CHAPTER AND VERSE DIVISION IN THE ROMANIAN BIBLES: INFLUENCES, CHANGES, QUESTIONS

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Abstract: The present paper will discuss the problem of chapter and verse division of the Old Testament in some of the Romanian Bible translations, especially the Synodal Bibles starting with the second Synodal Bible of 1936 and up till 2015, the most recent edition. This group of Synodal Bibles innovated the Romanian translation by combining the Hebrew Text and the Septuagint, and thus leaving aside the tradition of following the Septuagint which was still represented by the first Synodal edition of 1914. Thus, the Orthodox Church of Romania is reading now a hybrid text for the Old Testament.
Keywords: chapter division, verse division, Romanian Synodal Bible, Cornilescu.

1. Chapter and verse division

First, let me remind you shortly the history of chapter and verse division. A sort of text division has been already attested in the early period. In the New Testament, Acts 13:33 quoted a prophecy with the mention that it belongs to the "second Psalm". In the Mishnah (Megillah 4:4) the student of Torah must read at least three verses, a proof for division of the text in verses. In the Talmud the verse division was ascribed, according to the Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 37b, to scribe and priest Ezra himself. The Masorah included also a system of accentuation that provided roughly the division into verses by placing the accent silluq on the last word of the verse, thus indicating the end of the verse (Penkower 2000, 379).

The present chapter division of the Bible appeared in the Middle Ages. It was the work of Professor Stephan Langton, who taught at the University of Paris. The Parisian text of Vulgate (in Latin) offered for the first time a much easier way to refer to biblical text. Probably the teaching staff for the University of Paris mandated Langton to make up the chapter division that was complete before his appointment as cardinal of Canterbury in 1206 (van Banning 2007).

Verse division was established by the French editor and publisher Robert Etienne (Stephanus): first in a French Bible *in folio* (Geneva, 1553) with verses beginning new lines, and then in a Latin Bible *in octavio* (Geneva, 1555) with verses divided by the paragraph sign (Greenslade 1975, 422). His son told later that his father worked on the verse division on a journey from Paris to Lyons

inter equitandum, that was understood ironically "on the horse back". When the horse stumped over a stone in the road, so runs the legend, Robert's hand slipped away marking the verse beginning in the wrong place, an acid irony for the many deficiencies of his system (Metzger 1981, 41).

2. The Romanian chapter and verse divisions: particularities inherited from the Frankfurt Bible

The present Synodal version of the Bible (with its most recent edition in 2015) appeared in 1936, being, as I said, the second Synodal Bible. Although it is innovative in combining the biblical witnesses, Hebrew text and Septuagint, it relies on older tradition in chapter and verse division, the first Synodal Bible of 1914, the *Bible of Blaj* and its editions/revisions, and, most importantly, the first Romanian complete translation of the Bible, the *Bible of Bucharest* 1688. The Bible of Bucharest used the chapter and verse divisions of its source, the Bible of Frankfurt 1597. We are in the very early tradition of verse divisions, only 42 years after its introduction into French and Latin Bibles. Although the Frankfurt Bible has Septuagint for the Old Testament, the Greek text is sometimes an adaptation to the Latin text. For example, the text of the book of Jeremiah missing in Septuagint, but extant in Hebrew was offered from other sources (the main source, as far as I could identify it, was the Complutensian Polyglot, see Mihăilă 2013). So the Frankfurt Bible doesn't provide a pure Septuagint text, but a "patched text", Septuagint with insertions from the Hebrew text via Vulgate.

We might expect that the chapter and verse division in the Frankfurt Bible correspond exactly with Etienne's division, but this is not always the case. For example, Latin Geneva Bible 1555 numbered the title of the *Song of Songs* as the first verse, erroneously wrote again number "one" for the second verse, but came back with number "three" for the third verse, summing up 17 verses for the first chapter of the book. Apart from the error, this is the standard numbering for the modern Bible editions.
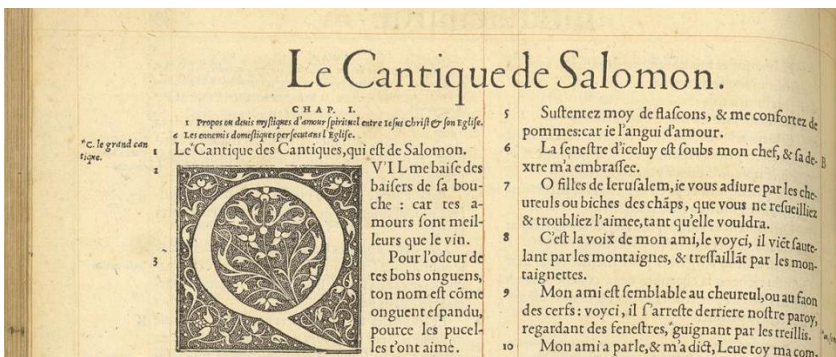

