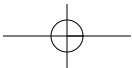
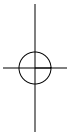
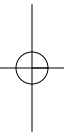


# A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT



A NEW ENGLISH  
TRANSLATION  
OF THE SEPTUAGINT

AND THE OTHER GREEK TRANSLATIONS  
TRADITIONALLY INCLUDED UNDER THAT TITLE

Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright  
EDITORS

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# ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS):

## LAWS

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Leu	Leuitikon
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomion

## HISTORIES

Ies	Iesous
Judg	Judges
Routh	Routh
1 Rgns	1 Reigns
2 Rgns	2 Reigns
3 Rgns	3 Reigns
4 Rgns	4 Reigns
1 Suppl	1 Supplements
2 Suppl	2 Supplements
1 Esd	1 Esdras
2 Esd	2 Esdras
Esth	Esther
Idt	Ioudith
Tob	Tobit
1 Makk	1 Makkabees
2 Makk	2 Makkabees
3 Makk	3 Makkabess
4 Makk	4 Makkabees

## POETIC BOOKS

Ps	Psalms
PrMan	Prayer of Manasses
Prov	Proverbs
Eccl	Ecclesiast
Song	Song of Songs
Iob	Iob
WisSal	Wisdom of Salomon
Sir	Wisdom of Iesous son of Sirach
PsSal	Psalms of Salomon

## PROPHECIES

Hos	Hosee
Am	Amos
Mich	Michaias
Ioel	Ioel
Abd	Of Abdias
Ion	Ionas
Na	Naoum
Hab	Habbakoum
Soph	Sophonias
Hag	Haggaios
Zach	Zacharias
Mal	Malachias
Esa	Esaia
Ier	Ieremias
Bar	Barouch
Lam	Lamentations
Letler	Letter of Ieremias
Iezek	Iezekiel
Sous	Sousanna
Dan	Daniel
Bel	Bel and the Dragon

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the New Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament (NRSV), shown in NETS arrangement:

**(LAWS)**

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy

**(HISTORIES)**

Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chr	1 Chronicles
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
1 Esd	1 Esdras
Ezra & Neh	Ezra & Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Jdt	Judith
Tob	Tobit
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
3 Macc	3 Maccabees
4 Macc	4 Maccabees

**(POETIC BKS)**

Ps	Psalms
Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Prov	Proverbs
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Solomon
Job	Job
Wis	Wisdom
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
[PsSal]	[Psalms of Solomon]

**(PROPHECIES)**

Hos	Hosea
Am	Amos
Mic	Micah
Joel	Joel
Ob	Obadiah
Jon	Jonah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hagg	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Bar	Baruch
Lam	Lamentations
Let Jer	Letter of Jeremiah
Ezek	Ezekiel
Sus	Susanna
Dan	Daniel
Bel	Bel and the Dragon



## ABBREVIATIONS

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The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes to NETS:

Aram	Aramaic
Gk	Greek
Heb	Hebrew
Ha	Hanhart (1–2 Esd, Esth, Idt, 2–3 Makk, Tob)
Ka	Kappler (1 Makk)
Mu	Munnich (OG: Sous, Dan, Bel)
Ra	Rahlfs ( <i>Psalmi cum Odis</i> in Ps and PrMan, manual edition of LXX elsewhere)
We	Wevers (Gen, Ex, Leu, Num, Deut)
We <sup>d</sup>	Wevers Edition (in distinction from Notes)
We <sup>N</sup>	Wevers Notes (in distinction from Edition)
Zi	Ziegler (Bar, Bel, Dan, Esa, Ier, Iezek, Iob, Lam, LetIer, Twelve Prophets, Sir, Sous, WisSal)
fem	feminine gender
masc	masculine gender
om	omitted by
pl	plural
pr	preceded by
sg	singular
tr	transposed (after)
+	followed by
=	equivalent to
i.e.	explanatory translation
or	alternative translation
possibly	possible translation
perhaps	remotely possible translation
Gk uncertain	meaning of the Greek very uncertain
[ . . . ]	of questionable originality

## ABBREVIATIONS

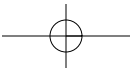
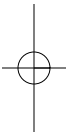
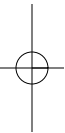
The following abbreviations are used in the introductions to the books of NETS:

