

TO CONCEAL OR REVEAL? SELF-CENSORSHIP AND EXPLICITATION IN THE ANCIENT BIBLE VERSIONS

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DECLARATION

I, Douglas Todd Mangum (student no. 2010084560), declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree, Doctor of Philosophy with specialisation in Hebrew, at the University of the Free State is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Biblical Hebrew figures of speech and their translations in the ancient Bible versions in Greek (the Septuagint), Syriac (the Peshitta), and Aramaic (the Targums). The research is grounded in the methodologies of Translation Studies and linguistics — with Translation Studies providing the theoretical basis for describing translation and linguistics providing the theoretical basis for analysing figures of speech and their construal by ancient translators. The research question is: how did ancient Bible translators respond to Biblical Hebrew figures of speech, especially when those figures of speech were used for mitigating taboo topics like blasphemy or bodily functions?

Since figurative language requires the translator to make a decision about what the figure of speech was meant to communicate, it was hypothesised that the translators' strategies related to figures of speech might provide insights into their decision-making process. Figures of speech that are used to conceal taboo topics are euphemisms, so the primary focus of analysis was on Biblical Hebrew euphemisms and their translation. While the sociocultural importance of taboo subjects increases the likelihood of the translator's intervention in suppressing content (self-censorship), this study also addressed figures of speech from neutral, or non-taboo, subject areas in order to establish a standard of comparison for how the versions handled the implicit meaning of figurative language when the stakes were not as high as with a sensitive topic. The opaque meaning of figurative expressions also provides an opportunity for a translator to intervene to make the meaning explicit to the audience (explicitation).

The major finding of the study is that while literal translation is the predominant approach to translating figures of speech in all the ancient versions, the versions also used figurative language to translate figures of speech from their source text far more than was expected based on the hypothesis that the ancient versions are highly literal and rarely engage in substitution of one figure of speech for another. This assumption that the versions did not make significant use of idiomatic or figurative substitution was not supported by the evidence analysed in this study. The significant number of blended (literal and figurative) renderings and figurative renderings indicates at least some translators of the ancient versions possessed a more sophisticated understanding of translation and were capable of varying their strategies to bring the text closer to the natural language of their audiences, even if their default mode was to translate literally. Further, it was found that figurative language in the area of euphemism carried over between languages at a greater degree than anticipated. A translation that appeared

to be strictly literal because it used a word from the same semantic, conceptual domain as the source could in fact be figurative because the target language had developed the same figure of speech through the same processes of semantic extension (i.e., metaphor or metonymy). Overall, it was shown that the ancient translators were capable of more interpretive renderings that reoriented Biblical Hebrew idiomatic phrases toward the expectations of the audience of the translation. With taboo topics, there can be a wide range of acceptability norms. The varying strategies used in the ancient versions with euphemistic figures of speech likely reflect an awareness of what was acceptable to the target audience.

Key Words: Translation Studies; Bible Translation; Biblical Hebrew; Hebrew Bible; Septuagint; Targum; Peshitta; figurative language; euphemism; translation technique

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By the desk where I've written most of this work is posted a piece of paper given to me by my oldest daughter when she was nine years old, roughly five years ago now. On the paper, in large, neat letters, she wrote, "Things don't get done by ease. Everything is hard when you first do it." At the bottom, she added, "By Emma L. Mangum, age 9." Out of the hundreds (maybe thousands) of handwritten notes, drawings, and scribbles I've received from my daughters over the past dozen years or so, I've kept that one close at hand because I was struck that such a profound thought had been shared by a little girl. I adopted her words as my motto as I pressed on with my Ph.D. journey. At the time, I was a little more than halfway through the journey called "graduate school," though I had no inkling then of how much longer the journey might take.

The journey began officially in September 2004 when I started classes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison a few weeks before Emma's first birthday. I am grateful for my time in the Hebrew and Semitic Studies department in Madison and consider it a privilege to have studied there under Michael V. Fox and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé. Professor Fox modelled in the classroom the thoughtful approach to the biblical text evident in all of his writings and held himself to the same high standards of academic excellence that he expected from all of us. His probing questions on how I *knew* what a particular word meant in Biblical Hebrew in one of the very first classes I had from him profoundly shaped my thinking about the nature of meaning. (It was a rare word from Ezekiel 1 and that I'd looked it up in BDB was *not* an adequate answer. "How did *they* know what it meant?!?") Professor Miller-Naudé also modelled excellence in her research and her teaching. Most of what I know about Biblical Hebrew and a half-dozen or so other Northwest Semitic dialects I learned from her demanding classes, where she expected our engagement with the text to be accompanied with a depth of philological and linguistic detail. I am especially thankful to Professor Miller-Naudé for encouraging me to continue my research with her at the time when she transitioned from the University of Wisconsin to the University of the Free State. The transition enabled me to benefit from the co-supervision of Professor Jacobus Naudé, whose remarkable expertise spans Biblical Hebrew, Septuagint, Bible translation, and Translation Studies. I appreciate his always-helpful prodding to push beyond the traditional limits of biblical studies to benefit from the deep wisdom offered by the transdisciplinary approach of Translation Studies. I am

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Over the many years that I've been on this Ph.D. journey, so many friends and colleagues have shown interest in my work and encouraged me to continue that I should undoubtedly fail in an attempt to list all of them by name. However, I'd like to mention a few whose support has been indispensable. I thank Josh Westbury for many discussions on the nature of meaning in linguistics and Biblical Hebrew and for taking the time to offer feedback on early drafts of Chapter 3. I'm grateful to Kevin Chau for his willingness to dialogue about figurative language in Biblical Hebrew and for helping me understand metaphor and metonymy a little better. Wendy Widder has been a regular source of encouragement since we began our studies in Madison together in 2004. Karl Kutz and Becky Josberger also offered much needed encouragement and helpful advice. I must also mention my debt to Michael O. Wise who first taught me Biblical Hebrew over fifteen years ago at the University of Northwestern-Saint Paul. It was he who nurtured my interest in ancient languages and directed me to the program at Madison where I could more than get my fill.

Finally, I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to my family. I am grateful to my parents, Alan and Cheryl, for their support and encouragement over the many years that I've been in school. They never doubted that I was capable of finishing this journey, and they helped out whenever I encountered obstacles. I am thankful for the support of my wife's family and that they share my belief that deep study of the Bible has lasting value. My wife, Erin, and my three daughters, Emma, Abby, and Lizzie have sacrificed the most to these years of study. Erin believed in me when I doubted myself. She also took care of me through two serious leg injuries that impacted my mobility and my ability to write and research. She looked out for everyone else's needs, often sacrificing her own interests, and she carried virtually all the burden of homeschooling our daughters. My three girls have been a constant source of joy (and an

occasional source of irritation). I appreciate their patience and support even if they didn't always understand why Dad was still "going to school." They endured my absence and did their best to leave me undisturbed. Recently, Abby explained to Lizzie that the tooth fairy had likely failed to visit her pillow as expected because "she was probably still writing her thesis." Well, the thesis is done, so I may be back on tooth fairy duty soon. I dedicate this study to my wife and daughters and look forward to giving them my undivided attention in the future.

ABBREVIATIONS

abs.	absolute
BDAG	Bauer, W.F., F.W. Danker, W.F. Arndt, & F.W. Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	Brown, F., S.R. Driver, & C.A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1906
BH	Biblical Hebrew
<i>BHQ</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i> . Edited by A. Schenker et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004–
<i>BHRG</i>	<i>A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> . C.H.J. van der Merwe, J.A. Naudé & J. Kroeze. 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2017
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger, W. Rudolph & A. Schenker. 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997
CAL	Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon
CMT	Conceptual Metaphor Theory
<i>CSD</i>	<i>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary</i> . Edited by J. Payne Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903
cstr.	construct
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by D.J.A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2014
<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking & P.W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1999
fem.	feminine
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A.E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, & J.J. Stamm. Translated & edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000
Hatch-Redpath	Hatch, E., & H.A. Redpath. <i>Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament</i> . 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1897, 1906
<i>IBHS</i>	<i>Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . B.K. Waltke & M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990
impf.	imperfect
inv.	imperative
inf.	infinitive

Jastrow	Jastrow, M. <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> . 2 vols. New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1903
JM	<i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . P. Joüon & T. Muraoka. Rev. English ed. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEH	Lust, J., E. Eynikel, & K. Hauspie. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Revised Edition</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, & H.S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
LXX	Septuagint (represented by Rahlfs or the Göttingen critical text)
LXX ^A	The Septuagint text of Codex Alexandrinus
LXX ^B	The Septuagint text of Codex Vaticanus
masc.	masculine
MT	Masoretic Text (as represented by the Westminster Leningrad Codex, a digital edition of the Leningrad Codex maintained by the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research)
n.	noun
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> . Edited by A. Pietersma & B.G. Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007
OG	Old Greek
perf.	perfect
Pesh	Peshitta (represented by the text of the Leiden Peshitta)
pl.	plural
Rahlfs	<i>Septuaginta: SESB Edition</i> . Edited by A. Rahlfs & R. Hanhart. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006
sg.	singular
SL	source language
ST	source text
Syr	Syriac
Swete	<i>The Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint</i> . Edited by H.B. Swete. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, & H-J. Fabry. Translated by J.T. Willis, D.W. Stott & D.E. Green. 15 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976

Tgm	Targum (represented by the texts of the CAL project)
TgmJ	Targum Jonathan to the Prophets
TgmO	Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch
TgmN	Targum Neofiti to the Pentateuch
TgmPsJ	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch
Onq	Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch
Neo	Targum Neofiti to the Pentateuch
PsJ	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch
TL	Target language
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target text
vb.	verb

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

While translation has long played a key role in the dissemination of world literature, the work of translation has often been misunderstood in the popular view as nothing more than a simple and straightforward transfer of the plain meaning of a text from the language in which it was written to another language in which it can be read. Through the work of translation, many people around the world can claim to have read the Bible, Homer's *Iliad*, Dante's *Inferno*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, or the *Arabian Nights*, regardless of whether they are able to read ancient Hebrew and Greek, Italian, Russian, English, or Arabic.

Despite their status as some of the oldest translations known from antiquity, the ancient Bible versions such as the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums, are only just beginning to receive serious attention as translations from scholars who can draw on contemporary translation theory to analyse the ancient biblical translation as translation. Research comparing the ancient biblical translations to the ancient Hebrew text seems to have begun, even in antiquity, in the service of textual criticism.¹ The various versions of the Tanakh or Old Testament were compared in a search for the original text, the best text, the correct text, or the most complete text. The ancient translations most widely analysed for text-critical purposes are the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Targums (see, e.g., Brady 2003; Cook 1997; Greenberg 2002; Szpek 1992; Tov 1999; Troxel 2008).²

¹ For example, Origen's "Hexapla" (third century CE) compared the text from multiple Greek versions of the Old Testament and even included a column with a Hebrew version transcribed into Greek characters (see Fernández Marcos 2000: 206–210; Swete 1914: 59–86). The primary reference work for readings from the Hexapla is still Field (1875).

² Throughout this study, I commonly list the versions in this sequence — Septuagint, Peshitta, Targums. The sequence is not intended to imply any sort of relationship of priority (historical or otherwise) among

Analysis of the ancient Bible versions in biblical studies has typically proceeded with little or no reference to the theory and methodology developed by Translation Studies — an interdiscipline developed in the second half of the twentieth century concerned with the social, cultural, psychological, literary, and linguistic aspects of translation (Venuti 2012: 391–397). Typically, the ancient translator was envisioned as slavishly replicating the style and syntax of his source text creating a target text with little linguistic affinity with its target language. Yet, the work of the translator must have been motivated by a concern for communicating to his target audience some essential content of the source text. Most studies of the ancient versions have focused on a particular translation of a specific book of the Bible such as the Septuagint of Isaiah (Troxel 2008) or the Targum of Lamentations (Brady 2003). These studies tend to favour either textual criticism — does the translation point to a different source text — or exegesis. The concerns of the translator for the frame of reference of his audience are secondary.

1.1.1 The Ancient Bible Versions

The Septuagint (LXX) refers collectively to the ancient Greek Bible translated from around the third century BCE through the first century CE.³ It is not a single translation made by one

these versions. It is a fact of history that work on the Greek translation that would come to be known as the Septuagint began the earliest of the three (likely in the third century BCE), but the Aramaic versions come from the same historical and cultural milieu — the Levant and Mesopotamia from roughly the first to the seventh centuries CE. The sociolinguistic environment of the region during this period was extremely complex (see Butts 2016). This study was designed to be strictly descriptive and comparative; I analysed these three ancient versions in relation to their purported source text (represented by the critical editions of the Masoretic Text). I feel this initial comparison was necessary prior to any attempt to draw general conclusions from this data regarding the relationship among the versions (such as whether the Peshitta shows dependence on the Septuagint; on the broader issue of Greek's influence on the Syriac language, see Butts 2016). Even in examples where the versions follow similar strategies dealing with Biblical Hebrew figures of speech, I hesitate to conclude that one translator was aware of the work of another due to the high probability of translators using the same select strategies to address the unique challenges presented by figurative language.

³ Study of the Septuagint text is generally based on one of the scholarly critical editions: Swete 1909; Rahlfs & Hanhart 2006; or the twenty-four-volume Göttingen Septuagint published by the Septuaginta-Unternehmen between 1931 and 2015, which covers about two-thirds of the LXX books. My examples

individual or even the same group of individuals. Like the Hebrew Bible, it is a collection of books initially kept on separate scrolls. This fact complicates the analysis of the LXX as a translation since the different books represent the work of one or more translators working in different places at different times. The different books reflect a wide variety of approaches to translation from highly idiomatic to extremely mimetic or imitative.

The Peshitta is a Syriac translation of the Bible completed in the early centuries of the Common Era.⁴ Michael P. Weitzman (1999: 258) dates the Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible to around 150–200 CE. The Peshitta also includes the New Testament and the deuterocanonical books found in the Septuagint but absent from the Hebrew Bible. The origin of the Peshitta continues to be a point of debate. Unlike the Septuagint, no ancient traditions on the circumstances of its creation have been preserved.⁵ As a result, theories of origin among early Christians or various Jewish groups have been proposed. The most thorough examination of the question, however, has been undertaken by Weitzman (1999: 206–262) who offers a compelling argument for placing the origin of the Peshitta among non-rabbinic Jews in Edessa in the second century CE. The prominence of the Peshitta in Eastern Christianity resulted from the later conversion of that Jewish community to Christianity (Weitzman 1999: 259).

are based on the Göttingen text where available (e.g., Wevers 1974 on Genesis or Ziegler 1982 on Job) or on Rahlfs & Hanhart (2006). Common English translations include Brenton (dated and overly influenced by the Hebrew) and the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Pietersma & Wright 2007). *La Bible d'Alexandrie* is a French project of translation and commentary on the Septuagint that was begun in the 1980s; at this time, nineteen volumes have been published, including a one volume translation of the Pentateuch (Dogniez & Harl 2001). The *Septuaginta Deutsch*, the first complete German translation of the Septuagint, has also recently appeared (see Kraus & Karrer [2009] 2010).

⁴ The text of the Peshitta used for this study is the electronic version of the critical edition from the Peshitta Institute Leiden. For introductions to the versions of the Syriac Bible, see Brock 2006 or Weitzman 1999. On the development of the Syriac language during this period and the influence Hellenistic Greek had on that development, see Butts 2016.

⁵ On the traditions concerning Septuagint origins, see Dines 2004; Naudé 2009.

The possible source text or *Vorlage* for the Peshitta of the Hebrew Bible is similarly uncertain, but analysis of the Peshitta as a translation usually proceeds on the hypothesis of a Hebrew source text in many ways similar to the Masoretic Text (MT) (Greenberg 2002: 3–4; Weitzman 1999: 269).⁶ While this source text is not identical to MT, comparison with the traditional Hebrew text is a necessary starting point for reconstructing the translators' strategies.

The Targums are translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic created for use in the synagogue in late antiquity.⁷ The official Targums seem to have originated in classical rabbinic Judaism and the Talmuds refer to the texts and the practice of composing Targums (see Alexander 1990). Brady (2003: 111–118) has demonstrated that the Targum of Lamentations reflects rabbinic theology and was likely created for use in the synagogue. The Targums date to the same period of Jewish literary activity that produced the Mishnah, the Talmuds, and numerous works of midrashic exegesis, ranging from the first century to the eighth century CE.

It is not possible in this brief overview of these ancient versions to do more than hint at the complex editorial history of each textual tradition. None of the ancient versions is a unified collection of translated texts informed by a singular translation philosophy in the way that most Bible translations today are. Note the lengthy date ranges given above for the production of each version, ranging from the third century BCE to the eighth century CE. The ranges all overlap at the first century CE, a historical turning point for Judaism with the destruction of the

⁶ Tully (2015: 4) probably overstates the possibilities when he says the source text could be “Greek, or an Aramaic Targum, or something else.” While he emphasizes uncertainty over whether MT is the source text, he still must analyse the translation in relation to MT (Tully 2015: 5). Further, he does not address Weitzman’s (1999) extensive evidence demonstrating the relationship of the Peshitta to a Hebrew *Vorlage* with only periodic influence from the Septuagint.

⁷ For the most recent and up to date introduction to the Targums, see Flesher & Chilton 2011. The Targum texts used in this study are those prepared by the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Second Temple and the rise of Christianity. The textual development of these Bible versions continued in the new, complex religious milieu of late antiquity (ca. 100–700 CE). The effect this milieu had on Bible translation, especially regarding language contact and change, is a fascinating topic for another study.⁸ In the present study, these ancient versions are studied comparatively and independently to map out their general tendencies with regard to Biblical Hebrew figures of speech.

1.1.1.1 Text-critical issues and translation technique

Research on the Septuagint and the Peshitta has been driven primarily by textual criticism and the search for textual variants revealing a different reading of the Hebrew text. The goal of textual criticism has changed over the years from a search for the *Urtext* (or earliest text) to a search for the best final text to an admission that the evidence may point to multiple contemporary Hebrew texts, all with a more or less equal claim to the mantle of “best” or “most authoritative” text (Wegner 2006: 29–37; Waltke 1989). While working on his recently published eclectic critical text of the book of Proverbs, Michael V. Fox (2006: 5) described his goal as “reconstructing the Masoretic *hyparchetype*.” In textual criticism, a hyparchetype is a reconstructed source of variants, not as close textually to the original as the archetype (or *Urtext*). Fox (2006: 5–6) defines hyparchetypes as:

“reconstructed variant-carriers,” that is to say, deviating text-forms that derive from a single non-extant source text (at some remove) but not from each other. Their

⁸ Butts (2016) has produced an invaluable study on the linguistic development of Syriac within the linguistic and religious milieu of late antiquity in Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean, especially exploring Greek’s influence on Syriac. He acknowledges that translation provides a point of contact between languages that could cause language change, such as Syriac translations from Greek carrying certain linguistic features into Syriac, but he focuses primarily on “native compositions” in Syriac (Butts 2016: 5). This focus is important since it controls for changes that are “the result of the translation process and not changes in a language” (ibid.). He does, however, address the extent to which translated texts may have brought about changes in the Syriac language as used in native compositions (Butts 2016: 6, 128–129).

relation is horizontal. An entire “reconstructed variant-carrier,” or text-form, is a hyparchetype.

With hyparchetypes, the goal of textual criticism has become an intermediate stage in textual transmission that can be reconstructed on the basis of existing variants. For the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, the ancient versions have been an important source of variants with their translations examined in order to determine whether their text reflects a different Hebrew *Vorlage* than known editions of the Hebrew text.

However, the versions themselves have also been examined text critically with scholars studying the many manuscripts of the Septuagint and Peshitta to produce critical editions of those texts as well and to reconstruct the best possible text of the version itself.⁹ Weitzman (1999: 308–309) argued the Peshitta likely originated in a single *Urtext*. According to Olofsson (2009: 18n5) a similar situation obtains in the case of the Old Greek text posited as underlying the existing manuscripts of the Septuagint.

Research on the Septuagint has a long history and has produced a great number of books, monographs, and articles. The most important developments in the study of the Septuagint are covered in a number of recent introductions (Jobes & Silva 2015; Aitken 2015; Dines 2004; Fernández Marcos 2000). The methodologies of Septuagint studies were devised primarily for the needs of textual criticism — identifying variant readings in the translation that might be evidence of a Hebrew source text or *Vorlage* different from the MT. The study of “translation technique” served this larger purpose — any variant that could be attributed to the typical practice of the translator could be ruled out as evidence of a different Hebrew text.

⁹ As noted above (see note 2), the main critical editions of the Septuagint are those of Rahlfs and Hanhart (2006) and the multiple volumes of the Göttingen Septuagint. The primary critical edition of the Peshitta is the *Leiden Peshitta* produced by the Peshitta Institute Leiden.

The typical focus on text-critical issues manifests itself in the easy adoption of the jargon of textual criticism where the ultimate justification for studying the version is a potential contribution to understanding its *Vorlage* or uncovering the *Urtext* or isolating meaningful “variants.” W. Edward Glenny (2007: 5) explains that he focused on the textual differences between LXX and MT “as a means of understanding the translator and the *text* he used” (emphasis added). Similarly, Ronald Troxel (2008: 73–85) devotes a short chapter in his monograph to “reconstructing the *Vorlage* of LXX-Isaiah.” This text-critical approach is an important aspect of research on the ancient versions, but it potentially limits the field of inquiry by reducing all differences to a determination whether the difference reflects a legitimate textual variant. Differences that can be explained according to the translator’s theological tendencies or translation technique can be set aside as having no text-critical value. The other common areas of attention in research on the ancient versions seem to have originated under the umbrella of text-critical research. Investigations of theological exegesis and translation technique were subordinated to the larger question of how they could be used to provide non-textual explanations of variant readings, that is, to show that the translator was not reading a different *Vorlage*, usually in comparison to MT.

1.1.1.2 Translation technique and ancient exegesis

Research on the Targums generally focuses on either the exegetical techniques of the targumist or on particular translation phenomena such as converse translation (see Klein 1976; Gordon 1999) or the treatment of figurative language (see Grossfeld 1996). The Targums are approached mainly as an exegetical document of ancient Judaism (see McNamara 2003) with their value for analysis as translation minimised due to the high degree of aggadic (or interpretive) expansion in the text. However, the Targums, as part of the corpus of rabbinic literature, can be productively analysed for the ideological and theological concerns motivating

the translational phenomena, including the lengthy interpretive expansions. Unlike the Peshitta and Septuagint whose origins and likely religious functions are shrouded in obscurity, the purpose and use of the Targums within rabbinic Judaism is well-documented.¹⁰ This additional external information about the translation could make the application of Translation Studies even more relevant for analysing the Targums than the Septuagint or Peshitta (see Fraade 2006 for a beginning step in this direction).

The search for theologically-motivated translation in the ancient Bible versions developed out of a need to explain translational phenomena that seemed unlikely to have originated with a different source text. However, Olofsson (2009: 15) has rightly pointed out that investigating the translator's theology "stands in mutual relationship" to studying the translator's technique. Similarly, Cook (2001) has demonstrated that study of the translator's ideology and technique are fundamentally inter-related. Most scholars approaching translation technique and the translator's theology or ideology work from a hierarchy of evaluation: prioritising explanations based on translation technique over explanations appealing to ideology. The goal is determining whether a variant points to a different *Vorlage*. There is less agreement whether explanations appealing to the translator's ideology should be prioritised over positing a different *Vorlage*. Troxel (2008: 19) is critical of previous work on LXX-Isaiah that has been quick to conclude various renderings revealed the contemporary cultural, theological, or historical concerns of the translator. On the other hand, Cook (1997: 316–317) is more willing to attribute active,

¹⁰ For example, rabbinic tradition reveals that the Targums were not initially intended to function as stand-alone translations, wholly disconnected from their source text. In the synagogue, the Targum was to be recited orally, not read, following the explicit reading of the Scripture from a Hebrew scroll. Even in private study, the Hebrew passage and the Targum were to be studied side by side, reading the Hebrew twice and the Targum once. In fact, the Mishnah states that an official reading of a Scripture for a festival does not count if it is done in Aramaic unless the non-Hebrew speaking audience has at least heard the text in Hebrew (m. Meg. 2.1).

theologically-motivated manipulation of the text to the translator of LXX-Proverbs.¹¹ Olofsson (2009: 17) acknowledges the possibility of theological exegesis, but he is cautious about prematurely drawing conclusions of that nature (Olofsson 2009: 25–26).

While text-critical concerns have long motivated the analysis of the ancient biblical versions, systematic attempts to describe the translation technique of particular books or passages in various versions have long dominated the field.¹² On the one hand, this was an important and necessary first step, and these studies describing the general tendencies of particular translators provide a useful foundation for further description and analysis. On the other hand, these systematic descriptions lacked methodological consistency and terminological precision.

Research on the ancient versions would greatly benefit from the systematic adoption of a well-developed theoretical framework. The need for more agreement on theory and terminology is clearly seen from the overuse of the term “translation technique” as a catch-all to describe a great many discrete activities on the part of the translator.¹³ The term is often

¹¹ In further work on LXX Proverbs, Cook (2005: 65) has demonstrated that he is well-aware of the past excesses in finding widespread theological exegesis in the Septuagint. However, he sees the current scholarly reaction against positing any theological or ideological exegesis on the part of the translator as an extreme over-reaction. His own careful study strongly suggests that some aspects of the translator’s theological or ideological system can be recovered through translation analysis (see, especially, Cook 2005: 76–79).

¹² Works emphasising translation technique of the Septuagint or Peshitta include, e.g., Heater 1982; Olofsson 1990a; 1990b; 2009; Sailhamer 1991; Szpek 1992; Taylor 1994; Magary 1995; Cook 1997; Beck 2000; Sollamo & Sipilä 2001; Greenberg 2002; Glenny 2007.

¹³ Septuagint scholars A. Aejmelaeus and I. Soisalon-Soininen are uncomfortable with the imprecision of the term “translation technique,” though their reservations stem from the concern that the term implies a much more sophisticated and intentional program of translation than was likely the case with the ancient versions (Aejmelaeus 2007: 59–61). Muraoka (2001: 15) is also unhappy with the term “technique” for not adequately drawing to mind the aesthetics or art of translation.

employed simply as a generic label to eliminate potential variants from further consideration in text critical research.

Olofsson (2009: 64–66) interacts briefly with a 1985 article by E. Tov and B. Wright (reprinted in Tov 1999: 220–239) which uses statistical analysis to gauge a translator’s degree of “literalness.” Translation technique following a statistical model is reduced to linguistic features that can be measured empirically (see Muraoka 2001 on the insufficiency of such analysis). For that reason, the statistical method can be overly reductive and automatically eliminate from consideration many of the dynamic aspects of the translation process. Other definitions are too vague to be useful such as translation technique as “the ways in which the LXX translators rendered the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language” (McLay 2003: 45).

Dines (2004: 117) explains “translation technique” as the process of analysing each translator’s “methods, preferences and peculiarities” in order to understand “how a translation works linguistically” and “how the translator has understood and represented the meaning of the original.” Dines’ definition encompasses all three of Aejmelaeus’ “angles” on the “common theme” of translation technique: the statistical, the linguistic, and the exegetical (Aejmelaeus 2007: 59; see also Cook 1997: 31).

Detailed analysis of a translator’s “preferences and peculiarities” usually manifests itself in some form of statistical report on a translator’s lexical and syntactic usage compared with either the putative source text or the similarly reconstructed preferences of other translators. Statistical analysis is useful for detecting broad patterns in a translator’s approach to rendering common lexemes and morphosyntactic constructions, but its application is limited if translators choose inconsistency and variability as their technique (common where target language fluency is the ideal for translations; see Venuti 2008: 1–13).

The second angle — “how the translation works linguistically” — focuses on the language of the translation analysed within the linguistic system of the target language. Translations, especially ancient ones like the Septuagint or Peshitta, are often easily distinguishable from original compositions in the target language, so analysis at this level helps create a picture of the translator’s competence with the lexicon and grammar of the target language.

The third aspect of translation technique intersects directly with the issue of theologically or ideologically motivated translation as mentioned above. There is little debate that the translators of the Septuagint and the other ancient Bible versions were working with the general intent of communicating “the meaning of the original” as they understood it (Aejmelaeus 2007: 61; see also Cook 1997: 16). The debate is over whether ideologically motivated translation can be identified through the observation and description of the translation — the end product of the translation process. Aejmelaeus (2007: 63) notes that “description of translation technique can only be description of the results of translation, not of the aims and intentions of the translator.” Her conclusion, however, is not shared by Cook (1997: 30) who believes he can demonstrate when the LXX translator of Proverbs adjusted his translation for religious reasons.

In his work on the Peshitta of Daniel, Taylor (1994: 315) offers a definition of “translation technique” that illustrates how the complexity of translation itself presents a challenge to reconstructing the process of an ancient translator:

[Translation technique is] the characteristic means of expression adopted by a translator of the biblical text which may differ in significant ways from the syntactical structure and lexical choices utilized in the text which he is translating. The process of transferring the thought of the source language into a receptor language very often requires a restructuring of the external forms of expression that are the vehicles for conveying the thought. To the degree that this is necessary, a translator of a text is of course obliged to find conveyors of thought that will be suitable for the receptor language, even though they will often differ considerably from those of the source

language. These changes at the surface level are necessary due to the differences in grammatical and syntactical structures which exist between languages.

Taylor's observation that translation often entails major restructuring of form to convey the source text's thought may seem like an obvious conclusion, but it highlights how difficult it can be to discern whether restructuring is motivated by the translator's conceptual understanding of the text's thought or by necessary linguistic constraints. Progress in analysing the ancient versions and overcoming this difficulty could be made by drawing on the theoretical frameworks developed in the emerging inter-discipline of Translation Studies.

1.1.2 Translation Studies and Biblical Research

Most research on the ancient Bible versions and translation technique has proceeded with little or no reference to contemporary translation theories (see Section 3.2 for a general introduction to Translation Studies).¹⁴ When translation theory is mentioned, it is almost always taking the linguistic paradigm developed in the mid twentieth century as its point of departure, especially the work of J. Catford (1965) or E. Nida (1959; 1964), which rested on theories of linguistic equivalence. While Nida himself nuanced his views based on continual theoretical development in the growing field of Translation Studies, most researchers on ancient Bible versions are unaware of his later contributions to the study of translation (such as Nida 2001).

¹⁴ For example, of a dozen monographs published from 2000 to 2011 that addressed issues of "translation technique" in the Septuagint, Targum, or Peshitta, only four demonstrate any awareness of the discipline of Translation Studies. Prior to 2000, virtually all such studies show no engagement with translation theory at all apart from the occasional reference to the work of Eugene Nida (especially Nida 1964 or Nida & Taber 1969, not to Nida's more recent work). Fortunately, this imbalance has begun to be corrected with the contributions to Noss 2007, especially Burke 2007 and Sysling 2007, and three recent works on the ancient Bible versions that make thorough use of Translation Studies (e.g., Wagner 2013; Modugno 2015; Tully 2015).

Recently, a dialogue over translation theory and practice has begun among Bible translators, biblical scholars, and leading figures in Translation Studies.¹⁵ This dialogue is, in large part, the legacy of Eugene A. Nida whose work on translating the Bible also influenced the budding field of Translation Studies. Nida's work brought the Bible to Translation Studies and brought Translation Studies to the treasure trove of data from decades of field work on how to translate the Bible.¹⁶ The Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship, part of the American Bible Society, established the Nida School of Translation Studies in 2007 to further facilitate the interaction of Bible scholars and translators with influential Translation Studies scholars such as Edwin Gentzler, Theo Hermans, Maria Tymoczko, Lawrence Venuti, and Susan Bassnett.¹⁷

Translation Studies, however, is not a unified discipline with a single methodology. The field has developed from the cross-pollination of ideas in literary translation, professional interpreting, linguistics, literary criticism, sociology, and more (see Section 3.2.1). Some approaches to translation focus on the process of translating and try to develop prescriptive guidelines for how to go about translating texts. Functional approaches such as that of Christiane Nord (1997; 2005) have a strong prescriptive orientation toward training translators (see Section 3.3.2). Nord, following Reiss and Vermeer (1984), emphasises the purpose or *skopos* of the translation because the intended use of a text and what type of text it is significantly affects how it should be translated. A restaurant menu probably does not need to be translated into poetic form, and a sonnet probably should not be translated as if it were a menu. A document known as the translation brief is used to establish the purpose of the

¹⁵ For an overview of the history of Translation Studies and its relevance for Bible translation, see Naudé 2011a (see also Naudé 2002; 2008).

¹⁶ For some of the fruit of this emerging dialogue, see the essays in Noss 2007, including a contribution on theory from Anthony Pym, a leading Translation Studies scholar (Pym 2007).

¹⁷ See "History of NSTS" <http://www.nidainstitute.org/NSTS> [Accessed 24 Jan 2018]). I was privileged to be a part of the Nida School in 2008.

translation and to set the expectations of the person or organisation commissioning the translation. A restaurant owner likely will not want to pay for the extra time it took a translator to turn the menu into a piece of poetic art.

The other primary approach to studying translation is descriptive — studying the product, not the process. The translated text is the focus, and the researcher describes the translator's strategies, perhaps comparing multiple translations of the same literary work and attempting to discern the sociocultural factors that influenced each of the translators. The descriptive approach is commonly known as Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and is associated with the work of Gideon Toury (2012). However, the descriptive side of translation research has shifted significantly since it began in the 1980s with Toury, Itamar Even-Zohar, Theo Hermans, and others (see Section 3.2.2). Even in its early stages, the scholars who adopted a descriptive approach, whether it was known as DTS, polysystem theory, the Manipulation School, the systems approach, or any of several other labels (see Hermans 1999: 7–16), emphasised different aspects of translation and different research concerns (whether norms, the literary polysystem, empirical studies, the manipulation of literature, or translation history; see Hermans 1999: 13).

Throughout the 1980s, the emphasis in DTS on the target culture that would receive a translation drew increasing attention to the social, cultural, and political power differentials within which the practice of translation was embedded (Snell-Hornby 2006: 49–50). Those aspects of culture and power were key components of the conceptualisation of translation as manipulation (Naudé 2011a: 230). The role ideology had in influencing translation — drawn in stark relief by poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism — was brought in focus (see Tymoczko 2002). This awareness led to what would come to be known as the “cultural turn” and the “power turn” in Translation Studies that dominated the 1990s and, in many ways,

continues today (see Section 3.2.3). The rapid globalisation and technological advances of the last twenty years have only made the world's social and economic inequities that much more apparent. In such an atmosphere, the issues raised years ago by poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism are still relevant and still have an impact on how translations are commissioned, produced, distributed, and received (see Bassnett 2014b: 125–145).

Bible translators, much more than Bible scholars, have been aware of the global and cross-cultural issues affecting their translation work (see Zogbo 2007). The Nida Institute, as mentioned above, has been actively working to connect Bible translators with the wider world of translation research. This interaction between Bible translators and Translation Studies eventually attracted the attention of some scholars working on the ancient Bible versions. Over the last decade especially, these researchers have begun exploring the potential that Translation Studies methodologies could have for descriptive analysis of ancient Bible translations (e.g., Boyd-Taylor 2006; Van der Louw 2007; Sollamo 2008; O'Hare 2010; Boyd-Taylor 2011). While this has been a positive development and resulted in theoretically-nuanced studies of the LXX, until recently, they have tended to adopt translation theory only from the branch of Descriptive Translation Studies built primarily on the work of Toury (especially Toury 1995). A few studies since 2013 have begun moving beyond Toury in their awareness of and engagement with other models of contemporary Translation Studies (e.g., Wagner 2013; Modugno 2015; Tully 2015).

While Septuagint researchers have tentatively begun engagement with DTS, those working on the Aramaic versions of the Bible (the Peshitta and the Targums) generally have not (with the exception of Tully 2015). Studies devoted to analysing the Aramaic Bible generally do not range into theoretical discussions beyond adopting the terminology of “translation technique” developed in Septuagint Studies or engaging the problems of analysing

ancient translations as “literal” or “free” (especially as formulated by Barr 1979). Research on the Peshitta (such as Greenberg 2002) often focuses on text-critical questions, addressing how and why the translator may have deviated from MT. Research on the Targums (such as Brady 2003) usually emphasises the exegetical character of the translation.

The discipline of Translation Studies has had little influence on research into the ancient Bible translations, despite the potential of various translation theories for helping explain how translation techniques may have been influenced by a translator’s theology, ideology, or cultural context.¹⁸ The long history of a philological approach to biblical research and the text-critical orientation of research on the ancient versions compared to the relatively recent emergence of Translation Studies no doubt contributed to the methodological divide, but the interdisciplinary nature of Translation Studies allows for those analysing the ancient Bible versions to have a voice in both developing and applying the theoretical model of Translation Studies.

1.2 Problem Statement and Hypothesis

My research examines the question — how did ancient Bible translators handle Biblical Hebrew (BH) figures of speech, especially when those figures of speech were used for taboo topics like blasphemy or bodily functions? With taboo topics, how attentive were the ancient translators to the expectancy norms of their audiences? Expectancy norms relate to the audience’s expectations about the text (see Section 3.3.5). Those expectations include the sociocultural

¹⁸ A few scholars have attempted to apply contemporary translation theories to the study of the Septuagint, but those studies have been relatively recent and preliminary (e.g., Boyd-Taylor 2006; 2011; Van der Louw 2007; O’Hare 2010; Wagner 2013; also see Naudé 2009; Miller-Naudé & Naudé 2013). One earlier work that brought together Translation Studies and Bible translation was Naudé & Van der Merwe 2002. For an overview of some of the initial studies, see Naudé 2008. Another exception was the work of Jan de Waard who began to apply translation theory to the LXX as early as the 1970s. For a brief discussion of his contributions, see Van der Louw 2007: 3–4.

constraints on what is allowed in polite discourse as well as the assumption that the text will have meaning that they can understand. Since figurative language requires the translator to make a decision about what the figure of speech was meant to communicate and how to present that to the audience, I believe that the translators' strategies related to figures of speech could provide insight into their decision-making process.

Figures of speech present a special problem for translation because the meaning of a figurative expression is rarely apparent from the sum of its parts.¹⁹ Figurative language can be hard to understand even within a single language because of its non-referential nature (that is, the words refer to something other than their literal referents).²⁰ Figures of speech, such as idioms and euphemisms, vary by place and change over time. Idioms are stock expressions like “How do you do?” where the pragmatic meaning (i.e., a greeting) is not apparent from the referential meaning of the words used (i.e., a question; see Section 3.4.1.4). These types of expressions vary considerably by region and dialect, even among users of the same language. Similarly, four hundred or so years removed from William Shakespeare, his bawdy puns and witty double entendres easily pass the notice of many English readers (Partridge 1990). Since euphemisms are figures of speech used for the express purpose of avoiding open mention of a delicate subject, writers and speakers can sometimes conceal their true or full meaning (see Section 3.4.1.5). Readers can remain blithely unaware of the subject concealed by euphemism; certain, for instance, that all the talk of “gardens” in Song of Songs shows the poet had a deep fascination with horticulture.²¹ The problem of interpretation is only magnified when a

¹⁹ On some of the difficulties translating figurative language, see Alvarez 1993; Al-Zoubi, Al-Ali, and Al-Hasnawi 2006.

²⁰ See Section 3.4.1.2 for additional explanations of the terminology related to figurative language.

²¹ The poet did not have a fascination with horticulture. Garden and vineyard imagery was common in ancient Near Eastern love poetry, often used euphemistically for veiling sexual trysts, alluding to fertility, or referring to the pudenda (Paul 2005: 271–272).

translator is faced with the task of translating a figure of speech into another language (see Section 3.5). With figurative language, translators must decide whether to prioritise the source text's grammatical form or its rhetorical function or effect (see Section 3.6). A formalist rendering often fails to transfer the meaning of the figure of speech to the target audience while an overly explicitative rendering often loses the communicative effect achieved by the use of figurative language (compare Croft & Cruse 2004: 193).

Translation Studies has produced a growing body of literature demonstrating how cultural contexts and literary systems can affect translation (e.g., Hermans 1985; Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Snell-Hornby 1995; Toury 1995; Nida 2001; Katan 2004; Hung 2005; Baker 2006; Pym, Shlesinger & Jettmarová 2006; Venuti 2008; Milton & Bandia 2009; Miller-Naudé & Naudé 2010). Social norms and theological concerns may prevent a translator from revealing the text's full meaning to his audience; alternatively, a translator's desire to break social expectations to achieve a certain rhetorical impact could motivate a translation that reveals details that the source text leaves to the imagination. The translator's immersion in the cultural norms of his target audience may also result in a conscious or unconscious adaptation to the audience's expectations. Further, significant expertise in the source culture, language, and text is necessary for skilful mediation of difficult ideas and imagery. In a very real sense, the "translator's experience of the author's world" or "universe of discourse" is an indispensable skill for successful cross-cultural communication (Zlateva 1990: 31).

This study examines a translator's tendency to either conceal (self-censorship) or reveal (explicitation) the meaning of the source text when it contains content that may be considered objectionable for sociocultural or theological reasons, addressing the problem of how the translators of the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums mediated these social and theological concerns. Strategies for producing figurative language and methods for reframing content (such

as censorship) are likely to be employed in a translation to avoid the same taboo subjects for which euphemisms are commonly used across cultures (including death, disease, and sexuality). The translators' responses to potentially taboo topics may help clarify the very social expectations that influenced the decision.²²

Social norms and theological concerns may inspire a translator to conceal from his audience what the source text actually says, or the desire to break those norms and conventions for “shock value” can motivate changes that reveal more in translation than the source text leaves to the imagination. How did the translators of the ancient Bible versions deal with the problem of transmitting a text that was in some way problematic for their target audience? What did those translators do when social norms and audience expectations constrained them to conceal what the source text was actually saying? The translators' strategies related to figures of speech may reveal more about their decision-making process. Figurative language requires the translator to make a decision about what the figure of speech was meant to communicate. A related problem is translators' tendencies toward either self-censorship, conscious or unconscious, or explicitation — making the target text say more than the source.

Even though languages typically produce figurative expressions through similar processes, the identification of language as figurative is often a challenge for the ancient translator. When faced with an uncertain figure of speech, the translators tend to provide a word-for-word, literal rendering, preserving the foreign expression regardless of whether their target text actually transfers any meaningful information from the source.

The strategies used by the translators include formal, literal rendering, direct translation of the meaning of a figure of speech, or use of a target language figure of speech with

²² For a discussion of taboo as it relates to translation generally, see Robinson 1996.

comparable meaning. Translators can also blend aspects of these strategies by giving the meaning of a figure of speech while still representing aspects of the original form that are now unnecessary for conveying the meaning (on these strategies, see Section 3.6.2).

1.3 Methodological Framework

The methodology of Translation Studies, specifically work on translation norms (i.e., Toury 2012) and narrative framing in translation (i.e., Baker 2006), provides the primary methodological direction for this research (see Section 3.2 and Section 3.3). Translation Studies has explored how cultural constraints affect translators – how the expectations of the community affect the choices they make when translating (see Sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5). Since Translation Studies is a transdisciplinary field concerned with linguistic meaning and its representation, the methodological framework also involves aspects of linguistics such as the construal of figurative expressions (see Section 3.4) and the pragmatic function of euphemism (see Section 3.5). The account of euphemisms and their use in concealing taboo topics draws on work from sociolinguistics and pragmatics (e.g., Allan & Burridge 1991; 2006). The concept of the dynamic construal of meaning, which possesses many conceptual links to fundamental concepts of DTS and narrative framing, has been adopted from cognitive linguistics for its utility in describing the way language users actively negotiate meaning in their interactions with linguistic content in discourse (Croft & Cruse 2004; Langacker 2008). Understanding the social and cultural facets of language further requires Translation Studies to incorporate insights from the social sciences and literary criticism (e.g., Ricoeur 1981; Goffman 1986; Bourdieu 1991). To the extent that Translation Studies has drawn on these disciplines to describe the various ways that figurative language can be understood and translated, insights from those disciplines inform the overall methodological framework for this study.

1.4 Delimitation of Study

A full comparative study of all BH figures of speech throughout the Hebrew Bible and their representation in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and the Targums is an impossible undertaking for a single thesis, but this study offers a beginning step toward understanding the general tendencies these ancient translators exhibit with reference to many BH figures of speech. The primary corpus for analysis is a selection of BH lexical items that fall within the purview of euphemism — that is, words and expressions that relate to common taboo topics (see Chapter 5). While these taboo topics could motivate more active manipulation on the part of the translator, I also included for analysis six BH idiomatic expressions (see Chapter 4) in order to establish a baseline of expectations for how the versions handled the implicit meaning of figurative language. The examples come from various parts of the Hebrew Bible, but many of the figures of speech, being multi-word expressions, were found in narrative. The figurative language of poetry tends to use metaphor and metonymy in a more creative way and with a different sort of stock vocabulary than the conventionalised figures of speech analysed for this study.

Narrative texts also provide more contextual clues for framing the situation and construing the pragmatic purpose of an expression. Poetry is allusive and terse, but prophetic poetry is often subtly evoking the memory of events narrated in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets using key words and expressions. Therefore, understanding the usage in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets provides insight into explaining enigmatic or puzzling passages in the Latter Prophets and wisdom literature.

With figurative language, translators could also make the meaning plainer or more evident, but in the process, they may have blunted the rhetorical impact of the Hebrew. For example, the Targum tends to fully transform passages like Jer 3 or Ezek 16 where Israel is graphically depicted as Yahweh's unfaithful consort by historicising the story. That is, they

avoid the graphic language and imagery while telling the underlying story behind the prophet's rhetoric — the story of Israel's history of apostasy.

To summarise, this study looks generally at BH figures of speech and their translation into Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic. Narrative texts are preferred because of the greater detail provided in a narrative context, and contextual details are particularly helpful for interpreting figurative expressions.

1.5 Organisation of Study

Chapter 2 reviews previous research on BH figures of speech, including studies on translating BH figures of speech and on how the ancient versions understood those BH expressions. Chapter 3 presents the methodology behind this study, introducing the field of Translation Studies in more detail, explaining the linguistic approaches to figurative language, and discussing the problems that figurative language presents for translation. The chapter ends by outlining the main strategies available to a translator for handling figurative language.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of select BH idiomatic expressions, surveying how those lexical items were represented in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums. Chapter 5 continues with an analysis of select BH euphemistic words and phrases, exploring their representation in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums. Chapter 6 offers a summary of the study, the main conclusions revealed in the analysis, and a discussion of potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF STUDIES ON BIBLICAL HEBREW FIGURES OF SPEECH AND THEIR TRANSLATION

2.1 Introduction

The focus of my research is on how aspects of Biblical Hebrew (BH) figures of speech were translated in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums. No other study known to me has shared that specific focus, though a few have addressed aspects of the topic. Issues related to the interpretation of particular BH words and phrases are regularly raised in commentaries on particular books, but those studies tend to only offer an explanation of the word or phrase in passing without engaging in a detailed analysis because such an analysis is beyond the stated scope of their work. Studies that focus on the translation techniques of a particular book in the LXX, Peshitta, or Targums may offer a slightly more detailed account of how their translator rendered a BH figure of speech, but the analysis is subsumed under the larger goal of determining the translator's tendencies throughout the entire book. For specific passages in the analysis, relevant commentaries and textual studies have been consulted.

While many of the figures of speech in the Hebrew Bible are grounded in conceptual metaphor and metonymy, I have not attempted to survey the vast literature on BH metaphor.¹ Metaphor and metonymy are so widely used in language that Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3) find “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” Their work on the cognitive nature of metaphor gave rise to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, an important part of cognitive semantics (see Geeraerts 2010: 203–222). The

¹ For a recent survey, see Chau 2011: 27–58.

methodology supporting my analysis of the translation of BH figurative language is partially cognitive semantic, but my focus is on specific BH figures of speech with restricted variability, not on the creative use of metaphor or metonymy in BH.² The use of metaphor to enrich literary style is distinct from the use of conventionalised phrases that may have derived from conceptual metaphors. However, I have covered two studies that addressed the related problem of translating BH metaphor (i.e., Stienstra 1993; Kroneman 2004).

Figures of speech utilised in this study include idiomatic phrases and euphemisms. Idioms differ from other figures of speech in that they are highly stereotyped and conventionalised. That is, idioms are fixed expressions to the extent that they permit very little lexical or syntactic variation (Taylor 2012: 76). Shifts in syntax or lexical choice typically result in an expression that no longer activates the intended idiomatic meaning.³ For example, with an English idiom like *spill the beans*, substituting a different English word for either “spill” or “beans” produces an expression that does not activate the same idiomatic meaning as *spill the beans*, even if the substituted words belong to the same semantic domain.

Some idiomatic expressions are also euphemisms like the English idiom *kick the bucket*, meaning “die.” Euphemisms are figures of speech that function to mitigate potentially offensive language. A euphemism may be an idiomatic expression used for avoiding direct reference to a taboo topic (such as death or sexuality), but single words and other figures of speech may also be used euphemistically. The words and phrases chosen to function as euphemisms often relate

² *Restricted variability* is preferable to other terms for the same characteristic, such as *fixed expression*, *frozenness* or *inflexibility*, because few idiomatic expressions are completely fixed or frozen. On the use of the label *restricted variability* as an indicator of idioms, see Van den Heever 2013: 10, 105–6.

³ A cognitive semantic approach to idioms holds that “they are complex linguistic and conceptual activation networks, which can be unfolded variably” (Langlotz 2006: 178). Idioms are not rigidly fixed expressions, but variation is limited before the change no longer activates the appropriate idiom schema (Taylor 2012: 78–80).

to their taboo referents by metonymy or some similar conceptual relationship. In terms of the guiding concepts for this research — self-censorship and explicitation — euphemisms represent topics most likely to be subject to self-censorship and concealment in translation while idioms are more likely to be subject to explicitation or having their global meaning fully and explicitly revealed in the translation (see Section 3.4.1 for further explanation of terminology). From a cognitive semantic perspective, idioms and euphemisms are related linguistic phenomena in that their proper construal depends on the activation of the appropriate conceptual network (see Section 3.4.3). In translation, the underlying meaning of the source text may be concealed (intentionally or inadvertently) if the translation does not connect to the appropriate concept.

For this survey of related literature, the studies reviewed are limited to those devoted to three key areas of the subject as introduced above: (1) the linguistic or philological analysis of BH figures of speech, (2) the interpretation and translation of BH figures of speech, and (3) the representation of BH figures of speech in the LXX, Peshitta, or Targums. Only a few studies have touched on the general topic of how the ancient versions construed BH figurative expressions.

2.2 Studies on Biblical Hebrew Figures of Speech

The studies in this section include general works on BH style and figures of speech (e.g., Bullinger 1898; König 1900; Dhorme 1923) and works specifically on BH euphemism and idioms (e.g., Opelt 1966; Ullendorff 1979; Pope 1992; Brenner 1997; Schorch 2000; Van den Heever 2013). With the exception of Schorch (2000), the studies tended to be brief and representative with more attention usually given to BH's euphemistic sexual vocabulary (e.g., Ullendorff 1979; Pope 1992; Brenner 1997). The works in this section are also limited to those that stayed close to the subject of figures of speech in BH itself without moving into questions of translation or translatability, either descriptive or prescriptive. The studies that also engaged

the issue of the translation problems raised by BH figures of speech are surveyed in Section 2.3.

2.2.1 E.W. Bullinger (1898)

In 1898, E.W. Bullinger published a detailed catalogue of biblical figures of speech titled *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated*. Bullinger aimed to assist readers of the Bible by highlighting particular nuances of style, the recognition of which could only enhance their appreciation for the biblical text. His extensive categorisation covers over two hundred types of figures, and his study is organised around these categories. The main weakness of his approach, especially with reference to figures from the Hebrew Bible, comes from this categorisation because his types are imported from ancient rhetoric with most categories identified by a label derived from Greek (e.g., *polysyndeton* or *metalepsis*). The use of the labels of ancient rhetoric would be less of a problem if he had proceeded systematically through the biblical text and identified various figures as they arose in context instead of beginning with the categories and then identifying representative examples from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. On the other hand, his definitions of the various figures of speech are helpful since the labels of ancient rhetoric are still used in academic studies of language and literature to identify common stylistic phenomena (e.g., *anaphora*, *hendiadys*, or *paronomasia*).

The study has value as a reference work, but the enormous scope of the work allowed for only minimal attention to be given to any particular figurative expression. Each entry consists of a definition of the figure, some general remarks on usage, and a list of representative examples with a brief explanation of the meaning of the figure in each instance. He has defined in a general way many of the figures of speech that occur in the Bible, but he has not systematically analysed any specific words, expressions, or passages from Hebrew or Greek.

To illustrate, the entry in his index of Hebrew words for the word לֵב (“heart”), a word with one of the broadest figurative semantic ranges in BH, points to a single sentence mentioning the pleonastic use of “heart” for “midst” (Bullinger 1898: 412). Many other figurative uses of “heart” appear in passing in various examples, but at no point does Bullinger discuss the various ways “heart” is used figuratively in the Bible.

His entry on “Euphemismos; or, Euphemy” (i.e., euphemism) consists of five pages (Bullinger 1898: 684–88). He defines the phenomenon in the traditional sense as “a figure by which a harsh or disagreeable expression is changed for a pleasant and agreeable one; or, where an offensive word or expression is changed for a gentle one; or an indelicate word for a modest word” (Bullinger 1898: 684). He lists roughly a dozen examples from the Hebrew Bible and a half dozen from the New Testament, but he does not clearly state the standard topics for which euphemism is used (e.g., death, disease, bodily functions, sexual organs, etc.). This failure to clearly outline the scope of euphemism results in the use of questionable examples in nearly every case where the so-called euphemism does not deal with death. In particular, every New Testament example except for John 11:11 is highly debatable. The result is that many biblical euphemisms will be easily overlooked by readers when the topic is outside the domain of death and burial. The absence of any examples of sexual euphemisms is notable, though perhaps not unexpected in a book written for Christian lay people in England at the end of the nineteenth century. Overall, his contribution to the interpretation of biblical euphemisms is negligible.

2.2.2 E. König (1900)

While researching his monumental work on Hebrew syntax, published in 1897,⁴ Eduard König began making observations about aspects of Hebrew style that were more peripheral to the subject of syntax. After completing the syntax, he returned to the question of style in biblical literature by undertaking a comparative study, published in 1900, that encompassed Biblical Hebrew, the Amarna tablets, the Moabite Stone, other Semitic monumental inscriptions, Jewish deuterocanonical and pseudepigraphal literature, the New Testament, and later Hebrew texts as well as Arab, Greek, and Roman rhetoric.

Like Bullinger, König (1900) organises his study according to established classical categories of stylistic language (e.g., metonymy, synecdoche, pleonasm, palindrome, etc.). He addresses euphemism under the heading of metonymy, spending six pages surveying the standard examples of lexemes used euphemistically in the Hebrew Bible, such as רגל, ערוה, בשר, כב, and ידע (König 1900: 36–42). Due to the tendency in BH for idioms and euphemisms to make use of words for parts of the body, König also mentions some phrasal body idioms in passing when discussing the use of metonymy and synecdoche (e.g., König 1900: 24–25; 59–60). He defines major categories like metonymy (König 1900: 15) and synecdoche (König 1900: 50), but he does not define or explain euphemism directly.

While König's mastery of Hebrew is evident, his evaluation of style and stylistic effects in the Hebrew Bible appears to rely primarily on his intuitions born of detailed textual analysis. His analysis is based not on a clearly articulated methodology but on his subjective sense of style. His conclusions as to the effects stylistic techniques likely had on a Hebrew audience are debatable, but his collection of data on figurative usage is still worth consulting. Since his study

⁴ E. König (1897) *Historisch-comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung).

was not focused on any particular figure of speech, he spends only a few pages on expressions relevant to this study. However, his discussion of well-known euphemisms is useful for the occasional references to how a particular euphemistic phrase was translated in the ancient versions.

2.2.3 P. Dhorme (1923)

Paul Dhorme (1923) conducted a comparative study of the metaphorical use of words related to the body in Hebrew and Akkadian. The work was first published incrementally in *Revue Biblique* from 1920–1923 and then collected in a monograph published in 1923. Dhorme (1923: 2) notes that the metaphorical use of body part terms in Akkadian was quite similar to that found in BH:

L'hébreu et l'akkadien marchent côte à côte dans cet emploi métaphorique des mots qui primitivement étaient appliqués à la désignation du corps de l'homme ou de l'animal. Sans doute, beaucoup de ces métaphores sont naturelles, on les retrouve non seulement dans les langues sémitiques, mais dans toutes les langues.⁵

The value of Dhorme's study is in the comparative lexical data. He does not provide a detailed analysis of any BH idiomatic expressions involving parts of the body. He is more focused on the metaphorical usage of particular lexemes. His comments on BH euphemisms are also no more detailed than those offered by Bullinger (1898) or König (1900). Dhorme (1923: 108) notes the same well-known examples, but the only additional contribution he makes is in identifying parallel Akkadian usages.

⁵ Author's translation: "Hebrew and Akkadian share this metaphorical use of words that were originally applied to the designation of the body of man or animal. No doubt many of these metaphors are natural, they are found not only in the Semitic languages, but in all languages."

2.2.4 I. Opelt (1966)

Ilona Opelt provides a comparative study of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew euphemisms in an entry for the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. The article is predominantly on Greek and Latin euphemisms, but it is helpful to consider BH euphemisms against the Greco-Roman cultural background that Opelt outlines in detail. The cross-cultural nature of euphemistic categories is evident in that euphemism is used for the same subjects in Greek and Latin as are common in BH, English, and others (e.g., sexuality, bodily excretions, death, disease, deities and demons).

Opelt's article is primarily descriptive, summarising key points gleaned from original research published elsewhere (as dictionary and encyclopaedia articles generally do). As a result, most examples are presented without any detailed discussion related to how the examples were identified as euphemisms or how their meanings were determined. Her working definition of euphemism is a useful starting point: "Der E.[uphemism] ist der Tarnname gefährlicher oder anstößiger Dinge" (Opelt 1966: 948).⁶

For Opelt, as with König, her familiarity with the relevant literature made the identification seem self-evident (as is often the case with attempts to clearly define the parameters of what a society deems obscene, offensive, or objectionable).⁷ However, she characterises her entire discussion of the topic according to the notion of speech taboo or

⁶ Author's translation: "Euphemism is a disguised name for dangerous or offensive things."

⁷ A well-known example from modern times arises from the court case of *Jacobellis v. Ohio* that came before the United States Supreme Court in 1964. The case revolved around whether a particular motion picture was obscene, so the decision hinged on how obscenity was defined. In his concurring opinion, Justice Potter Stewart stated they were "trying to define what may be indefinable," but he believed only material considered "hard core pornography" should be restricted as obscene. He acknowledged the difficulty defining what should fall under the label of "hard core pornography" with the famous statement: "I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that" (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*. 378 U.S. 184 [1964]; quoted from <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/378/184/case.html>).

linguistic taboo (“Sprachtabu”), and the relationship between taboo and euphemism has become a well-established finding of sociolinguistics (see Allan & Burridge 2006: 154).

Her brief summary of ancient theories of euphemism derives entirely from classical sources, so she offers no specific insight on a theory of euphemism in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament (OT). Rather, she holds that the general usage areas for euphemism in the OT largely align with the usage areas in Greek and Latin but that Hebrew divides the categories somewhat differently (Opelt 1966: 955). For OT examples, Opelt has relied almost entirely on König (1900), so her list generally covers the same well-accepted set of BH euphemisms including ערוה, בשר, שכב, and ידע. The examples are predominantly substitutions of individual lexemes, not phrasal idioms used euphemistically.

While Opelt discusses Greek and Latin euphemisms at greater length than Hebrew, she does not offer any explicit discussion of how BH euphemisms are rendered in Greek or Latin translations of the OT. Her data may provide a starting point for such comparative work to the extent that the LXX translation of a BH euphemism could be checked against her Greek examples to see whether the translator used a Greek euphemism for a BH one.

2.2.5 E. Ullendorff (1979)

Edward Ullendorff’s 1979 article titled “The Bawdy Bible” is an attempt to trace the contours of the Hebrew Bible’s “vocabulary of lewdness” — a category covering sexuality and related taboos associated with the body (i.e., excretion). Ullendorff’s study is semantic but also broadly conceptual; he addresses particular BH lexemes in the context of the larger topic of how biblical writers referred to sexual behaviour. For example, some biblical texts are surprisingly direct and graphic in their descriptions of lewdness (e.g., Ezek 23) while others are so artful and subtle that the sexual undertones of the content are easily overlooked (e.g., Song of Songs).

Regarding the subject of the present study, Ullendorff (1979: 426) makes some general observations on euphemism among the “various ways in which biblical redactors, Massorettes, and commentators have responded to the requirements of good taste.” It is notable that his assumption appears to be that bringing the text into alignment with “good taste” was the work of later tradents, not the biblical writers themselves. He states, “the Hebrew text could thus be tampered with in a variety of different ways, by introducing vowel changes, by altering suffixes, by consonantal metathesis” (ibid.), referring to the options the Masorettes had for manipulating the text. However, he generally makes no strong claims about who was responsible for the use of euphemism or antiphrasis. For example, whether בִּרְךָ was substituted for “curse” in passages like Job 1:5 by the author or a later redactor is a debated question, and a strong case can be made for either one based on the strength of verbal taboos “associated with feelings of fear and awe” (De Waard 1971: 108).⁸ The important point is that the books of the Hebrew Bible were transmitted over such a long time period that it is inevitable that attitudes toward earthy and ribald content would have fluctuated over the years (Ullendorff 1979: 429). However, diachronic development is not the only factor involved in linguistic variation around this topic. Ullendorff notes the effect that genre may have had on word choice, especially regarding the difference between the bawdy wordplay of narratives in Genesis or Judges and the strong, direct language of Ezekiel (Ullendorff 1979: 431–432).

In the middle of the article, he devotes several pages to remarks related to BH euphemisms, but the treatment is uneven in that he does not really evaluate the strength of the evidence for whether a term should be read as a euphemism. For example, the euphemistic use

⁸ Similarly, it is an open question whether euphemisms were used by biblical writers as a common form of self-censorship or by later copyists concerned to censor the explicit language of what had become a sacred text. On people’s general tendency to censor their language, see Allan 2007: 106.

of **ד** for the phallus may be well-documented (Ullendorff 1979: 441), but it seems less certain that **פֶּת** in Isa 3:17 should be accepted as “the rare word for ‘vulva’” (Ullendorff 1979: 442) since it only occurs one other time in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kgs 7:50). Such an interpretation of **פֶּת** in Isa 3:17 may be reasonable, but it should not be presented with the same certainty with which words such as **ד**, **רַגְלִי**, and **יְדַע** are presented as euphemisms.

While Ullendorff has compiled a helpful amount of data on the “vocabulary of lewdness” in the Hebrew Bible, his interpretations of various words and phrases suffer from his tendency to level the evidence; he moves easily from opinions based on rabbinic literature and medieval Jewish commentators to interpretations derived from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ugaritic to those based on comparative Semitic philology more broadly. What is lacking is detailed semantic analysis of the BH lexemes within the confines of the Hebrew Bible. He mentions various passages where particular terms appear to be used euphemistically, but he rarely discusses multiple examples to establish the range of meaning of a word. He also does not systematically address the BH terms according to their semantic domains. That is, he does not treat the various verbal substitutions for describing sexual intercourse either in relation to each other or with reference to their shared referent. He also only rarely makes reference to the way the BH terminology was understood in the ancient versions. His remarks consist mainly of passing references where the Targum or LXX rendering supports finding a sexual sense for a Hebrew word.

The article is valuable as a collection of key terms for the Hebrew Bible’s sexual vocabulary, and the insights from rabbinic literature and medieval commentators should be given some consideration, though Ullendorff’s study also served to establish that later

interpreters are not always trustworthy guides since they sometimes give “a somewhat prurient sense to passages which do not naturally bear such an interpretation” (Ullendorff 1979: 427).

2.2.6 M. Pope (1992)

Marvin Pope’s commentaries on Job (1973) and the Song of Songs (1977) demonstrated his superb command of the layered nuances of poetic language in the Hebrew Bible. Figurative language plays a prominent role in poetry, and Pope was well-known for his often-inventive solutions for obscure words and difficult phrases. His experience with the subject matter of Song of Songs and Job, especially the use of colourful and indirect language to hint at the intended meaning, allowed him to produce a lengthy treatment of biblical euphemism and dysphemism for the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Pope’s discussion of the subject far exceeds what is found even in more recent encyclopaedia and dictionary entries dealing with biblical euphemisms.⁹

As with Ullendorff, Pope’s article does not break any new ground regarding the semantics and pragmatics of euphemism in BH, but he provides a thorough and well-organised introduction to the subject. He is aware of the general phenomenon of euphemism as a way to mitigate potentially offensive language, and he recognises that biblical euphemisms are used for the same common taboo subjects as in many other cultures: sexuality, excretion, death, and the sacred.

Pope’s familiarity with Ugaritic enables him to provide comparative support for BH euphemisms by pointing to similar euphemistic usages for Ugaritic cognates (e.g., *yd*, “hand”;

⁹ Most Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias do not include articles on biblical euphemism or dysphemism at all. Shalom Paul’s entry in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007) and Scott Noegel’s entry in the *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (2013) are both exactly the sort of brief surveys of the subject one would expect from an encyclopaedia article.

tdmmt, “lewdness”). He also occasionally notes where rabbinic interpretation provides historical precedent for recognising certain words as sexually suggestive.

Pope devotes the most attention to sexual terminology, but he provides a brief discussion of the euphemisms for excretion and an even briefer section on euphemisms related to death. He covers the language associated with sacred subjects in slightly more detail, and it is here where he primarily addresses the use of dysphemism — where insulting labels are selected over neutral or positive designations. For example, disparaging terms, like גלולים (which likely means “dung balls”), were often used to refer to the false gods of Israel’s enemies and the idols Israel chose to worship instead of Yahweh (e.g., Lev 26:30; Ezek 14:3–5).

While Pope closes the article with a survey of modern attempts to sanitise English Bible translations, he does not offer any comments on how the ancient Bible versions dealt with the taboo subject matter that engendered the euphemisms in BH.

2.2.7 A. Brenner (1997)

Athalya Brenner’s (1997) monograph addressed the ways the Hebrew Bible portrayed the subjects of love, desire, and sexuality. As part of this study, she ostensibly offered a “semantic inquiry” that classified “the linguistic data of HB terms for love and desire” (Brenner 1997: 8). While she may have done such a classification of linguistic data, the results are not systematically presented either in the main text or in an appendix. Rather she offers a list of her five preliminary categories, giving two of the five without any representative examples or explanation (i.e., “Similes and metaphors”; “Terms for sexual pleasure”). Further, she never explicitly explains any semantic theory or linguistic methodology that might have informed her

categorisation, though it appears to be basically structuralist.¹⁰ Regarding the methodology used, Brenner makes the puzzling statement that the “methodology adopted, of organizing the relevant linguistic data into a loosely-defined semantic construct, is best explained by itself” (Brenner 1997: 11) — which I take to mean she felt the data’s classification was self-evident. Her survey of the Hebrew Bible’s vocabulary of love, desire, sexuality, and the body would have benefited from a clearer expression of her approach to lexical semantics and linguistic categorisation, however.¹¹ Despite writing in the late 1990s, Brenner shows no awareness of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff & Turner 1989) despite her purported interest in how gender is conceptualised in the Hebrew Bible and despite the fact that so much of the BH vocabulary of love, desire, and sexuality is clearly metaphorical. It is also puzzling that she does not make explicit use of metonymy as a concept for explaining the semantic relationship of many euphemisms to their referents, though she acknowledges the general phenomenon once or twice under the label “contiguity” (e.g., Brenner 1997: 38).

