

The Translation and Interpretation of the זָבַח Sacrifice in LXX Pentateuch:

LXX as an Interpretive Conversation Partner

1—Introduction:

A number of modern commentators have made the observation that LXX Pentateuch represents an early example of Jewish interpretation of the biblical text.¹ And yet, in certain instances in modern scholarship, LXX remains an untapped resource for understanding how the ancient Jewish community understood its textual resource. The following paper identifies one example in which LXX Pentateuch displays sensitivity to the Hebrew *Vorlage* indicative of such interpretation and understanding. This example is the use of the Hebrew term זָבַח as a technical term for purification within the cultic context. Of course, this term stems from the root זָבַח , which broadly defined means ‘sin’. This paper explores the translation of this Hebrew root in various forms throughout LXX Pentateuch, which with few exceptions uses the two terms $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$, and $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ to render the Hebrew. As with any interpretation or translation there exists the possibility that the intention of the source text was misunderstood. This paper intends to assess the translators’ understanding of the Hebrew terms.

Within the Pentateuch, the Hebrew term is primarily but by no means exclusively used in a cultic context. This study assumes the likelihood that the translators had before them a Hebrew copy of all the books of the Pentateuch when they conducted their translation of the individual books. As such, the translators were mindful of the changing conceptual landscape of the Pentateuch with regard to sin from cultic to non-cultic applications. Their understanding of certain terms was likely shaped in part by the presentation of those terms in the whole of the Pentateuch, and not just the book or section on which they were working at the time.

2.1—Why the זָבַח ? The Scope of the Hebrew Root זָבַח

The זָבַח sacrifice forms one of the centerpieces of the purity system found in Leviticus. Debates on the nature of this term are well known and well executed, and need not be rehashed here.² The significance that the concept of ‘sin’ held for 2nd Temple Jewish and Christian writers is evident from the New Testament and rabbinic material.³

¹ J.W. Wevers *LXX: Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* SCS 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) xiiff; Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem: Simor Ltd., 1981) 70-72; F. M. Cross, “The Evolution of a Theory of Local Texts” as found in *1972 Proceedings of IOSCS Pseudepigrapha* (Los Angeles: SBL, 1972) 110. Cross *ibid.* 115 notes that the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible was not ‘foreign’ to the community of Jews in Alexandria. In what way the LXX is to be placed in the wider flow of Jewish (and Christian) interpretive activities in the 2nd Temple Period is another matter, one which must await a more extensive examination.

² Cf. Jacob Milgrom “Leviticus” v. I (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Nobuyoshi Kiuchi *A Study of Hata’ and Hata’t from Leviticus 4-5* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Baruch A. Levine *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); Jonathan Klawans *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³ The destruction of the temple notwithstanding, the concepts of sin and impurity as found in Leviticus endured and found a prominent place in the Talmud and rabbinic thought more generally, e.g., *Seder Tohoroth*. See, for instance, Jacob Neusner in Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner *Classic Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: Comparing Theologies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004) 184-202.

In light of its abiding importance for ancient Israelite, Jewish and Christian religious sensibilities, the concept of sin provides a useful test case for assessing the historical interpretation of a Hebrew concept by later communities, of which LXX would represent one tradition. As such, the concept of sin forms a ready example to trace theological permutations throughout the history of the Judeo-Christian traditions. The benefits of using this term and concept as the example are therefore several. First, the concept of sin and impurity represents a very important issue for the biblical and post-biblical writers. Secondly, it has shown itself to be a concept that readily takes to interpretation and adaptation. Finally, it holds central importance for Christians as well as Jews.⁴

The Hebrew term **חטא** functions in two, antithetical capacities within the Hebrew Bible. The first is the pointing in the *Qal* in which the term means generally, ‘to sin or commit an offense’.⁵ The other meaning is the *Piel* form, which means generally, ‘to purify’. On the one hand, the term signifies a breach in the prescribed purity codes and on the other the means by which restoration of that breach might be obtained.⁶ Simply put, two very different and yet related concepts are encapsulated by the different vocalization of one Hebrew term.⁷

The substantive form, **חטאת**, is useful in that it forms a dividing line between two categories of impurity, usefully categorized as ‘ritual’ and ‘moral’ by Jonathan Klawans.⁸ The first rubric, ritual impurities, is broadly characterized by unavoidable and natural events such as birth and death.⁹ Moral sin or impurity, however, is characterized by heinous acts such as sexual deviancy (e.g., Lev. 18.24-30), idolatry (e.g., Lev. 19.31; 20.1-3), and bloodshed (e.g., Numb. 35.33-34).¹⁰ Klawans points out that inadvertent sins and ritual impurities are capable of amelioration within the purity system of Leviticus, whereas the moral sins and impurities are not.¹¹

