

The Septuagint and the Vocalization of the Hebrew Text of the Torah

STEFAN SCHORCH

Abstract: The translation of the Septuagint goes back to a Hebrew *Vorlage*, which, apart from the casual use of *scriptio plena*, did not mark vowels. On the other hand, the Greek renderings of this *Vorlage* obviously imply certain vocalizations. But what was their source? Different answers have been proposed so far, especially by F. Wutz (use of transcriptions), J. Barr, E. Tov (oral reading traditions) and A. van der Kooij (learned study of scripture), but the question still seems unsolved. The present paper suggests, that the translators were dependent to a large extent on parabiblical traditions:

- Parabiblical traditions are eclectic and cover only parts of the Biblical text. This feature explains why the translators of the Torah produced a translation that is very faithful in some parts, while it failed in others.
- Poetry can only be reproduced, but not transformed into a new literary form. Paratextual traditions, which require the latter, were therefore of limited use for the understanding of the poetical parts of the Hebrew text.
- Sometimes, parabiblical traditions took the Biblical text only as point of departure for the expansion and the addition of new concepts. Obviously, the Greek text of the Torah shows many traces of this process.

The translation of the Septuagint goes back to a Hebrew *Vorlage*, which, apart from the casual use of *scriptio plena*, did not mark vowels. On the other hand, the Greek renderings of this *Vorlage* obviously imply certain vocalizations.

Of course, the translators of the Septuagint had a certain knowledge of the Hebrew language,¹ which certainly gave them an appropriate understanding of the consonantal framework in most cases. On the other hand, the biblical text contains many Hebrew words and passages, which can

¹Note, however, that the Hebrew of the translators was different from the Biblical Hebrew of the Tiberian tradition in many aspects, cf. e.g. Josua Blau, "Zum Hebräisch der Übersetzer des AT," *VT* 6 (1956) 97-99; Jan Joosten "The knowledge and use of Hebrew in the Hellenistic period: Qumran and the Septuagint," *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (ed. J.F. Elwolde and T. Muraoka; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XXXVI; Brill: Leiden – Boston – Köln, 2000) 115-130; Jan Joosten, "On aramaizing renderings in the Septuagint," *Hamlet on a hill: Semitic and Greek studies presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* (ed. M.F.J. Baasten and W.Th. van Peursen; OLA 118; Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003) 587-600.

be vocalized in different ways involving different meanings. Why then did the translators choose the one way and not the other? What was their understanding based on? The aim of the following investigation is to clarify this question.

1. STATE OF RESEARCH

In response to this question, different answers have been proposed so far, especially by Franz Wutz, James Barr, Emanuel Tov and Arie van der Kooij.

According to Wutz, the Septuagint was translated from a *Vorlage*, which consisted of a Hebrew text transcribed in Greek letters including the Hebrew vowels as realized in reading.² However except for Origenes' *Secunda* (third century CE.) there is no proof for the existence of such transcriptions. Accordingly, scholars generally have abandoned Wutz's theory.³

James Barr and Emanuel Tov reckon with oral traditions standing behind the vocalization implied by the Greek translations. Both scholars proceed from the assumption that the vocalization of the Torah was known to the translators of the Septuagint due to the regular reading of the Torah in public: "When the LXX was translated, unvocalized Hebrew texts were read publicly, so that some form of reading of the consonantal text must have been known."⁴

In fact, I shall not question the fact that the Torah was *read* in public.⁵ It seems, however, that at that time when the Torah was translated into Greek, the public reading was restricted to certain occasions (cf. Neh 8)⁶ and a *regular*

²See Franz Wutz, *Die Transkriptionen von der Septuaginta bis Hieronymus* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur vormasoretischen Grammatik des Hebräischen 2; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1933). For an evaluation of this theory see Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 70-73 and Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in context: Introduction to the Greek version of the Bible* (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2000) 61f.

³Cf. the conclusion of Fernández Marcos, that Wutz's theory is "of no interest today as an explanation for the origins of the LXX" (*The Septuagint*, 61).

⁴Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research: Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies 8; Jerusalem: Simor Ltd., 1997) 107 and similarly James Barr, "'Guessing' in the Septuagint," *Studien zur Septuaginta – Robert Hanhart zu Ehren* (ed. D. Fraenkel *et al.*; Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens 20; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1990) 23.

