15, 16. In ch. 33 there are preceding *setumot* at 33.40 and 33.50, yet only the second one leads to a SH in GNB. It may be better to resort to two levels of SH again, a higher level one at 33.1, such as "Summary of the desert journey," and lower level ones at 33.1, 40, and 50. The first two could be "From Egypt to Mount Hor," "From Mount Hor to the plains of Moab," and the third could stay as it is.

Proposals to add SHs

It remains only to comment on the absence of a GNB SH at 25.10. Since this break is marked by a *petuchah*, a *parash*, and a *seder*, the evidence in its favour is very strong indeed. The lack of a SH links the immorality at Peor in 25.1-9 with what follows rather than what precedes, and this is clearly contrary to the scribal intent. A new SH at 25.10 would not only minimise this link, but would put more focus on the zeal of Phinehas and the permanence of the priesthood. Here as elsewhere, scribal markers focus on the prominence of the Levites.

Conclusion

Although this study is only tentative, the results it throws up are surely significant and challenging enough to justify further and more detailed study by scholars with more specialised knowledge of the field. We can no longer afford to ignore ancient scribal markers when deciding where to put SHs and how to word them.

GRAHAM S. OGDEN

KINGS AND LABORERS: Temporal Idioms in Isaiah 16.14; 21.16; and 23.15

The author is a UBS translation consultant based in Australia.

There are three occasions in Isaiah when temporal phrases are linked either with kings or with laborers. They are 16.14 and 21.16, where we note the phrase "like the years of a hired worker" (*kishnē sākîr*), and 23.15 where the phrase "like the days of one king" (*kîmē melek 'echād*) appears. The simple question is, what do these phrases mean? What is the significance of comparing a period of time to that of a hired laborer or of a king?

From the point of view of social standing, the king and the laborer are obviously at opposite ends of the social spectrum. In Israel, once the kingdom was established, the king represented its highest office. His role was that of upholding the law, administering justice, providing a religious and spiritual example as Yahweh's representative on earth. The laborer on the other hand, represented the lowest social category, along with orphans and widows. Special regulations made it incumbent on employers of laborers to pay the wages due for the day's work immediately upon completion of the day's task. Payment should never be delayed (Lev 19.13; Deut 24.14; Mal 3.5). The reason for this special concern for the immediate payment of wages due is "because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them" (Deut 24.15). There were other regulations that guarded the

rights of those in the lower echelons of Israelite society—those who had sold themselves into servitude because of poverty had the right to redeem themselves, or have other members of the family buy their freedom (Lev 25.47-55; Deut 15.18). Laborers were a component of society known for the hardship they had to endure—Job 7.1-2; 14.1-6. They were no better off than slaves, and in many cases probably worse off than those who served in the homes of the wealthier members of the community and who at least had food and lodging provided.

The three time phrases in Isa 16.14; 21.16; and 23.15 are similes, each with the same basic structure. They consist of a preposition *kᵉ*, "like, as," plus a construct form of the noun *yôm* "day," or *shānāh* "year," linked to the noun *melek* "king," or *sākîr* "laborer, hireling." In general terms, we recognize that the component parts of similes are three—the subject, the comparison, and the point of similarity. In the three phrases that concern us here, the time period of "three years" (16.14), "(one) year" (21.16), and "seventy years" (23.15) represents the subject component. The comparison lies in the phrase "like the days/years of ...," while the similarity remains to be defined.

There is also an example of this form in Job 7.1 that exhibits this pattern, the only difference being that "laborer" is linked with "days" rather than "years" as in Isaiah 16 and 21. What this suggests is that the actual temporal noun is a variable in the construction—either "day" or "year" can be used without breaking the pattern. Since both "day" and "year" in these examples refer to extended periods of time rather than being specific 24-hour or 365-day periods, this kind of variation is to be expected. There are countless other examples throughout the OT in which "day" and "year" refer in a general way to periods of time, even to lifetimes—see Job 7.1-6; Prov 3.2. In other words, the comparison that is being made by means of this basic pattern can use either "day" or "year" in the comparison element. This means that it is the nouns "laborer" and "king" that hold the key to a successful determination of the similarity component.

The laborer

When we turn to phrases that highlight the laborer's days or years, we can detect a common thread. Each relates to a relatively short period of time. Although it lies outside our immediate focus in Isaiah, we can begin with Job 7.1 in which Job's response to Eliphaz focuses on the hardship that life has become. Job begins with a two-part rhetorical question about life's pain, and the fact that human life is "like the days of a laborer." Vv. 2-5 reflect on the hardship, while v. 6 takes up the second component of v. 1, namely the brevity of a person's "days." In Job 14.6 there is a related thought, not expressed in quite the same pattern as our examples in Isaiah, but one in which a mortal human is "few of days and full of trouble." It is again the pain and the fleeting nature of human life that is the focus of Job 14.1-6. In the end Job pleads "that they may enjoy, like laborers, their days" (14.6). Implicit in this plea is the notion that the "days" of the laborer's life are brief.