Brenner (1997: 21–28) discusses common sexual euphemisms under the heading “Explicit terms for intercourse,” a label that raises doubts about her understanding of the term “euphemism” since a sexual euphemism is usually a term used to *avoid using* the explicit terms for intercourse. In fact, she refers to “euphemism” regularly but never defines it. It appears that since the Hebrew Bible typically uses euphemisms to refer to sexual intercourse, Brenner has taken these euphemisms as the “explicit terms for intercourse” in BH. Her identification of the common phrasal idioms used for sexual intercourse include the well-known uses of בוא אל

¹⁰ In note 3 on p. 9, she mentions binary opposition in the sense of Saussure’s structural linguistics.

¹¹ Brenner does refer the reader to her other research on the semantics of colour terms and humor, and she does have a more detailed discussion of semantic terminology in her study of colour terms (Brenner 1982: 26–30). Unfortunately, it is not particularly informative for understanding the semantic inquiry in Brenner 1997.

("come to"), ידע את ("know" plus direct object marker), קרב אל ("draw near to"), and שכב עם/את ("lie with"). However, she only indirectly acknowledges that these collocations are somewhat variable and that the use or absence of the preposition or object marker does not necessarily indicate the words are used in their typical sense and not as euphemisms. She implies that such variable use may be double entendre or a source of ambiguity or sexual insinuation (Brenner 1997: 22). For those euphemisms in particular, the linguistic data from her semantic inquiry would have been most helpful. The lack of detailed engagement with specific textual examples makes it difficult to accept many of her generalisations about meaning. It is also surprising that Brenner never mentions Ullendorff's article (1979) since he covered exactly the same ground as the survey of semantic fields in Chapters 2 and 3 of her monograph.

Overall, Brenner's monograph offers thoughtful comment on the issues under discussion, despite a tendency toward psychoanalytic speculation about Oedipus complexes and the like. The lack of any indices, however, renders her work significantly less useful for reference, despite the wealth of lexical data listed throughout.

2.2.8 S. Schorch (2000)

Stefan Schorch (2000) has produced the most comprehensive treatment of BH euphemisms to date with his monograph *Euphemismen in der Hebräischen Bibel* (based on his doctoral dissertation defended in October 1998). Schorch examines in detail the euphemisms used in the Hebrew Bible, paying close attention to the literary and sociohistorical contexts that inform their usage. His method is broadly sociolinguistic, informed by the concept of verbal taboos and by the way different social situations motivate the use of euphemism in different ways (Schorch 2000: 4–21).

Schorch examines the phenomenon of euphemism in the Hebrew Bible both diachronically and synchronically. The first part of his diachronic analysis involves euphemisms found in the recensions of the books of Samuel — namely, the MT, the LXX, and 4QSam^a (Schorch 2000: 36–59). The comparative nature of this section has some bearing on how BH euphemisms were treated in the LXX since his examples suggest a tendency of the LXX toward using euphemistic language in cases where the MT is direct (e.g., 1 Sam 2:33 where MT reads “die” [יָמוּתוּ], but LXX and 4QSam^a read “fall” [πεσοῦνται and יפולו]; Schorch 2000: 39). His findings for this subject show that euphemisms are not used consistently in various textual witnesses — that is, a euphemism may be used in the MT while the LXX might not render it euphemistically, or the Qumran text may reflect a euphemistic usage absent from MT. Schorch’s diachronic analysis also includes comparisons of other parallel corpuses from the Hebrew Bible, comparing MT with the Samaritan Pentateuch (Schorch 2000: 59–66) and comparing passages in the Deuteronomistic History with their parallels in 1–2 Chronicles (Schorch 2000: 66–84).

The most useful contribution of the book is Schorch’s exhaustive lexicon of BH euphemisms (Schorch 2000: 85–214). His entries on the various BH lexemes that may be used euphemistically are quite detailed and include comparative information from a variety of ancient Near Eastern languages such as Akkadian, Aramaic, Egyptian, and even Hittite.

Following the lexicon, Schorch provides a synchronic analysis listing the semantic fields used for BH euphemisms (Schorch 2000: 215–233). His broad categories include death, disease, bodily defects, cursing, blasphemy and naming the deity, sexual practices and related bodily functions and body parts, and excretion and related bodily functions. The second part of his synchronic analysis is a survey of the strategies used to create euphemisms like metaphor,

metonymy, substitution, loan words, synecdoche, antiphrasis, or periphrasis (Schorch 2000: 235–253).

Schorch's work is an invaluable contribution to the study of BH euphemisms. He has produced an essential reference with his lexicon section, and his diachronic analysis of euphemisms in the textual witnesses of 1–2 Samuel provides a helpful starting point for evaluating how BH euphemisms are handled in the LXX even though translation itself was not one of his primary concerns.

2.2.9 C. M. van den Heever (2013)

The recent doctoral dissertation from Cornelius M. van den Heever (2013) is the most thorough semantic classification of BH idioms known to me. His work is notable for how well he sets the study of BH idioms within the context of a larger linguistic theory of idioms and idiomaticity. Other work on BH idioms, such as that of Babut (1999) and Lübke (2002), both discussed in Section 2.3, has not taken the same care to clearly define the characteristics of idioms that allow us to identify BH expressions as idioms. The lack of a linguistically supported definition has resulted in a haphazard selection of what BH phrases are considered idioms. Van den Heever's lengthy review of the linguistic literature on idioms is one of his study's greatest contributions to research on BH because it brings the vocabulary and categorisation on idioms from linguistics into the sphere of those studying Hebrew Bible (Van den Heever 2013: 17–81). He also provides a much shorter review (since there are few studies) of research on BH idioms, demonstrating that a well-articulated definition of idiom for BH was much to be desired (Van den Heever 2013: 83–102).

Van den Heever's analysis of BH idioms was limited to the text of 1–2 Samuel, and he provides a classification of those idioms based on the lexical semantic domains used in the

Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew or SDBH (Van den Heever 2013: 149–71). His corpus produced 104 idioms, including many of the most common idioms found in BH (like *וַשָּׂא פָּנָיִם*, “lift the face”). While his classification is helpful for a semantic analysis of BH idioms, that portion of his study bears little relevance for the present study concerned with how BH idioms were understood and translated by ancient Bible translators. However, his Appendix A listing the idioms from 1–2 Samuel alphabetically offers a useful reference for identifying the occurrences of the figures of speech he classifies. Since many BH figures of speech are idiomatic phrases, his classification is also helpful for identifying which figurative expressions also occurred in his corpus.

2.2.10 Summary

The studies surveyed in this section range from general works on BH stylistics to specific discussions of the interpretation of BH figures of speech. We have seen that detailed treatments of the phenomena of figures of speech in BH have appeared fairly recently with Van den Heever (2013) for idioms and Schorch (2000) for euphemisms. Other studies of BH euphemisms have focused primarily on BH’s sexual vocabulary (Ullendorff 1979; Brenner 1997), though none comes close to the scope of Adams’s (1990) treatment of the sexual vocabulary of Latin.

One shortcoming of many of the studies in this section was a failure to adequately define the category of euphemism and its relationship to idioms. Admittedly, the identification of euphemisms is often not clear-cut due to their pragmatic function of concealing their true referents; however, most of the studies that address euphemism in BH offer little more guidance for classifying euphemisms than “I know it when I see it” (e.g., König 1900; Opelt 1966; Ullendorff 1979; Pope 1992; Brenner 1997).

While Van den Heever (2013), for example, offers a detailed discussion and a list of criteria related to the definition of idiom, he includes a number of euphemistic expressions in his study without further explanation. Van den Heever (2013) was focused more on the linguistic structure of idiomatic expressions than on the discourse function of those expressions, despite the fact that his ultimate goal was classifying the idiomatic expressions by conceptual semantic domain. In the area of classification, he could have offered a bit more explanation on the category of euphemism or accounted for it more explicitly in his classification.

2.3 Studies on Translating Biblical Hebrew Figures of Speech

The studies reviewed in this section address questions related to interpreting BH figurative language that are similar to those studies covered above (see Section 2.2), but all of these studies also have in common a concern for how BH figurative language should be translated. Many of the authors mentioned were either involved with contemporary Bible translation as translators or translation consultants or interested in Translation Studies or both. While most of the studies in the section above focused on BH euphemism, the studies here cover euphemism, metaphor, and idioms, though they all have similar things to say about the challenge of translating figurative language, regardless of what type of figure of speech they happen to have focused upon.

2.3.1 J. de Waard (1971)

In a 1971 article titled “Do You Use ‘Clean Language’? Old Testament Euphemisms and Their Translation,” Jan de Waard produced one of the few discussions of BH euphemisms that also explored the challenges they create for translation. His description and definition of the general phenomenon is heavily indebted to Opelt (1966) and the concept of verbal taboo (see above Section 2.2.3), but his representative examples of OT euphemisms are more thoroughly

explained (De Waard 1971: 109–112). He addresses how to translate these OT euphemisms by considering translations into the African language Bamoun and several English versions (De Waard 1971: 113–115). He prefers dynamic equivalence or conveying the meaning with a similar figure of speech in the target language, but he acknowledges the dilemma faced by a translator (De Waard 1971: 113–114):

For, though the use of euphemisms is universal, it may be more pronounced in one culture than in another. ... What is the task of the translator in such a case? Does he have to translate the Hebrew euphemism literally even if it is not understood, or should he give a direct translation of the meaning of such a euphemism in the receptor language? ... Does he have to translate the Hebrew euphemism literally, or should he replace it by a euphemism typical of the receptor language?¹²

As a modern Bible translator, de Waard's interest in the problem is practical, and his suggested solutions are meant to be prescriptive. His belief that "translation is a translation not only of meaning but also of form" (De Waard 1971: 114) raises the difficulty of translation immensely since figures of speech like euphemisms and phrasal idioms tend to be idiosyncratic and non-compositional. Any attempt to preserve aspects of the form of the source text will inevitably reduce the likelihood that the translator is able to even use "a euphemism typical of the receptor language." His commitment to dynamic equivalence also leads him to attempt "to do justice to the cultural and linguistic values of the source language as well as to those same values in the receptor language" (De Waard 1971: 114).¹³ The challenge of those commitments results in the solution of double translation — translating the figurative meaning while also providing a formal (or literal) equivalent (De Waard 1971: 115).

While the approach of this thesis is descriptive and focused on ancient translations, de Waard's article raises important questions about the nature of translating biblical figurative

¹² De Waard's options between translating literally and translating the meaning (either directly or via an equivalent figure of speech) reflects the same basic division between preserving form and communicating meaning described in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.6.2).

¹³ On the problems with the notion of equivalence in translation, see Section 3.3.3.

language, especially BH euphemisms. The issues raised apply to all translation, even the ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible, so his approaches to translating figurative language are likely to be reflected to varying degrees in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targums.

2.3.2 P. Ellingworth and A. Mojola (1986)

Bible translation consultants Paul Ellingworth and Aloo Mojola also published a brief discussion of translating biblical euphemisms in 1986. Their five-page article introduces the topic of euphemism and discusses how to translate euphemisms “dynamically” (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 139–40). In their view, a translator needs to identify the euphemisms “and then find dynamic equivalences for them within the natural patterns of his own language” (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 139). Their approach to translating euphemisms is the same as that of de Waard (1971: 114) who similarly advocated for the translator finding “a euphemism typical of the receptor language.”

As with most discussions of euphemisms in a cross-cultural context, Ellingworth and Mojola (1986: 139) explain that most cultures have expectations for situations when direct reference to an embarrassing subject is allowed and when it is not. They note that issue “affects both source and receptor languages, though in different ways” (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 139), and they survey how these differing expectations can cause communication problems in translation, especially when euphemisms are translated literally (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 140).

To demonstrate the difficulty of translating euphemism, they give five options for expressing “A had sexual intercourse with B” in English, and they evaluate the options for style and register (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 140–141). In dynamic translations, the preference is usually for vernacular or common expressions rather than expressions that evoke high literary

style or ones that seem too much like technical jargon. So, for example, they find the expression “had sexual intercourse with” to be “high level language, and stylistically rather heavy” while “slept with” is considered “the nearest to common language” (ibid.). Their discussion of these options illustrates the challenge of translating euphemisms dynamically since the translator has to decide what aspects of the expression to communicate. At the same time, the translator has to avoid using an expression with target language connotations that were not part of the source expression. The difficulty of finding figurative expressions that meet this challenge is undoubtedly why many euphemisms either get translated literally or obscured in phrasing that mutes the implications of the text even more than the original (e.g., English translations of biblical euphemisms for sexual intercourse with the bland phrase “had sexual relations with”).

One of their examples provides a notable look into the agency of a translator (see Section 3.3.4). They recount how a translator thought using a sexual euphemism was itself too descriptive:

A translator in one Kenyan language project recently expressed the view that a euphemism for Mt 1.25 in terms of Joseph not “sleeping with” Mary, with all its ambiguities, was saying too much, and was hence embarrassing to use. He preferred the literal translation “knowing”, which was not only contradictory in the context, since Joseph obviously did “know” Mary, but also failed to communicate.

(Ellingworth & Mojola 1986: 141)

This example shows a translator intentionally concealing the meaning of the source text to avoid embarrassment. Our general assumption with translators (ancient and modern) is that they intend for their texts to communicate. While this is typically the case, it is clear that a translator could make a conscious decision *not* to translate in a meaningful way in order to shield his audience from the meaning of the text. In other words, the translator engages in self-censorship, understanding the source text and intentionally concealing that understanding from the readers of the translation.

As translation consultants, Ellingworth and Mojola wrote prescriptively, offering advice on applying the principles of dynamic equivalence to the sensitive subjects languages often engage euphemism for. Like de Waard (1971), their awareness of the cultural aspects involved in dealing with these expressions is helpful for demonstrating the range of approaches that even ancient translators may have employed to deal with euphemism.

2.3.3 J. Ellington (1993)

John Ellington, another Bible translation consultant, published a short piece, barely over two pages, on taboo words in the Bible in 1993. His comments emphasise how the taboos associated with words change over time as the meanings and connotations of words shift. He illustrates this with examples from English Bible translations of terms readers have objected to because of the word's change in meaning or its acquisition of primarily negative connotations (like the English word "piss" used in the King James Bible).

His lesson for Bible translators is simply to be aware of the fact that "a word or name that may be perfectly acceptable today may in the future become taboo" (Ellington 1993: 233). He also cautions translators against using language "that will unduly shock Bible readers and distract them from the essential message of the text" (ibid.; compare Ndhlovu & Botha 2017). He appears aware of the fact that sometimes the shock value is actually part of "the essential message of the text," but he seems fearful that translators may traumatise readers when no such shock was intended by the biblical text. His concluding words are relevant to the issue of euphemisms in Bible translation because he advocates for the use of euphemisms to communicate the appropriate meaning "without causing problems for those who read or hear the Scriptures read" (Ellington 1993: 234). Ellington's discussion is a helpful reminder that even as the meanings of words change now, so, too, did the meanings of terms change over

time during the transmission of the Bible itself and during the long textual history of its earliest translation, the Septuagint.

2.3.4 N. Stienstra (1993)

Nelly Stienstra's 1993 monograph *YHWH is the Husband of His People* is a study of the biblical marriage metaphor in the Hebrew Bible. She approaches metaphor primarily through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) where specific instantiations of a metaphor are thought to reflect a broader conceptual pattern.¹⁴ Stienstra examines metaphor in general as well as biblical and theological metaphor to set the context for the analysis of the marriage metaphor (tediously and frequently referred to as "the titular metaphor of this monograph"). She also spends Chapter 3 on the concept of marriage in biblical Israel in order to set the parameters of the "donor field" for the metaphor, though her contribution in this area is limited by her explicit rejection of any extrabiblical material that might illuminate the ancient Near Eastern social context (Stienstra 1993: 70–72).

Her textual analysis is, unfortunately, not characterised by a detailed semantic study of particular words and phrases from the marriage metaphor. The analysis is more of a general, theological and literary discussion of how Hosea and the other passages involved can be interpreted in light of using "YHWH is the husband of his people" as a guiding metaphorical concept. She devotes Chapter 4 to the marriage metaphor in Hosea and another to how the marriage metaphor plays out in texts "before and after Hosea" (Stienstra 1993: 127). Her study

¹⁴ Technically, Stienstra's approach to metaphor is a blend of Black's "Interaction Theory," Lakoff and Johnson's approach that became the foundation of "Conceptual Metaphor Theory," and a "semantic field theory" derived from Kittay and Lehrer (Stienstra 1993: 22–33). She sees overlap and major points of agreement between the three, especially relating the other two back to Lakoff's theory. Since Lakoff's definition of "metaphorical concept" is central to her analysis, I consider her contribution to be built primarily on CMT.

has value for the way she highlights the discrete metaphors that make up the conceptual structure of the marriage metaphor as a whole.

Stienstra offers very little detailed lexical analysis of the vocabulary of the marriage metaphor, so the importance of her work for the present study lies in her final chapter (Chapter 6) where she discusses translating the marriage metaphor. Stienstra was familiar with translation theory as it stood in the early 1990s, making her acutely aware of the challenge that metaphor presents to translators. Her complaint about the lack of studies on the translation of metaphor has been remedied since the early 1990s (e.g., Alvarez 1993; Kövecses 2005: 131–62; Al-Zoubi, Al-Ali, & Al-Hasnawi 2006), and her supposition that some metaphors are “culture-exceeding” has been largely supported by further work in conceptual metaphor (e.g., Kövecses 2005).

The basic challenge in translating metaphor is that metaphors evoke connotative associations that are often impossible to represent in translation. Further, figurative imagery may evoke the wrong connotations in translation when translated literally. For example, the dragon (δράκων) of Revelation 12 is a negative image in its New Testament literary context, but in Chinese culture, dragons are viewed favourably (Stienstra 1993: 210–11). This type of cultural mismatch with opposing connotations applied to the same imagery is the single greatest problem for translating figurative language since a literal (word-for-word) rendering would convey the exact *opposite* meaning to that intended by the source text. Stienstra’s solution to this problem, however, is *not* to find a target culture metaphor that maps onto the source’s metaphorical meaning as closely as possible, though she acknowledges this strategy may work in limited cases (Stienstra 1993: 211). Instead, she suggests “that most problems can be solved at the level of denotation, even if this is not true at the level of connotation and symbolism” (ibid.). What she means by “the level of denotation” is not entirely clear; the most obvious

answer is that she means for the metaphorical meaning to be explained plainly — but, on the following page, she criticises such an attempt reported by Nida where “uncircumcised of heart” (Acts 7:51) was translated as “with your hearts unprepared” (Stienstra 1993: 212).¹⁵ Stienstra argues strongly against the appropriateness of that translation of the metaphor, criticising it for “obliterat[ing] the connection with Old Testament passages” and “undermining the whole passage” (ibid.). From her discussion of the cultural and theological significance of circumcision, it would appear that the only acceptable solution is to translate the metaphor literally and provide commentary for the reader to familiarise them “with this particular aspect of Jewish religious practice and culture, otherwise the text will remain obscure (if the metaphor is kept) or lose its point (if the metaphor is replaced)” (Stienstra 1993: 213).

Surprisingly, her chapter on the translation of metaphor (and of the biblical marriage metaphor in particular) offers no clear explanation of what options are available to a translator when dealing with a metaphor. However, Stienstra (1993: 188–190) ends the previous chapter with a few observations on the three options she sees available to translators where metaphor is concerned: (1) “eliminate” the metaphor, (2) “replace the metaphor,” or (3) “leave the metaphor as it is.” She does not really explain these options outside of dismissing the first as morally wrong and the second as impossible. Her preference appears to be leaving the metaphor as it is, presumably meaning translate it literally.

By “eliminate” the metaphor, she does not appear to envision a translation that explains the meaning of the metaphor in non-figurative language such as translating “Judah is a lion” with something like “Judah is strong,” so it is unclear what a translation that eliminated the metaphor would look like. She says that if a translator eliminated the metaphor, then it “would

¹⁵ See Nida 1964: 220 for the example.

obviously result in a version of the Bible that no longer deserves the name ... it would not be literature any more either, in short it would be totally uninteresting, not to say superfluous” (Stienstra 1993: 189).

With regard to replacing a metaphor, she argues it is impossible because “every metaphorical concept is unique, no two donor fields structure one and the same recipient field in exactly the same way” (Stienstra 1993: 189). This argument, however, implies a relativist view of language and translation that is stronger than the one she articulates in Chapter 6 (see, e.g., Stienstra 1993: 195–96).¹⁶ She wants to both assert the possibility of translation and deny the possibility of translating a metaphor with a comparable metaphor. In part her theory of metaphor and her understanding of the “interactive” nature of conceptual metaphor makes the impossibility of translating metaphor appear much more acute because she is focusing on the subtle nuances that are inevitably lost when a metaphor is either replaced by another metaphor or translated non-metaphorically. She ascribes to a view of metaphor where human “experience will influence the metaphorical concept, which in its turn will again structure the experience” (Stienstra 1993: 187). What is lost in her understanding of conceptual metaphor appears to be that many metaphorical concepts become conventionalised to the extent that language users no longer actively process the usage as metaphor — making the loss of subtly interacting nuances a likelihood regardless of whether the metaphor is translated (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980).¹⁷

¹⁶ Stienstra’s summary of linguistic determinism or linguistic relativity is overly simplistic and probably presents a version of the theory that no one has held since Edward Sapir and Benjamin L. Whorf in the 1930s. For a recent evaluation of the theory, see McWhorter 2014.

¹⁷ The fact that metaphorical concepts become conventional parts of “everyday language” is evident throughout the examples presented by Lakoff & Johnson 1980. Indeed, one of the primary contributions of CMT was drawing attention to how metaphor had structured conceptualisation and communication so pervasively that language users were no longer consciously aware they were using a metaphorical expression.

Stienstra's argument against replacing a metaphor with another metaphor in the target language is simply that no target language metaphor will carry all the same associations as the source metaphor. Without realising it, she has presented a version of the same strong argument against the very possibility of translation — something she elsewhere explicitly rejects (Stienstra 1993: 197). It is exceedingly rare for a word or expression in one language to have an exact equivalent in another language that encompasses the same semantic domain and invokes the same connotations. Subtlety and nuance are always lost in translation. When Stienstra rejects the notion that translation is impossible, she stresses that “translation is not a matter of all or nothing” (Stienstra 1993: 197). Yet she rejects what would appear to be a helpful strategy for translating figurative language (i.e., using a similar target language figure of speech) on the very grounds that no target metaphor can convey all the associations of the source metaphor.¹⁸

Her opposition to the “replacement” option appears motivated by theological concerns related to the translation of a sacred text. Her rejection of a metaphorical replacement for “uncircumcised of heart” (noted above) was based on the loss of the “rich [theological] associated commonplaces” of the metaphor (Stienstra 1993: 212).¹⁹ Similarly, she dismisses the possibility of translating the biblical marriage metaphor with a different metaphor because “there is no relationship [in modern Western society] in which one of the parties is the superior, though loving and faithful partner of the other, who in his (or her!) turn is also expected to be faithful and loving, and obedient in addition” (Stienstra 1993: 189). She insists that no metaphor can be replaced “either by a literal statement, or by another metaphor without effecting a change

¹⁸ See Section 3.6.2 for further discussion of the translation strategies available for figurative language.

¹⁹ While Stienstra does not use the word “theological” to describe these connotations, her entire defence of translating the metaphor literally revolves around theological notions of covenant and religious identity (Stienstra 1993: 212–13).

of meaning” (ibid.). This insistence appears to also eliminate the option of a translation that explains plainly the meaning communicated figuratively in the source text (a strategy frequently employed in modern Bible translation).

Apparently out of respect for the exact wording of the source text, Stienstra (1993: 189) advocates the “third option” to “leave the metaphor as it is.” By this, she appears to mean translating the word or expression in a word-for-word fashion. With the “dragon” example noted earlier, the Chinese word for “dragon” would be used even though it evokes the wrong associations. The translator would be responsible for offering a footnote explaining that the “dragon” imagery has negative connotations. The same would go for the circumcision example. Unfortunately, Stienstra never explicitly explains how this might work for translating a concept like “circumcision” that is theologically loaded in biblical culture into a culture that lacks the very idea of circumcision.

The solution to the problem of the cultural gap, and consequently the differences in metaphorical concepts, between biblical days and our times seems to lie in a sound knowledge of biblical culture rather than in replacing the metaphors, the latter being just no solution at all. (Stienstra 1993: 190)

She places the burden on readers to familiarise themselves with biblical culture, and the translators should bear the weight of that burden through adding notes to the translation explaining the cultural background of the Bible (Stienstra 1993: 190). What if the practice of circumcision is unknown in a culture? Or what if it is known but has deeply negative connotations? What if a culture possesses a different ritual for marking community identity? Why should replacing the circumcision imagery with the familiar language of group identity from the target culture be treated as somehow inferior or wrong?²⁰

²⁰ Kroneman (2004: 299), a missionary Bible translator, concludes that Stienstra’s strong statements on this subject indicate that she “is not primarily concerned with translation situations where the audiences share little common ground with the culture and worldview of the Bible and where ‘radical translation’ is being called for.”

These questions point to the ultimate failure of Stienstra's monograph to offer a workable solution to the problem of translating biblical metaphor. She recognises the problem but quickly dismisses all the potential solutions, leaving translators with the cumbersome burden of literal translation combined with detailed explanatory notes teaching the reader about biblical culture. Even her descriptions and evaluations about how Dutch and English Bible translations handle parts of the biblical marriage metaphor prove unhelpful because she critiques most renderings for their insensitivity to the subtle nuances of the marriage metaphor, believing a literal translation the only way to preserve those nuances.

2.3.5 J-M. Babut (1999)

In contrast with most of the studies surveyed in Section 2.2, Jean-Marc Babut (1999) approached the subject of BH idioms via the well-defined methodology of componential analysis, an approach from structuralist semantics.²¹ Babut is also one of the few to address the problem that idiomatic expressions present for Bible translation. In his chapter on "Definitions and Inventory," he makes occasional observations on translation problems in the course of his discussion on defining BH idiomatic expressions (see, esp., Babut 1999: 13–22), though he does not directly address the question of how ancient Bible translations handled the BH idioms. In his analysis of specific examples, he sometimes comments on how a particular idiom was

²¹ For an overview of componential analysis, see Geeraerts (2010: 70–80). Babut's method derives almost exclusively from Nida (1975), however, without any reference to the linguistic literature on componential analysis from the 1980s or 1990s (see Babut 1999: 8–9; 65–74). For a publication of a dissertation that first appeared in French in 1995, Babut's bibliography is surprisingly outdated, especially in the area of linguistics where the most recent work cited in linguistics dates to 1976. In fact, fully half of the works referenced in his bibliography date to the 1960s and 1970s, including the majority of the works related to his linguistic methodology.

represented in the LXX or other ancient translations, but, in those cases, he is more concerned with the larger question of the general translatability of biblical idioms.²²

His definition of idiom is somewhat limited and problematic since he denies idiom status to any expressions that “can be understood perfectly well on the basis of their constituent parts” (Babut 1999: 8). Based on that criterion, his choice of componential analysis as a methodological framework is questionable since that method of semantic analysis is based on understanding meaning by isolating the components of a lexical item. If idioms should be understood as “semantic units” (ibid.), then a componential analysis of an idiom should involve isolating the components and determining meaning based on the unit’s “constituent parts.” Babut seems unaware of this basic logical tension between his method and his definition of idiom.

In excluding phrases that have any sort of compositionality, Babut thinks an expression like אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ (“whatever your hand will find”; Judg 9:33; 1 Sam 10:7; 25:8; Ecc 9:10) is not idiomatic because “the meaning of the whole can be deduced from the meaning of its constituent parts” (Babut 1999: 21). He finds the metonymic use of “hand” for the whole person to be straightforward and “find without having looked for” to be within the normal semantic range of the verb (ibid.). While this idiom has limited compositionality and is decipherable on that basis, others consider it still an idiomatic expression (McCarter 1980: 183; Van den Heever 2013: 215). Obviously, the metonymic use of “hand” alone indicates this is a figure of speech. Further, the context of its use in Judg 9:33 reveals it could also be used euphemistically since the implication in that passage is that the “hand” will be wielding a sword and will find enemies

²² I address Babut’s analysis of specific idioms in Chapter 4 where my examples include some of the BH idioms that he covers.

to strike down. The phrase in Judg 9:33 serves to avoid explicitly saying the enemies should be killed.

Despite occasionally discounting BH phrases as idioms that most would consider idiomatic expressions, Babut has provided a useful inventory of BH idiomatic expressions, noting their frequency of occurrence (Babut 1999: 38–61). He recognises the list is incomplete and open to debate (Babut 1999: 37), but his inventory provides a helpful reference for finding potential idiomatic expressions.

Babut’s criteria for identifying idiomatic expressions include the requirements that the expression have an “exocentric meaning” (i.e., a meaning that is distinct from its “transparent or literal sense”), that it exhibits “strong stereotypicality” (i.e., a regularly recurring collocation), and that it is monosemic, that is, “it has only one meaning” (Babut 1999: 27). His strict adherence to this last criterion is the most puzzling aspect of his study since a BH idiom like **נִשָּׂא פְּנִים** is demonstrably polysemous (see Lübke 2002: 48). Babut also appears to be alone in making monosemy an essential feature of idioms (Van den Heever 2013: 115–116). While most idiomatic expressions appear to have very specific, limited meanings, that fact does not logically exclude the possibility of a polysemous idiom.

The majority of Babut’s study is devoted to analysing seven different BH idiomatic expressions, and all but the last of his chapters are titled with English glosses of those idioms — “To Speak on the Heart,” “His Ears Will Ring,” “Stiffen the Neck,” “If I Have Found Favor,” “May I Find Favor in Your Eyes,” “To Fill Behind the Lord,” and “Šub Šebut.” The different glosses he uses to title the chapters on “finding favour” obscure the fact that he has split the usage of the idiom into two distinct idiomatic expressions (undoubtedly due to his requirement that idioms be monosemic). Both chapters deal with the basic idiom **מָצָא הוּן בְּעֵינַי** (“find favour

in the eyes of *X*”), but Babut has separated a subset of the occurrences as volitives, treating them as a distinct, stereotypical expression (Babut 1999: 173–74).

Overall, Babut has usefully demonstrated that many BH idioms exhibit some level of syntactic variability and are not really fixed or frozen expressions. At times, his analyses may be debatable (as with the “speak to the heart” expression), and his definition of idiom is too restrictive by excluding any expressions that have a hint of endocentric (transparent) meaning or that appear polysemous (on endocentric versus exocentric meaning, see Section 3.4.1.3).

Regarding the translation of BH idioms, Babut suggests, in conclusion, that componential analysis could assist a translator in evaluating the source phrase and determining if a potential equivalent phrase in the target language was truly appropriate (Babut 1999: 281). He believes such an analysis would provide a “control on translation” to allow for objective evaluation of competing options (*ibid.*). While Babut offers passing comments on the problems inherent in translating BH idioms, he does not offer any clear direction on how he believes idioms should be translated. It seems likely from his general remarks that he would favour using an equivalent idiomatic expression.

2.3.6 J. C. Lübbe (2002)

John C. Lübbe’s 2002 article “Idioms in the Old Testament” deals with BH idioms that use the verb נָשַׁב . Within the confines of a journal article, Lübbe devotes little attention to the definition of idiom and no attention to any previous studies on BH idioms. He briefly surveys some basic definitions of idiom derived from literary and linguistic studies, but he proceeds with a working definition based on that of Nida and Taber: “An expression consisting of several words and whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of the individual words ... also called

exocentric expression.”²³ Lübbe supplements this definition with comments from linguist R. L. Trask on the syntactic flexibility evident with some idioms. His stated goal is to assist in the identification of idiomatic expressions “for lexicographical and translation purposes” (Lübbe 2002: 46).

Lübbe identifies nineteen different idioms that involve the verb נָשַׁב. This verb was selected because “it appears to have been particularly prolific in producing expressions that need to be treated as a unit in order to determine the meaning of that group of words” (Lübbe 2002: 47). By analysing the occurrences of these nineteen idioms, Lübbe is able to see the possible syntactic and semantic variations that may occur without the phrase losing its idiomatic meaning.

Following his analysis, Lübbe comments on the way the idiomatic uses of נָשַׁב have been neglected in the standard dictionaries for BH (Lübbe 2002: 56–59). In general, he is critical of these dictionaries for their failure to distinguish literal and figurative meanings and for the absence of any attempt to explain the development of idiomatic expressions.

His final section addresses how idioms are rendered in modern English Bible translations. Lübbe begins the section by noting “the literalness with which some modern versions render these idioms either makes the rendering meaningless, or suggests a nervousness on the part of the translators” (Lübbe 2002: 59). Ironically, Lübbe criticises translators for rendering figures of speech literally while Stienstra criticises them for *not* translating literally. However, Lübbe’s examples reveal clearly that literally translating an idiom will lead either to a translation without meaning or to a translation where the reader must strain to determine the meaning concealed

²³ While Lübbe (2002: 46) cites “Nida and Taber (1982:202),” he neglected to list the work in his bibliography. The quoted definition of idiom, however, matches that from Nida & Taber (1969: 202).

by the unfamiliar expression. His disappointment with the BH dictionaries stems from the fact that no translator would find help there for deciphering an unfamiliar BH idiom. Without BH dictionaries that offer explanations of idiomatic expressions, modern Bible translators will continue to represent the form of the source text when they are uncertain of the meaning. That literal rendering will most likely “obscure the meaning” for the intended audience (Lübbe 2002: 62).

2.3.7 D. Kroneman (2004)

Dick Kroneman’s 2004 doctoral dissertation is a detailed study of the translation of the biblical metaphor “The LORD is my shepherd.” Kroneman engaged with theories of metaphor, translation studies, anthropology, linguistics, and communication theory in this wide-ranging treatment. As a Bible translation consultant working out of Papua, Indonesia, Kroneman had first-hand experience with the challenge of translating biblical imagery in a non-Western culture for an isolated language group (working with the Una language). Being in the field allowed Kroneman to test ways of translating metaphors. He discovered that “literal (unchanged) renderings of biblical metaphors are often misunderstood” because the audience uses cognitive frames from their own cultural worldview (Kroneman 2004: v).

Kroneman has produced an exhaustive account of biblical shepherd/sheep imagery, grounding his work in contemporary metaphor theory and Translation Studies. His work divides into four major sections. The first part is a methodological introduction to metaphor (Kroneman 2004: 1–70). The second part is a survey of the shepherd metaphor throughout the Hebrew Bible with a special focus on Ps 23 and a closing survey of the imagery in the New Testament (Kroneman 2004: 71–198). The third section is another detailed methodological introduction — this one focused on Translation Studies and Bible translation with a focus on the translation of metaphor (Kroneman 2004: 199–317). The final section is an in-depth look at the Una

language and various attempts to translate Ps 23 and other biblical metaphors (Kroneman 2004: 317–551). The dissertation contains a massive amount of information and research in addition to the detailed methodological surveys of metaphor, Translation Studies, and translation of metaphor.

Kroneman deals broadly with translating metaphor, not with translating idiomatic or euphemistic expressions, so his detailed analysis of the biblical shepherd metaphor is less relevant here than his findings on how figurative language could be translated and whether certain types of translation were successful. For example, one of his guiding research questions concerns how metaphors were translated into Papuan and Austronesian languages (Kroneman 2004: 545). The research data reveal six possibilities (*ibid.*; emphasis original):

1. “the *metaphor* has been kept in the translation without any explication”
2. “the metaphor has been rendered as a *simile without explication*”
3. “the metaphor has been rendered as a *simile with additional explication*”
4. “the metaphor of the source text has been replaced by a *vernacular metaphor* of the target language”
5. “the metaphor has been replaced by a *literal rendering* in the target language”
6. “the metaphor has been rendered in a different way”

These options subsume Stienstra’s three approaches (eliminate, replace, or leave the metaphor) and touch on de Waard’s approach to translating euphemisms (using a target language figure of speech or explaining the meaning with a literal rendering). Kroneman’s six options fit into four general categories:

1. The metaphor can be translated literally (“kept in the translation”), not explained.
2. The metaphor can be translated figuratively and explained.
3. The metaphor can be translated with a target language metaphor.
4. The metaphor can be translated non-metaphorically.

The core ideas behind Kroneman’s options also overlap with the four basic strategies identified in Section 3.6.2 for translating figures of speech. Kroneman’s analysis is valuable for understanding figurative language in translation because these observations are based on real examples of how practicing translators handled figurative language. The nature of translation suggests that even ancient biblical translators likely had only the same options available to them. When the ancient versions translate a biblical figure of speech in a way that aligns with a common strategy other translators have used to deal with figurative language, then we have stronger grounds for identifying the rendering as a purposeful attempt to handle the figure of speech — even when the strategy appears to have been to leave the imagery unchanged.

2.3.8 A. Warren-Rothlin (2005; 2013a; 2013b)

Andy Warren-Rothlin works as a Bible translation consultant for the United Bible Societies in central Africa. His academic work focuses on Biblical Hebrew linguistics and translation, especially the issue of how BH idioms and euphemisms can be translated in an African cultural context. He addresses this topic in a 2005 essay and in two articles for the *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* — “Euphemisms and Bible Translations” (Warren-Rothlin 2013a) and “Idioms: Biblical Hebrew” (Warren-Rothlin 2013b).

Warren-Rothlin (2005) deals with BH body idioms in the Psalms. He opens the essay with an example of how an overly-literal translation of the Hebrew can sometimes produce phrasing that has a different idiomatic meaning in the target language. In this case, the RSV translation of Ps 1:1 “stands in the way of sinners” was read by an African translator with the idiomatic English sense of “obstruct,” and so the translator’s rendering “into one northern Nigerian language read, ‘Blessed is the man who ... does not obstruct sinners’” (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 195). Warren-Rothlin continues with several more examples of how figurative language can be misunderstood and concludes (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 196):

Literal Bible translations, which form English expressions from Hebrew idioms, potentially do a great disservice to the uninitiated reader, and that those most committed to the reliability of the biblical texts have often been the least reliable interpreters of their meaning.

After defining idiomatic language and introducing the linguistic areas relevant for interpreting idioms, Warren-Rothlin surveys BH idioms generally (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 198–203) before turning to body idioms (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 203–212). Warren-Rothlin (2013b) also provides a general overview of BH idioms with similar examples. The recent survey offers more detail on specific examples of idiomatic phrases and supplements the earlier work with more linguistic background.

Warren-Rothlin (2005: 202) focuses on body idioms because terms for body parts commonly occur in idioms. It would appear that this commonality is cross-cultural since he does not limit the observation to BH idioms and offers examples from both English and Hebrew (compare Van den Heever 2013: 100n40). In fact, the cross-cultural use of body part terms in idioms could explain the failure of biblical interpreters to always recognise the use of BH idiomatic phrasing since the figurative use is analogous to idiomatic usage from their native languages. For example, Babut (1999) discards any expressions with “endocentric” (transparent or self-evident) meaning as not actual idioms, but the transparency of those expressions could be due to a general familiarity with body idioms.

Warren-Rothlin (2005: 201–202) introduces the concept of *idiomatisation* — a four-stage process through which some idioms develop from “culture-specific symbolic acts” into idioms and speech acts. He demonstrates the process by describing how “doffing the hat” in English society shifted from a literal act of respect and deference to a symbolic speech act of thanks or praise (“I take my hat off to you”). While we cannot necessarily trace the cultural symbolic acts behind BH idioms, it is still helpful to have a model for comparison of how such *idiomatisation*

can occur, and Warren-Rothlin is the only BH scholar known to me who has offered this potential solution to the question of how BH idioms develop. One of Lübbe's (2002) criticisms of BH dictionaries was precisely that they did not attempt to explain how any of these expressions developed.

For BH body idioms in particular, Warren-Rothlin (2005: 205) draws on the linguistic concept of grammaticalisation to explain how phrases with BH body part terms came to function grammatically (e.g., as a preposition like לִפְנֵי for “before”). He notes how body part terms are grammaticalised in similar ways in other languages, so it is not a phenomenon unique to BH.

Warren-Rothlin (2005: 209–212) uses this background on the development of idioms to discuss the importance for Bible translation of distinguishing literal meaning from idiomatic meaning. He finds it naïve for translators to stop at the level of translating the words instead of looking at whole phrases within a discourse context (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 209). Failure to look at phrases in context may lead to translations that misrepresent the meaning of the source text. He uses speech act theory and the notion of symbolic actions to help determine when body terms are used literally and when they should be taken idiomatically. For example, when the subject of the act does not possess the body part in question, it is a clear case of idiomatic use.

Other cases are less straightforward since the described act could be at any stage of the idiomatisation process. If the symbolic act was still in use in biblical society, then the phrase could have been used literally. The biblical references to swearing by putting the hand under the thigh help illustrate the process (Warren-Rothlin 2005: 211). In Gen 24:2, Abraham tells his servant to put his hand under his thigh and swear, and in 24:9, the text states plainly that the servant did so. However, when Jacob makes the same request of Joseph in Gen 47:29–31, no

symbolic act is reported. Rather, Joseph replies that he will carry out Jacob's wishes, Jacob orders him to swear to it, and Joseph does so. If Joseph symbolically placed his hand under Jacob's thigh while swearing, the text does not state it explicitly. Warren-Rothlin (2005: 211) suggests that "Joseph already understood the expression as an idiom ... [and] could have performed the act by saying, 'I hereby put my hand under your thigh.'"

Warren-Rothlin (2005) has advanced the interpretation of BH idioms by introducing linguistic processes like idiomatisation and grammaticalisation into the conversation. The possibility that body idioms derive from a symbolic act is worth serious consideration, but the biblical corpus may be too limited to truly determine whether an act was literally undertaken or only symbolically as a speech act. For example, the symbolic act of removing the sandal to confirm an agreement in Ruth 4:7–8 is carried out literally, but the narrator takes pains to explain the significance of the act.²⁴ Such a symbolic act does not appear to have engendered an idiom where saying "I take my sandal off to you" means agreeing to a contract, though the act of throwing a sandal on a land appears to symbolise a claim of ownership (Ps 60:10).

Warren-Rothlin (2013a) also looks at the challenge presented by translating BH euphemisms. He notes that BH uses euphemisms to avoid reference to culturally taboo body parts and their functions. He surveys the same common BH euphemisms, but he adds observations about the difficulty translating some concepts in African cultures. For example, the common word for "circumcision" in some African languages is derived from a term meaning "to Islamize" (Warren-Rothlin 2013a: 866). Warren-Rothlin (ibid.) notes that in these cultures and others where circumcision is an unknown practice, translators "may often have to

²⁴ In Deut 25, the symbolic act of removing the sandal signifies breach of agreement, but the distinction may lie in the difference between drawing off (שלף) one's own sandal and having an injured party pull off (חלץ) the sandal of someone who reneged on a legal obligation. The act makes sense in both contexts if the sandal served as a physical symbol of the agreement.

resort to an explicit phrase such as ‘to cut the skin of the penis’ (Kirundi, Burundi) or even ‘to cut the penis’ (Birifor, Ghana).”

According to Warren-Rothlin (*ibid.*), some body parts tabooed in Western contexts are spoken of quite freely in African cultures, though restricted by other social considerations. European influence on older Bible translations often resulted in translations with “unnaturally euphemistic” language. The newer translations, however, tend to use “target-language euphemisms” when appropriate. The general strategy for translating BH euphemisms in contemporary Bible translation in Africa appears to be to follow local norms and translate with euphemisms that are current in the target language for the same taboo subjects for which the BH euphemisms were used (Warren-Rothlin 2013a: 868).

2.3.9 Summary

The studies reviewed above engage the subject of interpreting BH figures of speech with the added concern of how the meaning of figurative language can be communicated in translation or made apparent for translators. The authors surveyed in this section typically had a professional interest in the translation of the Bible and sought solutions for challenges currently faced in Bible translation. Their preference on translating figurative language tends toward favouring meaning over form (Ellingworth & Mojola 1986; Babut 1999; Lübbe 2002; Kroneman 2004; Warren-Rothlin 2005), but the nature of translating a sacred text leaves a few with strong feelings about preserving the source text’s form as much as possible (e.g., De Waard 1971; Stienstra 1993).

2.4 Studies on Biblical Hebrew Figures of Speech in the Ancient Versions

To my knowledge, no book-length studies have focused on the question of how BH figures of speech were rendered in the ancient Bible versions. The topic was covered briefly and indirectly

in two older books. Two essays have addressed the issue of BH idioms in the Septuagint, and a few essays explored how BH figurative language fared in the Aramaic versions.

2.4.1 H. Thackeray (1909)

Henry St. John Thackeray (1909: 39–44) mentions a few BH idioms in passing as part of a larger discussion of the Semitic influence on Septuagintal Greek. Since he is looking for Semitisms, he mainly notes the literal renderings of stock BH phrases in the LXX, often labelled as “calques.”²⁵ However, he makes the interesting observation that the literal Greek renderings of BH body idioms are often “passable, if unidiomatic, Greek expressions” (Thackeray 1909: 42).

Thackeray (1909: 41–42) also notes that literal translations of BH idiomatic phrases are more likely to be found in the books of the LXX already known to be more literal than literary (e.g., Judges versus the Pentateuch). It is unfortunate that Thackeray did not devote more attention to the question of how BH idioms were handled in the LXX since his familiarity with classical Greek gave him an advantage in evaluating whether a phrase was idiomatic Greek or possibly a development derived from Semitic influence. For example, concerning the BH idiom **נִשְׂא פְּנֵי**, he summarises the variations of the idiom found in the LXX and concludes they reveal “the three stages through which the Hebrew idiom finds its way into Greek: first the possible but unidiomatic version, then the baldly literal, then the new Greek words coined from the literal version” (Thackeray 1909: 44). His view of the development depends somewhat on his debatable categorisation of the books of the LXX, but his intuition about the stages is not

²⁵ I use the term “calque” in its broad sense as referring to mimetic and stereotypical translation where simple glosses are slotted in for the constituents of the source phrase. With a calque, the target language glosses should be interpreted through the semantics of the source language lexemes. See Section 3.4.1.6.

unlike the stages of the process of idiomaticisation (see Section 2.3.6 above).²⁶ In the case of idioms borrowed from BH in the LXX, some of those phrases eventually developed into biblical Greek idioms in the sense that New Testament Greek has words and phrases that appear to have developed from the LXX adaptations of BH idioms (e.g., *προσωπολημπτέω* of James 2:9).²⁷ Thackeray does not elaborate further on the tendencies found in the LXX for BH idioms.

2.4.2 J. Barr (1979)

James Barr's (1979) short monograph on *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* includes a few pages (Barr 1979: 40–44) on “the “accuracy and level of semantic information, especially in cases of metaphor and idiom” (Barr 1979: 20). He discusses the basic translation problem presented by the lack of full alignment in the range of meaning of a source term and a target language equivalent, but he mainly addresses the larger issue of what “literal” means when figurative language like metaphor is involved. Barr (1979: 40–41) presents the “Prayer Book version” of Ps 95:1 as an example where the Prayer Book has translated the Hebrew word צוּר (“rock”) as “strength” because it is used in the verse as a metaphor for strength while the Authorised Version (AV) has used “rock”:

In a case like this we say that the AV is “literally” correct: the meaning of the Hebrew word is “rock” and not “strength”. But, of course, as the other side would express it, the “real” meaning here is not “rock”: The Psalmist is not telling us to worship a rock, but to worship God, who is like a rock in respect of his strength. There are thus two levels to be considered, the literal meaning of the word as a normal linguistic unit, and the more ultimate significance, the quality or reality that is actually being spoken about. The result is paradoxical: literal translation preserves the metaphor, free translation renders the further significance of the metaphor but destroys the actual metaphor itself. The reader of the Prayer Book version as quoted above no longer knows that the text is a metaphor based on the word “rock”. (Barr 1979: 41)

²⁶ Barr (1979: 9) offers a succinct critique of Thackeray's classification; the main objection is the lack of clarity surrounding the parameters Thackeray used to make his judgments.

²⁷ Thackeray 1909: 44; see also BDAG, s.v. “*προσωπολημπτέω*.” On the general issue of Semitisms in the New Testament, see Moule 1959: 171–91; Moulton & Howard 1963: 413–485.

Barr has summed up the fundamental problem with translating figurative language. A literal translation may preserve a figure of speech at the expense of communicating the significance of the expression. A translation that explains the meaning often does so at the expense of the figurative imagery.

Most of Barr's examples in this brief section are individual words used metaphorically. Barr (1979: 41) sees the main issue with translating metaphor being whether the translation offers "the linguistic semantic value of the words [or] the exegetical-theological value of the reference." The Targums provide many examples where they have replaced a BH metaphor with what has been interpreted as the metaphor's referent. Barr (1979: 41) notes the rendering of כוכב ("star") and שבט ("sceptre") from Num 24:17 in Targum Onqelos as מלכא ("king") and משיחא ("messiah"), respectively, to show how the translation can provide the interpreted meaning of the metaphor and lose the original wording of the source.

Barr does not explore the issue beyond providing some representative examples since the primary topic of his monograph was various types of literalism in the ancient Bible versions. He has, however, demonstrated that the meaning of "literal" in a translation is not self-evident when figurative language is involved.

2.4.3 J. Lee (1983)

John Lee (1983) produced a study of the terminology of the LXX of the Pentateuch. His goal is demonstrating the affinities that LXX Greek had with the Koine Greek of its time. He rejects the argument that LXX Greek was hopelessly corrupted by Semitic influence, believing instead that it reflects the normal Koine Greek of the translators. In topic and purpose, Lee's study has little relevance on the present research. His contribution to the question of how the LXX

rendered BH idioms is covered in his second chapter on the nature of LXX Greek (Lee 1983: 11–30).

Lee (1983: 11, 24) notes the well-known use of calques (or imitative renderings) of BH idioms in the LXX (as pointed out by Thackeray 1909 and many others) and acknowledges the overall challenge of defining Semitisms and Hebraisms in the LXX. Lee (1983: 17) mentions the typical examples brought out to demonstrate the existence of Semitisms in the LXX like the imitation of BH's infinitive absolute constructions by using a Greek finite verb with participle.

For the present study, Lee's (1983: 24–29) discussion of cases where the LXX translators rendered BH idioms into idiomatic Greek (or at least did not use mimetic/imitative word-for-word renderings) is most relevant. Over a few short pages, he cites roughly fifty verses where the LXX did not use a word-for-word imitation of the Hebrew to represent a Hebrew idiomatic phrase. He states this group of examples is “only a small selection” and that similar examples “are to be found throughout the Pentateuch” (Lee 1983: 25).²⁸ The implication for analysing the LXX treatment of BH idioms is that we should not assume the translators operated with a default tendency to use calques of BH idioms. They may have done so regularly, especially in later books of the LXX, but the option of translating idiomatically was known to them.

2.4.4 B. Grossfeld (1996)

Bernard Grossfeld (1996) wrote an essay analysing how the BH idiom *מצא הן בעיני* (“to find favour in someone's eyes”) was rendered in the ancient Aramaic Bible translations. He looks at the Peshitta and the Targums, including the Samaritan Targum. He also included variations

²⁸ His assessment is confirmed by my analysis of some of the same BH idioms in Chapter 4.

of the idiom which included substitution of the verbs **נתן** or **נשא** for **מצא** and one occurrence of **הן** with **בעיני** in a verbless clause (Prov 17:8).²⁹

Most of Grossfeld's essay focuses on the Aramaic terms most commonly used as equivalents of **הן** in these expressions: **חסדא**, **חנא**, and **רחמיין**. He attempts to explain why some Aramaic versions prefer one term over the other, and he also investigates the possible significance of the use of double translation where two of the Aramaic terms are used together to stand for the single **הן** from the Hebrew text. In part, he aims at sorting out the semantic relationship of the three Aramaic terms. Grossfeld (1996: 54) considers the Aramaic cognate **חנא** to be the "literal" equivalent, so the predominant use of the other terms may have interpretive significance related to the range of meaning all three terms had in Aramaic.

Grossfeld's examples are laid out well in two appendices to the essay which allow for a brief scan of the consistencies and anomalies in the renderings of the BH idiom. His discussion of the problem reveals an understanding of translation as replacing source language constituents with equivalent target language constituents, but when looking at Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, the syntactic and semantic similarities allow for much closer stylistic imitation of the Hebrew in the Aramaic. If a translator has a pattern of close imitation of the Hebrew, it is likely significant when he departs from the expected pattern. However, the validity of using translation equivalence as a guide for explaining semantic development in Aramaic seems questionable. While it is clear from the data that the Aramaic translators balanced consistency

²⁹ It is highly unlikely that the idiomatic meaning of **מצא הן בעיני** is present in Prov 17:8. The phrase in question is **אבן הן השחד בעיני בעליו** ("A stone of favour [is] the bribe in the eyes of its possessor"). None of the typical syntactic relations or semantic roles characteristic of this idiom is present in Prov 17:8. On the meaning, syntax, and distribution of this idiom in BH, see Vardi 2015.

with occasional variety in their choice of equivalents for this BH idiom, it is less clear that such choices reflected semantic development over mere stylistic variation.

Grossfeld has compiled useful data on the Aramaic translation of BH $\eta\eta$, but he does not fully explore the significance the information may have for interpreting the idiomatic phrase as a whole. In other words, he offers a treatment of the BH idiom in Aramaic translations, but he does not really discuss the idiomatic phrase as a lexical unit. Most of his attention is focused on the variations in Aramaic renderings for the key word $\eta\eta$, not on the meaning of the expression either in BH or Aramaic. His study would have benefitted from a clearer statement of what an idiom was and what it meant to translate idiomatic meaning. Instead, he treats all collocations where the key words occur in proximity, neglecting to fully explore whether idiomatic meaning was present in BH.

2.4.5 R. Kasher (1999)

Rimon Kasher (1999) wrote an article on metaphor and allegory in the Aramaic Bible versions (including the Targums, Peshitta, and Samaritan Targum). While he does not specifically address stock metaphorical expressions like idioms or euphemisms, Kasher (1999: 54) discusses the general question of whether the Aramaic translations “leave the metaphor intact or interpret it in some way or another.” In that sense, his treatment of the subject is similar to Barr’s (1979) because he is also aware that the options for translating the “literal” or “plain meaning” of the text are not clear cut when the source text is using figurative language (Kasher 1999: 56).

Based on Aramaic renderings of the phrase $\text{וַאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׂרִים}$ (“and I carried you on eagle’s wings”) from Exod 19:4, Kasher (1999: 57–64) finds three strategies evident: (1) literal translation; (2) exegetical; and (3) twofold exegetical. The literal translations are the

versions that matched the Hebrew word-for-word and added nothing — in this case, only the Samaritan Targum. He asserts that the literal translation of the Samaritan Targum means “the meaning of the passage is unintelligible” (Kasher 1999: 57), but he does not explain how this is any more or less “unintelligible” than the metaphor would have been in the Hebrew text. Kasher (1999: 58) appears to be disappointed that the literal rendering leaves us with “no idea how the Samaritan Targum *interpreted* the passage: literally or as a metaphor/simile” (emphasis original). He is well-aware “that the translation of such expressions reflects a decision between adherence to the text or explication thereof” (ibid.), but his attitude toward these literal renderings suggests he favours a method of translation that interprets the text in order to remove ambiguity and uncertainty.

His examples of “exegetical” renderings mostly convert the metaphor to a simile, a subtle change in figurative language that makes the non-literal nature of the statement explicit. That is, by using a simile (explicit comparison) instead of a metaphor (implicit comparison), the translators make certain that readers realise God does not actually have “eagle’s wings.” Kasher (1999: 58) places the renderings of Targum Onqelos and the Peshitta in this category, though the addition of a word for “like” or “as” (כִּי in Targum Onqelos and כְּ in Peshitta) is the *only* thing separating the renderings from being purely literal. In fact, that addition is not explicative enough for Kasher who thinks the rendering “obscures the intention of the text” (ibid.) He prefers the rendering in the Palestinian Targums which generally add imagery about Israel being carried on clouds. These are the true “exegetical” examples that go further in explaining the meaning of the biblical metaphor, yet Kasher (1999: 59) still finds them unsatisfactory because they have simply exchanged one mythical image for another (carried on clouds versus carried on eagle’s wings). Unfortunately, he does not explain how an “exchange”

of mythical imagery can be taking place when every example of the “exchange” retains explicit references to both clouds and wings.

The third strategy of “twofold exegetical conception” derives only from the rendering in Targum Neofiti which does not use an explicit simile but does present both sets of imagery — clouds and wings (Kasher 1999: 60). Kasher translates the Neofiti rendering as “and I have borne you on the clouds of the Glory of my Shekhinah, upon the wings of swift eagles” (1999: 56). In Kasher’s categorisation, Neofiti is not following the exegetical mode since it has not used a simile. Kasher (1999: 61) suggests the double translation in this case reflects a “combination of different Targumic traditions” — one figurative and one literal. It is unclear to me why the Neofiti rendering alone reflects a “twofold exegetical conception” since the only difference from the other Palestinian Targums is the lack of an explicit simile. Those other renderings also used imagery literally translating the “wings” aspect of the Hebrew text while adding imagery about clouds. The difference is that the simile was applied to the statement about “wings,” so even though the vehicle of the metaphor is rendered literally, the non-literal meaning is explicit. Kasher (ibid.) interprets the lack of that simile in Neofiti as evidence for “an authentic Targumic technique, interpreting the text as having a double meaning.” He cites another example of double translation as support, showing that it is likely an intentional translational strategy. If Kasher had looked more thoroughly into known translation strategies, he would have discovered that translating to maintain a connection to the form of the original even while explaining a figure of speech is not uncommon (see Section 3.5.2).

In the final section of his article, Kasher (1999: 64) discusses how Aramaic translations “offer metaphorical interpretations of the text even when the plain meaning does not so require.” For example, Targum Jonathan treats Hos 1–3 as an allegory and changes God’s command to Hosea to “take ... a woman of whoredom and children of whoredom” into a

command to “speak a prophecy against the inhabitants of the idolatrous city, who continue to sin” (Hos 1:2).³⁰ The idea that God had *actually* commanded the prophet to marry a “woman of whoredom” was so unthinkable that the Aramaic translators explained the theological meaning of the text instead of presenting the text itself. They concealed the actual phrasing of the text while still revealing the meaning as they understood it. More than the other ancient Bible versions, the Targums concealed the full phrasing of the biblical text when they found the meaning theologically troubling. Using the Hebrew text as an anchor, they would subtly reframe the scene to convey their interpretation.

Kasher demonstrates that the Aramaic translations, especially the Targums, are more exegetically creative in dealing with biblical figurative language. His assessment of various examples shows that the translators could use non-literal interpretation in subtle ways and that those manipulations of the source material were often exegetically motivated.

2.4.6 C. Dogniez (2002)

Cécile Dogniez (2002), one of the scholars involved with L’*Bible d’Alexandrie* project, published an article on how the LXX rendered BH idioms into Greek. Like Lübke (2002), she is partly concerned with how idioms are handled in lexicography, and she notes several examples where the standard LXX lexis offer no help to the researcher concerning the Hebraic origin of the meaning ascribed to a particular lexical item.

For example, a particular sense might be listed for a Greek verb without any indication that the sense derives only from its use in an imitative translation of a BH idiom. To note just one example, the entry in Lust’s lexicon for *λαλέω* lists “speak comfortingly” as one of the

³⁰ Translation from Cathcart & Gordon 1990.

meanings without explicit reference to that meaning's origin in the phrase *λαλέω ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν*, a Greek calque of the BH idiom *דבר על לב* (Dogniez 2002: 6, 9).³¹

Dogniez primarily discusses the tendency of the LXX translators to render BH idioms literally (see also Section 4.3.1). She covers four Greek phrases that the LXX typically uses to mimic idiomatic expressions from BH: the euphemism for death of “gathered to one’s people/fathers”; the difficult idiom “speak to the heart”; the common idiom “lift the face”; and the expression “bring back the captives.”³² She studies a limited selection based on phrases that occur in the texts covered by the two common LXX lexica because her goal is to demonstrate that while the LXX should be studied “as a text on its own,” the Hebrew influence through figurative expressions warrants explicit mention in the LXX lexica (Dogniez 2002: 15–16). Her study is representative, and she notes the need for further work on the subject to improve our understanding of LXX style and translation technique as well as consider the possibility that the LXX translator had a better understanding of Hebrew texts that are obscure and difficult.

2.4.7 A. Tal (2003)

A. Tal (2003) treated euphemisms in the Samaritan Targum in an article published in *Aramaic Studies*. Tal (2003: 109) provides a workable explanation of euphemisms as terms used to “avoid loss of face” and avoid reference to disquieting topics, and he briefly mentions the use of euphemism in Greek and Latin. To demonstrate BH euphemisms, Tal surveys the ways ancient translators and interpreters explained the euphemism “covering the feet” in Judg 3:24 and 1 Sam 24:4. In Judg 3:24, for example, the translator of Targum Jonathan “put the

³¹ The meaning is noted with reference to the phrase as used in the LXX of 2 Kgs 19:8 (see LEH, s.v. *λαλέω*). Dogniez is critiquing the fact that such an idiomatic meaning *only* comes from an interpretation of the BH idiom, but the lexicon makes no reference to the phrase’s BH background.

³² Three of these expressions are covered in more detail in my analysis (see Sections 4.3.7, 4.3.8, and 5.3.2.1).

expression in his contemporary euphemism” (110). The examples cited demonstrate the basic options between translating the euphemism with a similar euphemism in the target language and translating literally (that is, mimetically by imitation of the source wording). He introduces the use of euphemism in rabbinic literature and other ancient texts before turning to the phenomenon of euphemism in the Samaritan Targum.

Tal’s study covers the usage of euphemisms in the Samaritan Targum in cases where BH euphemisms are used as well as where euphemisms were added or amplified in Aramaic. In particular, he identifies a tendency in MS A of the Samaritan Targum to soften the language of the original and make it more palatable for a contemporary audience, especially where the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel are depicted in less than flattering terms (see Tal 2003: 112–17). For example, where Rachel “steals” (גנב) Laban’s idols in the MT of Gen 31:19, MS A substitutes “takes” (קבץ), a term lacking the explicitly negative connotations of “steal” (Tal 2003: 113).

Tal demonstrates that the Samaritan Targum used euphemisms for saving face, avoiding taboo expressions, and softening reference to negative feelings — all common cross-cultural uses of euphemism. Dysphemism is also used in a similar way as in BH to express contempt for idols (Tal 2003: 114, 118).

Euphemisms for shameful parts of the body were sometimes developed from Arabic words (Tal 2003: 120–121). The usage Tal describes appears analogous to English adopting Latin words to conceal references to genitalia, but Tal does not explicitly make that comparison or explain the logic behind borrowing words from Arabic. In general, the Samaritan Targum appears to make equivalent euphemistic substitutions instead of translating by imitating the Hebrew wording. The Samaritan translators used euphemism to a greater extent, however, not

only substituting for source euphemisms but also for subject matter that may have offended the sensibilities of their contemporary audience. Tal (2003: 128) concludes:

A large part of the euphemistic expressions in the Samaritan Targum consist of intentional distortions of genuine Aramaic words, whose straightforward display was too harsh for the taste of the later generations of scribes. They resorted *inter alia* to an old device which proved its efficacy in many other instances: deformation of plain words, sometimes to the degree of incomprehensibility.

While some of his examples certainly do appear to be “meaningless” or “cryptic” in the Samaritan Targum’s rendering, it would be unusual for translators to intentionally produce an incomprehensible text. It is, however, possible that “later generations of scribes” tampered with the text to conceal aspects of the meaning of the original from their audience. Overall, Tal’s study is useful for providing evidence that BH euphemisms could be translated by target language euphemisms in an ancient Bible version.

2.4.8 J. Joosten (2010)

In a brief essay, Jan Joosten (2010) addresses the challenge the LXX translators had in rendering BH idioms into Greek. Joosten (2010: 62–63) categorises LXX renderings of BH idioms into three types: literal (i.e., mimetic or imitative), free (i.e., meaning-oriented), and combined (i.e., explaining the meaning while retaining aspects of form).³³ According to Joosten, the LXX translators rarely translate BH idioms with Greek idioms, assuming that is what he means by “idiom substitution” (2010: 66). His examples, however, cannot be considered an adequate representative sample to make such a broad generalisation.³⁴ The claim also has no real bearing

³³ Joosten (2010: 66–67) describes these categories as literal (type A), free (type B), and combined (type C). I adapt and expand this classification in Section 3.6.2.

³⁴ Joosten (2010: 66n23) also dismisses an entire set of examples presented by Lee (1983) of idiomatic renderings of BH idioms (see Section 2.4.3). Joosten (*ibid.*) asserts that Lee’s examples “illustrate formulaic language more than idiomatic expressions of the type discussed in the present paper.” The assertion is surprising since idioms are often classified linguistically with “fixed expressions,” not in the sense that their form is fixed or frozen but in the sense that they are *formulaic* collocations. In other words, “formulaic language” qualifies as idiom by most linguistic definitions of the category.

on his argument or his conclusions in the rest of the essay apart from leaving open the option for an additional strategy used by the LXX translators to render BH idioms.

Joosten's examples indicate that mixed renderings are likely quite common where the translation maintains a word-for-word correspondence with the Hebrew even though the idiomatic meaning is communicated regardless of whether every source word has a Greek equivalent. This strategy appears common for body idioms where the word representing the hand or head, for example, appears in Greek even though the meaning of the BH idiom can be communicated by the selected Greek verb alone. Joosten (2010: 67) seems justified in the claim that these mixed renderings "reflect a conscious policy, shared by a large group of Greek translators who otherwise show much diversity in their approach." His short survey of the evidence is enough to show that the LXX translators used a number of strategies in attempting to communicate the meaning of idiomatic expressions. This variation of technique is evident "within one and the same translation unit" (Joosten 2010: 68), a finding that would seem to confirm Barr's sense that the "translators often seem to have worked in an *ad hoc* manner" (Barr 1979: 7). In the use of mixed renderings especially, Joosten (2010: 69) sees the creativity of the translators at work. Refusing the choice between preserving form at the expense of meaning or abandoning form to convey meaning, the LXX translators opted for a compromise "and tried to compose in Greek an expression that paid tribute to both the wording and the sense" (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the examples Lee (1983: 24–29) cites do not strike me as fundamentally different from those discussed in Joosten's essay.

2.4.9 Summary

The research surveyed above in Section 2.4 touched on how the ancient Bible versions dealt with BH figurative language. None of the studies has explored this subject in any depth. Several essays discuss particular BH idiomatic expressions and examine how specific versions dealt with the expression. Studies tend to focus either on the Aramaic versions or the Septuagint and do not systematically present the readings from the other category. Figures of speech are more similar in BH and Aramaic than in Greek, so a comparative study should include Greek since it is likely that a departure from imitative translation toward idiomatic Greek may reflect a translator's intentional decision to ensure the meaning is best communicated to the audience.

