

Jeroboam's Rise to Power

A Rejoinder

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Revised Version (1885), the King James Version, or are David Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

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In 1967¹ I suggested that the peculiarities of the LXX's first account of Jeroboam's rise to power, 1 Kings 11:43–12:24, might be understood as arising from a desire to whitewash Jeroboam's character, and that the LXX's second account of his rise to power, 1 Kings 12:24^{a-z}, was clearly an attempt to blacken his character as much as possible. An article and a critical note in this *Journal*² have subsequently carried the discussion further, and both of them have put forward views contrary to my own. I myself have also added some further remarks on the topic in *Textus* 7 (1969) 11–13; since these remarks have particular relevance to some of the points made in the article I shall not comment further on it here. But on the critical note I should like to comment at some length. My purpose is not to maintain that my views were right after all, but to question some of the basic assumptions and methods adopted by the note in its use of the LXX evidence. These assumptions and methods are inadequate and misleading. But the author of the note is not the only one who from time to time indulges in them. And, therefore, it may do no harm to question them; for if these assumptions come by unchallenged use to be accepted as axioms, they will inevitably lead to erroneous results.

The note says (pp. 217–18):

In this note we hope to demonstrate via textual criticism that the contrary³ is true, i.e., that the LXX bears witness to an old Hebrew tradition according to which Jeroboam did not return from Egypt or participate in the Shechem assembly until after the murder of Adoram.

In the process of the demonstration it uses three main arguments.

Argument 1.

Our case begins with the reading from 1 Kgs 12:12.

MT	ויבו ירבעם וכל העם
LXX	καὶ παρεγένοντο πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ

Many commentators (see also *Biblia Hebraica*) delete ו ירבעם 'with the Greek.' We must not fail to note, however, that the LXX is even more divergent, presupposing not just a shorter text, but a different one, ויבא כל ישראל. This verse states, therefore, that all Israel—with no explicit mention of Jeroboam—came to Rehoboam the third day.

The kernel of this argument, which we are asked not to miss, is that whereas the absence of any equivalent of ו ירבעם from the Greek might merely mean that the Greek was based on a Hebrew text shorter than the MT, the fact that the Greek has πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ and not πᾶς ὁ λαός shows that it was based on a Hebrew text that was not only shorter than, but different from, the MT. The basic assumption of the argument is, then, that not only is the LXX based on a Hebrew text that sometimes differs from the MT, but every detail of the LXX, however small, faithfully reflects the Hebrew on which the LXX was based; so that if the LXX here says πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ not πᾶς ὁ λαός, it can be assumed without further argument that there must have been

¹ 'The Septuagint's Rival Versions of Jeroboam's Rise to Power,' *VT* 17 (1967) 173–89.

² Moses Aberbach and Leivy Smolar, 'Jeroboam's Rise to Power,' *JBL* 88 (1969) 69–72; and Ralph W. Klein, 'Jeroboam's Rise to Power,' *JBL* 89 (1970) 217–18

³ That is, contrary to my view.

a Hebrew text which at this point read כל ישראל and not as the MT כל העם. Now it is a matter of common knowledge what leads people, or at least encourages them, nowadays to make a basic assumption of this kind: the non-MT-type of Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran which agree with the LXX have shown that the LXX's peculiarities are more likely to be based on Hebrew texts than we have hitherto thought. But they have not given us grounds for thinking that every single difference between the LXX and the MT presupposes that same difference in some Hebrew *Vorlage*; and it is quite mistaken to proceed as if they had. Other possible causes of difference have not automatically been ruled out, and one still needs to assess the comparative likelihood of the competing possibilities, before deciding which is the most probable.

To take just one such possibility. In its third argument the note under discussion argues, as we shall presently find, that the MT of 1 Kings 12:3a differs from the LXX of 1 Kings 12 because it (the MT) has suffered influence from the parallel passage in the MT of 2 Chronicles 10. But was it only the MT that could suffer influence from parallel passages? Could not a LXX verse suffer similar influence from a parallel verse in the LXX? The difference in question between the MT and the LXX in 1 Kings 12:12 concerns a common phrase in which variations naturally occur, particularly when the variations are synonymous and do not alter the meaning. And these variations occur not only between the MT and the LXX but within the LXX evidence itself. Here are some examples from 1 Kings 12:

	MT		LXX
v. 1	כל ישראל	πᾶς Ἰσραηλ]	omnis populus Israel La.
v. 3	כל קהל ישראל	ὁ λαός]	omnis populus Arm
v. 12	כל העם	πᾶς Ἰσραηλ]	πᾶς ὁ λαός 74-242
v. 16	כל ישראל	πᾶς Ἰσραηλ]	πᾶς ὁ λαός b o c ₂ e ₂
v. 20 (1)	כל ישראל	πᾶς Ἰσραηλ]	Ἰσραηλ Ax
(2)	כל ישראל	Ἰσραηλ	

