: “hope”), and תַּעֲפָה (“look


out”/“keep watch”). This terminological diversity regarding the concept of hope is matched by the wide range of literary genres in which the writings of the HB communicate hope. Hope in the HB finds expression in narratives, wisdom sayings, prophetic oracles, apocalypses and cultic poetry, such as hymns and (communal and individual) laments, to name but a few well-known examples. According to Knierim, the different words and the multitude of literary forms reveal the basic structure of hope in the HB. Hope is an attitude in which human beings look forward and wait in expectation for the advent or arrival of what is considered to be future possibilities. To a certain extent, hope presupposes “an uncertainty or a tension between the present state and the state hoped for, between the known present and the unknown future, and between the state of desire and the state of satisfaction.” Knierim argues that this attitude of hope in the HB is made possible by a, so-called, dynamistic worldview “which allows for or even generates projection into future on the basis of past experience.” For the people whose hopes are articulated in the writings of the HB the acts and words of YHWH have a central place in the worldview in which the hopes are grounded. As a result, hope in the HB is, in the words of Westermann, “im eigentlichen Sinn Hoffen auf Jahweh.”

These various aspects of hope in the HB, the variety of words used to express it, the attitude of looking forward/waiting in expectation, the presupposed tension between the present and anticipated future and its basis in a “YHWH-centred” worldview, are illustrated well in a passage from the individual lament genre, Lam 3:16-33. This passage, especially vv. 19-33, is one of the featured texts in scholars’ investigations of hope in the HB and the book of Lamentations.

Knierim, “Hope,” 246-247, also refers to the verbs בטח (“to feel safe”/“to trust”), דמם (“to be, keep, or stand still”), נבוח (“to look upon, behold [expectantly]”), הניט (“to have patience with”), נבוח (“to seek refuge”), רשק (“to seek”/“to inquire”), כתר (“to be still/“to be silent”), שאול (“to ask for”/“to inquire of”) and בקר (“to attend to”), whereas Zimmerli, Man and his Hope, 7-8, mentions מרש (“wish”), נבוח (“confidence”/“trust”) and מסלול (“confidence”). Wordlists of this kind contribute little to a better understanding of the conception of hope in the HB writings. In order to arrive at such a better understanding, it is necessary, first, to study the words as they are used in the syntactic and literary contexts of specific passages. Cf., in this regard, James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 269. Secondly, it is important to determine how the words’ connotation of hope relates to their other possible meanings. Thirdly, the meanings of the words are connected to the culture, worldviews and experiences of the people who use them. It is, therefore, imperative to study the Hebrew words that can express hope against the background of ANE perceptions of the world, especially in the southern Levant.

Dobbs-Allsopp notes that Lam 3:19-33 is the “lone thematic discussion” of hope in Lamentations, but it is not the only passage in the five poems where hope is expressed. The final four verses of the fifth poem, Lam 5:19-22, is another good example of hope in Lamentations:

19 (But) you, O YHWH, are sitting enthroned forever; Your throne is for generation and generation.  
20 Why do you forget us enduringly?  
(Why) do you abandon us for length of days?  
21 Turn us back to yourself, O YHWH, so that we may come back; Renew our days as in ancient / former times.  
22 Even though / but instead / unless you have completely / truly rejected us, you are exceedingly angry with us.  

Although the Biblical Hebrew words for hope do not appear in these four verses, the words of the first-person plural speakers manifest an attitude of desire or expectation regarding the future which is orientated towards the past (v. 21). This hope is directed at YHWH (vv. 19 and 21) and there is a clear tension between the present situation and the hoped for future (vv. 20 and 22). These comments on the hope in Lam 5:19-22 are based on the translation of the Hebrew wording of these verses in the MT, as it is represented by one particular manuscript, Codex Leningradensis. As the only textual witness in which the Hebrew wording of Lam 5:19-22 is completely preserved, the MT is an

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10 The translation is my own.  
11 Knierim, “Hope,” 259-260, discusses Lam 5:19-22 as an example of hope in the HB that stands in tension with reality. For another perspective on the hope expressed in these verses, see Heath A. Thomas, Poetry and Theology in the Book of Lamentations: The Aesthetics of an Open Text (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 233-236.  
important representative of this passage’s content. Nevertheless, the MT is not
the only textual representative of Lamentations and, therefore, not the only
legitimate witness to its content. The ancient translations are also important
witnesses to the content of Lamentations, including the hope that is articulated
in a passage such as Lam 5:19-22. This study intends to determine how the
Greek translation of Lamentations presents the hope that is expressed in Lam
5:19-22. Instead of examining the readings in LXX Lam only in cases where
there is a possibility that the Greek translation is based on a Hebrew reading
that differs from and has the potential of being more original than the reading
in the MT, this study examines LXX Lam as both a translation of a Hebrew
Vorlage and as a witness to the content of Lamentations. It aims to gain a better
understanding of LXX Lam as such a witness by studying the way in which the
Greek translation presents the expression of hope in Lam 5:19-22.

B INTERPRETING LXX LAM

A study of how the LXX text presents the hope that is expressed in Lam 5:19-22
entails a detailed comparative analysis of the wording of the translation. It is
only through an analysis of the wording of the translation that one can explain
differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts, construe the probable mean-
ing of the Greek version of a passage and draw conclusions regarding the
intentions that the translator might have had with his specific renderings. Such an analysis must take three aspects of the Greek wording into considera-
tion: (1) the shape of the original translation in distinction from later changes
during its transmission; (2) the translation technique exhibited by the translated
text; and (3) the textual character of the Hebrew Vorlage on which the original
translation was based.

The first important factor in the study of LXX Lam’s presentation of
hope in Lam 5:19-22 is that the analysis must be based on the Old Greek text.
The term “Old Greek” refers to the particular wording of a translation that
scholars consider the most likely to be the original text. The Old Greek text, or
original Greek translation of Lamentations, must therefore be distinguished
from readings that were created during its transmission history. These readings
include deliberate revisions and changes to the wording of the original transla-
tion, as well as accidental scribal errors. Although such inner-Greek develop-

13 Two of the four Qumran manuscripts of Lamentations, 4QLam and 5QLam\textsuperscript{a}, are
also important textual witnesses, but the final four verses of Lam 5 were, unfortunately,
not preserved in any of these manuscripts. The other two manuscripts, 3QLam
and 5QLam\textsuperscript{b}, are extremely fragmentary and cannot be used in any discussion on the
content of passages.

14 Cf. Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Translation Technique and the Intention of the Transla-
tor,” in VII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate
Studies, Leuven 1989 (SBLSCS 31; ed. Claude E. Cox; Atlanta: Scholars Press,
ments often make for interesting reading, the analysis of this study is primarily concerned with the work of the original translator of Lamentations and the wording of the Old Greek text of LXX Lam.\(^\text{15}\)

The decision to focus on the original text of LXX Lam means that an examination of the translation technique must form a central part of the analysis of this translation’s wording. Translation technique is a “collective name for all the different renderings used by the translator. Study of translation technique aims at describing what the result of the work of the translator turned out to be like.”\(^\text{16}\) In this regard, scholars characterise the Greek translation of Lamentations as a “literal” translation in which the translator often rendered his Hebrew Vorlage word for word.\(^\text{17}\) LXX Lam is also an acknowledged member of the kaige group of translations and revisions.\(^\text{18}\) The fact that LXX Lam exhibits some of the characteristic traits of the kaige group underscores the literal nature of the Greek text’s translation profile.\(^\text{19}\) Such general characterisations of LXX Lam’s translation technique might be helpful in the analysis. They can also be misleading, if they form the sole basis for an explanation of a particular reading. In the study of the wording of LXX Lam, each passage must be analysed in detail and the most probable explanations of how the readings might have been created during the translation process must be considered.

