

Literalism and Left Dislocation in the Greek Pentateuch

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Abstract

This article argues that at least one case of literalism in the Septuagint is actually an epiphenomenon of crosslinguistic symmetry between biblical Hebrew and postclassical Greek. I examine translation of the Left Dislocation construction in the Greek Pentateuch and demonstrate that the translators were aware of its discourse-pragmatic meaning. I argue the best explanation for its distribution in the Pentateuch is that the translators licensed crosslinguistic symmetry in order to produce a direct translation that interpretively resembled the source.

In Memoriam: James K. Aitken (1968–2023)

1. A Happy Coincidence?

Since Soisalon-Soininen's *Die Infinitive in der Septuaginta*, the study of translation technique has received extensive attention in Septuagint studies.¹ The results have been constructive but ultimately inconclusive as the challenge of determining the relationship between the product and its source remains. Previous research on translation technique in the Septuagint has been largely product oriented: it has sought to characterise the relationship between the product and its purported source, while cognitive factors behind the translation process have been neglected. Yet a model of translation that

1. Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, *Die Infinitive in der Septuaginta*, AASF Series B 132.1 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1965). See also Anneli Aejmelaeus, 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Translation Technique', in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Oslo, 1998*, ed. B. A. Taylor (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 531–552.

integrates both process- (cognitive) and product-oriented approaches is essential for understanding any translation, ancient or otherwise.

Consider the notion of literalism.² Literalism is a contrastive phenomenon: what counts as ‘literal’ depends on prior facts about the languages that come into written contact. A translation cannot be ‘literal’ unless the language pair has symmetry across multiple *loci* of grammar. A literal translator is one who ‘licenses’ (deliberately allows) this symmetry when translating. Linguists refer to this fact as ‘favouring connectivity’ and scholars do not dispute it is widespread in the Septuagint. However, students search in vain for a process-oriented explanation of why this procedure is so frequent. This oversight is unfortunate, since a process-oriented approach provides an attractive explanation of multiple curious features.

1. *Routinised outcomes in translation occur because translators favour connectivity.*³ Literalism does not entail unconventionality in the target language. Depending on the language pair, it is possible to translate literally and achieve a conventional product at the same time.⁴
2. *Translators process both source and product in parallel with each other.*⁵ Literalism does not entail discourse failure. It is possible to translate literally from the source and create a product whose broader structure is conventional in the target language – indeed, a product whose discourse features have been closely checked, despite its apparent ‘isomorphism’ (rote copying of wording and form from the source language).

2. On literalism in Septuagint studies, see James Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 279–325; Emmanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 22–25, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781575063676>; Cameron Boyd-Taylor, ‘The Classification of Literalism in Ancient Hebrew-Greek Translation’, in *Die Sprache der Septuaginta*, ed. Eberhard Bons and Jan Joosten (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2016), 139–160, <https://doi.org/10.14315/9783641310950-011>.

3. Sandra Halverson, ‘Cognitive Translation Studies and the Merging of Empirical Paradigms: The Case of “Literal Translation”’, *Translation Spaces* 4.2 (2015): 318, <https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.4.2.07hal>.

4. Conventionality is itself a relative notion: what is conventional depends on the accidents of history and the language community in question. For the purposes of the present argument, I operationalise conventionality as found data widely attested in Greek documents of all kinds. I intend no methodological comment on the use of translation data in historical linguistics.

5. Laura Balling, Annette Sjørup, and Kristian Hvelplund, ‘Evidence of Parallel Processing During Translation’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* 59 (2014): 251–252, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1027474ar>.

3. All translation involves problem-solving (also referred to as *monitoring*).⁶ Literalism is not equivalent to automation and a literal translator does not typically reproduce the form of the source text at the expense of the performance of the product.

As a notion, literalism has been criticised by Septuagint scholars because it is explanatorily inadequate for the distribution of linguistic phenomena in the product. However, data from process-oriented translation studies indicate that literal translation is the default procedure for multilinguals: translators license symmetry where possible and problem-solve as various asymmetries between the source and target language arise. In fact, recent literature refers to literalism as a *default procedure* in translation.⁷

Scholars are right to complain traditional criteria (e.g. Barr 1979 and Tov 2015) are descriptively inadequate, but for a reason different than that typically offered. If we follow the lead of recent literature, the literalism of the Greek Pentateuch is an epiphenomenon of crosslinguistic symmetry.⁸ On this view, the Septuagint is literal not because a theologically charged procedure was applied to the text as sacred literature ('representing' the text for the purpose of teaching or transmitting the Hebrew Bible). Rather the translators simply functioned in ways typical of multilingualism by licensing symmetry as their default procedure. This phenomenon has been noticed in Septuagint studies. In his Grinfield lectures, John Lee noted how Septuagint syntax can appear to represent the source even though it is technically conventional as postclassical Greek.⁹ Lee points to (1) as an example of this phenomenon:

6. Sonja Tirkkonen-Condit, 'The Monitor Model Revisited: Evidence from Process Research', *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* 50 (2005): 405–414, <https://doi.org/10.7202/010990ar>.