⁵Cf. Arie van der Kooij, "Zur Frage der Exegese im LXX-Psalter. Ein Beitrag zur Verhältnisbestimmung zwischen Original und Übersetzung," *Der Septuaginta-Psalter und seine Tochterübersetzungen: Symposium in Göttingen 1997* (ed. A. Aejmelaeus and U. Quast; Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000) 374; Rolf Rendtorff, "Esra und das »Gesetz«," *ZAW* 96 (1984) 178f; Rolf Rendtorff, "Noch einmal: Esra und das »Gesetz«," *ZAW* 111 (1999) 91.

⁶Cf. David Goodblatt, "Judean Nationalism in the light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Historical perspectives: from the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in light of the Dead Sea scrolls: Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Orion Center for*

reading of the Torah in public did not yet exist.⁷ Moreover, firm vocalization traditions of the Torah did not develop before the late second century B.C.E.,⁸ which means only after the translation of the Torah into Greek. Therefore, the assumption that the translators vocalized the consonantal framework in accordance with the public reading of the Torah is hard to accept.

James Barr, in addition to his assumption of vocalization based on an oral reading tradition of the Torah, suggested a second way in which the translators rendered certain parts of the consonantal framework. He suggests, that the full vocalization of the consonantal framework is not necessarily part of the translation process. Instead, the translator may have rendered a certain word on the basis of its visual shape alone. Although less common than the full vocalization, this direct way seems to Barr the preferable explanation for the numerous cases in which the Greek rendering of the supposed Hebrew *Vorlage* seems to be far away from its understanding as suggested by simple logic.⁹ One of Barr's examples, taken from Gen 15: 11, is the following:

(“And when the vultures came down on the carcasses,...”)

MT: וַיֵּשֶׁב אִתָּם אֲבִרְהָם (וַיֵּרֶד הָעֵיט עַל הַפְּגָרִים)

LXX: καὶ συνεκάθισεν αὐτοῖς Ἀβραμ

LXX: וַיֵּשֶׁב אִתָּם אֲבִרְהָם

In this verse, the consonantal framework of the Masoretic text and that of the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint were most probably identical. However, the two interpretations of this consonantal framework display a remarkable difference. As against the Masoretic vocalization וַיֵּשֶׁב אִתָּם – “he drove them away,” the Greek translator apparently read *וַיֵּשֶׁב אִתָּם* – “he sat down together with them.” Obviously, the reading suggested by the Septuagint doesn't seem to fit the context very well, as it speaks of a covenant ceremony between Abraham and God. The question, why the Greek translator nevertheless chose the reading “he sat down” is answered by Barr with

the study of the Dead Sea scrolls and associated literature, 27-31 January, 1999 (ed. D. Goodblatt *et al.*; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 37; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001) 16; Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish sects in the Maccabean era: an interpretation*, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 55; Leiden – New York: Brill, 1997) 120f.

⁷This has already been stated by Bickermann: “The custom of public reading of the Law and within a cycle of lessons was not yet known in the third century B.C.E.... The continuous reading is not attested before the middle of the second century C.E., and the Mishna still gives a list of short appointed lessons.” (Elias Bickermann, “The Septuagint as a translation,” *Studies in Jewish and Christian history I* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums IX; Leiden: Brill, 1976) 171f.

⁸Cf. Stefan Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes: Die samaritanische Lesetradition als Textzeugin der Tora, 1. Das Buch Genesis* (BZAW 339; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2004) 56-60.

⁹Barr, *Guessing*, 29-31.

reference to the observation, that the translator simply chose the most common interpretation of the consonants וי"שׁב, proceeding directly from the identification of its well known visual shape to the rendering followed in most cases, without any regard of existing reading traditions or the context.¹⁰

It is not my aim to discuss Barr's suggestion at length here. It should be recalled, however, that it does not solve the question, how the Greek translators vocalized their Hebrew *Vorlage*. Barr himself suggested that it was a rather marginal phenomenon and by no means the general way the connection between consonantal framework and Greek rendering worked.

