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CRITICAL NOTES

SEMANTIC BORROWING AND INNER-GREEK CORRUPTION IN LXX ZECHARIAH 11:8

Zechariah 11:8, part of the so-called Shepherd Allegory, reads as follows in the LXX: καὶ ἐξαρθῶ τοὺς τρεῖς ποιμένας ἐν μηνὶ ἐνί, καὶ βαρυνθήσεται ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς, καὶ γὰρ αἱ ψυχαὶ αὐτῶν ἐπωρῶντο ἐπ’ ἐμέ. Literally rendered: “And I shall remove the three shepherds in one month, and my soul will be made heavy against them, for their souls also were roaring against me.” The prophet, in playing the role of chief shepherd over the flock of God’s people, announces his intention to dismiss three of their leaders, here represented as faithless undershepherds. The displeasure of the chief shepherd will be a reaction to the “roaring” of the undershepherds.¹

It is the description of this mutual antagonism that requires some elucidation. What is meant by the soul of the chief shepherd being “made heavy” against the undershepherds, and how can the souls of the latter be said to “roar” against the former? In what follows I will put forward proposals to explain both these verbs—the first as an example of semantic borrowing and the second as a case of inner-Greek corruption. I will conclude that the two verbs were originally synonyms, both meaning “to be hardened.”

I. Semantic borrowing and βαρυνθήσεται

Students of the LXX have not been able to agree on the proper translation of the words βαρυνθήσεται ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς. A sampling of proposed renderings is the following:

Jerome (406): “ingravescet anima mea super eos” (“my soul will grow heavy over them”)²

Schleusner (1822): “exacerbatus valde erit animus meus adversus illos” (“my soul will be very irritated against them”)³

¹ Although most modern commentaries (based on the MT) take this verse to mean that the prophet-shepherd falls out with the sheep of the flock, rather than the three undershepherds, the text of the LXX suggests otherwise. The masculine pronoun in the words ἐπ’ αὐτούς refers to the ποιμένας, not the πρόβατα, of the preceding context. Accordingly, the extant Greek patristic commentaries on Zechariah (Didymus the Blind, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodore) all understand the LXX in this way.

² See Jerome, *In Zachariam Prophetam* (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 76A, Pars I,6; Turnholt: Brepols, 1970) 853.

³ J. F. Schleusner, *Novus Thesaurus Philologico-Criticus, sive Lexicon in LXX et Reliquos Interpretes Graecos ac Scriptores Apocryphos Veteris Testamenti* (2d ed.; 3 vols.; Glasgow: Duncan, 1822) s.v. βαρύνω (1.439).

- Brenton (1851): "my soul shall β grieve over them" (β Or, "be sorely displeased with them")⁴
- Wright (1879): "[my soul] will be distressed (*or*, provoked) against them"⁵
- Doutreleau (1962): "mon âme s'appesantira sur eux" ("my soul will weigh down on them")⁶
- Muraoka (1990): "I shall be gravely distressed over them"⁷
- Muraoka (1993): "my attitude towards them will become unfriendly"⁸

In addition, we might mention the opinion of Cyril of Alexandria (fifth century), who glosses the phrase as βαρείαν αὐτοῖς ἐποίησεν τὴν δικήν, "I shall impose a heavy penalty on them,"⁹ and that of G. Schrenk in *TDNT* (1933), who takes the verb here to mean *zürnen*, *strenge sein* ("to rage, to be severe").¹⁰ Although no one disputes that the basic meaning of βαρύνω is "make heavy," there is clearly no consensus as to its idiomatic meaning when applied to the soul of the prophet-shepherd.

