CHAPTER EIGHT

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN LXX-ISAIAH

To this point I have focused on isolated verses or short units to establish elements of the translator’s Übersetzungsweise and to reveal the weakness in pillars of one common conception of it. However, because I wish to provide an alternative view of the translator’s work, I want to explore the translator’s Übersetzungsweise in a lengthy unit, Isaiah 28. Although there is not space to address each and every feature of the chapter, this reading will suffice to demonstrate how the translator went about forming it into a literary unit.

On first glance, this chapter might seem a loose collection of ad hoc renderings. However, a closer reading provides prima facie evidence that the translator produced a coherent unit. Evidence of that appears already in the first verse:1

1 οὐκαὶ τῷ στεφάνῳ τῆς ὑβρεῶς
οἱ μισθωτοὶ Εφραίμ
τῷ ἄνθος τὸ ἐκπεσόν ἐκ τῆς δόξης
ἐπὶ τῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ παχέος
οἱ μεθύοντες ἄνευ οἴνου

The most striking equivalence is οἱ μεθύοντες ἄνευ οἴνου (‘those drunk without wine’) for ἠλικίμ (‘struck with wine’),2 an equivalence the translator produced, according to Seeligmann, under the impress of 51:21:3

диὰ τούτου ἔχουσε τεταπεινωμένη
tεπείραται οὐκ ἀπὸ οἴνου
καὶ μεθύουσα οὐκ ἀπὸ οἴνου

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1 Because citing all witnesses to every verse of chapter 28 would lengthen this chapter unreasonably, differences between the mt, the dss, and the versions will be noted only when deemed pertinent.

2 1QIsa = mt. S’s στυβά, ἄνθος τὸ ἐκπεσόν, ἐπὶ τῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ παχέος, ‘who are dazed by wine’, and V’s errantes a vino, ‘wandering from wine’, are likely guesses, while T’s ὀφθαλμός, ‘beaten by wine’, is more precise.

3 Seeligmann, Septuagint Version, 71. This conception finds a parallel even closer at hand, in 29:9:

Even in this case, the point remains that the final clause of 28:1 is rendered in the light of other passages that use drunkenness metaphorically.
Spurring him to perceive a link between 51:21 and 28:1 (besides the similar phrases about being “drunk without wine”) might have been the forms נֶבֶר in 28:1 and נָבֵר in 51:21. While the translator interpreted the sibilant of נָבֵר as a סִינ in 28:1 (οἱ μισθωτοὶ) but the sibilant of נָבֵר in 51:21 (καὶ μεθύοντας), the formal similarity may have attracted the comparison. And even though he chose to render נָבֵר as נָבֵר in 28:1, his rendering of δὲ δὲ by οἱ μεθύοντες ὅπερ οἴνον makes οἱ μισθωτοὶ Ἐφραίμ the topic of the text, which affects interpretation of בֵּשֶׁר in v. 7:

_representation of ωαί does not exist in the LXX.

The most significant difference arises in the final clause, whose relationship to the προς is more oblique than the remainder of the verse. φύσιμο occurs elsewhere only in Num 16:30 and Job 20:8. In the latter passage, ὀπερ φύσιμο νυκτερινόν is a sensible equivalent for μισθωτοί. However, Num 16:30 presents a unique case. In the contest over whether Moses’ authority is genuine, Moses announces that if the deaths of the...