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CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

“PROBLEM QUOTATIONS
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE
HEBREWS”

Thomas F. McDaniel, Ph.D.

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XXVII
PROBLEM QUOTATIONS
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews contains about ninety quotations or allusions from the Hebrew scriptures.¹ It is widely acknowledged that the author of this epistle was not interested in an exegetical inquiry to discover the literal meaning of the Hebrew texts or the earlier Israelite authors' intended messages. The Hebrew scriptures were assumed to have been written by God—or to be the utterances of the Holy Spirit or the pre-incarnate Christ—and were used by the author of the epistle to give authority to his faith affirmations about the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Most of the quotations in the epistle are rather straight forward from the Hebrew text or the Septuagint with only minor variations—as if they were quoted from memory—and are trouble free.² Some of the author's allusions, though, have been missed by a number of commentators. Such is the case of the statement in Heb 1:3, “[God] spoke to us through a son, . . . through whom he created the universe,” which was surely drawn from the wisdom traditions found in

- Proverbs 8:22, 30, “Yahweh created me [Wisdom] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old . . . I was beside him like a little child.”
- Wisdom of Solomon 9:1–2, “O God of my fathers . . . who has made all things by your Word and by your Wisdom has formed man.”
- Wisdom of Solomon 7:22, “For Wisdom [is] the fashioner of all things.”
- Wisdom of Solomon 8:4, “[Wisdom] glorifies her noble birth by living with God . . . she is an initiate in the know-

ledge of God, and an associate in his works.”

- Wisdom of Solomon 9:9, “With thee is Wisdom, who knows thy works and was present when you made the world.”

The affirmation in Hebrew 1:3, “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” clearly echoes Wisdom of Solomon 7:25–26,

[Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; . . . she is a reflection of the eternal light, a spotless mirror of God’s active power, and image of his goodness. . . . she renews all things.³

Just as the prologue of the Gospel of John reflects the transformation the feminine חֵכְמָה / Σοφία “Wisdom” tradition into a masculine Λογός / Χριστός “Word/Christ” tradition, so the prologue in the Epistle to the Hebrew reflects the transformation of the חֵכְמָה / Σοφία tradition into the υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ / Χριστός “Son of God/Christ” tradition. And, whereas Matthew appealed to the Greek text of Isaiah 7:14 for a prophecy of a virgin birth, the author of Hebrews appealed to the metaphor of adoption in Psalm 2, בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יְלֵדְתִיךָ “you art my son, today I have begotten you,” (which was a declaration of the divine origin and supremacy of the Israelite monarchy) to proclaim the reality of the “first born” Son of God who sat at “the right hand of Majesty on high” and was superior to the angels.⁴ Moreover, to support this affirmation, the author appealed to the same metaphor in II Sam 7:14, אֲנִי אֶתְהַלֵּל לְאָב וְהוּא יִתְהַלֵּל לִי, “I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son”—disregarding the histor-

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ical context found in II Sam 7:14, where Yahweh said to David:

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body (בְּמִנְעֵיךָ / κοιλλάς σου), and I will establish his kingdom.

Buchanan (1976: 15), in his commentary on this epistle, noted that there is no direct or indirect evidence “that the author of Hebrews interpreted Jesus as belonging to the family of David . . . [he] never mentioned David in relation to Jesus or the Messiah.”

Heb 1:6 and Deut 32:43

הֲרַנִּינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ
כִּי דָם-עֲבָדָיו יִקּוּם
וְנִקָּם יִשָּׁיב לְצָרָיו
וְכִפֶּר אֲדָמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ:

Praise his people, O you nations;⁵
for he avenges the blood of his servants,
and takes vengeance on his adversaries,
and makes expiation for the land of his people.

The quotation in Hebrews 1:6 presents the reader with two problems. The first is the statement that when God brought the “first born” into the world, the angels (probably the “winds” and “flames,” mentioned in vs. 7) were already present and were commanded to worship the “first born Son” —despite the prior statement in Heb 1:3, that “[God] spoke to us through a son, . . . through whom he created the universe.” Seemingly then the title “first born” was not used to

designate the “first of creation” but was used as an honorific—differing with Wisdom’s claim in Prov 8:22–23 that “Yahweh created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old . . . when he established the heavens I was there.” Whereas Wisdom claimed to have come before any angels, according to Heb 1:6, the “first born” was greeted by angels already there.

