


The use of the Septuagint in Afrikaans Bible translations

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The Bible Society of South Africa is currently in the process of publishing a new Afrikaans translation of the Bible. In its introduction, the 1983 translation refers to earlier Hebrew manuscripts used but not to the early translations, such as the Septuagint or Vulgate. The 2020 translation uses the ancient versions but tries to remain as faithful as possible to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. When comparing instances where the 2020 translation refers to the ancient versions, it becomes clear that the two earlier Afrikaans translations used them as well, 1983 more than 1933/53. The use of the Septuagint in these three translations is elucidated by a number of examples from the books of Ezekiel and 1 Samuel. All three Afrikaans translations of the Old Testament made use of the ancient versions in some instances where the Masoretic Text (MT) presented serious problems. This was done to a lesser extent in the 1933/53 translation. This translation does not discuss the issue in its introduction and contains no notes referring to the practice. The 1983 translation used the Septuagint and the other versions more than the earlier translations did, and has notes about its preferences in some, but not all, instances. The 2020 translation will contain notes in all instances where it deviates from the MT, and even in some instances where it translated the MT, but where the Septuagint or other ancient versions have important variant readings.

Contribution: The 1933/53, 1983 and 2020 Afrikaans translations of the Bible used the Septuagint to solve some text-critical issues in the Masoretic Text. The 1983 translation indicates this with footnotes in some instances and the 2020 translation in all instances. Bible translation is related to the core focus of *HTS*.

Keywords: Afrikaans Bible translations; Septuagint; Ancient versions; 1 Samuel; Ezekiel.

Introduction

The Bible Society of South Africa is currently in the process of publishing a new Afrikaans translation of the Bible. It will be published in November 2020, and it is the fourth Afrikaans translation of the Bible to be published by the Bible Society of South Africa.¹ It follows the 1933 translation, the 1953 translation (commonly known as the '1933/53 translation'), which is a revision of the 1933 translation, the 1983 translation and *Die Bybel vir almal*.² In the text, the translations will be referred to as the '1933 translation', the '1933/53 translation' and the 1983 translation. The 1933/53 translation used the second edition of Kittel's (1925) *Biblia Hebraica*, which is based on the Bomberg Bible (cf. Würthwein & Fischer 2014:44–45). The 1953 revision may have used the third edition (1973), based on the *Leningrad Codex* (Latin: *Codex Leningradensis* [the codex of Leningrad]). The 1983 translation, as well as the 2020 translation, used the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) as the base text (Elliger & Rudolph 1984). The earlier Afrikaans translations do not indicate to what extent they used the Septuagint in their text-critical work. In its introduction, the 1983 translation refers to earlier Hebrew manuscripts used, but not to early translations such as the Septuagint or Vulgate. The 2020 translation used the ancient versions but tried to remain as faithful as possible to the BHS.

When comparing instances where the 2020 translation refers to the ancient versions, it has become clear that the two earlier translations used the ancient versions as well, 1983 more than 1933/53. The use of the Septuagint in these three translations will be elucidated by a number of examples from the books of Ezekiel and 1 Samuel. In some instances, a distinction will be made between the original 1933 translation and the revised edition of 1953 (the 1933/53 translation).

1.Previously: British and Foreign Bible Society (Afrikaans: Britse en Buitelandse Bybelgenootskap).

2.Full bibliographical information can be found in the list of references under Bible 1933, Bible 1933/53, Bible 1983 and Bible 2007.

Note: Special Collection entitled Septuagint SA, sub-edited by Johann Cook (SUN).

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Although the editorial committee for the Old Testament, of which I was a member, did not formulate an explicit framework for the text-critical work that formed part of the translation process, I formulated a number of principles that may have informed the work of the committee in this regard. These principles are discussed in an earlier publication (Van Rooy 2017:9–10). Some of them are relevant to the current article:

- The authoritative text of the Old Testament is that of the autographs, to which we do not have recourse.
- In the transmission of the text, a certain fluidity existed, causing a variety in the witnesses to the text of the Old Testament.
- Translators and faith communities can make different valid choices regarding the text to be translated, such as choosing the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint or the Vulgate.
- Since the time of the Reformation, the choice in the Reformed tradition has been to translate the MT.
- In instances where the MT is unproblematic, this text will usually be translated.
- In instances where the MT presents a problem, internal and external evidence will be used. As far as external evidence is concerned, special attention will be given to Hebrew evidence, such as the manuscripts from the Dead Sea and its vicinity and the Samaritan Pentateuch.
- However, this does not imply the inherent superiority of such evidence.

Variants from the ancient versions also have to be taken into consideration:

- All textual variants should be evaluated, and priority has to be given to readings that can be used to explain variant readings, for example in the case of the confusion of similar letters or the metathesis of letters.