7. Tirkkonen-Condit, *The Monitor Model*, 407–408. Sandra Halverson, "'Default" Translation: A Construct for Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies', *Translation Cognition & Behavior* 2.2 (2019), 187–210, <https://doi.org/10.1075/tcb.00023.hal>. Compare Barr, *Typology*, 50, who writes literalism is an 'easy technique'. This notion has a long history in biblical scholarship; see for example John Merle Rife, 'The Mechanics of Translation Greek', *JBL* 52.4 (1933), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3259206>.

8. An *epiphenomenon* is a causally inefficacious by-product of a primary cause. If one causes D using C, they do not necessarily intend to cause E, the by-product of D. To prove an author intended to cause E will require more evidence than the fact that the author used C to cause D. One will also need to prove the author was aware of E and intended to cause D *in order to bring E about*. The fact that a translation is literal does not prove the author intended to represent or imitate the source text.

9. John Lee, *The Greek of the Pentateuch: Grinfield Lectures on the Septuagint 2011–2012* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 36–40. See also Anneli Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 44: 'If the literal

- (1) Gen 50:14 וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִם הוּא וְאָחָיו וְכָל-הָעָלִים אֲתָּו לִקְבֹּר אֶת-אָבִיו

And Joseph returned to Egypt, he, and his brothers, and all who went up with him to bury his father.¹⁰

καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν Ἰωσήφ εἰς Αἴγυπτον, αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ συναναβάντες θάψαι τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ.

And Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and those who travelled with him to bury his father.

Since the form of the product corresponds almost exactly with the form of the source, it is considered literal. Yet notice that literalism alone has no impact on the conventionality of the product. Not only is (1) conventional in postclassical Greek; it is conventional in all periods of the Greek language:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| (2) Archaic | <p>ἵνα μιν παύσειε πόνοιο δῖον Ἀχιλλῆα
so that he might restrain him from his labour, noble Achilles¹¹</p> |
| Classical | <p>ὄλβιος οὗτος ἀνὴρ, ὃς ἐμὸν δόμον ἐσκαταβαίνει, Κύψελος Ἡετίδης,
βασιλεὺς κλειτοῖο Κορίνθου, αὐτὸς καὶ παῖδες
Fortunate is the man who comes down to my temple, Cypselus
Aetides, famous king of Corinth, he and his children¹²</p> |
| Postclassical | <p>Σαοὺλ ἀδελφέ, ὁ κύριος ἀπέσταλκέν με, Ἰησοῦς ὁ ὀφθεῖς σοι ἐν
τῇ ὁδῷ ἣ ἤρχου
Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on
the way by which you came¹³</p> |
| Medieval | <p>Ὡς βασιλέαν μὲ εὐφήμισαν ἐμὲν καὶ τὴν Ροδάμνην
As a king they honoured me, me and Rodamne¹⁴</p> |

rendering of an expression produced acceptable Greek and also corresponded to the meaning of the original, it was no problem for the translator'

10. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are the author's own.

11. Homer, *Il.* 21.249-250. Example and translation from Mark Janse, 'Clitic Doubling from Ancient to Asia Minor Greek', in *Clitic Doubling in the Balkan Languages*, ed. Dalina Kallulli and Liliane Tasmowski (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), 165-202, <https://doi.org/10.1075/la.130.11jan>.

12. Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.92e.

13. Acts 9:17.

14. Example adapted from Jorie Soltic, 'Clitic Doubling in Vernacular Medieval Greek', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 111:3 (2013): 387. For the original text

discourse topic.¹⁹ LD is well known in Ancient Greek, and like (1) above, it is attested in all periods of the Greek language:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| (4) Archaic | ὑμέτερος δ' εἰ μὲν θυμὸς νεμεσίζεται αὐτῶν, ἔξιτέ μοι μεγάρων
As for you, if your own heart is displeased, get out of my house ²⁰ |
| Classical | τὰς δὲ δαιμόνων τύχας ὅστις φέρει κάλλιστ' ἀνὴρ, οὗτος σοφός.
Now whichever man bears the fortunes of the gods, this one is wise. ²¹ |
| Postclassical | τοὺς δὲ μὴ ἀκούοντάς σου, μὴ εἰσαγάγῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖ.
Now those who do not obey you, you shall not lead them there. ²² |
| Medieval | Τον Διγενήν ἐπήραν τον οἱ βάργιες
As for Digenes, the maids took him ²³ |
| Modern | Τον Γιάννη τον ξέρω, ἀλλὰ ὄχι καλὰ.
As for John, I know him, but not well. |

Postclassical Greek and Biblical Hebrew shared a significant degree of symmetry for the LD construction, which includes both its formal features (syntactic form) and discourse-pragmatic function (e.g. contrastive topicalisation). It is these conditions that prime a literal translation of the LD construction in the Greek Pentateuch.²⁴

19. Ellen Prince, 'On the Functions of Left Dislocation in English Discourse', in *Directions in Functional Linguistics*, ed. Akio Kamio (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 127–139, <https://doi.org/10.1075/slcs.36.08pri>.