I would suggest that the solution lies in the fact that the verb βαρύνω in the LXX often takes on one of the senses of the Hebrew כָּבַד, hiphil, namely, "harden" (the heart) or "dull" (the senses). The evidence for this meaning of the verb is summarized by Schrenk in a note to his article on βάρος and cognates in *TDNT*:

βαρύνειν is very common in the LXX for the hardening of the heart, esp. of Pharaoh, Ex. 7:14 BA; 8:15 (11); 9:7; 8:32 (28); 9:34; 10:1 A; 1 Βασ. 6:6, always in transl. of כָּבַד kal or hiph. The same idea of hardening or dulling is found in respect of the dimming of the eyes in 1 Βασ. 3:2: βαρύνεσθαι (כָּהַךְ) and the making deaf of the ears in Is. 59:1; 33:15: βαρύνων (כָּהַן); Zech. 7:11: τὰ ὦτα αὐτῶν ἐβάρυναν τοῦ μὴ εἰσακούειν (כָּהַן hiph); Sir. 21:24: ὁ δὲ φρόνιμος βαρυνθήσεται ἀτιμία (כָּהַן: -יאן).¹¹

Unfortunately, Schrenk's note seems to have been largely overlooked in LXX lexicography.¹²

⁴ Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986) 1123.

⁵ C. H. H. Wright, *Zechariah and his Prophecies* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1879; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1980) 580.

⁶ Louis Doutreleau, S.J., ed., *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur Zacharie* (3 vols.; SC 83–85; Paris: Cerf, 1962) 841. Although the French idiom "s'appesantir sur" normally means "to dwell at great length on" (a subject), this meaning does not seem appropriate in the present context.

⁷ T. Muraoka, "Septuagintal lexicography: Some general issues," in *Melbourne Symposium on Septuagint Lexicography* (ed. T. Muraoka; SBLSCS 28; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 17–48, at p. 42.

⁸ T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint (Twelve Prophets)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993) s.v. βαρύνω, 4.

⁹ In his commentary on Zechariah ad loc. (PG 72.192B).

¹⁰ *TDNT* 1.559 (= *TWNT* 1.557).

¹¹ *TDNT* 1.559 n. 2 (= *TWNT* 1.557 n. 2). See also K. L. and M. A. Schmidt in *TDNT* 5.1024 n. 8 (= *TWNT* 5.1025 n. 8): "In the LXX βαρύνω or βαρέω (with heart, eyes, or ears) is very commonly used for the process of hardening."

¹² Schrenk is not mentioned s.v. βαρύνω in J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *A Greek-*

The use of βαρύνω to mean “harden” or “dull,” which does not appear to be found outside of biblical and patristic Greek,¹³ is a clear example of the semantic borrowing that is so common in the language of the LXX.¹⁴ In this case, the Greek verb for “make heavy” (βαρύνω) took on a metaphorical meaning of the Hebrew verb for “make heavy” (כבד, hiphil), namely, “harden” or “dull.” Once this new sense of βαρύνω had been established in the Pentateuch, the Greek verb could also be used in the rest of the LXX to convey the sense of hardening or dulling—even when the Hebrew parent text did not have כבד. Such is the case in two of the places quoted by Schrenk, namely, 1 Kgdms 3:2 and Isa 33:15, where βαρύνω corresponds to כָּבַד and כָּבַשׁ, respectively.

Given this evidence, I suggest that the most plausible rendering of the first half of our sentence is “my soul will be hardened against them.” The point being made is that the chief shepherd will no longer allow his soul to be sensitive to the undershepherds; he will suppress all feelings of pity and compassion toward them.

Three additional considerations give support to this interpretation of βαρυνθήσεται:

1. Zech 7:11 demonstrates that the LXX translator of Zechariah knew and used βαρύνω in the sense “harden” or “dull.” As the immediate context of that verse makes abundantly clear, the words quoted by Schrenk, τὰ ὄτα αὐτῶν ἐβάρυναν τοῦ μὴ εἰσακουεῖν, mean “they dulled [i.e., desensitized, deafened] their ears so as not to hear.” In other words, they deliberately made themselves “hard of hearing” (German *schwerhörig*) and thus turned a deaf ear to the voice of God. As Muraoka puts it, the meaning of βαρύνω in this verse is “to make unreceptive, unresponsive.”¹⁵

2. The use of βαρύνω with ψυχή can be considered a variant of its common use with καρδία elsewhere in the LXX, since the two nouns are closely related in meaning. This would not be the only example of an idiomatic expression involving καρδία that has a variant with ψυχή.¹⁶ In fact, in some twenty-seven cases the LXX uses ψυχή rather than καρδία to render Hebrew לֵב or לִבָּב.¹⁷ Consequently, if the heart can be said to be “made heavy” in the sense of “hardened,” it is not surprising that the same can be said of the soul.

