CHAPTER SEVEN

GENTILES, ESCHATOLOGY, AND MESSIANISM IN LXX-AMOS

This chapter brings together three topics that are related in LXX-Amos: Gentiles, eschatology, and messianism. Differences between the MT and LXX emphasize these topics in the LXX and suggest they were important to the translator. As mentioned in the previous chapters concerning the biases and beliefs of the translator, there is not a systematic development of the theology of the translator in LXX-Amos; instead there are hints of his beliefs in the translation, especially in passages that were difficult or obscure in the Vorlage. He apparently finds reference to some of his biases and concerns in such passages, and at other times such passages give him opportunity to develop further or to introduce his biases.

Whether such differences from the MT were intentional or not they still reflect to some degree the biases of the translator. Knibb summarizes well the point intended here.

The cliché “all translation involves interpretation” is no less true for being a cliché, as anyone who has ever attempted to translate an ancient or a modern text can testify. The unintentional as well as the deliberate changes introduced by a translator, often simply to clarify obscurities in the original, inevitably betray something of the historical and social circumstances, and the intellectual and religious milieu in which the translation was made. It certainly cannot be excluded that some of the differences between the Septuagint and Hebrew text were deliberately introduced for theological reasons or reflect exegetical tradition. . . . Equally it cannot be excluded that there are some messianic interpretations in the Septuagint, whether deliberately introduced or not.

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1 The topics addressed in this chapter are also related to the topics in chapter six, as will be evident.

Many of those who have done work in LXX-Amos have observed that it contains an eschatological emphasis beyond that found in the MT. The passages addressed in this section are important examples of that emphasis.

7:1

Amos 7:1–3 is the first of five visions in the book (cf. 7:4–6; 7:7–9; 8:1–3; and 9:1–4). The first two visions are similar in theme (the prophet is interceding with the Lord for Israel in order to avoid a catastrophe) and vocabulary (compare esp. 7:2b–3 with 7:5–6). In both Amos intercedes because Israel does not realize its vulnerability and weakness (ὁ πόλεμος ὁ ἄρλος ἴας ἱδίαν πορεία ἐκ μιατὸς ἓς ἔστιν, 7:2, 5). The first vision is a plague of locusts led by a “king Gog”; Amos pleads for mercy and the Lord relents concerning this judgment.

The translation of Amos 7:1 differs greatly from MT and has been the subject of much discussion. The MT text reads, “Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings” (לֵךְ הָרָמִים אֶלֽוֹת הָיוֹת יֶזֶר וְנֶגֶר בְּכֶתְּלוּת עֵלָ֣ית וְלֹלֶּךְ הָיוֹת לֶךְ יֶזֶר וְנֶגֶר מֵהָֽלֹלֶךְ). The translator renders it, “Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold a swarm of locusts coming at dawn, and behold one locust was Gog the king” (οὕτως ἔδει ἵνα κύριος καὶ ἰδοῦ ἐπιγνώνη ἀρχιδον ἐξομενή ἐπιθνή καὶ ἰδοῦ βροιχὸς εἰς Γωγ ὁ βασιλεύς).

I will summarize the main issues concerning this translation. It is generally believed that the rendering “swarm” (ἐπιγνώνη) for ἴας ("form, forming") is a result of the translator reading the Hebrew as the noun יֶזֶר ("form, forming"). The basic idea of the Greek term is “offspring”

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5 See also the discussion of this verse in chapter three.