Revisiting the προσήλυτος in “the LXX”

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One of the more heated lexical debates in LXX studies surrounds the meaning of the Greek term προσήλυτος. Yet the only thorough examination of the word in the LXX is W. C. Allen’s 1894 article “On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ in the Septuagint,” which argues that the LXX translators distinguish carefully between two different uses of גָּר in the Hebrew Bible: the first is rendered by the Greek word πάροικος and is used in contexts where a convert to Judaism cannot be intended; the second is rendered by the Greek word προσήλυτος and is used in contexts where a convert to Judaism could be intended. Most modern treatments of conversion in early Judaism rely heavily on Allen’s conclusions, often indirectly through Karl Georg Kuhn’s TDNT entry on προσήλυτος, without reassessing the methodology or evidence Allen used to support his argument. Consequently, I provide a criticism of Allen’s methodological assumptions and a reassessment of LXX renderings of גָּר by utilizing recent studies on the significance of the varying translation techniques of the LXX translators, concluding that Allen’s methodology, which treats the entirety of the LXX as a translational unity, leads him, and those who rely on him, to misinterpret the evidence of the LXX. In contrast, analyzing the evidence of the individual books of the LXX as discrete translations by different translators demonstrates that Allen anachronistically renders προσήλυτος in the LXX as “proselyte,” when in fact it should be translated as “alien.”

Most scholars believe that גָּר, the Hebrew word that the LXX translators frequently render into Greek as προσήλυτος, did not originally mean a proselyte or convert to Israelite religion; rather, the word referred to an alien, Israelite or non-Israelite, residing in a foreign land. At some point in later Jewish literature,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their financial support, which enabled me to complete the research for this article. I am also grateful to Joel Marcus, Melvin K. H. Peters, Dirk Büchner, and David M. Moffitt, as well as the participants in the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Atlanta in 2010, for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1 For arguments against seeing the גָּר as a convert in the Hebrew Bible, see Matty Cohen,
though, גר came to designate a convert to Judaism. For instance, Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Nezikin 18, states:

Beloved are the proselytes [הגרים]. It was for their sake that our father Abraham was not circumcised until he was ninety-nine years old. Had he been circumcised at twenty or at thirty years of age, only those under the age of thirty could have become proselytes [דバル תושב]. Therefore God bore with Abraham until he reached ninety-nine years of age, so as not to close the door to future proselytes [גרים הבאים].

Consequently, the question arises as to when the word גר acquired this new meaning. Numerous scholars argue that it is in the LXX’s use of the term προσήλυτος, often considered to be a neologism, 3 that we have our earliest evidence of this latter meaning. Yet only W. C. Allen’s 1894 article, entitled “On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ in the Septuagint,” has thoroughly examined how the LXX translates the term גר. 4 Allen argues that the LXX translators distinguished carefully between two different uses of גר in the Hebrew Bible: the Greek word πάροικος translates the first meaning and appears in contexts that do not envisage a convert to Judaism; the Greek word προσήλυτος translates the second meaning of גר and occurs in contexts that can conceivably refer to a convert to Judaism. Most modern discussions of προσήλυτος, particularly in NT studies, rely heavily

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2 Translation slightly adapted from Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933), 3:140. Even in rabbinic literature distinctions exist within the category of the הגר: a a וַיְנַדֶּשֶׁהוּ הָגֵר was not a Jew, while a וַיְנַדֶּשֶׁהוּ הָגר was. Cf. Bernard J. Bamberger, Proselytism in the Talmudic Period (New York: Ktav, 1939), 133–40.

3 As the article of David M. Moffitt and C. Jacob Butera in the preceding issue of JBL demonstrates, it does not appear that the LXX translators coined the term (“P.Duk. inv. 727r: New Evidence for the Meaning and Provenance of the Word προσήλυτος,” JBL 132 [2013]: 159–78).

on the conclusions of Allen's article, whether directly or indirectly, through Karl Georg Kuhn's TDNT entry on προσήλυτος, without reassessing the methodology or evidence Allen used to support his argument.⁵ Thus, in an appendix to The Alien in Israelite Law, Christiana van Houten discusses the meaning of προσήλυτος in the LXX, stating that her study is greatly helped by a study of W. C. Allen.⁶⁶

At the same time, some recent studies on individual LXX books suggest a growing unease with translating προσήλυτος as proselyte (i.e., convert to Judaism) but do not explicitly rebut Allen's argument.⁷ The following pages will provide a critique of Allen's methodological assumptions in light of recent studies on the significance of the varying translation techniques of the LXX translators. As I will show, Allen's methodology leads him to misunderstand the evidence of the LXX and, consequently, to conclude wrongfully that in the LXX προσήλυτος is a technical term for a convert to Judaism.

I. W. C. Allen’s Argument: A Προσήλυτος Is a Convert in the Septuagint

In a helpful summary of the conclusions that he draws from the evidence of the LXX, Allen states:

A consideration of the following facts will, I believe, lead to the certain conclusions (1) that προσήλυτος is not synonymous with πάροικος; (2) that it does not mean “advena,” “stranger,” “sojourner,” in the sense of the old Hebrew ֵגֵר; (3) that its original meaning, so far as the extant literature enables us to judge, was “proselyte.”⁸

As Allen argues, these conclusions suggest that the LXX translators did not translate ֵגֵר in keeping with its original meaning but imported “the later meaning which it has in the Mishna.”⁹

⁷ For instance, the various translators of A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title (ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Alain Le Boulluec and Pierre Sandevoir, L’Exode: Traduction du texte grec de la Septante (La Bible d’Alexandrie 4; Paris: Cerf, 1989), 51–52.
⁹ Ibid.
To substantiate these claims he lists eleven texts in which the LXX renders גֵר with παροικός. He observes that in none of these passages could גֵר bear the meaning of a convert to Judaism and concludes that the LXX translators avoided rendering גֵר with προσήλυτος in such contexts. On the other hand, the LXX renders גֵר with προσήλυτος over seventy times in contexts that, according to Allen, bear the meaning of a convert, the LXX translates גֵר with παροικέω. Conversely, where a convert might be in view, the translators often render גֵר with προσήλυτος, πρόσκειμαι, προσγίνομαι, προσπορεύομαι, or προσηλευτεύω. In other words, according to Allen, where converts are intended, the LXX translators greatly prefer προσήλυτος and related verbs, and they avoid προσήλυτος in favor of παροικός and its cognates where the context prevents the reader from envisaging a convert.

