

The risks of rash textual criticism illustrated on the basis of the *Numeruswechsel* in Exod 23, 20-33

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Before starting the literary-critical study of a biblical pericope one has to realise that the Massoretic form of the Hebrew bible is not the only form in which the text is handed over. In this respect, literary criticism necessarily presupposes textual criticism, since it is one of the tasks of textual criticism to judge which of the variant readings is the most original one. Although the importance of textual criticism is generally affirmed, a profound study of the material text of a pericope, within the scope of a literary-critical investigation, is rather rare. Usually, the Massoretic text is taken for granted. The other textual witnesses, such as the Septuagint (LXX), the Samaritan Pentateuch (SamP) or the manuscripts from the Dead Sea are left out, unless they are useful to support the proposed historical-critical theory.

Taking the epilogue of the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod 23,20-33) as a test case, the present article will first illustrate the aforementioned defective application of textual criticism. In this pericope, the well-known *Numeruswechsel* is repeatedly used as a criterion to reconstruct the growth of this passage. This reconstruction, however, is often founded on a deficient application of LXX¹. Secondly, the importance of a thorough text-critical analysis of the *Numeruswechsel* in Exod 23,20-33, in order to use these text-critical data in an adequate way, will be demonstrated.

I. A deficient use of textual criticism. The case of the *Numeruswechsel*

Since the 18th century, scholars have paid special attention to the question of the *Numeruswechsel* between the second person singular and the second person plural in the book of Deuteronomy. In this respect, authors like C.F. Houbigant, A. Knobel, J.W. Colenso, F.W.J. Schroeder, S.R. Driver, A. Dillmann, F. Montet, E. König and S. Oetli are worth mentioning².

¹ SamP generally follows MT, whereas 4QpaleoExod^m is too fragmentary to be useful. An exhaustive text-critical investigation into these texts can be found in H. Ausloos, *Deuteronomi(sti)sche elementen in Genesis-Numeri. Een onderzoek naar criteria voor identificatie op basis van een literaire analyse van de epiloog van het "Verbondboek" (Exodus 23,20-33)*, Doctoral dissertation Faculteit Godgeleerdheid K.U.Leuven, Leuven 1996, esp. 307-358. This Doctoral dissertation was prepared under the supervision of Prof. Dr. M. Vervenne and was funded by the Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders (Belgium) (F.W.O.).

² C.F. Houbigant, *Notae criticae in universos Veteris Testamenti libros*, Tomus 1, Frankfurt, 1777; A. Knobel, *Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua erklärt nebst einer Kritik des Pentateuch und Josua* (KEHAT), Leipzig 1861; J.W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, Part 3, London 1863; F.W.J. Schroeder, *Das Deuteronomium oder das fünfte Buch Mose theologisch-homiletisch bearbeitet* (Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk des Alten Testaments 3), Bielefeld 1866; S.R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC), Edin-

The impulse to systematically research this problem was given by W. Staerk en C. Steuernagel³. Both scholars considered the *Numeruswechsel* as a criterion that could be used in reconstructing the genesis of the book of Deuteronomy. However, shortly after the publication of the studies of Staerk en Steuernagel, A. Bertholet reacted against the application of the *Numeruswechsel* as a literary-historical criterion⁴.

In 20th century research, the *Numeruswechsel* became one of the most important points of interest in the study of the book of Deuteronomy⁵. In this respect, two tendencies can be seen⁶. Recently, R. Achenbach, for example, used the *Numeruswechsel* as an indication in favour of the composite character of Deut 5–11⁷. M. Weinfeld, on the other hand, claimed that the *Numeruswechsel* cannot be used as a literary-historical argument⁸. He considers the

burgh 1895; A. Dillmann, *Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua* (KEHAT), Leipzig ²1886; F. Montet, *Le Deutéronome et la question de l'Hexateuque. Étude critique et exégétique sous forme d'introduction et de commentaire du Deutéronome considéré dans ses rapports avec les quatre premiers livres du Pentateuque et Josué. Thèse présentée à la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Paris pour obtenir le Grade de Docteur en Théologie*, Paris 1891; E. König, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Bonn 1893; S. Oettli, *Das Deuteronomium und die Bücher Josua und Richter* (Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften des Alten und Neuen Testaments sowie zu den Apokryphen), München 1893. An exhaustive survey concerning the research done into the *Numeruswechsel* in Deuteronomy can be found in C. Begg, *Contributions to the Elucidation of the Composition of Deuteronomy with Special Attention to the Significance of the Numeruswechsel*, Doctoral dissertation Faculty of Theology K.U.Leuven, Leuven 1978, esp. 7-1094. See also Id., "The Significance of the Numeruswechsel in Deuteronomy. The 'Pre-History' of the Question", *ETL* 55 (1979), 116-124.

