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CHAPTER 7 - LXX ISA 26:1-6 IN ITS OWN RIGHT

ISA 26:1-3B – TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

- 1a: In that day they will sing this song on the land of Ioudas
1b: saying:
1c: “Look, a fortified city, and *as* our salvation he will set a wall and a surrounding wall.
2a: Open the gates
2b: let a people enter
2c: that keeps righteousness
2d: and that keeps truth
3a: that holds truth fast¹
3b: and that keeps peace.”

26:1-3b

26:1a-b introduces a song. The participle λέγοντες “saying,” a plus against MT, makes it clear that the content of the song starts in 26:1c.² The change from third person verbs in 26:1c-3b to a direct speech addressed to the Lord in 26:3c-4a clearly demarcates the end of the song in 26:3b. Further, while the references to a “fortified city,” its “walls and surrounding walls,” and its “gates” tie 26:1c-2 together, the fourfold use of participles qualifying λαός (26:2b) unite 26:2-3.³ The theme surrounding those verses is on the entrance of a faithful people into a strong city. As such, 26:1-3b should be taken as a subunit of 26:1-6.

The double accusative σωτήριον ἡμῶν/τεῖχος καὶ περίτειχος deserves further comment. All translations (Brenton, NETS, and LXX.D.) take the double accusative as the direct object of θήσει and render them as “and he will make our salvation its wall and outer wall;”

¹ For this translation, cf. GELS, 59.

² For a discussion of the translator’s addition of a form of λέγω, cf. Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*, 58 and, more recently, van der Vorm-Croughs, *The Old Greek of Isaiah*, 107.

³ MT is much less clear in its use of a participle followed by an imperfect in 26:2-3.

“*und* als unser Heil wird er Mauer und Ringmauer aufrichten.” This interpretation finds support in Isa 60:18: ἀλλὰ κληθήσεται σωτήριον τὰ τείχη σου/ךחמתתך שועה וקראת. In this verse, it is said that the “walls” of Jerusalem (cf. 60:1) will be called “salvation.” It is clear that the “walls” of Jerusalem, built by “aliens” (60:10), will provide security for her “righteous people” (60:21: καὶ ὁ λαὸς σου πᾶς δίκαιος/םדיקים כלם צדקתו). It seems the same idea is found in Isa 26:1, where the establishment of a “wall and surrounding wall” will function as “salvation, refuge” for the “lasting city’s” inhabitants.

In part 1 above, it was noted that the phrase σωτήριον ἡμῶν represents a different syntactical reading from MT by taking ἡμῶν with שועה. The analysis of the Greek in its own right sheds light on the translator’s decision. A similar concept to σωτήριον ἡμῶν “our salvation” appears also in Isa 25:9: ἐπὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ ἡμῶν/ותועה בישמחה (MT: “his salvation”), where the “we” group sees God’s acts as “our salvation.” Isa 26:1 presents once again the “we” group celebrating the same salvation. The parallelism between Isa 25:9 (“free translation”) and 26:1 (“literal” although different syntactical reading) indicates that the “they” in 26:1 are to be identified with the “we” group. Their liberation from the oppressive control of the “ungodly/nations” in Zion (Isa 25:5, 6-7, 8-9, 10) leads them to see the “fortified city” as their safe haven. It is interesting to note that the translator did not judge it necessary to change the wording of his source-text in Isa 26:1. The reason is that the literal reading “our salvation” cohered well with the “freer” translation “our salvation” in Isa 25:9.

But which city does Isa 26:1 envisage? In LXX Isa, 26:1c; 30:13 are the only places where πόλις ὄχυρά occurs in the singular. Elsewhere, it appears in the plural (cf. Isa 25:2; 26:5; 36:1; 37:26). As Isa 30:13 does not have a specific city in view, it does not help in identifying the “city” in 26:1. Isa 26:1; 33:20 are the only places in the LXX as a whole, where ἰδοὺ followed by πόλις in the nom. case and σωτήριον ἡμῶν occur closely together. Isa 33:20 reads: ἰδοὺ Σιων ἢ πόλις τὸ σωτήριον ἡμῶν/הזקן יצא מועדנו קרית. Whereas MT reads “the city of our appointed feasts,” “the city, our salvation” is in the LXX. In Isa 33:20, the “city” is identified with Zion and Jerusalem, cf. οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου ὄψονται Ἱερουσαλημ. The city Zion/Jerusalem is further characterized as secure, as a city whose tents will not be shaken (cf. μὴ σεισθῶσιν). Isa 26:1; 33:20 share not only

