SOME TEXT-CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE GREEK TEXT OF THE PENTATEUCH

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While working on a dissertation on the use of tenses in parts of the narrative sections of the Greek Pentateuch, I encountered a few instances of text critical interest that I shall discuss in this article. In these cases the reading of the original text is not, in my opinion at least, so clear. The evidence relating to translation technique that I will use in this study is based upon the material analyzed for my dissertation and most of it is not yet published.

The cases under consideration concern verb forms only. We will discuss the originality of certain Greek verb forms in the MSS of the Pentateuch, which are an inner-Greek problem. First, I will present various instances from the Book of Exodus in which it will be decided whether the aor.ind. or aor.part. is the original reading. After that I shall examine a case in Numbers in which the Ms-tradition is divided between the aor.ind. and impf.ind. Finally, I will present examples from Exodus and Deuteronomy, in which it will be decided whether aor.subj. or fut.ind. were the original readings.

I

A dialogue between God and Jacob occurs in Gen 46:2-3 where the wayyiqtol form of the verb אמר appears four times. In the LXX (Göttingen edition), these cases are treated slightly differently by the translator than other examples in the Pentateuch. It is very odd that the fourth ויאמר is translated by λέγων, since it has no main verb. It also occurs without a main verb in Gen 22:7 in a context with the same kind of pattern: address of a person by name, answer, then the participle λέγων with the actual

speech.[1] Some MSS contain the reading εἶπεν and λέγει, which are both much more common as an equivalent of ויאמר, λέγει especially in dialogue. The second ויאמר has the equivalent aor.part. εἶπας, which is unattested anywhere else in the Pentateuch besides Gen 22:7 and it is rather unusual, as well, that the aor.part. follows its main verb.[2] There are some MSS that read λέγων here, which is much more common in these contexts. Other variants are also found in the tradition. The translator of Genesis seems to have used some exceptional forms, which are good Greek, and are rarely, if at all, employed in other books of the Pentateuch. The lemma text of the Göttingen edition is the *lectio difficilior* and thus seems to represent the original text.

Papyrus no. 962, however, lacks the text after the word νυκτός until the participle λέγων.[3] If the reading of the Göttingen edition represents the original text, it is difficult to understand how the shorter reading represented by P 962 has come into existence. If we consider the possibility of parablepsis arising from repeated verbs occurring in direct discourse introductions, then this must have already occurred in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the translator. In the Greek, as we have already noted, the introductory verbs are all in different forms: εἶπεν, εἶπας and λέγων. There is, of course, a slight possibility that in an earlier stage of MSS tradition of the shorter reading there was, instead of εἶπας, the participle λέγων, which afterwards caused the parablepsis, but this explanation is highly hypothetical and questionable. This solution leaves unanswered the question of the isolated λέγων without the main verb, a translation of the fourth ויאמר. But if we might consider the shorter reading as the original LXX reading, the longer one could be considered as a correction towards the MT, although it is rather difficult to regard the equivalent of the second ויאמר, aor.part. εἶπας, as a later correction; the aor.ind. would be expected.

[1] Anneli Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis in the Septuagint* (AASF 31; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982) 92

[2] Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 101.

[3] See Albert Pietersma, *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri IV and V* (ASP 16; Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert and Company, 1977) 133.

It is not very unusual for Hebrew parataxis to be rendered by a *participium coniunctum* construction. In LXX, this construction is usually built in such a way that the logical subject of the construction is the subject of the main clause. In *Text History of the Greek Exodus*, five text critically difficult occurrences are given where the indicative is preferred to the *participium coniunctum* forms (Exod 12:30, 37; 14:7; 15:20 and 16:18).[4] In all these cases the form functions as a translation equivalent of the Hebrew wayyiqtol. If the participial construction is original in these cases, it would be incorrect from the point of view of Greek grammar; the subject of the main clause and the logical subject of the construction do not agree. Wevers uses the term 'anacoluthic' for these constructions.