AB	Anchor Bible
BA	<i>La Bible d'Alexandrie</i> . Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf
BCE	Before the Common Era
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BIOSCS	<i>Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
Brenton	L. C. L. Brenton, <i>The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, According to the Vatican Text, Translated into English</i> . London: S. Bagster and Sons, 1844.
CATSS	Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint Studies
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CE	Common Era
Charles	R. H. Charles, ed. <i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament</i> . 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913.
CHJ	<i>The Cambridge History of Judaism</i> . W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
ET	<i>Église et Théologie</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IOSCS	International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 1966.
MSL	T. Muraoka, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> . Louvain: Peeters, 2002.
MSU	Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen
MT	Masoretic Text
NETS Manual	Albert Pietersma. <i>Translation Manual for "A New English Translation of the Septuagint" (NETS)</i> . Ada, Michigan: Uncial Books, 1996.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OG	Old Greek
OTS	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>

## ABBREVIATIONS

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Pietersma, "Paradigm"	Albert Pietersma, "A New Paradigm for Addressing Old Questions: The Relevance of the Interlinear Model for the Study of the Septuagint," in <i>Bible and Computer: The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference. Proceedings of the Association Internationale Bible et Informatique "From Alpha to Byte."</i> University of Stellenbosch, 17–21 July, 2000 (Johann Cook, ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002) 337–364.
Pfeiffer, <i>History</i>	R. H. Pfeiffer, <i>History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha</i> . New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949.
PSBA	Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology
RSV	Revised Standard Version Bible Translation
Rahlfs	Alfred Rahlfs, <i>Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes</i> . Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935.
SBE	<i>Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLCS	Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
STDJ	Studies in the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Gerhard Kittel).
Thomson	Charles Thomson, <i>The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Covenant, Commonly Called the Old and New Testament: Translated from the Greek</i> . Philadelphia: Jane Aitken, 1808.
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



# TO THE READER OF NETS

The use of the term “Septuagint” in the title of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) requires some justification. According to legend<sup>1</sup> it was seventy(-two) Jerusalem elders who at the behest of King Ptolemy II (285–246 BCE) and with the consent of High Priest Eleazaros translated the Scriptures of Egyptian Jewry into Greek from a Jerusalem manuscript inscribed in gold. The event is said to have occurred on the island of Pharos in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Alexandria and to have taken seventy-two days. “Scripture,” however, comprised only the so-called five books of Moses, also known as the Pentateuch. Other books were translated in subsequent centuries and also in other locations. In time the entire anthology became popularly known as “the translation of the seventy,” irrespective of the precise origin of individual books.

Not surprisingly then, though the various parts of “the translation of the seventy” have many features in common, it is also true that, as modern scholarship has increasingly shown, there is wide-ranging diversity and heterogeneity within the collection—to the point that some scholars now question the continued use of the term “Septuagint,” which to the unwary reader might suggest a greater degree of uniformity than can be demonstrated. Though “Old Greek” would undoubtedly be a more suitable term to refer, in the case of each individual book or unit of translation, to the earliest rendition into Greek, NETS has bowed to the weight of tradition and has thus continued the use of the term “Septuagint.”

## WHY A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT?

Only two English translations of the entire Septuagint, albeit in modified form, have ever been published. The first was by the American businessman-scholar Charles Thomson and published together with his translation of the New Testament in 1808 and the second by the British cleric Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton.<sup>2</sup> Thomson’s rendition excludes the so-called deuterocanonical books, but does feature Ps 151. The order of books is that of the Hebrew canon. His translation was based indirectly—via J. Field’s edition of 1665 and the Sixtine edition of 1587—on a single manuscript, namely, the well-known fourth century CE manuscript Codex Vaticanus (B). No preface or notes of any kind were appended.

Brenton’s work, though it appeared some thirty-five years later than Thomson’s, acknowledges only cursory and indirect acquaintance with it. As the title indicates, it too is (indirectly) based on Codex Vaticanus. In the Preface (xi) Brenton gives the Valpy edition of 1819 as his immediate source, which in turn was based on the Sixtine edition. Like Thomson, Brenton translated only the books of the Hebrew canon, plus Psalm 151, and ordered them accordingly. For Esther, however, he did not excise the Additions, as Thomson had done. Notes of various kinds, embedded in the text, include variants from the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus (A), as well as comments on the Hebrew and Greek texts.

Of the two translations, Brenton’s has easily been the more influential and, though not originally published with facing Greek and English texts, has long been made available as a diglot with both versions in parallel columns.

