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Theological Exegesis in LXX?

Exod 24:9-11 as a Case in Question

Hryhoriy Lozinskyy

Introduction

The Greek Exod 24:9-11 contains a rather striking statement when it is compared with its Hebrew (hereafter MT) equivalent. In the latter, the leadership of Israel enjoys the vision of the God of Israel on the mountain. The former, however, states they see only the place where the God of Israel stood. The piece in question is only one small window into the masterpiece of the whole Septuagint (hereafter LXX) translation or, as an experienced scholar in this matter such as J. W. Wevers would state, “the earliest extant commentary on the Hebrew Bible by Hebrews themselves”¹.

The paper will be divided into three sections. First, textual-critical analysis will identify and consider several differences between MT and LXX. The second section will present three different approaches: the maximalist, the minimalist and the moderate approach to LXX hermeneutics that provide at least three possible ways to evaluate the many differences one finds between LXX and MT. Finally, I will present a number of observations that appear to be important for an understanding of this passage.

The issue has already been studied by some other authors² and recently by Wyckoff³. I would like to re-examine some divergences between the text in its Greek and Hebrew traditions in a wider textual context, position the research among several scholarly opinions, and finally provide some of my own considerations on the issue.

¹ WEVERS, *Two Reflections*, 21.

² NICHOLSON, *Interpretation*, 77-97; SKA, *Vision*, 165-183.

³ WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 675-693.

1 *Status Quaestionis* on the Modification in the Greek Exod 24:9-11

1.1 *Textual-critical Analysis*

The first task is to examine MT and LXX Exod 24:9-11 in parallel⁴. This method will help to highlight the similarities, the differences and the nature of the latter. A list of all the elements which differ in both the texts will be drawn up. The list will concentrate on omissions, additions and differences in LXX against MT⁵. By studying the differences in LXX I do not intend at all to diminish the importance of the Greek version. Undoubtedly both textual traditions have to be treated with all due respect⁶. I will, however, focus on what the translators rendered in the Greek version, with the goal of understanding what caused such a different rendering from MT.

MT	LXX
וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	καὶ ἀνέβη Μωυσῆς καὶ Ααρων καὶ Ναδαβ καὶ Αβιουδ καὶ ἑβδομήκοντα τῆς γερουσίας Ἰσραήλ,
וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה לְבַנְתַּת הַסַּפִּיר וְכַמַּעֲצָם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטֹהַר:	καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον, οὗ εἰστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ· καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ ἔργον πλίνθου σαπφείρου, καὶ ὡσπερ εἶδος στερεώματος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῆ καθαριότητι
וְאֵל-אֶצְיָלִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: ס	καὶ τῶν ἐπιλέκτων τοῦ Ἰσραήλ οὐ διεφώνησεν οὐδὲ εἶς· καὶ ὤφθησαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἔπιον.

⁴ I will report the Hebrew text from *BHS* and the Greek from John William WEVERS (ed.): *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Göttingensis editum*. II/1: Exodus, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991.

⁵ For such a methodology, see, among many others, TOV, *Exegesis*, 260; SOLLAMO, *Translation Technique*, 35-36. Cf. JOOSTEN, *Une théologie?*, 33.

⁶ Cf. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *La Bibbia*, 88.

1. The coordinative conjunction καὶ before Nadab is lacking in the Hebrew text (v. 9). The Samaritan Pentateuch and 4QpaleoExod^m (4Q22) make the list longer adding the names of other two sons of Aaron: Eleazar and Ithamar⁷;
2. γερουσία means “council of elders” and, thus, is a bit different from זקנים “elders” in the Hebrew text (v. 9);
3. According to MT, the whole group (cf. v. 9) “saw the God of Israel” whereas in LXX one finds the expression καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον, οὗ εἰστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς “and they saw the place where the God stood”. Thus, the object that the leaders saw is different (v. 10);
4. Neuter plural nominative article τὰ is found only in the Greek text (v. 10);
5. εἶδος στερεώματος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ “appearance of the firmament of the sky” is different from what the Hebrew reports וכעצם השמים “as heaven itself” (v. 10);
6. LXX contains ἐπιλέκτων “chosen ones” for MT אצילים “chiefs”;
7. The Greek contains Ἰσραήλ and in Hebrew one finds בני ישראל “sons of Israel” (v. 11);
8. V. 11a is rendered differently: according to MT ואל-אצילי בני ישראל לא שלח ידו “God did not stretch out his hand against the chiefs”, meanwhile LXX contains καὶ τῶν ἐπιλέκτων τοῦ Ἰσραήλ οὐ διεφώνησεν οὐδὲ εἶς “no one of the chosen ones of Israel failed”;
9. V. 11b differs in both the textual witnesses: ויחזו את-האלהים “and they beheld God” in the Hebrew, whereas one finds in the Greek καὶ ὤφθησαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ “and they appeared in the place of God”.

Comparing a mere three verses, thus, yields a striking collection of divergences. Not all of them are of the same nature. A good analysis of all the divergences can be found in other authors⁸. I will focus on the divergences that directly interest the topic of this paper: the fact of seeing God. Special attention will be paid obviously to the Book of Exodus, though several examples from the rest of the Pentateuch will be provided in this analysis as well. Since the Five Books of Moses were translated first, they constitute the original LXX. Moreover, in general, each book has to be perceived as having been made by

⁷ SANDERSON, *Scroll*, 337. Cf. HIMBAZA, *Voir Dieu*, 105. For Shigehiro, Nadab and Abihu are secondary additions, see SHIGEHIRO, *Elders*, 29-31.

⁸ LE BOULLUEC – SANDEVOIR, *L'Exode*, 246-247; WEVERS, *Greek Text*, 384-386; WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 678-688.

different translators at different times⁹. It has to be added, of course, that the hands of multiple translators may be discovered both in smaller and larger literary contexts.

1.2 Analysis of the Divergences Pertinent to the Issue of Seeing God

The neuter plural nominative article τὰ has the function of the subject in v. 10. It corresponds to nothing in MT. In the Hebrew, it could translate אלה or אשר but they are not present in MT. Two nominative predicates refer to this subject: “work of sapphire slab” and “appearance of the firmament of heaven”. Occurrences of this neuter plural article are not so frequent in the Book of Exodus; however, two examples must be taken into consideration: Exod 4:16 and 18:19. In both passages, we find the expression τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν “the things pertaining to God”. In both texts, Moses has to become an intermediary between God and Aaron (4:16) and between God and the people (18:19). MT could be translated literally as follows: “and you will become God for him” (4:16) and “you will be for the people in front of God” (18:19). Reading these two passages together with 24:10b we could note that there is a similar issue at stake: the degree of man’s approach to God. The Greek text corresponding to MT has softened the possibility for human beings to appear close to God. In all three occurrences, the Greek renders “things”: Moses is an intermediary in the *things* pertaining God (LXX) but not in front of God (MT). This article also places emphasis on the things that have been seen in the same way in Exod 24:10a¹⁰.