2— ἀμαρτία renders **חטאת**: Towards an Understanding of the Greek

In his substantial commentary on Leviticus, Jacob Milgrom writes:

To my knowledge, all versions and translations, old and new, render the *hatta't* sacrifice as “sin offering.” This translation is inaccurate on all grounds: contextually, morphologically, and etymologically...It is not my intention to investigate the origin of

⁴ The Christian dimension to Scripture cannot be overlooked in discussing the two terms for two reasons. First, sin and atonement are central features in Christian theology. Second, LXX formed the Christian Scriptures for the early Church and continue to form the Old Testament scriptures for the Orthodox Christian community.

⁵ Note BDB 306-307; also note B.A. Levine *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 102-103.

⁶ As B.A. Levine *ibid.* 102 has stated, the term ‘...is sometimes synonymous with *kipper*’.

⁷ Levine *ibid.* 102 goes on to conclude that the two forms, i.e., the *Qal* and *Piel*, have “become confused in the punctuation.” Cf. also Milgrom “Leviticus” v. I 253-254; and James Barr “Sacrifice and Offering” in *DB* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1963) 874.

⁸ These distinctions are taken wholesale from Jonathan Klawans *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: University Press, 2000).

⁹ Klawans *ibid.* 23.

¹⁰ Klawans *ibid.* 26.

¹¹ Also note Milgrom “Priestly Doctrine of Repentance” *Revue Biblique* 82. (1975): 186-205.

this mistranslation. It can be traced as far back as the LXX, which consistently renders ἀμαρτία, ...¹²

Milgrom's explication of the term **זָבַח**, both in his commentary and in several articles,¹³ demonstrates the nature of the term as a technical feature of the priestly purity system that achieves the act of purification. In this process, Milgrom argues for a change in nomenclature from 'sin offering' to 'purification offering' based on the *function* of the sacrifice within the purity system. In short, Milgrom asks and answers the question, 'what does the **זָבַח** achieve?' The answer is purification and, as such, it should be translated as 'purification offering'. The quoted statement above is Milgrom's attempt to trace the misunderstanding of the function of the offering which has led to the designation 'sin offering'.

Of the most recent attempts undertaken to understand the nature, development, and function of the purity system in Leviticus, little serious attention is given to the role played by LXX. Milgrom's comment is virtually his only interaction with LXX on this point. Klawans' work does not address LXX at all, and the same may be said of Nobuyoshi Kiuchi's work *A Study of Hata' and Hatta't in Leviticus 4-5*. Although this present study does not suggest to offer a substantive comment regarding the understanding of the technical terms for sin and purification in the Hebrew text, it does intend to suggest that LXX Pentateuch was an early witness to the proper sense of the function of the sacrifice as articulated in the Hebrew text. The various sections in which this term and its related forms, both verbal and nominal, are found display a keen awareness of the technical dimension of the underlying Hebrew. Thus, LXX is a faithful witness to the priestly nuance given to the Hebrew term in its translation and interpretation (*pace* Milgrom).

2.1—Genesis:

Most of the occurrences of a derivation of **זָבַח** in Genesis pertain to issues of moral deviancy and are rendered with the Greek terms ἀμαρτάνω, and ἀμαρτία. The one exception to this is found in Gen. 31.39 and Jacob's interchange with Laban (ἀποτινύω for **זָבַח**).¹⁴ As a general rule, the position of LXX Genesis betrays an equivalency between **זָבַח** and ἀμαρτάνω in which both terms describe morally deficient behavior. Thus, for the translators working in the Pentateuch, **זָבַח**=ἀμαρτάνω/ἀμαρτία. Of course, there is no cultic context in Genesis, so the use of both the Hebrew and Greek terms must indicate non-cult-technical language.

Gen. 4.7 (**זָבַח**) speaks proleptically of Cain's transgression; Gen. 18.20 (**זָבַח**) of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah; and Gen. 20.6 (**זָבַח**) of Abimelech's potential sin with Sarah. Each of these cases may be summarized with one

¹² Milgrom "Leviticus" v. I 253.

¹³ See fn 11 and also Milgrom "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray" *Revue Biblique* 83 (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1976) 390-399.