A further suggestion with regard to the question, how the Greek translators vocalized their Hebrew *Vorlage*, was proposed by Arie van der Kooij. Van der Kooij suggested that the translators belonged to the milieu of learned scribes. Accordingly, their way of vocalization of the Hebrew text had its roots in the study of scripture in the circles of the intellectual elite.¹¹ The most obvious difference between the public reading of the Torah and the continuous study of the Torah in some kind of *Bet Midrash* is that the latter is focused on interpretation, while the aim of the former is just the reading aloud of the Biblical text. As a consequence, the translators of the Septuagint read the Biblical text in accordance with certain exegetical traditions. Therefore, and due to the fact that the vocalization was not yet fixed, the interpretation of a given single word depended mainly on the exploration of the context.¹² The advantage of van der Kooij's theory is that it does not refer to the existence of a public reading tradition. On the other hand, there are many examples in the Greek translation of the Torah, which seem to contradict his explanation of context-dependent interpretation. If, for instance, the translators would have rendered the passage from Gen 15: 11 discussed above in accordance with the context, how could they have arrived at καὶ συνεκάθισεν αὐτοῖς? The conclusion, that van der Kooij's theory is not suitable as a general explanation of the translation may be illustrated with further examples, as for instance the following taken from Gen 47: 31:

(“...‘Swear to me.’ And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself...”)

MT: (השבעה לי וישבע לו וישתחו ישראל) על ראש המטה

LXX: ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ

LXX: על ראש המטה

In this passage, the Greek translation is obviously based on the reading המטה “the staff” as against the Masoretic vocalization המטה “the bed.”

¹⁰James Barr, “Vocalization and the analysis of Hebrew among the ancient translators,” *Hebräische Wortforschung, Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner* (ed. B. Hartmann et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 3f.

¹¹Arie van der Kooij, *The oracle of Tyre: the Septuagint of Isaiah XXIII as Version and Vision* (VTSuppl. 71; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 1998) 121.

¹²See van der Kooij, *Zur Frage der Exegese*, 377 and id., *The oracle of Tyre*, 121f.

From the perspective of both the immediate and the broader context, the Greek translator should have adopted the Masoretic reading, since the background of the passage is the illness and eventually the death of Jacob.¹³ The fact, that the Greek translator nevertheless read אֵלֶּיךָ shows that his reading was not dependent on the exploration of the context. Therefore, examples like this contradict the theory proposed by van der Kooij. Moreover, a further and more general argument seems in place. At the time when the Pentateuch was translated into Greek, neither the public reading nor the regular study of the Torah seems to have been part of Second Temple Judaism. According to Adiel Schremer, it was only in the first century B.C.E., when both emerged as the result of a re-orientation of religious observance. While Second Temple Judaism was characterized by “tradition-based observance” prior to the first century B.C.E., it became “text-based observant” only afterwards.¹⁴ On account of this observation, it seems improper to reckon with firm exegetical traditions developed in the framework of a *Bet Midrash*-like institution prior to the first century B.C.E..

Therefore, the survey of the explanations suggested so far with regard to the vocalizations standing behind the Greek translation of the Pentateuch leads to the conclusion, that the question “On which source relied the Greek translator when rendering a Hebrew word in his written *Vorlage*, which could be vocalized in different ways, involving a different meaning?” is still open.

2. A NEW SUGGESTION

Obviously, Schremer’s observation of tradition-based observance among Second Temple Judaism prior to the first century B.C.E. refutes the theories proposed by Barr, Tov, and van der Kooij. On the other hand, however, it may serve as the starting point for a fresh look.

The conclusion that the public reading and regular study of the Torah became a central part of Jewish life not before the first century does not mean that the Torah had not been handed down among scribes and was not known to the public. On the contrary, the Torah was of course known and had been handed down, but in a different sense than from the first century onwards. Prior to that time, even the Torah had been subject to the current tradition-based observance, which seems especially important with regard to the following two aspects:

It seems that Second Temple Judaism, in the environment of tradition-based observance, transmitted and learned Torah mainly through oral

¹³ This was already observed by Barr, *Vocalization*, 3f.

¹⁴ Adiel Schremer, “[T]he[y] did not read in the sealed book’: Qumran halakhic revolution and the emergence of Torah study in Second Temple Judaism,” *Historical perspectives: from the Hasmonians to Bar Kokhba in light of the Dead Sea scrolls: Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea scrolls and associated literature, 27-31 January, 1999* (ed. D. Goodblatt et al.; *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah* 37; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001) 113.

παράδοσις τῶν πατέρων¹⁵ and much less through reading and exploring the text itself. At that time, even someone who read the Biblical text itself would have been strongly influenced by these paratextual traditions and would therefore have understood the text mainly on their basis.

