

ISSUES IN TEXT AND TRANSLATION  
TECHNIQUE IN THE GAMMA-GAMMA  
SECTION OF 3 REIGNS (1 KINGS)<sup>1</sup>

Andrzej Szymon Turkanik

This dissertation is a contribution to the study of the transmission history of the Samuel-Kings corpus, examining the translation technique<sup>2</sup> employed by the translator of the *gamma-gamma* section of 3 Reigns (1 Kgs 2:12–21:43). For the most part the translation follows the Hebrew closely. At points, however, one encounters significant differences. Since the two major witnesses, i.e. the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Old Greek (G), differ, it is only proper to ask what the differences can be attributed to. Following the discovery of the DSS,<sup>3</sup> the majority of modern scholars assert that the variations are due to a different text tradition (*Vorlage*) rather than intentional or unintentional changes introduced by the translator. Whether this is the case or some other factors have influenced the text of G, has been the subject of investigation.

This study concentrates on issues of larger additions and omissions in the text as well as substantial verse reordering. The focus is mostly, though not exclusively, on the quantitative variants between MT and G.<sup>4</sup> The approach taken is an inductive one: the texts in Hebrew and Greek are compared throughout the corpus of the *gamma-gamma* section. Careful attention is paid to the issues of potential textual

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<sup>2</sup> The term translation technique has been used by different authors in different ways. This study takes an exegetical approach, thus differing from the so-called 'Scandinavian school' which is interested above all in issues of grammar and syntax in the translation.

<sup>3</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls' text of Kings, although of much older date than MT, plays only a marginal role in the quest for the original text of Kings. 4QK, 5QK and 6QK are small pieces of text preserving a few verses from chapters 1, 3, 12 and 22.

<sup>4</sup> There are blocks of additional text in chapters 2 and 12. These, referred to in the scholarly literature as Miscellanies, are not part of this investigation since it is deemed that they should be a subject of study in their own right.

corruption in both witnesses and this is the point of departure. This is followed by the categorization of the types of differences with their occurrences. Conclusions about the emerging patterns were made only after work on the translation unit was completed in this manner.

Chapter 1 outlines the background to 3 Reigns, the history of research, and describes the methodology and purpose of the exercise as well as discussing the arrangement of the material in categories.

Chapter 2 discusses the translator's desire for logical consistency. It considers that changes to the text were influenced by G's desire for logical consistency. It can be observed that G rearranged certain texts which were taken to be out of place, mostly from a chronological perspective. Different techniques were used in order to adjust the material to fit G's rationale. Larger units as well as parts of verses were moved to other contexts, assumed to be more suitable. This is most likely an effort to create a text which has a coherent chronological sequence and which is free from perceived errors of fact. The secondary nature of the new locations can be easily recognised, since the verses do not altogether fit their new surroundings.

The second part of the chapter seeks to demonstrate a different approach by G in correcting material which was considered faulty. The perceived problems were either linguistic or factual, and in order to remedy them G either supplied a corrected expression or omitted information considered confusing, redundant or unlikely.

The third part of the chapter discusses verses where the translator's concern for precision was the driving force behind changes in the text. G highlighted parts of the text in comparison with the MT, and in some instances beyond what the text allows. A good deal of material was harmonised with other passages within 1 Kings and elsewhere. Although the translator made questionable judgements on a number of occasions, he nevertheless tried to keep the text as clear as possible.

Chapter 3 deals with issues of piety in the translation. Analysis of the text shows the translator to have adjusted the text of his *Vorlage* in accordance with his theological convictions by introducing more acceptable vocabulary and by means of omissions and additions to the text. He was concerned to safeguard the interest of piety in the sections dealing with the Temple, in relation both to its building and to cultic practices during the dedication and later. The prominent figures of Solomon and Elijah, in their respective roles as model ruler and faithful prophet, received special attention. The gods of the nations

were treated with contempt and sometimes described using deprecatory names. This practice, however, was not uniform throughout; in some instances customary lexical equivalents were used.

In passages describing God, his character and his dealings with humanity, G was careful to remove elements which suggest God's dependence on humans and introduced reverential distancing in order to maintain a proper respect for God. This fell short of a full anti-anthropomorphic programme on the part of the translator.

Chapter 4, dealing with G's handling of the major figures in 1 Kings, moves the discussion further. In order to present a positive picture of Solomon, different techniques were used, such as omissions and additions to the text, transposition to a different location of both verses and individual expressions within them, as well as grammatical changes and enhancing features. The resulting picture of Solomon was different from that painted by MT in that it removed most of the criticism found there. However, there was one instance in which criticism beyond that of MT was expressed.

The second part of the chapter demonstrates that G delivered a more pointed picture of the kings of Israel and Judah. The southern kingdom as a whole was presented in a positive light. This was done even at the expense of inserting negative statements about her rulers in place of remarks considered harmful to the kingdom's integrity.

The positive appraisals of the kings of Judah were made even more favourable by omission of their less virtuous acts and addition of positive features. Moreover, Israel's rulers were looked upon as negative characters because Israel was a rebel state and did not follow in the steps of her model king. David was the ultimate paradigm of faithfulness to God's law and in consequence could not be accused of any wrongdoing whatsoever. The only negative remark concerning the affair with Bathsheba was discreetly removed from the narrative.

Jeroboam was stripped of his royal robes even before ascending the throne by the removal of his matronymic. Yet by including the prophetic utterance concerning Jeroboam's kingship, G hinted that he was modelling himself on David and so would not take part in the overthrow of Rehoboam himself. However, G acknowledged that owing to his rebellious nature he became a king of the utmost contrast with David, an evildoer leading Israel into idolatry.

G's portrayal of Ahab was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he was presented as a fallen king of a rebel state. On the other hand, G

made sure that he was not entirely blamed for his wrongdoing since many of his problems were caused by his idolatrous wife. For some of his activities, though highlighted in G's version, a precise value judgement by G is difficult to decipher due to conflicting signals. In other instances, however, we can detect a tendency to present Ahab in a more favourable light, which may have prompted later rabbis to adopt a more sympathetic view of his reign.

Chapter 5 argues that in G there was a clearly defined tendency to conform the information given to the reader to the translator's idea of court etiquette. In the opinion of the translator a 'proper' view of an individual's behaviour has to be seen through a well defined code of practice. Such a code assumes that there are things a king or his subjects simply do not do. On the other hand, there are responsibilities from which even kings cannot be freed. The method our translator used to achieve this purpose varied.

Sometimes through a slight change G obtained a more desirable view of the story. On other occasions, the addition or omission of text created the necessary adjustment. G toned down expressions which could give an impression of a king's limited power and diminish respect for him as a monarch. Thus, for example, the king was not expected to bow down to his subject, even if it was his own mother.

The king's prerogative was to bless his subjects and rule over them rather than the opposite; thus G removed material that could be seen as contrary to this protocol. This applied equally to kings of Israel and Judah and to kings of other nations. In one case Ben-hadad was made responsible for giving orders whereas in the MT he seemed to be overrun by his servants. In G the servants were silenced and required to fulfil their responsibility. In order to spare the shame of the defeated king they acted as spokesmen pleading for mercy.

In view of this evidence I would argue that although the findings of scholars in the past arguing for an evident bias in the translation have to be somewhat modified and at times made more precise, nevertheless, these findings, as far as they went, have been confirmed by the study which I have conducted. However, in the minority of cases where previous studies of the translation technique of the *gamma-gamma* section have been too optimistic in finding exegetical explanations, deviations from the typical renderings of particular words or phrases may be accounted for by differing *Vorlage*, mechanical errors, or erroneous interpretation of the Hebrew text.