¹⁴ Gen. 4.7; 18.20; 20.6; 20.9; 31.36; 39.9; 40.1; 41.9; 42.21-22; 43.9; 44.32; 50.17. BDB 307 are uncertain of the translation required in the pericope concerning Jacob and Laban and produce this interchange: "I bare the loss of it Gn 31.39 (lit. I let it be missing? poss. rd. **זָבַח** I was made to miss it?). The Greek also represents sensitivity to the context of Gen. 31.39 in which Jacob challenges Laban's accusation of theft.

or a few words reflecting the type of sins committed. In the case of Cain it is murder; in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah sexual deviancy and murder; and in the case of Abimelech, adultery. Each of these categories has a place within the Levitical laws under the rubric of moral sins (cf. Lev. 18). Interestingly, another term that holds significance within the Levitical purity system, **חַטָּאת**, is also rendered in Gen. 42.21 with ἀμαρτία.¹⁵

The picture that develops from Genesis, then, is one in which moral sins, such as the types we find in Lev. 18, are cast using the two terms **חַטָּאת/חַטָּאת** and their Greek counterparts ἀμαρτάνω/ἀμαρτία. In fact, excepting what might perhaps be a slight reworking of the Abimelech narrative in Genesis 20¹⁶, we find no trace of the types of sins which are referred to as inadvertent¹⁷, and the conclusion may be made that both the Hebrew and Greek terms refer to moral sins. This means that, so far as LXX Genesis is concerned, **חַטָּאת/חַטָּאת** refer to moral sins and ἀμαρτάνω/ἀμαρτία accurately render those types of sins.

2.2—Exodus

It is in Exodus that we first encounter the purity system that functions so prominently in the priestly material. There are 16 occurrences of **חַטָּאת** in one form or another in the book. Like Genesis, LXX Exodus renders **חַטָּאת/חַטָּאת** with ἀμαρτάνω/ἀμαρτία, which include instances of moral transgressions.¹⁸ Two noticeable exceptions occur in Exod. 5.16, which has ἀδικέω for **חַטָּאת**, and Exod. 20.5, which has ἀμαρτία for **עוֹן**.¹⁹

The construction of the tabernacle in Exodus marks a change in the way in which sin and atonement are envisioned with the text. Although the construction of the tabernacle is discussed in chapter 26, the important sections for this discussion do not emerge until chapter 29 with the consecration of the priests. This first mention of **חַטָּאת/ἀμαρτία** in reference to an implement of the purity system is Exod. 29.14. Here the Greek phrase ἀμαρτίας γὰρ ἔστιν renders **חַטָּאת הוּא**.²⁰ Suzette Daniel has pointed

¹⁵ This situation in Genesis regarding Joseph's plight and his brothers' complicity in that event is somewhat confusing in this regard. It is not technically murder, which Reuben is credited with having avoided in Gen. 37.21-22.

¹⁶ LXX translators very clearly insert a present participle of ἀγνοέω which is un-represented in the Hebrew text in Gen. 20.4 when Abimelech protests to God regarding the potential charge of adultery. The status of 'unwitting' sin seems to assuage the potential outburst of God's fury, which LXX noticed and then 'explained' through the insertion.

¹⁷ Interestingly, LXX might be attempting to lessen the severity of Abimelech's ignorance by rendering **חַטָּאת** in Gen. 26.10 with ἀγνοία. This Greek term holds significance in Leviticus as an indication of inadvertent, and therefore not heinous, sins; e.g., Lev. 4-5.

¹⁸ For example, Exod. 9.27, 34 (Pharaoh's actions against God—cf. also 10.16-17); 23.33 (reference to worshipping other gods); and 32.30-34 (Golden Calf).

¹⁹ In Exod. 5.16, the context may be enough for the translators to have taken steps to create a remove from 'sin' for the Israelites with the alteration to the term for 'guilt'. **עוֹן** creates another verbal range, which LXX responds to with ἀμαρτία as well. A discussion of that semantic comparison lies beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁰ The Hebrew and Greek reads:

MT: ואת־בשר הפר ואת־ערו ואת־פרשו תשרף באש מחוץ למחנה חטאת הוא

out that LXX does not normally render **תִּשְׁחַט** only with a nominative Greek equivalent but uses a preposition, article, or combination of the two, such as *πέρι* or *τό, + τῆς ἁμαρτίας*. Here, however, no such construction exists.²¹ The Theodotion recension has *περί ἁμαρτίας ἐστίν*, possibly reflecting an attempt at systemization and clarification along the lines identified by Daniel though the genitival form may have sufficed. Most of the instances of ἁμαρτία addressed in Genesis and Exodus prior to this selection refer to a type of moral sin or error and of course gain no bearing from a cultic context. The construction of the tabernacle occasions the need for new language range to compensate for the cultic reference. The bulk of the MSS have ἁμαρτία alone, clearly considering context enough to underscore that ἁμαρτία here refers to a *function* within the newly anointed priestly and purity system and not to a moral sin.²² Both the Hebrew and Greek are in the same position at this point: how do we know that these two terms have become technical expressions of a cultic activity?

