CLARIFYING MORE BAFFLING BIBLICAL PASSAGES

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31"

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XI

THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31

Prov 31:1 MT

דִּבְרֵי לְמוּאֵל מֶלֶךְ מַשָּׂא אֲשֶׁר־יִסְּרַתּוּ אִמּוֹ

The words of king Lemuel,
the prophecy that his mother taught him.(KJV)

The words of Lemuel, king of Massa,
which his mother taught him. (RSV)

LXX Prov 24:69 = MT 31:1

οἱ ἐμοὶ λόγοι εἴρηνται ὑπὸ θεοῦ
βασιλέως χρηματισμός ὃν ἐπαίδευσεν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ

My words have been spoken by God;
the oracle of a king whom his mother instructed.

The name Lemuel (לְמוֹאֵל/לְמוּאֵל) calls to mind the
Arabic phrase لمّ الله (lammaᵓallahu) "God rectified, restored
someone to good condition, reunited (people)"(Lane 1893:
3013; Wehr 1979: 1029). Given the well attested interchange
of ע"ע and ל"ה verbs (GKC 77ᵉ) one can posit the Hebrew
cognate למה/למו which would account for the ו in לְמוּאֵל,
rather than לְמם, which would have called for the name
לַמִיאֵל (like the חַנִיאֵל of Num 34:23) or לְמַמְאֵל (like the
חֲנַנְאֵל of Jer 31:38). The לְמוֹאֵל of Prov 31:4 is most likely
to have been the original vocalization since an original לָמוּ
would have contracted (lamaw > lamô) to לָמוֹ, not לָמוּ.

Whereas the הַמַּשָּׂא of Prov30:1 is best read as the cognate
of Arabic نشأ (našaᵓa, form IV) "he created, produced, origi-

nated" and منشى (*munšî*) "author, originator" (Lane 1893: 2791; Wehr 1979: 1131),[1] in Prov 31:1 the מַשָּׂא is best read as a proper noun related to the Ishmaelite מַשָּׂא mentioned in Gen 25:14 and I Chron 1:30. Consequently, the RSV and NAB translations, "Lemuel, king of Massa" are preferred to other translations which opted for מַשָּׂא "oracle."[2]

   Despite what is stated in 31:1, the words which follow in 31:2–9 are not the words of Lemuel, but of his mother. The phrase דִּבְרֵי לְמוּאֵל מֶלֶךְ מַשָּׂא would better introduce verses 10–31, which could well be Lemuel's words of praise for his mother, permitting the text of 31:28 to be paraphrased "Her son arose and called her blessed." The appropriate introduction to the mother's instructions to Lemuel in 31:2–9 should be restored as דְּבָרִים לִלְמוּאֵל אֲשֶׁר־יִסְּרַתּוּ אִמּוֹ "words to Lemuel by which his mother instructed him."[3]

Prov 31:2 MT (LXX Prov 24:70)

מַה־בְּרִי וּמַה־בַּר־בִּטְנִי וּמֶה בַּר־נְדָרָי׃

What, my son? What, son of my womb?
What, son of my vows?

τί τέκνον τηρήσεις
τί ῥήσεις θεοῦ
πρωτογενές σοὶ λέγω υἱέ
τί τέκνον ἐμῆς κοιλίας τί τέκνον ἐμῶν εὐχῶν

What, O child, will you observe?
What are the dictates of God?
My firstborn, I am speaking to you, O son,
What is it, son of my womb? What is it, son of my vows?

McDaniel Translation

*Prospe*r, my son! *Flourish*, son of my womb!
Thrive, son of my vows!⁴

Behind the threefold interrogative מַה. . .וּמַה. . .וּמֶה "What . . . what . . . what?" of the MT stand three imperatives from the stem נָמָה, the cognate of Arabic نما/نمىء (*namy/namā ʾ*) "to grow, increase, expand, prosper, flourish, thrive" (Lane 1893: 3038; Wehr 1979: 1174–1175). Like the verbs נָשָׂא, נָסָה, and נָגַשׁ, which drop the initial נ in the imperative, the imperative נְמָה became simply מָה, a homophone and homograph of the interrogative מָה. The verb נָמָה is found in the proper name נְמוּאֵל (Ναμουηλ) and the gentilic הַנְּמוּאֵלִי (ὁ Ναμουηλ) in I Chron 4:24 and Num 12:26.⁵ Otherwise, נָמָה may never have been used in the standard Judean dialect of Hebrew. The use of בַּר "son" by Lemuel's mother, instead of בֵּן, is indisputable evidence that she was speaking in a dialect. Thus, it is not surprising to encounter a number of rare words on the lips of Lemuel and his mother which were not normally used in the Jerusalem/Judean dialect.⁶

The Septuagint (24:70 = 31:2) has an expanded text which includes (1) τηρήσεις "you will keep," (2) ῥήσεις θεοῦ "the dictates of God," and πρωτογενές σοι λέγω υἱε "my first-born, to you I am speaking, O son," suggesting that the מה בר in the *Vorlage* was also read as מדבר which could account for the ῥήσεις and the λέγω.⁷ The τηρήσεις is either a doublet of the τί ῥήσεις (τίρήσεις > τηρήσεις) or a doublet of the נדר "vow" which was read as נטר "to keep." The πρωτογενές σοι can be a doublet of the ברי read as בכרי

"my firstborn," originating from a dittography of the ב which was in turn misread as a כ so that the בברי became בכרי.

Prov 31:3 MT (LXX 24:71)

אַל־תִּתֵּן לַנָּשִׁים חֵילֶךָ וּדְרָכֶיךָ לַמְחוֹת מְלָכִין

Give not your strength to women,
your ways to those who destroy kings.

μὴ δῷς γυναιξὶ σὸν πλοῦτον
καὶ τὸν σὸν νοῦν καὶ βίον εἰς ὑστεροβουλίαν

Give not thy wealth to women,
nor thy mind and living to deliberation after the fact.

McDaniel Translation

Give not your wealth to women
nor your *acquisitions* to (*women*) *who deceive* kings.

The Septuagint reads πλοῦτος "wealth" for Hebrew חַיִל in ten other texts,[8] and remains the best understanding of this verse and in 31:29. Interpretations which associate חַיִל here with the physical strength required for sexual activity seem to have King Solomon and his harem in mind rather than King Lemuel and his mother.[9] Once the focus on חַיִל took on sexual overtones, it became necessary to emend דְרָכֶיךָ to יְרֵכֶיךָ "your thighs" (BHS note) for a implicit sexual parallel to go with an implicit sexual חַיִל.

Defining חֵילֶךָ as "your *wealth*" and דְּרָכֶיךָ as "your *acquisitions*" recovers the anticipated parallelism. The Hebrew דֶּרֶךְ is the cognate of Arabic درك (*darak*) "the attainment, or acquisition of an object of want, and the seeking the attain-

ment or the acquisition thereof " (Lane 1867: 874). Lemuel's mother is advising her son not to be overly generous with his possessions and acquisitions, i.e., do not squander the royal estate on *untrustworthy* women.

The idea of some women being *untrustworthy* lies hidden in the MT לִמְחוֹת. The initial לְ is the preposition affixed to the feminine plural participle מֹחוֹת, from the stem מָחַח, which is the cognate of Arabic محاح (*maḥḥâḥ*) that Lane (1885: 2691) defined as "one who pleases, or contents, thee with his words, but who does, or performs nothing; an habitual liar; one who lies to thee even respecting the place whence he comes." Hava (1915: 709) defined محاح (*maḥḥâḥ*) simply as "liar, deceiver." The מֹחוֹת is a contracted form of מְחַחוֹת, like the feminine singular participle רֹעָה in Prov 25:19, which is a contraction of רֹעֲעָה (GKC 67ˢ).[10] The advice of Lemuel's mother was essentially "Son, beware of female flatterers who do lip service only!"