The procedure of the editorial committee was to work with the BHS as the base text, but to deal with problems in the MT as indicated above. It happened frequently that the Septuagint played an important role in instances like these. As the 2020 Afrikaans translation still has to be published, I am using examples from the text the editorial committee worked on in the final stages of the project.

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 1:24

(MT) וַתַּעֲלֶהּ עִמָּהּ בְּאֶשֶׁר גָּמְלָתוּ בְּכַרְיִים שְׁלֹשָׁה

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three year old bull. (New International Version [NIV])

The NIV has a note stating that the translation follows the Septuagint, Syriac and the Dead Sea Scrolls, whilst the MT has ‘with three bulls’. This translation follows the note in the BHS. The second and third versions of Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* refer to the Septuagint only in their notes. The Septuagint

reads ἐν μόνῳ τριετίζοντι. The reading ‘a three year old bull’ is also supported by Smith (1899:12) and Klein (1983:2), whilst Tsumura (2007:129–131) wants to retain the MT. Barthélemy (1982:141–142) also accepts the reading of ‘three year old bull’ and ascribes the error on the MT to a wrong word division.

The 1933/53 translation follows the MT.³ The 1983 translation follows the footnote of the BHS. It adds a footnote that the Hebrew has ‘three bulls’ and refers to Verse 25 (which refers to the slaughtering of ‘a bull’, not ‘three’). This is also the translation of the 2020 translation. A more extensive footnote states that the translation follows a manuscript from Qumran and the Septuagint. It also refers the reader to Verse 25. The footnote should further include a reference to the Peshitta, which reads ‘a three year old bull’. As different possibilities could be considered here, an extensive note to the translation is necessary.

1 Samuel 1:28

וְגַם אֲנֹכִי הַשְׂאֵלְתָהּ לַיהוָה כְּלֵי־יָמַיִם אֲשֶׁר הָיָה הוּא שְׂאוֹל לַיהוָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה שָׁמָּה לַיהוָה (MT)

So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there. (NIV)

The problem here relates to the ‘he’ at the end of the verse. The NIV followed the MT. However, the question is to whom this ‘he’ refers. In the immediate context of this verse, it should be Samuel, but that does not make sense in the broader context of the narrative. It could be Elkanah, but he is not explicitly mentioned in the description of the scene that starts in Verse 24. The 2004 Dutch translation inserts Eli here. The BHS, however, has a footnote stating that some Hebrew manuscripts, the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, the Peshitta and Vulgate have the plural (‘they worshipped’). Barthélemy (1982:143) regards this reading of the plural as an assimilation to the context. The second and third versions of Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* refer to the Septuagint for the plural, but it has a translation quite different from the MT. This phrase follows the Song of Hannah in the Septuagint, which has the plural: Καὶ κατέλιπον αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ ἐνώπιον κυρίου [and they left him there before the Lord]. Some commentaries think that the reading of the Septuagint should be preferred, and that the reading of the MT is a late replacement for the original reading as reflected in the Septuagint.⁴ Barthélemy (1982:143–144) also regards the different arrangement of the text in the Septuagint as preferable.

The singular is followed by the 1933/53 translation, whilst the 1983 translation has the plural ‘they’ (without any footnote). The 2020 translation will also have the plural, with a footnote that the translation follows some Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the ancient versions, whilst the Hebrew has the singular.

3. ‘drie bulle’ [three bulls].

4. Klein (1983:2); Smith (1899:12).

1 Samuel 2:33

The final sentence of this verse reads as follows:

וְכָל־מִרְבֵּית בֵּיתְךָ יָמוּתוּ אַנְשֵׁים (MT)

and all your descendants will die in the prime of life. (NIV)

The problem is the translation of the last word in the verse, namely, 'men'. The NIV rendered it as 'in the prime of their life'. This is exactly what the 1983 translation did.⁵ The BHS has a footnote stating that a manuscript from Qumran has 'by the sword' before 'men' ('by the sword of men'), and that the Septuagint also has this addition (πεσοῦνται ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ ἀνδρῶν – they will fall through the sword of men). Barthélemy (1982:150) points out that this reading of the Septuagint requires a different verb (not 'die' but 'fall'). The second and third versions of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* both refer to this addition in the Septuagint and propose that it should be followed. This is also the proposal of Smith (1899:24) and Klein (1983:22). The argument of Tsumura (2007:169) to translate it as 'die by the hand of men' seems improbable. The 1933/53 translation follows the MT, with a translation close to that of the NIV ('at the age of men'⁶). It is interesting to note that Barthélemy (1982:150) agrees with the interpretation of scholars who support this kind of interpretation. The 2020 translation follows the footnote of the BHS and adds 'by the sword' to the translation, with a footnote stating that the translation follows a manuscript from Qumran and the Septuagint. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) refers to the reading of the Qumran manuscript and the Septuagint, but clearly thinks that this reading replaces the 'men' of the MT, and therefore gives the translation '... shall die by the sword'. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) also follows the footnote, but has 'by the sword of men'.

