

References to

God: the One Who Exists

in early Manuscripts of the Bible

by

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Introduction

Centuries before the Christian era, in a world in which each city made its own god out of wood or stone, the people of Israel described Yahweh as the one “true God”¹, a phrase that was echoed by Christ and the Apostles.² Through the prophets God declares that he is “the first and the last” (Isaiah 44:6, 48:12). He is described as never changing (Malachi 3:6). He is “the living God” (Jeremiah 23:36) and “the everlasting God” (Isaiah 40:28). He always was, is and will be. God is thus self-existent, the “uncreated one”, while everything and everyone else has been created. God alone is “the One Who Is” (Exodus 3:14). In contrast, the “gods” of other nations are described as “gods that are not gods” or “gods that do not exist”³ (Jeremiah 5:7, NIB⁴).

Exodus 3:14

The phrase that is translated “the One Who Is”, “the One Who Exists” or “the Being One” is attributed to God as a self-designation in the ancient Greek “Septuagint” translation of Exodus 3:14:

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν
[kai eipen ho theos pros Mōusēn egō eimi **ho** **ōn**]
and said the God to Moses, I am the one who is / exists.

καὶ εἶπεν οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς
(Exodus 3:14⁵).
[kai eipen houtōs ereis tois huiois Israel **ho** **ōn** apéstalken me pros humas]
and he-said thus you shall say to the sons of Israel **the One Who Is / Exists** has sent me to you

NETS

The “New English Translation of the Septuagint” (NETS) was first published in printed form in 2007, with sections of it apparently having been previously available on the internet⁶.

NETS translates Exodus 3:14 as:

And God said to Moyses, "I am **The One Who Is**." And he said, "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, '**The One Who Is** has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14 NETS)

Most modern translations of the Jewish Scriptures (the Christian “Old Testament”) are of course not translated from the Greek Septuagint but from the original Hebrew and Aramaic. Thus, the NIV has:

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14, NIB)

However, the Jews of Jesus’ day mostly read the Scriptures in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint, which is normally referred to with the abbreviation LXX. In the Septuagint, the words translated “I am who I am” are ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, and NETS correctly translates this Greek phrase as:

¹ For instance, in 2 Chronicles 15:3, Jeremiah 10:10.

² John 17:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 1 John 5:20.

³ In the Greek Septuagint, this is τοῖς οὐκ οὖσιν θεοῖς [tois ouk ousin theois], “those that are not gods”.

⁴ NIB = Anglicised English version of the NIV: Holy Bible, New International Version Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, formerly International Bible Society. Anglicised edition. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, an Hachette UK company

⁵ Rahlfs, Alfred, rev. Hanhart, Robert, “Septuaginta Id est Vetus Testamentum graece”, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006 (1st edition, 1935)

⁶ Pietersma, Albert & Wright, Benjamin G., editors, “A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTUAGINT AND THE OTHER GREEK TRANSLATIONS TRADITIONALLY INCLUDED UNDER THAT TITLE” Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford www.oup.com Quotations marked NETS are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

"I am **The One Who Is**."

In the Greek, the next sentence says

ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ **ὁ ὢν** ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς
[ereis tois huiois Israel ho ōn apestalken me pros humas]

NETS again correctly translates this as:

"Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, '**The One Who Is** has sent me to you.'"

Thus the phrase **ὁ ὢν**, "**The One Who Is**" was a description of the fundamental, eternal existence of God.

Use of the phrase ὁ ὢν by Jesus

This phrase from the Septuagint was alluded to by Jesus in John 6:46 and John 8:47:

John 6:46 οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακέν τις εἰ μὴ **ὁ ὢν** παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα. (John 6:46)⁷

The New International Version renders this as, "No one has seen the Father except **the one who is [the One Who Exists]** from God; only he has seen the Father." (John 6:46, NIB)

παρὰ could be better translated as "with", "alongside" or "by"⁸, so an alternative translation could be: "**the One Who Is / the One Who Exists** with God."

This allusion to one of the principal Old Testament titles for God is often missed by translators, but it would not have been missed by the Jewish leaders who were being addressed by Christ. They knew well the text of the Jewish Scriptures, *especially in the Greek translation*.

Similarly, in John 8:47 the following words by Christ are recorded:

ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει

This could be translated:

"**The One Who Exists** from God hears the words of God." (translation by the author of this article)

Use of the phrase ὁ ὢν elsewhere in the New Testament

The phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], "the One Who Is" or "the One Who Exists" is repeatedly used in the New Testament to describe God. In the book of Revelation, God is described as "him who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Revelation 1:4, 1:8, 4:8). This reinforces the usage in Exodus 3:14 in the Greek Septuagint translation.

But is Exodus 3:14 the only place in the Septuagint where ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] is used as a designation for God?

No. The same designation occurs in three different places in Jeremiah in the most important early manuscript copies of the Septuagint.

The Book of Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah principally consists of two types of text:

- messages from God delivered by Jeremiah;

⁷ Nestle, Eberhard & Erwin, Aland, Kurt & Barbara, et. al., "Novum Testamentum Graece", 28th Edition, Stuttgart: Deutsche, 2013, often referred to as "Nestle-Aland 28" or "NA28".

⁸ See Danker, *Greek NT Lexicon*, as reproduced in Bibleworks 10, or other Greek lexicons.

- narrative concerning Jeremiah and the people of Israel and Judah.

However, there is also a third type of text in Jeremiah:

- prayers by Jeremiah to God.

In these prayers, Jeremiah is recorded on three occasions in the Septuagint text as addressing God as “**the One Who Is**” or “**the One Who Exists**.”

These three passages are to be found in the following verses in Jeremiah⁹:

- 1:6 (LXX and MT),
- 14:13 (LXX and MT)
- and 39:17 (LXX; = 32:17 in MT).

We will look at each of these examples below. First we should explore if the words of the prophet Jeremiah were known and important in the days of Christ.

New Testament Quotations from Jeremiah

The Jews of Jesus’ day were very familiar with the text of Jeremiah and there are several quotations from Jeremiah and allusions to its text in the New Testament. Here we give merely a few examples.

Reference in Jeremiah	New Testament reference
Jeremiah 31:15 (LXX & MT)	Matthew 2:17
Jeremiah 5:21 (LXX & MT)	Mark 8:18
Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (MT; = 38:31-34 in LXX)	Hebrews 8:8-12

Examples of New Testament Quotations from Jeremiah

We note that Hebrews 8 quotes a very long passage from Jeremiah.

References to Jeremiah in the New Testament

Reference in Jeremiah	New Testament reference
Jeremiah 5:21 (LXX & MT)	Matthew 13:15
Jeremiah 7:11 (LXX & MT) and Isaiah 56:7	Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:46
Jeremiah 4:4 (LXX & MT), 9:26 (MT; = LXX 9:25)	Romans 2:29
Concepts in Jeremiah 16:17 (LXX & MT)	Mark 4:22 and Hebrews 4:13
Jeremiah 17:13 (LXX & MT)	John 4:10 and 7:37-38
Jeremiah 29:13 (MT; = LXX 36:13)	Matthew 7:7-8

Examples of New Testament Allusions to passages in the book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah is also referred to in Matthew 16:14 and Matthew 27:9.

