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JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF JUDAISM 54 (2023) 429–431

Journal for
the Study of
Judaism
brill.com/jsj

Special Issue: *The Septuagint within the History of Greek*

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Received 11 July 2023 | Accepted 26 July 2023 |

Published online 14 August 2023

This collection in part represents the proceedings of a one-day seminar held in Cambridge in April 2018, entitled “The Septuagint within the History of Greek,” organized by James (Jim) Aitken. The invited speakers presented on various aspects of the language of the Septuagint: Trevor Evans on the syntax of the Septuagint, Will Ross on lexical choice, Jim Aitken on discourse markers, Patrick James on the influence of the language of the Septuagint on papyri, and Marieke Dhont on pronoun usage in the Septuagint. Shortly afterwards we decided to gather these contributions and supplemented them with contributions by Sofia Torallas Tovar and Benjamin Kantor, in order to cover the various dimensions of the Greek language represented in the Septuagint, from phonology to lexicography, syntax, and translation technique. We are grateful to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* for taking on this project in a special issue.

This issue is intended as a contribution towards furthering our understanding of the Septuagint within its sociolinguistic context. While scholarly study of the language of the Septuagint has been ongoing since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, we are currently in the midst of a shift in the field, from understanding its linguistic character primarily as an artificial, inference-based language to predominantly and essentially reflective of post-classical Greek, not just in relation to its vocabulary but also its syntax.¹ The importance of this understanding lies in the fact that the language of the Septuagint is more than a linguistic question: it relates to our historical imagination, particularly to how we envision the position of Jews within

1 Evans, “Embracing Advances.”

the multilingual and multicultural world of the ancient Mediterranean in terms of their social position and educational background. The introduction, “The Septuagint within the History of Greek,” co-authored by Jim and myself, addresses the challenges related to studying the language of the Septuagint, past scholarship, the contribution of the present volume, and the avenues of the future.

Naturally ensuing not only from this seminar, but also from previous (and ongoing) work by Jim Aitken and Trevor Evans, the establishment of a research network under the same title became a fact by late 2018. “The Septuagint within the History of Greek” (SHG) is an international research network dedicated to contextualizing the language of the Septuagint within its historical-linguistic context. In their work, its members engage recent advances in the linguistic study of Post-classical Greek, including but not limited to vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and language variation (register). The aim is both to enlighten our understanding of language in the Septuagint and to show how the Septuagint as the largest collection of early Post-classical Greek prose available to us can contribute to the general study of the Greek language. In addition to Jim Aitken (University of Cambridge, UK), Trevor Evans (Macquarie University, Australia), and Marieke Dhont (University of Cambridge, UK / Paris Lodron University Salzburg, Austria), the core members include Anna Angelini (University of Zurich, Switzerland), Klaas Bentein (Ghent University, Belgium), Christopher Fresch (Bible College of South Australia, Australia), William Ross (Reformed Theological Seminary, North Carolina, USA), and Romina Vergari (University of Florence, Italy). The network’s senior advisors are Mark Janse (Ghent University, Belgium), John Lee (University of Sydney, Australia), and Anne Thompson (University of Cambridge, UK). Also included in the network are the Septuagint-focused research students of James Aitken and Trevor Evans. Currently these are Tyler Horton, Andrew Keenan, Timothy Lee, Robert Walker, and Travis Wright at Cambridge, and Mark Matic and Samuel Wessels at Macquarie University.

The inaugural conference of this research network will be held in September 2023 under the title “SHG23: The Language of the Septuagint and Cultural Identity,” organized by James Aitken, Andrew Keenan, and Robert Walker at the University of Cambridge. Tragically, Jim passed away unexpectedly on April 7, 2023, before this conference took place, and before he was able to finalize his individual contribution to the present collection, entitled “New Discourse Markers in Greek.” In its place, Jim’s current PhD students and I have co-authored an article that is intended as a tribute to Jim’s work and an epilogue to the entire issue. It demonstrates how those working closely with Jim

expanded on and contributed to his project of contextualizing the Septuagint within the history of Greek in various ways.

It is our hope that with this collection of essays and the future work of SHG, we collectively build upon Jim's intellectual legacy, to demonstrate definitively the many ways in which the Greek of the Septuagint is Post-classical Greek, and to show that the Septuagint has much to offer beyond textual and translation-technical study, as a linguistic, literary, and cultural artefact of Hellenistic Judaism.

Bibliography

Evans, Trevor V. "Embracing Advances in the Interpretation of LXX Language: A Continuing Challenge for LXX Studies." *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 55 (2022), 43–54.

Note from the Editor

Except for the introduction, all of the submissions to this special issue have been peer-reviewed. On the basis of these reviews most contributions have been revised, in several cases substantially. The editor wishes to thank Dries De Crom, Trevor Evans, Katrin Hauspie, Mark Janse, John Lee, Silvia Luraghi, Jean Maurais, and Anssi Voitila for their reviews and feedback.