

NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

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Psalm 70:1

לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר:
אֱלֹהִים לְהַצִּילֵנִי
יְהוָה לְעֲזָרְתִּי חוֹשָׁה:

NAS

For the choir director.

A Psalm of David; for a memorial.

O God, *hasten* to deliver me;
O LORD, hasten to my help!

LXX

εἰς τὸ τέλος τῷ Δαυιδ εἰς ἀνάμνησιν
εἰς τὸ σῶσαί με κύριον
ὁ θεός εἰς τὴν βοήθειάν μου πρόσχευς

For the end, to David, for a remembrance.

That the Lord may save me,
O God, draw nigh to my help.

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For bass voices,¹ for the king,² for a memorial.³

Remember, O God, to deliver me
O Yahweh, hasten to save me.

Following the superscription, Psalm 70:1 begins now with the vocative אֱלֹהִים, “O God,” followed by the sequential

infinitive לְהַצִּילַנִי “to deliver me.” The original finite verb which began the verse survives in the לְהַזְכִּיר “to hold in memory” of the superscription. This הַזְכִּיר was mistakenly read as a *Hiph^cil* infinitive and was given secondarily the preposition ל and made the final word of the superscription.

However, this הַזְכִּיר was a *Hiph^cil* imperative and was originally the first word of the psalm itself: “Remember, O God, to save me”⁴ On the other hand, if the infinitive הַזְכִּיר was always a part of the superscription, the text would have included the infinitive *and* the imperative: (לְ) הַזְכִּיר הַזְכִּיר, with the imperative הַזְכִּיר having dropped out by haplography. Thus, there is no need to assume that the imperative רַצֵּה “be pleased,” found in Psa 40:14, was ever a part of Psa 70:1.⁵ A typical 3 + 3 bi-colon can be restored simply by borrowing the הַזְכִּיר from the superscription or restoring its double.

Psalm 40:14–17

Psalm 70 is quoted in its entirety in Psa 40:14–17, although it is not an entirely exact quotation, there being twelve variations in the texts of the two psalms. Four words in Psa 40:14–17 are not found in Psalm 70, namely, the רַצֵּה “be pleased” in 40:14, the יַחַד “together” in 40:15; the לְסַפּוֹתָהּ “to snatch it away” in 40:15; and the לִי “to me” in 40:16. The other eight variations⁶ between the psalms are

MT Psalm 40:	MT Psalm 70
v.14 יְהוָה	v. 1 אֱלֹהִים
v. 16 יִשְׁמֹר	v. 4 יִשׁוּבוּ ⁷

v. 17	יְהוָה	v. 5	אֱלֹהִים
v. 17	תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ	v. 5	יְשׁוּעָתְךָ ⁸
v. 18	אֲדַנִּי	v. 5	אֱלֹהִים
v. 18	יִחְשָׁב לִי	v. 6	חֹשֶׁה-לִי ⁹
v. 18	עֲזָרְתִּי	v. 6	עֲזָרִי
v. 18	אֱלֹהֵי	v. 6	יְהוָה

There was no plagiarism involved in the use of Psalm 70 by the author of Psalm 40. The poet clearly identified his source, stating:

בְּמִגְלַת-סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלַי

in the scroll of scripture it was written about me.

Unfortunately, this citation introducing the quotation became detached from the quotation itself, which at one time must have immediately followed the statement of source. Somehow the phrase **בְּמִגְלַת סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלַי** ended up as 40:8b, and the quotation from Psalm 70 ended up as the last five verses of Psalm 40.

Rearranging Psalm 40

Once the psalm, now called Psalm 40, was incorporated into the **מִגְלַת-סֵפֶר** “scroll of scripture” which included what is now called Psalm 70, the discrepancies between the original Psalm 70 and its duplicate in Psalm 40 became embarrassingly conspicuous. The problem was solved not by harmonizing the texts of Psalms 40 and 70 but by rearranging the verses of Psalm 40 so as to obscure the direct quotation and eliminate its proper citation. The rearrangement was quite successful, for commentators have attempted to identify the **מִגְלַת-סֵפֶר** “scroll of scripture” with the Torah of Moses, or

the Deuteronomic Code, or the heavenly record book of human deeds, mentioned in Psa 56:8, 87:6, and 139:16. The fact that it referenced a scroll of “published” psalms from which the current psalmist quoted has to date gone unrecognized.¹⁰

Originally, Psalm 40 was likely to have had the following sequence of verses (with the words requiring additional comment being marked in bold italics):

40:7b. In the scroll of scripture it is written about me:

40:13–17. Let them be put to shame and confusion altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt! Let them be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, Aha!” But may all who seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is Yahweh!” As for me, I am poor and needy; but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not tarry, O my God!

40:11–12. Do not thou, O LORD, withhold thy mercy from me, let thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness ever preserve me! For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me, till I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.

40:1–6. I waited patiently for Yahweh; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the *burial plot*, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in Yahweh. Blessed is the man who makes Yahweh his trust, who does not turn to *skeptics* or *misleading myth*.

You have multiplied, O Yahweh my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with

thee! Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering you do not desire. You reiterated to me the pronouncements: Burnt offering and a sin offering you have not required.