10 Ibid. See the following passages: Gen 15:13; 23:4; Exod 2:22; 18:3; Deut 14:21; 23:8; 2 Sam 1:13; 1 Chr 29:15; LXX Pss 38:14; 118:19; Jer 14:8. Allen (p. 266) notes that the recension of Aquila renders גֵר as προσήλυτος in 2 Sam 1:13 and the recension of Lucian renders גֵר as προσήλυτος in 1 Chr 29:15, but he makes nothing of the fact that the context of these passages makes it unlikely that גֵר refers to a convert.

11 Allen, “On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ,” 267–68. Although he mentions the double occurrence of προσήλυτος in Deut 10:18, where the MT has only one occurrence of גֵר, his treatment does not mention two other occurrences of προσήλυτος where the MT does not have גֵר (Lev 17:3 and Deut 12:18). Cf. van Houten, Alien in Israelite Law, 181 n. 4. Additionally, Allen did not have access to the Hebrew fragments of Sirach and so was unable to take into account the way in which the Greek translator of that book rendered גֵר. One of the problems with Allen’s study is the fact that he was not using a critical edition of the LXX along the lines of the Göttingen edition. Although his article makes no mention of which edition of the LXX he used, it seems likely that it was a lightly revised version of Codex Vaticanus, such as the edition of Robert Holmes and James Parsons (Vetus Testamentum Graecum cum variis lectionibus [5 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1798–1827] or one of the editions of Constantin von Tischendorf (Vetus Testamentum Graece: Iuxta LXX Interpretes). It is conceivable that he used Henry Barclay Swete’s first edition (The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint [3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887–94]), which is also basically Codex Vaticanus, although perhaps not as likely, since the last volume of this edition came out in the year that Allen published his article.

12 Cf. Allen, “On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ,” 269–71. Further, the LXX translators render גֵרְם and גָרְם, which occur ten times in contexts clearly not referring to converts, with the verb παροικέω.

13 In an article on ἐξιλάσασθαι in the LXX, Dirk Büchner has rightly argued that care must be taken in determining the meaning of a Greek word from the scriptural context in a work of translation where Greek words are being matched to Hebrew words, often for no reason other than convention (“Ἐξιλάσασθαι: Appeasing God in the Septuagint Pentateuch,” JBL 129 [2010]: 237–60). Yet προσήλυτος presents interpreters with the problem that, apart from the recently unearthed evidence of Moffitt and Butera (“P.Duk. inv. 727r”), the word does not occur outside of the LXX until the first century C.E., and there in works (Philo, Matthew, Acts) that are under the influence of the LXX. Consequently, although pitfalls remain, we are left with little apart from the context to determine the way in which the LXX translators used προσήλυτος.
II. Septuagint Translation Techniques and the Differing Renderings of גַּר

At first glance, Allen’s treatment appears to demonstrate that the LXX translators perceived two distinct meanings for the word גַּר. But, as even Allen notes and Moffitt and Butera argue, a number of passages do not quite fit this tidy scheme. In light of this fact, one suspects that something may be fundamentally wrong with his analysis. Indeed there is: his methodology. Throughout the lists that Allen provides in his article, he lumps together texts from all over the LXX. This would be appropriate if the same person or group translated “the LXX” in its entirety. But such a perception of the LXX translation is indebted not to historical realities but to the legends that arose regarding it. If, on the other hand, different individuals were responsible for translating different books of the Hebrew Bible, and did so at different times, to assume one translational strategy is a significant methodological mistake akin to assuming that different modern English translations of the Bible employ English words in exactly the same way. Since Allen’s article, study of the LXX has demonstrated just this: each translation of each book of the Hebrew Bible is unique. For instance, the Greek translator of Genesis did not translate Ezekiel, nor were the two translators necessarily contemporaries. Consequently, as Staffan Olofsson argues, “Neither explicitly nor implicitly should the Septuagint be looked upon as one translation in line with, for example, Symmachus or Aquila.”

Each book was translated by a different person (or group); these translators presumably lived at different times and in different places and used different methods of translation (whether intentionally or otherwise). Some translations


15 I acknowledge that by continuing to refer to the early Greek translations of the books of the Hebrew Bible as “the LXX,” I may be inadvertently perpetuating this misconception, but to my mind no adequate solution for this problem exists.