1 Samuel 3:13: *Tiqqun sopherim*

The Hebrew expression *tiqqun sopherim* means 'corrections of the scribes'. These corrections are regarded as changes to texts that could be offensive to God (cf. Tov 2012:59–61). First Samuel 3:13 has an example at the end of the verse. It reads as follows:

כִּי־מִקְלָלִים לָהֶם בָּנָיו וְלֹא כָהָּ בָּם (MT)

His sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. (NIV)

A footnote in the NIV refers to the *tiqqun*, stating that the Septuagint and an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition have 'and his sons blasphemed God'. The BHS has a note to this effect, namely that the *tiqqun* has אלהים (for להם), with a reference to the Septuagint and Vetus Latina manuscripts. The difference between the MT and the *tiqqun* is the aleph at the beginning of the reading of the *tiqqun*. The second and third versions of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* refer to the *tiqqun* as well and propose that the Septuagint should be followed. The Septuagint has ὅτι κακολογούντες θεὸν υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ, agreeing with the *tiqqun*. This *tiqqun* is discussed in detail

5. in die fleur van hulle lewe [in the prime of their life]

6. sal op manlike leeftyd sterf [will die at the age of a man]

by McCarthy (1981:77–79). He refers to all the rabbinic sources that contain this *tiqqun*, and regards the Septuagint as containing the original text, before the correction by the scribes. This original reading emphasises the severity of the transgression of Eli's sons (McCarthy 1981:78–79). The *tiqqun* is also preferred by Barthélemy (1982:151), with reference to the work of McCarthy, *inter alia*. The 1933/53 and 1983 translations follow the MT, without a remark about the *tiqqun*. The 2020 translation follows the *tiqqun*. The footnote refers to the Septuagint and states further that the Masoretes changed the original text to read that the sons despised them(-selves).⁷ The NIV has the reference to the *tiqqun* in a footnote, as indicated. The New King James Version (NKJV) follows the MT, without a footnote. The RSV follows the *tiqqun*, also without a footnote. The NRSV also follows the *tiqqun*, but with a footnote. The *tiqqun* is accepted as the correct reading by Smith (1899:27–28) and Klein (1983:22).

The problem is that the piel of the verb used does not have any kind of reflexive meaning,⁸ making it quite probable that the *tiqqun* was the original reading. Both the *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon* (BDB)⁹ and the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT) refer to the *tiqqun*, with God as the object of the verb according to the *tiqqun*. A footnote to explain the situation is in order, especially as proposed by the 2020 translation.

1 Samuel 6:18

וַעֲבָרֵי הַזֶּהָב מִסְפָּר כָּל־עָרֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים לְחֻמֶּשֶׁת הַסָּרְנִים מְעִיר מִבְּצֹר וְעַד כָּפָר הַפְּרָזִי וְעַד אֲבֵל הַגְּדוּלָּה אֲשֶׁר הֵעִיזוּ עָלֶיהָ אֶת אֲרוֹן יְהוָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בַּשָּׂדֶה הַזֶּהוּשֶׁע בֵּית־הַשֹּׁמֵשׁ (MT)

And the number of the gold rats was according to the number of Philistine towns belonging to the five rulers – the fortified towns with their country villages. The large rock, on which they set the ark of the LORD, is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. (NIV)

The problem to be discussed relates to the phrase וְעַד אֲבֵל הַגְּדוּלָּה [and up to great Abel]. The BHS has a note to read וְעַד אֲבֵל [and up to the great rock], with reference to a number of Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint, two manuscripts of the Vetus Latina and the Targum. The Septuagint has καὶ ἕως λίθου τοῦ μεγάλου. The NIV accepted this change with its translation, but also changed a vowel of the preposition עַד to read עָד, the noun for a witness.¹⁰ A note to this effect refers to some Hebrew manuscripts and the Septuagint. Both the 1933/53 and 1983 translations did the same as the NIV with regard to both issues mentioned above, without any note. The second and third versions of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* refer to the reading 'rock'. It is, however, only BHK³ that has the proposal to change the vowel to get 'witness'; the other two editions do not have

7. hulle het hulle geminag [they despised themselves]

8. As done by many translations and Tsumura (2007:178), although Tsumura (2007:179) mentions the *tiqqun* as the original reading.

9. Brown, Driver & Briggs 1977.

10. According to Cooke (1936:48), the proposal to change the preposition to a noun was first made by Julius Wellhausen, not always a favourite in reformed circles!

it. Klein (1983:53) accepts the proposal but wants to add the article to the word for 'rock' and read וְעָדָה for the preposition. Tsumura's (2007:225) proposal to take the preposition as a noun meaning 'platform' on account of such a noun in Ugaritic seems to be far-fetched. Barthélemy (1982:154-155) does not discuss the proposed correction of the proposition to a noun, but supports the reading 'stone'.

