Wordplay and Translation Technique in the Septuagint of Job

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[This article examines the Septuagint's treatment of Janus parallelism in the book of Job. Janus parallelism is a type of wordplay device in which a polyseme reflects what has preceded it in one of its meanings and anticipates what follows in another. Six examples of the device are chosen from the Hebrew text (Job 3:25-26, 10:7-8, 20:23-24, 28:9-10, 29:18-19, 39:19-20) and are found to have been rendered in the LXX through epexegesis or equally punful translations. The study proposes that an awareness of Hebrew ambiguity might account for some instances of textual variance in the LXX in particular, and in the various other ancient translations in general.]

Translation technique in the Septuagint (LXX) has been studied for decades and has provided the scholarly world with important insights into the aesthetics, idiolectic systems, and religious biases of the LXX translators.[1] While scholars often dispute the degree to which such factors determined the translation,[2] it is commonly accepted that some personal and socio-religious forces played roles.

Analogous research on translation technique in the other ancient versions, e.g., the Targumim and Peshitta,[3] also has shown that the translator often attempted to preserve the most subtle literary features in the Masoretic text, including repetition and variation, parallelism, and ambiguity.

This naturally raises the question of whether the LXX also attempted to preserve such literary features. While some headway has been made in regard to the Greek aesthetic preference by H. Orlinsky,[4] it is clear from the dearth of studies on the subject that the topic needs to be examined more closely, a task which I intend to undertake, at least in part, below.

One literary feature in particular, though ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible, has received no attention with regard to LXX studies, namely wordplay. Nevertheless, an examination of wordplay in Classical Greek and Latin literature has yielded many interesting results. Among them, is the realization that any serious hermeneutical study of a text also must take into consideration the more allusive poetic devices such as paronomasia (soundplay) and polysemy (plays on multiple meanings). In the words of Frederick Ahl:

> The ancient text, be it philosophical or poetical, is a texture not only of sound and words, but of soundplay and wordplay. These are the means by which the ancient writer, poet or philosopher, weaves his text in a fabric of horizontal and vertical Varronian threads. Ovid's or Vergil's Varronian declensions of literary

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1. Donald Hugh Gard, *The Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator of the Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952); M. Greenberg, "Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text," *VTS* 29 (1978), pp. 131-148; Homer Heater, *A Septuagint Translation Technique in the Book of Job* (Washington, DC.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982).

2. See, e.g., with regard to the book of Job, the excellent summary by Harry M. Orlinsky, "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter I," *HUCA* 28 (1957), pp. 53-74.

3. See, e.g., John Gray, "The Massoretic Text of the Book of Job, the Targum and the Septuagint Version in the Light of the Qumran Targum (11 QtargJob)," *ZAW* 86 (1974), pp. 331-350; Heidi M. Szpek, *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Job: A Model for Evaluating a Text with Documentation from the Peshitta to Job* (*SBLDS*, Num. 137; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

4. Orlinsky, *HUCA* 28 (1957), pp. 53-74; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter II," *HUCA* 29 (1958), pp. 229-271; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter III," *HUCA* 30 (1959), pp. 153-167; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter III (Continued)," *HUCA* 32 (1961), pp. 239-268; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter IV," *HUCA* 33 (1962), pp. 119-151; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter V," *HUCA* 35 (1964), pp. 57-78; "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job: Chapter V," *HUCA* 36 (1965), pp. 37-47.

language are not, I suggest, an occasional ornament of the writer's art: they *are* his art... Once we are comfortable with these larger and more complex associations we will be ready, I think, to begin the long overdue revaluation and reinterpretation of Latin and Greek literature as a whole, to relish the multiplicity and complexity of what we have so long taken to be, at heart, simple, sincere, and classical.[5]

The relative frequency of wordplay in the Hebrew Bible and in Classical literature, therefore, suggests that it will be worthwhile to look anew at the LXX to see if it reflects an awareness of wordplay in the Masoretic Text. To facilitate this examination I will limit my remarks to a well-defined corpus, the book of Job, and to a specific literary device, a type of wordplay[6] known as Janus parallelism. The latter term was coined by Cyrus Gordon to describe a literary device in which a middle stich of poetry parallels in a polysemous manner both the line that precedes it and the line which follows it.[7] Gordon's initial discovery was in Song 2:12.

<div dir="rtl">

12 הנצנים נראו בארץ
עת הזמיר הגיע
וקול התור נשמע בארצנו

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12. The blossoms have appeared in the land
    the time of זמיר has arrived,
    the call of the turtledove is heard in our land

As Gordon pointed out, the word זמיר may be read both as "singing"[8] and as "pruning."[9] As "singing" it connects with the expression וקול התור "the voice of the turtledove" and as "pruning," with

5. Frederick Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 322-323. See also his "Ars Est Caelare Artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)," in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), pp. 17-43.

