

**Almah, Bethulah, and the Septuagint:**

*A Defense of the LXX's Reliability in Biblical Linguistics and Theology*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper defends the Septuagint (LXX) as a historically respected and theologically reliable translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, countering modern dismissals rooted in theological and apologetic biases. It argues that *‘almâ* consistently implies virginity in every biblical context, while *bethulah* requires clarification and, in some instances, does not denote virginity. The paper highlights the LXX’s significance in pre-Christian Judaism, its centrality in New Testament writings, and its rejection by post-Jamnian Judaism due to its adoption by Christians. Jerome’s prioritization of Hebrew texts and subsequent modern biases are examined as contributing factors in misrepresentations of the LXX.

Origen’s Hexapla is explored to demonstrate textual discrepancies introduced in later translations, such as those by Aquila and Theodotion, which sought to align with Rabbinic theology. Additionally, the discussion underscores the irony of King James Version (KJV) translators acknowledging the LXX’s importance, even as KJV-only adherents falsely claim reliance on the Masoretic Text. This paper ultimately restores respect for the LXX as a bridge between ancient Jewish and Christian thought and argues that modern critiques of its translation choices reflect theological agendas rather than linguistic or historical accuracy. An appendix provides a detailed analysis of the LXX’s translation of *‘almâ* and *bethulah*, solidifying the case for its reliability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Septuagint (LXX), the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, holds a unique and pivotal position in biblical studies. As a translation produced for the Jewish Diaspora, it became the primary scripture for Greek-speaking Jews and later played a central role in the theological development of early Christianity. However, its handling of key Hebrew terms, such as *'almâ* and *bethulah*, has sparked significant debate, particularly in the context of Isaiah 7:14<sup>1</sup> and its implications for the doctrine of the virgin birth. These linguistic nuances have become a focal point of modern apologetic and counter-missionary arguments, raising questions about the reliability and intent of the LXX translators.

This paper argues that the LXX is a linguistically precise and culturally informed translation, reflecting the textual traditions and theological priorities of its time. The controversies surrounding its terminology and rejection by post-Jamnian Judaism are best understood as theological shifts rather than evidence of textual inferiority. By examining the broader historical role of the LXX,<sup>2</sup> this study seeks to deepen the conversation with a focused analysis of *'almâ* and *bethulah*.

Through a linguistic and cultural lens, this paper will demonstrate the LXX's reliability in preserving a distinct Hebrew textual tradition. By exploring these terms within their ancient context, the study reaffirms the Septuagint's significance as a bridge

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2001), Isaiah 7:14.

<sup>2</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon: A Brief Historical Overview*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://trinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

between Jewish and Christian thought and as a witness to the diversity and richness of the biblical textual tradition.

## II. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ‘ALMÂ AND BETHULAH

### ‘*Almâ*: Virginité Assumed

The Hebrew term ‘*almâ*, while relatively rare in the biblical text, consistently refers to a young woman of marriageable age. Unlike *bethulah*, ‘*almâ* is never explicitly clarified in the Hebrew Bible as “one who has not known a man,” because its cultural and contextual implications inherently include the presumption of virginity. For instance, in Genesis 24:43, ‘*almâ* is used to describe Rebekah, whose virginity is already established by the narrative in Genesis 24:16. Similarly, in Exodus 2:8, the term applies to Miriam, a young unmarried woman offering to assist Pharaoh’s daughter.<sup>3</sup>

The Septuagint translators, working centuries before the rise of Christianity, consistently rendered ‘*almâ* as *parthenos* (παρθένοϛ, “virgin”) in every instance, including Isaiah 7:14. This choice reflects not only linguistic precision but also a cultural understanding that ‘*almâ* inherently implied virginity. The uniformity of the LXX’s translation indicates that Jewish interpreters of the time understood ‘*almâ* as unambiguously referring to a virgin.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Genesis 24:43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Isaiah 7:14.