Is it not even a theoretical possibility that the LXX, or rather, most of the LXX MSS, use πᾶς Ἰσραηλ and not πᾶς ὁ λαός in verse 12 simply because of the influence of πᾶς Ἰσραηλ in verses 1, 16, 20? At any rate one could hardly maintain that every variant in every strand of the Greek evidence throughout these verses presupposed a different Hebrew text. Clearly some variants in the Greek have occurred independently of any Hebrew text. It is not enough, then, to assume without argument in any particular instance that the right explanation is 'different Hebrew *Vorlage*' and not 'independent variation'.

Argument 2.

This argument is in two parts. *First*: Secondly, an examination of 1 Kings 12:2–3a discloses not only that the LXX omits these verses, but that their presence would seem to be precluded by 1 Kings 12:20 which reports that Jeroboam returned from Egypt only *after* the initial negotiations at Shechem.

But neither the MT nor the LXX of 1 Kings 12:20 reports any such thing. What they both say happened after the initial negotiations is 'And it came to pass that when *all Israel* heard that

Jeroboam had returned . . .'; and that is clearly not the same thing as saying that Jeroboam returned at that time. One is, of course, at liberty to argue that Jeroboam could not have returned earlier, otherwise the people would have heard of it earlier; but that would be only an inference, and not necessarily a correct inference. And when the issue at stake is the exact time of Jeroboam's return *as given by verse 20* and whether or not that timing conflicts with the information given in verses 2–3a, it is a *petitio principii* to state one's inference from the text as though it were the text itself.

Second: 'LXX^B's inclusion of material similar in content and length to vss. 2–3a in 11:43 is a correction by a later hand, requiring the awkward doubling of the regnal formula.'

Now doubtless the *positioning* of this material is the work of a later corrector, for no original text would have doubled the regnal formula in this way. But this of itself does not prove that the later corrector himself translated all or any of the material which he placed in this secondary position. Maybe he did translate it, but maybe he did not; one should not simply assume without further argument that he did. The material contains a verb in the historic present (ἔρχεται), and H. St. J. Thackeray,⁴ D. Barthélemy,⁵ and J. D. Shenkel⁶ all maintain that historic presents in Samuel and Kings are a sure mark of the original translator. Now I do not think that this criterion is as consistently valid as they do; but at least I have given reasons for my view.⁷ To contradict my view and then to offer an explanation which conflicts with the weighty theory of Thackeray, Barthélemy and Shenkel without even acknowledging that it does conflict with it, and without providing any reasons for thinking that their theory is wrong, would seem a somewhat facile procedure.

Argument 3.

Furthermore, a close study of 1 Kings 12:3a and its parallel in 2 Chronicles 10:3a demonstrates that the half-verse in Kings can only be interpreted as an addition from Chronicles, as the following readings from Chronicles make clear.

MT	וכל ישראל וידברו
LXX ^A	καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἐκκλησία ἤλθον ⁴
LXX ^B	καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἐκκλησία Ἰσραηλ

If the Vorlage of LXX^B was **וכל הקהל באו**, the reading in LXX^A can be interpreted as a partial correction containing translations for **קהל** and MT's **ישראל**, though, like Vaticanus, lacking any word for **וידברו**. Consequently the Kings MT reading **וכל קהל ישראל** is a conflation of synonymous variants **וכל ישראל** (MT) and **וכל הקהל** (LXX^B cf. LXX^A), attested separately in Chronicles texts. The secondary character of 1 Kings 12:3a MT is reasonably certain.

⁴ *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (The Schweich Lectures for 1920; London: British Academy, 20–22) 115.

⁵ *Les devanciers d'Aquila*, (VTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1963) 63–65.

⁶ *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (Harvard Semitic Studies 1; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1968) 51–53.

⁷ *JTS* ns 21 (1970) 128–29.