Two objections could be made to this observation: (1) Neither in MT in v. 10b is it claimed that Moses and others saw God. Indeed, if v. 10a states they saw God, in v. 10b the objects that have been seen are described and not God Himself. One could remark that what is new in LXX is this emphasis on “things”, expressed by the article. In this way it clarifies the text more without leaving a doubt about the object of seeing. (2) There are just three examples reported here: Exod 4:16; 18:19; 24:10b. Probably one could not deduce from them the general tendency of toning down the notion of approaching God by employing this article. However, it seems that the use of the article removes the possibility

⁹ WEVERS, *Two Reflections*, 21. Cf. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *La Biblia*, 62-63; RÖSEL, *Towards a “Theology”*, 240; DE TROYER, *Hebrew Text*, 22; JOOSTEN, *To See God*, 287-299.

¹⁰ Wyckoff claims that τὰ is a relative pronoun. See WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 687-688. I would, rather, affirm it is a neuter article with the function of a pronoun.

of confusion about the object of seeing. At first glance insignificant, the addition of τὰ makes clearer the object of seeing and could be interpreted as an attempt to tone down MT and to increase the distance between God and humans.

In v. 10b, MT reads וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה וְכַעֲצָם הַשָּׁמַיִם which is usually translated in modern languages “the heaven itself”. Indeed, עֲצָם besides its usual meaning “bones” also indicates “self”¹¹. Thus, the whole expression in the Hebrew text can be rendered literally as “like the sky itself”. The Greek text reports, however, a different rendering: “like the appearance of the firmament of the sky”. Could there be a significant difference between the two expressions? In MT, the object of seeing is the sky itself whereas in the Greek Moses and others see just the appearance of the firmament of the sky.

Throughout the Pentateuch, the firmament is always related to the sky¹². It seems that, for the Greek translator, there was not a difference between the sky and firmament; rather, these terms would occur together and would mean the same thing. However, the addition of “appearance” to the Hebrew “sky itself” looks significant. This rendering makes the aspect of comparison stronger and, thus, moves away from the reality of things: they do not see the sky itself but just its firmament¹³. Thus, the directness of the Hebrew expression goes against the comparative rendering employed by the translator in LXX.

The next divergence concerns the subject of the verb describing the potential death of the leaders of the people. According to MT, God is the subject even though he is not explicitly mentioned in v. 11. However, the preceding statement alludes to the agent responsible of the action of “stretching out”: “they saw the God of Israel” and God “did not stretch out his hand against the chiefs”. If one also reads other passages stating that whoever sees God will perish (Gen 16:13; Exod 19:21; 33:20-23; Lev 16:2; Num 4:20; Deut 5:24; Judg 6:22-23; 13:22-23; Isa 6:5) it is not said by the hand of whom one is going to die: these passages limit themselves by simply making explicit the disastrous consequences for those who would see God. But Exod 24:10-11 explains by whom death would

¹¹ Gen 7:13; 17:23; Exod 12:17.51; Lev 23:21; Deut 32:48; Ezek 24:2.

¹² For instance, in Gen 1:8 the firmament is called explicitly sky by God. Furthermore, the expression “the firmament of the sky” occurs five times in the Pentateuch. The Greek στερέωμα renders the Hebrew רָקִיעַ. In Deut 33:26, the Hebrew “clouds” is rendered by Greek “firmament”. It is a poetical text where a comparison is made between sky and clouds in the Hebrew text on one hand and sky and firmament on the other (*parallelismus membrorum*).

¹³ For instance, Dozeman claims that the Hebrew expression “like the very heaven for purity” here means that the veil between heaven and earth was lifted for the moment. See DOZEMAN, *Exodus*, 567.

be caused: “he (God of Israel) did not stretch out his hand against the chiefs of sons of Israel”. Durham cites Humbert’s affirmation that the expression “to stretch out the hand”, a human gesture throughout the OT, occurs five times with God as subject: Exod 3:20; 9:15; 24:11; Ezek 8:3; Ps 138:7¹⁴. This action is presented in all but one of these passages as punitive and, so, it also seems to be understood in Exod 24:11. However, Moses and the others do not die since they climb the mountain at God’s invitation. The Greek text does not mention God as the subject: “and from the chosen ones of Israel not even one perished”. Thus, God is not explicitly presented as the one who destroys the people. For Wevers, it is a paraphrase that avoids making God the subject of a disastrous activity¹⁵. However, in all the other passages mentioned above, in the Hebrew text where God is subject of the “stretching out the hand”, the Greek translator renders the Hebrew faithfully. The question remains: why did the translator not tone down God’s outstretched hand in the other passages? Most likely, this text has to be understood in its own textual context of Exod 24:9-11: the distance between God and the people is already emphasized in the Greek vv. 10a and 11b, v. 11a is, therefore, not the only occurrence of such a feature. It also seems that, in fact, the avoidance of the presentation of God as a subject of the disastrous activity has to be read within this general tendency – to underline the distance between God and earthly beings that can be seen throughout other the passages in LXX as well¹⁶.

The last two divergences are the most striking. The first concerns an issue that could hardly be perceived as an unconscious scribal oversight. I will take into consideration the evaluation of this modification in detail later on¹⁷ but here I intend to make some remarks concerning the translation of v. 10a itself. In both passages, the notion of God’s being seen is considerably toned down. The modifications concern the context. The Greek text translates literally the Hebrew *רָאָה*, however, the object of the seeing is the place and not God Himself. There have been attempts to emend here *רָאָה* into *רָאָה*, however, Nicholson has already precluded such effort¹⁸. For him, there are three reasons for judging such an emendation impossible:

¹⁴ DURHAM, *Exodus*, 345.

¹⁵ WEVERS, *Greek Text*, 385-386.

¹⁶ Cf. RÖSEL, *Towards a “Theology”*, 247-248.

¹⁷ See chapter 3.

¹⁸ NICHOLSON, *Interpretation*, 81-82.

1. Context – in v. 10b, there is the description of what was seen, that is to say there is an object of seeing;

2. In v. 11a, it is stated that God did not stretch out his hand against the chiefs which presupposes that they have seen God;

3. None of the ancient versions support the reading “and they feared”.

The choice of the term τόπος refers to the location of the theophany: they did not see God but just the place where the theophany took place, namely, where the God of Israel stood. Philo (*De somn.* I,62) also refers to Exod 24:10 and interprets the “place” in three different ways¹⁹. The Targumim Pseudo-Jonathan and Onkelos read “and saw the glory of the God of Israel”. Targum Neofiti adds also Shekinah and the divine name: “and saw the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord God of Israel”. Vetus Latina renders literally LXX, whereas the Vulgate translates faithfully MT as usually is the case. Aquila renders MT without modification and Symmacus adds “and saw in the vision the God of Israel”²⁰. In this way, the majority of the witnesses avoid the notion of God’s being seen.