## Bethulah: Broader Usage

In contrast to *‘almâ*, the term *bethulah* often carries a broader meaning of “maiden” or “young woman,” requiring additional clarification to specifically denote virginity. For example, Genesis 24:16 describes Rebekah as a *bethulah*, but the text adds, “no man had known her,” to confirm her virginity explicitly. This redundancy highlights that *bethulah*, on its own, does not inherently imply virginity.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in Joel 1:8, *bethulah* is used to describe a woman mourning “for the husband of her youth,” clearly referring to a widow. This usage demonstrates that *bethulah* could apply to women whose virginity was no longer intact, depending on the context. Given this ambiguity, *bethulah* would have been an unsuitable term for a prophecy like Isaiah 7:14, where the emphasis on virginity as a miraculous sign is central.<sup>6</sup>

## Implications for Isaiah 7:14

The use of *‘almâ* in Isaiah 7:14—“Behold, the *‘almâ* shall conceive and bear a son”—is significant both linguistically and theologically. The term, with its implicit association with virginity, underscores the miraculous nature of the sign offered to Ahaz. The Septuagint’s rendering of *‘almâ* as *parthenos* affirms that this interpretation was established long before Christian appropriation of the text.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:283.

<sup>6</sup> Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 55.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

By contrast, the term *bethulah* would have been inappropriate in this context due to its broader and more ambiguous usage. The LXX translators' decision to use *parthenos* reflects their recognition of *'almâ* as the most precise term for a young woman whose virginity was assumed. This understanding aligns with the theological emphasis of Isaiah 7:14 as a divine sign, later referenced in Matthew 1:23 in connection with the virgin birth of Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, the linguistic distinction between *'almâ* and *bethulah* demonstrates the Septuagint's reliability in preserving the cultural and theological nuances of the Hebrew Bible. By faithfully rendering *'almâ* as "*virgin*," the LXX captures the original intent of Isaiah 7:14 and provides a crucial foundation for its New Testament interpretation.

This prophetic foundation for the virgin birth is further strengthened by Genesis 3:15, where God declares that the Messiah will come from the "*seed of the woman*." In Jewish tradition, lineage is traced through the male,<sup>9</sup> yet this passage uniquely attributes the coming Redeemer to the woman's lineage alone. Such an irregularity finds its fulfillment only in Christ's birth to a virgin, bypassing human paternity altogether. If Jesus had a human father, He would be the "*seed of man*," contradicting the prophecy. Thus, the virgin birth is not merely a miraculous sign—it is a theological necessity for

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> In ancient Jewish tradition, lineage and tribal affiliation were typically traced through the male line, as evidenced by biblical genealogies such as Numbers 1:18 and Matthew 1:1–16. However, rabbinic law established that Jewish identity itself is determined matrilineally, meaning that a person is considered Jewish if born to a Jewish mother. This principle is derived from interpretations of passages like Deuteronomy 7:3–4 and is codified in the Talmud, Kiddushin 68b. Therefore, the reference to the "*seed of the woman*" in Genesis 3:15 is particularly significant, as it aligns with the matrilineal determination of Jewish identity, highlighting the unique role of the woman in the prophesied lineage.

Jesus to be the promised Messiah, fulfilling the first gospel (*protoevangelium*) of Genesis 3:15. This further reinforces the reliability of the LXX's translation of 'almâ as *parthenos*, showing that the expectation of a miraculous birth existed long before Christianity's rise.

### III. THE MODERN REJECTION OF THE LXX

#### Jerome's "Hebrew Truth"

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Jerome significantly influenced the trajectory of biblical translation and interpretation with his prioritization of the Hebrew text. Jerome's decision to revise the Latin Vulgate based on the Hebrew Bible rather than the Septuagint (LXX) marked a pivotal shift in how biblical authority was perceived. He famously referred to the Hebrew text as the *Hebraica veritas* ("Hebrew truth"), asserting that the original Hebrew scriptures were the definitive source of divine revelation.<sup>10</sup>

While Jerome's preference for the Hebrew Bible was rooted in his linguistic skills and the growing Christian desire to distinguish itself from Jewish traditions, his approach contributed to a gradual dismissal of the LXX's authority in Western Christianity. Jerome's view that the Hebrew text was more authentic undermined the LXX's longstanding use in the early Church, where it had been the primary source of scriptural citation for New Testament authors and early Church Fathers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jerome, *Preface to the Pentateuch*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 6, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 489.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 22.

