

JOSHUA 24 AND TEXTUAL PLURIFORMITY

RANDALL L. MCKINION

Cedarville University

ABSTRACT: This article considers the cumulative effect of the variants in the Greek text of Joshua 24 under the understanding that its Hebrew *Vorlage* represents a text distinct from what became the Masoretic Text (MT). The best explanation for the textual phenomena in Joshua 24 may be the persistence of two Hebrew texts that were mutually informative among the communities that received the book of Joshua and the Former Prophets. This essay will attempt to demonstrate the value of text pluriformity in text-critical decisions and in the compositional strategy represented in these texts.

KEYWORDS: Joshua, Masoretic Text, Old Greek, pluriformity

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to consider the cumulative effect of the variants in the Greek text of Joshua 24 under the understanding that its Hebrew *Vorlage* represents a text distinct from what became the Masoretic Text (MT). Ultimately, what best explains the textual phenomena in Joshua 24 may be the persistence of two Hebrew texts that were mutually informative among the communities that received the book of Joshua and the Former Prophets. As such, this essay will attempt to demonstrate the value of text pluriformity in text-critical decisions and in the compositional strategy represented in these texts. The arguments proceed along the line of explaining the relationships between the texts (LXX and MT) rather than trying to ascertain an original that lay behind both traditions. The Old Greek (OG) of Joshua was not just a translation of a text representing a distinct literary stage in the growth of the book; it is a translation of a Hebrew text set alongside that text which became the MT.

Even a cursory reading of the Greek text of Joshua 24 opens a host of text-critical

* RANDALL L. MCKINION (PhD 2006, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is Professor of Old Testament at Cedarville University. Email: rmckinion@cedarville.edu

issues, with some type of difference evident in almost every verse. From a septuagintal viewpoint, Joshua 24 includes pluses, minuses, and variation in order. Depending upon how the texts are viewed in their priority or chronology, the different text traditions have been variously explained as resulting from translator error, translator interpretation, and literary development. Of course, each of these may be present, but both text traditions witness to a specific interpretation of Joshua's final interaction with the community and the events after his death. Dozeman summarizes the textual situation of Joshua as follows: 'A summary of the differences between the MT and the LXX illustrates that the relationship between the versions is not simply a matter of textual expansion in one direction or copying mistakes. Rather, the two versions demonstrate a dynamic relationship, in which both provide distinct content to the book, while also placing Joshua in different literary contexts within their emerging canons' (Dozeman 2015: 32). This 'distinct content' is never more evident than in Joshua 24. In fact, Tov (Tov 1999: 396) provides a precursor for the arguments here:

It is remarkable that as late as the third or second century BCE, when the LXX was produced, the short Hebrew edition was still available to the translators. The only possible explanation for this situation is that even after the short edition was altered to the edition of MT, it was not destroyed, but continued to exist. In other words, when the short edition was expanded, more than one copy of that edition already existed. Not all of these were discarded, so that its impact continued to be felt afterwards.

What is intriguing about this conclusion is that Joshua 24 presents the exception to the characteristic of the LXX as the 'short edition.' Another possibility, which Tov does not address, is that these two texts were mutually illuminating. The shorter text represented in the OG was not simply altered to become that of the MT; rather, it is possible that the shorter text of the OG was passed alongside the text that became the MT as an explanation or clarifying interpretation. This is particularly applicable in the case of the extensions (or explanations) present in the Greek text of Joshua 24. On the one hand, it would be unnecessary for the parallel Hebrew text to provide explanation to a text that was already clear and expanded. On the other hand, the longer text of Joshua 24 represents an interpretive interaction with the story received by the text that became the MT. If this can be shown, these two texts were propagated by the community as mutually illuminating. This then raises the question of why the interpretation of the *Vorlage* of the Greek text did not have more of an impact on the text that became the MT.

The question that this paper attempts to address is not, 'What was removed from the OG witness in the making of MT Joshua?' This approach tends to treat the LXX as a matter of happenstance, wherein the text is a result of a series of misreadings,

mistakes, and conflation by its translators. Rather the question at hand is, What role did the two discrete Hebrew versions have in interpreting Joshua's final words and the events after the death of Joshua? Why were both the Vorlage of OG and the MT retained as witnesses to these events? Joshua 24 is where text and history of interpretation of the text collide (see Teeter 2014: 270). The balance of the evidence seems to show that G represents a steppingstone in the interpretation of the Hebrew text that was not necessarily followed by the MT tradition. 'The comparison of the MT and the LXX versions indicates that the differences between them go beyond mistakes in textual transmission to reflect distinct ideological perspectives on many of the central themes of the book.' (Dozeman 2015: 32)

When considering text pluriformity, the question becomes which way the influence was made or whether there was an explicatory relationship. If, as Teeter states, 'preservation of text and preservation of meaning are often inseparable processes in antiquity,' (Teeter 2014: 9), the multiple text traditions of Joshua 24 witness to how Joshua's actions and legacy were understood within the story of the Former Prophets by the community of faith. Since, as a rule, the Greek text of Joshua is the shorter of the textual witnesses, the longer text of Joshua 24 presents a uniqueness within the text history of the book. Though at one point there was a tendency in scholarship to explain these as insufficiencies in the Greek translation and/or expansions in what became the MT text, the movement of scholarship is towards considering both as witnesses to the interpretative engagement of the translators and scribes propagating these texts. This raises the question of how 'text history becomes reception history' (Teeter 2014: 10) in Joshua 24.