16 See Let. Aris. 301–7, in which a team of seventy-two is responsible for the translation of the Law (although even this account suggests that they were not responsible for the translation of the Prophets or the Writings); and Philo, Mos. 2.25–44. See also the recent discussion of these traditions in Giuseppe Velti, Libraries, Translations, and “Canon” Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (JSJSup 109; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 100–146.


are more wooden than others. Some translations consistently render one Hebrew word with one particular Greek word; others consistently render that same Hebrew word with a different Greek word; and still others render that same Hebrew word with a number of different Greek words. As Anneli Aejmelaeus argues, “Each and every phenomenon in translation technique, be it word equivalence, use of transliteration, poor knowledge of Hebrew, free rendering, or addition of items, should be localized. What has happened in one book has not necessarily happened in another.” Further, recent studies indicate, contrary to the claims of Henry St. John Thackeray, that even the books that constitute the Greek Pentateuch are not a unified translation. As Robert J. V. Hiebert argues, the Greek Pentateuch “exhibits more heterogeneity in terms of translation technique than the account of Aristeas would appear to allow. When one expands the frame of reference to include the whole of the Old Greek canon, the literary diversity between books is often dramatically greater than it is among the constituent components of the Pentateuch.”

As a result, to compare the way in which a verse in Genesis renders מָדַע to the way in which a verse in Leviticus renders מָדַע—let alone one of the Prophets or Writings—is methodologically unsophisticated and possibly misleading. The first step to assessing the range of meaning of any word is to determine, insofar as is possible, its meaning in the individual translations of each book of the Greek Bible. It is here that Allen’s broad theological conclusions are based on inadequate philological grounds, for he neither systematically examines the translation of


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γρ/γὸς in each book nor keeps the evidence of each book separate.23 Only once one has completed the initial step of determining the philology of the individual books can one assess whether the way in which each translator has rendered a Hebrew word is due to theologizing and not merely due to translation technique.24 And only once one has separately assessed the different translation techniques of each book, can one begin the process of synthesizing the various data in order to determine whether the translators share a common translational or theological trend.25 It could be the case that προσήλυτος means “sojourner” in some books and “convert” in others.

III. Six Categories of Evidence

The various books of the LXX divide into six separate categories: (1) those whose Hebrew Vorlage never used γρ/γὸς and do not use προσήλυτος (Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel); (2) those whose Hebrew Vorlage used γρ but used neither πάροικος nor προσήλυτος (Job: ξένος); (3) those whose Hebrew Vorlage used γρ/γὸς but always render it with πάροικος or παροικέω, never with προσήλυτος or related verbs (Genesis,26 Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings,27 Hosea, Nahum, Ruth, Lamentations, Ezra-Nehemiah); (4) those whose Hebrew Vorlage used γρ/γὸς and always render it with προσήλυτος or related verbs, but never use πάροικος or παροικέω.

23 On the penultimate page of his article, Allen does briefly discuss separately the evidence of Deuteronomy (“On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ,” 274), but, as I show below, his conclusions inadequately deal with the evidence.
24 As Raija Sollamo notes, “translation technique has a negative role when it points out what is pure translation technique and philology, not theology. What is not philology, only that can contain theology in the sense of a theology of the Septuagint differing from the theology of the source text” (“Translation Technique as a Method,” in Translating a Translation: The LXX and Its Modern Translations in the Context of Early Judaism [ed. H. Ausloos et al.; BETL 213; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008], 35–42, here 41).
25 On the hope that such a synthesis is ultimately possible, see Martin Rösel, “Towards a Theology of the Septuagint,” in Kraus and Wooden, Septuagint Research, 239–52.
26 Although Otto J. Baab has argued for two distinct translators (one for chs. 1–25 and one for chs. 26–50; “A Theory of Two Translators for the Greek Genesis,” JBL 52 [1933]: 239–43), most interpreters treat LXX Genesis as a unified translation. With regard to γρ/γὸς specifically, there is no difference in translation technique between chs. 1–25 and chs. 26–50.
27 Since there are no critical editions of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings in the Göttingen series, discussion of these books is based on Alfred Rahlls, Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpres (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935). Further, while there remains debate over the unity of the Old Greek translation of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, the solution is inconsequential, since the books are consistent in their rendering of γρ/γὸς. See the discussion of Bernard A. Taylor, “To the Reader of the Old Greek Text of Reigns,” in Pietersma and Wright, New English Translation of the Septuagint, 244–48.
(Joshua, Zechariah, Malachi); 28 (5) those whose Hebrew Vorlage used רַבְרֵג and always render it with προσήλυτος or related verbs, and always use πάροικος or παροικέω to translate ישב (Leviticus, Numbers); and (6) those books whose Hebrew Vorlage used רַבְרֵג and sometimes render these words with προσήλυτος and related verbs and sometimes render רַבְרֵג with πάροικος and related verbs (Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, 1–2 Chronicles; see chart). 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Use רַבְרֵג</th>
<th>Use προσήλυτος or related verbs</th>
<th>Use πάροικος/παροικέω</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Micah, Hab, Zeph, Haggai, Prov, Song of Songs, Eccl, Esther, Daniel</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>Gen, Judg, 1–2 Sam, 1–2 Kings, Hosea, Nahum, Ruth, Lam, Ezra-Neh</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>Josh, Zech, Mal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 5</td>
<td>Lev, Num</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 6</td>
<td>Exod, Deut, Isa, Jer, Ezek, Pss, 1–2 Chron</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, the first and second categories cannot help to determine the meaning of either πάροικος or προσήλυτος. The third category demonstrates that these translators believed that πάροικος referred to a resident alien, whether Israelite or

28 C. Robert Harrison Jr. has argued that the books comprising the Twelve had different translators ("The Unity of the Minor Prophets in the Septuagint: A Reexamination of the Question," BIOSCS 21 [1988]: 55–72). In contrast, Henry St. John Thackeray (The Septuagint and Jewish Worship: A Study in Origins [London: British Academy, 1921] and "The Greek Translators of the Prophetical Books," JTS 4 [1903]: 578–85), Joseph Ziegler ("Die Einheit der Septuaginta zum Zwölffprophetenbuch," in Syllig: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Septuaginta [MSU 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971], 29–42), and George E. Howard ("To the Reader of the Twelve Prophets," in Pietersma and Wright, New English Translation of the Septuagint, 780–81) argue for the overall unity of the Greek translation of the Twelve. Although I treat each prophet separately, the results remain the same.