Since the publication of these two translations, now more than one hundred and fifty years ago, significant advances have been made in Greek lexicography, numerous ancient manuscripts have come to light, and important steps have been taken in recovering the pristine text of each Septuagint book. By way of comparison it may be noted that whereas both Thomson and Brenton were based on (essentially) diplomatic editions of a single manuscript, the critical edition of the Göttingen Septuagint for the book of Genesis rests on a foundation of some one hundred and forty manuscripts (nine pre-dating the fourth century CE), ten daughter-versions, plus biblical citations in Greek literature. A new translation of the Septuagint into English is, consequently, not only much needed for biblical studies but is in fact long overdue.

<sup>1</sup> For the earliest full-blown version see the *Letter of Aristeas* §§28–33; 301–307.

<sup>2</sup> For the initial pages of this edition see <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ioscs/brenton/>.

## NETS AND THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

Ancient texts, including biblical texts, have been translated from time immemorial, and the need for such work continues. What is often less clear is the precise reading-public a translation should target. Because of its widely varied audience, this is perhaps especially true for biblical literature. Writing specifically on the topic of Bible translations, Nida and Taber<sup>3</sup> envisaged no fewer than three such audiences.

It is usually necessary to have three types of Scriptures: (1) a translation which will reflect the traditional usage and be used in the churches, largely for liturgical purposes (this may be called an "ecclesiastical translation"), (2) a translation in the present-day literary language, so as to communicate to the well-educated constituency, and (3) a translation in the "common" or "popular" language, which is known to and used by the common people, and which is at the same time acceptable as a standard for published materials.

NETS is aimed primarily at the reading public identified in Nida and Taber's second grouping, namely, a biblically well-educated audience, on the assumption that it is most probably this audience that has a more than passing interest in traditions of biblical literature other than their own. Since NETS has been based, however, on the New Revised Standard Version (1989), its character can be said to derive, in part at least, from the NRSV.

That an existing English translation of the Hebrew Bible should have been used as a base for NETS perhaps needs some justification. Why not, it might be suggested, simply translate the Septuagint in the tradition of Thomson or Brenton, without any overt dependence on an English translation of the Hebrew? The answer to this question is based, in the editors' view, on considerations of both principle and practicality. First, the considerations of principle.

While it is obvious that the so-called Septuagint *in time* achieved its independence from its Semitic parent, and that it *at some stage* in its reception history sheds its subservience to its source, it is equally true that it was, at its stage of production, a Greek *translation* of a Hebrew (or Aramaic) *original*. That is to say, the Greek had a dependent and subservient *linguistic* relationship to its Semitic parent. Or again, although the Septuagint was a translation of the Bible, it did not thereby automatically become a biblical translation. More particularly, for the vast majority of books the linguistic relationship of the Greek to its Semitic parent can best be conceptualized as a Greek interlinear translation of a Hebrew original within a Hebrew-Greek diglot. Be it noted immediately, however, that the terms "interlinear" and "diglot" are intended to be nothing more than (or less than) visual aids to help the reader conceptualize the linguistic relationship that is deemed to exist between the Hebrew original and the Greek translation. In other words, "interlinear" is a metaphor, and as such it points not to the surface meaning of its own components but to a deeper, less visual, linguistic relationship of dependence and subservience. As Max Black aptly states,

a memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate for the one as a lens for seeing the other . . .<sup>4</sup>

Be it noted further that the deeper linguistic reality, which the metaphor attempts to make more tangible, is in no way contingent on the existence of a physical, interlinear entity at any point during the third to the first centuries BCE. What precise physical format the translation took we may never know. A variety of possibilities is not difficult to imagine.

Looked at from a different perspective, NETS is presupposing a Greek translation which aimed at bringing the Greek reader to the Hebrew original rather than bringing the Hebrew original to the Greek reader.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the Greek's subservience to the Hebrew may be seen as indicative of its aim.

NETS has been based on the interlinear paradigm for essentially three reasons. First, the concept of interlinearity has superior explanatory power for the "translationese" character of Septuagint Greek, with its strict, often rigid, quantitative equivalence to the Hebrew. As Conybeare and Stock<sup>6</sup> (and others) noted nearly a century ago, Septuagintal Greek is at times "hardly Greek at all, but rather Hebrew in disguise,"

<sup>3</sup> Nida, E. A. and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1982) 31.

<sup>4</sup> Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1962) 236.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. P. Brock, "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint," *OTS* 17 (1972) 17.

<sup>6</sup> Conybeare, F. C. and St. G. Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995 [expanded and reprinted from the edition originally published by Ginn and Company, Boston, 1905]) 21.

