

Translation of Hebrew tenses in the Greek Psalter: choosing between past, present, and future

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In the LXX-Psalter, in about 80% of cases, the choice between past, present, and future/non-indicative (in the present paper we consider future tense and non-indicative moods together) was predetermined by the tenses of the original. As for the remaining 20%, some of these “abnormal” renderings can be explained as inheriting the tense value from the preceding context, and some by the translator’s attempt to take into account the meaning of the text. The study of the translator’s attempts to take into account the meaning of the text reveals certain discursive and narrative patterns governing his choice of tenses and casts doubts on other patterns that are sometimes ascribed to him.

Introduction

Modern research on the LXX tense system began with James Barr’s work “Translators’ Handling of Verb Tense in Semantically Ambiguous Contexts.”¹ Barr stated that in many cases, especially in prose, tenses presented little difficulty for the LXX translators, “for a simple reason, namely, that the general content and context [...] fairly well selected the Greek tense for itself.” The problem, he pointed out, was in poetic texts, where the context is ambiguous with regard to tense.

Subsequent research on tenses in the LXX focused primarily on prose texts, such as the Pentateuch, Reigns, Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, and Jonah. The most important work on Psalms was John H. Sailhamer’s monograph *The Translation Technique of the Greek Septuagint for the Hebrew Verbs and Participles in Psalms 3-41*.² An important part of Sailhamer’s study were detailed lists of LXX equivalencies for Hebrew tenses in Psalms 3-41. However, the accuracy of these lists was affected by the fact that they were created in an era before the advent of modern electronic databases. For the present study, I have compiled new lists of quantitative data on the LXX translator’s rendering of Hebrew tenses in Psalms 1-150, using morphologically tagged electronic databases for the Hebrew (MT) and Greek (Rahlfs) texts, as well as the Revised Tov-Polak CATSS Hebrew/Greek Parallel Text.

In rendering verb tenses, the most important choice for the LXX translator was the choice between past, present, and future, which is often far from obvious in the Psalter. It is this choice and the factors that influenced it that is the focus of this article.³

¹ In: Claude Cox (ed.), *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem 1986*, SBLSCS 23 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 381-403.

² New York: Peter Lang, 1991. In 2019 Anna Luppova, my student, further developed Sailhamer’s analysis in her bachelor paper on Psalms 3-51. I would like to express my gratitude to Anna for our discussions.

³ It is often assumed that the verb forms of Biblical Hebrew express aspect rather than time. Whether this is true or not, the system underwent a change in the post-Biblical era. The verbs of Mishnaic Hebrew encode time. On the parallel development in Qumran Hebrew see, e.g., Ken Penner, *The Verbal System of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in*

In the LXX-Psalter, among forms with past temporal reference, aorist is the default tense (over 93% of cases), pushing aside imperfect (about 5%) and perfect (about 1%).⁴ Pluperfect does not occur.

The distinction between the future tense and non-indicative moods is more blurred in the LXX than in Classical Greek; for example, often a future tense form appears where in Classical Greek one would expect the subjunctive mood, or vice versa.⁵ Future forms can stand in parallelism with optative (e.g., Ps 63/62:6) or imperative (Ps 5:12), rendering the same Hebrew tense (*yiqtol*). In view of this, when discussing the LXX translator's choice between past, present, and future, it makes sense to consider future tense and non-indicative moods together.

In about 80% of cases, this choice in the LXX-Psalter was predetermined by the tenses of the original (following Barr, this strategy of rendering Hebrew tenses is referred to as “normal scheme”; see §1). As for the remaining 20%, some of these “abnormal” renderings can be explained by the principle of inheritance (§2), and some by the translator's following of standard discursive and narrative patterns (§3). Of course, it is not that the translators had some agreed and consciously used set of rules, but rather that they intuitively followed certain translation patterns. In some cases (e.g., conditional periods or subordinate clauses) the choice of verbal form is rigidly determined by the rules of Greek grammar, so the LXX translator had no alternative.

It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze the reasons for the choice between different Greek forms with past temporal reference and between future tense and different non-indicative forms. Another important topic, which we have to omit for the sake of space, is the translator's choice of tenses when rendering Hebrew verbless clauses using the Greek εἰμί. Since the Greek verb had no Hebrew equivalent, the rules for choosing tenses were different in this case.

In some cases, one can suspect that the Vorlage of the LXX-Psalter differed from the MT, or that the original Greek translation differed from the Rahlfs' edition. In some cases (though rare in the Psalms), the translator paraphrased the text rather than giving a literal translation. Such cases require an individual approach, but they do not distort the overall picture. My research has not revealed any significant differences in translation techniques between different parts of the book, at least as far as the rendering of Hebrew tenses is concerned.

Throughout this article, references will be given according to the numbering of psalms and verses in the MT.

§1. First strategy. Normal scheme

Table 1 gives quantitative data on the rendering of Hebrew tense forms in the Greek Psalter (Psalms 1-150). Hebrew *yiqtol* in the table refers to all prefixed verbal forms (except *wayyiqtol*), including jussive and cohortative. Forms with *waw* consecutive (*wayyiqtol* and *wəqatal*) are treated in separate rows; forms with *waw* copulative (*wə+yiqtol* and *wə+qatal*) are treated together with *yiqtol* and *qatal* without copula. In §2 we shall deal with these forms (*wayyiqtol*, *wəqatal*, *wə+yiqtol*, and *wə+qatal*) in more detail and demonstrate that another approach, namely the principle of inheritance, may explain their rendering in the LXX-Psalter better than the normal scheme discussed in the current section.

Qumran Hebrew Texts. Studia Semitica Neerlandica 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2015). As we shall see, the rendering of Hebrew verbs by the LXX-Psalter translators indicates that they also understood the Hebrew verb forms as primarily expressing time.

⁴ On aorist as the default past tense in the LXX see Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 264-268, 270-272.

⁵ See Muraoka, *Syntax*, 285-289 on injunctive, permissive and potential future; *ibid.*, 308-316 on admixture of future and subjunctive.

For the Greek indicative mood, I distinguish five tense forms; other moods are treated without distinguishing tense or aspect values.

Table 1

HEBREW	GREEK									SUM
	Ind					subj	opt	imp	other*	
	aorist	impf	pf	pres	fut					
<i>Qatal</i>	1196	35	16	31	35	9	0	7	75	1404
<i>wəqatal</i>	9	3	0	1	29	0	3	2	4	51
<i>Yiqtol</i>	327	49	2	93	1011	211	93	205	79	2070
<i>wayyiqtol</i>	289	3	0	5	23	0	1	2	9	332
participle	21	1	3	66	12	1	0	3	753	860
imperative	20	2	0	0	4	1	2	627	44	700
other**	54	18	2	207	14	10	8	14		
SUM	1916	111	23	403	1128	232	107	860		

* E.g. a participle, infinitive or non-verbal form in the Greek text.

** E.g. an infinitive or non-verbal form in the Hebrew text.

The normal rendering of Hebrew *qatal* is a Greek tense form with past temporal reference, mostly aorist, occasionally imperfect or perfect.

The normal rendering of Hebrew *yiqtol* in the LXX-Psalter is future tense or a non-indicative verbal form. However, Hebrew poetry often used *yiqtol* forms with past meaning (“short” prefixed verb forms, derived from the Proto-Semitic preterite form *yaqtul*). This usage is well represented in Biblical poetry, even long after *yiqtol* forms with past meaning disappeared from spoken Hebrew and Hebrew prose. In most cases the LXX translators guessed from the context the correct, by their time long forgotten, preterite meaning of such *yiqtol* forms (see §2 and §3 on the role of context). This explains the large number of cases in which Hebrew *yiqtol* is rendered with Greek past.

Hebrew participles are mostly rendered with Greek participles, but Hebrew predicative participles are rendered by the translator with Greek finite forms (normally present tense). Hebrew imperative is almost uniformly rendered with Greek imperative.

Sometimes the illusion of an “abnormal” correspondence between the LXX and its Hebrew original may arise simply because the LXX translators vocalised the Hebrew text differently from the Masoretes. For example, the translations of Hebrew imperative forms or participles with Greek aorist seem mainly to be due to the fact that in an unvocalised text *qatal*, *qətol*, and *qotel* forms are easily confused. If this possibility is taken into account, the number of “abnormal” renderings is smaller.

Table 2, based on the data in table 1, shows the percentages for normal and “abnormal” renderings of Hebrew finite verbal forms and predicative participles by finite verbal forms in the Greek Psalter (we regard Hebrew participles as used predicatively if they are translated by Greek finite verb forms). Renderings of the Hebrew forms with Greek participles, infinitives, or non-verbal forms are not counted.

The percentages for normal renderings are highlighted.

Table 2

HEBREW	GREEK		
	PAST (aor, impf, pf)	PRESENT	FUTURE/NON-INDICATIVE

<i>qatal</i>	93.8 %	2.3 %	3.8 %
<i>wəqatal</i>	25.5 %	2.1 %	72.3 %
<i>yiqtol</i>	19.0 %	4.7 %	76.3 %
<i>wayyiqtol</i>	90.4 %	1.6 %	8.0 %
predicative participle	23.4 %	61.7 %	15.0 %
imperative	3.4 %	0 %	96.6 %

Sometimes the LXX translator changes the syntactic structure of the clause, the voice, or person of the verb, but still renders the tense according to the normal scheme. For example, in 10:13 (LXX 9:34) Hebrew לֹא תִדְרֹךְ is translated as οὐκ ἐκζητήσει (2 person > 3 person, but *yiqtol* > future, normal scheme).

The normal scheme operates at the level of individual verbs and clauses. At the level of multi-clausal units, other factors come into play, which we investigate below.

§2. Second strategy. The principle of inheritance

2.1. The role of the principle of inheritance in rendering Hebrew *wayyiqtol*, *wə+yiqtol*, *wəqatal*, and *wə+qatal*

In the LXX-Psalter, the Greek translations of *wayyiqtol*, *wə+yiqtol*, *wəqatal*, and *wə+qatal* mostly inherit the tense value of the last finite form from the chain of verbal forms in the immediate Greek context. Inheritance can be either exact (e.g. aorist after aorist, future after future) or inexact (past after past, present after present, or future/non-indicative after future/non-indicative).

The distinction between *wəqatal* (*waw* consecutive) and *wə+qatal* (*waw* copulative) is expressed in the MT only by an accent shift in the forms of 1 and 2 Sg. (the origin and date of this shift are unclear). In other cases, the scholar who attempts morphological tagging of the MT has to draw this distinction on a highly subjective basis. This makes any quantitative data on the Greek rendering of Hebrew *wəqatal* dependent on the morphological database used.

We can avoid this methodological pitfall by analysing the Greek renderings of Hebrew *wə+qatal* forms without differentiation between *waw* consecutive and *waw* copulative. In the Psalter, there are 72 cases where Hebrew *wə+qatal* forms (without differentiation between *waw* consecutive and *waw* copulative) are rendered with Greek finite forms. In about 75% of them the inheritance of the tense value of the last finite form is exact (e.g., aorist after aorist, 7:15; future after future, 69:36). Sometimes, after a Greek subjunctive with future meaning, future tense is used (28:1, 37:10, 89:33, 143:7). After Greek perfect with present meaning, Greek present may be used (38:20). If we take into account such cases of inexact inheritance, the percentage will be much higher, about 85%.

As concerns the distinction between *wayyiqtol* and *wəyiqtol*, in most cases the Masoretic *wayyiqtol* forms occur within a sequence of clauses referring to the past and, accordingly, in the LXX they normally correspond to Greek past forms. On the contrary, the Masoretic *wəyiqtol* forms mostly occur in a sequence of clauses referring to the future or expressing a wish, and, accordingly, in the LXX they normally correspond to future or non-indicative. This correlation *can* be explained as evidence that the LXX translator distinguished *wayyiqtol* from *wəyiqtol* in the same way as the Masoretes did and rendered this distinction in his translation. However, the principle of inheritance may provide an alternative and, probably, a better explanation.

In the Psalter, there are 323 cases where Masoretic *wayyiqtol* forms are rendered with Greek finite forms. In about 85% of them the tense of the Greek form simply inherit the tense of the last finite form

from the immediate Greek context, mostly aorist after aorist, but also imperfect after imperfect (50:18); future after future (34:8, 55:18); present after present (50:16). If we take into account cases of inexact inheritance (e.g., aorist after imperfect, 35:20-21; imperative after future expressing a wish, 109:28), the percentage of inheritance will be about 90%.

There are 224 cases in the Psalter where Masoretic *wəyiqtol* forms correspond to Greek finite forms. In about 38% of them the preceding finite verbal form in the immediate Greek context is future and the *wəyiqtol* form is also rendered as future. If we count together all the cases of exact inheritance (e.g., optative after optative, 40:14-17; imperative after imperative, 68:2; subjunctive after subjunctive, 2:3; aorist after aorist, 55:3), the percentage of inheritance becomes significantly higher, about 70%. If we take into account cases of inexact inheritance (e.g., future after subjunctive, 2:12; imperative after subjunctive, 35:27; imperfect after imperfect, 119:46), the percentage becomes about 85%.

The results of our analysis may be summarized in Table 3.

	Greek translations of		
	<i>wəqatal</i> , <i>wə+qatal</i>	<i>wayyiqtol</i>	<i>wəyiqtol</i>
exact inheritance	75%	85%	70%
inexact inheritance	85%	90%	85%

This means that when the LXX translator encountered a combination *waw* + finite verb, his default strategy, as concerns the choice between past, present, and future/non-indicative, was to follow the tense value of the preceding verb, ignoring the MT difference between *waw* consecutive and *waw* copulative, and even the difference between *qatal* and *yiqtol*.⁶ Counterexamples are either passages where the context makes it difficult to identify the previous link in the narrative chain, or cases where the translator's choice of tenses is governed by some narrative pattern (§3).

Particularly interesting are cases where, within a chain of Greek participle clauses, both *wəqatal* and *wayyiqtol* forms are rendered as participles, inheriting not only the tense value but the entire morphology from the context (136:14,15,18,21).

I am not going to argue in this article that the LXX translators did not know the difference between *waw* consecutive and *waw* copulative, although it is quite possible.⁷ However, their rendering of Hebrew tenses (at least in the Psalms) does not indicate their knowledge of this.

2.2. Inheriting the tense value in parallel lines

Ancient West Semitic poetry was characterized by frequent alternation in parallel lines between suffixed verb forms (= Hebrew *qatal*) and “short” prefixed verb forms (= Hebrew *yiqtol*) with past meaning. This stylistic device was already being used in Ugaritic poetry and is well represented in Biblical poetry. In the LXX-Psalms, in cases of such an alternation, the verbal form of the second line often inherits the tense of the preceding line, e.g., aorist after aorist, ignoring the normal scheme (2:1; 6:10; 7:14; 10:17; 11:7; 18:5; 18:9; 24:2; 27:10; 44:10; 51:8; 73:6; 73:9; 74:1; 82:5).

⁶ Cf. the observation by Ken Penner (*Verbal System*, 2015, 133–8) that in Qumran Hebrew *wqtl* and *wyqtl* verbal forms often inherit their function, tense and modality from the preceding verb.

⁷ Cf. Benjamin Kantor's remark in *The Second Column (secunda) of Origen's Hexapla in Light of Greek Pronunciation* (Austin, The University of Texas, 2017), 244: “Because the narrative past tense *wayyiqtol* was not a part of the spoken language [at the turn of the era], it was not always identified in the consonantal text, especially in poetry. The ancient Greek translations also indicate inconsistency in the renderings of *w(ay) + yiqtol* forms in Psalms.”

2:1	לְמַה רָגַשׁוּ גוֹיִם וְלְאַמִּים וְהִגְדוּרֵי קַיִן:	ἵνα τί ἐφφύαξαν ἔθνη καὶ λαοὶ ἐμελέτησαν κενά
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Less often, the second line of the Greek translation inherits the future tense from the first line, 60:11 (=108:11).

60:11	מִי יְבַלְנֵי עֵיר מְצוֹר מִי נִתְנִי עַד-אֲדוֹם:	τίς ἀπάξει με εἰς πόλιν περιοχῆς τίς ὀδηγήσει με ἕως τῆς Ἰδουμαίας
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2.3. Inheriting the tense value in coherent discourse units

Inheriting the tense value from the preceding clause might occur in other cases as well, if the translated text formed a coherent discourse unit. Sharing the same gender, person and number with the preceding verb often facilitated inheriting the tense value.

55:18	עָרַב וּבָקַר וְצֹהֲרִים אֲשִׁיתָה וְאֶתְהַמָּה וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי:	ἐσπέρας καὶ πρωὶ καὶ μεσημβρίας διηγῆσομαι ἀπαγγελῶ καὶ εἰσακούσεται τῆς φωνῆς μου
55:19	פָּדָה בְּשָׁלוֹם גַּפְשִׁי מִקְרַב-לִי	λυτρώσεται ἐν εἰρήνῃ τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπὸ τῶν ἐγγιζόντων μοι

In 55:18-19, future tense of διηγῆσομαι (= Hebrew אֲשִׁיתָה) in the first line is inherited in the following lines. Even the *qatal* form פָּדָה in 55:19 is rendered with future λυτρώσεται, following the future form εἰσακούσεται in the preceding verse, contrary to the normal scheme.

Sometimes, overly mechanical adherence to the principle of inheritance could mislead the translator.

60:3	אֱלֹהִים וְנִחַתְנוּ פְּרָצְתָנוּ אֲנִי תְּשׁוּבָה לָנוּ:	59:3 ὁ θεός ἀπόσω ἡμᾶς καὶ καθεῖλες ἡμᾶς ὀργίσθης καὶ οἰκτίρησας ἡμᾶς
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While the first three verbal forms (Hebrew *qatal* = Greek aorist) depict the humiliation of the people of God, the *yiqtol* תְּשׁוּבָה לָנוּ is an appeal to God to come to help. The LXX translator rendered it also with aorist (οἰκτίρησας), misled by the identity of gender, person, number and referent (probably, he understood this as a reference to the return of the exiles, see §3.2 on the past tense in references to Israel's history).

2.4. Exceptionally, a verb may inherit the tense form of a verb from a more distant context. If the narrative chain is interrupted by a digression or direct speech, the verbs of the digression or the direct speech are not taken into account, only the verbs of the narrative chain. For example, future ἀναγγελοῦσιν in the narrator's speech in 50:6 inherits the tense value of προσκαλέσεται in 50:4 and disregards the direct speech of God in 50:5.

50:4	יִקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי-שָׁמַיִם מֵעַל וְאֱלֹהֵי-אֲרָץ לָדִין עָמוֹ:	προσκαλέσεται τὸν οὐρανὸν ἄνω καὶ τὴν γῆν διακρίναι τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ
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50:6a	וַיִּגִּידוּ שְׂמִימָה צְדָקָה	καὶ ἀναγγελοῦσιν οἱ οὐρανοὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ
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The description of the jubilant prayers of the righteous in 44:9 (see the example below) continues the description of their triumph in 44:6 (verses 44:7-8, both introduced with γάρ, may be regarded as a digression explaining the reason for the triumph). The two verses exhibit the same syntactic structure, and contain the same key expressions, ἐν σοὶ // καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου // ἐν τῷ θεῷ // καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου. Contrary to the normal scheme, Hebrew *qatal* form וַיִּלְלֵהוּ in 44:9 is rendered with future tense inherited from 44:6.

44:6	בָּרַךְ צְרִינֵנוּ נִנְגַם בְּשִׂמְחָה נְבוֹס קַמִּינוּ:	ἐν σοὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἡμῶν κερατιοῦμεν καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐξουθενώσομεν τοὺς ἐπανιστανομένους ἡμῖν
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44:9	בְּאֵלֵהֶם הִלְלֵנוּ כְּלֵהֵי־וָאֵל וְשִׂמְחָה לְעוֹלָם נִדְּבָה סֵלָה:	ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἐπαινεσθησόμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐξομολογησόμεθα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα διάψαλμα
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In Hebrew, the *wayyiqtol* forms in 18:24 (see the example below) are a direct continuation of 18:23. In the LXX, however, verses 18:22-23, which both begin with כִּי (= ὅτι) and give the reason for God's rewarding the protagonist, seem to be treated as a digression, so the verbs of 18:24 inherit their tenses from 18:21.

18:21	וַיִּמְלֵנִי יְהוָה בְּצָדָק כִּי כָבֵד יְיָ יֵשִׁיב לִי:	καὶ ἀνταποδώσει μοι κύριος κατὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην μου καὶ κατὰ τὴν καθαρίότητα τῶν χειρῶν μου ἀνταποδώσει μοι
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18:24	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עִמּוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה מֵעוֹנָי:	καὶ ἔσομαι ἄμωμος μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ φυλάξομαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνομίας μου
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Such cases demonstrate that at least sometimes the LXX translator took into account not only the short segment he was translating, but also the preceding verses.

2.5. *Repetition of key words* is an important stylistic device in the LXX-Psalter. Often the repeated Greek verb inherits its entire morphology, including tense, from the earlier occurrence (in Hebrew, the morphology and sometimes even the root may differ).

68:34	לְרַכֵּב בְּשִׂמְיָ שְׂמִי־קָדָם הוּא יִתְּנוּ קוֹלוֹ קוֹל עֵץ:	[ψάλατε τῷ θεῷ] τῷ ἐπιβεβηκότι ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατὰ ἀνατολάς ἰδοὺ δώσει ἐν τῇ φωνῇ αὐτοῦ φωνὴν δυνάμεως
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68:36	נִרְאָה אֱלֹהִים מִמְקַדְשׁוֹ אֵל שֶׁרָאָל הוּא יִתְּנוּ עֵץ וְתַעֲצֹמוֹת לְעֵץ בְּרַחֲוֵי אֱלֹהִים:	θαυμαστός ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ αὐτὸς δώσει δύναμιν καὶ κραταίωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός
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The verb δώσει in 68:36 repeats the same verb from 68:34. Note the thematic and structural parallelism between the two verses: both speak of God’s majesty; in both cases God is the subject of δώσει; the key word δύναμις occurs in both verses (as well as in 68:35).

Another example of this rhetorical strategy is Psalm 37.

37:9a	כִּי־מַרְעִים יַכְרִתּוּן	ὅτι οἱ πονηρευόμενοι ἐξολεθρευθήσονται
...		
37:22b	וּמַקְלָלָיו יַכְרִתּוּ:	οἱ δὲ καταρώμενοι αὐτὸν ἐξολεθρευθήσονται
...		
37:28b	וְזָרַע רְשָׁעִים נִכְרָת:	καὶ σπέρμα ἀσεβῶν ἐξολεθρευθήσεται
...		
37:38	וּפְשָׁעִים נִשְׁמְדוּ יַחְדָּו אֲחֵרֵית רְשָׁעִים נִכְרָתָה:	οἱ δὲ παράνομοι ἐξολεθρευθήσονται ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό τὰ ἐγκαταλείμματα τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἐξολεθρευθήσονται

The key expression of the Greek Psalm 37, ἐξολεθρευθήσεται / ἐξολεθρευθήσονται, is repeated 5 times, corresponding to two different Hebrew roots. The first occurrence sets the tense value for the subsequent occurrences. Here the principle of inheritance goes hand in hand with another tendency, namely to describe the inevitable retribution in future tense, which is discussed in §3.7.3.

§3. Third strategy. Taking into account the meaning of the text

The LXX translator often tries to make the use of tenses more logical than in the original by taking into account the meaning of the text. For example, he describes events that occur simultaneously with the time of speech using Greek present and renders explicit references to the past using past tense, regardless of the tense of the Hebrew. Rhetorical questions starting with ἕως πότε “how long?” can contain present or future but not past (80:5-6).

In addition to these self-evident translation decisions, the choice of tenses seems to have been governed by certain predetermined discursive and narrative patterns that are not so self-evident. For example, the translator usually assigns the sufferings of the protagonist and the sins of the wicked to the past. The good works of the protagonist, if they are mentioned as the grounds for his plea, are also mostly assigned to the past, as are God’s righteous deeds, if they are mentioned as a cause for the protagonist’s praise. The causal relationship between sin and punishment can be reflected in the Greek translation by the opposition between past and future.

Flashback, indicated by ὅτι clauses (or, sometimes, relative clauses), often signifies a change of pattern by moving the narrative from one temporal plane to another (see, e.g., §3.7.2).

Below I list the most important patterns with examples and lists of references (not intended to be exhaustive), paying special attention to cases where these patterns override the normal scheme.

3.1. **References to the primeval events** (very rare in the Psalms) are given in past tense. For example, in 8:4b, 6-7 the references to the creation of heaven and man (whether *qatal*, *wayyiqtol*, or *yiqtol*) are rendered with aorist (the rhetorical question in 8:5 is a digression in terms of text structure).

8:4	כִּי־אַרְאֶה שְׁמִיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ יָרַח וְכֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנֹתָהּ:	ὅτι ὄψομαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἔργα τῶν δακτύλων σου σελήνην καὶ ἀστέρας ἃ σὺ ἐθεμελίωσας
...		
8:6	וַתַּחַסְרֶהוּ מְעַט מְאַלְהֵימ וַתְּכַבֹּד וְהִדָּר תַּעֲטֹרֶהוּ:	ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν
8:7	תִּמְשַׁלְהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כָּל־שָׁמַיָה תַּחַת־רַגְלָיו:	καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ

See also, e.g., 24:2; 74:13-14; 115:3.

3.2. **References to the history of Israel** are always rendered with past tense. For example, Ps 78 recounts the major events of the history of Israel from Moses to David, and the LXX translator retells this history using past tense forms, regardless of the tenses of the original. In this psalm, *yiqtol* > aorist 14 times, e.g.

78:40	בְּמַה יִמְרוּהוּ בַמִּדְבָּר לְעַצְיָבוֹהוּ בְּיַשְׁמֹן:	ποσάκις παρεπίκραναν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ παρώργισαν αὐτὸν ἐν γῆ ἀνύδρω
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See also, e.g., 43:3; 44:2-4, 11-15; 47:4-5; 80:9-14; 81:6-8; 99:6-8; 105:9-44; 106:7-46.

3.3. God's intervention in history is often depicted through **images of the earth, hills and mountains trembling, shaking or melting**. God either causes these cataclysms (e.g., 18:8; 46:3-4, 7; 68:8-9; 77:17-19; 114), or puts an end to them (75:4; 93:1), or both (60:4). The LXX translator understands these cataclysms as occurring in the past (they can often be interpreted as referring to the Exodus events) and depicts them mostly with past tense forms, regardless of the tenses of the original. This is important for the question of the alleged influence of the eschatological worldview on the LXX-Psalter: the translator could have rendered these descriptions in future tense, linking them to the eschaton, but he did not (see the discussion in §3.7).

46:4	יִהְיוּ יַחַסְרוּ מִיָּמִי יִרְעַשׁוּ־הָרִים בְּגִאֲוַתוֹ סֵלָה:	ἤχησαν καὶ ἐταράχθησαν τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῶν ἐταράχθησαν τὰ ὄρη ἐν τῇ κραταιότητι αὐτοῦ διάψαλμα
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Here *yiqtol* > aorist (3 times).

3.4. **The evil deeds of the wicked** are usually rendered with past tense forms. For example, in the Hebrew text of Ps 83:3-9, the deeds of God's enemies are described using a mixture of *qatal* and *yiqtol* forms. The LXX translator renders everything (except the direct speech of the enemies) with aorist forms.

83:3	כִּי־הִנֵּה אֹיְבֶיךָ יִהְיוּ רָמְשׁוּ־אֵיךָ בְּשֵׂאוֹ רֹאשׁ:	ὅτι ἰδοὺ οἱ ἐχθροί σου ἤχησαν καὶ οἱ μισοῦντές σε ἤραν κεφαλὴν
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See also, e.g., 2:1-2; 11:2-3; 12:2-3; 36:3-5; 50:17-20; 52:4-6; 74:4-7; 83:3-9; 94:5-7.

3.5. **The sufferings of the hero and the chosen people** are usually rendered with past tense forms. For example, in the Hebrew text of Ps 38:3-15, the sufferings of the hero are described with *qatal*, *wayyiqtol*, and *yiqtol* forms. The LXX translator renders the whole story using past tense.

38:13	וַיִּנְקְשׁוּ מִבְּקָשִׁי נַפְשִׁי וְדַרְשׁוּ רַעְתִּי דְבָרֵי הַגּוֹת וְמַרְמֹזֹת כָּל־הַיּוֹם יִהְיֶה׃	καὶ ἐξεβιάσαντο οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν μου καὶ οἱ ζητοῦντες τὰ κακά μοι ἐλάλησαν ματαιότητος καὶ δολιότητος ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐμελέτησαν
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See also, e.g., 17:9-12; 22:7-8, 13-19; 32:4; 35:11-13, 20-21; 38:2-15, 20-21; 39:9-11; 41:6-10; 44:10-17; 55:3-9; 56:2-3, 6; 69:2-6, 8-13, 21-22, 27; 80:7; 88:4-10, 16-19; 89:39-46; 102:4-12; 109:2-5, 22-25; 116:3; 143:3-6.

3.6. **The moral choices and good works of the righteous as the grounds for their pleas and hopes**, are also usually rendered using past tense. A good example is Ps 101:2-8, where the hero's hope that God will "come to him" is motivated by a long list of his righteous deeds, described in Hebrew mostly with *yiqtol* forms (10 out of 11 finite forms). Modern translations almost unanimously understand these righteous deeds as referring to the future, but the LXX translator took them as referring to the past and translated them with aorist and imperfect forms.

101:7	לֹא־יָשׁוּב בְּקִרְבִּי עֲשֵׂה רַמְיָהּ דְּבַר שְׂקָרִים לֹא־יִפְּוֹן לִנְגֹד עֵינָי׃	οὐ κατόκει ἐν μέσῳ τῆς οἰκίας μου ποιῶν ὑπερηφανίαν λαλῶν ἄδικα οὐ κατεύθυνεν ἐναντίον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν μου
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See also, e.g. 17:3; 18:22-23; 25:12; 26:11; 37:40; 77:1-7; 139:21-22.

3.7. The descriptions of God's judgment and help for the righteous can be understood either as an exemplary salvation story that took place in the past, or as an imminent retribution to occur in the future. The Hebrew text can be ambiguous because *qatal* and *yiqtol* forms often alternate and, in addition, the temporal reference of *yiqtol* forms is often uncertain. The choice of the LXX translator depended, in part, on how he categorized the text to be translated (e.g., history of David or wisdom teaching). Sometimes the first lines of the psalm set the tone for the following lines.

3.7.1. Rendering such descriptions with Greek past tense forms (making them **exemplary salvation stories**) is characteristic of narratives in which the hero's suffering and salvation follow one another. This is often the case in the psalms related to the story of David. For example, the long narrative of 18:5-20, which includes references to the hero's piety, past suffering, theophany, and God's help, is told predominantly using past tense forms (*yiqtol* > aorist 12 times).

18:17	יִשְׁלַח מַרְרֹם יִקְרָא יִמְשֹׁן מִמֵּי־רַבִּים׃	ἐξαπέστειλεν ἐξ ὕψους καὶ ἔλαβέν με προσελάβετό με ἐξ ὕδατων πολλῶν
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See also, e.g. 23:2-5; 57:4-7; 71:20-21; 118:10-16.

A lengthy collection of exemplary salvation stories is presented in Ps 107 (*yiqtol* > aorist or imperfect 20 times).

3.7.2. **God’s righteous deeds as a cause for present hope and praise** are described using Greek past tense forms, even if this contradicts the normal scheme. This often occurs in subordinate clauses introduced by ὅτι.

27:5	כִּי יִצְפְּנִי בְּסִפְּהֵי בְנוֹם רְעָה וְיִסְתְּרֵנִי בְּסִתְרֵי אֲהָלָי בְּצֹר יְרוּמָמָי:	ὅτι ἔκρυσέν με ἐν σκηνῇ ἐν ἡμέρα κακῶν μου ἐσκέπασέν με ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ ἐν πέτρᾳ ὑψώσέν με
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See also, e.g., 4:9; 8:2; 11:7; 17:6; 21:4; 63:12; 72:12; 109:31; 148:13.

3.7.3. In the context of moral exhortation, **the inevitable retribution** is described with future tense. This is characteristic of texts that contrast the future of the righteous with that of the wicked and are close to the wisdom literature. For example, the main theme of Psalm 37 is that the righteous should not envy the wicked, “because like grass they will quickly wither and like green herbs they will quickly fall off” (37:1-2; *yiqtol* forms in Hebrew, future tense in Greek). In the LXX, these verses set the tone for the rest of the psalm: the fate of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous are described mostly in future tense, even where *qatal* or *wayyiqtol* forms are used in Hebrew (37:10, 28, 38, 40).

37:38	וּפְשָׁעִים נִשְׁמְדוּ יַחְדָּו אַחֲרֵית רְשָׁעִים נִכְרְתָה:	οἱ δὲ παράνομοι ἐξολεθρευθήσονται ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τὰ ἐγκαταλείμματα τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἐξολεθρευθήσονται
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See also, e.g., 34:8, 21-23; 49:15; 53:6; 55:18-20; 92:10-11; 94:23; 107:42; 146:4.

3.7.4. Although the LXX translator sought to make his text more consistent than the Hebrew, he sometimes seems to “forget” the chosen narrative pattern and follow the normal scheme. It is possible, however, that, at least in some cases, this was not because of his carelessness, but because of a more sophisticated rhetorical strategy.

For example, in the opening lines of Psalm 18 the protagonist declares that he “will cry out” to God for help (אֶקְרָא > ἐπικαλέσομαι) and “will be saved” (יִשָּׁא > σωθήσομαι). In the long narrative that follows (18:5-20), the LXX translator uses predominantly past tense (§3.7.1), but returns several times to the “normal” rendering of *yiqtol* forms with future. Perhaps it is not coincidental that this happens with the verbs that can be viewed as a flashback to the opening lines: ἡ κραυγή μου ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ “my cry before him will enter into his ears” (18:7); ῥύσεται με “He will save me” (twice, 18:18, 20).

3.8. To emphasize **cause and effect**, the LXX translator sometimes renders cause in past and effect in future. For example in 109:17 Hebrew past forms (*wayyiqtol*, *qatal*) are rendered either with aorist (2 times) if they denote cause, or with future (2 times, underlined below) if they denote effect.

109:17	וַיִּאָהֶב קָלְלָהּ וַתְּבוֹאֶהוּ וְלֹא-תִפְזַח בְּבִרְכָּהּ וַתִּרְתַּק מִמְּנוֹ:	καὶ ἠγάπησεν κατάραν καὶ ἤξει αὐτῶ καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησεν εὐλογίαν καὶ <u>μακρυνθήσεται</u> ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ
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Barr cites Ps 7:15-16 as an example of the LXX translator’s erratic and surprising translation of Hebrew tenses: “The verbs of v. 15 are all rendered as past, although by normal scheme they would be expected to be taken as future or present in time. By contrast, in v. 16 וַיִּפֹּל, with waw consecutive, which by normal scheme should definitely be past, is (surprisingly) future. On the other hand, לְעָפָר is again past, although a future would have been quite possible.”⁸ In fact, these verses are a good example of a causal scheme: the sinner’s acts against the righteous (cause) are rendered as past (6 times), his punishment (effect) is rendered as future (3 times, underlined below).

7:15	הִגָּה יִחַבְל־אֹנוּ וְהִרְהַ עֲמָל וַיִּלְדֹּ שִׁקָּר:	ἰδοὺ ὠδίνησεν ἀδικίαν συνέλαβεν πόνον καὶ ἔτεκεν ἀνομίαν
7:16	בּוֹר בָּרָה וַיִּתְפַּרְהוּ וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת וַיִּפְעַל:	λάκκον ὄρυξεν καὶ ἀνέσκαψεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμπεσεῖται εἰς βόθρον ὄν εἰργάσατο
7:17	וַיָּשׁוּב עָמְלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וַעֲלֵ לְדָגְדְּדוֹ חֲמָסוֹ יָרֵד:	ἐπιστρέψει ὁ πόνος αὐτοῦ εἰς κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ κορυφὴν αὐτοῦ ἡ ἀδικία αὐτοῦ <u>καταβήσεται</u>

See also, e.g. 65:5; 103:20-23; 126:5-6.

3.9. **Atemporal statements and eternal truths**, including descriptions of God’s eternal greatness and righteousness are usually rendered with present tense (in Hebrew mostly *yiqtol* with present meaning).

11:5	יְהוָה צְדִיק יִבְתֵּן גְּרֹשָׁע וְאִתְּבַ חֲמָס שְׂנֵאָה נַפְשׁוֹ:	κύριος ἐξετάζει τὸν δίκαιον καὶ τὸν ἀσεβῆ ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν ἀδικίαν <u>μισεῖ</u> τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν
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See also, e.g., 5:7; 9:8; 10:14; 11:4-5; 19:2-4; 32:10-11; 39:7; 46:5; 66:7; 68:11; 104:15, 26, 27.

3.10. Eschatology in the Greek Psalter?

Initially, my interest in the translation of Hebrew tenses in the Greek Psalter was sparked by a desire to see if it might provide evidence of eschatologization in the LXX. Sailhamer in his monograph on translation of Hebrew verbs in the LXX-Psalter stated that “because the future time plays an important role in the eschatological systems of early Judaism, the use of the future indicative often displays an interpretive bias in the translation,”⁹ and wrote in the summary of his work “as far as the present study is concerned, it is the eschatology of early Judaism that made itself felt most prominently in the choice of verbal equivalencies in translation.”¹⁰

⁸ Barr, “Translators’ Handling,” 196.

⁹ Sailhamer, *Translation Technique*, 69.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 214-215.

I think, however, that we should be extremely cautious in viewing the use of the Greek future as an indication of eschatology.

3.10.1. Since in the LXX-Psalter the rendering of Hebrew *yiqtol* by Greek future is a normal, default translation strategy (§1), it cannot be used as evidence of eschatologization in the LXX. The same is true of passages where future tense appears by inheritance (§2).

Joachim Schaper in his monograph *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*¹¹ proposed the existence of a network of messianic texts in the Septuagint and pointed out that some psalms belonging to this network are characterized by “frequent changes from the Hebrew imperfect consecutive to the Greek future tense”.¹² However, as we have seen (§2.1), the rendering of the Hebrew *wayyiqtol* (i.e. imperfect consecutive) with the Greek future is what is to be expected in the context of preceding Greek future forms. This is exactly the case with Schaper’s examples.¹³

3.10.2. The translator’s use of future to depict the inevitability of retribution (§3.7.3; §3.8) is theological in nature, but not necessarily eschatological, since retribution can occur *within history*, whereas eschatology implies a one-time event that will lead to the *end of history*. For Sailhamer, the paragon example of eschatological use of future in the Greek Psalter is Psalm 37. We agree that the LXX translator’s use of future tense in this psalm emphasizes the idea of retribution (see our treatment of this Psalm in §3.7.3). But is this psalm more “eschatological” in nature – whether in Hebrew or Greek – than other Wisdom texts that speak of retribution? Sailhamer points out that the Qumran Peshier (4Q171) interprets this psalm as predicting the fate of the community. Indeed, it is characteristic of Qumran exegesis that those passages in the Hebrew Bible that speak of persecution of the righteous and of their coming vindication are understood as referring to specific events in the life of the Qumran community. Such is the case with Ps 37. However, even if this specific Qumran interpretation can be considered “eschatological”, I doubt we can project it onto the LXX-Psalter.

3.10.3. With these caveats in mind, we can look for those passages in the LXX-Psalter where the anomalous appearance of future tense can be linked not to the general idea of retribution, but to some well-known end-time scenarios, such as God’s judgment or cosmic cataclysms marking the end of this world. The number of such passages is surprisingly small, and their eschatological interpretation is problematic. Let us look at two such passages.

102:16	וַיִּרְאוּ גוֹיִם אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה וְכָל־מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ אֶת־כְּבוֹדָהּ:	καὶ φοβηθήσονται τὰ ἔθνη τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου καὶ πάντες οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς τὴν δόξαν σου
102:17	כִּי־בָנָה יְהוָה צִיּוֹן נִרְאָה בְּכָבוֹד:	ὅτι οἰκοδομήσει κύριος τὴν Σιών καὶ ὀφθήσεται ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ

The future tense of οἰκοδομήσει and ὀφθήσεται in 102:17 (*qatal* in Hebrew) may be explained by the idea of the future restoration of Zion. Still, the influence of the tense of the preceding verb (φοβηθήσονται in 102:16) cannot be ruled out. In any case, the future restoration of Zion (σὺ ἀναστὰς οἰκτιρήσεις τὴν Σιών, Hebrew *yiqtol*, Greek future, normal scheme) is mentioned already in 102:14, so the translator does not

¹¹ WUNT, 2/76; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995.

¹² Schaper, *Eschatology*, 116.

¹³ See Schaper’s treatment of the Greek text of 92:11a, *ibid.*, 111.

“eschatologize” the text by introducing themes not present in the original, but rather repeats and emphasizes an idea that is already present in the Hebrew.

Psalm 29 begins with a call for the “sons of God” to worship the Lord (29:1-2), continues with a description of the Lord’s voice and its impact (29:3-9), and ends with a description of the Lord enthroned “over the flood” and blessing his people (29:10-11). The translator has a marked preference for Greek future forms in this psalm. For example, the MT *wayyiqtol* forms describing the impact of the Lord’s voice in 29:4-5¹⁴ are rendered with Greek future, contrary both to the normal scheme and to the principle of inheritance (cf. aorist ἐβρόντησεν in 29:3). In 29:10 the translator obviously read *qatal* (instead of the MT *qatal*).

29:3	<p>קוֹל יְהוָה עַל-הַמַּיִם אֶל-הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים יְהוָה עַל-מַיִם רַבִּים:</p>	<p>φωνὴ κυρίου ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης ἐβρόντησεν κύριος ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν</p>
...		
29:5	<p>קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים וַיִּשְׁבֶּר יְהוָה אֶת-אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן:</p>	<p>φωνὴ κυρίου συντρίβοντος κέδρους καὶ συντρίψει κύριος τὰς κέδρους τοῦ Λιβάνου</p>
29:6a	<p>וַיִּרְקִינֵם כְּמוֹ-עֵגַל לְבָנוֹן</p>	<p>καὶ λεπτυνεῖ αὐτὰς ὡς τὸν μόσχον τὸν Λίβανον</p>
...		
29:10	<p>יְהוָה לְמַבּוּל יִשָּׁב וַיִּשָּׁב יְהוָה מִלְּדָד לְעוֹלָם:</p>	<p>κύριος τὸν κατακλυσμὸν κατοικιεῖ καὶ καθίεται κύριος βασιλεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα</p>

One can speculate about the influence of eschatology on the rendering of Hebrew tenses in this psalm, but the evidence is not entirely convincing.

3.10.4. Against the background of such inconclusive and dubious arguments for the “eschatologization” of the LXX-Psalter, it is telling that many passages that could have been interpreted by the LXX translator as references to end-time events are simply rendered according to the normal scheme. For example, references to God’s judgment in 9:5-8 are rendered as past, in 9:9 as future (in both cases according to the normal scheme). Confessing that “Lord will be king” (βασιλεύσει; once; 146:10) and “Lord became king” (ἐβασίλευσεν; 5 times; 47:9; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), the translator is also following the normal scheme in both cases.

One of the most majestic descriptions of God's judgment in the Psalter is Psalm 50.

50:1	<p>אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דָּבַר</p>	<p>θεὸς θεῶν κύριος ἐλάλησεν</p>
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¹⁴ Ralph Brucker sees the vocalisation of these forms as imperfect consecutive as “ein Irrtum der Masoreten” (*Septuaginta Deutsch - Erläuterungen und Kommentare*, edited by Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011, 2:1576-1580).

	וַיִּקְרָא-אֶרְצָךָ מִמִּזְרָח-שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד-מִבְּרָחַי:	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὴν γῆν ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν ἡλίου καὶ μέχρι δυσμῶν
50:2-3	מִצִּיּוֹן מְכַלְל־יָפִי אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ: יָבֵא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵל־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-לִפְנֵינוּ תֹאכַל וְסִבִּיבֵינוּ וְשַׁעֲרָה מִדָּד:	ἐκ Σιων ἢ εὐπρέπεια τῆς ὠραιότητος αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐμφανῶς ἦξει ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ οὐ παρασιωπήσεται πῦρ ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ καυθήσεται καὶ κύκλω αὐτοῦ καταίγῃς σφόδρα
50:4	וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי-שָׁמַיִם מֵעַל וְאֵל־הָאָרֶץ לִדְיוֹן עָמוֹ:	προσκαλέσεται τὸν οὐρανὸν ἄνω καὶ τὴν γῆν διακρίναι τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ

[50:5 Direct speech of God]

50:6	וַיְגִידוּ שָׁמַיִם צְדָקָה כִּי־אֱלֹהִים הוּא שֹׁפֵט הָעָלְמָה:	καὶ ἀναγγελοῦσιν οἱ οὐρανοὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς κριτῆς ἐστὶν διάψαλμα
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[50:7-15 Direct speech of God]

50:16a	וְלִרְשָׁעוֹ אָמַר אֱלֹהִים	τῷ δὲ ἀμαρτωλῷ εἶπεν ὁ θεός
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[50:16b-23 Direct speech of God]

In 50:1a, perfect קָרָא is rendered with aorist ἐκάλεσεν according to the normal scheme, the tense is inherited in 50:1b by aorist ἐκάλεσεν rendering waw + finite verb in Hebrew (see above, §2.1). In 50:2-4, Greek future forms correspond to Hebrew $yiqtol$ (4 times, normal scheme). The future tense is inherited in 50:6 by ἀναγγελοῦσιν rendering waw + finite verb in Hebrew (the inheritance is facilitated by the fact that 50:6 shares with 50:4 the key image: the heavens as a witness to God's judgment). The judgment scene continues in 50:16a, but is rendered in past (aorist), again following the normal scheme. The change of tenses is illogical, but is explained by the alternation of tenses in the Hebrew original. The translator could have described God's judgment completely in future tense, but he did not.

Some verses that could have been used by the translator to express his eschatological views are rendered with past tenses *even though* the normal scheme would have required future tense. This is the case, for example, of God's address to the gods in Ps 82:7, which is understood by the translator as an iterative present ($\text{ὕμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἄνθρωποι ἀποθνήσκετε καὶ ὡς εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων πίπτετε}$, $yiqtol$ > present, 2 times, see above, §3.9). Ps 82:7 would have been a great opportunity for the translator to express his belief in God's future judgment using future tense – if he had had such beliefs.

Describing God's intervention in history with images of the earth, hills and mountains trembling, shaking or melting, the translator could have used future tense, pointing to the eschaton, but he preferred past tense (§3.3).

On the whole, the translator's failure to clearly express his eschatological views in passages like these raises doubt that he had such views, or at least that he was willing to reflect them in his choice of tenses.

Summary

We have identified in the LXX-Psalter three strategies for rendering verb tenses: (1) following the normal scheme, (2) following the principle of inheritance, and (3) taking into account the meaning of the text, which often involves imposing certain predefined discursive and narrative patterns on it. Each of these strategies is consistent and logical in itself, but the translator's switching between them sometimes gives the impression of chaos. A systematic analysis of the patterns that determine the choice of tenses has not provided compelling arguments in favor of the "eschatologization" of the Psalter in the Greek translation.

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