

CLARIFYING MORE
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BIBLICAL PASSAGES

CHAPTER NINE

“NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40”

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IX

NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

Psalm 70:1

לְמַנְצַח לְדָוִד לְהִזְכִּיר:
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 πρόσχεε

For the end, to David, for a remembrance.

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

McDaniel

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 לְהַצִּילֵנִי “to deliver me.” The original finite verb which began the verse survives in the לְהִזְכִּיר “to hold in

memory” of the superscription. This הַזְכִּיר was mistakenly read as the *Hiph^cil* infinitive—hence its being 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: הַזְכִּיר הַזְכִּיר (לְ),” with the imperative הַזְכִּיר having dropped out by haplography. Thus, there is no need to assume that the imperative רְצֵה “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 רְצֵה “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 יִשְׁמַר	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	יִחְשַׁב לִי	v. 6	חַוְשָׁה-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 *freed* me of **my faults**. Burnt offering and 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 הַיְיֹון

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.

McDaniel

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 שָׂאֵן 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, שָׂאֵן would mean “the final resting place” and the בּוֹר שָׂאֵן 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 שָׂאֵיהָ in Isa 24:12—as understood by the Septuagint translators. The Hebrew and Greek for 24:12 are

$\text{נִשְׂאָר בְּעִיר שְׁמָהּ וְנִשְׂאִיהָ יִכָּתֵשׂ עָר}$

Desolation is left in the city,

the gates are battered into ruins (RSV).

$\text{καὶ καταλειφθήσονται πόλεις ἔρημοι}$
 $\text{καὶ οἴκοι ἐγκαταλειμμένοι ἀπολοῦνται}$

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 שָׂאֵיהָ 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 שְׁאִיָּהּ (perhaps read as the plural שְׁאִיָּהּ [scriptio defectiva] in the Vorlage). This שְׁאִיָּהּ/שְׁאִיָּת, like the שְׁאִיָּהּ 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 שְׁאִיָּהּ as ταλαιπωρίας “misery, distress” (as though it were from the root שָׂא—like the שְׂאָה וּמְשָׂה “distress and misery” in Job 30:3—rather than from the root שָׂה / שְׂאָה), the fact that the Septuagint translators rendered שְׁאִיָּהּ in Isa 24:12 as οἶκος is sufficient reason to add שְׂה, stem III, the cognate of ثوى (*tawaya*), to the lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, and to recognize that the שְׁאִיָּהּ of 40:2 was derived from it.

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

וְלֹא-פָנָה אֶל-רְהָבִים וְשִׂי 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

McDaniel

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 **שׁוֹא**, but never the words for idols, like **עֲצָב**, **סִמָּל**, **מִפְלָצָת**, 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 (ματαιά “vain”); and Isa 51:9 (which lacks a corresponding word in the Greek).

The ματαιότης “vanities” in the Septuagint and the **ܫܪܝܩܘܬܐ** (*sērīqūta*) “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 רְהָבִים. But the translation of both רַהַב and הַבֵּל in Isa 30:7 as μάταια/ματαιά “vain” and as *sērîq/sērîqûta* (سَريق/سَريقُتة) “vanity,” supports the integrity of the MT רְהָבִים 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 ריב, stem II, and its by-form רַהַב, 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 רַהַבִּים 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 רַהַב 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 (רְהָבִים) in 40:5 would be contextually appropriate.

The MT שֹׁטִי is generally translated as “those who turn aside” or “go astray” or “lapse into,” and is derived from שָׁטַח, a by-form of שָׁטָה/שָׁטָה “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 מְשִׁמְרָה [= $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$] appearing twice in Hos 9:7–8). But the $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{שְׂטָא}$ “to become demented” and the $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{שְׂטָא} / \text{שְׂטִיָּה}$ “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 כִּזְב is singular and the שְׂטִי 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 שְׂטִי in 40:4 may have been originally the שְׂטִר “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 سَطَر (*saṭara*) “he composed lies, falsehoods” and $\text{سَطْر} / \text{أسطورة}$ (*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* $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{כִּזְב}$ (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 $\text{שְׂטִר} / \text{כִּזְב}$

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 שֶׁטֶר כָּזָב “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־חָפְצָתָּ
 אֲזָנִים כָּרִיתָ לִּי
 עוֹלָה וְחַטָּאתָּ לֹא שְׂאֵלָתָּ:

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

ᾠτια δὲ ἔσκαψας μοι (Aquila)

But ears you covered/protected for me

ᾠτια δὲ κατεσκευάσας μοι (Symmachus)

But ears you prepared for me

ᾠτια κατηρτίσω μοι (Theodotian)