## TO THE READER OF NETS

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especially in its syntax and word order. Secondly, interlinearity not only legitimates the use of the Hebrew parent as arbiter of established meanings in the target language but as well absolves the reader of positing new meanings derived solely from translation equivalency. Differently put, the interlinear paradigm recognizes that unintelligibility of the Greek text *qua text* is one of its inherent characteristics. Thirdly, and perhaps paradoxically, the interlinear paradigm safeguards the Greekness of the Septuagint by emphasizing that its linguistic strangeness, rather than reflecting a form of the living language at odds with its Hellenistic environment, was made to serve a specific (possibly pedagogical) purpose.

Thus whatever else one might consider the LXX to be—a repository of textual variants to the Masoretic Text, the oldest “commentary” on the Hebrew Bible, Holy Writ for Egyptian Jewry (at least from the time of Aristas) and, later, for Christianity—the Committee decided to focus on the most original character of this collection, namely, that of interlinearity with and dependence on the Hebrew, or, from a slightly different angle, the Septuagint *as produced* rather than *as received*. Or yet again, NETS aims to focus on the translated corpus in its Hebrew-Greek context.

Once the aim and focus of NETS had been decided upon, a methodological directive seemed compelling. If NETS was to render into English the Greek half of a Hebrew-Greek interlinear diglot posited as paradigm, its English text might then be made “interlinear to” a modern English translation of the current Hebrew text. Put another way, since NETS was to echo the original dependent relationship of the Greek upon the Hebrew, one could seemingly do no better than to base NETS on an existing English translation of the Hebrew and to modify that base as dictated by the Greek.

But if the linguistic makeup of the Septuagint can best be conceptualized in terms of interlinearity, it follows that, characteristically for interlinears, one should read the Septuagint *as produced* with one eye on the parent member of the diglot, namely, the Hebrew. Thus what this Septuagint says, and how it says it, can only be understood in its entirety with the help of the Hebrew. This interlinearity with and dependence on the Hebrew may be termed the constitutive character of the Septuagint, in contradistinction to its history of interpretation, or better, its reception history. From the NETS perspective these two aspects of the Septuagint are not only distinct but might in fact be termed the apples and oranges of its history.

In the light of what has been argued, it is thus appropriate to think of NETS along the lines of the Göttingen Septuagint: as the Göttingen editors attempt to establish the original form of the Greek text and in so doing draw on the Hebrew for text-critical leverage, so NETS has availed itself of what leverage the Hebrew can provide in arbitrating between competing meanings of the Greek. Moreover, just as the *form* of the original text differed from its later textual descendants, so what the original translator thought his text to mean differed from what later interpreters thought the text to mean.

But in addition to the dictum of principle, there emerged also an intensely practical consideration for basing NETS on an existing English translation of the Hebrew. In the Committee’s view, important to the *raison d’être* of a new translation of the (original) Septuagint—i.e., a translation of a translation—is its synoptic potential. That is to say, users of such a translation, especially in light of the diglot paradigm, should be able to utilize it to the greatest degree achievable (within set parameters) in a comparative study of the Hebrew and Greek texts, albeit in English translation. This aim could best be realized, the Committee believed, if English translations of the Hebrew and the Greek were as closely interrelated as the two texts themselves dictate or warrant, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In other words, ideally the user of NETS would be able to determine not only matters of longer or shorter text and major transpositions of material, but also questions of more detailed textual, interpretational, and stylistic difference. Needless to say, the Committee harbors no illusions about this goal having been fully reached.

Given the above decision, essentially two options were open: (1) one could first translate the MT into English and then use this translation as the point of departure for an English translation of the Greek, or (2) one could use an existing English translation of the MT as base. Clearly the latter route recommended itself as being the more practical and economical one. It was, furthermore, difficult for the Committee to see how the work of the committees of scholars that have produced the major English translations of the Hebrew could be greatly improved upon even though they are admittedly translations of a presumed *original* rather than being translations of a *translation*, like NETS.

## NETS AS MODIFIED NRSV

Two considerations have guided the Committee in choosing an English version as the base text for NETS: (1) general compatibility of translational approach with that of the LXX itself and (2) widespread use among readers of the Bible. The New Revised Standard Version, based as it is on the maxim “as literal as possible, as free as necessary” (Preface), was thought to be reasonably well suited to NETS’ purposes on both counts. Consequently, throughout those Septuagint books which have extant counterparts in

Hebrew (or Aramaic), NETS translators have sought to retain the NRSV to the extent that the Greek text, in their understanding of it, directs or permits. NETS' synoptic aim, however, has not been allowed to interfere with faithfulness to the Greek text.