The second problem confronting the reader relates to the difference between what appears in the Hebrew text of Deut 32:43 and what appears in the Septuagint, which was the source for the seven word quotation in Heb 1:6. The thirteen words in the Hebrew text of 32:43 (cited above) were expanded into forty eight words in the Septuagint, and, of all these Greek words, only seven were quoted in Heb 1:6. In these texts, cited in the next paragraphs, the boldface corresponds to the MT of Deut 32:43, and the underlined text matches the quotation in Heb 1:6.

Deut 32:43

εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοί ἅμα αὐτῷ καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ ὅτι τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικᾶται καὶ ἐκδικήσει καὶ ἀνταποδώσει δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν ἀνταποδώσει καὶ ἐκκαθαριεῖ κύριος τὴν γῆν τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ

Praise, ye heavens, with him, and let all the sons of God worship him. **Rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people**, and let all the angels of God strengthen themselves in him; **for he will avenge the blood of his sons /servants** (υἱῶν / וְיַבְרָכֶם) **and he will render vengeance**, and recompense justice **to his enemies**, and will reward them that hate him; and the **Lord shall purge the (his) land (of) his people**.

Heb 1:6

ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην,
λέγει, Καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.

But when he again brings the firstborn into the world,
he says: “and let all the angels of God worship him.”

The radical difference between the MT “Praise his people, O you nations” and the Septuagint’s “Rejoice, ye heavens, with him” reflects the confusion of an ע and a ש, as attested, for example, in Judges 8:16 where the MT reads

וַיִּקַּח אֶת־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר
וְאֶת־קֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרִקָּנִים
וַיַּדַּע בָּהֶם אֶת אַנְשֵׁי סֻכּוֹת:

And he took the elders of the city
and with thorns of the desert and with briars
he *made known* with them the men of Succoth.

The senseless last line here appears in the Septuagint as καὶ ἠλόησεν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοὺς ἄνδρας τῆς πόλεως “and with them [the thorns and briars] he *threshed* the men of the city” (after which came the destruction of the tower of Penuel and the killing of the men of that city). In the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint the MT וידע “he knew/made known” was obviously read as וידש “he threshed,” which is contextually the preferred reading.⁶ A similar error occurred in the MT of Deut 32:43, where the הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עִמּוֹ “Praise, O Gentiles, his people,” was—in light of the Septuagintal variant—originally הַרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עִמּוֹ “Praise, O heavens, his people” or “Praise, O heavens, with him” This phrase became corrupted when the ש of שָׁמַיִם was read as an ע, and it became הַרְנִינוּ עִמֵּם

עֲמוּ “Praise, O peoples, his people.” The ambiguity of this עֲמוּ was reduced when גוֹיִם was substituted for the עֲמוּ. This change, which survives in the MT גוֹיִם עֲמוּ, would have been unnecessary had the original שָׁמַיִם not been misread as עֲמוּ.

The Septuagint of Deut 32:43 has two doublets. The first one is (a) the εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ ἅμα αὐτῷ (“Praise, O heavens, with him”), reflecting a *Vorlage* with הִרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עֲמוּ, coupled with (b) the εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ (“Rejoice, O nations, with his people”), which reflects a *Vorlage* with הִרְנִינוּ עַם עֲמוּ. The second doublet is (c) καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ “and let all the sons of God worship him,” coupled with (d) καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ “and let all the angels of God strengthen themselves in him.” This second doublet with its “sons of God” and “angels of God” interprets the שָׁמַיִם / οὐρανοὶ “heavens” mentioned in the first doublet cited above. Thus, the Song of Moses began with the vocative “O heavens” in Deut 32:1, and apparently ended with the same vocative in Deut 32:43, providing a classical *incipit* and *inclusio*—clinching the argument that the MT גוֹיִם was not original but a secondary clarification once שָׁמַיִם was misread as עֲמוּ. Thus, when the author of Hebrews quoted the phrase “and let all the angels of God worship him,” he used a phrase found only in a doublet which was totally removed from the Hebrew text and context of the Song of Moses.