6. The existence of wordplay in biblical Hebrew and in the Semitic languages in general is ubiquitous and is commonly accepted. See, e.g., Edward L. Greenstein, "Wordplay, Hebrew," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pp. 968-971; Jack Sasson, "Word Play in the Old Testament," *IDP* Supplement, (Nashville: Abingdon), pp. 968-970; I. M. Casanowicz, *Paronomasia in the Old Testament* (Boston, 1894); H. Rechendorff, *Über Paronomasie in den semitischen Sprache. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* (Giessen: Topelmann, 1909); F. Bohl, "Wortspiele im Alten Testament," *JPOS* 6 (1926), 196-212; G. Böstrom, *Paranomasi iden äldre Hebreiska Maschalliteraturen med särsklid hänsyn till proverbia* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1928); D. R. Driver, "Playing on Words," in *Proceedings of the 4th World Congress of Jewish Studies. Papers*, v. 1 (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 121-129; J. J. Glück, "Paronomasia in Biblical Literature," *Semitics* 1 (1970), 50-78; W. L. Holladay, "Form and Word-Play in David's Lament Over Saul and Jonathan," *VT* 20 (1970), 153-189; M. Delcor, "Homonymie et Interpretation de l'Ancient Testament," *JSS* 43/1 (1973), 40-54; B. Beitzel, "Exodus 3:14 and the Divine Name: A Case of Biblical Paranomasia," *TrinJ* (n.s.) 1 (1980), 5-20; A. R. Ceresko, "The Function of Antanaclasis (ms' 'to find' // ms' 'to reach, overtake, grasp') in Hebrew Poetry, Especially in the Book of Qoheleth," *CBQ* 44 (1982), 569; Walter Farber, "Associative Magic: Some Rituals, Word Plays, and Philology," *JAOS* 106/3 (1986), 447-449; Robert B. Chisholm, "Word Play in the Eighth-Century Prophets," *BibSac* 144 (1987), 44-52; Russell Thomas Cherry III, *Paranomasia and Proper Names in the Old Testament: Rhetorical Function and Literary Effect*, Ph.D. dissertation (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), etc.

7. C. H. Gordon, "New Directions," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 15 (1978), 59-66.

8. So F. Brown, *et al.*, eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; hereafter *BDB*), p. 274; L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; hereafter *KB*), pp. 259-260; L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, eds. *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament.* Vols. I-IV (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967-1990; hereafter *HALAT*), I, pp. 262-263.

9. See *BDB*, p. 274; *KB*, p. 260; *HALAT*, I, p. 263.

נצנים "blossoms." Gordon's discovery added to the then known sophisticated literary devices of the biblical authors.

Gordon was preceded by David Yellin, who, though he did not use the term "Janus Parallelism," spotted this device in Job 7:6-7.

<div dir="rtl">

6   ימי קלו מני ארג

ויכלו באפס תקוה

7   זכר כי רוח חיי

לא תשוב עיני לראות טוב

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6. My days are more trifling than a weavers shuttle. They go without תקוה.

7. Remember, my life is but a wind, my eyes will see no more good.

As Yellin noted,[10] the word תקוה means both "thread"[11] and "hope."[12] As the former, it parallels ארג "a weaver's shuttle" in line 6,[13] and as the latter, it parallels line 7, לא תשוב עיני לראות טוב "my eyes will see no more good," an expression of Job's failing hope.[14]

The evidence garnered thus far has led to the general acceptance of Janus parallelism as a literary device utilized by the poets of ancient Israel. Thus, standard works on Hebrew poetry, such as those by W. G. E. Watson and A. Berlin,[15] mention and illustrate this device.

In my monograph on the subject[16] I have made an exhaustive study of the device and have found it to be ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the book of Job. Indeed, in Job it is essential to the referential nature of the theological debate and the demonstration of witty one upmanship depicted in the book.[17] For the purpose of this study it is important to note that the consistency in form[18] of Janus parallelism and its relative frequency make it a perfect case study for an examination of the LXX's treatment of wordplay. Moreover, typically when the Hebrew text presents multiple possibilities for interpretation, the other versions, e.g., Targum, Peshitta, and Vulgate, often differ in respect to the

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10. David Yellin, "משנה ההוראה בתנ"ך," *Tarbiz* 5 (1933), 13. He was anticipated by Ibn Ezra.

11. As found in Josh 2:18, 21. *BDB*, p. 876; *KB*, p. 1038; *HALAT*, IV, p. 1636.

12. *BDB*, p. 876; *KB*, pp. 1038-1039; *HALAT*, IV, p. 1636.

13. It also may be connected to two roots in line 5: לבש "clothed" and עפר "dust," which may reflect the garment called *ġpr* in Ugaritic. See *UT* 465, s.v. *ġpr*, (1106:7, cf. 24): "20 gpr garments."

