

The Septuagint as Textual Witness and Translation. A Re-Evaluation

Thesis Abstract

Ryan Korstange

Trinity Western University

The Septuagint is one of the most important witnesses to the text of the Hebrew Bible available to the Old Testament textual critic. Not only have its readings preserved a tradition that has escaped the influence of the Masoretes, but also the earliest extant manuscript copy of the text of the Septuagint, Codex Vaticanus, is 4–5 centuries earlier than the Leningrad Codex. It is not difficult to see why many prominent scholars believe that the Septuagint plays a major role both in understanding the development of the Hebrew Bible, and in critically determining a more accurate and authentic text of the Hebrew Bible.

Unfortunately, the great wealth of textual information held by the Septuagint is not readily accessible. The same act of translation that made the text of the Old Testament available to innumerable Greek speakers has clouded the grammatical and morphological data needed to derive a more authentic text of the Hebrew Bible. In the last 20 years several scholars have developed highly optimistic methodologies by which the textual information locked in the translation of the Septuagint can be made accessible. These optimistic methodologies purport their ability to both find differences between the Masoretic Text and the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, and to supply the Hebrew text which produced these differences (through a process called retroversion). If tenable, these optimistic methodologies would produce Hebrew evidence of differences between the Masoretic Text and the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint.

This study seeks to re-evaluate the way in which the Septuagint is used in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. There are two glaring deficiencies present in the optimistic methodologies of retroversion spoken of above: 1) A firm text of the Septuagint itself is not established, and 2) the lack of exact grammatical, syntactical and morphological correspondence between Hebrew and Greek are not given enough consideration. As the study progresses we will find that the complex transmission of the Septuagint, the “translation technique” of the translators, and the non-correspondence of Greek and Hebrew serve to permanently disguise the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint. Thus, the Septuagint is severely limited in its usefulness as a textual witness.