40:7a. Whereupon I said: “Behold, *I have confessed*:

40:8–10. I delight to do your will, O my God; your law *has been internalized.*”¹¹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation. Lo, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Yahweh. I have not hid your saving help within my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Psa 40:2a (MT 40:3a)

וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שְׁאוֹן מִטֵּיט הַיָּנּוּן

RSV

He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog

LXX

καὶ ἀνήγαγέν με ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας
καὶ ἀπὸ πηλοῦ ἰλύος

And he brought me up out of a pit of misery,
and from miry clay.

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He drew me up from the burial plot,
out of the miry bog.

Contextually, the **שְׁאוֹן בּוֹר** appears to be a reference to the grave. As suggested in BDB (981) the phrase can mean “pit of roaring (of waters?),” which would fit well the context of

II Sam 22:5–20 (Psa 18:4–19), which speaks of “the waves of death,” “the torrents of perdition,” “a gathering of water,” “the channels of the sea,” and “many waters.” But the only hint of moisture in Psalm 40 is the “miry bog,” which, as in Psa 69:2, suggests one’s silently sinking into soggy soil.¹² The **שָׁאֵן** in Psa 40:2a is actually the cognate of Arabic **ثوى** (*tawaya*) “he remained, stayed, dwelt, or abode . . . he was slain and remained where he was, or he remained in his grave . . . he died,” with the passive **ثوى** (*tuwiya*) meaning “he was buried.” The noun **مَثْوَى** (*matwan*) means “a place where one stays, dwells, or abides, an abode or a dwelling,” (Lane 1863: 365–366; Wehr 1979: 131). In terms of dynamic equivalence, **שָׁאֵן** would mean “the final resting place” and the **בּוֹר שָׁאֵן** would be equal to “grave site” or “burial plot,” with the **בּוֹר** perhaps being read as **בָּר** “field, uncultivated ground.”

This cognate also provides the derivation for the **שְׁאֵיָה** in Isa 24:12—as understood by the Septuagint translators. The Hebrew and Greek for 24:12 are

נִשְׂאָר בְּעִיר שְׁמָהּ וְשְׂאֵיָהּ יִכָּתֵשׂ עָרָהּ

Desolation is left in the city,

the gates are battered into ruins (RSV).

καὶ καταλειφθήσονται πόλεις ἔρημοι
καὶ οἴκοι ἐγκαταλειμμένοι ἀπολοῦνται

and cities shall be left desolate,

and houses being left shall fall to ruin.

Hatch and Redpath (1897: 138, 366, 980) identified the **ἐγκαταλειμμένοι** “ones being left” with the MT **שְׂאֵיָהּ** and the **ἀπολοῦνται** “fall to ruin” with the MT **יִכָּתֵשׂ**. According to

this analysis, the MT שַׁעַר “gate” has no equivalent in the Greek translation. They did not identify the οἴκοι of Isa 24:12 (marked with a †) with any Hebrew stem. However, the οἴκοι reflects the MT שַׁאֲיָה (perhaps read as the plural שַׁאֲיָת [scriptio defectiva] in the *Vorlage*). This שַׁאֲיָה/שַׁאֲיָת, like the שַׁאֲוֹן of Psa 40:2, is a cognate of the Arabic ثوى (*tawaya*) “he dwelt, or abode,” and مَثْوَى (*matwan*) “a place where one stays, dwells, or abides, an abode or a dwelling” i.e., the οἶκος of the Greek translation.¹³

Although the Septuagint translators of Psa 40:2 translated שַׁאֲוֹן as ταλαιπωρίας “misery, distress” (as though it were from the root שׂוֹא—like the שׂוֹאָה וּמִשָּׂאָה “distress and misery” in Job 30:3—rather than from the root שׂוֹה / שׂוֹהָ), the fact that the Septuagint translators rendered שַׁאֲיָה in Isa 24:12 as οἶκος is sufficient reason to add שׂוֹה, stem III, the cognate of ثوى (*tawaya*), to the lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, and to recognize that the שַׁאֲוֹן of 40:2 was derived from it.

Psa 40:4b (MT 40:5b)

וְלֹא־פָנָה אֶל־רְהָבִים וְשִׁטִּי כָזָב

RSV

who does not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false gods!

LXX

καὶ οὐκ ἐνέβλεψεν εἰς ματαιότητας¹⁴
καὶ μανίας ψευδεῖς

and has not regarded vanities and false frenzies

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who does not turn to *skeptics* nor *misleading myth*

While most translators and commentators have interpreted the רָהַבִּים of 40:4 as “proud, arrogant, boisterous” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1193), Dahood (1965: 243) paraphrased רָהַבִּים as “pagan idols.” He argued

The usual derivation of *r^ehābīm* from *rāhab*, “to be arrogant,” is supported by analogous *zēdīm*, a term for pagan deities in Ps xix 14 deriving from *zyd*, “to act stormily, arrogantly.” Hence the mythical sea monster Rahab is “the Arrogant One.” Note too that LXX translates *r^ehābīm* by *mataiōtētas* which elsewhere reproduces Hebrew words for “idols, gods.”

