

**Interpreting the Septuagint in Its Greco-Roman Context**  
A colloquium held on June 19-20, 2024, at McGill University, Montreal, Canada

**Call for Papers**

Not long after Alexander the Great's conquest, Jewish scholars in Egypt began translating their scriptures into Greek. Commonly referred to as the Septuagint, this collection of translations provides an important window into the world of Hellenistic Judaism: Its linguistic makeup points to the multilingual environment of Ptolemaic Egypt and the complexities of language contact. The Septuagint represents an important corpus of postclassical Greek that should be considered, along with documentary sources, in the study of the history of the Greek language. Its literary and textual features provide insight into the intellectual milieu and scribal practices of its translators, their education and the material culture that enabled its production. The cultural world of its production environment is also reflected in translation strategies and lexical choices, via concepts that are introduced or avoided in translation. Consequently, the Septuagint offers a window into the interpretative traditions of the Jewish scriptures found within Judaism and the early Christian communities that also made regular use of them. As such, it represents a unique and extensive body of evidence concerning postclassical Greek, the intellectual and scribal milieu of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period, and the early reception and interpretation of what would become the Hebrew Bible.

The growing appreciation of the Septuagint's value as a linguistic, literary, and cultural artifact for the study of early Judaism and Christianity has prompted a significant upsurge in Septuagint research over the past few decades. The goal of this conference is to examine these topics from several angles while highlighting the contributions of Canadian scholarship. To this end, potential contributors are invited to explore issues that relate to these three main areas:

- Linguistic: Characterizing the language of the Septuagint has long proved a difficult and controversial topic: How can the language of the Septuagint be assessed in light of postclassical sources? How should these sources be employed and interpreted for such purposes? On what scale or in what context should this linguistic data be evaluated? To be sure, John Lee has provided significant contributions in his publications, especially in the area of lexicography. The Finnish school also provides a long tradition of analyzing specific linguistic items from the perspective of translation technique and in light of

contemporaneous Greek usage. Moreover, the comparative study of the Septuagint in its sociolinguistic context, including documentary sources, is one of the objectives of the SBLCS series under development. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to characterize the language of each book.

- Literary and intellectual: There is much that a translation can state about its production milieu. Can its translation process be related to translation practices from the same period and place or specific scribal practices? What is the relationship between the style and register of various sections and contemporaneous literary styles and registers? What sociocultural and intellectual milieu do they point to? How should these features be contextualized within broader Jewish literary production and interaction with Hellenism?
- Theological and ideological: Since all translation involves a degree of interpretation, adapting concepts from a source text into a new language and culture inevitably exposes the interpretative traditions and tendencies of its translators and their communities. Here the issue of intentionality is unavoidable. To what extent are various translators intending a specific semantic change in relation to the source text? What were the options available to them? How comprehensive is the interpretative project? In the light of James Barr's warning in his *Semantics of Biblical Language*, is there a danger of confusing word meaning with contextual meaning? Or going from linguistic phenomena to thinking? However, cognitive linguistics tells us that words conjure up associations and guide our thoughts. Therefore, how can the encyclopedic meaning and life situations brought up by the use of specific Greek terms be taken into account, especially when these are different from that of the source text? What Greco-Roman cultural associations have bearing on the Septuagint's meaning and theological peculiarities? And finally, how do the interpretative renderings found in the translation fit within the broader Jewish exegetical tradition?
- From a text-critical and historical perspective, how were Septuagint manuscript traditions received and interpreted in the early Church? What role did this corpus play in the thinking and literary strategies of New Testament authors and in the Patristic Era? What are the similarities and differences observed between the Jewish scribal practices that gave rise to the Septuagint and those deployed by later authors interacting with these texts?

Scholars and graduate students are invited to submit paper proposals, including their name, position, the name of their institution, the title of the proposed paper, and an abstract of up to 250 words. The abstract should function as a short summary of your paper. Speakers will be allotted 20 minutes for their paper presentation, with 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Please send proposals by January 15, 2024 to [septuagintcolloquium2024@gmail.com](mailto:septuagintcolloquium2024@gmail.com). Presenters should note that a conference volume is planned and that participation in the conference entails a contribution to the volume.