When NETS differs from the NRSV, the reason is typically one of the following: (1) the lexical choice of the NRSV to represent the Hebrew differs significantly from that of the Greek translator's, even though either rendering, independently, might be regarded as an adequate translation of the same Hebrew; (2) differences in translational approach between the translators of the NRSV and the ancient Greek translators has occasioned noteworthy differences between the two versions (for example, in any given passage, the Greek might be hyper-literalistic, where the NRSV is not, or again it might be very free, which the NRSV is not); (3) an attempt to reflect linguistic features in the Greek, such as word echoes or paratactic style, at times has required that the NRSV wording be modified; (4) the Greek translator has apparently rendered a text at variance with MT, due to textual difference; (5) the NRSV has opted for gender-inclusive or explicit language, eschewed by NETS; (6) the NRSV has not translated MT, but opted instead for some other reading. Naturally, where, in such instances, the NRSV has adopted the reading of the Septuagint, NETS and NRSV agree. As a rule such cases have been annotated in the NRSV, but the reader should not take for granted that the precise English word used by the NRSV has been adopted by NETS.

The Committee's desire to enable the reader to make use of NETS in synoptic manner with the NRSV has been second only to its commitment to giving a faithful rendering of the Greek original. In fact, NETS may be said to have two competing aims: (1) to give as faithful a translation of the Greek as is possible, both in terms of its meaning and in terms of its mode of expression and (2) to create a tool in English for the synoptic study of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. Since these are competing aims, the translator often, especially on the expression side, has been called upon to do a balancing act.

#### TRANSLATING A TRANSLATION

Translating an ancient text can only be described as a profoundly difficult undertaking. Not only do translators have to contend with the natural gulf that exists between languages and with the absence of the authors who wrote the pieces in question, but they also suffer from the lack of native speakers of the ancient languages, who might be cajoled into giving some much needed help. Consequently, what the modern translator of an ancient text is trying to do is something like starting up a one-way conversation, or a monologue that passes for a dialogue. Translation, as someone has aptly noted, is an act of hubris.

The difficulties of the undertaking are certainly not decreased when one attempts to translate an ancient translation into a modern language. If translating is an act of interpreting, as linguists suggest it is, rather than a simple transfer of meaning, a Greek interpretation of a Hebrew original can be expected to reflect what the translator understood the Hebrew text to mean. The end result is therefore inevitably to some degree a commentary written at a specific historical time and place by an individual person, whose understanding of the Hebrew will often have been at variance with our own, though at times perhaps equally viable.

But as has already been suggested by the interlinear paradigm, much of the Septuagint is a translation of a special kind. Thus whereas a translation that *replaces* the original can be counted on to "solve" the problems of the original, in an interlinear rendition these may simply be passed on to the reader. In fact new problems might often be created because of its inherent preoccupation with representing as much of the linguistic detail of the original as possible. All of this is not to say that the interlinear type of translators of the LXX had no concern for making sense, but simply that the interlinear language-game of the ancient translator has added an extra dimension to the problems faced by the modern translator. The notion of constitutive character, introduced earlier, comprises *inter alia* certain realities of the source language, Hebrew (or Aramaic). Just as inappropriate as accusing the interlinear translator of lacking concern for making sense would be to saddle him with inadequate knowledge of Greek, since his use of Greek is determined by the aim he wishes to achieve, whatever that be.

The paradigm of the Septuagint as an interlinear text within a Hebrew-Greek diglot, in contradistinction to the Septuagint as a free-standing, independent text now calls for a further distinction alluded to earlier, namely, that between the text *as produced*, on the one hand, and the text *as received*, on the other. The distinction is important because it demarcates two distinct approaches to the Greek text. That is to say, one can either seek to uncover the meaning of the Greek text in terms of its interlinear dependence on the Hebrew, or one can aim at rendering the meaning of the text from the perspective of its reception history, i.e., in terms of its autonomy. The difference between the two may be simply illustrated. Though the entire Greek language community of third to the first centuries BCE would agree that Greek δύναιμι sometimes means "host/army" but at other times means "power/might," which component of meaning