(Footnote) 4. ἤλθον presumably represents a divergent Hebrew text. Compare the Syriac: *wkhlh ysryl 'tw (!) w'mryn, 'and all Israel came [pl. verb] and said.'*

The claim put forward in this argument that 'the half-verse in Kings can *only* be interpreted as an edition from Chronicles' is certainly sweeping, and at first sight the evidence on which it is based—sundry variations in the phrases 'all Israel' and 'all the congregation of Israel'—increases, rather than decreases, its initial incredibility. The facts are these: the phrase **כל קהל ישראל** and its Greek equivalent $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ (ἡ) ἐκκλησία Ἰσραήλ occur in 1 Kings 8:14, 22, 55; 1 Chronicles 13:2; 2 Chronicles 6:3, 12, 13. The similar, but slightly different, phrase, **כל הקהל** / $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ ἡ ἐκκλησία occurs in Chronicles but not, it would seem, in Kings. When, therefore, in 1 Kings 12:3 the MT uses the phrase **כל קהל ישראל** one might have thought that it was merely repeating its usage of 8:14, 22 and 25. But not so, apparently; that would be an impossible explanation. The only possible way of accounting for the presence of **כל קהל ישראל** in the MT of 1 Kings 12:3 is to say that it is an addition from Chronicles! But the MT of the parallel passage in Chronicles does not have **כל קהל ישראל** but only **כל ישראל**, nor is any other extant Hebrew text of Chronicles cited which has **כל קהל ישראל**. Nevertheless we are assured that the only possible explanation is that the phrase in 1 Kings was taken from Chronicles. What, then, is the evidence that compels us to this confident, yet unlikely, explanation?

First, a hypothesis. 'If the *Vorlage* of LXX^B was **ואל הקהל באו . . .**' But was it? We have already noticed the uncertainties that beset the assumption that every detail in the original LXX presupposes a corresponding detail in a Hebrew text. But here there is a further problem. The reading of LXX^B is supported by a tiny minority of MSS and is only one out of three main variants.⁸ It may not be the original LXX reading—Rahlfs thinks it is not. What is worse, it may be only an inner-Greek corruption and not based on a Hebrew text at all. The first hypothesis is precarious in itself; it also rests on another unproven assumption, that B's text is not corrupt.

Secondly, a hypothesis. '. . . the reading in LXX^A can be interpreted as a partial correction . . .' Yes, it *could* be; but then it could be the original of which B's text is a corruption. Rahlfs, at any rate, thinks that it is. But suppose A's text is not original: while it could be a correction, it need not be. It could simply be the result of accidental variation between common, very similar phrases, independent of any fresh consultation of variant Hebrew texts.

Thirdly, a deduction. 'Consequently the Kings MT reading **ואל קהל ישראל** is a conflation of synonymous variants **ואל ישראל** (MT) and **ואל הקהל** (LXX^B, cf. LXX^A) . . .' The logic behind this 'consequently' is very odd. How can any Masoretic text be said to be in its present state *as a consequence* of the state of the Greek text LXX? What the writer seems to mean is that the history of the Greek text LXX^A (as he conceives it to have been) leads him in consequence to suggest by analogy that the MT of 1 Kings may have come into being by a similar process. But if so, the suggestion amounts merely to a conjecture. Just because LXX^A may have arrived at a Greek equivalent of **ואל קהל ישראל** by secondary conflation, it does not follow that the

⁸ καὶ $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ ἡ ἐκκλησία ἤλθον B c₂ i γ [[om. η γ | ἐκκλησία] + $\eta\lambda$ i γ | ἤλθον] pr. καὶ c₂ : ηλθε i γ].
καὶ $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ ἡ ἐκκλησία ηλ (μετ' αὐτοῦ ηλ b') καὶ ἐλάλησαν b m e₂.
καὶ $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ ἡ ἐκκλησία ηλ A (iōλ) N + majority.

same phrase in the MT of 1 Kings must have come about in the same way. At most, it only suggests that it may have come about so.

Fourthly, a summary. 'The secondary character of 1 Kings 12:3a MT is reasonably certain.' As a description of a conjecture built on successive hypotheses, 'reasonably certain' is somewhat exaggerated. But by what step of logic does this exaggeration transform itself into the statement that 'the half-verse in Kings can *only* be interpreted as an addition from Chronicles'? Suppose that LXX^B's reading is not a corruption but the original LXX reading, based on a non-MT-type Hebrew *Vorlage*; then suppose that LXX^A's reading is a correction, and not an accidental development; after that suppose that the correction was based on a Hebrew text that in itself was a conflation; and then all you have is a Hebrew text of 2 Chronicles 10:3 that was the same as the MT text of 1 Kings 12:3. How does that prove that the MT of Kings took over its reading from Chronicles, and not that this particular Hebrew text of Chronicles was influenced by the MT of 1 Kings, or that they both arrived at the same phrase independently, or that the Chronicles text is secondary, and the Kings text likewise secondary, but that the Kings text has been influenced not by Chronicles but by other occurrences of the phrase in Kings? The claim that 'the half-verse in Kings can only be interpreted as an addition from Chronicles' is unwarranted. Qumran has taught us many things, but not, we may hope, to make assertions like this.

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING was Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.