The 2020 translation will also follow these changes but will have a more detailed footnote that refers to the change of the vowel of the preposition and the reading of 'the great rock', with reference to some Hebrew manuscripts and the Septuagint. The note should, however, also include a reference to the Targum. The note also provides a translation of the MT. The RSV and NRSV do the same. The NKJV inserted some words related to the proposal of the BHS but wanted to retain the MT as well:

[E]ven as far as the large *stone* of Abel on which they set the ark of the LORD, *which stone remains* to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh.

1 Samuel 10:19

וְאַתֶּם הַיּוֹם מְאַסְתֶּם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא מוֹשִׁיעַ לָכֶם מִכָּל־רָעוֹתֵיכֶם וְצָרֹתֵיכֶם וְתִמְרוּ לוֹ כִּי־מֶלֶךְ תַּשִּׁים עָלֵינוּ (MT)

But you have this day rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses; and you have said, 'No, set a king over us'. (NIV)

The problem relates to the preposition וְ, which does not fit in the context. Samuel is talking to the people and refers to what they said to him, not to a third party, such as the Lord. The BHS has an extended note about this word in the MT. The note says that some Hebrew manuscripts add the particle לַ to the preposition, referring to the Targum as well. A number of manuscripts, the Septuagint, one manuscript of the Vetus Latina, the Peshitta and the Vulgate read the negative particle instead of the preposition, whilst some manuscripts read לַי, and two manuscripts read לַי. The second and third versions of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* refer only to the variant of the negative particle for the preposition. The Septuagint reads και εἶπατε Οὐχί, ἀλλ' ἢ ὅτι βασιλέα στήσεις ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Smith (1899:74) also wants to read the negative particle, as does Klein (1983:95) and Tsumura (2007:295). Barthélemy (1982:164–165) regards the reading of the Septuagint, Vulgate and Peshitta as an assimilation to 1 Samuel 8:19, where the negative appears in a similar context. He thus prefers to retain the MT.

The NIV does not have a note referring to the choice of the negative particle instead of the preposition. The 1933/53 and 1983 translations did the same as the NIV, also without a note. This will also be the rendering of the 2020 translation, with a note that the translation follows a number of Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate. It also gives a translation of the MT.¹¹

11. *Julle het vir Hom gesê* [You said to Him]. The capital 'H' makes it clear that the suffix to the preposition refers to the Lord.

1 Samuel 12:15

וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמַעוּ בְקוֹל יְהוָה וּמְרִיתֶם אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה וְהִתְתֶּה דִּי־יְהוָה בְּכֶם וּבְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם (MT)

But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers. (NIV)

The problem relates to the last word in the verse. If the MT is translated literally, it should be 'and the hand of the Lord will be against you and your fathers'. As 'fathers' normally refers to the ancestors of the people, it does not make sense. That is why the NIV has the translation, 'as it was against your fathers'. Barthélemy (1982:175) notes that the Targum and Peshitta translated this passage in a similar way, with a reference to the past as regards the forefathers. This translation of the Peshitta and Targum is not included in the note of the BHS. The BHS refers to the reading of the Septuagint, 'and against your king' [και εσται χειρ κυριου ἐπὶ ὑμᾶς και ἐπὶ τὸν βασιλέα ὑμῶν]. The king is mentioned in the previous verse. Barthélemy (1982:174–175) regards the reading of the Septuagint as an exegetical adaptation to the previous verse. Both the 1953 and 1983 translations followed the MT ('fathers'/'forefathers'), although both added 'as' [*soos*], as the NIV did.¹² It is interesting that the original 1933 translation circumvented the problem by translating the word for 'fathers' or 'forefathers' as 'your counsellors' [*julle raadsmanne*]. The 2020 translation follows the footnote of the BHS with the translation 'and against your king'. It states in a note that the translation follows the Septuagint, whilst the MT has 'your forefathers'. This is also done by the NRSV (with a note) and the RSV (without a note). The NKJV follows the example of the NIV ('as it was against your fathers'). The reading of the Septuagint is preferred by Smith (1899:87) and Klein (1983:110). Tsumura (2007:324) again goes his own way, saying that the phrase 'you and your fathers' refers to the whole household of Israel, as in Verse 7. However, Verse 7 clearly refers to the past, not the future as in Verse 15. The solution of the 2020 translation is in order, especially with the footnote about the reading of the MT.