14. For additional published examples of the device see, e.g., D. T. Tsumura, "Janus Parallelism in Nah 1:8," *JBL* 102 (1983), 109-11; Walter Herzberg, *Polysemy in the Hebrew Bible*, (New York University doctoral dissertation, 1979), 63-65, 116; Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 113, 160, 164; Shalom Paul, "Polysensous Polyvalency in Poetic Parallelism," in *"Sha'arei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 147-163; Gary A. Rendsburg, "Janus Parallelism in Gen. 49:26," *JBL* 99 (1980), 291-93; C. H. Gordon, "Asymmetric Janus Parallelism," *Eretz Israel*, (Harry M. Orlinsky Volume), v. 16, 80*; D. Grossberg, "Pivotal Polysemy in Jermiah XXV 10-11a," *VT* 36 (1986), 481-485; and more recently, Scott B. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job* (JSOTSup 223; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996).

15. W. G. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, p. 159; A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985); and her "Parallelism," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, p. 157.

16. See n. 14.

17. See also Scott B. Noegel, "Janus Parallelism in Job and Its Literary Significance," *JBL* 115/2 (1996), 313-320.

18. Of the 70 total Janus constructions examined in my book I found 64 to be symmetrical in form, i.e., they are accomplished in three stichs. Of these 64, 20 place the polyseme at the head of the stich, 20 in the middle, and 24 at the end. This suggests that the author's primary concern was the placement of the polyseme in the second of three stichs, and only secondarily with its position within that stich. Similarly, of the 6 asymmetrical Januses (which are accomplished in two stichs), 3 place the polyseme at the head of the stich, and 2 in the middle, and one at the end.

verse's treatment or capture the pun through equally punful renderings or through epexegesis. Usually, this multiplicity of meaning is picked up by the medieval and modern commentators who reflect it in their differences of opinion. Thus, with each of the Janus passages discussed, I will demonstrate how a recognition of these divergent and polysemous translations can lead to the discovery of wordplay in the LXX.

With this in mind I turn now to a few Janus parallels in the book of Job beginning with Job 3:25-26.

25 כי פחד פחדתי ויאתיני
ואשר יגרתי יבא לי
26 לא שלותי ולא שקטתי
ולא נחתי ויבא רגז

25. That which I have feared has come upon me, and that which יגרתי has come to me,
26. I have no rest, no quiet, no repose, but continual agony.

יגרתי in line 25 may be understood in two ways: as "I have dreaded" or "I have stirred up, strived with, quarreled with." Both roots are well-attested: גור II "stir up strife" occurs in Isa 54:15; Ps 56:7; and Hos 7:14, and גור III "dread," a by-form of the root יגר, can be found in Num 22:3; I Sam 18:15; Deut 18:22; and Job 41:17.[19] As "I have dreaded" it echoes פחד פהדתי "I have feared" and as "I have stirred up," it parallels the following stich's לא שלותי ולא שקטתי "I have no rest, no quiet." Though the roots פחד and גור III are not parallel elsewhere, they do have a word parallel in common-- ירא. For example, גור appears with ירא in Ps 22:24; 33:8. פחד occurs with ירא in Deut 2:25; 11:25; 28:67; Ps 27:1; and Isa 44:8.

As for Job 3:25-26, most of the versions are in agreement as to the meaning of יגרתי, deriving it from גור III "to dread."[20] While the Vulgate's *verebar*,[21] the Sages,[22] and modern commentators,[23] restrict their understanding to "fear, dread," a few of the versions were able to capture the pun. For instance, the Targum translates our pivot word with the root דלח, both "fear, dread" and "stir up, make turbid, trouble;"[24] and the Syriac employs the root זוע, which means both "fear, quake," and "stir up, set in motion."[25]

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19. גור I "sojourn" is not applicable here. *BDB*, 158-159.
20. As are the dictionaries. *BDB*, p. 158; *KB*, p. 176; *HALAT*, I, p. 177.
21. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (herafter *OLD*), pp. 2035-2036.
22. Sa'adiah Gaon's rendering is a puzzle: "what I guarded against." See L. E. Goodman, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah ben Joseph Al-Fayyūmī* (New Haven and Lopndon: Yale University Press, 1988).
23. Marvin Pope, *Job* (Anchor Bible, 15; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 27; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 30; N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1967), p. 68; W.L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (Biblica et Orientalia, Num. 42; Rome: Pontifical Institute Press, 1987), p. 39; A. Guillaume, *Studies in the Book of Job* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 20; J.E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), p. 100.
24. M.A. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Mishnaic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1989), p. 309.
25. J.A. Payne-Smith, *Compendious Syrian Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 113-114.

When we look to the LXX we find a similar desire to translate the pun. It renders our pivot word with ἐδεδοίκειν "(that) which I feared" which is derived from δείξω.[26] Like the Hebrew דלח, δείξω carries two meanings: "fear, dread," and "flee from," in the sense of being "stirred up" or "alarmed."[27] Thus the LXX used this verb in order to retain the pun inherent in the Hebrew original.