But ears you restored to me

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

Syriac Texts of Psa 40:6b (40:7b)¹⁹

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝ (Syro-Hex.)

pagrā^o den tēqant liy

then you restored the body for me

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝܢܝܢܝܢ (Syro-Hex. Margin)

°ednā^o den hēpārt liy

then you dug the ear for me

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝܢܝܢܝܢܝܢ (Peshiṭta)

°ednā^o den nēqabt liy

then you pierced the ear for me

As is obvious from these translations the **אָזְנַיִם כָּרַיתָ לִי** “ears you bored for me” has been very problematic. At first glance it appears that the three major Greek codices, reading *σωμα 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 *σωμα* 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 **אָזְנַיִם כָּרַיתָ 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 **אָזְנַיִם** “ears,” and offered his own emendation of **אִזְ בְּרִית לִי** “then had I the covenant.” His assertions that “**אִזְ** translates as if it rd.

כֹּונֶנֶת (*sic*) and had supplied the obj.” and “~~אז~~ mistook . . . אז for אֶזן” are, in my opinion, mistaken. Although his recognition that “~~אז~~ mistook ב for כ” was correct, the original spelling of the MT כָּרִית “you dug” was *not* בְּרִית “covenant” but the *Piel* בְּרִית “you set free” (discussed below on page 133).

Dahood (1966: 246), by (1) reading כָּרַת “you cut, you circumcised” for MT כָּרִית “you bored” and by (2) appealing to the אֶזְנֵם עֶרְלָה “their uncircumcised ear” in Jer 6:10, paraphrased the אֶזְנֵים כָּרִית לִי as “so you made my ear receptive” (to divine inspiration). However, had the psalmist intended to say “you circumcised ears for me,” the noun עֶרְלָה “foreskin” and/or the verb מָוַל, used for the circumcising of the foreskin of the heart (Deut 10:16), as well as the foreskin of the flesh (Gen 17:11), would surely have been used.²⁰

In light of the occasional confusion of ב and כ,²¹ I would emend the MT כָּרִית “you dug” to בְּרִית and derived it from ברה, stem III,²² the cognate of

- Aramaic ברי/ברא to get well, recover, to be strong or stout”; אבְּרִי “to make well”; and בְּרִיא/בְּרִי “healthy, strong, stout” (Jastrow 192; KBS 1: 154) and
- Arabic بَرِه (*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.”
- Arabic nouns أَبْرُه (*‘abrahu*) and بَارِع (*bāriy*) 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*”).

The noun זין or זין (or און or און) would be the cognate of Arabic ذان (*dân*) and ذین (*dîn*) “a vice, fault, defect, or the like” (Lane 1867: 976, 989, 991; Castell 1669: 697, 700–701).²⁵ In the psalmist’s quotation from the “scroll of scripture” reference was made to the רעה “harm, trouble” others wanted to inflict (Psa 70:2; 40:14), but the psalmist also confessed that he had more than enough רעות of his own making: “my iniquities have overtaken me, till I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me” (40:12). These iniquities are apparently what the psalmist had in mind when אונים/זנים was used as a synonym for רעות.

The אונים ברית לי in Psa 40:6b is the psalmist’s assertion that he was free of the אונים “vices/faults” which plagued him. Once כרית is emended to ברית, the verb ברה, discussed above on page 131, comes back into focus. Not only can it mean “(God) restored him to convalescence,” but, like its Arabic cognate برأ (*bara’a*), it could also mean “he was, or became clear or free,” and a causative *Pi^{el}* ברית (like the Arabic form IV) would mean “(God) made one guiltless . . . free from the fault, defect, imperfection, blemish, or vice.” The noun ברה, like the cognate برى (*bariy³*), would signify “clear of evil qualities or dispositions; shunning what is vain and false . . . pure in heart from associating any with God,” as well as signifying “sound in body and intellect.”²⁶

Moreover, the psalmist was made guiltless and became free of faults and vices by the sheer grace of God. Perhaps the clearest statements in the psalm are those in 6a and 6c (MT 7a and 7c):

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתָּ

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας

Sacrifice and offering you desired not

עֹלָה וַחֲטָאָה לֹא שָׂאֲלָתָּ

ὀλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας

Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not.

The psalmist was not making a forensic repudiation of the sacrificial cult²⁷ but was sharing a 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 (פְּלִטָה) 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.'"²⁸ 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 / بَأء (bawa²a / bā²a) "he returned . . . he made himself answerable, responsible, or accountable for it [sin] by an inseparable obligation, . . . he acknowledged it or confessed it."²⁹ In prayer one says اَبُوْءُ اِلَيْكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ (*abu²u ilayka bini^cmatika*) "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־בִּאֲתִי
 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.”³⁰

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 ὠτια “ears” of Ⲙ^{AqθΣ} (39:7)—like the 𐤍𐤃𐤍 (‘*edna*’) “ear” of the *Peshitta* and in the margin of the *Syro-Hexapla*—became σῶμα “body” as in the Ⲙ^{AB S}.