1 Samuel 15:32

It is not always the case that the 2020 translation follows the Septuagint when the MT presents a problem. First Samuel 15:32 is an example. The relevant passage reads as follows:

וַיָּלֶךְ אֵלָיו אַגַּג מְבֹטָח (MT)

Agag came to him confidently. (NIV)

The HALOT gives a number of explanations for this word. Amongst others, it can mean 'to go in chains', but it refers to the Septuagint ('trembling') and to Aquila, Symmachus and the Targum ('cheerfully', 'calmly'). This last possibility is the preference of the NIV. The three editions used also refer to these different translations, with BHK³ preferring the reading of the Septuagint. Barthélemy (1982:188–189) also discusses

12. 1953: *dan sal die hand van die HERE teen julle wees soos teen julle voorvaders* [then the hand of the LORD will be against you as against your forefathers]; 1983: *sal die Here teen julle wees, soos teen julle voorvaders*. [then the Lord will be against you, as against your forefathers]

the different interpretations of the word and the renderings of the other ancient witnesses, but retains the MT, with a meaning similar to that of the NIV. The 1933/53 and 1983 translations have ‘cheerfully’ [opgeruimd]. The 2020 translation accepts the first possibility of the HALOT (‘to go in chains’). This is also the first entry in the BDB. In a footnote, the 2020 translation states that the meaning of the original is uncertain and that the Septuagint translated the Hebrew as ‘trembling’, whilst the Targum and other ancient Greek translations chose ‘cheerfully’. All the possibilities are discussed by Tsumura (2007:408), who prefers ‘cheerfully’.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 1:14

In some instances, the Septuagint did not offer a solution to the problem the committee faced, and one or more of the other ancient versions helped the committee to find a solution. Ezekiel 1:14 is an example, as this verse does not occur in the Old Greek:

וְהַחַיִּוֹת יָרְצוּ אֶשׁוּב כְּמִרְאֵה הַבְּזֻק (MT)

The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning. (NIV)

The first problem in this verse is the word יָרְצוּ, which is a hapax legomenon. The BHS proposes that one should follow the Vulgate (*ibant*) and read יָרְצוּ. This is probably the reading followed by the NIV. It was also followed by the 1933/53 and 1983 Afrikaans translations.¹³ The reading of the Vulgate is not mentioned in Kittel’s second version of *Biblia Hebraica*, but in the third. As Kittel’s third version of *Biblia Hebraica* was published over an extensive period, it is possible the translator of the 1933 edition made use of Kittel’s 1973 edition of *Biblia Hebraica*. In the 2020 Afrikaans translation, a footnote will be added to the text stating that the meaning of the word is unknown and that the translation follows the Vulgate.

Koehler and Baumgartner in the HALOT regard the word as a by-form of רוץ [to run].¹⁴

This was what the Peshitta did when it used the verb ܠܘܫܘܬܐ. This possibility is also mentioned in the BDB, but this dictionary proposes to read יָרְצוּ as well, as the HALOT does. As the BDB was probably the dictionary used by the 1933 translators, they could have followed BDB’s suggestion. Many commentaries support this emendation, for example Cooke (1936:25) and Zimmerli (1979:84). Block (1997:93) mentions this reading, but thinks the form could be a by-form of the verb רוץ, as does Allen (1994:6). This idea is not generally accepted.¹⁵ Barthélemy (1992:7–9) discusses this example in some detail, mentioning the different possibilities, but refrains from making a definite proposal on account of the omission of this verse by the Septuagint.

13. 1953: ‘En die wesens het heen en weer gesnel’ [And the creatures sped to and fro] 1983: ‘Die wesens het soos weerlig heen en weer geskiet’ [The creatures rushed to and fro]. The original 1933 had ‘gevaar’ [‘to sail’ or ‘navigate’] instead of ‘gesnel’ [sped].

14. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M.E.J. & Stamm, J.J. 1994–2000).

15. Cf. e.g. Cooke 1936:25.

Ezekiel 5:7, using the Peshitta

The final part of the verse reads as follows:

וְכַמְשַׁפְּטֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם לֹא עֲשִׂיתֶם (MT)

You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you. (NIV)

In the NIV, a footnote to ‘You have not even’ states that this is the reading of most Hebrew manuscripts, whilst some Hebrew manuscripts and the Peshitta have ‘You have’. This is in agreement with the footnote of the BHS, which refers to many Hebrew manuscripts and editions, as well as the Peshitta. The 2020 translation follows the footnote,¹⁶ leaving the negative particle out, with a note agreeing with the note of the BHS:

1953: *En die wesens het heen en weer gesnel.*

1983: *Die wesens het soos weerlig heen en weer geskiet.*

Both the 1933/53 and 1983 translations followed the MT in their translations.¹⁷ Both of them added a word to the negative particle, just as the NIV did by adding ‘even’. It can be noted that Kittel’s second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* refer to 30 Hebrew manuscripts, the editions and the Peshitta, which all omit the negative particle, but this is not followed by the two translations. They circumvented the problem by an addition to the negative particle. In this instance, the Old Greek agrees with the MT, but the 2020 translation is willing to follow the Peshitta and some Hebrew manuscripts and editions. In a case like this, the translation will always have a footnote that explains what it did and what the reading of the MT is.