To further demomstrate the LXX's penchant for polysemous preservation I turn to Job 10:7-8.

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7 על דעתך כי לא ארשע
ואין מידך מציל
8 ידיך עצבוני ויעשוני
יחד סביב ותבלעני

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7. Though you know that I am not wicked, there is no one who can deliver me from your hand.
8. Your hands עצבוני me, they have made me, altogether, yet now you swallow me.

The form עצבוני may be derived from two different roots: from עצב I (cf. Arabic *ğazaba*) "hurt, pain, grieve," or from עצב II (cf. Arabic *'azaba*) "shape, fashion,"[28] both of which are employed in the Bible. That the Hebrew represents both PS roots with the same orthography provides the poet's pen with a visual pun. We may read the phrase ידיך עצבוני either as "your hands hurt me" or as "your hands fashioned me." With the sense of "hurt" the stich follows nicely upon the expression of grief in 7b ואין מידך מציל. That the latter expression refers to destruction can be seen in Job 5:4 where אין מציל occurs alongside וידכאו בשער "may they be crushed at the gate." As "fashioned" עצבוני parallels equally well ויעשני "they have made me" in 8a. Such expressions of Job's wit befit the label "crafty word-hunter" which is placed on him later by Bildad in 18:2.[29]

The Targum is able to render the pun perfectly into Aramaic with צירוני both "fashion, form," from צור and "vex, harm," from צרר.[30] That the second meaning of עצבוני was known to the ancients is suggested also by the Syriac which renders אידיך לאיבי "your hand troubles me."[31] Yet, the Vulgate translates עצבוני with *plasmaverunt me* "they have fashioned me."[32]

The Rabbis also are divided on this word. Rashi and Ralbag opt for the meaning "form, make," whereas Ibn Ezra and both Metsudat David and Metsudat Zion take it as "harm, grieve."[33] Interestingly,

26. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Vols. I-II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940; hereafter *LS*), p. 373.

27. See this secondary use in the *Iliad*, 17.242, 5.556, 22.251. *LS*, p. 373.

28. So *BDB*, pp. 780-781; *KB*, p. 725; *HALAT*, III, p. 818.

29. See my "Another Look at Job 18:2,3," *JBQ* 23 (1995), pp. 159-161.

30. Ch.-F. Jean-J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Sémitiques de l'Ouest* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965; hereafter *DISO*), p. 245; Jastrow, pp. 1270-1271, 1305; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), p. 675; M.A. Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), pp. 461, 471.

31. Payne Smith, p. 233.

32. *OLD*, p. 1388.

33. Moshe Qimhi attributes to the verb עשה in 10:8 a negative, indeed, abusive tone, as on par with Ezek 23:3.

Saadiah Gaon rendered both meanings of עצבוני via paraphrasis: "your blows have cut me and bruised me." On the other hand, the moderns invariably derive the word from עצב "shape, form."[34]

When we consult the LXX we again find lexemes carefully selected in order to translate the pun, namely ἔπλασάν με "have formed me," from πλάσσω,[35] which plays upon πλήσσω "smite, strike."[36] Note both the similarity between πλάσσω and πλήσσω and the documented confusion between the two roots.[37] Thus the LXX, like a few of the other versions, attempted to construe the polysemy here.

The poet again displays his talent for polyvalence in Job in Job 20:23-24.

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23 יהי למלא בטנו
ישלח בו חרון אפו
וימטר עלימו בלחומו
24 יברח מנשק ברזל
תחלפהו קשת נחושה

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23. To fill his belly to the full. He will send his wrath against him. And rain down upon him בלחומו
24. If he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze arrow will pierce him.

The word בלחומו typically has been understood as "in his battle-fury," as if derived from the root לחם "to do battle."[38] However, as the phrase follows, with a slight interruption, the line "to fill his belly," there is some question as to whether we may translate בלחומו as "for his bread, food" from לחם "bread," (c.f., the segholate noun גבר and its derived nominal form גבורה).[39]

Consequently, in Job 20:23-24 there is reason to see in בלחומו both meanings. In its rendering "with his food" it reminds us of יהי למלא בטנו "to fill his belly." If rendered "in his battle-fury," it foreshadows the following remark: יברח מנשק ברזל תחלפהו קשת נחושה "if he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze arrow will pierce him." That the roots מלא and לחם as "battle" are word pairs in Jer 33:5 supports our connecting בלחומו with the previous stich. That the root מלא occurs with לחם as "bread", e.g., in Prov 20:17 and Exod 16:32, adds weight to the interpretation of בלחומו as "for his food."

