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Short Note: Translating the Additive גַּם *Gam* in 1 Samuel 22:7

Stephen H. Levinsohn
Senior Linguistics Consultant, SIL International, UK
stephen_levinsohn@sil.org

Abstract: Most English versions do not translate the additive *gam* in 1 Samuel 22:7. This article argues that Spanish versions such as the Reina-Valera revision of 1995 are correct in translating it *también* ('also') to indicate a parallel between 'all of you' (men of Benjamin) and the men with David.

This brief paper compares the way that translations into English and Spanish treat the additive *gam* in 1 Samuel 22:7. It argues that the NASB and Spanish versions such as the Reina-Valera revision of 1995 (RVR95) and the Versión Popular (VP) are correct in translating *gam* 'also'. This implies, in turn, that future translations into English (and other languages) should also be translating *gam* in the same way.

King Saul starts addressing his servants as follows in v. 7 (NIV adapted to more closely reflect the Hebrew):

> Listen, men of Benjamin! ADDITIVE-to.all.of.you (*gam-ləḵulləḵem*) will the son of Jesse give fields and vineyards?

Most English versions do not translate *gam* (e.g., GNB, NEB, NIV, NJPS, RSV). However, NLT treats it as an 'intensive' (Vannoy 2009:203): 'Will the son of Jesse indeed (*gam*) give all of you...?'

In contrast, a number of Spanish versions translate *gam* as 'también' ('also'). For example, RVR95 reads, 'Oídme ahora, hijos de Benjamín: ¿Os dará también a todos vosotros el hijo de Isaí tierras y viñas...?' [Hear.me now, sons of Benjamin: To.you will.give also to all you the son of Jesse lands and vineyards...?].[1] The NASB

[1] See also BJ, NVI and VP.

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is similar: 'Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards?' Such translations imply that Saul is making a comparison and drawing a parallel between 'you' (the men of Benjamin) and other people, such as 'the men who were with him [David]' (v. 6).[2]

Cross-linguistically, additive connectives most commonly instruct the hearer or reader 'to find a parallel with some previous proposition or assumption' (Levinsohn 2023:90), and Hebrew is no exception. Van der Merwe et al. state (2017: §40.20 [1]), 'The most typical use of גַּם (over 50% of the cases) is the one that could be associated with the syntactic pattern גַּם + constituent, and which could be translated (predominantly) by "also" or (to a lesser extent) by "even."' In contrast, the other uses of a single *gam* that they list occur 'seldom' (ibid.: §40.20 [2]) or are 'rare' (ibid.: §40.20 [4, 5]).[3]

The NLT translation of *gam* as 'indeed' corresponds to one of van der Merwe et al.'s 'rare' categories: 'Affirmation' (ibid.: §40.20 [4]). The NASB translation of *gam* as 'also', in contrast, corresponds to the category which they consider to be 'most typical': 'Additive' (ibid.: §40.20 [1]). So, the question to be answered is whether the use of *gam* in 1 Samuel 22:7 is 'typical' (ibid.) or not.

Two pieces of evidence in the Hebrew text imply that the use of *gam* in that verse is indeed typical (as reflected in NASB, RVR95, BJ, NVI and VP).

First, the indirect object 'to all of you' to which the additive has been attached in v. 7 (*gam-ləḵulləḵem*) 'is placed first for the sake of emphasis, "You Benjaminites also"' (Keil and Delitzsch 1975 [1861]). In other words, the constituent has been preposed for focal prominence[4] (bolded): 'Will the son of Jesse also give fields and vineyards **to every one of you**?'[5] So Saul is not drawing a parallel between what he had done for the tribe of Benjamin and what David

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, Biblical quotes in English are from the RSV.

[3] Van der Merwe et al. (ibid.: §40.20) list five categories for *gam*: '(1) Addition (typical)'; '(2) Corresponding reaction (seldom)' with *gam* translated 'also' or 'in turn'; '(3) Multiple inclusion (often)' with *gam … gam* translated 'both … and also' or, in negative contexts, 'neither … nor'; (4) 'Affirmation (rare)' with *gam* translated 'yes' or 'indeed'; '(5) "Apparent" neutral enumeration (rare)' with *gam* appearing 'to function as a near synonym of וְ.'

