CLARIFYING
MORE
BAFFLING
BIBLICAL
PASSAGES

BY

THOMAS F. McDANIEL, Ph.D.
PREFACE

This volume, *Clarifying More Baffling Biblical Passages*, contains twenty-nine chapters which focus on problematic Hebrew and Greek biblical texts and terms that were not addressed in my two other books, entitled, respectively, *The Song of Deborah: Poetry in Dialect—A Philological Study of the Song of Deborah with Translation and Commentary* and *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*. The former volume is a 2003 revision of *Deborah Never Sang: A Philological Study on the Song of Deborah* (Jerusalem: Makor. 1983). It is available now online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/Deborah.pdf. The latter volume is also available online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/CBBP.pdf.

The *Summary* chapter in *The Song of Deborah: Poetry in Dialect* has a “Supplemental Lexicon” containing fifty-five old Hebrew words which never made it into the standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Fifty of these fifty-five lost words have been recovered thanks to Arabic cognates. Similarly, in the book *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages* fifty-eight old Hebrew words appearing in eighty-four phrases (in fifty-five different verses) were recovered—thanks again to Arabic cognates. A list of all fifty-eight words is provided in the *Summary* chapter of that book. In this volume, *Clarifying More Baffling Biblical Passages*, I present over seventy new translations of problematic Hebrew words, most of which are based upon Arabic cognates.

For the readers of this study the eight volume *Arabic-English Lexicon* of Edwin W. Lane and the two volume *Lexicon Heptaglotton* of Edmund Castell are available at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/LaneLexicon.htm and http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/Castell.htm.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Having been retired now for seven years and thoroughly enjoying the role of a Professor Emeritus at the Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, I have had the opportunity to pull together more of my research notes and assorted articles for online publication in this volume, Clarifying More Baffling Biblical Passages, which follows the same format as its predecessor, Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages, noted in the Preface above. In addition to the acknowledgments made in the earlier volume, I want to acknowledge here my indebtedness to my mentors back in the 1950’s and 1960’s whose instruction and inspiration provide me with the philological tools and a strong desire to participate in the critical study of biblical texts. The distinguished professors are name here in chronological order of when I studied under them, starting with my undergraduate work.

Pierce Ellis (University of Richmond)
Edward Dalglish (Eastern Baptist Seminary)
Ephraim Speiser (University of Pennsylvania)
Franz Rosenthal (University of Pennsylvania)
Moshe Greenberg (University of Pennsylvania)
Wilfred Lambert (Johns Hopkins University)
George Glanzman (Johns Hopkins University)
Samuel Iwry (Johns Hopkins University)
Delbert Hillers (Johns Hopkins University)
Herbert Huffmon (Johns Hopkins University)
George Krotkoff (Johns Hopkins University)

Narberth, Pennsylvania
June, 2008
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-text</td>
<td>Codex Alexandrinus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJSL</td>
<td>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica, Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOS</td>
<td>American Oriental Society, New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATD</td>
<td>Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Göttingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611 (same as KJV, 1611)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-text</td>
<td>Codex Vaticanus</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCTP</td>
<td>A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BH¹</td>
<td>R. Kittel, Biblica Hebraica, third edition, Stuttgart, 1937</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BibOr</td>
<td>Biblica et Orientalia, Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Bible Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSC</td>
<td>Bible Student's Commentary</td>
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<td>BibT</td>
<td>Bible Today</td>
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<td>BTal</td>
<td>Bet Talmud</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>I. Gelb, L. Oppenheim, et al., eds., The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Washington, D. C.</td>
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<td>CTM</td>
<td>Concordia Theological Monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Communio Viatorium</td>
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<td>DR</td>
<td>Downside Review</td>
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<td>EBC</td>
<td>The Expository Bible Commentary</td>
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<td>ET</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAT</td>
<td>Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review, Cambridge, Massachusetts</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBCTP</td>
<td>Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>IVPNTC</td>
<td>IVP New Testament Commentary Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven, Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Missoula, Montana</td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