24:1–15

Shechem vs. Shiloh

According to v. 1, the setting for this narrative varies in the traditions: Shechem (MT) and Shiloh (LXX). This immediately presents a tension, and scholars differ on how best to explain the readings or at least to make a choice in translation and interpretation. For example, Boling and Wright provide a typical response by concluding that 'MT remains the more difficult reading and is more likely to be original, although the matter cannot be solved on text-critical grounds' (Boling and Wright 1982 532). As Butler states, 'No attempt to support the LXX as original has gained acceptance' (Butler 2014: 293). Perhaps choosing an 'original' reading of the two may fail to appreciate the interpretive nature of the reading of the Greek's *Vorlage*. Whereas this textual feature has continued to be discussed with no general consensus, this paper will seek to make some comments only after evaluating the general relationship between these discrete witnesses. For now, however, it is noteworthy that Greenspoon, Orlinsky,

and others, believe this difference shows the presence of distinct Hebrew texts. Orlinsky believed that these two readings were ‘authentic variants in different Hebrew text-traditions’ (quoted in Wright 1965: 256 n. 19). At the same time, it is noteworthy that the Shiloh reading of OG remains in the Theodotion recension, even though Greenspoon has shown that it was adjusted to align more with the Hebrew text that became the MT. Greenspoon’s comparison of the OG and Theodotion concluded that ‘Th[eodotion] corrected this form of the OG to a Hebrew text identical in almost every reading to the OG’ (Greenspoon 1983: 7). The witness of OG (and its Vorlage) to Shiloh was allowed to remain, even as the Hebrew text began its path away from text pluriformity. That a later recension decided to retain the reading of OG over against the Hebrew text from which he was working speaks to the recension’s view of the value of the OG reading. This should alert the reader that the readings provided by the Greek text provided an important witness to the interpretation of this narrative. The impact of this reading will be explored more below on v. 25.

24:4–5

In the text of Joshua’s speech (vv. 2–15), differences between the Greek and Hebrew mostly consist of longer Greek readings, which can be explained in different ways. For example, the LXX includes a significant addition that stretches across vv. 4–5: καὶ ἐγένοντο ἐκεῖ εἰς ἔθνος μέγα καὶ πολὺ καὶ κραταῖον and καὶ ἐκάκωσαν αὐτοὺς οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι. Since this material appears directly after the name Egypt in v. 4 and ends with the same name in v. 5, haplography could certainly explain the MT reading, as proposed by Margolis (Margolis 1992: 457) and Boling and Wright (Boling and Wright 1982: 530). Whether by haplography or by difference in textual witness, the fact that it appears here argues for its presence in the Hebrew Vorlage of the OG. This would make it a matter not so much of an expansion or explanation by G but of a representation of what was present in the two Hebrew versions. Its absence from the MT then best be explained by textual criticism, not interpretive expansion.

Recognizing the priority of this reading complements the text’s dependence on the Torah, as the longer reading of the Greek resonates with the Pentateuchal tradition of Exodus 1. However, it shows a closer relationship to Deuteronomy 26 as well as Numbers 20. In fact, even though he ultimately rejects the reading as not original, Butler surmises, ‘The note is taken over from MT of Deut 26:5b–6’ (Butler 2014: 293). In Deuteronomy 26:5–6 G, the worshiper confesses that his father ‘went down into Egypt and sojourned there few in number. And he became there a great nation and a numerous and great multitude’ (κατέβη εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ παρῴκησεν ἐκεῖ ἐν ἀριθμῷ βραχεῖ καὶ ἐγένετο ἐκεῖ εἰς ἔθνος μέγα καὶ πλῆθος πολὺ καὶ μέγα καὶ

ἐκάκωσαν ἡμᾶς οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι). Likewise, in Numbers 20:15 the messengers explained to the king of Edom: ‘Our fathers went down into Egypt, and we sojourned in Egypt many days. And the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers’ (καὶ κατέβησαν οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, καὶ παρωκίσσαμεν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἡμέρας πλείους, καὶ ἐκάκωσαν ἡμᾶς οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν). These same chapters from the Torah seem to be followed in v. 7, as well. If the allusion here to Deuteronomy 26 shows a textual relationship, as it seems to do, then this may help explain the surprising absence of a Greek witness to the beginning of v. 5 MT, ‘And I send Moses and Aaron (יְהֹֽשֻׁעַ־וְאַהֲרֹן֙ וְמֹשֶׁה֙ וְאַהֲרֹן֙ וְמֹשֶׁה֙ וְאַהֲרֹן֙). Margolis (Margolis 1992: 457) includes a Greek equivalent as part of his reconstruction of OG; Rahlfs does not. This difference between the two texts would not be explained by the haplography in vv. 4–5 MT noted above. It is interesting that neither the confession of Deuteronomy 26 nor the related passage in Numbers 20:15–16 refers to Moses and/or Aaron. This absence of the Sinai tradition, which has been noted by von Rad (von Rad 1966: 159), could be explained as a historical (ideological) correction, bringing the confession into alignment with the Mosaic/Sinai narratives. This growth of the text seems to be represented in the G recensions, too, as they become more conformed to the MT.