Etienne, French Bible, Geneva, 1553 with correct standard numbering
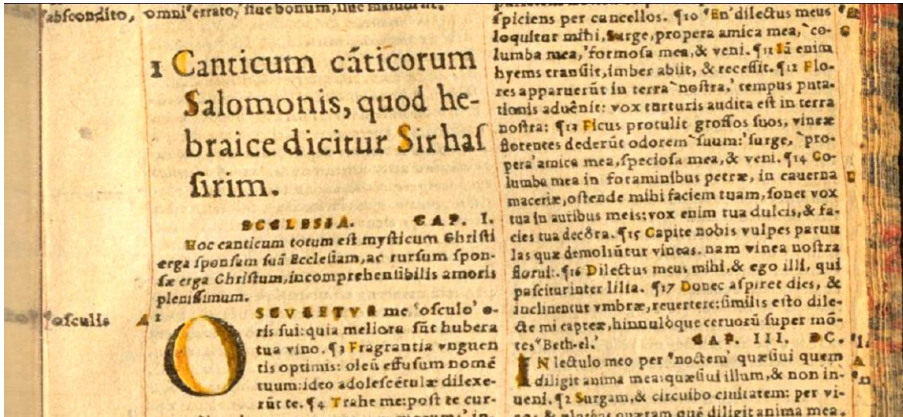
Etienne, Vulgate, Geneva, 1555 with erroneous numbering (verse 1 appears two times)

However, the Greek Frankfurt Bible didn't have a number for the first verse in the Song of Songs, which was understood as a title, and numbered the second verse with "one", resulting in 16 verses for the first chapter of the book instead of 17 verses.
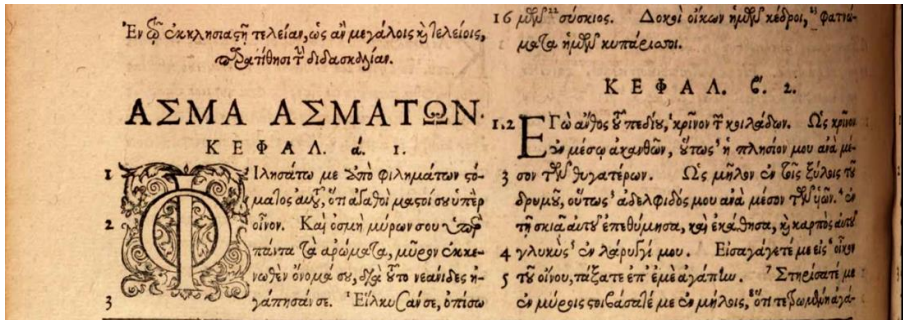
Frankfurt Greek Bible, 1597 dropped the first verse

The Synodal Bible of 1936 inherited all these problems, continuing so the tradition of the "patched" Septuagint in the Frankfurt Bible.
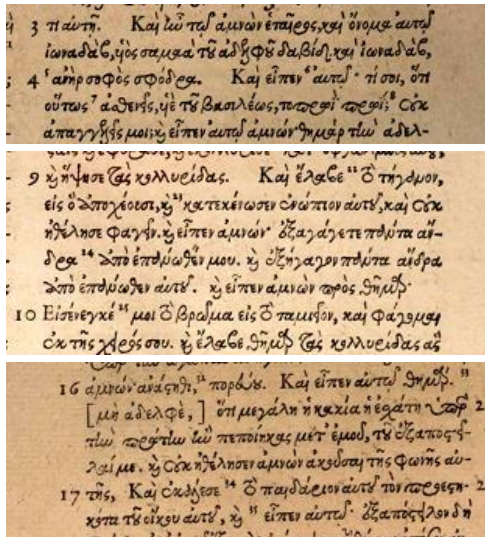
My first conclusion is: When there is a difference between the Synodal Bible and the standard numbering, this is an influence of the Frankfurt Bible of 1597, which in some places (quite a few) has a special numbering system.

3. Synodal Bible 1936 and Cornilescu

But sometimes the Synodal Bible is divergent from the verse numbering of the Frankfurt Bible. These cases were for me of particular interest, because the translators of the Synodal Bible 1936 assumed in the preface that they have translated from the Hebrew original confronted with the Greek version.

One such strange case was chapter 13 from 2 Samuel (2 Kings in LXX), the episode with Tamar's rape by Amnon. The chapter has 38 verses in all editions, but the Synodal Bible has a special layout for the verse division, different from the standard verse division and even from the verse division of the Frankfurt Bible.