29 Whether the Greek translation of Sirach belongs to category 5 or 6 is uncertain because of the fragmentary nature of the extant Hebrew manuscripts of the work.
non-Israelite, but indicates nothing about the translator's knowledge or understanding of the term προσήλυτος. The fourth category can perhaps help us narrow down the possible meanings of the word προσήλυτος but cannot demonstrate that the translators intended to distinguish between προσήλυτος and πάροικος. The fifth category may help distinguish between different meanings of προσήλυτος and πάροικος, but these differences may indicate nothing more than the translators' preferred renderings of Hebrew words—προσήλυτος for גָּר, and πάροικος for פָּרָשָׁה.

It is only the sixth category, which consists of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, and 1–2 Chronicles, that is truly useful for determining translational intentionality and, therefore, the meaning of the word προσήλυτος and its relation to the word πάροικος. In light of the fact that the five books of the Pentateuch were probably the first books of the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek, I will begin with Exodus and Deuteronomy and then move to consider the various translations of the Prophets and the Writings.30 The following discussion is based on critical editions of the LXX, where available.

A. Προσήλυτος in the Greek Pentateuch

The LXX translator of Exodus uses both πάροικος and προσήλυτος. Consequently, LXX Exodus might give us the evidence we need to weigh Allen’s claims. Exodus contains twelve occurrences of the noun גָּר, which the translator renders as προσήλυτος nine times (12:48, 49; 20:10; 22:20 [2x]; 23:9 [3x]; 23:12), πάροικος twice (2:22; 18:3), and γειώρας once (12:19).31 Not once does προσήλυτος render a word other than גָּר in LXX Exodus. Additionally, the verbal form גָּר occurs four times (3:22; 6:4; 12:48, 49) and is rendered as σύσκηνος (3:22), παροικέω (6:4), and προσέρχομαι (12:48, 49).32

Does Allen’s thesis fit the evidence of Exodus? To be sure, the use of πάροικος to describe Gershom, Moses’ son, would make sense of the avoidance of proselyte language, since Gershom was a born Israelite (2:22; 18:3). Yet the use of γειώρας in 12:19 is striking, since, on Allen’s thesis, one would expect, in a context that clearly permits envisaging a convert to Israelite religion, to see προσήλυτος here, were it a technical term denoting a convert.33 Additionally, the use of προσήλυτος in LXX

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30 For an attempt to date the translations of the individual books of the LXX, see Gilles Dorival, Marguerite Harl, and Olivier Munnich, La Bible grecque des Septante: Du judaïsme hellénistique au christianisme ancien (Initiations au christianisme ancien; Paris: Cerf, 1988), 96–98.

31 For a helpful discussion of the translation of גָּר in LXX Exodus, see Le Boulluec and Sandevoir, L’Exode, 51–52.

32 In Exod 12:48, a few manuscripts have ἐρχομαι or παρέρχομαι instead of προσέρχομαι, while in 12:39, one manuscript has πρόσκειμαι instead of προσέρχομαι. See the textual apparatus of John William Wevers, Exodus (Septuaginta 2.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 179–80. For a more detailed discussion of Exod 12:19 and 12:48–49, see Moffitt and Butera, “P. Duke. inv. 727r,” 162–63, 172–74.

33 A few LXX manuscripts, as well as Aquila and Symmachus, do render גָּר in 12:19 as προσήλυτος, as the textual apparatus of Wevers (Exodus, 170) makes clear.
Exodus militates against the proselyte definition. Although Exod 12:45 stipulates that the πάροικος (Hebrew: תושב) cannot partake of the Passover, 12:48–49 provides an exception: a circumcised προσήλυτος can. This verse appears to assume the existence of an uncircumcised προσήλυτος, demonstrating that the term cannot in itself indicate a full convert to Judaism in LXX Exodus, for a full convert is one who has undergone circumcision.34 This leaves four passages in which προσήλυτος could refer to a convert: 20:10; 22:21; 23:9; and 23:12. Exodus 22:21 and 23:9 command Israel not to oppress the προσήλυτος, since Israel was itself a προσήλυτος in the land of Egypt. But the use of προσήλυτος to refer to the identity of the Israelites in Egypt suggests that the first occurrence of προσήλυτος in these verses cannot refer to a convert. Allen dismisses the evidence of this passage too hastily. The logic of the command demands that whatever a γρ or προσήλυτος might be, it is appropriate to use this word in reference to Israel. In other words, if προσήλυτος in the first instance means a “convert to Judaism,” then it makes no sense to use this word in reference to Israel’s time in Egypt. Both occurrences of προσήλυτος must mean the same thing or else there is no connection between Israel’s experience in Egypt and the experience of the προσήλυτος in their midst. And only if they both have shared the same experience does the imperative have any force.35 If, on the other hand, προσήλυτος means “resident alien,” then the translation makes perfect sense.

Finally, the reference to a προσήλυτος in Exod 20:10 also creates problems for Allen’s thesis, since the passage describes the προσήλυτος as the one who dwells among you (ὁ παροικῶν ἐν σοί; MT: גֵּר כְּאשֶׁר בְּשֵׁעתיך—) a verbal form that Allen thinks is used exclusively of sojourners, not converts.36 In other words, of the nine occurrences of προσήλυτος in LXX Exodus, only one, 23:12, a passage in which the γρ/προσήλυτος is to rest on the Sabbath, can possibly fit Allen’s theory. In light of these other occurrences in LXX Exodus, it seems more likely that the προσήλυτος of 23:12 is a resident alien, not a convert.