³ W. Staerk, *Das Deuteronomium. Sein Inhalt und seine literarische Form. Eine kritische Studie*, Leipzig 1894; C. Steuernagel, *Der Rahmen des Deuteronomiums. Literarische Untersuchungen über seine Zusammensetzung und Entstehung*, Halle a.S. 1894. A detailed analysis of these works can be found in C. Begg, "1994: A Significant Anniversary in the History of Deuteronomy Research", in F. García Martínez et al. (eds.), *Studies in Deuteronomy*. FS C.J. Labuschagne (SVT 53), Leiden - New York - Köln 1994, 1-11.

⁴ A. Bertholet, *Deuteronomium* (KHCAT 5), Freiburg im Breisgau - Leipzig - Tübingen 1899. Cf. Begg, *Contributions* (n. 2), 327-359.

⁵ See Begg, *Contributions* (n. 2), 271-1094.

⁶ Cf. Id., "Anniversary" (n. 3), 11: "Over against the use of the *Numeruswechsel* as a key for reconstructing the formation-history of Deuteronomy as first systematically applied by Staerk and Steuernagel stands the understanding of the phenomenon as a rhetorical device of a single author."

⁷ *Israel zwischen Verheissung und Gebot. Literarkritische Untersuchungen zu Deuteronomium 5–11* (EurHS 422), Frankfurt am Main - Bern - New York - Paris 1991. The *Numeruswechsel* was given special attention by G. Minette de Tillesse, "Sections 'tu' et sections 'vous' dans le Deutéronome", *VT* 12 (1962), 29-87 in order to distinguish between different layers in the book of Deuteronomy.

⁸ *Deuteronomy 1–11. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 5), New York, 1991, 15: "Not all of the interchanges of second-person singular and plural in Deuteronomy can be explained on literary-critical grounds. The change may simply be a didactic device to impress the individual or collective listener, or it may reflect the urge for literary variation (...). Certain changes in stylistic addresses can be explained by the supposition that an expression is being quoted (...). Shifts from singular to plural and vice versa come often in order to heighten the tension (...). Even in places wherein the distinction between singular and plural forms of address seems to indicate layers, like the repetition in chap. 12 (...), there are still interchanges that cannot be explained by the literary-critical criterion. (...) In sum, although in some cases the interchange of singular and plural address may indi-

Numeruswechsel as a stylistic quality of an individual author. C.T. Begg emphasises the ambiguity of the *Numeruswechsel*. On the one hand, it is not right to designate that every *Numeruswechsel* is an indication for the stratification of a text. On the other hand, Begg states that it is improper to consider the *Numeruswechsel* automatically as a stylistic feature⁹.

The question of the *Numeruswechsel* in Deuteronomy is also important concerning the study of other texts, which are related to this Old Testament book. In this respect, reference can be made to Exod 23,20-33, a pericope that has been continuously associated with a so-called Deuteronom(ist)ic reworking of Genesis-Numbers¹⁰. In order to find a solution to the frequent *Numeruswechsel* in Exod 23,20-33, and to reconstruct the genesis of this text, scholars often made use of the old textual witnesses, especially LXX. The studies of A. Dillmann and J.P. Floss are classic examples of this methodology¹¹.

In his commentary on the book of Exodus, Dillmann tries to sort out the *Numeruswechsel* in MT Exod 23,25b¹². In this verse, YHWH is suddenly mentioned in the third person (ברך). In the surrounding verses, however, YHWH is speaking in the first person. According to Dillmann, this *Numeruswechsel* is due to a corrupted Hebrew text. To "reconstruct" the lost original version, he makes use of the Septuagint. In v. 25b, LXX reads εὐλογήσω (first person). As a result, the replaced ברכי (v. 25b) becomes an integrated part of Exod 23,25bff by conjecture. Exod 23,22-25a, on the other hand, is seen as a redactional insertion in Exod 23,20-22.25bff, *i.a.* since the term מלאכי in MT Exod 23,23 does not correspond with the undefined מלאך (v. 20)¹³. Concerning this irregularity, however, Dillmann does not use LXX to "reconstruct" the "original" Hebrew text of v. 20 as מלאכי, although in vv. 20.23 LXX reads ὁ/τὸν ἄγγελος/ν μου¹⁴.

cate the existence of different layers, in general the interchange reflects stylistic variations introduced by the same author."