The Targumist rendered the pivoting lexeme with בשלדיה "with his burning (matter)," or "flake of flesh," which suggests an awareness of the meaning "battle-fury"[40] On the other hand, the Peshitta seems to favor the meaning "battle-fury" rendering it with בקרב תנותה "with war-like strength."[41] Similar is the Vulgate's *bellum suum* "his own warfare."[42]

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34. Pope, p. 78; Gordis, pp. 98, 112; Tur-Sinai, pp. 176-177; Michel, p. 235; Guillaume, pp. 29, 89; Hartley, p. 185. Note that though Tur-Sinai remarks that "there is no connection between this word and עָצָב 'grief' (p. 177), that he fails to explain why.

35. *LS*, p. 1412.

36. *LS*, p. 1421.

37. See e.g., *Iliad*, 21.269 and *Odyssey*, 5.389.

38. So *BDB*, p. 535.

39. Along with *HALAT*, II, 499. Others choose to emend the word, e.g., *KB*, p. 478.

40. This is how the Targum translates מפלי in Job 41:15. Jastrow, pp. 1577-1578.

41. Payne Smith, p. 517.

42. *OLD*, pp. 228-229.

Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, and the commentaries Metsudat David and Metsudat Zion render בלחומו as "battle-fury," whereas Ibn Ezra and Ralbag translate בבשרו "on his flesh." Moshe Qimḥi renders: "'his flesh' or 'his food'."[43] The modern commentators, Yellin, Pope, and Gordis,[44] render with the LXX and Vulgate, but Tur-Sinai and Guillaume differ greatly, the former giving the reading "upon their cheeks"[45] (which requires him to emend and revocalize) and the latter opting for "into his very bowels" without comment.[46] Of special interest is Hartley's remark (even though he does not note the forward parallel to the weapons of war):

> With its first meaning MT is understood as 'on his flesh.' This affords a good parallel with 'his belly' in the first line. With the second meaning MT reads 'in his wrath'; the parallel is then with 'his burning anger.'[47]

The divergence between the Vulgate and Peshitta, on the one hand, and the Targum, Ibn Ezra, and Ralbag, on the other, demonstrate that this passage was understood in multiple ways.

The divergence, therefore, should alert us to the possibility of pun retention in the LXX as well. Interestingly, the LXX translates our Janus with θυμὸν ὀργῆς "torrent of pain (lit. anger)."[48] This expression probably was chosen because θυμός also can mean "appetite, desire for food and drink."[49] With a slightly different accent, not required for puns to be effective,[50] we also may hear in the translator's word θύμον "a mixture of thyme with honey and vinegar,"[51] that is, a food item. Note also that θῦμα "an animal slaughtered for food,"[52] is used by the LXX in Genesis 43:16. Thus again, despite the extraordinary differences between the source and target languages, the LXX translated the verse with an eye toward preserving the polysemy.

The Jobian poet again pens a pun in Job 28:9-10.

9 בחלמיש שלח ידו
הפך משרש הרים
10 בצורות יארים בקע
וכל יקר ראתה עינו

9. To flint he sets his hand. He overturns the mountains by the roots.
10. בצורות he carves out channels. Every precious thing his eyes behold.

43. בשרו או מאכלו
44. Yellin, p. 144; Pope, pp. 150, 153; Gordis, pp. 210, 219.
45. Tur-Sinai, p. 318.
46. Guillaume, p. 43.
47. Hartley, p. 303, n. 20.
48. Note that θυμόω means "make angry, provoke." *LS*, p. 810.
49. *LS*, p. 810. See e.g., *Iliad*, 4.263 and *Odyssey*, 17.603.
50. See the comments of Ahl, *Metaformations*, pp. 35-40.
51. *LS*, p. 810.
52. *LS*, p. 809.

Here the poet has utilized the construction בצורות to mean both "from the rock"[53] and "precious ore" (from the root בצר).[54] The first echoes the previous mention of "flint" and "mountains," and the second anticipates "every precious thing" in the next stich. Though such a shift requires revocalization, it is important to remember that we are dealing here with a pre-masoretic consonantal system in which either reading would have been possible. Moreover, support for the parallels comes from elsewhere in the Bible. הר and צור are parallel also in Job 14:18 and occur together in Job 24:8 and Isa 30:29. As "precious ore," בצר parallels יקר in Job 28:10. Though the two roots are not parallel elsewhere in the Bible, the close association between them can be demonstrated on the basis of a parallelism between יקר and כסף, זהב in Prov 3:15, 20:15, between בצר and אופיר in Job 22:24, and between בצר and פנינים in Job 22:25. Interestingly, just a few verses later, in Job 28:16, we find אופיר parallel with שהם יקר וספיר. Finally, we also may point out that the root בצר also bears the meaning of a "secret, hidden thing," (cf. Jer 33:3 and Ezek 21:5). As such, we also may see here a parallel between בצר in Job 28:10 and תעלמה "secrets" in 28:11. Thus, Job 28:9-10 is a strictly visual and symmetrical polysemous parallel.