The LXX translator of Deuteronomy translates γρ, which occurs twenty-two times in the book, as προσήλυτος twenty times, and πάροικος twice (14:21; 23:8).37 Two additional occurrences in 10:18 and 12:18 may be the result of a Hebrew

34 Allen (“On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ,” 269) recognizes this problem but does not deal with it.

35 Again, see Moffitt and Butera, “P.Duk.inv. 727,” 174.

36 To be sure, according to two LXX manuscripts (see Wevers, Exodus, 242), there is an intervening καί between προσήλυτος and ὁ παροικῶν, which would then distinguish between the two words. John William Wevers (Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus [SBLSCS 30; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 312) argues that ὁ παροικῶν ἐν σοί is a free though not incorrect translation of MT’s דָּעַת בְּשֵׁעתיך.

37 See Deut 1:16; 5:14; 10:18, 19 [2x]; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:14, 17, 19, 20, 21; 26:11, 12, 13; 27:19; 28:43; 29:10; 31:12. Deuteronomy uses the verbal form γρ three times; LXX Deuteronomy renders it as παραγίνομαι (18:6), ἀπέχω (18:22), and παροικέω (26:5).
Vorlage that differed from the MT. Deuteronomy 14:21 stipulates that Israelites cannot eat נובלה (meat from animals that have died naturally), but that a גר can. Presumably, the translator would not have permitted a full convert to eat food forbidden to the native Israelite, so it is possible that he uses πάροικος here instead of προσήλυτος to show that a proselyte is not in mind. In the second instance, Deuteronomy says that Israel was a גר in the land of Egypt (23:8). In both instances, the LXX translator of Deuteronomy has rendered גר as πάροικος. Additionally, Deuteronomy uses the verb גור of Levites, who dwell in Israelite towns, and of Abraham, who dwelled in Egypt, and LXX Deuteronomy translates the verb as παροικέω (18:6; 26:5). Thus far, these Greek renderings fit Allen’s thesis.

But do the occurrences of προσήλυτος in LXX Deuteronomy consistently portray a convert? The answer is no. In Deut 10:19, God commands Israel to love the προσήλυτος, for Israel was itself a προσήλυτος in Egypt. While the translator has used πάροικος for Israel’s sojourn in Egypt elsewhere (Deut 23:8; 26:5), here he translates it as προσήλυτος. If the translator was intent on distinguishing between προσήλυτος and πάροικος, as Allen suggests has happened in 23:8 and 26:5, why does he render גר as προσήλυτος in 10:19 in a context in which it cannot possibly mean a convert? As I noted of similar passages in Exodus, it seems more logical to assume that, by identifying Israel as a προσήλυτος in Egypt, the translator ensures that his readers will properly identify προσήλυτοι in their midst as resident aliens.40 And if the translator can refer to Israel’s (or Abraham’s) identity in Egypt with either προσήλυτος (10:19) or πάροικος (23:8; 26:5) does this fact not suggest that he believed the two words are, if not synonyms, at least closely related?41 Additionally, one of the curses for infidelity to the covenant is that the גר will be higher than the Israelite and will lend to Israel, rather than Israel lending to him (28:43). Clearly a convert to Israelite religion cannot be in view here, yet the LXX translator renders גר as προσήλυτος. Finally, Deut 1:16 refers to a dispute between a person and his sojourner (גרו). The translators render this phrase as προσηλύτου αὐτοῦ, although the αὐτοῦ is lacking in a number of LXX manuscripts. Allen’s only comment on this usage of προσήλυτος is that it is “strange.” Yet this passage can hardly refer to

38 In both 10:18 and 12:18, the Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the reading of the MT, while extant readings from Qumran are fragmentary at this point. See Julie Ann Duncan, “4QDeut”, in Qumran Cave 4.IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings (ed. Eugene Ulrich et al.; DJD 14; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 110; and, in the same volume, eadem, “4QDeutc,” 22.
39 Aquila renders the גר of 14:21, who is permitted to eat נובלה, as προσήλυτος, not πάροικος.
40 See the discussion of Moffitt and Butera, “P.Duk. inv. 727r,” 174.
41 Rahlfs (Septuaginta) links the two in Deut 5:14: δο προσήλυτος δο παροικῶν ἐν σοί. None-theless, the critical edition of 5:14 in John William Wevers (Deuteronomy [Septuaginta 3.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 112) reads: δο προσήλυτος δο ἐντὸς τῶν πυλῶν σου. See also the discussion of this verse in Wevers, Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy (SBLCS 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 102.
42 Allen, “On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ,” 268. On the manuscript evidence, see Wevers,
someone's convert; rather, it clearly portrays a dispute between a person and his
guest. As Melvin K. H. Peters argues,

The default rendering προσήλυτος describes in the Pentateuch and certainly in
Deuteronomion someone clearly not yet a proselyte, a convert, but more like a
guest of the community who receives preferential treatment alongside the orphan
and the widow. He should be treated fairly and paid a just wage. That he is an
outsider is not in doubt. But he is not just any passing outsider, nor as yet fully
an insider. He has “come over” to the community and is treated as its guest, with
all the privileges that such a status implied.43

In summary, there is no clear evidence that the earliest translated books of
the Greek Bible worked with a definition of προσήλυτος that meant “convert.”
While LXX Genesis, Leviticus, and Numbers are inconclusive due to the translators’
stereotyped equivalents for גר, the translators of Exodus and Deuteronomion did
not consider the Greek word προσήλυτος to mean “a convert.” It is possible,
however, that biblical books later translated into Greek do reflect such a meaning.