It seems that these are the conditions under which the Greek translation of the Torah was carried out. If we wished to know, therefore, how the Greek translators read the Biblical text, we should look for the parabiblical traditions, which influenced them. Obviously, we will never know how many of such parabiblical traditions remained purely oral and got lost. Some of these traditions, however, seem to have left their traces in the so-called parabiblical literature from the Second Temple period.¹⁶ And although obviously only parts of this parabiblical literature survived, the corpus which we know still seems a reliable basis for the detection of some central features of the parabiblical traditions namely, eclecticism, narrativity, and supplementarity.

Eclecticism: Parabiblical traditions are eclectic and cover only parts of the Biblical text. Not unlike the midrashic literature of later times, they refer to certain passages of the Biblical text only, while other Biblical passages do not have parabiblical cognates.¹⁷

Narrativity: In most cases, parabiblical traditions are related to Biblical prose, while poetry is much less covered. The reason for this uneven proportion lies in both the nature of poetry and of parabiblical traditions. A poetical text can be reproduced, but not easily paraphrased or otherwise

¹⁵This term is used by Flavius Josephus in his characterization of Phariseic thinking, cf. Schremer, They did not read, 113 note 28.

¹⁶This literature formed a central part of the Jewish literature roughly contemporary to the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, originating in the 4th and third centuries B.C.E.. According to the calculation of Armin Lange, more than fifty percent of the Jewish literature of that period of time as far it is known to us is to be labeled as parabiblical, cf. A. Lange, "The parabiblical literature of the Qumran library and the canonical history of the Hebrew Bible," *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea scrolls in honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. W.W. Fields et al.; VTSuppl. 94; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003) 319f. Lange concludes that this high rate should not be regarded as an accident, but rather as an indication for the high rank of authority which the Biblical books had gained even prior to their canonization (Lange, *The Parabiblical Literature*, 321). On the other hand, the relatively free approach to the Biblical text attested by parabiblical texts may seem to contradict the presumed proto-canonical status of the Biblical scriptures. There is no contradiction, however, if we realize the implications of the common tradition-based observance at that time.

¹⁷See Ida Fröhlich, "'Narrative Exegesis' in the Dead Sea scrolls," *Biblical perspectives: early use and interpretation of the Bible in light of the Dead Sea scrolls: Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the study of the Dead Sea scrolls and associated literature, 12.-14 May, 1996* (ed. E.G. Chazon and M.E. Stone; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 28; Boston – Köln: Brill, 1998) 82.

transformed into new literary forms. As opposed to prose texts, every re-formulation or re-telling of poetry will inevitably lead to a considerable loss of details as compared with the original. Parabiblical traditions, however, require some kind of literary transformation. Therefore, even in the case when parabiblical traditions of a certain poetical text did exist at all, they obviously were of very limited use for its reader (or the Greek translator) who was in need of detailed information. On the other hand, parabiblical traditions could well serve him in the case of texts composed in prose.

Supplementarity: Parabiblical traditions are often supplementary; they add details not contained in the Biblical text or expand short passages into more detailed accounts. In these cases, the Biblical text serves only as the point of departure for expansions and additions.

If the translators of the Pentateuch worked under the influence of parabiblical traditions, these three features should have left their traces in the Greek text. In the following, I will try to demonstrate with examples, that this is indeed the case.¹⁸

2.1. *The Septuagint And The Eclectic Character Of Parabiblical Traditions.*

Several scholars have noted that the Greek text of the book of Genesis reflects a relatively literal translation technique in some parts, e.g.: “The

¹⁸Due to the following considerations, the majority of the following examples have been collected from the book of Genesis:

– According to most scholars, the Greek translation of this book was the first which was carried out and completed, cf. the statements of John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek text of Genesis* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 35; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993) ix: “[...] Genesis was, in fact, the first attempt by the Alexandrians to translate parts of the Torah;” and Martin Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung* (BZAW 223; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1994) 11: “Die Genesis wurde als erstes der fünf Bücher des Pentateuch im 3. Jh.v.Chr. in Alexandrien übersetzt [...]” (The possibility of a different order has been advocated recently by James Barr, “Did the Greek pentateuch really serve as a dictionary for the translation of the later books?,” *Hamlet on a hill: Semitic and Greek studies presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* [ed. M.F.J. Baasten and W.Th. van Peursen; OLA 118; Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003] 523-543.) If Genesis was indeed the first of the Biblical books that was translated into Greek, the selection of examples from this book avoids the difficulties emerging from a possible influence from the translations of other Biblical books.