Exod. 29.36 provides this evidence. The selection refers to the actions taken to consecrate the priests, Aaron and his sons, to God.

MT: And the **תִּשְׁחַט** bull you shall offer each day for purification **עַל־הַכֹּפֶרִים** and you shall purify (**תִּשְׁחַטְּהוּ**) the altar and you shall purify it and you shall anoint it and sanctify it.

LXX: And the calf of the ἁμαρτίας you shall offer each day of purification, and you shall purify (καθαρίεις) the altar as you sanctify it, and you shall anoint it in order to sanctify it.

The Hebrew text clearly sees a resonance of meaning between **שָׁחַט** and **כִּפֶּר**; set in a relationship within a cultic context, **כִּפֶּר** governs the meaning of **שָׁחַט**, which functions as a technical term in Israelite worship.²³ LXX maintains the distinction envisioned by MT, which is captured by the *piel* vocalization of **שָׁחַט**, with the use of *καθαρίζω* for the verb **תִּשְׁחַט**, but ἁμαρτία for the nominal **תִּשְׁחַט**.²⁴ Targums Neofiti (N) and Pseudo-

LXX: τὰ δε κρέα τοῦ μόσχου καὶ τὸ δέσμα καὶ τὴν κόπρον κατακαύσεις πυρὶ ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς ἁμαρτίας γὰρ ἐστίν

²¹ Suzanne Daniel *Recherches sur le Vocabulaire du Culte dans la Septante* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1966) 301-303. Alain Le Boulluec and Pierre Sandevor *L'Exode in La Bible D'Alexandrie* (ed. by Marguerite Harl; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1989) 297 state: *Il est possible que le texte grec, pour le traducteur, ait voulu dire: 'car cela est le proper d'un sacrifice pour le péché.'* Should Boulluec and Sandevor be correct, and there is a great deal of sense to their observation, then the perspective embraced in this selection from Exodus, which seems anomalous to other examples from the Pentateuch, would in fact be in harmony.

²² John W. Wevers *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 471-472 (472—my brackets) suggests: “Here Exod was faced with a nominal phrase, **שָׁחַט תִּשְׁחַט**, which allowed for no dodging. This he rendered astutely by using the genitive: ἁμαρτίας γὰρ ἐστίν ... the genitive is his way of distinguishing the sacrifice from ἁμαρτία [as a term meaning “sin”].”

²³ ‘Sin the altar’ is obviously wrong; cf. fns 6 and 7.

²⁴ Wevers *Ibid.* 482 notes that the translators had no verb to cope with the meaning of **שָׁחַט** in the *piel*. They capture the meaning, however, with the use of *καθαρίζω*. In his commentary, Milgrom notes (*Leviticus* I:254f) that the function of the **תִּשְׁחַט** is to cleanse the altar from the sins, miasmatically or

Jonathan (PsJ) also render ‘purify’ for the verbal **תטא** in the verse, and Milgrom’s insistence that the nominal form **תטא** refers to a purificatory activity within the priestly material is amply validated, not only by later rabbinic sources, but also by the much earlier LXX. This is to say, LXX provides an early *and accurate* interpretation of the subtlety of the Hebrew text on the issue of the **תטא** offering. The translators simply employed a stock term, ἁμαρτία, to render its Hebrew coordinate with the understanding that context would determine that the Greek term was now part of a technical sphere of propitiation within the tabernacle complex. Without the internal vocalic flexibility of Hebrew, Greek requires the use of an alternate term to indicate the actual effect of the sacrifice. Thus the term καθαρίζω. LXX gives no indication that the translators misunderstood the nature of the activity recorded in Exod. 29.36 and the rendition indicates the translators’ understanding of ἁμαρτία as a technical term within the Israelite worship system.

Exodus 30.10 records the annual purification of the altar of incense and provides one more example of the understanding of the term by LXX.

MT: And Aaron shall purify (**כפר**) upon its [altar of incense] horns once a year; from the blood of the purification offering of atonement (**מדם חטאת הכפרים**) once a year he shall purify (**כפר**) it for your generations. It is most holy to the Lord.

LXX: And Aaron shall purify (ἐξιλάσκομαι) upon its horns once every year; by the blood of purification of the offering of atonement (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τοῦ ἐξιλασμοῦ) once a year he shall purify (καθαρίζω) it for their generations. It is most holy to the Lord.