The addition of the Mosaic tradition could also be influenced by the text of 1 Samuel 12:8 and Micah 6:4, connections that are discussed by Koopmans (Koopmans 1990: 245–46). He concludes that ‘there are other comparable verses and contexts which could provide the specific incentive for an expansion in Josh. 24:5aA. In our opinion this possibility is more probable than the idea that it was excised from the LXX or the *Vorlage* of the LXX’ (Koopmans 1990: 246). Koopmans goes on to discuss how both the Greek text and the MT underwent expansions in keeping with the poetic tradition of Psalm 105 wherein ‘both editions would base the expansions upon cola found elsewhere in the OT in parallel accounts of the same event. What is also extremely significant is that in the poetic tradition of Ps. 105 one finds material which parallels *both the expansion in the LXX and in the MT*’ (Koopmans 1990: 246). Thus, both traditions relate closely to other texts. As with other differences in the chapter, these ‘differences in the LXX and the MT attest to a state in which at least two Hebrew editions were extant with minor variations’ (Koopmans 1990: 247). Based on these observations, a possible conclusion could be this: If the OG witnesses to a Hebrew *Vorlage* that already shows dependence on a Hebrew text of Deuteronomy, it represents an edition that was already interpreting the events of Joshua through the lens of the Torah. This is further expanded as the book became part of the Former Prophets. The key is that this is happening in a Hebrew text, not in the work of the Greek translator(s). This may be a key point for the whole chapter with significant implications. It would appear that in this case, the MT provides a textual expansion

in keeping with the exodus tradition that would have been expected. Later Greek recensions that are working from a Hebrew text more in keeping with MT add an equivalent to this.

Whatever the text-critical conclusion, the evidence seems to point to a further clarification made by the MT intended to maintain the book's focus on Moses. An interesting possibility for its inclusion would be as a theological corrective, wherein the MT text ensures that there is no ambiguity as to who was sent to lead the people from Egypt (see below on v. 31 G). As it stands, the text underlying OG shows a less-concerted effort to include Moses and Aaron and more of a concern to portray Joshua in terms similar to the Torah's portrait of Moses. Thus, the MT addition might best be considered an interpretive expansion, influenced by the larger context of the book, intended to distinguish Moses and Joshua, ensuring that Joshua was not the prophet like Moses. The MT integrates the text of Joshua into a Deuteronomic collection with Joshua separated from the Pentateuchal collection but tightly bound to it. The LXX, however, has other purposes showing Joshua as a prophet who speaks about the last days like Jacob, Balaam, and Moses (see below on v. 27). Joshua's speech has taken the words of Deuteronomy 26, which are those of the individual who acknowledges himself as a recipient of Yhwh's acts of deliverance (von Rad 1966: 159), and turned them into a corporate reminder of their identity of those whom God has given the Land.

Third Person vs. First Person

The use of third person in G over against first person in MT throughout the rest of Joshua's speech agrees with the conclusions above that the two text traditions present Joshua in distinct but complementary ways. Beginning in v. 5b, the first-person verbs in MT with Yhwh as subject are generally translated as third-person speech of Joshua. The exception to this is v. 7, which demonstrates several differences between the G, MT, and Syriac traditions. Yet, when MT switches back to first-person in v. 8, G remains third. A search for the 'original' speech as entirely by Yhwh or by both Joshua and Yhwh remains elusive. However, recognizing that both of these texts exist once again brings the implications of textual pluriformity into consideration. By predominantly maintaining first-person verbs, MT presents Joshua as one who communicates the words of Yhwh as a prophet typically would: 'Thus says Yhwh.' While also making this point, the Greek text goes beyond this by showing that Joshua's words and Yhwh's words are one and the same, just as Moses' words in the Torah.

Further Explanations

In addition to the longer reading of G in vv. 4–5, there are a few other phrases in G

that do not appear in the MT, some of which seem to be explanatory. In v. 6, the first occurrence of ‘sea’ is clarified in G as ‘the Red Sea,’ just as it is at the end of the verse in both G and MT. In v. 10, the phrase ‘the Lord your God’ (κύριος ὁ θεός σου) appears. On the one hand, the presence of this phrase is explained by the third-person verb (as opposed to first-person in MT). For clarity, a subject would need to be stated, given that the subject of the last verb was Balak (v. 9). On the other hand, it shows a unique expression to the chapter (‘the Lord your God’). However, this phrase appears twice in Deuteronomy 23:6 G in the context of the Balaam story. Yet, Deuteronomy 23:6 G follows the Hebrew infinitive in the translation ‘to listen to Balaam’ (εἰσακοῦσαι τοῦ Βαλααμ), which would parallel the Hebrew of Joshua 24:10. But in Deuteronomy 10:10, the desire of God not to destroy Israel is expressed similarly with ‘and the Lord was not willing to destroy you’ (καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησεν κύριος ἐξολεθρεῦσαι ὑμᾶς). So G seems to use the phrase κύριος ὁ θεός σου in keeping with Deuteronomy 23:6 but follows the desire of the Lord not to destroy Israel based on Deuteronomy 10:10. Perhaps G is interpreting the Lord’s refusal to listen to Balaam in terms of his unwillingness to destroy his people. This would be consistent with the theology of the Torah. Also in v. 10, G has the additional phrase ‘and he destroyed them’ (καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτούς). The third-person verb continues the distinction in G of a speech by Joshua about Yhwh. Finally, in v. 15, the phrase ‘because he is holy’ (ὅτι ἅγιός ἐστιν) is stated as Joshua’s concluding rationale. This phrase would certainly heighten the tension in Joshua’s words in v. 19. There, the people commit to worship the Lord because he is holy; but Joshua says they cannot/will not ‘because he is holy.’ It seems to explain why Joshua brings this up in v. 19 and highlights the irony of Joshua’s words.