The consequences of Jerome’s prioritization extended beyond his lifetime. By promoting the Hebrew text as superior, he inadvertently reinforced later theological biases against the LXX, particularly during the Reformation and modern biblical scholarship. This shift not only marginalized the LXX but also laid the groundwork for contemporary arguments that reject the LXX’s translation choices, including its rendering of *‘almâ* as *parthenos*.<sup>12</sup>

### **Counter-Missionary Arguments**

Modern counter-missionary apologetics often capitalize on Jerome’s emphasis on the Hebrew text to challenge Christian theological claims tied to the LXX, particularly the doctrine of the virgin birth. A recurring argument asserts that *‘almâ* in Isaiah 7:14 simply means “*young woman*” rather than “*virgin*,” contrasting it with *bethulah*, which is claimed to explicitly denote virginity. This reinterpretation reverses traditional Jewish understandings of the term and dismisses the LXX’s translation as theologically biased.<sup>13</sup>

However, this argument fails to account for the textual history and cultural context of the Hebrew Bible. As demonstrated in earlier sections, *‘almâ* consistently implies virginity, while *bethulah* requires clarification in many instances. The Septuagint’s rendering of *‘almâ* as *parthenos* reflects a faithful translation of an older Hebrew tradition, one that pre-dates the standardization of the Masoretic Text.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Benjamin G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint: Translation, Narrative, and History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 123.

<sup>13</sup> Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy Objections*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Isaiah 7:14.

Counter-missionary strategies also often dismiss the LXX's reliability by framing it as a Christian creation rather than a Jewish text. Yet, the LXX was produced by Jewish scholars for Jewish audiences in the Hellenistic period, long before the rise of Christianity. The Dead Sea Scrolls further corroborate that the LXX's Vorlage (source text) represents a distinct and ancient Hebrew textual tradition, one that often aligns more closely with other early witnesses than the Masoretic Text.<sup>15</sup>

These efforts to discredit the LXX are less about linguistic accuracy and more about theological and apologetic concerns. By reversing the meanings of *'almâ* and *bethulah*, counter-missionaries aim to undermine Christian claims of prophetic fulfillment in Isaiah 7:14, despite the historical and textual evidence supporting the LXX's translation choices.

### **Justin Martyr's Accusation**

Justin Martyr, a second-century Christian apologist, accused Jewish leaders of deliberately editing the Hebrew Scriptures to counter Christian claims about Jesus as the Messiah. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he states:

*"But I am far from putting reliance on your teachers, who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, the king of the Egyptians, is a correct one, and they attempt to frame another. And I wish you to observe, that they have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by those seventy elders."* (*Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 71)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 136.

<sup>16</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 71, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 233.

There can be no doubt about whom Justin is referring to, as “the seventy” is a direct reference to the Septuagint (LXX)—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The word “Septuagint” itself derives from the Latin word for “seventy,” highlighting the connection to the seventy Jewish elders traditionally believed to have completed this translation.

This accusation aligns with evidence of textual discrepancies between the Septuagint (LXX) and the Masoretic Text (MT). The Septuagint preserves readings, such as Isaiah 7:14’s use of *parthenos* (virgin), that the MT either modifies or omits. Justin’s critique reinforces the argument that the LXX reflects an older and more reliable textual tradition, predating the theological polemics that shaped later Jewish texts.

#### **IV. THE ROLE OF THE LXX IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY**

##### **New Testament Use**

The Septuagint (LXX) served as the primary scriptural source for the authors of the New Testament, shaping the early Church’s theology and Christological understanding. Its widespread use among Greek-speaking Jews and early Christians highlights its authority in the first century AD.<sup>17</sup> The LXX provided the framework for

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<sup>17</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Integrated Hypostatic Union Model: Addressing Christological Coherence—A Proposal for a Unified Framework in Understanding and Navigating the Dual Natures of Christ through Kenosis and Selective Communication*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

numerous citations and allusions throughout the New Testament, underscoring its theological significance.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most notable examples of the LXX's influence is Matthew 1:23, which quotes Isaiah 7:14: "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son.*" The use of *parthenos* (virgin) in the LXX's rendering of 'almâ provided the linguistic and theological basis for the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ. This citation not only aligns with the LXX's understanding of the term but also reflects the Jewish interpretive tradition that preceded the rise of Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

**Additional examples of the LXX's influence can be seen in passages such as:**

- **Luke 4:18-19:** Jesus reads from Isaiah 61, closely aligning with the LXX rather than the Masoretic Text.
- **Hebrews 1:6:** The quotation "*Let all God's angels worship him*" corresponds with the LXX reading of Deuteronomy 32:43, which is absent in the MT.<sup>20</sup>

These instances illustrate how the New Testament authors relied on the LXX to articulate key theological concepts, affirming its role as the authoritative Scripture of the early Church.