The second most striking divergence again concerns the fact of the vision of God by the chiefs of Israel. LXX does not recount the fact of vision at all: “they appeared in the place of God”. Three observations should be made here. First, the Hebrew text states twice in 24:10-11 that Moses and others saw God. However, a shift of the verb of vision is registered here: in v. 10a ראה is employed, whereas in v. 11b one finds חזה. Secondly, the Greek translator rendered the Hebrew verb “to behold” in the passive. Thirdly, the expression already used in v. 10a τόπος τοῦ θεοῦ occurs in v. 11b as well. Concerning the use of חזה instead of ראה, some authors have proposed that the text is about prophetic vision: thus, the directness of the statement of the vision in v. 10a would be softened down by employing the verb חזה which usually indicates the prophetic vision. For instance, Childs considers this verb as technical for prophetic clairvoyance and it indicates a peculiar perception²¹. Robinson, however, states that there is no significant difference between ראה and חזה; they both refer to such an experience since they are used in tandem in several contexts (Amos, Zechariah, Daniel) and the shift could be explained as a matter of elegant variation²². The Greek translator rendered both Hebrew verbs with ὁράω. This is

¹⁹ Cf. PHILO ALEXANDRINUS, *On Dreams*, 328-329.

²⁰ For an analysis of the ancient witnesses, see EBERHART, *Beobachtungen*, 300-302.

²¹ CHILDS, *Exodus*, 507. See also HANSON, *Seeing God*, 559.

²² ROBINSON, *Theophany*, 167.

the normal rendering for the verb ראה as well as a common LXX rendering for חזו.²³ The striking fact, however, is the shift to the passive voice: in the Greek text, contrary to the Hebrew, it is the chosen ones who were seen or appeared in the place of God. In general, the phenomenon of the shift from active to passive and *vice versa* is common in the Greek text²⁴. Rösel explains it as a part of the general anti-anthropomorphism of the Greek Scriptures: when a verb of seeing is changed from active to passive the meaning of the latter becomes different and tones down the idea that somebody could see God²⁵. This modification changes the Hebrew text considerably. Thus, it fits well with the divergence made in v. 10a. This modification puts the Greek text in line with other passages, such as Exod 19:21; 33:20; Lev 16:2, where it is stated clearly that whoever sees God will die²⁶. At the same time, however, it creates another difficulty: if the chosen ones did not see God, why then is it said that nobody perished²⁷? In general, one has to see the point that in Exod 24:11b the passage from active to passive voice of the verb avoids the notion of God's being seen and this was probably the main concern. In this way, the scribes could simply "correct" the "striking" statement in Hebrew, while leaving the statement that no one perished intact. The Greek translator did not even keep the verb of prophetic vision which seems not to cause any problem elsewhere: Isa 1:1, Amos 1:1, Hab 1:1, Mic 1:1 where חזו has been rendered with ὀρώ in the active voice. The Targumim in this case rendered the same expression as in v. 10a: Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti claim that the chiefs saw the Glory of the Shekinakh of the Lord and Onqelos states they saw the Glory of the Lord. Some manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch contain ויאחזו instead of ויחזו.

²³ This verb occurs only randomly in the Pentateuch. It is, however, common in other books, see 2 Sam 24:11; Job 27:12; Ps 11:7; Isa 26:11; 33:17; Ezek 12:27; 13:7, Zech 10:2. In some cases, one finds a different rendering as well; see Exod 18:21; Job 19:27a; 23:9a.

²⁴ TOV, Text-Critical Use, 176.

²⁵ RÖSEL, Towards a "Theology", 247. See also FRITSCH, Greek Translation, 55. Fritsch also claims that specially in cultic act the verb "to see" is shifted from active to passive voice. (FRITSCH, Greek Translation, 54.)

²⁶ WYCKOFF, Exegesis?, 684.

²⁷ HIMBAZA, Voir Dieu, 102, 105-106.

1.3 Evaluating Notes on the Divergences

LXX text appears quite different from MT. The translator revising the Hebrew text did not confine himself just to the lexical choices which are inevitable in the work of the translation but he made also several modifications that concern the very meaning of the source text. Unfortunately, 4Q22 which contains Exod 24:6-11 is very fragmentary²⁸. A similar witness from Qumran would be useful in order to reconstruct the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind LXX²⁹. In any case, it is clear that at least in two major points the Greek text diverges considerably from MT. An important issue is at stake here: was God in fact seen or not? In addition, MT does not limit itself only to one such a statement (v. 10a) but it repeats it again, even if employing a different verb in v. 11b. On the other hand, LXX corrects this statement not only once but in both the occurrences of its Hebrew parallel. LXX appears also to clarify the Hebrew in at least three other occurrences: by employing the neutral plural nominative article to specify the exact object of seeing; paraphrasing in v. 11a in order to avoid presenting God as the agent of destructive actions; and reducing the leadership's view of the sky to a view of its appearance. Thus, one can notice an accurate work of the translation behind only these three verses. The translator paid attention to the minimal details and a general tendency of the distance between God and the people could be identifiable behind the modifications.

2 Positioning the Research

2.1 Between Minimalist and Maximalist Scholars

The purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons that caused such a different rendering in LXX Exod 24:9-11. If one explains the different rendering on linguistic grounds, immediately a problem arises: how could such an important issue as the avoidance of the fact of God's being seen by man could be generated by the philological reasons even if the translator was modifying consciously? It would mean that the translator was aware of such an alternation and of its consequences while being guided by only philological factors. However, the nature of the modification itself makes such an explanation

²⁸ Cf. SANDERSON, Scroll, 337.

²⁹ DE TROYER, Hebrew Text, 16; SOLLAMO, Translation Technique, 39.

difficult. Theoretically and as a matter of principle, several reasons could play a role in this rendering but the question is to understand what exactly caused such a modification in LXX. Thus, on the other hand, one has to understand what kind of criterion led the translator in the rendering of Exod 24:9-11 as it appears in LXX.

A. Pietersma as well as other authors outline some guidelines within which this research could proceed. Current Septuagint hermeneutics is evolving between two groups of scholars, that is minimalists on one extreme and maximalists on the other³⁰. One of the main differences between these two groups is the consideration of the translator's role and consequently the differences made by him in the translation. For the minimalists, the translator has a lower degree of independence. Of course, he cannot be considered as a mere robot mechanically translating the text but, surely, he is not an author in his work of translation. His main aim is to reproduce the source text faithfully. Thus, he does not affect what he has on hand and many of the divergences between the Greek and the Hebrew have to be explained as due to linguistic reasons. On the other hand, there are maximalist scholars who grant the translator a much higher degree of independence in his literary work: he could not be a mere medium since in the translation he is also influenced by a certain theological view of which he is a bearer. In this way, the translator begins to approach the status of an author. In consequence, the differences between the source language and the target language have to be understood within this type of authorial consideration: his literary work is subject to influence such as historical context and the community of faith to which he belongs.

