

Biblical Greek and post-biblical Hebrew in the minor Greek versions

On the verb συνερίζω “to render intelligent” in a scholion on Gen 3:5, 7

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The post-Septuagint Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible are for the most part known only fragmentarily, from quotations in Church Fathers or from glosses figuring in the margins of Septuagint manuscripts. Once upon a time a full version of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus must have existed. Origen transcribed all three of them in his Hexapla, where Jerome and Eusebius could consult them. Some of them may have lived on for a while in late Antiquity among specific groups.¹ Eventually, however, they perished. Partial exceptions exist, but they are rare: a text going under the name of Theodotion was adopted early on for Daniel, and nearly came to supersede the Old Greek version.² For some books—Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations—no “Old Greek” version ever existed, and translations in the style of Theodotion

¹ Both Reinhard Ceulemans and Olivier Munnich have argued that what has come down to us of the Three originated mostly in the Hexapla, see R. Ceulemans, “Greek Christian Access to ‘The Three’, 250-600 CE,” in *Greek Scriptures and the Rabbis* (ed. T. Michael Law & Alison G. Salvesen; CBET 66; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 165-191; O. Munnich, “Les révisions juives de la Septante. Modalités et fonctions de leur transmission. Enjeux éditoriaux contemporains,” in *La Bible juive dans l'Antiquité* (éd. Rémi Gounelle, Jan Joosten; Histoire du Texte Biblique 9; Prahins: Zèbre, 2014), 141-190. This may well be true. However, some of the later versions may have lived on into Late Antiquity among Jewish or Jewish-Christian groups, and Christians may have come into contact with them at various points. Note that Clement of Alexandria quotes Ezek 18:4-9 from Aquila or Theodotion in *Stromata* II 22,135,1-2. The Greek Acts of Pilate quote the Old Testament according to a version that may perhaps be identified as Theodotion, see J. Joosten, “Le texte biblique cité dans les *Actes de Pilate*” in *La littérature apocryphe chrétienne et les Ecritures juives* (éd. R. Gounelle, B. Mounier; Publications de l'Institut Romand des Sciences Bibliques 7; Prahins: Editions du Zèbre, 2015), 181-192.

² A similar situation is found for Ezra-Nehemiah if one accepts that 1 Esdras is in fact the Old Greek equivalent of this book. In any case, the “Septuagint” of Ezra-Nehemiah (2 Esdras) belongs to the Theodotonic group. The case of Job is rather different: most Septuagint manuscripts offer the Old Greek to which fragments of “Theodotion” have been added where the Greek version seemed to be lacking. See P. J. Gentry, *The Asterisked Materials in the Greek Job* (SCS 38; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 390.

or Aquila are the very first ones that were produced.³ Naturally, it is these versions that survived until today. Apart from such special cases, however, only fragments of the minor versions were preserved.⁴

Their shattered attestation impedes the analysis of these versions. Much of a researcher's energy is taken up by the need to gather and sift the evidence, and then to present it in a clear way which nevertheless respects the uncertainties surrounding it. When all these more or less mechanical operations have been carried out, little time and energy remains to study the exegetical principles involved in the later versions. What do they set out to achieve? And why do they diverge from the Septuagint, to which they all relate as much as to their Hebrew source texts? Few global studies have addressed such questions.⁵ There remains a place, therefore, for smaller-scale in-depth studies addressing single passages. The intention of the present paper is precisely this: to provide a number of philological and exegetical remarks on a single rendering reported from the margins of Septuagint manuscripts and attested also by a Church Father. The remarks will draw on what is known about the minor versions, but, it is hoped, will also contribute to their study by adding new observations.