### **Post-Jamnian Rejection**

The rejection of the Septuagint (LXX) by post-Jamnian Judaism and subsequent attempts to replace or revise it represent a deliberate and concerted effort to counter the

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament*, 66-67.

<sup>19</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 50-52.

<sup>20</sup> Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Deuteronomy 32:43.

trajectory of the Gospel. Following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism, the Masoretic Text (MT) became the standardized Hebrew text. The Council of Jamnia (ca. 90 CE) marked a turning point, as the LXX—adopted by Christians—was increasingly aligned with Christian theology.<sup>21</sup> This rejection cannot be seen as coincidental; the timing and methods used suggest an intentional theological strategy to delegitimize the LXX as Christian reliance on it grew.

In the second century AD, Jewish leaders banned the use of the LXX within their communities, while alternative Greek translations by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion emerged. These revisions appear apologetic in nature, aimed at redirecting or undermining Christian claims rooted in the LXX.<sup>22</sup> For example:

- **Aquila:** Replaced terms like *parthenos* in Isaiah 7:14 with less theologically charged words, distancing the text from the Gospel’s claim of the virgin birth.<sup>23</sup>
- **Theodotion and Symmachus:** Offered revisions that aligned more closely with the MT, softening messianic prophecies and passages Christians had identified as Christological.<sup>24</sup>

Justin Martyr provides direct evidence of this strategy, accusing Jewish leaders of “*altogether taking away many Scriptures*” and reframing the LXX’s theological implications. His reference to “*the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy*” highlights the

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<sup>21</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 136-140.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, 21-22.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas*, 128.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Septuagint's historical and theological significance, as well as the deliberate nature of its rejection.<sup>25</sup>

Despite these efforts, the trajectory of the Gospel could not be stopped. The LXX continued to serve as the foundation of the Christian Old Testament, shaping the theology of the early Church. Its survival and prominence expose the limitations of these revisionist attempts, leaving a historical record that validates its reliability and enduring significance. For Rabbinic Judaism, this historical reality remains an inconvenient truth—one that no amount of revision could erase.

**This shift was motivated by several factors:**

- **Theological Concerns:** The LXX's translation choices, such as rendering *'almâ* as *parthenos*, were seen as supporting Christian claims, particularly regarding the messianic identity of Jesus.
- **Textual Standardization:** Rabbinic Judaism sought to unify Jewish scripture under a single textual tradition, solidifying the MT as the authoritative Hebrew text.
- **Counter-Christian Polemics:** By rejecting the LXX, Rabbinic Judaism distanced itself from the growing Christian movement, which relied heavily on the LXX in its theological formulations.

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<sup>25</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 233.

Despite its rejection by post-Jamnian Judaism, the LXX continued to serve as the foundation for the Christian Old Testament and remains a vital witness to early Jewish textual traditions.<sup>26</sup>

## V. THE KJV TRANSLATORS AND THE LXX

### The Translators' Acknowledgment

The translators of the King James Version (KJV) explicitly recognized the significance of the Septuagint (LXX) in biblical scholarship and its role in shaping early Christian theology. In their preface, "*The Translators to the Reader*," they emphasized the importance of the LXX as a historical and theological resource. They noted that the early Church relied on the LXX as their primary text of the Old Testament, particularly in Greek-speaking regions, affirming its authority for the Christian community.<sup>27</sup>

The KJV translators acknowledged the contributions of the LXX in clarifying difficult Hebrew passages and noted its influence on New Testament citations. Their view underscores the enduring respect the LXX commanded, even among those working primarily with the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT). For further exploration of the historical acknowledgment of the LXX by the KJV translators.<sup>28</sup>

### Irony of KJV-Only Adherents

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<sup>26</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon: A Brief Historical Overview*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "*The Translators to the Reader*," in *The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition: King James Version* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon: A Brief Historical Overview*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