– In most cases, the Hebrew *Vorlage* which was in front of the Greek translator, is preserved in the extant Hebrew textual witnesses (especially in MT) or can be reconstructed, cf. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung*, 12.

– Unlike the other books of the Pentateuch, the material from the Samaritan reading tradition of the book of Genesis as far as it is relevant for the textual criticism of the vocalization has been analyzed and may serve as a third complete textual witness, independent from both the Masoretic text and the Septuagint, cf. Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes*, 10. All examples quoted in the following from the Samaritan tradition are presented there with the addition of a commentary.

translator of Genesis tried to stay as near as possible to his Hebrew Vorlage.”¹⁹ However, other parts of the same book are translated in a much more free way.²⁰ In a number of additional cases, moreover, it seems that the Greek translator produced some clear mistranslations on account of an insufficient understanding of his Hebrew *Vorlage*.²¹ This inconsistency requires an explanation. Anneli Aejmelaeus suggested a convincing solution:

The stories with most free renderings seem to form a special group among the Pentateuchal narrations, a group possessing the greatest interest for the translators. [...] It seems that the translator was closely acquainted with these narrations even perhaps in a Greek form, not in a written translation but maybe in an oral tradition. It was easy for him to use free renderings, since he knew how the story continued.²²

Aejmelaeus’ suggestion fits well the framework of the theory proposed in the present paper. Due to the eclectic character of parabiblical traditions, they did not cover all parts of the Biblical text and, accordingly, the difficulty of the task of the translator was of varying degree. It seems, for instance, that the Greek translator did not know the story of Abraham performing his covenant offering in Gen 15 and was therefore easily misled in his understanding of verse 11 and especially in the interpretation of the two Hebrew words **וַיִּשָׁב אֵתֵם**.

On the other hand, however, the same translator²³ was successful in rendering other and even more difficult passages, which potentially could have been read with different vocalizations, too. Since the phenomenon recurs, pure chance seems an improbable explanation. More likely is, that the presumed knowledge of the context of a certain difficult word, the knowledge of the story, enabled the translator to render it in the proper way. The following two examples will illustrate the phenomenon:

Gen 14: 20 (“And blessed be God Most High...”)

MT: **אֲשֶׁר מִגֵּן צָרִיךְ בְּיָדָי**

*Sam: **אֲשֶׁר מִגֵּן צָרִיךְ בִּידָךְ***

LXX: ὃς παρέδωκεν τοὺς ἔχθρους σου ὑποχειρίους σοι

¹⁹Johann Cook, “The Exegesis of the Greek Genesis,” *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem 1986* (ed. C.E Cox; Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 23; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987) 119.

²⁰Cf. Anneli Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis in the Septuagint: A Study of the renderings of the Hebrew coordinate clauses in the Greek Pentateuch* (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum 31; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982) 164f; Cook, *The exegesis*, 118f.

²¹As in the examples from Gen 15: 11 and 47: 31, which were discussed above.

²²Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 172f.

²³As opposed the Greek translation of the book of Exodus, most scholars acknowledge, that the translation of the book of Genesis is the work of one single translator, cf. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung*, 12.

LXX: אֲשֶׁר מִגֵּן צָרִיךְ בְּיָדְךָ

In this verse, the Greek translator vocalized the difficult מִגֵּן in the way the Masoretes did, viz. as a *Piel* perfect, which seems to preserve the original reading²⁴: "...who *has delivered* your enemies into your hand." However, the three consonants can also be vocalized in a different way. This is illustrated by the Samaritan reading tradition, which attests the noun מִגֵּן "shield" and understands the passage as: "...who is a *shield* against your enemies in your hand."

In terms of textual criticism, this latter vocalization is the result of a simplification, since the verb מִגֵּן occurs only three times in the whole Biblical text and is a *hapax legomenon* in the Pentateuch, while the noun מִגֵּן is much more common (attested 63 times in MT). That the Greek translator of the book of Genesis knew and understood מִגֵּן shows in his rendering of Gen 15: 1.²⁵ Unlike the Samaritan tradition, however, he did not become influenced by the more common word and preserved the *lectio difficilior* of the original text. The reason for this preservation seems to be that the Greek translator was familiar with the Melchizedek-story due to the broad stream of parabiblical tradition connected with the person of Melchizedek.²⁶

Gen 45: 2 ("And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians heard it...")

