CHAPTER 3

Greek Translations of Hebrew Left Dislocation Constructions in LXX Genesis

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1 Introduction

The Septuagint (LXX) holds great significance for more than one field of research. This corpus of Greek Jewish writings include translations of writings composed in Hebrew and Aramaic (especially, the so-called Old Greek [OG] texts),1 as well as works that were originally written in Greek, such as the Wisdom of Solomon and 2–4 Maccabees. As the earliest translations of Semitic literature into an Indo-European language, the Old Greek texts are relevant to translation studies and the examination of corpora of documents written in Koiné Greek. Although they are not eyewitness reports or mirror images of it, these translations are, nevertheless, potential sources of knowledge about the historical and cultural contexts in which they came into being.2 They embody early interpretations of the wordings and contents of their Hebrew-Aramaic

1 “Old Greek” is the term used here for the earliest recoverable wording of the original Greek translation of a writing.
2 Unfortunately, we know very little about the scribes who were responsible for the translations and the exact circumstances and procedures of the translation process. See Emanuel Tov, “The Septuagint Translation of Genesis as the First Scripture Translation,” in In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes: Studies in the Biblical Text in Honour of Anneli Äijmeläeus (ed. Kristin De Troyer, T. Michael Law and Mariketta Liljestöm; CBET 72; Leuven / Paris / Walpole, 2014), 47–48. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that Greek translations were made in Alexandria, Judaea and possibly in other places. Whereas the writings of the Torah were, in all probability, translated by five different translators during the third century BCE, the other translations were produced between the second century BCE and the second century CE. See Ernst Würtzwein and Alexander Achilles Fischer, The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 100–02, and Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 131–32. According to Johann Cook and Arie van der Kooij, Law, Prophets, and Wisdom: On the Provenance of Translators and their Books in the Septuagint Version (CBET 68; Leuven / Paris / Walpole: Peeters, 2012), 10–11, “internal” data such as translation profile, translation equivalents (for example, lexical choices) and contents, do not provide sufficient evidence alone to determine the provenance of a translation unit. They suggest that external data from the
source texts, which often differ in small and large details from other textual representatives of Hebrew Bible and early Jewish writings. The OG texts provide data on how, for example, lexemes, grammatical constructions, idioms and imagery in the discourses of Hebrew-Aramaic literary writings were rendered into Greek and, in translated form, facilitated or hindered the successful transmission of information communicated by the Semitic source texts. They are, therefore, important for philological examinations of the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish writings, as well as for a better understanding of these texts' histories of development. In addition to their value for philology and textual criticism, the data culled from analyses of the Greek translations as representatives of the wordings and contents of the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish writings might also be interesting to branches of linguistics. This study remains within the ambit of the related fields of philology and textual criticism and proposes to examine the Greek translations of a particular way of structuring information in utterances found in the Hebrew Bible writings, namely left dislocation constructions.

Left dislocation is a particular way of structuring information in an utterance. A constituent (for example, a noun phrase, prepositional phrase, or pronoun) is placed in a position outside the border of a matrix clause and the referent of this dislocated element is related semantically or pragmatically to a clause-internal item. Larger historical-cultural context are also needed to resolve the provenance issue (if it can be established at all).

Seeing as the Greek translations of Jewish scriptures were used in the New Testament writings and early Christian compositions, they are essential to analyses of these works. These interesting matters will, however, not be addressed in this study.


Gross, “Extraposition,” 892, refers to left dislocation as a stylistic device and defines it in the following terms: ‘one part of a sentence, the so-called ‘pendens,’ is removed from its normal contextual position and transferred to the beginning of the sentence; the remainder of