JBS  Journal of Biblical Storytelling
JETS  Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JPSTC  Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JQR  Jewish Quarterly Review, Philadelphia
JSNT  Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Sheffield
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford
KJV  King James Version of the Bible (same as the AV, 1611)
LTSB  Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin
LXX  Septuagint
MBC  Mellon Biblical Commentary
MT  Masoretic Text
NCB  New Century Bible
NITGTC  The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NRSV  New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, New York, 1992
NTL  New Testament Library
NTS  New Testament Studies
OTL  Old Testament Library, Philadelphia and London
PEFQS  Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement
PEQ  Palestine Exploration Quarterly, London
RSV  Revised Standard Version of the Bible, London and New York, 1952
SC  The Speakers Commentary
TDNT  Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TDOT  Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
USQR  Union Seminary Quarterly Review
UT  C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, Rome
VT  Vetus Testamentum, Leiden
VTSup  Vetus Testamentum Supplements, Leiden
WTJ  Westminster Theological Journal, Philadelphia
ZAH  Zeitschrift für Althebraistik
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Gießen and Berlin
ZNT  Zeitschrift für neuen testamentliche Wissenschaft
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I

SUGGESTIONS FOR GEN 2:1–3, 8:11 AND 39:6

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their host were perfected.

And God was fatigued on the seventh day [from] his work which he had done;

so God rested/desisted on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.

God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, for on it he rested from his work— which God had created to sustain life.

Repetition is well used in these two verses. Five words (ךֵלֶל, וָאַלֶהָה, וָאַלּוֹהִים, מָלָכָא ה, וָאַלְּוֹהִים) appear three times, with coming twice. In addition שָׁבְתָּ, וָאָשָׁר, and מָלָכָא ה occur twice. These repetitions notwithstanding, commentators have questioned the repetition of the verb “to finish” in the
statements “the heavens and earth were finished” (2:1), followed by “God finished” (2:2). Skinner (1951: 37), in agreement with a tradition going back to Ibn Ezra, translated the רָכַל of Gen 2:2 in a negative sense, as God “desisted from” or “did not continue” his work. Speiser (1964: 5 and 7) translated the רָכַל of 2:2a as “brought to a close” and “brought to a (gratifying) close,” suggested by the Akkadian šutesbû used in the sense of “inspect and approve,” but without any lexical or cognate support. The אָשָׁר בָּרָא לְעֵתָם of 2:2b Speiser paraphrased simply as “which he had undertaken.”

The first bold italicized word in the translation at the beginning of this article is suggested by Targum Onkelos (Berliner, 1884: 2) which reads in part, אָשָׁר בָּרָא לְעֵתָם... וְאָשָׁר בָּרָא לְעֵתָם. The first verb is a Shaphel reflexive of כָּלַל “to crown, to finish, to perfect”; the second is a Shaphel of כָּלַל, meaning in this form “to finish, to complete,” like the Shaphel reflexive אָשָׁר כָּלַל “to be finished” cited by Jastrow (1903: 1567). Although the MT Pu’al plural כָּלַל in 2:1 and the Pi’el singular כָּלַל in 2: 2 appear to be from כָּלַל כָּלַל “to be complete, to be finished” (BDB 447), the כָּלַל is more likely to be from כָּלַל כָּלַל “to perfect, to complete,” as interpreted in the Targum and found in Ezek 27:4 (כָּלַל כָּלַל... “they made perfect your beauty”). Having been told repeatedly (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) that “God saw that it was good” and once, in summation, (1:31) that “God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good,” the verb “perfected” indicates not only the completion of the creation but hints at the goodness of the created order.
The MT הֲרָאִל in 2:2 needs to be repointed as הָרָאִל and derived also from הִרָאִל. However, the narrator shifted the verb from הִרָאִל to הֲרָאִל, “to perfect” to הֲרָאִל, “to be tired, fatigued, weary.” This הֲרָאִל is the cognate of the Arabic كَلّا (kalla) “he was, or became, fatigued, weary, tired” (Lane 1893: 3002; Wehr 1979: 977). In view of the use of קָנַן (“from” with this verb, it seems best to restore an initial מ̀ (= “from”) to the MT גְּלַעְפָהוּ “his work,” which could easily have been lost by haplography.