expressions, such as “look, a city; our salvation,” but also the theme of a secure city with “fortified city” in 26:1 and a city whose “tents will not be shaken” in 33:20. The link between LXX Isa 26:1; 33:20 indicates that the “lasting city” of 26:1 should be identified with Jerusalem.⁴

In part 1 above, it was indicated that the translator’s use of ὄχυρός for יְרֵי is unusual. When LXX 26:1-6 is taken in the light of its literary contexts, the reason for the translator’s choice becomes clearer. The singular πόλις ὄχυρά stands in sharp contrast with the plural πόλεις ὄχυράς in 25:2; 26:5. It seems that the translator chose ὄχυρός to make the contrast between the establishment of a “fortified city” and the destruction of “fortified cities” clearer.

Furthermore, the translator’s use of ὄχυρός indicates he interpreted יְרֵי יְרֵי as a “fortified city” instead of a “strong city.” In LXX Isa and also elsewhere, the adjective ὄχυρός often qualifies “cities” as “fortified” (cf. e.g., Deut 3:5; 1 Macc 9:50; 2 Macc 12:13, 27; Isa 25:2; 26:5; 30:13; 36:1; 37:26). Contrarily, the phrase πόλις ἰσχυρά “a strong city” occurs rarely in the LXX and elsewhere (cf. Isa 27:3; Dan 11:24; Rev 18:10). It seems that the translator decided to use ὄχυρός in Isa 25:2; 26:1, 5 to communicate his interpretation of the Hebrew as “fortified city(ies).”

The establishment of a “wall and surrounding wall” is in sharp contrast to the fall of “the wall” in Isa 24:23 (MT: “the glow of the full moon will be ashamed). As discussed in the comments to Isa 24:23 above, τὸ τεῖχος there denotes a “city wall.” It was also indicated that the “wall” probably refers to the “wall” of the “fortified cities” of Isa 25:2. It is interesting to note now that the fall of “the wall” in 24:23 contrasts neatly with the reign of the Lord in Zion and Jerusalem. The same idea is found in Isa 26:1-5, where the building of a “wall and surrounding wall” as “salvation” for the “strong city,” Jerusalem/Zion, contrasts with the fall of “fortified cities” (cf. 26:1, 5).

Isa 26:2-3 presents the contents of the song of the “we” group introduced in 26:1 (cf. comments above on the “they” as the “we”

⁴ van der Kooij, “The Cities of Isaiah 24-27,” 194; van der Kooij, “Interpretation of the Book of Isaiah,” 65.

group). They welcome a “faithful people” into the “fortified city,” namely, Jerusalem/Zion. Part 1 above remarked that the use of *λαός* for *יג* is highly unusual in LXX Isa. With an interesting style (cf. four participles and the thrice use of “to keep”), LXX Isa 26:2-3 introduces a people that “keeps righteousness, truth, and peace.” These expressions denote a people that live according to the “law” (cf. the phrase “law[s] of truth” in Neh 9:13; Mal 2:6 and the expression “your law is truth” in Ps 118:142). The *λαός* entering “Jerusalem/Zion” should be equated with the “godly” of Isa 26:7. This passage refers to the “way of the godly,” which is to be taken sapientially as an indication of a people that morally keeps the “law” (cf. e.g., Ps 1).⁵ The “people” of Isa 26:2-3 contrasts with the “ungodly” who do not learn “righteousness” or practice the “truth” (cf. Isa 26:10). They further stand in opposition to the “breakers of the law” (Isa 24:14).⁶ Because only a “godly people” can enter the city of Jerusalem/Zion, while the “breakers of the law” need to be kept out, the translator found the use of *ἔθνος* for *יג* unfitting for the present context.

