INTRODUCTION

In this contribution in honour of Gene Ulrich I would like to discuss two cases in the book of Isaiah where the Old Greek (LXX) of the book has a long minus (a verse, or part of a verse): Isa 2:22; 36:7. The intriguing question is whether in these and similar cases the minus reflects a different parent text in Hebrew, or whether it can be ascribed to the translator. Most scholars are of the opinion that the case of Isa 2:22 is an example of the former, while the case of Isa 36:7 is considered by many as an example of the latter option. Such a variety is in line with the principle that each case should be evaluated in its own right. Recently, Eugene Ulrich has written about these and other cases in LXX Isaiah and in 1QIsaא, in a very stimulating article, showing, among other things, the complexities of some cases.¹

In order to contribute to the debate I will deal with the two cases mentioned above, and for reasons of method I will do so in a twofold way: on the one hand by studying a given passage in MT in exegetical and literary respects, and on the other by dealing with the LXX in some detail by raising the question whether the Old Greek might contain indications of why a given passage in Hebrew has been left out by the translator.

ISAIAH 2:22

| MT |izador ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν οἷς ἐστιν σπνό | איבר הַדָּם מִצְרֶא הָאָדָם אֶפְּרָי נְשָׁמָה הָאֲדָמָה: |
| 1QIsaא |idor לְבָּבוּן נַפְשֵׁים בְּאֶפֶרֶנֶם נָשָׁמָה נָשָׁמָה נָשָׁמָה נָשָׁמָה נָשָׁמָה |
| LXX | Aquila παύσασθε ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ |

The text of Isa 2:22 (“Turn away from man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?” [RSV]) raises two problems, (a) an exe-

getical one, how to interpret this verse, and (b) a text critical one, what is the significance of it not being attested in LXX?

As is well known, the interpretation of the verse is disputed. Some consider it as a “Stossseufzer eines Lesers,” directed to eschatological teachers and conveying the message not to trouble mortal men with eschatological dreams (“Alpträume” [Kaiser]). According to this reading of the text, it voices scepticism towards eschatological prophecies, in a way similar to the book of Qohelet. Another interpretation is the one proposed by Blenkinsopp. His rendering of the verse runs thus: “Leave the rest of humanity alone, doomed to perish as they are, of what value are they?” (p. 8). He takes the verse as “an admonition … to the purified remnant in Israel” (p. 194), and for a similar exegesis he points to 1QS 5:16-19 where Isa 2:22 is understood as an injunction to segregate themselves from the rest of humanity” (ibid.). Yet, another interpretation, which is the more current one, consists of the idea that v. 22, to put it in the words of Sweeney, is “a wisdom saying which instructs the reader to avoid reliance on man.”

Cf., for example, the REB: “Do not rely on mere mortals.” This interpretation is also the most ancient one, as is clear from the commentary of Eusebius of Caesarea. Commenting on the Greek text which goes back to Aquila (see above) he states that the verse means that one should not trust mortal men (μὴ προσέχειν ἐκείνοις μὴ δὲ εἶς ἀνθρώπους ἐλπὶς ὧν ἡ τοὺς …).

The last, third, interpretation seems to me on the right track, as it makes good sense of the text, particularly if read in its actual context. In this regard, three elements deserve attention. First, the term νῆπιον, “the man.” Some scholars believe it should be taken in the sense of “humanity.” For contextual reasons, however, it is more likely to think of “the man” in the sense of the strong and arrogant man in

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4 M. A. Sweeney, Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition (BZAW 171; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988) 145.