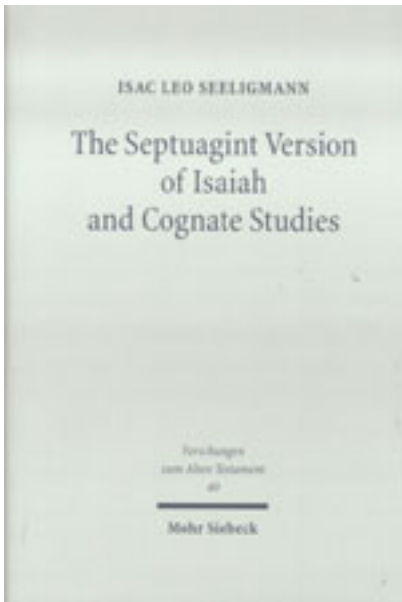


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Seeligmann, Isac Leo

Edited by Robert Hahnhart and Hermann Spieckermann

The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies

Forschungen zum Alten Testament 40

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Due to the initiative taken by the German scholars Robert Hahnhart and Hermann Spieckermann, this volume makes accessible once more the significant contribution on the Septuagint of Isaiah entitled *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah: A Discussion of Its Problems* (1948), by Isac Leo Seeligmann. In addition, it offers two essays by the same author, “Problems and Perspectives in Modern Septuagint Research” (1940) and “Phases of Jewish Historical Consciousness” (1947). Both essays were originally written in Dutch. Unlike the latter, the former has been published in English before (see *Textus* 15 [1990]: 169–232). Both have been translated into English by the daughter of the author, Judith H. Seeligmann.

Isac Leo Seeligmann lived 1907–1982. From 1936 up to his deportation to Theresienstadt, Germany, in 1943, he was lecturer at the Israelite Seminar in Amsterdam. As of 1946 he was librarian at the University of Amsterdam, and from 1950–1977 professor of Biblical Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The volume under review, together with another one containing articles by Seeligmann, was presented to Judith Seeligmann on 2 August 2004 in Leiden, at the occasion of the Eighteenth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT; 1–6 August 2004). It was felt most appropriate to have this presentation in the

Academy building of Leiden University, as this was the place where Seeligmann defended his thesis, that is, his study on the Septuagint of Isaiah, and got his doctorate in Arts and Philosophy on 25 May 1948.

The volume consists of the following parts: “Introduction” (R. Hanhart); “Rules Applied to the Edition of Isaac Leo Seeligmann’s Works” (the editors); “Problems and Perspectives in Modern Septuagint Research” (23–80); “Phases of Jewish Historical Consciousness” (83–118); and “The Septuagint Version of Isaiah” (119–294). The volume is concluded by a list of original publications and indexes of authors and passages.

It is to be noted that the republication of the study on LXX Isaiah includes supplementary notes from the author’s annotations, the result being a change in the numbering of footnotes in comparison to the first publication. Typographical errors and other slight mistakes have been corrected. (An error still to be corrected is “140 A.D.,” which should be “140 *ante*” [245]. A few new errors have crept in: “Sybille” instead of “Sibyl” [101], “17” instead of “27” [160 middle], “devine” instead of “divine” [270 below].) Due to quotations from memory, some passages in Hebrew or in Greek display minor differences with the editions available at that time (*BHK* [not *BHS*, as stated on 20], the edition of Rahlfs, and the Göttingen edition of Isaiah by Ziegler). These differences have not been corrected.

The introduction by Hanhart offers a very useful summary of the three works of Seeligmann. He rightly emphasizes that these works of Seeligmann are characterized by two main features, (1) the study of the LXX, especially of Isaiah, “in its own right, that is, not making it instrumental to the understanding of the Old and New Testament, and (2) as a witness of Israel’s understanding of history in the Hellenistic era.

The essay “Problems and Perspectives” is first of all an excellent survey of the philological problems in the LXX and its research of the time. Furthermore, as is typical of the work of Seeligmann, it also deals with “the religious-historical issue” of the LXX, which was “very much at the centre of modern Septuagint-research,” as he put in 1940 (69). Among other issues involved, he is particularly critical of the work of G. Bertram and the approach taken in contributions to the volumes of *TWNT*, which appeared in the 1930s, by emphasizing that the LXX is a Jewish piece of religious literature. Furthermore, as to the religious-historical issue he draws attention to what he calls the aspect of “actualization” in the LXX as far as legal matters (*halakah*) as well as prophecies are concerned.