Wyckoff talks about a third group which has to be positioned between the two abovementioned ones³¹. For this group of scholars, a good degree of prudence has to be applied while considering the nature of divergences between the Hebrew and the Greek. They have to be explained by a wide spectrum of reasons. They have to be considered first of all for reasons other than theology; although the latter is also operative and, thus, can explain certain divergences, however, this criterion can be considered only among many others that determined the translator's work.

These three approaches give a good panorama of the methodological ground on which the research will be positioned. These guidelines represent good

³⁰ PIETERSMA, *Exegesis*, 35-36; SOLLAMO, *Translation Technique*, 40; COOK, *Interpreting*, 590.

³¹ WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 676.

tracks in order to approach Septuagint hermeneutics and, so, I will make use of them to explore the divergences in Exod 24:9-11.

2.1.1 Maximalists

M. Rösel, asking himself in the first lines of his article “Towards a «Theology of the Septuagint»” whether it is possible to write a theology of the Septuagint, gives a positive answer³². Immediately after this statement, however, he makes a series of preliminary considerations being indeed aware of debates of the scholars in this field. In any case, his research is in favor of the possibility of such an undertaking.

Rösel’s survey represents the position of those who are called the maximalist scholars in Septuagint hermeneutics. Besides him, two other authors will be taken into consideration who concentrate on the theological innovations in the Greek Bible: J. Schaper and T. McLay³³. All of them argue in favor of the possibility of the theology of the Septuagint as a concept. Of course, only three authors do not exhaust the entirety of all the maximalist authors; however, their pivotal arguments will help to introduce hermeneutical maximalism and outline its main features.

While each author presents something that distinguishes him from other perspectives, I will try to outline the features that maximalist scholars have in common. First of all, as a matter of principle, every work of translating and transmitting the text implies an exegetical involvement³⁴. When the translator renders a statement from the source language he has to choose a word or expression in the target language. Therefore, the translation reveals a certain way of the translator’s understanding of the source language. Furthermore, since the scribes and translators were aware that they were dealing with authoritative scriptures, they paid more attention to the exegetical task they had to exercise. Thus, in the translation their decisions were most probably conditioned by their theological perception. In this way, in many if not all of the modifications LXX made to its Hebrew counterpart one has to affirm the influence of a theological view to which the translator subscribed.

One of the main principles that these maximalist authors sustain is the consideration of the Greek Bible as more than a mere translation. Although

³² RÖSEL, Towards a “Theology”, 239.

³³ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*; McLAY, *Theology?*, 607-620.

³⁴ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 24; McLAY, *Theology?*, 611; JOOSTEN, *Une théologie?*, 31.

J. Schaper dedicates his dissertation *Eschatology of the Greek Psalter* to the study of the Psalms as is clear from the title, he nevertheless claims in the introduction that the aim of his study is to demonstrate that Greek Bible is “a work displaying a new, distinct quality in the religious history of Judaism and Hellenism”³⁵. In this way, he confers on the Septuagint a status that exceeds the rank of mere translation. The Greek version exhibits theological features that are new in comparison with the Hebrew Bible. Their presence testifies a certain history of theological ideas from their birth until their reception into the new Hellenistic world³⁶. Thus, LXX version has to be considered interpretation rather than translation because of these new theological concepts present in this literary work³⁷. J. Schaper goes further claiming that his study would result in the writing of a commentary on the version itself³⁸. Although he limits such an enterprise to the Book of Psalms, he admits that it could be extended to the whole Greek Bible as B. Lindars has already stated³⁹. Whatever may be extent of Schaper’s study, it is clear from his statement that he attributes a high degree of independence to LXX in comparison with its original Hebrew Bible. In this way, LXX is treated on a level higher than translation.

The maximalist scholars also enter into debate concerning translation technique studies. This is the issue that has been studied extensively by the exegetical school at Helsinki⁴⁰ as well as by other scholars⁴¹. The translation technique could be defined as a special way of translation by the translator into the target language of given words and expressions of the source language or simply it is a matter of the relationship between the translation and original text as Aejmelaeus states⁴². In the work of translation, the translator has recourse usually to the same equivalents in the target language⁴³. Maximalist scholars first

³⁵ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 2.

³⁶ RÖSEL, Towards a “Theology”, 242.

³⁷ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 19.

³⁸ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 18.

³⁹ LINDARS, A Commentary?, 167.

⁴⁰ The authors that belong to the Helsinki school, such as I. Soisalon-Soininen, A. Aejmelaeus, R. Sollano and others, will be treated under the category “minimalist scholars”.

⁴¹ TOV, Translation Technique, 337-359; OLOFSSON, *The LXX Version*; TAUBERSCHMIDT, *Secondary Parallelism*; JOOSTEN, Elaborate Similes, 3-14.

⁴² AEJMELAEUS, Übersetzungstechnik, 225. For a more complete description of the term “Translation Technique”, see also in the same volume AEJMELAEUS, Translation Technique, 205-208.

⁴³ SOLLAMO, Translation Technique, 36.

of all dispute the weight that sometimes is given to the translation technique. It is rather a tool for other methods but not the goal of the research⁴⁴. Secondly, for these scholars it is erroneous to consider the translation techniques only on philological ground. The mere linguistic framework belittles the importance of the translation text because behind it there are also other factors: the theological perception and intentions of the translator, the community of faith to which he belongs⁴⁵, and the historical context. All these factors significantly influence the translation. The mere philological approach to translation technique runs the risk of being unhistorical⁴⁶. Thus, the differences in both the texts have to be examined by a wide range of factors of which philology is only one aspect among many others.

At this point, the translator's role could also be specified since numerous factors influence the translation. Such a translator could not be merely the medium⁴⁷. He could not just mechanically render the target text appearing thus as a non-historical character. When he was translating he was always a man of his time, with certain views both historical and theological. In the work of translation, he left the imprint of influences. Thus, the translator, in the maximalist's point of view, would be closer to the status of the author and not the medium as Pietersma presents it⁴⁸. That is to say, the material from the source language into the target language was changed deliberately and purposefully by the translator who is considered as author.

In the end, as the culmination of these authors' positions, it should be added that Rösel and McLay even propose the principles by which a theology of the Septuagint should be written⁴⁹. Such a theology would not be considered "less" theology than that of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, the Greek Jewish scriptures were the theological source for the early Church so the theology of the Septuagint should be written at least as a Christian theology⁵⁰. Rösel suggests that in the Septuagint several theological topics have to be noticed and then the comparison between the Greek and Hebrew text concerning these topics has to be made⁵¹.

⁴⁴ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 19.

⁴⁵ MCLAY, *Theology?*, 608.

⁴⁶ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 17.

⁴⁷ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 21; MCLAY, *Theology?*, 609.

⁴⁸ PIETERSMA, *Exegesis*, 36.