A further note on the “righteous people” of Isa 26:2 in relation to other groups in Isa 24:1-26:6 is important here. First, “the righteous people” should be identified with the “remnant” (Isa 24:6, 14). Both have as their leader the ‘man of godliness’ who is intimately associated with “righteousness and truth” (cf. Isa 11:5). Upon the destruction of the oppressors in Zion, the “we” group welcomes the “remnant/righteous people” into Jerusalem. Contrarily, the “righteous people” should be taken in opposition to the “poor people” (Isa 24:6; 25:3). The latter indicates more generally people under oppression without necessarily indicating a “godly people.” Although both benefit from God’s liberating acts, only the “godly people” is to enter Jerusalem.

The idea that Jerusalem will be delivered and that a “righteous people” will inhabit it finds strong parallels in Isa 60. There, it is said that “salvation” has come to Jerusalem (cf. the references to *δόξα κυρίου*/ *יהוה כבוד* and *τὸ σωτήριον κυρίου*/ *יהוה תהלת* Isa 60:1, 6), that her “walls” (*τείχος*) will be built up (Isa 60:10), and that her “people shall all be righteous” (*ὁ λαός σου πᾶς δίκαιος*). On the other hand, there is only

⁵ cf. van Menxel, *Ελπίς*, 256-257.

⁶ cf. van Menxel, *Ελπίς*, 256.

“darkness” for the “nations” (ἔθνη in 60:2) and dread for “those who humbled” (ταπεινωσάντων in 60:14) Jerusalem. For the Isa translator, the same theme is present in Isa 26:1-3, where, according to his interpretation, Jerusalem/Zion is a “safe city” for a “righteous people.”

ISA 26:3C-6 – TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

- 3c: Because in you
 4a: they forever hoped, o Lord, great, everlasting God,
 5a: who have humbled,
 5b: and brought low the inhabitants in lofty places,
 5c: you will throw down fortified cities,
 5d: and you will bring them down to the ground
 6a: and the feet of the meek and humble will tread them under

26:3c-6a

A direct address to the “Lord” characterizes this section throughout with the use of second person pronouns, verbs, and vocatives. The third person verbs in 26:7ff indicate the direct address finishes with 26:6a.

The form ἤλπισαν is interesting. First, it represents a different vocalization from MT, which has the imperative יִחַזְּב. The unvocalized יחזב would have given the translator ample opportunity to use an imperative verb as he tends to do (cf. e.g., Isa 24:11; 25:7).⁷ The question must be asked why he decided to use an imperfect instead. Second, the use of ἐλπίζω for יחזב is unusual in LXX Isa, raising the question of the translator’s lexical choice. And, third, the question of who the subject of ἤλπισαν is must also be addressed.

The subject of ἤλπισαν is the “they” of Isa 26:1, which has been identified with the “we” group of Isa 25:5. Isa 26:4 gives the reason as to why a “people that keep righteousness” is allowed to enter the city. The phrase ὅτι ἐπὶ σοὶ ἤλπισαν κύριε (26:3c-4a) functions as another explanation for the reason as to why the “people” in 26:2-3 were allowed

⁷ For a discussion of “imperativization” in LXX Isa, cf. Baer, *When We All Go Home*, 23-52.

to enter Jerusalem/Zion (26:1). Besides “keeping righteousness, truth, and peace,” they also put their hope in the Lord.

The use of ἐλπίζω was not the result of a thoughtless decision on the translator’s part. That root plays an important role in LXX Isa 24-26. The theme of trusting in God as source of deliverance from an oppressive power also appears in LXX Isa 25:9. After God deals with the “nations” that are occupying mount Zion (Isa 25:5, 6-8), the “we” group of Isa 25:5 says: “Look, our God, in whom we trusted (ἐλπίζω/קוּ) and we rejoiced in our salvation (σωτηρία/הַשׁוּיִם).” In this context, σωτηρία denotes the deliverance from an oppressive power (cf. 25:10ff). Ἠλπισαν in Isa 26:4 is in line with the same theme. Because the “people” (λαός) trusted in God (ἐλπίζω/חַטַּב) as the source of their “deliverance,” they were allowed to enter Zion/Jerusalem. Similarly, Isa 24:14 proclaims hope to the “godly one.” The latter had been identified as the ‘man of godliness’ (Isa 11:2), who functions as the leader of the “remnant/righteous people” group. Like their leader, the “righteous people” is also characterized with putting their hope in the Lord.⁸