⁹ "We wish to emphasize that there is no *one* explanation for the *NW* in Deuteronomy and elsewhere. The temptation to systematize, the compulsion to try to explain all the instances of the feature in 'stylistic' or 'literary critical' or other terms is very great, but it must, if justice is to be done to the text itself, be controlled by an approach which is willing to accept different solutions in different cases." (Begg, *Contributions* (n. 2), 1219).

¹⁰ Cf. Ausloos, *Deuteronomi(sti)sche elementen* (n. 1), 167-306. See also Id., "Deuteronomi(sti)sche Elements in Exod 23,20-33. Some Methodological Remarks", in M. Vervenne (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus. Redaction – Reception – Interpretation* (BETL 126), Leuven 1996, 481-500, esp. 481-489; Id., "Les extrêmes se touchent... Proto-Deuteronomie and Simili-Deuteronomistic Elements in Genesis-Numbers", in M. Vervenne – J. Lust (eds.), *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature*. FS. C.H.W. Brekelmans (BETL 133), Leuven 1997, 342-366.

¹¹ A. Dillmann – A. Knobel, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* (KEHAT 12), Leipzig² 1880; J.P. Floss, *Jahwe dienen – Göttern dienen. Terminologische, literarische und semantische Untersuchung einer theologischen Aussage zum Gottesverhältnis im Alten Testament* (BBB 45), Bonn 1975.

¹² *Exodus* (n 11), 252.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁴ מלאכי des Sam. der LXX und Vulg. beruht auf Gleichmacherei mit V. 23" (*Ibid.*).

In a similar way, Floss uses LXX in order to reconstruct the composition history of Exod 23,20-33¹⁵. According to Floss, Ex 23,23c (הַכּוֹחֲדִים) originally belongs together with vv. 20-22*. Since v. 22 speaks about the oppressors and the enemies (plural), there is an inconsistency with the suffix ך in v. 23c (singular). On the basis of LXX (καὶ ἐκτρίψω αὐτούς), Floss “reconstructs” the lost Hebrew text. Originally, the Hebrew text would have read הַכּוֹחֲדִים. As to the irregularity in Exod 23,29-31, however, Floss does not use the LXX to “restore” the “original” Hebrew text. In vv. 29-31a, יְהוָה mentions that he himself will dispel the inhabitants of Canaan (אֲנִי – first person). In v. 31b, however, Israel itself is commissioned to drive away the foreign peoples (תִּרְשָׁמֶנּוּ – second person). Since, in Floss’ opinion, both concepts are contradictory, vv. 29-31a and v. 31b must be assigned to originally different layers within the text¹⁶. However, if Floss would have taken LXX into consideration, he could have “restored” Exod 23,29-31, since in v. 31b LXX reads, ἐκβαλῶ (first person singular), analogous to vv. 29-31a.

These two examples illustrate the way in which textual witnesses of Exod 23,20-33 are often misused on behalf of literary-critical hypotheses. In my view, this procedure is not doing justice to the peculiarities of neither LXX nor MT. On the contrary, a detailed text-critical analysis of the textual materials is indispensable. In the next section, special attention will be paid to the question whether and in which way the textual witnesses can contribute to the solution of the problematic *Numeruswechsel* in MT Exod 23,20-33.

II. The *Numeruswechsel* in Exod 23,20-33

The epilogue of the “Book of the Covenant” deals with the announcement of the taking into possession of the promised land by the Israelites. It is one of the most complicated passages for the literary-critical analysis of the book of Exodus¹⁷. This passage, as it is found in MT, is characterised by a triple *Numeruswechsel*, which is sometimes considered by scholars as a figure of speech that the author of Ex 23 used in composing this text¹⁸. At other times it is seen as an indication for the literary complex character of the pericope¹⁹.