⁴⁹ RÖSEL, *Towards a "Theology"*, 251-252; MCLAY, *Theology?*, 616-620.

⁵⁰ MCLAY, *Theology?*, 616-617.

⁵¹ RÖSEL, *Towards a "Theology"*, 251-252.

Such an exploration of theological concepts has to develop on the level of individual books instead of emphasizing text-critical questions⁵².

2.1.2 Minimalists

As a matter of principle, these scholars try to attribute the differences between the Hebrew text and LXX to a different *Vorlage* on which the translation was realized on one hand or to the work of the translator on the other. The main authors of this approach are the members of the exegetical school of Helsinki: I. Soisalon-Soininen, R. Sollamo, A. Aejmelaesus, A. Voitila, S. Sipilä⁵³.

From the very first it should be stated that they do not exclude the theological interpretation made by the translator in the translation task. Such interpretation surely occurs but it cannot be sought behind every divergence between the source text and the target text. Thus, the criticism against these scholars that they see only philological features behind the divergences, or as Schaper states, “do not seem to see the wood for the trees”⁵⁴, has to be toned down.

There are several ways in which this technique appears useful for research. First of all, it is described by the scholars of Helsinki school as a method in order to sketch the syntax of the Septuagint⁵⁵. The translator would have recourse to his own way of translation determined by the use of certain words to translate words and expressions of the source language. The translation technique helps to understand the syntactical constructions the translator reproduced in the target language. Furthermore, it is useful in order to reconstruct the *Vorlage* on which the translation was based⁵⁶. In certain cases, as when there are numerous divergences inexplicable on philological grounds or as free renderings, one could conclude that behind this text there was a different *Vorlage*. At this point, by undertaking the reconstruction of the *Vorlage*, the translation technique could help to reproduce it. Since this technique is outlined as a special way of translation it is useful not only in order to know the characteristics of the

⁵² RÖSEL, Towards a “Theology”, 241.

⁵³ SOISALON-SOININEN, *Die Infinitive*; SOLLAMO, Translation Technique, 35-41; SOLLAMO, Prolegomena, 23-42; AEJMELAEUS, Participium Coniunctum, 385-393; AEJMELAEUS, Von Sprache, 265-293.

⁵⁴ SCHAPER, *Eschatology*, 22.

⁵⁵ SOLLAMO, Translation Technique, 35, 40.

⁵⁶ SOLLAMO, Translation Technique, 39; AEJMELAEUS, Übersetzungstechnik, 225. Also K. De Troyer goes in the same direction. See DE TROYER, Hebrew Text, 15.

translator better⁵⁷ but also to determine the words of the original text on which this technique was utilized and consequently the source text itself.

Another area of interest for translation technique studies concerns this study directly: namely, its relationship with theological interpretation⁵⁸. First of all, the translation technique is presented as an essential condition in order to determine the theology of LXX. Anyway, a rather moderate approach is adopted by these authors. A scholar first has to consider the philological features behind the differences in the target language. Only afterwards can the theological reasons be employed to explain these differences. So, the theological interpretation utilized by the author has a place in this approach but it has to be discovered and only after a series of other considerations that can explain the presence of differences between the original text and its translation.

Aejmaleus, in her turn, offers a good series of methodological considerations for treating the theology of LXX⁵⁹. Firstly, one cannot talk about theology in a verbatim translation where the translator uses the standard words to render the source text. Neither when the translator has recourse to free renderings must one necessarily talk about the theological reasons by which he was guided⁶⁰. Moreover, the divergences could appear because of the way the Hebrew *Vorlage* has been analyzed: the translator could read the consonantal text differently. Thus, the translation also depends on the translator's analysis of the original text. He could analyze the text employing only linguistic categories and, thus, not engage in theological interpretation at all. Finally, one can talk about LXX theology when the translator deliberately left a different rendering which does not appear clearly as a smoothing of possible Hebraisms but it is rather a different text in comparison with its original⁶¹. He could also operate in this manner in order to clarify the source text or to avoid a certain rendering. Moreover, a scholar has to ask whether the interpretation found in the target text is caused by the difficulty of the passage or the different rendering is caused

⁵⁷ VOITILA, *Septuagint Translators*, 183-196.

⁵⁸ SOLLAMO, *Translation Technique*, 40-41. In her paper, Sollamo talks about the *ideology* of the translator and then shifts to the theology. I will keep talking about the theology as suggested by many authors, both maximalists and minimalists. J. Cook gives a good panorama on terms "exegesis", "theology" and "ideology" used by different scholars as applied to the Septuagint. See COOK, *Interpreting*, 594-595; also AEJMELAEUS, *Übersetzungstechnik*, 230-239; AEJMELAEUS, *Von Sprache*, 265-293.

⁵⁹ AEJMELAEUS, *Übersetzungstechnik*, 231-235.

⁶⁰ Cf. AEJMELAEUS, *Übersetzungstechnik*, 232-244.

⁶¹ AEJMELAEUS, *Übersetzungstechnik*, 235-236.

instead by the translator's desire to reproduce the original text in clearer language so as to improve what the original text says.

It turns out that even for the scholars of the Helsinki school the translator is not the mere medium and there is also a place for theology. His involvement in the translation task includes reasoning, smoothing difficult passages, using his competence in order to translate better the text he had on hand. In certain cases, he would translate verbatim, in others he would employ rather free renderings. I would conclude quoting Sollamo whose statement reflects well the position of these authors regarding the theology behind the translation text: "theology needs to be demonstrated, not presupposed"⁶².

2.1.3 A Third Approach?

As stated above, Wyckoff suggests the existence of a third approach for dealing with the theology in LXX. He rates among these scholars, A. Pietersma, J. Cook and J. Joosten⁶³. This approach is distinguished by a good degree of moderation in evaluating the theological interventions in LXX. A scientific analysis has to be applied to the text in order to determine the nature of the divergences. Firstly, one has to examine the reasons other than theological tendencies behind the divergences. Only afterwards can the theological factor be taken into consideration.

However, I find difficult Cook's inclusion in this list. He himself speaks about the *theology* of the Septuagint and not just about some "potential theological changes"⁶⁴. It is true that he binds such a concept to the individual books. Thus, one has to talk about many theologies in the Septuagint; however, even examining the Book of Proverbs, he concludes his paper by stating that the attempt to outline the theology of LXX can also be applied to the other books⁶⁵. Moreover, in my view, E. Tov could also be considered as one who belongs to this third group of scholars. In his "Theologically Motivated Exegesis Embedded in the Septuagint", he offers some methodological considerations where he reveals his prudence concerning the presence of the theological exegesis though he affirms one has to recognize it at least in certain books of LXX⁶⁶.

⁶² SOLLAMO, *Translation Technique*, 41.

⁶³ WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 676.

⁶⁴ WYCKOFF, *Exegesis?*, 676.

⁶⁵ COOK, *Interpreting*, 605-606.