Frankfurt Bible, 1597

Galaction Bible, 1939

Synodal Bible, 1936

English translation (RSV)	standard verse division (including Frankfurt Bible)	Synodal verse division
"and Jonadab was a very crafty man"	v. 3	v. 4
"so every one went out from him"	v. 9	v. 10
"but he would not listen to her"	v. 16	v. 17

First, I could not find any parallel layout in the present Bible translations, except one: Cornilescu.

Cornilescu, 1921

Cornilescu, 1924

Cornilescu, 1931

	Cornilescu, 1921	Cornilescu, 1924	Cornilescu, 1931
"and Jonadab was a very crafty man"	v. 3	v. 3	v. 3
"so every one went out from him"	v. 9	v. 9	v. 9
"but he would not listen to her"	*v. 17*	*v. 17*	v. 16

It was strange that, while v. 3 and v. 9 were numbered according to the standard numbering, v. 17 (and only this one) in the Cornilescu's translation 1921 and 1924 (but not 1931) correspond to the Synodal verse division. Because Cornilescu's translations predated the Synodal Bible of 1936, I thought this might be an evidence that the Synodal translators (Gala Galaction, Vasile Radu, and archimandrite Nicodemus) had used Cornilescu's Bibles 1921 and 1924 (but not the edition of 1931). It was also interesting that the Galaction's Bible of 1938-1939 (or the so-called Carol II's Bible) followed the standard numbering for Tamar's rape pericope.

But still remains the question of why the Synodal Bible differ from the standard numbering in the first two cases (verses 3 and 9), where Cornilescu accords with the standard numbering. I looked up in many editions and translations without finding any reasonable answer to this problem.

4. Following Louis Segond

Recently a new search track was opened for me. By chance, I noticed that side numbering of the Bible verses could be misinterpreted when the print layout is wide and the verse has many verbs or many sections. This gave me a clue to the reason of the particularity in the Synodal Bible.

Louis Segond was a Swiss Protestant professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Strasbourg. Already in 1873 (1874 on the printed edition at the Éditions Cherbuliez, Geneva) he had finished a new Old Testament translation from Hebrew. New Testament appeared in 1880 in Geneva, and the entire Bible in the same year in Oxford. Segond died 1885, but a third edition appeared after his death in 1899.

The editions from Geneva 1874 and Oxford 1880 use side numbering, but the 1899 edition inside numbering, as you can see from the following tables.

French Bible, Segond, 1874		
3 tive. Amnon avait un ami, nommé Jonadab, fils de Schimea, 4 frère de David, et Jonadab était un homme très-habile. Il lui dit : Pourquoi deviens-tu ainsi chaque matin plus maigre, toi.	"and Jonadab was a very crafty man"	could be misunderstood as belonging to verse 4
9 et les fit cuire ; prenant ensuite la poêle, elle les versa devant lui. Mais Amnon refusa de manger. Il dit : Faites sortir tout le 10 monde. Et tout le monde sortit de chez lui. Alors Amnon dit à Tamar : Apporte le mets dans la chambre, et que je le mange	"so every one went out from him"	could be misunderstood as belonging to verse 10
16 Elle lui répondit : N'augmente pas, en me chassant, le mal que 17 tu m'as déjà fait. Il ne voulut pas l'écouter, et appelant le garçon qui le servait, il dit : Qu'on éloigne de moi cette femme	"but he would not listen to her"	could be misunderstood as belonging to verse 17

Segond, 1880	Segond, 1899

Amnon avait un ami, nommé Jonadab, 8 fils de Schimea, frère de David, et Jonadab était un homme très-habile. Il lui 4 dit: Pourquoi deviens-tu ainsi chaque matin plus maigre, toi, fils du roi? Ne

dab, fils de Schimea, frère de David, et Jonadab était un homme très habile. ⁴Il lui dit: Pourquoi deviens-tu ainsi chaque matin plus maigre, toi, fils de

9 lui des gâteaux, et les fit cuire; prenant ensuite la poêle, elle les versa devant lui. Mais Amnon refusa de manger. Il dit: Faites sortir tout le monde. Et tout le 10 monde sortit de chez lui. Alors Amnon dit à Tamar: Apporte le mets dans la chambre, et que je le mange de ta main.

fit cuire; ⁹prenant ensuite la poêle, elle les versa devant lui. Mais Amnon refusa de manger. Il dit: Faites sortir tout le monde. Et tout le monde sortit de chez lui. ¹⁰Alors Amnon dit à Tamar: Apporte le mets dans la chan-