But this argument is weakened by two facts. First, the זָרִים in Psa 19:14 was translated in the LXX as ἀλλοτριῶν “strangers, foreigners” (as though זָרִים were זָרִים), not by ματαιότητας “vanities.” Secondly, זָרִים was used elsewhere to modify אֲנָשִׁים “men” (as the “godless men” in Jer 43:2) and used with אִישׁ “man” as the subject (as in Exo 21:14, “a man acts presumptuously to slay his neighbor”). Thus, Psa 19:14 is not a convincing analogy for building the case that רָהַבִּים means “pagan idols.” Moreover, ματαιότης was used to translate הַבֵּל, הַבֵּל, הַנָּה, רִיק, and שָׁוְא, but never the words for idols, like עֲצָב, סִמָּל, מִפְּלֶצֶת, and אֱלִיל.¹⁵

Gunkel and many others identified the רָהַבִּים with Rahab, the sea monster mentioned in Pss 87:4 (Pααβ); 89:10 (MT 89:11) (ὑπερήφανον “proud ones”); Job 9:13 and 26:12 (κῆτη/κῆτος “sea monster”); Isa 30:7 (ματαιία “vain”); and Isa 51:9 (which lacks a corresponding word in the Greek).

The ματαιότητος “vanities” in the Septuagint and the ܠܫܘܢܘܬܐ (*sērîqûta*) “vanity, nothingness” in the Syriac of Psa 40:4 suggested for Briggs (1906: 358; BDB 923) and others a *Vorlage* with הַבְּלִים/הַבֵּל for the MT רְהִיבִים. But the translation of both רַהֵב and הַבֵּל in Isa 30:7 as μάταια/ματαιία “vain” and as ܠܫܘܢܘܬܐ/ܠܫܘܢܐ (*sērîq/sērîqûta*) “vanity,” supports the integrity of the MT רְהִיבִים in 40:4.

In light of the Arabic راب/ريب (*raib/râba*) “it made me to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” ريب (*rayb*) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” and مرتاب (*murtâb*) “a sceptic in matters of religion,” (Lane 1867: 1197–1198), one can postulate the Hebrew root רִיב, stem II, and its by-form רַהֵב, which would be the cognate of Arabic ارهبه/رهب (*rahiba/ʿarhab*) “he feared, he frightened” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1192), as in the phrase لم أرهب بك (*lam ʿurhab bika*) “[lit. I was not frightened by thee]; meaning, I did not see in thee what induced in me doubt, or suspicion, or evil opinion” (Lane (1867: 1168)).¹⁶

Consequently, the MT רַהֵבִים has four possible meanings: (1) proud, boisterous, frightening (2) the “Rahabeans,” i.e., devotees of the mythical sea monster Rahab who was also known as Leviathan and Lotan, (3) “vain, useless, worthless,” as understood by the Greek and Syriac translators who took רַהֵב to be a synonym of הַבֵּל, and (4) “doubtful, suspicious, skeptical.” Given the positive references to those who trust (מִבְּטָח/בְּטָח) in 40:3–4, a negative reference to skeptics and doubters (רְהִיבִים) in 40:5 would be contextually appropriate.

The MT **שׁוּטִי** is generally translated as “those who turn aside” or “go astray” or “lapse into,” and is derived from **שׁוּטַ**, a by-form of **שׁוּטָה/שׁוּטָה** “to swerve, to fall away” (BDB 962; KBS 4:1439). But the Septuagint translators interpreted it differently.¹⁷ The $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ of 40:4 (39:4) is marked with a † in Hatch and Redpath (1897: 895), as though there were no corresponding word for it in the MT (like the **מִשְׁטָמָה** [= $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$] appearing twice in Hos 9:7–8). But the **שׁוּטִי/שׁוּטָה** “to become demented” and the **שׁוּטִי/שׁוּטָה** “madman, fool” (as cited in Jastrow 1531, 1553) is a good match for the Septuagint’s $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ “false frenzies.”¹⁸

However, the MT **כֹּזֵב** is singular and the **שׁוּטִי** is a plural construct (or an Aramaic singular absolute) without a preposition, meaning literally “ones avoiding a lie.” Thus, “false frenzies” (LXX), “lying follies” (DRA), “such as turn to lies” (KJV, ASV, NKJ) and “those who lapse into falsehood” (NAS, NAU)—which add the preposition “to” or “into”—are not literal translations.

Given the well attested confusion of **י** and **ר** (Delitzsch 1920: 111 §109^a), the **שׁוּטִי** in 40:4 may have been originally the **שׁוּרִי** “scribe, official, a writ, a document” (BDB 1009; Jastrow 1555; KBS 4: 1441, 1475). The Syriac cognate carries nuances of “talking foolishly, to lose one’s senses,” as well as a promissory note, bond, or deed (Payne Smith 574). The Arabic cognate is **سَطَرَة** (*saṭara*) “he composed lies, falsehoods” and **سَطْرَة / أسطورة** (*saṭr / ʿustūrat*) “lies, or falsehoods; or fictions, or stories having no foundation or no right tendency or tenour . . . [such as we commonly term legends] . . . written stories or their written lies” (Lane 1872: 1357–1358).

Wehr (1979: 477) included the terms “fable, saga, myth,” as well as “legend.”

Thus, instead of *paraphrasing* שְׁטִי כֹזֵב (which literally can mean only “those avoiding a lie” or “the fools of a lie”) to “*those who go astray after false gods,*” the restored שְׁטֵר כֹּזֵב means quite literally a “lying legend” or “misleading myth” (written or oral). This interpretation shifts the focus away from what was at best an allusion to *idols* to an explicit reference to the *myths* which challenged the traditions of Israelite monotheism. It was not about what skilled artisans crafted with their hands, but about what poets composed and mythologists wrote: empty words, vain thoughts, false fables—all of them שְׁטֵר כֹּזֵב “a written lie” compared to the thoughts, wonders, and law of Yahweh (40:5, 8).