24:7

Joshua 24:7 varies across the Hebrew, Syriac (S), and Greek text traditions. As these differences relate to the conclusions of this paper, the following short discussion is necessary. The discussion is broken up according to the MT accents.

- V. 7aα begins with a third-person plural wayyiqtol, following a third-person plural wayyiqtol from v. 6. In v. 6, the subject is Egypt (מִצְרַיִם), but in v. 7 the subject is not made explicit. Although the subject clearly seems to be ‘your fathers,’ who are mentioned in v. 6, S removes any ambiguity by inserting ‘your fathers’ (ܐܬܪܝܗܘܢ) as the subject in v. 7. An interesting difference appears in G where the verb is the first-person plural “we cried” (ἀνεβοήσαμεν), even though Margolis reconstructs a third-person verb (ἀνεβόησαν) and states that the first-person is ‘hardly original’ (Margolis 459 :1992). This feature of G is continued with the first-person plural pronoun used in v. 7aβ (see below). The phrase ‘and we cried to the Lord’ (καὶ ἀνεβοήσαμεν πρὸς κύριον)

appears in both Numbers 20:16 and Deuteronomy 26:7. This would continue this chapter's relationship with these two chapters as shown above. The Greek text in both chapters follows the first-person verb וָנִצַּעַק. So it appears that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of OG would be the text of the Torah in both the first-person plural verb and pronoun.

- In v. 7aβ, S seems to follow MT, with the exception of the מִן preposition on מֵאֶפֶס. Both BHS and BHK recommend the reading מֵאֶפֶס, with the former describing this as a case of dittography. Interestingly here, both MT and S switch to a third-person verb, 'and he set,' only to switch back to first-person in v. 7aδ. MT and its related texts seem to still be fluid in these details. G also has a couple of variations in this portion of the verse. The first was mentioned above, where the first-person pronoun ἡμῶν appears. This follows naturally from its use of the first-person plural verb in v. 7aα. The second is the addition of 'cloud and' (νεφέλην καὶ). While the noun is common, it does not seem that it should be expected here, as it is used more likely in reference to the cloud at Sinai, not at the Red Sea. Boling and Wright (Boling and Wright 1982: 530) attribute this to a gloss that was in the translator's text. Margolis (Margolis 1992: 459) believes that מֵאֶפֶס was identified with עֵנָן וְעֶרְפֶּל and refers to Ps 97:2 [G 96:2], where G uses the same combination of nouns.
- V. 7aγ is consistent across MT, S, and G, as each has a third-person singular verb. The only difference is that S clarifies that the sea came upon Egypt, which is necessary after its addition between vv. 7aβ and 7aγ. S inserts 'and the Lord divided the waters of the Suph and made your fathers pass in its midst.'
- The main difference in v. 7aδ is the use of the first-person verb in MT and S and the third-person in G. According to Margolis (Margolis 1992: 459), κύριος was added by the translator, as he continued with third-person verbs. Additionally, G reads "in the land of Egypt" (ἐν γῇ Αἰγύπτῳ).
- V. 7b seems to be consistent across the traditions, although between vv. 7aδ and 7b, S again has an addition: 'and I brought you to the wilderness.' The additions in Syriac show that the MT tradition continued to be elucidated in accordance with the Pentateuchal texts.

Summary

The preceding discussion of vv. 1–15 has shown that the presence of two underlying Hebrew texts certainly explains the difference between the MT and the OG. Although there is not a clear direction of influence between them, wherein one text

seems to have developed as an explicatory text, the distinct presentation of the speech by Joshua as words from him rather than exclusively Yhwh begins to show G's concern to present Joshua in a way consistent with the Torah's portrayal of Moses, namely, as the prophet whose words are consistent with those of Yhwh. This focus could certainly be lost in a MT of Joshua that stresses the role of Moses from beginning to end. The LXX of Joshua concludes the book on a note similar to that of the Torah, a pattern that will be more evident in the comments below. The number of variants as in v. 7 show that the settling down of the text into what became MT+ remained fluid.