¹⁵ *Jahwe dienen* (n. 11), 250-251.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. recently L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch (Ex 20,22–23,33). Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie* (BZAW 188), Berlin - New York 1990, esp. 406-414; Achenbach, *Israel* (n. 7), 258-269; Y. Osumi, *Die Kompositionsgeschichte des Bundesbuches Exodus 20,22b–23,33* (OBO 105), Freiburg - Göttingen 1991, esp. 204-217.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. W. Rudolph, *Der “Elohst” von Exodus bis Josua* (BZAW 68), Berlin 1938, 62: “Der Wechsel zwischen singularischer und pluralischer Anrede ergibt kein brauchbares Kriterium für eine Aufteilung; die drei Pluralstellen (21b.25aa.31ba) können aus ihrem Kontext nicht losgelöst werden. Der Numeruswechsel ist offenbar willkürlich und bei der Anrede an das Kollektivum “Volk” wohlverständlich.”; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Jerusalem 1967, p. 307: “The change from plural to singular, which occurs a number of times in these verses, is common in Biblical Hebrew and particular in poetic style; it breaks the monotony of the oft-repeated recurrence of the same termination.”; J. Halbe, *Das Privilegrecht Jahwes Ex 34,10-26. Gestalt und Wesen, Herkunft und Wirken in*

1. In MT, there is a *Numeruswechsel* concerning the addressee, i.e. the Israelites. These are mostly indicated in the second person singular²⁰. Verses 21d, 25a and 31b, in which the addressee is spoken to in the second person plural²¹, are the exception. In LXX(-Vorlage), these irregularities are smoothed out. Basing one's judgement on the translation technique of the LXX-translator of the book of Exodus, who is very accurate in the translation of his *Vorlage*²²,

vordeuteronomischer Zeit (FRLANT 114), Göttingen 1975, p. 497: "Stilistisch ist dies Element ungewöhnlich lebhaft gestaltet, offenbar bewußt und auf Hörer berechnet:

V. 25aα: Plural d. Anrede: Prädikationsstil

V. 25aβ: Erste Zusage; Sgl. d. Anrede; Subj. in 3. Pers.

V. 25b: Zweite Zusage; Sgl. d. Anrede; Subj. in 1. Pers.

V. 26a: Dritte Zusage; Sgl. d. Anrede; Subj. in 3. Pers.

V. 26b: Vierte Zusage; Sgl. d. Anrede; Subj. in 1. Pers.

Die Textüberlieferung zeigt die Tendenz, die Personen- und Namenwechsel möglichst zu vermeiden. Aber darin verfehlt sie das Temperament dieser Sätze. Sie werden geschrieben, nicht mehr gesprochen, gelesen, nicht mehr aus dem Mund des Sprechers gehört, der mit dem kurzen Wechsel zum Plural (v. 25aα) die Anrede intensiviert und als Sprecher im Namen Jahwes selbst (v. 25b, 26b) zur präzisierenden Rede von Jahwe übergehen kann (v. 25a), ohne die Einheit der Situation zu zerstören. Beide Mittel – Numerusumspaltung und Prädikationsstil – heben v. 25aα und damit die vier ihm unterstellten Zusagen v. 25aβ, 26 im Fluß der Rede hervor."

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. H. Holzinger, *Exodus* (KHCAT 2), Tübingen 1900, 102: "Schon der unerträgliche (...) Personenwechsel in dieser Rede [i.e. Exod 23,20-33 – H.A.] zeigt, dass der Text nicht aus einem Guss ist."; J.H. Hoppers, *De numeruswisseling in het boek Deuteronomium*, Utrecht 1947, 45: "Cap. 23:21b: (...) Dit is een verklarende – hoewel voor ons niet geheel duidelijke! – toevoeging. De oude vertalingen lezen hier ook pluralis, doch zij zetten dit nog voort in het begin van het weer singularische vs. 22. Cap. 23:25a: (...) Dit is een toevoeging, daar vs. 25b zeer goed aansluit bij vs. 24. De oude vertalingen trachten ook hier weer de text te effenen."; E. Otto, *Das Mazzoffest in Gilgal* (BWANT 107), Stuttgart 1975, 232: Ex 23,25a "sich schon aufgrund des Personenwechsels als sekundär erweist.". Reference also can be made to Osumi, *Kompositionsgeschichte* (n. 17). J. Weiss, *Das Buch Exodus übersetzt und erklärt*, Graz - Vienna 1911, 202 considers the *Numeruswechsel* in Exod 23 as corrupt and "corrects" the text by using LXX. J. Hofbauer, "Die literarkritische Komposition von Exodus Kap. 19–23 und 32–34", *ZKT* 56 (1932) 475-529, esp. 492-493 attributes the *Numeruswechsel* in Ex 23,21.25.31 to mistakes made by scribes.