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Finally, with regard to the textual character of the Hebrew Vorlage of LXX Lam, Albrektson concludes, after an extensive text-critical analysis, that the Greek translation was based on a Hebrew text that was almost identical to the consonantal base of the MT. This is an important conclusion, but it does not rule out the possibility that in some instances a variant reading in the Greek translation’s Hebrew parent text is responsible for a difference in wordings between LXX Lam and the MT. At the same time, the fact that the Hebrew Vorlage of LXX Lam was probably very similar to the consonantal base of the MT implies that many of the differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts of Lamentations can most likely be attributed to the translator’s interpretation of his Hebrew text.

In what follows, the original text of LXX Lam 5:19-22 will be analysed in order to establish how the wording of the Greek translation presents the hope that is expressed in the Hebrew text. The analyses will compare the Greek translation with the extant Hebrew texts, investigate the nature of the translation of the individual verses and, in cases where there are differences between the Greek and the Hebrew texts, determine the most plausible explanations for the differences in wording. The analyses will conclude with comments on the Greek translation’s presentation of the hope that is articulated in Lam 5:19-22. These concluding comments will be based on the results of the comparative analyses of the four verses.

C ANALYSES OF LXX LAM 5:19-22

1 Lamentations 5:19

MT

אהתו יהוה לועִלְךָ נשב כסאך לדר ודואתה יהוה לע

(But) you, O YHWH, are sitting (enthroned) forever; Your throne is for generation and generation.

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21 The analyses of the four verses make reference to a poet, translator and speakers / speaking voice. The poet refers to the people who were responsible for the composition of Lam 5 in writing. Insofar as the MT cannot simply be equated with the poem’s original text, the poet does not necessarily refer to the original author. For the purposes of the analyses in which the MT is used for comparison with the LXX, “the poet” is a collective name for the scribes who contributed to the wording of the poem as it is represented by the MT (and more specifically, Codex Leningradensis). Whereas the MT is not the original Hebrew text of Lam 5, the Göttingen edition’s eclectic text of the Greek translation which was established by scholars can, provisionally, claim the status of original text for LXX Lam. The translator then refers to the scribe who made the translation from a Hebrew Vorlage that was not identical to the MT. Although we
LXX
σὺ δέ κύριε εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατοικήσεις
ὁ θρόνος σου εἰς γενεὰν καὶ γενεὰν
But you, O Lord, you will dwell forever;
Your throne is for generation and generation.

Lamentations 5:19 in the MT consist of two semantically parallel cola. The two prepositional phrases לְעוֹלָם and לְדוֹרֵד וּדְרוֹד correspond with one another and indicate undetermined duration of time. The verb יֹסֵב is parallel to the noun כָּסָא and this implies that the verbal root יֹסֵב probably has the meaning “to sit enthroned” / “to reign” in the context of this verse. As a yiqtol, יֹסֵב has a present temporal reference here and expresses continuative action. The verb is marked for person (second-person masculine singular) and, therefore, the use of the independent personal pronoun הָאת seems superfluous. Nevertheless, its presence and fronting (its position in the preverbal field of the clause) fulfil an important semantic-pragmatic function. The pronoun does not only signal the switch from a description of Mount Zion’s desolation in v. 18 to an address to YHWH in v. 19, but also reactivates YHWH as the topic of the utterance. The reactivation serves to contrast YHWH on his everlasting throne with the topic of the previous clause, Mount Zion, which is said to have been deserted and to have become the haunt of foxes. As the mountain of God and the site of Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, Mount Zion was considered to be the earthly abode of YHWH and the location of his throne in Israelite religious

primarily have access to the intentions of the poet and translator through the clues provided by the wordings of the Hebrew and Greek texts, this does not mean that the speakers in the texts can simply be identified with either the poet or the translator. The first-person speaking voice in Lam 5 is a part of the poem and translation as literary creations. It therefore does not necessarily belong to a specific, identifiable historical community.


24 The words of the bicolon, excluding the superfluous personal pronoun and the vocative, form a chiastic pattern: (a’) לְדוֹרֵד וּדְרוֹד (b’) כָּסָא (b) לְעוֹלָם (a) יֹסֵב.

25 Before v. 19, YHWH is the topic of an utterance only in v. 1. Like v. 19, YHWH is also an addressee in this opening verse of Lam 5.
tradiions that are reflected in certain writings of the HB. With its references to the roaming foxes on desolate Mount Zion, Lam 5:18 implies that the temple has been destroyed and creates the impression that chaos has infiltrated YHWH’s abandoned earthly residence. The invasion of chaos into culture forms part of the well-known topos of a world turned upside down (mundus inversus) in ANE literature. The image of desert-dwelling wild animals, which represent the chaotic, anti-human world, becoming the new occupants of ruined sites that once embodied the pinnacle of culture, communicates the


inversion of normal conditions well. In Lam 5:18, the poet uses this established image to describe the disaster of the desolate divine dwelling place.\footnote{Kruger, “Disaster,” 412-413.} According to the next verse (Lam 5:19), however, YHWH’s royal power and authority remain unaffected by this. The desolation of Mount Zion does not mean that YHWH has abdication his throne. Despite the destruction of the temple, the place on earth where God’s throne was located, and the desolation of God’s mountain, v. 19 shows that the religious worldview that underlies Lam 5 allowed the poet to still think of YHWH in terms of royal imagery.\footnote{It is not stated explicitly in v. 19 that YHWH is sitting enthroned in heaven. It might nevertheless be implied. Frevel, “Zerbrochene Zier,” 109, maintains that the idea of YHWH dwelling in heaven did not originate during the “exilic” period, but was already a “pre-exilic” belief. He concedes that the notion of God dwelling in heaven, removed from earth, became more prominent after the exile (Frevel, “Zerbrochene Zier,” 120). Although the exact dating of Lam 5 is a matter of scholarly dispute, there is consensus that it was composed after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E. The contrast between desolate Mount Zion and YHWH’s eternal (heavenly) throne expressed in Lam 5:18-19 is rooted in the view that YHWH reigns in heaven and therefore his rule, authority and power remains unaffected by the destruction of the place where the divine king was once thought to be present. It is also interesting to note that in “exilic” and “post-exilic” texts that deal with the heavenly throne of YHWH (cf., e.g., Pss 33:13-19, 102:13-23, 113:4-9; Isa 66:1-3), it is not a symbol of YHWH’s inaccessible transcendence; rather, these texts claim that YHWH intervenes on earth in favour of the poor, needy and those who fear him. See, on this topic, Beate Ego, “‘Der Herr blickt herab von der Höhe seines Heiligtums’: Zur Vorstellung von Gottes himmlischem Thronen in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit,” ZAW 110 (1998): 556-569. The fact that a measure of uncertainty clings to the hope that is expressed in MT Lam 5:19-22 means that this passage does not stand in line with “exilic”/“postexilic” texts that speak positively of YHWH looking down from heaven and delivering people who are in need.} The verse claims that YHWH sits forever in a position of sovereign power and, therefore, possesses the ability to do something about the suffering of the community.