Psa 40:6 (MT 40:7; LXX 39:6)

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא-חָפְצָת
 אֲזָנִים כָּרִיתָ לִּי
 עוֹלָה וְחַטָּאת לֹא שְׂאֵלָת:

Sacrifice and offering you desired not.

Ears you dug for me.

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require.

Greek Texts of Psa 39:7 (MT 40:7)

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας

Sacrifice and offering you desired not.

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι (C^A B^S)

But a body you restored for me.

|| ὦτια δὲ ἔσκαψας μοι (Aquila)

But ears you covered/protected for me.

ὦτια δὲ κατεσκεύασάς μοι (Symmachus)

But ears you prepared for me.

ὦτια κατηρτίσω μοι (Theodotian)

But ears you restored me. ||

ὄλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας
Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not

Syriac Texts of Psa 40:6b (40:7b)¹⁹

ܐܠ ܫܡܫܝ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ (Syro-Hex.)

pagrā' den tēqant liy

then you restored the body for me

ܐܠ ܫܡܫܝ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ (Syro-Hex. Margin)

'ednā' den hēpārt liy

then you dug the ear for me

ܐܠ ܫܡܫܝ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ (Peshitta)

'ednā' den nēqabt liy

then you pierced the ear for me

Lamsa's paraphrase

“but as for me, I now have understanding.

As is obvious from these translations the אָזְנַיִם כְּרִיתָ לִי “ears you bored for me” has been very problematic. At first glance it appears that the three major Greek codices, reading σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι “but a body you restored for me” (later quoted in Heb 10:5, see below) had a quite different *Vorlage*. Hatch and Redpath (1897: 1330) marked the σῶμα of this verse with a † to indicate that there was no corresponding word for it in the Hebrew text. The variants in the

Syriac tradition correspond to those in the Greek text, reinforcing the impression that אֶזְנֵי כְּרִית לִי had been corrupted in the *Vorlagen* used by some Greek and Syriac translators.

Briggs (1906: 358) cited a number of proposed emendations, like reading עצם “bone, body, self” for אֶזְנֵי “ears,” and offered his own emendation of אִז בְּרִית לִי “then had I the covenant.” His assertions that “Ⲭ translates as if it read כּוֹנֵנְתָּ (*sic*) and had supplied the object,” and that the “Ⲭ mistook אִז for אִזְן,” as well as reading the MT כְּרִית as ברִית,” are not convincing.

The Greek σῶμα “body” was probably be due to scribal errors in the uncials when the final ζ of ἡθέλησας was mistakenly read as the initial letter of the ὠτία “ears.” Then the τι of this erroneous σωτια was misread as a μ, resulting in the σῶμα now in the texts. Once σῶμα appeared in the text, the כְּרִית in the *Vorlage* was read as כְּרִית; and this כְּרִית was read as the cognate of Aramaic בְּרִי/בְרָא to get well, recover, to be strong or stout,” אֲבָרִי “to make well” and בְּרִיא/בְּרִיא “healthy, strong, stout” (Jastrow 192; KBS I: 154). It is the cognate of the Arabic verb بَرِهَ (*baraha*) “his body returned to a healthy state, or his health of body returned to him, or his bodily condition became good, after having been altered by disease” and nouns أَبْرَهَ (*abrahu*) and بَارِي (bâriy) meaning respectively “having the body in a healthy state” and “recovering from disease, sickness or malady” (Lane 1863: 179, 196) Castell (1669: 431) rendered it “*convalluit*”). Thus, the Greek καταρτίσω “to mend, to restore, to make right” and the Vulgate’s *perfecisti* are good translations of this בְּרִיה.

Given the implicit reference to healing in 40:2, “he drew me up from the burial pit,” a reference to restored health in 40:6 was contextually very appropriate.

Dahood (1966: 246), by (1) reading כָּרַתְּ “you cut, you circumcised” for MT כָּרִיתְּ “you bored” and by (2) appealing to the עֲרְלָה אָזְנָם “their uncircumcised ear” in Jer 6:10, paraphrased the אֲזַנִּים כָּרִיתְּ לִי as “so you made my ear receptive.” However, had the psalmist intended to say “you circumcised ears for me,” the verb מוּל used for the circumcising of the foreskin (Gen 17:11), as well as the foreskin of the heart (Deut 10:16), would surely have been used.

The commentators and translators, like Lamsa, who paraphrased the אֲזַנִּים כָּרִיתְּ לִי and אֲדַנָּה דֵּנֵה נִמְבֵּחַ לִי (°*ednā den nqabt lī*), to mean “you opened my ears” or “you gave me understanding,” have appealed directly or indirectly to Isaiah 50:4–5.

אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה נָתַן לִי לְשׁוֹן לַמּוֹדִים
 יַעִיר בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר
 יַעִיר לִי אָזְן לְשִׁמְעַת פְּלִמּוֹדִים:
 אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה פָּתַח־לִי אָזְן
 וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא מָרִיתִי

My Lord Yahweh gave me the tongue of a teacher

Morning by morning he wakens,

he wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

My Lord Jahweh opened for me an ear,

and I was not rebellious

However, כָּרַח “to dig” would be a synonym for the חָצַב “to dig, to hew” and the נָקַר “to dig, to bore” in Isa 51:1, but not

a synonym of the עִיר “to awaken” or the פָּתַח “to open” in Isa 50:5.