The weariness of God after six days of creating is hinted at in Exo 31:17 which speaks of God’s “taking a breather,”

נַשְׁחַת יְהוָה אָתָו הָשִׁירוֹת אֶת-חָיְיוֹ
רְבִים הַשֵּׁבָעִים שָׁבָה רַגְפְּשָׁה:

Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he stopped and refreshed himself.

What was only insinuated in Exo 31:17 was once quite explicit in Gen 2:2, i.e., before הֲרָאִל, stem III, dropped out of tradition, translations, and Hebrew lexicons.

The theme of fatigue among the gods is dominant in the Atra-Hasîs creation myth, which includes the following lines (i 1-4; iii 162–163) as translated by Lambert and Millard (1969: 43, 49):

When the gods like men
Bore the work and suffered the toil—
The toil of the gods was great,
The work was heavy, the distress was much—
. . . they suffered the work day and night
. . . Excessive [toil] has killed us;
Our work [was heavy], the distress much.
The threat of a revolt by the work-wearied gods against the high gods of leisure eventuated in the creation of the *lulu*, “human beings” whose labor would permit all the gods to stop work and rest.

The Genesis and Babylonian traditions were in agreement that the *work* of God/gods led to divine *fatigue*, followed by divine decision(s) to give *rest* to the weary. In the *Atra-Hasis* epic only the gods were granted this rest; whereas, in the Genesis tradition not only did God rest, but those created in his image were gifted with the rest of a seventh day Sabbath. (Theological concerns about an omnipotent God’s becoming weary have to be addressed in the same manner as that of an omniscient God being forgetful at times, as noted in Gen 9:14–15 and the prayers which plead, “Forget me not, O Lord.”)

The phrase שָׁיֵהוּ לַאֲלֹהִים in Gen 2:3, meaning literally, “which God created to make,” is awkward. The Septuagintal reading, ὡν ζηρίσετο θεός ποιήσαι “which God began to make,” reflects a *Vorlage* having שָׁיֵהוּ לַאֲלֹהִים for the MT שָׁיֵהוּ לְאַלֹהִים. Hebrew שָׁיֵהוּ לַאֲלֹהִים appears in I Kings 12:33 (with לעלוה) and in Neh 6:8, meaning “to invent, to devise” (BDB 94: KBS 1: 109). It is the cognate of Arabic بدأ (bada’) “he began” (Lane 1863: 163–165), which appears in the Qur’an, Sura 32:6, “He began the creation of man from clay,” and as a title of God, المبدئ (’almubdi’u) “the Creator, the Originator.”

English translations have played freely with the finite verb שָׁיֵהוּ and the infinitive שָׁיֵהוּ. The KJV, NKJV, NAS, NAV RSV, NRSV, NIV and NIB render שָׁיֵהוּ as the finite verb “(he) made”; the RSV, NRSV, NAB, and NLT read שָׁיֵהוּ as the noun “creation,” while the NIV and NJB translate it as the participle “creating.” The consonantal MT can be retained here, with the finite שָׁיֵהוּ intact, once another Arabic cognate
comes into focus, similar to the way an Arabic cognate clarified the Septuagintal reading of ἄρχεν as ἦπερξετο “he began” (discussed above).

As indicated in the opening translation, the MT לְאָחָד “to make” needs to be repointed as לְאָחָד, i.e., the preposition לְאָחָד, an abstracted noun meaning “livelihood, life, the sustenance of life.” This נְשָהָה is the cognate of Arabic (1) عَيْش (عِيْص) “he became possessed of life,” (2) عَيْش (عِيْص) “life, that whereby life subsists; the means of life or subsistence, livelihood, the way of living,” (3) عَيْش (عِيْص) “a state of life,” (4) عَيْش (عِيْص) “having much of the means of life, living well” (Lane 1874: 2210; Wehr 1979: 775). The contraction of the diphthong in נְשָהָה to נֶשָהָה, coupled with scriptio defectiva, resulted in the homograph נֶשָהָה נֶשָהָה, which was subsequently read as the infinitive of נְשָהָה נֶשָה “to make,” rather than being read as the rare synonym of נְשָה “life, living, livelihood” (Jastrow 452).