LXX adds one element in translating **מדם חטאת הכפרים**, which is rendered with ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τοῦ ἐξιλασμοῦ. It is very likely that τοῦ ἐξιλασμοῦ represents **כפרים** as is the case elsewhere in LXX (e.g., Lev. 23.27, 25.9, Numb. 29.11). An exception to this is found in the example noted above in Exod. 29.36, which has καθαρίσμος instead for **כפרים**, though this is a synonym to ἐξιλασμός. Two Greek terms in a genitival relationship are left to render **תטא**, one of which expresses an aspect of either purification or atonement. Two translations of this phrase from LXX Exodus 30.10 are possible:

- 1) ...by the blood of the purificatory ἁμαρτιῶν of atonement

phenomenologically transferred by the actions of the people or person. Wevers suggests that LXX differs from MT on this account in Exod. 29:36, offering a reading that runs “cleanse the altar” rather than “make a sin offering upon the altar.” I think Wevers’ reading to be in error on this account and would press the translation of the phrase το θυσιαστήριον ἐν τῷ ἁγιαζεῖν σε ἐπ’ αὐτῷ as reflective of the intent envisioned by MT, and *ipso facto*, Milgrom’s understanding of the function of the **תטא**; the two elements το θυσιαστήριον and ἐπ’ αὐτῷ operate here in tandem and alleviate the redundancy of the *lf* in the verse. In his *Notes to the Greek Text of Leviticus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 105-106, Wevers notes that ἐπί functions in the capacity of indicating the action intended by **על**.

2) ...by the blood of purification of the ἁμαρτιῶν of atonement

Either way, it is clear that LXX here represented the הַטָּהַר sacrifice as a purificatory offering with ἁμαρτιῶν satisfying the technical features of the הַטָּהַר and הַכֹּפֶרֶת .²⁵

In Exodus, therefore, ἁμαρτάνω/ἁμαρτία can refer to moral sins in much the same manner as we encountered in Genesis. But with the organization and implementation of the religious system of the Israelites centered on the tabernacle, a new category of sin (and impurity) developed. This development required that a new set of technical terms be formulated for expressing the function of the cultus. In MT, making the הַטָּהַר a quantifiable redress to sin fulfilled this need. This term was associated with the purificatory process it completed and, therefore, with the very language of purification. Far from misunderstanding this process, LXX seems to adhere to it consciously.

2.3— *Leviticus*:

Leviticus represents the most sustained use of $\text{הַטָּהַר}/\text{הַכֹּפֶרֶת}$ as technical terms for purification. One or a combination of the terms occurs 68 times in the book. A majority of the occurrences are in reference to the amelioration process following an inadvertent sin, (so Leviticus 4-5), or a prolonged ritual impurity, (so Leviticus 12, 14-15). It is important to point out that the two types of הַטָּהַר found in the Levitical narrative, the eaten and burnt (cf. esp. Leviticus 4-5), are distinguished by either sociological/economic status of the offender or the severity of the sin committed. As such, the difference between the two is a matter of degree and not of kind: they are both purification offerings.²⁶

The cultus dominates Leviticus, but the Heb/Gk terms still identify moral sins along the lines of Genesis and Exodus within the book. For instance, in Leviticus 26, the terms are used in reference to a moral failure: idolatry (v. 1), failure to observe the Sabbath (v. 2) or general disobedience to the Lord's ordinances and commandments. Other examples of the use of the term in this fashion are found in Lev. 19.17 and 20.20. Leviticus 24.15 refers to someone who has cursed God with this phrase: וְשָׁמַר הַטָּהַר = ἁμαρτίαν λήμψεται. In short, in Lev. 26.18 and elsewhere, the two terms can refer to moral sin or sinfulness.

The most common use of the Heb/Gk terms, however, is to express a technical function of the purity system. Generally speaking, the noun הַטָּהַר is rendered by some combination of Greek prepositions, article, and the noun ἁμαρτίας along the lines

²⁵ Boulluec and Sandevour *op.cit.* 306 suggest that the Greek rendition “*explicite la finalité du sacrifice pour le péché.*” The Targums generally follow Hebrew at this point without any addition clarifying the function of the offering.

²⁶ Milgrom “Leviticus” v. I 261-269, 307-318 discusses the particulars of the purification offering in fine detail. Note especially 263 where he states: “Thus the eaten *hatta't* no less than the burnt one has a purificatory purpose. They differ not in kind but in degree, the degree of impurity that they purge.” Milgrom goes on to point out that the eaten *hatta't* purges the outer altar and that the burnt one the inner, incense altar.”

identified by Suzette Daniel.²⁷ The verbal form is translated consistently in the manner of Exodus when referring to a function within the cultic sphere. Several examples should suffice for the present study. The first is Lev. 8.15:

MT: And Moses slaughtered [it—the זֶבֶחַ , Lev. 8.14] and took the blood and put it upon the horns around the altar with his finger, and purified ($\text{זָבַחַ$) the altar. And he poured out the blood at the base of the altar and he sanctified it by atoning for it.