²⁰ Second person singular: לַפְנֵיךָ (v. 20a); לְשִׁמְךָ (v. 20aa); לְהִבְיֵאךָ (v. 20ab); הַשְׁמַע (v. 21a); שָׁמַע (v. 21b); אֵל תִּמְרָה (v. 21c); הַשְׁמַע (v. 22a); עָשִׂה (v. 22b); אִיבֵךְ (v. 22c); צִרְדִּיךְ (v. 22d); לַפְנֵיךָ (v. 23a); הִבְיֵאךָ (v. 23b); הַשְׁמַע (v. 24a); תַּעֲשֶׂה (v. 24b); תַּחֲשֹׁב (v. 24c); תִּחְרָס (v. 24d); תִּשְׁמַע (v. 24e); הִבְיֵאךָ (v. 25b); מִימֶךָ (v. 25b); מִקִּרְבְּךָ (v. 25c); בְּאָרְצְךָ (v. 26a); יִמְךָ (v. 26b); לַפְנֵיךָ (v. 27a); תְּבֹא (v. 27ba); אִיבֵךְ (v. 27c); אִלֶּיךָ (v. 27c); לַפְנֵיךָ (v. 28); מִפְּנֵיךָ (v. 29a); עִלֶּיךָ (v. 29c); מִפְּנֵיךָ (v. 30a); תִּפְרֹה (v. 30b); נִחַלְהָ (v. 30c); נִבְלֶךָ (v. 31a); מִפְּנֵיךָ (v. 31c); חִבְרָה (v. 32a); בְּאָרְצְךָ (v. 33a); אֶרֶץ (v. 33b); תַּעֲבֹד (v. 33c); לָךְ (v. 33d).

²¹ Second person plural: לַפְּנֵיכֶם (v. 21d); עֲבַדְתֶּם (v. 25a); יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (v. 25a); בִּידְכֶם (v. 31c).

²² Cf. i.a. A. Ejmelaeus, "Septuagintal Translation Techniques – A Solution to the Problem of the Tabernacle Account", in G.J. Brooke - B.L. Lindars (eds.), *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings. Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings (Manchester 1990)* (SBL SCS 33), Atlanta, GA 1992, 381-402, esp. 389; Id., "What Can We Know about the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint?", *ZAW* 99 (1987), 58-89, esp. 72; Id., *Parataxis in the Septuagint. A Study of the Renderings of the Hebrew Coordinate Clauses in the Greek Pentateuch* (AASF 31), Helsinki 1982, esp. 180. See also R. Sollamo, "The LXX Renderings of the Infinitive Absolute Used with a Paronymous Finite Verb in the Pentateuch", in N.

one can assume that these harmonisations are possibly due to the translator's *Vorlage*²³, where the addressees are always spoken to in the second person singular. Verse 25 (ἄφ' ὑμῶν) is an exception to this pattern. As to this apparent inconsistency, the study of the Greek translation equivalents of בקרבו with a singular suffix within the book of Exodus, can provide a solution. The term בקרבו or בקרבך is employed ten times in Exodus (MT). In Exod 12,9 and 29,17, LXX reads the equivalent τὰ ἐνδόσθια (intestines). Also, in the Hebrew text of these passages, the term is considered in the literal sense of "intestines". In the other cases, בקרב is a typical Hebrew idiom to express "in the middle of", which consistently is related to the people as a whole²⁴. In order to render this collective notion, the LXX-translator consistently used a plural form. Building on the preceding remarks, the plural form ἄφ' ὑμῶν in Exod 23,25 can be explained as follows. The LXX-*Vorlage* reads a singular suffix (מקרבך). The meaning of מקרבך, however, is collective (the people). MT emphasises that YHWH will take away illness מקרבך. This means that YHWH will eliminate the diseases that are present *within* the community. If LXX would have translated this formula in the second person singular (ἄπο σου), it would give the impression that YHWH would only take away the illness of a single person. Therefore, LXX, trying to follow its *Vorlage* as closely as possible, opted to render מקרבך as ἄφ' ὑμῶν in order to express the nuance "in the middle of your people" clearly²⁵.

Besides v. 25, LXX Exod 23,31 has also another plural form (ὑμῶν) that, however, does not fit in the tendency to harmonise the whole pericope Exod 23,20-33, as addressed to the Israelites in the second person singular²⁶.