The reliance of the KJV translators on the LXX creates a striking irony when contrasted with modern KJV-only proponents. While KJV-only adherents often claim strict adherence to the MT as the “*original*” and “*pure*” Hebrew text, the KJV itself frequently aligns with the LXX over the MT. This alignment demonstrates that the KJV translators valued the LXX as a critical witness to the biblical text, particularly in cases where the MT presented difficulties or deviations.<sup>29</sup>

**Key examples include:**

- **Deuteronomy 32:43:** The KJV includes the phrase “*Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people,*” a reading found in the LXX but absent in the MT. This phrase is later quoted in the New Testament (Romans 15:10), affirming the LXX’s influence on the KJV.<sup>30</sup>
- **Isaiah 61:1:** The KJV follows the LXX’s rendering of this verse, which aligns closely with Jesus’ quotation in Luke 4:18-19. The MT differs significantly, yet the KJV prioritizes the LXX reading to maintain theological coherence.<sup>31</sup>

These examples reveal how the KJV’s alignment with the LXX undermines the claim that the KJV is exclusively based on the Hebrew text. Rather than strictly adhering to the MT, the KJV translators embraced the LXX as a vital resource, inadvertently

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 77-78.

<sup>30</sup> Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Deuteronomy 32:43.

<sup>31</sup> Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy Objections*, 28-29.

affirming its reliability. This inconsistency in KJV-only arguments highlights the theological and historical importance of the LXX, even for those who claim to reject it.

## VI. ADDRESSING COUNTERARGUMENTS

### Misrepresentation of ‘*Almâh* and *Bethulah*

One of the most persistent counterarguments against the Septuagint’s rendering of ‘*almâ* as *parthenos* in Isaiah 7:14 is the claim that ‘*almâ* simply means “*young woman*” and lacks any connotation of virginity. This interpretation, often advanced in counter-missionary contexts, seeks to undermine Christian reliance on Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of the virgin birth. However, this claim misrepresents both the linguistic and cultural context of ‘*almâ*.<sup>32</sup>

As previously demonstrated, every occurrence of ‘*almâ* in the Hebrew Bible implies a young woman of marriageable age whose virginity is presumed, making it unnecessary to add qualifiers. In contrast, *bethulah*, while often translated as “*virgin*,” is less precise and requires clarification to confirm virginity (e.g., Genesis 24:16). Moreover, passages like Joel 1:8, where *bethulah* refers to a widow mourning her husband, demonstrate its broader semantic range, which can include non-virgins.<sup>33</sup>

The Septuagint’s consistent rendering of ‘*almâ* as *parthenos* aligns with the Jewish understanding of the term prior to the rise of Christianity. The Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient sources further confirm that the LXX reflects an older and reliable

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>33</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 283.

textual tradition, undermining claims that it was retroactively altered to suit Christian theology.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Virgin Birth and Theology**

Another common critique is the claim that the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth relies exclusively on the LXX's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. While the virgin birth is significant to Christian theology, it is not theologically required for the core doctrine of the hypostatic union.<sup>35</sup> The hypostatic union, as articulated in the Chalcedonian Definition, asserts that Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person without confusion, change, division, or separation. This doctrine stands independently of the mode of Christ's conception.<sup>36</sup>

The use of 'almâ in Isaiah 7:14 reflects the cultural norms and theological framework of its time. A miraculous sign, as promised to Ahaz, would naturally involve extraordinary circumstances, such as a virgin conceiving a child. The Septuagint's rendering of 'almâ as *parthenos* accurately captures this prophetic emphasis, a fact recognized by Matthew in his citation of Isaiah 7:14 to affirm the virgin birth of Christ (Matthew 1:23).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 136.

<sup>35</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Integrated Hypostatic Union Model: Addressing Christological Coherence—A Proposal for a Unified Framework in Understanding and Navigating the Dual Natures of Christ through Kenosis and Selective Communication*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 62-63.

<sup>37</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 50-52.