The Septuagint's νοῦν "mind, thought, reason" is an alternative translation of חַיִל which was read as though it were the cognate of Arabic خال/خيل (*ḫyl/ḫâla*) "he thought, fancied, imagined" and the noun "thought, opinion, surmise, mental image" (Lane 1865: 833–836; Wehr 1979: 309–310). The βίον "life" is a variant translation of the חות of למחות which was read as לם חות and then inverted to חות לם (= βίον εἰς (= חָיָה לְמוֹ).[11]

The ὑστερο of ὑστεροβουλίαν "deliberation after the fact" (Liddell and Scott 1940: 1906) comes from (1) a variant reading of חיל as חדל (= ὑστερέω) "to lack," and (2) the βουλίαν is an alternative rendering of the מְלָכִין when

derived from מֶלַךְ "counsel, advice" (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 971). Coming together they amount to the idea of "second guessing."

Prov 31:8

פְּתַח־פִּיךָ לְאִלֵּם אֶל־דִּין כָּל־בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף

Open your mouth for the dumb,
for the rights of all who are left desolate. (RSV)

ἄνοιγε σὸν στόμα λόγῳ θεοῦ καὶ κρῖνε πάντας ὑγιῶς

Open your mouth to the word of God,
and judge all fairly.

The Septuagint's λόγῳ θεοῦ "to the word of God" trans-lates what now stands in the MT as לְאִלֵּם אֶל, as though the *Vorlage* read לכלם אל, with the stem כלם being the cog-nate of Arabic كلام (*kalâm*) "saying, words", used in a similar expression, فتح فمه بالكلام (*fataḥa famahū biʾlkalâm*) "he opened his mouth to say something" (Lane 1893: 3003; Wehr 1979: 981). The ὑγιῶς "fairly" reflects a variant in which the בני was read as באין (= בְּ + אֵין) "without" and the חלוף was reads as a cognate the Arabic

- جلف (*ḥulf*) "the breach, or non-fulfilment, of a promise . . . disagreement, difference, dissension in opinions";

- جلف (*ḥilf*) "one who perseveres in opposition or conten-tion";

- جلفة (*ḥulfat*) "a vice, a fault, or an imperfection; badness, corruptness, vitiousness, or dishonesty";

- أجلف (*ʾaḥlafu*) "contrariousness, hard in disposition, as though going with a leaning to one side; and [simply] leaning to one side."

Ben Yehudah (1920: 114) proposed to read אֶל "to" as the imperative אַל "hasten," a cognate of Arabic أل (ʾall) (Hava 1915: 11). He also proposed to read חֲלוֹף as the cognate of Arabic خرف (ḥaraf/ḥarif) "unfortunate," which Lane (1865: 726) defined as "corrupt, unsound, disordered in intellect in consequence of old age, dotage." But these proposals were of no help in understanding the Septuagint.

A number of other interpretations have been proposed for the בְּנֵי־חֲלוֹף of 31:8. McKane summarized the following:

- children of abandonment, i.e., orphans
- those subject to the vicissitudes of fortune
- those likely to perish standing on the edge of a precipice
- sons of impotence
- sons of disease
- those with a bodily infirmity
- those who were stupid, foolish, of defective intellect
- adversaries, i.e., legal opponents
- those who are the victims of circumstance[12]

Scholars have been looking for a definition of חֲלוֹף which would balance the לְאִלֵּם "for a mute" in the first part of the line and the עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן "poor and needy" in 31:9. However, the בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף needs to be recognized as the equivalent of בְּנֵי בְרִית "sons of the covenant," which would be a reference to the allies, confederates, and tribal affiliates of the kingdom of Massa who would look to their king as their adjudicator.

One Arabic cognate of חלף is حلف (ḥalif) meaning "the act of confederating, or making a compact or confederacy, to aid, or assist; and making an agreement . . . the object was to

aid the wronged, and for making close the ties of the relationship" (Lane 1865: 627; Wehr 235).[13] The Arabic translation of בְּרִית frequently used حلف (ḥalif), as in Jud 9:46 where the MT בֵּית אֵל בְּרִית appears in the London Polyglott of 1667 as بيت ايل ليتحالفوا (bayti ʾil liyataḥǎlafû) "ut ibi conjurarent conspirarentque," i.e., the place where they made an alliance and were united.[14] The cognates of this حلف (ḥalif) are (1) חֵלֶף "covenant, friendship, brotherhood, league" and (2) חָלִיף "a sincere friend who swears to his companion that he will not act unfaithfully with him."[15]

Lemuel's mother advised her son not to open his mouth to wine and strong drink, lest it interfere with his ability to properly adjudicate for the *rich* and for the *poor*. Lemuel's need to adjudicate on behalf of the poor is clearly stated in 31:9, פְּתַח־פִּיךָ שְׁפָט־צֶדֶק וְדִין עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן "open your mouth, judge rightly and adjudicate (for) the oppressed and the poor." A reference to Lemuel's need to adjudicate on behalf of the rich lies hidden in 31:5, דִּין כָּל־בְּנֵי־עֹנִי, where the עֹנִי needs to be vocalized as עָנִי[16] and identified as the cognate of the Arabic غنى (ğaniya) "he was free from want . . . he became rich, wealthy," and the nouns غِنًى (ğinan) and غناء (ğanaʾ) "wealth, affluence, riches" (Lane 1877:2301–2304; Wehr 1979: 803).[17]

Contrary to the pointing in the MT, this עָנִי is certainly attested in I Chron 22:14, where David declared וְהִנֵּה בְעָנְיִי הֲכִינוֹתִי לְבֵית־יְהוָה "Behold, with my *riches* I have provided for the temple of Yahweh!" Myers (1965: 152) interpreted the hundred thousand talents of gold and million talents of silver

David donated to be 3,775 tons of gold and 37,750 tons of silver, which he estimated to be worth 4.25 billion dollars. Despite the *paupertatula* "poverty" in the Vulgate and the πτωχείαν "poverty" in the Septuagint, the MT עָנְיִי "my poverty" needs to be read as עָנְיִי "my wealth." Similarly, the בְּנֵי־עֹנִי of Prov 31:5 can be repointed as בְּנֵי־עָנִי meaning "the sons of wealth," i.e., the rich.[18] If Lemuel listened to his mother he soberly and rightly judged the poor (אֶבְיוֹן), the needy (עָנִי), and the wealthy (עָנִי).[19]

Just as Arabic cognates helped to clarify the meanings of בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף "sons of the covenant, allies" and בְּנֵי־עָנִי "sons of wealth, the rich," another Arabic cognate, آل / إِيلة / ال (°āl / °îlat / °il) "family, relatives, kith-and-kin, consanguinity" (Lane 1863: 75, 127–128; Wehr 1979: 27, 44), helps to clarify the original meaning of the MT אֵלֶם "dumb" in 31:8. Although, as noted above (page 164), the Septuagint apparently read כלם "word" for the אלם; the אלם remains the preferred reading. However, it should be read as *scriptio defectiva* for אלים and vocalized as אֱלִים or אֵלִים, the plural of אָל / אֵלָה "family, kith-and-kin," like its cognates. Just as the Arabic ال (°ill) is a synonym of حلف (ḥilf), the אלם/אלים is the synonymn of the בְּנֵי־חֲלוֹף in Prov 31:8.[20]