This נְשָה “the means of life/subsistence” in Gen 2:3 provided a summation of Gen 1:29–30, which spelled out in detail how God had provided sustenance for every נְשָה נַחַי “living creature”—for birds, beasts, and human beings. This נְשָה also provides the transition to Gen 2:5–16 which deals with subsistence issues: mists, rain, water, rivers, food, food trees, and a garden. According to Genesis 1–2, God had indeed created to sustain life.
Genesis 8:11

One word in the phrase נֵלֶךְ שָׁלַלַח in Gen 8:11 has proven to be very problematic. The נֵלֶךְ is without a doubt “an olive leaf,” but the שָׁלַלַח has been variously rendered. The Septuagint has φύλλον ἐλαίας κάρφος, “an olive leaf, a dry twig,” with the κάρφος (ῥ’) being not just a twig but a dry twig, “such as birds make their nest of” (Liddell and Scott 881). The Septuagint translators were evidently aware of the שָׁלַלַח which was the cognate of Amharic tarufa “sprig, branch” (KBS II: 380). The Vulgate used four words to translate the three Hebrew words: *ramum olivae virentibus foliis*, “green leaf olive branch,” with the שָׁלַלַח being read as “green, verdant,” as though the text had ṭhrm, a noun with a preformative י from יררכ “green,” a cognate of the Arabic وارق/ورق (waraq/wâriq) “leaves, foliage/ green, verdant.”

The NKJ, NRS, RSV, NIV, NIB translated the phrase as “freshly plucked olive leaf” (with the NAS, NJB, and NAU having “freshly picked olive leaf”). In the opinion of this writer only the “fresh olive leaf” of the NLT is correct, although, in light of NLT translation of Ezek 17:9 (see next paragraph), it appears to have been just a good guess.

The MT שָׁלַלַח is a homograph for two distinctly different words. One word comes in Gen 37:33 מֶרֶח חֲלֶשׁ אֶלֶף הָרוֹסָה, “a wild animal has devoured him, Joseph has surely been torn in pieces!” The second מֶרֶח occurs in Ezek 17:9 מֶרֶח ↓רָכֶשׁ, “all the fresh ones of her sprouting will wither” (n.b., the NLT has simply “its leaves wither,” completely ignoring the מֶרֶח). This second מֶרֶח is
the cognate of Arabic طَرِيْف (tarîf) “a thing that is good [and recent or new or fresh]” and طَرِيْفة (tarîfat) “anything new, recent, or fresh” (Lane 1974: 1845; KBS II: 380).

The “freshly plucked/freshly picked,” in the translations noted above, is an unnecessary doublet of (1) “freshly” (= םַרְחָה, stem II) and (2) “plucked” (= םַרֵח, stem I). With the olive leaf being in the mouth of the dove, it was obviously severed from the tree branch. The leaf’s being new and fresh was evidence that the flood waters had abated.

Genesis 39:6

As indicated in the following statement, the relationship between Potiphar and Joseph was one of Potiphar’s complete trust and Joseph’s full responsibility.

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand;

(KJV) and he knew not ought he had
(NAB) he gave no thought, with Joseph there
(RSV) and having him he had no concern for anything
(NJB) and with him there, concerned himself with nothing
(NIV) with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself
with anything

and he did not know of anything that belonged to him

except the food which he ate.