An accurate interpretation of the אֲזַנִּים כְּרִיתָ requires the repointing of the dual אֲזַנִּים as the plural אֲזַנִּים and recognizing it as the cognate of the Arabic أذُن (*dân^{un}*) “a notification; an announcement,” as in the *Qurʾan*, *Sura* 9:3,

وَأَذِّنْ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ

And an announcement from Allah and His Apostle, to the people on the day of the Great Pilgrimage.

Lane [1863: 43–44] noted that أذُن (*dân^{un}*) was used for the call to prayer made from the minaret (مِدْنَة [mīdānat]) by the muezzin (مُؤَذِّن); and Dozy (1927: 15) cited أذِن (*idan^{un}*) (= أَمْر) “ordre, commandment d’un supérieur.”

The אֲזַנִּים “notifications” in Psa 40:7 refers to Yahweh’s announcements, scattered in these various texts:

I Sam 15:22	Isa 66:3–4
Hos 6:6	Jer 7:21–23
Amos 5:15–21	Psa 50:8–16, 23 ²⁰
Mic 6:6–8	Psa 51:16–17
Isa 1:11–17	Psa 69:30–31.

All of these declare that Yahweh did not desire blood sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Similarly, the כְּרִיתָ in the phrase אֲזַנִּים כְּרִיתָ “ears you dug” needs to be reinterpreted in light of the Arabic cognate كَر (karra), which in forms 2 and 5 means “to repeat, to reiterate, to do repeatedly,” as in the phrase كَرَّ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ

كذًا (*karrara* ^c *alay sam^c ihi kaḏa* ^o) “he reiterated such a thing to his hearing” (Lane 1885: 2601; Wehr 1979: 958}. Castell (1669: 1794), translated this كَرَّ (*karra*) as “*reduxit, repetavit, iteravit, replicavit*”; and Dozy (1927:451) translated it as “refaire, envoyer pour le seconde fois, raffiner.” The by-forms כרה / כרר “to reiterate” can be added to the by-forms cited in GKC §77^{a,c} (נדה / נדר “to flee,” רמה / רמם “to be quiet,” חנה / חנן “to incline,” and כלה / כלל “to end”).

Thus, the revocalized לִי אֲזַנִּים פְּרִיתָ means “you reiterated for me the pronouncement(s).” The plural אֲזַנִּים could be a plural of intensity (GKC §124^d), suggesting the significance of the pronouncement in Psa 40:6 that God has no desire for sacrifices. But, given the ten texts listed above and in the Addendum below, a regular plural cannot be ruled out. This plural may really do double duty:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire.

You *reiterated* to me the *pronouncement(s)*:

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not request!

Thus, the Arabic cognate برى (*baraya*) = ברה “to restore the body” clarifies the κατηρτίσω σῶμα “prepared/perfected a body” in the Septuagint (S^{ABS}) of Psa 39:7 and Heb 10:5. The cognates أذنان (^o *dân^{un}*) “a notification” and كَرَّ (*karra*) “to reiterate” clarify the problematic phrase אֲזַנִּים פְּרִיתָ once it is vocalized as אֲזַנִּים פְּרִיתָ “you repeated the pronouncement(s).”

The psalmist reiterated Yahweh’s repudiation of the sacrificial cult while sharing his personal experience. He had been near death, but was healed; he was overwhelmed by his iniquities, but was made guiltless, pure, and free. All of this

without a sacrifice or an offering having been made. God's help (עֲזָרָה) and deliverance (פְּלִיטָה) had been free for the asking. But once healing and forgiveness was received the psalmist responded with a pledge to declare "the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation."

The pledge lies hidden in 40:7a (MT 8a) in the phrase אָז אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאתִי "then I said, 'behold I came.'"²¹ While the MT בָּאתִי has been derived from the common verb בּוֹא "to come," it is better derived in this context from בּוֹא, stem II, which is the cognate of Arabic بَوَّأ / بَأَّأ (*bawā'a / bā'a*) "he returned . . . he made himself answerable, responsible, or accountable for it [sin] by an inseparable obligation, . . . he acknowledged it or confessed it."²² In prayer one says أَبوءُ أَلَيْكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ (*abū'u ʿalayka biniʿmatika*) "I acknowledge, or confess, to thee thy favour [towards me, as imposing an obligation upon me]" (Lane 1863: 270–271; Castell 1669: 299 translated it "*reversus fuit . . . confessus fuit*"). The first part of this prayer could well have been a paraphrase of the psalmist words in 40:7a-8

הִנֵּה־בָאתִי . . .
 לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי חַפְצָתִי
 וְתוֹרָתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי

Behold I **confessed**:

"to do your will, O my God, is my desire
 your Law has been internalized."²³

Psa 40:7–9 (LXX 39:7–9) and Heb 10:5–9

The quotation of the Psa 40:7–9 (MT) in Heb 10:5–9 follows the Greek text rather than the Hebrew text. But the

quotation is not an exact quotation. Several differences suggest that the author of Hebrews was working from memory. They are (1) the singular ὄλοκαυτώμα “burnt offering” (39:7) became the plural ὄλοκαυτώματα (10:6); (2) the οὐκ ἠθέλησας “you did not desire” in 39:7 became οὐκ εὐδόκησας “you did not find pleasure in” (10:5); (3) the τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλήθην “to do your will, O my God, I desire” (39:8b) became simply οὐ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεός τὸ θέλημά σου “to do, O God, your will” (10:7); and (4) the ὠτία “ears” of ܐܘܩܩܘܣܐ (39:7)—like the ܐܕܢܐ (‘edna’) “ear” of the *Peshitta* and in the margin of the *Syro-Hexapla*—became σῶμα “body” as in the ܐܘܩܩܘܣܐ.²⁴