24:16–24

Although distinctions in the text traditions of Joshua 24:16–24 primarily lie in the Syriac, there are a couple differences between MT and G that relate to the present discussion. First, in v. 17, G represents a shorter text, which is typical in the book of Joshua. Rather than מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים, G reads simply ἔξ Αἰγύπτου (17a). Also, G does not have an equivalent for MT וַאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְעֵינֵינוּ אֶת־הָאֲתוֹת הַגְּדֹלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה (v. 17b). These differences could be explained as Deuteronomic expansions in MT, as both seem to be influenced by deuteronomic phraseology. Koopmans concludes: 'In light of the foregoing discussion of vs.5, and in view of the conclusions that the MT of Joshua shows a tendency to expand an earlier and shorter edition, it is logical to approach the present divergence as a deliberate expansion in the MT' (Koopmans 1990: 248). This is in keeping with Tov's conclusion that the MT of Joshua tends to expand (Tov 1999: 321–339). Koopmans refers again to Micah 6:4 (see above on v. 5) about the phrase 'from the house of slavery,' which shows deuteronomic expansion typical of MT (cf. Deuteronomy 5:6; 6:12; et al.). This would also be the case for 'great' and 'signs' as found in Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22; et al., and Jeremiah 32:21. The relationship to Deuteronomy continues to be evident.

The uniqueness of this to the chapter remains how G does not expand here. Given the tendency for the *Vorlage* of G to show influence from the Torah in this chapter, it is probably more fitting to conclude that this is a Deuteronomic expansion within the text that became the MT. This conclusion is complemented by the expansion demonstrated in the Syriac text (cf. vv. 18, 20, 21, 23), especially if Syriac is related closely to the MT tradition. This also explains the absence of v. 22b from G and the lack of a narrative introduction to the words of Joshua in v. 23 MT, which is also not present in G. It also explains the presence of אֶל־הֵינוּ in v. 24, which does not have an equivalent in G. In conclusion, the difference of MT seems to show an expansion related to Deuteronomy or the process of development of the Deuteronomic History. But this is not typical of MT in the rest of this section.

The absence of a narrative introduction to Joshua's words in v. 23 after the state-

ment from the people in v. 22 is surprising. On the one hand, the Syriac recognizes the issue and includes a typical introduction (ܐܡܪ ܕܡܠܟܐ). On the other hand, the absence in G of a response by the people shows that this irregularity was not present in its *Vorlage*. The textual witness of G (and its *Vorlage*) makes the statement in v. 24 a sufficient commitment by the people.

24:25–28 MT

There are two pertinent concerns in these verses that are related to the two text traditions. In v. 25, G again mentions Shiloh and has an additional explanation. Also, v. 27 G has an important phrase that is not represented in the Hebrew. There is also a distinction in order that affects this section, but it will primarily be discussed with the next set of verses.

Shechem vs. Shiloh (again)

Whereas the previous verses generally lacked additional, explanatory material in G, v. 25 returns to this chapter's tendency with the phrase 'before the tent of the God of Israel' (ἐνώπιον τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰσραὴλ). Since this phrase accompanies the variant 'Shiloh,' this seems to be explaining the importance of Shiloh as the location of the tabernacle in the book (cf. 18:1; 19:51). For this reason, most scholars believe the Greek text is simply harmonizing the chapter with the rest of the book. The presence of this phrase is important in establishing the theological rationale for the inclusion of Shiloh in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of OG and its continued presence in the Greek recensions. Rather than simply showing ignorance or indifference to the Hebrew text, this also presents G as making key explanations for a proper reading of the Hebrew textual traditions. That is, it is here that the reader can appreciate the explicatory character of the *Vorlage* of G in light of the Hebrew text that became the MT. Since these texts were passed on in the community, the textual polyvalence produced a fuller appreciation for the theological fidelity of what Joshua was leading the people to do. As such, it was incumbent on the text to have a rationale for why things were allowed to happen at both Shechem and Shiloh. G maintains that the speech and covenant occurred at Shiloh, because the tabernacle was there. MT is content to maintain Shechem, since Joshua set the large stone under the tree, which was 'in the sanctuary of Yhwh' (בְּמִקְדָּשׁ יְהוָה). By contrast, G simply reads 'before the Lord' (ἀπέναντι κυρίου). It seems that S recognizes this issue of the MT tradition when what happens at Shechem occurred 'before the tabernacle' (בְּפָנֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן) in v. 1.

While discussion about the Shiloh/Shechem variant will most likely continue with various textual, historical, and literary-critical explanations, the implications

drawn from recognizing textual pluriformity can at least help to mitigate any incompetence attributed to the translators of OG and its recensions. Teeter's conclusion helps explain this phenomenon: 'Instead, we observe the literary remains of communities that were committed to the scriptural text in the deepest way possible, and yet were plainly cognizant of textual plurality—and, at times, deliberately capitalized upon it' (Teeter 2014: 267). The MT maintains an appreciation for the tradition of true worship at Shechem, wherein the legacy of putting away false worship during the time of Jacob was emulated by the people under Joshua. This was in keeping with the traditions influencing Joshua's speech here. With Shiloh appearing in the Hebrew *Vorlage* to OG, the translators were content to leave it, not necessarily because the tension was unrecognized, but because it was in concert with the form of the Hebrew text wherein Joshua was consistently following in Moses' footsteps, leading the people to the place of God's presence with the tabernacle at Shiloh. The OT, along with its *Vorlage*, gives its stamp of approval of Joshua's actions. This presentation is seen even more clearly when Joshua presents a last-days context to his covenant with the people.