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In a reading reported in the second apparatus to the Göttingen edition of Genesis, the verb συνετίζω “to render (the eyes) intelligent” is substituted for διανοιγνυμι “to open (the eyes)” in two verses:

Gen 3:5

כִּי יֵדַע אֱלֹהִים כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקַחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם

“for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened”

³ Some of these late and ultra-literal versions were nevertheless revised according to even stricter rules of literalism. See notably Peter Gentry's studies on “Septuagint” and Aquila of Ecclesiastes, e.g. “Issues in the Text-History of LXX Ecclesiastes,” in *Die Septuaginta: Texte, Theologien und Einflüsse. 2. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D)*, – Wuppertal, 23. – 27.7.2008 (edited by Wolfgang Kraus and Martin Kärner; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 201-222.

⁴ The fragments are gathered in the works of Bernard de Montfaucon, *Hexaplorum Origenis quae supersunt* (Paris, 1715), conveniently accessible in the reprint in PG 15, and Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt, vols. 1–2* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875). On plans and preparations for a new collection, see A. Salvesen, “A ‘New Field’ for the Twenty-First Century? Rationale for the Hexapla Project and a Report on Its Progress” in *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Editions. Studies in Celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot* (ed. by Andrés Piquer Otero and Pablo Torijano Morales; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 286-310.

⁵ See the exemplary study of Alison Salvesen, *Symmachos in the Pentateuch* (JSS Monographs 15; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991).

LXX

ἦδαι γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐν ἧ ἡμέρᾳ φάγητε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, διανοιχθήσονται ὁμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί

“for God knew that on the day you would eat of it, your eyes would be opened”

Second apparatus

διανοιχθήσονται] θ' συνετισθήσονται *s*⁻¹³⁰ (M, 135)⁶

“(... your eyes) will be rendered intelligent”

Gen 3:7

וַתִּפְתָּחַנָּה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיָּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרֻמָּם הֵם

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked”

LXX

καὶ διηνοιχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν δύο, καὶ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι γυμνοὶ ἦσαν

“And the eyes of the two were opened, and they knew that they were naked”

Second apparatus

διηνοιχθησαν] θ' συνετίσθησαν M 343(s nom)-344'

“(the eyes of the two) were rendered intelligent...”

1. ATTRIBUTION

A first question these readings raise is which translation they reflect. The problem of attribution affects many readings of the Three. When a reading is attributed to a single version, and appears to reflect the typology of that version as far as it is known, the identification will be widely accepted. But many readings are attributed to different versions by different sources, or do not seem to fit the profile of the version to which they are ascribed. Many readings are transmitted without attribution. Some of these problems indeed come up in regard to the variant readings involving συνετίζω in Gen 3:5, 7.

The readings are attributed to Theodotion in the margin of a number of minuscules in verse 5, and in the margin of other minuscules as well as the Codex Coislianus 1 in verse 7. This information is recorded in the Göttingen edition of Genesis, with the further indication that ms. 342 has the reading *sine nomine*. Montfaucon and Field, however, in their editions of the remains

⁶ The reading is transmitted with a few variants (συνετίσθησαν, συνετίσθητε), which are almost certainly simple mistakes.

of the Hexapla, noted that the readings are attributed to Symmachus in the eleventh book of the *Hexaemeron* of Anastasius of Sinai, an author of the seventh century.⁷ They quote this source from a manuscript, but the work has recently been edited for the first time and is now accessible to all.⁸

There are different ways to resolve these conflicting indications. The alternative readings may have been found in both Theodotion and Symmachus, as Montfaucon indeed conjectures.⁹ However, since no source attributes the readings to both versions, it seems more likely that one of the two attributions is in error. As was seen above, John Wevers privileges the information transmitted in the margins of Septuagint manuscripts. Alison Salvesen, in her excellent study of Symmachus in the Pentateuch, appears to follow Wevers, for she does not include the readings in her book. No doubt the plurality of Septuagint manuscripts attesting the attribution to Theodotion has weighed heavily on their decision. Perhaps also the late date of Anastasius played a role.