MT: (וַיִּשְׁעוּ מִצְרַיִם) וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פְּרַעֲהַ

Sam: וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פְּרַעֲהַ

LXX: καὶ ἀκουσθὸν ἐγένετο εἰς τὸν οἶκον Φαραῶ

LXX: וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פְּרַעֲהַ

²⁴See Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes*, 127f. The hypothesis that at the end of the literary development of a certain Biblical text and at the beginning of its textual transmission stood one single version – the "*Urtex*t" – is today followed by most scholars, cf. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis – Assen – Maastricht: Fortress Press and Van Gorcum, 1992) 164-180. However, there are critical voices, too, cf. Eugene Ulrich, "The community of Israel and the composition of the Scriptures," *Studies in the Dead Sea scrolls and related literature* (ed. E. Ulrich; Grand Rapids – Leiden – Boston – Köln: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Brill, 1999) 14. Since the present paper deals with the Pentateuch only, the problem seems less complicated. According to all the witnesses we know, there is no real basis for the postulate of more than one textual tradition, cf. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung*, 12. Obvious, but less often expressed is the implication that the concept of the *Urtex*t should be applied to the vocalization as well, cf. Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes*, 7-10.

²⁵MT: אֲנִי מִגֵּן לְךָ ("I am your shield.") – LXX: ἐγὼ ὑπερασπίζω σου ("I shield you."). The fact that the Septuagint contains a verb instead of the Hebrew noun most probably goes back to the relatively free translation technique prevailing in ch. 45, cf. Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 165.

²⁶For an overview see Michael C. Astour, "Melchizedek," *ABD* IV, 684-686. Aejmelaeus lists Gen 14 among the chapters well known to the translator, *Aejmelaeus, Parataxis*, 164f and 172f.

The Masoretic tradition vocalizes not only the first occurrence of the verb שָׁמַע in the *Qal*-stem, but the second one too: "...and the house of Pharaoh *heard* it." The Samaritan tradition, on the other hand, vocalizes the second verbal form in the *Piel*-stem: "...and *let* it *hear* the house of Pharaoh." This alternation with regard to the verbal stem of שָׁמַע displays the *lectio difficilior* and most probably preserves the vocalization of the original text,²⁷ while the Masoretic *Qal*-vocalization of the second verb seems to be influenced by the preceding verbal form.

The Septuagint translates "...and it was heard in the house of Pharaoh." Although representing a rather free rendering of its Hebrew *Vorlage*, this translation is obviously based on the same understanding of the story as it is attested by the Samaritan tradition. Since there is no text-internal reason, which could have led the translator to this understanding, there must have existed an external source. The recognition of the religious *milieu* of the Greek translation, as described above, leads again to the conclusion, that this external source most probably was a parabiblical version of the story of Joseph.²⁸

2.2. The Septuagint And The Narrative Character Of Parabiblical Traditions

The Greek translators of the Pentateuch were dependent on parabiblical traditions to a high degree. In the field of Biblical poetry, however, the possible contribution of parabiblical traditions toward the understanding of the text is very limited, as has been shown above. Therefore, the Greek translators especially suffered a lack of information when they encountered poetical texts. Due to this fact, the number of guesses and mistranslations rises significantly in the poetical parts of the Pentateuch as compared with the passages written in prose. Numerous examples, which illustrate this phenomenon, may be found in Jacob's blessing in Gen 49. Three of them will be presented in the following. The first example comes from verse 6:

- MT: "Let not *my honor* (כְּבוֹדִי) be united to their assembly."
 *Sam: "Let not *my honor* (כְּבוֹדִי*) be angry in their assembly."
 LXX: "Let not *my liver* (τὸ ἥπατό μου = כְּבוֹדִי*) contend in their assembly."

In this verse two different vocalizations are attested with regard to the word כְּבוֹדִי: While both Hebrew witnesses derive it from כְּבוֹד "glory," the Septuagint translates τὸ ἥπατό μου, which most probably goes back to the derivation from כֶּבֶד "liver." Without any doubt, the reading common to the Masoretic and the Samaritan text is to be regarded as preserving the

²⁷See Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes*, 214.