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 $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ 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 Quintillian, included, among other options, the use of paronomasia.³¹ 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).³²

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 $\Theta^{Aq\Theta\Sigma}$, and why was this Psalm 40 singled out for correction and the many, many other variants, like those in Matt 4:16 and Isa 9:2,³³ 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 בְּרִית) did *differ* from the MT (אֲזַנִּים כְּרִית); (3) the LXX variant $\sigma\omega\mu\hat{\alpha}$, instead of $\acute{\omega}\tau\iota\alpha$ (= 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 ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\omega}$ $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota$) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ($\acute{\epsilon}\phi\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\zeta$) (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)³⁴ 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 the scroll of scripture it is written about me" (7b) preceded the introduction, and "Whereupon I said: 'Behold, I have confessed'" (7b) 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's 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)

- **בָּרָא** (*baraʿa*) the cognate of **ברא** / **ברה** “to restore the body,” found in *Vorlage* of the LXX (39:7) which has $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha \delta\epsilon \kappa\alpha\tau\eta\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$; whereas the MT (40:7) has **כרה** “to dig.”
- **בָּרַהַ** (*baraha*) a by-form of **בָּרָא** (*baraʿa*), the cognate of **ברה** “to make pure, guiltless, to heal the body,” found in the restored Hebrew text of 40:7 (MT 40:8).
- **בָּוֹא** / **בָּא** (*bawaʿa* / *bâʿa*) the cognate of **בוא**, stem II, “to confess,” found in 40:7 (MT 40:8).
- **تَوِيَّ** (*tuwiya*) / **مَتَوَى** (*matwan*) the cognate of **תַּוְיָה** / **תַּוְיָה** and the noun **תַּוְיָה** in Isa 24:12 (LXX οἶκος), as well as the **תַּוְיָה** “(final) resting place” in Psa 40:2 (MT 40:3).
- **ذَان** / **ذَيْن** (*dân/dîn*) the cognate **זין** / **זין** (= **אזין** / **אזין**) “vice, fault, defect” as restored from the **אזנים** “ear” in 40:6 (MT 40:7).
- **رَاب** / **رايب** (*raib/râba*) “to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” **رايب** (*rayb*) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” the cognate of the **רַב־בַּיִם** in 40:4 “sceptics (in matters of religion).”
- **سَطَرَا** (*saṭara*) the cognate **שַׁטֵּר** “a writer, a writer of lies, legends” and **שַׁטֵּר** myths” in 40:4 (MT 40:5) when the MT **שַׁטֵּי** is restored to **שַׁטֵּר** or **שַׁטֵּר**.

The working Hebrew vocabulary of the Septuagint translators included **כרה** “to heal the body” and **תַּוְיָה** “resting

place, home,” two words which have gone unrecognized in the current lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Had this בְּרֵךְ survived in post-biblical Hebrew—as its cognate survived in Arabic—there would have been no need for all the speculation of how Hebrew אָזְנִים (= $\acute{\omega}\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ = ears) ended up in the Septuagint as $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ “body.” Other words still needing to be added to the Hebrew lexicons include בָּנָה “to confess,” שְׂאֵן “(burial) place,” אֵן “vice,” and רֵהַב “skeptic.”

Ambiguities in handwriting contributed to a number of variants, like the אָזְנִים being read as אָרִיִּים (= $\delta\epsilon$ = then) and the confusion of ב and כ , ב and ג , י and ת , etc. The ambiguity of homographs like שְׂטִי , בּוֹא , אֵן , and רֵהַב also contributed to a number of poor translations.

NOTES

1. Dalglish (1962: 237–238) noted “. . . the phrase לְנִצְחָה 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* ($n\bar{t}h$) [= נִצְחָה].

Dalglish concluded:

The phrase לְנִצְחָה 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 ܢܫܐܗ (*nēṣāh*) “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 *dâwidum* 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 אֲזִכִּיר “memorial offering” in Lev 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8; 24:7; Num 5:26. The הֲזִכִּיר in Psa 70:1 could well be a variant spelling of אֲזִכִּיר

4. For variations of this imperative addressed to God, compare Jdg 16:28 and Psalm 106:4 (זְכַרְנִי); Neh 13: 14, 22, 31 (זְכַרְהָ לִי); and Job 10:9 (זְכַרְנָא).