To the Jews of the time, the incident of the call of Moses at the Burning Bush in Exodus 3 was also well known, and indeed Jesus also refers to it when speaking to them. (Mark 12:26, Luke 20:37) Likewise, Stephen also referred to it in his defence before the Sanhedrin. (Acts 7:35) The Jews were thus very familiar with God’s self-designation twice in Exodus 3:14 as ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “**the One Who Is / the One Who Exists**”.

The most frequently-accessed printed editions of the Septuagint are those by Brenton and by Rahlfs-Hanhart.

⁹ In the Septuagint (LXX), some chapters of Jeremiah are in a different order from the Masoretic (Hebrew) Text (“MT”) on which modern translations of the Old Testament are based. Where there is a numbering difference between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text, this is shown in brackets with the letters “LXX” or “MT”.

Brenton

The edition of the Septuagint by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton was first published in 1851.¹⁰

Rahlfs-Hanhart

The edition of the Septuagint edited by Alfred Rahlfs was first published in 1935.¹¹ A new edition of this text, slightly revised by Robert Hanhart, was published in 2005.¹² Hanhart says, “The here presented new edition ... is not a fundamentally revised edition ...”¹³ For brevity, the Rahlfs-Hanhart edition is referred to hereafter in this article as “Rahlfs”.

Rahlfs misses out the phrase **ὁ ὢν [ho ōn]** in his edition of the Septuagint. This omission of the phrase is significant, as his edition is the modern printed Septuagint text that is most readily available, both in print and because the text is often included in Bible software packages.

Ziegler

There is, however, a third authoritative edition of the text of large parts of the Septuagint. Over a period of several decades, the publishers Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht of Göttingen published a critical text edition of the Septuagint. In this series they had published Rahlfs’ edition of the Psalms in 1931. One of their principal editors over many years was Joseph Ziegler (Isaias, 1939; Duodecim Prophetiae, 1943; Ezechiel, 1952; Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco, 1954). In 1957 they published Ziegler’s edition of Jeremiah.¹⁴ We will look at this in more detail below.

Evidence for the Presence of ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, in Jeremiah in the Earliest Manuscripts of the Bible

We do not need to look in detail at Exodus 3:14, where the presence of ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is” / “the One Who Exists” is not challenged. In the rest of this article we therefore look at the evidence for the presence of this phrase in the Greek text of the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:6 (LXX and MT)

The account of the calling of Jeremiah, which comes right at the beginning of the book bearing his name, would have been well-known to the Jews at the time of Christ, and so would his reference to God as **ὁ ὢν** δέσποτα Κύριε [ho ōn, déspota, Kúrie], “**the One Who Is**, Sovereign Master, LORD”.

In this verse, the prophet Jeremiah is speaking to God:

καὶ εἶπα **ὁ ὢν** δέσποτα Κύριε ἰδοὺ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι λαλεῖν ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι (Jeremiah 1:6, Brenton, p. 902)

[kai eipa **ho ōn** déspota Kúrie idou ouk epístamai lalein hoti neōteros egō eimi]

¹⁰ Brenton, Sir Lancelot C. L., “The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English”, London: Samuel Bagster & Sons Ltd, 1851. Republished: Peabody, MS, USA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 1986 and reprints. Quotations in this article are from the 14th Printing, May 2011.

¹¹ Rahlfs, Alfred, „Septuaginta“, Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935

¹² Rahlfs, Alfred & Hanhart, Robert, “Septuaginta: Editio Altera”, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2005

¹³ English introduction page XI. In the German introduction this is: „Bei der hier vorliegenden Neuauflage ... handelt es sich um keine grundlegende Neubearbeitung...“, p. IX.

¹⁴ Ziegler, Joseph, “Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum XV: Ieremias Baruch Threni Epistula Ieremiae”, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957

“And I said, ‘**You Who Are**, Supreme Master, Lord, behold, I do not understand how to talk, because I am young.’ ” (my translation from the Greek)

Brenton

Here we show the verse in Brenton’s edition of the Septuagint, along with his translation to the left:

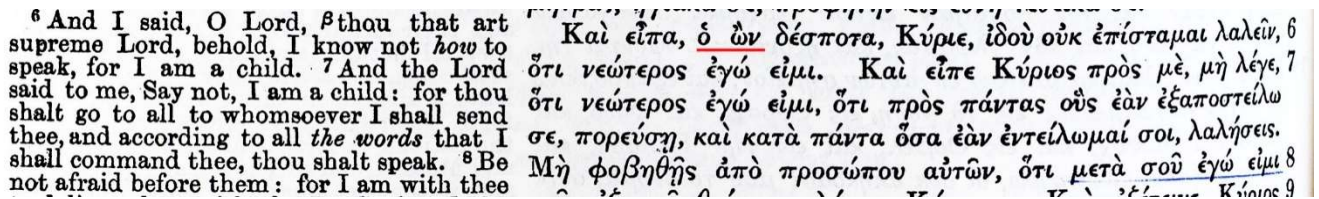


Figure 1 Jeremiah 1:6 in Brenton’s edition of the Septuagint

I have here and subsequently throughout this article underlined in red the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is” in all subsequent images in this article.

The presence or absence of a comma after ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] can clearly influence the translation. However, it must be remembered that very little punctuation was given in ancient Greek texts, and no commas were used. Their presence or absence here, in both the Greek text and the English, merely reflects modern editorial decisions by the people preparing the manuscript for publication.

As is often the case in Brenton’s edition of the Septuagint, the “translation” given by him in fact reflects the *Hebrew* original, not the Greek that he purports to translate. Note the English text:

“And I said, O Lord, ^βthou that art supreme Lord, behold, I know not *how* to speak, for I am a child.”

Before the word “thou” a Greek beta ^β refers to a footnote. The footnote says: “^β See *Hebrew*”. Here is the foot of the page:

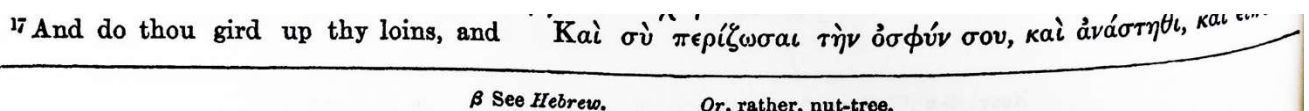


Figure 2 Footnote by Brenton on his translation of Jeremiah 1:6

(see previous figure).

Even though Brenton’s “translation” is wrong, not reflecting the Greek, this is irrelevant: the Jews of Jesus’ day did not know Brenton; they read a manuscript that is reflected in all the major codices of the Septuagint: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus.