LXX: And Moses slaughtered it ($\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu$), and took the blood and placed it upon the horns round the altar with his finger, and purified ($\epsilon\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$) the altar. And he poured the blood at the base of the altar, and he sanctified it by atoning for it.

This example is reminiscent of Exod. 29.36. Here again, LXX is quick to clarify the purposes of the זֶבֶחַ sacrifice. The function of the sacrifice is to cleanse the altar from impurities, rightly noted by LXX with the verb $\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\zeta\omega$.²⁸ Targum PsJ, in a rather lengthy addition, states several times that the purpose of the blood of the זֶבֶחַ was to purify the altar, a view attested by Targum Onkelos as well.²⁹ LXX, along with other ancient translations of this verse, understood the Hebrew verb זָבַחַ as well as the function of the זֶבֶחַ as having purificatory values.

Leviticus 9.15 provides another example.

MT: And he brought the offering of the people near, and took the goat of the זֶבֶחַ of the people and he slaughtered it and he $\text{זָבַחַ$ (purified with it) like the first.

LXX: And he offered the gift of the people, and he took the goat of the $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ of the people, and he slaughtered it and he $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$ (purified) with it like the first.

Leviticus 9.15 demonstrates again that both versions asserted the purificatory properties of the זֶבֶחַ sacrifice. Most Targumim follow the reading of LXX. According to the examples from both Exodus and Leviticus, the LXX translators had a thorough grasp of the lexical range envisioned by the Hebrew term.

2.4—Numbers:

Like both Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers preserves the impression that the Hebrew זָבַחַ in its verbal and nominal forms can be used to describe both moral and ritual abnormalities. Numbers contains some of the most telling examples of LXX's

²⁷ Examples of this “standard cultic” use of the term are found also in 4.3, 14, 20, 25, 26, 28; 5.6, 18; 6.10, 18; 8.2, 14; 9.2, 7, 22; 10.16, 19; 12.6, 8; 14.13, 19, 22, 31; 15.30; 16.3, 5, 9, 11, 15, 25, 27. Daniel *op cit.* 301-303.

²⁸ Wevers *Leviticus* 105 states: “LXX fully understood this in its translation $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$...”

²⁹ Targum N simply has “anoint.”

understanding of the **תִּטְאֵה** sacrifice's purificatory function. Numbers 8.7 and 8.21 provide useful examples of this understanding.³⁰

In 8.7, the terms **טָהַר** and **תִּטְאֵה** have been rendered by ἀγνισμός.³¹

Numb. 8.7:

MT: Thus you will do in order to purify them (**לְטַהַרֵם**): sprinkle them with the waters of **תִּטְאֵה**, and they will shave their whole bodies and wash their garments and they will be pure (**וְהָטָהֲרִו**).

LXX: And thus you will do to them for their purification (ἀγνισμόν): sprinkle them with the water of purification (ἀγνισμοῦ) and a razor will go over their whole body and they will wash their garment and they will be pure (κάθαροι).

This certainly seems to reflect a different hand than was present in Exodus where the translator kept to form in using ἀμαρτία for **תִּטְאֵה**, but added elements to clarify the intent. The choice of the Greek terms κάθαρος and ἀγνισμός for **טָהַר** is obvious, but the translators then use ἀγνισμός for **תִּטְאֵה** as well and in the same selection. This effectively equates the ablution with purity (**טָהַר=תִּטְאֵה**). It is clear that the translators of Numbers understood the term as sometimes functioning for a technical aspect of the purity system in much the same way as LXX Exodus and Leviticus. Numbers differs in its choice of Greek terms, likely reflecting a different hand active in the translation. Effectively, the Hebrew text is systematized by the use of one Greek (ἀγνισμός) term for two Hebrew terms (**טָהַר/תִּטְאֵה**). In light of Exodus and Leviticus, the choice of terms in Numb. 8.7 is not surprising, which indicates a clear understanding of the function of **תִּטְאֵה** within the purity system. In addition to the conceptual differences between the ashes of the red heifer and the **תִּטְאֵה** sacrifice from Leviticus, the systematic alteration to ἀγνισμός from ἀμαρτία may have everything to do with the fact that the water of purification is not itself an offering. This view is substantiated by reference to Numb. 8.8 where the 'purification offering' is mentioned and is rendered by LXX with πῆρι ἀμαρτίας.³²

³⁰ Also note Num. 19.9, 12, 17, and 19. Also note and compare Ex. 29.36 with Num. 29.11 in which the translators have added additional elements in their representation of the Hebrew text.