Although noted in Castell's 1669 lexicon (58, 115) and defined as "*populus, asseclae, affines, familia, domestici,*" the cognate إِيلة / ال (= אֵלָה / אָל) has dropped out of subsequent lexicons. Although rarely found in the literature, it probably appears in the name אֱלִיאֵל (Eλιηλ / Aλιηλ) in I Chron 11:

46–47, meaning the same as the אֱלִיעָם (Ελιαβ) in II Sam 11:3 and the עַמִּיאֵל (Αμιηλ) in I Chron 3:5. They all mean "God is my kinsman" and are much like the names רְעוּאֵל (Ραγουηλ) "God is my kinsman," אֲבִיָּה, and אֲחִיָּה "Yahweh is my brother/father." According to these interpretations of חלוף, עני, and אלם, Lemuel's mother instructed her son to judge the poor (אֶבְיוֹן), the needy (עָנִי), the rich (בְּנֵי־עָנִי), all tribal allies and confederates (בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף), and his own kith-and-kin (אֵלִים/אָלִים). Her advice covered all social classes, as well as the needs of the royal family and the affairs of state.

Prov 31:10–31
אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל
the woman of power

The transition from the words *of* a wise woman (31:1–9) to words *about* a wise woman (31:10–31) is highlighted by the use of an acrostic form which controls the logical flow of ideas in the poem. As noted above, vv.1–9 are not the words of Lemuel, but vv.10–31 could well be the words which followed the introductory phrase דִּבְרֵי לְמוֹאֵל מֶלֶךְ מַשָּׂא "the words of Lemuel, king of Massa." The king of Massa may have been like the king of Moab, who (according to II Kings 3:4) was a sheep master on a grand scale, suggesting that royal households were centers of home industries, commercial adventures, and charities—all requiring good managerial skills. Even a king could wax poetic over his mother who had been throughout life an אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל "a woman of

power," or, as the Septuagint has it, a γυναῖκα ἀνδρείαν "a manly woman."[21]

English translators have rendered חַיִל by a number of adjectives or adjectival phrases, including: capable, truly capable, excellent, good, noble, valiant, virtuous, virtuous and capable, and worthy. Missing from most of these translations is the recognition of חַיִל was also a term for being intellectually gifted. This meaning is found in two of three Arabic cognates (as found in Lane 1865: 675–677, 688, 834–835):

(1) حول/حيل/حال (ḥyl/ḥâl/ḥawl) "strength, power, might."

(2) حول (ḥuwwal) "knowing, skillful, or intelligent, in turning affairs over, or about in the mind, considering what may be the results and so managing them," i.e., a strategist.

(3) خيل/خال (ḫyl/ḫâl) "a liberal, bountiful, generous person . . . one who keeps a thing, and manages, orders, or regulates well . . . [used of] a king who manages, orders, or regulates his subjects," i.e., an administrator.

In light of 31:17 ("she girds her loins with strength and makes her arms strong") and 31:25 ("she is clothed with strength and dignity") this woman's physical strength cannot be minimized. Cognate (1), above, reinforces this quality of her character. But in light of cognates (2) and (3) the intellectual, managerial, and charitable qualities of the woman cannot be ignored. The word חַיִל carries multiple levels of meaning which requires some sort of *paraphrase* in order to be *literally* accurate—such as, "Who can find a rich generous and dynamic smart woman gifted with administrative skills?"

Prov 31:11b

וּשְׁלָל לֹא יֶחְסָר

"He will not lack a son."

ἡ τοιαύτη καλῶν σκύλων οὐκ ἀπορήσει

Such a one shall stand in no need of fine spoils.

Despite McKane's dismissal of Driver's proposal to read the שׁלל of 31:11 as the cognate of Arabic سليل (*salîl*) "a child or male offspring," and سليلة (*salîlat*) "daughter" (Lane 1872: 1397; Wehr 489), Driver was certainly correct. McKane (1970: 667) argued that Driver's interpretation[22]

> weakens the force of v. 11b, where, in agreement with the general tendency of the poem, a reference to the wife's skill as a domestic economist rather than her fertility is desiderated.

McKane also rejected Thomas' proposals (1965: 277) to (1) identify the שׁלל in 31:11 with the Arabic cognate ثلة (*ṯallat*) "wool" and (2) add לָהּ "for her"—to accommodate the feminine ἡ τοιαύτη—so that the text reads, "Wool is not lacking to her."[23] McKane concluded, "I retain the MT, recognizing that *šālāl* is difficult."

But there is no need to follow McKane and make it a matter of *either* fertility *or* domestic economy. In 31:28 it is clearly stated that this אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל was a mother: "Her children rise up, and call her blessed." But she was not just a mother, she was in fact the mother of a son, a שָׁלִיל. The cultural priorities in the kingdom of Massa and in the royal household of Lemuel were the same as those shared down to this day in Near Eastern and Far Eastern communities in which a woman is

expected to provide a son for her husband. This fact is well illustrated by the felicitous greeting in Arabic extended to those getting married. It is the word رفا (*rafâ*) which means not only (1) "he effected a reconciliation, or made peace between them," and (2) "he married, or took a wife," but also (3) "may the marriage be with close union (رفاء [*rifâ'un*]), constancy and the begetting of sons not daughters" (Lane 1867: 1117–1118, 1129). Wehr (1979: 403) rendered this felicitation to newlyweds as "live in harmony and beget sons!" If Prov 31:10–31 are the words of Lemuel, then Lemuel himself would be the son his mother delivered to her husband, for which she now receives his praise.

Prov 31:12

<div dir="rtl">גְּמָלַתְהוּ טוֹב וְלֹא־רָע כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ</div>

She benefited him well,
not badly, all the days of her life.

ἐνεργεῖ γὰρ τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθὰ πάντα τὸν βίον

For she employs all her living for her husband's good.

Like the Septuagint and the Vulgate, English translations treat the *perfect* verb גְּמָלַתְהוּ as if it were an *imperfect*, making the translation either a present or future tense. Of the thirty-eight verbs in 31:10–31, only six are in the *imperfect* tense (תֹּאכֵל [21], תִּירָא [11], תָּבִיא [15], יִכְבֶּה [18], יֶחְסָר [27], and תִּתְהַלָּל [30]),[24] and one is in the *imperative* (תְּנוּ [31]). Even the *imperfect* verbs may indicate past time for actions which continued over a period of time (GKC 107[b.e]). The thirty-one verbs in the *perfect* or *waw-consecutive*

definitely support the argument made in this study that the poet had in mind a particular woman from his past, rather than an imaginary model women for all times in the future.

The MT וְלֹא־רָע (= ולארע) "and not bad" became τῷ ἀνδρι "to the husband," in the Septuagint, reflecting a *Vorlage* with לאנש, with (1) a confusion of a ר and a י, (2) a confusion of an ע and a ש, and (3) the loss of the conjunctive ו. Delitzsch (1920: 111 §109[a] and 119 §131) has cited other examples of such confusion.

Prov 31:14

הָיְתָה כָּאֳנִיּוֹת סוֹחֵר מִמֶּרְחָק תָּבִיא לַחְמָהּ

She was like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.

ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ ναῦς ἐμπορευομένη μακρόθεν
συνάγει δὲ αὕτη/ἑαυτης τὸν βίον/πλουτον

She is like a ship trading from a distance,
so she procures her livelihood/riches.

Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus[1] have αὕτη τὸν βίον "her livelihood" for the MT לַחְמָהּ "her food," but Codex Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus[2] have εαυτης τὸν πλουτον "her riches." The former reflects a *Vorlage* with לחייה or לחים לה for the MT לחמה. Reading the ל of לחמה as a preposition is suggested by the וְחַיִּים לְנַעֲרוֹתֶיךָ "nourishment for your servant-girls" (NRS, NKJ) in Prov 27:27. In light of Ecc 5:9, where הָמוֹן "wealth" appears in parallel with כֶּסֶף "silver," the πλουτον in Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus[2] probably reflects a

Vorlage reading להמנה "for her wealth" for the MT לחמה "her bread."

The comparison with a merchant's fleet was interpreted by McKane (1970: 667) to mean "that she explores and exploits the further possibilities of producing wealth on the basis of the husbandry of her household." However, when the comparison is overlooked, the statement clearly claims that she imported food for her household, suggesting that there was sufficient wealth in the royal household to buy international gourmet food.

31:15
וַתָּקָם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה
וַתִּתֵּן טֶרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֹק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ

She arose while it was still night
and gave quality food to her household,
and daily rations to her maidens
καὶ ἀνίσταται ἐκ νυκτῶν
καὶ ἔδωκεν βρώματα τῷ οἴκῳ καὶ ἔργα ταῖς
θεραπαίναις
And she arose by night, and gave food to her household,
and tasks to her maidens.

The paired words חק and טרף appear also in Prov 30:8, הַטְרִיפֵנִי לֶחֶם חֻקִּי "feed me with the food that is my portion" (NAS).[25] Both words are very problematic. The טרף, meaning "to tear, rend, pluck" appears in Gen 37:33 where Jacob cried, טָרֹף טֹרַף יוֹסֵף "Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." טרף is a word more suited for the food of a lion, the king of the jungle, than for Lemuel, the king of Massa.

In the MT 31:15, טֶרֶף is without a doubt the cognate of Arabic طريف (*ṭarîf*) "a thing that is *good* [*and recent* or *new* or *fresh*] . . . [or pleasing to the eye] of fruits and other things"; and طريفة (*ṭarîfat*) "*anything new*, *recent*, or *fresh* . . . anything choice" (Lane 1874: 1845; KBS II: 380). Arabic also attests the by-form ترفة (*turfat*) "good feeding . . . good, sweet, or pleasant food" (Lane 1863: 304). In light of the interchange of the ט and the ת in words like טָעָה "to err" and תָּעָה "to err," and Hebrew קָטַל but Arabic قتل (*qatal*) "to kill," there may well have been טָרָף/תָּרָף by-forms in Hebrew meaning "fresh quality food."

The חֹק has more to do with something inscribed than something ingested. Only secondarily does it have to do with food allowances and rations, as in Gen 47:22, וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־חֻקָּם "and they ate their portion." This ambiguity accounts for the Septuagint's ἔργα "work," the "task" in the NAS, RSV and NRS, the "plan the day's work" in the NLT—in contrast to the "portions" in the KJV, NKJ, NAS, and NIV.

Prov 31:21

לֹא־תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשָּׁלֶג
כִּי כָל־בֵּיתָהּ לָבֻשׁ שָׁנִים

She does not fear for her family when it snows
for all of them are doubly clothed. (Scott)
οὐ φροντίζει τῶν ἐν οἴκῳ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς
ὅταν που χρονίζῃ πάντες
γὰρ οἱ παρ' αὐτῆς ἐνδιδύσκονται

Her husband is not anxious about those at home
when he tarries somewhere
for all those with her are clothed.

The variants in the Septuagint reflect (1) a misreading of the תִירָא as יִירָא, (2) a misreading of MT שֶׁלֶג "snow" as שֶׁגָל "consort, spouse," and (3) a doublet for the MT בֵיתָה which became (a) ἐν οἴκω and (b) χρονίζῃ, "he would delay"—which was evidently a secondary misreading of the ביתה as במהה.[26] McKane's refusal to repoint the MT שָׁנִים "scarlets" as שָׁנָיִם "double" (following the Vulgate's *duplicibus* and the Septuagints δισσάς [31:22] and Driver's suggestion [1947:11]) are puzzling. Multi-red colors don't give warmth against snow and the cold, but layered clothing does. The quality of the clothing is not an issue since the double layers of clothing could all be top quality. Quantity does not preclude quality.

Prov 31:23

נוֹדָע בַּשְּׁעָרִים בַּעְלָהּ בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עִם־זִקְנֵי־אָרֶץ

Her husband was known in the gates,
when he sits among the elders of the land. (RSV)

περίβλεπτος δὲ γίνεται ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς
ἡνίκα ἂν καθίσῃ ἐν συνεδρίῳ
μετὰ τῶν γερόντων κατοίκων τῆς γῆς

Her husband is admired round about in the gates,
when he sits in council
with the elder inhabitants of the land

The Septuagint interpreted the MT בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ "with his sitting" as ἡνίκα ἂν καθίσῃ ἐν συνεδρίῳ "whenever he sits in

a *sanhedrin*/council." In Exo 18:14, יָשַׁב is the term for Moses' sitting to judge the people, and in Mal 3:3 for the messenger of Yahweh who was to judge and purify the sons of Levi. Kings "held court" by "sitting at the gate," as in I Kings 22:10, which speaks of Ahab and Jehoshaphat "sitting (יֹשְׁבִים) on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria" (NAS). Thus, the royal lady's husband does not go to the city gates to lounge about or to shop, but to sit in judgement in a senate (συνεδρίω) of the tribal elders.[27] Thanks to the sterling character of the אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל, her charities and beautiful household, the prestige of her husband when in public and when in court was greatly enhanced.

Prov 31:24

סָדִין עָשְׂתָה וַתִּמְכֹּר וַחֲגוֹר נָתְנָה לַכְּנַעֲנִי׃
she made and sold a linen garment to the merchant.

σινδόνας ἐποίησεν
καὶ ἀπέδοτο περιζώματα δὲ τοῖς Χαναναίοις
She made fine linens,
and sold girdles to the Canaanites.

The Septuagint did not translate the MT נָתְנָה "she gave," and the כְּנַעֲנִי was simply transliterated into the plural Χαναναίοις "Canaanites." But, as noted in BDB (489) and Jastrow (650), כְּנַעֲנִי was a proper noun which also carried the meaning of "merchant, trader."[28] The Syro-Phoenician woman (Συροφοινίκισσα in Mark 7:26) who asked Jesus to heal her daughter was identified in Matt 15:22 as γυνὴ Χαναναία. In the *Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Howard 1995:

74–75) she is identified as אשה כנענית באה מארצות מזרח "a Canaanite woman who came from the lands of the East." But if she was "from the East" she was not a "Canaanite" because Canaan was the name given to land west of the Jordan. So the "Syro-Phoenician" woman may really have been a "merchant lady from the East," whose business, though, may well have taken her to Syro-Phonecia. Like the Septuagint translators before him, Mark may have misunderstood the כנענית "merchant" in his Hebrew source and simply updated the old name "Canaan" to the contemporary name of "Syro-Phoenicia."