NETS

NETS translates Jeremiah 1:6 in the following way:

"And I said, "**You That Are**, Sovereign, Lord! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am rather young." (Jer. 1:6 NETS)

Ziegler

Like Brenton (op. cit., p. 902, Ziegler¹⁵ includes the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, in Jeremiah 1:6 in his edition of the Greek text. The inclusion by Ziegler is significant, as in the 22 years since Rahlfs’ edition had been published, it had been possible to consult many more Greek manuscripts, as well as very early translations into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian, Old Latin, Arabic and other languages. (Ziegler, pp. 140-141)

¹⁵ Ziegler op. cit., p. 150.

6 προφήτην εἰς ἔθνη τέθεικά σε. ⁶καὶ εἶπα Ὁ Ὦν δέσποτα κύριε, ἰδοὺ
7 οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι λαλεῖν, ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι. ⁷καὶ εἶπε κύριος πρὸς με
Μὴ λέγε ὅτι Νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὅτι πρὸς πάντας, οὗς ἐὰν ἐξαποστείλω
σε, πορεύσῃ, καὶ κατὰ πάντα, ὅσα ἐὰν ἐντείλωμαί σοι, λαλήσεις·

Figure 3 Jeremiah 1:6 in Ziegler's edition of the book, p. 150.

For ὁ Ὦν Ziegler refers to Ambr. (= the Church Father Ambrosius, cf. p. 141) V 315. He states that ω is in “Streane and Ra.” “Streane” = A.W. Streane, “The double text of Jeremiah (Massoretic [sic] and Alexandrian) compared together with an Appendix on the Old Latin Evidence”, Cambridge, 1896, cf. p. 146. “Ra.” = Rahlfs, cf. p. 145).

Rahlfs

Rahlfs' Septuaginta omits the phrase ὁ Ὦν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, in Jeremiah 1:6, having only
καὶ εἶπα Ὁ δέσποτα κύριε ἰδοὺ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι λαλεῖν ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι.
[kai eipa ō déspota kúrie idou ouk epístamai lalein hoti neōteros egō eimi]
“And I said Oh Sovereign Master, Lord, behold I do not know how to speak for I am young.”

It seems that Rahlfs (or the Greek manuscript that he was consulting) may have been influenced by the Greek text of Jeremiah 4:10 LXX & MT):

καὶ εἶπα Ὁ δέσποτα κύριε
[kai eipa ō déspota kúrue]
“and I said Oh Sovereign Master, Lord”.

We will look at Rahlfs' text in greater detail below.

Codex Alexandrinus

In his edition of the Septuagint, Brenton repeatedly refers to Codex Alexandrinus, an important manuscript of the Bible in Greek, produced in about 420 AD. A typographical facsimile of Jeremiah was published by the British Museum in 1819 (Volume III in the six-volume bindings; in the three-volume bindings known as TOMUS SECUNDUS), p. 331r. See VETUS TESTAMENTUM GRÆCUM E CODICE MS ALEXANDRINO H ΠΑΛΙΑ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ.¹⁶

It includes the phrase ὁ Ὦν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”:

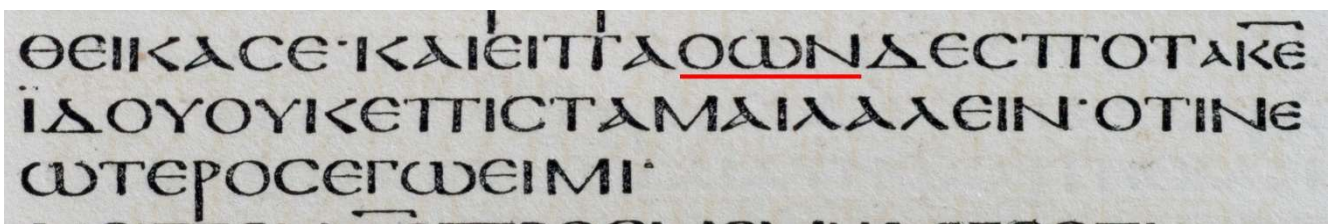


Figure 4 Jeremiah 1:6 in the typographical facsimile of Codex Alexandrinus published in 1819

At the time when this manuscript was produced, spaces were rarely put between words, and there was little punctuation (although here we do see a full stop (a raised dot) at the end of the preceding sentence and at the end of the sentence that we are examining. We also see a paragraph break at that point.

We reproduce the same text below, adding spaces between the words. The words from the previous verse are reproduced in grey, and the first syllable of the first reproduced word, which appears on the previous line of the text, is shown here in square brackets.

¹⁶ Alexandrinus LSU font courtesy of Linguist's Software

[ΤΕ]ΘΕΙΚΑ ΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΠΑ Ο ΩΝ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΑ ΚΕ
ΙΔΟΥ ΟΥΚ ΕΠΙΣΤΑΜΑΙ ΛΑΛΕΙΝ ΟΤΙ
ΝΕΩΤΕΡΟΣ ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ

Figure 5 Jeremiah 1:6 in Codex Alexandrinus, with spaces added between the words

Font courtesy of Linguist's Software.

We note that the word Kurie (the vocative of Kurios, Lord) is not written in full, **ΚΥΡΙΕ**, but in the *Nomina Sacra* form **ΚΕ**, as was normal with such words in copies of the Septuagint produced by or for Christians.¹⁷

The text reads:

[τέ]θεικά σε ⁶ καὶ εἶπα ὁ ὢν δέσποτα κύριε ἰδοὺ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι λαλεῖν ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγώ εἰμι (Jer. 1:5-6)

“[I] placed you. And I said, ‘**the One Who Exists**, Sovereign Master, Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak for I am young.’ ”

In 1883 the British Museum published a full-sized photographic facsimile of the Old Testament. This was under-exposed, which made the image too dark, and the resolution of the lens used was also not adequate for such a text, with a reduction in both resolution and brightness towards the corners of the image. In first two decades of the 20th century the whole manuscript was re-photographed. In its determination to avoid under-exposure, the Museum this time produced over-exposed images, which were too light. Both of these errors can result in different parts of the text being difficult to read. The 20th century copy was not printed full-size, but reduced. Here we show a scan of part of Jeremiah 1:6 in the 20th century edition.¹⁸ Both sharpness and resolution are poor and on this first page of Jeremiah, contrast is poor, too. (Here I have not enhanced the scan.) However, both the word **ὁ** [ho], “the” and the word **ὢν** [ōn], “one Who Exists” can be clearly seen. I have here enlarged the scan from the reduced size that was printed in 1936, to approximately the original full size (when viewed on A4 paper).