Furthermore, the theological emphasis on the virgin birth lies in its role as a sign of divine intervention and fulfillment of prophecy, not as a requirement for Christ's divinity. Even without Isaiah 7:14, the doctrine of the virgin birth is supported by the Gospel narratives and the broader theological understanding of Christ's incarnation.<sup>38</sup>

In summary, objections to the LXX's rendering of *'almâ* as "virgin" and its use in the doctrine of the virgin birth often stem from modern apologetic concerns rather than linguistic or theological accuracy. The evidence affirms the Septuagint's reliability in this regard and reinforces its centrality to understanding both Jewish and Christian textual traditions.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The Septuagint (LXX) stands as a linguistically and theologically reliable translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, offering invaluable insight into the textual traditions and interpretive practices of ancient Judaism. Its treatment of terms like *'almâ* and *bethulah* reflects not only the cultural assumptions of its time but also the precision and care of its translators, who faithfully rendered these concepts for a Greek-speaking audience. By preserving the nuance of Hebrew terms such as *'almâ*, which consistently implies virginity, the LXX provides a crucial foundation for understanding prophecies like Isaiah 7:14 and their fulfillment in the New Testament.

Beyond its linguistic significance, the LXX serves as a vital bridge between Judaism and Christianity. It formed the scriptural basis for the New Testament writers and

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<sup>38</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament*, 68.

shaped the theological landscape of the early Church. At the same time, its rejection by post-Jamnian Judaism underscores its role in the growing divide between these religious traditions. The deliberate shifts in textual emphasis and theological interpretation that followed only highlight the enduring value of the LXX as a witness to the diversity and richness of the biblical textual tradition.

For readers interested in a broader exploration of the LXX's historical role and its relationship to the Masoretic Text, *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon* offers a more comprehensive discussion. This paper complements that work by focusing on the linguistic and theological implications of the LXX's translation choices, reaffirming its central place in the study of Scripture and the development of Christian theology. Through its analysis, this study restores the respect and authority the Septuagint rightly deserves in the ongoing dialogue between faith, history, and biblical scholarship.

APPENDIX A: COMPARATIVE TABLE OF ‘ALMÂ

Reference	Hebrew Text	LXX Rendering	Contextual Analysis
Genesis 24:43	<i>ha ‘almâ yōšē`t liš`ōb mayim</i>	<i>hē parthenos</i>	Refers to Rebekah, the young woman who draws water for Abraham’s servant. The narrative context (Genesis 24:16) confirms her virginity. The LXX renders ‘almâ as <i>parthenos</i> (virgin), aligning with this presumption.
Exodus 2:8	<i>wattēlek ha ‘almâ</i>	<i>hē parthenos</i>	Describes Miriam, Moses’ sister, offering assistance to Pharaoh’s daughter. The term ‘almâ is used without further clarification, presuming her virginity. The LXX translates it as <i>parthenos</i> .
Psalms 68:25 (Hebrew 68:26)	<i>bəmaḥălōt bəmasībōt ‘ālāmōt</i>	<i>neanisai (young women)</i>	Used in the context of young women playing tambourines in a celebratory procession. The LXX uses <i>neanisai</i> (young women), emphasizing their role in worship rather than virginity.
Proverbs 30:19	<i>dereḵ geber bā ‘almâ</i>	<i>hodos andros en neotēti</i>	Discusses the “way of a man with a young woman.” The term ‘almâ is used generically, implying youth and marriageability. The LXX translates it as <i>neotēti</i> (youth), focusing on the age of the woman rather than her virginity.
Song of Songs 1:3	<i>‘ālāmōt ‘āhēbūkā</i>	<i>neanides</i>	Describes young women expressing admiration for the beloved. The term implies youth and desirability. The LXX renders it as <i>neanides</i> (young women), reflecting the context of romantic longing.

Song of Songs 6:8	<i>‘ālāmôt eyn mišpār</i>	<i>neanides</i>	Refers to an innumerable group of young women among queens and concubines. The focus is on youth and beauty rather than virginity. The LXX uses <i>neanides</i> (young women) consistently with its rendering in Song of Songs 1:3.
Isaiah 7:14	<i>hinneh ha ‘almâ hārâ wāyōledet bēn</i>	<i>hē parthenos</i>	The prophecy of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son. The LXX explicitly renders <i>‘almâ</i> as <i>parthenos</i> (virgin), emphasizing the miraculous nature of the sign.

