CHAPTER FIVE

THE SEPTUAGINT OF ISAIAH 23
AND ITS HEBREW VORLAGE

Having dealt with the questions of “what” (chapter III) and “why” (chapter IV), in this chapter we will discuss the question of “how” the translator did his work. Basically this concerns the question of how the translator read and interpreted his parent text, syntactically and semantically, and which devices he may have used to realize a particular rendering of the underlying Hebrew text.

It will be clear, however, that a discussion of how the Greek text of Isa. 23 was produced presupposes an idea of the Hebrew Vorlage used by the translator. For this reason the following treatment of each verse of ch. 23, which aims to reconstruct the process from the Hebrew parent text to its Greek version, will start with the question of the underlying Hebrew text of that verse (Section B).

The preceding chapters (III and IV) may have left the reader with the impression that it was taken for granted that the Vorlage of LXX Isa. 23 was very close to MT. As has been argued in chapter I, however, it is the aim of our investigation to discuss the Greek text of Isa. 23 in two respects, namely as text (including the aspects of coherence and contents) (chapter III) and as prophecy (“vision”) (chapter IV), before the question of the underlying Hebrew text is dealt with. So far, the MT was only used for the sake of comparison with the Greek text. The advantage of this procedure is that a Greek version like that of LXX Isa. 23 can be taken seriously in its own right. The disadvantage is that the question of the Vorlage is postponed to some extent, the effect being that an analysis as presented in chapters III and IV is carried out as if the parent text were very close to MT. It is time now to check this as far as LXX Isa. 23 is concerned.

This procedure implies that the observations made and ideas developed in chapters III and IV will be taken into consideration for the question of the Hebrew Vorlage. Of particular importance is the coherence in LXX Isa. 23 which, as we have seen, can be observed in several respects; it may concern the level of syntax (see e.g. the units of vs 2-3 and of vs 12b-13), the level of style (the preference of specific terms) and the internal relationship between verses (e.g. vs 1 and vs 10; vs 2-3 and vs 10a). These traits, and others as well, are to be taken into account in reconstructing the parent text. It means at least that it
would be unwise to reconstruct the underlying Hebrew \textit{ad hoc}, that is to say, on the word level only, without due attention to the context in Greek.

Another issue to be taken seriously in reconstructing the parent text is the point that the Hebrew of the \textit{Vorlage} must be correct, or at least plausible, grammatically and idiomatically, in terms of biblical and late-biblical Hebrew. Further, a variant reading must make good sense in its supposed (Hebrew) context.\footnote{On these and other aspects of the retroversion see particularly Tov, \textit{The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint}, pp. 57ff.}

Most important are, of course, the ancient witnesses in Hebrew available besides the MT itself: the MSS of Qumran, 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a} (1Qa), 1QIsa\textsuperscript{b} (1Qb), 4QIsa\textsuperscript{a} (4Qa) and 4QIsa\textsuperscript{c} (4Qc).\footnote{As for the 4QIsaiah materials see now DJD XV (Oxford, 1997).} As we will see, these primary witnesses, dating to the period from the second century B.C. up to the first century A.D., testify to a Hebrew text of Isa. 23 which was, at that period at least, close to MT (\textit{ketib}). This does not mean that the parent text of LXX Isa. 23 is to be equated automatically with the available evidence, but it is certainly a weighty factor to be taken into consideration together with the other aspects just mentioned.

Among the Qumran witnesses of the book of Isaiah the text of 1Qa has its own place.\footnote{On this issue, see section C below.} The passage of Isa. 23 in 1Qa, therefore, will be treated separately in order to deal with this passage in 1Qa not only in relationship with LXX Isa. 23, but also in its own right (section C).

The other ancient witnesses to the Hebrew text of Isa. 23, above all the Targum, Peshitta and Vulgate, will be left out of consideration, not only because this would require a study of these translations in their own right, but also since they date to a period of the history of the Hebrew text of Isaiah in which the proto-MT was dominating the scene. The only other ancient witness that will be used (as far as available) in some cases is the version of Theodotion (i.e. the \textit{kaige}-recension of Isaiah; see also chapter VI.A).

All the aspects mentioned so far will play an important role in our attempt to reconstruct the \textit{Vorlage} of LXX Isa. 23. Though it has been stated above that the question of \textit{how} the translator created his Greek version presupposes the reconstruction of the \textit{Vorlage}, it is also true that this question of "how" can help us in finding an answer to remarkable differences between LXX and the supposed Hebrew text. As we have indicated already in chapter III.A, and as we will discuss