The Targum leaves no doubt that its writers understood the Hebrew as "rock," as it translates it with בטינרין "in the rock, flint."[55] Similar is the Vulgate's *in petris*.[56] On the other hand, the Peshitta's use of בחוסנה "in a fortress"[57] suggests that it understood the *beth* in בצר (translated as "fortress") as part of the root.

Though the medieval commentators I examined translated בצרות as "in the rock," it is important to note that each found it necessary to clarify the reading, suggesting the presence of an element of ambiguity. With the exception of Tur-Sinai, who espied the second meaning here by translating the stich: "He broke through to the *treasure* of the rivers,"[58] modern translators all have opt for the reading "in the rock."[59]

Interestingly, the LXX translates בצרות with δίνας δὲ ποταμῶν "whirlpools of rivers."[60] While this might suggest that the translators understood the Hebrew as referring to a channel in the rock, it also may represent a play on δεινός "wonderous, marvellous,"[61] i.e., "precious." Note also the use of δῖνος for a precious item, namely, "a jewelled goblet made of silver."[62] Third, it is possible that, like the Peshitta, the LXX translation understood the Hebrew as "fortesses, enclosures."[63] Δῖνος can be anything that is enclosed and rounded, and this is the root meaning of בצר.[64] Thus, once again, despite the large difference between the languages, the LXX was able to hint at the wordplay.

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53. So *BDB*, p. 849; *KB*, p. 799; *HALAT*, III, pp. 952-953.

54. See *BDB*, p. 131; *KB*, p. 142; *HALAT*, I, p. 142; D.R. Meyer, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. 18th ed. (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1987; herafter *HAHAT*[B]), p. 167.

55. Jastrow, p. 533; Sokoloff, p. 224.

56. *OLD*, p. 1370.

57. Payne Smith, p. 152.

58. Italics my own. Tur-Sinai, pp. 400-401. Cf. Job 22:24. In this he followed Yellin.

59. S.R. Driver, *A Critical nad Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job. Together with a New Translation*. Vols 1-2 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1921), vol. 1, p. 239; P.A. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (tr. H.J. Knight. London: Nelson, 1967), p. 370; D. Yellin, *'iyb-ḥqry miqr'* (en hebreo) (Jerusalem, 1927), pp. 154-155; Pope, pp. 197, 202; Gordis, pp. 300, 307; Guillaume, pp. 53, 111; Hartley, p. 375.

60. *LS*, pp. 431-432.

61. *LS*, p. 374.

62. Note that δῖνος is "frequently... found in puns with δεινός." *LS*, p. 432. For other uses of δῖνος in connection with precious metals, see *Iliad*, 3.391, 13.407 and *Odyssey*, 19.56.

63. See *BDB*, pp. 130-131; *KB*, p. 142; *HALAT*, 1, 142; *HAHAT*[B], p. 167.

64. *BDB*, pp. 130-131.

Another example of where the LXX translates a pun with a pun occurs in Job 29:18-19, also a Janus parallel.

18 ואמר עם קני אגוע
וכחול ארבה ימים
19 שרשי פתוח אלי מים
וטל ילין בקצירי

18. I thought I would end my days with my nest. And be as long lived as חול.
19. My roots reaching water, and dew lying on my branches.

These lines are a famous *crux interpretem*. Part of the difficulty lies in the ambiguous use of חול normally "sand, coast,"[65] but here also the mythological bird "Phoenix."[66] Also ambiguous is קני, either literally "my nest" or metaphorically "my family" (cf. Hab 2:9 where it parallels בית "dynasty" and Isa 16:2 where it is used figuratively for בנות מואב).[67] That the context and parallelism fit either for each of the lexemes has led scholars to debate the priority of one or the other renderings. Yet, it is precisely this ambiguity with which the poet charges his lines.[68] As the Janus examples above demonstrate, such ambiguity is part of the telling, and so it is with Job 29:18-19.[69] As "sand," the first stich in v. 18 parallels the mention of מים "water," and as "Phoenix," it echoes קני in the previous stich as "my nest." The former parallel is buttressed by the commonly attested expression חול מים, e.g., in Job 6:3, Ps 78:27, and Jer 15:8. The latter, though it cannot be demonstrated on the basis of a hapax, nonetheless, seems obvious if the meaning "Phoenix" is permitted. In addition, it is clear from extra-biblical sources that the Phoenix was a favorite subject for Classical Greek and Latin punsters as well.[70]

The Targum preserves the Janus on "sand/phoenix" by rendering with וחלא,[71] and perhaps also the pun on שרש with בית.[72] The Vulgate renders our pivot word *palma* "palm tree,"[73] and for קני and שרש it uses *nidulo* "nest" and *radix* "root."[74] It is unclear whether the Syriac preserves the pun on the two meanings of חול, though it translates like the Targum, חלא.[75] For קני and שרש the Peshitta gives קנינא "reed item (i.e., nest)," and שרש "root."[76]