As is evident from the paraphrases cited above, the second phrase of Gen 39:6, (literally, “he did not know with him anything”) is problematic. The reason for
the difficulties is that the והָלַּי and the יִדְעֵּה are homographs of distinctly different words. The unvocalized והָלַּי can be read as the negative particle והָלַּי “not” or as the emphatic והָלַּי “surely verily, indeed.” The יִדְעֵּה is a homograph of (1) the verb “to know,” as in I Sam 21:3, והָלַּי יִדְעוּ אחָתָה רַעְבֵּֽר, “let no one know anything about the matter,” as well as (2) the verb יִדְעֵּה which is the cognate of the Arabic ودیع (wada’a / yada’a) “to entrust, to consign for safekeeping” (Lane 1893: 3051; Wehr 1979: 1240). The consonantal MT והָלַּי יִדְעוּ אֲחָתָה מַעַרְחָה can readily be translated, “he would actually/indeed entrust to him anything.” The והָלַּי יִדְעוּ and the מַעַרְחָה, together, make for “anything and everything” being entrusted to Joseph—except, as noted, the food which Potiphar ate.

NOTES

1. Mr Gilad Gevaryahu (private communication) called my attention to the problems in Gen 2:1–3 and 8:11. He suggested that the והָלַּי יִדְעוּ in Gen 2:2 could mean “God assessed . . . his work.” This proposal, however, lacks corroborating lexical support. The issue raised concerning Gen 8:11 was the Septuagintal reading which put an olive leaf (and) a twig in the beak of the dove, whereas the Hebrew text has only a torn-off olive leaf. Arabic cognates, presented in this study, clarify these problems and permit alternative translations.

2. KBS II: 390–392 referenced the Arabic ودح (wada’a) “to put down,” but made no reference to forms IV and X “to deposit, to leave for safekeeping, to give something in charge of someone” or the nouns ودح (wadh) “depositing” and ودح (wadhat) “trust, charge, deposit.”
II

NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

GENESIS 6:3

καὶ εἶπεν Κύριος ὁ θεός οὐ μὴ καταμείνῃ τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτῶν σάρκας ἐσονται δὲ αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτῶν ἑκατὸν ἑκατὸν ἑκατοστὶ ἡμέρα

And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever, because they are flesh, but their days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

The problematic ἐπὶ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένῃ “for that he also is flesh” in 6:3b needs to be read in reverse order and repointed to read ἐπὶ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν. Then the antecedent of ἁμαρτωλῶν “he” is the preceding ἀνθρώπος “human” or ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλός “man” (gender inclusive), precluding the reading of the שְׁמֵן of MT שְׁמֵן as the suffix “their,” for which there is no antecedent. Because a verbless clause is unlikely to have the adverbial suffix שְׁמֵן, the שְׁמֵן of
NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה must be either a part of the stem or the plural בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה ending written scriptio defectiva.

If the stem were בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה, it could be the cognate of Arabic שְׁגַג/שְׁגַג “grief, sorrow, sadness” (Lane 1872: 1510; Wehr 1979: 533). If the word were בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה it could be either (1) "to go astray, to sin inadvertently" (BDB 992) or the cognate of Arabic שָׁג/שָׁג “to bash in the skull, skull fracture” (Lane 1872: 1504; Wehr 1979: 532). In light of the focus in 6:5 and 6:11–13 on the increased violence on earth, the Arabic שָׁג “skull bashing” is more likely to be the cognate of the בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה in 6:3. In this case the ב of בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה would be the suffix בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה, indicating here a pluralis intensivus, like the plural בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה "perverseness" in Isa 19:14 and the בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה “adultery” in Ezek 23: 43.

Given the well attested elision of an א, as in Exo 14:25 where אֹרְךְ appears for אָרְךְ, "to grow, to increase" cannot be rule out as another derivation for the ב of בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה. The Aramaic cognate בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה “multitude/great, greatness” appears regularly without the א (BDB 960; Jastrow 954).

Thus, the MT בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה, traditionally interpreted as “for that also” is better read as a preposition attached to a masculine plural noun with defective spelling with four possible meanings: (1) in sorrow, sadness, grief, (2) into inadvertent sin, (3) into skull bashing, and (4) in multitudes.