⁶⁶ TOV, *Exegesis*, 257-269. See also TOV, *Textual Criticism*, 124-128.

In principle, one has to look for the translator's ideas and these could be accessible behind the divergences against the source text⁶⁷. These ideas could reveal the theological view of the translators. However, not every difference needs to be the bearer of such a view. Tov distinguishes between exegesis in general and theological exegesis in particular⁶⁸. The latter constitutes only one aspect of a much larger concept. In any case, if one looks for theological interpretation in LXX it is proper to examine these divergences at the outset so that they may serve as trails to guide further research. The standard equivalents, certain free renderings and those linguistic choices that can be explained by mere philological reasons can be set aside as not relevant to such research. This considerably narrows the field in which theological interpretation may be sought.

Furthermore, the extent of the concept of the theology of the Septuagint has to be restored to proper perspective. Tov speaks about some *theologoumena* and individual renderings but not about the *theology* of the Septuagint⁶⁹. The latter appears an unobtainable undertaking. Joosten, in his turn, underlying the fact of literalism and harmonisation that took place in the translators' work, states that such a theology has to be considered as a theology of the word. Thus, one ought not look for the theology in the large literary units in LXX against the source text. The translation was realized in a rather literal way by translators who were conscious of dealing with authoritative Scriptures⁷⁰. That is to say the modification could rather take place on the level of the word than on the level of big literal units. Pietersma also proceeds in a similar direction⁷¹. He stresses the fact that if one looks for the exegesis in LXX one has to start on word-level since the Septuagint translation is rather word-based. What is interesting about his approach is the fact that he takes into consideration the case of the Book of Psalms which is considered one of the more freely translated books.

In conclusion, these scholars recognize the traces of theological interpretation in the Septuagint though each of them employs different terminology⁷². The scholars taken into consideration share what Joosten calls

⁶⁷ JOOSTEN, *Une théologie?*, 33, 46; PIETERSMA, *Exegesis*, 45; TOV, *Exegesis*, 259-260.

⁶⁸ TOV, *Exegesis*, 258-259.

⁶⁹ TOV, *Exegesis*, 268.

⁷⁰ JOOSTEN, *Une théologie?*, 42-46.

⁷¹ PIETERSMA, *Exegesis*, 38-39.

⁷² Tov speaks about the theological exegesis, Pietersma generally about the exegesis and Joosten, in his turn, employs the term ideological exegesis.

“down-to-earth explanations”⁷³ for the divergences. Only after one examines these non-theological reasons, the way to the latter can be opened.

3 Evaluating the Modifications

3.1 *The Greek Exod 24:9-11 as A Result of Theological Interpretation*

Having presented three possible approaches it is time to make an evaluation of the divergence under discussion. What perception would be more suitable for the Greek Exod 24:9-11? It seems that in rendering into Greek the passage at hand the translator was guided by theological concerns to pay more attention to the transcendence of God and, thus, tone down the directness of possible anthropomorphisms. He avoided, at all costs, presenting God as the object seen by Moses and others on the mountain, still maintaining, however, the fact of the special proximity to the God of Israel they enjoyed because of their office as the leaders of the people⁷⁴. In any case, it is clear that the directness of the Hebrew statement was tempered in both occurrences: v. 10a and v. 11b. Since the group of the leaders of Israel saw only the *place* where God stood, the distance between Him and the people is underlined. This distance is further highlighted by the fact that the representatives, that is to say the leadership of the people, could see God according to what the Greek version states. I am aware that my position could appear as preaching to the saved since several scholars have stated it before⁷⁵. However, what I am determined to propose here is especially to take a closer look at the reasons themselves that seem particularly prominent in order to sustain the hypothesis of the theological interpretation behind the Greek Exod 24:9-11.

⁷³ JOOSTEN, *To See God*, 298.

⁷⁴ Cf. SKA, *Le repas*, 305-327; SKA, *Vision*, 165-183.

⁷⁵ Following there are some authors that sustain the theological interpretation behind the Greek Exod 24:9-11: WEVERS, *Two Reflections*, 36-37; WEVERS, *Text History*; AEJMELAEUS, *Von Sprache*, 272; HANSON, *Seeing God*, 559-560; TOV, *Exegesis*, 267-268; TOV, *Textual Criticism*, 128; SKA, *Il cantiere*, 117; CASSUTO, *Exodus*, 314; PIETERSMA, *NETS*, 47-48.

3.1.1 The Same Kind of the Shift in Other Passages

There is a series of passages where the notion of God's being seen has been avoided or toned down. Fritsch and Hanson make a list of all the occurrences where the verb "to see" has undergone some modifications in the Greek text⁷⁶. Among the passages listed by these scholars, I will underline firstly those examples where the translator has clearly avoided the notion of seeing God Himself: Exod 3:6; 4:24; 24:10.11; Num 12:8⁷⁷. Secondly, there are the passages where this avoidance is not marked so clearly as in the examples just mentioned but the notion of seeing God has been downplayed: Gen 32:31; Exod 19:21; Deut 31:15. As further evidence of toning down the notion of God's vision in the Greek version, I will list also some passages out of the Pentateuch where this phenomenon occurred: Job 19:26b.27a; 22:14; 33:26; Pss 16(17):15a; 33(34):6; 62(63):3a; Isa 17:7a; 38:11; Zech 9:14a; 2 Chr 26:5⁷⁸. Such examples show that this phenomenon was not a single occurrence but a modification made repeatedly by the translators. Thus, one can speak about a certain *tendency* to omit the notion of seeing God. Such a tendency reinforces the hypothesis of the theological interpretation behind the passage in question⁷⁹.

At this point, at least two objections should be raised. First of all, there are several passages where LXX maintained the notion of seeing God as it appears in MT: Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 22:14; 26:2; 35:1.9; 48:3; Exod 3:16; Lev 9:4; 16:2; Num 14:14⁸⁰. Fritsch claims there are at least twenty places where the Hebrew text was left unmodified⁸¹. Secondly, there seems to be even the tendency in LXX to introduce the notion of seeing God where it is lacking in the Hebrew text: Gen 16:13; 31:13; Exod 25:8; 33:13; Num 6:25; Deut 33:16⁸².

Several clarifications are proposed here in order to tackle these objections. Firstly, the different readings could be explained with different

⁷⁶ FRITSCH, Greek Translation, 51*-56*; HANSON, Seeing God, 557-568. See also JOOSTEN, To See God, 290-291.

⁷⁷ I confine myself, in the list, only to the passages in the Pentateuch.

⁷⁸ For E. Tov, among all the books of the Hebrew Bible especially Isaiah, Daniel, Job and Proverbs contain more substantial quantity of the theological exegesis. See TOV, Exegesis, 258.

⁷⁹ JOOSTEN, To See God, 299.

⁸⁰ Although in Gen 18:1 a shift from יהוה to Θεός took place.

⁸¹ FRITSCH, Greek Translation, 53*.