[4] Van der Merwe calls this 'the focus of the utterance' (2009:324), noting also that the fronting of *gam* and a constituent 'happens in the majority of cases … in reported speech.'

[5] NJPS puts 'to every one of you' at the end of the question: 'Will the son of Jesse give fields and vineyards to every one of you?' This order implies that the indirect object is the 'dominant focal element' (Levinsohn 2023:58). Other passages in which *gam* governs an indirect object that has been preposed for focal prominence include Gen 13:5 ('also [*gam*] to Lot … belonged flocks and herds and tents') and Gen 24:19 ('I'll draw water for your camels too [*gam*]').

might do for them, as Baldwin (1988:150) would appear to suggest.[6] Rather, the parallel is between 'every one of you' and people who have featured in 'some previous proposition or assumption' (Levinsohn 2023:90).

Secondly, consider the previous verse (v. 6): 'Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him.' The reference to 'the men who were with him [David]' is with a relative clause (*wa'ănāšîm 'ăšer 'ittô*). I note elsewhere that 'relative clauses in Biblical Hebrew are usually related to prominence, especially thematic prominence' (Levinsohn 2023:163). 'A thematically prominent entity will have a significant role to play in the subsequent discourse' (ibid.:63). If such is the case in v. 6, then prominence has been given to the men who were with David because they will have a significant role to play in the subsequent discourse. In particular, news of them will influence Saul's thinking and lead him in v. 7 to make a comparison and draw a parallel between them and 'every one of you'.

According to Tsumura (2006:542), 'When David became a military vassal of Achish of Gath, he was given Ziklag, from which he probably gave grants to his troops.' Whether or not he did so, Saul could easily have convinced himself that the men who were with David were following him because he had promised to give them fields and vineyards (Evans [2004:127] suggests that Saul's speech in v. 7 reflected his 'paranoia'). In his troubled state, Saul fears that David may have also 'bribed those of Saul's own tribe who remained with him' (ibid.). So he utters a 'rhetorical question to which the implied answer is "no"' (Hohulin and Kelly 2020): 'Will the son of Jesse also give fields and vineyards **to every one of you**?', in which he makes a comparison and draws a parallel between 'all of you' and 'the men who are with' the son of Jesse (v. 6).

I conclude that the function of the *gam* that precedes the preposed indirect object 'to all of you' in v. 7 is the 'typical' one that is usually translated 'also' (Van der Merwe et al. 2017: §40.20 [1]). It constrains the reader to make a comparison and draw a parallel between 'all of you' and people who have featured in 'some previous proposition or assumption' (Levinsohn 2023:90). In turn, the use of a relative clause to refer to 'the men who were with him (David)' in v. 6 identifies them as the people with whom the parallel is drawn.[7]

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[6] 'The tribe of Benjamin had been honoured by Saul with gifts of land and positions of leadership. He [Saul] implies that the son of Jesse of Judah will have no such attachment to Benjamin.' See also Omanson and Ellington 2001:470.

[7] An anonymous reviewer asked whether *gam* ever functions elsewhere across a quote boundary. The answer is, 'Yes.' Other instances in which *gam* governs a constituent that has been preposed for focal prominence at the beginning of a reported speech include Gen 24:19 (see fn. 5), Deut 1:37 ('You also [*gam*] not go in there'), Ruth 2:15 ('Let her glean even [*gam*] among the sheaves') and 1 Sam 19:24 ('Is Saul also [*gam*] among the prophets?').

I therefore recommend that future translations into English (and other languages) should translate Hebrew *gam* in 1 Samuel 22:7 as 'also', to bring out the parallelism with the people mentioned in v. 6.

Scripture Versions

BJ: 2019. *Biblia de Jerusalén*, nueva edición. Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer.

GNB: 1976. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*. Swindon: The Bible Societies.

NASB: 1995. *New American Standard Bible* (95). La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation.

NEB: 1970. *The New English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

NIV: 1984. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. London/Sydney/Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton.

NJPS: 1999. *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation*. Second edition. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.

NLT: 1996. *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale.

NVI: 1999. *La Santa Biblia, Nueva Versión Internacional*. Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica.

RSV: 1952. *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*. New York/Glasgow: Collins.

RVR95: *Santa Biblia: Reina-Valera 1995*. Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas.

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