2.5 Conclusion

The preceding survey of studies on BH figures of speech and translation demonstrates that while important work has been done on aspects of the topic, no previous study has examined the various approaches to BH figurative language found in several ancient Bible versions. The present study is not exhaustive in this regard, either, but it offers a comparative analysis of select BH words and expressions in Greek and Aramaic translations. The studies of Dogniez (2002) and Joosten (2010) that survey the translations for specific BH idiomatic expressions are closest in aim to the present study, though they are much more limited in scope. In Chapter 3, I explain the methodological framework of the present study and demonstrate how Translation Studies, sociolinguistics, and cognitive semantics all contribute to the analysis of BH figures of speech and their translation.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3: A METHODOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ANALYSING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN TRANSLATION

3.1 Introduction

In recent decades, growing research on the process and product of translation has drawn attention to the inherent difficulties associated with translation. Rather than consisting of a simple linguistic transfer, translation involves a complex process of interpretation, analysis, and action. The emergence of Translation Studies since the 1970s as a distinct area of research has facilitated the development of theoretical models both prescribing how translation could be done and describing how translation has been done.¹

The question underlying research on translation is fundamentally hermeneutic: how do people make sense of texts and language? This question has been considered and answers offered by those in many different fields including literary criticism (White 1980), linguistics (Croft & Cruse 2004; Langacker 2008), sociology (Somers 1992; Ewick & Silbey 1995), philosophy (Gadamer 2004), psychology (Pinker 2007), and anthropology (Geertz 1973; Lévi-Strauss 1963). A concern for the interpretation of human experience as evidenced in texts, linguistic utterances, thoughts, actions, motives, symbols, among others, has produced

¹ The field of Translation Studies is constantly evolving, but there are now numerous introductions and reference works available for understanding the field and its major concepts. The most recent introductory texts include Munday (2016), Bassnett (2014a), Baker (2011), Pym (2010), Baker and Saldanha (2009), Kuhiwczak and Littau (2007), Snell-Hornby (2006), Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (2006), and Gentzler (2001). For a thorough overview of Translation Studies from the perspective of Bible Translation, see Wendland (2015). John Benjamins Publishing Company also maintains an online annotated bibliography of Translation Studies at <http://benjamins.com/online/tsb/>. The bibliography provides information on over 24,000 publications relevant to Translation Studies.

numerous insights from varied disciplines. These insights about how human beings understand the world around them, interpret their experiences, and make use of language have often cross-pollinated across disciplines (such as with Lévi-Strauss' application of structuralism to anthropology or the broader applications of Geertz' ideas of "thick description" in interpretation or the overlap of interests with linguistics and semiotics or the influences of philosophical hermeneutics on literary criticism). The interpretative tradition is, therefore, transdisciplinary and while the literary critics, the social scientists, and the philosophers address how humans interpret the world around them through reason, social interactions, the physical senses, verbal exchanges, and written texts, scholars of Translation Studies examine how those interpretations are communicated into new linguistic and cultural settings, drawing on virtually all disciplines that concern themselves with how human beings communicate including (but not limited to) linguistics, semiotics, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and media studies.

These disciplines provide Translation Studies with many perspectives on how people make sense of communication in a variety of contexts. While the main focus of translation is the interpretation and transmission of written texts, the narrative impulse seems to be behind all attempts to articulate our own experience and those of others. Historians create a story of past experience. Novelists create stories in imaginary worlds to explore possible experience. Journalists construct a story to make sense of contemporary experience. Translators recreate stories of all types.

Any time we retell a story, recount an experience, or explain our understanding of a topic, we select details and put them into a framework that organises experience. Following this process of selection and organisation, we can manipulate perception by emphasising some aspects over others. Analysing a translation provides an opportunity for bringing these decisions out in the open because we can compare various versions of a text. One area where a translator's

choice may be more evident is in the translation of figurative language. The focus of this thesis is an investigation of “translational action”² with regard to the translation of figures of speech, especially whether the translator makes an effort to conceal or reveal sensitive information from the source text.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief introduction to the field of Translation Studies (Section 3.2) and then survey the methodological issues associated with translation (Section 3.3). The issues of translator agency, social norms, and the concept of framing are especially relevant for their influence on the analysis of BH figures of speech in translation. Linguistics also provides key concepts and terminology useful for describing figures of speech and the linguistic processes that produce them. Since this aspect of linguistics has contributed significantly to my understanding of figurative language, I introduce the terms and the important concept of linguistic construal (Section 3.4) before discussing how linguistics and Translations Studies inform the problem of translating figurative language (Section 3.5). Out of this synthesis of disciplinary approaches emerges a set of translation strategies that can be used to describe the treatment of biblical figures of speech in translation (Section 3.6).

3.2 Translation Studies

While translating texts has occurred in various forms since ancient times, the systematic study of translation under the interdisciplinary label Translation Studies is a relatively recent phenomenon and Translation Studies only emerged as an academic discipline in the second half of the twentieth century. From antiquity through the nineteenth century, few translators attempted the task of explaining their creative process beyond an occasional reference to the

² Translational action simply refers to “the range of actions carried out by translators” (Pym 2010: 50). The term is often associated with Justa Holz-Mänttari’s functional model where it has a slightly more technical sense (see Munday 2016: 124–127).

age-old dichotomy of the word-for-word versus sense-for-sense approaches (Cicero, Jerome).³ Later writers expressed this same polarisation under the labels of “literal” versus “free,” but all shared the foundational assumption that there was some inherent meaning in the text that could be transferred from the source language to the target language. This foundational assumption remained as the starting point for many theories of translation developed in the twentieth century and persists in some theoretical models even today.

The development of translation theory in emerging Translation Studies followed closely on theoretical shifts in both linguistics and literary theory through the same period of time. The same questions about how language carries meaning and how speakers and hearers (or authors and readers) encode and decode the message were central to both linguistics and literary theory in the mid-twentieth century. Translation Studies emerged when researchers trained in linguistics and comparative literature turned their attention to the communicative problems raised by the practice of translation.

Scholars working on ancient Bible translations have only recently begun to consider how Translation Studies might complement their research (e.g., Van der Louw 2007; Boyd-Taylor

³ In reality, the opposition of “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense” as methods of translation is an oversimplification. These two categories are opposite poles on a spectrum, but a translation’s tendency toward either pole is a matter of degree, not a strict dichotomy. When translators consciously adopt a “literal” method, this may become a guiding principle in practice, but it is a rule frequently broken (see Brunn 2013). Even in antiquity, sophisticated translators like Cicero knew full well that the type of text they were translating profoundly influenced the way they translated (see Van der Louw 2007: 54–55). Most translators from antiquity left no metatexts explaining their process, however. The data presented in chapters 4 and 5 suggest that a word-for-word approach was often the default guiding principle for translators of the ancient Bible versions. On the one hand, this tendency does not necessarily mean the translators were unaware of other options. But on the other hand, we cannot assume that the majority of ancient translators approached their task with careful, conscious theoretical reflection like Cicero. Barr (1979: 7) asserts the Septuagint translators worked in an “*ad hoc* manner,” and Aejmelaeus (2007: 66) describes their work as “characterized by intuition and spontaneity more than conscious deliberation and technique.”

2011).⁴ For the most part, they have ventured no further into the literature of Translation Studies than necessary to acquire a working familiarity with Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), especially in the vein of Gideon Toury ([1995] 2012).⁵ This state of things is not unusual as biblical studies is often years behind in awareness of methods in other disciplines, especially literary theory and social science.⁶ Delving a bit deeper into Translation Studies, however, reveals a much wider theoretical system concerned primarily with understanding the complicated interactions between culture, cognition, and communication. Unfortunately, the prevalence of jargon-heavy theories addressing similar translational phenomena with different terms has undoubtedly created a major obstacle to broader integration between study on the ancient Bible versions and Translation Studies.⁷ Various models of translation attempt to offer systematic accounts of textual interpretation, comprehension, and reproduction.

⁴ Biblical scholars also involved in Bible translation engaged with Translation Studies somewhat earlier. See, for example, the essays in Naudé and Van der Merwe (2002). The increasing number of studies in the last few years explicitly adopting Translation Studies in research on Septuagint and Peshitta is a welcome change (e.g., Wagner 2013; Tully 2015; Modugno 2015; Hutton 2015). These studies have also begun delving into Translation Studies beyond the work of Nida or Toury.

⁵ Jeremy Hutton (2015) notes that while studies of translation technique have multiplied, the results cannot be easily compared because of differences in terminology. He offers Van der Louw (2007) and Boyd-Taylor (2011) as examples of two such studies. While both are grounded in Translation Studies, their descriptions differ significantly. The difficulty, of course, comes from the nature of Translation Studies itself. Boyd-Taylor follows a form of Descriptive Translation Studies while Van der Louw follows the earlier linguistics-oriented Translation Studies of the 1950 and 1960s (e.g., Vinay & Darbelnet 1958; Nida 1959; 1964; Catford 1965; Nida & Taber 1969).

⁶ Take, for example, the exegetical studies using “structuralism” that continued long after literary critics had largely abandoned the approach.

⁷ One example is Nida’s dichotomy between “formal” and “dynamic” equivalence — a concept also found in Newmark’s work, but he calls it “semantic” and “communicative” translation (Newmark 1981; 1988). Similarly, systems approaches and functional approaches to translation are both concerned with a translator’s behaviour and with broader questions related to social and cultural context of translation which need to be applied in LXX studies.

3.2.1 The Beginnings of Contemporary Translation Studies

Following the lead of twentieth century linguistics, early attempts to develop a theory of translation focused on empirical evidence and attempted to describe translation as a “science” (see Nida 1959; 1964; Nida & Taber 1969; Vinay & Darbelnet 1958; Jakobson 1959; Catford 1965). Early efforts focused on the concept of equivalence and saw language as a mathematical system where different variables could fill an equation to lead to the same underlying truth (Bassnett 2014b: 17–18). The belief in the possibility of programmable correspondence between languages fed the fervour for machine translation as the eventual wave of the future. The complexities of languages and how they transmit meaning eventually muted (but did not extinguish) the fervour for automatic translating. These linguistics-oriented approaches to translation emerged as a part of applied linguistics. They focused on non-literary texts because these were more favourable to systematic description. The creative language of literary texts was deemed “deviant” and inappropriate for their scientific approach (Snell-Hornby 1988: 23).

Translators of literary texts also distanced themselves from linguistics since it was “unable to deal with the manifold complexities of literary works” (Hermans 1985: 10). Literary translation was a branch of comparative literature, and the founding of Translation Studies as a new discipline is commonly attributed to James S Holmes, an American literary translator and scholar of comparative literature working in the Netherlands (Gentzler 2001: 93). His seminal essay “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” was first delivered as a congress paper in 1972, though it did not become widely accessible outside of a small circle of translation scholars until 1988. Regardless of the slow dissemination of Holmes’ essay, he is credited with the decision to call the discipline “Translation Studies” as opposed to the “science” of translating or “translatology” (Holmes 1988: 68–70).

3.2.2 Functionalism and Descriptive Translation Studies

If the 1970s saw the birth of Translation Studies, the 1950s and 1960s were its gestation, the 1980s were its childhood and the 1990s its adolescence. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of two dominating paradigms in Translation Studies — functionalism (or *Skopostheorie*) and systems theories (including polysystem theory, Descriptive Translation Studies, and the Manipulation School).⁸ Both paradigms turned their focus to the target (language, text, culture) over the source since a translation's primary *raison d'être* was to communicate to a target audience.

Functional approaches to translation emphasise the intended function or purpose the translation is to have in the target culture (Pym 2010: 43–48). As a theory of translation, functionalism is more prescriptive than descriptive. Communication between the translator and the person or organisation sponsoring the translation is a key component (Nord 2005: 9–13). The translator is supposed to work from a translation brief (essentially a contract between the translator and whoever wants the translation that lays out the rules for translation; see Nord 1997). Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss (1984) are considered the pioneers of functionalism. Vermeer focused on the concept of *Skopos* or “purpose” while Reiss contributed the emphasis on text-types to the theory, namely categorising texts according to their predominant communicative purpose. The overriding emphasis on *Skopos* has resulted in the label *skopos* theory or *Skopostheorie* being essentially synonymous with functionalism. Christiane Nord (1997; 2005) has further developed the core concepts of functionalism and produced a detailed functional model emphasising source-text analysis and strategies for addressing problems in translation by considering the intended function of the translation. While Nord is still oriented

⁸ Hermans 1999: 8–9.

toward translator training, her approach overall devotes more attention to the source text than does that of Reiss and Vermeer (Munday 2008: 82–83).

Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), the most influential of the systems approaches, emerged about the same time as functionalism but focused on the reception of translations within the target literary system. DTS developed out of the work of Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury in Israel and José Lambert, Theo Hermans, André Lefevere, and others in Europe and North America (Hermans 1999: 7–14). In contrast with functionalism (where ideally the translator’s “brief” guides behaviour), scholars involved with DTS viewed literature as a dynamic system of text production and reception influenced heavily by sociocultural factors (Munday 2008: 118). They set out to describe how translations fared in comparison with other types of texts in a given literary system. An important part of their investigation looked into how sociocultural norms influenced the process of translation, that is, how translators manipulated their text to conform to audience expectations (Toury 2012: 81–85).

This approach and the scholars developing it were also known as the Manipulation School, a name derived from an important collection of essays published in 1985 under the title *The Manipulation of Literature* (Hermans 1985). Hermans (1999: 8) summarises the varying labels applied to this approach but acknowledges that “it is not a unified approach.” He uses the main labels — descriptive, polysystems, systemic, Manipulation school — “more or less interchangeably” in his account of translations theories falling under the label DTS (Hermans 1999: 9). The aspect of manipulation comes from Hermans’ statement in the introduction to *The Manipulation of Literature* that “all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (Hermans 1985: 11). This awareness that translation involved manipulation led to more questions about the power relations involved in translation and the realisation that translators had the power to manipulate a text (and control its message). Further

research on social, political, and cultural power and their connection with literature and education also contributed to an increased focus on organisational and institutional attempts to manipulate literature in translation (Bourdieu 1991; Swartz 1997; Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002; Woods 2012).

The attention paid to the translator's role in the process and the influence of culture on translation led to what came to be called a "cultural turn" in Translation Studies in the 1980s and 1990s (Snell-Hornby 2006: 47–48; see also Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Katan 2004). But the same period also saw a "power turn" as research drawing on postcolonialism and feminism drew attention to the ways translation had been used to reinforce the narratives that maintained the power of males in the West (Simon 1996; Bassnett & Trivedi 1999a).

3.2.3 The Cultural and Power Turn in Translation Studies

In addition to theoretical influences from within the discipline, Translation Studies has continued to incorporate new ideas in literary criticism (postcolonialism, deconstruction) and linguistics (prototype semantics, cognitive grammar, discourse analysis) as well as fold in research on human communication from the social sciences (Baker 2014; Snell Hornby 2006: 162–175). Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (1999b: 2) aptly sum up the view on translation that characterised the cultural and power turn:

Translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems.

The cultural and power turn in Translation Studies developed out of the concerns of DTS, but it grew far beyond scholars associated with a systems approach because the aspects of culture and power connected "with wider studies of politics, culture, and society as well as with

discussions of translation and gender, post-colonial theory, and translation ethics” (Strowe 2013: 134). The power dynamics of publishing and disseminating literature were closely linked with larger social and political issues and institutions.

The cultural and power turn in Translation Studies resulted in a greater focus on the translator as cultural mediator. Translators could serve or undermine those in power based on what was translated and how it was translated. Bassnett and Lefevere’s (1990) expectation that power and manipulation would be central aspects of the cultural turn has been borne out in the growing focus on the role of translation in cultural conflict and power relations (see Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002; Baker 2006; Salama-Carr 2007). This development followed logically after the shift toward contextual and communicative models for translation. Postmodernism’s victory over the notion of objectivity made the old model of translator as a neutral go-between no longer viable. Whether wielded actively or passively, the translator had power — power that could be used for resistance simply by translating texts that challenged the status quo. At the same time, a translator who accepted the dominance of the status quo might avoid translating a challenging text or might translate the text in a way that minimised its impact or neutralised the force of the dangerous ideas. When the translator succumbs to dominant cultural expectations and neutralises the text, he or she is involved in a form of self-censorship.

3.2.4 Corpus-based Translation Studies

On-going research in Translation Studies, especially corpus-based studies, seeks to catalogue and classify various typicalities that distinguish translated texts from natural compositions in a given language (see Munday 2016: 291–97). These typicalities are sometimes labelled “universals” (see Mauranen & Kujamäki 2004), but they tend to be more like observable tendencies than predictable patterns. Features of translation considered as potential universals include lexical simplification, explicitation, and the tendency toward self-censorship. The

translator's adoption of typical patterns is often considered part of his or her accommodation of sociocultural norms, reframing the text to fit with the target culture's expectancy norms.

Mona Baker (1993; 1995) first suggested the use of corpora in the study of translation and connected the notion of typicalities with the concept of norms as developed in DTS. The development of computer databases of thousands of texts provided the necessary data of real language use that could serve as a base of comparison for determining how the words and expressions in translated texts might differ from texts initially written in the same language (Munday 2008: 180). A corpus-based approach to translation works well alongside a descriptive approach by providing quantitative data about typical features of translation to supplement the concern for sociocultural context that characterises Descriptive Translation Studies.

3.3 Issues in Translation Studies

Translation, perhaps more than any other form of human communication, provides a window into the workings of the human mind and how we process communication. The implications of this complex process and the ways it affects social development and global interaction are only beginning to be explored (see Marais 2013b; 2017). In translation, someone receives a text, makes decisions about the meaning the text represents, and passes on that representation to another in the form of a new written text. Early models of how translation worked emphasised “equivalence” and assumed a text had a stable meaning that a translator could apprehend and replicate (Pym 2010: 6–16). In the twentieth century, this assumed stability of meaning was felt to be untenable, and a growing body of work in literary criticism, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology demonstrated that interpretations of any human communications were heavily influenced by biological, environmental, and socio-cultural factors external to the text itself such as the interpreter's gender, education, social status, wealth,

and group affiliations (including social, political, and religious groups; see, e.g., Simon 1996; Bassnett & Trivedi 1999a; Gentzler 2008).

The illusion of objective meaning was largely the by-product of a shared Western worldview and shared post-Enlightenment, modernist assumptions about texts and meaning. The assumption of an ideal static text with an unquestionable meaning accessible to “objective” readers was revealed for the illusion it was once readers no longer shared a similar perspective when they approached the text. I do not mean to suggest that all interpreters of the same text accepted the same meaning. However, in their arguments over meaning, they still tacitly assumed that a single correct meaning was there to be discovered. Minor changes in vantage point were not enough to bring about change; the philosophical revolution of postmodernism and the rise of post-colonialism and feminism were required (Bassnett 2014a: 37–80; Flotow 1997). The entrance of new international voices (non-white or female or both) into a discourse on text previously dominated by white males in Europe and North America brought about a fundamental shift in the conception of meaning (Snell-Hornby 2006: 90–103). Interpreters acknowledged that the situation of the reader was much more influential on understanding than had been previously accepted. This shift acknowledging the basic instability of meaning in texts had a significant impact on the theory and practice of translation in the latter half of the twentieth century as Translation Studies developed (Gentzler 2001).

Early attempts at theories of translation tended to simply assume the feasibility of the enterprise and similarly assume a definition of translation as taking something said or written in one language and retelling the same message in another language. As more sophisticated models for understanding human communication developed, this simple notion of translation as transfer became much more complicated. The major issues suddenly open for discussion

included defining translation, deciding what should be the object of study, distinguishing potential theoretical perspectives, and re-examining the fundamental concept of equivalence.

3.3.1 Defining Translation

Translation is typically understood as the process and product of transferring written or verbal communication from one language to another.⁹ The meta-language of translation relies on shared concepts such as “source text” (ST), “source language” (SL), “target text” (TT), and “target language” (TL) to describe the relationship between original and reproduction. The source text is the “original” text translated to create a target text, a version of the source text in the target language. The nature of translation as mediating between two or more texts and languages engendered these concepts, despite the practical difficulties posed by the ambiguities of language in-use (e.g., code-switching, code-mixing, dialect, register, etc.) and the literary challenges to the stability of meaning in texts. In DTS, defining a text as a translation is more straightforward since the focus on the target culture allows for a text to be treated as a translation if it is accepted as a translation in the target literary system (Toury 2012: 26–28).

The understanding of translation as the transfer of linguistic content results in the popular assumption that translation is a straightforward process — the meaning of the ST is recreated in the TT. This understanding of translation reveals the oversimplified standard concept of translation of many modern cultures (but especially Western English-speaking culture).¹⁰ A

⁹ Technically, this definition applies to what Roman Jakobson (1959: 233) called “interlingual translation or translation proper.” Jakobson distinguished between three different types of translation: intralingual (rewording within the same language); interlingual (interpretation between languages); and intersemiotic (interpretation into a different category of meaningful sign such as words represented visually). Translation Studies as a discipline covers all three of these types. For the purpose of this study that focuses on ancient written translations of an ostensibly written source text, “translation” is used in the interlingual sense.

¹⁰ Marais (2013b) suggests even scholars working in translation have an underdeveloped conceptualisation of translation and do not appreciate the full complexity of the phenomenon or the

translation is accepted as if it was the original and most readers never question their translation's relationship to the original (Hermans 1999: 97). For example, most American students when asked if they have read Tolstoy, Dante, Cervantes, or Dumas will answer yes if they have read the author in English translation and have likely never given any thought to the possibility that the story they read may have been quite different from the story they could have read in Russian, Italian, Spanish, or French. The quality of the translation as a stand-in for the original is simply assumed outside of academic circles.

Linguistic form is only one aspect of the source text that a translation can emulate. The source text usually has multiple communicative aspects that a translator could emphasise or ignore, such as metaphor, metonymy, and other figures of speech that convey information implicitly.¹¹ For example, a translator of poetry can choose to render the source poem in prose or reproduce the poem in a poetic form recognisable to the target audience (such as giving poems a distinct meter or making them rhyme). The translator can choose to cling closely to the linguistic form of the source or attempt to mimic the source text's rhetorical or aesthetic effect. The rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of a text are usually culturally dependent, so the translator must bridge that cultural gap. When ancient texts are translated, the translator must also account for the chronological gap between the original audience and the contemporary target audience. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher made the well-known observation that the translator has only two options for overcoming these gaps: bringing the reader to the source or bringing the source to the reader (Snell-Hornby 2006: 8). The dynamic nature of this process is lost on most readers of translations. They do not recognise the

challenge of engaging it. For a new approach to defining translation by engaging with complexity theory and development studies, see Marais 2014.

¹¹ On translating metaphor, see Alvarez 1993; Dickins 2005. On translating metonymy, see Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2013. On translating implicit semantic relations, see Denver 2007.

translator's intervention or the alterity of the source text that when it has been domesticated into the literary forms they expect and appreciate (Venuti 2008).¹²

3.3.2 The Object and Orientation of Study

Another key issue in Translation Studies is determining the object of study and the orientation of the research. Theories of translation can orient more towards being prescriptive — setting rules for how translation *should* happen — or descriptive — describing how translation *has* happened. The object of study can be the product (the translation itself) or the process of producing the translation. Most descriptive studies focus on the product and try to extrapolate the norms and strategies that guided the process. More prescriptive studies focus on the translator and attempt to find out how their mental process works (e.g., think-aloud protocols; see Englund Dimitrova 2005; Jääskeläinen 2010). For ancient translations, direct access to the translator is unavailable, so the object of study must be the translation itself or texts about the translation's production or reception (metatexts). For ancient versions of the Bible, the translation alone is the primary source of data, though metatexts exist for the LXX and Vulgate.¹³

The object of study can also vary according to conceptions of the relationship between source text, target text, and translator. Many studies follow a comparative (source-oriented) model where the source text is compared with the target text and deviations from formal equivalence are noted. Another approach is contextual where the focus is on the receiving

¹² The issue of concealing or drawing attention to the alterity (or otherness or foreignness) of a translated text is central to discussions of agency in translation (see Section 3.3.4).

¹³ See Naudé (2009) on the role of the “Letter of Aristeas” as a metatext on the LXX. For the Vulgate, Jerome described his approach to translation at various times in his correspondence. The significance of metatexts for the study of Bible translations is explored further by Naudé (2013) and Miller-Naudé and Naudé (2015; 2016).

culture (target-oriented). The latest model is cultural where translation is studied in the context of cross-cultural conflict and communication (Baker 2006; Salama-Carr 2007). The cultural approach is really just a logical extension of the contextual approach where differences of culture and ideology are factored into the understanding of context.

3.3.3 The Notion of Equivalence

Much early theorising in translation was based on the fundamental concept of equivalence (see Pym 2010: 6–40). The very category of “translation” in Western literary systems is based on the notion that the translated text is in some way equivalent to its source text. The act of translating was considered effective if the source message was sufficiently reproduced with an equivalent message in the target language. Equivalence can be sought on multiple levels and from multiple angles (see Baker 2011). Baker (2011) structures her popular introductory textbook on translation around the concept of equivalence with chapters on equivalence at word-level, above word-level, and grammatical, textual, and pragmatic equivalence.

This basic assumption that equivalence at some level must exist between source text and target text has been a driving force in both prescriptive and descriptive translation theories. Theories outlining rules about *how* to translate discuss strategies for creating equivalence. Eugene Nida introduced the idea that equivalence could be plotted on a spectrum between two poles of word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation. The word-for-word side of the spectrum was identified as formal equivalence while the sense-for-sense side came to be called dynamic equivalence (Nida 1964). Nida recognised that translation was not a pure either/or proposition between mimicking form and reproducing meaning. Different texts required different types of equivalence for effective communication. In his own translation work, Nida preferred dynamic equivalence for its flexibility in expressing the content of a text in a new

cultural context (compare Venuti's concepts of foreignisation versus domestication; see Venuti 2008).

Both formal and dynamic equivalence, however, were challenged by the postmodern assertion that meaning in texts is unstable and subjective (Hermans 1999: 96–98). The rejection of modernist objectivity in literary theory worked its way into translation theory and the perspective on the translator's role shifted. No longer was the translator the invisible objective mediator of the text's fixed meaning. Now the translator's active role in shaping the meaning of the text was recognised.

Furthermore, the very flexibility of the concept of equivalence, that it could be qualified and classified into subtypes that only reflected partial equivalence with the source, led Andrew Chesterman (1997: 9) to conclude that "equivalence is a red herring, in that it is virtually unattainable, and hence not a useful concept for translation theory." Hermans (1999: 97) also criticises the gradual stripping away of meaning from the term because the concept of equivalence helped raise awareness of manipulation in cases of non-equivalence.

Despite debate over its meaning and utility, Baker (2011: 4) feels comfortable using it throughout her coursebook because it is a familiar term for most translators. She offers "the proviso that although equivalence can usually be obtained to some extent, it is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is therefore always relative" (Baker 2011: 4). The terms "equivalence" and "equivalent" are used in the present study under the same caveat and with the understanding that a source text and its translation could be considered "equivalent" in some ways and "non-equivalent" in others. In a sense, many of the translation strategies developed in both systems and functional approaches to translation are designed to address the

existence of non-equivalence at varying levels (see the survey of strategies in Chesterman 1997: 87–116; compare Baker 2011: 15–43).

3.3.4 Translator Agency

Translation is not a neutral activity. The prominent role the translator plays in this activity has been underappreciated historically (Venuti 2008). Jacobus Naudé (2011a: 223) notes that “the translator has always had a position of power and has always been an agent of change, but the translator’s power and role in this regard have not always been recognised or appreciated.” A shift has taken place, however, so that the translator’s agency has come to be a central concern in considering how a translator has, could, or should use their power as intermediary to attempt to influence change in their society (Milton & Bandia 2009b; Buzelin 2011; compare Miller-Naudé & Naudé 2010).

Translation occurs under real social, political, and cultural conditions, and is often conducted by and for individuals and groups with vested interests related to how texts are received in new linguistic and cultural contexts (Milton & Bandia 2009b: 2–5). Despite popular conceptions of translation as faithfully and disinterestedly reproducing a source, the human agent involved in translation (the translator) continually makes choices about what information from the source text gets communicated in the translation; choices may be conscious and deliberate or automatic and mechanical (Hermans 2009). A wide variety of factors influence translational decision just as a variety of conscious and unconscious factors influence the information processing of most human beings (Paloposki 2009).

The process of translation requires the involvement of a human mind subject to influence from social norms, cognitive biases, philosophical presuppositions, and religious convictions (Marais 2013a: 78). Translation as the mediation of texts and ideas across linguistic, cultural,

and ideological boundaries is inextricably linked to the problems associated with cultural dominance, oppression, and conflict (Baker 2010; Tymoczko 2010). As such, translation is a nexus for the study of power relations and the means of control and resistance (Baker 2006: 20–21). Institutionalised powers may overtly influence translation through direct censorship, selection of translators and texts to be translated, or explicit statements of doctrine to which the translation must conform (Woods 2012). However, structural influences are often more subtle, unseen, and endemic to the cultural context (Billiani 2007). These covert influences are potentially more powerful because they take the form of socialised assumptions and unexamined presuppositions.¹⁴

A method of translation analysis that seeks to account for these covert influences must, like deconstruction, go behind the text to lay bare the presuppositions hidden in the translator's choice of expression and his or her construal of the information content of the source text. As active agents of interpretation, translators may resist some covert influences and comply with others (Baker 2006: 23–26). The translator may accept or resist the dominant power assumptions of either source text or target context and translate accordingly (Baker 2006: 43, 153–154). Resistance to dominant assumptions can bring new ideas to the target audience and reveal alternatives to the dominant narrative. The power of new ideas to effect change is a key aspect of institutional censorship and control (Bourdieu 1991). Those in power resist efforts to reform or minimise their control. Over the course of history, the powerful few have exerted

¹⁴ Research on censorship and translation is a growing area that engages with Bourdieu's concept of structural censorship — the covert socialisation of individuals that encourages self-censorship and compliance with established power structures. Recent studies include Billiani 2007; Seruya & Moniz 2008; Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleánáin & Parris 2009; Woods 2012. For a brief introduction, see Merkle 2010a. Merkle also edited two special issues of the journal *TTR*, vols. 15 (2002) and 23 (2010), that were devoted to the issue of censorship and translation. For her introductions to those issues, see Merkle 2002; 2010b.

control over law, religion, morality, education, economics, literature, communication, and more. The totalitarian state differs from the “free country” only on a spectrum of how much control they assert over these areas. Translation contributes to cultural conflicts by transmitting ideas from one part of the spectrum to another.

Agency is an important consideration in translating religious literature because of the concerns over fidelity and accuracy that characterise a religious community’s relationship to its sacred text (see Naudé 2010). In studies of Bible translation in Africa, the missionaries responsible for translations produced in the early twentieth century had a significant role in promoting the status quo of colonialism and suppressing the cultural identity of indigenous peoples (see Naudé 2005; 2011b; Maluleke 2017). Awareness of the ways translators have misused their agency in the past is essential for preparing translators to work in the current culture of globalisation (see Baker 2014).

One of the more important epistemological shifts of postmodernism was the recognition that interpretation of all aspects of human communication was heavily influenced by the interpreter's social, historical, and cultural context (Swartz 1997; Gadamer 2004). One outcome of this shift was the growing acknowledgment that translation was not a neutral or value-free activity (Bassnett & Trivedi 1999b: 2). A translator's beliefs will influence, to varying degrees, how the source text is presented in translation (Marais 2013a). The translator can no longer be considered an invisible conduit providing a pure and unadulterated look at the information content of the source text. The agency of the translator has become a key area of translation research, focusing on the various strategies the translator employs, consciously or subconsciously, to manipulate the source text. Most of this research is descriptive, that is, researchers examine translations and their source texts and offer observations on the translator's decisions, especially with an eye on whether a particular ideological perspective may have

motivated certain choices (on ideology and translation, see Tymoczko 2002). Descriptive analysis of translations has had a strong sociological component, looking for the social norms that influenced the translator and examining the status that translations have in the society for which the translation was produced.

3.3.5 Norms, Laws, and Universals

The concept of “norms” is invoked frequently in Translation Studies, but it is often used as a vague label to encompass a broad range of social and translational phenomena (Pym 2010: 73–74). In the social sciences, a norm is a principle that regulates socially acceptable behaviour. Norms are unofficial rules about social behaviour. As such, they vary among social contexts — acceptable behaviour in one social setting may be unacceptable in another (e.g., shouting and cheering may be expected behaviour at a sporting event but inappropriate at a solemn religious ceremony). Violation of a norm results in some sort of social censure, but the penalty could vary from getting disapproving looks to being asked to leave the area. With translation, the norms tend to relate to what the target culture expects for the type of literature being translated (see Toury 2012; Hermans 1999). According to Anthony Pym (2010: 74),

[Norms] concern what translators think they are supposed to do, what clients think translators ought to do, what text users think a translation should be like, and what kinds of translations are considered reprehensible or especially laudable within the system.

In other words, norms are unspoken guidelines that influence many aspects of the translation process.

One on-going issue in Translation Studies is determining the norms by which a translator felt constrained. What were the translational norms guiding his or her choice of expression? What was or was not acceptable to translate for the target audience? This is directly relevant to cultural norms in general — what is and is not okay to say in certain situations to certain

audiences. Christina Schäffner (1999: 1) defines norms as “related to assumptions and expectations about correctness and / or appropriateness.” Every community has notions of correct or appropriate behaviour, including communicative behaviour. Norms, in the broadest sense, “are sociocultural constraints specific to a culture, society, and time” (Munday 2016: 177).

A translator’s tendency to self-censor could indicate a desire to abide by the norms — that is, conform to expectations or observe the constraints. This tendency could itself be called a “norm,” so some translation theorists argue for clearer terminological distinctions between translator tendencies and sociocultural influences. Toury (2012) distinguishes between “preliminary norms” — those related to initial policy decisions about the general approach to translation — and “operational norms” — those active while translation is underway. Chesterman (1997) also distinguishes two types of translation norms — “professional norms” and “expectancy norms” — categories that cover what the translator does and what the audience expects respectively. While these clarifications (accompanied by further sub-categories of norms) are somewhat helpful for classifying particular behaviours within the overall theoretical systems laid out by Toury and Chesterman respectively, the great variety of what falls under the heading of “norms” limits its usefulness as an explanatory concept.

Sari Eskola (2004: 84) argues that the equation of norms with “observed regularity” in translation is a problem because the linguistic features observed are not themselves norms. While a social norm could be behind an observable pattern in translation, that pattern could also have resulted from other causes. Eskola seems to be getting at a subtle circularity in the use of the concept of norms. Observable regularities in translation are equated with norms, but norms are, in turn, used as explanation for the existence of the observed regularities. In addition to the concept of norms, the tendencies and regular patterns that can be observed in translation are

explained by the concept of “laws of translation” and that of “translation universals.” The terminology does not overlap completely, but there is disagreement about what constitutes a norm versus a law or universal. According to Eskola (2004: 85),

while norms operate in local socio-cultural contexts and change over time, universals are globally observable tendencies and regularities of behaviour that can be found in translations irrespective of the languages involved. ... In my view, norms are primarily prescriptive by nature, while universals are descriptive and predictive, and this is why we should not use these terms as alternative explanations for regular distinguishing features of translations.

She apparently classifies universals as tendencies characteristic of all translations, but norms are constraints that operate within distinct cultural and historical contexts. Since she goes on to identify “laws of translation” as “features that are inherent in translation,” she would appear to consider laws and universals as synonymous labels, but she actually argues for “a distinction between local and universal translation laws than talk about norms and universals as parallel phenomena” (ibid.). By these definitions, the overall category for tendencies in translation should be considered laws with a distinction made between local laws (i.e., norms) and universal laws (i.e., translation universals).

Laws of translation already played a part in Toury’s translation theory as one of the ultimate outcomes he foresaw from “the cumulative findings of descriptive studies” (Toury 2012: 9). Toury’s laws would be predictive generalisations based on repeated observation of the same regularities of behaviour found in a wide range of translated texts. The laws would be probabilistic, not absolute — indicating “the *likelihood* that a kind of behaviour, or surface realization, would occur under one set of specifiable conditions or another” (Toury 2012: 10; italics original).

The identification of observable regular patterns in translation is helpful for Translation Studies, even if there is disagreement over whether a particular pattern is limited to translations

between a certain language pair at a certain point in time or whether the pattern is a universal tendency. Depending on the researcher, these tendencies could be labelled norms, laws, or universals. However, all of these labels are in some way merely designations for translation strategies or techniques.¹⁵ The labels are problematic in that “laws” and “universals” both tend to connote a sense of operating absolutely (despite Toury’s caveat that his laws would be “everything but absolute”). Since “norms” are the varying constraints on a translator’s behaviour, the term “norms” seems a poor choice to also designate the observable patterns found in the translator’s product. In the revised edition of *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Toury substantially revised and expanded his discussion of norms, providing a more detailed account of the social processes that produce norms.

Agreements about actions are far from given. Rather, they result from **negotiations** held in the group, whether language is used in this process or not. These negotiations breed **conventions**, according to which members of the group then feel obliged to behave in particular situations. With time, sets of accepted conventions may crystallize into quite complex **behavioural routines** which become a kind of second nature of people as members of a particular community. (Toury 2012: 62; bold original)

When conventions and routines become norms, they can be reproduced through standard socialisation processes that often result in the norms being passed on and reinforced without conscious recognition or resistance from members of the social group.¹⁶ With regard to the relationship between translational norms and strategies, Toury helpfully clarifies that norms and strategies are not synonymous in that a particular strategy may have been “fed by several

¹⁵ Chesterman (1997: 87) notes the “considerable terminological confusion” arising from the distinctions made by various disciplines “between strategies, tactics, plans, methods, rules, processes, procedures and principles etc.” Chesterman uses “translation strategies” to describe these “standard conceptual tools of the trade.” In studies of the ancient Bible translations, especially Septuagint and Peshitta, common translatorial patterns are generally labelled “techniques.”

¹⁶ The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu focused on this question of how socialisation and social structures kept individuals locked in social struggles that led them to inadvertently and unwittingly reproduce, and not resist, the system of social stratification in which they were embedded (see Swartz 1997: 6–7).

different norms (syncretism), or, conversely, that a single norm [may have been] at the root of a number of different strategies” (Toury 2012: 65). In this study, the particular techniques or patterns used in translation are labelled as techniques or strategies while the term “norms” is primarily used to designate the socio-cultural constraints hypothesised to affect the translator.

3.3.6 Narrative Frame Analysis

Translation analysis is at the intersection of text and context. The source text had a source context, intended audience, and intended message. Translation has its own sociological context and intended audience, but at some level it attempts to maintain connections with the message and context of the source — inasmuch as the translator is able to make sense of said message and context. In social research, the notion of narrative has come to be used to characterise the stories that construct or represent a social group's interpretation of reality. Ricoeur (1981) demonstrated that historical narratives were constructed and could be analysed with the same methods as fictional narratives.

Research on both narrative and metaphor can be classified according to two main starting points. One is a social-scientific approach that uses these categories to help explain human communication, conceptions of reality, and creation of social constructs (Goffman 1986; Bruner 1991; Somers 1992). This is where linguistics, sociology, anthropology, philosophical hermeneutics, and cognitive science intersect. The other approach is literary and focuses on how a story is constructed (narrative) or how figurative language contributes to the literary art of the composition (metaphor). This latter approach is less concerned with the broad philosophical questions of meaning, preferring to instead limit itself to the study of the meaning or reality reflected in the piece of literature. This focus is much less useful than the social-scientific when it comes to analysing problems of translation that include the encoding of literary narratives that are also influenced by broader cultural narratives.

Baker's approach applying narrative framing to translation, as outlined in *Translation and Conflict* (2006), is explicitly following this sociological path. In many respects, her approach uses "narrative" as a label for the process of how we make sense of reality and how we are part of still larger stories or narratives that influence how we retell our experience.¹⁷ Social narrative theory as developed by Baker (2006) has been applied in Translation Studies to a limited extent (Harding 2013), but the approach has been put to good use on the study of Bible translations in Africa (Naudé 2011b; Maluleke 2017).

The concept of framing as a way of organising meaning in narrative is a central part of how Baker has applied narrative theory to translation. Every form of verbal or written communication involves framing (Wendland 2010: 29). This is especially true in composing or translating a narrative where every word choice offers an opportunity for framing or reframing. Frames are conceptual structures that organise reality and provide context for understanding a word or phrase (Croft & Cruse 2004: 8). The concept of framing is actively applied (though sometimes under different names) in linguistics, discourse analysis, cognitive science, psychology, sociology, and translation theory.¹⁸ Application in such a wide range of disciplines

¹⁷ This conception is similar to Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" (see Swartz 1997: 100).

¹⁸ The concept of framing involves social, cultural, and cognitive structures that help explain how human beings interpret the world around them. Discussions emphasising these mental operations and the accompanying influence of sociocultural factors on thought processes use a wide variety of labels for these structures including "background," "context," "domain," "frame," "frame of reference," "matrix," "mental space," "norm," "scenario," "script," "schemata," and "setting" (see Tannen 1993: 14–21 for a helpful discussion of this terminological overlap). Unfortunately, researchers in different disciplines may use the same terms for different aspects of the concept such as using one term for a single structure and another to refer to a collection of structures (e.g., Langacker [2008:44] uses "domain" for the one and "matrix" for a collection of domains). Framing involves culturally-bound mental associations. The network of meaning invoked by these associations is sometimes called "intertextuality." The phenomenon of framing in the sense of active manipulation of information made available to the public is also a concern of political science and media studies. For research on the phenomenon in linguistics and discourse analysis, see Langacker (2008), Evans and Green (2006), Fillmore (2006), Croft and Cruse (2004), and Tannen (1993). For cognitive science and social psychology, see Kahneman (2011), Pinker (2007), and Fauconnier and Turner (2002). Most research in the social sciences using "framing" is in

is possible because framing describes a fundamental aspect of human communication and cognition that has been called the “inevitably relational dimension of meaning.”¹⁹ In this study, frame or framework refers to a static mental construct or projection shaped by an individual's understanding of the world around them; framing refers to the dynamic activity of forming that mental construct.²⁰ The act of framing may involve manipulating perception by constraining readers or listeners to approach a topic from a particular perspective, often by encouraging the use of one framework over another. In these instances, a reader can either accept the frame encouraged by the original “framer” or reject it and apply a different frame. The proper frame to use to interpret an interaction may be ambiguous, leading to the creation of multiple frames as the story is retold. Framing provides a well-developed theoretical model that can easily be applied to biblical studies because it can be used to analyse both the biblical text itself and the reception of the biblical text in the history of interpretation.²¹

Narrative frame analysis is an epistemological, not a literary, approach that aims to describe how human experience is mediated and manipulated in the narrative discourse that constitutes or represents our interpretations of reality. While narrativity may have focused on literary texts in the past and while some of the categories for description may have originated

some way indebted to Erving Goffman's book *Frame Analysis*, first published in 1974 (Goffman 1986). Translation Studies is broadly interested in the sociocultural and linguistic constraints on communication that affect translation. Toury ([1995] 2012) approaches the phenomenon in terms of “norms.” Baker (2006; 2007) adopts the language of “framing” from Goffman. Katan (2004) also uses “frames” in his discussion of translation as an act of cultural mediation.

¹⁹ Bennett M. Berger, foreword to Goffmann 1986: xiii.

²⁰ This definition and the model of framing applied here is primarily based on the notion as developed in sociology and cognitive linguistics (i.e., Fillmore 2006; Goffmann 1986). Framing as adopted in translation theory is itself based on this same work in the social sciences and linguistics (see Baker 2007: 151–52; Wendland 2010: 28–29).

²¹ This methodology has been successfully demonstrated for biblical studies and Bible translation in various publications by Victor Matthews, Ellen van Wolde, Timothy Wilt, and Ernst Wendland (see Matthews 2008; Van Wolde 2009; Wilt 2003; Wilt & Wendland 2008; Wendland 2008; Wendland 2010).

in literary criticism, the narrative approach has proven to be applicable to and productive in the social sciences and the humanities (e.g., White 1980; Bruner 1991; Somers 1992; 1994; Ewick & Silbey 1995; Ewick & Silbey 2003). The application of narrative analysis in other fields has accompanied the postmodern realisation of the constructed nature of our knowledge--that is, the illusion of our objectivity and our inability to truly separate “what really happened” from our stories about what happened. Scholars take different positions on whether the telling of events “represents” reality (White 1980) or “constitutes” reality (Baker 2006). The argument that narrative constitutes reality is really just a larger abstraction developed from observing that we cannot conceive of anything or make sense of any events apart from situating them in some sort of narrative framework. In this sense, narratives function in the same way as large-scale schemata (according to the psychological terminology for the phenomenon). Our conceptualisation of reality cannot be separated or identified distinctly from some objective thing that exists as an unchanging common “reality.” Therefore, narrative constitutes and does not merely represent reality. While it is true, in a sense, that we are all bound by the mental structures through which we organise knowledge, it seems to me to press the issue too far to say the narrative constitutes reality rather than representing it. Even though each person is a “historically effected consciousness” (Gadamer 2004: 301) and even though our individual narratives are slightly different, when we are witnessing the same life events or reading and explaining or translating the same texts, a basic narrative with shared common features will emerge. Our narrative of events or explanation of a text emerges in dialogue with others and can be refined by their narratives (Smith 1980: 229–30), but this process does not change the fact that while people from different languages, cultures, or historical periods would describe the same text or event differently we can still compare their accounts and identify commonalities. The differences come from the different interests and concerns of those telling the story. Those different points of emphasis are the focus in narrative frame analysis. A reader

or observer or listener takes in information and forms a “definition of the situation” (Goffman 1986: 1) based on their understanding of what is read or observed or heard. Education, social position, cultural norms, religious beliefs, political concerns, and other factors can all affect how someone creates that “definition of the situation” or, in the terminology of narrative frame analysis, how they “frame” the event or text. Framing can be active or passive. Most of the framing that occurs in everyday conversation is passive. We are not actively and consciously attempting to manipulate our hearers, but merely telling our point of view and our point of view is culturally and socially conditioned to favour some aspects over others. In some contexts, however, we write or speak in order to persuade or advocate for a particular point of view. In those cases, we can actively frame the communication — highlighting aspects that favour our position and ignoring contrary perspectives or downplaying potential objections. This sort of active framing is common in politics, legal arguments, and the media, for example.

In Translation Studies, narrative frame analysis provides an opportunity to review the translator's product and attempt a reconstruction of what factors were most salient for his or her process of interpreting and transmitting the message of the source (Naudé 2011b). Jameson Maluleke's (2017: 102) analysis of Bible translations in Xitsonga in South Africa reveals how the framing behind the 1929 Xitsonga Bible Translation “played a role in empowering and legitimising colonialism and paving the way for submissive colonial faith.” Manipulation of frames and framing effects provides the translator with a subtle opportunity for ideological affirmation or resistance. Writing a narrative involves framing — making decisions about which aspects to foreground. Translating or retelling the narrative offers an opportunity for reframing — making different aspects of the narrative explicit or recasting the entire episode in a new frame. The nature of reframing elevates the often-subtle shifts made in the ancient

versions to the level of exegesis and allows for a more refined analysis of what may have motivated the translator's decision.

3.3.7 Frames of Reference

The Bible translators Timothy Wilt and Ernst Wendland developed an approach to Bible translation that they call the “frames of reference” approach, which shares much in common with narrative frame analysis and other descriptive approaches to translation due to their attention to the effects of socio-cultural context on interpretation and communication.²² They draw on aspects of conceptual metaphor theory, frame semantics, and sociology in a way comparable to a narrative frame analysis approach to translation, but they devised it for Bible translation working from the notion of framing in cultural mediation and cognitive linguistics. Wilt (2003) emphasises that they are viewing translation with reference to sociocultural settings, human communication processes, and concerns for a text’s function, an especially important aspect for translating a sacred text.

Wendland (2008: xvi) calls the method a “context-sensitive, function-oriented, ‘frames of reference’ approach” and defines frames as “distinct culturally-conditioned cognitive perspectives which serve to orient as well as to contextualise all our perception, evaluation, integration, and organization of data.” This conceptualisation of frames as structures that influence how human beings organise and process the data related to human experience is akin to Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus” and aligns with the perspective of narrative frame analysis where narrative functions as both the process of how we articulate reality and the constraint that influences our perception of reality (compare Baker 2006; Bourdieu 1991). Wendland orients his study around four types of “conceptual domain,” which he also calls frames —

²² See, especially, Wilt 2002; Wilt 2003; Wilt & Wendland 2008; Wendland 2008; Wendland 2010.

sociocultural, institutional, situational, and textual. These frames represent four broad categories of experience that affect both a translator's interpretation of a source text and his or her reproduction of that text for a new audience. The notion of norms in the sense discussed above is encompassed within the idea of frames through either narrative frame analysis or a frames of reference approach because the process of framing is essentially what a translator does, consciously or not, when navigating the relevant translational norms.

Wilt (2003) categorises “frames of reference” into five types that effectively cover the same aspects as Wendland's four categories: cognitive frames, sociocultural frames, organisational frames, communication-situation frames, and textual frames. Wendland's categorisation is different because he takes the cognitive frame or cognitive context to be “the most general or inclusive sort of perceptual/conceptual framework” — it is the overarching category of which the other four aspects are “sub-frames” (Wendland 2008: 19). Narrative frame analysis, the frames of reference approach, and frame semantics (or cognitive semantics) all address the issue of how the interpretation of any type of human communication is subject to perception influenced by social setting, cultural background, institutional affiliation, and textual context. All of these areas affect the construal of any particular act of communication — verbal or textual. These broad cognitive and sociocultural factors also impact the comprehension of figures of speech.

3.4 Linguistic Construal of Figurative Language

Figurative language can be hard to understand even within a single language. Figures of speech such as idioms and euphemisms change over time (see Ellington 1993). Four hundred or so years removed from William Shakespeare, his bawdy puns and witty double entendres easily pass the notice of many English readers (see Partridge 1990). Since euphemisms are words or expressions used for the express purpose of avoiding open mention of a delicate subject, writers

and speakers can sometimes conceal their full meaning. Readers can remain unaware of the actual referent concealed by a euphemism, especially when they are at considerable historical or cultural distance from a text.

As noted above, the concept of framing, under various names, is a part of how various disciplines describe how people construct meaning in verbal and non-verbal social interaction. In cognitive linguistics, this process of framing is described as “construal.” Croft and Cruse (2004: 19) explain that construal “depends on how the speaker conceptualises the experience to be communicated, for the understanding of the hearer.” Langacker’s (2008: 43) definition makes the equivalence between construal and framing more apparent: “The term construal refers to our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways.” For Croft and Cruse, meaning only emerges from the process of construal and does not reside in the words or sentences themselves:

[M]eanings are something that we construe, using the properties of linguistic elements as partial clues, alongside non-linguistic knowledge, information available from context, knowledge and conjectures regarding the state of mind of hearers and so on. (Croft & Cruse 2004: 98)

Linguistics, including sociolinguistics, approaches the same phenomenon under the category of pragmatics — the branch of linguistics concerned with the meaning of statements in specific social contexts. The insights on this subject from the linguistic and the cognitive linguistic perspective are similar and complementary. For example, in a 1998 essay titled “Language and the Mediation of Experience,” Michael Stubbs describes a sociolinguistic view on the interaction between cognition and language usage in varying social contexts. He demonstrates how “cognitive orientation” influences language usage, but his examples of how linguistic choices emphasise different perspectives on the same situation could just as easily be cognitive linguistic examples of framing or construal where lexical choice reflects various

conceptualisations of a situation.²³ Similarly, an important book on the linguistic phenomena of euphemism and dysphemism by the linguists Keith Allan and Kate Burridge (1991) emphasises how context and social conventions affect a speaker’s choice of expression. While they are writing from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective, their conclusions are easily accommodated within a theory of construal based on cognitive linguistics.²⁴

3.4.1 Terminology

This study is concerned with Biblical Hebrew (BH) figures of speech and how they were construed by the translators of the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Targums. This section introduces key terms used in linguistics and biblical studies relevant for describing figures of speech and their translation.

3.4.1.1 Linguistic elements

Researchers dealing with figurative language use a variety of labels to refer to the set of linguistic elements that make up a figure of speech, especially *collocation*, *constituent*, *construction*, *locution*, or *syntagm*. Each term basically designates a linguistic element (a word or morpheme) or a set of linguistic elements that function as one syntactic or semantic unit. These labels are general terms for the meaningful arrangement of components in a linguistic expression, not terms specific to describing figurative language. A **collocation** is a particular arrangement of linguistic elements. **Construction** is also a label for a particular arrangement of words or groups of words in a sentence. **Locution** similarly refers to a particular style of speech

²³ In fact, some examples are identical to what can be found in varying discussions of frame semantics. For instance, Stubbs uses the contrast in connotations between “stingy” and “thrifty” — an example also used by Fillmore (2006 [1982]) and Croft and Cruse (2004).

²⁴ For a detailed overview of cognitive linguistics in general, see Lamprecht (2015: 31–71).

or form of expression. Some Bible scholars use locution to refer to specific biblical phrases or expressions, using the term with the same general meaning as collocation or construction.

Constituent is a common term in linguistics for referring to “a structural unit of a definable syntactic, semantic, or phonological category that consists of one or more linguistic elements (as words, morphemes, or features) and that can occur as a component of a larger construction” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “constituent”). Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze (2017: 525) define “constituent” more specifically as referring to the functional units of a clause like subject, object, indirect object, and so on. They also define **syntagm** as a synonym of “constituent” (Van der Merwe, Naudé, & Kroeze 2017: 367).²⁵ In semiotics, a syntagm is simply a particular meaningful combination of elements (Hodge & Kress 1988: 25).

Zevit (2011: 393) defines syntagm as “a sequence of individual words or lexemes that constitute a single semantic unit with its own meaning, a meaning not obvious from its underlying constituents.” The first part of his definition aligns well with the basic meaning shared by all of these terms: a particular arrangement of linguistics elements. However, by adding that the meaning of a syntagm is “not obvious from its underlying constituents,” Zevit imports the aspect of conventionality that applies to idiomatic language but that should not be seen as inherent to the meaning of syntagm.

The terms **lexeme** or **lexical item** denote distinct elements of the vocabulary or lexicon of a language. A lexical item may consist of more than one word as with many figures of speech. The meanings of the individual lexemes making up a figurative expression do not necessarily

²⁵ Similarly, Pröbstle (1995: 99) states, “The term syntagm designates a word or word group which is an indispensable constituent for a sentence.”

add up to the meaning of the lexical item as a whole (i.e., the full expression). For instance, an idiomatic expression is a lexical item consisting of one or more linguistic elements functioning as a constituent of a sentence. Idioms are a particular type of lexical item characterised by conventionality, limited compositionality, and non-referential language (see Section 3.4.1.4 below).

3.4.1.2 Figurative language

The labels **figure of speech** and **figurative language** are general terms for the use of language in a non-denotational (or non-referential) way, meaning the use of words to mean something other than what is commonly accepted as the primary referential meaning (or literal meaning).²⁶ According to Croft and Cruse (2004: 193), “the major types of figurative usage are metaphor and metonymy,” and those types are frequently used in the creation of euphemisms. **Metaphor** and **metonymy** are both complex topics, but I follow the basic explanation presented by Croft and Cruse:

Metaphor and metonymy both involve a **vehicle** [that is, the word used figuratively] and a **target** [that is, the intended figurative meaning]. Metaphor involves an interaction between two domains construed from two regions of purport, and the content of the vehicle domain is an ingredient of the construed target through processes of correspondence and blending. ... In metonymy, the vehicle’s function is merely to identify the target construal. (Croft & Cruse 2004: 193; bold original)

Metonymy and metaphor both involve mappings between a source domain and a target domain (ibid.: 195), but metaphors involve distinct conceptual domains while metonymy maps between terms in the same conceptual domain (see Chau 2011: 13–24). Metonymy maps according to relationships like PART-FOR-WHOLE, WHOLE-FOR-PART, PLACE-FOR-

²⁶ Geeraerts (2010: 26–31) surveys the key mechanisms of figuration as part of a classification of semantic change. Cruse (2011: 239–240) discusses the difficulty in “pinning down the essence of literalness” but admits the common awareness of the distinction between literal and non-literal that most English users encounter on an everyday basis.

INSTITUTION, GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC, and others (Allan & Burridge 1991: 14; Cruse 2011: 259–260).

Geeraerts (2010: 28–29) includes **hyperbole** (overstatement or exaggeration) and **litotes** (understatement) among other “stylistic devices” (or figures of speech) that can be used euphemistically or dysphemistically (see Section 3.4.1.5). The salient point is that “figurative language” is a category that encompasses many different non-referential uses of language. Due to the endemic use of figurative language like metaphor and metonymy (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980), the present study is necessarily selective and focuses on figures of speech that are used either conventionally with non-referential meaning (like idioms) or with pragmatic effects related to speech taboos (like euphemisms).

Croft and Cruse (2004: 193) explain figurative language as language use where “conventional constraints are deliberately infringed in the service of communication” and the speaker’s meaning can be apprehended only by the recognition of the hearer that that the usual “conventional constraints” should be “overridden by contextual constraints.” The needs of communication explain what motivates a language user to speak figuratively instead of plainly.

A speaker uses an expression figuratively when he/she feels that no literal use will produce the same effect. The figurative use may be more attention-grabbing, or it might conjure up a complex image not attainable in any other way, or it may permit the conveyance of new concepts. As far as the hearer is concerned, the most obvious reason for opting for a figurative construal is the fact that no equally accessible and relevant literal construal is available.

(Croft & Cruse 2004: 193)

The fact that figurative expressions produce a certain “effect” is relevant for considering how those expressions are translated from one language to another (see Kövecses 2005: 140–149). A translation strategy that plainly provides the denotational meaning behind the figure of speech is unlikely to have the same rhetorical effect in the target language.

3.4.1.3 Literal versus figurative

In discussing figures of speech, varying terms are used to differentiate the literal and figurative meanings of words and expressions. The use of the labels **literal** and **figurative** are common, despite debate over the different meanings of “literal” (Cruse 2011: 239; Barr 1979).

These labels are used throughout this study for the simple fact that these terms are more familiar than the terms sometimes used in their place. Essentially, I use “literal” to refer to the basic meaning of a word that one might find in a dictionary. To use an example from BH, the basic meaning the lexicons give for the word **7** is “hand”; the literal meaning of the word is the part of the body at the end of the upper body appendage known as the arm. Dictionaries also tend to list common figurative meanings of words, though, so the BH lexicon may also explain that **7** can be used to mean “power.” This sense is a metonymic extension where the part of the body with which we interact with objects in the real world in a tactile way comes to represent our ability to do things (or power) even in abstract contexts.

Sometimes the word **global** is used to refer to the overall figurative meaning of a word or expression as opposed to the **transparent** meaning that could be derived from taking the words in their usual, literal sense. Some approaches to semantics use the more opaque labels **exocentric** and **endocentric** to refer to these distinctions in meaning with reference to idioms (e.g., Nida 1975; Babut 1999). The “exocentric” meaning is the figurative or global meaning while the “endocentric” meaning is that which can be derived from adding together the constituents of a phrase (Nida & Taber 1969: 202; Cruse 2004: 66–67).

The label **referent** can also be used for the concept or communicative purpose lying behind a figure of speech (following Crespo Fernández 2005; 2008; 2011). In the example below (see Section 3.4.1.4), “kick the bucket” the literal referent explicitly avoided by the

euphemism is death. In idioms for greeting like “How are you?”, the referent is the communicative purpose of offering a greeting.

3.4.1.4 Idioms and fixed expressions

In linguistic terms, **idioms** are “conventionalized phrases with limited compositionality” (Warren-Rothlin 2013b: 227). That idioms are **conventionalised phrases** means that knowing the meaning of each lexeme independently may not lead to comprehending the appropriate meaning of the combined expression.

That idioms have **limited compositionality** means that idiomatic phrases tend to be limited to specific syntactic constructions — modify the syntax and the phrase is no longer an idiom (Nunberg, Sag & Wasow 1994: 492). For example, the English idiom “to kick the bucket,” meaning “to die,” has to be used in the active voice with “bucket” as the object of the clause.

Example: Kick the Bucket

- A. He kicked the bucket.
- B. The bucket was kicked by him.

Sentence A works as an expression of the idiom, but sentence B does not. Within those constraints, however, the morphology of the verb phrase can be adapted without removing the idiomatic meaning.

- C. He might kick the bucket.
- D. The dog will kick the bucket.
- E. I hope she kicks the bucket.

Idiomatic phrases also tend to use figurative language like metaphor or metonymy, though the reasoning behind why the figure involved has the idiomatic meaning it does is often obscured by the nature of idioms as conventionalised and lexicalised or semi-lexicalised

expressions (Nunberg, Sag & Wasow 1994: 492). These features of idiomatic expressions all contribute to the difficulty comprehending and, then, translating idioms.

Fixed expression is another technical term used to describe idioms, despite the fact that many expressions so categorised are not fully fixed. However, they are fixed to the extent described above for idioms having limited compositionality.

Fixed expression is a very general but convenient term used to cover several kinds of phrasal lexeme, phraseological unit, or multi-word lexical item: that is, holistic units of two or more words. These include: frozen collocations, grammatically ill-formed collocations, proverbs, routine formulae, sayings, similes. Fixed expression also subsumes idioms. (Moon 1998: 2)

Although Moon finds the label “fixed expression” to be as unsatisfactory as “idiom,” she adopts it for her study of English “fixed expressions and idioms” (using the acronym FEI to label the category). The semi-fixed nature of idioms can also be described as **frozenness** or **inflexibility**, but these terms obscure the fact that few expressions so categorised are fully frozen and inflexible. The labels **restricted variability** or **restricted collocability** better reflect the restricted-but-not-fixed nature of idiomatic expressions (see Langlotz 2006: 4; Van den Heever 2013: 10).

3.4.1.5 Euphemisms and dysphemisms

Euphemisms are figures of speech used as substitutes to avoid a direct reference to a socially sensitive topic like death, disease, or bodily functions. **Dysphemisms** are figures of speech meant to insult or offend by drawing attention to those socially sensitive topics (or taboos) that others prefer to avoid. Some euphemisms and dysphemisms are also idioms or fixed expressions in the sense that they are conventionalised phrases of limited compositionality where the combined expression carries a meaning unrelated to common meaning of the individual lexical items making up the expression. The idiom “kick the bucket” used above is an English

euphemism for death, albeit an extremely informal and potentially dysphemistic one.²⁷ However, individual lexemes may be used figuratively in a euphemistic way. That is, while idioms are typically defined as multiword items, euphemisms may be individual words because the pragmatic purpose for a figurative expression is what defines it as a euphemism (see Section 3.4.4).²⁸

3.4.1.6 Describing translation

Many of the important concepts related to describing translations were introduced above, including equivalence (Section 3.3.3), agency (Section 3.3.4), norms (Section 3.3.5), and frames of reference (Sections 3.3.6 and 3.3.7). It has been customary to describe translations according to where they fall relative to the two poles of a dichotomy like “literal” versus “free” or “word-for-word” versus “sense-for-sense” or “formal” versus “dynamic” equivalence. The dichotomy oversimplifies the complex nature of translation and the varying ways texts can be “equivalent” (see Baker 2011), but the usefulness of the concept comes more from considering it less as an either/or and more as a spectrum where actual translations all fall somewhat in the middle but show tendencies favouring one pole or the other. As noted above (see Section 3.4.1.3), I use the term “literal” for the common, denotative meaning of words that make up a figure of speech. With reference to translation, **literal** can describe a translation that adheres closely to the linguistic form of the source text (i.e., formal equivalence).

²⁷ The categorisation of an idiom as dysphemistic or euphemistic depends largely on context of use and the speaker or hearer’s “definition of the situation” (meaning their assessment of the social situation that influences their understanding of appropriate behaviour; see Goffman 1986). Many euphemisms about death are flippant, but they are only dysphemistic if they are meant to cause offense to the hearers (Allan & Burridge 1991: 166). A more respectful English euphemism for death is “pass away.”

²⁸ On the difficulties defining the term “idiom”, see Moon 1998: 3–4. For a detailed discussion of the characteristics of idioms, see Van den Heever (2013: 103–21 [esp. p. 120 for a helpful summary of the characteristics]). That idioms are “multi-word” units is a necessary part of his definition of idiom.

Due to the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of “literal” as opposed to “free” in the study of the ancient Bible translations (see Barr 1979), biblical scholars studying the ancient versions have engaged different labels to describe the strict, word-for-word renderings often found in the ancient versions. Michael V. Fox (2002: 207–208) suggests the concept of **mimesis** (as in “imitation”) to guide a translation of the Hebrew Bible made for teaching purposes that would be more transparent and “oriented to the text rather than the reader.” Fox (2002: 208) adopted this idea of “**mimetic form**” from James S Holmes, one of the founders of Translation Studies (see Section 3.2.1). Holmes (1988: 22–33) was looking at the challenge of translating poetry, and he presented four traditional approaches that had been used for that purpose (see Jones 2011). The first approach was oriented toward “retaining the form of the original,” which Holmes labels “mimetic form.”

The translator ... will imitate the form of the original as best he can, constructing German hexameters for Greek, or English *terza rima* for Italian. This approach ... might therefore best be described as one of “mimetic form.” (Holmes 1988: 26)

According to Holmes (1988: 27), the mimetic form passes on the strangeness and foreignness of the source text and “requires the reader to stretch the limits of his literary sensibility, to extend his view beyond the bounds of what is recognized as acceptable in his own literary tradition.” This aspect of putting the work of literary interpretation back on the reader was what Fox (2002: 207) felt to be desirable in a Bible translation designed for those who had to teach students to interpret the Hebrew Bible using an English translation. While “mimetic” is not a frequently used descriptor in Translation Studies, the concept can be traced to Holmes, and it was brought to the attention of biblical scholars through its use by Fox. A mimetic translation is one that reproduces the original form of the source (Jones 2011: 119).

Isomorphic is a more common term used by scholars working on the ancient Bible versions to describe those versions’ tendency toward word-for-word renderings. For example,

the Septuagint's tendency to represent the Hebrew source phrasing word-for-word, and even morpheme-by-morpheme is regularly labelled "isomorphic" (e.g., Boyd-Taylor 2006; Gauthier 2009; 2010; Kreuzer 2012). Like "mimesis," the term describes a strict literal translation that closely mirrors the source text.

The term **calque** is used in linguistics, Translation Studies, and biblical studies to describe semantic borrowing. A calque is a semantic shift that "copies the polysemy of another word" and, in translation, imports the meaning of the word from the source language into the target language text (Geeraerts 2010: 29). In Translation Studies, "calque" may refer to a strict semantic representation of an expression that does not carry the same meaning in the target language (see Tymoczko 1999: 24–25; Englund Dimitrova 2005: 200–201). Translating a figure of speech by a calque may reveal the "source-culture bias" of the translator (Dickins 2005: 267). When calques are used regularly in translation, they may be considered stereotypical or standard equivalents for the words or phrases they represent from the source text (Tov 1999: 88). Sometimes foreign phrases enter the lexicon in their translated form as calques and in their original form as loan words (e.g., "au contraire" and "on the contrary"; see Moon 1998: 137–138). In the ancient Bible versions, their tendency toward isomorphic renderings was accompanied by a tendency to reuse standard collocations that had originated as calques.²⁹

Finally, the term **explicitation** is used in Translation Studies to describe "the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text" (Klaudy

²⁹ In Septuagint Studies, "calque" is often used in a more restricted sense as a stereotypical rendering that has become "fully contextualized through continued use within the Greek-reading/-speaking community" (Büchner 2000: 96). Tov (1999: 88) calls the phenomenon of imitative translation in the LXX "stereotyped (automatic) representation of Hebrew words." He finds the technique especially common with "lexical Hebraisms" (87–88) — a term that is frequently used for the LXX renderings of Hebrew idioms.