In the Last Days

In v. 27, the Greek text witnesses to the addition of both 'today' (σήμερον, see v. 31a) and G 'in the last days' (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν). According to Butler, the latter phrase is added as the 'LXX uses prophetic language to make the passage relevant to its own time rather than simply a report of past history' (Butler 2014: 297). Although he does not accept this as original, the notion of this as representing prophetic language is important to the argument of this article. Koopmans (Koopmans 1990: 261ff.) makes a series of arguments for this reading being based on a Hebrew original and not just an expansion by LXX.

In the light of all these factors it is virtually certain that the LXX pluses are deliberate, and they probably can be traced to a poetic Hebrew text differing slightly from the present MT. It is improbable that both pluses in the LXX would be omitted by accident of transmission in the MT. The only way to do justice to the complexity of this issue is to conclude that once again we have evidence of different editions of this passage as represented in the present texts (Koopmans 1990: 262).

He further highlights the parallel between Genesis 49:1 and Joshua 24:1, which both use קרא and אסף within the context of last-days prophetic material. He also points out the farewell instruction of Moses in Deuteronomy 31:29 as parallel to Joshua here.

So once again, the Hebrew *Vorlage* of OG was already influenced by the Torah's structure and specifically by Deuteronomy. The LXX seems to be explaining these

events in light of some significant passages in the Torah, including the ‘last days’ prophecies of Genesis 49, Numbers 24, and Deuteronomy 31–33, as well as the confession of Deuteronomy 26. Joshua’s covenant with the people is therefore made eschatological as with the poetic portions of the Torah. The addition at the end of the chapter (see below on v. 33), with its negative focus, also shows the author’s focus beyond the time of Joshua, even as the Former Prophets quickly pivot to this negative evaluation in the book of Judges. In this sense, the theological evaluation of the Deuteronomic History remains intact, but the eschatological becomes more evident. The role of the last-days prophetic speaker is not given priority in MT or in the rest of the Former Prophets in either tradition. However, interpreting Joshua 24 in light of the prophetic structure of the Torah is a significant effect of textual pluriformity. Dozeman’s comments on the relationship between the MT and LXX and their respective canons relates to this:

In the LXX ... the book of Joshua is tied more closely to the preceding literature of the Pentateuch as a continuation of the history of Israel, in which the meaning of law unfolds in human experience. The LXX suggest a literary Hexateuch upon first reading, rather than the Pentateuch of the MT. But the downplaying of Joshua and his generation at the conclusion of the LXX version of the book indicates that the editors envision a larger literary work than the Hexateuch, extending at least through Judges (Dozeman 2015: 42).

Summary

By setting the words of Joshua geographically at Shiloh and prophetically in line with the last-days poems of the Torah, the text behind OG (1) explained Joshua’s role in terms of Moses’ as torah-writer and law-giver and (2) implied an eschatological fulfillment of the covenant that he made with the people. This is in keeping with the last-days, new covenant hope of the Latter Prophets (e.g., Isaiah 2; Micah 4; Jeremiah 30–31; and Hosea 3:5). G represents the final words of Joshua in the spirit of the prophets, so to speak.

Such interpretations like these in G are brought out by a significant difference in how the traditions bring the book to a conclusion as the head of the Former Prophets. More will be stated below, but it should be noted here that v. 31 MT appears as v. 29 in G, which places it before the narrative introduction of v. 29 MT (v. 30 G). The order of G seems to be an explanatory clarification by its Hebrew *Vorlage*, and it also follows the order of Judges 2:6–9. It makes sense to include this summary here before completing the rest of the story (as in ch. 21). They served, but then Joshua died, which issues in a new narrative and strategy of the author. There is first notes about his and Joseph’s burial, then the apostasy of Israel (see more comments below).

24:29–33 MT

The final section of the chapter has three areas of concern that need to be addressed: (1) the variant orders of the textual witnesses, (2) the additional material in v. 31 G, and (3) the differences and additions of v. 33.

Ordering

First, as mentioned above, the order in G differs from MT beginning in Joshua 24:29 through the end of the chapter. Since a typical narrative introduction appears in v. 29 MT (וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) and in v. 30 G (καὶ ἐγένετο μετ’ ἐκείνα), both traditions transition to the death of Joshua and the final comments of the book. However, v. 31 MT appears as v. 29 G, which moves the concluding remark about Israel’s loyal service to Yhwh before this narrative transition. That is, G highlights the obedience of the nation under Joshua and the elders that followed him before it turns to the death of Joshua, Eleazer, and the apostasy of the nation. This phenomenon in ordering has been variously explained. While Boling and Wright (Boling and Wright 1982: 532) follow the order of G and state that it ‘is considerably less disjointed than MT,’ Butler (Butler 2014: 335) believes that ‘LXX represents an attempt to harmonize the two sections [namely, Joshua 24:28–31 and Judges 2:6–9].’ If this is the case, then the question to be asked is, What is the effect of the positioning of this account in relationship to the rest of the account of the Shechem Covenant? The order of the Greek certainly allows the text to provide an ideal portrait of the nation’s allegiance to Yhwh during the time of Joshua and the other elders of his time; it only then transitions to the next part of the story (with the G+ of v. 33). G (and its Hebrew *Vorlage*) see the note about the fidelity of Israel as part of the previous narrative section.