### Analysis

#### Consistency in LXX Rendering:

- The LXX predominantly uses *parthenos* (virgin) for *‘almâ* when the context emphasizes individual identity or a miraculous event (e.g., Genesis 24:43, Isaiah 7:14).
- In poetic or figurative contexts (e.g., Psalms, Song of Songs), the LXX opts for *neanisai* or *neanides* (young women), focusing on youth or beauty rather than virginity.

#### Contextual Implications:

- In every occurrence, *‘almâ* implies a young woman of marriageable age, and virginity is either assumed (Genesis 24:43, Exodus 2:8) or irrelevant to the context (Proverbs 30:19, Song of Songs).

#### Isaiah 7:14:

- The LXX’s rendering of *‘almâ* as *parthenos* (virgin) in Isaiah 7:14 reflects the interpretive understanding of ancient Jewish translators that the prophecy involves a miraculous sign.

**APPENDIX B: OCCURRENCES OF BETHULAH IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, THE  
CORRESPONDING SEPTUAGINT (LXX)**

The following table lists occurrences of *bethulah* in the Hebrew Bible, the corresponding Septuagint (LXX) rendering, and contextual analysis for each instance. This helps demonstrate the broader semantic range of *bethulah* and its differences from *‘almâ*.

Reference	Hebrew Text	LXX Rendering	Contextual Analysis
Genesis 24:16	<i>wəhannə ‘ārāh ṭōbat-mar’eh m’ōd bəṭūlāh wə’iš lō’ yəda ‘āh</i>	<i>parthenos</i>	Refers to Rebekah as a virgin, but the text clarifies her virginity with “ <i>no man had known her,</i> ” indicating that <i>bethulah</i> alone was insufficient to convey virginity. The LXX uses <i>parthenos</i> to preserve this meaning.
Exodus 22:16	<i>kī jəpathē’iš bəṭūlāh ‘āšer lō’ ‘ōrašāh</i>	<i>parthenos</i>	Describes a man seducing an unmarried virgin ( <i>bethulah</i> ) who is not betrothed. The LXX uses <i>parthenos</i> to indicate her virginity, which is central to the legal context.
Leviticus 21:3	<i>wə ‘al-bəṭūlāh ‘āšer lō’- hāyətāh lə’iš</i>	<i>parthenos</i>	Refers to a priest mourning for a virgin relative who has not been married. The LXX renders <i>bethulah</i> as <i>parthenos</i> to emphasize her unmarried and virgin status.
Deuteronomy 22:23	<i>kī-yihyə hānā ‘ārāh bəṭūlāh mə’ōrašāh lə’iš</i>	<i>parthenos</i>	Refers to a virgin ( <i>bethulah</i> ) betrothed to a man. The text assumes virginity but ties it to the legal status of betrothal. The LXX translates it as <i>parthenos</i> .
Judges 11:37	<i>‘ārənāh šənayim hādāšīm wə’ēlkā wəyārādī ‘al- hehārīm wə’ebkeh ‘al- bəṭūlāī</i>	<i>parthenia (virginity)</i>	Jephthah’s daughter mourns her virginity, emphasizing her unmarried status before her death. The LXX reflects this with <i>parthenia</i> , focusing on her loss of the potential for marriage and family.

Judges 21:12	<i>bəṭūlīm</i>	<i>parthenoi</i>	Refers to young virgin women spared during the war. The term <i>bethulim</i> (plural of <i>bethulah</i> ) is rendered as <i>parthenoi</i> in the LXX, indicating their virgin status.
Joel 1:8	<i>biḵī kəḇəṭūlāh ḥāgurat-šāqqīm ‘al-ba ‘al nə ‘ūreyhā</i>	<i>nymphē</i> (young bride)	Describes a virgin mourning for the husband of her youth. The term <i>bethulah</i> is used figuratively here, referring to a widow. The LXX translates it as <i>nymphē</i> (bride), which does not imply virginity.
Isaiah 62:5	<i>ūmāsôs ḥātān ‘al- bətūlāh</i>	<i>parthenos</i>	Compares the joy of a bridegroom over a virgin ( <i>bethulah</i> ) to God’s joy over His people. The LXX uses <i>parthenos</i> to preserve the imagery of purity and marriage.