The reading of the participle as the original text is supported in all five cases by MS B, in four cases by minuscule 527, and in three of them by the other MSS belonging to the group *x*. Other witnesses support only one or two of these cases. Wevers lists 73 instances in which MS B seems to have influenced the *x*-tradition.[5] This may not be taken to mean that it would always be so in every case, but occasionally it may be concluded that both traditions have individually preserved the original reading. Let us look at each of the cases more closely:

1) Exod 12:30: וַיָּ֨קָם פַּרְעֹ֜ה לַ֗יְלָה ה֤וּא ... וַתְּהִ֛י צְעָקָ֥ה גְדֹלָ֖ה בְּמִצְרָ֑יִם—καὶ ἀναστὰς Φαραὼ νυκτὸς ... καὶ ἐγενήθη κραυγὴ μεγάλη ἐν πάσῃ γῇ Αἰγύπτου. The subject of the part.coni. is Pharaoh, while that of the main verb is κραυγή.

2) Exod 12:37-38: וַיִּסְע֧וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֛ל מֵרַעְמְסֵ֖ס סֻכֹּ֑תָה ... 38 וְגַם־עֵ֥רֶב רַ֖ב עָלָ֣ה אִתָּ֑ם—Ἀπάραντες δὲ οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ Ῥαμεσσὴ εἰς Σοκχῶθα, ...38 καὶ ἐπίμικτος πολὺς συνανέβη αὐτοῖς. The participle has Israel as its subject, whereas the main verb has ἐπίμικτος, a collective noun.

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[4] John William Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Exodus* (MSU 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992) 219.

[5] Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Exodus*, 93.

3) Exod 14:7: וַיֶּאֱסֹר אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה ... וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ-מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר—καὶ λαβὼν ἑξακόσια ἅρματα ἐκλεκτὰ … καὶ ἐσκλήρυνεν κύριος τὴν καρδίαν Φαραώ. If we did not look at the context, we might take this text to mean that the Lord, the subject of the main verb, had also ridden in the chariot. However, the logical subject of the participial construction has to be Pharaoh.

4) Exod 15:20: וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת-הַתֹּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֶאןָ כָל-הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתֻפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֹת: — λαβοῦσα δὲ Μαριὰμ ἡ προφῆτις ἡ ἀδελφὴ Ἀαρὼν τὸ τύμπανον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξῆλθον πᾶσαι αἱ γυναῖκες ὀπίσω αὐτῆς μετὰ τυμπάνων καὶ χορῶν. The subject of the participle is Miriam and that of the main verb the women. Naturally, Miriam is one of the women intended.

5) Exod 16:18: וַיָּמֹדּוּ בָעֹמֶר וְלֹא הֶעְדִּיף הַמַּרְבֶּה וְהַמַּמְעִיט לֹא הֶחְסִיר אִישׁ לְפִי-אָכְלוֹ לָקָטוּ—καὶ μετρήσαντες τῷ γόμορ, οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν ὁ τὸ πολύ, καὶ ὁ τὸ ἔλαττον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν· ἕκαστος εἰς τοὺς καθήκοντας παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ συνέλεξαν. Here the Israelites serve as the subject of the participle, however the main verb has ὁ τὸ πολύ as its subject.

Thus the preference for the indicative as the original reading is concluded from the following fact: the translator of Exodus did not use the participial constructions in an anacoluthic fashion. Only two cases are mentioned (Exod 8:15 and 9:7) in which this happens. For anacoluthic constructions the translator used the genitive absolute construction.[6]

This solution raises a few questions. First, the indicative being the original reading, it follows that in some MSS, one of them highly regarded (B), the copyist must have changed the correct indicative to the incorrect participle. How can we explain such an action?

Secondly, the genitive absolute construction is very rarely found and it is hardly ever used as a rendering of the Hebrew verbal clauses in the LXX version of the

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[6] Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Exodus*, 219.