B. Jeremiah, Psalms, and Book of the Twelve

Because the evidence of Greek translations of Jeremiah, Psalms, and the
Twelve needs to be understood in relation to LXX Deuteronomion, I will deal with
them briefly here.44 Eleven times the book of Deuteronomion refers to a list of three
people: the גר, יתום, and אלמנה, “resident alien,” “orphan,” and “widow,” respec-
tively.45 LXX Deuteronomion consistently translates this list as προσήλυτος, ὀρφανός,
and χήρα. Significantly, the only times LXX Jeremiah and LXX Psalms use
προσήλυτος is in translating this same list (Jer 7:6; 22:3; LXX Pss 93:6; 145:9). In
other words, LXX Jeremiah and LXX Psalms translate גר as προσήλυτος because
they are influenced by LXX Deuteronomion;46 in all other passages they render גר
Deuteronomy, 59. On the interpretation of this verse, see Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11: A
43 Peters, “Deuteronomion: To the Reader,” in Pietersma and Wright, New English Transla-
tion of the Septuagint, 143.
44 Henry St. John Thackeray has argued that three different people translated Jeremiah, the
first responsible for chs. 1–28, the second responsible for chs. 29–51, and the third responsible for
ch. 52 (“The Greek Translators of Jeremiah,” JTS 4 [1903]: 245–66). Even if Thackeray is correct, this
does not explain the different renderings of the noun גר, since all three occur in the first
twenty-eight chapters.
45 On the significance of this list in Deuteronomion and the ancient Near East, see Weinfeld,
Deuteronomion 1–11, 439–40.
46 As Emanuel Tov states, “Quotations from and allusions to passages in the Torah occurring
in the later books of the Bible were often phrased in the Greek in a manner identical with the
Greek Pentateuch” (“The Impact of the LXX Translation of the Pentateuch on the Translation of
the Other Books,” in The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint [VTSup 72;
Leiden: Brill, 1999], 183–94, here 192). See also Olofsson, LXX Version, 26–28. This does not
with verbs of dwelling. LXX Deuteronomy’s influence extends to the three other occurrences of the list mentioning the יִתְמוֹן, והוד, and פָּרָשִׁים in Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; and Mal 3:5. Zechariah 7:10 and Mal 3:5 contain the only two occurrences of προσήλυτος in the LXX translation of the Twelve. In both cases, προσήλυτος occurs in the context of this Deuteronomic list. Thus, apart from these two instances, the Book of the Twelve does not render יִתְמוֹן as προσήλυτος. Consequently, Jeremiah, Psalms, and the Twelve give no evidence of conscious distinguishing between two different meanings for the Hebrew word יִתְמוֹן.

### C. Προσήλυτος in the LXX Prophets

Isaiah contains one occurrence of the noun יִתְמוֹן and ten occurrences of the verb גוֹר. The verbal form occurs with reference to the wolf residing with the lamb (5:17; 11:6), and the LXX renders the verb with βόσκω or its cognate συμβόσκωμαι. There are an additional five occurrences of גוֹר in contexts that cannot possibly mean “to convert,” and the translator renders them as παρακατευθύνω (16:4; 52:4), παρακατέβασμαι (23:7), or ἐνεχθήλω (33:14 [2x]). Isaiah 54:15 contains the final three occurrences of גוֹר. In the MT, the passage has nothing to do with either sojourners or converts. Nonetheless, the LXX translator, understanding יִתְמוֹן and גוֹר to mean “to sojourn” (not “to stir up”), renders the verse in the following way: "Behold, προσήλυτοι will come to you through me, and flee to you.” Whatever the LXX’s Hebrew Vorlage, and whatever its original meaning, προσήλυτος and προσέρχομαι could refer either to converts or to sojourners.

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47 On the question of the unity of the translation of the Book of the Twelve, see n. 28 above.
48 Johannes Herrmann and Friedrich Baumgärtel (Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Septuaginta) have argued that different translators are responsible for different parts of Isaiah, but Joseph Ziegler (Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaías [ATA 12.3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1934], 31–46, esp. 20–31) has convincingly argued for the unity of the translation.
50 Isac Leo Seeligmann argues that the translator had a difficult time understanding his Vorlage and therefore read proselytism into the text (The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies [ed. Robert Hanhart and Hermann Spieckermann; FAT 40; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 289), but this assumes that προσήλυτος was a technical term for “convert,” when it could just as easily refer to a resident alien who has sought out asylum, as the use of καταφεύγω might suggest.
Unfortunately, and inexplicably, Allen does not discuss the only occurrence of the noun גְּֽר in Isaiah, for it occurs in a context where his thesis suggests that the translator should have rendered it with προσήλυτος. According to Isa 14:1, יְהֹוָה will choose Judah and reestablish the people in the land. At this time the גְּֽר will join them and attach himself to the house of Jacob (ונלוה הָגָר עליהם ונספחו על בית יִ นาย). This is a positive reference to the גְּֽר—quite possibly suggesting conversion, for the גְּֽר joins (הל) the house of Jacob. Yet the LXX translator of Isaiah does not render גְּֽר as προσήλυτος, as one would expect if the word were a technical term denoting conversion. Instead, the translator merely transliterates גְּֽר as γιώρας.51

The fact that in Isa 14:1 the translator has rendered גְּֽר not with προσήλυτος but with γιώρας suggests that, whatever the precise meaning of the term in LXX Isa 54:14, he was unaware of the word being a technical term for a convert.