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was right for which context might well be a matter of dispute. From the perspective of the Septuagint text as an independent, self-sufficient entity, context is recognized as the sole arbiter of meaning. That is to say, should the context speak of military might, δύναμις would be translated by “army,” but if the (Greek) context be about bodily might instead, δύναμις would be rendered by “power/might.” On the other hand, from the perspective of the Septuagint as a dependent, subservient entity, one could not agree that context is the sole arbiter of meaning. What if context should admit either reading and thus fail to steer the reader into one direction or the other? In that case, based on our diglot model, the Hebrew parent text would be the arbiter in the dispute. Should the underlying Hebrew have אָרְמִיָּה (“army, war, warfare”), Greek δύναμις should be understood as “host/army,” but if the Hebrew be כֹּחַ (“strength, might”) instead, δύναμις would have to be understood as meaning “might/strength.” An even simpler example is the distinction between the Greek pronouns “us” and “you” (pl) (e.g., ἡμῶν and ὑμῶν) which, due to their identical pronunciation in post-Classical Greek, are frequently confused in Greek manuscripts. Which of the two is to be regarded as original LXX can often be determined only by using the Hebrew as arbiter. The latter example underscores the analogy between NETS and the Göttingen Septuagint.

Perhaps the most obvious examples of Septuagintal dependence (as opposed to independence) are cases in which, due to the ambiguity inherent in Greek grammar, only the syntactic relationships (e.g., subject or object role) of the Hebrew can guide the English translator to what the Greek text means. Thus a sentence such as τὸ παιδίον εἶδεν might mean either “the child saw” or “(s)he saw the child.”

The distinction between the text as an independent entity or the text as a dependent entity is, therefore, not only a valid one in terms of the NETS paradigm, but in the Committee’s view, it is an important methodological stance for translators of the Septuagint as *produced*, with frequent practical consequences for NETS. Differently put, one can either treat the LXX as though it were an original (as Charles Thomson did) or one can treat it as a translation of an original in a non-Greek language. Though both are worthy undertakings in their own right, NETS perceives them as fundamentally different.

Constitutive character or *Sitz im Leben* is a figure for socio-linguistic realities. As such it includes not only what, judging from the language used, the text overtly means but also what at times resulted covertly from the model that informed the translator’s work. Again, inherent in the model of the LXX as an interlinear rendition is the word-by-word method of translating, including the so-called structural words (articles, prepositions, conjunctions). Also to be expected from an interlinear perspective are standard and stereotypical equations between Hebrew and Greek words, again often including structural words. For these reasons and more, though the LXX is in Greek, there is also much that is decidedly un-Greek. “The voice is Iakob’s, but the hands are Esau’s” (Gen 27.22) is a statement aptly applied to much of the Septuagint.

## HOW NETS DETERMINES WHAT THE GREEK MEANS

Simply put NETS has been governed by five lexical guidelines, which can be made to apply as well, *mutatis mutandis*, to the grammar of Septuagint Greek, and all of them are implicit in or concordant with the interlinear paradigm: (1) Greek words in the LXX normally mean what they meant in the Greek of that period (statistically the vast majority of the lexical stock belongs here); (2) the precise nuance of Greek words is sometimes arbitrated by the Hebrew parent text (see the δύναμις and ἡμῶν/ὑμῶν illustrations above); (3) some Greek words, when they are used rigidly as uniform renderings of the corresponding Hebrew words, fit poorly into some of the contexts in which they stand—these may be dubbed stereotypes (see e.g., “will” [θέλημα] for NRSV’s “desire” in Ps 1.2); (4) some Greek words in the LXX have been selected by the translator solely because of their perceived connection with (a) Hebrew morpheme(s)—these may be called isolates (see e.g., כֵּן [oh please!] = ἐν ἐμοί = “in/with me” in 1Rgns 1.26 et al.); (5) some Greek words in the LXX have Hebrew meanings, i.e., the chief meaning of the Hebrew counterpart has been transferred to the Greek, which has then become part of the living language—these may be labeled calques (see e.g., כִּבְרֵי = διαθήκη = “covenant” throughout the LXX, but “will, testament” in extra-biblical Greek). Calques may be expected to predate the Septuagint. Graphically these guidelines may be represented as follows:

Contextual renderings ————— Stereotypes | Calques ————— Isolate renderings

The vertical line on the scale represents a semantic demarcation, since words or lexemes placed to the left are governed by their normal Greek semantic range, while those to the right may in part be governed by their Hebrew counterparts, though, when such is the case, not by their full semantic range. NETS trans-

lators have ordered the linguistic information of the Greek in terms of this scale and have translated accordingly.