This creates a different focus at the end of the chapter (and book), as the death of Joshua issues in a quick movement toward the nation’s downfall, not their obedience. As a result, G reflects the inevitability of their apostasy, not just its potentiality. With the addition of a narrative introduction in v. 33 G, as well, the conclusion of the book shows that the death of Eleazer was the last event before the death of Phineas and the inevitable decline into false worship. In view of the more eschatological focus (see above), this difference in order would seem to explain Joshua’s words and actions in light of Moses’ warnings (e.g., Deuteronomy 31–32) that their rebellion was certainly going to take place, as it would and did. G reflects a Hebrew *Vorlage* that did not just highlight the nation’s obedience but also begins the transition to the story taken up in Judges. Both text traditions seem to be a fitting end to the book of Joshua considering the composition of the Former Prophets. Thus, neither seems to have resulted from a process of bringing together Joshua with Judges (see Butler 2014: 335).

The Burial of Joshua

Second, the LXX has additional material about the burial of Joshua (v. 30 MT, v. 31 G). This additional material seems to be a translation of a Hebrew text. According to Boling and Wright, ‘Presumably this was lost in connection with the displacement of v 31 in the tradition of MT’ (Boling and Wright 1982: 532). This may explain how this was lost in the MT tradition, but it does not explain the significance of this material within the context of textual pluriformity. The reader must ask about the importance of this section within OG and the underlying Hebrew text. The reading in G continues and brings to conclusion the circumcision of the nation in Joshua 5 and the burial tradition recorded in Joshua 21:42d. Thus, the narrative arc would be completed in G.

The most striking addition that this reading makes is the phrase, ‘when he brought them out from Egypt’ (ὅτε ἐξήγαγεν αὐτοὺς ἐξ Αἰγύπτου), which attributes the deliverance of Israel to Joshua. This would certainly argue for the text’s authenticity, given its tension with the Torah. This would also explain why this was not maintained in the text that became the MT, even as Moses (and Aaron) are inserted into Joshua’s words in v. 5. But the question remains, How does this reading of G (and its *Vorlage*) interpret Joshua’s story? The role of Joshua as the one who circumcised the people and led them out of Egypt is striking. If this is part of the Hebrew *Vorlage*, as is reasonably the case, it continues the textual portrayal of Joshua as related to Moses. The narrative typological development throughout the book of Joshua also lends itself to this conclusion. Joshua makes a covenant, writes torah, circumcises the people, leads them from Egypt (i.e., completes the exodus), and speaks to them about the last days (prophetic activity). Yet, together with the additional material in v. 33, the text shows that the people do not persevere after he has gone, just as Moses and Joshua prophetically confirmed. These types of elements confirm the textual strategy through the book of the comparison of Joshua and Moses, as the book describes the entrance into the land typologically in terms of the narratives of the Torah. The text of Joshua 24 returns to this strategy after the highly deuteronomic chapter 23.

The Conclusion of Joshua

Third, there are two important differences in v. 33 G. The first of these is the narrative introduction καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ ταῦτα, which provides evidence of the presence of this section (together with the G+) in an original Hebrew conclusion and transition to Judges. The Hebrew *Vorlage* would be using this typical transition (as in v. 29 MT) to move the reader to the next element of the narrative. This points the reader to the inevitability of Israel’s failure to maintain true worship of Yahweh. Their apostasy was not only a possibility; it was a certainty in keeping with the rest of the Former

Prophets. The explanation of the underlying Hebrew text makes this clear, even as additional material is carried forward in the MT of Judges before returning to this point of the story in Judges 3. The 3-fold representation of Joshua's death in Joshua and Judges indicates that the Hebrew texts strategically used repetition, reinserting different elements of the story by returning to earlier narratives. The underlying Hebrew text was not satisfied with the mere potential of apostasy; it explains the rest of the story in the same way that Moses frames his 'last days' comments (Deuteronomy 31:29) prophetically around the nation's certain sin and exile. But this also shows that Joshua was not the 'prophet like Moses,' as confirmed by the turning away of the people. By turning attention to the nation's apostasy, in keeping with the conclusion of the Former Prophets, the Greek text moves beyond the historical events to frame Joshua's words as eschatological.

The second and larger question in v. 33 is the presence of additional material at the end of the verse (and book). Tov has shown that it seems to be translated from a Hebrew original and that it represents an earlier version of the end of Joshua and the beginning of Judges (Tov 2022: 247). As such, Boling and Wright restore this from G in their translation (Boling and Wright 1982: 529–30). Although the ability to back translate the Greek is a clear indication that the Hebrew text from which the OG was translated contained this material, this only shows its presence, not its priority. As Butler (Butler 2014: 337) states, 'Retroversion simply proves at best that the text was added in the Heb. tradition prior to the Gk. translation, not that the retroverted Gk. plus is original.' He argues against the originality of the additional material in v. 33 because its 'content and theme are that of Judges, not that of Joshua' (Butler 2014: 337). However, the presence of this material certainly invites an explanation considering textual pluriformity, not just textual criticism.