Cooke (1936:59) wants to retain the MT, saying that it would have been easier to omit the negative particle than to add it. It is also retained by Zimmerli (1979:159), Allen (1994:52), Greenberg (2008:99) and Block (1997:200). After discussing this problem in some detail, Barthélemy (1992:25) concludes that the reading of the MT should be retained as the more difficult reading. The solution of the older translations to soften the negative, which is followed by the 2020 translation, goes against the consensus of scholarly opinion. However, the footnote gives the translation of the MT as it stands.

Ezekiel 6:6

The first part of the verse reads as follows:

בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם הָעָרִים תְּהָרְבֶנָּה וְהַבְּמֹזוֹת תִּישָׁמְנָה לְמַעַן יִהְרָבוּ וַיִּאֲשָׁמוּ מִזְבְּחֹתֵיכֶם (MT)

Wherever you live, the towns will be laid waste and the high places demolished, so that your altars will be laid waste and devastated. (NIV)

The problem is related to the verb וַיִּאֲשָׁמוּ [to be guilty]. This clearly does not fit in the context. The NIV follows the

16. *maar die gebruike van die volke rondom julle nagedoen het* [but followed the standard of the nations around you].

17. 1933/53: *sels na die verordeninge van die nasies wat rondom julle is, nie gehandel het nie* [you did not even conform to the ordinances of the nations around you]; 1983: *julle het nie eens volgens die gebruike van die nasies rondom julle geleef nie.*

proposal of the BHS to read the verb *יִשְׁמוּ* [to be made uninhabited] without any note. This verb, a niphil, occurs in Verse 4. The BHS says that this proposal follows the Peshitta, Targum, Vulgate and Symmachus, whilst the word is not present in the Old Greek.

The 1933/53 and 1983 Afrikaans translations followed this or a related reading.¹⁸ Kittel's third version of *Biblia Hebraica* proposes the same Hebrew as the BHS, whilst Kittel's second version of *Biblia Hebraica* proposes *יִשְׁמוּ*. The proposal of the BHS is also accepted by the 2020 translation, with a note referring to the Peshitta, Targum, Vulgate and Symmachus. The change is also accepted by Cooke (1936:69), Zimmerli (1979:179) and Allen (1994:81). Allen mentions the possibility that the word in the MT could be a form of the verb *שָׁמַם*, but the addition of the aleph would be strange. Greenberg (2008:132) also thinks along these lines, referring to a work of GR Driver. Block (1997:220) agrees with Greenberg in this regard. All these explanations, however, accept that the word could not be from the root *אָשַׁם* [to be guilty]. Barthélemy (1982:29–30) wants to retain the MT and wants to understand the word as not 'to be guilty' but 'to atone for', with a note to be added in the translation that the word in the Hebrew resembles the word 'to be devastated'. He discusses all the proposals made, but wants to retain the MT in this way.

This example, as well as the previous one, indicates that the editors of the 2020 translation used proposals based on ancient versions other than the Old Greek. The following examples have references to the Septuagint, in some instances with references to other ancient versions as well.

Ezekiel 7:13

The last part of the verse reads as follows:

וְאִישׁ בְּעוֹנוֹ חִיּוֹ לֹא יִתְחַזֵּק (MT)

Because of their sins, not one of them will preserve his life. (NIV)

The problem is related to the last word in the verse, the hithpael of *חָזַק*. This form of the verb usually has a reflexive meaning ('to show oneself courageous', 'to prove oneself strong'), which does not fit in the context. The BHS referring to the Old Greek (*κρατήσαι*) and the Peshitta regards a hiphil of the verb probably as the reading translated by these two versions. The hiphil can be used transitively, and this is probably what the NIV accepted. Kittel's second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* have the same proposal as the BHS, as have the HALOT and the BDB.

The 1933/53 translation attempted to translate the hithpael and added 'force' to 'his life' ('and no one will strengthen himself through his iniquity in his life's force'¹⁹). It did not

18.1953: *sodat julle altare woens en eenzaam sal woens* [so that your altars will be devastated and lonely]; 1983: *julle altare sal in puin lê en verwoes woens* [your altars will be ruined and destroyed].

19.1953: *en niemand sal homself deur sy ongeregtigheid in sy lewenskrag versterk nie* [emphasis in the original]; [and no one will strengthen his life's power through his iniquity]. This is one of the examples where the 1953 revision differs from the original 1933, which reads, *en niemand wie se lewe in sy ongeregtigheid is, sal*

follow the remarks of the BHK in this instance. The 1983 translation did the same as the NIV did.²⁰ This is also the proposal of the 2020 translation. A footnote will indicate that the translation follows the Septuagint and Peshitta and that the original can be translated as 'to preserve himself'. This is also the view of Zimmerli (1979:196) and Block (1997:256).