In Isa 16.14 we have a more specific note about the length of time that relates to the "years of the laborer." Here we read that Moab's demise will take place "in three years like the years of a laborer" (*bᵉshālôsh shānîm kishnē sākîr*). The overall thrust of the passage indicates that this is meant to refer to a relatively short period of time, and that the downfall of Moab will not be delayed. Likewise 21.16 speaks

specifically of a period of one year "according to the years of a laborer" (*bᵉ'ôd shānāh kishnē sākîr*) within which Kedar will meet a fate similar to that of Moab.

Although our pool of examples is not vast, it is enough to provide us with a consistent picture of the "days" or "years" of the laborer. Not only were they full of hardship and pain, they were above all brief. In other words, the phrase "days of the laborer" points to a relatively short and painful period of time.

The king

Our single reference to the phrase "like the days of one king" (*kîmē melek 'echād*) in Isa 23.15 indicates that this is to be compared with the subject, the stated period of seventy years. This is a decidedly longer period than that noted in the subject of the laborer examples. Not only is it considerably longer in fact, it also is an ideal number, indicative of completion and, in this case, of a full life. The "days of a king" carries the clear implication that the point of similarity in 23.15 is longevity. It is in direct contrast to the brevity of the laborer's life. While there is no specific reference to life's hardship in the case of the king, it is probably implicit that his life was relatively comfortable.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the three phrases that employ the simile "time phrase + like the days/years of + laborer/king" belong to the same genre. The phrase serves as a fixed expression for the length of time periods. In the case of the link with the laborer we have an idiomatic expression for a relatively short and painful period of time. Conversely, the phrase "like the days/years of a king" is an idiom for a long period of time. While there may be other connotations within the comparison, namely that the short life of the laborer is full of pain and distress, over against that of the king with its abundance, the primary thought is probably of longer or shorter periods of time.

Implications for translation

Beginning first of all with the Isa 23.15 reference, since there is specific mention of a period of seventy years it is obvious that a long period of time is involved. That it is an idealized number is recognized since few of Israel's kings actually enjoyed such longevity. Since many readers will be aware that the numeral "seventy" has some special significance in Scripture, translators can simply retain the numeral and render the phrase *kîmē melek* as "the (seventy year) lifespan of a king," or similar.

However, when we turn to the contrasting phrase about the laborer, we note an interesting situation. There are two basic approaches evident. In the one, the phrase is either rendered literally, and almost certainly without much meaning. This is what we find in KJV, NAB, RSV, and NRSV. The second approach is to give the phrase an expanded meaning. NIV, REB, and NJB are exemplars. These latter all share the view that the phrase has something to do with the way in which a hired laborer kept account of the time served. Inherent in this type of rendering is the notion that laborers were very conscious of the hours they worked if working on a daily basis, or of the number of years remaining in their work contract if committed to long-term work. The laborer, so it is argued, would know exactly how many days, months, or years remained before they could be set free at the Year

of Jubilee (Lev 25.50). This alleged obsession with time may well be true of many laborers, but whether it has anything to do with the contextual meaning of the present phrase is something that requires examination.

Among the various major English language translations, NJB suggests a rendering for 16.14 and 23.15 as follows: "(Within three years) as a hired worker reckons them." This rendering is hardly informative and seems to imply that the laborer had a unique way of reckoning the length of a year. This of course is not just meaningless, it is verging on the ridiculous. NIV is a little more enlightening, stating that "(Within three years) as a servant bound by contract would count them." Similarly, REB has "(In three years,) as a hired labourer counts them off exactly ... " Both NIV and REB make the similarity component the fact that laborers were particularly conscious of time served and kept a close count. Tanach (NJPSV) is only a little different when it says "(In three years), fixed like the years of a hired laborer." In other words, there is an exegetical tradition prevailing in some major modern translations that read into the phrase, "like the days/years of a laborer," a laborer's alleged concern with time. TEV, on the other hand, simply says "In exactly three years ... ," with no mention of the laborer at all. It too seems to imply that what is typical of the laborer is a concern with time, since it suggests a rendering that echoes that of REB. As noted above, KJV, NAB, RSV, and NRSV keep close to the Hebrew form and so are essentially meaningless.

This phrase I would argue has become a fixed form for characterizing longer or shorter periods of time. The over-interpretation that is given to the phrase "days of a laborer" in the above translations must be dismissed as altogether unjustified exegetically. However, as an aside, it would be interesting to know how those who render the phrase in terms of a laborer's obsession with time might handle the phrase "days of a king" were they to apply the same thought processes to their treatment of it. What we have in this formal pattern "like the days/years of a laborer/king" are contrasting idioms for a short period of time ("days/years of a laborer,") and a long period of time ("days/years of a king").

Translators would do well to render Isa 16.14 and 21.16 as "In three short (and painful) years, like those of a laborer, ... " or similar. In this way the brevity of the laborer's life that provides the contextual meaning of the phrase can be brought out. Isa 23.15 is a little simpler to handle since the period of seventy years specified in the text already represents a long period of time. By translating the text as it stands it is clear that "days of a king" refers to a long period of time. It probably also implies that it is a period of relative ease and comfort.

NORM MUNDHENK

WHO IS GOD IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA?

The author is a UBS translation advisor who has worked for many years in Papua New Guinea. He is presently based in Irian Jaya, Indonesia.

During the United Bible Societies' Triennial Translation Workshop in 1991, one of the main themes under discussion concerned the matter of how to translate the name of God. A document containing various recommendations was produced at