In the Greek translation, the contrast between the observations in v. 18 and the confession in v. 19 is explicitly marked by the conjunction δέ. This conjunction is a plus in the text of the Greek translation when compared to the wording of Codex Leningradensis. Other Masoretic manuscripts contain the reading רַחַם, which was probably also in the Hebrew text that was used in the translation process. The counterparts of σὺ δέ in the Peshitta and the Vulgate, אַחֲרָיו and tu autem, also presuppose the reading רַחַם. This might very well be the original Hebrew reading, as suggested by some scholars.\footnote{Cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, “Der Text der Klagelieder,” ZAW 56 (1938): 122; and the critical apparatus of BHS. The loss of the initial waw can be attributed to haplography, seeing as the final word of v. 18, תָּנָא, ends a waw.} Apart from the plus, the wording of the Greek translation agrees with the word order of the MT. Like the MT, only the first of the two clauses in the Old Greek text contains a
verb. The second is a nominal clause. \(\alpha\iota\omega\nu\) is a standard rendering in the LXX for סלע and \(\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\alpha\) can denote “an unlimited duration of time with particular focus upon the future.”\(^{33}\) \(\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\nu\nu\epsilon\nu\varsigma\nu\) και \(\gamma\nu\nu\epsilon\nu\varsigma\nu\), which closely matches מַלְךָ וְרָצֹן, expresses a continuation in successive generations.\(^{34}\) This also indicates an undefined duration of time. These data create the impression that the verse was translated quite literally. Nevertheless, the rendering of the verb בָּשָׁת by κατοικήσεις is noteworthy.

The Greek translator of Lamentations employs two equivalents to translate forms of the Hebrew verbal root בָּשָׁת. קαθίζω (“to sit”) is used in Lam 1:1, 3; 2:10; 3:6, 28. Κατοικέω serves as an equivalent for בָּשָׁת in Lam 4:12, 21 and the verse under discussion. The fact that the translator uses different Greek words to render one Hebrew verb means that the translation of בָּשָׁת with κατοικήσεις in Lam 5:19 was probably not an arbitrary choice. In this context, κατοικέω means “to dwell” and the clause indicates that the Lord will reside in his dwelling place forever.\(^{35}\) The sense of the Greek clause therefore differs slightly from the way the first colon in the Hebrew text is usually understood. The meaning of the Greek text is also not quite the same as the Peshitta and Vulgate translations.\(^{36}\) Both of these translations stress the eternal existence of the Lord. The future tense of κατοικήσεις, in combination with σὺ δὲ and the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, mark the contrast well between the destroyed state of Zion (v. 18) and the Lord who will continue to live on in his dwelling place (v. 19a). The idea that the Lord will dwell forever complements the confession in the second clause that the Lord’s throne remains intact for all generations. The focus on the stability and permanence of the Lord’s dwelling and kingship in LXX Lam 5:19\(^{37}\) implies that he is not subject to the disaster that has befallen his earthly abode and, thus, that the speakers can still hope in him.

\(^{33}\) Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, “\(\alpha\iota\omega\nu\),” GELNT 1:641.

\(^{34}\) Takamitsu Muraoka, “γενεά,” GELS: 127.


\(^{36}\) The Syriac text reads as follows: ܐܒܠܐ ܒܠܝܬܐ ܓܝܢܐ. The wording of the clause in the Vulgate is \(t\)u \(a\)utem Domine \(i\)n \(a\)eternum \(p\)ermanebis. For these quotations, I use the critical editions of Albrektson, Studies in the Text, and Roger Weber, Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem: Editionem quintam emendatam retractatam praeparavit Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

2 Lamentations 5:20

MT
למה לעזר תשכחנו לארך ימים
Why do you forget us enduringly?
(Why) do you abandon us for length of days?

LXX
ἲνα τί εἰς νίκος ἐπιλήσῃ ημῶν
καταλείψεις ημᾶς εἰς μακρότητα ημερῶν
Why will you forget us until victory?
Will you abandon us for length of days?

The two cola of MT Lam 5:20 are not only semantically parallel, but the prepositional phrases and verbs appear to be arranged in a chiastic pattern: prepositional phrase ל валלה (a), verb תשכחה (b); verb לארך ימים (b'), prepositional phrase ל ו[vala (a'). The interrogative הלמ, which is ellipsed in the second colon, introduces questions regarding the reason for the actions expressed by the verbs תשכחה and לארך ימים. The two yiqtol verbs are used here to indicate continuous action, while the prepositional phrases ל ו[vala and לארך ימים act as adverbial adjuncts that modify these verbs in terms of unlimited duration of time. Therefore, after confessing in the previous bicolon that it is YHWH who is forever enthroned in power, unaffected by the destruction of Mount Zion, the community now poses the question in this bicolon whether there is a reason why YHWH forgets/abandons them for as long as he is in a position to help them.

The verbs והשכ and והשכ, “to forget” and “to abandon,” recall the opening plea of this communal lament in v. 1. The lament begins with the community’s invocation of YHWH and the plea that he remember (רזכ) what has happened to them and that he must see and take note (ההביט ורא) of their disgrace. The long complaint in vv. 2-18 then describes the misery that has befallen the community. The goal of such a description of misery in the lament-genre is to move the deity to have mercy on the community so that he will act on their pleas.

The community’s question in v. 20 intimates that, since he is in a position to help them (v. 19), there is no reason why YHWH would continue to forget / abandon the community if, in his mercy, he would just notice and bear in mind (v. 1) what they bring to his attention in their complaint (vv. 2-18).

39 The interrogatives in this verse introduce the theme of divine abandonment and rejection. The poet of Lam 5 returns to this theme in the final verse of the lament. Divine abandonment is a generic feature of Sumerian city laments and Dobbs-Allsopp notes that Lam 5:20 and 5:22 share this staple feature with the Mesopotamian poems. See Dobbs-Allsopp, Weep, 45-51.
40 Cf. Renkema, “Misschien is er Hoop…”, 296.
The Greek translation resembles the word order and other formal features of the Hebrew text closely. The interrogative ἵνα τί reproduces הָלָם, the qigol forms of the verbs שָׁבַח and עָזַב are rendered by the future indicatives ἐπιλήσῃ and καταλείψεις, and the prepositional phrase εἰς µακρότητα is literally translated as εἰς µακρότητα ἡµερῶν. The Hebrew Vorlage of the Greek translation seems to have been almost identical to the consonantal base of the MT. The main difference between the Greek and Hebrew wordings of the verse pertains to the prepositional phrase εἰς νῖκος, which serves as the translation of לְנֵצָח. The Hebrew adverbial phrase modifies the verb in terms of the duration of an action. According to Anderson, לְנֵצָח is always related to the future and does not convey a specified period of time. In LXX Lam 5:20, εἰς νῖκος also has a temporal meaning, but it seems to identify a “victory” as the point in the future until which the action of the verb ἐπιλήσῃ will take place.

LXX Lam 5:20 is not the only passage in the Greek Jewish scriptures where לְנֵצָח is translated by εἰς νῖκος. Although the Hebrew phrase is usually rendered by εἰς τέλος or εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, εἰς νῖκος is its translation equivalent in the Old Greek texts of 2 Kgms 2:26, Jer 3:5, Amos 1:11, 8:7 and Lam 5:20. Furthermore, the noun לְנֵצָח in Lam 3:18 and 1 Chr 29:11 is rendered by νῖκος and νίκη respectively, while the word לְנֵצָח in Hab 3:19 is translated as τοῦ νικήσατα. These data show that forms of νῖκος were used in different connections and contexts to translate forms of לְנֵצָח.