English Lexicon of the Septuagint (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992–96), despite that work’s otherwise excellent bibliographical references. It does list the meaning “to harden” for the active voice in Exod 8:28, and “to be hardened, to be made stubborn” for the passive in Exod 8:15 (following LSJ s.v.).

¹³ For the meaning “harden” LSJ lists only Exod 8:15, and *PGL* one place in the *Vita Danieli*.

¹⁴ On “semantic borrowing,” see Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 86–94. See also David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (SNTS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); and E. Tov, “Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings,” in *Melbourne Symposium on Septuagint Lexicography* (SBLSCS 28; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 83–125.

¹⁵ Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. βαρύνω, 3.

¹⁶ Thus, in the LXX the expression λαμβάνω or τίθημι εἰς καρδίαν, corresponding to the Hebrew idiom לֵב עַל לֵב, “lay to heart,” is found in Isa 57:11 and Mal 2:2 (twice), but the same idiom is rendered τίθημι ἐπὶ ψυχῆν in Isa 42:25.

¹⁷ See E. Hatch and H. R. Redpath, *A Concordance of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1897; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) s.v. ψυχή.

3. The proposed interpretation of βαρυνθήσεται fits the immediate context particularly well. The next verse describes the callous and unfeeling attitude that the prophet-shepherd adopts toward his sheep once his soul has been “made heavy” against the undershepherds: “And I said, I will not tend you: that which dies, let it die; and that which falls off, let it fall off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of his neighbour.”¹⁸ These are the words of a shepherd who has hardened his heart and soul.

It might be objected against our interpretation that (καὶ) βαρυνθήσεται does not correspond to קצרוּ in the MT, but this is a difficulty for any interpretation of the Greek verb.¹⁹ Although it has been suggested that the LXX here presupposes the Hebrew verb קצק rather than קצר, such an assumption is not necessary.²⁰ As we have seen, βαρύνω in the sense “harden” translates a variety of Hebrew verbs elsewhere, and in our verse קצר is itself of uncertain meaning. The Hebrew idiom ופשו קצרוּ, literally “and his soul was shortened,” has a wide range of meanings depending on the context.²¹ Besides, the stereotypical LXX rendering elsewhere, καὶ ὀλιγοψύχησεν (which is also followed in our verse by Theodotion and Symmachus) suggests discouragement or faint-heartedness.²² Our translator may have avoided it because he did not wish to suggest that God (whom the prophet-shepherd represents) could be discouraged or faint-hearted. In any case, the translation βαρυνθήσεται in the present context is probably best understood as an attempt to give a contextual rendering of the multifaceted Hebrew idiom.

II. Inner-Greek Corruption and ἐπωρόντο

The above interpretation of βαρυνθήσεται can help us find a plausible explanation of ἐπωρόντο. The problem here is not that of establishing the lexical meaning of the Greek verb, but of making sense of this meaning in its context. It seems incongruous to say that the souls of the three undershepherds were “roaring” against the chief shepherd.²³ This incongruity is only heightened by the fact that the grammatical subject of the verb is not the undershepherds themselves, but their ψυχαί. Furthermore, although the simple verb ὠρόμαι is common enough in the LXX, the compound form ἐπωρόμαι occurs only here and is extremely rare in extrabiblical Greek.²⁴

¹⁸ Brenton, *Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 1123.

¹⁹ We are not concerned here with the striking use (also found elsewhere in LXX Zechariah) of a Greek future to render a Hebrew *wayyiqtol* form. In the present context it may be influenced by a theological concern: to avoid the impression that the hardening of the shepherd's heart preceded the negative reaction of his sheep.