²⁸Further support for this conclusion comes from the work of Aejmelaeus, who lists Gen 45 among the Biblical narrations, which were well known to the Greek translator, cf. Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 164f and 172f.

vocalization of the original text. The translator of the Septuagint, on the other hand, was most probably unfamiliar with the original vocalization and his reading seems to be based on an unsuccessful guess.²⁹ A different phenomenon is attested in Gen 49: 10:

MT: (עד כי יבא) שִׁילֹו
 Sam: שִׁילֹו
 LXX: τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῶ
 LXX: (?) שִׁילֹו

According to both the Masoretic and the Samaritan vocalization, the passage under consideration means: “Until he (viz. Judah) comes to Shiloh.” and this reading should be regarded as preserving the original text.³⁰ The Greek rendering of the Septuagint, on the other hand, is most probably based on the derivation from שִׁילֹו + שׁ*. Although the vocalization itself is obviously a guess,³¹ the understanding of the passage as reflected in this vocalization seems to have had its intellectual background in the messianic thinking of the Greek translator and his time.³² It is, therefore, influenced by parabiblical traditions connected with the stem of Judah.³³

The phenomenon that these parabiblical traditions could even lead the translator towards a translation, which ignored the consonantal framework of the Hebrew *Vorlage*, may be illustrated by the following example from the same verse:

MT: (ולו) יִקְהָתוּ עַמִּים
 Sam: יִקְהָתוּ עַמִּים
 LXX: προσδοκία ἐθνῶν

²⁹For a more comprehensive analysis of the different textual witnesses within this verse see Stefan Schorch, “The significance of the Samaritan oral tradition for the textual history of the Pentateuch,” *Samaritan Researches V: Proceedings of the Congress of the Société d’Études Samaritaines, Milan 1996* (ed. V. Morabito et al.; Studies in Judaica 10; Sydney: Mandelbaum Publishing, 2000) 1.07-1.10.

³⁰See Hans-Jürgen Zobel, *Stammesspruch und Geschichte* (BZAW 95; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1965) 13 and Schorch, The significance, 1.10-1.12.

³¹See Schorch, The significance, 1.10.

³²See e.g. Emanuel Tov, “Die Septuaginta in ihrem theologischen und traditionsgeschichtlichen Verhältnis zur Hebräischen Bibel,” *Mitte der Schrift?* (ed. M. Klopfenstein et al.; Judaica et Christiana 2; Bern – Frankfurt/M. – New York – Paris: Peter Lang, 1987) 258.

³³4Q252 attests the messianic interpretation of this verse in Qumran, cf. Craig A. Evans, “The messiah in the Dead Sea scrolls,” *Israel’s messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea scrolls* (ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003) 91. An impressive and extensive history of the interpretation of Gen 49: 10 within Rabbinic Judaism has been written by Adolf Posnanski: *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre, I. Die Auslegung von Gen 49: 10 im Altertum bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1904).

LXX: (?) תִּקְוַת עַמִּים

Both Hebrew witnesses read the difficult first word as a verbal form of the root קָהַח "to gather," which was undoubtedly contained in the original text as well.³⁴ The Greek translator, however, seems not to have known this *hapax legomenon* and resorted to a guess. Maybe, he saw some connection with the word תִּקְוַת, but again and more importantly, his rendering refers to a messianic view known to him from parabiblical sources and not from the text itself.

2.3. *The Septuagint And The Supplementary Character Of Parabiblical Traditions*

The two latter examples show that the text of the Septuagint refers to traditions which do not or at least not directly come from the Biblical text itself. Sometimes, these traditions are labeled as "exegetical."³⁵ This designation, however, seems not very exact, since it is not possible to reduce their background and significance to simple exegesis alone. Rather, the parabiblical traditions should be regarded as attestations of a continuous literary creativity which left its traces in both biblical and parabiblical texts.³⁶ The following examples illustrate this phenomenon:

Gen 6:4: ("There were נַפְלִיִּם / γίγαντες on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men...)