The book of Ezekiel contains five occurrences of גְּֽר, each of which the Greek translator renders as προσήλυτος (14:7; 22:7, 29; 47:22, 23), and three occurrences of גֵּר, which the translator renders once as προσηλυτεύω (14:7), once as προσήλυτος (47:23), and once as παροικέω (47:22).52 Not once does the translator use the noun πάροικος, again suggesting that προσήλυτος was the standard Greek equivalent for גְּֽר in the translator’s mind. Nonetheless, the fact that the translator renders גְּֽר with either προσηλυτεύω or παροικέω in the space of two verses suggests that, whatever the meaning of προσήλυτος, he did not think there was a significant difference between the two verbs προσηλυτεύω and παροικέω, and, by extension, between προσήλυτος and πάροικος.

In summary, not one of the various Greek translations of the Prophets supports Allen’s thesis that προσήλυτος means “convert” and πάροικος means “sojourner.” The Greek translations of Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, Jeremiah, and the Twelve (or the individual books making up the Twelve) do not provide enough data to assess the interpretive decisions of the various translators. While LXX Isaiah does use προσήλυτος three times in 54:15, in a version of the verse that could refer to converts, the fact that the translator does not use προσήλυτος to translate גְּֽר in 14:1, a passage that portrays Gentiles joining Israel, suggests that he did not think that προσήλυτος was an adequate word to denote conversion. Finally, LXX Ezekiel uses προσηλυτεύω and παροικέω in ways that suggest they are synonyms, demonstrating that its translator did not think that προσήλυτος had a technical meaning signifying a convert.

51 Here Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion render גְּֽר as προσήλυτος. See Joseph Ziegler, Isaia (Septuaginta 14; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939), 173.

52 Henry St. John Thackeray (“The Greek Translators of Ezekiel,” JTS 4 [1903]: 398–411) has argued that LXX Ezekiel is the product of two different translators, the first responsible for chs. 1–27 and 40–48, and the second responsible for chs. 28–39. Again, even if Thackeray is correct to detect two different hands at work, this does not aid us in explaining the evidence surrounding the translation of גְּֽר/גֵּר, since all occurrences are found in Thackeray’s hypothetical first hand.
D. Προσήλυτος in the Writings

1 and 2 Chronicles contain four occurrences of  \( \text{גר} \) and three occurrences of  \( \text{גור} \). The translator renders  \( \text{גר} \) three times as  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) (1 Chr 22:2; 2 Chr 2:16 [LXX 2:17]; 30:25), and once as  \( \text{πάροικος} \) (1 Chr 29:15), while rendering  \( \text{גור} \) once as  \( \text{παροικέω} \) (1 Chr 16:19) and once as  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) (2 Chr 15:9). The first two uses of  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) undermine Allen’s thesis, since both envisage David and Solomon enslaving this group of people. Does the LXX translator believe that David and Solomon enslaved converts to build the temple, as LXX 1 Chr 22:2 and 2 Chr 2:17 would then suggest? Surely, if this term signified converts to Judaism, such stories would detract from the appeal of conversion! Further, the use of  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) for a participial form of  \( \text{גור} \) in 2 Chr 15:9 refers not to converts but rather to those who resided in the territories of Judah and Benjamin and yet were genealogically descended from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon. 2 Chronicles 30:25 contains a similar use of  \( \text{גר} \), where those of Israel who were sojourning (the LXX again calls them  \( \text{προσήλυτοι} \) in Judah celebrated the Passover. The LXX translator has twice equated a number of the twelve tribes with  \( \text{προσήλυτοι} \), demonstrating that he does not think that a  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) is a convert. In other words, in none of the four instances where  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) translates  \( \text{גר} \) can the translator intend a reference to a convert. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that, in 1 Chr 29:15, the LXX translator has equated  \( \text{גר} \) and  \( \text{תושב} \), rendering both with  \( \text{πάροικος} \): “For we were aliens [\( \text{גרים} \)/\( \text{πάροικοι} \)] before you, and sojourners (\( \text{תושבים} \)/\( \text{παροικοῦντες} \)], like all our fathers. . . .” In the mind of the translator of the Chronicler, a  \( \text{גר} \) is nothing more and nothing less than a  \( \text{תושב} \), and a  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) nothing more and nothing less than a  \( \text{πάροικος} \).

Finally, for the sake of completeness, we must turn to the book of Sirach. \(^{54}\) The Hebrew manuscripts of Sirach use  \( \text{גר} \) in 10:22, stating:  \( \text{גר זר נכרי ורש תפארתם יראת יי} \) (“the resident alien, stranger, foreigner, and poor, their boast is in the fear of the Lord”). \(^{55}\) According to the critical edition of Joseph Ziegler, the Greek translator rendered the verse as  \( \text{προσήλυτος καὶ ξένος καὶ πτωχός, τὸ καύχημα αὐτῶν φόβος κυρίου} \). While the context does not exclude the possibility of a convert, it seems more likely, given that the list mentions the  \( \text{προσήλυτος} \) in conjunction with the  \( \text{ξένος} \) (“foreigner”), that he is a resident alien. Further, LXX Sirach 29 discusses

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\(^{53}\) Since there is currently no Göttingen critical edition of 1–2 Chronicles, I again base my discussion on Rahlfis, *Septuaginta*.

\(^{54}\) Allen did not examine Sirach since he had no access to the Hebrew fragments of the work and so could not examine how the translator rendered  \( \text{גר} \)/\( \text{בר} \).