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 a confusion of ב and ה were cited by Delitzsch. The MT יִחַשְׁבֶּה became in Ⓞ 39:18 φροντισεῖ “consider.” The MT חוֹנֵשֶׁה—which was rendered in Ⓞ^{B S} 39:14 as πρόσχες “give

heed” and in S^A as $\sigma\pi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu$ “hasten”—was translated in $\text{S}^{B1 S2}$ in 69:1 as $\sigma\pi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu$ and in S^{S1} as $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\sigma\omicron\nu$ “be pleased.”

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

11. MT בְּחֻדֵי מִעֵי “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” (= $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\omega$). Like שָׂאָה and שָׂעָה “to gaze” (BDB 981, 1043), שָׂאַר and שָׂעַר could be by-forms, although it is more likely that a שָׂעַר and שָׂאַר variation simply reflects an aural error once the ע was softened into a glottal stop.

14. Note Ecc 1:2, $\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma \mu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\omicron\tau\eta\tau\omega\nu$ “vanity of vanities.”

15. See Hatch and Redpath 1897: 899. In Zech 11:17, רֵעִי הָאֵלִיל “my worthless shepherd” became $\text{o}\acute{\iota} \text{ ποιμαίνοντες τὰ μάταια}$ “the worthless shepherds” in the Septuagint. But the “idol shepherd” of the KJV here notwithstanding, the רֵעִי הָאֵלִיל , like the רֵעֵה אֲוִלִי (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 (${}^{\circ}irhâb$) “terrorism”; and ارهابی (${}^{\circ}irhâbî$) “terrorist.”

17. The Peshittā has ܡܡܠܠܐ ܕܓܘܠܐ ($mamlēlā dagāl$) “lying speech,” apparently reading שִׁפִּי or שִׁפָּה for MT שִׁטִּי .

18. None of the other possible derivations (including שָׁטָה “turn aside”; שׂוֹט “to go, to rove / row about”; שׂוֹט “scourage, whip”;

שׁוֹט “treat with despite”; or שִׁטָּה “acacia, tree and wood”) correspond to the Greek *μαύλας*.

19. Field 1964: 151.

20. A person with a כְּרוּת שִׁפְכָה “severed penis” could not enter the assembly (Deut 23:1), suggesting that the verbs מוּל and כָּרַת were not fully interchangeable.

21. See Delitzsch 1920: 110 §107^{a-c}.

22. בָּרָה “to eat” is stem I; בָּרַה “to bind” is stem II, which is the base of בְּרִית “covenant.” Hebrew and Aramaic בָּרַי/בָּרָא/בָּרַה can also mean “to perforate, to hollow out,” not to mention בָּרָא “to create”(see Jastrow 192).

23. For the confusion of (1) ז and ד (like the אַחַד/אָחַז variants in I Chron 24:6), (2) י and נ (like the מְפַנֵּי/מְפַנֵּיִם *Qere/Kethib* in Pro 3:15); and (3) ׀ and ׀ (like the כְּמִהֵן/כְּמִהֵם variant in II Sam 19:41), see Delitzsch 1920: 111–112 §110a; 116–119 §120^b, 128^a, and 131.

24. See Jastrow 16, 1044 and BDB 725, noting also the עֲדָנָה by-form.

25. Its synonyms are ذيب (*dîb*), ذيم (*dîm*), and ذوموم (*dumûm*) which Castell defined as ذين (*dîn*) “*culpa, labe, ignominiosus,*” ذيب (*dîb*) “*macula, vitium,*” and ذيم (*dîm*) “*vitium, vituperium.*”

26. Compare Castell (1669: 425–426) who rendered it “*liberavit, absolvit, . . . justificavit . . . convaluit à morbo, sanatus fuit.*”

27. For statements repudiating sacrifice note I Sam 15:22; Psa 50:7–15 (with the initial לָּ of vs. 8 being read as the emphatic לָּ “I do indeed reprove you . . .”); Psa 51:16–17; Psa 69:30–33; Isa

1:11–17; 66:1–4; Jer 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6; 8:13; Amos 5:21–25; and Micah 6:6–8.

28. 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.”

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

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

31. *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 <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/quintilian.html>.

32. The careful reader of Jobes 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.

33. Matt 4:16

λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος
ἐν σκότει
φῶς εἶδεν μέγα,
καὶ τοῖς καθημένοις
ἐν χώρα
καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.

Isa 9:2

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

The people who **sat**
in darkness
have seen a great light,
And upon those who sat
in the land
and shadow of death
Light has **dawned**.

O people **walking**
in darkness,
behold a great light
you that dwell
in the land
and shadow of death
a light **shall shine upon you**.

34. See Moffat 1924: xiv–xvii.