Prov 31:30a

שֶׁקֶר הַחֵן וְהֶבֶל הַיֹּפִי

Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting. (Scott)

ψευδεῖς ἀρέσκειαι
καὶ μάταιον κάλλος γυναικός[29]

False are desires-to-please
and vain the beauty of a woman.

McDaniel Translation

Infidelity is deceitful, and beauty is fleeting.

The stem חָנַן "to be gracious" appears in such names as חֲנַנְאֵל "God is gracious" and חֲנַנְיָהוּ "Yahweh is gracious" the latter of which became Ἰωάννης in Greek and *John* in English. Hebrew חָנַן is the cognate of Arabic حن (*ḥann*) "he was merciful, compassionate, he became affected with a yearning, longing, desire," and حنان (*ḥanân*) "mercy, pity, compassion" (Lane 1865: 652–654; Wehr 1979: 244). Therefore, it is quite surprising to have this quality labeled as a

שֶׁקֶר "a lie." Some commentators, like McKane (1970:670), avoided the issue altogether, while others, like Scott (1965: 186), followed the Septuagint (ἀρέσκειαι "a desire to please") and resorted to paraphrase, coming up with "charm," "fair looks," or "favor." A few translations have followed the Vulgate's *gratia* with "grace" or "gracefulness" (DBY, ASV).

In the immediate context of this verse, the MT הַחֵן is better derived from חון, which was cited by Castell (1669: 1166) as the cognate of Arabic خان / خون (*ḥwn / ḥân*) meaning "*decepit, nec fidua, perfidus, fraudavit*." Lane (1865: 826–827) cited خان (*ḥâna*) as meaning "he was disloyal, false, unfaithful, or he acted unfaithfully, perfidiously" and noted the intensive epithets خائن (*ḥâᵓin*) "unfaithful, disloyal, false" and خائنة (*ḥâᵓinat*) "very unfaithful . . . a surreptitious look at a thing at which it is not allowable to look, or the looking with a look that induces suspicion or evil opinion." This was the verb used in the Arabic translation of Num 5:12 and 27 in the *London Polyglott* of 1667, which deal with marital infidelity." Thus, the Hebrew חן / חון "infidelity" is the word of choice for 30:31a, and it has nothing to do with חן / חנן "grace, compassion," aside from the fact that they became confusing homographs in Hebrew.

It is difficult to relate the Septuagint's ἀρέσκειαι "desires to please" with either חון "unfaithful" or חן "graciousness." It is much more likely that ψευδεῖς ἀρέσκειαι "false desires-to-please" is a doublet reflecting the MT שֶׁקֶר "a lie" and a variant which was read as שִׁפַּר / שֶׁפֶר "comeliness, beauty, seemly, to be pleasing." In Theodotian's translation of Dan

3:32, 4:24, and 6:1, ἀρέσκειν "to please" was used to translate the Aramaic שְׁפַר.

The γυνὴ γὰρ συνετὴ εὐλογεῖται "for a wise woman is blessed" in 31:30 comes from variant readings of the MT אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת. The εὐλογεῖται reflects a double reading of אשה (= γυνὴ) as אשר (= εὐλογεῖται)—thanks to a confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116ᶜ for examples). The συνετὴ reflects a double reading of יראת (= φόβον) and as ידעת (= συνετὴ)—thanks to the confusion of a ד and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104ᵃ⁻ᶜ for examples), plus the aural confusion of the א and ע.

Prov 31:31

וִיהַלְלוּהָ בַשְּׁעָרִים מַעֲשֶׂיהָ

And let her works praise her in the gates.

καὶ αἰνείσθω ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς

And let her husband be praised in the gates.

The עֹשֵׂה מְלָאכָה הוּא "he was industrious" in I Kings 11:28 was translated in the Septuagint as ἀνὴρ ἔργων ἐστίν, rendering the Hebrew participle עֹשֵׂה "one making" by the noun ἀνήρ "man, husband." A similar liberty with the text occurs here in 31:31. By dropping the suffix ה of ויהללוה and the מ nominal prefix of מעשיה, the resulting עשיה was read as a suffixed participle, much like the עֹשֵׂה (with no suffix) in I Kings 11:28. In this way the מעשיה "her works" became (mis)read as עשיה "her doer," which was the basis for the Greek ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς "her husband," thereby making the husband the one who received the public praise. Thus, the

Septuagint interpreted 31:31 in light of its translation of 31:
23, where the well admired husband of the royal lady sits in
the *sanhedrin* (καθίση ἐν συνεδρίω).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The two literary units of Proverbs 31 are 31:1–9, which are
a mother's advice to her son, Lemuel (דִּבְרִי[ם לְ]לְמוּאֵל),
and 31:10–31, which are Lemuel's words of praise (דִּבְרֵי
לְמוּאֵל) about his mother. Lemuel himself had nothing to say
in 31:1–9, so "the words of Lemuel"—assuming he said
something—can only be the words of 31:10–31.

The royal lady was very anxious and emphatic that her son
prosper. She was also very protective of the royal assets, ad-
monishing her son not to squander his wealth and acquisitions
on female flatterers and liars who would give him only lip
service. Soberness, she admonished, was a requirement of the
crown. The king needed to adjudicate intelligently for both
rich and poor, and for both the royal family and the tribal
clans and confederates.

Although the אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל has been traditionally interpreted
as "virtuous woman" (KJV) or "a good wife" (RSV) or "an
excellent wife" (NAS), the foci in 31:11–31 are not limited to
the lady's virtuousness or to her relationship to her spouse.
While a husband is mentioned in verse 11,12, 23, 28, chil-
dren, maidens, and the whole household are mentioned in
verses 15, 21, 27, 28. The words praising the אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל could
have been written by a husband, son, or daughter.

In light of the introduction, "the words of Lemuel" (31:1),
there is a compelling reason to conclude that Lemuel said
something. If not 31:1–9, why not 31:10–31? If so, then

Lemuel appreciated the way his mother treated his father, the way she treated him and everyone else in the household. The author was speaking out of experience— which explains why thirty-one of the thirty-eight verbs in 31:10–31 are in the *perfect* tense or are *waw consecutive imperfects* with the force of a *perfect*. Even the *imperfect* verbs can refer to the past reflecting what *could*, *would*, *should* or *used to be* done.[30] The author was not fantasizing about an ideal woman in the future but was giving a eulogy about a family member—not his wife, but his mother.

As the text now stands, the wisdom of Lemuel's mother, expressed as admonitions to her son in 31:1–9, are but a prelude to his eulogy of her in 31:10–31. The two units could well be reversed, with the prelude transformed into a postlude, illustrating the mother's wisdom which had been extolled already in the eulogy itself. The point is that Proverbs 31 is a literary unit, with Lemuel being the speaker in 31:10–31 and his mother being the speaker in 31:1–9.

Once it is recognized that the אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל was a royal lady, the interpreter of this poem can readily appreciate her access to power, wealth, and leisure which gave her the freedom

- to engage in entrepreneurial activities (13, 16, 18, 19, 24)

- to have an expensive and comfortable wardrobe (21, 22)

- to enjoy a physical fitness routine (17)

- to enjoy gourmet foods and international cuisine (14, 15)

- to contribute generously to charity (20)

- to have maids (probably to care for the children) (15)

But not all of the royal lady's fine qualities and strengths were dependant upon withdrawals from the royal treasury.

Her astute managerial and business skills contributed to the income of the royal household. She had an air of dignity, a good sense of humor, transparent wisdom, practical skills, and a kind spirit (25–26). She was not lacking in religious commitment. She may have been the one who named the son Lemuel/Lemoel, meaning "God made things right." There was a *Torah* of kindness which provided her with wisdom (26), and she stood in awe of Yahweh (30).