The בָּשָׂר בְּשָׁם used in reference to בָּשָׂר “earthling, mankind, humanity,” would be best understood as “physical/corporeal beings” or “a
human being,” like the Arabic "bašar" “human being” (Castell 1669: 455; Lane 1863: 208), as opposed to the supra-terrestrial “sons of God,” for whom a flood would have been no threat. The mixed breed of “the sons of the daughters of man and the sons of God,” i.e., the Nephilim, were evidently included in the designated "flesh, human being(s)."

For purposes of English idiom the singular and may be translated as plurals and the plural may be rendered as a singular. These options permit to mean (1) “humans are in grief” (or), (2) “humans are in error” (or), (3) “humans are into skull bashing” (or), and (4) “human beings are in vast numbers” .

Option one suggests that the limited human life-span, announced in 6:3b, carried its own burden of grief and sorrow, similar to the curse of sorrow announced to Adam and Eve in Gen 3:16–17. Moreover, the grief-stricken human victims of uninvited and unwelcomed heavenly guests, whose offspring were prone to violence, would never live to be a hundred twenty years old. Instead, panic-stricken and grief-stricken they would go prematurely to a watery grave.

Option two, that the human race was into inadvertent sin, would complement the theology of victimization introduced in Gen 6:1–2. In the Eden story of Genesis 3, sin began with the willful desire of Adam and Eve “to become like God” (i.e., to get power). Though tempted by an earthly serpent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their choosing to eat the forbidden fruit. Efforts to project responsibility— Adam onto
Eve, and Eve onto the serpent—lacked credibility, and all three were held accountable and fully responsible. By contrast Genesis 6 articulated a theology of victimization. The extra-terrestrial, super-human “sons of God” impregnated terrestrial women, creating havoc for human beings when the part-alien offspring grew to be giants. Violence became normative and the victimized humans inadvertently sinned when influenced by the their violent half-brothers fathered by the “sons of God.” A key theological difference between Genesis 3 and Genesis 6 can be recovered if the enigmatic “into inadvertent sin.”

*Option three,* skull bashing, anticipates the violence spelled out in Gen 6:11, אֵין הָאָדָם לְפָנֵי הַאֱלֹהִים וְהַמְפֹלָה ("now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence"), in 6:12, בָּשָׁר אֶרֶץ רָמָה לְעֵילָהּ ("for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"), and in 6:13, הָאָדָם הוּא מְפֹל ("for the earth has become full of violence"). Four words taken from 6:3–4, create the mental image of club swinging cave men: מְפֹלָה מְפֹלָה מְפֹלָה מְפֹלָה, “the skull bashing giants of yore.”

According to *option four* the singular Adam (אָדָם) had become the multitudinous (שְׂרֵי אָדָם = שְׂרֵי אָדָם) human race (אֱלֹהִים). Any punishment of all human beings would have to be on a gigantic scale. Consequently, there was a need for a weapon of mass destruction. Deep flood waters became God’s weapon of choice, though not a perfect weapon since there would be collateral damage in the destruction of in-
nocent “beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens” (Gen 6:7; 7:23), as well as unwarranted collateral benefits for the fish and sea-creatures whose watery realm and food supply would be increased for a while. If the MT בֵּין הָאָדָם in Gen 6:2 referenced the multitudes of human beings, it would have provided a reason for the gigantic flood (דָּאָם וְזָרָא בֵּּאָרָא) to destroy the scattered human masses and their gigantic half-brothers, as narrated in Gen 6:5–7:24.

Recognition of the בֵּין in Gen 6:3b as a possible cognate of שַג (ṣajin) “grief” or שַג (ṣaj) “skull bashing” provides the clue for determining the meaning of יְדֹר in Gen 6:3a. Although the Septuagint translated this verb as καταμεῖναι “dwell, remain,” this evidence was dismissed by many commentators. Skinner (1930: 143) thought that καταμεῖναι was “perhaps nothing more than a plausible guess at the meaning, though a variant text has been suspected (יְדֹר, לִדְוָא, etc.).” A number of Akkadian cognates have been proposed, including (1) danānu “to be powerful,” (2) dinānu “bodily appearance,” and (3) dinānu “substitute, surrogate.” Speiser (1964: 44) concurred with Skinner, stating, “The traditional ‘abide in’ is a guess lacking any linguistic support.” He proposed the third Akkadian cognate above, which led him somehow to translated 6:3 as, “My spirit shall not shield man forever.”

