WHEN DAVID FLED ABÉSSALOM:  
A COMMENTARY ON THE THIRD PSALM IN GREEK  

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It is a distinct pleasure for me to contribute to a celebratory volume for Emanuel Tov who, inter alia, has become one of the most productive contemporary scholars in the field of Septuagint Studies. Since he himself, together with S. Talmon, many years ago put his hand to writing a commentary on a Septuagint text,¹ it is perhaps not inappropriate for me to follow in those footsteps and to seek to honor him with an attempt at a commentary on the third psalm.

The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) has decided to sponsor a commentary series on all the books of the Septuagint corpus. A Prospectus, published in 1999,² has delineated a set of principles for the series, and it is these I would like to cite as a context for what appears below. They are the following:

(1) the principle of original text, which is understood to mean that though for any given book the best available critical edition will form the basis of interpretation, commentators shall improve upon that text where deemed necessary, and thus assist in the ongoing quest for the pristine Greek text.

(2) the principle of original meaning, which is understood to mean that although commentators may make use of reception history in an effort to ascertain what the Greek text meant at its point of inception and may from time to time digress to comment on secondary interpretations, the focus shall be on what is perceived to be the original meaning of the text.

(3) the principle of the parent text as arbiter of meaning, which is understood to mean that though as much as possible the translated text is read like an original composition in Greek, the commentator will need

to have recourse to the parent text for linguistic information essential to the proper understanding of the Greek.

(4) the principle of “translator’s intent,” which is understood to mean that, since the language of the translated text is the only accessible expression of “the translator’s mind,” the linguistic information—whatever its source—embedded in the Greek text shall form the sole basis of interpretation. Stated differently, any linguistic information not already seen to be embedded in the Greek text, even though perhaps recognized as such, on the practical level, only by recourse to the parent text, shall be deemed inadmissible.

(5) the principle of linguistic parsimony, which is understood to mean that, as a general rule, no words or constructions of translation-Greek shall be considered normal Greek, unless attested in non-translation writings.\(^3\)

It should further be noted that any retroversions from the Greek, thought to reflect a parent text different from the Masoretic Text, appear in enlarged print in the Hebrew text printed below. Since the Greek text is the point of reference, all numbers are those of the Greek psalms.

**Psalm 3**

*Synopsis*

The psalmist, alarmed at his present opposition (2–3) but conscious of divine help in the past (5, 8b–c), expresses his confidence in God’s continued support (4, 6b–7, 9) which he urgently requests (8a) at the start of a new day (6a–6bα).

*Psalm 3 as a whole*

Based on v. 6, this psalm is commonly described as a morning prayer (e.g. Briggs, Weiser, Craigie), a characterization perhaps underlined by G’s past tense in 6a–6bα. For G, if not for the original poet, the superscription would have assigned the psalm to a particular episode in the life of King David. Within that episode he might have thought of the fortuitously rejected advice of Achitophel to pursue David by night (2 Kgdm 17:1; cf. 16).

\(^3\) Ibid. 44.