However, Gous (1996: 38) noticed

The erotic is usually included in Ancient Near Eastern songs about women, and may even play an important role in them[31] . . . Here there is no suggestion of it. . . . Moreover, there is mention of children but no mention of child-rearing, This makes one wonder: Why ignore aspects like this?

The answer could well be that Lemuel's eulogy was occasioned by the death of his mother, and any reference to the erotic at such a time would not be expected. In a eulogy given by a son the matter of child-rearing was addressed indirectly, but effectively, by references to (1) the *household* in 31:15, 21, 27, (2) "her *sons*" in 31:28, and (3) the "many *daughters*" in 31:29. Nothing in the 31:10–31 precludes the poem's having been composed in memory of the אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל.[32]

As Arabic cognates provided clues for unraveling the ambiguities of Prov 30:1–5, which was written in a non Judean dialect of Hebrew,[33] Arabic cognates have also provided clarity in the interpretation of Prov 31:1–31, also written in a non-Judean dialect which used בַּר and שְׁלִיל for "son" rather than בֵּן. The *old* words from the Massa dialect which need to be added to the *new* lexicons of Biblical Hebrew include:

אל	family, kith-and-kin (30:8)
דרך	acquisitions (30:3)
חון	infidelity, faithlessness (30:30)
חיל	thought, imagination (30:10)
חיל	liberal, generous (30:10)
חיל	manager, managerial skill (30:10)
חיל	intelligent (30:10)
חלף	ally, confederate, covenant bond (30:8)
טרף	good, fresh food (30:15)
כלם	word (30:8)
למה	rectify, restore, unite (30:1)
מחח	flatterer, liar (30:3)
נמה	prosper, thrive (30:2)
עני	riches, wealth (30:5)
שלל	son (30:11)

Fifty-three other Hebrew words in Proverbs 31 have already been identified in current Hebrew lexicons as having Arabic cognates. In my opinion there are actually sixty-eight words with Arabic cognates that appear in chapter 31.[34]

By contrast, Wolters (1985: 577–587) argued for identifying just one word, the צוֹפִיָּה of 31:27, as a wordplay on the Greek word σοφία, and on this basis concluded (1) "that everything in the Valiant Woman's sphere of action embodies wisdom. . . . She personifies wisdom in both word and deed"; (2) "that the song was probably composed sometime after Alexander's conquest, presumably in the third century B.C."; and (3) that "the author and the intended audience must have

belonged to a sophisticated and highly literate milieu" for the wordplay to have been understood. However, the Septuagint translators were not sophisticated enough to understand the alleged wordplay! They rendered צוֹפִיָּה הֲלִיכוֹת as στεγναὶ διατριβαι "the ways-of-life were kept under cover/secret"[35] as though צופיה were a passive of צפה, stem II, "to cover, to overlay." Moreover, Kennicott (1780: 477) cited the variant *perfect* form צפיה in manuscripts 30, 139, 207, 224 and 264.

In my opinion, the editors who incorporated this poem into the corpus of Israelite wisdom literature, as well as those who read it early on, were sophisticated enough to understand the non-Judean dialect of Hebrew used by Lemuel and his mother—be they historical or fictional characters. But in time knowledge of many words in the Massa dialect were forgotten. Many differences in the Septuagint can be clarified only by the recovery of Hebrew lexemes through an appeal to Arabic cognates. Many modern scholars have tried unsuccessfully to interpret these difficult texts using only the vocabulary of Judean Hebrew which has survived in rabbinic recollection and literature.

Instead of being read as a hymn about wisdom incarnate, Prov 31:10–31is best read as a eulogy by a son about his mother. If it was composed after the death of Lemuel's mother, the hyperbole can be appreciated as an expression of Lemuel's grief. Lemuel's exceptional mother may provide a paradigm for hyperactive royal ladies who are immune to sleep deprivation and are energized by entrepreneurial success which permits them to contribute to the royal treasury, as well as to withdraw funds from it. But mothers of kings were not role models for the public to emulate, but simply to appreciate. Lemuel's royal mother, as Lemuel saw it, was in

a class all to herself. Perhaps with his aunts and sisters in mind and in earshot, Lemuel eulogized, "Many daughters have done brilliantly, but you, [Mother], surpassed them all" (31:29).

ADDENDA

Frequent appeals to Arabic cognates have been made to clarify the ambiguities in Prov 30:1–5 (see note 32) and in this study of Prov 31:1–31. A few more examples are noted here to emphasize the benefits of looking at Arabic cognates in order to understand some of the Septuagintal variants and problematic words in the MT. These examples deal with Prov 30:31, which speaks of "*three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing.*" The "mighty lion which never retreats" was the first strident figure, mentioned in 30: 30, after which appear

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זַרְזִיר מָתְנַיִם אוֹ־תָיִשׁ ...

וּמֶלֶךְ אַלְקוּם עִמּוֹ
</div>

. . . the strutting cock, the he-goat,
and a king striding before his people. (RSV)

The Septuagint has a expanded text reading

καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐμπεριπατῶν θηλείαις εὔψυχος
καὶ τράγος ἡγούμενος αἰπολίου
καὶ βασιλεὺς δημηγορῶν ἐν ἔθνει

and a rooster strutting about boldly among the hens,
and the goat leading the herd;
and a king demagoguing before a people.

The MT זַרְזִיר מָתְנַיִם has been translated as "greyhound" (KJV, ASV, NKJ), "war horse" (BBE), *gallus succinctus* "cock girded" (Vulgate, DRA), "vigorous cock" (NJB), and

"strutting cock / rooster" (RSV, NRS, NIV, NIB, etc.). The MT זַרְזִיר can be related to זֵרֶז "strength, valor, belt, garments" and זָרַז "to be quick" or "to harness." When used with מָתְנַיִם "loins," the combination suggested something fast in the hindquarters (like a greyhound) and/or something fast and girded (like a war-horse or a gladiator) (Jastrow 412; BDB 267, 608).

But זַרְזִיר also means a "starling" or a bird used for food (Jastrow 412; Lane 1867: 1223). Thus the "rooster" and the "hens" appeared in the translations. The MT מָתְנַיִם was taken to mean "strutting," which would be the cognate of Arabic ثنى (ṯanaya), form V, meaning "he affected an inclining of his body . . . from side to side and walked with an elegant and proud and self conceited gait" (Lane 1863: 357). Ordinarily, the Arabic ṯ became a š in Hebrew and a t in Aramaic, but as noted above, Proverbs 30 and 31 are in a dialect and mixed forms can be anticipated. Thus, the Septuagint *Vorlage* had זרזירם תנים זַרְזִיר מָתְנַיִם "strutting roosters" for the MT "girded loins." The ἀλέκτωρ "cock" and the εὔψυχος "bold" are a doublet for the זרזירם. The θηλείαις "females, hens" and the ἡγούμενος αἰπολίου "leading the herd" have no correspondents in the MT.