⁸² HANSON, Seeing God, 565-566; HAYWARD, Temple Service, 386-388; JOOSTEN, To See God, 291-295.

*Vorlagen*⁸³. Behind the passages where LXX seems to introduce the notion of seeing God it is more probable that the Greek translator did not have a Hebrew text where this notion was toned down or even omitted entirely. And, as a matter of principle, one has to try to reconstruct the *Vorlage* of the ancient translations in general in order to clarify the differences. It has to be stated that authors, such as J. W. Wevers, E. Tov, K. De Troyer, claim that there are relatively few differences between the Hebrew text behind the Old Greek and MT⁸⁴. However, the issue of the different *Vorlagen* can be used as a methodological tool that works in some cases and not in others rather than an exhaustive explanation of all the differences.

Secondly, the particularity of each biblical book has to be taken into consideration when studying the theological themes in each of them. I. Himbaza, in his essay on the theme of the vision of God in the Hebrew and the Greek Exodus, concludes: “La LXX se singularise par son refus catégorique de la possibilité pour l’homme de voir Dieu... Le texte d’Exode est comme un îlot au milieu de la LXX du Pentateuque”⁸⁵. For Himbaza, though, the notion of seeing God is rendered possible in other books of the Pentateuch: that man could see אלהים but not יהוה⁸⁶. Indeed, if one takes into consideration all the passages where LXX did not make any modification, one common feature appears clearly – in all the abovementioned passages the verb ראה recurs in the Niphal with the meaning “and God appeared”. Now, Genesis connects all these passages to God’s appearances to the patriarchs. Even the sole occurrence outside the Book of Genesis, that is Exod 3:16, recalls the patriarchs: that same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appeared also to Moses. Hayward claims that it is a particular feature of the Book of Genesis to present God as one who appears to the patriarchs⁸⁷. Indeed, there are no occurrences of God’s direct apparition in the

⁸³ Various scholars claim the differences can be attributed to *Vorlage* different from MT as we know it today: HANSON, *Seeing God*, 566; TOV, *Textual Criticism*, 121-124; SOLLAMO, *Translation Technique*, 35; HIMBAZA, *Voir Dieu*, 110.

⁸⁴ For instance, K. De Troyer claims: “the Old Greek of the most books of the Pentateuch was translated from a Hebrew text that was not that much different from the later Hebrew Masoretic text”. (DE TROYER, *Hebrew Text*, 19-20.) See also TOV, *Text-Critical Use*, 39; WEVERS, *Greek Text*, xv.

⁸⁵ HIMBAZA, *Voir Dieu*, 108-109.

⁸⁶ However, out of Pentateuch: 1 Kgs 22:19; Amos 9:1; Isa 6:1.

⁸⁷ HAYWARD, *Temple Service*, 386-387.

Book of Exodus other than this kind of appearance⁸⁸. Finally, it seems that the statement “God/Lord appeared” looks less striking than “I saw the Lord” with a human subject as it occurs in 1 Kgs 22:19; Amos 9:1; Isa 6:1⁸⁹.

Thirdly, some of the passages where LXX seems to introduce the notion of seeing God could be explained as a usual way of translation of certain verbs by the translator. For Fritsch the phenomenon of the shift of the verb “to see” from active to passive voice is quite frequent⁹⁰. Joosten in his turn claims that the verb שׁוּב is usually translated by κατοικέω when the subject is man and by ὁράομαι “to be seen” when the subject is God as it occurs in Exod 25:8 and Deut 33:16⁹¹.

Fourthly, it has to be assumed, as a matter of principle, that in several passages the translator rendered the text merely literally. It could better explain those renderings where no modification appears in the Greek version. One probably cannot argue that LXX changed every single passage thus becoming a complete theological rewriting. Tov claims that it is not possible to talk about a systematic reworking of the Hebrew text but rather about individual passages that have been theologically motivated⁹².

3.1.2 What does the Hebrew text itself report?

I propose to point out three issues in Exod 24:9-11. First of all, the Hebrew Exod 24:10b specifies what Moses and his companions saw on the mountain. Even if it is claimed “they saw the God of Israel”, afterwards the exact object of their seeing is reported: “under his feet like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness”. There is no description of God Himself but only of what was under his feet. In Isa 6 and Ezek 1 there is quite a considerable description of what these two prophets saw⁹³. Such a description, however, is lacking in Exod 24:10-11 and the only object reported as seen is other than God Himself. Although the prophetic visions have to be considered separately, the point is that v. 10b, specifying the object of the vision, downplays

⁸⁸ In the Book of Exodus, God appears in the cloud but it is not anymore direct appearance. See, e.g., Exod 16:10.

⁸⁹ Cf. ROBINSON, *Theophany*, 158.

⁹⁰ FRITSCH, *Greek Translation*, 51*.55*.

⁹¹ JOOSTEN, *Une théologie?*, 39-40.

⁹² TOV, *Exegesis*, 268.

⁹³ Although Amos 9:1 has less description than the other two, it, however, reports: “I saw the Lord staying beside the altar”.

the directness of the statement in v. 10a⁹⁴. Both Himbaza and Durham point out this fact and the latter states that “what Moses and his companions experience is a theophany of the Presence of God, not a vision of his person”⁹⁵. My main purpose here is to underline what v. 10b states. However, one could ask why v. 11a would say “and against the chiefs of the sons of Israel he did not stretch out his hand”. If this special group perceived only the presence and not God Himself, what is the reason of this last statement? It makes sense only if they saw God Himself. Exod 33:20 clarifies that no one can see God and live. Thus, one has to suppose that v. 10 reports the vision of God Himself. There are, in the Hebrew Bible, several examples of those who survived after having had such a vision: Jacob (Gen 32:31), Gideon (Judg 6:22-23), Samson’s parents (Judg 13:22-23), Isaiah (Isa 6:5). It seems Exod 24:11 could be read as one of these passages where one survives though the general principle that no one can see God and live is still maintained⁹⁶. Indeed, in all these occurrences the concern for the life of those who saw God is expressed. It seems their lives are rather spared by God or his messenger. Finally, it is also impressive to notice that even if Exod 33:20 clearly expresses that no one can see God and live, and this danger is underlined elsewhere as well, there is no concrete example anywhere in the Hebrew Bible of someone dying after seeing God. Hence what is impressive is that one finds several exceptions to this rule but no factual confirmation of the rule itself occurs in the text⁹⁷.

The second issue is the change of יהוה into Θεός instead of the more common rendering κύριος in ch. 24. It occurs four times throughout the whole chapter: vv. 2.3.5.16. This phenomenon could seem rather insignificant since the translator did not change all the occurrences into Θεός: vv. 1.4.7.8.12.17. At this

⁹⁴ At this point, I have to add that, for some authors, the seeing God was a fundamental experience for the leadership of Israel and for Israel itself. For instance, it shows the finality of the alliance. (See VINCENT, *Aspekte*, 15-20.) Meanwhile, Ska claims that the purpose of this scene is “the establishment of their authority (chiefs of Israel) and the legitimization of their function in the service of God”. (SKA, *Vision*, 174.) Robinson has a similar view, stating that the theophany in vv. 10-11 confirms the offices of prophets, priest and elders within the people. See ROBINSON, *Theophany*, 173.