20. Homer, *Od.*, 2.138–139. Example and translation from Philomen Probert, *Early Greek Relative Clauses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 231, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198713821.001.0001>.

21. Euripides, *Dramatic Fragments*, 37.

22. 4 Baruch 8.3.

23. Escorial Digenes Akrites, line 593. Example and translation from Peter Mackridge, 'An Editorial Problem in Medieval Greek Texts: The Position of the Object Clitic Pronoun in the Escorial Digenes Akrites', in *Origini della Letteratura Neograeca: Atti del secondo Congresso Internazionale "Neograeca Medii Aevi"*, Venezia, 7–10 Novembre 1991, ed. Nikolaos M. Panayotakis (Venice: Istituto Internazionale 'Neograeca edii Aevi', 1993), 328.

24. On LD in Biblical Hebrew, see Josh Westbury, *Left Dislocation in Biblical Hebrew*, Unpublished PhD dissertation (Stellenbosch University, 2014; Table 1 is adapted from p. 101); Matthew Hewett, 'Resumption in Biblical Hebrew' (unpublished paper, University of Chicago, 2019); Cynthia Miller-Naudé and Jacobus Naudé, 'Differentiating Left Dislocation Constructions in Biblical Hebrew', in *New Perspectives in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew*, ed. Aaron Hornkohl and Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), 617–640, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0250.20>; Cynthia Miller-Naudé

Table 1: A contrastive analysis of Left Dislocation

	Postclassical Greek	Biblical Hebrew
Does the dislocate precede the main clause?	Yes	Yes
Does the dislocate have a possible canonical position in the main clause?	Yes	Yes
Is the correlate marked for agreement with the dislocate?	Yes	Yes
Does the dislocate have a separate intonation?	Yes ²⁵	Likely ²⁶

3. Previous Research

Previous attempts to catalogue and classify LD in the Septuagint exist. The most recent study is Kotzé (2016), who studied this construction in Genesis and demonstrated the translator was responsible for changes in the product.²⁷ Muraoka (2016) also catalogues the distribution of *casus pendens* in the Septuagint, while Soisalon-Soininen (1987) mentions in passing the tendency

and Jacobus A. Naudé, ‘Differentiating Dislocations, Topicalisation, and Extraposition in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence from Negation’, *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 56 (2019): 179–199. On postclassical Greek, see Janse, *Clitics*, 165–202; Rutger Allan, ‘Clause Intertwining and Word Order in Ancient Greek’, *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 12 (2012): 5–28, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156658412X649733>; Allison Kirk, ‘The Syntax of Correlatives in New Testament Greek’, *Linguistics in the Netherlands* (2011): 61–73, <https://doi.org/10.1075/avt.28.06kir>; Steve Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 287–312.

25. Vit Bubeník, *Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a Sociolinguistic Area* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1989), 67, <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.57>.

26. On the prosody of the Tiberian reading tradition of Biblical Hebrew, see Bezalel Elan Dresher, ‘The Prosodic Basis of the Tiberian System of Hebrew Accents’, *Language* 70.1 (1994): 1–52, <https://doi.org/10.2307/416739>; Geoffrey Khan, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and Its Reading Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2013), esp. 39–41; Sophia Pitcher, ‘Towards a Prosodic Model for Tiberian Hebrew: An Intonation-Based Analysis’, *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 63 (2021): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.5842/63-0-934>. On the historical depth of the Tiberian reading tradition, see recently Aaron D. Hornkohl, *The Historical Depth of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*, *Semitic Languages and Cultures* 17 (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0310>.

27. Gideon Kotzé, ‘Greek Translations of Hebrew Left Dislocation Constructions in LXX Genesis’, in *Septuagint, Sages, and Scripture: Studies in Honour of Johann Cook*, ed. Randall X. Gauthier, Gideon R. Kotzé, and Gert J. Steyn (Leiden: Brill 2016), 45–65, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004325227_004.

to assign a copular parse to the Tripartite Nominal Clause (see 4.3).²⁸ While these studies catalogue and identify trends in the data, they would benefit from a linguistic explanation of the distribution of LD in the Septuagint. Below I offer a preliminary analysis, focusing especially on discourse-pragmatic meaning in the product.

4. Left Dislocation in the Greek Pentateuch

Recall that as a default, translators prefer to license symmetry between the source and target language. In the Greek Pentateuch, this fact is reflected by direct translation, a type of translation designed to achieve *interpretive resemblance*: where the source has an assertion or implication, the product has been translated to carry the same assertion or implication.²⁹ Direct translation can be seen in tokens where the correlate is case-marked for agreement with the dislocate (5) and tokens where the correlate is mismatched with the case of the dislocate (6):

(5) Gen 3:12 אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתַתָּהּ לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֵכָל

The woman whom you gave me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.

Ἡ γυνὴ ἣν ἔδωκας μετ' ἐμοῦ αὕτη μοι ἔδωκεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου καὶ ἔφαγον.³⁰

The woman whom you gave me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.

28. Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 722–725; Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, ‘The Rendering of the Personal Pronoun as Subject in the Greek Pentateuch’, in *The Legacy of Soisalon-Soininen: Toward a Syntax of Septuagint Greek*, ed. Tuukka Kauhanen and Hanna Vanonen, DSI 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020 [1987]), 263–282, <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666564871.263>.

29. Ernst Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (London: Taylor & Francis 2014), 169–173, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760018>; Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt, ‘On Translating “What is Said”: Tertium Comparationis in Contrastive Semantics and Pragmatics’, in *Meaning Through Language Contrast: Volume 2*, ed. Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt and Ken Turner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 441–462, <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.100.26jas>.

30. In certain cases, I have removed German commas between the head and relativiser in the Göttingen text of the Pentateuch, since they represent an editorial interpretation of the Greek syntax. This has required changing the accenting for tokens such as (5), where γυνή forms a constituent with the relative clause, but γυνή does not.

(6) Gen 28:22 וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן־לִי עֹשֶׂר אֶעֱשְׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ:

And all that you give to me, I will give a tenth of it to you.

καὶ πάντων, ὧν ἐάν μοι δῶς, δεκάτην ἀποδεκατώσω αὐτά σοι.

And from everything, whatever you would give to me, I will give a tenth of these things to you.

The product in cases like (5) has been called ‘slavishly literal’ because it appears to reproduce the source text exactly.³¹ Such translations are the reason scholars write that Genesis was ‘a strict, quantitative representation of its source text’.³² These descriptions attempt to describe literalism but fail to notice it is equally likely that the literalism of the Greek Pentateuch was an epiphenomenon of crosslinguistic symmetry. This symmetry allowed the translators to achieve interpretive resemblance by simply licensing the form of the source: when asked who was responsible for eating the forbidden fruit, Adam responds not *me*, but *the woman* you gave me. This contrast is present in both the source and the product, although it is not explicit in either (notice the lack of δέ in the product). It is clear the translator is aware of the meaning of this construction, since elsewhere (6) he conventionalises the product when necessary: notice he updates the case of the dislocate (πάντων) and the number of the correlate (αὐτά), conventionalises the indefinite relative clause (ὧν ἐάν), and follows Wackernagel’s Law by placing μοι in the second position in the clause.³³ Changes like these in (6) indicate the translator did not reproduce the form of the source in (5) by accident. Literalism can result in conventional

31. Aejmelaes, *On the Trail*, 77: ‘A slavishly literal translator ... tends to reproduce each and every element of the original – be it word, suffix, preposition etc. – and in the original order.’ On this basis, Genesis is ‘slavishly literal’ since ‘over 85% of the tokens ... have been matched with a single token in the other text’. James Robert Covington, ‘The Poetics of Translation in Greek Genesis and the Virtuous Plot’ (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2019), 48.

32. Robert Hiebert, ‘To the Reader of Genesis’, in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 1. Although he mentions this must be ‘nuanced somewhat’, the reason given (‘periodic departures from his typical patterns to produce renderings that reflect Greek usage’) seems to assume that literalism was not intended to reflect ‘Greek usage’.

33. Wackernagel’s Law refers to the fact that prosodically dependent words called clitics (e.g. μοι) occur in the second position of the clause in archaic Indo-European languages. In (6), the second position is not counted from ὧν, since it has an obligatory position at the head of the clause, but from ἐάν which is the prosodic host for μοι. Discussion of this law can be found in David Goldstein, ‘Wackernagel’s Law’, in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*, ed. Georgios Giannakis, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 508–513. For recent treatment of this issue in Septuagint studies,

postclassical Greek, both in form and meaning. In such cases it is not only an epiphenomenon of crosslinguistic symmetry – it is also the default form of direct translation, and therefore a way to achieve interpretive resemblance.

4.1 Monitoring the Product

However, some might suggest interpretive resemblance in (5) occurred by accident: the translator followed an ‘isomorphic’ procedure and accidentally reproduced its meaning. Below I examine two lines of evidence that undermine this rebuttal: (1) the preference for a demonstrative pronoun over a personal pronoun when translating the correlate in LD constructions, and (2) cases where the translator relies on the surrounding context to assign a parse to the Tripartite Nominal Clause.

4.2 Monitoring the Correlate in LDs

Changes to the product are referred to as monitoring.³⁴ A translator monitors the performance of the product when they conventionalise it. The reason for such changes can include discourse-pragmatic considerations (e.g. unwanted implications), asymmetry between the source and target languages, or literary harmonisation, *inter alia*. In the Greek Pentateuch, the translators often monitored the LD construction by changing the correlate from a personal pronoun to a demonstrative pronoun. Linguists have identified a reference hierarchy that can explain this choice:

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------|---|-------------|---|-------------|---|--------------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| (7) | in focus | > | activated | > | familiar | > | uniquely
identifiable | > | referential | > | type
identifiable ³⁵ |
| | <i>it</i> | | <i>this</i> | | <i>that</i> | | <i>the</i> | | <i>this (indef.)</i> | | <i>a</i> |

Speakers use determiners like *it* or *this* to guide attention in discourse based on how prominent the referent is. Demonstratives are preferred when the referent appeared previously (it was activated) but has become the current

see Marieke Dhont, ‘Syntax and Pronominal Competence in Post-Classical Greek and the Septuagint’, *JSJ* 54 (2023): 582–605, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700631-bja10069>.