The translation of לְנֵצָח with νῖκος has elicited different explanations from scholars. Kraft argues that already by Paul’s time in the first century C.E. εἰς νῖκος would have been understood as a synonym for εἰς τέλος and εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. His argument rests on the fact that εἰς νῖκος is used as an equivalent for לְנֵצָח in Old Greek texts and that it is hard to imagine that Greek speaking readers would have taken the phrase εἰς νῖκος to mean “into / until victory” in passages such as 2 Kgms 2:26, Jer 3:5, Amos 1:11 and 8:7. He therefore suggests that εἰς νῖκος must have had the meaning of “forever” / “permanently” by the time it

41 Apart from Lam 5:20, the Greek translator uses ἐπιλανθάνοµαι to translate the verb שָׁבַח, which is vocalised as a pi’el in the MT, at Lam 2:6. In LXX Lam, καταλείπω is used only in Lam 5:20 as equivalent for בִּישָׁם. A participle form of this Greek verb appears in LXX Lam 2:22 as translation equivalent for the Hebrew word דִּשְׁרֵי (“survivor”).
44 לְנֵצָח appears often in the titles of Psalms. In the original Greek translation, it is rendered with the phrase εἰς τοῦ τέλος.
was used in 1 Cor 15:54 and Matt 12:20. In contrast to Kraft, Caird\textsuperscript{46} claims that the LXX translators must have intended \textit{εἰς νῖκος} to mean “until victory is won,” because they would have been familiar with the usual translation equivalents, \textit{εἰς τέλος} and \textit{εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα}. It is also significant that the occurrences of the noun חנצ in 1 Chr 29:11 and Lam 3:18 were translated with forms of νῖκος. Therefore, in Caird’s opinion, the choice of νῖκος as translation equivalent for חנצ must have been deliberate. Grindel approaches the issue from a different angle. He argues that the correspondence between חנצ and νῖκος is a feature of what he calls the \textit{kaige} “recension.” According to Grindel, the \textit{kaige} “recension” is

a recension of the Old Greek or Septuagint translation of the Old Testament which took place, around the turn of the era, in Palestine. Done in accordance with rabbinical hermeneutical principles then in force and in conformity with a Hebrew text then current in Palestine, it was this recension which Aquila in turn took up and developed in the second century A.D. A regular set of correspondents between the Hebrew and the Greek make it easily recognizable.

Grindel’s investigation reveals that the members of the \textit{kaige} “recension” have the readings \textit{εἰς νῖκος}, νῖκος and \textit{εἰς το νῖκος/τῷ νικοποιῷ} for חנצ, חנצ and חמנצ in the \textit{MT}.\textsuperscript{48} For חמנצ and חמנצ, the version of Aquila reads \textit{εἰς νῖκος} and \textit{τῷ νικοποιῷ}.\textsuperscript{49} The evidence which he adduces in support of this argument is impressive. However, not all his conclusions can be accepted, since recent research demonstrates that a homogenous \textit{kaige} recension did not exist.\textsuperscript{50}

Scholars such as Greenspoon, Gentry and McLay point out that the \textit{kaige} group does not only include revisions of Old Greek texts that aim to bring it closer to the proto-MT. There are translations that exhibit some of the \textit{kaige} traits. The

\textsuperscript{46} Caird, “Towards a Lexicon,” 136.

\textsuperscript{47} John A. Grindel, “Another Characteristic of the Kaige Recension: \textit{נצח}/\textit{νικος},” \textit{CBQ} 31/4 (1969): 499. The traits of the \textit{kaige} group that are most characteristic of these revisions and translations include: (1) the rendering of \textit{גם/וגם} by \textit{καί γε}; (2) the consistent rendering of \textit{איש} by \textit{ἀνήρ}, even in cases where the former has the meaning of “each”; (3) the translation of \textit{מעל} with \textit{ἐπάνωθεν/ἀπάνωθεν} plus genitive; (4) \textit{יצב/נצב} with \textit{στηλόω}; (5) \textit{חצרה} with \textit{σάλπιγξ} and \textit{שופר} with \textit{κερατίνη}; (6) the elimination of historical presents; (7) the translation of \textit{אין} with \textit{οὐκ ἔστιν}; (7) the curious rendering of \textit{אנכי} by \textit{ἐγώ εἶµι}; and (8) the translation of \textit{לקראת} with \textit{ἕως συνάντησιν}.

\textsuperscript{48} With regard to the two \textit{kaige} translations of חמנצ in the Psalm titles, see Grindel, “Kaige,” 504-506.

\textsuperscript{49} Grindel, “Kaige,” 512.

The kaige group can, therefore, not be defined as a recension. Furthermore, these scholars indicate that the kaige group of translations and revisions are not uniform. Not all the characteristics that have been attributed to the kaige group are consistently shared by all its members. There are also important differences between the members that need to be taken into account. These criticisms levelled against the view that kaige is a uniform recension lead to the conclusion that it can only refer to a group of translations and revisions which share certain Greek translation equivalents for particular Hebrew words and phrases. The fact that the original Greek translation of Lamentations is a member of the kaige group means that the reading εἰς νῖκος in LXX Lam 5:20 cannot simply be explained as a by-product of recensional activity. It was the translator of LXX Lam who made the decision to translate חנצ with εἰς νῖκος and חנצ in Lam 3:18 with νῖκος. However, if the crux of Grindel’s argument is accepted, namely that the translation of חנצ with νῖκος is a kaige feature, it would appear as though the Greek translator of Lamentations simply chose this group’s default equivalent to render חנצ in Lam 3:18 and 5:20. In the case of LXX Lam 5:20, this choice of translation equivalent creates a semantic tension between εἰς νῖκος and the context of the verse.

The argument that εἰς νῖκος in LXX Lam 5:20 is an example of the translator’s use of standard Greek translation equivalents for certain Hebrew words still leaves the reason why νῖκος was chosen to translate חנצ unaccounted for, as well as the fact that this translation equivalent is also found in Old Greek texts that are not members of the kaige group. With regard to εἰς νῖκος in the Old Greek texts of 2 Kgdms 2:26, Jer 3:5, Amos 1:11 and 8:7 and νῖκη in 1 Chr 29:11, some scholars argue convincingly that the translators rendered חנצ after the sense which this root has in Aramaic. Such an Aramaising rendering was not necessarily due to a conscious exegetical decision. The translators’

Furthermore, the suggested links between the kaige traits and the Palestinian rabbinic exegesis are, at times, precarious. Cf. Leonard J. Greenspoon, “Recensions, Revision, Rabbinics: Dominique Barthélémy and Early Developments in the Greek Traditions,” Textus 17 (1990): 153-167.


knowledge of both Aramaic and Hebrew\textsuperscript{54} and the long history of contact between the two languages, which resulted in Aramaic influence on Hebrew (especially, but not exclusively, Late Biblical Hebrew, Qumran Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew)\textsuperscript{55} could explain why the translators, at times, inadvertently attribute Aramaic meanings to words in their Hebrew Vorlagen. According to Joosten,