The second essay, “Phases,” is dedicated “to the memory of my teachers, friends and pupils who died as Jews 1941–1945.” It is a very interesting sketch of Jewish historical

consciousness through the ages in antiquity (periods of ancient Israel and the Hellenistic and Roman times, ending up with the consciousness as expressed in the [Babylonian] Talmud). It is not so much about the history “wie es gewesen ist” but rather about history “wie es erlebt und empfunden wurde” (B. Laqueur). Seeligmann strongly distinguishes between what is called the “Galuth-consciousness,” especially in Egypt (Alexandria), on the one hand, and the ways in which historical consciousness was developed in Palestine in the Hellenistic and early Roman times, on the other. The former is seen as characterized by some secularization (God as Lord of nature and source of all ethics) as well by longing for return to Zion, whereas the latter is presented as having two faces, (1) that of nationalism (cf. the Maccabean state and the related propaganda) and (2) that of apocalypticism (critical of the Maccabean claims).

The major contribution in the volume is Seeligmann’s work (dissertation) on LXX Isaiah. According to the preface, the basic concept and ideas of this study were developed in Theresienstadt, in May 1945. The work is well known and has made a lasting contribution to LXX studies, particularly, of course, to the study of LXX Isaiah. It has four parts, dealing with: (1) the text of LXX Isaiah (including an interesting section on the issue of Christian interpolations [157–68]); (2) the style of translation (far from homogeneous), including matters such as the relationship between LXX Isaiah and the Pentateuch in Greek, vocabulary (e.g., Aramaisms), and many passages that differ markedly from the Hebrew text as we know it; (3) dating and historical background; and (4) LXX Isaiah “as a document of Jewish-Alexandrian theology.”

Like the two essays, the study of LXX Isaiah reflects a special interest in traces of actualization in the translation. In the introduction Seeligmann states it thus: “This translation, in fact, is almost the only one among the various parts of the Septuagint which repeatedly reflects contemporaneous history. . . . those places where the paraphrase of the text contains allusions to events happening in the more or less immediate neighbourhood of the translator’s place of residence give one a surprising image of the translator’s notion that the period in which he lived was to be time for the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, and of his efforts to contemporize the old biblical text and revive it by inspiring it with the religious conceptions of a new age” (128). So he argues that as in Dan 11 the Isaianic oracles about the king of Assyria has been interpreted as referring to Seleucid rulers, in particular Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In this connection he points to passages such as LXX Isa 14:18–20 and 10:24. On the basis of significant differences between LXX and MT he further tries to reconstruct, in chapter 4, the complex of underlying theological ideas concerning the law, God’s plan, the Diaspora (Galuth), and the longing for Zion, as well as the notion of the remnant and of the concept of the Messiah.

It is good to have these works of Seeligmann in the form of a republication (and English version, as far as the second essay is concerned), not only as a tribute to a remarkable scholar, but also it marks a highly stimulative and original work in the field of LXX studies. Most important is his comprehensive approach to LXX Isaiah, which not only includes matters of philology and translation technique but also a search for the religiohistorical setting and context of the version. Seeligmann is right in pointing out that one should study LXX Isaiah as a Jewish translation in its own right and hence from the perspective of the early Jewish exegesis and theology.

His work on LXX Isaiah is impressive and, in comparison to earlier studies on this part of the Septuagint, innovative. It deals with this complicated and intriguing book with a great knowledge of the details of its text in several respects. However, as is characteristic of a pioneering work, his discussion of many remarkable readings in LXX Isaiah is brief and in most cases of a suggestive nature only. In view of the complexities concerning all kinds of differences between LXX and the Hebrew text of Isaiah, a more detailed and systematic approach is needed. Nevertheless, the work has been proven most stimulating for further research on LXX Isaiah. Seeligmann's idea that LXX Isaiah is characterized by "actualization" has turned out to be very fruitful for the study of this intriguing part of the Septuagint.

LXX Isaiah is presented by Seeligmann as a document of Jewish Alexandrian theology, but it is also argued that the actualization of prophecies that is typical of this book does not fit in with what is known of "Alexandrian Judaism." Actualizations pertaining to the persecution by Antiochus IV are best understood, in his view, as Palestinian traditions that passed on their way through the Onias temple in Heliopolis (or rather, in Leontopolis [cf. Josephus]) to Alexandria (252). Here one touches upon the important issue of how to perceive Alexandrian, or Egyptian, Judaism. In line with recent research, it seems more appropriate to distinguish between two types (milieus): Egyptian Judaism represented by scholars such as Artapanus and Aristobulos, on the one hand, and those Jews in Egypt who produced literature such as book 3 of the *Sibylline Oracles*. LXX Isaiah fits easily in with the latter type, not with the former. Moreover, there is reason to believe that LXX Isaiah has been produced in the milieu of the Onias temple in Egypt—that is to say, by Jews who came (fled) from Palestine—which would account more easily for the "Palestinian" traditions.

Finally, one might say that the works published in this volume share an interest that is also typical of LXX Isaiah. In both cases their authors, Seeligmann and the anonymous scholar-translator, were strongly interested in the relationship between the ancient prophecies of Isaiah—in Hebrew and in Greek, respectively—and the reality of the history of their times. It was a reality dominated by a crisis in the life of the Jewish

people. The works of Seeligmann are in a sense not only pieces of great scholarship but also witnesses to a deep concern with the dramatic events of his time.