Ezekiel 10:9

In Ezekiel 10:9, a phrase (*וְאוֹפְנֵי אֶחָד אֶחָד אֶחָד אֶחָד אֶחָד*) is repeated in the MT, with only 'and' omitted before the first occurrence. The repetition does not occur in the Old Greek and the Peshitta, and this is followed by the NIV and the 1983 translation. The 1933/53 translation does not repeat the phrase but has an additional word (*telkens* [every time]). The 2020 translation will also not have the repetition; however, it will include a note that the phrase is repeated in the original Hebrew, but that the translation follows the Septuagint and the Peshitta. It is interesting to note that Kittel's second version of *Biblia Hebraica* refers to the omission of the repetition in the Septuagint and Peshitta, but that Kittel's third version of *Biblia Hebraica* does not have this note.

It can be noted that Cooke (1936:119), Zimmerli (1979:196), Block (1997:181, with reference to Ezekiel 1:23), Greenberg (2008:179, 181, with reference to Ezek 1:23) and Allen (1994:116)²¹ regard the repetition as functional, as the 1933/53 translation does by including the word *telkens*. The repetition could perhaps indicate quantification, in which case the translation of the Old Greek and Peshitta may have followed this interpretation.

Ezekiel 10:19

In Ezekiel 10:19, a number of verbs and pronominal suffixes refer to the cherubs mentioned in the plural, whilst one verb is in the singular:

וַיִּשְׂאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־כַּנְפֵיהֶם וַיִּרְוּמוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ לְעֵינַי בְּצֵאתָם וְהָאוֹפָנִים לְעַמְתָּם (MT)

While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (NIV)

The one verb in the singular is *יַעֲמֹד*, but the NIV has the plural in its translation ('They stopped'). The BHS states that the Septuagint and the Peshitta have the verb in the plural. Kittel's second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* also have this note. Apart from the NIV, the 1933/53 and 1983 translations also have this translation.²² This proposal is also

.....
homself versterk nie [and no one whose life is in his iniquity will strengthen himself]. Both versions retained the reflexive meaning.

20. *almal is skuldig, niemand sal sy lewe behou nie* [everybody is guilty, no one will save his life].

21. Allen refers to Gesenius-Kautzsch, §1341, q.

22. The 1983 translation makes it clear that the cherubs are the subject of this verb, saying, *Die gerubs het by die ingang van die oostelike poort van die huis van die Here gaan staan* [The cherubim took their stand at the entrance of the eastern gate of the house of the Lord]. The 1933/53 uses the plural of the personal pronoun *hulle* [they].

followed by the 2020 translation, with a footnote that the translation follows the Septuagint and Peshitta; the MT has the singular. Zimmerli (1979:227) thinks that the glory of the Lord in the previous verse is the subject of the singular verb in Verse 19. Block (1997:326) and Greenberg (2008:179) read the plural.

Ezekiel 11:7

In Ezekiel 11:7, the Lord is speaking to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

לְכֹן כְּהֵאמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הַלְלִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַתֶּם בְּתוֹכָהּ הֶמָּה הַבָּשָׂר וְהִיא הָעִיר
(MT) וְאַתֶּם הוֹצִיא מִתּוֹכָהּ

Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The bodies you have thrown there are the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it. (NIV)

The final verb in the MT is a third person plural, but one would expect a first person singular, as the Lord is saying what he is going to do. Many Hebrew manuscripts and editions, as well as the ancient versions, have a first person singular, as stated by Kittel's second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* and the BHS. The 1933/53 and 1983 translations follow this, just as the NIV does. This will also be followed by the 2020 translation, with a footnote stating that the translation follows many Hebrew manuscripts and editions, as well as the ancient versions. It adds that the MT has the third person singular. This reading of a first person singular subject is also supported by Cooke (1936:127), Zimmerli (1979:227), Allen (1994:117) and Block (1997:327). Greenberg (2008:185) wants to read it as an infinitive with a passive sense, but this does not fit in the context. Barthélemy (1992:63-64) discusses the different possibilities, but wants to retain the MT as an infinitive absolute, with reference to the discussion on 2 Samuel 3:18 in Barthélemy (1982:234-235). He wants to translate it with a first person subject.