2009: 104). Explicitation brings information into the target text that is only implied in the source text. With regard to figures of speech, explicitation would be evident in the strategy to make the implicit meaning of figurative language clear and straightforward in the translated text.

3.4.2 Dynamic Construal of Meaning

Meaning consists of conceptualisation and arises from the interaction between conceptual content and construal of that content (Langacker 2008: 43). Determining the potential referent for a figure of speech is a matter of construal because it involves profiling an expression against the right domain or frame. The relationship between content and construal is interactive because linguistic elements chosen for an expression both imply a particular construal or evoke some content associations (ibid.).

The same processes are at work whether the communication is mediated through speech or a written text, though with speech a speaker can also manipulate tone, timing, facial expressions, and body language to influence construal. Regardless of whether the communication is oral or written, the speaker/author can never guarantee that the hearer/reader will construe a sentence as intended. However, the greater the shared sociocultural experiences between speaker and hearer, the more likely that communication will happen successfully. This aspect of shared associations is central to the encyclopaedic view of meaning — the idea “that words do not represent neatly packaged bundles of meaning (the dictionary view), but serve as ‘points of access’ to vast repositories of knowledge relating to a particular concept or conceptual domain” (Evans & Green 2006: 160). With an encyclopaedic view of meaning, various lexical items are relevant to the particular domain with varying degrees of centrality. More central items nearly always activate the domain, while less central items activate the domain only in certain contexts.

According to John Taylor (1995: 83),

we can regard the relevant background information for the characterization of word meanings as a network of shared, conventionalized, to some extent perhaps idealized knowledge, embedded in a pattern of cultural beliefs and practices.

While some early characterisations of cognitive semantics viewed conceptual categories as static or stable, it is now clear that rather than possessing fixed associations, categories are “created at the moment of use” (Croft & Cruse 2004: 75). This means that “meanings are seen as emerging dynamically in discourse and social interaction,” being “actively negotiated by interlocutors on the basis of the physical, social, and cultural context” (Langacker 2008: 28). This dynamic and interactive negotiation is the essence of construal. Further, construal must be considered an active process where language users are seen to be capable of creating new conceptual categories as needed, but they create those categories out of previous experience, recent mental activity, and “construal of immediate context, including linguistic, perceptual, social, psychological aspects, including current goals and plans, inferences and expected outcomes, perceived causal relations and so on” (Croft & Cruse 2004: 93). The dynamic nature of construal is useful for considering the interpretation of figurative language because many figures of speech are conventionalised and understanding hinges on previous experience with either the expression itself, a similar expression, or knowledge of relevant features for comparison.

Croft and Cruse (2004: 97–104) break down the process behind the dynamic construal of meaning into four key aspects: contextualised interpretation, purport, constraints, and construal operations. The first aspect relates to how understandings build on inferences about context and from prior knowledge. The second — purport — is a label for the raw ingredients of meaning associated with any particular lexical item. The other two aspects — constraints and construal operations — are most relevant for this study. Constraints are limitations on construal. They

resemble social norms in that they can be resisted but it requires more effort to violate the constraint because abiding by it feels like the natural action. The number of possible constraints is too great to attempt a list, but Croft and Cruse give four examples of the types of constraints that affect construal: human cognitive capacities, the nature of reality, convention, and context. These constraints represent tendencies in conceptual structures where certain experiences or aspects of life are more likely to be construed one way than another. The area of convention is likely the most important constraint for translation of figurative language because convention relates to how a community typically uses words and regulates the language appropriate for discussion of certain concepts in certain contexts. In this way, convention can be a factor in the use of euphemism and in a decision to self-censor (i.e., abide by the convention). Linguistic contextual constraints relate to how the nature of the discourse constrains interpretation. Social setting and cultural knowledge also act as cultural constraints.

Regarding construal operations, Croft and Cruse (2004: 45) discuss over a dozen construal operations organised into four categories that they take as representing “four basic cognitive abilities in different aspects of experience”:

1. attention/salience
2. judgement/comparison
3. perspective/situatedness
4. constitution/Gestalt

Here I highlight a few construal operations that have particular relevance for the construal of figurative language and framing in translation — selection, categorisation, metaphor, perspective, and relationality.

Selection addresses how we focus on some aspects of experience and ignore others. It is the fundamental element of construal at work in how different semantic domains profile different aspects of a concept. The use of metonymy is also part of selection since it makes use

of one word within a conceptual domain to refer to another within that domain with which it is somehow related. The decision to use metonymy can influence the way a concept is construed.

Categorisation, like selection, involves attending to some aspects of a situation and ignoring others in order to find a comparable category for the experience. Categorisation is a key element of framing because our conceptualisation of the situation affects what prior experiences will be selected for comparison and, thus, what categories will be available.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that categorization depends on how things are conceptualized, which to some extent is independent of their objective nature. We are perfectly capable of construing the same conceived entity in alternate ways, each of which highlights certain aspects of it and downplays others. Collectively, for example, some oblong pieces of wood can be referred to as either boards or lumber. Although they are referentially identical, the plural boards renders salient the individual constitutive entities, whereas lumber suppresses their individuation in favor of their apprehension as an effectively homogeneous mass: three boards vs. *three lumber, these boards vs. this lumber, etc. These different construals are incorporated as part of the established meanings of these forms, a matter of shared linguistic convention. We have the conceptual flexibility to construe the situation in either fashion and select the form whose meaning best suits our communicative intent. (Langacker 2008: 131)

While linguistic and conceptual categories are not predetermined, many exist as items of shared linguistic and cultural convention. Despite the constraints these conventions place on construal, they can sometimes be manipulated for communicative purposes.

Metaphor also impacts construal because the “choice of metaphor to describe a situation in a particular domain construes the structure of that domain in a particular way that differs depending on the metaphor chosen” (Croft & Cruse 2004: 55). Metaphor involves a comparison and the features evoked by the comparison affect construal.

Perspective includes the idea of our being situated or embedded in a particular social, cultural, and historical location. That situatedness influences construal because it dictates to some extent the perspective from which we view any given experience.

Relationality refers to how some concepts imply the existence of other concepts and cannot be understood without reference to those concepts. Adjectives and verbs tend to be relational while nouns tend to be non-relational. This is important for construal because the selection of an adjective instead of a noun can evoke a different understanding of the situation. In other words, a non-relational term profiles different aspects than a relational term.

3.4.3 Construal of Figurative Language

In this section, I present the relevance of dynamic construal (as described in the previous section) for the interpretation of figurative language as illustrated by idiomatic expressions. As noted earlier, idiomatic expressions have limited compositionality — that is, their meaning cannot be determined solely by knowing vocabulary and following the usual grammatical rules for the language (Evans & Green 2006: 643; see Section 3.4.1.4). A common classification of idiomatic expressions used in cognitive linguistics defines idioms according to contrasting features:³⁰

1. decoding versus encoding
2. grammatical versus extragrammatical
3. substantive versus formal
4. pragmatic point versus no pragmatic point

An encoding idiom can be understood via normal grammar rules, but the terms used in the expression may only have that meaning when used in that expression (e.g., “answer the door”). A decoding idiom cannot be understood by decoding the parts of the expression because there is usually no relationship between the words of the idiom and the meaning they represent (e.g., “kick the bucket” for “die”). Grammatical idioms obey the rules of grammar, but extragrammatical idioms do not. For example, idioms like “kick the bucket” and “spill the beans” are grammatical because they adhere to the rule for the direct object following the verb.

³⁰ See Croft & Cruse 2004: 231–235; Evans & Green 2006: 643–648.

Extragrammatical idioms are expressions that do not follow usual syntactic rules and carry meanings that have little or no connection to the normal meanings of the words involved. Examples of this type include English phrases like “by and large,” “be that as it may,” or “easy does it” (Croft & Cruse 2004: 233). A substantive idiom is made up of fixed lexical elements, meaning substitution of one of the elements removes the idiom. For example, neither “kick the container” nor “hit the bucket” convey the same thing as “kick the bucket.” A formal idiom is one where some elements of the expression can be modified without affecting the meaning of the idiom. This distinction tends to appear in syntactic patterns like the “let alone” construction in English.³¹ The fourth type relates to whether an idiom serves a pragmatic function. Many idioms related to greetings and good-byes fall into this category, but stock phrases that serve standard functions in different kinds of discourse can also be considered idioms with pragmatic purpose. The idioms without pragmatic point also tend to be those classified as extragrammatical (e.g., “by and large”).

3.4.4 Usage of Euphemism and Dysphemism

In this section, I offer a more expanded introduction to the concepts of euphemism and dysphemism (see Section 3.4.1.5), their common areas of usage, and the associated process of lexicalisation that turns figures of speech into commonly accepted items in a language’s lexicon. The principles of the dynamic construal of figurative language discussed above (see Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3) applies as well to the figures of speech from this section. In fact, several of the idiomatic expressions mentioned in the previous section are also euphemisms.

³¹ See Evans & Green 2006: 648–651 for a case study on the “let alone” construction. The construction designates sentences that follow the pattern: X can’t do Y, let alone Z.

Euphemism is characterised by avoidance language. The choice of a particular word or expression is influenced by a concern for avoiding potentially offensive phrasing, shielding the audience from the full negative impact that another word or expression would have. Dysphemism, on the other hand, is characterised by offensive language. The choice of a particular word or expression is motivated by a deliberate desire to shock, offend, or insult. Allan and Burrige (1991: 26) define dysphemism as “an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason.” While euphemism and dysphemism are used for opposite purposes, they reflect two sides of the same phenomenon — the choice to conform to social norms or to deliberately violate those norms.³² This phenomenon can be defined with reference to “concerns about face” and “face effects” (Allan & Burrige 1991: 4, 7) — that is, the choice is motivated by a desire either to save face (for any of the participants) or to cause shame and offense (lose face).

Many figures of speech can be categorised as euphemisms since they function as substitutes for dispreferred (or taboo) words and phrases.³³ Dysphemisms, likewise, function as intentionally insulting substitutes for polite or neutral words and phrases. In general, euphemisms conceal socially sensitive situations to save face while dysphemisms deliberately denigrate and disparage an opponent. These figures of speech are heavily dependent on the social and cultural context of their use since they are meant to say more than the mere meanings of the words denote. Euphemism makes use of a language's resources for producing figurative

³² The subtitle of their book uses a SPEECH AS COMBAT metaphor to express the conceptual semantic connection: “language used as shield and weapon.”

³³ While “taboo” has connotations of inviolability, the degree of social censure inspired by an infelicitous statement varies greatly according to culture and language. In the United States, hearers may be offended and disgusted, but their reaction rarely has real consequences. By contrast, violation of certain linguistic taboos had severe consequences in Israelite society (see Lev 24:10–16).

expressions, so many types of euphemism are simply applications of general strategies for producing figures of speech like metaphor, metonymy, wordplay, or hyperbole. Application in a relevant context is what makes an expression a euphemism. The study of this linguistic phenomenon makes use of semantics, pragmatics, communication theory, and sociolinguistics.

Euphemism is used to avoid social censure and disapproval. Dysphemism is used to assert social status or manoeuvre for status by downgrading or diminishing the status of another. The interrelationship between these types of language usage is solidified by the existence of “euphemistic dysphemisms” and “dysphemistic euphemisms” (Allan & Burridge 1991: 7). Euphemistic dysphemisms include more “polite” terms for swearing (e.g., “Gosh!” or “Shoot!”). Following speech-act theory, we could say the locution or utterance is euphemistic but the illocutionary or perlocutionary effect is dysphemistic.³⁴ Dysphemistic euphemisms are generally coarse or vulgar idioms; a dysphemistic locution could have a euphemistic illocutionary or perlocutionary effect.³⁵

Cross-linguistically, euphemism is commonly used for culturally taboo topics, such as death, disease, sexuality, body parts, and bodily functions. An expression's status as dispreferred changes according to social context: Language censured in one context is commonplace in another. The status of a particular word or phrase as socially acceptable or unacceptable also changes over time within the same language — what was once a poetic euphemism becomes a vulgar dysphemistic euphemism.³⁶

³⁴ For an overview of speech-act theory, see Mangum & Widder 2015.

³⁵ Allan and Burridge (1991: 7, 30–31) use “illocution” and “illocutionary” alone for the effect that an utterance has on the hearer. “Perlocution” and “perlocutionary” can also describe the effect of communication in speech-act theory, especially as formulated in Austin (1975).

³⁶ Neaman and Silver (1983: 10) give the example of the slang use of “cherry” for the hymen as a poetic euphemism that became a vulgarism.

Crespo Fernández (2005; 2008; 2011) describes the usage of euphemism and dysphemism as a process of “referent manipulation” — a “process whereby the language user presents the taboo referent in a particular way, either softening its less acceptable aspects or, by contrast, intensifying them” (Crespo Fernández 2008: 96n4).³⁷ Crespo Fernández approaches the phenomena of euphemism and dysphemism with a cognitive linguistic framework — that of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987).³⁸ As with the dynamic construal approach outlined above, he emphasises an active process of conceptualisation where metaphor serves as a way to frame or structure experience in terms of mapping conceptual correspondences between domains.

One of Lakoff’s contributions for the understanding of metaphor was drawing attention to the ubiquity of metaphor in language usage; many common patterns for describing experience make use of conventional metaphors that language users no longer recognise as metaphorical expressions (see Lakoff & Turner 1989). Crespo Fernández (2008) uses a classification for euphemisms and dysphemisms that takes advantage of this tendency in language for figures of speech to become conventionalised. The categories address “degree of lexicalization” (Crespo Fernández 2008: 98) and label three kinds of euphemism or dysphemism — lexicalised, semi-lexicalised, and creative.

With a lexicalised word or expression, the figurative sense is considered the usual meaning. A lexicalised euphemism has become so associated with its figurative meaning that it has effectively lost its metaphorical status. As an example, he gives the English word “cock,” meaning “adult male chicken,” where the term’s sexual connotations have “deprived [it] of its

³⁷ This choice of how to present a “taboo referent” is a key aspect of the translational problem explored by this thesis.

³⁸ For a survey of the conceptual approach to metaphor and its relevance for the study of the Hebrew Bible, see Chau 2011: 11–27.

capacity to refer figuratively or euphemistically to the taboo due to its intimate association — not to say identification — with the sexual concept it names” (Crespo Fernández 2008: 100). A semi-lexicalised euphemism is one taken from a conceptual domain that has been a traditional source domain for providing substitutes for words and expressions in the dispreferred target domain. The existence of common cross-domain mappings for euphemisms is evident from how Allan and Burridge (1991) can divide their “lexicon” of euphemisms and dysphemisms according to patterns found in numerous languages. One common pattern is the use of food-related metaphors for sexual activity and genitalia.³⁹ Crespo Fernández defines the “creative” category as a case where “the euphemistic or dysphemistic item is the result of a novel association with the taboo, only accessible in its phraseological context” (Crespo Fernández 2008: 98). A euphemism or dysphemism in this category can be understood only by mapping the appropriate conceptual correspondences between domains that have no prior established conceptual relationship. As an example, he offers a line from DH Lawrence that describes sexual orgasm according to the religious categories of baptism and confirmation. He asserts that the latter two categories — semi-lexicalised and creative — are the most able to accomplish the communicative purposes of euphemism and dysphemism due to the way they draw on associations from conceptual domains associated with the subject.

In Biblical Hebrew, many sexual euphemisms could be considered lexicalised in some sense because the figurative meaning is so common (e.g., the use of *שָׁכַב* to describe sexual relations). However, the euphemistic meaning is still not usually the primary “literal” meaning. These euphemisms are better classified as semi-lexicalised since the context of use determines the appropriate meaning and the euphemisms tend to have a sexual sense via conceptual

³⁹ For English examples, see Allan & Burridge 1991: 99–100. Allan and Burridge (1991: 92) observe that a “common euphemism for ‘copulate’ in many African languages is *eat*.” They also note that use of the food metaphor was “common in Attic Greece, particularly for female genitalia” (100).

association. A number of potential biblical sexual euphemisms are ambiguous. While that ambiguity is often used to deny possible sexual undertones, some of them may be examples of creative euphemisms.

3.5 Figurative Language and Translation

The problem of interpreting figurative language is only magnified when a translator is faced with the task of translating a figure of speech into another language. Since figures of speech carry meanings that are not evident from the conventional usage of the words that make up the expression, the translator must be aware of the underlying referent. If figures of speech break the rules of grammar, the translator must recognise the usage as a fixed expression and translate according to the communicative purpose of the phrase. If a figure of speech has no purpose or pragmatic point, the translator may not need to represent the phrase in translation at all.

As figures of speech used to conceal or castigate their true referents, euphemism and dysphemism further complicate translation. Baker identifies two ways that idiomatic expressions present difficulties for translators: 1) the need to recognise and properly interpret the idiom and 2) the challenge “involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language” (Baker 1992: 65). The fundamental choice underlying “referent manipulation” as discussed above is whether to present a “taboo referent” by “softening” or “intensifying” the objectionable aspects of the concept (Crespo Fernández 2008: 96n4). This is a problem faced by translators as well as speakers. The decision between “softening” and “intensifying” is a matter of self-censorship versus explicitation. Further, the culturally-bound nature of euphemism and dysphemism means that different groups have different expectations (expectancy norms) about what can be said directly versus what must be concealed via euphemism. This section addresses the problems faced in translating figurative language as represented by euphemisms and idioms.

3.5.1 Euphemisms and Translation

While most of the sexual euphemisms in the Bible are fairly clear and rather mild (due to their nature as lexicalised or semi-lexicalised expressions), the Bible does not shy away from using crude, rude language at times for shock value, especially in the prophetic books. The problem with euphemism for translation is the cultural knowledge from the source context necessary for an appropriate understanding of the euphemism. Once understood, the translator faces the additional challenge of deciding how much of that understanding should be made clear in translation. What was appropriate to the source culture may not be deemed appropriate in the target culture. Translation naturally tends to produce a more explicit text than the source, but the translator must grapple with how much detail is appropriate or even necessary for the target audience. Salah Salim Ali explains the problem with euphemism in translation:

In all forms, euphemism constitutes a translating problem since literal rendering hardly captures the functional and metonymic significance of the original. On the other end of the spectrum stand pejorative or derogatory [sic] words and expressions which do not hide the unpleasant implications but do flagrantly announce them instead. (Ali 1995: 23; italics added)

In other words, a formal rendering will miss the meaning of the euphemism and an explicative rendering loses the effect of the euphemism. Despite the fact that a formal rendering tends to be least appropriate for conveying the meaning of idioms and euphemisms, this approach appears to be the most common way for ancient translators of the Bible to handle figurative language. The nature of the Bible as a sacred text has undoubtedly influenced the tendency that continues into modern times for Bible translators to feel constrained to represent the exact words of the source as much as possible. However, on occasion, even in ancient translations, strategies preserving meaning over form have been employed.

Beyond the issue of losing meaning versus losing communicative effect, there is the difficulty of whether a concept covered by euphemism in the source language culture requires

a euphemism for the target language culture. While euphemisms tend to be used for the domains of death, disease, sexuality, body parts, and bodily functions, different cultures have different expectations about how extensive the use of euphemism should be. Similarly, the source text could be more graphic or explicit (even while using some level of euphemism) than seems appropriate for the target audience, leading the translator to obscure the details of the scene in even greater euphemism (e.g., some English renderings of Ezek 16:25–26).⁴⁰

3.5.2 Idioms and Translation

Figures of speech present a special problem for translation because the meaning of an idiomatic phrase is rarely apparent from the sum of its parts.⁴¹ Baker (2011: 67) notes that many idioms are “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form.” Decoding and substantive idioms are especially difficult due to their fixed nature. With most idioms, a writer or speaker cannot change the word order, remove words, add words, replace words, or restructure the syntax (*ibid.*).

For example, the English idiom “let the cat out of the bag” (meaning to inadvertently reveal a secret) is no longer an idiom if a speaker says, “let the cat out.” Now the utterance simply has its straightforward sense. Similarly, the phrase is no longer an English idiom if the animal or container is relabelled (e.g., “let the dog out of the box”). While it is possible that “let the cat out of the bag” could be uttered quite appropriately if a speaker was instructing someone

⁴⁰ For example, the RSV uses “offering yourself” and “lustful neighbors” for the more explicit euphemisms in the Hebrew of Ezek 16:25–26. The NIV’s “spreading your legs” and “neighbors with large genitals” better capture the explicit sense. The New Century Version also uses the bland “had sexual relations with” in Ezek 16:26 for the Hebrew’s זנה, a notorious verb mainly used to condemn immoral sex, translated as “play the whore” in ESV and as “engage in prostitution” in NIV. (Note that references to the NIV are to the text of the 2011 edition.)

⁴¹ On some of the difficulties translating figurative language, see Alvarez 1993; Al-Zoubi, Al-Ali & Al-Hasnawi 2006.

to release a feline from a flexible, soft-sided container, this literal meaning is not the default understanding of the collocation.⁴² For an idiom to be translated, regardless of how it is classified, the concept behind the idiom must be available to the translator. A translator faced with this type of idiomatic phrase may:⁴³

- (1) represent the phrase by glossing (literally) the individual items in the phrase, regardless of whether the meaning transfers to the target language,
- (2) translate in a way that explains the meaning of the idiom directly,
- (3) represent the idiom with an appropriate and comparable idiom in the target language,
- (4) or attempt a compromise where aspects of the source's form (1) are represented alongside a direct explanation of the meaning (2).

In other words, a translator can attend to the words that make up the expression, attend to the meaning behind the expression, substitute a target language idiom that approximates the meaning of the expression, or translate in a way that mimics the form while explaining the meaning. A strictly formal rendering of this idiom (“let the cat out of the bag”) in translation would likely either be meaningless in the target language or convey a completely different sense (unless the target language had borrowed the English idiom). The second strategy is likely the most common, even for translations that claim to be “idiomatic,”⁴⁴ but it is unlikely that these “idiomatic” renderings have the same illocutionary or perlocutionary effect on the target audience as the original idiom did for its audience. While achieving the same rhetorical impact

⁴² These features of language are often exploited for comedic effect. For example, Amelia Bedelia, the main character in a series of American children's books, is continually misunderstanding the instructions for her duties as a maid. When she is told to “draw the drapes,” she makes a drawing of the curtains on a piece of paper instead of closing the curtains. When she is told to “dust the furniture,” she sprinkles dust *on* all the furniture instead of removing dust from the furniture. Parish 1963 is the first book in the series.

⁴³ While the explanations differ, these options are fairly common in discussions of translation strategy for figures of speech (e.g., Newmark 1988; Unseth 1996; Baker 2011). The strategies are discussed in more detail in Section 3.6.2.

⁴⁴ English Bible translations that claim to be “idiomatic” generally use the label to mean “fluent” in the sense criticised in Venuti 2008.

(or even measuring the impact) is impossible, a translator could make some attempt at a true idiomatic rendering. This third option is the most difficult, but the rhetorical force of a figure of speech is likely best represented by a comparable figure of speech. Returning to the example of “let the cat out of the bag,” a *very* mechanical translation of the idiom into Afrikaans yields: “laat die kat uit die sak.” This is *not* an idiom in Afrikaans for revealing a secret, though there is a “cat in the sack” idiom in Afrikaans for making a bad purchase (“Kat in die sak gekoop”).⁴⁵ However, Afrikaans does have a similar idiom for revealing a secret: “aap uit die mou laat” (“let the monkey out of the sleeve”).⁴⁶ This phrase comes closest to option 3 — translating an idiom with a comparable idiom from the target language. When it comes to biblical figures of speech, translators — both ancient and modern — tend to favour options 1 and 2. This tendency on the part of the translators of the English King James Version, for example, undoubtedly led to a number of biblical idioms becoming conventionalised in English.⁴⁷

3.6 Translation Strategies for Figurative Language

The standard handbooks on translation survey a range of general strategies available to translators (e.g., Catford 1965; Newmark 1988; Baker 2011). Many of these strategies are relevant for describing the techniques used by ancient Bible translators.⁴⁸ The strategies described below relate specifically to options for handling content where the translator has a choice to conceal or reveal aspects of the source content. The translator’s decision could be

⁴⁵ Both the English idiom and the Afrikaans idiom may have the same origin in the popular etymological story that some medieval European merchants tried to cheat customers by selling a cat in a bag, claiming it was a pig. “Buying a lemon” might be a comparable American English idiom for making a bad purchase.

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Jannie Van Niekerk for his help with Afrikaans.

⁴⁷ The English euphemism “carnal knowledge” for sexual intercourse could be indebted to the KJV’s literal translation of the Hebrew euphemism ידע (“know”) for sexual relations (see Gen 4:1), though the conceptual domain of knowledge has produced sexual euphemisms in other languages independently of biblical influence (Adams 1990: 190).

⁴⁸ See, in this regard, the studies of Van der Louw 2007; Modugno 2015; and Tully 2015.

motivated by ideology, theology, or social norms and conventions. Certain strategies work to reframe the content and avoid or emphasise various features of the situation. For the translation of figurative language, reframing on a larger scale is possible, but there are also four common techniques used for rendering figures of speech. In Chapter 4, I test this categorisation by analysing a number of BH idiomatic expressions. In Chapter 5, I apply this categorisation in an analysis of BH figures of speech that fall under the scope of euphemism. In both chapters, I look at how those figures of speech were represented in the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Targums.

3.6.1 Strategies for Reframing Content in Translation

Baker (2006: 112) outlines four strategies available for reframing content in translation. Since framing is simply another name for construal, it is no surprise that her strategies bear a close resemblance to the construal operations discussed above.

1. Framing through selective appropriation
2. Temporal and spatial framing
3. Framing by labelling
4. Repositioning of participants

Baker emphasises that these are key strategies, but not the only possible ways to reframe content. The strategy of selective appropriation is an aspect of the construal operation of selection. The use of temporal and spatial framing takes advantage of perspective (or situatedness), but for translation, it includes re-situating a text in a completely different setting. This reframing is less common in Bible translation, but a recent Bible-related example would be the short-lived 2009 American television show *Kings* which re-situated the biblical narrative of Saul and David in a setting that resembled the modern-day United States.

Framing by labelling relates to categorisation but involves the choice of word or phrase for how best to describe a person, event, or other key element. This strategy relates directly to the use of euphemism, as Baker (2006: 122) notes:

Any type of label used for pointing or identifying a key element or participant in a narrative, then, provides an interpretive frame that guides and constrains our response to the narrative in question. This explains the motivation for the use of euphemisms in many contexts.

Labelling involves all choices about naming — including how to refer to world events, social groups, and political issues, so competing systems of naming tend to present competing claims for social and political power. One of the examples Baker uses to illustrate the potential problem labelling presents to translators is the choice of place names for locations in the Middle East. She notes how use of the biblical names “Judea” and “Samaria” in Israel today “embeds [a speaker or writer] within a Zionist narrative whether or not they consciously subscribe to it” (Baker 2006: 125).

The strategy of framing by repositioning participants is another aspect of the construal operation of perspective (or situatedness). Repositioning is evident in how language users manipulate various linguistic elements to promote an ideology or emphasise group identity.

In translation and interpreting, participants can be repositioned in relation to each other and to the reader or hearer through the linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect, register, use of epithets, and various means of self- and other identification. (Baker 2006: 132)

These last two strategies highlight how narratives encode or propagate power relations. As an understanding of the world, narratives give a story from a particular angle. Depending on the narrative, there may be things that cannot be said or parts that do not fit. Here is where framing in narrative relates to social norms and censorship. The narrative wields the symbolic power that constrains what should or should not be admitted into the literary system of the target culture.

3.6.2 Strategies for Translating Figurative Language

The four options noted above for translating idioms (see Section 3.5.2) are also typical strategies for translating all kinds of figurative language — represent the form, provide the meaning, provide the meaning with some indications of the form, or present a similar figure of speech. To simplify reference to these strategies, I have labelled these four ways translators may approach the translation of figurative language as follows:⁴⁹

Type A	Formal (word-oriented)
Type B	Semantic (meaning-oriented)
Type C	Formal and Semantic (word + meaning-oriented)
Type D	Idiomatic (effect-oriented)

Type A is a translation that represents the linguistic elements of the source text, even if those elements do not convey the appropriate meaning in the target language. Type B renders the meaning represented by the collocation plainly (i.e., without recourse to target language idioms) and is unconcerned with representing any formal features of the expression. Type C conveys the meaning while attempting to represent aspects of the form. Type D is a translation of the source language idiom with a comparable target language idiom.

Baker (2011: 74–86) discusses seven strategies for translating idioms that are relevant for translating figures of speech in general. These strategies correspond in some ways to the four types listed above:

⁴⁹ I am adopting the *labelling* of these strategies as “Types” A, B, C from Joosten (2010: 62–68), but as noted in Section 3.5.2, the basic classification is found in many translation handbooks (e.g., Newmark 1988; Baker 2011). I am adding a fourth type (Type D) to Joosten’s three, one that covers the sort of figurative substitution he dismisses as rarely seen in the LXX. Unseth (1996) advocates four similar strategies for Bible translators to deal with euphemisms: translating literally, translating with a non-euphemistic form, translating with a euphemistic form, and translating the form but adding the meaning. He adds that translations that choose a literal rendering may also add paratextual elements (such as a footnote) to explain the meaning of the idiom. Since Bible translations are often oriented toward preserving the very words of the source text as much as possible, this strategy of a formal rendering with explanatory footnote is more common for Bible translations than for other types of literature.

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form
2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form
3. Borrowing the source language idiom
4. Translation by paraphrase
5. Translation by omission of a play on idiom
6. Translation by omission of entire idiom
7. Translation by compensation

Her first strategy is based on the occasional correlation of form and meaning in idiomatic phrases between languages. Most of her examples of this type, however, reflect similar expressions between Indo-European languages, so the correspondence between form and meaning could result from historical and areal influence. The idiom in her Example A — the rains falls on the just and the unjust — is actually an allusion to Matt 5:45, so the shared cultural context of Christianity in Western Europe could account for the linguistic correspondence (Baker 2011: 76). In languages less closely related by either areal influence or historical development, idioms very rarely occur with similar meaning *and* similar form. The single non-European example — a translation of the English idiom “turned on its head” by Arabic meaning “turned head over heel” (both meaning turned upside-down) — has only a coincidental overlap with a formal feature of the English idiom (Baker 2011: 76).

Her second strategy is a version of Type D — rendering the expression idiomatically with an appropriate idiom in the target language. The fourth strategy, translating by paraphrase, is essentially the tactic of translating the meaning of the expression in straightforward language (Type B). The strategy of omitting the idiomatic expression falls partly under processes for reframing and partly under construal of an idiom with no pragmatic point. The total omission of an idiom is more likely if it does not have a necessary communicative function in the source text.

Baker's final strategy, compensation, could involve aspects of both Type C and Type D strategies, depending on what sort of loss of meaning needed to be overcome:

Briefly, [compensation] means that one may either omit or play down a feature such as idiomaticity at the point, where it occurs in the source text and introduce it elsewhere in the target text. This strategy is not restricted to idiomaticity or fixed expressions and may be used to make up for any loss of meaning, emotional force, or stylistic effect which may not be possible to reproduce directly at a given point in the target text. (Baker 2011: 86)

Compensation could be seen as an aspect of Type C where the figurative meaning of an expression is explained alongside preservation of unfamiliar semantic features. But it also involves the potential for broadly reframing the presentation of content, especially with use of figurative language. For example, a writer's penchant for wordplay might be difficult to represent in the same phrases but might be possible to add to other expressions in the target language text, even if the writer did not employ wordplay there in the source text.

Since a formal, word-for-word representation of a figure of speech generally fails to convey meaning into the target language and Baker's coursebook is geared toward training translators, none of Baker's strategies aligns with Type A — translating the words, regardless of the meaning. For contemporary translations of sacred texts, it may be necessary to preserve the formal wording of the source text, but the meaning behind the unfamiliar expression is often included in an explanatory note. However, ancient Bible translators frequently use Type A renderings for biblical figures of speech. In fact, the translators of the Bible into English for the King James Version also tended to represent biblical figures of speech literally, leaving the task of construing the meaning up to the reader.

These strategies can also be defined with reference to the translational tendencies of self-censorship and explicitation.⁵⁰ Even in the absence of direct censorship sanctioned by an institution or organisation, censorship exists in a person's social awareness of what they can and cannot say. The social conventions and beliefs of various social groups influence this awareness in such a way that "censorship functions as a network of censorships" (Woods 2012: 19). Explicitation is defined as "the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text" (Klaudy 2009: 104). Explicitation brings information into the target text that is only implied in the source text but can be inferred from the context or situation. Implication is the opposite process where information that is explicit in the source text is merely implied in the target text with the context or situation expected to provide enough information for the reader to fill in the details. Obscuring content from the source text, however, is also an aspect of censorship.

When a source text contains sensitive material, such as sexual references, the translator may feel constrained to prevent the sensitive content from being apparent in the target text, meaning they engage in self-censorship, but they can either obscure the content completely or just mute the more explicit aspects of the source text. For example, a sexual euphemism could be completely obscured by Type A translation because the direct rendering makes sense without sexual overtones (e.g., *יָהָרָה* in Job 31:10 could be a sexual euphemism but literal translation obscures this possibility). The translators may have recognised a possible double entendre and chosen not to draw attention to it. Alternately, inadequate knowledge of the society and culture

⁵⁰ On censorship in translation, see Billiani (2007), Seruya and Moniz (2008), Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleánáin and Parris (2009), and Woods (2012). On explicitation, see Englund Dimitrova (2005) and Klaudy (2009).

of the source text would allow some figures of speech to be missed, especially figurative expressions that were novel or unconventional.

A milder sort of censorship occurs when the translation provides the meaning using euphemistic language that further conceals aspects of the source text that were more explicit. One example is the NRSV rendering of זָנָה, “to whore,” in Num 25:1 as “to have sexual relations.” The phrase “have sexual relations” lacks sexually charged connotations even while making an explicit statement that sexual activity took place. In the context of Num 25, it is unclear whether making such an explicit statement is justified since the meaning of זָנָה has been metaphorically extended in the Hebrew Bible to describe the practice of idolatry.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the methodological framework for this study that is based in Translation Studies and linguistics. The field of Translation Studies provides theoretical perspectives on analysing and describing translations while the field of linguistics provides a theoretical basis for describing figures of speech and their construal by language users. The areas of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics also contribute to an understanding of the discourse functions of using figures of speech, especially those designed to veil sensitive topics or maintain polite discourse and abide by social conventions.

Out of this theoretical background informed by Translation Studies and various branches of linguistics, I developed a set of translation strategies that accounted for the four primary ways that figures of speech can be construed and then translated.

Type A	Formal (word-oriented)
Type B	Semantic (meaning-oriented)
Type C	Formal and Semantic (word + meaning-oriented)
Type D	Idiomatic (effect-oriented)

Depending on the context of use and the nature of the figure of speech, any of these strategies could be employed to conceal or make explicit aspects of meaning from the source text. The additional strategy of reframing provides an option for translators to shift the discourse in a direction away from figurative language or towards more neutral figures of speech.

In the next chapter (Chapter 4), I analyse a selection of BH idiomatic expressions and look at how they were translated by the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targum in order to demonstrate how ancient Bible translators operated by similar strategies to those outlined here. After establishing the basic tendencies of the versions with BH figures of speech in Chapter 4, I turn to BH figurative language associated with taboo topics (i.e., euphemisms) in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: CONSTRUAL OF BIBLICAL HEBREW IDIOMS IN THE ANCIENT VERSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of six BH idiomatic expressions and the strategies the translators of the ancient versions used to represent them: שאל לשלום, “ask about peace” (a greeting); מלא את־יד, “fill the hand” (meaning “ordain as priest”); “son of [] years” (an expression of age); אמר בלבו, “speak in the heart” (for internal speech); דבר על־לב, “speak on the heart” (for persuasive speech); and נשא פנים, “lift the face” (for acceptance or respect). While figures of speech related to taboo topics may reveal more active manipulation on the part of the translator, the analysis of common BH idiomatic expressions whose contextual meanings are more or less accepted will serve to establish a baseline of expectations for how the versions handle the implicit meaning of idiomatic language — whether they make explicit what was implicit in the source text (explicitation) or conceal the meaning in foreign phrasing.

Concealment of idiomatic meaning, however, is not necessarily self-censorship since censorship implies aspects of the content’s meaning were thought objectionable. But we cannot draw conclusions on whether a translator’s tendency to translate a euphemistic expression literally was intentional obfuscation if we do not know what their usual strategies were for figures of speech that did not carry objectionable connotations. In other words, the opaque meaning of idiomatic expressions provides an opportunity for a translator to intervene to make the meaning explicit to the audience, but those expressions (unless they are also euphemisms) lack the baggage of cultural taboo that might alone have motivated a shift in translation strategy.

The first section of the chapter provides a brief introduction to the topic of idioms in BH (Section 4.2). Idioms are figures of speech where the syntax and semantics of the constituents do not inform the global meaning of the expression (see Section 3.4.1). The next section introduces some general tendencies on how the ancient versions handled BH idiomatic expressions and then presents the analysis of the six BH idiomatic expressions noted above. The section on general tendencies (Section 4.3.1) connects the translation strategies developed in Section 3.6.2 with the observations of Septuagint scholars on the “translation technique” associated with the Greek translation of BH idiomatic phrasing. The majority of the chapter is devoted to the detailed analysis of the selected BH idiomatic expressions. For the most part, the meaning of those expressions in Hebrew is straightforward and uncontroversial, but the last two expressions — דַּבֵּר עַל־לֵב, “speak on the heart” (Section 4.3.7) and נושא פְּנִים, “lift the face” (Section 4.3.8) — exhibit more contextual variation of meaning. This variation in ways of construing the idiomatic expression in BH is explored in more detail to determine the range of meanings the translators may have selected from in making a rendering. The final section of the chapter (Section 4.4) summarises the results from the analysis of the six expressions.

4.2 Idioms in Biblical Hebrew

Idiomatic phrases in Biblical Hebrew (BH) often consist of “a verb phrase, with a body part as object” (Warren-Rothlin 2013b: 227).¹ An example of this type of BH idiom is the expression נושא פְּנִים (“lift the face”), often used for showing favour, acceptance, respect, partiality, or favouritism to another (see, e.g., Gen 19:21; 32:21; Lev 19:15; Deut 10:17; 28:50; 1 Sam 25:35).²

¹ On idioms in BH, see Babut 1999; Lübke 2002; Van den Heever 2013; Warren-Rothlin 2013b.

² Many words for body parts in BH have a wide range of secondary (that is, idiomatic, non-literal or figurative) meanings. By metonymy, the words for the ear (אָזן) and eye (עֵין), for example, come to stand

Other idiomatic phrases in BH do not involve words for the body. For example, the conventional way to indicate a person's age in BH is to say that they are the "son" (בן) or "daughter" (בת) of so-many "years" (שנה or שנים; Exod 7:7; 2 Sam 5:4). Also, phrases using שאל לשלום ("ask about peace/welfare") have developed into greeting formulas where their usage may be conventional rather than reflecting the speaker's actual concern for someone's well-being (Gen 43:27; 1 Sam 25:5).³

The difficulty in interpreting idioms arises from their "limited compositionality" (Warren-Rothlin 2013b: 227) as well as their use of metaphor or metonymy in ways that do not lend themselves to easy comprehension for readers from another cultural context (see Section 3.4.3 on the construal of idioms). That "lift the face" (נשא פנים) would denote acceptance or favour is not immediately transparent to a reader not already familiar with Old Testament idiom. Further, the idiomatic meaning of a BH fixed expression varies according to the sociolinguistic context of its use. The basic meaning of the idiom נשא פנים appears to relate to having a positive attitude toward another, but its precise nuance — whether showing due respect or inappropriate favouritism — depends on context (Gruber 1983). Interpreting the idiom requires an appropriate "definition of the situation" (Goffman 1986).

Translations of the Bible may offer evidence of whether a translator understood an idiom appropriately. However, perhaps fearing they may not be understanding the idiomatic phrase

for the senses of hearing and sight associated with them. The mouth (פה) may represent the speech it produces, the face (פנים) may stand for the person, and so on. Words such as יד ("hand") and רגל ("foot") are used in various idiomatic and euphemistic expressions. A number of fixed expressions in BH use words for parts of the body, but the construction has been fully grammaticalised. For example, לפני (the construct form of פנים ["face"] with the preposition ל) literally means "to the face of," but its grammaticalised meaning is "in front of" or "before."

³ By analogy, when a speaker of American English asks "How are you?", they do not expect a detailed and honest reply about the person's health and present emotional state.

correctly, Bible translators tend toward formal, mimetic renderings of BH idioms. But, the literal translation of an idiom may not be evidence of the translator's failure to understand the source text. With a sacred text, translators may feel constrained to represent the very words of the source, even when those words are unnecessary for conveying the meaning in the target language (e.g., Gen 19:21 as discussed in Section 4.3.1 below).

4.3 Biblical Hebrew Idioms in the Ancient Versions

This chapter explores how figures of speech in Biblical Hebrew, especially common idiomatic expressions, were understood by the ancient Bible translators of the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targum. The identification of a phrase as an idiom is not always straightforward. Some expressions presented a challenge for the ancient translator, but the global meaning was generally understood for commonly used idioms. However, when faced with an idiom, the ancient translators tended to provide an overly formal, mimetic rendering, preserving the foreign expression regardless of whether their target text actually transfers any meaningful information from the source.

4.3.1 General Tendencies

As noted in Section 1.2 and Section 3.4, figures of speech such as idioms and euphemisms present problems for comprehension and translation since their meaning is not immediately apparent from the literal meaning of the word or words making up the expression.

A literal (or isomorphic) translation of a figure of speech is not necessarily an indication that the translator did not understand the intended referent in the source text. Failure to understand the fixed expression is only one possibility. With reference to the tendency of the LXX translators to render BH idioms literally, Dogniez (2002: 2) identifies four possible explanations:

1. The translator failed to identify the expression as an idiom.
2. The translator identified the expression as an idiom but did not understand it.
3. The translator recognised and understood the expression but chose a literal rendering out of respect for the exact wording of the sacred text.
4. The translator recognised and understood the expression but chose a literal rendering in order to preserve the foreignness or “strangeness” of the source.

While Dogniez admits that “we cannot know” which one was actually the case for any given literalism (*ibid.*), she implies that the third option best explains the increasing tendency toward literalism in the books of the Hebrew Bible that were translated into Greek later — at a time when respect for the Scripture’s exact words held more importance than using good, intelligible Greek:⁴

A translation which aims at making the Hebrew text easily accessible to the people speaking Greek — to the Hellenised Jews for religious purposes or to non-Jews for cultural purposes — will include few literalisms and literal renderings of idioms. Such is the case of the Pentateuch which is written in good koine Greek. . . . However, in later translations, which manifest a growing respect for the Scripture, the literalism prevails and the Hebraisms become more frequent, sometimes to the detriment of the readability and of the correctness of the language.

(Dogniez 2002: 2)

It seems better to let these four options stand than to attempt to identify one as the most plausible, and while respect for Scripture may explain some cases of literal translation in the LXX, the tendency toward literalism in the translation of figurative language cannot be so neatly categorised.⁵ Her assumption that books translated into Greek earlier, like those of the

⁴ In this assumption, she follows Thackeray (1909: 28–31) who believed “the growing reverence for the letter of Scripture” was contributing “to the production of pedantically literal versions” (1909: ix).

⁵ Thackeray (1909: 12–15) classified the LXX books according to their Greek style — from the Pentateuch written in good *κοινή* to the literal and “unintelligent” Greek of the Megilloth (besides Esther) — and since his stylistic divisions aligned somewhat with the three sections of the Hebrew canon, he posited that the books were translated into Greek in roughly the order of the canon (1909: viii–x). He also assumed an increasing tendency toward literal translations aligned roughly with the order in which the books were translated. Broadly speaking, his determination that the Pentateuch was translated the earliest and that books found in the Writings were translated later still holds, though historical development does not explain stylistic variation.

Pentateuch, would “include few literalisms and literal renderings of idioms” implies that BH idioms and other figures of speech found in those books should be translated idiomatically into good Greek and not rendered by isomorphic reproductions of the BH expression. Her own examples indicate that even in the Pentateuch, BH idiomatic expressions are often translated literally. For example, she notes that the LXX always translates the BH idiom מלא את־יָד (“fill the hand”) literally, even though the expression in Greek does not mean “to ordain or consecrate someone for the priesthood” as it does in BH (Dogniez 2002: 3–4). The idiomatic phrase “fill the hands of” is most frequently found in the Pentateuch with reference to the establishment of the priesthood. Exodus 28:41 (Greek: 28:37) provides a typical example of the phrase and its isomorphic rendering in the LXX.

(1) Exodus 28:41

MT מִמָּלֵא יָדָם
and you will fill their hand

LXX καὶ ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας
and you will fill their hands

Obviously, the consistent literal rendering of this idiom into Greek in the Pentateuch undermines the assumption that the “good” Greek of the Pentateuch would contain few literalisms. The Greek translation is not idiomatic Greek; it is a straight calque of the BH phrase.⁶ However, it is hard to imagine that the meaning of the idiom was not evident to the translator. There is another possible explanation for a translator’s literal rendering of a known idiom besides respect for the exact wording of the sacred text or an interest in preserving the foreignness of the text. The translator may have felt the idiomatic meaning was already transparent in the culture of the target audience, regardless of whether the calqued phrase had

⁶ I use the term “calque” in a broad sense to describe mimetic and stereotypical translation where simple glosses are slotted in for the constituents of the source phrase. With a calque, the target language glosses should be interpreted through the semantics of the source language lexemes. See Section 3.4.1.6.

any idiomatic meaning in the target language. Idiomatic meanings are part of a language user’s mental lexicon, and idiomatic expressions are learned “after only minimal exposure” (Taylor 2012: 74–75). In communities with various degrees of diglossia and multilingualism, it is reasonable to assume a level of familiarity with idiomatic constructions from a linguistic code with greater prestige, even if those constructions have been introduced as calques.⁷ If the LXX translator knew that a Hebrew idiom was known to the Greek-speaking Jewish audience, even if the construction was not “good Greek,” the translator may have simply seen no need to make the meaning of the idiom explicit.

Joosten (2010: 62–63) identifies three strategies the LXX translators use to represent BH idioms: (1) a literal, word-for-word rendering; (2) a free translation that renders the idiomatic meaning; and (3) a combination rendering the meaning *and* representing the form.⁸ As an example of this third type, Joosten points to the LXX of Gen 19:21 where the Greek verb *θαυμάζω* alone adequately conveys the meaning of the Hebrew idiom **נִשְׂאָ פָנָיִם**, yet the Greek still formally represents Hebrew **פָּנִים** with *τὸ πρόσωπον*.

(2) Genesis 19:21

MT	הִנֵּה נִשְׂאָתִי פָּנָיִךְ גַּם לְדָבָר הַזֶּה <i>Behold, I lifted up your face also on this word</i>
LXX	Ἰδοὺ ἐθαύμασά σου τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ῥήματι <i>Behold, I honoured your face and upon this word</i>

⁷ On diglossia and multilingualism, see Coulmas 2005: 126–145; Schiffman 1998. On calques or loan translations in Koine Greek, see Silva 1994: 86–90; Büchner 2000: 95–97.

⁸ As noted in Section 3.6.2, Joosten’s three strategies correspond to my Types A, B, and C, and I have adopted the label of “type” following his categorisation. However, these same strategies have been commonly recommended by translation theorists (see Section 3.5.2).

The Greek verb connotes honour, admiration, and respect (LSJ, s.v. “θαυμάζω”). The explicit, but redundant, reference to the face can only be explained as the translator’s attempt to represent all the lexical elements in the source text (Joosten 2010: 63).⁹

The first two of Joosten’s three strategies correspond to the three basic options open to translators identified in Section 3.5.2: (1) translating the words, (2) translating the meaning, or (3) translating the figure of speech with another figure of speech. Joosten (2010: 66) states that “‘idiom substitution’ is extremely rare,” by which he seems to mean the LXX translators do not often render a Hebrew idiom with a Greek idiom conveying a comparable meaning. If Joosten is correct, very few examples of figurative renderings of BH idioms should be found in a comparative analysis.

Joosten’s third strategy of producing a combined rendering (as in Gen 19:21 discussed above) reveals a tendency of the Septuagint translator that is still used in contemporary Bible translation for dealing with figures of speech. Isaiah 19:16 uses a simile to describe the Egyptians. This type of figure of speech is relatively easy to translate, but both ancient and modern translators have produced combined renderings.

(3) Combined renderings of Isaiah 19:16

- | | |
|------|--|
| MT | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה מִצְרַיִם כְּנָשִׁים
<i>In that day, Egypt will be like women</i> |
| TgmJ | בְּעֵידָנָא הַהוּא יְהוֹן מִצְרַאִי חֲלָשִׁין כְּנִשְׂיָא
<i>In that time the Egyptians will be weak like women</i> |
| NLT | In that day the Egyptians will be as weak as women. |

Both Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (TgmJ) and the New Living Translation (NLT) have formally reproduced the simile while also making the meaning of the simile explicit with the addition of a word meaning “weak.” In the context of Isa 19, the simile is meant as an insult

⁹ For further discussion of this BH idiom in the versions, see Section 4.3.8.

based on gender stereotypes — when the Day of Yahweh comes, the mighty men of Egypt will be as weak before Yahweh as a woman before a warrior. For this verse, the NIV provides an example of a translation that renders the idiomatic meaning only.¹⁰ The LXX and Peshitta (Pesh) rendered the phrase literally, possibly seeing no need to make the figurative meaning explicit.¹¹

(4) Idiomatic renderings of Isaiah 19:16

NIV	In that day the Egyptians will become weaklings.
LXX	Τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἔσονται οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι ὡς γυναῖκες <i>But on that day the Egyptians will be like women</i>
Pesh	כִּי יָבֹאוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶל-מִצְרָיִם <i>On that day the Egyptian shall be like women</i>

These examples represent three of the four strategies for translating figurative language noted in Section 3.6.2:

Type A	Formal (word-oriented)
Type B	Semantic (meaning-oriented)
Type C	Formal and Semantic (word + meaning-oriented)
Type D	Idiomatic (effect-oriented) ¹²

The LXX and Peshitta of Isa 19:16 reflect Type A. The NIV rendering of Isa 19:16 illustrates Type B. The Hebrew simile uttered as an insult to Egypt (יִהְיֶה מִצְרַיִם כְּנָשִׁים; “Egypt will become like women”) is rendered as “Egyptians will become weaklings” — conveying the

¹⁰ According to the preface of the 2011 revision of the NIV, some of the translators’ changes involved adapting language to avoid negative connotations and stereotypes in English surrounding gendered language.

¹¹ A similar BH expression is used with the same rhetorical purpose in Jer 50:37 in an oracle against Babylon. On the day of Yahweh’s judgment, Babylon’s warriors, her horses, chariots, and allies will become like women (וְהָיוּ לְנָשִׁים). The LXX, Peshitta, and Targum handle the expression in the same way as Isa 19:16. Interestingly, the NLT uses a mixed rendering in Isa 19:16 but translates the phrase in Jer 50:37 literally as “they will all become like women.”

¹² Type D renderings are those that are more oriented toward target language style. This orientation can take the form of using TL idiomatic phrasing that attempts to recreate some of the stylistic feel of the source text like substituting a TL idiom for a SL idiom. By contrast, Type B renderings are those that give the meaning of a figure of speech plainly and directly.

meaning, but not the flavour or rhetorical impact of the Hebrew. The translations of Isa 19:16 in the NLT and Targum Jonathan are examples of Type C — a meaning-oriented translation that unnecessarily reproduces formal aspects of the source text. The LXX of Gen 19:21 is also an example of this type.

English translations of the BH expression “cover the feet” — a euphemism for defecation used in Judg 3:24 and 1 Sam 24:4 — illustrate Types A and D: the KJV translates the words literally (“to cover his feet”), losing the meaning, and the ESV translates the figure of speech with another figure of speech (“to relieve himself”), capturing the meaning but losing the wording. The LXX also appears to have used a euphemism in 1 Sam 24:4, but perhaps that is one of the “extremely rare” cases where idiom substitution occurred.¹³

As already noted, it is generally accepted that the Pentateuch was the first section of the Hebrew Bible to be translated into Greek (Fernández Marcos 2000: 18; Tov 2004: 161). In that sense, the translators of the Pentateuch were pioneers whose solutions for various translation problems could have set the standard for the translators of other sections of the Jewish canon. With the translation of BH figures of speech, however, there is no consistency, and different books of the LXX use different strategies for the same idiom (Joosten 2010: 63). Different approaches to the same BH idiom are even evident within the same book in the LXX. Further, sophisticated techniques like that used in LXX Gen 19:21 (effectively a compromise between valuing meaning and representing form) belie the idea that the Greek translators did not understand BH idioms. Joosten (2010: 67) asserts that “literal renderings are not to be attributed to a lack of understanding.” Rather, he believes that the word-for-word representation of idioms and euphemisms was likely an intentional attempt to preserve the foreignness of the text

¹³ See Section 5.3.4.1 for further discussion of the BH euphemism “cover the feet.”

(Joosten 2010: 66). While fluency has historically been the dominant paradigm for English translation (Venuti 2008: 1–13), the ancient translators of the Septuagint appear to have been comfortable with retaining the foreignness of the Hebrew source. As a literary translator, Venuti (2008: 18) favours “a theory of and practice of translation that resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text.” Venuti is addressing contemporary readers steeped in the “dominant values” of domesticating foreign texts in English translation. The overall tendency toward literal translation that will be seen in the following analysis suggests that foreignisation was the more dominant value for the LXX translators as they attempted to render the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. In this section, I analyse representative examples of BH idioms and compare how those figures of speech were represented by the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Targums. The examples are analysed according to the four strategies for translating figures of speech reviewed above.

4.3.2 Ask about Peace (שאל לשלום)

The BH idiomatic expression שאל לשלום (“ask about peace”) refers indirectly to the act of greeting another. It is metapragmatic because the phrase occurs in narrative reports that a greeting occurred, not as a greeting formula in direct speech. The idiom occurs eleven times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 43:27; Exod 18:7; Judg 18:15; 1 Sam 10:4; 17:22; 25:5; 30:21; 2 Sam 8:10; 11:7; Jer 15:5; 1 Chr 18:10). The use of the preposition with the noun (לשלום) appears to be essential to activate the idiomatic meaning of the expression because the one occurrence of שאל with שלום without the preposition in Ps 122:6 does not have a figurative meaning. The phrasing in Ps 122:6 is שֶׁאֲלוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם יְרוּשָׁלַם, which means “pray [lit. ‘ask’] (for) the welfare of Jerusalem.” Every other collocation of שאל with שלום is a report that one person greeted another. Genesis 43:27 is a typical example:

(5) Genesis 43:27a

וַיִּשְׂאֵל לְהֵם לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲשָׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם
*And he asked about their peace and he said,
“Is it well with your father?”*

The idiomatic expression means that the speaker (in this case, Joseph addressing his brothers) greeted the others (Wevers 1993: 735). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, *שָׁלוֹם* alone or with the preposition *ל* and a second person suffix is used as a greeting (e.g., Judg 6:23; 2 Kgs 4:23; 5:21–22). The question in the next phrase of Gen 43:27 — *הֲשָׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם* (“is it well [with] your father?”) — likely indicates what “asking about someone’s peace” involved. The formulaic nature of the exchange is evident in two scenes from 2 Kgs. In 2 Kgs 4:26, Elisha’s servant Gehazi is instructed to ask the Shunammite, *הֲשָׁלוֹם לָךְ* (“is it well with you?” or “how are you?”), to which she replies simply *שָׁלוֹם* (“Well”). Later in 2 Kgs 5:21–22, the Syrian officer Naaman observes Gehazi coming after him, so he stops and says, *הֲשָׁלוֹם*, to which Gehazi replies *שָׁלוֹם*.

The stereotypical use of the interrogative particle *ה* with *שָׁלוֹם* in a greeting formula contributes to a very deliberate subversion of linguistic expectations in the narrative of Jehu’s coup against Jehoram of Israel in 2 Kgs 9. The dialogue in 2 Kgs 9:17–22 alternates between uses of *שָׁלוֹם* in its formulaic sense as a greeting and in its literal sense as the opposite of war, strife, conflict, suffering, and so on. The messengers Jehoram sends to meet Jehu all ask, *הֲשָׁלוֹם*, but he answers each of them with *מַה־לָּךְ וְלִשְׁלוֹם* (literally, “what to you and to peace?”), meaning “what do you care about peace?” Finally, in 9:22, Jehoram himself comes out to meet Jehu, stating, *הֲשָׁלוֹם יְהוּא*, another use of the greeting expression. Jehu’s reply highlights the

play on the meanings of the word שלום when he says, מָה הַשְּׁלוֹם עַד־זְנוּנֵי אִיזָבֶל אִמָּךְ וּכְשָׁפֶיהָ הֶרְבִּים (“what peace while the whorings of Jezebel your mother and her sorceries are so great”).

This narrative in 2 Kgs 9 illustrates how firmly embedded figures of speech are in social and linguistic context. The literary effect of wordplay where different senses of the same word are manipulated is often impossible to reproduce in translation, especially when one of the manipulated senses is purely idiomatic. Most Bible translations — ancient or modern — make no attempt to recreate the stylistic literary feel of the Hebrew text for this narrative. Indeed, the impossibility of transferring these stylistic aspects of language usage is one of the main arguments of those who argue that translation itself is fundamentally impossible. However, it would be a mistake to conclude from the reality that some things are “lost in translation,” that translation itself is a lost cause. Most translations successfully communicate the core informational content from their source texts, even with idiomatic phrases and figurative expressions. The difference is often one of the degree to which they accommodate the content to the expectations of the audience (whether preserving the foreignness or recasting in familiar words and concepts).

The renderings of this BH greeting idiom in the ancient versions offer fundamental examples of the usage of the various strategies for representing figures of speech outlined above.

Table 4.1: The idiom שאל לשלום in the ancient versions

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm
Gen 43:27	וַיִּשְׁאַל לְהֵם לְשָׁלוֹם	ἠρώτησεν δὲ αὐτοὺς Πῶς ἔχετε	ܘܫܥܠ ܠܫܠܘܡܗܘܢ	<i>Onq</i> וּשְׁאַל לְהוֹן לְשָׁלוֹם <i>Neo</i> וּשְׁאַל לְהוֹן בְּשָׁלוֹם <i>PsJ</i> וּשְׁאַל לְהוֹם לְשָׁלוֹם

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm
Exod 18:7	וַיִּשְׁאַלֵּנוּ אִישׁ-לְרֵעֵהוּ לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἠσπάσαντο ἀλλήλους	אשאלנו לשאלנו	<i>Ong</i> ושאלו גבר לחבריה לשלם <i>Neo</i> ושאלו גבר לחבריה מלין דשלם <i>PsJ</i> ושיילו גבר לחבריה לשלם
Judg 18:15	וַיִּשְׁאַלֵּנוּ-לוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם	A: καὶ ἠσπάσαντο αὐτόν B: καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν εἰς εἰρήνην	אשאלנו	ושאלו ליה לשלם
1 Sam 10:4	וַיִּשְׁאַלֵּנוּ לָהּ לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἐρωτήσουςίν σε τὰ εἰς εἰρήνην	אשאלנו לשאלנו	וַיִּשְׁאַלֵּנוּ לָהּ לְשָׁלוֹם
1 Sam 17:22	וַיִּשְׁאַל לְאַחֵיו לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἠρωτησεν τους ἀδελφους αυτου εἰς ειρηνην ¹⁴	אשאל לשאלנו גאשאלנו	ושאל ל אחיהו לשלם
1 Sam 25:5	וַיִּשְׁאַלְתֶּם-לוֹ בְּשָׁמִי לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἐρωτήσατε αὐτόν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου εἰς εἰρήνην	אשאלנו לשאלנו בשמי	וַתִּשְׁאַלֵּנוּ לִיה בְּשָׁמִי לְשָׁלוֹם
1 Sam 30:21	וַיִּשְׁאַל לְהֶם לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν τὰ εἰς εἰρήνην	אשאלנו לשאלנו	ושאל ליהוון לשלם
2 Sam 8:10	וַיִּשְׁלַח תְּעֵי אֶת- יֹרָם-בְּנוֹ אֶל- הַמֶּלֶךְ-דָּוִד לְשָׁאֵל-לוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Θεου Ιεδδουραν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς βασιλέα Δαυιδ ἐρωτήσαι αὐτόν τὰ εἰς εἰρήνην	ישאל לשאלנו גישאלנו לשאלנו	ושלח תועי ית יורם כריה לות מלכא דויד למשאל ליה לשלם
2 Sam 11:7	וַיִּשְׁאַל דָּוִד לְשָׁלוֹם יֹאָב וְלְשָׁלוֹם הָעָם וְלְשָׁלוֹם הַמְּלָחָמָה	καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν Δαυιδ εἰς εἰρήνην Ιωαβ καὶ εἰς εἰρήνην τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ εἰς εἰρήνην τοῦ πολέμου	ישאל לשאלנו לשאלנו לשאלנו לשאלנו	ושאל ליה דויד לשלם יואב ולשלם עמא ולשלם עבדי קרבא

¹⁴ 1 Sam 17:12–31 is lacking from LXX^B (Codex Vaticanus) and so is omitted from the main text in Rahlfs. The rendering here is from LXX^A (Codex Alexandrinus) as given in the apparatus of Rahlfs. The LXX translation of this passage is generally considered part of a recension correcting the text towards MT (Fernández Marcos 2000: 21; Ottley 1920: 106).

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm
1 Chr 18:10	וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַדּוֹרָם־ בָּנוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ־דָּוִד לְשָׂאוֹל־לוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם	καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν Ἰδουραμ υἱὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Δαυιδ τοῦ ἐρωτῆσαι αὐτὸν τὰ εἰς εἰρήνην	וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַדּוֹרָם־ בָּנוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ־דָּוִד לְשָׂאוֹל־לוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם	ושדר ית הדורם בריה לות מלכא דוד למשייל ליה בשלם
Jer 15:5	וּמִי יִסּוּר לְשָׂאֵל לְשָׁלוֹם לְךָ	ἢ τις ἀνακάμψει εἰς εἰρήνην σοι	וּמִי יִסּוּר לְשָׂאֵל לְשָׁלוֹם לְךָ	וּמִן יִזּוּר לְמִשְׂאֵל לְשָׁמָא לְיָד

In the LXX, the Greek term εἰρήνη (“peace”) is often used with the range of meaning of שָׁלוֹם (Thackeray 1909: 40; Tov 1999: 88). For instance, εἰρήνη is used for שָׁלוֹם in the greetings cited above from 2 Kgs 4:26 and 5:22. The Greek calque translation of the BH idiom שָׂאֵל לְשָׁלוֹם is typically ἐρωτάω ... εἰς εἰρήνην (e.g., 1 Sam 10:4; 25:5; 30:21), but the calque is not used to translate the phrase in the Pentateuch.

The calque is an example of the Type A (formal, word-oriented) translation strategy. A calque or stereotyped translation results in a standard target language term being employed as a typical equivalent of a source language term even though the semantic ranges of the two terms are not fully equivalent. Tov (1999: 88) notes this stereotypical use of εἰρήνη in the LXX as a prime example of Greek words serving only to represent Hebrew meaning:

At the level of lexicography, Hebraisms do not function as ordinary Greek words possessing Greek meanings, but they are used as mere *symbols* representing Hebrew words, as in the case of שָׁלוֹם and εἰρήνη. Not infrequently שָׁלוֹם is used not only as ‘peace,’ but also as ‘welfare’ and ‘health,’ and these meanings should have been rendered into Greek by words other than εἰρήνη.

According to Thackeray (1909: 41), the Pentateuch uses “more classical phrases” to express the meaning of this idiom such as ἠρώτησεν δὲ αὐτοὺς Πῶς ἔχετε (“And he asked them, ‘How are you?’”) in Gen 43:27 or the use of the verb ἀσπάζομαι (“greet”) in Exod 18:7. The translation using ἀσπάζομαι follows the Type B (meaning-oriented) translation strategy because

the meaning of the idiom is made explicit and not replaced with a similar Greek idiomatic expression. On the contrary, the use of *πῶς ἔχετε* in Gen 43:27 is a clear example of idiom substitution, the Type D translation strategy. Wevers (1993: 735) states the Genesis translator “translates freely by *πῶς ἔχετε* ‘how are you,’ or ‘how do you hold yourself, how are you keeping?’” The Pentateuch tends to be more idiomatic Greek, but stereotyped, isomorphic translations of BH idioms are still evident, though not with the two occurrences of this particular idiom.

In Judges 18:15, the text of Codex Vaticanus (LXX^B) provides an example of the Type C strategy, providing the meaning while retaining unnecessary aspects of form. The text of Codex Alexandrinus (LXX^A) for this verse reflects the more natural Greek phrasing of Exod 18:7. For the book of Judges, LXX^B “corresponds to the Theodotonic or *καίτε* recension of the original LXX made at the turn of the era in order to make it agree with the Hebrew text current at the time” (Fernández Marcos 2000: 95). This tendency in later revision of the LXX could explain the frequent use of these hybrid renderings of idioms that preserve formal features of the Hebrew source even when those features are not needed for the meaning to be communicated adequately in Greek.

(6) Judges 18:15

MT	וַיִּשְׁאַל אֵת יְהוָה <i>and they asked about his peace</i>
LXX ^A	καὶ ἠσπάσαντο αὐτόν <i>and they greeted him</i>
LXX ^B	καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν εἰς εἰρήνην <i>and they greeted him in peace</i>

The calque (Type A translation) shows that the BH idiom “could easily have been rendered literally” (Lee 1983: 25). The use of Type B and Type D strategies indicates that the translators were just as capable of rendering into idiomatic Greek. Lee (*ibid.*) considers this

strong evidence that the Hebraisms or Semitisms often found in LXX Greek indicate that LXX Greek was not a spoken Jewish Greek dialect.

I find it difficult to see how anyone who spoke a Hebraic Greek, in which this Hebrew idiom would surely have been current, could have refrained from a literal rendering here. (Lee 1983: 25)

The literal renderings of BH idioms in Greek reflect a default translation strategy of word-for-word renderings in some books of the LXX. Of the eleven occurrences of this BH idiom, the LXX renders with a calque seven times (1 Sam 10:4; 17:22; 25:5; 30:21; 2 Sam 8:10; 11:7; and 1 Chr 18:10 [// 2 Sam 2:10]). Exceptions to this default, literal strategy are found primarily to those books widely acknowledged as reflecting a more literary Greek style such as Isaiah, Proverbs, and Job, though isolated cases are found throughout the LXX. The one occurrence of this BH idiom in the Latter Prophets in Jer 15:5 may reflect such an exception for the LXX. The translator appears to have omitted the infinitive of *שאל* in what is otherwise a rather mechanical rendering of the verse:

(7) Jeremiah 15:5

MT	וּמִי יָסוּר לְשָׂאֵל לְשָׁלֶם לָךְ <i>And who will return to ask about your peace?</i>
LXX	ἢ τις ἀνακάμψει [-] εἰς εἰρήνην σοι <i>And who will return _____ to peace for you?</i>

It is possible the translator felt that “return to peace for you” was contextually meaningful.¹⁵ Brenton (1844) clearly felt something was missing from the Greek since he translated the sentence as “or who will turn back *to ask* for thy welfare,” marking “to ask” as an addition he made based on the Hebrew. Recent translators of LXX Jeremiah have taken the Greek as it stands, finding meaning not in the Semitic idiom but in the context of Jerusalem’s rejection in judgment (e.g., Walser 2012; *NETS*). The translator may have intentionally left out

¹⁵ Walser (2012: 288) offers no comment on this phrase, though the omission of an infinitive in an otherwise mechanical translation of the Hebrew would seem to merit attention.

the verb for stylistic reasons, though the verb was supplied in later manuscripts.¹⁶ However, since the rendering is otherwise quite literal, it seems most likely that the omission here was an error produced by the visual similarity of לשאל and לשלם.

