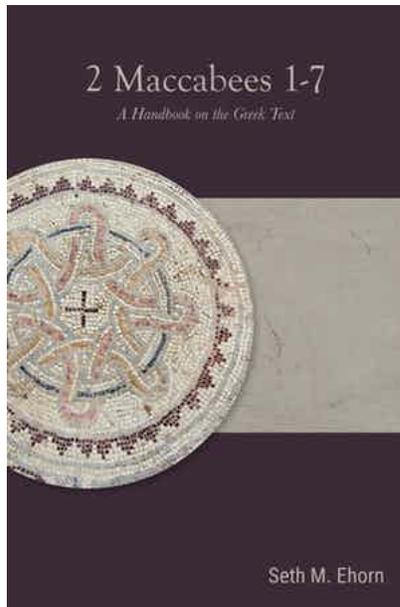


RBL 09/2021



Seth M. Ehorn

2 Maccabees 1–7: A Handbook on the Greek Text

Baylor Handbook on the Septuagint

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020. xxxix + 317.
Paper. \$44.95. ISBN 9781481313827.

Jan Willem Van Henten
University of Amsterdam

This volume is the first fruit of a new series launched by Baylor University Press, which is edited by Sean Adams and Seth Ehorn. The latter, Seth Ehorn, is also the author of this volume. The Baylor Handbook on the Septuagint series, abbreviated BHLXX, is set up in line with the Handbooks on the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Bible published by Baylor University Press, with which many *RBL* readers will be familiar. It is a most welcome initiative to start a new series devoted to the Septuagint and also a clear sign that the field of Septuagint studies rapidly is gaining significance. In the introduction to the series, both editors explain its aim and profile: the series will not provide a full commentary on each book of the Septuagint but is designed to assist scholars, teachers, and students to read the text in Greek and translate it properly. Importantly, the aim is to understand the Septuagint text as a Greek text of its own and not as a translation. Each volume will provide a short introduction to the book involved, deal with a selection of text-critical and exegetical matters, and discuss “every significant grammatical or syntactical issue” (vii). The Greek text used is the Rahlfs-Hanhart 2006 edition, but other editions, including the Göttingen edition, will be included as well. In addition, each volume will provide a fresh translation that will focus on a “Greek-language perspective” (xi).

The introduction to the book of 2 Maccabees in this volume necessarily had to be selective, but it still provides a wealth of good information on the Greek text and its translations, the collection of the four Maccabean books, the literary integrity and dating of 2 Maccabees, the use of Greek verbs, and the language, style, and syntax of the book. Also included is a detailed list of differences between the Rahlfs-Hanhart 2006 and the Göttingen 2017 editions, focusing on, among other things, punctuation and versification differences as well omissions, additions, and different word choices. Several scholars have argued that 2 Macc 7 is a Christian edition, but Ehorn concludes that the chapter may come from a different source but also that it is carefully integrated in the larger narrative. The section on the use of Greek verbs stands out in the introduction, as it offers an excellent discussion of this topic that is well informed by current studies in Greek linguistics. The proposed window for the date of 2 Maccabees is 125–63 BCE (in 1:9/10 Ehorn reads with Robert Doran and others the year “188” [124 BCE] as *lectio difficilior* and not “148” [164 BCE]).

The new translation remains close to the Greek text and is carefully done. It mostly reads well. In a few cases one could argue for a different translation, for example in 2 Macc 1:2, where Ehorn translates the word *douloi*, which refers to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as “slaves” instead of “servants.” Obviously, text-critical decisions may lead to alternative translations, and scholars have different opinions about such decisions. Ehorn translates 1:35, a notoriously difficult verse that brings along text-critical problems, with “And to those whom the king favored, he was receiving a large sum of money and sharing [it],” which does not make sense. Besides, in a few cases the given translation does not seem to match what it argued for in the comments on the text. In 7:30 Ehorn translates “Now, when this one was stopped [speaking],” while he correctly notes that the active participle of the verb *katalêgô* that is translated here means “leaving off speaking” (271–72). In the introductory verse about the old Eleazar in 6:18, he translates *grammateus* with “official” (following Christine Schams’s argument) and the last part of the verse with “(A certain Eleazar...) was being compelled, when he opened his mouth, to eat pig flesh,” although he seems to go along with those scholars who argue that *anachanôn* (“opening his mouth”) should be left out of the text.

The handbook includes discussions of a selection of text-critical issues that are admirably clear and helpful. Of course, here, too, one can differ with Ehorn because of different views on how to apply textual criticism. I was, in many cases, persuaded by the provided information and decisions, but not always. The short passage about Antiochus IV’s death in 2 Macc 1:13–17 indicates how Antiochus was killed and his body (or the body of him and his fellows) dismembered. Ehorn translates: “After opening a secret door in the ceiling, throwing stones, they [the priests of Nanea] struck down the leader, and after cutting off the limbs and removing his head, they threw [them] to those outside (1:16).” The text-critical decision that underlies this translation concerns reading *tên kephalên* with MS 55

and manuscripts of the Syrian and Latin versions instead of the plural *tas kephalas* with the majority of textual witnesses. The former reading solves the problem of the incongruity in the verse as read with most witnesses (only Antiochus as leader is explicitly mentioned), but the plural reading “heads” implies that his fellow plunderers were also killed and dismembered. This reading is plausible, but it creates the said problem of incongruity, which is solved by the reading of MS 55, LaP, and Sy, which is, therefore, probably a correction of the given text.

Most notes are short and focus on grammatical and syntactical issues, but there are helpful comments on the meaning of phrases as well as short explanations of the content of the pericopes commented on. The book also offers a glossary of grammatical terms, a bibliography, and two indices, one for grammar, with entries such as “accusative direct object” and “hyperbaton,” listing all occurrences, and one for modern authors.

This volume is an excellent start of this series of Septuagint handbooks: it fully matches the aims of the series, as pointed out by the editors, it is fully up to date in its application of relevant resources and studies on 2 Maccabees, and it provides a wealth of information on grammatical and syntactical issues, which will be very helpful not only to graduate students, who may be the main target audience, but surely also to specialists in the field. Of course, this is not a study to read in one flow but a handbook in the traditional sense of the word, to be consulted time and again, each time one wants to study a passage of 2 Maccabees in Greek.