²⁰ See Schleusner, *Novus Thesaurus*, s.v. βαρύνω; and T. Jansma, “Inquiry into the Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions of Zechariah ix–xiv,” *OTS* 7 (1950) 101 n. 44.

²¹ See, for example, the NRSV in the four places where the idiom occurs: Num 21:4 (“became impatient”), Judg 10:16 (“could no longer bear to see”), Judg 16:16 (“was tired”), and Zech 11:8 (“had become impatient”). See also Robert D. Haak, “A Study and New Interpretation of QSR NPŠ,” *JBL* 101 (1982) 161–67.

²² The LXX uses ὀλιγοψυχέω in each of the three other places where the Hebrew idiom occurs (see preceding note).

²³ The fourth-century Greek commentator Didymus the Blind assumed that the verb suggested lions. See Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur Zacharie*, 850: ἐπωρέσθαι λεόντων δικην. So also Cyril of Alexandria in his commentary on Zechariah (PG 72.192B).

²⁴ LSJ lists only one other occurrence (the active ἐπωρώ, in an epigram by Philippus Epi-

Nor can the apparent oddity of ἐπωρόντο be explained by reference to the Hebrew or the other ancient versions. The corresponding Hebrew of the MT is the verb בָּחַל, a *hapax legomenon* that is itself of uncertain meaning. It has often been emended to גַּעַל, “loathe,” or given some comparable meaning on the basis of the context.²⁵ As for the ancient versions, they either follow the LXX (so the Peshitta: ‘wy, “howled”), paraphrase on the basis of the context (so the Targum: קָצַת בַּפִּילְחָנִי, “was sick of my service”), or interpret the verb in the light of the Mishnaic Hebrew verb בָּחַל, “ripen” (so Aquila: ἐπέρκασεν; Symmachus: ἤκμασεν; and Vulgate: *variavit*). There is nothing here that explains why the LXX translator chose the puzzling rendering ἐπωρόντο. Nor is there much to recommend the solution proposed by B. Otzen that the LXX (as well as the Peshitta) should here be translated “sie jammerten über mich” (“they lamented over me”), which he suggests may reflect a Hebrew *Vorlage* with the verb אָבַל, “to mourn.”²⁶ Not only does this proposal require an emendation of the MT, but it also ascribes to ἐπωρόμαι a connotation of lamentation and mourning that the Greek verb does not have.

My own proposal is a simpler one: to interpret the incongruous ἐπωρόντο as an inner-Greek corruption, due to metathesis, of ἐπωρόντο, “were being hardened.” In that case the Greek verb in question is not the rare ἐπωρόμαι but the more common παρόω, which yields a sense that fits well in the context. Παρόω, a denominative verb based on πάρος (a kind of stone), means literally “to turn to stone,” and thus “to harden” or “to dull.” In the NT and patristic literature it is often used of the hardening of the heart.²⁷

A number of considerations lend plausibility to the proposal to read ἐπωρόντο here:

1. *Parallelism.* Two matching verbs fit well into the balanced structure of the sentence in question: “[*verb*] the soul of me against them” is balanced by “the souls of them against me [*verb*].”²⁸ If we read ἐπωρόντο instead of ἐπωρόντο, the match is perfect, since βαρύνω and παρόω both mean “to harden” or “to dull.” In fact, they are used elsewhere in the LXX to translate the same Hebrew verb. The dulling of the eyes, expressed in Hebrew by the verb כָּהַה, is rendered by βαρύνω in 1 Kgdms 3:2, and by παρόω in Job 17:7.²⁹

2. *Manuscript variation.* The textual evidence for the reading ἐπωρόντο is not

grammaticus, PA 9.311), and PGL only two (one of which is an allusion to our verse). Note that W. Rudolph speaks of “das sehr seltene Wort” (W. Rudolph, *Haggai—Sacharja 1-8—Sacharja 9-14—Maleachi* [KAT 13.4; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1976] 202 n. 8b).