Nevertheless, one cannot refrain from observing that the attitude toward the process of translation that transpires from the renderings is more typical of Symmachus than Theodotion. Theodotion is known for strict, sometimes pedantic, adherence to the Hebrew source text. One wonders why he would have diverged from the Septuagint reading at all: *διανοιχθήσονται* and *διηνοίχθησαν* are perfectly good renderings of the Hebrew words in the source text. Moreover, in all other passages where the Theodotionic equivalent of the Hebrew verb *פָּקַח* is known, it is *ἀνοίγνυμι* or *διανοίγνυμι*.¹⁰ It is true that “Theodotion” is not a unified label. In different books it may correspond to versions of different dates and backgrounds.¹¹ It is also true, however, that within the entire Theodotion family, a high degree of lexical stereotyping obtains. These considerations make the attribution to Theodotion unlikely.

Symmachus, for his part, is much better known for creative interpretations. Examples in the creation story are the rendering of *מות תמות* “dying you will die (on the day you eat of the fruit of the tree)” in Gen 2:17 as *θνητὸς*

⁷ Anastasius of Sinai, *Hexaemeron*, XI, I, 1 ὁ Σύμμαχος εἰς τὸ Διανοιχθήσονται, συνετισθήσονται τέθεικεν. Ὅμοίως καὶ εἰς τὸ Διηνοίχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν δύο, συνετίσθησαν εἴρηκε, τουτέστιν ἐσορίσθησαν καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἦλθον...

⁸ C. Kuehn, John Baggarly, S.J., eds., *Anastasius of Sinai: Hexaemeron* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 278; Rome: PIB, 2007).

⁹ Montfaucon, PG 15, 176: “forte est utriusque.”

¹⁰ See the asterisked portion of Job 27:19; Dan 9:18 θ’; as well as the verses that occur in the *kaige* sections of Kings: 2 Kgs 4:35; 6:17, 20; 19:16. Similarly Aquila in Ps 146/145:8.

¹¹ See e.g. P. Gentry, “New Ultra-Literal Translation Techniques in *kaige*-Theodotion and Aquila,” in *Die Sprache der Septuaginta/The Language of the Septuagint* (edited by E. Bons and J. Joosten; LXX.H 3; Gütersloh, Gütersloher, 2016), 202-220.

ἔσῃ “you will become mortal”, and the translation of “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil” in Gen 3:22 as ἴδε ὁ Ἀδὰμ γέγονεν ὁμοῦ ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν “see, Adam has altogether become one to know good and evil of himself.” These renderings respond to famous exegetical problems in the passages concerned, and find echoes in other ancient translations and commentaries. Precisely such a rendering is what we find in Gen 3:5, 7. In light of these considerations, Anastasius’s attribution seems on balance more probable.

2. THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VERB ΣΥΝΕΤΙΖΩ

As a rule, readings from the later versions are transmitted only if they diverge from the Septuagint. Many typical words of the Three are rare or unattested in the Septuagint. This does not mean their vocabulary is wholly original. On the contrary, in many instances, one observes that a reading in the *recentiores* links up lexically with words of the Septuagint, either words used *in loco* or, more often, elsewhere in the Greek version.¹² Whether one thinks of the later versions as recensions of the Septuagint or new translations, they certainly interact with the Old Greek version and are in constant conversation with it. The link to the Septuagint is particularly clear in the readings in Gen 3:5, 7.

The verb συνετίζω occurs 13 times in the Septuagint, and is attested also for the minor Greek versions. In addition it is found a few times in non-canonical writings dependent on the Septuagint. Absent from the New Testament, it makes a modest comeback in patristic Greek, both in quotations from the Septuagint and in original writing.¹³ The verb is wholly unattested in ancient Greek writings that are neither Jewish nor Christian. It is not found in inscriptions and documentary papyri. Although its distribution alone does not suffice to argue that συνετίζω is a *vox biblica*, a closer look at some of its earliest attestations suggests that it is. Notably, the verb is used seven times in the Septuagint of Psalms to render the *hiphil* of בִּין “to understand”:

¹² Another case illustrating how the vocabulary of the Three relates to that of the Septuagint is discussed in J. Joosten, “Source-language Oriented Remarks on the Lexicography of the Greek Versions of the Bible,” *ETHL* 81 (2005): 152-164.

