THE HEBRAIC CHARACTER OF SEPTUAGINT GREEK

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The object of a translator obviously is to render a document clearly into the vernacular. Upon reading the LXX, however, it is often difficult to obtain the sense without comparing the Hebrew text. In other words, there is a Hebraic cast to the language of the LXX. It is well-known that the Greek of the LXX is the koine, of which the colloquial element is amply illustrated from the papyri; yet we have to admit that the language of the LXX is different in many ways from other koine Greek. In his Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek, Thackeray maintains (p. 26) that the papyri “have given the death-blow to, or at any rate have rendered extremely improbable, the theory once held of the existence of a ‘Jewish-Greek’ jargon, in use in the Ghettos of Alexandria and other centres where Jews congregated.” It certainly would be too bold to speak of a “Jewish-Greek jargon”, and yet we can hardly avoid speaking of a Jewish-Greek, which was in use in the synagogues and in religious circles. If the Jews who read the LXX did not understand Hebrew, we may infer at least that the translation made sense to them and that it was intelligible when it was read in the synagogue.

In speaking of Jewish-Greek usage we may start with the use of the conjunction καί. Thus in the paratactic construction in LXX Greek as in Hebrew, the conjunction ‘and’ may signify ‘that’ in the sense that it introduces what is really a substantive clause: Gen. iv 8, “And it came to pass while they were in the field, (καί ἀνέστη Κάιν) that Cain rose up ….” — 1 Sam. x 5, “And it shall come to pass …., (καί ἀπαντήσεις) that thou wilt meet ….” — 2 Sam. vii 12, “And it shall come to pass (καί ἔσται) when thy days are fulfilled and thou sleepest with thy fathers, (καί ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου μετὰ σέ) that I will raise thy seed after thee.” — 1 Kings 1 21, “And it will come to pass …., (καί ἔσομαι ἐγώ καί Σαλομών ὁ υἱὸς μου ἀμαρτωλός) that I and my son Solomon shall be offenders.”

Vetus Testamentum,
As in Hebrew, a circumstantial clause may be indicated in LXX Greek with the conjunction 'and': 2 Sam. iv 10, in connexion with the report of the assassin of Ish-Bosheth, we meet the circumstantial clause καὶ αὐτὸς ἤν ὃς εὐαγγελίζομεν ἐνώπιόν μου (while we was as one bringing good tidings in my presence). — 2 Sam. xi 4, "And he lay with her, (καὶ αὐτὴ ἰσχυρά καθ᾿ ἑαυτῆς πρὸς τὸν ἐκστάσης ἔμεινε) while she was purified from her uncleanness."

As in Hebrew, the conjunction 'and' may show the beginning of the apodosis: 1 Sam. xvii 9, "If he be able to fight with me ..., then (καὶ) we shall be servants unto you." — 1 Sam. xx 6, "If thy father miss me at all, then (καὶ) thou shall say. . . ."

From this use of καὶ to introduce the apodosis, it is easy to see how the conjunction developed the meaning of 'then': Gen. iv 12, "When thou tillest the ground, (καὶ) then it will no longer yield to thee its strength." — Gen. ix 16, "When (καὶ) my bow will be in the cloud, then (καὶ) will I see to remember . . ." — 1 Sam. xvi 2, "If (καὶ) Saul hear, then (καὶ) he will slay me." — 1 Sam. xiv 52, "And Saul seeing any mighty man . . ., then (καὶ) he collected them unto himself.' — 2 Sam. x 5, "When (καὶ) they reported to David concerning the men, then (καὶ) he dispatched . . ." — 1 Kings iii 14, "And if thou wilt walk in my way . . ., then (καὶ) I will lengthen thy days." — Ezek. xxxii 15, "When (ὅτε) I scatter all those dwelling in her, then (καὶ) they shall know that I am the Lord."

Likewise the conjunction developed the sense of 'so' or 'therefore': Gen. iii : 22-23: "And now lest ever he stretch forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever. So (καὶ) the Lord God dismissed him from the paradise of luxuriousness."

From these examples of the use of καὶ, of which there are many more, it seems reasonable to believe that in the LXX the reader would not merely ramble along reading one καὶ after another; he certainly must have felt even in the paratactic construction that in many instances καὶ introduces what is really a subordinate clause, that it shows the relationship of clauses to each other, and that it indicates the sequence and dependence of ideas. Even though a Hellenistic Jew would not know Hebrew or Aramaic, it is probable that for the most part the context would lead him to the correct interpretation of καὶ in passages of this nature.

The foregoing Hebraic uses of the conjunction καὶ are, however, only an incident in the Hebraic Greek of the LXX. When it comes to the subordinate conjunction ὅτε, we have cases where Hebrew ַָּי is