³¹ Cf. Wevers *Notes to the Greek Text of Numbers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 120-121.

³² It may be that LXX can help to clear up a confusing relationship between Num. 8 and 19. Milgrom "Numbers" in *JPS Torah Commentary Series* (ed. by Nahum M. Sarna; New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) 158-160 and 438-443 suggests that the red heifer is an "ongoing *hatta't*." One detail that remains perplexing to Milgrom is the application of this water is upon the person and not upon an object *on behalf of* the offender. Its application to the person resembles the water sprinkled on the leper (cf. Lev. 14), but the latter is never called a **תִּטְאֵה**. Milgrom overcomes this problem by postulating that the ritual leper purification is older than that of the red heifer. It seems as though the waters spoken of in Num. 8 are linked with that which is produced via the ritual of the red heifer in Num. 19, where the phrase **לִמַי נִדְּחָה** is present. There, the water of *niddah* is given the terse appositive "it is a *hatta't* (**הִיא תִּטְאֵה הַזֹּאת**)—cf. v. 9), which Milgrom "Numbers" 160 suggests is indicative of analogy between the two Hebrew terms (cf. also

The translation of Numb. 8.21, in which the Levites are set apart for work in the tabernacle and placing upon the culmination of the process the achievement of purification, serves to emphasize this position.³³

Numb. 8.21:

MT: The Levites purified (וַיִּהַטְּהוּ) themselves and washed their garments and Aaron offered them as a wave offering before the Lord; and Aaron atoned on their behalf to purify them (לְטַהֵרם).

LXX: The Levites purified (ἡγνίσαντο) themselves and washed the garments, and Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord and he atoned on their behalf to purify them (ἀφάγνισάσθαι).

For the Hebrew text, the context establishes the meaning of the *hithpael* form, which indicates a purificatory activity and which is referred to synonymously in the verse with טָהַר. In Numb. 8.21, LXX homogenizes the Hebrew by rendering both הִטְּהוּ and טָהַר with ἀγνίζω. This is in keeping with the use of ἀγνισμός in 8.7 to render the nominal forms of both הִטְּהוּ and טָהַר.

2.5—*Deuteronomy:*

In Deuteronomy the perspective regarding these terms shifts noticeably. No longer does the tabernacle and the purity system that accompanies it remain solely dominant. Rather, the terms under discussion once more function in the capacity in which they were used in Genesis, largely describing moral sins.³⁴ The only intimation of the priestly purity system is found in Deut. 21.1-9 and the atonement made for unintentional murder. Yet this example is in fact a hybrid, meshing elements from moral sin (the murder) with inadvertent sin (the unknowing community). The heifer brought as the sacrifice is neither offered in the tabernacle nor killed in the fashion of the offerings of the tabernacle complex. The similarity is in the effect achieved by the offering; it atones for the unknown sin. The selection is unique: it affects a community with a sin that is both moral (that is, not ritual) and ‘inadvertent’.

Zech. 13.1). In Num. 8.8, the Levites are to present a הִטְּהוּ sacrifice, which LXX renders with ἀμαρτίας. After which the Levites are to shave their entire bodies, which recalls the actions undertaken by the lepers in Lev. 14.4-8. It could very well be the case that LXX saw the possible link with the red heifer ceremony and the dedication of the Levites and wished to express clearly what the waters were for in Num. 8. It is important to point out, however, that the water spoken of in Num. 19 is specifically related to corpse impurity, and difficulties remain in associating the two pericopes conceptually. The red heifer may reflect a 3rd type of הִטְּהוּ. It contaminates on contact, reflecting the more potent type of הִטְּהוּ envisioned in Lev. 4.3-21 pertaining to the sin of the anointed priest or the entire Israelite community, yet it is not slaughtered in the door to the Tent of Meeting like every other הִטְּהוּ (cf. Lev. 4-5, 6.24-25), and the results are sprinkled on the offender rather than on an object in the Temple.

³³ Wevers *Numbers* 128-129 makes very little of the difference.

³⁴ Deut. 1.41; 5.9; 9.16; 9.18; 9.21; 9.27; 19.15; 20.18; 21.22; 22.26; 23.21; 24.4; 24.15; 30.3; 32.5 exhaust the references in Deut. using הִטְּהוּ/הִטְּהוּ and ἀμαρτάνω/ἀμαρτίας. In Deuteronomy, the Greek term ἀμαρτήμα is also used to render the nominal forms of הִטְּהוּ.