34. Vladimir, Ivir, ‘Formal Correspondence vs. Translation Equivalence Revisited’, *Poetics Today* 1.4 (1981): 58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772485>; Tirkkonen-Condit, *The Monitor Model*, 408; Moritz J. Schaeffer, Sandra L. Halverson, and Silvia Hansen-Schirra, ‘“Monitoring”, in ‘Translation: The Role of Visual Feedback’, *Translation, Cognition & Behavior* 2 (2019): 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.1075/tcb.00017.sch>.

35. Jeanette Gundel, Nancy Hedberg, and Ron Zacharski, ‘Cognitive Status and the Form of Referring Expressions in Discourse’, *Language* 69 (1993): 274–307, <https://doi.org/10.2307/416535>.

topic of discussion.³⁶ This fact can be seen throughout the entire history of Greek.

(8) Archaic οὗτος δὲ προτέρης γενεῆς προτέρων τ' ἀνθρώπων·
But this one is of an earlier generation of earlier men;³⁷

Classical ὁ δὲ Καμβύσης οὗτος τοῦ Περσίδων γένους ἦν·
Now this Cambyses was a descendent of the Perseides;³⁸

Postclassical ὁ δ' ἄνθρωπος οὗτος Ἀδάμος ἐκλήθη·
Now this man Adam was chosen;³⁹

Medieval Τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ Παλλάδιον ἔδωκε τῷ Τρώῳ βασιλεῖ
Now this Palladion was given to King Tros⁴⁰

Modern Ωστόσο, αυτή η ιδέα είναι δύσκολο να κατανοηθεί.
However, this idea is difficult to understand.

In the Greek Pentateuch, the translators often prefer the demonstrative over a personal pronoun to create contrastive topics:

(9) Num 35:33 כִּי הַדָּם הוּא יַחֲנִיף אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
For the blood, it will pollute the land

τὸ γὰρ αἷμα τοῦτο φονοκτονεῖ τὴν γῆν
For the blood, this will pollute the land

(10) Gen 2:14 וְהַנָּהָר הָרְבִיעִי הוּא פָּרַת:
And the fourth river, it is the Euphrates.

ὁ δὲ ποταμὸς ὁ τέταρτος οὗτος Εὐφράτης.
Now the fourth river, this is the Euphrates.

36. Åshild Næss, Anna Margetts, and Yvonne Treis, *Demonstratives in Discourse* (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2020); Io Manolessou, 'The Evolution of the Demonstrative System in Greek', *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 2 (2002): 119–148, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jgl.2.05man>.

37. Homer, *Il.*, 23.790.

38. Xenophon, *Cyr.*, 1.2.1.

39. Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.34.5.

40. Example from Manolessou, *The Evolution*, 121. For the original text see Ioannes Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae – Series Berolinensis 35 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110876017>.

In (9) there is a Contrastive Left Dislocation in both the source and the product. The translator prefers the demonstrative in order to highlight that τὸ αἶμα is the topic rather than another possible contaminant. The same is the case in (10), where the demonstrative indicates that the translator identified a contrast (δέ) between the third and fourth rivers. One reason for this contrast may be that the fourth river is unlike the third river (the Tigris): it demarcates the northern border of the geographical ideal promised to Israel.⁴¹ Although subtle, changes of this kind reflect a sensitivity to the performance of the product as discourse. They also indicate that the LD construction did not arise from a simplistic procedure of isomorphism. The selection of οὗτος over a personal pronoun is a small decision, but it reflects the translators' attention to their product as Greek discourse.

4.3 Monitoring the Tripartite Nominal Clause

Monitoring practices also arise as the translators interpret cases of structural ambiguity in the source (cases where a construction can be parsed in multiple ways).

- (11) Deut 18:2 יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ
 The LORD _{PRON} his inheritance.
 κύριος αὐτὸς κληρὸς αὐτοῦ
 The Lord αὐτὸς his inheritance.

The Hebrew construction in (11) is referred to as a Tripartite Nominal Clause (TNC). A TNC is an assertion with two nouns and a pronoun. These clauses create an interesting situation for the translators since it was possible to parse the pronoun הוּא not as the correlate of a LD construction but as a copula:

- (12) LD יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ
 The LORD, *he* is his inheritance.
 Copula יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ
 The LORD *is* his inheritance.

41. Thus Rashi on Gen 2:14: the Euphrates is 'the most important' of the four (הַחֲשׁוּב עַל כָּלֶם).

Linguists continue to be divided on the status of the pronoun in Semitic TNCs, although the majority of recent analyses⁴² have concluded the pronoun is a copula in Biblical Hebrew – even an ‘indisputable fact’⁴³ in Aramaic.

(13) Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic *Hate i attaydi yo.*

This my wife _{PRON}

This is my wife.

(14) Gen 31:43

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה רֹאֶה לִי-הוּא

And all that you see to me _{PRON}

And all that you see, it is mine.