\(^{55}\) See ms A IV r. 10:22 (which ends with (\( \text{ת אלהים} \)[…])) and ms B I r. 10:22, in Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

\(^{56}\) See the textual evidence in Joseph Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Septuaginta 12.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 172. Rahlfis’s edition follows a different manuscript tradition, in which 10:22 states  \( \text{πλούσιος καὶ ἔνδοξος καὶ πτωχός, τὸ καύχημα αὐτῶν φόβος κυρίου} \).
living among foreigners (ἀλλοτρίοι, 29:22): reproach follows the one who sojourns (παροικία, v. 23); to sojourn (παροικέω, v. 24) is a terrible life. According to Sirach, the πάροικος will hear such bitter words as these: “Come, sojourner [πάροικε], prepare a table, and if there is something in your hand, feed me. Go, sojourner [πάροικε], because of good repute, my brother has come to visit, I have need of the house” (vv. 26–27). Clearly the context here indicates that the author intends a resident alien, not a convert. Unfortunately, no extant Hebrew manuscripts of Sirach contain these verses, and so we do not know what Hebrew word πάροικος renders. Similarly, LXX Sir 38:32 refers to the πάροικος of the city, in a context where it clearly means nothing more than “to inhabit,” but again we have no Hebrew manuscript evidence for this verse. Thus, LXX Sirach also provides no evidence for or against Allen’s thesis.

IV. Conclusion

By utilizing the results of recent LXX scholarship, which emphasize that each individual book of the LXX reflects a distinctive translation technique, I have tried to demonstrate the methodological problem with Allen’s argument. Only if one were convinced that the same person or group, using the same translational technique, translated all the books of the LXX could one arrive at Allen’s conclusions. On the other hand, by examining the distinctive way that each book of the Greek Bible translates גא or גора, I have shown that there is no firm evidence that any translator used προσήλυτος to mean a convert to Israelite or Jewish religion. In fact, the evidence of some translations militates against it.

Translators often use words or phrases as responses to verbal stimuli, rather than as acts according to choice. Practical experience in this field shows that the translators usually render words mechanically with the receptor language term they adopted when they encountered the word in the original for the first time, and transfer renderings of phrases that they feel to be well chosen to any further occurrence of the same phrase.

57 I should also mention that LXX Tob 1:8 refers to a προσήλυτος in the context of a list with widow (χήρα) and orphan (ὀρφανός), people to whom Tobit provides tithes in accordance with Deut 26:12. Although we do not have any Hebrew witnesses to this verse, it is likely, in light of the numerous lists in biblical books that contain these three groups, that προσήλυτος renders גא here. Joseph A. Fitzmyer claims that “Tobit includes the ‘proselytes,’ who are not mentioned in the biblical prescriptions about such tithing [in Deut 26:12]” (Tobit [Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2003], 110). This statement is misleading, since MT Deut 26:12 mentions the גא, which LXX Deuteronomy renders as προσήλυτος. In contrast to the Old Latin, which refers to the proselytis, the Vulgate refers to both proselytis et advenis.

58 Olofsson, LXX Version, 10. Similarly, Sollamo (”Translation Technique as a Method,” 36) argues, “A certain translator does not vary his way of translating without limits from instance to
Consequently, it is the sixth category mentioned above (i.e., those books whose Hebrew Vorlage used טוֹבָע and which sometimes render these words with προσήλυτος and related verbs and sometimes render these words with πάροικος and related verbs) that is most helpful for determining the meaning of the word προσήλυτος and its relation to the word πάροικος. Thus, only Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, and 1–2 Chronicles shed light on this question. Yet the likelihood that previous translations of similar passages in Deuteronomy influenced the translation of προσήλυτος in Jeremiah, the Psalter, Zechariah, and Malachi renders these books unhelpful in this task. As a result, we can safely use only five books (Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Ezekiel, 1–2 Chronicles) to determine clearly the intentions of these translators in their uses of προσήλυτος and πάροικος. Each of these books uses προσήλυτος in considerably more complicated ways than the analysis of Allen suggests. If the translators of Exodus and Isaiah were aware that the word προσήλυτος was a technical title for a convert to Judaism, their use of γ(ε)ιώρας in Exod 12:19 and Isa 14:1 is inexplicable. Why use a transliteration of an Aramaic word if a convert was intended and a Greek term readily conveyed this meaning? Apparently, they did not believe that προσήλυτος was a particularly apt word to describe converts. This suggests that LXX Exodus and LXX Isaiah serve as evidence that προσήλυτος did not mean a “convert.” More clearly, the use of προσήλυτος in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and 1–2 Chronicles, in contexts that exclude the possibility of Gentile converts to Judaism, indicates that, at least to these translators, the word meant not “convert” but “resident alien.” In fact, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and 1–2 Chronicles indicate that προσήλυτος and πάροικος had considerable semantic overlap with each other in the minds of the translators.

Allen’s influential article has led the majority of scholars to conclude that in the LXX the word προσήλυτος is not synonymous with πάροικος, since the former word is used exclusively of proselytes in the LXX, while the latter word retains the original sense of the Hebrew word טוֹבָע, “stranger,” or “alien.” I have demonstrated that Allen is wrong: (1) Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and 1–2 Chronicles treat προσήλυτος and πάροικος as synonyms; (2) Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and 1–2 Chronicles use προσήλυτος in contexts where it can only mean “sojourner”;
and, most significantly, (3) not one of the various translations of the LXX books enables us to judge that the original meaning of προσήλυτος was “proselyte.” These facts, should place the burden of proof squarely on those who believe that the translators of some or all of the books of the LXX used προσήλυτος to denote converts to Judaism. If the analysis of each LXX book above is largely correct, such proof can come only from evidence external to and contemporaneous with the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. Yet, according to the newfound papyrological evidence that Moffitt and Butera discuss in their article, the only extant external evidence appears to support the conclusion of this article: at the time of the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible, the term προσήλυτος meant resident alien.61

61 Again, see Moffitt and Butera, “P.Duk. inv. 727r.”