If what Tov says is true, this would be a redactional explanation of textual plurality. Greenspoon (Greenspoon 1983: 81–82) shows that OG and Theodotion contain this addition, which is interesting given that a main thesis of his work is that Theodotion edited OG in view of a Hebrew text that is virtually the same as MT. If this is the case, then either (1) this was present in the Hebrew text used by Theodotion or (2) 'in an effort to preserve as much as possible of the OG, he may have retained these verses and somehow indicated in his text that they were not contained in the Hebrew' (Greenspoon 1983: 82). While the latter is a difficult argument to make, the former would invite the compositional question about when and why these verses were removed from the MT. A better account may be that the MT retained its normal form and the recensions kept a portion of OG that was a helpful interpretation of the text. Perhaps the recensions did not want the reader to miss the textual strategy of OG and its Hebrew *Vorlage*. This compositional feature would make room for the

insertion of further explanation of what happened when Joshua died—an event narrated three times in the text—and beyond this to a time when Phineas died and when the nation was ruled by Eglon. Conclusions about this difference in focus between the MT and G has further implications for reading Joshua within the context of the Former Prophets.

Conclusions

Rather than attempting to propose what an earlier Hebrew version of Joshua 24 may have looked like, the reader is confronted with discerning the relationship between the two existing forms: one represented by what became the MT and one represented in the OG and its *Vorlage*. The question thus becomes one of understanding why and how these two witnesses were allowed to remain alongside one another. This is described as text pluriformity, in that two texts remained alongside one another and authoritative until the one witnessed in OG gave way to the text that inevitably became the MT. An important element of this discussion has been evidence from the Greek recension, Theodotion, which seems to have adjusted the OG based on a Hebrew text resembling the MT.

The text of Joshua 24 represented in the OG (and thus its Hebrew *Vorlage*) interprets the Shechem/Shiloh events as the Pentateuch does the last words of Moses. In other words, the Greek text of Joshua 24 (1) interprets Joshua in the spirit of the prophets (both Moses and the Latter Prophets) and (2) transitions to the inevitability of apostasy. The Hebrew *Vorlage* behind OG explicates what happened at Shechem/Shiloh by presenting Joshua like the Torah's presentation of Jacob, Balaam, and Moses: namely, as a prophet who speaks the words of Yahweh, whose words are equated with those of Yahweh, who speaks about the last days, who makes a covenant, and who writes torah. More so than the MT, the text underlying OG seems to appreciate the eschatological and prophetic dimensions of Joshua's words at Shechem/Shiloh. This reflects the author's strategy to present the conquest, distribution of the land, and rest as temporary steppingstones on a path toward the last-days fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.

The community had two versions of the book of Joshua. The one textual witness, represented by OG, presents Joshua like Moses in his prophetic duties, especially as one who led the people out of Egypt and spoke to them about the last days. Like the end of Deuteronomy, the Hebrew *Vorlage* to OG already looks to the future apostasy. As in Deuteronomy 29–30, Joshua was already making a covenant with the people that looks to the future. The other textual witness, represented by the MT, presents Joshua as the prototypical keeper of torah whose influence lasted through his generation. These two interpretations of the story of Joshua were allowed to remain together and be mutually influential on one another. This coincides with the repetition of

Joshua's death twice in Judges, where his death leads to disobedience by and apostasy of the nation. These different orders highlight different narrative strategies in these two texts.

In conclusion, the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind OG explicates what happened at Shechem/Shiloh by presenting Joshua in a way similar to that of Jacob, Balaam, and Moses. Joshua is one who speaks the words of Yhwh, whose words are equated with those of Yhwh, who speaks about the last days, who makes a covenant with the people, and who writes torah. This conclusion complements other observations of the LXX as a more prophetic, eschatological text.

Bibliography

- Boling RG and Wright GE (1982) *Joshua: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City: Doubleday & Company.
- Butler TC (2014) *Joshua 13–24*. Word Biblical Commentary 7B. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Dozeman TB (2015) *Joshua 1–12*. The Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Greenspoon LJ (1983) *Textual Studies in the Book of Joshua*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 28. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Holmes SJ (1914) *The Hebrew and Greek Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koopmans WT (1990) *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 93. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Margolis ML (1992) *The Book of Joshua in Greek: Part V: Joshua 19:39–24:33*. Monograph Series. Philadelphia: Annenberg Research Institute.
- Meer M van der (2004) *Formation and Reformulation: The Redaction of the Book of Joshua in the Light of the Oldest Textual Witnesses*. VTSup 102. Leiden: Brill.
- Rahlfs A (1965) *Septuaginta*. Eight edition. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt.
- Teeter DA (2014) *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 92. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Tov E (2022) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Fourth Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Tov E (1999) *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 72. Leiden: Brill.

Von Rad G (1966) *Deuteronomy*. The Old Testament Library. Translated by Dorothea Barton. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Wright GE (1965) *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*. New York: McGraw-Hill.