Ezekiel 16:6-7

Verse 6 and the beginning of Verse 7 read as follows:

וְאָעֲבַר עָלֶיךָ וְאָרְאֶה מִתְבּוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶּיךָ וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי
(MT) רַבְּבָה כְּצִמְחַת הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְלִיךְ

Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, 'Live!' ²⁵ I made you grow like a plant of the field. (NIV)

There are two issues in the passage. At the end of Verse 6, a phrase is repeated in the MT (וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי). The repetition is omitted by the NIV, but not by the 1933/53, 1983 or 2020 translations. It is interesting to note that in this instance, some translations retain the repetition, whilst in other instances they do not. The repetition is omitted by some Hebrew manuscripts, as well as by the Old Greek and Peshitta, as stated by Kittel's second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* and the BHS. Some inconsistency appears in this regard, although the 2020 translation refers in a footnote to the omission of the repetition in the Septuagint and Peshitta. Cooke (1936:162) regards the repetition as an error, a view

that Zimmerli (1979:322) and Allen (1994:224) support. Block (1997:477) agrees with Greenberg (2008:275), who thinks that the repetition indicates emphasis. Barthélemy (1992:92-93) also agrees with Greenberg in this example. It seems as if the 2020 translation does not treat all instances of repetition consistently, sometimes omitting it and sometimes not. However, consistency is not always possible, as retaining the repetition depends on the context.

The word at the beginning of Verse 7 (רַבְּבָה) can be translated as '10 000' or as 'a great quantity'. However, the Septuagint (πληθύνου – increase!) and the Peshitta have imperatives. Kittel's second and third versions of *Biblia Hebraica* and the BHS say that it could be read as וְרַבִּי or וְרַבִּית, an imperative or a perfect with waw consecutive, respectively. The translation of the NIV implies the first person singular form, probably translating this verb in conjunction with following verb (נִתְלִיךְ). The 1933/53 translates the MT,²³ but it does not make sense in the context. Both the 1983 and 2020 translations translated the imperative and started a new sentence directly after this verb, retaining the following verb ('I made you'). The latter has a note stating that the translation follows the Septuagint and Peshitta, with a remark that the Hebrew can be translated as 'countless', as is done in the 1933/53 translation. Cooke (1936:163, 166) also supports the emendation, remarking that the original might have been an imperative or a perfect with waw consecutive. Zimmerli (1979:322) prefers the imperative on account of the imperative in the previous verse. Allen (1994:224) also prefers the imperative. Block (1997:477, who agrees with Greenberg 2008:270), wants to retain the MT and makes the noun an object of the word 'I made you (flourish)'. The meaning he ascribes to the noun, however, is not attested elsewhere, and a verbal noun from the related verb would rather have the meaning of 'numerous' rather than 'flourish'. Barthélemy (1992:93-95) discusses the different readings of the versions and the proposals of different scholars, but wants to retain the MT, with the same interpretation of the noun as Greenberg. The remark about the meanings of this word above is also applicable here. The 1983 and 2020 translations have good ground for their translations.

Ezekiel 16:45

Ezekiel 16:45 reads as follows:

בְּתִיאֲמֹךְ אֵת גַּעֲלַת אִשָּׁה וּבְנֵיהָ וְאָחוֹת אָחוֹתֶיךָ אֵת אֲשֶׁר גַּעַלְוּ אֲנִישֵׁיהֶן וּבְנֵיהֶן אִמְכֶן
(MT) חַתִּית וְאָבִיכֶן אַמְרִי

You are a true daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and her children; and you are a true sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. (NIV)

The problem is related to the phrase וְאָחוֹת אָחוֹתֶיךָ [the sister of your sister] in the MT. The NIV has 'the sister of your sisters'. This is what one would expect, also because the next verb is in the plural. The plural (אָחוֹתֶיךָ) appears in two Hebrew manuscripts and agrees with the plural in the Septuagint,
.....
23.onelbaar [infinite]

Peshitta and Vulgate, according to the BHS. Kittel's second version of *Biblia Hebraica* has the same note and refers to the versions. Kittel's third version of *Biblia Hebraica* also mentions the Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate.

The three Afrikaans translations have the plural as well (*jou susters*). This is one of the instances where the 1983 translation follows the Septuagint and the other ancient versions without a note explaining the translation explicitly. A note in the 2020 translation states that the translation follows the ancient versions. Most commentaries follow this emendation.²⁴

Barthélemy (1992:108–109) has an extensive discussion of this example and other examples of 'the sister/s of your sister' in this chapter. He wants to retain the MT, but then with the possibility that it is a defective form for the plural.

Conclusion

The ancient versions frequently used a strategy of normalisation to make their translations coherent. The three Afrikaans translations of the Old Testament made use of the ancient versions in some instances where the MT presented serious problems or ambiguity. This was done to a lesser extent in the 1933/53 translation. However, this translation did not discuss the issue in its introduction and has no notes referring to the problem. In some instances, a distinction has to be made between the original 1933 translation and the revision of 1953. The 1983 translation made more use of the Septuagint and the other versions, and it has notes about choices made in some, but not all, instances. The 2020 translation will contain notes in all instances where it deviates from the MT. This is true even in some instances where it translated the MT but the Septuagint or other ancient versions have important variant readings. The use of the versions is not consistent in this translation, but consistency is not possible, as the translators had to evaluate every instance on its own merits.

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Author's contribution

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Ethical considerations

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24.Cf. Cooke (1936:176) and Zimmerli (1979:330).

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