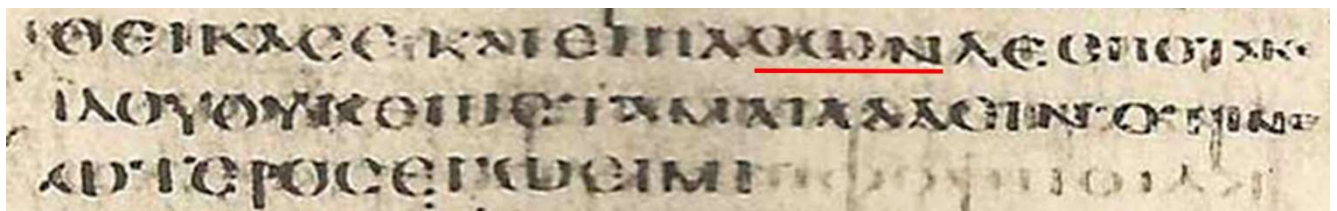


Figure 6 Scan of Jeremiah 1:6 in the reduced photographic facsimile of Codex Alexandrinus published in 1936

Codex Sinaiticus

Codex Sinaiticus¹⁹, which is approximately 100 years older than Codex Alexandrinus, also includes the phrase **ὁ ὢν** [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, although this manuscript was unknown to Brenton, as this part of the manuscript was first seen by western researchers in 1859 and was first published by Tischendorf in 1862²⁰.

¹⁷ For an introduction to *Nomina Sacra*, see <https://livingwater-spain.com/crucfixn.pdf> on this website, page 8 in the edition consulted on 27.8.22.

¹⁸ The volume containing Jeremiah was published by the British Museum in 1936.

¹⁹ A full-colour photographic facsimile of Codex Sinaiticus was published in 2010 by Hendrickson Publishers Marketing LLC of Peabody, MS, USA and by The British Library, London, England.

²⁰ Tischendorf, Constantinus, “Biblorum Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus”, St Petersburg, Russia, 1862. The text of Jeremiah is reproduced in Volume II. Jeremiah 1:6 is on page 68.

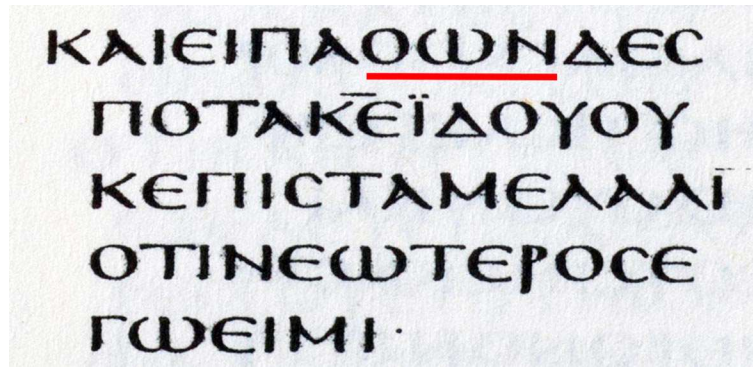


Figure 7 Jeremiah 1:6 in Codex Sinaiticus

Photograph from the reduced-size photographic copy of the 1862 edition.²¹

In spite of this, the text of Codex Sinaiticus is highly relevant to us in our evaluation of what would most probably have been the original text. Also in Sinaiticus, again we note the presence of the *nomina sacra* form ΚΕ for Κύριε, the vocative form of Κύριος (“Lord”).

In manuscripts throughout the first centuries of the Christian era, a high-up horizontal bar was often used as a space-saver at the end of a line of text to represent a final letter Ν [“n”] (called “nu”). We see this here with the word ΛΑΛΙΝ [lalin] (a spelling variant of ΛΑΛΕΙΝ [lalein], “to speak”): ΛΑΛῙ.²²

The text reads:

καὶ εἶπα ὁ ὢν δέσποτα κύριε ἰδοὺ οὐκ ἐπίσταμε λαλεῖν ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι (Jer. 1:5-6)

“And I said, ‘the One Who Exists, Sovereign Master, Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak for I am young.’ ”

Codex Vaticanus

Codex Vaticanus also includes the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, in Jeremiah 1:6, although this may not have been known to Brenton, as although the existence of this codex had been known for centuries, the first reasonably accurate typographical facsimile of Jeremiah in Codex Vaticanus was not published by the Vatican until 1872²³.

The text of Jeremiah can be found in volume IV of the typographical facsimile, where Jeremiah 1:6 is on Pagina Codicis 1064, which corresponds to Pagina Editionis 172.

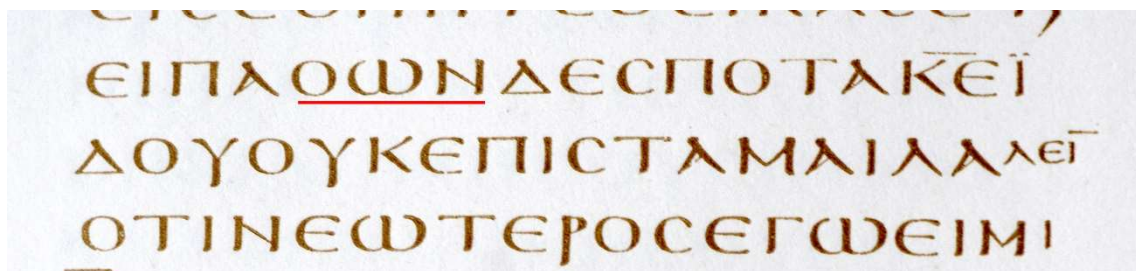


Figure 8 Jeremiah 1:6 Codex Vaticanus Typographical Facsimile of 1872

²¹ Tischendorf, Constantinus, “Biblorum Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus”, St Petersburg, Russia, 1862, reduced-size facsimile, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969, p. 68.

²² Sinaiticus LSU font courtesy of Linguists’ Software.

²³ Caroli Vercellone Sodalitatis Barnabitarum et Iosephi Cozza Monachi Basiliani, “Biblorum Sacrorum Graecus Codex Vaticanus, Tomus IV: LIBROS ESTHER, IUDITH, TOBIAE ET PROPHETARUM”, Auspice Pio IX. Pontifice Maximo, Romae, Typis et Impensis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, MDCCCLXXII. The six volumes of the facsimile were published between 1868 (the New Testament) and 1881. An edition prepared by Cardinal Mai had been published in 1857, three years after Mai’s death. However, this was after the publication of Brenton’s text, and it was in any case reportedly riddled with errors. Quoting from the well-known and respected Biblical text expert J. K. Elliott, “A Bibliography of Greek New Testament Manuscripts” (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 34., Wikipedia states, “As a consequence, this edition was deemed inadequate for critical purposes”. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus Accessed on 24.8.22.

The editors of this edition had the text printed in a very faint brown that is actually harder to read than most of the original text. In spite of this, the words can be clearly seen. Strangely, even though the Codex Vaticanus includes accent and hard and soft breathings, these were not included in the typographical facsimile. Perhaps the editors believed that these features were not original. However, they do reproduce the *nomina sacra* form of Kúrie, $\overline{\text{ΚΕ}}$, the vocative form of Kúrios.

The text reads:

εἶπα ὁ ὢν δέσποτα κύριε ἰδοὺ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι λαλεῖν ὅτι νεώτερος ἐγώ εἰμι (Jer. 1:5-6)

“I said, ‘the One Who Exists, Sovereign Master, Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak for I am young.’ ”

A full-colour photographic facsimile of the entire Codex Vaticanus was published in 1999.²⁴ Here we show the same passage from that edition.

