THE RABBINIC TRADITION CONCERNING THE 
"ALTERATIONS" INSERTED INTO THE GREEK
PENTATEUCH AND THEIR RELATION TO THE
ORIGINAL TEXT OF THE LXX*

BY

EMANUEL TOV

Jerusalem

Various passages within rabbinic literature cite a tradition of a
series of alterations which were inserted into the Greek translation
of the Torah. In these passages a list of 10(11), 13, 15 or 18(16)
such alterations appears along with a brief account of the circum-
cumstances under which they were inserted in the translation. The
present paper seeks to understand the background of this rabbinic
tradition, as well as its importance for Septuagint studies. Special
attention is given to the implications of certain details in the list for
the original form of the LXX.

The Sources

The principal sources for the rabbinic tradition are as follows: b.
Meg.9a; y. Meg. 1, 1, 4., p. 72a; Mek. Exod 12, 40; Midr.
Hagadot Exod 4, 20; Abot de-R. Nat. version B., chap. 37; Sop.
1. 7; Yal. Shim. Gen, 3; Midr. Tan. Exod para 22. Additional
sources are listed in Higger, Soferim, 101').

* For the translation of the text of this article I am indebted to Mr. P. LIPPI,
for that of the notes to Mr. G. MARQUIS.

') The following bibliographical abbreviations are used:
APTOWITZER = V. APTOWITZER, "Die rabbinischen Berichte über die Entstehung
der Septuaginta", Haqedem 2 (1909), 11-27, 102-122; 3 (1910), 4-17.
GEIGER = A. GEIGER, Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel (Breslau 1857).
TALMON = S. TALMON, "The Three Scrolls of the Law that were found in the Tem-
ple Court", Textus 2 (1962), 14-27.
MÜLLER = K. MÜLLER, "Die rabbinischen Nachrichten über die Anfänge derSep-
tuaginta", Forschung zur Bibel, Festschrift J. Ziegler (Würzburg 1972), 73-93.
FRIEDMANN = M. FRIEDMANN, Onkelos und Akylas (Wien 1890).
FRANKEL = Z. FRANKEL, Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta (Leipzig 1841).
The List

The various sources cite a different number of alterations and at times explicitly state the number at the head of the list. Such is the case with Abot de-R. Nat. and Midr. Tan. Exod para 22 which speak of 10 alterations (though the list itself includes either 11 or 14 instances), and Midr. Hagadol on Exod 4, 20 and Deut 4, 19 which speak of 18 alterations (though the list in Exod includes only 16 alterations). Other sources do not indicate any number at the head of their lists even though the alterations themselves are mentioned there: b. Meg. 9a; Mek. Exod 12, 40; Yal. Shim. Gen, 3.

It would be natural to assume that the shortest list (10 or 11 alterations) reflects the original formulation of the rabbinic tradition, and that the longer lists expanded it; however, there is no certainty that this assumption is correct, since the list and the story associated with it developed not only by expansion but also by abridgment.

The sources which know of 13 or 15 alterations are the most wide-spread and presumably reflect the central tradition. The difference between these two traditions lies in the inclusion or exclusion of the biblical passages numbered 10 and 11, to be mentioned below. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the list having 16 alterations (Midr. Hagadol Exod 4, 20) came about as a result of the addition of biblical passages similar to those originally in the list, hence that list is secondary. Among the other traditions, 10 or 18 alterations are mentioned in the headings of the list (though the lists themselves contain some other figure); it would appear that these figures have been influenced by other lists of 10 items in the context (Abot de-R. Nat. ibid.; Abot chap. 5, 1-9) and in the same way by the list of 18 emendations of the scribes in the Hebrew text of the Bible which, too, is known from rabbinic literature^2). The tendencies toward expansion and abridgment are also noticeable in the items comprising the list themselves, both regarding the biblical citations and their explanations. This problem is particularly acute