²⁵ For a discussion, see B. Otzen, *Studien über Deuteriosacharja* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964) 256. Karl Elliger, in the apparatus of BHS, is among those who adopt the emendation גַּעַל.

²⁶ Otzen, *Studien*, 256.

²⁷ See TDNT 5.1025–28 (= TWNT 5.1027–30) and PGL s.v.

²⁸ The reciprocity of the two halves of the sentence is emphasized by A. Caquot, “Brèves remarques sur l’allégorie des pasteurs en Zacharie 11,” in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Mathias Delcor* (ed. A. Caquot et al.; AOAT; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985) 53.

²⁹ Given the synonymous parallelism with βαρυνθήσεται, we may also assume that ἐπωρόντο is passive, not middle.

uniform. In fact, of the forty Greek manuscripts containing our verse which Ziegler collated for the Göttingen edition of the Minor Prophets, twelve have some variant of this reading.³⁰ Furthermore, it is striking that elsewhere in the manuscript tradition of the Greek Minor Prophets we twice find that the reading *ἐπωρνετο* (another form of the same rare verb) turns out to be an example of inner-Greek corruption.³¹ This suggests the possibility that *ἐπωρούοντο* in Zech 11:8b may be another case of inner-Greek corruption.

3. *Metathesis*. It is well known that metathesis, the transposition of neighboring letters, is a common cause of inner-Greek corruption. It is so common, in fact, that variants due to metathesis are listed by Ziegler among the *Orthographika* which he generally does not record in his textual apparatus.³²

4. *Conjectural emendations*. If none of the Greek manuscripts of Zechariah does in fact have the reading *ἐπωρούοντο*, then our proposal constitutes a conjectural emendation. Such emendations are not uncommon in the scholarship on the Greek Minor Prophets. Ziegler, although he rejects many that have been proposed, still admits some thirteen into his edition.³³

There are thus a number of reasons for accepting this slight but significant emendation in our text. Unfortunately, it does not shed any new light on the difficult verb in the Hebrew text. It would seem that the LXX translator, like his modern counterparts, did not understand the Hebrew verb *בָּחַלַהּ* and based his rendering on his interpretation of the parallel expression *וַחֲקָצַר נַפְשָׁא*. Having chosen *βαρυσθησεται* as his rendering of the latter, he added *ἐπωρούοντο* as a synonymous expression to match it.

On the basis of the foregoing argument for semantic borrowing and inner-Greek corruption, I propose the following translation of LXX Zech 11:8b: "And my soul will be hardened against them, for their souls also were turned to stone against me."³⁴

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³⁰ See the apparatus ad loc. in J. Ziegler, *Duodecim Prophetæ*, vol. 13 of *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1943). The twelve manuscripts in question are W, S, 68, 87, 233, 239, 410, 490, 544, 613, 710, 919.

³¹ See the apparatus on Jonah 1:11 and 13 in Ziegler, *Duodecim Prophetæ*. The correct reading in both places is *ἐπορεύετο*, as is clear from the Hebrew (וָיָלַךְ).

³² On metathesis, see Ziegler, *Duodecim Prophetæ*, 119. Of the seven examples of metathesis in the LXX of the Minor Prophets that Ziegler lists, four are from Zechariah.

³³ See Ziegler, *Duodecim Prophetæ*, 134–36, where the conjectural emendations that Ziegler accepts are distinguished by spaced type. For a detailed discussion of the various conjectures that have been proposed for the LXX of the Minor Prophets, see J. Ziegler, "Beiträge zum griechischen Dodekapropheten," in *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse* (1943), 345–412, esp. 380–91, reprinted in *Sylloge: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Septuaginta* (Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971) 71–138, esp. 106–17.

³⁴ I would like to thank the following LXX specialists for commenting on an earlier version of this article: Claude E. Cox, Robert Hanhart, George Howard, and especially Albert Pietersma.