2. *A Numeruswechsel* is also found in the verses dealing with the foreign peoples of Canaan, who will be expelled from the land or exterminated (vv. 23-24.27-33)²⁷. LXX, however,

Fernández Marcos (ed.), *La Septuaginta en la investigacion contemporanea (v Congreso de la IOSCS)* (Textos y estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" 34), Madrid 1985, 101-113, esp. 113.

²³ As to the origin of harmonisations in the textual witnesses of the Old Testament, cf. H. Ausloos, "The Septuagint Version of Exod 23:20-33. A "Deuteronomist" at Work?", *JNSL* 22 (1996), 89-106, esp. 90-91.

²⁴ Cf. Exod 3,20 (בקרבו; ἐν αὐτοῖς); Exod 10,1 (בקרבו; ἐπ' αὐτούς); Exod 33,5 (בקרבך; ἐφ' ὑμᾶς); Exod 34,10 (בקרבו; ἐν οἷς); Exod 34,12 (בקרבך; ἐν ὑμῖν). One exception to this pattern can be found in Exod 33,3. In this verse, the formula בקרבך is rendered very literally by μετὰ σοῦ. See also Exod 23,21. One should notice, however, that in this verse, בקרבו refers to a singular object (מלאך).

²⁵ Cf. J.W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (SBL SCS 30), Atlanta, GA 1990, 373: "The plural is rather odd since it is one of only two second plurals in the entire section vv. 20-33, so it must be intentional. Possibly it represents a bit of rationalization concerning μαλακίον; sickness is after all an individual affair – one man is sick and his neighbour is not – and so the plural phrase really means 'from anyone of you'."

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 376: "Within the second clause a second instance of the second plural within the section vv. 20-33 occurs (...), but this one is due to the parent text (דכב in MT)."

²⁷ The foreign peoples are referred to with the singular form in: והכרתיו (v. 23c); אנרשנו (v. 29a); אנרשנו (v. 30a); נרשחמו (v. 31c: possibly referring to הארץ?). About the foreign peoples in the plural: לאלהיהם (v. 24a); תעבדם (v. 24b); כמעשיהם (v. 24c); תהרסם (v. 24d); מצבתיהם (v. 24e); להם ולאליהם (v. 32a); ישבו (v. 33a); חיטמו (v. 33b); אליהם (v. 33c).

consistently refers in the plural to the autochthonous population of the land²⁸, with the exception of v. 24, where *καθαίρεισιν καθελείσιν* is read as the equivalent of *סררהק סרה*. Thus LXX has a *minus* for the suffix *σιν*. Probably, LXX considers τὰ στήλας αὐτῶν as the object of *καθαίρεισιν καθελείσιν*²⁹. Analogous to LXX Exod 23,24, *καθαίρειν* is used in Exod 34,13 in order to denote the destruction of the altars. In MT and SamP, the suffix *σιν* in *סררהק* refers to *סררהק*. In my opinion, it is not possible to assess which variant is the most original one.

3. In MT and SamP a kind of *Numeruswechsel* concerning the speaker as subject can be found³⁰. With the exception of v. 25b, it is *YHWH* himself who speaks in the first person to the Israelites. Verse 25b, however, deals with *YHWH* in the third person. The LXX(-Vorlage), on the contrary, reads in this place a first person singular form (εὐλογῶ). In my opinion, this adaptation is due to the LXX(-Vorlage). Two reasons can be given in order to support this hypothesis.

Firstly, the LXX(-Vorlage) aimed at harmonising with the rest of the pericope, in which, starting from v. 22, *YHWH* is the subject. From v. 22 onwards in the LXX(-Vorlage), *YHWH* is consistently presented as the subject of the speech and as the subject of the actions he announces. The LXX(-Vorlage), however, makes a clear separation between Exod 23,21 and the following verses. In vv. 20-21, *YHWH* says that he will send his messenger. This messenger will lead the people and they must obey him. MT makes, by using *אם כי*, a clear link between v. 22 and the foregoing verses³¹. This link, however, is broken in the LXX(-Vorlage)³². In LXX, something new is started in v. 22, although implicitly it refers to the appearance of the messenger in vv. 20-21.