⁹⁵ DURHAM, *Exodus*, 344. Although he advances the hypothesis that the description of God Himself could be deleted from the original version. See also HIMBAZA, *Voir Dieu*, 102.

⁹⁶ The examples are taken from SKA, *Vision*, 170-171.

⁹⁷ It is worth of noticing the Rashi commentary on Exod 24:10-11 for whom Nadab, Abihu and the elders are punished later with death because they perceived God. See CARASIK, *Exodus*, 209-210.

point, one has to take into consideration two observations. Firstly, the tetragrammaton never occurs as the object of seeing in the whole Pentateuch⁹⁸, meanwhile the general denomination Θεός/אלהים appears more often when describing a theophany. Secondly, also the same shift occurs in Exod 19, and it is a theophany scene too: vv. 3.7.8.18.21.23.24. It is possible then to consider these four shifts in ch. 24 as not occasional ones⁹⁹. Hence, the translator seems to downplay the notion of seeing God not only in vv. 9-11 but this tendency can be also noticed throughout the whole ch. 24.

The simple fact that this notion has been modified twice suggests that it is not an oversight but something important to which the translator paid attention. That the same modification took place twice within just two verses strengthens the case for ideological motivation on the part of the translator in vv. 10-11.

3.1.3 The Nature of the Divergence

What is striking about Exod 24:9-11 is that an important issue is at stake: whether God can, in fact, be seen or not. It is not a marginal question but, rather, a fundamental one. It is quite difficult to talk about an unconscious error in the case of an important issue.

For Tov, theological exegesis can be connected to several topics: the description of God, his acts, the Messiah, exile, and all religious experiences¹⁰⁰. Exod 24:9-11 can be ascribed to this latter category. According to the Hebrew text, the leadership of Israel participates in the vision of God. For the translator, however, such an idea had to be clarified since the shift of the object of seeing took place. Wevers claims what is stated in the Greek text is what the translator of the Hebrew text really meant. This clarification has been made in order to avoid a possible misunderstanding by the reader¹⁰¹.

What led the translator to soften two direct statements in Exod 24:9-11 was an anti-anthropomorphic or spiritualizing tendency in the Hellenistic world where the Jewish community of Alexandria lived. A good number of scholars

⁹⁸ HIMBAZA, *Voir Dieu*, 108.

⁹⁹ Cassuto and Wevers state that tetragrammaton יהוה is to be considered more protected than אלהים. (See CASSUTO, *Exodus*, 314; WEVERS, *Two Reflections*, 30-31.) Rösel, however, considers the difference between the terms as follows: κύριος is used for more merciful description of God, while Θεός recurs to indicate more powerful actions. These are the examples he quotes: Gen 13:10; 38:7 and 6:6-7; Exod 3:18; 10:11; 16:7-9. See RÖSEL, *Towards a "Theology"*, 245.

¹⁰⁰ TOV, *Textual Criticism*, 127-128; TOV, *Exegesis*, 259.

¹⁰¹ WEVERS, *Text History*, 147. See also NICHOLSON, *Interpretation*, 89.

underline the fact of this tendency, and not just behind the passage in question but rather as something widespread in contemporary Alexandrian culture¹⁰². Since Jewish religious thought was developing within the context of this Hellenistic culture it had consequences also on the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the needs of the Greek-speaking Jewish community. Allegory was in vogue at that time so the Scriptures were interpreted according to this current. Thus, several anthropomorphic passages were toned down and consequently also the theme of seeing God¹⁰³. However, one cannot claim that all the anthropomorphic passages have been changed in the Hebrew Bible. This tendency affected only some of them and hence cannot be drawn throughout the whole Bible. Indeed, it appears clearly in some instances from the examples of divine visions that have not been changed. This tendency, however, did affect several passages and one can talk, thus, about the partial anti-anthropomorphism¹⁰⁴.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Exod 24:9-11 in its Masoretic witness and LXX shows that, in the latter, the translator's work went beyond a mere literal translation. The probable criterion that caused such a modification was rather a theological one. According to the theology that asserts the transcendence of God, man cannot see Him directly and, thus, the translator interpreted the text in the manner he deemed to be more correct. In this way, interpretation and not merely translation of the text took place. The translator, in his turn, operated as a true exegete. This exegesis can be noticed not only in two major modifications in vv. 10a and 11b but also in another three divergences as shown in chapter 3. This interpretation could be defined as theological since it deals with God Himself and a religious experience of vision. In addition, the modification rendered the text smoother, avoiding the contradiction that could arise reading Exod 33:20. Even if one cannot talk about an omnipresent tendency to avoid the notion of God's being seen in LXX since there is a series of places where the Greek version maintains it, such a phenomenon did occur in several passages and it seems Exod 24:9-11 can be defined as one of these.

¹⁰² FRITSCH, *Greek Translation*, 51*-56*; VRIEZEN, *Exegesis*, 101; HANSON, *Seeing God*, 566; TOV, *Exegesis*, 267-268; SKA, *Il cantiere*, 117; RÖSEL, *Towards a "Theology"*, 247-248; ROBINSON, *Theophany*, 157-158.

¹⁰³ FRITSCH, *Greek Translation*, 51*-52*.

¹⁰⁴ TOV, *Exegesis*, 267-268; RÖSEL, *Towards a "Theology"*, 247-248.

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Summary

Exod 24:9-11 is an exemplary case of study of the differences between MT and LXX. A mere three verses reveal how carefully the translation work has been conducted to deal with an important issue: did the leaders of Israel see God or not? This paper aims to clarify the possible reasons that lay behind such a different rendering in LXX as compared to MT. Exod 24:9-11 in both its Hebrew and Greek texts is witness of different theological approaches to the same problem.

Key words: seeing God, LXX theology, anti-anthropomorphism.

Zhrnutie

Ex 24,9-11 je jedným z tých príkladov, na ktorých je vidieť rozdielnosť medzi masoretským textom a textom Septuaginty. Tieto jednoduché tri biblické verše ukazujú, ako opatrne si grécky prekladateľ počínal pri svojej práci v prípade dôležitej otázky: Videli vodcovia Izraela Boha či nie? Cieľom článku je objasniť možné príčiny, ktoré stoja v pozadí rozdielneho textu v Septuaginte v porovnaní s masoretským textom. Vo svojich oboch verziách – hebrejskej i gréckej –, Ex 24,9-11 svedčí o odlišných teologických prístupoch k rovnakému problému.

Kľúčové slová: vidieť Boha, teológia LXX, antiantropomorfizmus.

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