The Biblical Hebrew pronoun in (14) patterns exactly with the enclitic copula *yo* from Neo-Aramaic Ṭuroyo in (13).⁴⁴ As Geoffrey Khan notes, this analysis is supported by the Tiberian reading tradition, which assigns a conjunctive accent to create a prosodic bond with the first element in the clause.⁴⁵

In the only study of TNCs in the Septuagint, Woodard Jr (2009) found most tokens appear to receive a copular parse.⁴⁶ A typical example is (15):

42. Geoffrey Khan, ‘Some Aspects of the Copula in North West Semitic’, in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 155–176; Robert Holmstedt and Andrew R. Jones, ‘The Pronoun in Tripartite Verbless Clauses in Biblical Hebrew: Resumption for Left-Dislocation or Pronominal Copula?’, *JSS* 59 (2014): 53–89, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgt035>; Daniel Wilson, *Syntactic and Semantic Variation in Copular Sentences: Insights from Classical Hebrew* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2020), 54–56, 88–94, <https://doi.org/10.1075/la.261>; Na’ama Pat-El and Øyvind Bjøru, ‘The Missing Link: There Is No Copula in Akkadian’, *WZKM* (2022): 23–35.

43. Geoffrey Khan, ‘Copulas, Cleft Sentences and Focus Markers in Biblical Hebrew’, in *Ancient Texts and Modern Readers: Studies in Ancient Hebrew Linguistics and Bible Translation*, ed. Gideon R. Kotzé, Christian S. Locatell, and John A. Messarra (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 29.

44. Paul Noorlander, *Ergativity and Other Alignment Types in Neo-Aramaic: Investigating Morphosyntactic Microvariation* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 52–55, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004448186>.

45. Khan, *Copulas*, 30.

46. Steven Woodard Jr, *Translation of the Hebrew Tripartite Nominal Clause*. Unpublished Th.M Thesis (Dallas Theological Seminary 2009), 55–59.

- (15) Gen 9:18 :וְחָם הוּא אֲבִי כְנָעַן:
 Ham_{PRON} father of Canaan.
 Χάμ ἦν πατήρ Χανάν.
 Ham was father of Canaan.

Although the Tiberian reading tradition appears to parse (15) as a LD (note the disjunctive *zakef gadol*, which indicates a pause consistent with a topic-comment structure), the Old Greek translation assigns a copular parse.⁴⁷ The possibility of both parses is due to structural ambiguity, which arises from the decline of Contrastive Left Dislocation (CLD) in the diachrony of Hebrew:

- There are 183 Hanging Topics but only 40 CLDs in Biblical Hebrew.⁴⁸
- CLD was ‘dramatically in decline in Late Biblical Hebrew’.⁴⁹
- The pronoun in the TNC is fully reanalysed as a copula in Mishnaic Hebrew.⁵⁰
- CLD is considered ungrammatical in Modern Hebrew.⁵¹

Comparative Semitic and crosslinguistic evidence also confirm that the enclitic pronoun tends to evolve into a copula from the CLD construction.⁵²

47. As Geoffrey Khan notes, ‘The cantillation is a layer of reading that has roots in late antiquity.’ *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), 50, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0173.0106>. Although the text has been set for performance, it is possible to recover an interpretation of its information structure from the prosodic features in its cantillation accents.

48. Hewett, *Resumption*, 18.

49. Miller-Naudé and Naudé, *Differentiating Left Dislocation*, 20; Martin F. J. Baasten, ‘Nominal Clauses Containing a Personal Pronoun in Qumran Hebrew’, in *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Leiden University 11–14 December 1995*, ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004350274_004.

50. Moshe Azar, ‘Pseudo-“Casus Pendens” in the Mishna’ [Hebrew], *Lěšonenu: A Journal for the Study of the Hebrew Language and Cognate Subjects* 47 [Hebrew] (1983): 264–271; *The Syntax of Mishnaic Hebrew* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, University of Haifa, 1995), 79–81.

51. Ruth Berman, ‘Modern Hebrew’, in *The Semitic Languages* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 324–325; Lewis Glinert, *The Grammar of Modern Hebrew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139, 417–418. The evidential value of modern Hebrew for the evolution of this construction is based on an inheritance relationship with earlier periods of Hebrew (e.g. Mishnaic). This relationship is ‘an unusual case of continuity’ that requires careful use in linguistic analysis (Edit Doron et al., ‘Introduction’, in *Language Contact, Continuity and Change in the Genesis of Modern Hebrew*, ed. Edit Doron et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2019), 1–31 (19), <https://doi.org/10.1075/la.256>).

52. Charles Li and Sandra A. Thompson, ‘A Mechanism for the Development of Copula Morphemes’, in *Mechanisms of Syntactic Change*, ed. Charles N. Li (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 419–444, <https://doi.org/10.7560/750357-012>.

TNCs like (14) could represent an early stage of development from pronoun to copula, leading to ambiguity for speakers at later stages of the language.⁵³ This possibility would explain variation in the translation of TNCs in the Greek Pentateuch, whose translators, if they spoke Biblical Hebrew, used some late variety of it.