Jobes (1991: 387–396) argued that these variations were the “intentional and creative rhetorical product of the author” of the epistle and that they

were not already in the Greek translation of the OT in the first century. If this is true, the appearance of σῶμα in Ps 40,7 in all extant Greek manuscripts implies that Christian scribes ‘corrected’ the text of Ps 40 in subsequent manuscripts to agree with the quotation by the author of Hebrews (388).

Jobes based her argument on “the principles of first-century rhetoric” which, according to the *Institutio Oratoria* of Quintilian, included, among other options, the use of paronomasia.²⁴ She noted

With each variation the author [of Hebrews] has achieved a phonetic assonance between the variant and another element in the quotation. This phonetic assonance functions to denote linguistic highlighting, or marked prominence, for that pairing (390).²⁵

But the question as to why the author of Hebrews restricted his use of good Quintillian rhetorical devices to just the “phonetic manipulation” of six quotations from the Septuagint is not addressed. One would expect the entire epistle to abound with euphony, homoeoteleuton, cadence, paronomasia, and *parison* if that were the author’s rhetorical style.

Moreover, if, as Jobes argued, Christian scribes ‘corrected’ all extant Greek texts of Psa 40:7, how did they miss the $\omega\tau\iota\alpha$ in $\text{C}^{\text{Aq}\Theta\Sigma}$, and why was this Psalm 40 singled out for correction and the many, many other variants, like those in Matt 4:16 and Isa 9:2,²⁶ not corrected? Lastly, why would Christian scribes be indifferent to the variants between the Psalm 40 (LXX 39:14–18) and its quotation of Psalm 70 (LXX 69: 2–6)?

Four of the five questions posited by Jobes in the first paragraph of her study require a “yes” answer: (1) the variations under review *were* present in the Greek *Vorlage* use by the author of the Hebrews; (2) the Hebrew *Vorlage* used by the Septuagint translators (אֲרִיִן בְּרִיחַ) did *differ* from the MT (אֲזַנִּים כְּרִיחַ); (3) the LXX variant $\sigma\omega\mu\hat{\alpha}$, instead of $\omega\tau\iota\alpha$ (= אֲזַנִּים), definitely served the author’s Christological argument in a way the Hebrew text could not; and (4) the abbreviated statement in 10:7, “*I have come to do your will,*” did serve the author’s soteriological assertion that “*by which will* ($\epsilon\upsilon\ \omega\ \theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota$) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ($\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\chi\iota$) (10:7).

Jobes’ question about the variants being evidence of the author’s lapse of memory requires a “no” answer. The variations in Heb10:5 and Psa 39:6 (LXX) definitely do *not* reflect a lapse of memory. Rather, the variants reflect the author’s freedom to paraphrase with all the rights and

privileges of a Targumist—which is not surprising given the fact that this Epistle Πρὸς Ἑβραίους was, in the words of Buchanan (1976: xix, xxi), a “homiletical midrash based on Ps 110.” The epistle received the title Πρὸς Ἑβραίους because of its midrashic literary style and content. Buchanan well noted

Midrashic composers were resourceful apologists with amazing skill in manipulating words, phrases, and passages to suit their own need in ways that were far removed from the original meaning of the text.

The author of Hebrews (whoever he was) and the original community of Christians to whom he wrote (whoever they were)²⁷ were obviously more attuned to the rhetoric of the *Targumim* and *Midrashim* than to the canons of Quintillian elocution.

SUMMARY

As rearranged in this study Psalm 40 was balanced by a lengthy quotation used as the introduction and a second, shorter quotation which provided the psalm’s conclusion. The introductory quotation was from the “scroll of scripture” which contained what is now Psalm 70 in the canonical Psalter. The “poor and needy” author of Psalm 40 identified with the words penned by an earlier “poor and needy” psalmist and made those words the prelude of his own psalm.

Between the introductory borrowed quotation (five verses) and the psalmist’s own concluding personal public confessions of his faith and God’s faithfulness (three verses) was the main body of the psalm (eight verses). One verse introduced the two quotations. In 7b, “In the scroll of scripture it is written about me,” preceded the introduction. The **וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה** in 7a, “whereupon I said: ‘Behold, I have confessed,’” preceded the

closing quotation.

The eight verses making up the main body of the psalm include eight elements in this order: (1) a plea for Yahweh's mercy, (2) a confession of sin followed by a patient wait for God's help, (3) God's deliverance of the psalmist from a grave illness, (4) the psalmist sings the praises of God in whom he puts his trust, (5) a blessing for those who trust Yahweh rather than trusting scary skeptics or misleading myths, (6) an affirmation of the incomparable goodness of God, (7) recognition that God does not require sacrifices and offerings, and (8) the psalmist' recognition that he has been freed from his sins, faults, and vices by the sheer grace of God.