The mind of the translators can never be known with certainty. Nevertheless, one might argue that the creation of Aramaising renderings in the Septuagint is due in greater measure to unconscious confusion than to philological exegesis. Certainly the factor of unconscious influence is much more important than has hitherto been admitted in scholarly literature. Even where the context is difficult, and the word at issue poorly attested, one should not automatically presume that recourse was taken to Aramaic in a conscious and deliberate way.\textsuperscript{56}

Every Old Greek passage in which νῖκος appears as a translation equivalent for ἐπέκειται must therefore be studied in order to determine whether the Aramaic meaning of ἐπέκειται makes sense in the context of the passage or not. Where it does not make sense, it is very probable that the translator was unconsciously influenced by the Aramaic meaning of ἐπέκειται. In LXX Lam 5:20, εἰς νῖκος is the original translation of חלצה and represents the Aramaic meaning of חלצה. This meaning is not quite appropriate in the context of the verse. The translator’s knowledge of Aramaic might therefore have had an unconscious effect on his understanding of חלצה’s meaning. If the rendering of חלצה by νῖκος proves to be a characteristic of the kaige group of translations and revisions, this would have facilitated the translator’s choice of νῖκος as the translation equivalent of חלצה in Lam 5:20.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Joosten, “Aramaising Renderings,” 599, argues that the translators of the Septuagint were trilingual: “Greek would have been their mother tongue, Hebrew the language of scripture and study, and Aramaic a language they used in certain undefined situations or localities.”


\textsuperscript{56} Joosten, “Aramaising Renderings,” 592.

\textsuperscript{57} The line of interpretation presented here to explicate the reading εἰς νῖκος in LXX Lam 5:20 is incompatible with Kevin Youngblood’s claim that the Greek translation of חלצה “betrays the more developed eschatology of Second Temple Judaism and expresses faith in the vindication of God’s people at the end of time.” See Kevin Youngblood, “The Character and Significance of LXX Lamentations,” in \textit{Great Is Thy Faithfulness? Reading Lamentations as Sacred Scripture} (ed. Robin A. Parry and Heath A. Thomas; Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 68. Although Youngblood correctly treats LXX Lam as a theological and historical resource, the dearth of knowledge about
Notwithstanding the conclusion that the prepositional phrase εἰς νῖκος is ill-suited in the context of LXX Lam 5:20, the Greek wording of the rest of the verse follows the meaning of the Hebrew text. The deliberative questions in the Greek translation inquire about the reason why the Lord will forget the speakers and whether it is possible that he will abandon them for a long period of time. These questions, which have to do with the way in which the Lord will relate to the speakers in the future, form the basis for the imperatives in the next verse, which present the content of the speakers’ hope regarding their future.

3 Lamentations 5:21

MT

השברון יהוה אליך נשוב חידו涂抹 מקים

Turn us back to you, YHWH, so that we may return; Renew our days as in ancient/former times.

LXX

ἐπίστρεψον ἡµᾶς κύριε πρὸς σέ καὶ ἐπιστραφησόµεθα
καὶ ἀνακαινισῶσον ἡµέρας ἡµῶν καθὼς ἔµπροσθεν

Turn us back to you, Lord, and we shall return; Renew also our days like before.

In the MT, the speaking voice of Lam 5 articulates the content of the community’s hope in v. 21. The community hopes that YHWH will re-establish the former (covenant) relationship between them and that he will bring back the community’s good old days. These hopes are verbalised in the form of two imperatives addressed to YHWH ((turn us back and renew our days) that are found in each of the verse’s two cola. In the first colon, the hip‘il imperative נוהشبון forms a verb sequence with בונשו, which is vocalised as a qal cohortative in the MT. ⁵⁸ According to this sequence of verbs, the cohortative indicates the purpose of the imperative. ⁵⁹ The verbal root of both words is ובש. Holladay, who has made an exhaustive lexical study of ובש, argues that נוהشبון and נושב in Lam 5:21 are who the translator was, when, where and for whom he made the translation, as well as his reasons for engaging in the task of translation create difficulties for any attempt to use this translation unit as a source of information about Second Temple Judaism. Such information as is available on these matters can mostly be inferred from the original wording of the translation. These inferences depend, to some extent, on the explanations that text-critics provide to account for the cases where the wording of the original Greek translation deviates from the wordings of the extant Hebrew textual representatives.

⁵⁸ The gere reading נושב also appears in a number of Masoretic manuscripts.
examples of the so-called “covenantal usage” of שׁוּב. Whereas the central meaning of שׁוּב involves the return of a mover to the initial point of departure, the covenantal usage of שׁוּב expresses “a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or God, each for the other.” In other words, שׁוּב is used in a covenant context to refer to the return to or re-establishment of a previous relationship and not to the establishment of a new one. If Holladay’s arguments are accepted, the first colon of MT Lam 5:21 would entail that the community pleads with YHWH to accept them back as his covenant partner. The purpose of this acceptance would be that the community may return to their former covenant relationship with YHWH. The underlying assumption of the verb sequence תִּשָּׁבוּ ... וְנִשְׁבוּ in MT Lam 5:21a is that only YHWH can re-establish the relationship that the community enjoyed with him in the past. The people are incapable of restoring the relationship with YHWH, and therefore they hope that YHWH will be the one to do it.

The second colon of MT Lam 5:21 parallels the first colon in that the community implores YHWH to act as he has done in the past. They call on YHWH to make their days new. שׁוּב can be understood as a metonym for what is happening to the community (or what happened to them in the very recent past). Thus, they plead with YHWH to transform their circumstances of suffering, which are recounted in vv. 2-18 and epitomised by the desolate Mount Zion. The prepositional phrase כְּכַדָּמָם (“as in ancient/former times”) is an adjunct that functions adverbially to modify the imperative וְנִשְׁבוּ. This creates the impression that, according to the speakers, the renewal they hope for would not be unparalleled, but has precedents in the olden days. Alternatively, כְּכַדָּמָם can be interpreted as the norm for the renewal of the community’s days. On this interpretation, the community requests that YHWH bring back the good old days of the community when they were YHWH’s people and he was their God. This probably implies, as Gottwald argues, a plea for a “return of national freedom under king and priesthood with independence of movement, re-establishment

61 Holladay, šûbh, 53.
62 Holladay, šûbh, 116.
63 Holladay, šûbh, 120.
64 This line of interpretation of MT Lam 5:21a is not accepted by all scholars. Some see in אליך ... וְנִשְׁבוּ a plea for a return from exile to Zion, while others interpret it in terms of a conversion. Cf., e.g., Delbert R. Hillers, Lamentations (2nd rev. ed.; AB 7; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 165.
66 Cf. BDB: 869.
67 Cf. Salters, Lamentations, 373.
of civil order and the exercise of worship and festivity." In both interpretations, the speakers orientate their hope towards the past.

Like the MT, the Greek translation of v. 21 provides the content of the hope that finds expression in LXX Lam 5:19-22. The hope of the community whose voice is heard in these verses revolves around a return to the Lord and a renewal of their days.

The wording of the Greek translation adheres closely to the word order of the Hebrew text and every constituent part of the latter is represented by a Greek equivalent. ἐπιστρέφω, the root of the first two verbs in LXX Lam 5:21, is the customary translation equivalent of forms of בוש in LXX Lam. The translator also uses ἀποστρέφω to render בוש in LXX Lam 1:8, 13 and 2:3. However, in most of the occurrences of this Hebrew verbal root in Lamentations, the translator chooses to translate it with ἐπιστρέφω (cf. Lam 1:11, 16, 19; 2:8, 14; 3:3; 5:21). Concerning καὶ ἐπιστραφήσομεθα, Salters is correct to point out that the Hebrew Vorlage of this reading cannot be determined. Even though it is possible that the translator read the Hebrew verb as a weyqtol and not as a cohortative, the function of the Hebrew verbal sequence is not captured in the Greek translation. Conversely, the translator rendered the prepositional phrase מְדוּקָא accurately by means of the adverbial phrase καθὼς ἔµπροσθεν. Ἔµπροσθεν modifies ἀνακαίνισον and clearly has a temporal, not a local, meaning.