There are three types of TNC and 93 tokens in the Pentateuch. Nine of these tokens represent an LD parse in the Old Greek translation:

Table 2: The Tripartite Nominal Clause in the Greek Pentateuch

	LD	Focus	Copula
PRONOUN הוּא NP		Deut 32:39	Gen 9:19; 36:19 Num 3:20; 3:21 (null); 3:27; 3:33
PREDICATE הוּא	Lev 11:41		Gen 23:15; 31:16; 31:43; 34:21; 34:23; 40:12; 40:18; 41:25; 41:26; 41:27; 45:20; 47:6; 48:5 Exod 3:5; 13:2; 16:36; 32:16; 34:14 Lev 13:15; 14:13b; 15:2; 17:11; 17:14; 20:14; 20:17; 20:21; 25:34; 25:55; 27:26; 27:30 Num 1:4; 5:15; 11:7; 18:9; 19:15; 21:26; 32:4 Deut 1:17; 4:24; 11:10
NP הוּא NP	Gen 2:14; 15:2 Num 16:7 Deut 4:35; 4:39; 7:9; 9:3; 10:17	Gen 36:8 Deut 3:22; 10:9	Gen 9:18; 21:29; 27:33; 30:33; 42:6 Exod 12:2 Lev 11:4 (null); 11:5 (null); 11:6 (null); 11:7 (null); 11:10; 11:12; 11:20; 11:23; 11:26; 11:27; 13:4; 14:13a; 23:2; 25:33 (null); 27:28 Num 13:32 (31); 16:11 Deut 12:23 (null); 31:8 (null)

Although the translators typically assigned a copular parse to the pronoun in the TNC, the presence of structural ambiguity in rare cases meant these speakers sometimes relied on context to parse the TNC.⁵⁴ Let us take Leviticus 11–13 as an example. The translator of Leviticus has been described as ‘not performing his ... duty to the reader, namely, to convey the total meaning of

53. Westbury, *Left Dislocation*, 27.

54. Khan, *Copulas*, 31: ‘Left dislocation constructions with coreferential clitics and subject-initial constructions in principle exhibit functional equivalence in [Biblical Hebrew].’

the source text'.⁵⁵ One reason is that he is 'not a careful grammarian' and 'is so overwhelmed by the material that he ignores the genius of the language'.⁵⁶ Yet notice the subtle difference in the rendering of the TNC in (16) and (17):

(16) Lev 11:41 וְכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לֹא יֵאָכֵל:

And every swarming thing that swarms on the ground, detestable
PRON' It shall not be eaten.

καὶ πᾶν ἔρπετόν ὃ ἔρπει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς βδέλυγμα τοῦτο ἔσται ὑμῖν οὐ
βρωθήσεται.

And every creeping thing which creeps on the ground, this will be an
abomination to you. It shall not be eaten.

(17) Lev 13:15 וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַבָּשָׂר הַחַי וְטָמֵא הָיָה הַבָּשָׂר הַחַי טָמֵא הוּא
צָרְעַת הוּא:

And the priest will look at the raw flesh, and it shall be declared
unclean. The raw flesh unclean PRON', leprous PRON'.

καὶ ὄψεται ὁ ἱερεὺς τὸν χρῶτα τὸν ὑγιῇ καὶ μιανεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ χρῶς ὁ ὑγιής
ὅτι ἀκάθαρτός ἐστιν λέπρα ἐστίν.

And the priest will look at the healthy skin, and the healthy skin will
pollute him, because it is unclean. It is leprous.

Although the syntax of the TNC in (16) and (17) is identical (predicate **הוא**), variation arises because the translator has parsed (16) as a LD but (17) as a copula.⁵⁷ In (16) πᾶν ἔρπετόν is the dislocate and τοῦτο the correlate, while in (17) ἐστίν must be a copular parse of the TNC because the copula is embedded in a subordinate clause, which is impossible for LD. Furthermore, although both τοῦτο and the copula ἔσται can 'represent' **הוא** in (16), they cannot represent it at the same time. Whether we read ἔσται in (16) as a translation of **הוא** and τοῦτο as a preposed addition, or ἔσται as an addition and τοῦτο as a translation of **הוא**, does not matter. Either reading proves the same point:

55. Dirk Büchner, 'To the Reader of Leviticus', in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 83.

56. John William Wevers, *Leviticus: Notes on the Greek Text* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1997), ix. Frankel writes, 'Der Vertent des Buches Leviticus ist an vielen Stellen Exeget, and wo er treu übersetzt, wird von dem Stoffe so überwältigt, dass er den Genius der Sprache, in welche er übersetzt, unbeachtet lasst.' (Zacharis Frankel, *Ueber den Einfluss der palästinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik* (Leipzig, 1851), 122 (cited in Wevers, *Leviticus*, ix)).