The phrase “ask about peace” was also idiomatic for a greeting in Aramaic. In Gen 43:9, Targum Neofiti substitutes the expression for Judah’s pledge that he would be guilty before Jacob all his days if he did not bring Benjamin back home. Most likely the expression was used to tone down the hyperbole of Judah’s statement in Hebrew (Grossfeld 2000: 270).

(8) Genesis 43:9

MT אם לא הביאתיו אליך והצגתיו לפניך ותטאתי לך כל הימים
*If I do not bring him to you and set him before you, then I will
be guilty before you all the days.*

TgmN אם לא אייתי יתיה לוותר ואקמית יתיה ניהוי מרחק מן
שאלת בשלמך כל יומיא
*If I do not bring him to you and stand him before you, let me be
removed from asking your peace all the days.*

Both Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan retain the wording of MT in Gen 43:9. Targum Neofiti also appears to have used this idiom more widely than it was in the Hebrew text. In Exodus 18:7, Targum Neofiti represents the BH statement וישתחו (‘‘and he bowed’’) with ושאל בשלמיה (‘‘and he asked about his peace’’).

Almost without exception, the Aramaic versions render this BH idiom with the Aramaic cognate. The single exception is the Peshitta of 2 Sam 11:7. In Hebrew, David asks about the welfare of Joab, the people, and the war, repeating לשלום three times. The LXX and Targum

¹⁶ According to the apparatus for the Göttingen edition (Ziegler 2006a), *ερωτησαι* was supplied in hexaplaric texts.

4.3.3 Fill the Hand (מלא את-יד)

The BH idiom מלא את-יד (“fill the hand”) is used mainly to refer to the ordination or consecration of individuals for religious service. The idiom occurs seventeen times, primarily in the Pentateuch (ten times — six in Exod, three in Lev, and once in Num). In the Hebrew Bible, the idiom is found in the following verses: Exod 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; 32:29; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3; Judg 17:5, 12; 1 Kgs 13:33; Ezek 43:26; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 13:9; 29:31.

The use of the direct object marker (־תָּ) appears common but must not have been required for the idiom to be understood. The only time similar wording is used, the context is clearly not ordination; in 2 Kgs 9:24, “Jehu fills his (own) hand with a bow” (וַיִּמְלֵא מְלֵא יָדוֹ (בַּקֶּשֶׁת) and then shoots dead Jehoram, king of Israel. In 1 Kgs 13:33, Jeroboam appears to ordain himself, marking the only case where this idiom is clearly used for someone ordaining themselves.

By the time the book of Ezekiel was written, the phrase appears to have become fully idiomatised since it is used to describe the consecration of an altar, an object without hands, in Ezek 43:26 (see Warren-Rothlin 2005 and Section 2.3.6). In the Pentateuch, the idiom occurs in the contexts of other rituals of ordination or consecration and so likely involved a literal ritual act of some sort where the hands of the person to be ordained were literally filled. In Ezekiel 43:26, *the altar*, an inanimate object, is consecrated by the filling of its “hand.” This usage shows the idiom had become fossilised and disconnected from its original context, meaning only “to consecrate *something*” instead of “to ordain or consecrate *someone*.”

The uses of the idiom in 1–2 Chr are also more generic than the Pentateuchal examples, further confirming the idiomatised status of the expression in later BH (see Klein 2012: 424). Snijders (1997: 301–302) incorrectly labels the expression as “*millē’ yaḏ hakkōhēn*, ‘fill the

hand of the priest” and states it “occurs 16 times in reference to the consecration of priests” (1997: 301–302). Many of the sixteen references listed do not refer to priests (כֹּהֵן) in the strict sense.

The technical term “consecrate” (lit. “fill the hand”) usually describes the setting aside or consecration of priests, beginning with the instructions for the tabernacle and recurring with the designation of the first priests. In Chronicles alone is it used for laypeople committing themselves to contribute for the temple. (Klein 2006: 535)

The ancient versions were fairly consistent in their use of a few stereotypical renderings for this idiom. The list below gives their characteristic renderings with the number of times each rendering is used and its percentage of the total occurrences in that corpus.

1.	Syriac cognate phrase	מלא יד or מלא יד	(“fill the hand”) (“complete the hand”)	1 12	6% 71%
2.	Greek calque	πληρώω τὰς χεῖρας	(“fill the hands”)	8	47%
3.	Greek stereotype	τελειόω τὰς χεῖρας	(“complete the hands”)	7	41%
4.	Neofiti stereotype	שלם קרבן יד	(“complete the offering of the hand”)	10	100%
5.	Aramaic idiom substitution ¹⁷	קריב קרבן	(“offer an offering”)	16 2	94% 12%

The Aramaic idiom קריב קרבן is used consistently in the Targums apart from Neofiti which has its own standard rendering.¹⁸ The Aramaic idiom is also used twice in the Peshitta, which otherwise predominantly uses מלא יד. The Greek calque of πληρώω τὰς χεῖρας is used nearly half the time with the Greek stereotype τελειόω τὰς χεῖρας used almost as often.

¹⁷ The two occurrences are the uses of the idiom in the Peshitta. The sixteen count represents the occurrences in the Targums derived from treating Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan together because their renderings are identical for their nine translations of this BH idiom (including the same exceptional rendering at Exod 32:29). Targum Jonathan uses the Aramaic idiom in all four cases, and Targum Chronicles uses the Aramaic idiom for all three occurrences.

¹⁸ See Grossfeld (1990b: 81) for a discussion on the significance of this characteristic translation in the Targums where it is used even where no sacrifice is involved or where the sacrifice is made to an idol.

While I have categorised the Peshitta renderings as primarily the use of the Syriac cognate ܡܠܗܐ (“fill hand”), the verb is clearly ܡܠܗܐ only in Exod 32:29. In the other occurrences, the verb appears as a form of ܡܠܗܐ, identified as the *shaphel* of ܡܠܗܐ in *CSD*. However, the verb is classified in *CAL* as a quadrilateral root ܡܠܗܐ with the meaning of “to complete,” though they still group the root as a derivative of ܡܠܗܐ.¹⁹ The Aramaic versions often use cognate words to directly translate a BH idiom, especially when the cognate phrase bears the same idiomatic meaning in Aramaic as with the greeting idiom discussed above (see Section 4.3.2). The idiomatic meaning of ܡܠܗܐ as “to ordain” is also listed in *CAL*. It is probably the case that ܡܠܗܐ is a form of ܡܠܗܐ, but it developed its own idiomatic form and meaning in Syriac using the *shaphel* for the Hebrew’s factitive *piel* verb. Its formal similarity with the BH idiom makes it a Type A rendering, though it could probably be considered as a Syriac idiom in its own right.

Since the verbal idea of fulfilment or completion is found in the Syriac ܡܠܗܐ as well as the Greek *τελειόω* and Neofiti’s *שלם*, it might be thought that the Peshitta was dependent on the LXX except for the fact that LXX uses *τελειόω* far less frequently than Peshitta uses ܡܠܗܐ. The consistent use of the same verbal idea in Neofiti suggests all three are based on understanding מלא in the sense of “fulfill,” perhaps as a way to give meaning to an otherwise opaque expression.

The use of a cognate phrase or calque (like options 1 and 2) reflect a Type A translation strategy, rendering the words and valuing preservation of form. The stereotyped renderings in the LXX and Targum Neofiti seem to be hybrid renderings or Type C strategy because they use

¹⁹ *CAL*, s.v. “šmly” [ܡܠܗܐ] (<http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/>), accessed 29 Dec 2017 02:37:39 -0500.

a word for “hand” but attempt to interpret the meaning of the phrase. The idiom substitution in Aramaic is a Type D rendering. Leviticus 16:32 provides representative examples for most of these characteristic renderings:

(10) Leviticus 16:32

MT	יִמְלֵא אֶת יָדוֹ לְכַהֵן <i>he will fill his hand for the priesthood</i>	
LXX	τελειώσωσιν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἱερατεύειν <i>they will complete his hands to be priest</i>	3. Greek stereotype
Pesh	ܘܡܢ ܥܘܠܡܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܢܐ <i>and whose hands were completed for service</i>	1. Syriac cognate
TgmO	וְדִקְרִיב יָת קִרְבָּנִיהָ לְשִׁמְשָׁן <i>and who will bring his offering for service</i>	5. Aramaic idiom
TgmN	וְדִי יִשְׁלֵם יָת קִרְבֵּן יָדוֹי לְמִשְׁמֶשֶׁה בְּכַהֲוֹנְתָהּ <i>and who will complete the offering of his hand for service in the priesthood</i>	4. Neofiti stereotype

The LXX also uses τελειώω τὰς χεῖρας in Lev 4:5 where the BH idiom does not occur. According to Büchner (2000: 103), the addition to LXX is likely harmonising with Lev 16:32 to make the qualifications for the priest explicit.

Second Chronicles 13:9 offers examples of the use of the Greek calque and the use of the Aramaic idiom in the Peshitta.

(11) 2 Chronicles 13:9

MT	לְמַלֵּא יָדוֹ <i>to fill his hand</i>	
LXX	πληρῶσαι τὰς χεῖρας <i>to fill the hands</i>	2. Greek calque
Pesh	ܠܥܘܠܡܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܢܐ <i>to offer the offering</i>	5. Aramaic idiom

The five characteristic renderings noted above account for the majority of the translations of this BH idiom in the ancient versions. The rest of this section addresses the translations that are exceptions to the characteristic renderings.

4.3.3.1 Exodus 28:41

Exodus 28:41 is one of the rare places where the LXX uses the Greek verb ἐμπίμπλημι (“fill”) instead of πληρόω or τελειόω:

(12) Exodus 28:41

MT	וַיִּמְלֵא יְדֵי הָאֱלֹהִים <i>and you will fill their hand</i>
LXX	καὶ ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας <i>and you will fill their hands</i>

The translation still reflects a word-for-word, Type A strategy, however. The choice of ἐμπίμπλημι as a lexical equivalent of מָלַא is fairly common in the LXX, despite its infrequent use in this particular idiom.²⁰ The verb is used twenty-three other times in the LXX to render the *piel* of מָלַא, not including the use of the verb to translate the same BH idiom in Judg 17:5, 12 in LXX^B (where LXX^A uses πληρόω).²¹

4.3.3.2 Exodus 32:29

Exodus 32:29 is the only time the Peshitta uses the cognate verb מָלַא not in the *shaphel* or quadriliteral form, but the verse is more interesting for being the one time that Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan do not follow their usual rendering of this BH idiom.

(13) Exodus 32:29

Onq	קְרִיבָא יְדִיכּוֹן יוֹמָא דִּין קוֹרְבָנָא קְדָם יוֹי <i>Let your hands offer today the offering before YWY</i>
PsJ	קְרִיבוֹ קוֹרְבָנֵינוֹן עַל שְׁפִיכוֹת אֲדָמָא דִּי בִּידִיכּוֹן <i>Offer your offerings for the shedding of blood that is in your hands</i>

²⁰ See Hatch-Redpath, s.v. “ἐμπίμπλημι.”

²¹ Ibid.

While the core of their usual rendering — קריב קרבן — is still present, both now make explicit reference to the hands, something otherwise absent from their rendering of this idiom. The other versions characteristically use a word for “hand” when translating this idiom, a common element of attempts to retain a formal representation of part of the source text even if that content is unneeded in the target text.

The exegetical motivation for the rendering appears to be found in Pseudo-Jonathan’s explicit statement that the offerings are necessary to atone for the blood on their hands, but it is unclear whether the same reasoning explains the rendering in Onqelos (see Maher 1994: 254–255). The Targumist of Pseudo-Jonathan may have been uncomfortable with the Levites receiving a reward (ordination or consecration) for the act of killing their fellow Israelites, even if the slain were guilty of idolatry and their deaths were ordered by Moses himself. The Targum’s phrasing groups together three terms associated with murder in the Hebrew Bible — שפך, דם, יד. In Deut 21:7, the terms occur in testimony denying responsibility for murder or the shedding of “innocent blood” (Deut 21:9). In Prov 6:17, “hands that shed innocent blood” are among the seven things YHWH hates. Isaiah and Ezekiel also equate “bloody hands” with sinful hearts, using the image as a metaphor for sinful behaviours including lying and idolatry (Isa 1:15; 59:3; Ezek 23:37, 45). It may be that the Targumist was using this language only to express the idea that the Levites needed to offer sacrifices to atone for the act of shedding blood, but it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Targum’s rendering may have been an allusion to Deut 21:7 or Prov 6:17 intended to imply that the Levites had shed some innocent blood as well as the blood of the guilty.

The rendering in Onqelos may also be meant to point to the need for atonement for sin, but this meaning can only be inferred from the context. Onqelos implies that the offering is

needed because they were against their kinsmen, but the mention of “hands” alone does not seem sufficient to activate the same associations as in Pseudo-Jonathan. Rather, the statement in Onqelos seems more like Neofiti’s standard rendering שלם קרבן יד (“complete the offering of the hand”). However, Pseudo-Jonathan evidently had an exegetical reason for modifying the expression in Exod 32:29, so it seems likely that Onqelos would also make a change only if exegetically necessary. Perhaps Pseudo-Jonathan makes more explicit the exegetical tradition that similarly motivated Onqelos. Instead of depicting the Levites receiving special standing, the Targums (including Neofiti) all require the Levites to make atonement for the shedding of blood.

4.3.3.3 Leviticus 21:10

Dogniez (2002: 3–4) claims that with the idiom מלא את־יד “the Greek translators rendered it always literally” even though consecration was “a meaning not attested in the Greek language” for these phrases. It appears to be the case that ancient Greek does not possess an idiom involving the word χεῖρ (“hand”) with the meaning of consecrating something. The Greek verbs commonly used to translate this BH idiom similarly do not relate to the ideas of ordination or consecration.

However, there is one exception to Dogniez’ claim the LXX always translates this idiom literally. In Lev 21:10, the perfect passive participle of the verb τελειόω is used alone without mention of the hands.

(14) Leviticus 21:10

MT ומלא את ידו ללבש את הבגדים
and he filled his hand to wear the garments

LXX και τετελειωμένου ἐνδύσασθαι τὰ ἱμάτια
and who has been completed to wear the garments

The apparatus in the Göttingen edition indicates that a fair number of manuscripts add τὰς χεῖρας here, but the reading has not been accepted as the Old Greek in either Rahlfs or the Göttingen text. The fact that *all* other occurrences of this BH idiom have been translated in the LXX using τὰς χεῖρας suggests the possibility that the words were omitted by mistake, especially since the verb τελειόω does not carry the meaning of “consecrate” in Greek apart from its use in this stereotypical rendering of a BH idiom in the LXX. The texts that include τὰς χεῖρας are probably corrections, but it is also possible that the verb alone was felt to be enough to activate the idiomatic meaning in this verse.

4.3.3.4 Peshitta of Chronicles

In 2 Chr 13:9, the translator of the Peshitta used the standard Aramaic idiom of “offer an offering” for this BH idiom, indicating familiarity with the phrase and its meaning. The other two times the BH idiom occurs in 1–2 Chr, however, the Peshitta does not use a standard rendering. The case in 2 Chr 29:31 is more straightforward while the translation of 1 Chr 29:5 departs significantly from the Hebrew.

(15) 2 Chronicles 29:31

MT	מְלֵאֲתֵם יְדָיִם לַיהוָה <i>you have filled your hands for YHWH</i>
Pesh	ܠܗܘܢ ܡܘܨܝܪܐ ܠܕܘܪܘܫܐ ܕܘܫܬܐ <i>Therefore, you have been brought near to the way of the Lord</i>

In 2 Chr 29:31, Hezekiah addresses the assembly, inviting them to come offer sacrifices now that they have been consecrated. For BH usage, the expression is fully idiomatised and no longer refers only to the ordination of those for religious service. The standard Aramaic “offer an offering” would have been appropriate for this context, but the rest of the verse already explicitly mentioned bringing sacrifices. Possibly to avoid this redundancy, the translator transformed Hezekiah’s first statement into an acknowledgment that the people had chosen to

draw near to God. Without using one of the usual equivalents, the translation still communicates the intended meaning of the Hebrew. Hezekiah's use of the BH idiom did not mean all the people of Judah were now set apart as priests. The expression was used only as an acknowledgment that the people had committed themselves to being right before God. The Peshitta's rendering is understandable as a Type D translation, an idiomatic and stylistic rendering that captures the meaning and feeling of the source. The same verb **בָּרַח** from the standard Aramaic translation of this idiom is used, but with the slightly different nuance of being brought near. The reference to the "way of the Lord" also has clear theological undertones that convey the same sense of preparation for the sacred.

By contrast, the Peshitta translator appears to have dispensed with this idiom entirely in 1 Chr 29:5. The use of the idiom in the Hebrew text is itself difficult to explain. The context is David announcing the silver and gold he has set aside for the building of the temple and inviting others to similarly contribute to the work. He phrases the request as: **וּמִי מִתְנַדֵּב לְמַלְאוֹת יְיָ הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה** ("And who will offer willingly to fill his hand today for YHWH?") There are two explanations for the phrase in the Hebrew text. David may have been speaking literally, not figuratively, and "fill his hand" meant literally take his property in his hand and bring it to David for the collection. The second explanation is that the phrase was meant idiomatically in the same way as in 2 Chr 29:31, meaning draw near to God by making these offerings.

The translator of the Peshitta clearly did not have the second option in mind since the Syriac text says nothing about a spiritual benefit for making the contribution. In fact, the Peshitta does not have David asking for contributions at all:

(16) Peshitta of 1 Chronicles 29:5

ܘܗܘܐ ܕܠܗ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ
ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܢܐ

that the work may be completed in its month. The work should not be delayed but rather be completed according to what is required of it in its cost.

In the Peshitta, David seems to be saying that he himself has provided enough gold and silver to ensure the work is completed on schedule and within budget (1 Chr 29:3–5). He makes this declaration without asking for additional contributions, but the leaders of Israel still gather to give additional metals for the project, including more gold and silver (1 Chr 29:6–8). The translator may have thought the implication that giving of one’s wealth for the temple project was the equivalent of consecrating oneself to holy service inappropriate. However, based on the overall direction of the Peshitta text in this passage, it seems plausible that the translator took the BH phrase to be not an idiom but a literal reference to bringing items in hand.

4.3.4 Age (בן שנה)

Biblical Hebrew indicates someone’s age by stating they are the “son” (בן) or “daughter” (בת) of so many years (שנה). The idiomatic expression most frequently consists of the noun בן (“son”) in construct with a numeral followed by the singular absolute feminine noun שנה, regardless of the number of years indicated (e.g., Gen 41:46: בן־שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה). In some cases, שנה is used in a masculine plural form (שָׁנִים). Parallel passages do not even necessarily present the same form of the idiom. For example, the idiom stating Josiah’s age in 2 Kgs 22:1 uses the singular while the parallel expression in 2 Chr 34:1 uses the plural. However, fewer than eight percent of the occurrences of this idiom in BH use the plural. The vast majority use the singular. There are 182 occurrences of the idiom with a form of שנה. The plural שָׁנִים is used fourteen

times with three of those cases being phrases unique to the Abraham narratives that use both שְׁנָה and שְׁנַיִם in the formulation (Gen 12:4; 16:16; 17:1).

A sacrificial animal of one year of age is labelled a בֶּן־שְׁנָה (“son of a year”). This collocation is used fifty-two times, always with reference to sacrificial animals except for the scribal error in 1 Sam 13:1.²² There are also a few examples of this idiom used with a length of time less than one year: בֶּן־שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים (“eight days old”) occurs twice (Gen 17:12; 21:4) and מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ (“from a month old”) occurs ten times, all but once in Numbers (Lev 27:6; Num 3:15, 22, 28, 34, 39, 40, 43; 18:16; 26:62). The following table presents all occurrences of the idiom in the book of Genesis and their renderings in the LXX, the Peshitta, and the Targum.

Table 4.2: The Genesis occurrences of the idiom בֶּן [] שְׁנָה in the ancient versions

	MT	LXX	Pesh	TgmO ²³
5:32	וַיְהִי־נֶחַ בֶּן־ חֲמִישׁ מֵאֹת שָׁנָה	Καὶ ἦν Νῶε ἑπτῶν πεντακοσίων	אסא קאסא כו עשכארא שְׁנָה	וַהֲנֶה נֶחַ בֶּר חֲמִישׁ מֵאָה שָׁנַיִן
7:6	וַנַּח בֶּן־שָׁשׁ מֵאֹת שָׁנָה	Νῶε δὲ ἦν ἑπτῶν ἑξακοσίων	אסא כו עשכארא שְׁנָה	וַנַּח בֶּר שִׁית מֵאָה שָׁנַיִן
11:10	שָׁם בֶּן־מֵאָת שָׁנָה	Σὴμ υἱὸς ἑκατὸν ἑπτῶν	שם כו עשכארא שְׁנָה	שָׁם בֶּר מֵאָה שָׁנַיִן
12:4	וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־חֲמִישׁ שָׁנַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה	Ἀβραὰμ δὲ ἦν ἑπτῶν ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε	אבראם כו שבעין אסא עשכארא שְׁנָה	וְאַבְרָם בֶּר שִׁבְעִין וְחֲמִישׁ שָׁנַיִן
16:16	וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־ שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְיָשָׁב שְׁנַיִם	Ἀβραὰμ δὲ ἦν ὀγδοήκοντα ἕξ ἑπτῶν	אבראם כו אסא עשכארא שְׁנָה	וְאַבְרָם בֶּר תְּמַנּוֹ וְשִׁית שָׁנַיִן

²² The Hebrew text says that Saul was a year old (בֶּן־שְׁנָה) at the start of his reign as king. It is clear from context that the numeral is missing from the formula. Unfortunately, the phrase is “defective in all witnesses in which it survives” (McCarter 1980: 222). The incongruity inspired the targumist’s creativity, resulting in the rendering: כְּבֵר שְׁנָה דְלִית בֵּיהּ חוּבִין שְׂאוּל כְּד מְלֶךְ (“As a one-year-old who has no guilt in him was Saul when he became king”).

²³ The Targum renderings are identical in Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan apart from the two references marked with an asterisk. In both cases, the idiom is handled similarly in the other Targums, but there are slight lexical or orthographic differences. See discussion of Gen 17:17 in Section 4.3.5 below.

	MT	LXX	Pesh	TgmO ²³
17:1	וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בְּן־תְּשַׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתִּשַׁע שָׁנִים	Ἐγένετο δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἑτῶν ἑνεήκοντα ἑννέα	אָמַם אָבְרָם בֶּן תְּשַׁע שָׁנָה	וַהֲוֶה אַבְרָם בַּר תִּשְׁעִין וַתִּישַׁע שָׁנִין
17:12	וּבְן־שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים יְמוֹל לְכֶם	καὶ παιδίον ὀκτῶ ἡμερῶν περιτμηθήσεται ὑμῖν	בֶּן שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים יִמּוֹל לְכֶם	וּבַר תְּמַנְיָה יוֹמִין יִגְזַר לְכֹן
17:17*	הֲלֹכֹן מֵאָה־שָׁנָה יִוֹלֵד	Εἰ τῷ ἑκατονταετεί γενήσεται υἱός,	לִבֹּן מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִוֹלֵד בֶּן־אֶלֶף	הֲלֹכֶר מֵאָה שָׁנִין יְהִי וְיֹלֵד לִי
	וְאִם־שָׁרָה הִבְת־ תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד	καὶ εἰ Σάρρα ἑνεήκοντα ἑτῶν οὕσα τέξεται	אִם שָׁרָה בִּתּוֹ תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד	וְאִם שָׁרָה הִבְת תִּשְׁעִין שָׁנִין תֵּלֵד
17:24	וְאַבְרָהָם בְּן־ תְּשַׁעִים וַתִּשַׁע שָׁנָה	Ἀβραὰμ δὲ ἦν ἑνεήκοντα ἑννέα ἑτῶν	אָבְרָהָם בֶּן תְּשַׁע שָׁנָה	וְאַבְרָהָם בַּר תִּשְׁעִין וַתִּישַׁע שָׁנִין
17:25	וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנוֹ בְּן־שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה	Ἴσμαῆλ δὲ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἑτῶν δέκα τριῶν ἦν	אִשְׁמַעְאֵל בִּנּוֹ בֶּן־שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר שָׁנָה	וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּרִיָּה בַר תֵּלֵת עֶסְרֵי שָׁנִין
21:4	אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בְּן־ שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים	τὸν Ἰσαὰκ τῆ ὀγδόῃ ἡμέρᾳ	אֶת־יִצְחָק בִּנּוֹ בֶּן־שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים	יֵת יִצְחָק בְּרִיָּה בַר תְּמַנְיָה יוֹמִין
21:5	וְאַבְרָהָם בְּן־ מֵאָה שָׁנָה	Ἀβραὰμ δὲ ἦν ἑτῶν ἑκατὸν	אָבְרָהָם בֶּן מֵאָה שָׁנָה	וְאַבְרָהָם בַּר מֵאָה שָׁנִין
25:20	וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בְּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה	ἦν δὲ Ἰσαὰκ ἑτῶν τεσσαράκοντα	אִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה	וַהֲוֶה יִצְחָק בַּר אַרְבָּעִין שָׁנִין
25:26	וַיִּצְחָק בְּן־שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתֹת אִתָּם אֹתוֹס רֵבֶעָא.	Ἰσαὰκ δὲ ἦν ἑτῶν ἑξήκοντα, ὅτε ἐτέκεν αὐτοὺς Ῥεβέκκα.	אִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן שֵׁשֶׁם שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתֹת אִתָּם רֵבֶעָא	וַיִּצְחָק בַּר שְׁתֵּין שָׁנִין כַּד יִלִּידַת תְּהוֹן
26:34	וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו בְּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה	Ἦν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἑτῶν τεσσεράκοντα	אָמַם בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה	וַהֲוֶה עֵשָׂו בַר אַרְבָּעִין שָׁנִין
37:2*	אֱלֹהִים תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בְּן־שִׁבְעִים־ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה	αὗται δὲ αἱ γενέσεις Ἰακώβ· Ἰωσήφ δέκα ἑπτὰ ἑτῶν	אֱלֹהִים תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב וְיֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעִים עָשָׂר שָׁנָה	אֱלִין תוֹלְדֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בַּר שִׁבְעֵ עֶסְרֵי שָׁנִין
41:46	וַיֹּסֶף בְּן־ שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה	Ἰωσήφ δὲ ἦν ἑτῶν τριάκοντα	יֹסֵף בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה	וַיֹּסֶף בַּר תֵּלְתִין שָׁנִין
50:26	וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בְּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים	καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν Ἰωσήφ ἑτῶν ἑκατὸν δέκα	וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים	וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בַּר מֵאָה וְעֶסְרֵי שָׁנִין

Not unexpectedly, the Aramaic versions typically use the Semitic idiom and include the lexeme for “son.” This approach is technically classified as Type A since the form of the Hebrew is matched at the lexical and syntactic levels. However, since the Semitic idiom occurs in Hebrew and Aramaic, the BH idiom is also rendered by an equivalent Aramaic idiom, the Type D idiomatic approach. Genesis 7:6 provides a representative example of how the idiom is typically translated in the ancient versions.

(17) Genesis 7:6

MT	וְנֹחַ בֶּן־יֶשֶׁשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
Pesh	ܘܢܘܚ ܒܢ ܝܫܘܫ ܡܝܐܘܬ ܫܢܝܢ
TgmO	וְנֹחַ בֶּן שֵׁשׁ מֵאֹת שָׁנִין <i>And Noah was a son of six hundred years</i>
LXX	Νῶε δὲ ἦν ἑξακοσίω <i>And Noah was six hundred years</i>

The gloss English translation is the same for the Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic because the versions are fully lexically equivalent. Only minor morphological differences are evident such as the use of the plural “years” in Syriac and Aramaic and the use of a compound noun for “six hundred” in Syriac. The examples in the table above indicate that the plural שָׁנִין or ܫܢܝܢ in the Aramaic dialects is the usual form used in the expression in Aramaic. The plural is also used in the one example of this idiom from Biblical Aramaic (Dan 6:1). The Peshitta and Targums use the plural throughout Genesis where this idiom appears with the exception of Targum Neofiti’s rendering of Gen 37:2 — יוסף בר שבע עשרה שנה — which is orthographically virtually identical to MT (יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה).²⁴

²⁴ Compare the renderings of Targum Onqelos (יוסף בר שבע עשרי שנין) and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (יוסף בר שביסרי שנין).

Idiomatic Greek for indicating a person’s age was to simply state they were *X* years using the noun ἔτος (“year”), a numeral, and either εἰμί with the genitive or γεγονώς with the accusative (Smyth 1920: 318, 358). Some Greek numerals also form possessive word compounds with ἔτος (Moulton & Howard 1963: 286).²⁵ In Gen 7:6, the LXX has rendered Noah’s age into idiomatic Greek (Type D). In fact, only one stereotypical rendering of this idiom using υἱός can be found in the Hexateuch — in Gen 11:10 (Thackeray 1909: 41).²⁶

(18) Genesis 11:10

MT שֵׁם בֶן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה
Shem was a son of a hundred years

LXX Σῆμ υἱὸς ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν
Shem was a son of a hundred years

With the BH idiom for expressing age, the LXX translators predominantly opted for the typical Greek way of expressing age instead of providing a calque of the Hebrew expression. There are 182 instances of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible, but the LXX used a rendering with υἱός only thirty-one times. Even the many references to sacrificial animals of a year old get translated idiomatically in the LXX by ἐνιαύσιος (“a year”; e.g., Exod 12:5; Lev 9:3).

The contrast in the LXX renderings of the idiom in Josh 24:30 (Heb. 24:29) and Judg 2:8 is striking since the Hebrew text is identical in both cases.

(19) Joshua 24:30 and Judges 2:8

MT וַיָּמָת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן עֶבֶד יְהוָה בֶּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנִים
And died Joshua son of Nun, servant of YHWH, a son of a hundred and ten years

²⁵ For example, the compound τριᾱκονταέτης (“thirty years”) occurs in classical Greek with the meaning “thirty years old” (e.g., Plato, *Laws* 670a, 914b).

²⁶ According to Thackeray (1909: 42), παιδίον ὀκτὼ ἡμερῶν (“child of eight days”) in Gen 17:12 is classical and not a calque.

LXX καὶ ἀπέθανεν Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Ναυη δοῦλος κυρίου
Josh ἑκατὸν δέκα ἐτῶν.
*And died Jesus son of Naue, servant of the Lord, a
hundred ten years*

LXX καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Ναυη δοῦλος
Judg κυρίου υἱὸς ἑκατὸν δέκα ἐτῶν.
*And ended Jesus son of Naue, servant of the Lord, a
son of a hundred ten years.*

The differences in the Greek translations of what was undoubtedly a *Vorlage* essentially the same as MT reveal a fascinating inconsistency in attitude toward both idiom and euphemism. In LXX Josh 24:30, the translator states directly that Joshua died (ἀποθνήσκω), though death is a common subject to be treated indirectly with euphemism. Joshua’s age at his death is also expressed in idiomatic Greek, not with a calque of the BH idiom. In LXX Judg 2:8, the translator uses a euphemistic Greek verb to refer to Joshua’s death (τελευτάω), but he then uses a calqued expression to state Joshua’s age at death (υἱὸς ἑκατὸν δέκα ἐτῶν). In classical Greek, the verb τελευτάω (“end”) can be combined with αἰών (“life”) or a form of βίωω (“life”) to euphemistically refer to death as a person’s life coming to an end.²⁷ The verb is used alone in LXX Judg 2:8, however, because, even in classical Greek, the verb alone had come to be sufficient “to activate [the] specific idiomatic meaning and function” of the idiomatic expression (Langlotz 2006: 178).²⁸ The amount of linguistic information necessary to activate an idiom varies over time and depends largely on the familiarity of the audience with the idiomatic expression.²⁹

²⁷ For example, Herodotus, *Histories* 1.32.5, 9.17.4; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7.17 (see LSJ, s.v. “τελευτάω” for additional references).

²⁸ For examples of τελευτάω meaning “to die” without an explicit word for life, see Herodotus, *Histories* 1.66; Plato, *Republica* 614b. It is possible that the verb acquired the idiomatic meaning through use in allusions to the full idiom (Taylor 2012: 80–83). Taylor (2012: 80) notes “that the allusions can themselves give rise to new idioms.”

²⁹ On flexibility and variation within idiomatic expressions, see Moon 1998: 120–177; Langlotz 2006: 177–224; Wulff 2008: 67–149.

The LXX translator in Judg 2:8 used a Greek euphemism where the Hebrew plainly stated “he died” (תָּמַת) and the parallel verse in LXX Joshua also plainly stated “he died” (ἀπέθανεν). But in the second half of the verse, the translator of Judges opted for an isomorphic rendering over an idiomatic Greek one. This choice is puzzling since the common rationale assumed for the increasingly isomorphic character of the Historical Books in the LXX is a growing religious sensitivity toward the importance of preserving the exact words of Scripture (Dogniez 2002: 2; Barr 1979: 50; Thackeray 1909: 15, 29). Here the translator’s choices blended natural and unnatural Greek phrasing; he chose a verb that carried the appropriate meaning only in an extended or derived sense (natural and idiomatic in Greek) and combined it with an awkwardly calqued representation of a BH idiom.

In three cases in BH, the age idiom occurs in an extended formulation. When Abram’s age is mentioned in Gen 12:4, 16:16, and 17:1, the number is distributed over two statements where הַשָּׁנִים is repeated: “Abram son of *X* year(s) and *Y* year(s)”. Compound numbers are typically linked by the conjunction, and the repetition of the noun with compound numbers in BH is also not unusual.³⁰ What is unusual is the repetition of the noun *in the idiom* for expressing age as “son of *X* years”. Genesis 5 is full of examples of compound numbers used with the noun הַשָּׁנִים that illustrate the variation allowed for noun repetition and noun form. The noun can be used only once with the compound number (Gen 5:3, 19), repeated in the singular with each part of the compound number (Gen 5:5, 8), or used once in the plural and once in the singular with each part of the compound number (Gen 5:6, 7, 11). The single occurrence in Gen 5 of the “son of *X* years” idiom appears in 5:32 and the noun is not repeated, even though the immediately previous verses repeat הַשָּׁנִים with the compound numbers seven times (Gen 5:23–

³⁰ See *BHRG* Section 37.2.2, esp. p. 319.

31). These examples suggest that while repetition of the noun is common with compound numbers, the repetition is atypical for the “son of *X* years” idiom. However, the expressions of Abram’s age in Gen 12:4, 16:16, and 17:1 blend the syntax of the idiom “son of *X* years” with the syntax used for indicating ages in the genealogies of Gen 5 and Gen 11. In these genealogies, the size of the smaller numeral affects whether singular or plural is used. For example, Gen 11:32 says Terah lived to be “five years (חַמֵּשׁ שָׁנִים) and two hundred years” (וּמְאָתַיִם שָׁנָה). Whenever the smaller numeral is ten or fewer, שָׁנִים is used, but when the numeral is eleven or greater, the singular שָׁנָה is used. The repetition of the noun in the idioms for Abram’s age follows this alternation:

(20) Abram’s age idiom

(a) Gen 12:4	וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה <i>and 70 year</i>	בֶּן־חַמֵּשׁ שָׁנִים <i>son of 5 years</i>
(b) Gen 16:16	וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים <i>and 6 years</i>	בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה <i>son of 80 year</i>
(c) Gen 17:1	וְתִשְׁעַ שָׁנִים <i>and 9 years</i>	בֶּן־תְּשַׁעִּים שָׁנָה <i>son of 90 year</i>

Even though the Targums and the Peshitta use the “son of *X* years” idiom, they do not represent the repetition of שָׁנָה with a compound number either with the idiomatic expressions for Abram’s age or with the genealogical style in Gen 5 and Gen 11. The Septuagint also does not repeat ἔτος in either the genealogies or the idiom in Genesis.³¹ This avoidance of an isomorphic translation in all the ancient versions suggests the translators were more concerned with communicating in understandable Greek, Aramaic, or Syriac than in closely glossing their source text in an interlinear fashion.

³¹ See Table 4.2 above for the renderings of Gen 12:4, 16:16, and 17:1 in the LXX, Peshitta, and Targum.

It is curious that the noun שָׁנָה is never repeated in the idiom “son of *X* years” after Gen 17:1, not even in the later statements of Abraham’s age. Genesis 17:24, for example, restates the fact from 17:1 that Abraham was ninety-nine years old, but it uses the expected pattern of the idiom, not that used in 17:1: וְאַבְרָהָם בְּן־תְּשַׁע־וָעֶשְׂרִים וָשָׁנָה.³²

Genesis 17:17 includes two uses of the idiom for expressing age, including the only time the feminine form of the idiom is used for indicating the age of a woman (the feminine occurs three other times with reference to a one-year-old ewe lamb; Lev 14:10; Num 6:14; 15:27). The verse is also the first reference to Abraham’s age that follows the expected syntax of the idiom rather than the variation used in all previous references to Abram’s age. The translations of the age idiom are typical of the examples seen thus far. The Aramaic versions use the cognate idiom, and the LXX uses the idiomatic Greek as expected in Genesis (with the exception of Gen 11:10). Despite their unremarkable renderings of the age idioms, the ancient versions of Gen 17:17 include a number of notable examples of explicitation, addressed in the following section.

4.3.5 Explicitation in Genesis 17:17

The Hebrew of Gen 17:17 contains a number of challenges for the translator including several idiomatic expressions, a rhetorical question embedded in an internal monologue, and a difficult verb form that appears to be missing an object. All of the ancient versions supplied an object for the verb; some made certain aspects of the meaning of the verse explicit for their audiences.

³² The change in pattern corresponds to Abram’s renaming as Abraham. As Abram, the idiom is given in its unusual form mixing syntax from the earlier genealogies with that of the idiomatic expression. As Abraham, his age is given with the idiom following the usual pattern (Gen 17:17; 17:24; 21:5). It is unclear whether any significance should be attached to the correspondence. The shift in syntax cannot be attributed to different sources since Gen 5 and Gen 17 are both traditionally assigned to P, the Priestly Source, and Gen 12:4 and 16:16 are also P (Skinner 1910: 127, 242, 285, 287).

A comparison of the three Targums reveals variations that could reflect the translator's theological sensitivities.

(21) Genesis 17:17³³

MT	<p>וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּצְחַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבּוֹ הֲלֵבֶן מֵאָה-שָׁנָה יוֹלֵד וְאִם- שָׂרָה הִבְתִּתְשָׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד</p> <p><i>And Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart: “Will a son of a hundred years father [a son] or will Sarah a daughter of ninety years give birth?”</i></p>
LXX	<p>καὶ ἔπεσεν Ἀβραὰμ ἐπὶ πρόσωπον καὶ ἐγέλασεν καὶ εἶπεν ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ λέγων Εἰ τῷ ἑκατονταετεί γενήσεται υἱός, καὶ εἰ Σάρρα ἐνενήκοντα ἐτῶν οὕσα τέξεται</p> <p><i>And Abraam fell on [his] face and laughed and said in his thought, saying: “If to a hundred-year-old a son will be born, and if Sarra being of ninety years will bear [a son].”</i></p>
Pesh	<p>וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל אַפְוָהּ וַיִּצְחַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבִּי הֲלֵבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנִין יֵהִי וְלֵד וְאִם שָׂרָה תִשְׁעִין שָׁנִין תֵּלֵד</p> <p><i>And Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart: “Will a son be born to a son of a hundred years or will Sara a daughter of ninety years give birth?”</i></p>
TgmO	<p>וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל אַפְוָהּ וַיִּצְחַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבִּי הֲלֵבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנִין יֵהִי וְלֵד וְאִם שָׂרָה תִשְׁעִין שָׁנִין תֵּלֵד</p> <p><i>And Abraham fell on his face and rejoiced and he said in his heart: “Will there be a child for a son of a hundred years, and will Sarah, a daughter of ninety years, bear?”</i></p>
TgmN	<p>וַאֲשַׁתְּחָ אַבְרָהָם עַל אַפְוֵי וַתִּמָּה וַאֲמַר בְּלִיבִיָּהּ הֲאֵ בַר מֵאָה שָׁנִין אֶפְשָׁר לִי לְמוֹלְדָהּ בְּנִין וְאִן שָׂרָה הֲאֵ בְרַת תִּשְׁעִין שָׁנִין אֶפְשָׁר לָהּ לְמִילָד</p> <p><i>And Abraham prostrated himself on his face and wondered and said in his heart: “Is it possible for me, a son of a hundred years, to father sons or for Sarah, a daughter of ninety years, is it possible for her to bear?”</i></p>
Tgm PsJ	<p>וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָהָם עַל אַנְפוּי וַתִּמָּה וַאֲמַר בְּלִיבִיָּהּ הֲלֵבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנִין יֵהִי וְוֹלֵד וְאִן שָׂרָה הִבְרַת תִּשְׁעִין שָׁנִין תִּוְלֵד</p> <p><i>And Abraham fell on his face and wondered and said in his heart: “Will there be a child for a son of a hundred years, or will Sarah, a daughter of ninety years, bear?”</i></p>

Every translation adds a noun for “son” or “child” as an object for the Hebrew verb ילד (“to beget, bear, bring forth [a child]”). Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan add a

³³ In this example, underlining indicates variations among the versions discussed further below.

The versions provided an explicit subject in Gen 17:17 as would have been expected from the usual usage of this verb. In BH, the subject is *always* the person, persons, or animals being born and is almost always mentioned explicitly. Even though the versions include words for “child” or “son” here, there is no suggestion in *BHQ* that a Hebrew textual variant is likely.³⁵

As for the translation of the verb itself, LXX and Peshitta use the passive (future, middle/passive 3rd sg. of *γίνομαι* and *ethpaal* 3 masc. sg. of אָלַץ, respectively). Targum Neofiti uses an infinitive of יָלַד, while Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan have added a form of הוּוּה and used the nominal form וַלֵּד, as noted above. However, a variant reading in Targum Onqelos suggests a text that did not make the subject explicit and used an *ethpaal* verb (יתיליד) like Peshitta.

The remaining issues involve only the renderings of the Targums in comparison with MT. Since most of the lexical items from the Hebrew for this verse are represented by their cognates in the Targums, the choice of a different verb may reflect a subtle sort of exegesis. Each of the Targums replaces the verb צָחַק (“laugh”) with one that lacks associations with mockery. Targum Onqelos uses חָדַי (“rejoice”), and Targum Neofiti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan use תַּמָּה (“wonder,” “be astonished”). Concerning Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Maher (1992: 65n15)

³⁵ Tal (2016: 39, 120* [*BHQ* Genesis]) explains the addition of a subject in some of the versions in Gen 17:17 as a harmonization toward Gen 17:19 where יָלַד occurs again with בֶּן given explicitly as object — אָבִל שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יֵלְדֶת לְךָ בֶּן (“Truly, Sarah, your wife, [is] the one who will bear to you a son”). There is no support for positing a Hebrew variant text in v. 17 that read בֶּן. The apparatus in *BHS* completely ignores the fact that several ancient versions add a word for “son” to v. 17.

speculates that “the *meturgemanim* considered it disrespectful to say that Abraham laughed in God’s presence.” However, the verbal shifts evident for all three Targums accomplished more than just concealment of a disrespectful attitude toward God.

In Hebrew, Abraham’s response has an element of ambiguity. Physically, Abraham showed proper respect for the divine presence by bowing to the ground, but his internal speech could be construed as evidence of scepticism and doubt when it is introduced with the image of Abraham laughing at God’s announcement. By shifting the verb, the Targums successfully reframe the scene away from doubt and disbelief and toward acceptance and assurance. Abraham’s internal speech is now framed as an expression of amazement at God’s promise to work a miracle, not as an expression of scepticism about that promise. When Abraham speaks aloud in Gen 17:18, it is an appeal for Ishmael to have the blessed status announced for Sarah’s unborn son in vv. 15–16. In the MT, that appeal reinforces the interpretation of v. 17 as an expression of doubt. Abraham heard God’s promise, doubted it, and asked for the benefits of the promise to pass to the son he already had.

Modern commentators on the Hebrew text of Genesis generally acknowledge Abraham’s response contained at least a twinge of doubt. Sarna (1989: 126) asks, “Is it the laughter of joy, surprise, doubt — or perhaps a little of each?” Mathews (2005: 206) suggests Abraham is offering God “a counterproposal by pleading for Ishmael’s acceptance.” Skinner (1910: 295) remarks, “Abraham’s demeanor is a strange mixture of reverence and incredulity.” Hamilton (1990: 477–478) states plainly that Abraham “is skeptical” and suggests that when he falls on his face at the beginning of v. 17, it may mean he “fell over laughing about God’s most recent proposition.” Wenham (1994: 25–26) asserts that Abraham’s plea “indirectly expresses his unbelief.” Westermann (1995: 268) notes that “the prayer [Abraham] utters for Ishmael implies that he does not believe the promise of a son to Sarah.” Driver (1904: 188) says that Abraham

laughed “in incredulity. Abraham cannot believe it, and still rests his hopes upon Ishmael, on whose behalf he now (v. 18) proceeds to utter a prayer.”

This brief survey of modern commentators’ opinions on Abraham’s mental state in this scene indicates that sensing doubt and disbelief in Abraham’s reaction was a natural reading of the Hebrew text. Ancient interpreters also understood that the most straightforward reading of Abraham’s reaction was that he doubted God’s promise, so they explicitly denied it. Philo of Alexandria described Abraham’s laughter as that of hopeful faith (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3.55) and emphasised that any doubt was nothing more than a fleeting thought (*On the Change of Names* 175–188). He later comments that only Sarah was rebuked for her laughter because Abraham was “secured by an unswerving and inflexible conviction of faith” (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 4.17 [LCL, 291]). The ancient Christian commentator Ephrem the Syrian holds that “Abraham was not guilty of any doubt by his laughter, for he showed his love toward Ishmael in what he said”; rather, Abraham laughed as he marvelled over this wondrous promise (Sheridan 2002: 58). Likewise, Cyril of Alexandria asserted that Abraham “was not laughing because he did not believe, as some might imagine, but rejoicing because he did. . . . And for this reason, he also ‘fell on his face’ and marveled in his heart” (ibid.). Ambrose of Milan said, “The fact that Abraham laughed when he had been promised a son through her was an expression not of unbelief but of joy. Indeed, he ‘fell on his face’ — in worship, which means he believed. . . . He is not incredulous with regard to the promises” (ibid.). Philo and the ancient Christian commentators paint a scene of pious worship and steadfast faith.

The targumists faced the same exegetical issue and solved it in ways very similar to the ancient Christian commentators by reframing Abraham’s laughter as that of amazement and joy. With the scene reframed, Abraham’s appeal for Ishmael could stand as a request that God would *also* bless Ishmael, not bless Ishmael *instead* of this yet-unborn son. Targum Neofiti may

also have added a nuance of worship to the scene by saying Abraham “prostrated himself” (using the *ethpeel* of שָׁטַח) instead of “fell” (נָפַל), used in the Hebrew and all the other Aramaic versions. In rabbinic literature, the verb שָׁטַח (“spread out”) takes on connotations of prostration in prayer and religious reverence.³⁶ Targum Neofiti’s addition of the phrases “is it possible for me” (אִפְשָׁר לִי) and “is it possible for her” (אִפְשָׁר לָהּ) to Abraham’s inner speech can also be seen as an attempt to make him seem more hopeful and positive.

4.3.6 Internal Speech (אמר בלבו/אל-לבו)

The first occurrence of the age idiom in Gen 17:17 comes in Abraham’s inner monologue, where he wonders to himself whether “a son of a hundred years could father [a son].” The second also occurs in Abraham’s musing over whether Sarah could give birth as “a daughter of ninety years.” That the words are thought and not spoken aloud is indicated by the idiomatic phrase וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבּוֹ (“and he said in his heart”). In the Aramaic versions, the BH idiom אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ is rendered with the cognate Aramaic idiom. The Septuagint, however, reflects a mixed tendency toward idiomatic and isomorphic translation for the phrase containing the idiom.³⁷

(23) Parallel alignment of MT and LXX of Gen 17:17ba

[לֹא־מָר]	י	לֵב	בְּ	וַיֹּאמֶר	וַ
λέγων	αὐτοῦ ³⁸	τῆς διανοίας	ἐν	εἶπεν	καὶ

³⁶ See, e.g., Gen. Rab. 63:5; b. B. Meṣ. 85b; b. Ḥag. 22b.

³⁷ Brayford (2007) does not comment on any of these variations between MT and LXX for Gen 17:17 in her commentary on the Septuagint of Genesis, though detailed comparative textual analysis is not a consistent feature the series.

³⁸ Wevers (1974) did not include αὐτοῦ here in his eclectic critical text of Genesis, so it is omitted from the text in (21). The presence of the pronoun in some manuscripts is mentioned in his apparatus. It is included in the main text in Swete and Rahlfs and appears in the parallel alignment of Tov 2003. It is added back in (23) to show the predominant tendency to represent every morpheme. However, Wevers likely excluded it for consistency with the rendering of the same idiom in LXX Gen 27:41 where αὐτοῦ is also omitted in Rahlfs (though it is retained in Swete).

The idiom itself is translated by a Greek term with a meaning reflecting the BH idiomatic meaning for לֵב. The “heart” metaphor is not carried over into Greek, perhaps because the metaphorical sense of *καρδία* had stronger emotional connotations.³⁹ However, *καρδία* appears elsewhere in the LXX of the Pentateuch, even elsewhere in Genesis, for Hebrew לֵב used in the sense of “thoughts” or “inner being” (e.g., Gen 6:5; Deut 4:9). Carrying over the BH idiom into Greek here would have been perfectly appropriate in Greek, and the prevalent use of *καρδία* as a stereotypical translation for לֵב throughout the LXX supports the assumption that the term could have been expected here. In fact, essentially the same BH idiom appears in Deut 8:17 and 9:4, and the LXX translator has used *καρδία* both times (אָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְךָ / εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου; Deut 8:17).⁴⁰

In Gen 17:17, the LXX adds λέγων before the report of Abraham’s thoughts, as if the Hebrew text had included לֵאמֹר. While BH frequently uses אָמַר as the matrix verb for introducing direct speech in quotative frames with לֵאמֹר, reports of *internal* speech using לֵאמֹר almost never have אָמַר as the matrix verb.⁴¹ It is possible that εἶπεν was so closely associated with λέγων that the translator added λέγων out of habit even though it was not in the source text. However, if Genesis is one of the earliest books translated into Greek, the habitual association is not likely to have developed from previous experience translating such phrasing

³⁹ The term is used metaphorically for a person’s thoughts a few times in Homer (*Illiad* 21.441; *Odyssey* 4.572; 5.389), but the majority of metaphorical uses listed in LSJ relate to the heart as the seat of emotions, not thoughts (see LSJ, s.v. “καρδία”).

⁴⁰ Assuming the same translator is responsible for LXX Deut, they were inconsistent in their handling of this idiom since it is rendered with διάνοιᾶ in Deut 7:17 but with *καρδία* again in Deut 18:21.

⁴¹ On the function of לֵאמֹר in BH and the syntactic patterns that BH uses to introduce direct speech, see Miller-Naudé 2003, especially pp. 290–93 on internal speech. The verb אָמַר is the matrix verb of a לֵאמֹר frame 110 times, but it only introduces internal speech once in Deut 9:4.

in Genesis since the collocation only occurs once prior to this verse (Gen 9:8). Looking at examples from the LXX books as a whole, though, the use of εἶπεν ... λέγων appears to have developed into a stereotypical rendering for BH אָמַר frames with אָמַר as the matrix verb.

Despite a general tendency toward literal and stereotypical representations of BH syntax and lexemes, in Gen 17:17 the translator of LXX Genesis avoided the lexically equivalent, stereotypical rendering of καρδία for לֵב and chose to use an idiomatic equivalent by using διάνοια, a Greek term with more explicit associations with thoughts and thinking. The same use of διάνοια appears with the same BH idiom in Gen 27:41 (וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו בְּלִבּוֹ / εἶπεν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ), and διάνοια is used elsewhere as an equivalent for לֵב in the same sense (Gen 8:21; 45:26; Exod 35:34). In fact, διάνοια appears to have been used as a stereotypical equivalent for לֵב in contexts where the Hebrew word was referring to thoughts and intentions (e.g., Exod 9:21; Lev 19:17; Num 15:39; Deut 4:39; 7:17; Prov 2:10; Job 1:5; 9:4; Isa 57:11), though καρδία was also used in such contexts (e.g., Gen 6:5).⁴² This use of διάνοια seems to reflect a stereotypical *idiomatic* Greek rendering (Type D) of a common BH idiom. The literal renderings of the BH idiom in LXX Deut 8:17 and 9:4 appear to be exceptions to what is otherwise a fairly consistent pattern, especially in the LXX of the Pentateuch.⁴³ The implication is that καρδία and διάνοια should both be considered stereotypical equivalents for לֵב in the LXX. The translators still varied their lexical choice enough that καρδία also appears with the

⁴² The examples given in parentheses are representative, not an exhaustive list of occurrences.

⁴³ Esther 6:6 is one example where the LXX uses different idiomatic Greek for expressing this idea, using ἐν ἑαυτῷ (“in himself”). Most occurrences appear with either καρδία or διάνοια. Outside of the Pentateuch, renderings with καρδία are much more common. In 1 Sam 1:13 and 1 Kgs 12:26, the LXX again renders the BH idiom with καρδία. When the idiom is used for internal speech in Isa 14:13, the LXX uses διάνοια, but all six examples of the idiom found in Psalms are translated with καρδία. The idiom also appears twice in Ecclesiastes with the LXX using καρδία both times.

metaphorical sense referring to the inner person (thoughts, feelings, etc.), even in LXX books that also use *διάνοιᾶ* with that sense (e.g., Gen 6:5; Exod 35:10; 36:2; Deut 5:29).

In Gen 8:21, a variation of this BH idiom — *אמר אל־לבו* — occurs with YHWH as the subject, and some of the ancient versions reveal their anti-anthropomorphic tendencies with words for parts of the body used with reference to God:

(24) Genesis 8:21

MT	<i>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־לְבוֹ</i> <i>And YHWH said to his heart</i>
LXX	<i>καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς διανοηθεὶς</i> <i>And the Lord God said, having considered</i>
Pesh	<i>אָמַר מַלְאָכָא בְּלִבָּא</i> <i>And the Lord said in his heart</i>
TgmO ⁴⁴	<i>וַאֲמַר יוֹי בְּמִימְרֵיהּ</i> <i>And YWY said by means of his Memra</i>
TgmN	<i>וַאֲמַר יִי בְּמַחְשַׁבַת לְבָהּ</i> <i>And YYY said in the thought of his heart</i>

Based on the tendencies noted above for the Greek translation of the related BH idiom, the use of the aorist passive participle of *διανοέομαι* (related to *διάνοιᾶ*) for the Hebrew prepositional phrase *אֶל־לְבוֹ* (“to his heart,” meaning “to himself”) was probably not motivated by a desire to avoid anthropomorphic language in connection with God. The Peshitta was also unconcerned by the anthropomorphism and translated the idiom literally.

Avoiding anthropomorphic references to God is a common practice for the targumists, however (Flesher & Chilton 2011: 15). Instead of YHWH speaking “to his heart,” Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan have him speaking *through* (or *by means of*) his *Memra* (מִימְרָא), an Aramaic term for “command” or “word” used in the Targums as a literary device

⁴⁴ Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has the same reading as Targum Onqelos for this phrase.

whose “function was to prevent the mention of God’s corporeality” (Grossfeld 1990a: 25). Reference to God’s *Memra* was a common way to avoid anthropomorphism, and, in his note on Gen 8:21 in Targum Onqelos, Grossfeld (1990a: 57n5) says the Hebrew “is anthropomorphic, here circumvented by the Memra device.” However, in his introductory discussion on the meaning of *Memra* in Targum Onqelos, Grossfeld observes that *Memra* can be used,

In the sense of “self” with reference to God in translation for Hebrew *lēb* (“heart”) or *népeš* (“soul”). Here *Memra* is **not to be considered as a circumvention** but provides a literal translation of the Hebrew, as in Gen 6:6; 8:21, where “heart” is to be translated “self,” and Lev 26:11, 30 where “soul” has the meaning of “self.” (Grossfeld 1990a: 26–27; emphasis added)

Grossfeld contradicts himself by saying in one place that *Memra* is a circumvention in Gen 8:21 and in another place claiming *Memra* is a “literal translation” and *not* a circumvention in Gen 8:21. Regardless of the fact that the Aramaic word מִימְרָא can be understood as an idiomatic, semantic equivalent for words like לֵב (“heart”) or נֶפֶשׁ (“throat”) when they are used for God’s inner being or person or self, the use of *Memra* is still an anti-anthropomorphic circumvention in places like Gen 8:21 and Lev 26:11 because a Hebrew lexeme for a physical part of the body is represented by an Aramaic lexeme without any connotations of physicality.

Targum Neofiti does not employ the Memra device to circumvent the anthropomorphism in Gen 8:21, but it mutes the implication that God has physical form by explicitly signalling that לֵב should be understood in its figurative sense. Instead of speaking “to his heart,” YHWH speaks “in the thought (מחשבת) of his heart.” By adding the word מחשבת, the targumist constrained the construal of the phrase to the non-literal sense.

The only other occurrence of the idiom **אמר אל-לבו** is found in 1 Sam 27:1. As is clear from (25), all the ancient versions, including both LXX and Targum Jonathan, rendered the **לב** part of the idiom isomorphically.

(25) 1 Samuel 27:1

MT	וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-לְבָבוֹ <i>And David said to his heart</i>
LXX ⁴⁵	Καὶ εἶπεν Δαυιδ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ λέγων <i>And David said in his heart, saying</i>
Pesh	סִמְחָתוֹ גַּם בְּלִבּוֹ <i>And David said in his heart</i>
TgmJ	וַאֲמַר דָּוִד בְּלִבֵּיהּ <i>And David said in his heart</i>

Furthermore, the Peshitta has consistently rendered both occurrences of the **אמר אל-לבו** variation of the idiom in the same way as the more frequent **אמר בלבו** form of the idiom. Similarly, Targum Jonathan has rendered the **אמר אל-לבו** idiom the same way that all the Pentateuchal Targums handled the **אמר בלבו** idiom in Gen 17:17 (see example (16)). While the Aramaic versions represent the BH idiom with the same metaphorical language, they are translating the meaning, not the form, since they use the same Aramaic idiomatic phrasing for both variations of the BH idiom. That is, they could have translated 1 Sam 27:1 much more isomorphically (perhaps as **וַאֲמַר דָּוִד לְלִיבֵיהּ**), but that would not have been idiomatic Aramaic.

The LXX has translated the BH idiom in 1 Sam 27:1 literally and in the same way as was done in Deut 8:17; 9:4. Moreover, the translator has added *λέγων* just as was done in the LXX of Gen 17:17 (see example (23) above), even though the Hebrew text does not use **לְאָמַר** to introduce the content of the internal speech in any of these examples.

⁴⁵ Text from Rahlfs. Compare Swete: *Καὶ εἶπεν Δαυειδ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ λέγων.*

Just as Targum Neofiti added מַחְשַׁבַּת (“thought”) to Gen 8:21 to emphasise the text was referring to internal speech, the LXX may also add content to make more explicit that the reported speech was thought but not spoken. In Gen 24:15, where MT has just לְדַבֵּר, the LXX has λαλοῦντα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ (“speaking in the mind”), adding “in the mind” to make explicit the Hebrew’s implied reference to internal speech. Most likely the LXX translator was harmonising Gen 24:15 with 24:45 where “to my heart” appears in Hebrew when Abraham’s servant is narrating his earlier experience.

(26) LXX Harmonisation of Genesis 24:15 and 24:45

v. 15a

MT וַיְהִי־הוּא לְדַבֵּר כְּלָה טָרָם
And it happened that before he finished speaking

LXX καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸ τοῦ αὐτὸν συντελέσαι⁴⁶ λαλοῦντα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ
And it came about before his speaking in the mind finished

v. 45a

MT אֲנִי טָרָם אֶכְלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־לִבִּי
Before I finished speaking to my heart

LXX καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸ τοῦ συντελέσαι με λαλοῦντα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ
And it came about before my speaking in the mind finished

According to Wever’s apparatus, some Greek manuscripts added ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ or ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ instead of ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ in v. 15.⁴⁷ No variants using καρδίᾳ are noted for v. 45 where לֵב is actually used in the Hebrew. For the Greek translator of Genesis, the concept of

⁴⁶ The pronoun and infinitive are transposed in Codex Alexandrinus and many other manuscripts. Rahlfs and Swete both read τοῦ συντελέσαι αὐτὸν. While the majority of textual witnesses support the reading with the pronoun following the infinitive, Wevers appears to have favoured the other reading for the Göttingen text primarily on the weight of two Genesis papyri from the Chester Beatty Papyri (see Wevers 1974: 227).

⁴⁷ Including, it appears, Papyrus 962 from the Chester Beatty Papyri, one of the two papyri that provided the minority reading favoured by Wevers mentioned in the previous note. As with any eclectic critical text, the readings of any single witness are never given the exact same weight, but it is interesting that he favoured 962 on an odd point of word order (the pronoun follows the infinitive even in Wevers’ text for the parallel in v. 45) but then relegated a more significant lexical variation in the same papyrus to the apparatus.

internal speech represented by the BH idiom was so closely paired with ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ that it could be added to the Greek where it was implicit in Hebrew.

4.3.7 Speaking to the Heart (דבר על-לב)

The Hebrew idioms related to internal speech covered in Section 4.3.6 primarily used אָמַר as the verb for speech, though דָּבַר was used on a few occasions (Gen 24:45; 1 Sam 1:13; Ecc 1:16). The idiomatic phrase דָּבַר עַל-לֵב (literally, “speak upon the heart”) is commonly understood to describe some sort of friendly or affectionate speech (e.g., Tribble 1984: 67). This idiom occurs nine times in BH (Gen 34:3; 50:21; Judg 19:3; 2 Sam 19:8; Isa 40:2; Hos 2:16; Ruth 2:13; 2 Chr 30:22; 2 Chr 32:6).

Table 4.3: The idiom דָּבַר עַל-לֵב in the ancient versions

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm ⁴⁸
Gen 34:3	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-הַנְּעֹר וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-לֵב הַנְּעֹר	καὶ ἠγάπησεν τὴν παρθένον καὶ ἐλάλησεν κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν τῆς παρθένου αὐτῆς.	ܘܝܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܪܐ ܕܠܝܘܒܐ ܘܕܘܒܐ ܠܝܘܒܐ ܘܕܠܝܘܒܐ.	ורחים ית ריבא ומליל פיוסין על ליבה דריבה
Gen 50:21	וַיְנַחֵם אוֹתָם וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-לִבָּם	καὶ παρεκάλεσεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν.	ܘܕܘܒܐ ܠܘܗܘܢ ܘܕܘܒܐ ܠܘܗܘܢ ܘܕܘܒܐ.	ונחים יתהון ומליל תנחומין על לבהון
Judg 19:3	וַיִּקָּם אִישׁוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרָיָה לְדַבֵּר עַל-לִבָּהּ	καὶ ἀνέστη ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπορεύθη κατόπισθεν αὐτῆς τοῦ λαλῆσαι ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῆς	ܘܡܫܝܢ ܕܠܝܘܒܐ ܘܕܘܒܐ ܠܝܘܒܐ ܘܕܘܒܐ.	וְקָם בְּעֵלָה וְאַזְל בְּתַרְקָא לְמַלְלָא עַל לְבָהּ

⁴⁸ For the Genesis examples, the Targum text is Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as representative of the renderings found in the Pentateuchal Targums. Specific aspects of the renderings of Targum Onqelos and Targum Neofiti are discussed below.

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm ⁴⁸
2 Sam 19:8	וַעֲתָה קוֹם צֵא וְדַבֵּר עַל־לֵב עֶבְדֶּיךָ	καὶ νῦν ἀναστὰς ἔξελθε καὶ ἀλάβησον εἰς τὴν καρδίαν τῶν δούλων σου	מסג מסג מסג מסג מסג מסג	ויכען קום פוק ומליל על לבא דעבדך
Isa 40:2	דַּבְּרוּ עַל־לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם	ἱερεῖς, λαλήσατε εἰς τὴν καρδίαν Ἱερουσαλημ	מלכ לבמ מלכ לבמ	מלו על ליבה דירושלם
Hos 2:16	וְדַבַּרְתִּי עַל־לִבָּהּ	καὶ λαλήσω ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῆς	מלכ לבמ	אמליל תנחומין על לבה
Ruth 2:13	כִּי נַחֲמָתִנִּי וְכִי דַבַּרְתָּ עַל־לֵב שְׂפָתֶיךָ	ὅτι παρεκάλεσάς με καὶ ὅτι ἐλάλησας ἐπὶ καρδίαν τῆς δούλης σου	מלכ לבמ מלכ לבמ	ארום ניחמתני למידכי בקהלא דיי וארום מללתא תנחומין על ליב אמתך
2 Chr 30:22	וַיְדַבֵּר יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ עַל־לֵב כָּל־הַלְוִיִּם	καὶ ἐλάλησεν Εἰζεκιας ἐπὶ πᾶσαν καρδίαν τῶν Λευιτῶν	מלכ לבמ מלכ לבמ	ומליל יחזקיהו על לב כל ליואי
2 Chr 32:6	וַיְדַבֵּר עַל־לִבְכֶם לְאָמֵר	καὶ ἐλάλησεν ἐπὶ καρδίαν αὐτῶν λέγων	מלכ לבמ מלכ לבמ	ומליל תנחומין על לבהון למימר

4.3.7.1 The meaning of the idiom in Biblical Hebrew

Commentators on the passages where the idiom is used rarely examine the phrase in any detail.⁴⁹ They offer a few words of interpretation without explaining their decision, apparently assuming their understanding is self-evident. For example, Tribble (1984: 67) explains, “The words, ‘to speak to the heart,’ connote reassurance, comfort, loyalty, and love.”

Concerning Gen 34, von Rad (1972: 331) does not discuss the exact wording of the Hebrew, but he clearly understands all three of Shechem’s actions in 34:3 — his soul clings to her, he loves her, and he speaks to her heart — as a single expression of Shechem’s affection for Dinah. Von Rad states, “The emphasis on the great love for the girl, which brooks no

⁴⁹ Two studies that analyse the phrase in more detail are Fischer 1984 and Babut 1999: 75–99.

hindrance, receives the benefit of the narrative, and the figure of Shechem is made more human for the reader.” Other commentators on Gen 34 similarly explain the phrase as an indicator of love and affection (Sarna 1989: 234; Wenham 1994: 311; Westermann 1995: 538; Mathews 2005: 593).