A number of Arabic cognates help to clarify ambiguities and variant readings in the Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew texts of Psalms 40 and 70, as well as Heb 10:5–7 and Isa 24:12. These cognates are (in Arabic alphabetical order)

1. بَرَأ (*bara^a*) the cognate of בִּרְא / בִּרְה “to restore the body,” found in *Vorlage* of the LXX (39:7) which has σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω; whereas the MT (40:7) has כִּרְה “to dig.”
2. بَوَأ / بَأء (*bawa^a / bâ^a*) the cognate of בּוֹא, stem II, “to confess,” found in 40:7 (MT 40:8).
3. ثَوَى (*tuwiya*) / مَثَوَى (*matwan*) the cognate of שָׁנָה / שָׁנָה and the noun שְׁאִיָּה in Isa 24:12 (LXX οἶκος), as well as the שְׁאִוָּן “(final) resting place” in Psa 40:2 (MT 40:3).
4. أَذَانَ (*dân^{un}*) “a notification” the cognate of the אָזַן in Psa 40:7 (MT).
5. رَاب / رَيْب (*raib / râba*) “to doubt, to be suspicious, to be

skeptical,” *ريب* (*rayb*) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” the cognate of the *רְהָבִים* in 40:4 “sceptics (in matters of religion).”

6. *سطر* (*satara*) the cognate *שִׁטָּר* “a writer, a writer of lies, legends” and *שִׁטָּר* myths” in 40:4 (MT 40:5) when the MT *שִׁטָּי* is restored to *שִׁטָּר* or *שִׁטָּר*.
7. *كر* (*karra*) “to reiterate, to repeat” the cognate *כרה* in Psa 40:7 (MT).

The working Hebrew vocabulary of the Septuagint translators included *בָּרָה* “to heal the body” and *שְׁאִיָּה* “resting place, home,” two words which have gone unrecognized in the current lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Had this *בָּרָה* survived in post-biblical Hebrew—as its cognate survived in Arabic—there would have been no need for all the speculation of how Hebrew *אזניים* (= *ὠτία* = ears) ended up in the Septuagint as *σωμα* “body.” Other words still needing to be added to the Hebrew lexicons include *בָּנָא* “to confess,” *שְׁאִוֵן* “(burial) place,” and *רְהָב* “skeptic.” The ambiguity of homographs like *שטי*, *בוא*, *אזן*, and *רהב* contributed to a number of contextually poor translations.

NOTES

1. Dalglisch (1962: 237–238) noted “. . . the phrase *לְנִצְיָה* appears to indicate that the lutes and lyres were to lead the voices of the singers” and cited the following exhortation in Egyptian to school-boys, dating from the Nineteenth Dynasty:

You have been taught to sing to the pipe and to chant to the *w(3)r*-flute, to intone to the lyre (*knnr*), and to sing to the *nezekh* (*ntḥ*) [= נְצֵחַ].

Dalglish concluded:

The phrase לְנֹצֵחַ may then be translated “for the director of strings” or, if we adopt Ewald’s suggestion [1881: 340] that it should be regarded as a neuter formation, we may translate the phrase “for string rendition.”

The Syriac נֶשַׁח (*nēṣah*) “to celebrate, to triumph” when used of the voice meant “clear, sonorous” (Payne Smith 1903: 348), a definition which would also fit well the Egyptian exhortation cited above. This cognate is the basis for my translation.

2. See Dalglish (1962: 239), who cited (1) Dossin (1938: 110), “le terme *dāwidum* semble avoir désigné le ‘chef suprême’, une sorte de ‘grand cheikh’ de tribu, le maître d’un pays ou d’une ville”; and (2) Engnell (1943: 176) “. . . the term לְדָוִד which will be interpreted as a technical term meaning ‘for the king’ . . . it is used, as a matter of fact, in the O. T. simply as a title of the reigning king, as can be seen in a lot of text passages” [like Hos 3:5; Jer 33:26; and Ezek 37:24–25].

3. Note the אֲזָכִיר “memorial offering” in Lev 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8; 24:7; Num 5:26. The אֲזָכִיר in Psa 70:1 could well be a variant spelling of אֲזָכִיר

4. For variations of this imperative addressed to God, compare Jdg 16:28 and Psalm 106:4 (אֲזָכִירָנִי); Neh 13: 14, 22, 31 (אֲזָכִירָה לִּי); and Job 10:9 (אֲזָכִירָנָא).

5. The RSV, NRS, NJB added “be pleased”; the NLT added just “please”; whereas the KJV and NKJ added “make haste”; the NAS, NIB and NAU added just “hasten.” The NAB gratuitously added “graciously.”

6. For variants within the manuscripts of each psalm, see the notes in BHS.

7. For the confusion ב and נ see Delitzsch 1920: 113–114 §114^{a-c}.

8. For the confusion י and ת see Delitzsch 1920: 114 §116^a 117.

9. No examples of the confusion of ב and ה were cited by Delitzsch. The MT **בְּחַשְׁבֹּן** became in **Ⲭ** 39:18 φροντιεῖ “consider.” The MT **הוֹשִׁיעַ**—which was rendered in **Ⲭ^{BS}** 39:14 as πρόσχεες “give heed” and in **Ⲭ^A** as σπεῦσον “hasten”—was translated in **Ⲭ^{B1 S2}** in 69:1 as σπεῦσον and in **Ⲭ^{S1}** as θέλησον “be pleased.”