## Analysis

### LXX Consistency:

- The LXX generally translates *bethulah* as *parthenos* (virgin) when the context explicitly involves virginity or legal purity.
- However, in cases like Joel 1:8, where *bethulah* refers to a widow, the LXX adapts its translation to *nymphē* (bride) to better reflect the figurative context.

### Clarifications in the Hebrew:

- Several passages (e.g., Genesis 24:16, Deuteronomy 22:23) explicitly clarify virginity with additional phrases, such as “no man had known her;” indicating that *bethulah* alone could be ambiguous.

### Joel 1:8 as a Key Example:

- The use of *bethulah* for a widow in Joel 1:8 highlights the term’s broader semantic range compared to *‘almā*, which always implies a young, unmarried woman presumed to be a virgin.

## APPENDIX C: KEY EXAMPLES FROM ORIGEN'S HEXAPLA

Origen's *Hexapla*, a monumental work of textual comparison, provided a side-by-side analysis of six versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Hebrew text, a transliteration, and four Greek translations (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Septuagint). This section highlights key examples where Origen's *Hexapla* reveals significant textual differences, with references to your earlier work where applicable.

### Isaiah 7:14 – The Virgin Birth

- **Textual Difference:**
  - The Septuagint (LXX): Translates *almâ* as *parthenos* (παρθένος, “*virgin*”), emphasizing a miraculous conception.
  - Aquila and Symmachus: Translate *almâ* as *neanis* (νεάνις, “*young woman*”), reflecting a rejection of the LXX's Christological implications.
- **Significance:**
  - Origen's *Hexapla* preserves the LXX's rendering, affirming its Jewish origin before Christianity.
  - The deliberate shift in Aquila's and Symmachus' translations highlights post-Christian attempts to undermine the LXX's theological readings, particularly those used by early Christians.<sup>39</sup>

### Deuteronomy 32:43 – Worship of God by the Nations

- **Textual Difference:**
  - The Septuagint: Includes additional phrases such as “*Rejoice, O heavens, with Him, and let all the sons of God worship Him*” and “*Rejoice, O nations, with His people.*”
  - The Masoretic Text (MT): These phrases are absent.
- **Significance:**
  - The LXX's expanded reading aligns with early Christian theology, particularly in Hebrews 1:6, which quotes this verse to affirm Jesus' divinity.
  - Origen's *Hexapla* reveals the divergence between the LXX and the MT, providing evidence that the LXX reflects an ancient Hebrew textual tradition not preserved in the MT.<sup>40</sup>

### Psalms 22:16 (Hebrew 22:17) – “*They Pierced My Hands and Feet*”

- **Textual Difference:**
  - The Septuagint: Renders the verse as “*They pierced my hands and feet,*” aligning with Christian interpretations of messianic prophecy.
  - The Masoretic Text: Reads “*Like a lion at my hands and feet,*” a phrase that is difficult to interpret and lacks the messianic overtone.

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<sup>39</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 138-140.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, 21-22.

- **Significance:**
  - Origen’s *Hexapla* documents this key difference, showing the LXX’s translation as more consistent with early Jewish expectations of suffering and deliverance.
  - The MT’s reading appears to reflect later editing that removes the explicit imagery of piercing, which is central to Christian typology.<sup>41</sup>

### Daniel 7:13 – The Son of Man

- **Textual Difference:**
  - The Septuagint: Uses “*Son of Man*” language that emphasizes the figure’s divine authority.
  - Theodotion: A later revision, aligns more closely with the MT and diminishes the messianic imagery.
- **Significance:**
  - Origen’s *Hexapla* preserves the Septuagint’s earlier rendering, showing how later translations like Theodotion sought to reinterpret passages to downplay messianic associations used by Christians.<sup>42</sup>

### Integration with Previous Work

- Refer to *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon* for detailed discussions of Deuteronomy 32:43 and Isaiah 7:14 as key examples of the LXX’s textual tradition.<sup>43</sup>
- The *Hexapla*’s systematic comparison underscores the theological shifts that motivated alternative translations, particularly by Aquila and Theodotion.

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<sup>41</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 53-54.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas*, 128.

<sup>43</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *The Recognition of the Biblical Canon: A Brief Historical Overview*, accessed December 3, 2024, <https://trinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

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