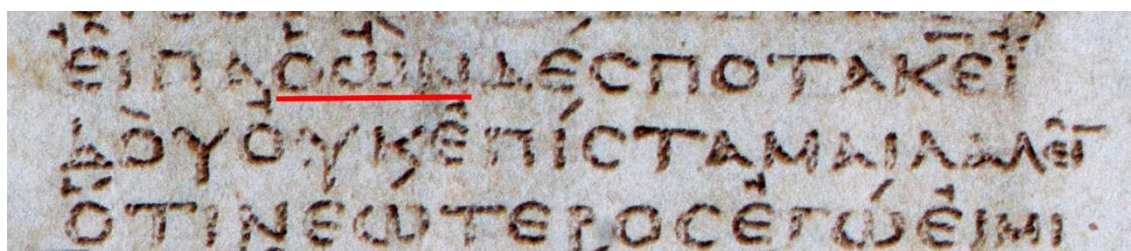


Figure 9 Jeremiah 1:6 in the colour photographic facsimile of Codex Vaticanus

Here we see all three Greek accents (acute, grave and circumflex), the smooth (´) and rough (´) breathings, the horizontal bar for Ν (“n”) in $\lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (lalein): $\lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ and a final full stop, which is a raised dot: ¨.

For the next two quotations we will provide fewer photographic reproductions of the Greek manuscripts. However, both Vaticanus and Alexandrinus provide the text that Brenton and Ziegler subsequently reproduced.

Jeremiah 14:13 (LXX and MT)

Both Brenton and Ziegler have: καὶ εἶπα, ὁ ὢν Κύριε [kai eipa ho ōn Kúrie], “and I said, ‘the One Who Exists, Lord’ ” (my translation).

Ziegler

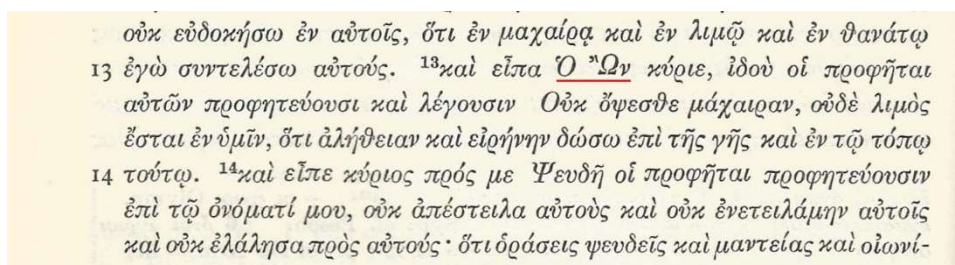


Figure 10 Jeremiah 1:6 in Ziegler's edition of the book, p. 220

On the choice between ὁ ὢν and ω , Ziegler gives the reference 106^c and says “cf. 16”. “106^c” seems to be a reference to “Ferrara, Bibl. Comm., 187 II”, a Minuscule manuscript or papyrus fragment from the XIV century (cf. p. 8). The lack of a bibliography in Ziegler prevents more precise identification of the

²⁴ “Codice Vaticano B (Vat. Gr. 1209)”, Roma: La Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana e L’Istituto Poligrafico E Zecca dello Stato, 25 Dicembre 1999

original source or the publication from which he was quoting. This really is a very late witness, and so little weight can be given to it. It is therefore clear why Ziegler concluded that the original was ὁ ὢν [ho ōn].

NETS

NETS translates this as: “And I said: “**You That Are**, Lord! ”” (Jer. 14:13 NETS). This is the beginning of a prayer to God, so it is in the vocative. Thus rendering “the One Who Exists” as “You That Are” is fully justified.

Rahlfs

Again, Rahlfs omits the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] in this verse.

Codex Alexandrinus

Alexandrinus also has the word δέσποτα [despota], “Sovereign Master”, here. I have here enlarged the scan from the reduced size that was printed, to approximately the original full size (when viewed on A4 paper).

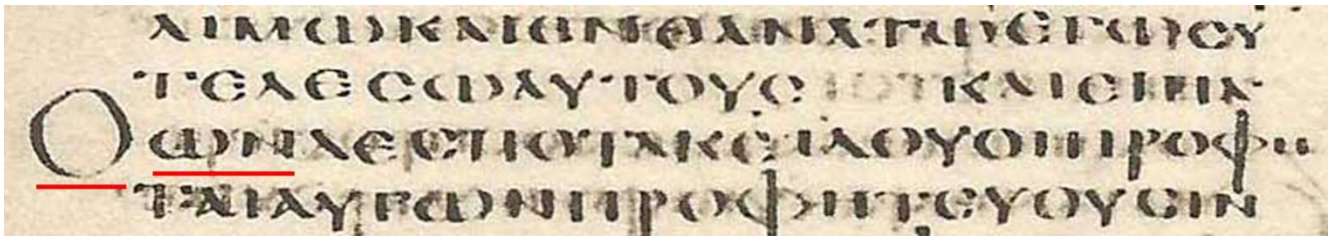


Figure 11 Scan of Jeremiah 14:13 in the reduced photographic facsimile of Codex Alexandrinus published in 1936

The text reads λιμῷ καὶ ἐν θανάτῳ ἐγὼ συντελέσω αὐτούς ¹³ καὶ εἶπα ὁ ὢν δέσποτα κύριε ἰδοὺ οἱ προφηταὶ αὐτῶν προφητεύουσιν (Jer. 14:12-13).

“by famine and by death I will end them. And I said, the One Who Is, Sovereign Master, Lord, behold, their prophets prophesy ...”

On this page, the contrast is much higher than on the first page of Jeremiah in Alexandrinus. In this verse, the presence of the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is” stands out, being at the beginning of a line and with the ὁ [ho], “the”, written much larger than the rest of the line, in the “ekthesis” style²⁵ used in Alexandrinus, mostly at the beginnings of “paragraphs” or sections.

Codex Sinaiticus

Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus has Jeremiah 1:1 to 10:25 only, but the rest of Jeremiah from the same manuscript is located elsewhere.

Codex Sinaiticus (Codex Friderico Augustanus)

Jeremiah 10:25 – 52:34 was among the pages that the Monastery of St Catherine in Sinai gave to Constantin Tischendorf in 1844 to take back to Germany. There he donated them to Leipzig University, where they are still held. Two years later he published a typographical facsimile of these 43 sheets (86 pages). He dedicated them to King Frederick Augustus II of Saxony, “who had supported Tischendorf’s journeys in 1843 and his edition of 1846.”²⁶ He called the facsimile “Codex Friderico-Augustanus”.

It would therefore in theory have been possible for Brenton to have seen the “Codex Friderico-Augustanus” text of Jeremiah 14:13 (and of Jeremiah 39:17 (LXX; = 32:17 MT)). However, its

²⁵ Projecting into the left margin

²⁶ “Reference Guide” to “Codex Sinaiticus” edition of 2010. See bibliographical details below.

significance had not yet been appreciated five years after its publication, at the time when Brenton was preparing his text of the Septuagint.