MT: וַיֵּלְדוּ לָהֶם

Sam: וַיֵּלְדוּ יְדוּ לָהֶם

LXX: καὶ ἐγεννῶσαν ἑαυτοῖς

LXX: וַיֵּלְדוּ יְדוּ לָהֶם

The Masoretic text most probably preserves the original text.³⁷ The difference, however, between the Masoretic text and the two other textual witnesses cited above seems to have its roots not in an unreliable textual transmission of the Hebrew original, but rather in the influence from different versions of the story referred to. It seems, that the version the Greek translator had in mind was close to that preserved in the parabiblical Ethiopic Enoch (= Enoch 1), which identifies the נַפְלִיִּם as giants³⁸ and is much more detailed in

³⁴See Schorch, *The significance*, 1.11-1.12.

³⁵See e.g. Cook, *The exegesis*, 119.

³⁶On the complex relations between biblical and parabiblical traditions see Isac Leo Seeligmann, "Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegese," *Copenhagen 1953 Congress Volume* (VTSuppl. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953) 152.

³⁷See Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes*, 102f.

³⁸See I Enoch 7:2; cf. Siegbert Uhlig, *Das äthiopische Henochbuch* (JSHRZ V/6; Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1984) 519f.

its account of the sexual relations between human women and the sons of God than the Masoretic text.³⁹ The Greek translator did not make efforts to go beyond his written Hebrew *Vorlage* in order to add some of these details, but it is noteworthy that a change from *Qal* to *Hif.* with regard to the vocalization of the verb יִלְדוּ means at least that an explicit reference to the sexual relations between human women and the sons of God was inserted into the text as opposed to the Masoretic tradition.

The Samaritan vocalization tradition attests the same change, too. This observation shows that it is not necessarily the translator who was responsible for the insertion of the new reading but that maybe already his Hebrew *Vorlage* was determined to be read in that way, due to the insertion of *matres lectionis* under parabiblical influence.

A further example for the influence of parabiblical traditions on the translation of the Septuagint is the rendering of the Hebrew name מִצְרַיִם. Most probably, the Greek form Μωσῆς goes back to an Egyptian re-interpretation of the name,⁴⁰ which gives a clear hint to the existence of an Egyptian parabiblical version of the Moses-story, which was current in the Hellenistic period among the Jews of Egypt.

A similar phenomenon is attested in the Greek transcription of the Hebrew word מִצְרַיִם as μῶσῆς. Since the translator made no effort to provide a translation but rather transcribed it, he seems to have understood it as a name or a *terminus technicus*. However, he did not reproduce the word in its Hebrew form, but in Aramaic, as the addition of the Aramaic article /-a/ at the end of the word shows.⁴¹ This observation leads to the conclusion, that the translator knew the word not from a Hebrew, but from an Aramaic source—most probably from a parabiblical tradition in that language.

3. CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

The Greek translation of the Pentateuch is not based on an fixed oral reading tradition of the unvocalized Hebrew text—neither handed down through the regular reading of the Torah in public nor transmitted in the context of regular scriptural study in certain circles of the intellectual elite. Rather, it depends to a large extent on parabiblical traditions current among Second Temple Judaism. Since at least parts of these traditions developed into what is known today as “parabiblical literature,” we may learn from the parabiblical compositions some of the main features of these parabiblical traditions:

³⁹See I Enoch 6:2; 7:1f; cf. Devorah Dimant, “I Enoch 6–11: A fragment of a parabiblical work,” *JJS* 53 (2002) 231.

⁴⁰See S. Morenz, “Ägyptische Spuren in der Septuaginta,” *Siegfried Morenz, Religion und Geschichte des alten Ägypten: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (ed. E. Blumenthal et al.; Köln – Wien: Böhlau, 1975) 420.

⁴¹Emanuel Tov, “Loan-words, Homophony, and Transliteration in the Septuagint,” *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: collected essays on the Septuagint* (VTSuppl. 72; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 1999) 177.

– Parabiblical traditions are eclectic and cover only parts of the Biblical text. This feature explains why the translators of the Torah produced a translation, which is very faithful in some parts, while it failed in others.

– Paratextual traditions are not reproductions of a certain textual unity, but require its transformation into a new literary form. Every literary transformation of poetry, however, leads to a considerable loss of information as compared with the original. To the translator, therefore, the paratextual traditions were of a very limited with regard to the understanding of the poetical parts of his Hebrew *Vorlage*. This explains the considerable increase of guesses and mistranslations, which entered the Greek version of the poetical parts of the Pentateuch.

– Sometimes, parabiblical traditions took the Biblical text only as a point of departure for the expansion and the addition of new concepts. Obviously, the Greek text of the Torah shows many traces of this process.