Interesting is the translator’s use of ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας (cf. part 1 above). A similar phrase appears in Isa 33:22: ὁ γὰρ θεὸς μου μέγας/ רַב־דָּוָהוּהוּ. The context of Isa 33:20 is similar in content to Isa 26:1-6. In Isa 33, Zion/Jerusalem is portrayed as a city of “salvation” (33:20; cp. with 26:1) as a result of the expulsion of the “lawless” and “ungodly” from Zion (33:14; cp. with comments to Isa 25:6-8). God is described as the one who dwells in “lofty places” and the one who hands the “disobedient” over to judgment (33:2-6; cf. with Isa 25:7). Ultimately, he is the one who saves his people (33:22; cp. with Isa 25:9; 26:1). It seems that the translator’s decision to use the phrase ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας had to do with the idea of the Lord as the “great God” who liberates Zion/Jerusalem from the oppressive control of the “ungodly.”

When one looks at the translator’s world, more can be said about the phrase ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας. Although it has been argued that the translator used ὁ μέγας to avoid anthropomorphism (cf. part 1 above), another explanation may be in order. In its present context, the expression “the

⁸ For a helpful discussion of the “hope” theme in Isa 24-26, see van Menxel, *Ελπίς*, 250-257.

great God” contrasts with “those who dwell in lofty places” (Isa 26:5). A similar use of the expression is found in Dan 2:45; 9:4, where it contrasts with “powerful rulers.”⁹ There may be an aspect of polemics in the translator’s decision to ascribe to the Lord the title of ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας against the “those who dwell in lofty places.”¹⁰ For the translator, the Lord is the only “great, eternal God” who overthrows foreign powers (cf. 26:5).

The phrase ὃς ταπεινώσας requires more comments. The relative pronoun ὃς (MT: כִּי) links 26:5 with 26:4, making it clear that 26:5 continues the direct speech that started in 26:3c-4a. The relative ὃς further characterizes God as the one who “has humbled and brought low the inhabitants in lofty places.” Isa 26:5 raises three important questions: first, the translator’s choice of the root ἐνοικέω (cf. discussion in part 1 above); second, the identity of the ἐνοικοῦντας ἐν ὑψηλοῖς; and third, how to account for the use of past tense verbs in 26:5a-b considering the appearance of future verbs in 26:5c-d. The following will address those issues.

Why did the translator employ √ἐνοικέω instead of √κατοικέω? The answer must be found in the translator’s interpretive tendency. The translator reserves √κατοικέω when a particular passage refers to God as the one who “dwells in lofty places” (cf. Isa 33:5; 57:15 respectively: ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν ὑψηλοῖς/מרום/כִּי שָׁכַן בְּיְהוּדָה; κύριος ὁ ὑψιστος ὁ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς κατοικῶν τὸν αἰῶνα/דַּע שָׁכַן רַם וְנֹשָׂא שָׁכַן or in “Zion” (cf. Isa 8:18). In some places, κατοικέω is also reserved for illegitimate occupiers/settlers (cf. discussion to Isa 24:5 above). Contrarily, when a passage has human beings as the ones “dwelling in lofty places,” the

⁹ cf. also the expressions הַגְּדֹלָה/ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας in Deut 10:17; Jer 39:18, 19; Dan 9:4 and רַב הַלְּהָא/ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας in cf. Dan 2:45. See also LXX Dan 4:37. It is also interesting to note that Antiochus IV assumed the title Θεὸς Ἐπιφανῆς “god manifest.”

¹⁰ Interesting also is to note that in the Greek world, some gods were ascribed the title of ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας. See ὡς ἔφυς μέγας θεός, Διόνυσε in Euripides’s *Fragmenta* (A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1889. Repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1964], frag. 177, line 1) and οἷς θεὸς ὁ μέγας Ὀλύμπιος in Sophocles’s *Electra* (H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophocles fabulae* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. Repr. 1992], line 209).

translator uses $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\omega}$, cf. Isa 26:5. Thus, the translator's choice of $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\omega}$ in Isa 26:5 is another example of a careful, well-considered translation of the phrase ישבי מרום .

