



Does head (Hebrew “rosh”) translate to “kephale” in Greek?

YES! ...and HARDLY EVER! This *Run With It* is technical, but don't lose heart! A treasure is buried within! The LXX/Septuagint is the earliest translation of Old Testament Hebrew into Greek. LXX is Latin for 70, and it represents the 70 (or 72) scholars who completed the work in the 2nd century BC. The LXX gives us a glimpse into the meaning and use of numerous Greek words during the 1st century AD. For example, let's consider “head” and the Hebrew *rosh* and Greek *kephale*.

Key Term

Septuagint
LXX = Greek translation of Old Testament

רֹאשׁ Rosh Hashanah = Head of the Year = New Year

How often did the LXX translate Hebrew *rosh* to Greek *kephale*?

The Old Testament text used the word *rosh* a total of 419 times. These can be divided into two distinct categories.

- Physical Head** - When the OT Hebrew *rosh* referred to physical head, LXX chose *kephale* **226 out of 239** times.
- Figurative Head** - *Rosh* was also translated *figuratively* **180** times by LXX translators. We need to examine what word LXX translators used when *rosh* was used figuratively. Did the Greek translators use *kephale* figuratively to mean ruler/leader, or did they choose another word?

Figurative ROSH = KEPHALE only 5% of the time (8 out of 180)

Breakdown of the 180 times *rosh* was translated figuratively into Greek.

When ROSH meant	LXX translated it as...	# times
1. ruler, commander, leader	<i>archon</i>	109
2. captain, leader, chief, prince	<i>archegos</i>	10
3. authority, magistrate, officer	<i>arche</i>	9
4. to be a leader, to rule, have dominion	<i>hegeomai</i>	9
5. first, foremost	<i>protos</i>	6
6. father or chief of a race, patriarch	<i>patriarches</i>	3
7. commander	<i>chiliarches</i>	3
8. chief of a tribe	<i>archephules</i>	2
9. head of a family	<i>archipatriotes</i>	1
10. verb; ruler, be ruler of	<i>archo</i>	1
11. great, mighty, important	<i>megas, megale, mega</i>	1
12. take the lead, go first, lead the way	<i>proegeomai</i>	1
13. firstborn, first in rank	<i>prototokos</i>	1
?? <i>rosh</i> ??	not translated	6
14. manuscript with variant readings	<i>kephale</i>	6
used in “head-tail” metaphor	<i>kephale</i>	4
leader, top, prominent	<i>kephale</i>	8*

The LXX Figurative ROSH Summary

- LXX used 14 different words when OT *rosh* referred to leader or chief.
- LXX chose *archon* 109 times (61%)
- LXX chose *kephale* 18 out of 180 times.
 - ⇒ 6 uses come from a single variant text.
 - ⇒ 4 uses preserve a “head-tail” metaphor.
 - ⇒ * The remaining 8 out of 180 (5%) include the following – 2 Samuel 22:44; Psalm 18:43; Isaiah 7:8-9; Jeremiah 31:7; and Lamentations 1:5.

Conclusion

YES! *rosh* = Physical head = *kephale*. **But Greek translators who intended to indicate a “leader with authority,” HARDLY EVER used *kephale* as the most appropriate Greek word.** The amazing Greek language had many options to show leadership or command. (See the One-Pager, *Isn't man the “head” of the woman?*).

4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?