When the context in view is Judg 19:3, commentators explain the phrase more in terms of reconciliation and persuasion than affection (Boling 1975: 274; Block 1999: 524; Niditch 2011: 192; Webb 2012: 457). The different senses afforded this phrase in these two contexts illustrates how much the assumed meaning of *דבר על-לב* has been coloured by the narrative framing of the scenes. In Gen 34, the idiom is preceded by two statements unequivocally expressing Shechem’s emotional attachment. These statements have primed interpreters to expect a continuation of this language of love.⁵⁰

By contrast, the text of Judg 19 offers few hints about the Levite’s feelings toward his concubine, though Tribble (1984: 67) thinks that “the Levite’s speaking to the heart of his concubine indicates love for her without specifying guilt.” This conclusion can only arise from a starting assumption that the idiom relates to love. In 19:3, the two statements preceding the use of the idiom relate to his decision to go after her — priming the idea of reconciliation but not a sense of his affection.⁵¹ Indeed, his calloused treatment of the woman later in the narrative (19:25, 28) and his lack of remorse over her death make it difficult to explain the use of this idiom if it is assumed to relate to love and affection.⁵² The idiom is associated with

⁵⁰ The priming effect is an aspect of cognitive association where exposure to a concept influences interpretation to continue within the parameters of the primed idea (see Kahneman 2011: 52–58).

⁵¹ The translation of Judg 19:3 in LXX^A emphasises the aspect of reconciliation, possibly to remove ambiguity over the meaning of the idiom (see Dogniez 2002: 7).

⁵² Commentators tend to make much of the narrative’s ambiguity over how and when the woman died (e.g., Block 1999: 541–42). Had she died at the hands of her attackers or perished later under the Levite’s knife? While the Levite is cold and insensitive toward his concubine, it seems most likely that v. 27 uses

reconciliation in Hos 2:16 and possibly Gen 50:21 and Isa 40:2, but it is not clear that those connotations should be attributed to the meaning of the idiom itself.

In Ruth 2:13, Boaz and Ruth have just met — there is no justification for an expression of love and no need for reconciliation. Ruth’s statement that Boaz had “comforted” (נָחַם) her is parallel to her use of the idiom דָּבַר עַל־לֵב. This parallel also occurs in Gen 50:21 and Isa 40:2 and provides the association of the idiom with the notion of comfort and consolation.

The way context has coloured their readings of a single idiom appears to have escaped most interpreters. The varying and contradictory nuances they apply to the phrase דָּבַר עַל־לֵב just for Gen 34:3 indicate its meaning is anything but transparent or self-evident.

One commentator insists the phrase means “to comfort” but *not* “to woo” (Skinner 1910: 419). Another thinks the expression “indicates his attempt to comfort her ... and perhaps woo her” (Mathews 2005: 593). Yet another explains that the phrase is *not* about Shechem comforting Dinah but about his attempt to persuade her to marry him (Speiser 1964: 264). Still others similarly see the scene as Shechem wooing Dinah, attempting to persuade her to marry him (Hamilton 1995: 355) or “to win her approval so as to make her his wife” (Westermann 1995: 538).

In particular, the “love” language of Gen 34:3 has apparently become so strongly associated with the idiom that interpreters sometimes import that sense into other passages where the idiom occurs, regardless of whether the context fully supports that connotation. In one theological dictionary, the aspect was made a central part of the definition of the idiom. In

נָפְלָה (“fallen”) as a euphemism for death (compare 1 Sam 4:10; Ezek 28:23; 32:27), meaning the woman was dead at the threshold of the house where he found her in the morning (see *NIDOTTE*, s.v. “נָפְלָה”).

the entry for דבר, the phrase is said to be “particularly at home in OT love language, where it characterises the relationship between a man and his wife (Gen. 34:3; Jgs. 19:3; Ruth 2:13).”⁵³ The entry on לב from the same dictionary follows the same line of interpretation for the expression, describing it as “a common idiom for wooing affection” and “the mode of speech used by lovers.”⁵⁴ Similarly, in discussing the meaning of the phrase in Hos 2, Wolff (1974a: 42) asserts it “belongs to the language of courtship,” citing Gen 34:3; Judg 19:3; and Ruth 2:13 as support.

In his detailed study of this phrase, Fischer (1984) demonstrated conclusively that the association of דבר על-לב with “OT love language” should be abandoned. After reviewing the contextual associations from each passage commonly thought to have connotations of love and affection due to this phrase, he concludes, “In keinem einzigen Fall wird דבר על-לב für ein trautes Tête à Tête-Gespräch zwischen zwei Liebenden verwendet” (Fischer 1984: 249).⁵⁵ As noted above, Judg 19:3 never hints at the Levite’s feelings for his concubine. The possibility can only be inferred (inappropriately) from modern preconceptions about the nature of the prototypical relationship between husband and wife. In Ruth 2:13, the context of Ruth’s interaction with Boaz is positive, but her statement that he had “spoken on the heart” comes at the end of her very first conversation with Boaz. They only just met, so it cannot be an expression of Boaz’ love for Ruth.

Fischer (1984: 250) concluded the idiomatic expression described someone attempting to overcome another’s existing negative attitude. In some cases, this act would involve forgiveness

⁵³ *TDOT*, s.v. “דבר,” 98.

⁵⁴ *TDOT*, s.v. “לב,” 417–418.

⁵⁵ Author’s translation: “In no case is דבר על-לב used for a sweet one-one-one conversation between two lovers.”

(either seeking or giving) and reconciliation. Apart from the two uses in 2 Chr, this definition makes good sense in each of the varying contexts where this idiom occurs.

Babut (1999) also had to bracket the occurrences of this BH idiom from 2 Chr when he formulated his own definition because the contextual associations in 2 Chr are so different from the other seven uses of this idiom. Babut (1999: 93) defines **דבר על-לב** as: “(for a person in a superior position) to offer to a partner a (new) positive relationship, to (re)establish a relationship of mutual trust.” His definition draws out the uneven power relationships found in every use of this idiom — that is, the speaker is of a higher social status or wields more power and prestige than those being addressed. That aspect is also found in 2 Chr, but the ideas of overcoming a negative attitude (Fischer 1984) or rebuilding a positive, trusting relationship (Babut 1999) are missing. The absence in 2 Chr of aspects that Babut considers constant and distinctive features of the idiom ultimately leads him to conclude that the expression has ceased to be an idiom at all by the time 2 Chr was written (Babut 1999: 95).⁵⁶

In both uses in 2 Chr, King Hezekiah of Judah is the speaker. In 30:22, he appears to be expressing appreciation to the Levites for their services. In 36:2, he is addressing the people of Jerusalem who are preparing for an imminent siege by the Assyrian king Sennacherib. His speech is intended to encourage them and strengthen their resolve to oppose Sennacherib. It would require a great deal of speculative interpretation to devise a backstory for Hezekiah’s use of this idiom that involved him needing to regain the people’s trust for 32:6 or mend a relationship with the Levites in 30:22.

⁵⁶ See Babut 1999: 89–93 for his discussion of the “constant features” and “distinctive components” of the idiom.

Yet while commentators tend to import the “affection” aspect of this idiom into other contexts, neither emotional appeal nor reconciliation tend to factor into discussions of the idiom in 2 Chr. For 30:22, Myers (1965: 175, 179) translates the idiom as “congratulated,” though he does not discuss the idiomatic wording or explain the reasoning behind his translation. In his comments on 32:6, Myers (1965: 189) emphasises Hezekiah’s effort to exhort and encourage the people, translating the phrase as “spoke directly” (Myers 1965: 186). Instead of addressing the difficulty of the idiom in his textual note to 32:6, he elaborates on his translation, commenting that “spoke directly” meant “specifically and directly, to encourage them” (Myers 1965: 187).

Klein (2012: 461) translates the phrase in 32:6 as “encouraged them,” but he does not discuss the idiom beyond explaining that the Hebrew text reads “literally ‘he spoke to their heart’ (וידבר על לבבם).” However, in 30:22, he translates the phrase as “spoke tenderly” (Klein 2012: 428) and explains its meaning on the basis of Gen 50:21 and Isa 40:2. Those two verses would be inappropriate comparisons in this context if the meaning of the idiom itself requires an element of conflict or underlying tension between the parties, a key element in the definitions of both Fischer and Babut. Instead, Klein has implicitly limited the idiom’s meaning to speaking in a friendly, kind, compassionate, and well-meaning way.

There is an argument to be made that the idiom itself communicates no more than that limited sense and that Fischer, Babut, and others have applied too many aspects from the context of the utterance to their explanations of the idiom’s meaning.⁵⁷ In every case, the

⁵⁷ Babut (1999) is particularly strict in requiring idioms to have an exocentric meaning that is in no way compositional. That is, the meaning of the whole cannot relate in any way to the combined meaning of the constituents of the phrase. In his view, דבר על-לב is used in 2 Chr in a purely endocentric sense with לב given “one of its traditional metaphorical values (location of the will)” (Babut 1999: 95). For further discussion of Babut’s approach to BH idioms, see Section 2.3.5.

connotations of affection, reconciliation, or consolation are communicated first through other statements — often directly as in וַיֶּאֱהָב אֶת־הַנְּעָרָה (“and he loved the girl”; Gen 34:3) or כִּי נִחַמְתָּנִי (“for you have comforted me”; Ruth 2:13) or לְהַשִּׁיבָהּ (“to bring her back”; Judg 19:3). Despite Biblical Hebrew’s penchant for parallel phrasing and repetition, it seems odd to attempt to explain the meaning of an idiomatic phrase by imbuing the idiom with the very meaning that has been clearly communicated by other explicit statements in the context.

Since Fischer’s study, interpreters have not so plainly and explicitly linked the idiomatic phrase to the language of *romantic* love; however, they continue to describe the phrase with emotional overtones of comfort, kindness, and tenderness.⁵⁸ The metaphorical association of the heart with the feelings exerts a strong influence over contemporary readers attempting to make sense of this ancient idiom. However, we must keep in mind that לֵב in BH is used metaphorically for more than just the seat of emotions — the term “functions in all dimensions of human existence and is used as a term for all the aspects of a person: vital, affective, noetic, and voluntative.”⁵⁹ In other words, לֵב can refer to the source of decisions, desires, and thoughts as well as the emotions. The heart can be described in terms of cognition, memory, motivation, contemplation, intention, and decision (Prov 22:17; Eccl 2:22; Isa 46:8; Jer 20:9; Ezek 40:4; 1 Chr 17:2; 2 Chr 9:23). If the BH idiom דָּבַר עַל־לֵב is read with connotations of לֵב as the mind or the will, then the idiom may express speech intended to persuade more than kind, affectionate speech. It is also possible that the psychological and emotional associations with לֵב should all be activated by the idiom, giving it a meaning of kindly speech that is meant to persuade. In his

⁵⁸ e.g., *NIDOTTE*, s.v. “לֵב.” Mathews (2005: 593) comments that Gen 34:3 “displays the affectionate intensity of Shechem’s love by its repetitious and vivid language,” Waltke (2001: 462) speaks of the “three verbs of tender affection” in Gen 34:3, and Webb (2012: 457) says the Levite in Judg 19:3 goes to “speak kindly” to the woman probably because he had wronged her somehow.

⁵⁹ *TDOT*, s.v. “לֵב,” 412.

work on OT anthropology, Wolff (1974b: 52) expands his view of this idiom to encompass both the “language of love” and the language of appeal as an “invitation to decision”:

The common phrase *dibber 'al-l.*, ‘to speak to the heart’, ‘to appeal to the heart’, belongs to the same context. It is in the first place part of the language of love; but it does not mean fine words without any particular aim, but an appeal which is an attempt at a change of will (Hos 2.16f.; Gen 34.3). It can then also mean ‘to appeal to the conscience’ (Judg. 19.3; Gen. 50.21). In any case it is the invitation to a decision; cf. Isa. 40.2; II Chron. 30.22; 32.6. ‘To speak to the heart’ in the Old Testament consequently means: to move someone to decision.

In summary, contemporary biblical interpreters have produced a variety of opinions on the meaning of this BH idiom — opinions often coloured by their understanding of the overall scene in which the phrase is used. Fischer (1984) is undoubtedly right that the connection to “love language” is overstated, but if we can set aside Wolff’s (1974b: 52) insistence that the phrase is first “part of the language of love,” then Wolff’s observation that the phrase means “to move someone to a decision” fits with Fischer’s conclusions and probably gets closest to a definition that can accommodate every usage of the phrase.

4.3.7.2 The translation of the idiom in the ancient Bible versions

If modern interpreters have had so much difficulty determining the meaning of this BH idiom, it is likely that the translators of the ancient versions stayed as close as possible to a word-for-word rendering of the phrase. Therefore, we are unlikely to find a consistent understanding of this BH idiom in the versions. However, if their translations deviate from a calqued representation of the Hebrew phrase, these renderings may offer evidence for refining our understanding of the meaning of the BH idiom.

For the most part, the versions stick with the Type A, word-for-word, strategy for this BH idiom. As noted before, this strategy serves as the simplest default option for translation. Using the default involves less cognitive effort for the translator because the difficult work of interpretation is deferred to the reader. With straightforward idioms like the ones related to age

or greetings, use of an idiomatic substitute was likely just as straightforward for the translator, but with a difficult and opaque expression like דבר על־לב, a calque might seem to offer the best option for providing a rendering of a phrase where the intended meaning is not readily apparent.

1.	Greek calque	λαλέω εἰς / ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν	“speak to/upon the heart”	8	89%
2.	Aramaic calque				
	a. Targum	מִלַּל עַל לֵב	“speak upon the heart”	9	100%
	b. Peshitta	ܟܠ ܟܠܒ	“speak on the heart”	6	67%
3.	Syriac semantic	ܟܠ ܟܠܒ	“speak with”	3	33%
4.	Greek semantic	λαλέω κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν	“speak to the mind”	1	11%

The list above shows that the calque is the predominant rendering in all versions. The exceptions in the Peshitta and the LXX are minimal. The Syriac’s semantic rendering drops the idiom completely, simplifying the expression to someone “speaking with” others. This choice for the Peshitta aligns with the three cases that Babut (1999: 79) lists under the meaning “(for a king) to encourage his people (2 Sam 19:8; 2 Chr 20:32 [*sic*: 30:22]; 32:6).”⁶⁰ In his analysis, Babut (1999: 85) brackets the 2 Chr examples for diachronic reasons, dating their use of the phrase to over two hundred years after the previous dated example of Isa 40:2.⁶¹ The Peshitta’s decision to render the BH expression with the plain “speak with” in 2 Chr could bolster Babut’s conclusion that the phrase had lost its status as an idiom by the writing of Chronicles.

For the Chronicler, דבר על־לב no longer functions as an idiomatic expression as such. Only the form remains, with the charm of the ancient formula, but without any other contents except what can be attributed to it by current linguistic means. Its meaning has once again become endocentric. (Babut 1999: 95)

⁶⁰ The citation of 2 Chr 20:32 is an error for 2 Chr 30:22. The same reference is listed incorrectly again a few pages later as 2 Chr 30:32 (Babut 1999: 83).

⁶¹ The diachronic aspect is one of the weaker parts of Babut’s study. Not only would most of his dates be challenged today (like dating Ruth to c. 800 BCE), but they were open to serious debate at the time he wrote his dissertation. In practice, he divides diachronically primarily by pre-exilic/post-exilic, so setting 2 Chr apart from the others is reasonable. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the issues surrounding diachronic analysis in BH; for a thorough study of that topic, see the essays in Miller-Naudé & Zevit 2012.

Since the BH expression's meaning in 2 Chr does not follow the expected meaning based on the other seven occurrences of the phrase, Babut (ibid.) considers the phrase to no longer be functioning idiomatically. Instead it was used with its endocentric meaning, the meaning apparent from taking the components at face-value. The problem with this conclusion, however, is that לב must still be taken figuratively (though it is common for Babut [1999: 21] and others to claim the metonymic use of "heart" for the person, their thoughts, feelings, etc., has itself been fully lexicalised or conventionalised, turning those metonymic senses into "literal" meanings of the word).

An alternative is to employ the concept of idiomatisation and suggest the cases of 2 Sam 19:8; 2 Chr 30:22; and 2 Chr 32:6 reflect the phrase further along the path to full idiomatisation. In this case, full idiomatisation means the phrase has weakened to a simple statement the equivalent of "speak with another." The Peshitta's translation could point to awareness of that basic meaning, but it could also reflect the translator's uncertainty about the expression. Since he was unsure how לב fit in the context, he omitted the word and translated just דבר על ("speak on/to").

While the statistics show the Targums used the Aramaic calque מלל על לב in every case, on five occasions (or 56% of the time) the Targumist added a word or words to the phrase to colour the meaning of the expression. The most common adaptation is the addition of the plural noun תְּנַחֲמִין ("consolations") as in the rendering of Gen 50:21b in Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan:

(27) Targums of Genesis 50:21b

- TgmO וְנַחֲמִים יְתַהוֹן וּמְלִיל תְּנַחֲמוּמִין עַל לִיבָהוֹן
and he consoled them and spoke consolations to their hearts
- TgmPsJ וְנַחֲמִים יְתַהוֹן וּמְלִיל תְּנַחֲמוּמִין עַל לְבָהוֹן
and he consoled them and spoke consolations to their hearts
- TgmN וְנַחֲמִים יְתַהוֹן וּמְלִיל עַל לְבָבֵיהוֹן מְלִין דְּשָׁלָם
and he consoled them and he spoke to their hearts words of peace

The word תְּנַחֲמוּמִין is also added to the translation of this BH idiom in the Targums for Hos 2:16, Ruth 2:13, and 2 Chr 32:6 as well as appearing as a variant in Targum Onqelos for Gen 34:3. For over half of the occurrences of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible, the Targum makes it explicit that “speaking on the heart” involved words of consolation or comfort. In some cases, the emotional colouring of the passage was already implied from other language in the context like in Gen 34:3; 50:21; and Ruth 2:13, but no other word for love or affection is found with Hos 2:16 or 2 Chr 32:6 (though, again, the overall context gives grounds for inferring that connotation).

For both uses of the expression in Targum Neofiti, the BH idiom is translated directly with “speak with/on the heart,” but the content of the speech is similarly clarified as מְלִין דְּשָׁלָם (“words of peace”). The nuance of the idiom is clarified by the additional words, but they represent an exegetical decision about what the BH expression meant. In this case, “words of peace” likely was meant with the same force as “consolations,” indicating that the speech was meant to be reassuring.

The final variation used in the Targums is found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan’s rendering of Gen 34:3: וּמְלִיל פִּיּוּסִין עַל לִיבָה (“and he spoke comforts upon her heart”). The noun פִּיּוּסִין relates to appeasement, apology, conciliation, persuasion, comfort, and consolation (see

Jastrow, s.v. “פִּיּוּס”).⁶² The interpretation of Pseudo-Jonathan seems to run along the same lines as the other translations of this idiom that made a sense of comfort and consolation explicit, but the term פִּיּוּסִיךָ may have stronger connotations of reconciliation and restoration of a relationship, aligning with interpretations of this idiom discussed above (e.g., Babut 1999: 93; Block 1999: 524; see Section 4.3.7.1).

Turning to the renderings of this idiom in the LXX, in every case except Gen 34:3 the LXX translator used a calque with *καρδία* to translate this BH idiom. According to Dogniez (2002: 7), the expression is “acceptable in Greek,” though it has to be taken figuratively. The metaphorical senses of “heart” as the centre of emotions and thoughts were operative in ancient Greek as they are in many languages. This shared figurative sense makes it difficult to know whether the LXX translators recognised the BH phrase as an idiomatic expression. As we have seen in numerous examples, the default approach to translation in the LXX and other ancient versions was often to translate literally, a tendency that often conceals whether they fully understood their Hebrew source text.

In Gen 34:3, the LXX translator uses *διάνοια*, not *καρδία*, for the “spoke to the heart” idiom. Brayford (2007: 377) notes, “Instead of speaking to ‘the heart of the girl,’ Shechem speaks according to the ‘mind of the virgin,’” but Brayford does not explore what it meant for Shechem to “speak to the mind” of Dinah instead of her heart. The choice of rendering may indicate the translator understood Shechem to be attempting to persuade Dinah to accept his proposal, aligning the idiom with the conclusion above that the expression related to speech intended to persuade (see the final paragraphs of Section 4.3.7.1 above).

⁶² “Appeasement” is the gloss for this term given in CAL. See CAL, s.v. “pyws” [פִּיּוּס] (<http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/>), accessed 30 Dec 2017 19:23:55-0500.

While *διάνοια* is a unique equivalence for לב with this particular BH idiom, the translator of LXX Genesis used *διάνοια* six times and *καρδία* five times as equivalents for לב, showing no particular preference for either term.⁶³ Two of the uses of *διάνοια* in Genesis related to internal speech (discussed above in Section 4.3.6), but a context relating to thoughts and intentions does not appear to be a determining factor in the choice of equivalent. In Gen 6:5, the use of *διάνοια* would have been appropriate to the context, but the translator chose *καρδία*. While *καρδία* is the most common equivalent for לב, the use of *διάνοια* as an equivalent for לב or לבב was not uncommon, occurring thirty-eight times.

Dogniez (2002: 7) sees another hint at the obscurity of this BH idiom for the ancient translators in the rendering of Judg 19:3 in Codex Alexandrinus (LXX^A). The text of LXX^A explicitly raises the issue of reconciliation by adding τοῦ διαλλάξαι αὐτὴν ἑαυτῷ (“to reconcile her to himself”) before the phrase καὶ ἀπαγαγεῖν αὐτὴν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτόν (“to bring her back to him”). Both phrases appear to be translations of the same Hebrew הָרַחֵם (qere). Dogniez (ibid.) calls this a “double translation” provided to clarify “the exact sense of the lexical unity λαλέω ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν.” While this is a possible explanation for the double translation, it is unclear how it elucidates the meaning of the BH idiom since it seems more likely to be an addition to clarify that “bringing her back” meant reconciliation. As noted earlier (see Section 4.3.7.1), the idea of reconciliation arises from the context of Judg 19, not only through the implied meaning of הָרַחֵם but also through the actions of the Levite in the narrative. The double translation is as likely to have been caused by difficulties in the Hebrew textual tradition as it is to have been motivated by uncertainty over the meaning of this idiom in BH.

⁶³ Hatch-Redpath, s.v. “*διάνοια*”; s.v. “*καρδία*.”

We have seen that ancient translators generally opted for a literal rendering for this difficult idiom, but the exceptions to a literal translation indicate they had some awareness of the expression's range of meaning and were not translating literally out of ignorance.

4.3.8 Lift the Face (נשא פנים)

The BH idiom נשא פנים (“lift the face”) is what we might call a “textbook example” of a biblical idiom. I began this chapter with reference to that idiom to introduce BH idioms (see Section 4.2). Similarly, Warren-Rothlin (2013b: 227) mentions it as one of his first examples of BH idioms. More broadly speaking, the verb נשא occurs in a range of idiomatic expressions, so many that Lübbe (2002) focused his study of Old Testament idioms on expressions involving נשא (see Section 2.3.6).

But the BH collocation נשא פנים has an unusually broad range of meaning for an idiom. Van den Heever (2013) classifies this expression under five different contextual semantic domains: affection, compassion, dispute, justice, and respect (Van den Heever 2013: 284, 287, 290, 294, 297). Context heavily colours the connotations associated with the idiom since it can be used for showing inappropriate favouritism as well as for showing appropriate respect. Since idioms are “complex linguistic and conceptual activation networks” (Langlotz 2006: 178), it is probable that this expression activates the idea of being favourably disposed toward another person, but that other contextual clues activate whether the favourable disposition is appropriate or inappropriate. In other words, the BH idiom occupies a semantic domain that includes respect, acceptance, and favouritism, but the framing of the idiom influences whether it is construed positively or negatively.

4.3.8.1 The common renderings of נשא פנים in the ancient versions

The ancient versions show more variability in how they render this idiom, especially with more translations unique to a particular passage. By and large, the idiom is translated with one or two stereotypical equivalents, but the departures from those stereotypical renderings indicate the translators were attempting to capture some of the nuance associated with the idiom from the context. The collocation appears twenty-eight times in the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁴ About sixty percent of the time (and more in the Targums) the expression is translated in a word-for-word fashion, though the verb varies more often than in the more consistent renderings of other idioms surveyed above. Despite the formal use of a word for each word of the source expression, the renderings are not strictly following the Type A strategy. The verb choice often gives the translation the necessary sense of the BH idiom in context, but a noun for “face” is still included in the rendering most of the time (80% in the LXX; 93% in the Peshitta; and 100% in the Targums). The list below gives the most common renderings used by each of the three ancient versions analysed.⁶⁵

1. Greek stereotype 1	λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον	“take the face”	8	29%
2. Greek stereotype 2	θαυμάζω τὸ πρόσωπον	“honour the face”	8	29%
3. Aramaic calque				
a. Targum	נסב אפין	“lift the face”	22	79%
b. Peshitta	נשב כפתי	“lift the face”	16	57%
4. Syriac variant	וסב אפתי	“raise the face”	4	14%
5. Aramaic variant	זקף אפין	“raise the face”	3	11%
6. Aramaic variant 2	סבר אפין	“brighten the face”	3	11%

⁶⁴ In 2 Kgs 9:32, נשא פנים is used in its endocentric sense when Jehu literally “lifts his face” to look up to the window of the tower where Jezebel was.

⁶⁵ The totals do not add up to 100% for the LXX and Peshitta because their remaining renderings occur only once or twice.

4.3.8.2 The idiom **נשא פנים** in the Targums

The Aramaic most often uses a straight cognate phrase (נִסְבַּ אַפִּיךָ) in the Targums and in the Peshitta. As with other BH idioms, the idiomatic sense appears to have been shared by the Aramaic dialects. The most common alternate renderings in Aramaic and Syriac are also direct translations where a different verb meaning “lift up” or “raise” has been substituted. Formally, these renderings are all Type A, but pragmatically the idiomatic meaning likely obtains in Aramaic.

The use of סָבַר on three occasions in the Targums (Lam 4:16; Job 22:8; and Num 6:26 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) appears to reflect a variation of this idiom that developed in rabbinic literature — “show a bright face,” meaning having a favourable attitude toward someone (see Jastrow, s.v. “סָבַר”). This idiomatic phrase has the same general range of usage in rabbinic texts including in legal discussions warning against showing partiality in judgment (e.g., y. Yoma 43b). Its wider usage in rabbinic literature shows that it should be considered an equivalent idiomatic translation or an idiom substitution (Type D).

The translation of Num 6:26 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan merits special mention since the priestly blessing was one of several passages listed in the Mishnah as texts that were not to be translated.

(28) Mishnah Megillah 4:10⁶⁶

The incident of Reuben (Gen 35)

is read but not translated.

The incident of Tamar (Gen 38)

is read and translated.

The first incident of the calf (Exod 32:1–20)

is read and translated

מַעֲשֵׂה רְאוּבֵן

נִקְרָא וְלֹא מְתָרְגֵם

מַעֲשֵׂה תָמָר

נִקְרָא וּמְתָרְגֵם

מַעֲשֵׂה עֵגֶל הָרֵאשׁוֹן

נִקְרָא וּמְתָרְגֵם

⁶⁶ Hebrew text of the Mishnah from Sefaria.org

(https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Megillah.4?lang=he). English translation is my own.

and the second (Exod 32:21–25, 35)
 is read but not translated.
 The blessing of the priests (Num 6)
 the incident of David (2 Sam 11)
 and [that] of Amnon (2 Sam 13)
 are not to be read and not interpreted.

וְהִשְׁנִי
 נִקְרָא וְלֹא מִתְּרַגְּמִים
 בְּרִפְת פְּהָנִים
 מְעֻשָׂה דְדָוִד
 וְאַמְנוֹן
 לֹא נִקְרָאִין וְלֹא מִתְּרַגְּמִין

Similar prohibitions appear in the Tosefta, but the lists are not identical (see t. Meg. 3:31–39). Three of the passages prohibited by the Mishnah depict sexual misbehaviour (Gen 35; 2 Sam 11; 13), but there is no systematic effort to censor stories that recount the sexual misdeeds of Israel’s forefathers since passages that would fall in this category are explicitly mentioned as to be read and translated (e.g., Judg 19; 2 Sam 16; see t. Meg. 3:32–33). The Talmud attempts to explain these inconsistencies by suggesting there are lessons to be learned from some of the stories (see b. Meg. 25b).⁶⁷

The parallel passage in the Tosefta makes no mention of the prohibition against translating the priestly blessing (t. Meg. 3:35–38). Klein (1988: 80–81) believes the priestly blessing was included in the list due to “a compounded error” where the similarity of the formulaic language of other rulings about the public reading of Scripture with the rule about the reading of the blessing led to their being grouped together. The rule about the priestly blessing related to the requirement for the priest “to recite the blessing *by heart*, and not read it

⁶⁷ The most evident inconsistency is the Tosefta’s statement that the story of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam 13) is to be read and translated (t. Meg. 3:32) versus the Mishnah’s grouping of Amnon with the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11) under texts that *are not* to be read or translated (m. Meg. 4:10). The Babylonian Talmud quotes the text of the Mishnah but comments on the lists from both the Tosefta and the Mishnah, leading to the mention of 2 Sam 13 twice, once as approved and once as prohibited. The Talmud is aware of the contradiction and tries to explain it away with: “The one applies when ‘Amnon, son of David,’ is written; the other applies when ‘Amnon’ is written alone” (my translation). The answer is nonsensical since “Amnon” is written alone throughout 2 Sam 13 except for the first reference to him in 13:1.

from a written text” when raising the hands to bless the congregation in the synagogue (Klein 1988: 81; emphasis original).⁶⁸

Regardless of how the injunction against translating the priestly blessing developed, the result is that Targum Neofiti and many manuscripts of Targum Onqelos leave the priestly blessing in Hebrew without an Aramaic translation. For Onqelos, Klein (1988: 90) notes that the manuscript tradition is mixed between texts that translate the blessing and texts that leave it in Hebrew. By contrast, “Pseudo-Jonathan in the manuscript and in the first edition contains *both* the Hebrew and the Aramaic for each of the three verses” (Klein 1988: 90). The Aramaic text in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan for the BH idiomatic expression **נשא פנים** in Num 6:26 is **לך בצלותך יסבר יי סבר אפוי** (“and may YYY shine his countenance on you in your prayers”). As noted earlier, the verb **סבר** appears to be used in an Aramaic idiom with similar meaning. The collocation **סבר אפיין** also seems to have developed into a compound noun with the meaning “countenance.”⁶⁹

4.3.8.3 The idiom **נשא פנים** in the Peshitta

The translators of the Peshitta showed more contextual variation in dealing with this BH idiom. In Isaiah where the BH idiom **נשא פנים** occurs with a passive participle to refer to an honoured or respected person, the Peshitta translator uses the participial adjective **מגוי**, meaning “honourable” (Isa 3:3; 9:14). The Syriac **ܡܘܓܝܐ** (“honoured face”) reflects the meaning of the BH idiom while also retaining a formal connection to the source through the word for “face,” even though the adjective alone conveyed the appropriate sense.

⁶⁸ According to Klein (1988), this line of argument about the interpretation of the blessing derives from a Hebrew article by J. Heinemann.

⁶⁹ See CAL, s.v. “sbr pyn” [סבר אפיין] (<http://call.cn.huc.edu/>), accessed 02 Jan 2018 19:35:36-0500.

In 11:15, the Peshitta reads ܘܕܢܝܘܬܝܢ ܘܕܢܝܘܬܝܢܐ (“and then you will lift your hands”) instead of “lift the face.” Szpek (1991: 234) explains this translation as a case where “a Heb. idiom [is] replaced by a Syr. idiom that bears no semantic relationship to the Heb.” She explains that “to raise the hands” is a Syriac idiom that can mean “to swear,” “to present a blessing,” or “to pray” (ibid.: 234–35). Szpek (1991: 235) considers the rendering an error motivated by the ambiguity of the BH idiom and influenced by the Peshitta’s translation of Job 10:15 where the BH idiom וַיִּשָׂא רֹאשׁ (“raise the head”; meaning to act boldly) is translated with the same Syriac verb and the cognate word for “head” (ܘܕܢܝܘܬܝܢܐ; “raise the head”). However, in context, the last meaning Szpek notes for this idiom in Syriac (“pray”) could make sense in Job 11:15 because it implies a restoration of Job’s relationship with God, something Zophar promises would follow Job’s repentance.

Another example of idiom substitution in the Syriac is evident with the Peshitta’s rendering of this BH idiom in Job 42:8–9. Szpek (1991: 233) describes this as a case where a BH idiom is replaced by a Syriac one that is “contextually more appropriate.” Since the meanings of the idiom וַיִּשָׂא פָּנָיו in Hebrew seem so varied, the Syriac translator chose a target language idiom that conveyed the contextual meaning. In occurrences of this idiom in Job 42, the Peshitta uses the verb ܥܘܣܘܬܝܢܐ (“do, make”) for the idiomatic phrase ܥܘܣܘܬܝܢܐܐܘܬܝܢܐ (“make his face,” meaning “regard” according to Szpek [1991: 234]).

4.3.8.4 The idiom וַיִּשָׂא פָּנָיו in the LXX

Nearly sixty percent of the time, the LXX translators use one of two collocations to represent וַיִּשָׂא פָּנָיו. Dogniez (2002: 11) considers the first — λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον — to be “a literal rendering of the Hebrew expression,” even though λαμβάνω typically means “take” or “receive” (see LSJ, s.v. “λαμβάνω”). While λαμβάνω is used elsewhere in the LXX as an equivalent to

אָפֿן, the fact that the Greek verb itself can have the sense of “accept” or “receive hospitably” suggests this rendering should not be considered a calque (LSJ, s.v. “λαμβάνω, II”; Dogniez 2002: 11). The expression may have been reasonably idiomatic in Greek, especially if πρόσωπον is understood as a metonymy for the person, a sense attested in ancient Greek (see Polybius, *Histories*, 12.27.10; 15.25.25; Thackeray 1909: 43–44; Dogniez 2002: 11).⁷⁰ Since the notion of acceptance could be activated by the Greek verb alone, this common rendering can be taken as an example of the Type C strategy (maintaining the formal translation of “face” when not strictly needed to convey the sense). Malachi 1:8 provides an example of the LXX rendering with λαμβάνω and of the standard rendering for this BH idiom in the Aramaic versions.

(30) Malachi 1:8

MT	אֹהֵי שְׂפָתַי <i>or lift up your face</i>
LXX	εἰ λήμψεται πρόσωπόν σου <i>or take/accept your face</i>
Pesh	ܐܘܟܘܢ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ <i>or lift up your face</i>
TgmJ	אֹהֵי שְׂפָתַי <i>or lift up your face</i>

The other standard translation for this idiom found in the LXX is also a Type C, a compromise between form and meaning. The use of θαυμάζω τὸ πρόσωπον for this BH idiom was discussed briefly early in this chapter to illustrate the various strategies for translating idioms (see Section 4.3.1). Genesis 19:21 was given above as example (2) to demonstrate this strategy and is now repeated here as (31). The Peshitta and Targums all use a variation of the Aramaic calque אָפֿן, already illustrated by (30).

⁷⁰ See LSJ, s.v. “πρόσωπον, IV” for additional examples of the Greek word used with the meaning “person.”

(31) Genesis 19:21

MT הִנֵּה נִשְׂאָתִי פָנָיֶיךָ גַם לְדָבָר הַזֶּה
 Behold, I lifted up your face also on this word

LXX Ἴδὸν ἐθαύμασά σου τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ῥήματι
 Behold, I honoured your face and upon this word

The Greek verb *θαυμάζω* alone is enough to convey the meaning of the Hebrew in this context as noted earlier. With BH body idioms in particular, the LXX often provides an equivalent Greek body part term in the text even as it uses a Greek verb with a range of meaning that encompasses the full contextual meaning of the Hebrew idiom. The explicit mention of the “face” or “hand” or “heart” is redundant in context, but the compromise appears to be regularly preferred to a full idiomatic Greek translation. In some cases, the LXX does translate this BH idiom without regard for form, but those few exceptions to the rule are found in books well-known for reflecting a more literary, free Greek style like Job, Proverbs, and Isaiah (Isa 3:3; Job 13:8; 22:26; 32:21; 42:9; Prov 6:35).

While the LXX uses one of the two stereotypical renderings discussed above eighty percent of the time, the remaining twenty percent consists of eleven unique translations of the idiom. Two of these differ from the standard only by using different Greek verbs that mean “lift up” or “raise up” (Num 6:26; 2 Sam 2:22). In the case of Gen 32:21, the LXX translator has again produced a Type C, hybrid rendering using the verb *προσδέχομαι* (“accept, receive favourably”). As with the standard renderings, the verb alone appears able to convey the meaning — ἴσως γὰρ προσδέξεται τὸ πρόσωπόν μου (“for perhaps he will receive my face favourably”). The verb *προσδέχομαι* is not a typical equivalent for **נָשָׂא**. In fact, it is only used for **נָשָׂא** one other time, in Exod 10:17 (Wevers 1993: 539).

As with the Peshitta, the most significant variant renderings of this idiom are found in the Septuagint of Job.⁷¹ The variation is not surprising as the Greek translation of Job is generally accepted as a “work of good literary quality” and “as among the least literal” translations in the LXX (Cox 2007: 667). In other words, the LXX of Job is more likely to reflect standard Greek usage and not use constructions indebted to underlying Hebrew phrasing.

For the BH idiom **וְשָׂא פָּנָיו**, the translator of LXX Job uses the expected stereotypical Greek renderings only rarely (Job 13:10; 22:8; 42:8), preferring instead to translate the idiom in a different way nearly every time it is used. The idiom is used nine times in Job with two occurrences in the same chapter on three occasions (Job 13:8, 10; 22:8, 26; 42:8, 9). Even in those cases where the idiom is used twice within a few verses, the translator chose a different rendering each time.

With the Greek text of Job, it is necessary to distinguish the Old Greek text from the conflated hexaplaric text because of significant omissions and additions (see Gentry 1995). For example, the single time LXX Job uses the stereotype *λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον* in 42:8, it is not from the translator of the Old Greek but from a later insertion (see Cox 2016: 181–182; compare Ziegler 1982: 409). The Old Greek translator appears to have simply omitted that phrase, perhaps considering it stylistically redundant. In the table below, the BH idiom and its apparent rendering in Greek are underlined, and text marked as hexaplaric in the Göttingen edition is in brackets (Ziegler 1982).

⁷¹ See Section 4.3.8.3 for the examples from the Peshitta of Job. On the Greek versions of Job, see Orinsky 1957; 1958; 1959; Gentry 1995; Kutz 1997; Cook 2011a; Cook 2011b; Cook 2012.

Table 4.4: The idiom פנים נשא in the LXX of Job

	MT	LXX
11:15	כִּי־אֵז תִּשָּׂא פָנֶיךָ מִמּוֹם וְהָיִיתָ מְצַק וְלֹא תִירָא	οὕτως γὰρ ἀναλάμψει σου τὸ πρόσωπον ὡςπερ ὕδωρ καθαρὸν, ἐκδύση δὲ ῥύπον καὶ οὐ μὴ φοβηθῆς
13:8	הַפְּנִי תִשְׂאוּן אִם־לְאֵל תִּרְיֹבון	ἢ ὑποστελείσθε; ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτοὶ κριταὶ γένεσθε.
13:10	הוֹכַח יוֹכִיחַ אֶתְכֶם אִם־בְּפִתְרֵי פָנִים תִּשְׂאוּן	οὐθὲν ἤττον ἐλέγξει ὑμᾶς, εἰ δὲ καὶ κρυφῆ πρόσωπα θαυμάσετε
22:8	וְאִישׁ זְרוּעַ לוֹ הָאָרֶץ וּנְשׂוֹא פָנִים יִשָּׁב בָּהּ	ἐθαύμασας δὲ τινων πρόσωπον, ὥκισας δὲ τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
22:26	כִּי־אֵז עַל־שָׂדֵי תִתְעַנֵּג וּתִשָּׂא אֶל־אֱלֹהֵי פָנֶיךָ	εἶτα παρρησιασθήσῃ ἔναντι κυρίου ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἰλαρῶς
32:21	אֶל־נָא אֲשָׂא פָנַי־אִישׁ וְאֶל־אָדָם לֹא אֶכְנֶה	ἄνθρωπον γὰρ οὐ μὴ αἰσχυθῶ, ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ βροτὸν οὐ μὴ ἐντραπῶ
34:19	אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִשְׂא פָנָי שָׂרִים וְלֹא נִכְרַ־שׁוּעַ לְפָנַי־דָּל כִּי־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כָּלֵם	ὅς οὐκ ἐπησχύνθη πρόσωπον ἐντίμου οὐδὲ οἶδεν τιμὴν θέσθαι ἀδροῖς θαυμασθῆναι πρόσωπα αὐτῶν.
42:8	וְאִיּוֹב עֲבָדֵי יִתְפַּלֵּל עֲלֵיכֶם כִּי אִם־פָּנֶיךָ אֲשָׂא לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת עִמָּכֶם נִבְלָה	Ἰωβ δὲ ὁ θεράπων μου εὖξεται περὶ ὑμῶν, [ὅτι εἰ μὴ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ λήμψομαι,] εἰ μὴ γὰρ δι' αὐτόν, ἀπώλεσα ἂν ὑμᾶς
42:9	וַיִּשָּׂא יְהוָה אֶת־פָּנָי אִיּוֹב	καὶ ἔλυσεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν αὐτοῖς διὰ Ἰωβ.

In Job 11:15, the LXX uses the verb ἀναλάμπω, meaning “shine,” creating an expression similar to the Targum’s סבר אפינן or the BH collocation אור פנים (“shine the face”; e.g., Num 6:25). However, the LXX never uses ἀναλάμπω or λάμπω as an equivalent for BH אור (see Hatch-Redpath, s.v. “ἀναλάμπειν”; s.v. “λάμπειν”). The Greek statement reads “your face will

shine again like pure water” (*NETS*) for the MT’s “you will lift up your face from blemish.”⁷² The Greek rendering captures the sense of restoration of status but without closely following the wording of the Hebrew.

While the use of the stereotype λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον in 42:8 was a later insertion, the translator did use the stereotypical rendering θαυμάζω τὸ πρόσωπον two times — once in Job 13:10 and once in Job 22:8. Both verses seem to be part of the Old Greek text. The translator used a common rendering in those instances but translated rather freely for the other time the same BH idiom is used in the same passages (Job 13:8; 22:26).

In 13:8, the LXX translator used the verb ὑποστέλλω (“draw back, defer”), possibly taking the BH idiom מַשֵׁן פְּנֵי with its forensic meaning of showing favouritism in judgment. If that is the case, the Greek ὑποστέλλω is explicitly giving the meaning of the idiom without retaining any aspects of the form (i.e., the stereotypical use of τὸ πρόσωπον even when it is unnecessary for communicating the sense). In the middle voice, ὑποστέλλω can have the sense of shrinking back before another, having reservations about confronting someone, refraining from speaking out, holding back, or deferring to another (for this sense in classical Greek, see, especially, Dinarchus, *Against Demosthenes* 11; *Against Philocles* 13). It is unlikely that the translator avoided using מַשֵׁן due to the anthropomorphism with reference to God (contra Dhorme 1967: 184). Orlinksy (1959: 159) notes several times where the “face” of God was translated literally

⁷² The translation of מִמּוֹם (“from blemish”) with ὥσπερ ὕδωρ καθαρὸν (“like pure water”) could reflect a textual variant of מִמַּיִם or מִמַּיִם (“like water” or “more than water”), though the possibility does not materially affect the rendering of the BH idiom. Heater (1982: 58) thinks the verb ἀναλάμψει is a corruption of ἀναλήμψεις (a form of ἀναλαμβάνω), but this emendation would create the *only* occurrence of the Old Greek translator of Job using a rendering for this idiom that resembles the stereotype λαμβάνω τὸ πρόσωπον. The verb ἀναλαμβάνω is also never used for this BH idiom elsewhere in the LXX.

in LXX Job and concludes “that our translator had no qualms about reproducing literally the ‘face’ of God any more than His ‘hand’ or ‘arm.’”

The translator departs further from any sort of literal representation of the Hebrew phrasing in LXX Job 22:26, translating פָּנֶיךָ אֶל־לַיְהוָה פָּנִיךָ (“and you will lift up your face to God”) with ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἰλαρῶς (“looking up to heaven cheerfully”). The translator’s addition of ἰλαρῶς may be an attempt to convey some of the connotations of the Hebrew לָנַח (“delight oneself, take pleasure”; *DCH*, s.v. “לָנַח, I”) from the previous phrase that were lost when that verb was translated with παρρησιάζομαι (“speak freely”). However, it is not clear that the translator knew that meaning of לָנַח since when the same Hebrew phrase is used again in Job 27:10, the Greek uses the related noun παρρησία (“outspokenness”) with the verb ἔχω (“have”), but no additional term is added to convey the connotation of delight (compare Orlinksy 1958: 268). The use of a speech verb in Greek is curious since Hebrew lexicons have not traditionally identified any uses of לָנַח with that apparent meaning (see, e.g., *HALOT*, s.v. “לָנַח”; *BDB*, s.v. “לָנַח”). The most recent Hebrew lexicon includes two suggestions that לָנַח could also mean “implore” or “depend on” (see *DCH*, s.v. “לָנַח, II”; “לָנַח, III”), but these suggestions derive from the same set of verses in BH, not any new textual evidence from the additional classical Hebrew literature that *DCH* covers.⁷³

Orlinsky (1958: 268) notes that “the Greek rendering ‘speak freely’ (παρρησιάζομαι) for לָנַח (so also in 27.10) is probably correct,” but he does not explain how the Hebrew word could be thought to mean “speak freely.” He appears to derive the connection from the Hebrew

⁷³ The bibliography associated with לָנַח in *DCH* attributes these suggestions to Robert Gordis for “implore” and GR Driver for “depend on.” Both depend on Arabic cognates and seem to provide a weak basis for a shift in the understanding of this Hebrew root (*DCH*, 6: 894).

parallelism of Job 27:10, but he does not state this explicitly. He simply points to the use of the phrase in 27:10b given in (32) below “as the parallel stich” to the phrase with ענג in 27:10 (ibid.).

(32) Parallel Hebrew phrasing in Job 22:26 and 27:10

	<i>b</i>	<i>a</i>
22:26	וַתִּשָּׂא אֶל־אֱלֹהִים פְּנֵיהָ	כִּי־אָז עַל־שָׁדַי תִּתְעַנֵּג
27:10	יִקְרָא אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־עֵת	אִם־עַל־שָׁדַי יִתְעַנֵּג

In (32), the verbs of each clause are underlined. Orlinsky’s logic seems to be that since ענג is used parallel to קרא (“call aloud”) in 27:10, then the translation of ענג with a speech verb in the Greek of 22:26 is justified. By the same logic, we could argue for giving ענג the connotations of נשא or נשא פנים.

If the translator of LXX Job did not understand the word ענג, he may have added *ἰλαρῶς* as contextually appropriate. Inasmuch as he translates the idiom נשא פנים, he takes it endocentrically. Literally lifting the face to God is the same as looking up to heaven. The use of εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν (“to heaven”) for אֶל־אֱלֹהִים (“to God”) is a clear case of metonymy found also in Job 1:16 as well as other Greek texts (see BDAG, s.v. “οὐρανός”). However, οὐρανός was also part of one of the translator’s favourite expressions — τῆν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν, a phrase added to the Greek text in Job 9:13 and 18:19 (Kutz 1997: 33). The addition of *ἰλαρῶς* in Job 22:26 served to clarify the promised shift in Job’s disposition. He would go from being fearful to look up to God to being relieved and happy to do so.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ I owe this observation to Karl Kutz, personal communication.

In Job 32:21, the BH idiom is represented with the Greek verb *αἰσχύνω* (“dishonour”), shifting the meaning from a statement about Elihu’s resolve not to show favouritism to a boast that he will not allow anyone to dishonour him. Surprisingly, the stereotypical phrase *θαυμάζω τό πρόσωπον* is introduced in 22b as a rendering for כָּנָה (“give honourific name, flatter”). This occurrence further demonstrates that the stereotypical rendering was known to the translator, even though it was not used consistently.

The phrase *θαυμάζω τό πρόσωπον* was also introduced by the translator in 34:19 in the same verse where the BH idiom does occur, but the stereotyped phrase is not used to render the idiom. The idiom is rendered by *ὃς οὐκ ἐπῆσχύνθη πρόσωπον ἐντίμου* (“who is not ashamed at an honoured face”) in 34:19a while the LXX stereotype *θαυμάζω τό πρόσωπον* is used in 34:19c for the Hebrew *כִּי מֵעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כָּלֵם* (“for the work of his hands all of them”). The choice to use the stereotyped rendering was likely meant to continue the topic established in 34:19a about showing proper respect. While the Hebrew of 34:19c serves as rationale for showing proper respect, the Greek just reiterates the same notion a third time.

The final use of this BH idiom in Job also reveals the translator’s habit of clarifying the underlying meaning of the text instead of using a word-for-word translation. The statement in Job 42:9 is transformed from the BH idiom about YHWH lifting Job’s face (meaning he accepted Job’s intercession on behalf of his friends) into a statement that God *forgave their sins* because of Job (*καὶ ἔλυσεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν αὐτοῖς διὰ Ἰωβ*). Cook (2012: 206) notes that the “Hebrew has no reference to ‘sin’ and the preposition *διὰ* expresses ‘instrument’.” The effect is that Job’s role as intercessor is made “more prominent in the Greek” (ibid.). The translator has made subtle adjustments in 42:8–9 that draw attention to Job’s role (see Cox 2016: 181; 185). In Hebrew, God commands the friends to offer sacrifices for themselves while Job prays for

them (42:8). In Greek, the friends are commanded to bring the sacrificial animals so that Job can make the offerings and pray for them. The use of the word *θεράπων* (“attendant”) for Hebrew’s *עֶבֶד* (“slave, servant”) instead of *δοῦλος* or *παῖς* to describe Job may also hint at Job’s role since the Greek *θεράπων* “is a word that denotes a person of higher status than either *δοῦλος* or *παῖς*” (Cox 2016: 185).

Another surprising change is that in Hebrew Job’s friends are accused of not speaking rightly about God himself, but in the Greek account the friends are chastised for speaking against Job (42:8). While this difference is a text-critical problem since some Hebrew manuscripts read *בַּעֲבֹדֵי אִיּוֹב* instead of *כַּעֲבֹדֵי אִיּוֹב*, Cox (2016: 185–186) suggests the translator was influenced in this rendering by the Greek of Job 1:8 — *κατὰ τοῦ παιδός μου Ἰωβ* (“against my servant Iob”).

All of these minor shifts from the Hebrew source combine to show the greater emphasis in the Greek text on the role of Job himself in this intercession. By turning the statement about accepting Job’s prayer into a declaration that God forgave their sins, the translator is communicating the meaning implied by the Hebrew that God’s acceptance of Job marked his forgiveness of the friends.

4.4 Conclusion

The translators of the ancient versions were perfectly capable of identifying Hebrew idioms and translating them with target language idioms if they so desired. However, their default approach was to translate word-for-word. Some word-for-word renderings had little meaning in the target language, like the Septuagint renderings of *מִלֵּא אֶת-יָד* (see Section 4.3.3), but others were idiomatic in the target language as well, especially where word-for-word renderings into

Aramaic or Syriac were involved, as with the expression **שאל לשלום**, which was also shown to be idiomatic in Aramaic (see Section 4.3.2).

The most interesting tendency in the Septuagint was toward using stereotypical renderings that mixed form and meaning; with body idioms, for instance, the Septuagint very often includes an equivalent body part term even when the meaning of the idiom is covered by the semantics of the verb used in the phrase, as in the stereotypical Greek renderings for **נשא פניו** (see Section 4.3.8). Rarely did the ancient versions simply give the global meaning of an idiom in plain language; those rare occasions show the translators were at least aware of a strategy commonly advocated today for translating figurative language (one example is the use of a Greek verb meaning “greet” for the BH greeting idiom in Exod 18:7). On occasion, the versions substituted a different target language idiom, as with the Peshitta’s approach to **נשא פניו** in Job 11:15 and 42:8–9 (see Section 4.3.8).

With the most obscure and opaque idioms such as **דבר על־לב** (see Section 4.3.7), the translators tended to play it safe with a word-for-word rendering, but there may be evidence that they dropped aspects of the idiom that they felt would not be meaningful for their audience, as with the Peshitta of 2 Chr with the idiom **דבר על־לב** (see Section 4.3.7.2). Overall, we see that the ancient translators were capable of more interpretive renderings that reoriented BH idiomatic phrases toward the expectations of the audience of the translation.

CHAPTER 5: CONSTRUAL OF BIBLICAL HEBREW EUPHEMISMS IN THE ANCIENT VERSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of biblical figures of speech that relate to topics generally associated with the use of euphemism. Euphemisms are especially common for the same types of taboo topics, regardless of language or culture (see Section 3.4.4). Taboos are social norms placing constraints on behaviour, often with reference to religion or morality. For example, taboos may be associated with sacred space, such as the restrictions in biblical law over who was permitted to enter the tabernacle (Num 1:51; 18:22). Taboos also proscribed sexual immorality (Lev 18). Linguistic taboos relate to words or phrases that should be avoided in polite discourse because of their association with taboo topics like the sacred, death, disease, sexuality, or body parts and bodily processes associated with excretion or sexuality.

Biblical Hebrew euphemisms also cluster around these same topics, but a figure of speech used as a body-part term may not necessarily be euphemistic. Euphemism is a pragmatic category that depends on the language user's definition of the situation and their construal of an expression as designed to conceal a taboo subject. Words that may have once been euphemisms for taboo subjects (or explicit taboo words themselves), eventually come to be lexicalised as *meaning* the very thing they were used to conceal. A classic example is found in Cicero's complaint over the use of obscene language in his day:

The ancients called a tail a penis; whence comes the word *penicillus* ("paint-brush"), from its similarity in appearance. Nowadays penis is regarded as an obscene word.¹

¹ Translation from Shuckburgh 1908–1909: 4:294. The Latin reads: "caudam antiqui 'penem' vocabant, ex quo est propter similitudinem 'penicillus; at hodie 'penis' est in obscenis."

And today, “penis” is the neutral English term for the male organ, though its use is only acceptable in certain contexts. The same change over time in acceptability norms for the subject matter covered by euphemisms would have affected the writers of the Hebrew Bible, since it was composed over hundreds of years by all accounts, as well as later scribes and translators confronted with a text that might be openly discussing subjects that were no longer considered acceptable for public discourse. The shifting strategies for addressing potentially taboo topics in discourse are the focus of the following analysis.

In this chapter, I briefly survey the topic of euphemism and dysphemism in BH before moving into a detailed analysis of how BH figures of speech related to the taboos of speaking about God, referring to death, labelling the parts of the body, naming bodily functions, and describing sexual activity were rendered in the ancient versions.

5.2 Euphemisms and Dysphemisms in Biblical Hebrew

Biblical Hebrew has its fair share of euphemisms and dysphemisms, though both are not always recognised as such.² Despite the ubiquity of euphemism and dysphemism in language usage, both spoken and written, few sustained treatments of the euphemisms and dysphemisms used in BH have been conducted.³

Euphemisms in BH range from conventional substitutions that have become commonplace (like the avoidance of specific verbs for sexual activity by substituting verbs like **לָקַח** or **שָׁכַב**) to creative wordplays that let a suggestive double entendre stand (like much of the

² On euphemisms in BH, see Opelt 1966; Ullendorff 1979; Pope 1992; Schorch 2000; Paul 2007; Noegel 2013; Warren-Rothlin 2013a. Both Pope and Noegel are fairly liberal in their identifications of euphemisms and include disputable examples. See Sections 2.2 and 2.3 for further discussion.

³ Schorch (2000) is the only book-length study known to me (see Section 2.2.8). Most other discussions of BH euphemisms are found in dictionary or encyclopaedia articles such as Opelt 1966; Pope 1992; Paul 2007; Noegel 2013; and Warren-Rothlin 2013a.

imagery of Song of Songs; compare the use of גַּן [“garden”] in Songs 4).⁴ Unfortunately, as is the case with much figurative language, these euphemisms generally get lost in translation, so readers of the Hebrew Bible in any translation — ancient or modern — may pass over euphemistic statements unaware of the writer’s probable (or at least possible) meaning.

The problem of identification is often greater for euphemism than dysphemism because euphemism is intended to conceal meaning while dysphemism tends toward explicit violation of linguistic propriety. However, the categories blur in actual usage, producing the blended categories of “euphemistic dysphemism” and “dysphemistic euphemism” defined earlier (see Section 3.4.4). The category of dysphemistic euphemism is hard to identify, and potential examples are open to question whether they are simply euphemisms using more overtly negative imagery. Perhaps in this category is the use of the BH phrase מִן־שִׁתֵּי בְּקִיר (“one who urinates against a wall”; 1 Sam 25:22) as a substitute for “male.” In this chapter, I use the label “euphemism” generically for this category of figurative usage that includes euphemism, dysphemism, euphemistic dysphemism, and dysphemistic euphemism.⁵

Language users tend to produce euphemisms following the same basic strategies, regardless of language or culture. The primary strategy is substitution — replacing a dispreferred word or expression with a more acceptable word or expression. For example, the biblical writers typically used a verb like יָדַע (“know”) or שָׁכַב (“lay”) instead of an explicit verb for sexual intercourse (see Gen 4:1; 39:7). On the few occasions where biblical writers

⁴ On the sexual overtones of “garden” imagery in the ancient Near East, see Paul 2005: 271–284.

⁵ Allan and Burridge (1991) use X-phemism to designate the overall category.

used the Hebrew verb שגל (“ravish, rape”), the Masoretes called for euphemistic substitution by marking שכב as the verb which should be read aloud.⁶

Substitutions are often metonymies; a related word within the same conceptual domain is substituted for a word the speaker or writer wishes to avoid.⁷ All euphemisms are technically substitutions of some sort, but languages also use borrowing, semantic remodelling, metaphor, wordplay, circumlocution, and generalisation to produce euphemisms.⁸ English, for example, borrows from Latin to sanitise sensitive subjects (e.g., words like coitus, vulva, labia, and phallus). Biblical Hebrew euphemisms, however, tend to be classifiable as substitution by metaphor, metonymy, antiphrasis, and periphrasis (i.e., circumlocution).⁹ The use of ברך (“bless”) with the meaning “curse” is probably the clearest example of antiphrasis in BH (see Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9).

⁶ The Kethiv of the Masoretic Text has שגל four times—Deut 28:30; Isa 13:16; Jer 3:2; Zech 14:2. In each case, the Qere indicates that the corresponding form of שכב is to be read. The context in those four uses supports the common understanding that שגל was a vulgar term for sexual intercourse (see *NIDOTTE*, s.v. “שגל”; *DCH*, s.v. “שגל”; *HALOT*, s.v. “שגל”). The substitution of שכב for שגל in the margin each time suggests that at some point the Masoretes came to consider the term obscene, and the substitution is often offered as an example of scribal use of euphemism (e.g., Paul 2007; Noegel 2013). However, it is also possible that the Qere preserves an alternative textual tradition known to the scribe, not the scribe’s preferred substitution. If there was an alternative textual tradition reading שכב in the main text, it raises the question of whether שגל had been used more often by some biblical writers before scribes later substituted שכב for most of the instances. The Great Isaiah Scroll may reflect a tradition where שכב was in the main text of Isa 13:16. While the first part of the word is obscured, the third letter from the end is unmistakably a ב, not a ל (1QIsa^a, col. XI). The relationship of the verb to the noun שגל (“queen”) is unclear (Ps 45:10; Neh 2:6; compare Dan 5:2, 3, 23). While the noun and verb likely do not share an etymology, the meanings came to be conflated in the Talmud with the noun taking on the negative connotations of the verb (see b. Rosh Hash. 4a; b. Sanh. 95b).

⁷ On the exegetical importance of recognising metonymy, see Chau 2014. The example of שכב could be understood as a PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy (part of the activity stands for the whole) or a GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymy (a general activity stands for the implicit specific activity).

⁸ On the strategies languages use to produce euphemisms, see Allan & Burridge 1991: 14–20; Neaman & Silver 1983: 9–11.

⁹ Zevit (2011: 396) states, “Israelite authors preferred euphemisms and circumlocutions most of which are transparent.” Of course, circumlocution is itself a type of euphemism. I believe he overstates the transparency of the euphemisms in Biblical Hebrew for readers less familiar with biblical idiom.

Common BH euphemisms include expressions to avoid direct reference to death like *וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ* (“and he was gathered to his people”; Gen 25:8) or sexual intercourse like *לְגַלוֹת עָרוֹהָ* (“to uncover nakedness”; Lev 18:6–18), circumlocutions for passing bodily waste like *לְהִסְדֵּף אֶת-רַגְלָיו* (“to cover his feet”; i.e., defecate [1 Sam 24:4]), or substitutions for the words for bodily waste products like *מַיִם רַגְלֵיהֶם* (“water of their feet”; i.e., urine [*Qere*: 2 Kgs 18:27]). Everyday words for parts of the body like *רֶגֶל* (“foot”) or *יָרֵךְ* (“thigh”) may also denote the private parts of the body (i.e., genitalia; see Gen 24:2; Deut 28:57; Isa 7:20).

The category of dysphemism in BH is largely evident in the disparaging labels used to refer to deities other than YHWH or the idols representing those deities, or the practices associated with their worship. For example, the Hebrew word *תועבה*, commonly translated “abomination,” is used to label a variety of detestable religious practices (Lev 18:26–30; Deut 7:25–26; 12:31; 1 Kgs 14:24). Likewise, the term *שֶׁקֶץ* (“detested thing, abomination”), also spelled *שֶׁקוֹץ*, was used synonymously with *תועבה* for idolatrous practices. The dysphemistic use of *תועבה* and *שֶׁקֶץ* is especially clear in 2 Kgs 23:13:

The king defiled the high places ... that Solomon king of Israel built
for Ashtoreth the abomination (*שֶׁקֶץ*) of the Sidonians and
for Chemosh the abomination (*שֶׁקֶץ*) of Moab and
for Molech the abomination (*תועבה*) of the Ammonites.

Instead of objectively reporting that Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech were the “gods” of the nearby nations, the writer labels them abominations. Surprisingly, a similar passage does straightforwardly label Ashtoreth as *אֱלֹהֵי צִדְוֹנִים* (“god(s) of the Sidonians”), but other foreign deities are still called “abominations” there (1 Kgs 11:5–7). With Ashtoreth and Molech, the very names of the deities appear to be dysphemistic with Ashtoreth a corruption of Astarte and

Molech possibly a corruption of Milcom.¹⁰ The common explanation for these corruptions is that the vowels of the word בִּשְׁתָּ (bosheth; “shame”) were applied to vocalise the word in a derogatory way much like names with a בַּעַל (ba‘al; “lord”) theophoric element were remodelled with בִּשְׁתָּ such as with the use of Ishbosheth for Eshbaal in 2 Sam (compare 1 Chr 8:33 and 2 Sam 2:8; see Pope 1992: 725). This use of בִּשְׁתָּ was also dysphemistic and motivated by polemics against worship of the Canaanite deity Baal (Tov 2012: 247–248). Since this latter change is found primarily in proper names, the translation of the name in the versions does not generally provide any indication of whether the translator understood its dysphemistic meaning (e.g., LXX at 2 Sam 2:8 just transliterates with Ιεβοσθε).

Idols are also regularly referred to as גִּלּוּלִים, a noun likely derived from the root גלל (“roll”) and related to nouns meaning “dung.” Pope (1992: 725) suggests the most appropriate English rendering for גִּלּוּלִים is “turds,” though his claim for a similar etymological background for English “turd” is fanciful. The use of גִּלּוּלִים in BH is always dysphemistic, and the word seems certainly to have been coined by vocalising the word גִּלְגָּל (“dung”; 1 Kgs 14:10) with the vowels of אֲשֶׁרֶץ (“abomination”). The use of dysphemism for idolatrous practices is not always evident in English translations, especially with a term like גִּלּוּלִים, because the insulting terms are often translated with somewhat neutral equivalents like “idols.” These dysphemisms also tend to be translated straightforwardly in the ancient versions either with neutral terms simply meaning “idols” or with terms from the same semantic domain of disgust and abhorrence.

¹⁰ With Molech, the derivation of his name and his association with Milcom are more uncertain (see Heider 1999: 581–582; Puech 1999: 575–576).

With euphemistic expressions in the Hebrew Bible, it is notoriously difficult to determine at what point in the textual transmission the substitution was made. As noted above, the substitutions for שגל found in the Qere suggest that later scribes were responsible for adding euphemisms to the reading tradition. Further, the textual traditions known as the *tiqqunê soferim* (“corrections of the scribes”) explicitly attribute changes to the text of Scripture to later scribes who were uncomfortable with anthropomorphic, blasphemous, or indelicate expressions used in relation to YHWH (see Ginsburg 1897: 347–363). These traditions are recorded in rabbinic literature in a number of places, and they list varying numbers of passages from seven to seventeen.¹¹ While these scribal corrections are sometimes described as euphemisms, they are not euphemisms in the same sense as the words and expressions described above. The scribal changes typically reflect minor orthographic alterations designed solely to make the text say something other than what it originally said, regardless of whether the correction makes sense. Of the examples surveyed by Ginsburg (1897: 352–362), over half consist of the change of a suffix from a first or second person suffix referring to YHWH to a first, second, or third person suffix referring to someone else. Thus, several times the text seems to have been changed from כבודי (“my glory”) to כבודו (“his glory”; Jer 2:11) or כבודם (“their glory”; Hos 4:7). This type of alteration is not a euphemism per se, but it was motivated by the same sort of taboos that lead language users to develop euphemisms. Specifically, these scribal corrections were motivated by fear and reverence for the sacred; the scribes were uncomfortable with transmitting a text that spoke directly in a derogatory fashion about God, even if the text itself was condemning such behaviour.

¹¹ Several midrashic texts include these lists in their comments to Exod 15:7 (e.g., Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Yalkut Shimeoni, and Midrash Tanhuma). See Tov 2012: 59–61.

Tov (2012: 60) is not convinced these necessarily reflect “real corrections” made by the scribes themselves as they copied the consonantal text because of the minimal nature of the alterations — i.e., the already-noted change of a letter or two to manipulate the pronominal suffix. Tov (2012: 61) states, “If the corrections had represented real changes in the text, it is hard to believe that the correctors would have limited themselves to such small details.” In other words, the scribes copying the Hebrew consonantal text could have made even more significant changes if the content of the text troubled them. Since that did not happen, it is more likely the “corrections of the scribes” reflect much later exegetical interference at a time when the skeletal structure of the consonantal text was fixed to the point that more involved rewritings of the content were impossible. In some cases, Tov (2012: 61) finds it highly unlikely that the original Hebrew text ever actually reflected the “original” reading attributed by the Masoretic lists.