Pentateuch.[7] Furthermore, the gen.abs. is used in constructions in LXX, as well as in the contemporary *koinê*, in which the logical subject of the participial construction is identical with the subject of the main verb.[8] Thus it seems that the use of the gen.abs. does not necessarily demand a change of the subject in paratactic constructions in the text to be translated, whereas the part.coni. construction is relatively common as a translation of the verbal clauses, especially as an equivalent for the wayyiqtol form.

Thirdly, almost all the verbs concerned are the most usual ones translated by part.coni. structures (נסע, קום, לקח; ἵστημι, αἴρω, λαμβάνω). It is therefore possible that the translator did not look at the context after the verb in question, but, assuming that the suitable main verb would follow, used a participial form as an equivalent in these cases simply out of habit. The possibility of error was compounded by the fact that the space between the verb rendered by the participle and the main verb was considerable. It is a well known fact that the translator of Exodus was capable of free translations in his work and sometimes, it seems, he may have been so bold as to resort to a free rendering without examining its suitability to the following context. In the other books of the Pentateuch, anacoluthic participles are found as well.

This conclusion is further supported by the fact that anacoluthic part.coni. constructions are found in contemporary Greek. It seems, however, that these so-called *nominative absolute*[9] constructions were used in classical Greek when the correct subject could be easily discovered from the context (such as formal subject cases like δοκεῖ μοι in which the first person is the "real subject"). This is a stylistic device that stresses the logical subject of the main verb in the text, and thus we are not dealing here with a real nom.abs. construction. The examples cited from the LXX,

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[7] Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 111.

[8] Edwin Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit mit Einschluß der gleichzeitigen Ostraka und der in Ägypten verfassten Inschriften* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1926-1934) II:3, § 157 II B II; Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis*, 111–112.

[9] See Raphael Kühner–Bernhard Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (II:1-2 Satzlehre; Dritte Auflage; Hannover and Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1898–1904) II:2, § 493.

however, may not be convincingly explained as logical subject cases — with the possible exception of Exod 15:20.

Anacoluthic participial constructions are also found in the papyri and NT. We may assume[10] that these writers used the participle following the classical usage. According to the Moulton-Turner NT grammar the nominative absolute construction was also used instead of the indicative in the papyri and in the NT, and thus incorrect Greek was not created. Nevertheless, Mayser demonstrated that the examples quoted in the Moulton-Turner NT grammar are hasty and dubious and considered them to represent incorrect expressions in these texts. In my opinion, we may explain this incorrectness in the same way we did regarding the incorrect participles in LXX. The writer started the construction with a participle and then changed his mind about the continuation of the sentence, or simply did not think about the necessity of agreement with the main verb.

Thus we may conclude that there are no nominative absolute constructions in LXX Exod, but that these part.coni. structures represent incorrect use of the Greek language on the part of the translator. The competence of the translator of Exod may not be used as a criterion for deciding between the aor.ind. and the aor.part. — it is too general a criterion. Competent translators might also have had their off-days.

II

Num 21:9: ויעש משה נחש נחשת וישמהו על הנס וְהָיָה אִם נָשַׁךְ הנחש את איש והביט אל נחש
הנחשת וחי—καὶ ἐποίησεν Μωυσῆς ὄφιν χαλκοῦν, καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ σημείου, καὶ ἐγένετο ὅταν ἔδακεν ὄφις ἄνθρωπον, καὶ ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὸν ὄφιν τὸν χαλκοῦν καὶ ἔζη. (εδακνεν B oI⁻¹⁵-29 537 d n⁻⁷⁶⁷ t 71' 392 Cyr II 637 Arm Sa Syh = Ra)

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[10] *Contra* James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Vol. I, Prolegomena; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh, 1906) 222–225 and Mayser II:1, § 51.3. See also Basil G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1973) § 920; Gilles Dorival, *Les Nombres, Traduction du texte grec de la Septante, Introduction et Notes* (La Bible d'Alexandrie IV; Paris: Cerf, 1994) 186.