The phrase $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\upsilon\omicron\tau\alpha\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\upsilon}\psi\eta\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma$ parallels here the “fortified cities” (Isa 26:5). As such, it denotes those who “dwell” in strong places. It carries a connotation of “arrogance, power” that is similar to $\acute{\upsilon}\psi\eta\lambda\omicron\iota \tau\eta\varsigma \gamma\eta\varsigma$ “the high ones of the earth” in Isa 24:4. The phrase $\acute{\rho}\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma \acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ deserves further discussion. As noted in the “comparison between MT and LXX,” the LXX diverges from MT in two aspects. Whereas MT has the singular “a lofty city” ($\text{קרִיָה נִשְׁגְּבָה}$), the plural “fortified cities” appears in the LXX. It was also noted that the use of $\acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ for שִׁגְב is atypical in LXX Isa. For a discussion of the translator's choice of $\acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, cf. discussion above to Isa 26:1. In the Greek, the contrast between the “city” of 26:1 with the “cities” of 26:5 is much clearer than MT's use of עִיר עֶז and $\text{קרִיָה נִשְׁגְּבָה}$ in the same verses. For the translator, Isa 26:1-6 meant that God was going to establish a “fortified city,” while he brought down “fortified cities.” Thus, his decision to use the lexemes $\acute{\rho}\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma/\acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ was thus the result of a careful consideration of the meaning of H Isa 26:1-5 on its higher level (cf. discussion to Isa 26:1 above).

Furthermore, the translator decided to use the plural $\acute{\rho}\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma \acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ due to his understanding that Isa 26:5 share a similar theme with Isa 25:2. Contrarily, the link between Isa 25:2; 26:1 is less clear in MT, which reads $\text{קרִיָה נִשְׁגְּבָה/קרִיָה בְצוּרָה}$ respectively. For the translator, Isa 25:2; 26:1 possess the same theme of the destruction of “fortified cities.”

Additionally, the link between Isa 26:5; 25:2 relates the $\acute{\rho}\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma \acute{\delta}\chi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ of Isa 26:5 with the “city of the ungodly” ($\tau\omicron\tilde{\omega}\nu \acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\beta\tilde{\omega}\nu \acute{\rho}\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma$) of 25:2. As it was argued under comments to Isa 25:2 above, the “city of the ungodly” should be identified with the city of Babylon. In the same way, the plural “fortified cities” in 26:5, as also in 25:2, should be seen as references to important “cities” of the Babylonian empire. The question as to whether Babylon was used as a cipher for the Seleucids in the translator's day cannot be addressed here. It suffices to say that the translator's careful choice of certain lexemes to form a coherent text highly suggests that his translation work was preceded by a careful interpretation of the H on a higher level.

SUMMARY

In sum, LXX Isa 26:1-6 represents a coherent composition that goes over two inter-related but contrasting ideas. On the one hand, God will establish a “fortified city” that will function as source of deliverance for a “righteous people.” On the other hand, God will also destroy “fortified cities,” which will signal to the destruction of the “ungodly’s” kingdom. In the light of the discussion to Isa 25:2 (cf. comments above), this kingdom should be identified with Babylon. The translator produced this coherence by choosing the same lexemes in 26:1; 5; 25:2: πόλις/ὄχυρός. In contrast, the coherence of MT is less clear because of the use of varied lexemes.

Moreover, Isa 26:1-6 introduces at least two different groups. On the one hand, there is the “they” in Isa 26:1, which must be identified with the “we” group. After their liberation from oppression in Zion, they welcome a “people that keep righteousness” into the “fortified city.” On the other hand, the “righteous people” must be taken as the “godly” in Isa 26:7. Their attitude is in conformity with the “law,” in contrast with the “ungodly,” who “break the law” (Isa 24:16). The “righteous people” is related with the “remnant.” Both have the ‘man of godliness/righteousness/truth’ as their leader (Isa 11:1-5). While there is “salvation” for the “we” group and the “righteous people,” there is judgment for the “fortified cities.” Such a coherent composition can only be the result of a particular interpretation that must have been well constructed before the translation started.