The Rabbis were aware that חול bore the meaning "Phoenix" as well (it is attested in Bereshit Rabbah 19:9), and Rashi and Minḥat Shai translated Job 29:18 as such.[77] Modern commentators typify the current additude toward polysemy by choosing an "either/or" policy when translating, i.e., it is to be translated *either* "sand" *or* "Phoenix." In the "sand" camp are Driver, Dhorme, Pope, Tur-Sinai, and

65. So *BDB*, pp. 296-297.
66. So *KB*, p. 282; *HALAT*, I, 285. See also M. Dahood, "HÔL 'Phoenix' in Job 29:18 and in Ugaritic," *CBQ* 36 (1974), 85-88. For an excellent bibliography on the word חול, see Ceresko, p. 22, n. 89.
67. *BDB*, p. 890; *KB*, p. 842; *HALAT*, III, p. 1036. So also the Targum; Yellin, p. 156; Hartley, p. 392, n. 1.
68. Note also that this pericope is called a משל in 29:1. As David Stern has shown, wordplay is quite common to the משל. See his *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 41, 44, 71, 73, 74, 59, 92, 111, 141, 146, 149, 155-156, 170-171, 181, 217.
69. What has not been noted in this passage is the presence of another polysemous word, namely שרש "root," but also "kin."
70. See Ahl, *Metaformations*, pp. 120-123.
71. Jastrow, pp. 433, 463.
72. Note that Moshe Qimḥi regards קני as בני ובנותי.
73. *OLD*, p. 1286.
74. *OLD*, pp. 1571, 1176.
75. Payne Smith, p. 142.
76. Payne Smith, p. 599. It is not certain whether חלא and שרש are polysemous in Syriac.
77. Ibn Ezra is strangely silent here.

Hartley,[78] while in the "Phoenix" camp are Gordis, Guillaume, Ceresko, and Grabbe.[79] By contrast, Yellin astutely remarks that "...במלה זו ענין של משנה הוראה"[80]

The divergence in opinion again suggests that we closely examine the LXX's word choice. In so doing we find that the LXX conflates חול and קני by rendering them with στέλεχος φοίνικος "the stem of a palm·tree."[81] While most who have commented on this rendering have noted the relationship between palm trees and the Phoenix and how the Vulgate adopted this reading (palma), only Pope[82] has seen it as an "oblique" reference to φοῖνιξ "Phoenix."[83] In addition, the word φοῖνιξ also means "Phoenician(s),"[84] i.e., a "coastal" people, which suggests that the author wanted to catch the other meaning of חול, namely "sand, coast." Note here also that ῥίξα translates well the Hebrew שרש[85] both as "root" and as "family."[86] Thus, the LXX again favors lexemes which translate the polysemy of the Hebrew text.

The sophistication with which LXX translators captured Hebrew puns may be demonstrated by one final example of Janus parallelism in Job 39:19-20.

<div dir="rtl">

19   התתן לסוס גבורה
     התלביש צוארו רעמה
20   התרעישנו כארבה
     הוד נחרו אימה

</div>

19. Do you give the horse its strength? Do you clothe his neck with רעמה?
20. Do you make him quiver like locusts, his majestic snorting, (spreading) terror

רעמה has long stood as a crux to scholars, both ancient and modern.[87] Its root suggests the meaning "thunder," or by extension "terror."[88] As such, it serves an excellent parallel for the expression התרעישנו כארבה הוד נחרו אימה "Do you make him quiver like locusts, his majestic snorting [spreading] terror?" in the next line. This parallel finds support in Ps 77:19, where the roots רעם and רעש are parallel and also Isa 29:6, where רעם and רעש occur as a hendiadys. However, as Pope and Gordis note, the word may be akin to the Arabic expression umm ri'm "mother of the mane."[89] If we take רעמה as "mane," the stich parallels התתן לסוס גבורה "do you give the horse its strength?" Again, the poet expresses two ideas with one word.

78. Driver, vol. 1, pp. 249-250; vol. 2, pp. 201-204; Dhorme, pp. 389-390; Pope, pp. 208, 213-216; Tur-Sinai, pp. 415-416; Hartley, pp. 392-393, n. 3

79. Gordis, pp. 314, 321-322; Guillaume, pp. 54, 112; A.R. Ceresko, *Job 29-31 in the Light of Northwest Semitic: A Translation and Philological Commentary* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), pp. 6, 22-26; L.L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job: A Study in Methodology* (SBL Dissertation Series, Num. 34; Missoula, MT.: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 98-101.

80. Yellin, p. 268.

81. *LS*, pp. 1637, 1947-1948.

82. Pope, pp. 214-216.

83. *LS*, p. 1948.