However, the Septuagint’s καταμεῖναι “remain” has good linguistic support from the Arabic دَامُ / دَمَ (dum / dâma) which means “it continued, lasted, or existed, incessantly, always, endlessly, for ever . . . it became permanent, perpetual, or
everlasting” (Castell 1669: 675; Lane 1867: 935–938; Wehr 1979: 350). The Hebrew דומ is related to שפ "fat" and בים (dasam) “fat” are related. There is simply the well attested ה/ג variation, as in the case of שפ (Num 22:32) and בים (Job 30:21), and the names Satan and Mastema (Jubilees 10:8 and 23:25), the latter being the "Aph"el participle in the emphatic state (= קָשְׂפָה). Because שפ by itself could have meant “to remain/abide for ever,” the adverbial modifier שפ “forever” may be a later clarifying gloss for the rare שפ. While Job 12:10 affirmed בּוֹרָה נְפְּשׁוֹ כֹּל-זֵיוֹ רֹאשׁ כֹּל-בְּשָׂר הָאָדָם, “in His hand is the breath of all life and the breath of every human being,” Gen 6:3 provided the explanation for the transition from the extended life-span of the antediluvian patriarchs to the limited life-span of Noah’s descendants. The spirit/breath from God was universal, but not perpetual. It would be measured out with a maximum fixed limit.

**GENESIS 6:4**

הָנָּפְלוֹתִים בְּתוֹךְ כָּלֵי עָתִיד בְּנֵי חַיָּה

וְהָנָּפְלוֹתִים בָּאָרָמִים

... the Nephilim" were on the earth in those days and also afterward . . .

Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown (NKJ)

οἱ δὲ γίγαντες ἡσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ μετ’ ἐκεῖνο
NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

...ἐκείνοι ἦσαν οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ἀπ’ αἰώνος
οἱ ἀνθρωποὶ οἱ ὄνομαστοί

and the giants were on the earth in those days and after that

... those were the giants of old, the men of renown.

According to Num 16:2–33 Korah, accompanied by two-hundred fifty prominent Israelites, confronted Moses saying, “You have gone too far! ... Why then do you [and Aaron] exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” These two-hundred fifty plus challengers were identified as being

- (ἀρχηγοί συναγωγῆς) “chiefs of the assembly”
- (σύγκλητοι βουλῆς) “chosen councillors”
- (ἄνδρες ὄνομαστοι) “men of renown.”

As narrated, their challenge to Moses and Aaron was viewed as a challenge to God himself, who responded by consuming the two-hundred fifty renown gentlemen by fire and having the earth swallow up their entire households.

The modifier ἄνδρες ὄνομαστοι “men of renown” used in describing Moses’ challengers has been appealed to by commentators to clarify the ἄνδρες ὄνομαστοι in Gen 6:4c, which was translated in the Septuagint as οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ὄνομαστοί and in the Targum as ἄνδρες ὄνομαστοι, both meaning “the men of renown.” The Arabic سما (sumā) “good repute, fame” (Hava 1915: 338) would be the obvious cognate of ἄνδρες “renown.”