Though the full extent of the scale may be represented in all books or units of translation of the Septuagint, not all may show the same translation profile. Two factors that may have exercised a direct influence on a given book's profile are its degree of literalness and its relative chronological placement within the corpus. By literalness is here understood the degree of consistency of Hebrew-Greek verbal equations, as well as the relative number of such one-to-one equations a given book or translation unit features. Potentially a book's chronological place within the corpus determines the number of calques it contains. That is to say, the later the book the more calques may have been part of its translator's everyday, living lexicon.

Even though, in deference to long-standing usage, the title of the NETS project speaks of the literature as a body, namely, the Septuagint, it has already been noted that the members of this anthology show considerable diversity, the interlinear model notwithstanding. Thus, Greek translations within it range all the way from highly literal to very free. Moreover, on a scale extending from what might be called the prototypical translator, who acts as a mere conduit for his author, to the prototypical author, who composes everything from scratch, Septuagintal writers would be seen scattered along most of its baseline. One finds not only full-fledged authors (e.g., 2 Makkabees and Wisdom of Salomon) who composed their works in Greek, but also bona fide translators who in varying degrees attempted to approximate our prototypical translator. Thus one might note, for example, Ecclesiast (Qoheleth) as the most prototypical translator (being very literal) and Job as the least prototypical (being very free). Needless to say, a Lohan translator must be labeled part author. NETS introductions to individual books or units are designed to give some detail on the nature of individual translations.

What has been noted in the preceding paragraph draws attention to a number of facts. First, though the paradigm basic to NETS is that of the Septuagint as an interlinear text, it does not follow that all interlinear texts are equally literalistic. Second, there are within the translated corpus exceptions that prove the rule, such as Job, Proverbs, Esaias (?) and Esther in part. Third, those books originally composed in Greek, such as 2-4 Makkabees and Wisdom of Salomon, by virtue of not being translations are not governed by the NETS paradigm.

#### NETS: ITS CHARACTER AND EXTENT

Though NETS is based on the NRSV, it is not intended to be the-NRSV-once-over-lightly but rather a genuine representation of the Greek, reflecting not only its perceived meaning but also, to the extent possible in an English translation, its literary nuggets as well as its infelicities, pleonasms, problems and conundra.

One scarcely expects literary beauty and rhetorical flourish from an interlinear text, since that was clearly not its purpose. In fact, it would make little sense to accuse an interlinear translator of lack of literary sense. When literary beauty occurs it is the exception that proves the rule. Consequently, NETS readers would be remiss in expecting literary elegance in the English. That would have required, from the NETS perspective, a different Greek. Since the Septuagint, with a few exceptions, was not originally composed in Greek and often used unidiomatic Greek, a fully idiomatic translation into English can scarcely be justified. Consequently NETS is perforce more a translation of formal correspondence than one of dynamic equivalence. All in all, what readers can expect is a reasonable facsimile of the (original) Septuagint such as it is, including many of its warts. For commentary, one may consult the forthcoming series, the Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint (SBLCS).

The reason for the NETS approach is integral to the NETS aim: that of reflecting the Septuagint's constitutive character and of attempting to capture the *incipit* of the history of interpretation of what in time became the Greek Bible. Implicit in this aim has been a concerted effort not to make the Greek text say more than is strictly warranted, but to leave such elaboration to later stages of exegesis or eisegesis, as the case may be.

Names have been treated in essentially two ways: (1) as *translations* of Hebrew (or Aramaic), i.e., names in general use in the Hellenistic world apart from the LXX, and (2) as *transcriptions* of Hebrew (or Aramaic), i.e., names produced *de novo* from the source language. The former have been given their standard equivalent in English (e.g., Egypt and Syria), while the latter appear in English transcription (e.g., Dauid and Salomon).

Since the Septuagint collection includes translations from extant Hebrew (Aramaic) sources and translations of lost Semitic works, as well as books originally composed in Greek, the Committee has decided to be inclusive. To cite the NETS Statement of Principles (art. 3): "For the purposes of NETS, the term

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'Septuagint' is understood to be exemplified by, but not in all respects . . . congruent with, Alfred Rahlfs' *Septuaginta* (1935)."

One "book" not included in NETS, however, is Odes since it has dubious integrity as a literary unit, and, in any case, almost all of the individual Septuagint odes have already been included in their native setting in other books. The sole exception is Ode 12 in Rahlfs' edition, the Prayer of Manasses, which for that reason has been separately appended to the Psalter.