²⁸ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς (v. 22); τοῖς ἀντικειμένοις (v. 22); αὐτοῦς (v. 23); τοῖς θεοῖς αὐτῶν (v. 24); αὐτοῖς (v. 24); τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν (v. 24); τὰς στήλας αὐτῶν (v. 24); αὐτοῦς (v. 27); αὐτοῦς (v. 29); αὐτοῦς (v. 30); τοῖς ἐγκαθημένους (v. 31); αὐτοῦς (v. 31); αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς αὐτῶν (v. 32); ἐγκαθησονται (v. 33); ποιήσωσιν (v. 33); τοῖς θεοῖς αὐτῶν (v. 33).

²⁹ See, however, in contradiction to my own view Wevers, *Notes* (n. 25), 372: "(...) Exod did not translate the suffix of *סררהק*; *καθελείσιν* is, however, transitive and some object must be understood; the two possible modifiers would be *ἔργα* and *αὐτῶν*, and obviously it is the latter which is intended. Hex has supplied *αυτους* to represent MT." The term *καθαίρειν*, however, is not used in the whole of the Pentateuch to designate the extermination of human beings (cf. H.G. Liddell – R. Scott – S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1948-1968, 849; J. Lust – E. Eynikel – K. Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Part 2, Stuttgart 1996, 218). See also A. Le Boulluec – P. Sandevioir, *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, Part 2: *L'Exode. Traduction du text grec de la Septante. Introduction et notes*, Paris 1989, 240: "Sans doute convient-il de sous-entendre *autois*, renvoyant aux «dieux», comme complément du tour intensif: «tu (les) démoliras complètement»."

³⁰ *YHWH* as the subject of the speech in the first person singular: *אנכי* (v. 20a); *שכי* (v. 21e); *אדברי* (v. 22ba); *אביחי* (v. 22c); *גרתי* (v. 22d); *מלאכי* (v. 23a); *הסרתי* (v. 25c); *אמלא* (v. 26a); *אימתי* (v. 27a); *אשליח* (v. 27a); *המתי* (v. 27b); *נתתי* (v. 27c); *שלחתי* (v. 28a); *אנרשנו* (v. 29a); *שדי* (v. 31a); *אחתי* (v. 31b); *כי* (v. 33b).

³¹ Cf. B.K. Waltke – M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake, IN 1990, 671; P. Joüon – T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 14), Rome 1993, § 173 b.

³² *כי* is missing, although MT reads *אם כי*.

Secondly, LXX(-Vorlage) has tried to reduce the role of the messenger as much as possible. In MT, the messenger is able to forgive the people's sins (כִּי לֹא יִשָּׂא לַפְּשׁוֹנִים Exod 23,21), and the people must obey him (וְשָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי Exod 23,22). Moreover, MT posits that YHWH is present in the messenger (כִּי שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי Exod 23,21). In LXX, however, these elements are softened. (a) Instead of the capacity to forgive sins, it is said that the messenger will not shrink away (οὐ γὰρ μὴ ὑποστείληται σε). (b), In the LXX version of Exod 23,21, it is stressed that the name of YHWH is not ἐν αὐτῷ, but ἐπ' αὐτῷ. (c) According to LXX, the people do not have to obey the messenger, but YHWH himself (Exod 23,22: ἐὰν ἀκούσης τῆς φωνῆς μου). In restricting the role of the messenger, the LXX translator seems to link up with the tenor of the book of Deuteronomy, since here, the angel is not mentioned at all³³.

Against the background of my thesis that the LXX(-Vorlage) wanted to minimalise the role of the messenger of YHWH in Exod 23, the transformation from the third person (בְּרַךְ) to the first person (בְּרַכְתִּי – εὐλογῆσω) can easily be explained. The LXX(-Vorlage) wanted to avoid that a too eminent role would be given to the messenger, at the expense of YHWH himself.

III. Conclusion

As to the triple *Numeruswechsel* in MT Exod 23,20-33, it can be stated that the LXX(-Vorlage) tried to smooth out the irregularities which are still present in MT. As a consequence, LXX cannot be useful in reconstructing the composition history of this pericope, since the Greek version as a whole is characterised by harmonisations. This harmonising tendency can also be found in other elements of the LXX version of Exod 23³⁴.

The given example is not only able to take the edge off Dillmann's and Floss' arguments that are used to reconstruct the origin of Exod 23,20-33, but it is also a warning against an impetuous use of text-critical data. When one would like to use textual witnesses in order to construct a literary-critical hypothesis, a detailed analysis of the materials is indispensable.

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³³ Cf. Ausloos, "The Septuagint Version" (n. 21), 102.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-106.

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