In 1911 the American scholars Kirsopp and Helen Lake travelled to St Petersburg (at the time called Petrograd) and to Leipzig to photograph both sets of pages. The New Testament pages were published in 1911 and the Old Testament pages in 1922.²⁷

Jeremiah 14:13 is on the page that in the combined colour photographic facsimile of 2010²⁸ is known as Q47 – f.2v [LUL – f.21v]. In Lake's edition of 1922, it is page 97v, although no page number is printed on verso pages.

This happens to be the flesh side of the parchment, on which some 1,700 years later the ink is lighter than on the hair side. On this page we can also see either “print-through” of ink from the other side of the parchment or ink that has transferred from the facing page. In spite of these problems, the text is not difficult to read.

Here we show the text photographed from Lake & Lake 1922.

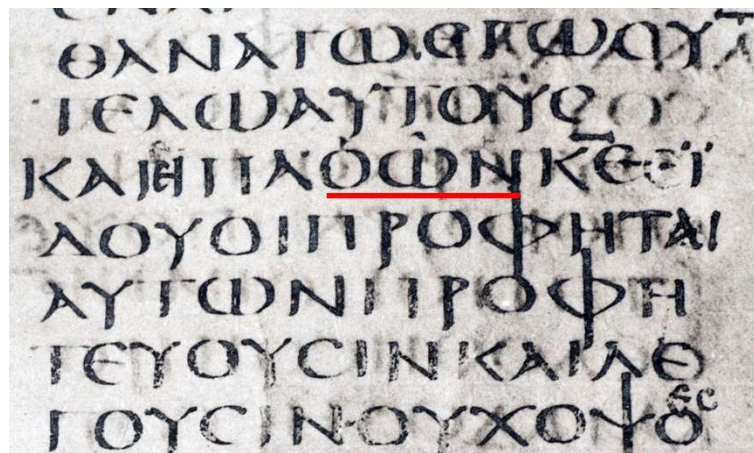


Figure 12 Jeremiah 14:13 Codex Friderico-Augustanus Photographic Facsimile of 1922

The text reads θανάτῳ ἐγὼ συντελέσω αὐτοὺς ¹³ καὶ εἶπα ὁ ὢν κύριε ἰδοὺ οἱ προφῆται αὐτῶν προφητεύουσιν καὶ λέγουσιν οὐχ ὅψες[θε] (Jer. 14:12-13).

“With death I will end them. And I said, the One Who Is, Lord, behold, their prophets prophesy and say you will not see.”

The words ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Exists” are very easy to see and there even appears to be a rough breathing (the indication of the “h” sound) on the ὁ [ho], and an accent on ὢν [ōn]. At the end of the first line of text that is included in this picture we see the first syllable of the word συντελέσω [sunteleso, “I will make an end”] and we note that the final nu (“n”) is replaced by a raised horizontal bar.

²⁷ Helen and Kirsopp Lake, “Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus et Friderico-Augustanus Lipsiensis: The Old Testament”, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1922

²⁸ “Codex Sinaiticus”, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing LLC and London: The British Library, 2010

Codex Vaticanus

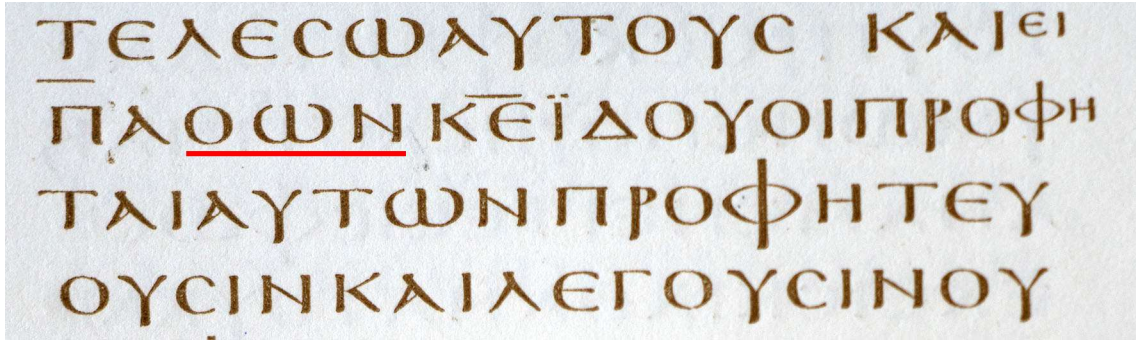


Figure 13 Jeremiah 14:13 Codex Vaticanus Typographical Facsimile of 1872

The text reads [συν]τελέσω αὐτούς ¹³ καὶ εἶπα ὁ ὢν κύριε ἰδοὺ οἱ προφηταὶ αὐτῶν προφητεύουσιν καὶ λέγουσιν οὐ[κ ὄψεσθε] (Jer. 14:12-13).

“I will end them. And I said, the One Who Is, Lord, behold, their prophets prophesy and say [we will not see].”

The words ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Exists” are very easy to see.

For this verse, Rahlfs has: καὶ εἶπα ὦ κύριε [kai eipa ō kurie], “and I said, ‘Oh Lord’ ” (my translation).

Jeremiah 39:17 (LXX; = 32:17 in MT)

Both Brenton and Ziegler have: ὁ ὢν Κύριε [ho ōn Kúrie] “the One Who Exists, Lord” (my translation).

Ziegler

16 ¹⁶ Καὶ προσευξάμην πρὸς κύριον μετὰ τὸ δοῦναί με τὸ βιβλίον τῆς
17 κτήσεως πρὸς Βαβυλὸν υἱὸν Νηριίου λέγων ¹⁷ ὦ κύριε, σὸ ἐποίησας
τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τῇ ἰσχύϊ σου τῇ μεγάλῃ καὶ τῷ βραχίονί σου
18 τῷ ὑψηλῷ, σὸ μὴ ἀποκρυβῇ ἀπὸ σοῦ οὐθέν, ¹⁸ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς χιλιάδας
καὶ ἀποδιδούς ἀμαρτίας πατέρων εἰς κόλπους τέκνων αὐτῶν μετ’

Figure 14 Jeremiah 39:17 LXX (= 32:17 MT) in Ziegler’s edition of the book, p. 369

On the presence here of ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], Ziegler does not refer to any other alternatives to this phrase in this particular verse, reenforcing the probability that ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] is indeed the original text here.

NETS

NETS translates this as: “You That Are, Lord!” Again, this is the beginning of a prayer to God, so it is in the vocative. Thus rendering “the One Who Exists” as “You That Are” is once again fully justified.

Rahlfs

Once more, Rahlfs omits the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] in this verse.

Codex Alexandrinus

I have here enlarged the scan from the reduced size that was printed, to approximately the original full size (when viewed on A4 paper).