Heb 1:8–9 and Psa 45:6–8

In the first verses of Psalm 45 the author stated with perfect clarity, “I address my verses to the king . . . [for] you are the fairest of the sons of men . . . therefore God has blessed you

for ever.” But this focus did not deter the author of Hebrews from appropriating part of the psalm as a hymn of praise for the “Son of God” who was the fairest of the “sons of God.”

Despite the fact that the 2ms suffix ך “your” appears fourteen times in Psa 45:1–5, 7–9 clearly referring to the king of Israel or Judah, the suffix in 45:9 was read by the author of Hebrews as referring to the Son of God, following the Septuagint’s $\acute{\omicron}$ $\theta\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ σου $\acute{\omicron}$ $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, “your throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And many subsequent translators have followed the Greek texts of Psalms and Hebrews, which understood the אלהים in the phrase כִּסֵּאֲךָ אלהים עוֹלָם וָעֶד to be the vocative “O God.” Thus, כִּסֵּאֲךָ “your throne” came to mean that the throne of God and/or the throne of the divine Son would be for ever and ever.

Given the fourteen ך suffixes referring to the earthly king, it is most likely that the psalmist intended כִּסֵּאֲךָ אלהים to mean “your divine throne,” with the אלהים used here as an adjective rather than as a vocative.⁷ This statement about Israel’s or Judah’s “divine throne” being “for ever and ever” reflects the same affirmation made in Psa 89:29, 35–37, “I will establish his line for ever . . . I will not lie to David. His line shall endure for ever, and his throne as long as the sun before me.”

The last phrase from Psalm 45 quoted in Heb1:9^b, “God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (חֵבְרִיךָ),” indicates how the author of Hebrews found evidence for “God the Father” and “God the Son.” The “your” suffix in the phrase “your throne, O God” (1:8) had as its antecedent the divine Son; while the “your God” in the phrase “your God has anointed you” (1:9) refers to God the

Father. And, whereas the חֲבֵרָיִךְ “your fellows” in Psa 45:7 referred to fellow monarchs surrounding Israel’s or Judah’s king, for the author of Hebrews it referred to the heavenly comrades of the Son—the angels who were commanded to worship the Son (1:6) and were the “ministering spirits sent forth to serve” (1:14).

Heb 2:7, 9 and Psa 8:5

וַתִּקְטַן־הוּא מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֶהוּ:

You diminished him a little from God,
and crowned him with glory and honor.

ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους, δόξῃ καὶ
τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν

You diminished him a little less than angels,
and crowned him with glory and honor;

Hebrews 2:7

ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους, δόξῃ καὶ
τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν

You diminished him a little less than angels.

The single word מֵעַט “little” became translated into Greek with the two words βραχύ “short” and τι “some, somewhat, only,” both of which were used for space, status, or time. This translations differ as to whether the βραχύ τι meant “a little lower” (spacial/ social status) or “a little while” (temporal). The Hebrew text of Psa 8:5 clearly means “you have made him [= Adam = human beings] *only a little lower than God,*” thereby affirming the very high social status of humans who were given dominion over the works of God’s hands, as stated

also in Gen 1:26–28. But once the אֱלֹהִים “God” was read or interpreted here as בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים “the sons of God” or “angels,” then the βραχύ τι, which translated the מְעַט “a little lower” (with reference to status), was interpreted by some as “for a little while.”

Thus, while the Vulgate, and most English translations rendered the βραχύ τι of Psa 8:5 as “a *little* lower than,” the same βραχύ τι when quoted in Heb 2:7 became “for a *little while* lower” in the RSV, NAB, NAS, NAU, NJB, and NRS. These latter translations rightly reflect the argument of the author of Hebrews who has taken liberty with Psa 8:7 by interpreting the אָנוּשׁ / ἄνθρωπος “man” and the בֶּן־אָדָם / υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου “the son of man” to be the “last Adam” (I Cor 15:45), even though the Hebrew has אָנוּשׁ “Enosh” for “man” rather than אָדָם “Adam”—not to mention that the Hebrew has אֱלֹהִים “God” rather than “angels.” But for the author of Hebrews the psalmist’s recognition that *Adam* (= “human beings”) had dominion on *earth* was but a coded revelation that the Son of God had dominion over *everything*. The Son became incarnate on earth *for a little while* (βραχύ τι) as Jesus, who as a son of Adam could demonstrate his dominion over death and the devil—while at the same time expiate the sins of all his earthly brethren, the children of Adam and of Abraham.

Heb 8:9b and Jer 31:32b

The initial הִנֵּה “Behold!” (= ἴδου) of Jer 31:31 is not found in Heb 8:8b; and the נֹאמַיִהוָה “oracle of Yahweh” (= φησὶν κύριος “says the Lord”) became in Heb 8:8–10 λέγει κύριος “declares the Lord.” The more significant differences

in the verses below (highlighted in boldface) have a ready explanation.⁸

Jeremiah 31:32

אֲשֶׁר־הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי
וְאַנְכִי בְעַלְתִּי בָם נֶאֱמַרְיָהוּהָ:

... my covenant which they broke,
though **I was their husband**, oracle of Yahweh

or

... my covenant which they broke,
and **I was disgusted with** them, oracle of Yahweh

Jeremiah 38:31 (LXX)

ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου
καὶ ἐγὼ ἠμέλησα αὐτῶν φησὶν κύριος

for they abode not in my covenant,
and **I disregarded** them, saith the Lord.

Hebrews 8:9b

ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου,
καὶ ἐγὼ ἠμέλησα αὐτῶν, λέγει κύριος·

because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,
and I disregarded them, declares the Lord.

The translation of **בְּעַלְתִּי** in the Septuagint as ἠμέλησα “I disregarded” may reflect a *Vorlage* with **נֶעַלְתִּי** “to loathe, to abhor,” rather than **בְּעַלְתִּי**. However, an emendation here is probably unnecessary. Hebrew **בעל** had more than the one meaning recognized in current Hebrew lexicons. It may be a homograph of the two meanings attested for the Arabic **بعل**

(*ba^cala*): (1) “he became a husband, or lord, or master,” with its noun בעל (*ba^cl*) “husband, lord, master owner,” and (2) “he became confounded or perplexed, he was disgusted,” with its participle בעל (*ba^cil*) “confounded, perplexed” (Lane 1: 228). The translation of בעל into Greek as ἡμέλησα “disregarded” makes sense once the second definition of the cognate בעל (*ba^cala*) comes into focus. Instead of interpreting בעלתי כֶּם as “I was their husband,” the context, the cognates and versions⁹ suggest that the phrase meant “I was disgusted with them.”

Heb 10:37–38 and Hab 2:3–4

The quotation of Hab 2:3–4 in Heb 10:37–38 contains an abbreviated and a rearranged text, as well as significant departures from the Mosoretic text in favor of the Septuagint. The texts to be compare include

כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד
וַיִּפֶחַ לִקְיָן וְלֹא יִכְזֹב
אִם־יִתְמַהֲמַה חֶכְהָלוֹ
כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יֵאָחֵר:
הִנֵּה עֹפְלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ יֵחִיָּה:

For still the vision awaits its time;
it hastens to the end — it will not lie.

If it seem slow, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.

Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.

διότι ἔτι ὄρασις εἰς καιρὸν
καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν
ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν
ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίση
ἐὰν ὑποστείλῃται οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ
ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται

For the vision *is* yet for a time,
and it will rise at the end, and not in vain:
though he should tarry, wait for him;
for he will surely come, and will not tarry.
If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him:
but the just shall live by my faith.

Hebrews 10: 37–38

ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον,
ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει·
ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται,
καὶ ἐὰν ὑποστείλῃται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ.

For yet a little while
(= MT Hab 2:3a)
the coming one shall come and shall not tarry;
(= MT Hab 2:3d)
but my righteous one shall live by faith,
(= MT Hab 2:4b)
and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.
(= LXX Hab 2:4a)

The MT רַעַי is reflected in the first of the two ὅσον, meaning “a while”; and the לְמוֹעֵד “appointed time” was read as a poetic preposition and an adverb—לְמוֹעַד “for a while”—

reflected by the second ὄσον. There is nothing in Heb 10:37 for the MT קִוּוֹן “vision.” Nor is there anything for the MT וְנִפְחָ לִקְצֹ וְלֹא יִכְזֹב אִם-יִתְמַהְמַה חֶכְהָ-לוֹ and its translation in the Septuagint as καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν “it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it.”

The translation of the MT בּוֹ נִפְשׁוּ לֹא-יִשְׁרָה נֶפְשׁוֹ has been very problematic for the following two reasons.

- The *pu^cal* נֶפְשׁוֹ “she became swollen” has been widely identified as a cognate of the Arabic عفل (*ʿafal*) “tumor” and عفل (*ʿofel*) “hemorrhoid” (BDB 779), and then paraphrased as a verb or adjective to mean “shall fail” (RSV) “lifted up” (KJV), “puffed up” (ASV, NIV, NIB), “unbelieving” (DRA), “succumb” (NJB), “rash” (NAB), “proud [ones]” (NAS, NAV, NRS, NKJ), with the Vulgate’s having “*incredulus*.”
- The verb יִשְׁרָה is commonly identified as יִשָּׂר “to be upright,” the cognate of Arabic يسر (*yasara*) “to be gentle, to be easy”—which, with the modifier בְּעֵינַי, means “to be right in the eyes of,” i.e., “to be pleasing.” (BDB 448).

However, the MT נֶפְשׁוֹ should be corrected to עֵבְלָהּ, in agreement with the Septuagint’s ὑποστελείηται and its quotation in Heb 10:37. The Hebrew stem עבל, as understood by the Greek translators, is the cognate of Arabic عبل (*ʿabala*) “held back, he drew back, he withheld, he diverted, he was cut off [by death]” (Lane 5: 1941–1942; Hava 451).¹⁰ With this definition in focus, the corrected MT לֹא-יִשְׁרָה עֵבְלָהּ נֶפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ means “his unrighteous soul was cut off,” i.e., the

unrighteous have been *cut off* [from life], but “the righteous shall *live* by faithfulness.” With this correction of עפלה to עבלה¹¹ and with insight from the cognate عبل (*‘abala*), the contrast between the fate of the *unrighteous* and the fate of the *righteous* is clear—the former *dies* and the latter *lives*.

The Greek translation (including the quotation in Heb 2:4) of the MT לא־ישָׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ as οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ “my soul has no pleasure in him,” reflects a *Vorlage* with לא שרה נפשי בו.¹² The Greek translators did not have a text with the 3fs perfect ישרה “she was upright,” but a 3fs perfect of שר/שרר “to have pleasure.” This stem is the cognate of Arabic سر (sar/surra) “he rejoiced, was glad, happy, he experienced a pleasure, or delight.” (Lane 4:1337).¹³

Heb 10:5–7 and Psa 40:7–9

7 זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתָּ
 אָזְנוֹם כְּרִיתָ לִי
 עוֹלָה וַחֲטָאָה לֹא שָׂאֲלָתָּ:
 8 אֲזֵ אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאתִי
 בַּמִּגְלַת־סֵפֶר כְּתוּב עָלַי:
 9 לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי חָפְצָתִי
 וְתוֹרָתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
 but *my ears* you have *pierced*;
 burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come
 — it is written about/for/to me in the scroll —

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“I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my *heart*.”

Θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας
ὥτία / σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι
ὀλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας
τότε εἶπον ἰδοὺ ἤκω
ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ
τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλήθη
καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire;
but ears / body you prepared for me:
burnt-offering and sin offering you did not require.

Then I said, Behold, I come:
in the volume of the book it is written concerning me,
I desired to do your will, O my God,
and your law in the midst of my stomach.

Heb 10:5–7

Θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας,
σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι·
ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας.
τότε εἶπον, Ἴδου ἤκω,
ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ,
τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς ὃ θέλημά σου.

Sacrifice and offering you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
sacrifices and offerings you have not desired.

“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come
(In the roll of the book it is written of Me)
To do your will, O God.’”

The Hebrew אֲזַנִּים כְּרִיתָ לִּי “you have bored ears for me” is translated literally into Greek by Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotian, and in a number of Septuagint manuscripts. But the major Septuagint manuscripts (Vaticanus, Siniaticus, and Alexandrinus) have σῶμα “body.” There was evidently a confusion in the (oral) tradition of אֶזְן “ear” (ὠτία) with עֵצָם “bone, body, self” (= ὀστέον or σῶμα; see especially Lam 4:7, אֲדָמוּ עֵצָם “they were ruddy in body”). If the original were עֵצָם = σῶμα = “body,” the verb may well have been כְּרִיתָ rather than the MT כָּרַתָּ. This כְּרִיתָ (from כָּרַת) would be the cognate of Arabic برأ / برى (*baraya*) “to cleanse, to restore the body;” as in the expression “He [God] restored him to convalescence from disease, sickness or malady”; and the noun باری (*bâri*^{um}) “recovering from disease, sickness, or malady, convalescent, healthy” (Lane 1: 178[form 4], 179; Hava 26). The Greek καταρτίσω “prepared” would translate Hebrew כּוּן “to prepare,” not the MT כָּרַת “to dig, to pierce.”

The מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר “scroll of scripture” may be a reference to just Psalm 119, which contains many references about “delighting in the law” (verses 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, as well as Psalms 1:2; 112:1; and 37:31).

NOTES

1. Henry Shires (in *Finding the Old Testament in the New* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974, 62–63] noted that in Hebrews “at least 28 O.T. passages are cited, and 21 of these are not quoted elsewhere in the N.T.” Given the varied length of the quotations in Hebrews, I prefer to count *phrases* rather than verses or passages.

2. A good example of minor variations having no theological significance is found in Heb 1:11–12 where Psa 102:25–26 is quoted, which reads וְיִחַלְפוּ כַּלְבוּשׁ תַּחֲלִיפֵם וְיִחַלְפוּ לְבוּשׁ כְּבֹדָה וְיִבְלוּ כַּלְבוּשׁ יְבֹלֵהוּ “and all of them like a garment will wear out; like a raiment you change them and they will be changed.” In the Septuagint (101:26) ἰμάτιον translated בְּגָד “garment” and περιβόλαιον translated לְבוּשׁ “raiment,” with the repeated use of תַּלְתֵּל “to change” matched by the repeated use of ἀλλάσσω “to change.” But in Heb 1:10 ἰμάτιον “garment” appears twice and περιβόλαιον “cloak” once; and the first ἀλλάσσω in the Septuagint became ἐλίσσω “to roll up” in the epistle.

3. James Moffatt (in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924: 6] cited Wis 7:25–26 and commented,

The unique relation of Christ to God is one of the unborrowed truths of Christianity, but it is stated here in borrowed terms. The writer is using metaphors which had been already applied in Alexandrian theology to Wisdom and Logos.

By contrast, George Wesley Buchanan (in *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions*, Anchor Bible 36 [Garden City, New York: Doubleday] 1976: 6–7) made no reference to Wis 7:25 ff., although he quoted Pss of Sol 8:2–14 as commentary on the “concept of time and creation” found in Heb 1:2 and 11:3.

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4. Compare Deut 32:18, צור ילדך תשי ותשכח אל מחלקך, “you were forgot of the Rock that begot you and you forgot the God who gave you birth.”

5. The fragment of the Song of Moses found in Qumran Cave 4, cited by Buchanan, op. cit., 15 reads, “Praise his people, O heavens.”

6. For other example of the confusion of ש and ע, see Friedrich Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1920), 119, §131.

7. So interpreted, Psalm 45 can be included among the biblical texts dealing with the divine right of kings, such as

- The government of the earth is in the hands of the Lord, and over it he will raise up the right man for the time (Sir 10:4).
- For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High (Wis 6:3).
- For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God (Rom 13:1).
- He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord’s own portion, whom, being his firstborn, he disciplined, and allotting to him the light of his love, he does not neglect him (Sir 17:17–18)

8. The words in italics indicate almost complete agreement between these passages in Hebrews 8 and Jeremiah 31. The words below in boldface indicate distinct disparity between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint tradition. The few underlined words highlight minor variations.

Jeremiah 31:31 “Behold! *the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant*

which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, oracle of Yahweh.** 33 *But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, the oracle of Yahweh: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* 34 *And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, oracle of Yahweh; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

Hebrews 8:8b *The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; **for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.** 10 This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."*

9. The Syriac reads with the Septuagint "and so I despised (ܕܥܫܝܬܘܢ [bēsīt]) them," but the Vulgate reads "ego dominatus sum eorum."

10. Lane (4:1555; 5: 1941) cited the expression *عبلته عبول* (‘abalathu ‘abûlu) and *شعبته شعوب* (ša‘abathu ša‘ûbu), both meaning "death separated him from his companions."

11. For the confusion of פ and כ, see Delitzsch, *op.cit.*, 115, §118.
12. For the confusion of ך and ך, see Delitzsch, *op.cit.*, 103–105.
13. Also noteworthy is سرور (*surûr*) “happiness, or joy, or gladness, . . . or dilatation of the bosom with delight or pleasure . . .” (Lane 4: 1339; KBS 4:1657). Although BDB (1057) recognized the Arabic cognate of Hebrew נַר “navel string” (= سن [*surr*]), the verb נַר and its cognates were not cited.

ADDENDUM

Matt 21:16–17 and Psa 8:2

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant; and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise?’”

Jesus’ quotation of Psa 8:2 in this conversation with his adversaries follows either the Septuagint or a Hebrew text in which one letter was different from that found in the Masoretic text. The Hebrew text used by the Greek translators did not have the MT עז “bulwark, strength” but ען or עין meaning αἶνον “praise,” matching the Vulgate’s *lauden*, reflecting the well attested confusion ך and ך. (Delitzsch, *op.cit.*, 113 §112d [see above, note 6] cited examples from (1) Isa 44:14 with the MT אֶרֶן and the אֶרֶן in two manuscripts listed by Kennicott, and (2) the *Qere* and *Kethib* in Psa 31:3 and 71:3,

with מְעוֹן “habitation” and מְעוֹז “stronghold.” The stems עָן and עָנָה “to praise” are cognates of Arabic غن (*ġan*) and غنى (*ġanaya*) (BDB 777; Lane 6: 2299, 2302). In Neh 12:36–37 both הָעֵין and מִלְּי were translated by αἰνεῖν “to praise.”

The NIV, NIB, NLT and the DRA follow the Greek and Latin texts of Psa 8:2 and the Greek text of Matt 21:17 by translating the עֲזַרְתָּ עֵן of Psa 8:2 as “you ordained/perfected praise.” Thus, the NLT reads, “*You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise. They silence your enemies who were seeking revenge.*” However, whether the text contained עֵן “bulwark” or עָן “praise,” the problem remains of explaining how or when infantile voices ever destroyed (הַשְׁבִּיתָ) an enemy or an avenger. Thus, the cluster of words as *they stand* in Psa 8:2 remain an enigma.

However, once the MT עֵן is corrected to עָן “praise”—as found in the *Vorlage* used by the Greek translators—and the last five Hebrew words Psa 8:2c are recognized as a misplace phrase, clarity comes immediately. At one time the words of Psa 8:2c, “you founded a bulwark because of thy foes, to still the enemy and avenger,” must have followed Psa 7:6, which when brought together constitute a logically coherent and balanced stanza that corresponds well with the balanced use of “anger” and “judgment” in Psa 7:11. The reconstructed stanza combining 7:6 and 8:2c would read

Arise, O Yahweh, in your anger,
raise yourself against the fury of my enemies.
Awake, O my God; you decreed judgment
because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

This relocation of 8:2c removes the insurmountable problem of explaining how babies or their infantile voices served in a defense against foes. Briggs (1906: 63) could only conjecture

The poet may have been thinking of the creative strength of God's speech, of Gn. 1, and so of the strength that God had established in human speech even of little children as superior to physical prowess. It is probable that he was thinking of the divine strength as recognized and praised by children, in accord with the rendering of the G .

More recent commentators have been a bit more creative but not more helpful.