Deuteronomy's inclination to use the term in reference to moral sins is drawn from one general observation: inadvertent sins or ritual impurities do not factor in the same capacity for the Deuteronomist as they did for the legist. This is due in large part to a muted treatment of the tabernacle within the book. Although references to the institution are made, they generally focus on God's Name 'dwelling' in the midst of the people and emphasize this point to elicit obedience to the Law of Moses. The occurrence of the tabernacle motif in Deuteronomy is subdued with respect to its ministrations. Apart from the particular example from Deut. 21, there are no other examples in which the purity system so familiar to Leviticus and Numbers is addressed in Deuteronomy.

The point to be taken from this is that *both* the Hebrew and Greek versions of Deuteronomy understood the concept categorized by **חטא/ἀμαρτάνω** to refer to a moral transgression. In fact, the complex **חטאת/ἀμαρτία** is found in the nominal form in Deut. 9.21 referring to an idol.³⁵ Regarding the Hebrew text, there is nothing in Deuteronomy suggesting that **חטא/חטאת** refers to a purificatory activity.³⁶ In short, Deuteronomy cannot be cited as an instance in which the LXX translators misunderstood the Hebrew *Vorlage* as Deuteronomy itself is largely disinterested in detailing cultic practice, save for the reminder in Deuteronomy 12 that the tabernacle is the one true center of worship.

2.5—Conclusions:

Milgrom's fine commentary on Leviticus has left the academic community in his debt. He has clarified with superb research and insight the book and its institutions. Yet his assessment that LXX represents one of the first misunderstandings of the term **חטאת** might profit from a re-examination. Milgrom makes the suggestion that the misunderstanding of the technical side of the sacrifice could have been cleared up by reference to the rabbinic commentaries, of which he makes great and insightful use in his commentary. He notes Rashi's comment to Numb. 19.19 that the **חטאת** is '...literally the language of purification'.³⁷ According to the above translations, the observation could be made that Rashi's comment was anticipated by several hundred years in LXX renditions of Exod. 29.36 and 30.10 as well as Lev. 8.15 and 9.15 and Numb 8.7 and 8.21.

The matter is clarified by the LXX translators' use of the verbal forms **καθαρίζω** or **ἀγνίζω** and the nominal forms of **καθαρισμός** or **ἀγνισμός** to explain the *function* of the **חטאת/ἀμαρτία** sacrifice. This is to say, the translators demonstrate their understanding of the underlying Hebrew by indicating what the noun (**ἀμαρτία**) actually accomplishes (**καθαρίζω** or **ἀγνίζω**). The outlay is obvious once the terms are addressed by reference to their cultic or non-cultic context. Both the Hebrew and Greek texts envision a shift in thinking that responds to the development or appearance of the cultic center, which requires the development of cult-technical language to address the activities undertaken therein. For the translators the Greek language, which does not afford the luxury of the inner-vocalic shifts of Hebrew, requires that they introduce other terms to clarify the position and function of the sacrifice. The term **ἀμαρτάνω** is never

³⁵ The Hebrew reads: **וְאֵת־חַטְאֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתֶם לַפְּחֹתַי** which is rendered in the Greek with: **καὶ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ὑμῶν, ἣν ἐποιήσατε, τὸν μόσχον, ἔλαβον αὐτὸν...**

³⁶ The term is found in Deut. only in 9.18, 21, 27 in reference to idolatry and the Golden Calf and again in 19.15 referring to bearing witness to someone's sin.

³⁷ Milgrom "Leviticus" v. I 253-255.

used to render a verbal form of $\sqrt{\text{נסח}}$ in a cultic context. Notably, alternate terms are used only for verbal forms; the nominal forms of the Hebrew תְּנִיחָה and the Greek ἁμαρτία remain in a consistent relationship, one which runs through the course of the Pentateuchal narratives. The confusion might stem from the use and understanding of the terms in both the cultic and non-cultic contexts. And yet, if due attention is paid to the effect of the sacrifice, represented by the verbal forms, then the translators' understanding of the nominal forms becomes clear.

If the misinterpretation that Milgrom has identified is, in fact, a genuine one, perhaps it reflects a modern understanding of sin rather than a faulty interpretation by the Greek speaking Jewish community of the mid 3rd century BCE. Translations of the selections above suggest that the translators had a very clear understanding of the function of the תְּנִיחָה sacrifice and its function within the cultic sphere. Far from misunderstanding the nature of the term, LXX Pentateuch seems to have understood the concept of the תְּנִיחָה very well; it is a technical term that is not to be confused with 'sin' but to be construed as 'purification'. Thus, Milgrom's insistence that it be called a 'purification offering' rather than a 'sin offering' is affirmed by LXX.