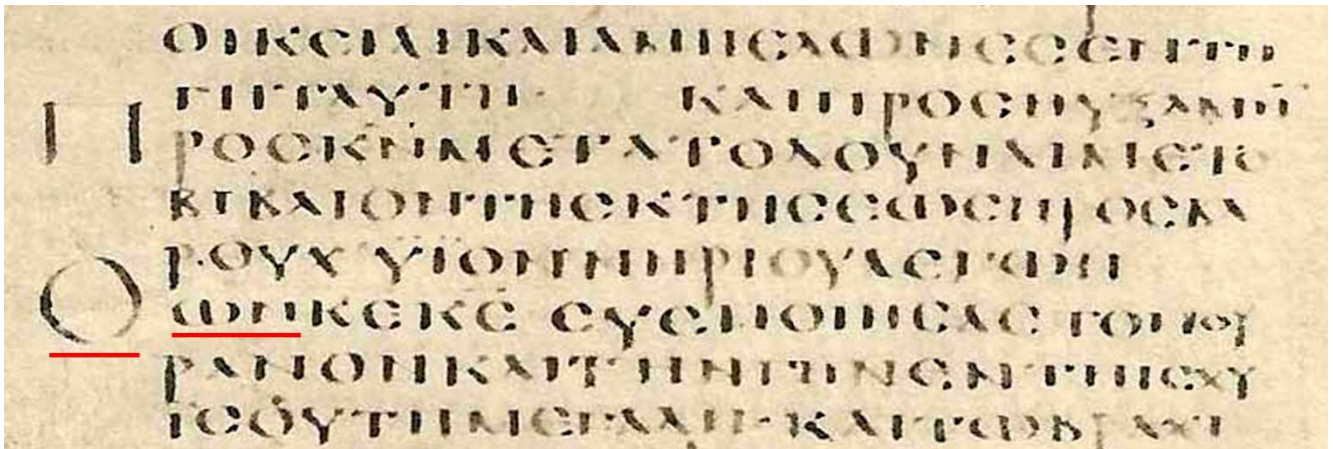


Figure 15 Scan of Jeremiah 39:17 (LXX, = 32:17 MT) in the reduced photographic facsimile of Codex Alexandrinus published in 1936

The text reads καὶ οἰκίαι καὶ ἀμπελῶνες ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ ¹⁶ καὶ προσευξάμην πρὸς κύριον μετὰ τὸ δοῦναί με τὸ βιβλίον τῆς κτήσεως πρὸς Βαρουχ υἱὸν Νηριου λέγων ¹⁷ ὁ ὢν κύριε κύριε σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τῇ ἰσχύι σου τῇ μεγάλῃ καὶ τῷ βραχί[ονί σου τῷ ὑψηλῷ] (Jer. 39:15-17)

“and houses and vineyards in this land. And I prayed to the Lord after giving the purchase scroll to Baruch the son of Neriou saying, the One Who Exists, Lord, Lord, You made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and with Thy [upraised] arm.”

This page was printed particularly light and so I have slightly darkened the text to improve visibility. Again, the presence of the phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is” stands out, being at the beginning of a line and with the ὁ [ho], “the” written much larger than the rest of the line, in the “ekthesis” style used in Alexandrinus, mostly at the beginnings of “paragraphs” or sections.

Codex Sinaiticus (Codex Friderico-Augustanus)

Jeremiah 39:17 (XX; = 32:17 in MT) is on the page that in the combined colour photographic facsimile of 2010 is known as Q48 – f.8r [LUL – f.35]. In Lake’s edition of 1922, it is page 111 (recto), in column 3, where it is what would appear to be the third “paragraph”.

Here again we show the text photographed from Lake & Lake 1922.

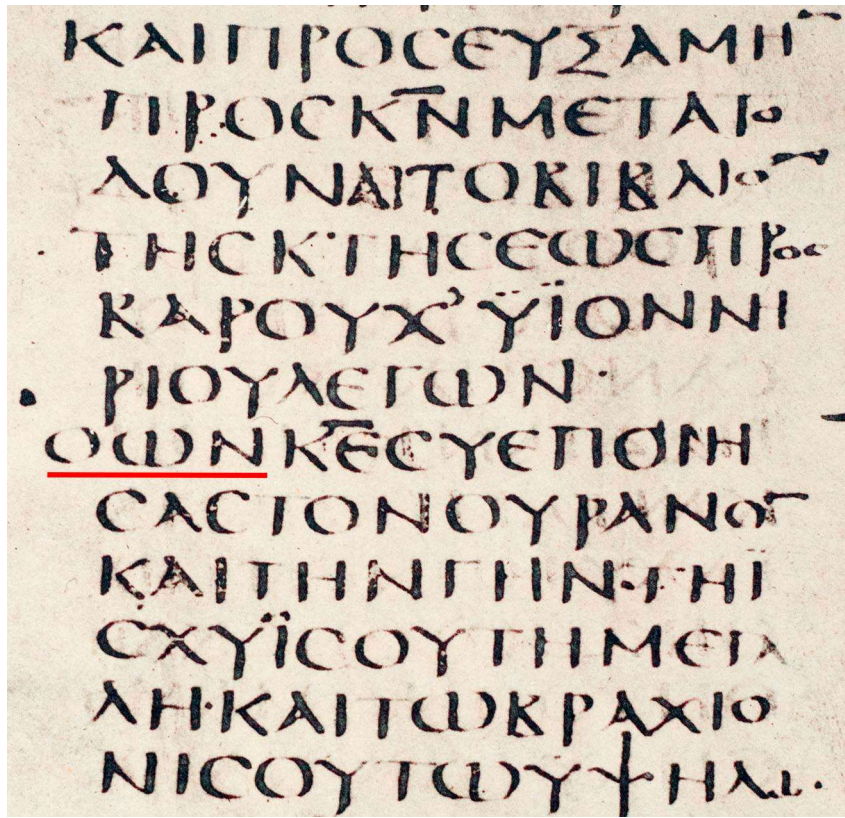


Figure 16 Jeremiah 39:17 [LXX; = 32:17 MT] Codex Friderico-Augustanus Photographic Facsimile of 1922

The text reads καὶ προσευξάμην πρὸς κύριον μετὰ τὸ δοῦναί με τὸ βιβλίον τῆς κτήσεως πρὸς Βαρουχ υἱὸν Νηριου λέγων ¹⁷ ὁ ὢν κύριε σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τῇ ἰσχύϊ σου τῇ μεγάλῃ καὶ τῷ βραχίονί σου τῷ ὑψηλῷ (Jer. 39:16-17)

“And I prayed to the Lord after giving the purchase scroll to Baruch the son of Neriou saying, **the One Who Exists**, Lord, You made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and with Thy up-raised arm.”

This is from the hair side of the parchment, on which contrast and ink are still very good. The phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”/“the One Who Exists” is very clear, being at the beginning of a line of text, in fact starting in the left hand margin.

We notice at the end of the first line here and on the line after ὁ ὢν [ho ōn] a final raised bar instead of a final nu (“n”) for the words προσευξάμην [proseuxámēn, “I prayed” and οὐρανὸν [ouranón, “heaven”].