The qatal form is beyond doubt most frequently translated by the aor.ind. Thus in Num 21:9 it is not at all surprising to find the aor.ind. in the lemma text: ἔδακεν as an equivalent for qatal נשך. The matter is not, however, that simple. The qatal appears in a clause beginning with והיה אם that is rendered by the temporal clause καὶ ἐγένετο ὅταν. A clause containing the particle ἄν and a secondary tense normally expresses iterative or habitual action;[11] thus in fact, this example is by no means a normal case of qatal rendered with the aor.ind. In several MSS the impf.ind. form appears. It is argued in *Text History* that the aorist is to be preferred since the action of a snake bite is "punctiliar".[12] But is it not also true that the verb "to bite" is already "punctiliar" in its lexical meaning (Aktionsart), and thus the LXX translator did not need to put the verb in the aorist to make the action "punctiliar"? Furthermore, as it may be maintained that the clause is nevertheless iterative—"always when"—notwithstanding the secondary tense used; both the imperfect and the aorist with the particle ἄν give an iterative meaning for the sentence, the only difference being that with the aorist the iterativeness is limited only to one situation, in this case the particular incident of snakes sent by God to punish Israel. The imperfect denotes every possible situation where snakes will bite somebody. The determination of which one of the secondary tenses was originally used in this case may not be solved by referring to the meaning that a certain verbal aspect carries in itself. Both secondary tenses, the aorist as well as the imperfect, can be understood as iterative in this context.

One also finds the imperfect in a similar clause in Num 21:6. Should the aorist ἔδακεν be regarded as the original reading? Why, we have to ask then, would anybody have changed the perfectly correct ὅταν + aor.ind. to the unnecessary imperfect? Is this possibly a case simply of an orthographic mistake made by a copyist, the difference being in any case only one letter?

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[11] See Albert Debrunner, "Das hellenistische Nebensatziterativpräteritum mit ἄν," *Glotta* 11 (1921) 1–28.

[12] John William Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Numbers* (MSU 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) 124.

III

Finally, I shall deal with two occasions where the fut.ind. is to be preferred to the aor.subj., Exod 3:18 and Deut 1:41.

In the LXX—at least in the material I have analyzed—the so-called adhortative subjunctive in the plural is only used when the person who is the object of the speech is included in the general concept of the subject of the adhortative subjunctive. When the brothers of Joseph are encouraging themselves to kill Joseph "ἀποκτείνωμεν", all the brothers are included in that "we" (Gen 37:20). In neither of the verses under discussion is this the case.

1) Exod 3:18: יהוה אלהי העברײם נקרה עלינו ועתה נ<u>לכה</u> נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזבחה ליהוה אלהינו — Ὁ θεὸς τῶν Ἑβραίων προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς· πορευσόμεθα οὖν ὁδὸν τριῶν ἡμερῶν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ἵνα θύσωμεν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν (πορευσομεθα Bᶜ F 376-*ol'*⁻⁷⁰⁸ C'⁻¹²⁶ *b* 44' *f* 628 *s* *t*⁻⁸⁴ *y*⁻⁵²⁷ *z* 55 59 76' 130 799; πορευσωμεθα A B M G 58 etc. = Ra).

The originality of the subjunctive is further complicated by the fact that the form πορευσώμεθα is not found before the Roman period. Thus it is a late form or more likely an orthographic variant caused by the copyist's inability to distinguish between long and short vowels. In parallel verses (Exod 5:3 and 8:27) the fut.ind. appears.

2) Deut 1:41: חטאנו ליהוה אנחנו נעלה ו<u>נלחמנ</u>ו ככל אשר צונו יהוה — Ἡμάρτομεν ἔναντι κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν· ἡμεῖς ἀναβάντες <u>πολεμήσομεν</u> κατὰ πάντα, ὅσα ἐνετείλατο κύριος (πολεμησομεν B F V 963 O'⁻⁶⁴⁻⁷² 52-57-77-414-528' *b*⁻³¹⁴ 53 127 130-321'-343-730 76' 318 128-630' 646 =Ra).

Were the subjunctive the original reading, it would be the only instance in Deuteronomy where the weqatal form is rendered in this way.

I would therefore argue that in these cases we have good reasons relating to translation technique for believing that the original translation read fut.ind. in both these verses.