10. See Briggs 1906: 355 and Anderson 1972: 318. Other occurrences of **מִגְלַת־סִפֵּר** include Jer 36:2, 4 and Ezek 2:9.

11. MT **מֵעַי בְּתוֹךְ** “within my bowels.” See note 30.

12. Note Psa 31:17–18, 94:17, 114:17, and Isa 47:5, all of which speak of the silence in Sheol.

13. The MT **שָׁעַר** was obviously read as the equivalent of **שָׁאַר** “to remain” (= ἐγκαταλείπω). Like **שָׂאַה** and **שָׂעה** “to gaze” (BDB 981, 1043), **שָׂאַר** and **שָׂער** could be by-forms, although it is more likely that a **שָׂער** and **שָׂאַר** variation simply reflects an aural error once the **ע** was softened into a glottal stop.

14. Note Ecc 1:2, ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων “vanity of vanities.”

15. See Hatch and Redpath 1897: 899. In Zech 11:17, **רַעִי הָאֱלִיל** “my worthless shepherd” became οἱ ποιμαίνοντες τὰ μάταια “the worthless shepherds” in the Septuagint. But the “idol shepherd” of the KJV here notwithstanding, the **רַעִי הָאֱלִיל**, like the **רַעִי הָאֱלִיל** (ποιμένος ἀπείρου “unskilled shepherd”) of 11:15,

was not an idol or a god but an earthly monarch.

16. Note also Wehr (1979: 420) who cited forms II and IV meaning “to terrorize”; *ارهاب* (*irhâb*) “terrorism”; and *ارهابي* (*irhâbî*) “terrorist.”

17. The Peshit̃ta has *ܡܡܠܠܐ ܕܓܘܠܐ* (*mamlēlā dagāl*) “lying speech,” apparently reading שפֿי or שפה for MT שטֿי.

18. None of the other possible derivations (including שׁטף “turn aside”; שׁוט “to go, to rove / row about”; שׁוט “scourage, whip”; שׁוט “treat with despise”; or שׁטח “acacia, tree and wood”) correspond to the Greek *μαυλάς*.

19. Field 1964: 151.

20. In Psa 50:7–8 the לֹא in the MT *אֵלֹהִים אֵלֹהִים* “I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices” must be read as as the emphatic particle לֹא “indeed, verily.” For the literature on the emphatic לֹא and לֵא, see Gordon (1965: 76, 425); Richardson (1966: 89); McDaniel (1968) 206–208; Bloomerde (1969) 31; Dahood (1975) 341–342); Whitley (1975) 202–204; and Huehnergard (1983) 569–593, especially 591. Psa 50:7–15 is not ambivalent about sacrifices. It reads consistently as “Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, **I will testify against you**. I am God, your God. I do **indeed** reprove you for your sacrifices; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

21. The *Qal* perfect בָּאתִי “I came” has been translated as a present tense “I come” (KJV, RSV, NKJV, NAS, NAU), “I am coming” (NJB). This translates well the present indicative ἤκω of the Septuagint and Heb 10:5, but not the MT. The NRS has simply “I am.”

22. BDB (97) noted this cognate but limited the Arabic definition to the one word “return”; and KBS (1: 112) cited only “to return.”

23. MT מֵעֵי בְּתוֹךְ means literally, “in the midst of my bowels.” It was used figuratively for the seat of emotions.

24. *Tertium est genus figurarum quod aut similitudine aliqua vocum aut paribus aut contrariis convertit in se aures et animos excitat. Hinc est paronomasia quae dicitur adnominatio.* Book 9: 3: 66. See www.thelatinlibrary.com/quintilian.institutio.html.

25. The careful reader of Jobs study will note the variant she introduced on page 395 line 17, “to do you (*sic*) will,” my God, I desire”—apparently as a rhetorical device to highlight the corresponding assonance of the *ou* of the English *you* and the *ou* of the Greek σου. To interpret this variant simply as a typographical error for an intended “your” would preclude proper appreciation of the author’s deliberate use of a rhetorical device which would enhance the reader’s memory of her argument.

26. Matt 4:16
 λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος
 ἐν σκότει
 φῶς εἶδεν μέγα,
 καὶ τοῖς καθημένοις
 ἐν χώρα
 καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
 φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.

The people who **sat**
 in darkness
have seen a great light,

Isa 9:2
 ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος
 ἐν σκότει
 ἴδετε φῶς μέγα
 οἱ κατοικοῦντες
 ἐν χώρα
 καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
 φῶς λάμψει ἐφ’ υμᾶς

O people **walking**
 in darkness,
behold a great light

<p>And upon those who sat in the land and shadow of death Light has dawned.</p>	<p>you that dwell in the land and shadow of death a light shall shine upon you.</p>
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27. See Moffat 1924: xiv–xvii.

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ADDENDUM

I Samuel 15:22

And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

Hosea 6:6

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Amos 5:21–25

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

Micah 6:6–8

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Isaiah 1:11–17

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 66:3–4

Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being; whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever presents a grain offering, like one who offers swine's blood; whoever makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and in their abominations they take delight; I also will choose to mock them, and bring upon them what they fear; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my sight, and chose what did not please me.

Jeremiah 7:21–23

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.

But this command I gave them, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you.”

Psalm 50:8-16, 23

Indeed,²⁰ for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house, or goats from your folds. For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. . . . Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.

Psalm 51:16–17

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 69:30–31

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.