A cursory glance at the wording of LXX Lam 5:21 therefore leaves the impression of a literal translation that focuses on the meanings of individual words and merely employs routine equivalents. Such an impression is somewhat misleading on two accounts. First, the second καὶ in the Greek text is a plus compared to the wording of the MT. There is no reason to suspect an error in either the wording of the MT or the wording of the Hebrew Vorlage of the Greek translation. Consequently, the plus can be attributed to the translator’s decision to join the two sentences of the verse by means of a coordinating conjunction. The relation between the sentences of this verse might therefore have been a matter of interest for the Greek translator. Secondly, a look at the content of the verses in the immediate context of LXX Lam 5:21 opens up the possibility that the choice of ἐπιστρέφω to render the forms of בוש in this verse might have

68 Norman K. Gottwald, Studies in the Book of Lamentations (London: SCM Press, 1954), 110. Gottwald points out that for the Israelites “it was impossible to think of a bright future without the reconstruction of those ancient and venerated forms through which God made his will and goodness known.”

69 Salters, Lamentations, 371.

been more considered than it might at first appear. This possibility merits closer scrutiny.

In *Septuaginta Deutsch*, Hirsch-Luipold and Maier translate ἐπιστρέψον ἡµᾶς κύριε πρὸς σέ καὶ ἐπιστραφησόµεθα in LXX Lam 5:21 as follows: “Bekehre uns, Herr, zu dir, und wir wollen uns bekehren lassen.” Assan-Dhôte also suggests that ἐπιστρέφω evokes here the nuance of “le repentir” and draws attention to the Old Latin translation converte nos Deus ad te, et convertemur. In the passive voice, ἐπιστρέφω can indeed have the meaning “be converted.” However, this is not the sense communicated by ἐπιστρέψον and ἐπιστραφησόµεθα in LXX Lam 5:21, if conversion can be defined as the deliberate change from an earlier form of piety to another, different and new, form of conduct and/or set of beliefs. The community who is speaking in LXX Lam 5 pleads with the Lord to turn them back to him and to restore their former circumstances just as he has done before. The wording of LXX Lam 5:21 hints at the fact that the community wants to return to the relationship which it once had with the Lord. The clause ἐπιστρέψον ἡµᾶς κύριε πρὸς σέ implies that there is a palpable divide between the Lord and the community, a divide which the community wants to cross. Yet, they can only do so if the Lord bridges the gap and causes them to come back to him. In the community’s view, their desired return to the Lord depends on whether he will heed their request to take them back. The observations in LXX Lam 5:20 and 22 confirm that there is a rift between the community and the Lord and that the prerogative to repair the relationship rests with the Lord alone. In v. 20, the community asks whether the Lord will forever forget/neglect (ἐπιλανθάνοµαι) and abandon them/leave them behind (καταλείπω). The implication is that the Lord has departed from them. In v. 22, the community claims that the Lord has pushed them away (ἀπωθέω) and that this is the cause for their need to return to him and to have their days renewed. The speakers’ claim that the Lord left them and pushed them away implies that the Lord created the distance between himself and the community. The questions in v. 20 and statement in v. 22 envelop the community’s pleas in v. 21 for a return to their previous relationship and for a restoration of, presumably, the times when they enjoyed the Lord’s proximity. In view of this,

ἐπιστρέφω, in its meaning “to turn/bring back,” seems to be a well-chosen translation equivalent for שׁוּב in the context of v. 21.

The hope for a future restoration expressed in the LXX version of the verse is, at least partly, predicated on the renewals that the Lord has, supposedly, brought about in the past (καθὼς ἔµπροσθεν). Thus, the Greek wording of Lam 5:21 presents the speakers’ hope as an expectation of a future possibility that is grounded in an experience of the past.

4 Lamentations 5:22

MT

כִּי אַמֵּס מָאָס אֲשֶׁר קָצְפָּת עַלָּנוּ עִדָּן מַעֲדִא

Even though/but instead/unless you have completely/truly rejected us, you are exceedingly angry with us.

LXX

ὅτι ἀπωθοῦµενος ἀπώσω ἡµᾶς ὠργίσθης ἐφ’ ἡµᾶς ἕως σφόδρα

Because, by rejecting, you rejected us; you became exceedingly angry with us.

The poet returns to the theme of divine rejection in the final verse of Lam 5. The wording of this verse has stimulated much discussion among modern commentators. The combination of the words כי אם at the beginning of the verse constitutes the crux interpretum and scholars are divided in their opinions regarding the correct way to understand these two words. There are a number of tenable interpretations of כי אם and the choice for any one of these possibilities depends on how scholars understand the verse in its literary context, especially in its relationship to v. 21.76 The first option is to let כי and אם retain their separate meanings. כי would then function as a conjunction and אם would introduce a conditional clause. On this interpretation, the second colon of the verse, קֶצֶפֶת עַלָּנוּ עִדָּן מַעֲדִא, expresses the consequence of the condition. Ehrlich favours this understanding of כי אם and translates the verse as follows: “Denn, wolltest du uns gänzlich verwerfen, du gingest in deinem Zorn gegen uns zu weit.”77 Linafelt also interprets כי אם along these lines, but he offers a novel translation of the verse: “For if truly you have rejected us, bitterly raged against us...”78

76 Some commentators render the bicolon as questions: “Or have you utterly rejected us? Are you exceedingly angry with us?” This is problematic, because כי never anywhere else in the HB introduces a question.

77 Arnold B. Ehrlich, Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches (vol. 7; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1914), 54.

78 He explains: “I have chosen to translate the line as a conditional statement that is left trailing off, leaving a protasis without an apodosis, or an ‘if’ without a ‘then.’ The book is left opening out into the emptiness of God’s nonresponse. By leaving a conditional statement dangling, the final verse leaves open the future of the ones lament-
The second solution to the problem posed by the verse is to assign כִּי עַם an adversative meaning: “but instead.” Hillers\(^79\) adopts this interpretation of כִּי עַם and mentions three other passages in the HB where it must also be understood in this way (Num 24:22; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 13:33)\(^80\). The adversative sense of כִּי עַם in v. 22 also fulfills an important function in Williamson’s argument regarding public and hidden transcripts in Lam 5\(^81\).

It is hardly a hopeful ending, for the missing but implied apodosis is surely negative, yet it does nevertheless defer that apodosis. And by arresting the moment from an ‘if’ to a ‘then’ the incomplete clause allows the reader, for a moment to imagine the possibility of a different ‘then,’ and therefore a different future.” Tod Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of A Biblical Book (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 60-61. See also Tod Linafelt, “The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations,” JBL 120 (2001): 340-343.