¹³ See J. Joosten, “The verb συνετίζω ‘to instruct’ in the Septuagint Psalms and beyond,” in “*Må de nu förklara...*” *Om bibeltexter, religion, literature. Festschrift för Staffan Olofsson* (edited by Rosmari Lillas-Schuil et al.; Göteborg: LIR, 2018), 105-113.

Ps 118/119:27

Make me understand (הִבִּינֵנִי, συνέτισόν με) the way of your precepts.¹⁴

Within the Septuagint, συνετίζω does not occur in the Pentateuch. In fact, apart from Psalms, it is found only in translation units associated with the Theodotionic school.¹⁵ This means the occurrences in Psalms are likely the oldest ones in the Septuagintal corpus. The question arises, then, whether the Psalms translator may not have coined the verb in imitation of the Hebrew *hiphil*: just as הִבִּינֵנִי is causative in relation to בִּינֵנִי, so συνετίζω is causative in relation to συνίημι, the usual equivalent of בִּינֵנִי. The hypothesis cannot be proven, and the absence of συνετίζω in non-biblical Greek may be due to the vagaries of attestation. Even if this is so, however, the frequency of the verb in the biblical corpus needs to be explained. From obscure origins in native Greek, the verb rose to prominence only in the biblical tradition.

There can be little doubt, therefore, that the marginal reading on Gen 3:5, 7, although diverging from the Septuagint in those verses, is rooted in Septuagintal tradition. To a Jewish reader, the verb would have a biblical ring, and perhaps even evoke specific passages such as Ps 118/119:27 quoted above.

3. THE EXEGETICAL RATIONALE

Much of what is contained in the Three is of an exegetical nature. It is profitable to distinguish two types of interpretation, each of which plays a large part, although in different proportions, in the various later translations: linguistic exegesis, and contextual exegesis. The Three had a different understanding of Hebrew from the Seventy, and many passages had come to be explained differently in Jewish circles by the time the minor versions were produced. Although the renderings in Gen 3:5, 7 consist of a single word, they may correspond at once to linguistic and contextual issues.

A contextual factor is the figurative meaning of the “opening of the eyes” in Gen 3. Nothing indicates that the eyes of the first-created man and woman are closed, literally, when the serpent speaks to the woman of the benefits of the tree. In Gen 3:6 it is told that the woman “saw that the tree was good” well before eating from its fruit. Manifestly, the phrases “your eyes will be opened” and “their eyes were opened” are not to be taken literally. What is meant is that through the act of eating they will gain a different understanding

¹⁴ See also Ps 118/119:34, 73, 125, 130, 144, 169.

¹⁵ See in more detail, Joosten, “The verb συνετίζω.”

of their situation—a better one according to the snake, although not necessarily according to the narrator. In light of this figurative meaning, the rendering “to be made intelligent” makes excellent sense. A similar operation appears to underlie Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, where the occurrence of פָּקַח in Gen 3:7 was rendered not with the literal פָּתַח “to open”, as in Onkelos, but as אֶתְנַהֵר “to be illuminated”.

Whether the contextual factor was the only one motivating the rendering is doubtful, however. The figurative sense obtaining in Gen 3:5, 7 is a frequent one, and in other passages where it is found the Greek versions render it literally.¹⁶ In addition to the figurative meaning, a purely linguistic reason may have been at work. A different understanding of the Hebrew verb פָּקַח may have triggered the rendering. While in Biblical Hebrew פָּקַח almost always refers to the opening of eyes, literally or figuratively, in post-Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic the root also acquires other meanings, notably: “to open the mind, to make open-minded.”¹⁷ The adjective פָּקִיחַ means “seeing” in BH, but “bright, intelligent” in later Hebrew. The reviser who used συνετίζω appears to have been familiar with this later meaning, which he found congenial to the passage in Gen 3. A similar interpretation of the root פָּקַח is found once in the Septuagint:

Ps 146:8 MT

יְהוָה פָּקַח עֵינָיו

The LORD opens (the eyes) of the blind.

