CHAPTER EIGHT

'GREEK WORDS AND HEBREW MEANINGS'

Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings—Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms (SNTS Monograph Series 5; Cambridge 1967) by D. Hill demonstrates that certain words in the New Testament are used in senses which reflect their Hebraic background (through the LXX) rather than their natural Greek heritage. In the wake of that study, the following analysis centers on a few words which carry some senses which have been determined by the Hebrew together with a lexicographical description of these words in full. At the end of each analysis a sample entry for a LXX lexicon is suggested.

1. δικαίωμα

LSJ describes the basic meaning of δικαίωμα as a legal term (I), a term connected with the world of lawsuits. It also provides (II) the meaning ‘ordinance, decree’ for the LXX and subsequent literature.

act of right, opp. δίκη, Arist.; duty Philo 2.199; prop. amendment of a wrong, opp. δικαιοπράγημα, Aristotle; hence:

I  
| a. | judgement, penalty, Plato |
| b. | justification, plea of right, Thucydides I 41.1, Isocrates, Aristotle, LXX 2 Ki 19.28(29), PLond ii AD |
| c. | pl. pleadings, documents in a suit, papyri iii B.C., also credentials pap ii A.D. |
| d. | act of δικαίωμα i 3, N.T. |

II  
| ordinance, decree, LXX Gen 26.5, Exod 15.26 (pl.), al., NT |

Discussion:

[I] LSJ records one occurrence of the meaning 'justification' for the LXX. In the ThDNT this sense is defined as 'legal ground or claim,' exemplified by 2 Sam 19:29 (listed as 'LXX 2 Ki' in LSJ):

2 Sam 19:29  

καὶ τί ἐστιν μοι ἡτί δικαίωμα καὶ τοῦ κεκραγέναι  
με ἢτι πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα  
What further right have I to cry to the king?  
= ἢτί ἢ ἐστιν ἢ ἡτί νῦν ἡτίς ἡτίς ἐτί καὶ ἡτίς ἡτίς ἡτίς
This sense of δικαίωμα comes close to the meaning recorded for classical Greek by LSJ (justification), but it is better defined in ThDNT with the same example from Thuc. I 41,1 δικαιώματα τάδε πρός υμᾶς ξομεν, referring to the established legal claims of allies. At the same time, the meaning of δικαίωμα in 2 Samuel is rightly determined on the basis of the Greek context as ‘justification.’

The word is also used in a similar sense as ‘cause’ or ‘case’:

2 Chr 6:35 καὶ ποιήσεις τὸ δικαίωμα αὐτῶν
And You will handle their case.

Jer 18:19 εἰσάκουσον τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ δικαιώματός μου
Listen to the voice of my case. Cf. also 11:20.

This is the only overlapping sense between the LXX and the general meanings of that word recorded in LSJ. The situation differs for the ThDNT, Bauer, Wörterbuch, and subsequently for BAGD, which gives the following description:

1. regulation, requirement, commandment (so mostly LXX; Philo; Josephus; Cass. Dio (ii-iii A.D.; P. Oxy 1119, 15 τῶν ἐξαιρέτων τῆς ἡμετέρας πατρίδος δικαιώματων).

2. righteous deed (Arist. 1135a, 12f; 1359a, 25; 1373b, 1; 3 Km 3:28; Bar 2:19; N.T.).


The meaning which apparently reflects the most frequent sense of δικαίωμα in the LXX (defined as ‘ordinance’, ‘decree’ in LSJ and as ‘regulation, requirement, commandment’ in BAGD) is not documented outside the LXX according to LSJ, but is documented according to BAGD, viz., in Dio Cassius (ii-iii CE) and in P. Oxy 1119 (254 CE).

[2,3] Another difference between the two lexica is that BAGD (as well as ThDNT) adds a meaning ‘righteous deed’ for which it provides support from Aristotle, not recorded by LSJ. Three issues are at stake:

1. Does a meaning ‘righteous deed’ exist for the LXX, as indicated by BAGD?

2. Do the two possibly separate meanings, ‘righteous deed’ and ‘justice’ appear in the LXX?

3. Is one of these senses, or possibly both, supported by external evidence?

We first turn to the best examples from the LXX relating to the meanings ‘righteous deed’ and ‘justice’:

1 Kgs 3:28 φρόνησις θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ τοῦ ποιεῖν δικαίωμα
The wisdom of God was in him (scil. Solomon) to do justice/a righteous act.

Prov 8:20 ἐν δόξῃ δικαιοσύνης περιπατώ, καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τρίβων δικαίωματος ἀναστρέφομαι