Codex Vaticanus



Figure 17 Jeremiah 39:17 (LXX, = 32:17 MT) Codex Vaticanus Typographical Facsimile of 1872

The text reads ἀμπελῶνες ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ¹⁶ καὶ προσευξάμην πρὸς κύριον μετὰ τὸ δοῦναί με τὸ βιβλίον τῆς κτήσεως πρὸς Βαρουχ υἱὸν Νηριου λέγων¹⁷ ὁ ὢν κύριε σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τῇ ἰσχύι σου τῇ μεγάλῃ καὶ τῷ βραχίονί σου (Jer. 39:15-17)

“and houses and vineyards in this land. And I prayed to the Lord after giving the purchase scroll to Baruch the son of Neriou saying, the One Who Exists, Lord, Lord, You made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and with Thy [up-raised] arm.”

The phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn], “the One Who Is” is particularly easy to see, with ὁ ὢν [ho], “the”, at the end of one line and ὢν [ōn], “One Who Is” at the beginning of the next line. There is no chance of confusing or merging the two words.

I repeat that here and for Jeremiah 14:13 we are showing the *photographic* facsimiles of the text, and there is no ambiguity: both of these verses clearly say, “the One Who Exists” or “the One Who Is”.

For this verse, Rahlfs has: ὦ κύριε [ō kurie], “oh Lord” (my translation).

Why is the wording in Brenton and in Ziegler not present in Rahlfs’s version of the text?

Rahlfs must have had available to him the typographical facsimiles of Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus (dates of publication given above) and should have had access at least to the photographic facsimiles of Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus.

Codex Sinaiticus

As indicated above, Codex Sinaiticus was photographed by Kirsopp and Helen Lake in Russia and Germany and was printed by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, New Testament published in 1911, Old Testament in 1922.

Codex Alexandrinus

The British Museum published the first photographic facsimile of Codex Alexandrinus between 1879 and 1883: New Testament in 1879, Old Testament in three volumes 1881-1883 (London: The British Museum 1879-83).

In the early years of the twentieth century, the British Museum re-photographed the whole of Codex Alexandrinus, though publication was spread over many years. Jeremiah was published as part of “The Old Testament Part III in 1936: Hosea – Judith (with introduction by H J M Milne)”. This was a year after Rahlfs’ Septuaginta was published. However, he may have had access to the full-sized photographic facsimile of Jeremiah, published in 1883, and he almost certainly will have been able to consult the typographical facsimile published by the British Museum in 1819 (see above).

Codex Vaticanus

There was also an early photographic copy of Codex Vaticanus. According to the Wikipedia article on Vaticanus²⁹, “In 1889–1890 a photographic facsimile of the entire manuscript was made and published by Cozza-Luzi, in three volumes.” However, copies of this were very expensive and hard to locate, so it is not possible to be certain that Rahlfs had access to it. The same Wikipedia article reports, “Another facsimile of the New Testament text was published in 1904–1907 in Milan.”³⁰

Other manuscripts

It must be assumed that Rahlfs also consulted other manuscript copies of LXX Jeremiah, and that some at least of these had the readings that he reproduced in his printed edition. It is not presently clear which factors led him to these decisions, but Ziegler was clearly of the opinion that they were erroneous, in consequence of which he produced a text of Jeremiah, Lamentations and some other prophetic books that was different from the edition of Rahlfs’ text that had been published in 1935.

Why did some of the texts consulted by Rahlfs have different wording?

Here we maintain that the original text in Jeremiah 1:6 was ὁ ὢν δέσποτα κύριε [ho ōn, déspota, Kúrie], with the words δέσποτα [déspota, “Sovereign Master”] and κύριε [Kúrie, “Lord”] being in apposition to the noun phrase ὁ ὢν [ho ōn, “the One Who Exists”]. This would be translated, “You, **the One Who Exists**, Sovereign Master, Lord.” The other two verses referred to in Jeremiah have the same core phrase and the vocative word “Lord”, but lack some of the other words that are in Jeremiah 1:6. The presence or absence of the other words does not change the meaning of the core words that are present in all three verses.

If it is assumed that the above text, which was reproduced in Brenton in 1851 and by Ziegler in 1957, more probably represents the original Septuagint text, it must be asked how texts with different wording arose.

The following factors are likely to have been highly relevant:

1. Greek manuscripts at the time were normally produced in *scriptio continua*, i.e., with no spaces between the words;

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus Accessed on 23.8.22.

³⁰ *Bibliorum Scriptorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus 1209* (Milan, 1904–1907), according to the same Wikipedia article.

2. generally no breathings (such as the sound “h”) or accents were used in the manuscripts;
3. especially at the end of a line of text, but also on occasion in other places, a final letter nu of a word was not written, being indicated instead by a horizontal bar above the text, after the preceding letter, as indicated above: $\bar{\nu}$.³¹

If the nu bar $\bar{\nu}$ was missing or not noticed, a copyist may have just put the omega. Missing out this one small symbol resulted in a different word, ω , the interjection “oh” ω [ō] instead of the present active nominative participle, masculine singular of εἰμί [eimi]: $\omega\bar{\nu}$ [ōn], “being”.³² The Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon (Abridged)³³ describes the interjection ω [ō] as, “Exclamation, expressing surprise, but also joy and pain, like our *O! oh!*”

Given the lack of spacing between the words, if the letter nu were omitted, this would result in an o micron followed by an omega and as breathings were not usually written on the earliest manuscripts, the o micron would easily not be recognised as the masculine singular [definite] article \acute{o} [ho].

Thereafter, it is easy to see how a copyist may have suppressed the o micron, assuming it to be an error, resulting in omega *déspota Kúrie*, $\omega \delta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\omicron\tau\alpha \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\epsilon$ (Jer 1:6) interpreted as one phrase, “oh Sovereign Master Lord”.

Conclusions

In spite of the absence from Rahlfs’ edition of the Septuagint of the phrase $\acute{o} \omega\bar{\nu}$ [ho ōn], “the One Who Exists” / “the One Who Is”, it is clear from the unanimous evidence of the most important early manuscripts in every one of these three verses that it was present in the original Greek text.

The Greek phrase $\acute{o} \omega\bar{\nu}$ [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, as a designation for God was well known to the Jewish people at the time of Christ, both from Exodus 3:14, where it occurs twice, and from multiple occurrences in Jeremiah. When Jesus used this phrase on two occasions, the Jewish people were aware of the allusion and the significance, and on the second occasion, following his application to himself also of the phrase $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega \epsilon\iota\mu\acute{\iota}$ [egō eimi, “I am”] (John 8:58), they responded by trying to stone him to death for blasphemy (John 8:59 and John 10:33).

As we have indicated in another article on this website,³⁴ in consequence of this evidence, the Eastern Orthodox churches understand $\acute{o} \omega\bar{\nu}$ [ho ōn], “the One Who Is”, as being a title of Jesus Christ, an indication that he is uncreated, “the One Who Is”, “the One Who Exists”.

³¹ Sinaiticus LSU font courtesy of Linguists’ Software.

³² The interjection ω [ō] occurs 106 times in the Greek text of the Old Testament, New Testament and Apocrypha, according to Bible Works 10. This will include the three occurrences in Rahlfs’ Septuaginta that are disputed here.

³³ As reproduced in Bibleworks 10

³⁴ English version: https://livingwater-spain.com/I_am_test.pdf