57. See also Lev 11:11,13,23.

the translator has used τοῦτο to monitor the performance of his product as discourse. In addition to these changes, he translates the participle הַשֵּׁרֵץ as a relative clause, selects a demonstrative instead of a personal pronoun, recovers the situation time with future tense, updates a referent (ὁμίῳ), and even splits the clause in (17) and marks its semantics as CAUSER using ὅτι. These changes do not represent the Hebrew source, but they do attempt to interpretively resemble it. These data also create a significant problem for views that state the Septuagint was ‘not [an] ... interpretive rendering of its source’.⁵⁸ It is clear that interpretation of the TNC was not automated by the translator.

4.4 How Hard a Hebraism?

With these data in view, we can offer a better explanation for the selection of αὐτός in (11). Scholars consider tokens like (11) bizarre, writing that ‘a pronoun instead of a copula in a sentence with an explicit subject is really a hard Hebraism’.⁵⁹

(11) Deut 18:2 יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ

The LORD_{PRON} his inheritance.

κύριος αὐτὸς κληρὸς αὐτοῦ

The Lord_{PRON} his inheritance.

If the translator assigned a copular parse to the pronoun הוּא, and attempted to ‘represent’ it with αὐτός, the translation would certainly be unusual. In fact, it would be the only token of its kind in the Greek Pentateuch. A better explanation is that αὐτός was intended to interpretively resemble a LD parse of the TNC. Recall that one purpose of the LD is to create a contrastive topic (e.g. not *me*, but *the woman* you gave me). Other methods exist for resembling this meaning, such as contrastive focus (not all forms of contrast are topical – one can also create contrast between non-topical referents). On this analysis, αὐτός is a reflexive pronoun (the Lord *himself*). Its presence indicates one referent was selected and assigned prominence over another (either explicit or assumed) in order to create an implied contrast.⁶⁰ Consider an exact parallel from Demosthenes:

58. John Srenock, *Traductor Scriptor: The Old Greek Translation of Exodus 1-14 as Scribal Activity* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 17, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336568>.

59. Theo van der Louw, *Transformations in the Septuagint: Towards an Interaction of Septuagint Studies and Translation Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 123–124.

60. On contrastive focus, see Jeaneatte Gundel, ‘On Three Kinds of Focus’, in *Focus: Linguistic, Cognitive and Computational Perspectives*, ed. Peter Bosch and Rob van der Sandt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 293–305. On the function

- (18) τότε μὲν πράττειν καὶ στρατεύεσθαι τολμῶν αὐτὸς ὁ δῆμος δεσπότης τῶν πολιτευομένων ἦν καὶ κύριος αὐτὸς ἀπάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν
Then, daring to act and wage war, the people itself became tyrant over the politicians and lord itself over all the goods⁶¹

The pronoun αὐτός is selected because it is surprising that *the people* have become the tyrant, not the politicians, a fact highlighted using contrastive focus. Likewise, in (11) Levi has just been told he ‘will not have an inheritance among his brothers’. Contrastive focus assigns prominence to the alternative: the *Lord*, not physical territory in Israel, will be Levi’s inheritance. Theo van der Louw writes that he has ‘not been able to trace [the use of αὐτός in a TNC] in any Greek grammar or lexicon’.⁶² Yet if the translator parsed the TNC in (11) not as a copula but as a CLD, and then rendered it with contrastive focus in Greek, the product is perfectly conventional. The assumption seems to be that the translator could not have intended such a combination because αὐτός appears to be isomorphic with אֲנִי in the source. Yet appearances are deceiving – of the seventeen tokens of the TNC in Deuteronomy, αὐτός is selected only three times, and always in this exact clause.⁶³ Evidence of this kind suggests that even cases that appear to be ‘hard Hebraisms’ in the Septuagint deserve fresh attention.

5. Conclusion

We should not conclude from the form of the product that the translator automated his decisions or neglected it as Greek discourse. In the Greek Pentateuch, the translators adopted a direct translation of the LD construction because the Biblical Hebrew construction primed a corresponding construction in postclassical Greek. This fact does not mean the translators automated the product: although they often borrow the LD construction from the source, the translators also monitor the correlate by selecting a demonstrative and rely on the surrounding context to interpret the TNC. Variation of this kind is predicted by recent advances in process-oriented translation research: as translators process their texts in parallel, they follow a default procedure

of reflexive pronouns, see George Spathas, ‘Reflexive Anaphors and Association with Focus’, *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT)* 23 (2013): 376–393, <https://doi.org/10.3765/salt.v23i0.2675>.

61. Demosthenes, 3 *Olynth.* 30.

62. Van der Louw, *Transformations*, 124.

63. 3:22; 10:9; 18:22. The demonstrative pronoun is reserved for CLD in 4:35,39; 7:9; 9:3; 10:17; 14:19, and 31:6.

that favours crosslinguistic symmetry, monitoring the performance of their product as needed. Legacy notions like literalism do not necessarily need to be decommissioned. Rather we should decompose them into their constituent parts and integrate those parts back into a model of translation informed by both product-oriented and process-oriented approaches. There we may well discover that, as Blass and Debrunner warn, ‘not everything which conforms to Semitic idiom is a Semitism’.⁶⁴

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64. Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961), 4.

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