Ps 145:8 LXX

κύριος σοφοῖ τυφλοῦς

The Lord makes the blind skilled.

The meaning of the Hebrew text in this Psalm is that God will give sight to the blind. The Greek translation “he will make the blind wise” diverges from the source text because the Hebrew verb was understood differently. The rendering in Psalm 146/145:8 makes it all the more certain that the marginal rendering of Gen 3:5, 7 is not simply contextual but has a linguistic basis too.

That Symmachus sometimes bases his renderings on Aramaic or late Hebrew was already pointed out by Geiger.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Gen 21:19; 2 Kgs 6:17, 20; Prov 20:13. Note, however, that the Aramaic Targums do generally offer distinct renderings for the figurative passages.

¹⁷ See M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903).

¹⁸ A. Geiger, “Symmachus der Uebersetzer der Bibel,” *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben* 1 (1862), 39-64, in particular 61; see also A.-F. Loiseau, *L'influence De L'araméen*

4. THE TRANSLATION OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

A last point concerns the translation technique that transpires in the marginal readings to Gen 3:5, 7. The rendering with συνετίζω, although contextually motivated, is somewhat jarring because the subject of the verb are the eyes: “*your eyes* will be made intelligent.” The Greek phrase would seem to conflate the literal and figurative meaning of the Hebrew text. Literally, the text of Genesis refers to the “opening of the eyes”, but the contextual implication is one of intellectual perception. “Your eyes will be opened” means: “you will be made intelligent.” The marginal reading, however, implies “your eyes will be made intelligent.”

In this conflation of literal and figurative meanings, Symmachus echoes a technique that is used rather often in the Septuagint. In an earlier publication I have pointed out that idiomatic expressions are translated in the Septuagint in one of three ways: literally, figuratively, or with a combination of the literal and the figurative meaning.¹⁹ For example, the Hebrew phrase ישר בעיני פלוני “to be straight in one’s eyes,” meaning “it pleases one,” may be rendered literally:

1 Sam 18:26 εὐθύνηθη ὁ λόγος ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς Δαυιδ
the matter was made straight in the eyes of David

or freely:

1 Kgs 9:12 οὐκ ἤρεσαν αὐτῷ
they did not please him

or, as happens rather often, in a mixture of literal and free:

Judg 14:3 ἤρεσεν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς μου
she was pleasing *in my eyes*

The rendering in Gen 3:5, 7 resembles this last technique. This resemblance tends to show that the later translator linked up with the Septuagint not only in the choice of the verb συνετίζω, but also in the translation technique.

Sur Les Traducteurs De La LXX Principalement, Sur Les Traducteurs Grecs Postérieurs, Ainsi Que Sur Les Scribes De La Vorlage De La Vorlage de la LXX (SCS 65; Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 221-222.

¹⁹ See J. Joosten, “Translating the Untranslatable: Septuagint Renderings of Hebrew Idioms,” in “*Translation Is Required*”: *The Septuagint in Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. R. Hiebert; SCS 56; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 59-70.

CONCLUSIONS

The rendering of the phrase “to open (the eyes)” in Gen 3:5, 7 as “to render (the eyes) intelligent” can with some probability be attributed to Symmachus, in spite of the attribution to Theodotion in codex M and some later Septuagint manuscripts. Using the verb συνετίζω instead of the Old Greek δαυνοίγνυμι, the later translator links up with typical Septuagint vocabulary. Similarly, the combination of literal and free translation harks back to Septuagintal models. The exegetical motivation of the rendering may be complex, with the change in meaning of the Hebrew verb פקח, from “to open” to “to make open-minded” playing an important part.

These conclusions may not be earthshattering, but to those who are interested in the Septuagint and its vocabulary they are still worthwhile. They confirm and deepen our appreciation of the later Greek versions. They also illustrate the inner life of the Greek Bible, whose textual history was in constant contact with the Hebrew source text yet not indentured to it in the updating of its message.

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