CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRANSLATION OF HEBREW VERBS IN CHRONICLES

This chapter first deals briefly with the production and translation of the book of Chronicles and then gives an overview of the Hebrew verb forms found in the book of Chronicles. The Greek equivalents chosen by the translator for each Hebrew verb form are tabulated, in total and according to three clause types, and discussed in detail. At the end of the chapter, brief mention is made of how each Hebrew verb form functions in three clause types: main clause narrative, main clause reported speech, and subordinate clauses, including the historical-linguistic changes that have occurred in the Hebrew verb system.

I. THE PRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION OF CHRONICLES

The book of Chronicles is a narrative history produced during post-exilic times. There has been some debate among scholars as to the exact dating of the book of Chronicles. It must have been produced between the time of the rise of the Persian Empire 539 BCE (2 Chr 36:20) and the citation of the Greek translation of Chronicles in Eupolemus ca. 150 BCE (which would imply the completion and recognition of the Hebrew text of Chronicles by no later than 200 BCE). It was completed sometime in the Persian period, perhaps in the early Persian period (539-460 BCE), with the genealogical material completed no earlier than 400 BCE (cf. 1 Chr 3:19-24). The book of

---

1 Reported speech includes both direct and indirect speech, except when an infinitive is used to indicate indirect speech. Then the clause is included under subordinate clauses (as narrative). Sometimes indirect speech in Hebrew is translated as direct speech, e.g., "Then David said that no one was to carry the ark of God" (1 Chr 15:2). In cases like this, we classify the clauses according to the Hebrew structure.

2 Cf. W. M. Schniedewind, Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125-28, who argues for an early Persian date based on its emphasis on David and his descendants. Cross (1975) proposes three stages in its production (in conjunction with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah), the first edition (1 Chr 10—2 Chr 34) produced between 520-515 BCE,
Chronicles consists of material taken from canonical sources, of which Samuel-Kings is the most frequent source, some non-canonical sources (e.g., the story of the prophet Iddo—cf. 2 Chr 13:2-22, about Abijah; and the records of the seers—cf. 2 Chr 33:11-19, about Manasseh), and work originating from the Chronicler himself. The Chronicler has selectively drawn from the canonical material, and in places the canonical material has been rewritten, rearranged, and even reinterpreted.

The language of Chronicles contains both classical biblical Hebrew and late biblical Hebrew. In synoptic passages, where text that is almost verbatim that of its source (e.g., 1 Chr 10:1-14), classical biblical Hebrew predominates. In text that is heavily based on parallel passages but has redactional changes and editorial comments (e.g., 1 Chr 14-16), there is a mixture of classical and late biblical Hebrew. The source is classical biblical Hebrew. The editorial changes, while influenced by the classical Hebrew of the surrounding text, sometimes reflect a modernization to late biblical Hebrew forms and uses. In the writings of the Chronicler himself, observed in the material unique to Chronicles (e.g., 2 Chr 26), late biblical Hebrew forms occur more frequently, but the classical biblical Hebrew style still exerts a strong influence. Modernization of the language can be observed in the forms and uses of verbs in each of these three types of text.3

3 Some of the changes to the verb system that occurred in late biblical Hebrew can be observed in the book of Chronicles. For example, the qatal suffix conjugation is increasingly becoming a past preterite form (Verheij notes an increase in the percentage of qatal forms (from 14% to 26.1%) and a decline in the percentage of wayyiqtol forms (from 64% to 40.3%) in narrative when comparing Samuel, Kings, and the non-synoptic portions of Chronicles, *Verbs and Numbers*, 97). See chapter 3, section ILE for a comparison between archaic and contemporary verb use as found in biblical Hebrew texts. See also the comments on and examples of the translation profile of the Greek (although not pertaining specifically to the verb) in S. Peter Cowe, “To the