ISAIAH IN THE SEPTUAGINT

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I

The Old Greek of Isaiah (LXX Isaiah) is a very interesting witness to the history of interpretation and reception of the book of Isaiah at an early date (ca. the middle of the second century BCE). This is the more so since LXX Isaiah represents an unique case within the LXX of the Old Testament as a whole, in being a free translation which reflects at several places an actualizing interpretation of the Isaianic prophecies.

It is the aim of this contribution, first to present a survey of research on LXX Isaiah since the 1930s, and secondly, to examine a particular passage (LXX Isa 8:11-16) in order to give an illustration of the profile of this translation.

II

The work of two scholars, J. Ziegler and I. L. Seeligmann, has become of great importance to the study of LXX Isaiah.1 Ziegler has laid the basis for research on LXX Isaiah by producing a critical edition of LXX Isaiah within the framework of the Göttingen Septuagint Project. He has also written the well known publication entitled Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaias.2 As to the study of the relationship between LXX and MT he makes the following programmatic remark:

Um das Verhältnis der Js-LXX zum MT recht zu würdigen, muss zunächst die ganze Persönlichkeit des Übersetzters vor uns erstehen.3

Several aspects of LXX Isaiah are discussed with quite a number of examples. It is argued that a tendency to explication and to

1 For earlier literature on LXX Isaiah, see A. van der Kooij, Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches (OBO 35; Freibourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 23-25.
2 J. Ziegler, Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaias (ATAbh 12.3; Münster: Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934).
3 Ziegler, Untersuchungen, 7.
paraphrase is typical of this translation, although some of these variants might have been present in the underlying Hebrew original. It is pointed out that LXX Isaiah is not to be regarded as a literal rendering e.g. in view of the large number of minuses and pluses. A minus seems to be due, in most cases, to the non-rendering of synonymous words or clauses, whereas most pluses are best understood as part of the tendency of the translator to make things explicit and clear. It is further pointed out that the translator wrote good Koine, in particular in his rendering of images and comparisons. Ziegler gives also much attention to the influence of the Hellenistic milieu of Egypt by comparing the vocabulary of LXX Isaiah with what is known from papyri. Important are his observations with regard to lexical choices related to agriculture, botany, economics, and to jurisdiction ("gerade in den Fachwörtern des Rechtslebens zeigt der Übersetzer eine gute Kenntnis"). Finally, another important characteristic of LXX Isaiah to which Ziegler has drawn our attention is the following:

Der Js-Übersetzer scheint überhaupt sein Buch sehr gut dem Inhalte nach im Gedächtnis gehabt zu haben; denn es begegnen viele Wiedergaben, die sich nur auf Grund der Exegese nach sinnverwandten Stellen erklären lassen. Gerade bei der Js-LXX darf irgendein Wort oder Wendung, die vom MT abweicht, nicht aus dem Zusammenhang genommen werden und für sich allein betrachtet werden, sondern muss nach dem ganzen Kontext der Stelle und ihren Parallelen gewertet werden; erst so lässt sich manche Differenz der LXX gegenüber dem MT erklären.

In his study, titled *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, Seeligmann offers also many valuable observations and suggestions which add to a better understanding of LXX Isaiah. This applies particularly to the following passage of his book:

This translation, in fact, is almost the only one among the various parts of the Septuagint which repeatedly reflects contemporaneous history . . . . those places where the paraphrase of the text contains allusions to events happening in the more or less immediate neighbourhood of the translator's place of residence give one a surprising image of the translator's notion that

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5 Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*, 56-80.
7 Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*, 135 (with examples, pp. 135-175).