\(^79\) Hillers, Lamentations, 160-161.
\(^81\) Robert Williamson, “Lament and Acts of Resistance: Public and Hidden Transcripts in Lamentations 5,” in Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts (ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 67-80. Williamson draws on the work of James C. Scott, who investigates the discourse between subordinate groups and their dominant authorities. Scott refers to the “polite patterns of speech designed to appeal to the self-interest of the dominant” as the subordinate group’s “public transcript” (Williamson, “Lament,” 68). Scott shows that a second type of discourse, the so-called “hidden transcript,” lies behind the “public transcript”: “The ‘hidden transcript’ is normally employed when the subordinate is ‘offstage’ and out of earshot of the dominant ... The hidden transcript contains the subordinate’s frustration and anger, which cannot be expressed publically for fear of reprisal” (Williamson, “Lament,” 69). Williamson goes on to argue that the communal lament is an Israelite form of public transcript in which the vassal, Israel, can give voice to its complaints in a way that is acceptable to the covenantal suzerain, YHWH. He identifies Lam 5 as a communal lament in which the speakers accuse YHWH of inflicting great suffering on them and subjecting them to severe public humiliation. The communal voice in the lament “speaks as a punished and degraded subordinate addressing a dominant it perceives as angry and excessively violent” (Williamson, “Lament,” 72). Williamson remarks that in this case one would expect to find a hidden transcript behind the public transcript of communal lament. In this regard, he highlights three ways in which Lam 5 departs from the normal form of the communal lament: First, the complaint section of the lament (vv. 2-18) is much longer than usual; secondly, the turn toward God only comprises one verse (v. 19), which is directly followed by another complaint in the next verse; and thirdly, there is no vow of praise after the petition in this lament. Verse 22 is, in Williamson’s opinion, the piéce de résistance, because it contradicts the expected expressions of trust and praise by replacing them with the accusation that YHWH has completely rejected the speakers in his great anger.
Although ב כי如果不是 usuall has a restrictive sense ("unless") after a negative clause, some scholars argue that ב כי in Lam 5:22 can be interpreted in this way. Berges, for example, defends this interpretation by claiming that the negation is implicit in v. 21.

Finally, Gordis puts forward another possible interpretation of ב כי in Lam 5:22. He argues that the verse is a subordinate clause that relates the circumstances surrounding the petition in the main clause found in v. 21, which introduces the subordinate clause, has, in Gordis’s opinion, a concessive meaning: "even though"/"although." He mentions four other passages in the HB where ב כי should be understood in this way: Jer 51:14, Isa 10:22, Amos 5:22 and Lam 3:32. Even though Gordis’s interpretation of ב כי has found favour with some scholars, his rendering of the two perfect verbs מאסתנו and קצפת as pluperfects has not.

The function of the infinitive absolute construction in the first colon of the verse also merits a closer inspection. Recent studies of the infinitive absolute have shown that it typically features in modal contexts where the factual nature of events might be in dispute. In such cases, speakers can use the

84 Berges, Klageleieder, 272
87 Cf. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, “The Infinitive Absolute Reconsidered: Review Article,” JNSL 39/1 (2013): 61-84; Yoo-Ki Kim, The Function of the Tautological Infinitive in Classical Biblical Hebrew (HSS 60; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009); and Scott N. Callaham, Modality and the Biblical Hebrew Infinitive Absolute (AKM 71; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010). Kim provides synchronic and diachronic perspectives on the infinitive absolute construction and argues that its basic function is to allow a speaker to express commitment to the factuality of a proposition (Kim, Tautological Infinitive, 75). Callaham argues that in the majority of its appearances in the HB, the infinitive absolute features in modal contexts. In these contexts, the infinitive absolute construction (which Callaham calls the paronomastic infinitive absolute)
The infinitive absolute can also describe the mode of an action, especially the degree or intensity (e.g., the extreme, limited or continuous manner) of the action.\(^8^9\) This occurs mainly (but not exclusively) in non-modal contexts where the factuality of events is not contested. Accordingly, van der Merwe points out that the information structure of the context in which the infinitive absolute appears (whether the factuality of an event is discourse active or not) has a key role to play in determining its function.\(^9^0\) With regard to מָאמָר בַּמַּעֲשֶׂה in Lam 5:22, the speakers’ complaint in vv. 2-18, their questions in v. 20 concerning the duration of their abandonment by YHWH and their pleas for restoration in v. 21 indicate that the poet of Lam 5 presents the speakers’ experience of divine rejection as a factual reality. The infinitive absolute either draws focus on the degree or intensity of the rejection expressed by the finite verb, or it helps to confirm the speakers’ conviction of the factuality of this divine action. The choice between these possible interpretations of the infinitive absolute construction will, to some extent, be determined by the meaning one ascribes to כי אם. This, in turn, will have an impact on the perceived rhetorical force of the pleas in v. 21.\(^9^1\) If כי אם has a restrictive sense, it

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\(^{88}\) Cf., e.g., Kim, *Tautological Infinitive*, 64-89.

\(^{89}\) Van der Merwe, “Infinitive Absolute,” 78-79. Cf. also Callaham, *Modality*, 189-208, who notes that infinitives absolute adverbially intensify the verbal idea in non-modal contexts.

\(^{90}\) Van der Merwe, “Infinitive Absolute,” 81, 82.

\(^{91}\) Callaham, *Modality*, 58, claims that the infinitive absolute construction in Lam 5:22 has an epistemic speculative modal sense. This means that a speaker “considers that a proposition may be true, though it is not necessarily true” (Callaham, *Modality*, 57). On this interpretation of the infinitive absolute construction, Lam 5:22 indicates that YHWH may have rejected his people, but the poet does not assert this directly. In view of the speculation concerning YHWH’s rejection of his people, it is also not certain whether the pleas for restoration in v. 21 will be realised. It is true that the interpretation of v. 22 has a bearing on the matter of YHWH’s possible reconciliation with the speakers in the future as it is articulated in the previous verse. In my opinion, however, Callaham’s interpretation of the infinitive absolute construction in Lam 5:22 does not account for the fact that כי אם can be interpreted in various ways and that these different interpretation options impact on the rhetoric of the passage, including the meaning of the infinitive absolute. Furthermore, it does not reckon with the possibility that the rejection referred to in vv. 20 and 22 (as it is formulated in the MT) can be construed as an experienced reality for the speakers. The rejection might also be presented as a reality because divine abandonment is a theme that appears in other
is possible that the pleas of v. 21 might still be realised, but it depends on the degree to which YHWH has rejected the community: “...unless you have completely rejected us.” On this interpretation of the utterance, the infinitive absolute highlights the extent of the rejection. This would also be the case if כי אם is understood in an adversative sense. Such an interpretation of כי אם and the infinitive absolute entirely rules out the possibility of a restoration of the relationship between YHWH and the community: “but instead you have completely rejected us.” In Gordis’s interpretation of כי אם, it introduces a subordinate clause which indicates that the pleas of v. 21 are addressed to YHWH in spite of the fact that he has rejected the community. According to this concessive interpretation of כי אם, the infinitive absolute would confirm the factuality of the rejection: “…even though you have indeed/truly rejected us.” A concessive understanding of כי אם is, however, also compatible with the view that the infinitive absolute in this verse marks the intensity of the action of the finite verb: “…even though you have completely rejected us.” On this reading of the opening colon of Lam 5:22, the speakers have no illusions about the serious nature of the breach in their relationship with YHWH. In spite of their conviction that YHWH has completely rejected them, they nevertheless plead with him to restore them to himself. Their plea for restoration therefore has the character of “hope against hope.”