The real crux of 30:31 has been the אַלְקוּם in the phrase וּמֶלֶךְ אַלְקוּם עִמּוֹ. Scott (1965: 182) confessed that his translation, "the king whom no man dare resist," was only a guess and conjectured, following Toy (1899), "Possibly the fourth of those *which stride proudly* (vs. 29) is another animal whose name is unknown or unrecognizable in the text as it stands." McKane (1970) has provided a convenient summary

of a number of emendations and translations, including

- כְּאֵל קָם בְּעַמּוֹ "who like a god stands among his people" (Ringgren 1947);

- אַיְל קֶדֶם עַמּוֹ "a leader preceding his people" (Bewer 1948: 61);

- עַמּוֹ לֹא־קָם/אַל־קוֹם "against whom there is no rising up, *i.e.*, a king who is irresistible" (Driver 1951: 94, citing Hitzig);

- קָם אֶל־עַמּוֹ "standing over, *i.e.*, at the head of his people" (Driver, 1951: 94, citing Toy, Jäger, and Ewald; and followed by McKane 1979: 664);

- "the mountain goat (אָקוֹ) standing up in front of his people" (Roth 1965: 20).

The consonantal MT can be retained if the אלקום is divided to read אל קום and the אל is recognized as the cognate of the Arabic آل (ʾāla) "he (a prince or commander, or a king) ruled, or governed, his subjects; presided over their affairs, as commander or governor; and did so well." The noun إيالة (ʾiyâlat) means "government, rule," and in form II آل (ʾāla) signifies "the discovering, detecting, revealing, developing, or disclosing, or the explaining, expounding, or interpreting, that to which a thing is, or may be reduced, or that which it comes, or may come to be"(Lane 1863: 126). This was certainly the meaning the Septuagint translator had in mind when they translated אל as δημηγορῶν "demagoguing, orating" with all the body language that goes with it.

The קום of אל קום is the cognate of Arabic قوم (*qawm*) "a people, or body of persons composing a community . . . a company or body . . . of men, [properly] without women: or of men and women together; for the قوم (*qawm*) of every man is his party, and his kinfolk, or tribe, sometimes including women as followers . . ." (Lane 1893: 2996). The consonantal MT, as re-divided, ומלך אל קום עמו, means "and a king governing/demagoguing a tribe of his people." A very similar phrase appears in Arabic, namely, هو مويال لقومه (*hû mûʾyâl liqawmihi*) "he is ruler, governor of his people" (Lane 1863: 128). The مويال (*mûʾyâl*) is but a variant prefixed form of آل (*ʾāla*) which equals אל, and the قوم (*qawm*) equals קום. In Hebrew the *aw* diphthong of *qawm* would have contract to *ô* so that קום should be read as קוֹם. The עמו "his people" could well be a gloss on the rare (in Judean Hebrew) noun קוֹם "people," and if so would reinforce this proposed derivation.

Thus, the problems in these biblical texts turn out to be more problems with the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew than with the versions or the MT. Lexicons have yet to include many lexemes which were *known* by the Septuagint translators—and survive in Arabic cognates—but were *unknown* in rabbinic literature. With all the precautions noted by Kaltner (1996) in mind, the recovery of a number of Hebrew lexemes in this study by a careful appeal to the variants in the Septuagint and Arabic lexicons may contribute to even better lexicons of Biblical Hebrew.

NOTES

1. The Septuagint's καὶ δεξάμενος αὐτοὺς reflects a reading of נָשָׂא as in Deu 33:3, יִשָּׂא מִדַּבְּרֹתֶיךָ (= καὶ ἐδέξατο ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ "and he received from his words") and Gen 50:17, וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא לְפֶשַׁע (= καὶ νῦν δέξαι τὴν ἀδικίαν "now please pardon the transgression"). In Arabic the ن of the cognate of נָשָׂא remains unassimilated. See McDaniel, "Surely There Is a God: Proverbs 30:1–5," page 128, in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/ tmcdaniel/CBBP.pdf.

2. The Septuagint's οἱ ἐμοὶ λόγοι εἴρηνται reflects a *Vorlage* which was read as דְּבָרַי נָמַלוּ אֵל "my words were spoken (by) God," with the inversion of the ל and מ of למואל and the inverted word order of מֶלֶךְ and the מַשָׂא.

3. Note Scott's (1965: 183) emendation and translation, "Words [of advice] to a king acting foolishly." This required reading לְנוֹאַל (from יָאַל "to be foolish") for the MT לְמוּאֵל.

4. The use of three synonyms rather than a threefold repetition of "prosper" is an accommodation here to English style.

5. In Gen 46:10 and Exo 6:15 the name appears as יְמוּאֵל (Ιεμιηλ/ Ιεμουηλ), providing another example of the confusion of י and נ, as well as י and ו. For other examples of such confusion see Delitzsch 1920: 103–105, §103[a–c] and 111–112, §110[b].

6. Compare Ben Yehudah's suggestion (1920: 114) that "the context demands some such significance as 'Listen!' 'Take heed!' Such a meaning of ما (*ma*) exists in Arabic." This suggestion was followed by McKane (1970: 408). But the numerous definitions of

ما (*ma*) cited in Lane (1893: 3016), Hava (1915: 705), and Wehr (1979: 1042) do not include such a definition.

7. For the confusion of ד/ר and ה, see Delitzsch 1920: 114 §116.

8. See the Greek texts of Job 20:15; 20:18; 21:7; 31:25; Psa 48:10 (MT 49:11); 61:11 (MT 62:11); 72:12 (MT 73:12); 75:6 (MT 76:6); Prov 13:22; and 31:29. Note also BDB 299, definition 3, for other references.

9. Solomon's harem of 3,000 women was more social than sexual. It was a form of welfare for the wealthy. Many of the prospective grooms for upper class Israelite maidens had lost their lives in King David's imperial adventures. Since there were not enough royal officers to go around, available maidens were compensated with a royal "wedding" of sorts. Most maidens in Solomon's harem were probably childless neglected virgins as long as they lived.

10. See McKane (1970: 409) for other interpretations which relate לַמְחוֹת to the root מָחָה "to wipe out, destroy, exterminate" and the מְלָכִין to מֶלַךְ "counsel, advice" (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 791).

11. Note the חַיִּים which was translated as βίου in Prov 4:10. For other examples of the confusion of a י and ו and a ח and ה, see Delitzsch 103–105, §103ᵃ⁻ᶜ, 107–108, §105ᵃ⁻ᵇ.

12. Note also Driver's (1951: 194) summary of interpretations. The meanings of the Arabic cognates حلف (*ḥalafa*) and خلف (*ḥalafa*) required over 1,500 lines of text in Lane's lexicon (1865: 627–628 and 792–799), providing the interpreter with many varied options.

13. A second cognate of חלף is خلف (*ḥalafa*)—not to be confused with حلف (*ḥalafa*)—meaning "he came after, followed, succeeded," with the noun خالف (*ḥâlif*) "successor, follower, caliph" (Lane 1865: 792–799). This cognate was cited in BDB

(322) and provided the basis for translating the בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף as "those who are passing away." See McDaniel, "I Have Not Come to Bring the End," pp. 305–306, in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/CBBP.pdf

14. The feminine خلفة (*ḫilfat*) is also attested. According to Simon (1793: 564, citing Schultens), حلف (*ḥalafa*) is the cognate of the חֲלִיפוֹת in Psa 55:19–20,

אֵין חֲלִיפוֹת לָמוֹ וְלֹא יָרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים
שָׁלַח יָדָיו בִּשְׁלֹמָיו חִלֵּל בְּרִיתוֹ׃

There were no *oaths of allegiance* from them,*
and they did not fear God.
He stretched forth his hands in retribution;
they (plural with LXX) had profaned his covenant.

*See GKC 103ᶠ for reading לָמוֹ as a plural, and *UT* 425, #1337, for reading ל "from."