84. *LS*, p. 1947.

85. See *BDB*, p. 1057; *KB*, p. 1012; *HALAT*, IV, pp. 1530-1532.

86. *LS*, p. 1570.

87. See e.g., Israel W. Slotski, "A Study of רעם," *AJSL* 37 (1920-21), pp. 149-155.

88. So *BDB*, p. 947.

89. So *KB*, p. 901; *HALAT*, IV, p. 1182; Pope, p. 311; Gordis, p. 461.

The Targum and Qumran fragment translate with תוקפא and בתקף respectively, both "strength, anger[90] (terror?)." The Vulgate's *hinnitum* "neighing"[91] seems an *ad sensum* attempt. The Peshitta, on the other hand, takes a compromise position between the two meanings by rendering with a word which means "terrifying clothing," i.e., "armour" (זינא).[92]

The word has evoked numerous comments from biblical exegetes. Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra read it as "terror," and Moshe Qimḥi, Y. Altschuler's Metsudat David, and Ralbag suggest, along with the Vulgate, that the "thundering" refers to the horse's neighing. Driver understood it as "might."[93] Yellin read it as "quivering."[94] Dhorme, Pope, Gordis, and Hartley each see in רעמה, "a mane."[95] Tur-Sinai hedgingly translates "with [power]."[96] Guillaume, attempting to bridge the two translations gives "quivering mane" without comment.[97]

Note how craftily the LXX handles the ambiguity. It employs φόβον "terror"[98] in order to render רעמה. In accordance with the examples above we may see in the LXX's word choice an attempt to capture the pun by way of a play on φοβήν "mane."[99] That the LXX translators chose to render the root רעם with φόβον only here, though typically they chose to render the root with a variety of different Greek words, e.g., ἄλμα, βοᾶν, βοβεῖν, δακρύειν, σαλεύειν, ἀθυμεῖν, κραυγή, and especially βροντᾶν (e.g., in Ps 77:19 and Isa 29:6), argues in favor of this.[100] Thus again, the LXX selected its lexemes carefully in order to capture the puns in the Hebrew text.

Translators and exegetes have long struggled with the Hebrew text in an effort to find the closest possible meaning and to come to an understanding of the text that is based on, if not absolute, then relative certitude. This desire to find the "correct" translation or interpretation, I would aver, has clouded to some extent the richness and abundance of meaning extant in the biblical text. As the above examples demonstrate, the Hebrew bards penned their thoughts with an openness to the multiplicity of nuance; to the possibility of simultaneous meanings.

Moreover, a desire to retain the multiplicity of meaning extends into the periods which gave rise to the various translations. That the versions demonstrate an attempt to render the polysemous passages of the Hebrew text suggests the need for a fresh examination of the LXX.[101] Typically, in order to explain instances of textual variance among the versions, especially in the LXX, a different *Vorlage* has been posited.[102] The evidence above suggests that in some cases the variance may be due to the translators' desire to preserve the sacred word by rendering it fully, i.e., by capturing its polysemy.

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90. *DISO*, p. 333; Jastrow, pp. 1655-1666; Beyer, pp. 726-727; Sokoloff, p. 590. The word is used to translate the root רגז in Job 35:15.

91. *OLD*, p. 797.

92. Payne Smith, p. 115.

93. Driver, vol. 1, p. 345; vol. 2, pp. 320-321.

94. On the basis of Isa 29:6 where it appears with the root רעש. Yellin, p. 163.

95. Dhorme, p. 554; Pope, pp. 305, 311; Gordis, pp. 440, 461. Interestingly, Hartley notes that "there may be a play on the homonyms 'quiver' and 'mane.'" Hartley, p. 510, n. 1.

96. Tur-Sinai, pp. 546-548.

97. Guillaume, pp. 71, 134.

98. *LS*, p. 1947.

99. *LS*, p. 1946. Pope derives the two Greek words, one from the other and Gordis and Tur-Sinai call attention to the similarity without further comment. Pope, p. 311; Gordis, p. 461; Tur-Sinai, pp. 547-548. For the related etymologies of the two Greek words see Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: the Greek Origin of European Thought* (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 230, n. 6.

100. See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, eds. *A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament*. Vols. I-II (Graz, Australia: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1954).

101. The excellent work of the aforementioned scholars notwithstanding.

102. The best discussion on this remains Orlinsky, *HUCA* 28 (1957), pp. 53-74.

While the above does not imply that all problems of variance between the LXX and the Masoretic text can be explained in this way, it does suggest that an awareness of polysemy in the Hebrew text might shed light on a few textual problems.[103]

103. For a concurring presentation of the LXX as it regards the Torah see John Wm. Wevers, "The Earliest Witness to Jewish Exegesis," in Barry Walfish, ed. *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume.* Vol 1. (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1993), pp. 115-127, especially 115.