Due to the textual difficulties associated with the *tiqqunê soferim* passages, they are not good candidates for translation analysis. Differences among versions likely indicate significant textual variants, not decisions made independently by the translators. However, the existence of the phenomenon reveals that it is possible some of the euphemistic phrasing in the Hebrew text itself is the product of a later redactor, not the biblical writer. This possibility is relevant for euphemistic substitutions like the use of בִּרְךְ (“bless”) for קִלְל (“curse”) in passages like 1 Kgs 21:10, 13. While it is generally assumed that later scribes made this change, it is possible that the biblical writers originally wrote the antiphrastic euphemism (so Yaron, see Parry 2003: 369n12). Tov’s (2012: 61) observation that it is surprising the scribes did not intervene more significantly in their so-called “corrections” is relevant here because if the euphemistic substitution of בִּרְךְ was a scribal alteration, it reflects just such a more intensive textual alteration. The minimal nature of the changes in the lists of *tiqqunê soferim* suggests the antiphrastic substitutions either date to an earlier period of scribal activity or they are the

phrasings of the biblical writers. The implication for the present study is that the euphemistic expressions found in the Hebrew Bible are considered to be part of the likely source text the translators of the ancient versions worked from unless there is compelling textual evidence to reconsider whether the version reflects a different *Vorlage*. Such evidence would consist of the inclusion of a passage among the *tiqqunê soferim*, serious grammatical problems, or widely varying textual traditions. For the most part, the euphemistic expressions analysed are phrases that occur multiple times in similar discourse contexts.

5.3 Biblical Hebrew Euphemisms in the Ancient Versions

This section covers how representative examples of BH euphemistic figures of speech were rendered in the ancient Bible versions.¹² With the idiomatic expressions analysed in Chapter 4, their multi-word, stereotyped character aided in their identification. With BH euphemisms, many examples can be found that consist only of single word substitutions. The euphemistic use of a single word is difficult to analyse in the ancient versions due to their predominant tendency toward imitative, word-for-word translation. Some single-word euphemisms like עֲרֵב occur a number of times in a euphemistic sense, but the meaning is generally evident from context. In other cases, a euphemistic expression is used once or twice, making it impossible to know whether the phrase was an idiomatic euphemism with common currency or a unique case of metaphor or metonymy created by the writer.

Due to the ambiguities of identification, this analysis is limited to a selection of terms broadly accepted as commonly-used BH euphemisms with a preference toward multi-word, idiomatic expressions with euphemistic function. As much as possible, representative examples

¹² The 130-page length of Schorch's lexicon of BH euphemisms shows why an analysis of *representative* examples is necessary (Schorch 2000: 85–214). Further, limiting the selection to more widely used and accepted BH euphemisms makes it more likely that the examples were ones recognised by the translators as euphemisms.

are included from the full range of taboo topics used for euphemism and dysphemism — body parts and bodily processes, sexuality, death, and the sacred. The examples are again analysed according to the four strategies for translating idioms and euphemisms introduced in Section 3.6.2.

5.3.1 Speaking of the Sacred

As discussed above in Section 5.2, the primary concern with the “corrections of the scribes” related to avoiding language that was irreverent or blasphemous. Allan and Burrige (1991: 37) explain that “taboos on the names of gods seek to avoid metaphysical malevolence by counteracting possible blasphemies (even, perhaps, profanities) that arouse their terrible wrath.” Biblical euphemisms related to speaking against God should probably be understood against this anthropological background as a fear-based taboo, meaning the euphemism originated from fear that actually speaking badly about a god would draw the god’s wrath on oneself. The power of such a taboo changes over time, so while the Hebrew scribes may have altered the text to avoid irreverent references to God, later translators may have not felt as strongly against transmitting a text that stated directly that someone cursed God.

In the Hebrew Bible, the most well-known example of euphemistic avoidance of blasphemy is the use of בָּרַךְ (“bless”) with the meaning of “curse” (apparently as a substitution for קָלַל, “curse”). This euphemistic substitution occurs six times but in only two different literary contexts (1 Kgs 21:10, 13; Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9). It is an example of antiphrasis or using a term to mean the opposite of its typical sense.

Table 5.1: The Biblical Hebrew antiphrastic use of בָּרַךְ in the ancient versions

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm
1 Kgs 21:10	בָּרַכְתָּ אֱלֹהִים וּמַלְאֲכָיְךָ	Ἐὐλόγησεν θεὸν καὶ βασιλέα	ܢܝܫܘܢ ܢܒܫܘܬܐ ܠܠܗܘܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ	גְּדִיפְתָא קְדָם יוּי וּמַלְכָא
1 Kgs 21:13	בָּרַךְ נְבוֹת אֱלֹהִים וּמַלְאֲכָיְךָ	Ἐὐλόγησας θεὸν καὶ βασιλέα	ܢܝܫܘܢ ܢܒܫܘܬܐ ܠܠܗܘܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ	גְּדִיף נְבוֹת קְדָם יוּי וּמַלְכָא
Job 1:5	אוֹלֵי חָטְאוֹ בְּנֵי וַיְבָרְכוּ אֱלֹהִים בְּלִבְבָם	Μήποτε οἱ υἱοὶ μου ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ αὐτῶν κακὰ ἐνενόησαν πρὸς θεόν	ܘܠܟܐ ܫܘܒܐ ܗܝ ܠܠܗܘܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ	דִּילמָא חבוֹן בְּנֵי וְאַרְגִּיזוּ קְדָם אֱלֹהָא בְּרַעֲיִנְהוֹן
Job 1:11	אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ	εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογῆσει	ܠܠܗܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܠܝܫܘܒܐ	אִין לֹא בִּאֲנַפִּי מִיִּמְרַךְ יִרְגֹזְנֶךָ
Job 2:5	אִם־לֹא אֶל־פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ	εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογῆσει	ܠܠܗܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܠܝܫܘܒܐ	אִין לֹא בִּאֲנַפִּי מִיִּמְרַךְ יִרְגֹזְנֶךָ
Job 2:9	בָּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים וּמַת	ἀλλὰ εἶπὸν τι ῥῆμα εἰς κύριον καὶ τελεύτα	ܠܠܗܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܕܡܘܬܐ	בְּרִיךְ מִיִּמְרָא דִּי וּמִית

The translations of Job 1:11 in the ancient versions reflect typical renderings of this expression. The Greek uses a verb that also means “bless,” but the Aramaic versions are surprisingly less euphemistic.

(33) Job 1:11

- MT אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ
surely he will bless you to your face
- LXX εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογῆσει
surely he will bless you to your face
- Pesh ܠܠܗܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܠܝܫܘܒܐ
but he will curse in your face
- Tgm אִין לֹא בִּאֲנַפִּי מִיִּמְרַךְ יִרְגֹזְנֶךָ
surely he will provoke anger in the face of your Memra

The Peshitta uses a Syriac verb (ܠܝܫܘܒܐ) in the *pael* with the straight meaning of “curse, revile” on all six occasions where בָּרַךְ is used antiphrastically in the Hebrew Bible (see Table

5.1 above). The Targums are less consistent, but they, too, tend to use verbs that convey the negative connotations directly. For the two uses in 1 Kgs 21, the Targum uses the verb ܦܓܘܠ, a word whose usual meaning in the *paal* is “revile” or “blaspheme.”¹³ On these occasions, both the Peshitta and the Targum were unconcerned about using more direct language than the Hebrew, translating the meaning directly (a Type B rendering).

Three times in Job the Targum uses the *aphel* of ܪܓܝ (“make angry”). In Northwest Semitic languages, this verb denotes trembling or shaking, an action which is typically metaphorically extended to convey the notion of emotions causing agitation, disquiet, excitement, or anger (see BDB, s.v. “ܪܓܝ”). Elsewhere in the Targums, the verb is used in connection with blasphemy such as in Lev 24:11 in Targum Onqelos where it is used to translate the Hebrew’s קלל (“curse”). While Mangan (1991: 24–26) translates ܪܓܝ as “blaspheme” in Job 1–2, she notes the verb literally means “make angry before” or “irritate” (Mangan 1991: 24n12). It seems reasonable to conclude that ܪܓܝ came to function euphemistically in the Targums as a substitution for directly stating someone cursed God or committed blasphemy. The substitution is still a term with negative connotations (i.e., making God angry), unlike the Hebrew use of antiphrasis.

Strangely, in the fourth use of ܒܪܚ in Job 2:9, the Targum uses the cognate Aramaic verb ܒܪܚ (“bless”). This equivalence would normally be unremarkable for the Targum since cognate terms are commonly used to render their BH counterparts. In this case, the usage is unusual because the Targums elsewhere do not use the cognate to render the BH euphemistic use of the verb, and the root ܒܪܚ is only rarely used as a euphemism for blasphemy in rabbinic literature

¹³ See CAL, s.v. “gdp [ܦܓܘܠ]” (<http://cal.huc.edu/oneentry.php?lemma=gdp+V&cits=all>; accessed 13 Jan 2018 16:06:59 -0500); Jastrow, s.v. “ܦܓܘܠ.” Compare the use of ܦܓܘܠ in BH at Num 15:30.

(e.g., b. Sanh. 56A), indicating the antiphrastic use was not productive in later Hebrew or Aramaic literature. Why would the targumist resort to antiphrasis after translating the verb more negatively on the previous three uses in the immediate context? Distancing Job’s wife from an overt suggestion that Job should curse God is the most likely option, but if the concern was keeping that strong language from the lips of a member of Job’s family, then it is odd that the first use in Job 1:5 is not also antiphrastic since Job is the speaker there. With the other two uses of ללך, the speaker is “the accuser” (שׂטָן; i.e., Satan). Similarly, both statements in 1 Kgs 21 are uttered by impious, wicked people. On the other hand, Job’s statement is a hypothetical musing on the behaviour of others (that perhaps his children sinned) accompanied by a pious act (offering sacrifices). The statement of Job’s wife, however, is a direct command — a *paël* imperative — to commit blasphemy and incur divine judgment. Since Jewish tradition identifies Job’s wife as Dinah, daughter of Jacob, the targumist was likely balking at placing such blasphemous talk in the mouth of the patriarch’s daughter (compare Kutz 1997: 227).¹⁴

For four of the six occurrences of this BH euphemism, the LXX uses εὐλογέω, meaning “bless.” This sort of lexical equivalence is typical in the Greek renderings of BH idiomatic expressions (see Chapter 4). The Greek rendering of Job 1:11 reflects the usual default strategy in the LXX to represent nearly every element of the Hebrew text with a corresponding element in Greek:

εἰ	=	אִם
μὴν	=	לֹא
εἰς	=	עַל-
πρόσωπόν σε	=	פְּנֵי
εὐλογήσει	=	יְבָרֵךְ

¹⁴ Most manuscripts of Targum Job include “Dinah” as the name of Job’s wife in Job 2:9. She is also said to have married Job in rabbinic literature (see Genesis Rabbah 57:4; b. B. Bat. 15B). The Talmudic passage records many, conflicting, speculative opinions about Job’s historical setting (see Ginzberg 2003: 308, 451, 451n3).

The only departures from this sort of a literal rendering of the BH phrasing are found in Job 1:5 and 2:9. The speech of Job’s wife is greatly expanded in Greek in 2:9, but the expansion provides no apparent motivation for the way the euphemistic expression was translated. Similarly, in Job 1:5, there is no immediately apparent reason for the LXX translator to not have translated literally as in Job 1:11 and Job 2:5. All four uses of the euphemism also appear to have been part of the Old Greek text, indicating that the different ways of rendering it are not the work of later insertions to the text (see Kutz 1997: 11–12).

(34) Job 1:5

MT אִלְיָ הִטָּאוּ בְנֵי וַבְּרַכּוּ אֱלֹהִים בְּלִבָּם
perhaps my sons have sinned and blessed God in their hearts

LXX Μήποτε οἱ υἱοί μου ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ αὐτῶν κακά ἐνενόησαν πρὸς θεόν.
perhaps my sons have thought bad things toward God in their mind.

In Hebrew, Job’s statement includes two verbs: הִטָּאוּ (“they sinned”) and וַבְּרַכּוּ (“and they blessed”). The Greek translator combines the two into one verbal action: *κακά ἐνενόησαν* (“they thought bad things”). We have already seen the use of *διάνοια* (“mind”) as an equivalent for לֵב (“heart”) as in Job 1:5 (see Sections 4.3.6 and 4.3.7). The Greek translators were often attuned to when לֵב was used metaphorically for thinking and rendered it with *διάνοια*. In this verse, the Targum of Job also translated with “in their thoughts” (ברעיניהון) instead of “in their hearts” (בליבהון), a Type B rendering giving the meaning of the BH metaphor.

With the Greek adjective *κακά* (“bad things”), it is doubtful that הִטָּאוּ was misread as the noun הִטָּא (“sin”) and understood syntactically as an object of בָּרַךְ. Kutz (1997: 12n6) points out that the two occasions where the translator has rendered the euphemism literally with *εὐλογέω* are times “when it is spoken by the Adversary” and that “when Job speaks in 1:5 it is paraphrased.” The Greek in Job 1:5 conveys the appropriate meaning while avoiding direct reference to sin and blasphemy. The direct translation with *εὐλογέω* in Job 1:11 and 2:5 should

probably be considered a Semitism since the Greek verb does not appear to be used in that sense in other Greek literature (see LSJ, s.v. “εὐλογέω”).

Kutz (1997: 222–223) argues that the varying renderings for בָּרַךְ in Job 1–2 reflect an interpretive stance of the translator that shifts according to whether בָּרַךְ is used by humans or by “the Adversary.”

The formal translation equivalent in 1:11 and 2:5 could be a reflection of the OG translator’s characterization of the Adversary. If the Adversary was understood to be a demonic figure, then the OG translator may have been unwilling to allow the Adversary to address God in anything but the most respectful manner. (Kutz 1997: 223)

In other words, the Greek translator retained the use of antiphrasis in Job 1:11 and 2:5 when the Adversary was addressing God himself, even though εὐλογέω was not typically used in that figurative way in ancient Greek. The preservation of the same figure of speech used in BH prevented the depiction of an enemy standing in God’s own throne room announcing, “You will be cursed,” in direct speech.

In Job 2:9, instead of commanding Job to “bless” God and die, Job’s wife commands, “Say some word to the Lord and die!” (εἰπὸν τι ῥῆμα εἰς κύριον καὶ τελεύτα), using the aorist imperative. But her statement comes as the culmination of a much longer speech in the Old Greek. The bold text in the quote below indicates text that reflects a translation of the Hebrew. The rest is material added to 2:9 in Greek.

Then after a long time had passed, **his wife said to him, “How long will you persist and say, ‘Look, I will hang on a little longer, while I wait for the hope of my deliverance?’ For look, your legacy has vanished from the earth — sons and daughters, my womb’s birth pangs and labors, for whom I wearied myself with hardships in vain. And you? You sit in the refuse of worms as you spend the night in the open air. As for me, I am one that wanders about and a hired servant — from place to place and house to house, waiting for when the sun will set, so I can rest from the distresses and griefs that now beset me. Now say some word to the Lord and die!”** (NETS, Job 2:9–9e)

This lengthy speech serves to provide a much deeper characterisation of Job's wife (see Kutz 1997: 224–227). In the Hebrew text, Job's wife is not a sympathetic figure. She appears without introduction, criticises his insistence on his righteousness, and says he may as well curse God directly and end things. Her misunderstanding of the situation and her rush to conclude that Job is in the wrong foreshadow the tone of the speeches to come with Job's friends, and Job dismisses her in the same way he deflects the comments of all his "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2). His wife's longer address in the Greek, however, draws attention to the reality that Job was not the only one affected by these circumstances (Kutz 1997: 226). She, too, lost her children and her livelihood. The statement that she wanders about as a hired servant suggests she has gone to work to support their basic needs while Job just sits around feeling sorry for himself: "Job's wife has herself undergone considerable suffering and her words reflect the weariness of her own struggle and her sympathy for Job" (Kutz 1997: 226). Her final pronouncement that he should "say some word to the Lord and die" must be understood in the context of this deeper characterisation. Her words are toned down in comparison to the Hebrew text. She does not say Job should say something *bad* about God or to God. She does not tell him to commit blasphemy. Kutz (1997: 226) believes this ambiguity shifts the emphasis "away from what she urged her husband to say onto the attitude reflected in her words." The Hebrew emphasises what she wants him to do — curse God. The Greek emphasises her resignation over the situation and her suggestion that it may be time to give up. Her words were meant in the sense of "make your peace with the Lord and die" (see Kutz 1997: 226).

The translator of Job is generally regarded as well-versed in Greek style; Fernández Marcos (2000: 60) describes him as "someone who had studied the Greek poets." Dines (2004: 20–21) states, "He was clearly a cultured man himself, and renders the difficult Hebrew in a free and sometimes elegant Greek style." His stylistic translations in Job 1:5 and 2:9 support

this characterisation, but the more literal renderings in Job 1:11 and 2:5 indicate that he could also work word-for-word and use typical Septuagintal phrasing.

In summary, the ancient versions reflect a variety of approaches with the euphemistic use of בָּרַךְ, ranging from the literal translation of the figure of speech (Type A renderings) to the direct indication of the underlying meaning (Type B renderings) to various euphemistic alternatives (Type D renderings). The variation suggests shifting norms over time and among religious communities regarding speaking of sacred matters, especially blasphemy. In some target cultures (like the audience for the Peshitta), the direct statement must have been acceptable. For the congregations listening to Targum, the directness of the language was closely related to the identity of the speaker. For the Greek audience, the Semitism was usually employed, but the translators may have expected the audience to track with the figurative usage.

5.3.2 Death

The use of idiomatic or euphemistic expressions to refer to death is extremely common across cultures and throughout history (see Allan & Burridge 1991: 153–171; Allan & Burridge 2006: 221–228). The Hebrew Bible includes a number of indirect ways of speaking about death such as when David and Job speak of the time when they will “go” (יָהָה; 1 Kgs 2:2; Job 7:9–10), a euphemism for dying also found in English today (e.g., “it was her time to go”; see Tromp 1969: 167–168). A similar euphemism is used in the narrative about Elijah’s impending death when various people refers to the impending time when God would “take” (לָקַח) Elijah (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 9–10). This ambiguous euphemism is also evident in Gen 5:24 which states that God “took” (לָקַח) Enoch. The use of euphemism for the death of these two figures combined with the supernatural circumstances of Elijah’s departure contributed to the later

traditions that both men had not actually died physically.¹⁵ While being “taken” is a common euphemism for death in English, the fact that it was only rarely used in this sense in BH allowed for these exegetical traditions to develop denying that the men had died. Apart from the accounts of Enoch and Elijah, the verb only appears to be used four times as a euphemism for death out of the nearly one thousand times the root occurs in BH (Ps 49:16; 73:24; Isa 53:8; Ezek 33:6).

There are two common idiomatic expressions used for death in BH — “to be gathered to one’s people/fathers” and “to sleep with one’s fathers.” However, direct mention of death was clearly not a strong taboo for the biblical writers. These idiomatic expressions occur very infrequently compared to the regular use of the root מוּת (“die”) hundreds of times in BH.

5.3.2.1 To be gathered to one’s people/fathers (אָסַף אֶל עַמּוֹ/אֲבוֹתָיו)

The expression אָסַף אֶל עַמּוֹ (“gather to his people”) occurs ten times in the Hebrew Bible, only in the Pentateuch (Gen 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33; Num 20:24; 27:13; 31:2; Deut 32:50 [2x]). The variant phrase אָסַף אֶל אֲבוֹתָיו (“gather to his fathers”) is used three times (Judg 2:10; 2 Kgs 22:20; 2 Chr 34:28). This minimal usage of a euphemistic expression contrasts sharply with the 840 times that the verb מוּת (“to die”) is used to refer to dying directly. The expression is clearly an idiom in BH, but its status as a euphemism for avoiding direct mention of death and dying appears marginal.

Dogniez (2002: 5) says, “we can suppose that it is an euphemism related to a taboo, namely to the social prohibition to mention death, similar to the euphemisms that we find in other cultures,” but in making that determination, she has overlooked the significance of her

¹⁵ On Elijah in later biblical texts, see Mal 4:5 [Heb: 3:23]; Matthew 11:14; 17:1–13. On Elijah in the traditions of rabbinic Judaism, see Lindbeck 2010. On Enoch, see Hebrews 11:5. For a survey of the speculations related to Enoch in Jewish and Christian literature, see Rowland 1999.

later observation that the expression is translated literally into Greek “because the verb ‘to die’ often occurs already in the same verse and cannot thus be used for a second time” (Dogniez 2002: 6). If the expression were a euphemism motivated by a “social prohibition to mention death,” then the writers could not be explicitly mentioning death in the same sentence. While the BH expression has the appearance of a euphemism as an indirect reference to death, the rationale for its usage in the Pentateuch cannot rest solely on a taboo against the mention of death. Genesis 25:17 is typical of the sequence of expressions that accompany the references to being gathered to one’s people in the Pentateuch.

(35) Genesis 25:17

MT	<u>וַיָּגוּעַ וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ</u> <i>and he expired and died and was gathered to his people</i>
LXX	<u>καὶ ἐκλιπὼν ἀπέθανεν καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ</u> <i>and passing over, he died and was added to his family</i>
Pesh	<u>מָוַת מָוַת מָוַת מָוַת מָוַת מָוַת</u> <i>and he became sick and died and was gathered to his people</i>
TgmN	<u>וּסָף וּמִית וְאֵתְכַנַּשׁ לְעַמּוּיָהּ</u> <i>and he perished and died and was gathered to his people</i>
TgmO	<u>וַאֲתַנְגִּיד וּמִית וְאֵתְכַנִּישׁ לְעַמּוּיָהּ</u> <i>and he grew weak and died and was gathered to his people</i>
TgmPsJ	<u>וְאֵיתַנְגִּיד וְאֵתְכַנַּשׁ לְעַמּוּיָהּ</u> <i>and he grew weak and was gathered to his people</i>

Two Hebrew verbs that explicitly denote dying are used prior to the statement that Ishmael was “gathered to his people.” The verb מוֹת is the usual verb for “die,” and the verb גוּעַ (“die, expire”) seems to be a neutral synonym for מוֹת that is used four times in association with this expression (Gen 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33). The versions tend to render גוּעַ euphemistically (“passing over, became sick, grew weak”) but מוֹת literally. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan omits the direct reference to death altogether. The variations are most likely stylistic since the fact that the person has died is repeated three times in the Hebrew text. Every use of this expression in Genesis is accompanied with explicit mention of death as in 25:17 or of

burial as in 49:29. In 49:33, the Peshitta adds **ܕܡܬܘܬ** (“and died”), probably to harmonise the phrasing with the statements in 25:8, 17 and 35:29. The usage in Genesis shows that a euphemism for dying could be used alongside direct reference to dying because mentioning death directly was not strongly taboo. When the expression occurs in Numbers, it can be used alone or in an abbreviated form to describe someone dying.

Table 5.2: The Biblical Hebrew expression **אָסַף אֶל עַמּוֹ/אֲבוֹתָיו in the ancient versions**

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm ¹⁶
Gen 25:8	וַיִּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוֹ	καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ	ܡܬܘܬ ܕܐܠ ܥܡܐܘܐ	ואתכנש לוות עמיה
Gen 25:17	וַיִּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוֹ	καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ	ܡܬܘܬ ܕܐܠ ܥܡܐܘܐ	ואתכנש לעמיה
Gen 35:29	וַיִּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוֹ	καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ	ܕܐܠ ܥܡܐܘܐ ܡܬܘܬ	ואתכנש לוות עמיה
Gen 49:29	אֲנִי נֹאסֵף אֶל-עַמִּי	Ἐγὼ προστίθεμαι πρὸς τὸν ἐμὸν λαόν	ܐܢܝ ܢܘܬܝܦ ܐܠ ܥܡܝ ܡܬܘܬ	הא אנא מתכנש לעמי
Gen 49:33	וַיִּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוֹ	καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ	ܡܬܘܬ ܕܐܠ ܥܡܐܘܐ	ואתכנש לעמיה
Num 20:24	וַיֹּאסֶף אֶהְרֹן אֶל-עַמּוֹ	Προσθεθήτω Ααρων πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ	ܕܐܠ ܐܝܣܘܦ ܥܡܘܐ ܡܬܘܬ	יתכנש אהרן לעמיה
Num 20:26*	וְאַהֲרֹן יֹאסֵף וּמַת שָׁם	καὶ Ααρων προστεθείς ἀποθανέτω ἐκεῖ	ܥܡܘܐ ܐܝܣܘܦ ܕܥܡܘܐ ܕܥܝܕ ܕܡܬܘܬ	ואהרן יתכנש וימות תמן
Num 27:13	וַיִּנְאֶסְפֵת אֶל-עַמִּי גַם-אַתָּה כְּאִשְׁרַךְ נֹאסֵף אֶהְרֹן אֶחָיו	καὶ προστεθήσῃ πρὸς τὸν λαόν σου καὶ σύ, καθὰ προσετέθη Ααρων ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἐν Ὠρ τῷ ὄρει	ܕܡܬܘܬ ܥܘܢ ܥܡܐܘܐ ܥܡܘܐ ܕܥܝܕ ܕܡܬܘܬ ܐܝܣܘܦ ܥܡܐܘܐ ܥܡܘܐ	ותתכנש לוות עמך אוף את היך מה דאתכנש אהרן אחוך
Num 31:2	אֶחָד יֹאסֵף אֶל-עַמִּי	καὶ ἔσχατον προστεθήσῃ πρὸς τὸν λαόν σου	ܕܐܠ ܥܡܐܘܐ ܥܝܕܝܢܘܢ ܥܡܘܐ	ובתר כדן תתכנש לוות עמך

¹⁶ The Pentateuchal Targums all reflect the same essential rendering for this expression. The text here for the Pentateuchal passages is from Neofiti.

	MT	LXX	Pesh	Tgm ¹⁶
Deut 32:50	<u>וְהֶאֱסַף אֶל-עַמִּיךָ</u> <u>כְּאֶשְׁר־מֵת אֶהְרֹן</u> <u>אֶחִיךָ בְּהָר הַהָר</u> <u>וַיֵּאֱסַף אֶל-עַמּוֹ</u>	καὶ προστέθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν σου, ὃν τρόπον ἀπέθανεν Ααρων ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἐν Ὠρ τῷ ὄρει καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ	<u>ܕܠܐܠ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܕܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u>	<u>ותתכנש בשלם לוות</u> <u>עמך היך מה</u> <u>דאתכנש בשלם</u> <u>אהרן אחוך בהור</u> <u>טורא ואתכנש</u> <u>בשלם לוות עמיה</u>
Judg 2:10	<u>וְגַם כָּל-הַדּוֹר הַהוּא</u> <u>נֶאֱסַפוּ אֶל-אֲבוֹתָיו</u>	καὶ πᾶσα ἡ γενεὰ ἐκείνη προσετέθησαν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτῶν	<u>ܕܠܐܠ ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u>	<u>וְאִף כָּל דָּרָא הַהוּא</u> <u>אֲתַכְנִישׁוּ לְוֹת</u> <u>אֲבֹהֹתָיו</u>
2 Kgs 22:20	<u>לְכֵן הִנְנִי אֶסְפֶּךָ עַל-</u> <u>אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְנֶאֱסַפְתָּ אֶל-</u> <u>קְבֻרָתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם</u>	οὐχ οὕτως, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ προστίθην σε πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας σου, καὶ συναχθήσῃ εἰς τὸν τάφον σου ἐν εἰρήνῃ	<u>ܕܠܐܠ ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u>	<u>בְּכֵין הֶאֱנָא כְּנִישׁ לְךָ</u> <u>לְוֹת אֲבֹהֶתְךָ</u> <u>וְתַתְּכַנִּישׁ לְקַבְרְךָ</u> <u>בְּשָׁלָם</u>
2 Chr 34:28	<u>הִנְנִי אֶסְפֶּךָ אֶל-</u> <u>אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְנֶאֱסַפְתָּ אֶל-</u> <u>קְבֻרָתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם</u>	ἰδοὺ προστίθην σε πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας σου, καὶ προστεθήσῃ πρὸς τὰ μνήματά σου ἐν εἰρήνῃ	<u>ܕܠܐܠ ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u> <u>ܘܢܘܨܐ ܘܢܘܨܐ</u>	<u>הָא אֲנָא מְכַנֵּשׁ יִתְךָ</u> <u>לְוֹת אֲבֹהֶתְךָ</u> <u>וְתַתְּכַנֵּשׁ לְבֵית</u> <u>קְבוּרָתְךָ בְּשָׁלָם</u>

The versions consistently render this expression with a Type A, word-for-word, strategy.

The Aramaic versions use the verb כנש (“gather”) with the exception of 2 Chr 34:28 in the Peshitta that uses ܘܢܘܨܐ (“collect”). The LXX uses the verb προστίθην (“add, join”). All versions always include a word for “people” or “fathers” as well. The LXX uses either γένος (“kin, family”) or λαός (“people”) to render Hebrew עַם (“people”), but there does not appear to be a particular motivation behind the decision since λαός is used in Gen 25:8, but γένος is used a few verses later in 25:17. In Numbers and Deuteronomy, only λαός is used.

In the Targum, the expression “gathered in peace” appears to have been used more widely as a euphemism for death. In Deut 32:50, Targum Neofiti reads כנש בשלם for the Hebrew’s

use of מות (“die”) two times as well as for its use twice in the expression “gathered to one’s people.” In Targum Neofiti, the verse reads:

<u>ותתכנש בשלם</u>	<i>And you will be gathered in peace</i>
בטורא דאת עליל לתמן	<i>on the mountain that you are going up there,</i>
<u>ותתכנש בשלם לוות עמך</u>	<i>and you will be gathered in peace to your people</i>
<u>היך מה דאתכנש בשלם</u>	<i>just as was gathered in peace</i>
אהרן אחוך בהור טורא	<i>Aaron your brother on Hor, the mountain,</i>
<u>ואתכנש בשלם לוות עמיה</u>	<i>and was gathered in peace to his people.</i>

The four occurrences of “gathered in peace” in Deut 32:50 are underlined above. The first and third occurrences translate מות. In Targum Onqelos, מות is used in both cases, and in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the euphemism שכב (“slept”) appears for מות. These variations in Targum Neofiti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reveal a slightly more developed tendency to use euphemisms with regard to death.

In Num 20:26 and 27:13, this BH idiom is activated with just the use of the verb אסף. The euphemistic use of אסף alone for death is uncommon (see 1 Sam 15:6; Isa 57:1; Zeph 1:2), so it is unclear whether these two verses should be read as examples of that meaning or as allusions to the full idiom that occurs in close proximity (in 20:24 and in the preceding clause in 27:13). The verb is used more clearly in a euphemistic sense in later texts (see Sirach 8:7; 40:28). The process of idiomatisation involved with expressions like euphemisms and idioms makes this outcome expected. Over time, the expression’s meaning becomes less closely associated with its original context (whether that was being gathered in the sense of burial in the family tomb, gathered with one’s ancestors in Sheol, or some other context). An intermediate stage may be evident with the expression אסף נפש (“gather the soul”) in Judg 18:25 and Ps 26:9. Eventually, the idiomatic sense can be activated with far fewer overt clues to the intended meaning.

The variation of this idiom as “gathered to the fathers” in Judg 2:10, 2 Kgs 22:20, and 2 Chr 34:28 also may be evidence of an intermediate stage of idiomatisation in BH. In Judg 2:10, the phrase is a clear euphemism for death, used with no other language associated with dying. In 2 Kgs 22:20 (and its parallel in 2 Chr 34:28), two variations of the idiom for gathering as death appear — gathered “to your fathers” (עַל־אֲבוֹתַיִךְ) and gathered “to your grave” (אֶל־קִבְרֹתַיִךְ). The latter phrase appears with “in peace” (בְּשָׁלוֹם), suggesting a possible origin for Neofiti’s use of כָּנַשׁ בְּשָׁלוֹם in Deut 32:50 in the phrasing אָסַף בְּשָׁלוֹם (“gathered in peace”) here in 2 Kgs 22:20.

The above analysis of the related BH expressions אָסַף אֶל עַמִּי/אֲבוֹתַיִךְ shows that the idiomatic expression was not used euphemistically in Genesis but acquired a more euphemistic function in later texts. The euphemistic development also may have involved a broader euphemistic meaning being attached to the verb אָסַף, but the few examples allow only a tentative conclusion in this direction. The uses of אָסַף alone in association with death and dying such as in Isa 57:1 likely reflect semantic development influenced by the use of the verb in these two idiomatic expressions as well as the use in additional expressions like “take away my soul” (Ps 26:9) and “gather to the grave” (2 Kgs 22:20). However, it is possible that these uses are metaphorical, not actually euphemistic. Zephaniah 1:2–3 might give evidence of such a metaphorical use.¹⁷

While the euphemistic use of this idiom appears to develop over time in BH, the versions predominantly translate the expressions isomorphically, even while expanding their use of

¹⁷ It is possible in 1 Sam 15:6 and Zeph 1:2–3 that the verb should be derived from another root such as סָוַף (“bring to an end”) or סָפַח (“carry away”), not אָסַף. If that is the case, then only Isa 57:1 would reflect the standalone use of אָסַף as a figure of speech for death if Num 20:26 is explained as an allusion to the full idiom in the same context.

euphemisms for death in the surrounding context where the Hebrew Bible had made explicit mention of death and dying.

5.3.2.2 To sleep with his fathers (שָׁכַב עִם אֲבוֹתָיו)

The phrase שָׁכַב עִם אֲבוֹתָיו (“sleep with his fathers”) is a common BH euphemism for death, used thirty-seven times in 1–2 Kgs and 2 Chr.¹⁸ “Sleep” is well-documented as a widely used euphemism for death across cultures (Allan & Burridge 2006: 225). Unlike the expression אָסַף אֶל עַמּוֹ (“gather to his people”) discussed above in Section 5.3.2.1, this phrase appears to always be a true euphemism for avoiding direct mention of death. Tromp (1969: 170) notes that the phrase “is never preceded or followed by the verb *môt* or an equivalent, and where *môt* is used, there our formula is found missing.” The expression שָׁכַב עִם אֲבוֹתָיו “is exclusively said of kings” and indicates they died a natural, peaceful death as opposed to a violent or unnatural one (Tromp 1969: 170). All thirty-seven occurrences of this euphemism are quite formulaic, so only one representative example is needed to demonstrate the BH euphemism and its typical renderings in the ancient versions. The translations are so literal and stereotypical that the English gloss given below serves for all four ancient versions of 1 Kgs 2:10.

(36) 1 Kings 2:10

MT	וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד עִם־אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקָּבֵר בְּעִיר דָּוִד
LXX	καὶ ἐκοιμήθη Δαυιδ μετὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐτάφη ἐν πόλει Δαυιδ.
Pesh	וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד עִם אֲבוֹתָיו כַּמִּלְכָּה וַיִּקָּבֵר בְּעִיר דָּוִד
Tgm	וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד עִם אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקָּבֵר בְּעִיר דָּוִד <i>And David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.</i>

¹⁸ 1 Kgs 1:21; 2:10; 11:21, 43; 14:20, 31; 15:8, 24; 16:6, 28; 22:40, 51; 2 Kgs 8:24; 10:35; 13:9, 13; 14:16, 22, 29; 15:7, 22, 38; 16:20; 20:21; 21:18; 24:6; 2 Chr 9:31; 12:16; 13:23; 16:13; 21:1; 25:28; 26:2, 23; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20.

The Aramaic versions use cognate terms for this euphemism every time it occurs. Similarly, the Septuagint virtually always uses *κοιμάω + μετὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ* to translate this euphemism, but it is a euphemistic expression even in Greek since *κοιμάω* is used in secular Greek literature as well as an indirect way to reference death (see LSJ, s.v. “*κοιμάω*”). On two occasions only does the LXX use a verb that directly denotes dying — *ἀποθνήσκω* in 2 Chr 12:16 and 13:23.

5.3.2.3 Summary

Generally, the writers of the Hebrew Bible and the translators of the ancient versions were not troubled by direct references to death. Even in cases where a respectful expression like “to gather to his fathers” was used, the writers did not hold back from also explicitly saying the person had died (e.g., Gen 25:8). The euphemism “sleep with his fathers” also appears to communicate more than the simple fact of someone’s death since it occurs only for kings and only to express that their deaths were natural and expected. The latter expression, however, does seem to serve as a respectful substitute for saying the king had died. His death is always evident from context, though, since the expression is usually paired with a statement that the king was buried (e.g., 2 Chr 21:1).

5.3.3 Taboo Body Parts

In many cultures, speaking openly about genitalia is considered impolite and inappropriate; as a result, many euphemisms are employed to serve as substitute names for these tabooed parts of the body (see Allan & Burrige 1991: 53–63). In BH, the language describing genitalia and the functions of those organs is almost entirely euphemistic (see Brenner 1997: 32). This section and the two following (Sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.5) are related in the sense that the key terms used as euphemisms for the sexual organs are introduced here, but they also factor into some of the expressions used to discreetly label bodily excretions (Section 5.3.4) or sexual

availability (Section 5.3.5). The degree to which the body parts discussed here were considered taboo varies widely. The sample terms surveyed begin with general, commonly used terms that are less strictly taboo and move to terms that occur less frequently but appear to censor strongly tabooed parts of the body such as the phallus or vagina.

In this survey of tabooed body-part terms, most examples consist of a single lexical item used figuratively. Many of these are other body-part terms that come to be used as labels for specific parts of the body via metaphor or metonymy (often using GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymy). While these labels are sometimes functioning as substitutions for taboo or dispreferred terms, the actual tabooed words are generally unknown because of the use of figurative language. In languages like English or Latin or Greek, we have medical texts where the use of technical and specific language is acceptable, so the sexual vocabulary has been more widely documented (see Adams 1990 for Latin). In BH, euphemisms are used even in the few passages where opportunity arises to describe parts of the anatomy explicitly (e.g., Deut 28:57; Ezek 16:26). These body-part terms tend to be translated literally in the ancient versions, that is, translated with a common word for that body-part in the target language. Often these literal renderings work reasonably well to convey the appropriate meaning in the target language because body-part terms are also used figuratively in a variety of ways in Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac. Departures from literal renderings of body-part terms are rare but may be found in translations of idiomatic expressions (as with 1 Sam 24:4 in the LXX; see Section 5.2.4.3).

5.3.3.1 Belly (בֶּטֶן)

The BH word בֶּטֶן, meaning “belly, stomach,” is most commonly used as a term for the uterus or womb (e.g., Judg 16:17; Job 1:21). The noun occurs some seventy-two times in the Hebrew Bible, but it is used figuratively for the womb around fifty times. On a few occasions referring

to offspring, its referent could be construed as a male parent (Deut 28:53; Ps 132:11; Mic 6:7), but Job 19:17 suggests the term could be used figuratively for the womb of one's mother. Job's reference to the "sons of my womb" (לְבָנַי בְּטֶןִי) is generally explained as a reference to his brothers, those born of the same womb (see Clines 1989: 448). The same logic allows for transference of the meaning to the woman who bore one's offspring as in Mic 6:7 or Ps 132:11.

While בְּטֶןִי may be used figuratively, it is not necessarily used euphemistically since it is not clearly used as a term for the genitalia. Most occurrences related to reproduction are relaying the fact of a person's origin in poetic language (e.g., Job 3:10–11; 10:19; 15; Ps 22:10–11; 139:13). We do not know what a technical term for the womb might have been in BH, but it is possible that רֶחֶם, the other common BH word for the womb, is such a primary noun (see *HALOT*, s.v. "רֶחֶם"). However, רֶחֶם may also have begun as a basic word for the inner part of the body or the abdomen, just like בְּטֶןִי. In English, "uterus" is such a technical term now, but it was borrowed from Latin (where it meant "belly"). Similarly, the English word "womb" derives from a word for "belly." These analogous terms show that a word like בְּטֶןִי would be likely to become a standard word for the womb, and the same metonymic development occurs in numerous languages where a general word for the belly or abdomen gradually acquires a more specialised meaning.

But even if the word is not a euphemism per se, the renderings of the term in the ancient versions can help illustrate the tendency the versions have toward figures of speech involving body-part terms that denote areas of the body that are more strongly tabooed. All of the versions tend to use one or two standard equivalents for בְּטֶןִי, and the words generally all carry the same basic meaning of "belly, stomach, abdomen." Also, בְּטֶןִי and רֶחֶם appear together in poetic parallelism, and the versions freely interchange their main equivalents. The versions even

display lexical variation in cases where the Hebrew uses **יִטְּבָּ** multiple times as in the LXX of Gen 25:23–24. The list below shows the top two or three terms used in the LXX, Peshitta, and Targums to translate **יִטְּבָּ** when it has the sense of “womb.” The number in parentheses next to each term represents the approximate number of times the term was used in that sense.

LXX	Pesh	Tgm
1. <i>κοιλία</i> <i>abdomen</i> (29)	1. ܘܒܝܢ <i>stomach</i> (30)	1. מַעֵין <i>belly</i> (28)
2. <i>γαστήρ</i> <i>stomach</i> (19)	2. ܡܘܬܪܐ <i>womb</i> (14)	2. כרס <i>stomach</i> (18)
	3. ܡܘܬܪܐ <i>belly</i> (4)	3. בטן <i>stomach</i> (3)

The use of the cognate term **בטן** is virtually absent in the Aramaic versions, found only in the book of Judges in Targum Jonathan. The Aramaic **מַעֵין**, cognate to Hebrew **מַעֵים**, is found most often in the Targums while **ܘܒܝܢ** is most common in the Peshitta. The Hebrew term **מַעֵים** is another general word for the belly or inner organs that is also used to denote the womb (e.g., in Gen 25:23 in parallel with **יִטְּבָּ**). These lexical correspondences show that Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Greek all use general body-part terms for the trunk of the body as metonyms for the womb. In translation, there is no attempt at lexical consistency and no preference given to the cognate. Rather, the common target language term that conveys the same general meaning is used. With words and expressions that function more euphemistically, we will see that the same pattern of use of a general term where the same figurative extension of meaning must be deduced from context. Sometimes those terms will be target language euphemisms, but often the foreign image is retained, and the reader of the target text is expected to make the appropriate inference or remain ignorant of the text’s underlying meaning.

The term **יִטְּבָּ** also factors in the BH expression **פְּרִי־בֶטֶן** (“fruit of the belly [or womb]”). This expression using the metaphor of fruit to describe a person’s offspring appears eleven times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 30:2; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11, 18, 53; 30:9; Isa 13:18; Mic 6:7; Ps

127:3; 132:11). Its use in poetic parallel with literal words for children in Isa 13:18 and Ps 127:3 indicate that the expression is a metaphor. The metaphorical imagery creates a heightened effect, however, in Deut 28:53 where a starving people are said to resort to eating fruit — only they are eating the fruit of the womb, their children. In some cases, the versions preserved the metaphor, but it was more common for them to translate the metaphor explicitly and explain that “fruit” meant “children” in this expression. The Peshitta is the only version that consistently retains the metaphor, using ܦܝܘܬܐ every time — ten times with ܘܒܝ (Gen 30:2; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11, 18, 53; 30:9; Ps 132:11; Isa 13:18; Mic 6:7) and once with ܦܝܘܬܐ (Ps 127:3).

The LXX uses *καρπός* with *κοιλία* three times (Gen 30:2; Ps 132:11; Mic 6:7) and with *γαστήρ* once (Ps 127:3). Those four verses are the only times the LXX translated the metaphor literally. More commonly, the LXX translator opted for explicitation as with the rendering *τὰ ἔκγονα τῆς κοιλίας σου* used all six times the expression appears in Deuteronomy (7:13; 28:4, 11, 18, 53; 30:9). The Greek word *ἔκγονος* is a straightforward term for “child” (literally, “born of”), but the translator of Deut followed the Type C, hybrid, strategy with rendering the figurative phrase. The meaning of the expression is fully communicated with *ἔκγονος*, but a literal translation of *פְּטִי* is retained in the use of *κοιλία*. The Greek translator of Isaiah, however, simply made the meaning of the expression plain without retaining any unnecessary aspects of the form of the source text, using *τὰ τέκνα* (“the children”) for *פְּרִי־בְטֶן* in Isa 13:18.

The Targums usually use *וולד* or *ולד* (“child”) with *מעין* for this expression (e.g., Gen 30:2 [Onq]; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11, 18, 53; 30:9 [Onq; PsJ]; Isa 13:18; Ps 127:3; 132:11). The only example that uses the word for “fruit” alone is in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of Gen 30:2 (*פִּירֵי מַעִיא*). The use of the metaphor in Mic 6:7 is rendered by a different metaphor, identifying

the “fruit of the womb” as the “loved one of my body/womb” (הַיְבוּב מְעִי). In each case, the Targum is making aspects of the source imagery explicit. The use of וולד is a Type B, semantic, rendering because it gives the plain meaning of the metaphor. The use of הַיְבוּב is a Type D rendering because one figure of speech is substituted for another.

In Targum Neofiti, this metaphor is consistently given a double rendering where פְּרִי is represented by פְּרִי וולד (“fruit of offspring” or “fruit, offspring”). This translation suggests a Type C strategy where the meaning of the figure of speech is given while the form is also indicated. Neofiti follows this strategy all seven times the metaphor occurs (Gen 30:2; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11, 18, 53; 30:9). Since this double phrasing appears as well in two Targum manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah (Ms E, Gen 30:2; Ms D, Deut 28:18), McNamara (1997: 54n9) suggests, “The expression, then, seems to be a genuine Aramaic form, even if it seems clumsy to us, especially in Nf Gen 30:2.” He does not offer further explanation or argument to support treating the expression as “genuine Aramaic,” however, and it appears more reasonable to assume that the renderings were influenced by the same exegetical tradition, not that they reflect independent evidence of an expression’s currency in Palestinian Aramaic. Grossfeld (2000: 209) explains the rendering as evidence of “N[eofiti]’s preference for concrete, as against idiomatic, expressions,” and he goes on to suggest the reading is a conflation of two variants, one represented by the וּלְדָא of Onqelos and the other by the פִּירִי of Pseudo-Jonathan. Even if that is the case, the rendering in Neofiti reflects a compromise between the form of the figure of speech and its meaning by ensuring the metaphor is glossed by the intended meaning.

The renderings of בְּטֶן and פְּרִי־בְטֶן in the ancient versions provide evidence for all four expected translation strategies for figures of speech. We see word-for-word translation (Type A), but such a literal rendering can be figurative in the same way in the target language since

body-part terms especially have similar figurative extensions of meaning in various languages. If a rendering communicates with similar figurative associations, it can also be considered a Type D rendering, where a figure of speech is translated by a figure of speech with comparable meaning in the target language. Another example of the Type D strategy is found in the Targum of Mic 6:7 since the metaphor is changed from “fruit” to “loved one.” The Targum’s substitution of imagery is even more intimate and emotive than the Hebrew, but the emotional heightening is appropriate to the source context. Where “fruit” was translated with a word literally meaning “children” or “offspring,” the semantic translation strategy (Type B) is clear since the meaning of the metaphor is made explicit. Finally, the double rendering in Neofiti for the “fruit of the womb” metaphor represents the compromise strategy (Type C). The meaning of the imagery is explained, but the source image is retained.

5.3.3.2 Loins (מְתַנִּים and חֲלָצִים)

As with the word כֶּטֶן discussed above, the BH terms used to refer to the “loins” (מְתַנִּים; חֲלָצִים) appear to be general body-part terms employed to refer to a specific area subsumed under the general term or spatially associated with the general area of the body. For example, the general meaning of the word מְתַנִּים seems to be “hips” or “waist,” roughly the middle of the body (e.g., Gen 37:34; Exod 12:11; Ezek 47:4), and its literal meaning makes sense virtually every time the word is used in the Hebrew Bible. When מְתַנִּים is used in a figurative sense, it seems to represent a person’s centre of strength (Deut 33:11; Prov 31:17). The only usage that could be construed euphemistically appears in Rehoboam’s boast in 1 Kgs 12:10 about the size of his “little finger” compared to his father’s “waist.”¹⁹ Usually, the versions render מְתַנִּים with a

¹⁹ This statement and its parallel in 2 Chr 10:10 are the only occurrences of the noun קָטָן (“smallness”) in the Hebrew Bible. Its euphemistic sense must be inferred from context. See Section 5.3.3.7 below.

comparable body-part term that refers generally to the middle of the body (e.g., Syriac: ܦܫܝܬܐ, “back, loin”; Aramaic: ܦܫܝܬܐ, “loins”; Greek: ὀσφύς, “lower back, loins”).

The other BH term for loins, ܦܫܝܬܐ, is used less frequently, but it is used to designate a man’s procreative centre in the phrase ܦܫܝܬܐ ܡܚܠܥܝܢ (“come out from your loins”; Gen 35:11; 1 Kgs 8:19 // 2 Chr 6:9). The expression is used in promises of offspring — descendants from one’s very own body. With this expression, the Peshitta uses ܦܫܝܬܐ, the same term that it uses to render ܡܫܝܒܐ. The LXX also uses ὀσφύς in Gen 35:11 and 1 Kgs 8:19, though in the parallel in 2 Chr 6:9 it has πλευρά (“side, rib”). Aside from Targum Neofiti that uses ܦܫܝܬܐ in Gen 35:11, the Targums translate this figurative expression idiomatically. In Gen 35:11, Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan omit the need for any equivalent for “loins” by using ܡܝܢܟ (“from you”). Both Targum Jonathan for 1 Kgs 8:19 and the Targum of Chronicles for 2 Chr 6:9 make the meaning of the BH expression explicit with ܒܪ ܕܗܘܠܝܕ (“a son whom you will beget”). The Targums are distancing their audiences from thinking about a man’s genitalia at all with these renderings, whereas the Hebrew’s reference to ܦܫܝܬܐ provided a concrete anchor to bring to mind the physical part of the man employed in the production of offspring. While ܦܫܝܬܐ may have been a BH euphemism in these contexts, the Targums’ translations conceal the associations even more by either not translating the word (Onq; PsJ) or making the meaning explicit in common and acceptable language (Tgm Jon; Tgm Chr).

5.3.3.3 Thigh (ܦܫܝܬܐ)

In BH, the term ܦܫܝܬܐ (“thigh”) can be used for the source of a person’s procreative energy in a similar sense as ܦܫܝܬܐ (see previous section). In fact, the idiomatic expression noted above for

offspring as that which “comes forth from the loins” can be used with יָרֵךְ as in Gen 46:26: יִצְאֵי יָרְכוֹ (“ones who came forth from his thigh”; compare Exod 1:5; Judg 8:30).

The uses of the word in passages like Gen 32:26–33 and Judg 3:16–21 indicate the term’s literal meaning was the upper leg and hip area (compare Ps 45:4; Song 3:8). The mention of the יָרֵךְ in the expressions like Gen 46:26 show its figurative use for the genitalia most clearly, but the overall context of the trial of a woman accused of adultery in Num 5 suggests the term could also be a euphemism for the female genitalia (see Num 5:21, 22, 27). The water of the curse is said to affect “womb” (בֶּטֶן) and “thigh” (יָרֵךְ) if the woman is guilty of adultery. The physical effect is focused on the woman’s innards (מֵעָה), so the outcome that her leg would literally fall off (נפל) seems unlikely. However, a swelling and discharge from her vagina might be the expected effect (if the ordeal was designed to induce miscarriage, for example; see Levine 1993: 197–202).

The other verses where יָרֵךְ is likely a euphemism for genitalia are found in Genesis narratives describing oath-taking (Gen 24:2, 9; 47:29). In Gen 24, Abraham commands his servant to come place his hand under Abraham’s יָרֵךְ and swear (שָׁבַע) to find a wife for Isaac back among his family in Mesopotamia. In Gen 47, Jacob commands Joseph to put his hand under Jacob’s יָרֵךְ and swear (שָׁבַע) to bury him back in Canaan with Abraham and Isaac. While it is possible the act involved the actual thigh, swearing on the site associated with progeny and family legacy would seem to have greater significance in both contexts (like the comparable English idiom “I swear on the life of my children”).

The ancient versions generally translated the figurative use of יָרֵךְ in a literal way, using comparable body-part terms for the leg or side. The LXX usually uses μηρός (“thigh, side”;

Gen 24:2, 9; 46:26; 47:29; Num 5:21, 22, 27; Judg 8:30), and the Peshitta usually has **سبي** (“back, loin”), the same term used to translate **מִתְנַיִם** and **הַלְצִיִּים** (Gen 24:2, 9; 46:26; 47:29; Exod 1:5; Judg 8:30). In Num 5, the Peshitta substitutes a different word for “thigh, side,” using **علائق** (Num 5:21, 22, 27). The Targums often simply use **ירך** (Gen 24:2 [Onq; Neo], 9 [Onq]; 46:26 [Onq; PsJ]; 47:29 [Onq]); Num 5:21, 22, 27 [all]; Exod 1:5 [Onq; PsJ]; Judg 8:30). Neofiti uses **הלציין** twice (Gen 46:26; Exod 1:5).

On a few occasions, the versions reflect more interpretive renderings of the Hebrew’s figurative language. In Exod 1:5, the LXX makes the meaning plain by translating the idiomatic **יְרָכֹוּ יִצְאֵי יְרָכֹוּ**, meaning “descendants,” as **ψυχαι** (“souls”). The Targum renderings are more interpretive in some of the oath-taking passages (e.g., Gen 24:2, 9; and 47:29 in Pseudo-Jonathan; Gen 24:9; 47:9 in Neofiti). These renderings support the euphemistic understanding of **ירך** by linking the oath to Abraham’s circumcision or to the covenant (the sign of which was circumcision). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has Abraham telling his servant to place his hand “on the cut of my circumcision” (**בגזירת מהולתי**; Gen 24:2; compare Gen 24:9; 47:29). Similarly, Targum Neofiti indicates the hand should be placed on the “covenant” (**קיים**) in Gen 24:9 and 47:29, but it translates literally in Gen 24:2 with **ירך**, perhaps to set up the association of the “thigh” and the sign of the covenant.

As with the translations of other body-part terms, the translations of **ירך** when used in a euphemistic sense are still predominantly literal. The exceptions, however, demonstrate that the euphemistic nature of the word was understood and that the translators could render the figurative expressions in more idiomatic language. The LXX rendering of Exod 1:5, for example, indicates idiom substitution where **ψυχαι** as “people” conveys the underlying meaning of the BH idiomatic expression.

5.3.3.4 Flesh (בָּשָׂר)

The Hebrew word בָּשָׂר is a common, generic word for “flesh,” regularly also used for the “body” as a whole, that is also found with the same general meaning and usage in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and most dialects of Aramaic (see *TDOT*, s.v. “בָּשָׂר”). The term occurs as a euphemism for the genitalia primarily in Leviticus (e.g., Lev 15), providing a priestly background that may have influenced its euphemistic use in Ezek 16:26 and 23:20. Outside of Ezekiel and Leviticus, the euphemism appears in Exod 28:42, yet another passage with a priestly background. The figurative use of בָּשָׂר for the penis (e.g., Lev 15:2) or vagina (e.g., Lev 15:19) represents a GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymy similar to the use of the generic English word “member” as a euphemism for the penis (i.e., “the male member”; compare Allan & Burridge 1991: 96–97).

The word בָּשָׂר may be used euphemistically only six or seven times in the Hebrew Bible, but identifying euphemistic usage is complicated by the use of בָּשָׂר to refer to the whole body in the same context where it is used as a euphemism. For example, in Lev 15, the references to the discharges that cause impurity in verses 2, 3, and 19 likely use בָּשָׂר euphemistically, but the instructions to wash the whole בָּשָׂר in the same context in verses 7, 13, and 16 must refer to the entire body as in other texts that prescribe washing to remove uncleanness (e.g., Lev 14:9; 16:4). Perhaps בָּשָׂר could be considered euphemistic in the references to the “flesh of the foreskin” (בֶּשַׂר עֶרְלֹת) in the passages prescribing circumcision (Gen 17:11, 14, 23, 24, 25; Lev 12:3). The construct phrase is redundant if it is indicating the skin (בָּשָׂר) of the foreskin, and the statement in Gen 17:13 that the covenant is in their flesh (בָּשָׂר) is most likely a euphemism for the penis since circumcision is the mark of the covenant. However, בָּשָׂר in 17:13 can be taken in a general sense to refer to the bodies of Abraham and his descendants as physically

bearing the sign of the covenant after circumcision. If we admit the references to the “flesh of the foreskin” as euphemistic and take Gen 17:13 in the euphemistic sense, then the euphemism occurs thirteen times. Considering that *בְּשָׂר* is used some 270 times in the Hebrew Bible, the euphemistic sense, even allowing a maximum of possible uses, accounts for only about 5% of the total use.

In the ancient versions, the euphemism was generally rendered with a lexical equivalent meaning “flesh” or “body” that covered a similar range of extended meanings as *בְּשָׂר* has in BH. The Peshitta always uses *ܒܫܐ*, the Syriac cognate to *בְּשָׂר*. The Targums also generally use the Aramaic cognate *בשר/בסר*. In these cases, the euphemistic meaning must be inferred from context as in the Hebrew, and the Targums alone attempt to mitigate those associations only in Ezekiel.

The LXX uses *σάρξ* (“flesh”) most of the time in the phrase “flesh of the foreskin” (e.g., *τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκροβυστίας* [Gen 17:11; compare Gen 17:14, 24, 25; Lev 12:3]) as well as in the possible euphemistic use in Gen 17:13. Wevers (1993: 235) asserts that *σάρξ* “is here [in 17:13] an euphemism for the penis,” but he does not address whether it should be considered euphemistic in the full phrase with *ἀκροβυστία* (“foreskin”).²⁰ His comments to 17:23–25 give the impression that he does not consider it such in “the bound phrase” but takes it as a reference to the skin of the foreskin (Wevers 1993: 241–242). While *σάρξ* could be used euphemistically by the same metonymic pattern as other GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC euphemisms, the lexical

²⁰ Wevers (1993: 234) believes the term *ἀκροβυστία* was a “creation” of the Greek translator of Genesis that was derived from the word *ἀκροποσθία*, meaning “tip of the foreskin” (see LSJ, s.v. “*ἀκροποσθία*”). Remodelling at word is a common strategy for coining new euphemisms, if that is what the translator intended with the creation of the term. On the euphemistic remodeling of words, see Allan & Burridge 1991: 14–16.

entry for *σάρξ* in LSJ gives no indication that the word was a euphemism for the phallus, unless such meaning is considered an extension of the word's use for "the seat of the affections and lusts" (see LSJ, s.v. "*σάρξ*, II"). Lacking other evidence, Wevers' (1993: 235) assertion appears to be based on the range of meaning of the BH word, rather than the Greek, since *σάρξ* is used in Ezek 16:26 and 23:20 where the context is clear as to its euphemistic sense.

In Gen 17:23, no equivalent for *רִצְּפוֹ* appears in Greek which reads simply *περιέτεμεν τὰς ἀκροβυστίας αὐτῶν* ("cut their foreskins"). Herodotus uses the same verb *περιτέμνω* ("cut, clip round about") to describe circumcision in Egypt, though he uses the word *αἰδοῖα* ("pudenda, private parts") as object (Herodotus, *Histories* 2.36, 104). In Gen 17:23, the object is "their foreskins," not "flesh of their foreskins." Wevers (1993: 241) notes that the Greek does not "render the bound word in the phrase, as is done in vv. 24, 25," but he offers no explanation for why the word may have been omitted in v. 23. The omission may have been unintentional since the translator does not seem to be concerned with the redundancy of the expression on the other occasions. It is possible the summary statement in v. 23 that the act was completed was not thought to need the same specification.

In two passages, the LXX uses an equivalent other than *σάρξ* to render *רִצְּפוֹ*. In Exod 28:42, the word *χρῶς* ("skin, flesh") is used, but its range of meaning extends to use as a general word for the body like *רִצְּפוֹ* (see LSJ, s.v. "*χρῶς*"). While *χρῶς* does not itself appear to have a euphemistic connotation, the full Greek phrase used suggests the euphemistic meaning of the overall context was understood by the translator.

(37) Exodus 28:42

MT	<i>לְכַסּוֹת בְּשׂוֹר עֲרְוָה</i> <i>to cover the flesh of nakedness</i>
LXX	<i>καλύψαι ἀσχημοσύνην χρωτὸς αὐτῶν</i> <i>to cover the shame of their skin</i>

Based on the word order of the Greek phrase, it might appear that ἀσχημοσύνη (“shame”) is the equivalent to בְּשֵׁר here, but ἀσχημοσύνη is a common equivalent for עֲרֹה and never identified as an equivalent for בְּשֵׁר (see Hatch-Redpath, s.v. “ἀσχημοσύνη”).²¹ The implication of what part of the body was to be covered was made clear to the translator due to the use of עֲרֹה, so it seems unlikely that בְּשֵׁר was understood euphemistically here. Rather, the translator took the word in its more general sense as referring to the body, understanding the clothing as intended to cover the shameful exposure of the naked body, especially the pudenda.

In Lev 15, the Greek translator used σῶμα (“body”) throughout (see 15:2, 3, 19). Their translation strategy can be explained either as a conscious decision to emphasise the most general sense of the Hebrew’s range of meaning or as an uncertainty over the intended meaning in context. The Greek translator of Leviticus used both σάρξ and σῶμα for בְּשֵׁר in roughly equal distribution (sixteen to seventeen times each), so the use of σῶμα in Lev 15 cannot be explained as the use of a standard equivalent. However, the explanation may be found in the fact that σῶμα is used in the verses that use בְּשֵׁר to refer to washing the entire body. Since that sense is intertwined with the euphemistic sense in Lev 15, the translator may have opted for lexical consistency rather than attempting to distinguish the nuance of meaning.

The last examples to consider are also the clearest cases where BH בְּשֵׁר is used as a euphemism for the penis. The graphic sexual imagery of Ezek 16 and Ezek 23 is widely recognised and has been studied at length by a number of scholars (see Baumann 2003: 135–166; Brenner 1997: 153–174; Kamionkowski 2003: 92–149; Moughtin-Mumby 2008: 156–205).²² Both texts are well-known examples of the prophetic marriage metaphor where the

²¹ The use of ἀσχημοσύνη for עֲרֹה in the Greek is discussed further below in Section 5.3.5.4.

²² Numerous essays and journal articles have also been devoted to the graphic imagery in one or both of these passages. For a representative sample of views, see the studies by Davidovich (2005); L. Day

prophets represent YHWH's relationship with his people as a marriage with YHWH as the husband and his people, Israel and Judah, as his wives. The metaphor serves to cast the nations' abandonment of faith in YHWH as marital infidelity. Ezekiel's lengthy chapters are the most developed versions of the metaphor, but similar imagery is found in Hos 1–3; Jer 2:1–4:4; and Lam 1.²³ In the Ezekiel texts, a history of God's relationship with his people is recounted in an extended metaphor where Israel (and later Judah) plays the part of a woman chosen by God to be his. Their history of religious apostasy in worshipping Canaanite deities is described as adultery, but political alliances also come under critique as evidence of Israel and Judah placing their trust in other nations instead of in YHWH — marital infidelity of a different kind. The significant feature of the Ezekiel passages is that they describe the sexual trappings of the scenes with extreme detail, freely mentioning sexual desires, adornments, preparations, and even compensation. This detailed description continues with an account of the harsh punishments the women can expect for their infidelity. The graphic violence against the women is one of the most troubling aspects of the metaphor for modern readers. Apart from the Targums, the ancient translators did not attempt to mitigate any of this imagery. Our present concern is with the euphemisms in Ezek 16:26 and 23:20. Both verses allude to the wayward wife's lust for well-endowed men.

(2000); P. Day (2000); Dempsey (1998); Patton (2000); Pope (1995); Shields (1998); and Sloane (2008). Most of these deal with the ideological and theological problems raised by the graphic, negative imagery of the passages as a whole, so they address the marriage metaphor as a whole more than they address specific aspects of the imagery such as the euphemisms in Ezek 16:25–26 or 23:20.

²³ The same sort of depiction of a city or nation as a woman being punished for adultery is used in Nah 3:4–7 (for Nineveh) and Isa 47:1–15 (for Babylon). The prophetic marriage metaphor may be part of a number of other passages as well (see Baumann 2003: 41 for a list).

(38) Ezekiel 16:26

MT	וּתְזַנִּי אֶל בְּנֵי מִצְרַיִם וְשָׁכְנֵיהֶם גְּדֹלֵי בָשָׂר <i>and you fornicated with the sons of Egypt, your neighbours, <u>great of flesh</u>.</i>
LXX	καὶ ἐξέπόρνευσας ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς Αἰγύπτου τοὺς ὁμοροῦντάς σοι τοὺς <u>μεγαλοσάρκους</u> <i>and you fornicated with the sons of Egypt, your neighbours, <u>those of great flesh</u></i>
Pesh	וּמַנְעָה, כְּבֹד, מִצְרַיִם, אֲבֻבָה, זֵיכָר, כְּבֹד <i>and you fornicated with the sons of Egypt, your neighbours, <u>large of flesh</u></i>
Tgm	וּמַנְעִית בְּתַר בְּנֵי מִצְרַיִם קְרִיבָךְ מְסַרְבְּלֵי בָסָר <i>and you went astray after the sons of Egypt, your neighbour, <u>overgrown with flesh</u></i>

All of the ancient versions represent the euphemistic phrase גְּדֹלֵי בָשָׂר (“great of flesh”) literally and fully. The Greek *μεγαλόσαρκος* is known only from this usage, but other equally rare compounds with *μεγάλο-* are common for conveying similar meaning like *μεγαλίδους* (“large teeth”) or *μεγαλόγαστρον* (“large belly”). The Peshitta and LXX followed their usual default translation strategy of rendering word-for-word, regardless of whether the expression would be understood as idiomatic Syriac or Greek. In some cases, literal translation of a figure of speech could be a means of concealing the full meaning of the source text. The words of the text were transferred, but the meaning was left to be inferred.

In the Targum, the expression is translated literally as “overgrown with flesh” (מְסַרְבְּלֵי בָסָר) because the translator has already completely shifted away from the metaphor and its sexual imagery, a shift that started in 16:2. The use of the passive participle of סָרְבַּל (literally, “being interwoven”) has precedent in rabbinic literature as referring to someone with such a thick and fleshy penis that his circumcision is not visible (see Jastrow, s.v. “סָרְבַּל”), but the targumist did not avoid labelling the Egyptians in this way because his text was not about sex. Back in 16:2, Ezekiel was commanded to “make known” (הוֹדֵעַ) Israel’s abominations, but the

Targum substitutes the verb כָּחַץ (“rebuke”). This lexical modification marks the beginning of the translator’s shift away from the metaphorical discourse of his source text and toward a straightforward rehearsal of the theological history that lies behind Ezekiel’s extended metaphor of Israel as God’s unfaithful wife. In BH, the *hiphil* of כָּחַץ tends to be associated with divine judgment, so by using it, the translator invokes the frame of admonishing Israel for their history of sin and rebellion against God.

In Ezek 16, the frequent Hebrew verb זָנָה (“fornicate”) used to describe Israel’s wanton ways is replaced in the Targum with טָעַי, a verb associated with deviating from proper worship. The related Aramaic noun טָעוּ (“idol”) also appears throughout Targum of Ezek 16 with reference to Israel’s increasing idolatry. The clause following the reference to the Egyptians as “overgrown with flesh” in 16:26 explains that Israel strayed after them to increase their collection of idols to worship (וַיִּזְכְּרוּ אִדֹּלִים; “and you increased your idols”). The reframing of the narrative in Ezek 16 toward a straightforward account of Israel’s apostasy rendered powerless the reference to the Egyptians being “overgrown with flesh.” The figure of speech would not necessarily activate any thoughts of well-endowed men because the context was overwhelmed with repeated references to idolatry.