15. Although KBS (321) cited חלף stem II, the cognate of Arabic حلف (*ḥalaf*) "sharp, high coarse grass, a writing reed," the حلف (*ḥalafa*) meaning "to swear an oath, to establish a brotherhood, to unite in a covenant" and the noun حلف (*ḥîlf*) "confederacy, league, covenant" are not mentioned in KBS, even though these cognates were cited in earlier lexicons, like those of Castell (1669: 1255–1260) and Simon (1793: 564). The name Alphaeus in Matt 10:3 (Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου) appears in Hebrew as חַלְפִּי, in Syriac as ܚܠܦܝ (*ḥalpay*), and in the Arabic as حلفى (*ḥalfî*). It can be derived from this stem (Jastrow 457).

16. This עָנִי "rich" is not to be confused with עָנָו "poor" or עָנִי "poor." Given the frequent interchange of י and ו in Hebrew roots, the graphic similarity of י and ו in certain scripts, and the coales-

cence in Hebrew of the *ġayin* (غ) with the *ʿayin* (ع), its is not sur-
prising that עני and ענו were so easily confused that עָנָי dropped
out of usage and became lost to lexicographers. Once the shift was
made from the clarity of oral literature to the ambiguities of a writ-
ten literature which used a consonant-only orthography, the plague
of homographs resulted in the demise of many words from the
active vocabulary.

17. The Arabic cognate of עָנָה "to sing" is غنى (*ġanaya*). It has
been recognized in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, along with عنو
(*ʿanawa*) "to be humble, submissive," the cognate of עָנָו "poor,
meek." The name of the Levitical singer עֻנִּי (LXX Ωνι), men-
tioned in I Chron 15:18, 20 and the *Qere* of Neh 12:9, was prob-
ably a *Puʿal* perfect (*ʿunnay > ʿunnê*) meaning either "he was af-
flicted" or "he was enriched." An *afflicted* Levite was unlikely to
have been appointed to the royal court or cult; whereas one who
"was freed from want" would have well qualified for such a posi-
tion. Thus, the lexeme עָנָי "to be rich" was no doubt in use at that
time.

18. Most translations have avoided making David into a billion
dollar "pauper" by paraphrasing בְּעָנְיִי as

- "in my trouble" (KJV, RWB, WEB),
- "I have taken much trouble" (NKJ),
- "I have taken great pains" (NIV, NIB),
- "with great pains" (RSV, NRS, NAU, NAS),
- "in my/mine affliction" (ASV, BBE, DBY),
- "I have worked hard" (NLT).

The בְּעָנְיִי was translated literally in the NJB as "poor as I am" and
in the DRA as "in my poverty." Curtiss (1910: 259) argued uncon-
vincingly, "possibly in Gn 31[32] and certainly in Dt 26[7], עני means
oppressive toil. . . . The parallel בכל כחי ["with all my power"] in

29[2] favours *by my hard* (or *painful*) labor." In BDB (777) בְּעָנְיִי was paraphrased as "in spite of my frustration."

19. The words עָנִי "poor" and עָנָו "rich" would not have been confused in speech where their difference in sound would be a bit analogous to the English words '*a knee*' and "*an eye*."

20. Lane's definition of اِلّ (*ʾill*) reads in part, "Anything which has a quality requiring it to be regarded as sacred, or inviolable . . . relationship; or nearness with respect to kindred . . . A compact, or covenant; or one by which a person becomes responsible for the safety, or safekeeping of a person or thing, . . . a confederacy, or league; syn. حلف (*ḥilf*), a covenant between two parties by which either is bound to protect the other." This cognate is also the key for properly understanding Jesus' questions to Peter in John 21: 15–17. (See http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/CBBP .pdf and view Chapter 33, pp. 360–363).

21. Liddell and Scott (1940: 128) defined ἀνδρεία as "manliness, manly spirit" and the opposite of δειλία "timidity, cowardice."

22. Although Szlos (2000: 102) noted the suggestions of Waltke (1999) and Clifford (1999), Driver's proposal went unnoticed. Szlos concluded that "Military imagery is this poem comprises שלל 'booty' in v. 11, חיל 'power' in v. 10 and 29, עז 'might' in v. 25, and מתנים 'loins,' עז 'might,' זרועות 'arms' and אמץ 'to strengthen' in v.17." For Szlos the military language, coupled with metaphors of body parts and commercial vocabulary, depicted a "woman of valor."

23. There is nothing in MT for the ἡ τοιαύτη "such a (woman)" nor the καλῶν, which turns the "spoils" into "good spoils."

24. Five of the six imperfect verbs could express modality when speaking of past events, such as, "he *would* not lack" (11), "she

used to bring" (15), "it *would* not go out" (18), "she *would* not be afraid" (21); "she *would* not eat" (27); and "she *should* be praised" (30) (see GKC §107^{r-w}). The brief but important article by Joüon (1922: 349–352) has, unfortunately, been ignored. Joüon called attention to the fact that the Pehiṭta and the Targum generally translated in the past tense. He noted further

> D'autres traits indiquent que ce personnage n'est plus vivant, L'éloge que font les fils et le mari (vv. 28-29) ne peut guère s'adresser à une femme encore vivante. Les mots du v. 25 *elle a souri au dernier jour* semblent bien devoir s'entendre de la mort; de même, au v. 12, les mots *tous les jours de sa vie* supposent qu'elle a terminé ses jours.

25. Compare also Gen 47:22; Ezek 16:27; and Job 23:12.

26. On the confusion of ת and ה, see Delitzsch 1920: 108–109 §105^b.

27. Compare Gous (1996: 35) who stated, " . . . paying no attention to charm and beauty, and probably also not to child-rearing or erotic aspects, and *leaving her husband nothing to do but to sit in the city gate praising her and being praised because of her*" (italics mine).

28. In the Baltimore dialect of English used in my childhood, the name Arab (pronounced EH-raab) was used for the hucksters selling fruit and vegetables from their horse-drawn carts. The name "Canaanite" obviously had such a double meaning in Biblical times. A shift in accentuation in old Hebrew may have distinguished the כְּנַעֲנִי "Canaanite" from the כַּנְעָנִי* "merchant."

29. The γυνὴ γὰρ συνετὴ εὐλογεῖται "for a wise woman is blessed" comes from variant readings of the MT אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת. The εὐλογεῖται reflects a double reading of אשה as γυνὴ and as

εὐλογεῖται (=אשר)— thanks to a confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116ᶜ for other examples). The συνετὴ reflects a double reading of יראת (= φόβον) and as ידעת (= συνετὴ)—thanks to the confusion of a ד and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104ᵃ⁻ᶜ for examples). There was also the aural confusion of the א and the ע.

30. Compare Joüon 1922: 349–352. See note 23.

31. Gous cited Wolters 1988: 451; Gottlieb 1991: 284, 287; Brenner 1993: 129; and Bellis 1994: 196–197.

32. See the quotation of Joüon in note 23.

33. See McDaniel, "Surely There Is a God: Proverbs 30:1–5," in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available on the internet at http://daniel.eastern.edu/tmcdaniel/cbbp-chapter15.pdf.

34. In a separate study of Jeremiah 31, twenty-eight of thirty-three Hebrew lexemes in that chapter having Arabic cognates have already been cited in standard Hebrew lexicons. See McDaniel, *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, 159, 178–180, available at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/cbbp-chapter19.pdf.

35. See Liddell and Scott 1636, s.v. στεγνός and στέγω B, III.