16 Elle lui répondit: N'augmente pas, en me chassant, le mal que tu m'as déjà fait. 17 Il ne voulut pas l'écouter, et appelant le garçon qui le servait, il dit: Qu'on éloigne

va-t'en! ¹⁶Elle lui répondit: N'augmente pas, en me chassant, le mal que tu m'as déjà fait. Il ne voulut pas l'écouter, ⁵et appelant le garçon qui le servait, il dit: Qu'on éloigne de moi

Because the action in 2 Samuel chapter 13 took place very quickly, with many verbs, the verse division could be misinterpreted very easily. It should also be mentioned that Segond didn't start up the verses with capital letters when there is a continuous phrase. Keeping this in mind, we can observe from the table showing Segond's French Bible of 1874 that anyone might understand that v. 4 begins with "et Jonadab était un homme très-habile", v. 10 with "Et tout le monde sortit de chez lui", and v. 17 with "Il ne voulut pas l'écouter".

Because no other Bible editions have such a particular verse division as Cornilescu's Bibles 1921 and 1924, and as well as the Synodal Bible 1936, the best explanation is that they were all based on Segond's editions. For Cornilescu, this was not a surprise. In 1926, Gala Galaction claimed that Cornilescu's translation is too much indebted to Segond (Conțac 2011a, 216). Emanuel Conțac also has found evidence for the strong influence of Segond on Cornilescu (Conțac 2011b). But from the above comparison, we must conclude that, at least some parts of the Synodal Bible too were directly influenced by Segond first edition. Speaking of Gala Galaction, a Romanian proverb says: "Thief shouts out 'thieves'." (In fact, Galaction is not the real "thief" here, since archimandrite Nicodemus translated the historical books, see Abrudan 2009. But he is responsible of the whole project as his colleagues, especially when he launches critiques on others).

My second set of conclusions: Cornilescu 1921 and 1924 must have used the first and/or the second edition of Segond (1874 or 1880), because the beginning of verse 17 is ambiguous in those editions (but not in 1899 edition). On the other hand, the Synodal Bible must have used only the first edition (1874), because all three cases discussed above are ambiguous only in that edition. Cornilescu 1931 has switched to the standard numbering, which is very clear

from the inside numbering of Segond 1899. Galaction's Bible 1938-1939 has also switched to the standard numbering, but this edition has unfortunately no continuity with the Synodal editions.

5. What about the Hebrew Bible of Kittel?

I was also very curious whether the Synodal Bible used the critical edition of the Hebrew text available at that time, namely Kittel's first edition, 1906 or the second edition 1913 (the third edition appeared in 1937, so after the Synodal Bible).

Exodus 21:37 is an instructive example. Etienne's French Bible 1553 and Latin Bible 1555 have only 36 verses for Exodus 21, while our verse is ascribed to the beginning of chapter 22. Similarly, Segond 1880, 1899 and 1910, Cornilescu 1921, 1924, 1931, Romanian Britannic Bible 1911 and 1921, and the Synodal Bible 1936.

But the first critical edition of Biblia hebraica (1906 and 1909) has 37 verses for Exodus 21 and likewise the following editions of Biblia Hebraica (1913, 1937), and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. I could not detect this particularity before 1906. This numbering appeared also in the Jewish Bibles, Mikraot Gedolot of Warsaw and Vilna (1912), and in the JPS translation (1917). Surprisingly, Galaction's Bible 1938-1939 followed this second group. It is not clear for me if Galaction used directly Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* or was influenced by other sources that followed the critical edition. Without further evidence, this answer should be left open, but I incline to assume that Galaction used the critical edition. It must have been a powerful and serious source at stake that convinced him to change the traditional numbering of Exodus 21. On the other hand, Galaction and Radu assumed to have used Kittel's first edition for the translation of the Psalms in 1929 (Conţac 2011, 193).

My third set of conclusions: The Synodal Bible 1936 didn't make use of Biblia Hebraica (first edition 1906 and 1909; second edition 1913). I am still wandering if the Synodal translators have really used any Hebrew text. Some parallels, for example in the list of unclean animals in Leviticus 11, could prove that generally high percentage of Hebrew texts specifics is due partly to the French Segond Bible (v. 30 "snail" [Romanian "melcul"]), and partly to Russian Bibles (v. 17 "ibis" [Romanian "ibisul"]), but not to the resort to Hebrew text itself. This could be the theme for a forthcoming article. We must also conclude that Galaction's Bible was a real step forward: the errors owing to the influence of Segond first edition were removed and the critical standard edition (or one dependent of it) was followed. But, as I said, Galaction's Bible had no influence on further Romanian Synodal editions.

6. Conclusion

Although boring and time consuming, the study of the chapter and verse division could provide interesting clues to the interdependence of Bible translations/editions. Further study using chapter and verse division comparison might prove other cases of direct influence.

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