Ezekiel 23 recounts a similar scene of sexual promiscuity, but the story is slightly different because the women are given names in 23:4: Oholibah (representing Jerusalem) and Oholah (representing Samaria, the capital city of Israel). The passage recounts their lusts for other men and their gods, blending condemnation for idolatry and adultery (see, e.g., Ezek 23:36–45). In Ezek 23:20, Oholibah’s lust for large loins is made explicit.

(39) Ezekiel 23:20

MT ותעגבה על פלגשיהם אשר בשר במורים בשרם וזרמת סוסיים זרמתם
and you lusted after your lovers whose flesh was the flesh of donkeys
and whose issue was the issue of horses.

LXX και ἐπέθου ἐπὶ τοὺς Χαλδαίους, ὧν ἦσαν ὡς ὄνων αἱ σάρκες αὐτῶν
καὶ αἰδοῖα ἵππων τὰ αἰδοῖα αὐτῶν.
and you set upon the Chaldeans, whose flesh was like that of donkeys
and whose privates were like the privates of horses.

Pesh אִשׁוּרָה לְבָנוֹתָם וְכַפְּסָם אִשׁוּרָה לְבָנוֹתָם וְכַפְּסָם
אִשׁוּרָה לְבָנוֹתָם וְכַפְּסָם אִשׁוּרָה לְבָנוֹתָם וְכַפְּסָם
and she was joined to their servants whose flesh was like the flesh of the
donkey and whose laps were like the laps of horses

Tgm וְאֶתְרַעֲיָאתָ לְמַהְוֵי שְׂמֶשָׁא לְהוֹן דְּבַסְרָא תְּמַרְיִן בְּסַרְהוֹן וְצַחְנַת סוּסוֹתָא
צַחְנַתְהוֹן
And she desired to be a servant for them, whose flesh was the flesh of
donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses.

Apart from the use of בָּשָׂר here, there is a textual difficulty with the word זָרְמָה, translated as “issue” in (37). The word is a *hapax legomenon* (occurring only here in ancient Hebrew). The standard lexicons suggest either “penis” or “ejaculate”; in other words, the term either refers to the male member itself or to that which issues forth from the member in intercourse.²⁴ The phallic interpretation seems to derive from its use here in parallel to בָּשָׂר combined with the possibility the word is a remodelling of זְמוּרָה (“branch”), which is sometimes thought to be a euphemism for the phallus in Ezek 8:17 (the difficult passage about the men of Jerusalem “putting the branch to their noses” as an offense to YHWH). However, the clear meanings of the verb זָרַם (“pour out in a flood”) and the noun זָרְמָה (“downpour”) suggest that if זָרְמָה is from the same root, it most likely means “ejaculate.” Both meanings make sense in the context of Ezek 23:20.

As with Ezek 16, the Targum of Ezek 23 emphasises the story is about idolatry, but it keeps the allegory of the two sisters and retains only hints of the sexually charged scene. The

²⁴ See HALOT, s.v. “זָרְמָה”; DCH, s.v. “זָרְמָה”; BDB, s.v. “זָרְמָה.”

Peshitta and the LXX took both בְּשֵׁר and זְרָמָה as references to genitalia while the Targum remains ambiguous since the word צַחֲנַת, used as an equivalent for זְרָמָה, can mean either “offensive smell” or “effusion of semen” (Levey 1990: 72n7; Jastrow, s.v. “צַחֲנַת”). While the versions all translated בְּשֵׁר literally as in other cases, the Peshitta and LXX treated זְרָמָה as either a euphemism or as an explicit term that needed to be concealed in translation by a euphemism. The Syriac ܘܫܘܫ and the Greek αἰδοῖα are both euphemisms for the private parts (see *CSD*, s.v. “ܘܫܘܫ”; *LSJ*, s.v. “αἰδοῖον”).

Overall, the versions translate the euphemistic use of בְּשֵׁר in a literal way. The Targum is more careful to conceal sexual connotations than the LXX or Peshitta. On the one hand, it is possible those versions used literal translation as a way to partially conceal the sexual meaning, but on the other hand, they may have simply expected their readers to follow the foreign figure of speech since it utilised common associations.

5.3.3.5 Feet (רַגְלִים)

The BH word רַגְלִים (“feet”) is used as a euphemism for the genitals on a number of occasions, but that meaning is clear only in phrases that provide context linking the “feet” to the functions of those body parts. In Exod 4:25, Zipporah circumcises her son and touches the foreskin to Moses’ רַגְלִים. Since circumcision is a key element of the passage, it is likely that she touched the foreskin to Moses’ genitals for some symbolic purpose. Deuteronomy 28:57 refers to a woman’s afterbirth that comes out “from between her feet” (מִבֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ). In this context, רַגְלִים likely refers to the vagina as the source of the afterbirth. In 2 Kgs 18:27 (// Isa 36:12), the Qere offers מִיַּי רַגְלֵיהֶם (“water of their feet”) to be read instead of שִׁינֵיהֶם (“their urine”). The expression שַׁעַר הַרְגְלִים (“hair of the feet”) is contrasted with הֶרֶאֵשׁ (“the head”) in Isa 7:20,

both are to be shaved. Since the feet do not typically have a significant amount of hair for shaving, this expression is usually understood as a reference to pubic hair. Finally, Ezek 16:25 depicts lustful Israel as God’s unfaithful wife, spreading her רגליה in an offer of sex for all passers-by. These five examples are the most likely euphemistic uses of רגליה found in the Hebrew Bible. Any sexual associations with the use of מרגלות (“place of the feet”) in Ruth 3:4, 7 remain uncertain, but the ambiguity may be an intentional rhetorical device to heighten the tension through unresolved innuendo.

For the most part the versions render these verses literally, so it is difficult to say whether they understood the euphemistic associations. As we have seen, the literal approach was the default for the LXX and Peshitta and even the Targums are quite literal much of the time. Some of the versions varied from a strictly literal rendering for Deut 28:57 and Ezek 16:25.

(40) Deuteronomy 28:57

MT	היוצת מִבֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ <i>that comes out from between <u>her feet</u></i>
LXX	τὸ ἐξέλθον διὰ τῶν μηρῶν αὐτῆς <i>coming out through <u>your thighs</u></i>
TgmO	דִּיפְקוֹן מִיְנָה <i>that comes out <u>from her</u></i>
TgmPsJ	דְּתִפּוֹק מִבֵּית תּוֹרְפָה <i>that comes out from <u>her place of filth</u></i>

The Peshitta and Targum Neofiti translate word-for-word this BH phrase, but the LXX and the other two Targums exhibit different degrees of muting or explicating the underlying meaning of the text. The LXX use of μηρός (“thigh”) indicates the Hebrew was understood as a euphemism, and the translator used a Greek word with the appropriate associations. Targum Onqelos was more concerned with concealing the imagery of afterbirth and pudenda, so it speaks of “the smallest of her sons that comes out from her” instead, omitting any reference to

the feet. The translation still carries the overall meaning of the source text, but it abandons the colourful imagery. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan uses another euphemism for the pudenda, literally, “house of filth.” Both the LXX rendering and Pseudo-Jonathan’s rendering are examples of the Type D strategy of idiomatic substitution — an appropriate target language word or figure of speech is used instead of borrowing the specific wording of the source.

In Ezek 16:25, the reference to the woman spreading her feet is euphemistic but clearly sexual. The context, as discussed above in Section 5.3.3.4, is a story of Israel’s apostasy, her turning from trust in YHWH to trust in herself, other gods, and other nations. Ezekiel retells this story as an account of a wife who was unfaithful to her husband, even though he provided freely for all of her needs. Apart from the repeated uses of זנה (“to fornicate”) and related terms in the passage, Ezek 16:25 is the clearest expression of sexual promiscuity in the chapter.

(41) Ezekiel 16:25

MT	וְהִפְשִׁקִי אֶת-רַגְלֶיךָ לְכָל-עוֹבֵר <i>and you have spread <u>your feet</u> to every passer-by</i>
LXX	καὶ διήγαγες τὰ σκέλη σου παντὶ παρόδῳ <i>and you drew apart <u>your legs</u> for every passer-by</i>
Pesh	וְהִפְשִׁקִי אֶת-רַגְלֶיךָ לְכָל-עוֹבֵר <i>and you have stretched out <u>your feet</u> to all who pass by</i>
Tgm	לְמַפְלַח לְטַעֲוֹתָא עִם כָּל דְּעָדִי <i>to worship <u>idols</u> with all who are passing</i>

The Peshitta is the only version to translate strictly literally. Typically, the LXX uses πούς (“foot”) as its equivalent for רַגְלָךְ, so the use of σκέλος (“leg”) in this passage is noteworthy as the word denotes the full length of the leg. The Greek verb used (διάγω) also carries associations of separating or drawing open. The image is more overtly sexual when a woman is described as drawing open her legs. In line with its overall reframing of this passage as an account of Israel’s religious apostasy, the Targum lacks sexual overtones and describes instead

an indiscriminate offer to worship idols with any and all who may pass by. The Peshitta translates literally (Type A), the LXX relates the imagery in comparable terms (Type D), but the Targum reframes the entire scene. The Targum’s strategy is Type B (meaning-oriented) in a sense because the underlying meaning of the passage is being recounted plainly instead of dressed up in an extended metaphor as in the Hebrew text.

5.3.3.6 Little thing (קטן)

The noun קטן is only used in BH in the rude expression Rehoboam’s young men suggest he use to assert himself over the northern tribes in 1 Kgs 12:10 (// 2 Chr 10:10), but the root קטן is used over a hundred times and clearly indicates small size. The young men suggest Rehoboam assert his superiority over his father by declaring, “my little thing is thicker than my father’s loins.” While the use of מְתַנִּים (“loins”) as a euphemism for the genitals is unclear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Section 5.3.3.2), this expression is often taken as, at the very least, an innuendo over the size of Rehoboam’s endowment in contrast with his father’s (see Cogan 2001: 348; Sweeney 2013: 170). When Rehoboam speaks harshly to the people in 1 Kgs 12:13–14, this insulting boast is not repeated, but the second half of 12:11 about disciplining the people with scorpion is stated explicitly. Cogan (2001: 349) believes that Rehoboam wisely ignored the advice to use such a crude insult in public.

(42) 1 Kings 12:10

MT	קִטְנִי עָבָה מִמְתְּנֵי אָבִי <i>my little thing is thicker than the loins of my father</i>
LXX	Ἡ μικρότης μου παχύτερα τῆς ὀσφύος τοῦ πατρός μου <i>My smallness is thicker than the loins of my father</i>
Pesh	כִּטְיָ, חֲבִיבָה מִ, חֶבֶל בִּזְמַת גִּבְרָתִי <i>my little finger is thicker than the thumb of my father</i>
Tgm	חַלְשׁוֹתַי תְּקִיפָא מְעוֹלִימוֹתֶיהָ דְאָבִי <i>my weakness is stronger than my father’s strength</i>

The versions may not have fully understood this expression any more than modern interpreters, but they were able to communicate the overall intent of the young men’s advice. Rehoboam’s “little thing” is taken as a reference to his little finger in the Peshitta and in the LXX of 2 Chr 10:10 (Ὁ μικρὸς δάκτυλός μου). Perhaps for consistency of imagery, the Peshitta mentions the “thumb” rather than the “loins.” In saying his little finger was thicker than his father’s thumb (normally the thickest digit on the hand), Rehoboam would be asserting his greater strength. The Targum makes this understanding explicit; instead of body-part imagery, the Targum refers to the symbols they represented in the BH expression — weakness and strength. By translating semantically (a Type B strategy), the Targum avoids any potential imagery about the relative virility of Rehoboam and Solomon while still translating the essential contrast of the source text. Since קִטְּוֹ is used nowhere else, we cannot be sure if it was meant euphemistically. Sweeney (2013: 170) is certain that קִטְּוֹ “is a reference to [Rehoboam’s] penis,” but associating one’s genitals with smallness seems an odd boast for a group of young men, regardless of whether the penis is literally a small part of the body. However, the euphemistic nature of the expression may be antiphrastic (“my little guy is really big!”).

5.3.3.7 Shameful parts (מְבוּשִׁים)

Euphemisms for the genitalia are derived from words related to “shame” in a number of languages (Allan & Burridge 1991: 54). The correlation of the Greek ἀσχημοσύνη (“shame”) with עֲרֹוּהָ (“nakedness”) as noted earlier (see Section 5.3.3.4) is but one example. The use of “pudenda” for genitalia is yet another since the English word derives from a Latin euphemism meaning “that of which one ought to be ashamed” (ibid.). Allan and Burridge (1991: 54) note similar euphemisms in Dutch (*schaamdelen*, “shameful parts”) and Indonesian (*kemaluan*, “shame, embarrassment”). The common development of euphemisms for the genitalia from

words invoking the concept of shame shows the existence of the Hebrew term מְבוּשִׁים (“shameful parts”), from the root בוש, fits an expected linguistic pattern. What is less expected is that the word is only used once in the Hebrew Bible, in Deut 25:11.

(43) Deuteronomy 25:11

MT	וְשָׁלְחָה יָדָהּ וְהִצִּיקָהּ בְּמִבְשָׁיו and she puts out her hand and grabs <u>his shameful parts</u>
LXX	καὶ ἐκτείνασα τὴν χεῖρα ἐπιλάβηται τῶν διδύμων αὐτοῦ and stretching out her hand seizes <u>his twins</u>
Pesh	וְשִׂיטָה יָדָהּ וְתִקֵּף בְּבֵיתוֹ and she extends her hand and seizes <u>his lap</u>
Tgm ²⁵	וְתוֹשִׁיט יָדָהּ וְתִתְקִיף בְּבֵית בְּהֵתִיָּה and she extends her hand and seizes his <u>house of shame</u>

The context is a casuistic legal scenario, a hypothetical situation used to illustrate a legal principle (i.e., “If A happens, then B is the punishment”). The set up to the legal principle (the “If this happens” part) is in 25:11 and describes a situation where two men are fighting and the wife of one intervenes to rescue her husband by grabbing his opponent in his private parts. No context to the men’s conflict is given (such as who started the fight or what the cause was), and no explanation follows the announcement of the harsh punishment — the woman’s hand is to be cut off (Deut 25:12).²⁶

The versions universally understood מְבוּשִׁים as a euphemism for the genitals. The Syriac uses ܡܘܫܝܡ, a euphemism for the genitalia also used to render the BH euphemism בְּשָׁר (see Section 5.3.3.4). The Targums use בֵּית בְּהֵתִיָּה, literally “house of shame,” but compounds with בְּיָתֵי are commonly found in rabbinic literature as terms for parts of the body (see Jastrow, s.v.

²⁵ The Targum text is from Pseudo-Jonathan, but all the Pentateuchal Targums have essentially this reading. Neofiti uses a different verb for “stretch out” (טָשַׁף).

²⁶ A detailed discussion of this legal scenario and its possible interpretations is beyond the scope of the current study. For a brief summary of options, see Tigay 1996: 484–486. For a longer discussion of laws related to family and sexuality in Deuteronomy, see Rofé 2002: 169–192.

“בַּיִת”). Finally, the Greek word *δίδυμοι* (“twins”) is used as a euphemism for the testicles in secular Greek texts (see LSJ, s.v. “*δίδυμος*”).

5.3.3.8 Summary

From this survey of body-part terms related to genitalia and procreation, we see that most BH terms in this semantic domain are general body-part labels that are only occasionally used euphemistically. The euphemistic use is generally signalled by key contextual clues that aid in construal of the appropriate sense. The ancient versions tended to translate these terms by attending to lexical equivalence instead of semantic equivalence. That is, they used a body-part term with the same literal meaning as the BH term even when the semantic context suggested the BH word was not being used literally. However, on numerous occasions, the euphemistic sense was recognised by the ancient translators and the appropriate meaning was conveyed either directly or through use of comparable figurative language.

5.3.4 Bodily Excretions

In this section, we will survey BH expressions related to bodily excretions like urination, defecation, and menstruation. This subject is commonly tabooed and typically discussed mainly via euphemism (outside of medical contexts) in many languages today (see Allan & Burridge 1991: 78–85). We have already noted one of the primary examples of euphemism used for urination or defecation — where the Qere substitutes *מֵי מַי רַגְלֵיהֶם* (“water of their feet”) for *שִׁינֵיהֶם* (“their urine”) in 2 Kgs 18:27 and its parallel in Isa 36:12 (see Section 5.3.3.5 above). The term *שִׁין*, the apparently offensive word for urine, is only found in these verses in BH, but the meaning is plain from cognate evidence (see *HALOT*, s.v. “*שִׁין*”). In the same verses, the Qere substitutes *צֹאֲתָם* (“excrement”) for *קִרֵיהֶם* (“faeces”), and despite the textual difficulties in 2 Kgs 6:25, the Qere appears to clearly be again avoiding the use of the word

קָרָאִים for faeces by substituting דְּבִיּוֹנִים (“excrements”). Both substitutions are mentioned in the rabbinic discussion at b. Meg. 25b:

The rabbis taught that all verses written in Scripture in an obscene manner are to be read in a polite manner. ... for “dove’s dung [חריונים], read “excrements” [דביונים]; for “to eat their dung and drink their urine” [לאכל את חריהם ולשתות את שיניהם עמכם], read “to eat their excrement and drink the water of their feet” [לאכול את צואתם ולשתות] [את מימי רגליהם].²⁷

This concern for polite speech for this subject appears to be a later development of rabbinic sensibilities since the LXX and Peshitta do not try to avoid direct references to excrement or urine (LXX: κόπρος, “dung”; οὔρον, “urine”; Pesh: אַבֵּא, “dung”; אַנְא, “urine”). By contrast, the Targum uses מפקה (“discharge”) and מִימֵי רַגְלֵיהוֹן (“water of the feet”) to veil somewhat the coarse meaning of the Hebrew, just as the Qere.

The etymology for the Hebrew word צֹאָה, used as a euphemism for faeces, is debated. If it derives from יצא (“come out”), then it would have a similar origin to the English “excrement” as a generic word for solid waste since “excrement” comes from Latin *excrementum*, meaning “what has been separated out.” However, it is more likely that צֹאָה is derived from צוּא (“filth, pollution”) and relates to צֹאָה, another word for human excrement used in Deut 23:14 and Ezek 4:12. The word צֹאָה appears written in the Hebrew text in Isa 4:4; 28:8; and Prov 30:12. In Isa 28:8, the word refers to vomit, but the other two uses may be euphemisms for faeces (though in Isa 4:4 the imagery is figurative for being soiled by sins). The versions mainly use generic words for “filth” that do not necessarily have connotations related to excrement for Isa 4:4 and Prov 30:12. The LXX in Prov 30:12 renders צֹאָה with ἐξοδος (“going out”), which suggests it

²⁷ My translation based on the text of the Babylonian Talmud available at <https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.25b.11?lang=he>. Note the Talmud’s Hebrew text for 1 Kgs 18:27 reads מימי שיניהם for the Ketiv. My version is amended to reflect the text of *BHS* where מימי is part of the Qere only.

was read as a word related to צֹא and also taken as a euphemism.²⁸ The other well-known biblical euphemism for answering the call of nature is “covering the feet,” covered in Section 5.3.4.1 below. The use of the expression “way of women” to refer to menstruation is then covered in Section 5.3.4.2.

5.3.4.1 Covering the feet (הַסִּיד אֶת־רַגְלָיו)

The BH euphemism הַסִּיד אֶת־רַגְלָיו (“cover his feet”) is a circumlocution used to refer obliquely to the act of squatting to relieve oneself.²⁹ A side effect of the primary activity serves to designate the activity itself, but this euphemism does not have the same conceptual associations in cultures where most people are not wearing long robes. Even Bible translations that emphasise their close attention to a word-for-word, formal rendering of the Hebrew Bible generally translate this euphemism idiomatically (e.g., “relieve himself” in ESV and NASB, though KJV is word-for-word “cover his feet”). The euphemism appears only twice in the Hebrew Bible, in Judg 3:24 and 1 Sam 24:4. The verb is the hiphil of סָכַךְ (“cover”). Since the object of the verb is the “feet” (רַגְלָיו), this expression is sometimes mentioned in discussions of the euphemistic use of רַגְלָיו for the genitalia (see, e.g., *TDOT*, s.v. “רַגְלָיו”).³⁰ However, the spatial associations with literally covering the feet when squatting while wearing a long robe provide the best explanation for the expression. If רַגְלָיו were taken as a euphemism for the genitalia, a more involved explanation of how purging one’s bowels could be figuratively described as “covering” one’s genitalia would be necessary. Where this expression is used in

²⁸ In *NETS*, Johann Cook translates ἄξοδος as “anus,” recognising the likely euphemistic sense of the word and the excrement-laced meaning of the proverb — “Wicked progeny judges itself righteous but did not wash off its anus” (Prov 30:12, *NETS*). In contemporary slang English, we might translate something like “he thinks he’s hot stuff, but he can’t even wipe his own ass.”

²⁹ It may be more accurate to classify it as another GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymy.

³⁰ On the euphemistic use of רַגְלָיו, see Section 5.3.3.5 above.

Judg 3:24, the context is that the servants of Eglon, king of Moab, are wondering whether the king has locked himself “in the cool room” (בַּחֲדָר הַמְקֻרָה) because he is using the toilet.³¹

(44) Judges 3:24

- MT אִךְ מְסִידָהּ הוּא אֶת רַגְלָיו בַּחֲדָר הַמְקֻרָה
Surely he is covering his feet in the cool room
- LXX^A Μήποτε πρὸς δίφρους κάθηται ἐν τῇ ἀποχωρήσει τοῦ κοιτῶνος
Perhaps he is sitting on the stool in the retreat of his bedroom
- LXX^B Μήποτε ἀποκενοῖ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ταμείῳ τῷ θερινῷ
Perhaps he is draining his feet in the summer room
- Pesh כּוּ לַחֲדָרָא דְעֻלְמָא וְחַלְלָא
Perhaps he went to the latrine in the upper chamber
- Tgm בָּרָם עֲבִיד הוּא יֵת צוֹרְכִיהָ בְּאֲדָרוֹן בֵּית קִטָּא
Surely he is doing his needs in the privacy of the summer house

All of the versions, including both editions of the LXX, appear to be rendering this BH euphemism with comparable target language euphemistic phrasing. The language may not reflect widely used euphemisms, but the meaning is easily inferred. Concerning euphemisms related to bodily excretions, Opelt (1966: 952) states that “Griechische E[uphemismen] für diesen Bereich sind noch nicht beobachtet.”³² Yet, in her discussion of Old Testament euphemisms, she suggests “covering his feet” from 1 Sam 24:4 provides a Hebrew parallel for the Greek and Latin euphemisms in the area of excrement and excretion (Opelt 1966: 955). The fact that Greek euphemisms for this subject have not been systematically observed suggests the LXX renderings for biblical euphemisms, when they are not strictly word-for-word translations, should be considered as possible Greek euphemisms. The rendering in LXX^A could be euphemistic (Type D) while LXX^B is possibly a compromise (Type C) since

³¹ It is possible, perhaps likely, that the phrase *בַּחֲדָר הַמְקֻרָה* (“the cool room”) is itself a euphemism for the toilet chamber (see the detailed argument in Jull 1998).

³² Author’s translation: “Greek euphemisms for this area have not yet been observed.”

same was as LXX^B for Judg 3:24 by using ἀποκενώω (Field 1875: 531). Josephus also recounts this story and describes Saul’s situation as ἐπειγόμενος οὖν ὑπὸ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν (“then being urged according to nature”; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.283). The LXX and other Greek witnesses, then, reflect euphemistic interpretations of the BH euphemism. The Targum’s rendering and the LXX use of the aorist infinitive παρασκευάσασθαι (“to make preparations”) are both examples of the Type D strategy where a source text figure of speech is translated by a target language figure of speech of comparable meaning. The assumption that the versions did not make significant use of idiomatic substitution of this sort has not been supported by the evidence analysed in this study. While it is true that Type A literal renderings are common, the number of Type C and Type D renderings indicates at least some translators of the ancient versions possessed a more sophisticated understanding of translation and were capable of varying their strategies to bring the text closer to the natural language of their audiences, even if their default mode was to translate literally.

The Peshitta is the only version that abandons the idea of Saul relieving himself in the cave, reporting instead that Saul went into the cave to sleep (ܫܠܡܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ). This version of events is not attested by any other ancient witnesses (Smith 1899: 217), and it is not easily explained as a textual variant of any kind. The only explanation is that the translator, either intentionally or accidentally, conflated the incident in 1 Sam 24 with that in 1 Sam 26 where David does come upon Saul sleeping and refrains from killing him. The Peshitta at 1 Sam 26:7 uses the same verb as in 24:4 (ܫܠܡܐ). Since the Peshitta does not seem to otherwise avoid the subject matter of latrines (as in the Syriac rendering of Judg 3:24), the change may have been made because the translator felt Saul would be more vulnerable asleep.

5.3.4.2 The way of women (דרך נשים or ארח כנשים)

Menstruation and menstruating women have been taboo in many societies (Allan & Burrige 1991: 63). According to the surveys done by Allan and Burrige (1991: 53) to assess how much people were revolted by various bodily fluids, a much higher percentage of men than women considered menstrual blood highly revolting. Their research showed that men were more strongly affected by this taboo compared to women (Allan & Burrige 1991: 64). This stronger negative male response may be evident in the detailed restrictions related to menstrual impurity in Lev 15: 19–32. Most commonly menstruation is referred to as נְדָה in the Hebrew Bible. This term may be a euphemism since it is also used as a general word for filth and contamination (e.g., Ezek 7:19–20; 2 Chr 29:5), but it is just as likely that the general meaning was an application of the meaning “menstrual contamination” to new contexts. In Lev 15:24, to take a representative example, the LXX renders נְדָה as ἀκαθαρσία (“impurity”), the Peshitta uses ܚܦܨܐ (“monthly period”), Targum Neofiti uses נדה, and Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan use ריחוק (“separation”), another euphemism for a woman’s period. These renderings are all fairly straightforward and stereotypical. None but Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan makes any effort to veil the language of menstruation in a stronger euphemism.

The two euphemistic phrases used in Genesis to refer indirectly to menstruation offer a more interesting example for analysis in the versions. The first expression occurs in Gen 18:11 as an explanation of why Sarah was too old to have children, and the other is spoken by Rachel in Gen 31:35 to explain to her father Laban why she really cannot rise to greet him.

(46) Genesis 18:11

MT	קָדַל לְהִיּוֹת לְשָׂרָה אֲרַח כְּנָשִׁים <i>The way like women had ceased to be for Sarah.</i>
LXX	ἐξέλιπεν δὲ Σαρρα γίνεσθαι τὰ γυναικεῖα <i>Female complaints had ceased to be for Sarah.</i>

Pesh בְּכֹהֵן וְלִמְחֵסָה לְשׂוּרָה אֲשֶׁר נִגְזַר
The way of women had departed from being for Sarah

TgmO פָּסַק מִלְמַהוּי לְשׂוּרָה אֲוֶרָה כְּנִשְׂיָא
The way like women had ceased to be for Sarah

In 18:11, the Peshitta and the Targums translate literally (Type A strategy), but the LXX translator uses τὰ γυναικεία (“female things”), a GENERAL-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymy, as a euphemism to represent the BH euphemism אֲרָה כְּנִשְׂיָא, a Type D rendering. The Targums all translate this euphemism directly as in Targum Onqelos, but Targum Pseudo-Jonathan adds a word to the phrase — אֲוֶרָה סוֹבְתָא כְּנִשְׂיָא (“way of uncleanness like women”). This insertion makes explicit what the figure of speech is actually about by linking the “way of women” back to the concept of impurity emphasised by passages like Lev 15.

In Gen 31:35, Rachel pretends to be having her period so that her father Laban will not find the household gods he is searching for because she is sitting on them. The ruse was an effective manipulation of the aforementioned strong sense of disgust that menstruation elicits in males. Rachel remained seated and Laban left without finding his stolen property.

(47) Genesis 31:35

MT לֹא אוֹכַל לָקוּם מִפְּנֵיךָ כִּי־זָרָה נִשְׂיָא לִי
I am unable to rise before you for the way of women is to me.

LXX οὐ δύναμαι ἀναστῆναι ἐνώπιόν σου, ὅτι τὸ κατ' ἐθισμὸν τῶν γυναικῶν μοί ἐστιν
I am unable to rise before you for it is with me in accordance with the habit of women.

Pesh וְלֹא יִשְׁבַּע אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ כִּי סוֹבְתָא
כְּנִשְׂיָא לִי נִגְזַר
that I cannot rise before you because the way to me of women

TgmO לֹא אֵיכוֹל לְמַקָּם מִן קִדְמוֹת אֶרֶץ אֲוֶרָה נִשְׂיָא
לִי
I am unable to rise before you because the way of women is to me

As with Gen 18:11, the Peshitta and Targums translate this euphemism literally, but it seems likely the expression's euphemistic meaning was well-understood. All Aramaic versions used the word אַרְוָה for "way" like the Hebrew of 18:11, even though the Hebrew of 31:35 uses אֶרְוָה. The terms are synonymous in both Aramaic and Hebrew. The Targums all reflect essentially the same reading in this case, as well, unlike in 18:11 where Pseudo-Jonathan makes the association between menstruation and impurity explicit.

The BH euphemism is translated by the LXX with ἐθισμὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ("habit of women"). This rendering provides a word-for-word translation, but the lexical choice is somewhat euphemistic since ἐθισμός means "custom" or "habit" and functions similarly to the English euphemisms "period" or "time of the month."

The taboos surrounding menstruation may have motivated the Targums to avoid some direct references and substitute with a euphemism as in Lev 15:24. With the euphemistic expressions in Genesis, the Aramaic versions pass along the source figure of speech, while the LXX provides more idiomatic renderings rather than simply calque the BH phrasing as is common with other idiomatic expressions.

5.3.4.3 Summary

The biblical writers and later scribes and translators were affected by taboos related to bodily excretions in different ways. The writer in 2 Kgs 18:27 freely used words for excrement and urine that were later considered offensive and euphemised in the Qere, but the translators of the LXX and Peshitta for that verse used straightforward words for the waste products, just like the Hebrew's written text. With a specific BH euphemistic phrase like "cover the feet" for defecation, the versions primarily used language that could be considered figurative and euphemistic for the target language, rather than literally representing the source.

The same mixed reactions are evident with the language of menstruation with renderings ranging from “separation” to “female problems” to “filth.” The translators tended to distance themselves from the topic either by avoiding direct reference to it or by highlighting their perception of its dirty and impure nature.

5.3.5 Sexuality

Biblical Hebrew typically refers to sexual activity with one of the following three verbs: יָדַע (“know”; Gen 4:1); שָׁכַב (“lie”; Gen 35:22); or בָּוֹא (“enter”; Gen 16:4).³³ Each verb is common in the Hebrew Bible in its natural sense; the euphemistic uses make up only a small fraction of the overall occurrences.³⁴ Yet, the euphemistic sense is always clear from context, and there is an element of verbal play in the way biblical narrative, especially in Genesis, juxtaposes the euphemistic and natural senses of these verbs. The verb בָּוֹא appears with its usual sense and its euphemistic sense in quick succession in Gen 30:16:

And Jacob came (בָּוֹא) from the field in the evening. Then, Leah went out to meet him, and she said, ‘You must come in to (בָּוֹא + אֵל) me since I have surely bought you with my son’s mandrakes.’ So he lay (שָׁכַב) with her that night.

The same verbal play is evident in Gen 19:30–38, the incident where Lot’s daughters bed their father, thinking he is the last man on earth. The narrative uses all three common euphemisms for sexual activity, but two occur in their usual sense — the girls “go in” (בָּוֹא) to “lie with” (שָׁכַב) their father but he does not “know” (יָדַע) what happens. The sex acts in this

³³ Zevit (2011: 396–399) offers a brief discussion of the euphemistic usage of these verbs. He attempts to distinguish some difference in the appropriate contexts where any one of the three is used instead of the others. His claim that בָּוֹא with אֵל is likely “used only in cases of a couple’s first licit sexual act after an agreement has been reached about the signification of the act” (Zevit 2011: 398) is an overly strong conclusion that overlooks illicit contexts such as Gen 6:4 and cannot explain how the acts in Ezek 23:44 could be considered “licit.”

³⁴ To illustrate, יָדַע is used 947 times, שָׁכַב is used 213 times, and בָּוֹא is used 2569 times according to a lemma search of the Hebrew Bible in Logos Bible Software. Each verb is used euphemistically 17, 49, and 34 times respectively.

context are communicated with the euphemism **שָׁכַב**, but the uses of the other verbs undoubtedly added to the suggestiveness and innuendo of the story.

The encounter of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38 also plays off the meanings of **בֹּא** and **יָדַע**. The sex act is usually described with **בֹּא**, but the verb **יָדַע** is used with its natural sense between two euphemistic uses of **בֹּא** in 38:16:

And he said, ‘Come now, let me come in to (**בֹּא** + **אֵל**) you’ for he did not know (**יָדַע**) she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, ‘What will you give me that you may come in to (**בֹּא** + **אֵל**) me?’

At the story’s resolution in 38:26, the narrator notes that Judah did not “know” (**יָדַע**) Tamar again after her pregnancy, the only euphemistic use of that verb in the story. In the next chapter of Genesis, Potiphar’s wife uses **אֵל** + **בֹּא** to describe Joseph’s literal entrance to her room and uses **שָׁכַב** to describe his alleged sexual intent in 39:14: “He came to (**בֹּא** + **אֵל**) me to lie (**שָׁכַב**) with me.”³⁵ Wordplay of this type is easily lost in translation and nearly impossible to replicate since double entendre depends so heavily on a shared sociolinguistic context. When the LXX consistently uses the Type A renderings and consistently uses the same Greek verb for a Hebrew verb, the formal correspondence is reproduced, but the double entendre must be inferred from context if the target language does not also use those terms euphemistically.

In this section, representative examples of the three primary BH euphemisms for sex acts are analysed. A high percentage of the euphemistic uses of these verbs are found in the book of Genesis, and most of the sexual euphemisms of this type are found in the genres of narrative or law. In addition to the three common BH sexual euphemisms, I address the use of the

³⁵ When she makes her accusation to Potiphar in Gen 39:17, the wording is substantially similar except that **שָׁכַב** is replaced with **צָחַק** (“laugh”). The only other place where **צָחַק** may be a sexual euphemism is Gen 26:8.

expression גלה עֲרְוֹהּ (“uncover nakedness”) as a sexual euphemism used primarily in Leviticus and Ezek 16 and 23.

5.3.5.1 Carnal knowledge (ידע)

The verb ידע is used as a sexual euphemism seventeen times in the Hebrew Bible, with seven of those occurrences found in Genesis.³⁶ A typical example is the first clear biblical reference to a sex act in Gen 4:1.

(48) Genesis 4:1

MT	וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד <i>and the man <u>knew</u> Eve his wife and she conceived and bore</i>
LXX	Ἀδάμ δὲ ἔγνων Εὐαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν <i>and Adam <u>knew</u> Eve his wife, and conceiving, she bore</i>
Pesh	וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד <i>and Adam <u>knew</u> Eve his wife and she conceived and bore</i>
TgmO	וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד <i>and Adam <u>knew</u> Eve his wife and she conceived and bore</i>

Here and in five of the other occurrences in Gen, the LXX represents ידע with γιγνώσκω (“know”). While this appears to be a Type A rendering of the Hebrew, it seems that γιγνώσκω was occasionally used as a sexual euphemism in classical Greek (LSJ, s.v. “γιγνώσκω”). According to Adams (1990: 190), “the familiar Biblical euphemism ‘know’ (of carnal knowledge) was well domiciled in Latin before it made an appearance in Bible translations,” but he also cites similar uses of γιγνώσκω in classical Greek. This classical usage suggests the conceptual domain of knowledge was productive for sexual euphemisms without necessarily indicating an influence from biblical language. The Peshitta and Targum Neofiti consistently use the Aramaic verb כחם when ידע is used in the sexual sense (see McNamara 1992: 64n1).

³⁶ Gen 4:1, 17, 25; 19:5, 8; 24:16; 38:26.

In Syriac, the verb **סַחַר** appears to regularly have that figurative sense, suggesting the usage is a substitution of a target language euphemism or Type D rendering (see *CSD*, s.v. “**סַחַר**”).

The one exception to the LXX use of **γίγνωσκω** for **עָדָה** in Gen is 19:5 where the verb **συγγίγνομαι** is used, a word that appears to have the basic sense of “be with” or “associate with” in classical Greek. Greek writers also use that verb as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (LSJ, s.v. “**συγγίγνομαι**”). If the word is a Greek euphemism, then this rendering is also Type D — another example of idiom substitution in the LXX.

The LXX also uses the word **συγγίγνομαι** in the sexually charged context of Gen 39. In 39:10, Joseph is described resisting the advances of Potiphar’s wife day after day. Despite her insistence, he refused to “lie (**שָׁכַב**) beside her to be (**הָיָה**) with her.” The LXX uses **συγγίγνομαι** to represent **הָיָה**. While **συγγίγνομαι** could be meant in the ordinary sense of “be with,” it is more likely again being used as a sexual euphemism.³⁷ The euphemistic use of **συγγίγνομαι** in 39:10 shows the LXX translator making the sexual overtones of the passage explicit, even as the Hebrew euphemisms are rendered literally.

The rendering of Gen 4:1 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reflects exegetical intervention on the part of the translator that far exceeds the simple manipulation of a euphemistic phrase. Typically, Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan use **עָדָה** for this euphemism (compare Gen 4:17, 25 in TgmPsJ). Maher’s (1992: 31) translation of Gen 4:1 in Pseudo-Jonathan reads: “Adam knew his wife Eve who had conceived from Sammael, the angel of the Lord.” The Targum reflects the exegetical tradition that Cain was the offspring of Satan, not Adam.

But after the fall of Eve, Satan, in the guise of the serpent, approached her, and the fruit of their union was Cain, the ancestor of all the impious generations that were

³⁷ *NETS* reads “in order to have relations with her” for the relevant phrase in Gen 39:10.

rebellious toward God, and rose up against Him. Cain's descent from Satan, who is the angel Samael, was revealed in his seraphic appearance.
(Ginzberg 2003: 100–101)

This belief in Cain's parentage is clearer in Pseudo-Jonathan's statement inserted at Gen 5:3 that Cain "was not from him [Adam] and did not resemble him [Adam]" (see Maher 1992: 36). The tradition that Eve had sexual intercourse with the serpent is recorded in the Talmud (b. Shab. 146a; b. Yeb. 103b), but those texts do not suggest that she became pregnant from the union. Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer, a late midrashic text on Genesis and part of Exodus ascribed to the tannaitic authority Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, implicitly connects Eve's conceiving of Cain with Sammael as well (Friedlander 1916: 150–151). Maher (1992: 31n2) concludes that Pseudo-Jonathan "is the earliest text that explicitly identifies Sammael as the father of Cain." Pseudo-Jonathan is usually explained as dependent on Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer for this exegetical tradition (both texts likely date between the late seventh and early ninth centuries CE; see Friedlander 1916: 150n6; Maher 1992: 11–12), so the Targum has made explicit what was implied in earlier Jewish texts. As a translation of the Hebrew, the Targum remains close to the source wording for the initial part of the verse, but the verb **עָדָה** could be taken as either euphemistic, indicating Adam had intercourse with Eve when she was already pregnant by Sammael, or literal, stating that Adam knew Eve was pregnant by Sammael. The overall effect of the translation in Pseudo-Jonathan is a reframing of the story toward the traditions explaining Cain's evil origin.

5.3.5.2 Going in (**בִּוּא**)

The verb **בִּוּא** is used as a sexual euphemism thirty-four times in the Hebrew Bible and nineteen times in Genesis.³⁸ The actual euphemistic collocation is often identified as **בִּוּא אֶל** meaning "go into" or "go to" (see, e.g., Brenner 1997: 22; Zevit 2011: 396), but this syntagm occurs

³⁸ Gen 6:4; 16:2, 4; 19:31; 29:21, 23, 30; 30:3, 4, 16; 38:2, 8, 9, 16, 18.

hundreds of times where it does *not* have a euphemistic sense. Also, in Gen 19:31, בוא occurs in its sexual sense without any preposition. Since euphemism is a pragmatic, not a syntactic category, it seems unnecessary to delimit the potential euphemistic use to a specific syntactic collocation, especially when that syntactic structure is not specifically marked for the figurative meaning.

Further, the euphemistic sense for בוא applies to only a tiny percentage of its overall use in the Hebrew Bible since בוא is one of the most frequently used verbs of motion in BH (see *TDOT*, s.v. “בוא”). It is interesting that over half of the euphemistic occurrences are found in Genesis alone, where it is used as a sexual euphemism even more frequently than שכב, overall the most commonly used of the three typical sexual euphemisms found in BH. Genesis 16:4, where Abraham “goes in” to Hagar when she conceives Ishmael, provides a representative example of this euphemism and its treatment by the ancient versions.

(49) Genesis 16:4

MT	וַיֵּבֵא אֶל הַגֵּר וַתְּהַר and <i>he went in</i> to Hagar and she conceived
LXX	καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς Ἀγαρ, καὶ συνέλαβεν and <i>he went in</i> to Hagar, and she conceived
Pesh	ܘܝܒܝܐ ܐܠ ܗܘܪܐ ܘܬܗܪ and <i>he went in</i> to Hagar and she conceived
TgmO	וַעַל לְוַת הַגֵּר וַעֲדִיאַת and <i>he went in</i> to Hagar and she conceived

In Aramaic and Syriac, the standard equivalent for בוא used in a sexual sense is the verb עלל (“go in, enter”). Since עלל also occurs elsewhere in Aramaic as a sexual euphemism, this substitution is a Type D rendering, even though the term is also a lexical equivalent (Jastrow, s.v. “עלל”; *CSD*, s.v. “על”).

The LXX almost always uses *εἰσέρχομαι* as in Gen 16:4 when **אָוַב** occurs as a sexual euphemism; this equivalence is a straightforward Type A rendering. The only exceptions are Gen 6:4; Deut 22:13; and Ezek 23:44. In Gen 6:4 and Ezek 23:44, the LXX uses *εἰσπορεύομαι*, another verb meaning “go in” or “enter.” There does not seem to be a discernible difference in meaning in Greek between *εἰσέρχομαι* and *εἰσπορεύομαι* (see LSJ, s.v. “εἰσπορεύω”), but it stands out that the substitution occurs in two passages known for their depictions of illicit sexual activity (though on that basis, we might expect the substitution in other scenes of unsanctioned sex like 2 Sam 16:21–22).

The third exception is Deut 22:13 where the LXX uses *συνοικέω* (“live together”). The use of *συνοικέω* is appropriate to the context since it can refer to living together as a married couple, a sense that could lend it the euphemistic connotation of consummating the marriage (a fact intended by the Hebrew’s use of **אָוַב** in this legal context). However, another explanation is influence from the other two uses of the euphemism in Deuteronomy. In the LXX of both Deut 21:13 and 25:5, the text associates “going into” (*εἰσέρχομαι*) a woman and “living with” (*συνοικέω*) her with taking her as a wife. It is possible the translator considered the terms to be so closely associated that substituting one for the other in 22:13 would cause no distinguishable change in meaning. Apart from the possibility that the rendering in Deut 22:13 is euphemistic, the LXX was predominantly literal with this BH euphemism.

5.3.5.3 Lying with (**שָׁכַב**)

The most common lexeme used as a sexual euphemism in BH is **שָׁכַב** (“lie down, sleep”). It is used forty-nine times in a sexual sense with fifteen of those occurrences in Genesis (including the ambiguous case at 39:10).³⁹ Connecting the sex act with the place where it occurs (the bed)

³⁹ Gen 19:32, 33, 34, 35; 26:10; 30:15, 16; 34:2, 7; 35:22; 39:7, 10, 12, 14.

or the stereotypical position of the bodies (lying down) is a common strategy for producing sexual euphemisms (see Allan & Burridge 1991: 90–91). The result is that “sleeping together” is a sexual euphemism in a number of other languages including English, Spanish, ancient Greek, and classical Latin (see Adams 1990: 177–178; Santaemilia 2005: 86). Adams (1990: 177) goes so far as to suggest that “this euphemism may be universal.” In Gen 26:10, Abimelech expresses dismay that he did not know Rebekah was Isaac’s wife and that someone could have slept with her while she was in his household.

(50) Genesis 26:10

MT	כְּמַעַט שָׁכַב אֶחָד הָעָם אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ <i>one of the people could easily <u>have lain</u> with your wife</i>
LXX	μικροῦ ἐκοιμήθη τις τοῦ γένους μου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός σου <i>one of my family almost <u>slept</u> with your wife</i>
Pesh	בְּ מַלְכָּא מִבְּרַחְמֵי אֲנִיכֵי <i>one from the people almost <u>slept</u> with your wife</i>
TgmPsJ	כְּזַעִיר פּוֹן שָׁכִיב מְלִכָּא דְּמִיחָד בְּעַמָּא עִם אִינְתַתְךָ <i>the king who is unique among the people might easily have <u>lain</u> with your wife</i>

The versions tend to render this euphemism directly with a verb meaning “sleep.” The Targums generally use the cognate שכב, the Peshitta uses *ܘܡܚܝܐ*, and the LXX typically uses *κοιμάω*. In Gen 39:10, the LXX uses *καθεύδω*, another verb for sleep, instead of *κοιμάω*. In Hebrew, שכב can refer to lying down to sleep (e.g., Gen 28:11), so these Greek verbs could be considered Type A renderings. On the other hand, they could be considered Type D renderings because ancient Greek writers including Homer and Herodotus did use *κοιμάω* as a sexual euphemism (see Homer, *Odyssey* 8.295; Herodotus, *Histories* 3.68–69). The broad attestation of words related to sleeping being used as sexual euphemisms suggests that while all the versions translate literally, the euphemism is still being communicated in the target language.

5.3.5.4 Uncover nakedness (גלה עֲרְוֹה)

Leviticus 18 is well-known for its extensive regulations on illicit sexual activity. Levine (1989: 117) says the chapter “is the most systematic and complete collection of laws within the Torah dealing with the subject of incest and other forbidden sexual unions.” Most of the euphemistic occurrences of גלה עֲרְוֹה (“uncover nakedness”) for describing sexual intercourse are found in these laws in Lev 18.⁴⁰ The phrase is used as a sexual euphemism about fourteen or fifteen times with twelve in Leviticus (of which eleven are in Lev 18). In Ezekiel 16 and 23, the expression is used alternately for sexual activity and for public humiliation. The adulterous sex (גלה עֲרְוֹה) in Ezek 16:36 will be punished in part by public humiliation (גלה עֲרְוֹה) according to Ezek 16:37. A similar alternation is evident in Ezek 23:18 and 23:29. Since the use of this expression is concentrated in Lev 18, it is likely that Ezekiel’s use is drawing on this locution associated with illicit sexual activity to enhance his sexually-charged rhetoric in Ezek 16 and 23 that paints Israel’s history of apostasy toward YHWH as a picture of adultery and blatant sexual immorality.⁴¹ Leviticus 18:6–18 systematically lists specific familial relationships and proscribes sexual intercourse between a man and any woman related to him in the proscribed fashion. In each case, the expression גלה עֲרְוֹה indicates what is not allowed. The last use of גלה עֲרְוֹה in Lev 18 comes in v. 19 where sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman is forbidden (compare Section 5.3.4.2 above). Leviticus 18:16 prohibiting a man from having sex with his sister-in-law is a typical example of the phrasing of this expression in Hebrew and in the ancient versions.

⁴⁰ The reference to “uncovering nakedness” in Exod 20:26 relates to indecent exposure, not sexual intercourse. In that verse, עֲרְוֹה is used as a euphemism for the genitalia.

⁴¹ The background to the sexually explicit language of Ezek 16 and 23 was introduced above in Section 5.3.3.4.

(51) Leviticus 18:16

MT	<u>עָרוֹת אִשְׁתְּ אָחִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה</u> <i>the <u>nakedness</u> of your brother's wife do not <u>uncover</u></i>
LXX	<u>ἀσχημοσύνην</u> γυναικὸς ἀδελφοῦ σου οὐκ ἀποκαλύψεις <i>the <u>shame</u> of your brother's wife do not <u>uncover</u></i>
Pesh	<u>ܐܫܘܒܐ ܕܥܪܘܬܐ ܕܐܚܝܟܐ</u> <i>the <u>nakedness</u> of your brother's wife do not <u>uncover</u></i>
TgmO	<u>עֲרִית אִיתְּךָ אָחִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה</u> <i>the <u>nakedness</u> of your brother's wife do not <u>uncover</u></i>

Since עָרוֹת itself is a euphemism for genitalia, the LXX and Peshitta are rendering literally while still maintaining the imagery by using words like ἀσχημοσύνη (“shame, disgrace”) and ܐܫܘܒܐ (“shame, nakedness”). The Syriac is apparently a euphemism for the pudenda (see *CSD*, s.v. “ܐܫܘܒܐ”), and the Greek ἀσχημοσύνη is used consistently for עָרוֹת in the LXX as a euphemism for the private parts. However, it is unclear whether that usage of ἀσχημοσύνη had wider currency in ancient Greek. Another Greek word for “shame,” αἰσχύνη, does appear to have been used as a euphemism (Adams 1990: 201). Where this BH euphemism occurs in Ezekiel, the LXX uses αἰσχύνη, which could reflect a euphemistic understanding, but it also fits the overall context with its meaning of “dishonour.” Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan also use the verb בזי (“despise, dishonour”) instead of the cognate גלי like Onqelos. This lexical shift emphasises the dishonour associated with the forbidden sexual unions described in Lev 18.

5.3.5.5 Summary

While the ancient translators mostly used verbs from similar semantic domains to render BH sexual euphemisms, the cognitive semantic processes active in producing euphemisms across languages most likely enabled euphemistic construal of those same verbs, even if the verb was not commonly used euphemistically in the target language. In many cases, the verbs appear to

have had a euphemistic function in the target language as well, such as with verbs for sleeping, so the figurative imagery could be conveyed in translation even while translating literally.

5.4 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that the ancient versions largely understood the figurative language of the Hebrew source text and were capable of rendering those figures of speech in appropriate target language expressions of comparable meaning. The dominant strategy of translating literally (Type A) allows a strong element of foreignisation to come through in translation, but the nature of euphemistic language as highly dependent on context and as cross-culturally associated with specific taboo topics would have allowed the audiences for these translations to have construed the appropriate meaning, even if it was slightly veiled in an unfamiliar turn of phrase.

The ancient translators sometimes resorted to the use of renderings that conveyed the meaning of figurative language directly (Type B), but that decision likely reflected a weaker taboo against, for example, references to using the latrine (as in the Peshitta of Judg 3:24). With taboo topics, there can be a wide range of acceptability norms. The varying strategies used in the ancient versions could reflect awareness of the acceptability norms of their target audiences since an audience is likely to react more strongly against a text that is too explicit and that violates their sense of propriety (see Ndhlovu & Botha 2017). This awareness is more evident in the Targums that try to shield their audiences from extremely graphic imagery like that found in Ezek 16 where the Targums reframe the story in order to explain the imagery plainly. In a sense, they are choosing the Type B strategy, but they reframe the content at the macro-level instead of just substituting a euphemism for its referent. The ancient translators intervened to varying degrees to conceal content that would elicit negative reactions from their audiences.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary

This chapter presents a summary of the thesis as a whole, a presentation of the conclusions, and some recommendations for future research. The rest of this section provides an overview of the preceding chapters. In the next section (Section 6.2), I present the findings from the research on Biblical Hebrew figures of speech, such as euphemisms, and how they were translated in the Septuagint, Peshitta and Targums. I close the chapter with remarks on additional research possibilities in the third section (Section 6.3).

6.1.1 Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, I indicated the general background of the research in biblical studies (Section 1.1), especially work on the ancient Bible versions that encompasses concerns for both textual criticism and ancient exegesis. I noted that researchers working on the ancient versions were only beginning to acquaint themselves with the wider world of translation theory, especially the potential for interaction with Translation Studies.

Next, I presented the research question driving this study (Section 1.2) — how did ancient Bible translators respond to BH figures of speech, especially when those figures of speech were used for potentially offensive topics like blasphemy or bodily functions? How attentive were the ancient translators to the expectancy norms of their audiences? Since figurative language requires the translator to make a decision about what the figure of speech was meant to communicate, I hypothesised that the translators' strategies related to figures of speech might provide insights into their decision-making process.

While taboo topics may have shown more active manipulation on the part of the translator, I expanded the scope of the study to include several common BH idiomatic expressions in order to establish a baseline of expectations for how the versions handled the implicit meaning of idiomatic language and because a variety of syntactic and semantic figures of speech may be used euphemistically in language. Euphemism labels a functional category as well as a semantic one, so figures of speech like metaphor, metonymy, and simile can be euphemisms. Idiomatic expressions may also function euphemistically, and the relationship between the constituents of the idiom and the referent they conceal is not always apparent due to the semantic processes languages use to create euphemisms. Circumlocution is especially productive in the formation of euphemisms, resulting in phrases like “I need to take care of some business” standing in for “I need to use the lavatory.” Metaphor and metonymy are also key sources of euphemisms, but words may also be remodelled (God > Gosh), clipped (Jesus > jeeze), or borrowed (as with many “polite” English terms for genitalia).

Further, the opaque meaning of idiomatic expressions provides an opportunity for a translator to intervene to make the meaning explicit to the audience, but those expressions (unless they are also euphemisms) lack the baggage of cultural taboo that might alone have motivated a shift in translation strategy. As a result, seeing how translators handled more neutral idiomatic expressions was thought to provide a missing piece of data needed to fully explain the translation of figures of speech that touched on more sensitive subjects.

The methodological framework for examining BH figures of speech in translation was necessarily multi-disciplinary, so the next section was devoted to drawing the essential outline of the theoretical influences involved (Section 1.3). The primary methodological background came from Translation Studies, an inter-discipline that is itself deeply indebted to the fields of linguistics, literary theory, the social sciences, and others. The perspective of Descriptive

Translation Studies with its concern for the sociocultural context of translation was the basis for considering the influence of social norms and constraints on translators' choices (Toury 2012). Narrative frame analysis offered a complementary perspective on how translators work within larger personal and public narratives that help inform their worldviews (Baker 2006). Cognitive linguistics provided the concept of the dynamic construal of meaning, which possessed many conceptual links to fundamental concepts of DTS and narrative framing. Research on euphemisms from the perspective of pragmatics and sociolinguistics rounded out the theoretical framework with examples of the similar processes used in many languages to produce euphemisms. I ended chapter 1 with a brief discussion of the scope of the planned research and a note on the organisation of the following chapters (Sections 1.4 and 1.5).

6.1.2 Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I reviewed previous research that had been done in the areas of BH figures of speech (Section 2.2), the translation of BH figures of speech (Section 2.3), and the treatment of BH figures of speech in the ancient Bible versions (Section 2.4). Few in-depth studies have been done on BH figures of speech (e.g., Schorch 2000; Van den Heever 2013). The work that has been done was mainly found in larger studies of the style and rhetoric of the Bible with only passing comments devoted to specific figures of speech like metonymy, simile, or euphemism (e.g., Bullinger 1898; König 1900; Dhorme 1923). In the area of BH euphemisms, the previous research has contributed little more than identification of words that might be used euphemistically with little attention to the questions of how and why those figures of speech were given a euphemistic function (e.g., Ullendorff 1979; Pope 1992; Brenner 1997).

The scholars involved in Bible translation had a more sophisticated understanding of the sociological and linguistic issues relating to interpreting and translating BH figures of speech, but most studies consisted of fairly brief articles (e.g., De Waard 1971; Ellingworth & Mojola

1986; Ellington 1993; Lübbe 2002; Warren-Rothlin 2005). However, important contributions have been made toward metaphor translation by Stienstra (1993) and Kroneman (2004). Babut's (1999) work also offers a useful perspective on using componential analysis to interpret BH idioms. The topic of translating biblical figurative language is still an area where further work can be done.

The last section of Chapter 2 surveyed the work from a handful of studies on how BH figures of speech fared in the ancient Bible translations. All of the studies would have benefited from a stronger theoretical basis in semantics or translation, but they provided a starting point for the present study. The brevity of the contributions and the fact that most were either limited to one figure of speech or devoted only a few paragraphs to specific figures of speech demonstrated that a more in-depth analysis of BH figures of speech in the ancient versions was needed.

6.1.3 Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, I give a full account of the methodological framework introduced in outline form in Chapter 1. I introduced the field of Translation Studies, an inter-discipline that developed in the 1970s and 1980s to fill a gap in research focusing on translated texts (Section 3.2). The 1970s simply saw the origin of a group of researchers agreeing to call their new discipline "Translation Studies." Previous research on translation by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Nida (1964), Catford (1965), and others had already laid a foundation for the growth of this discipline. The emerging field of Translation Studies has experienced several methodological "turns" or paradigm shifts and remains dominated by several key schools of thought. I provided an overview of the major developments before turning to the primary theoretical issues of Translation Studies utilised in this research (Section 3.3). The areas of Translation Studies that

most impacted the present study were Descriptive Translation Studies and the application of narrative frame analysis to translation.

The linguistic contribution to the theoretical framework through the concept of dynamic construal and the provision of established terminology for figurative language was introduced next (Section 3.4). The idea of dynamic construal was shown to be very similar to the notion of framing in that both are concerned with how a language user understands a given communicative situation. In that section, I also defined idiomatic expressions and surveyed the sociolinguistic functions of euphemism and dysphemism.

To apply the method to translation, I reviewed how figures of speech have been approached in translation research and built on that research to develop a set of strategies known to be used for handling figures of speech. Most translation strategies deal with micro-level shifts in content — a substitution of a word or omission of a phrase. Since the taboo topics related to some figures of speech could motivate change on a larger scale, I used narrative frame analysis to develop a set of strategies that the translator could use to reframe content and effectively skirt an entire taboo subject by shifting the topic of discourse (Sections 3.5 and 3.6). Aside from full reframing, the following four strategies were defined for use in describing the translation phenomena in the ancient versions:

Type A	Formal (word-oriented)
Type B	Semantic (meaning-oriented)
Type C	Formal and Semantic (word + meaning-oriented)
Type D	Idiomatic (effect-oriented)

The Type A strategy was for the traditional formal, word-for-word approach to translation. The Type B strategy involved translating in a way that communicated the meaning of the figure of speech directly. As an example, a translation of the English idiom “spill the beans” into an expression that straightforwardly means “accidentally told a secret” would be a

Type B rendering. The Type C strategy blends aspects of Type A and Type B and usually produces unnatural syntax. To use the expression “spill the beans” again, a Type C (intralingual) translation would be something like “exposed the beans” where the verb alone carries the meaning that something was revealed that should not have been while “the beans” retains a now-inexplicable remnant of the original idiom. The Type D strategy is the ideal approach favoured by translation theorists today (Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2013) — translating the figurative language with a comparable figurative expression from the target language.

6.1.4 Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I analysed six BH idiomatic expressions: שאל לשלום, “ask about peace” (a greeting); מלא את־ידי, “fill the hand” (meaning “ordain as priest”); “son of [] years” (an expression of age); אמר בלבו, “speak in the heart” (for internal speech); דבר על־לב, “speak on the heart” (for persuasive speech); and גשא פנים, “lift the face” (for acceptance or respect). The meaning of the first four of these idiomatic expressions is commonly accepted. The precise nuance of “speak on the heart” is debatable, and the meaning of “lift the face” is context-dependent. Depending on the frequency with which the idiom was used in the Hebrew Bible, I presented all occurrences or representative examples in the LXX, Peshitta, and Targums.

The renderings of the versions were analysed according to the four types identified in Section 3.6.2 or according to whether they reframed the discourse at a higher level to manipulate content. The Aramaic versions typically rendered BH idiomatic expressions via calques or cognate terms, but the cognates appeared to themselves function idiomatically in Aramaic and Syriac. The LXX showed a tendency toward Type C renderings, especially using a verb that carried the semantic sense of the entire BH idiom while still retaining a formal, but unnecessary, remnant of the BH idiom, usually in the form of the translation of a body-part

term. But the LXX also commonly translated idioms with the Type A strategy, using calques that may have been passably intelligible in Greek but did not communicate the idiomatic meaning of the expression in any way. For the idioms related to greetings and age, the LXX was uncharacteristically idiomatic, using expected Greek expressions instead of imitating the Hebrew phrasing. For the idiomatic expressions with more opaque meaning like “speaking on the heart,” the LXX tended to resort to the Type A approach as a default, perhaps due to uncertainty over the precise nuance of the idiom. The analysis in Chapter 4 laid the groundwork for understanding the general tendencies in the ancient versions toward BH figurative language.

6.1.5 Chapter 5

The analysis in Chapter 5 extended the study of figures of speech to BH words and expressions that fell in conceptual categories considered taboo across cultures — the sacred, death, the body and its functions, and sex. While Type D, figurative, renderings were evident on occasion with idiomatic expressions in Chapter 4, the use of comparable figurative language was much higher with body-part terms, expressions for urination and defecation, and sex as analysed in Chapter 5. The Type A renderings were still predominant, but the processes according to which euphemistic meanings develop have produced comparable euphemisms out of lexical items from the same semantic domain in multiple languages such as the near-universal use of words for “sleeping” serving as sexual euphemisms. Even words considered quintessential biblical euphemisms for sex like “know” (יָדָע; γιγνώσκω) were attested in classical secular sources (Adams 1990: 190). Substitution of other euphemisms or reframing to avoid objectionable content was found to be more prevalent in the Targums, while the Peshitta appeared more comfortable with rendering certain topics directly even though the source had used a euphemism.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 Strategies

The Type A strategy turned out to be the predominant approach to translation in all the ancient versions, regardless of whether the source language was idiomatic. That is not to say that the ancient versions translate word-for-word all the time, but that they tended overall to represent the source text in a correspondent way. Even the Targums tend to be literal with expansions, meaning a literal translation of the Hebrew can be isolated as a base text in which exegetical explanations were interpolated. This conclusion is based on my observations of the translations in the versions surrounding the specific figures of speech examined in my analysis. In the cases where the versions translated a BH euphemism with a comparable euphemism, they used Type D for the figure of speech, but resorted to Type A for the phrasing all around it (e.g., LXX 1 Sam 24:4).

The assumption that the versions did not make significant use of idiomatic substitution of this sort has not been supported by the evidence analysed in this study. While it is true that Type A literal renderings are common, the number of Type C and Type D renderings indicates at least some translators of the ancient versions possessed a more sophisticated understanding of translation and were capable of varying their strategies to bring the text closer to the natural language of their audiences, even if their default mode was to translate literally. The translators of the ancient versions were perfectly capable of identifying Hebrew idioms and translating them with target language idioms if they so desired.

Their standard Type A renderings occasionally resulted in expressions that had little meaning in the target language, like the Septuagint renderings of מְלֵא אֶת־יָדַי (see Section 4.3.3), but other renderings that we would consider word-for-word literal were also idiomatic in the

target language, especially with Aramaic or Syriac, as with the expression **שאל לשלום** in Aramaic (see Section 4.3.2).

An interesting tendency emerged in the LXX's common use of hybrid, Type C, renderings for BH idiomatic expressions. With body idioms, for instance, the Septuagint may include an equivalent body-part term even when the meaning of the idiom is fully covered by the semantics of the verb, as in the stereotypical Greek renderings for **נשא פנים** (see Section 4.3.8).

Only on rare occasions did the ancient versions give the global meaning of a figure of speech in plain language; those rare occasions show the translators were at least aware of a strategy commonly advocated today for translating figurative language (one example is the use of a Greek verb meaning “greet” for the BH greeting idiom in Exod 18:7). Full idiom substitution (Type D) is even evident in the Peshitta, where **נשא פנים** in Job 11:15 and 42:8–9 is rendered with a completely different target language idiom (see Section 4.3.8).

Overall, we see that the ancient translators were capable of more interpretive renderings that reoriented BH idiomatic phrases toward the expectations of the audience of the translation. With taboo topics, there can be a wide range of acceptability norms. The varying strategies used in the ancient versions with euphemistic figures of speech likely reflect an awareness of what was acceptable to the target audience.

6.2.2 Reframing

Reframing was most evident in the Targum's treatment of the prophetic marriage metaphor imagery in Ezek 16 and 23 (see Sections 5.3.3.4 and 5.3.3.5). What was a parable or allegory-like story saturated with sex and violence in the Hebrew Bible becomes straightforward religious discourse in the Targum. The Hebrew passages use the metaphorical

trope of Israel as YHWH's unfaithful wife to cast the nation's history of idolatry in terms of a wife's adultery against her husband. In rhetorical terms, the imagery was stark and concrete — any man could identify with the feelings of betrayal and anger that characterised the Hebrew's image of a God abandoned by his people. The Targum buries all of that explicit imagery under a story of Israel's history of worshiping idols instead of trusting in YHWH. Their version captures the global meaning of Ezekiel's account, which was a critique of Israel's *religious* unfaithfulness, but they have stripped the story of its powerful rhetoric. In the Targums, the exegetical motivation for an expansion or deviation is often clearly evident, like the use of *Memra* ("word") of YHWH to avoid anthropomorphism or avoid a negative portrayal of one of the patriarchs. In the Targum of Ezek 16, the reframing appears due to the sexual imagery, as with other sexually-charged passages that were not to be read in public (m. Meg. 4:10; Klein 1988).

A less extreme example of reframing was found in the Targum's treatment of Gen 17:17 where they avoid the irreverent image of Abraham laughing out loud when YHWH again promises him a son. Their textual manipulations reframe Abraham's laughter as that of amazement and joy and provide the scene with an atmosphere of hopeful piety and worship.

6.2.3 Conclusion

The ancient translators intervened to varying degrees to conceal content that would elicit negative reactions from their audiences, a type of self-censorship, but they also made use of explicitation, revealing the meaning of a figure of speech directly as in the LXX use of *τὸ ἔκγονον* ("child") for the figurative use of פְּרִי ("fruit") for offspring (e.g., Deut 7:13) or the avoidance of a reference to the הַלְצִימִים ("loins") in the Targum of 1 Kgs 8:19 by providing the full explanation that בר דתוליד ("a son you will father").

6.3 Future perspectives

This study has made a unique contribution to biblical studies and research on Biblical Hebrew by providing a detailed analysis not only of key BH figures of speech but also of their renderings in the ancient versions. The findings show that translation strategies derived from Translation Studies can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of the ancient versions. Translation Studies also provides a theoretical foundation for describing translations that can be put to further use in studies on the Septuagint, Peshitta, and the Targums.

One key area for future research related to this study is the analysis of additional types of BH figures of speech in ancient translations. This study focused on euphemisms and a few idiomatic expressions. While some of the euphemisms made use of metaphor or metonymy, further work on how those BH figures of speech are handled in the ancient versions remains to be done.

Another potential area for future research is the analysis of BH euphemisms in modern Bible translations. This topic has particular potential because so many Bible translations today are accompanied by metatexts explaining their translation philosophy. Further, modern translation projects often have records available detailing aspects of their translation work, or the translators themselves may be available to interview or observe their thought processes. A final advantage of conducting such a study of euphemisms in modern Bible translation is the opportunity for surveying sample audiences from the target culture to determine their reactions to various renderings of taboo terms.

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