The Old Greek text of Lam 5:22 presents a literal translation of the verse. The Greek wording imitates the word order of the Hebrew and apart from כי אם, all the constituent parts of the Hebrew words and clauses are represented by a Greek equivalent. The Hebrew infinitive absolute plus finite verb construction is rendered in Greek by a present participle followed by a finite form of the same verb in the aorist tense (ἀπωθούµενος ἀπώσω).

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laments (e.g., Sumerian city laments) and the poet of Lam 5 might have wanted to incorporate this theme into the rhetoric of the communal lament he put into writing.

The interpretation of the infinitive absolute as an adverbial modifier that describes the intensive degree of the accompanying qatal verb contributes to the semantic parallelism between the two cola of the verse. Whereas the two verbal phrases מאסתנו and קצפת עלינו correspond with one another, the infinitive absolute construction in the first colon corresponds to the adverbial qualification עד in the second colon.

In view of the fact that the Greek language does not have an exact equivalent for the Hebrew infinitive absolute construction, Emanuel Tov, “Renderings of Combinations of the Infinitive Absolute and Finite Verbs in the Septuagint: Their Nature and Distribution,” in The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 247-256, shows that the translators of the Greek Jewish scriptures used different Greek constructions to translate it: (1) the combination of an infinitive and a finite verb, (2) a finite verb and adverb, (3) a finite verb together with a Greek noun (in the accusative or dative case), (4) the combination of a participle and a finite verb, (5) a finite verb and an adjective, and (6) a finite verb alone. The Greek translator of Lamentations usually rendered infinitive
unidiomatic, even Hebraistic, use of the Greek participle. Nevertheless, it implies that the translator understood the infinitive absolute in his Hebrew Vorlage to have an adverbial function. In the case of LXX Lam 5:22, the participle ἀπωθούµενος might express the means by which the action of the main verb ἀπώσω is accomplished. The verb ἀπωθέω means “to push back/aside,” but it also has the figurative sense “to reject” in its semantic field. The Greek translator employed forms of this verb to render three Hebrew verbs in Lamentations: שפכים (Lam 3:45; 5:22), רצ, (nip‘al) “to be cut off,” that is, to be lost or destroyed (Lam 3:54) and רע, “to reject” (Lam 2:7; 3:17, 31). According to Assan-Dhôte, these renderings imply that God’s rejection of his people is a theme that is emphasised throughout the Greek translation of Lamentations.

Another example of the literal nature of the verse’s Greek translation is the rendering of שפכים. The Greek translator represented both parts of this compound adverb with a Greek equivalent: έως σφόδρα.

Turning to the Greek counterpart of כי אם in the MT, ὅτι appears to be a translation of כי alone. This might only be the result of the Greek translator’s interpretation of the verse’s difficult opening words and does not necessarily imply a variant Hebrew Vorlage. The translator also rendered the other appearance of כי אם in Lamentations (3:32) with ὅτι. In both verses, ὅτι has a

absolute constructions by means of a participle and a (cognate) finite verb (Lam 1:2, 1:20, 3:52 and 5:22). However, in one instance (Lam 3:20), he translated the construction with only a finite verb.


Sollamo, “LXX Renderings,” 105, points out that the participial construction used to translate the infinitive absolute is “passable,” albeit unidiomatic, Greek. These “paronomastic participles” in the LXX are, in her opinion, either modal or pleonastic.


Assan-Dhôte and Moatti-Fine, Baruch, 176, 284.

Albrektson, Studies in the Text, 207.
causal function. Nevertheless, Rudolph refers to six Hebrew manuscripts collated by Kenicott that contain the reading י instead of ב at Lam 5:22. Furthermore, the Peshitta translation equivalent, ܕ, implies that the Syriac translator only rendered ב. It is, therefore, possible that the Old Greek and Peshitta translations were based on Hebrew Vorlagen that differed slightly from the wording of Codex Leningradensis. י can be considered as the lectio difficilior and the minus of בא in some extant manuscripts (and probably the Hebrew Vorlagen of the Greek and Syriac translations) can be attributed to a scribal error.

The causal sense of ὅτι means that v. 22 in the Old Greek text supplies the reason for the pleas in v. 21. Since the Lord rejected the speakers and was very angry with them, they cannot restore the relationship with God themselves and they cannot, on their own steam, return to the former times when they enjoyed the Lord’s good graces. Therefore, in v. 21, they plead with the Lord to turn them back to him and to renew their days like before, that is, to bring them back into a happy relationship with him. In view of God’s rejection and anger mentioned in v. 22, the speakers in the Greek translation seem to recognise that the restoration of their former relationship with the Lord is his prerogative, not theirs. In other words, the realisation of what they hope for is totally dependent on the Lord.

D CONCLUSION

This study attempts to make a small contribution to a better understanding of LXX Lam as a witness to the content of Lam 5:19-22 by means of comparative analyses of the Greek and Hebrew wordings of these verses. The analyses focused on the Greek translation’s presentation of the hope in Lam 5:19-22 and examined both the translation technique and the reasons for differences between the LXX and MT wordings of the four verses.

The analyses lead to the conclusion that LXX Lam 5:19-22 can be described, in general, as a quantitative, formal equivalent translation of a Hebrew text that was close to, but not identical to the consonantal base of the MT (as represented by Codex Leningradensis). At vv. 19 and 22 the differences between the LXX and the MT are, in all probability, the result of variant readings.

100 Concerning the causal meaning of ὅτι, see Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Orti causale in Septuagint Greek,” in On the Trail of Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 17-36.
101 Rudolph, Klagelieder, 258.
102 Rudolph, Klagelieder, 258, suggests that בא might be a secondary plus which can be explained as a dittograph of the first two letters of בא, but Schäfer, “Lamentations,” 136, notes that בא could have been omitted by haplography or a phonological error. The presence of mem and 'aleph in the following words of the clause could have triggered the error.
Concerning the hope in LXX Lam 5:19-22, the conjunction δέ in v. 19 explicitly states the contrast between the Lord, who dwells forever, and the symbol of his earthly abode, Mount Zion, which is destroyed and deserted (v. 18). The two clauses of this verse in the Greek translation portray God as a sovereign lord who remains unaffected by the disasters that have befallen the community and Zion. The speakers thereby confess that the Lord is in a position for them to pin their hopes on. In this regard, the community cherishes the hope that the Lord will in the future restore their former relationship. This hope is articulated in v. 21 by means of the two imperatives addressed to the Lord. The fact that the speakers actually voice their pleas implies that they consider the hoped for restoration and renewal to be realistic future possibilities. However, it also clear that the objects of their hope remain only possibilities and that it is far from certain that these possibilities will be realized. The hope of LXX Lam 5:21 takes the form of an uncertain attitude of expectation regarding a desired future. The uncertainty is evident from the questions and statements that flank the pleas for restoration and renewal. In v. 20, the speakers ask whether the Lord will forget them and forever abandon them, whereas in v. 22, they recognise that it is because the Lord rejected them and is angry with them that he created the distance between them. It is, therefore, solely his prerogative to restore their former relationship and thereby to fulfil the community’s hope.

In conclusion, the quantitative, formal equivalent nature of the translation and the textual character of the Greek translation’s Hebrew Vorlage cause the expression of hope in LXX Lam 5:19-22 to be similar, but not identical to its counterpart in the MT. This should be of interest to interpreters of Lamentations if they are willing to treat the Greek translation not merely as a witness to possible original Hebrew readings, but also as a legitimate witness to the content of this literary writing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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