The one major addition to Rahlfs has been the so-called Alpha-Text of Esther. Here and elsewhere the Committee has been guided by the Göttingen Septuagint, which has presented two Greek texts of Esther in parallel. While it is true that in Esther and in certain other books (Judges and Tobit, for example) it is most unlikely that both texts, *qua* texts, can lay equal claim to originality, the texts that have been transmitted clearly defy conflation. Furthermore, even though the Committee aims to present the original Septuagint or Old Greek in English translation, here too it has not been oblivious to the weight of tradition. Thus, though in Job the Septuagint has been presented as the main text of NETS, the asterisked materials, sanctioned solely by ecclesiastical usage, have been included, albeit conspicuously marked off. For the same reason, the so-called Greek II text of Sirach, added in small print in Ziegler's edition, has been included. Similar procedures have been followed in other books (see Introductions to individual books). A special effort has been made in the case of books with parallel Greek texts to reflect their interrelationships in English.

Clearly where no parent texts are extant, whether because they have been lost or because they never existed, no comparison can be attempted between (Semitic) original and (Greek) translation. Thus, whether a book has been composed originally in Greek or is based on a lost original, it has been treated as an original, even though an effort has been made to reflect its style. Similarly, since the synoptic aim of NETS is not applicable in these cases, the NRSV has functioned only optionally as the base text for the NETS translator, though certain basic NETS practices and procedures have been carried through, especially in terms of translation style and names.

## GREEK TEXT

Since NETS claims to be a translation of the Greek text as it left the hands of its respective translators—or a "Göttingen Septuagint in English form"—it stands to reason that NETS has been based on the best available critical editions. That is to say, where available, NETS has used the Göttingen Septuagint, and Rahlfs' manual edition has been used for the remainder of the books. In the event that new and improved critical editions appear during the life of the project, the Committee is committed to using these, if at all possible. But since no edition, no matter how carefully and judiciously executed, can lay claim to being the definitive text of the Greek translator, NETS translators have from time to time sought to improve on their respective base texts. Just how much will have been changed varies with the quality of the edition used. All such deviations, however, have been meticulously noted.

## EDITORIAL DETAIL

Since NETS has used the NRSV as its base text, it stands to reason that some of the latter's editorial policy has been continued.

More specifically the NRSV for its so-called Old Testament segment has maintained the traditional distinction between shall (should) and will (would), and NETS has followed suit.

Though the NRSV adopted the practice of distinguishing between the Hebrew divine names Yahweh and Adonai by means of printing "LORD" and "Lord" as respective equivalents, NETS has felt committed to this practice only where it can be shown that the Greek translator made a comparable distinction between Yahweh and Adonai. Otherwise Greek κύριος has been routinely represented by English "Lord."

The footnoteing of the NRSV has been largely followed in NETS, though the specific content is often of a different kind. In NETS footnotes are generally of five kinds: (1) deviations from the Greek text used as base; (2) linguistic items in the English but lacking in the Greek; (3) graded (in terms of preference) alternative translations to the lemma text; (4) elucidations of various kind; (5) indications of a very obscure Greek text.

Deviations from the Greek text have been further divided into additions, omissions and transpositions. All three kinds of deviations from the Greek edition used are followed by an equal sign (=) in order to indicate the source of the variation without implying exact equivalence. Substitutions for obvious reasons have not been tagged as such.

Items in the English that are explicitly lacking in the Greek have been included when the information is judged to be implicit. When, however, added items may have some possible bearing on the interpre-

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tation of the text, they have been tagged. Hence the employment of this category is one of several ways in which NETS has sought to present the reader with the maximum of interpretational openness the Greek translator's text offers.

The category of other translations comprises alternative renderings of the Greek that are deemed to have varying degrees of warrant in the Greek. These degrees, in descending order of acceptability, have been marked as (a) alternative rendering (to the NETS text) marked by "or," (b) alternative rendering preceded by "possibly," (c) alternative rendering preceded by "perhaps." Again, the intent here is to present translation options supported by the Greek.

Clarifications are intended to communicate useful information to the reader. They are preceded by "i.e." or are phrased more explicitly.

The flagging of uncertainty in the Greek text has been a measure of last resort and has been used very sparingly, since it is of very limited help to the reader. Items so marked are typically clear from a textual point of view but very obscure as to their coherent sense.

Chapter and verse numbers in NETS follow those of the particular Greek text edition that has been used as base. The numbering of the NRSV, which often though not always follows MT, has been supplied in parentheses when different.

Since the NT regularly cites the Septuagint and synoptic use of the Bible is an important aim of NETS, translators have made an effort to align NETS and the NRSV NT in such cases, using similar principles to those outlined above.

*For the translation committee,*  
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Co-chairs

# A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT

