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THE PROBLEM OF THEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED RENDERINGS IN THE LXX:
LINGUISTICS AND EXEGESIS

Dissertation Summary
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The dissertation was prepared at the Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies of the HSE University.

Publications

Eight publications were selected for the defense:

1. Seleznev M. In Search of the "Theology of the Septuagint": Methodological Aspects // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. 2016. № 4. P. 7–28.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810292983.pdf

2. Seleznev M. Στερέωμα in the LXX and Related Literature and the Origin of the Quotation from Genesis in Pseudo-Longinus's On the Sublime // Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (JSCS). 2021. T. 54. P. 95-109.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810293296.pdf

3. Seleznev M. Πόλις ασεδεκ in Isaiah 19:18: a translator's wordplay or the actual Jewish name for "Leontopolis"? // Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (JSCS). 2022. T. 55. P. 155-164.

   http://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/810402205.pdf

4. Seleznev M. Βασιλεύς and ἄρχων in the Septuagint: Greek translations of the Hebrew word "king" and the attitude towards kings in the Egyptian Diaspora of the 3rd century B.C.E. // Shagi / Steps. 2017. T. 3. № 4. P. 47–63.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/213363604.pdf

5. Seleznev M. Antianthropomorphisms in the Septuagint revisited: an attempt of a statistical analysis // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 17. 2013. P. 800-812.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810293345.pdf

6. Seleznev M. Plural νόμοι in the LXX and the reinterpretation of Jeremiah 31/38 by the Greek translator// Aristeas. Philologia Classica et Historia Antiqua, 2023, № 1. P. 15-27.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/827258430.pdf

7. Seleznev M. "According to our image" or "to be our image"? (Gen 1:26-27) // Vestnik PSTGU. Series 1: Theology. Philosophy. Religious Studies. 2023. № 1. P. 11–25.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/814668034.pdf

8. Seleznev M. God's Self-Identification in Exodus 3.14: "I am The Being" or "I am who I am"? Modern Exegesis and Ancient Grammar // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. 2017. № 4. P. 162-186.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/213363889.pdf

The results of the present study have also been presented in the following papers:

9. Seleznev M. The Text of the Scripture and Religious Identity: The Septuagint in Orthodox Christianity // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. 2019. № 4. P. 192–211.

   https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/347949327.pdf

10. Seleznev M. Russian Bible and Russian Bible Scholarship Between the MT and the LXX // Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (JSCS). 2017. Vol. 50. P. 111-121.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/221146339.pdf

11. Seleznev M. Hosea 1:9 in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint: an Allusion to Exodus 3:14? // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 20. 2016. P. 929-939.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810292537.pdf

12. L. Yu. Musina, M. G. Seleznev, A. I. Shmaina-Velikanova. Ἀνομία, ἄνομος, ανομέω in the Psalms of the Septuagint and the divinity of "Law" // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 20. 2016. P. 755-764.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810293465.pdf

13. Seleznev M. Syntactic patterns for linking participial conditional clauses with the main clause in the Biblical Hebrew and the exegesis of Exodus 33.7 // Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Series 9. Philology. Asian Studies. Journalism. 2015. T. 4. P. 35-42.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810288726.pdf

14. Seleznev M. The most famous word in the Septuagint // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 19. 2015. P. 811-823.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810292441.pdf

15. Seleznev M., A. V. Shelushpanov. On the eschatology of the Greek Psalter: debates on the meaning of the expression εἰς τὸ τέλος // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 18. 2014. P. 842-852.

    https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810384570.pdf

16. Seleznev M. The Septuagint as it was understood by a Greek rhetorician: Pseudo-Longinus and στερέωμα // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 16. 2012. P. 761-771.

    http://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/812138009.pdf

Conference Presentations

The main results and conclusions of the present study have been presented at international and national conferences, including:

1) Die Septuaginta – Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz. 6. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 21.–24. Juli 2016. Paper title: Anti-anthropomorphisms in the Septuagint: Statistical Testing of a Hypothesis
   The text is published in the Proceedings of the conference:
   Seleznev M. Anti-anthropomorphisms in the Septuagint: Statistical Testing of a Hypothesis, in: Die Septuaginta – Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz. 6. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 21.–24. Juli 2016. Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2018. P. 416-430.
   https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/221143865.pdf
2) Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting (November 19-22, 2016, San Antonio). Paper title: The Greek Bible through the Lenses of "Pagan" Vocabulary and Cosmology
3) Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting (07-11 Aug 2017, Berlin). Paper title: Nomos and Nomoi in the LXX, and Jer 38:33 LXX
4) Seminar «Greek expanded, Greek transformed: The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators» (Oxford, 24 April 2018) Paper title: Semantic differentiation between Classical and Hebraizing usage in the LXX, with special reference to the case of νόμος (sg.) vs. νόμοι (pl.)
5) 5th International Conference on the theology of the Septuagint «Law and Justice», (Thessaloniki, 3-4 May 2018) Paper title: Between νόμος Μωυσέως and Σόλωνος νόμοι: grammatical number of νόμος in the LXX
6) «Language contact and translation in religious context. Comparative approaches» (Paris, May 24-26, 2018) Paper title: Metaphors they lived by: the metaphors of the Hebrew Bible in the Old Greek and modern Russian translations
7) Seminar «Greek expanded, Greek transformed: The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators» (Oxford, 18-20 June 2018) Paper title: On the Usage of στερέωμα in the LXX, with an Appendix on the Non-Usage of στερέωμα in Περὶ ὕψους
8) Die Septuaginta – Themen, Manuskripte, Wirkungen. 7. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 19.-22. Juli 2018. Paper title: Replacing מֶלֶךְ with ἄρχων in the LXX: Self-Censorship or Inner Development of the Jewish Tradition?
   The text is published in the Proceedings of the conference:
   Seleznev M. Replacing מֶלֶךְ with ἄρχων in the LXX: Self-Censorship or Inner Development of the Jewish Tradition?, in: Die Septuaginta – Themen, Manuskripte, Wirkungen. 7. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 19.-22. Juli 2018. Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2020. P. 302-314.
   https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/400868268.pdf
9) International conference "The Gospel of Matthew in its historical and theological context" (Moscow, September 24 to 28, 2018). Paper title: "Theology of the Septuagint" and the place of the Septuagint in the theological development of the Second Temple Judaism
10) Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting (Denver, 17 – 20 Nov 2018). Paper title: The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings and the Arithmetic of the Ancient Scribes
11) The Eighth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars (Caraiman, 26-31 May 2019). Paper title: «Homo Imago Dei»
12) Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting (Rome, Italy, July 1–5, 2019). Paper title: Platonic Influence on the Septuagint Translators? The Case of Genesis 1:6

13) 23 Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (Aberdeen, 4–9 August 2019). Paper title: The Hebrew Vorlage of the extra cola in the LXX Deut 32:43 and theological editing of the Bible text: a reappraisal
14) Summer School "The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint and Early Jewish Biblical Exegesis" (Bern, 19–23 Aug 2019). Paper titles: MT, Qumran and the Septuagint with special attention to Deuteronomy 32: 43; Psalm 17/18: Hebrew Verbal Forms and their Greek Translation; God's Self-Identification in Exodus 3.14: "I am The Being" or "I am who I am"?
15) International conference in honor of Nina Braginskaya (Moscow, 18-19 June 2021) Paper title: Πόλις ασεδεκ: Isaiah 19:18 in the Septuagint.

Studies, presented in this dissertation were discussed at the regular seminar «The Greek and the Hebrew Bible texts», headed by Mikhail Seleznev, which took place in 2014-2017 under the auspices of the Russian State University for the Humanities, and starting from 2017 takes place under the auspices of the «Laboratory of Unnecessary things» (Independent University of Moscow).

The results of Mikhail Seleznev's research in the field of the MT and the LXX studies were also presented at public lectures, lecture courses and seminars.

Research projects

What do we mean by Septuagint?

In this study, the term "Septuagint" (LXX) is used in a broad sense, synonymous with the "Greek Old Testament". This collection of Greek writings includes original translations of Hebrew and Aramaic scriptures into Greek, made between the third century B.C.E. (Pentateuch) and the second century C.E. (Ezra-Nehemiah), as well as their revisions ("Theodotion" Daniel), and books originally composed in Greek (Wisdom of Solomon).

Our primary attention will be paid to the Greek books that have Hebrew originals, so that we can compare the two texts and ask about the reasons for the divergence between them.

If there is a need to refer specifically to the (reconstructed) original translations made before the turn of the era, we will use the term "Old Greek" (OG).

What do we mean by theology of the Septuagint?

The articles submitted for defense in this dissertation deal with a question which has long been at the center of a lively scholarly debate: whether the differences between the Greek translation of the Bible and its Hebrew original were due to a specific translation technique or to new theological ideas and concepts that affected the translators' worldview. The translators lived in the world of Hellenized Judaism, which was already very different from the world of the ancient Near East. This change could not but affect the result of their work.

When I speak of the "theology" of Hellenistic Judaism or the Septuagint, I mean the entire set of concepts and ideas that are connected in one way or another with the sphere of religion. This includes a wide range of beliefs and practices, including conceptions of God, cosmological ideas, anthropological concepts such as human beings created in God's image, liturgical ideas and practices, and the variety of mechanisms through which social institutions achieve religious legitimization.

It is important to emphasize that these ideas were not systematized as they were later in medieval Christian theology. "Theology" in this systematic sense was unknown in the ancient Near East and in the varieties of Judaism that existed in the Second Temple period, including Hellenistic Judaism. Even so, religious ideas that are inchoate and unsystematized can still influence the life of human societies. This may be seen in the choices made by translators of religious texts, even though the influence may be less conscious.

The present dissertation and contemporary Septuagint research

In recent decades, the Septuagint and the culture of Hellenistic Judaism have attracted increasing interest in the world of biblical scholarship. To explain how and to what extent the worldview and the theology of the translators might have influenced their decisions, scholars have generally offered two types of approach.

We can easily see in the Greek Bible a lot of new ideas and conceptions, which at first glance seem to anticipate the later exegesis of Philo of Alexandria or the Christian tradition. Many studies of the Septuagint tend to attribute all the meanings and interpretations that later exegesis finds in the Septuagint directly to the translators. This approach is sometimes called "maximalism". This tendency was especially characteristic of the German school of Septuagint scholars in the mid-20th century. One illustration of this approach is the programmatic article (with a telling title!) by G. Bertram "Praeparatio evangelica in der Septuaginta" (*Vetus Testamentum* 7 [1957]: 225–249).

Our research follows rather a different approach, according to which we can speak of theologically motivated exegesis by the Septuagint translators if, and only if, all other possibilities of explaining the difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts have been explored and rejected. These possibilities might include the presence of a different Hebrew

Vorlage or a peculiar translation technique. This latter approach is sometimes referred to as "minimalism".

Methodologically important works that reflect this perspective include the following: Emanuel Tov, "Theologically Motivated Exegesis Embedded in the Septuagint," in idem, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill 1999), 257–269); J. Joosten, "Une théologie de la septante? Réflexions méthodologiques sur l'interprétation de la version grecque" *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 132 (2000): 31–46; A. Aejmelaeus, "Von Sprache zur Theologie: Methodologische Überlegungen zur Theologie der Septuaginta," in M. Knibb, ed., *The Septuagint and Messianism* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006): 21–48; A. Pietersma, "Exegesis in the Septuagint: Possibilities and Limits: The Psalter as a Case in Point," in W. Kraus and R.G. Wooden, eds., *Septuagint Research. Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 33–45); H. Ausloos and B. Lemmelijn, "Theology or Not? That's the Question: Is There Such a Thing as the Theology of the Septuagint?," in H. Ausloos and B. Lemmelijn, eds., *Handbook of the Septuagint* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 2020) 5:19-45).

In our dissertation the Bible texts are studied from a diachronic perspective. In this perspective, we look at the composing and editing of the books of the Hebrew Bible, their subsequent exegesis in the Hebrew-speaking Jewish milieu, their translation into Greek, the interpretation of this translation by Greek-speaking readers, and the exegesis of the Greek Bible in the world of Hellenized Judaism. All these stages can be seen as links in a single chain. The LXX translation itself is but one link among others. From this perspective, the so-called "upstream" and "downstream" approaches to the LXX do not contradict each other, just as the study of the Ancient Near East and the study of the Hellenistic Near East do not contradict each other.

There is one important point that all modern Septuagint scholars agree upon, namely that we cannot speak of the Septuagint as something stylistically or thematically unified. Any discussion of the Septuagint as a whole (including its "theology") must be preceded by a careful study of individual cases and passages. This assumption underlies the current dissertation as well. Its main part consists of an analysis of specific cases, each of which is representative and important for the overall picture in its own way. Such an approach puts our research on the same footing as other contemporary works on the Septuagint which emphasize the necessity of case studies. Illustrating the principles of moderate minimalism with specific examples contributes to the theoretical and methodological significance of the research.

The interdisciplinary nature of the research determines the diversity of methods used, including linguistic text analysis, textual criticism, historical and philological analysis of the Bible and its translations, and the analysis of philosophical and religious concepts. In our study of literal and non-literal translations of biblical "anthropomorphisms" in the Septuagint, the apparatus of modern mathematical statistics was proposed for the analysis of the Septuagint translation technique. For a number of reasons (including a certain traditionalism characteristic of the discipline), biblical scholars sporadically resort to the tools that have already become standard for other philological disciplines. The introduction of strict mathematical criteria in place of purely subjective assessments may be promising for the study of the Septuagint.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation consists of a methodological study and seven case studies. The results of each study have been presented in at least one paper published in a peer-reviewed journal (in Russian or in English), and at least one international conference (in English).

Each case study investigates a particular linguistic issue related to the LXX translation, and it also deals with a particular topic pertaining to the theology or religious outlook of the LXX.

	The topic of the case study	**Which linguistic or translation issue related to the LXX studies is being investigated?**	**Which topic pertaining to the theology or religious outlook of the LXX is being studied?**
1	Case study 1. Στερέωμα in the LXX and Related Literature	Semantic neologisms in translation and their understandability	The concept of "heaven" in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles
2	Case study 2. Πόλις ασεδεκ in Isaiah 19:18 LXX	Translators' use of euphemisms, dysphemisms and "speaking" names	The polemics around the "Leontopolis schism"
3	Case study 3. Βασιλεύς and ἄρχων in the LXX	Reflection of changing social realities in translation	Attitude towards kings and kingship in the Biblical tradition
4	Case study 4. Literal and non-literal translation of "anthropomorphisms" in the LXX	Use of statistical analysis to study translation trends	Anthropomorphisms in the Biblical image of God
5	Case study 5. Νόμος and νόμοι in the LXX	Lexicalization of grammatical categories in translation	The concept of "law" in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles
6	Case study 6. The meaning of "the image of God" in the Hebrew and the Greek texts of Genesis 1:26-27	The problem of translation of polysemous prepositions	Man as the image of God
7	Case study 7. God's self-definition in the Greek and Hebrew texts of Exod 3:14	Translator's rendering of the construction *idem per idem*	"Proto-apophatic" and "proto-cataphatic" theological tendencies in the Biblical tradition

Methodological study. In search of the "theology of the LXX"

Main publication (in Russian):

Seleznev M. In Search of the "Theology of the Septuagint": Methodological Aspects // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. 2016. № 4: 7–28

Conference presentation (in English):

"Theology of the Septuagint" and the place of the Septuagint in the theological development of the Second Temple Judaism. International conference "The Gospel of Matthew in its historical and theological context" (Moscow, September 24 to 28, 2018)

Summary:

The paper discusses the role of the theological exegesis among other factors that caused differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament. The author insists that we can speak of theologically motivated exegesis by the Septuagint translators if, and only if, all other possibilities of explaining the difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts (for example, a different Hebrew Vorlage or a peculiar translation technique) have been explored and rejected.

There was a marked development of concepts and ideas (including theological concepts and ideas) between the time in which the texts of the Hebrew Bible were written and the time of Philo and Josephus. Scholars dealing with the "theology of the LXX" often ascribe a good part of this development to the translators of the LXX. But in fact the translation itself was only a link among many other links in a lengthy and complicated chain of exegetical developments within Second Temple Judaism.

The paper attempts to classify factors that can create a false impression of a theologically motivated translation.

(a) The Hebrew text of the LXX Vorlage may have been different from the Hebrew text known to us.

(b) The meaning of Hebrew words and expressions may have changed by the time of the translation.

(c) The translator's choice may have been affected by the use of standard equivalents, by stylistic considerations, by peculiarities of translation technique, or by the translator's desire to make the text more explicit.

(d) The LXX text known to us may be different from the real OG.

(e) Our own understanding of the LXX may be influenced by later exegesis.

Speaking about theologically motivated exegesis in such cases would be misleading.

Case study 1. Στερέωμα in the LXX and Related Literature

Main publication:

Seleznev M. Στερέωμα in the LXX and Related Literature and the Origin of the Quotation from Genesis in Pseudo-Longinus's On the Sublime // Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (JSCS). 2021. No. 54. P. 95-109.
https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810293296.pdf

Conference presentations (in English):
1. Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting (November 19-22, 2016, San Antonio). Paper title: The Greek Bible through the Lenses of "Pagan" Vocabulary and Cosmology
2. 'On the Usage of στερέωμα in the LXX, with an Appendix on the Non-Usage of στερέωμα in Περὶ ὕψους. Seminar «Greek expanded, Greek transformed: The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators» (Oxford, 18-20 June 2018)

Summary:

The choice of the Greek word στερέωμα "solid body" to render the Hebrew rāqīaʿ "heavenly vault" was due to the connotations of the word στερέωμα that are already evident in classical Greek. The hypothesis that Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* influenced this choice is unnecessary.

The connotations of the word στερέωμα corresponded well to the conception of heaven in ancient Hebrew cosmology, but not in Greek cosmology. The LXX preserved the ancient Near Eastern worldview with the heavenly στερέωμα as a solid body above the earth. Jewish visions, apocalypses, and "testaments" followed both this worldview and this usage of the word στερέωμα. On the contrary, Hellenistic Jewish books that tried to follow the rules of the Greek literature avoided the word. The major exception is Philo, who advanced the conception of two skies, incorporeal and corporeal, and used στερέωμα to denote the "corporeal" one. Christian intellectuals turned out to be more willing to use the word, often combining a more literal understanding with the Philonic exegesis.

Pagan Greek writers (except later writers, such as the Neoplatonists, influenced by the biblical tradition and/or magical texts) were unaware of the semantic development that took place in the LXX. This could not but lead to misunderstandings on the part of the Greek-speaking readers and explains the strange rendering of the opening verses of Genesis in the Greek treatise "On the Sublime" (Περὶ ὕψους), the first reliably attested Bible quotation in "pagan" Greek literature.

Our reconstruction of the history behind the biblical quotation in "On the Sublime" puts an end to the scholarly debate about the possible connection between the author of this treatise and the Jewish milieu: he was not a Jew and, moreover, he was not even remotely familiar with Jewish cosmology. The quotation was taken by him (and "stylistically improved") from some other work that has not come down to us. We can assume with a high degree of certainty that this work was the lost treatise of the same name ("On the Sublime") by Caecilius of Calacte.

Case study 2. Πόλις ασεδεκ in LXX Isaiah 19:18

Main publication:

Seleznev M. Πόλις ασεδεκ in Isaiah 19:18: a translator's wordplay or the actual Jewish name for "Leontopolis"? // *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (JSCS)*. 2022. N 55. P. 155-164.
http://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/810402205.pdf

Conference presentation:

International conference in honor of Nina Braginskaya (Moscow, 18-19 June 2021) Paper title: Πόλις ασεδεκ: Isaiah 19:18 in the Septuagint

Summary:

Among different explanations of the peculiar reading πόλις ασεδεκ in Isaiah 19:18, the most probable seems to be the one that regards this expression as an allusion to עיר הצדק in Isaiah

1:26. However, observations on the translation technique of the LXX-Isaiah make it dubious that this allusion was created by the translator of Isaiah himself. Additionally, in Isaiah 1:26 the Hebrew expression is translated, while in Isaiah 19:18 it is transliterated, which is a strange way of creating an intertextual allusion. The present paper suggests an alternative, namely that the Greek expression Πόλις ασεδεκ, inspired by the Hebrew text of Isaiah 1:26, first became the name the "Leontopolis" Jews gave to their settlement, not in the imagery of the book of Isaiah, but in the real world of Ptolemaic Egypt. Only afterwards was it taken into the LXX-Isaiah. Our analysis of the translation technique of LXX-Isaiah lends support to this scenario.

Case study 3. Βασιλεύς and ἄρχων in the LXX

Main publication (in Russian):
Βασιλεύς and ἄρχων in the Septuagint: Greek translations of the Hebrew word "king" and the attitude towards kings in the Egyptian Diaspora of the 3rd century B.C.E. // Shagi / Steps, 3(4), 47–63
https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/213363604.pdf

Conference presentation (in English; published in the Proceedings):
Seleznev M. Replacing מֶלֶךְ with ἄρχων in the LXX: Self-Censorship or Inner Development of the Jewish Tradition? // Die Septuaginta – Themen, Manuskripte, Wirkungen. 7. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 19.-22. Juli 2018. Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2020. P. 302-314.
https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/400868268.pdf

Summary:
Theological and ideological changes in the LXX in most cases witness to developments that started long before and continued well after. The Greek translation was but one link – though often the most visible link – in the chain of such developments. The LXX rendering of מֶלֶךְ as ἄρχων is a link in the chain of "antimonarchic" developments that started with the Hebrew Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic History and continued through centuries, as late as Pirqe Avot.

Case study 4. Literal and non-literal translations of the "anthropomorphisms" in the LXX

Main publication (in Russian):
M. G. Seleznev. Antianthropomorphisms in the Septuagint revisited: an attempt of a statistical analysis // Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology. T. 17, 2013. P. 800-812
https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/810293345.pdf

Conference presentation (in English; published in the Proceedings):
Seleznev M. Anti-anthropomorphisms in the Septuagint: Statistical Testing of a Hypothesis // Die Septuaginta – Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz. 6. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 21.–24. Juli 2016. Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2018. P. 416-430.
https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/221143865.pdf

Summary:
The Hebrew Bible often uses anthropomorphic imagery with regard to God. In some verses of the Septuagint these anthropomorphic images seem to be eliminated or downplayed. In the present paper we deal with just one of the "anthropomorphisms" of the Hebrew Bible that used to be discussed in the scholarly literature, namely with the Hebrew semipreposition בעני "in

the eyes of" with regard to God. The question we try to answer may be formulated as follows: is it true that the translation of this semipreposition in a given LXX text depends in *a statistically significant way* on whether the expression refers to God or to man?

We see that the rendering of Hebrew idioms with the word עֵינֵי "eyes" varies in the Septuagint from free translation (Pentateuch, Book of Joshua) to literal (late translations). This development corresponds to how modern scholarship views the evolution of the Septuagint translation technique. In most books of the Septuagint, there is no statistically significant difference in how the corresponding idioms are rendered when referring to God and when referring to a human.

The most interesting case is the old Greek translation of the books of Samuel-Kings, where there is a statistically significant difference between the tendency to paraphrase when referring to God and the tendency to literalism when referring to a human. This may be related to the fact that the old Greek translation of these books is located at a point of equilibrium between the earlier, idiomatic translations and the later, literal ones. The role of the "Lucian" manuscripts of the books of Samuel-Kings for this research further emphasizes their significance for the reconstruction of the Old Greek text of these books.

Case study 5. Νόμος and νόμοι in the LXX

Main publication (in Russian):
M. G. Seleznev. Plural νόμοι in the LXX and the reinterpretation of Jeremiah 31/38 by the Greek translator// Aristeas. Philologia Classica et Historia Antiqua, 2023, № 1. P. 15-27.
https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/827258430.pdf

Conference presentations (in English):
1.   Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting (07-11 Aug 2017, Berlin). Nomos and Nomoi in the LXX, and Jer 38:33 LXX
2.   Seminar «Greek expanded, Greek transformed: The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators» (Oxford, 24 April 2018). Semantic differentiation between Classical and Hebraizing usage in the LXX, with special reference to the case of νόμος (sg.) vs. νόμοι (pl.)
3.   5th International Conference on the theology of the Septuagint «Law and Justice», (Thessaloniki, 3-4 May 2018). Between νόμος Μωυσέως and Σόλωνος νόμοι: grammatical number of νόμος in the LXX

Summary:
In the Septuagint, the word "law" (in the singular) always refers to the Law of God. The singular is semantically loaded: the Law is one, just as there is one God and one Temple. This translation strategy is the same for all the books of the Old Greek translation. The appearance of the plural forms of νόμοι "laws" in the Greek Bible may be due to one of the following factors:
(a) we are dealing with later translations/revisions that no longer follow the rule mentioned above;
(b) upon closer study of the textual tradition, the text adopted in the standard Septuagint editions as Old Greek turns out to be secondary;
(c) we are dealing not with a translation from Hebrew, but with fragments originally written in Greek;
(d) (the most interesting case) the translators deliberately choose the plural form to distinguish the law(s) in question from the Law of Moses (a kind of lexicalization of the grammatical category of number).
The present paper focuses especiallly on the meaning of pl. νόμοι in Jer 31/38:33 and Jer 31:36/38:37. It is shown that the difference between the Hebrew and the Greek texts witnesses to a re-interpretation of Jer 31/38 in the LXX. Differently from the Hebrew original, the Greek text

of Jeremiah speaks here not about the Torah of Moses, but rather about the new laws, that will be given in the context of the new, eschatological covenant (Jer 31/38:1). One can say that by rendering the Hebrew "Law" as νόμοι, the LXX translator of Jeremiah paved the way for the future self-understanding of the first Christians.

It is important that the contrast between the singular νόμος and the plural νόμοι in the Old Greek translation has nothing to do with the Hebrew *Vorlage* and cannot be used for its reconstruction. In particular, the plural νόμοι in Jer 31/38:33 says nothing about the grammatical number of the corresponding word in the Hebrew *Vorlage*. It can be used to reconstruct the theological worldview of the translators, but not the underlying Hebrew text of Jeremiah.

Case study 6. The meaning of "the image of God" in the Hebrew and the Greek texts of Genesis 1:26-27

Main paper (in Russian):
> Seleznev M. "According to our image" or "to be our image"? (Gen 1:26-27) // Vestnik PSTGU. Series 1: Theology. Philosophy. Religious Studies. 2023. № 1. P. 11–25
> https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/814668034.pdf

Conference presentation (in English):
> «Homo Imago Dei». The Eighth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars (Caraiman, 26-31 May 2019).

Summary:
The article attempts to classify the different interpretations of the expression "the image of God" attested in the history of exegesis. The difference between these interpretations may be clarified by an analogy with a king's image on a coin. What exactly is meant by "the king's image"? The coin itself? The features of the king's face represented on the coin? Or the stamp which impressed the king's image upon it? Following this analogy, we identify three models of understanding Gen 1:26-27 and trace their place in the history of exegesis.

The analysis of the semantics of the Hebrew preposition *bə-* as well as the study of the history of Hebrew religion demonstrate that the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:26-27 (man was created *bəṣelem 'ĕlōhīm*) was most likely intended to mean that man was created *to be* the image of God in the created world. An alternative, traditional interpretation, namely that man was created *according* to the image of God (i.e., sharing some qualities with God), is grammatically possible, but less likely in the perspective of the history of Hebrew religion.

The Septuagint translation (man was created κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ) was based on this alternative (most likely later) interpretation.

In the world of Hellenistic Jewish philosophy (Philo), the Septuagint wording gave rise to a third interpretation which presupposes an "image of God" having its own existence in the supersensible world and distinct both from God and man. There is no reason to believe that such an interpretation was intended by the Septuagint translators themselves.

Of special interest for us are the texts of Judeo-Hellenistic literature (Wisdom of Solomon) and early Christian literature (Paul's letters) that reflect interpretations of the biblical text different from the LXX.

Case study 7. God's self-definition in the Greek and Hebrew texts of Exod 3:14

Main publication (in Russian):
> Seleznev M. God's Self-Identification in Exodus 3.14: "I am The Being" or "I am who I am"? Modern Exegesis and Ancient Grammar // State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide. 2017. № 4: 162-186
> https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/213363889.pdf

Conference presentation (in English):

God's Self-Identification in Exodus 3.14: "I am The Being" or "I am who I am"? Summer School "The Masoretic Text, the Septuagint and Early Jewish Biblical Exegesis" (Bern, 19–23 Aug 2019).

Summary:

The article compares two interpretations of God's self-definition in Exodus 3:14. The first is the traditional "ontological" interpretation ("I am the One who really is", "I am the Being"), which is represented in Philo and in the patristic exegesis of the Septuagint, as well as in the standard Russian translation (the so-called Synodal version). The second is the "apophatic" interpretation ("I am what I am"), which is predominant in modern exegesis and modern translations of the Hebrew Bible.

Analysis of the Hebrew text clearly shows that the "apophatic" understanding is the original one. The Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew text is often regarded as having been influenced by Greek philosophy, but it may well be explained as the translator's attempt to retain the parallelism between the two halves of Exodus 3:14 without violating the norms of the Greek grammar. If this is the case, the LXX translators did not invent the "ontological" understanding of this verse, but rather involuntarily prepared the way for it.

Methodological study. In search of the "theology of the LXX"	0.1. The LXX translation is but one link in the chain of exegetical developments that took place during the Second Temple period. We can speak of theologically motivated exegesis by the Septuagint translators if, and only if, all other possibilities of explaining the difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts (for example, a different Hebrew Vorlage or a peculiar translation technique) have been explored and rejected.
Case study 1. Στερέωμα in the LXX and Related Literature	1.1 The choice of the Greek word στερέωμα "solid body" to render the Hebrew rāqīaʻ "heavenly vault" was due to the connotations of the word στερέωμα that are already evident in classical Greek. The hypothesis that Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* influenced this choice is unnecessary. 1.2. The connotations of the word στερέωμα corresponded well to the conception of heaven in ancient Hebrew cosmology, but not in Greek cosmology. This would inevitably lead to misunderstandings on the part of the Greek-speaking readers. . It also explains the strange rendering of the opening verses of Genesis in the Greek treatise "On the Sublime" (Περὶ ὕψους), the first reliably attested Bible quotation in "pagan" Greek literature. 1.3 Our reconstruction of the history behind the biblical quotation in "On the Sublime" puts an end to the scholarly debate about the possible connection between the author of this treatise and the Jewish milieu: he was not a Jew and, moreover, he was not even remotely familiar with Jewish cosmology. The quotation was taken by him (and "stylistically improved") from some other work that has not come down to us. We can assume with a high degree of certainty that this work was the lost treatise of the same name ("On the Sublime") by Caecilius of Calacte.
Case study 2. Πόλις ασεδεκ in LXX Isaiah 19:18	2.1 The expression Πόλις ασεδεκ in Isaiah 19:18 refers to the Hebrew expression ʻīr haṣṣedeq "city of righteousness" in Isaiah 1:26. However, this reference could hardly have been created by the translator of Isaiah into Greek or taken by him from his Hebrew *Vorlage*. It is more plausible that the Greek expression Πόλις ασεδεκ, inspired by the Hebrew text of Isaiah 1:26, first became the name the "Leontopolis" Jews gave to their settlement, not in the imagery of the book of Isaiah, but in the real world of Ptolemaic Egypt. Only afterwards was it taken into the LXX-Isaiah. Our analysis of the translation technique of LXX-Isaiah lends support to this scenario.
Case study 3. Βασιλεύς and ἄρχων in the LXX	3.1 Bickerman's hypothesis that the translators' use of the word ἄρχων "leader" instead of βασιλεύς "king" in the Greek Pentateuch was due to their self-censorship cannot be accepted. 3.2. The translators' preference for ἄρχων is due to the negative attitude of the theocratic Judaism of the Second Temple period to the institution of monarchy in Israel.

Case study 4. Literal and non-literal translation of the "anthropomorphisms" in the LXX	4.1 The rendering of Hebrew idioms with the word עֵינֵי "eyes" varies in the Septuagint from free translation (Pentateuch, Book of Joshua) to literal (late translations). This development corresponds to how modern scholarship views the evolution of the Septuagint translation technique. 4.2. In most books of the Septuagint, there is no statistically significant difference in how the corresponding idioms are rendered when referring to God and when referring to a human. 4.3 The most interesting case is the old Greek translation of the books of Samuel-Kings, where there is a statistically significant difference between the tendency to paraphrase when referring to God and the tendency to literalism when referring to a human. This may be related to the fact that the old Greek translation of these books is located at a point of equilibrium between the earlier, idiomatic translations and the later, literal ones. 4.4 The role of the "Lucian" manuscripts of the books of Samuel-Kings for this research further emphasizes their significance for the reconstruction of the Old Greek text of these books.
Case study 5. Νόμος and νόμοι in the LXX	5.1 In the Septuagint, the word "law" (in the singular) always refers to the Law of God. The singular is semantically loaded: the Law is one, just as there is one God and one Temple. This translation strategy is the same for all the books of the Old Greek translation. 5.2 The appearance of the plural forms of νόμοι "laws" in the Greek Bible may be due to one of the following factors: (a) we are dealing with later translations/revisions that no longer follow the rule mentioned above (5.1); (b) upon closer study of the textual tradition, the text adopted in the standard Septuagint editions as Old Greek turns out to be secondary; (c) we are dealing not with a translation from Hebrew, but with fragments originally written in Greek; (d) (the most interesting case) the translators deliberately choose the plural form to distinguish the law(s) in question from the Law of Moses (a kind of lexicalization of the grammatical category of number). 5.3 The contrast between the singular νόμος and the plural νόμοι in the Old Greek translation has nothing to do with the Hebrew *Vorlage* and cannot be used for its reconstruction. In particular, the plural νόμοι in Jer 31/38:33 says nothing about the grammatical number of the corresponding word in the Hebrew *Vorlage*. It can be used to reconstruct the theological worldview of the translators, but not the underlying Hebrew text of Jeremiah.
Case study 6. The meaning of "the image of God" in the Hebrew and the Greek texts of	6.1 The analysis of the semantics of the Hebrew preposition *bə-* as well as the study of the history of Hebrew religion demonstrate that the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:26-27 (man was created *bəṣelem 'ĕlōhīm*) was most likely intended to mean that man was created *to be* the image of God in the created world. An alternative, traditional interpretation, namely that man was created *according* to

Genesis 1:26-27	the image of God (i.e., sharing some qualities with God), is grammatically possible, but less likely in the perspective of the history of Hebrew religion. The Septuagint translation (man was created κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ) was based on this alternative (most likely later) interpretation. In the world of Hellenistic Jewish philosophy (Philo), the Septuagint wording gave rise to a third interpretation which presupposes an "image of God" having its own existence in the supersensible world and distinct both from God and man. There is no reason to believe that such an interpretation was intended by the Septuagint translators themselves.
Case study 7. God's self-definition in the Greek and Hebrew texts of Exod 3:14	7.1 God's self-definition in the Hebrew text of Ex 3:14a: *'ehyeh 'ăšer 'ehyeh* "I am who I am" is an *idem per idem* construction, which, in Biblical Hebrew, implies a refusal to give an exact answer. One can call such theology "proto-apophatic". The Greek translation ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν "I am the One who exists" breaks down the *idem per idem* construction and makes room for subsequent exegesis of this passage as a declaration that God is "the One truly existing" and the source of the being of everything that exists. This exegesis was suggested to Philo and Christian theologians by the Platonic concept of τὸ ὄν "the truly existing". There is no basis to assume that this exegesis was intended by the Septuagint translators themselves.