However, the original ἄνδρες in 6:4c may not have been what it came to be in the MT, namely, the definite article ὄνομαστοι attached to the noun ὄνομα “name,” requiring the ἄνδρες ὄνομαστοι to mean literally “the men of the name,” without any hint as to why “name” became definite. Another derivation of ἄνδρες needs to be considered.
In *Genesis Rabbah* 26, Rabbi Aha offered a twofold challenge to the interpretation that the אַנְשֵׁי הָאָדָם (Anshei haAdam) was the same as אַנְשֵׁי שֶׁם (Anshei Shem). He associated the אַנְשֵׁי הָאָדָם with בְּלֵל לֵילָּה (Bilel Lelaha) “foolish,” citing Job 30:8, אַנְשֵׁי הָאָדָם בְּלֵל לֵילָּה הבָּנֹיִים יְהוָה (Anshei haAdam Bilel Lelaha banyoyim Yehow), “they are the children of churls, yea, children of ignoble men,” and pondered, “Yet you say that they were ‘men of renown!’” Rabbi Aha interpreted the אַנְשֵׁי שֶׁם to mean “they laid desolate (ודרשים) the world, were driven in desolation (רדשים) from the world, and caused the world to be made desolate (שָׁמַי).” He obviously associated אַנְשֵׁי שֶׁם with חוֹשֶׁם/חֻשָּׁם, the Hiphil of שָׁמַי “to ravage, to terrify” (Jastrow 1597; Ben-Yehuda 73). But it is difficult to accommodate the שם in this context is more likely to be the cognate of Arabic حَشَمَ (hashama) “to destroy, smash, shatter” and its adjective حَشِيم (hashim) “broken, crushed” (Castell 1669: 891 [fractus, confractus]; Lane 1893: 3043; Hava 1915: 828; Wehr 1979: 1206), so that חוֹשֶׁם/חֻשָּׁם is a synonym of חֻשָּׁם “to treat violently.”12 If so, the phrase needs to be re-pointed as אָנָשֶׁי חֻשָּׁם “men of violence.” The following texts addressed the violence initiated by the gigantic *Nephilim:*13

- *Enoch* 7:2 “and they [the daughters of men impregnated by the angels] bare great *giants* whose height was 300 ells, who consumed all the acquisitions of men . . . and devoured mankind.”
- *Enoch* 9:10, “and the women have born *giants*, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness.”
- *Enoch* 15:8–11, “An now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon
NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

the earth . . . . And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth and cause trouble.”

• Jubilees 5:1–2, “the angels of God saw them [the daughters of men] . . . and they bare unto them sons and they were giants . . . and they began to devour each other.”

• Jubilee 7:22–23, “. . . and the giants slew the Nâphîl and the Nâphîl slew the Eljô, and the Eljô mankind, and one man another.”

• I Bar 3:26, “How vast the territory that [God] possesses! . . . the giants were born there who were famous of old, great in stature, expert in war. God did not choose them, nor give them the way to knowledge; so they perished because they had no wisdom; they perished through their own folly.”

• III Maccabees 2:4, “You destroyed men for their wicked deeds in the past, among them giants relying on their own strength and self-confidence.”

• 1Q23 Frag. 9 + 14 + 15, “2[ . . . ] they knew the secrets of [ . . . ] 3[ . . . si]n was great in the earth [ . . . ] 4[ . . . ] and they killed many [ . . ] 5[ . . . they begat] giants [ . . . ].”

• Sirach 16:7, “he was not propitiated for the ancient giants who revolted in their might.”

• Wisdom of Solomon 14:6, “for even in the beginning, when arrogant giants were perishing, the hope of the world took refuge on a raft.”

• Ezekiel 32:27, “and they do not lie with the fallen mighty (יִשְׂרָאֵל נַפְלִים) men of old . . . . because they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.”
• *Numbers* 13:33, there we saw the giants (גִּדְמֹן לָוָי, *gidmon la'ay*) who were the sons of Anaq from the giants (גִּדְמֹן לָוָי, *gidmon la'ay*), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers.\(^{17}\)

• *Genesis Rabbah* 26, “Awim [the seventh name of the Nephilim] denotes that they cast the world into ruins, were themselves driven from the world in ruin, and caused the world to be ruined, as you read, ‘A ruin, a ruin, a ruin’ will I make it” (Ezek 21:27, MT 21:32).

If the עָפַת of MT עָפַת in 6:3 is related to the Arabic شجّة / شجّة (šaj/šajjat) “skull bashing, breaking someone’s head,” as suggested above, there is additional support from Arabic that the עָפַת of 6:4 is related to הָשֵׁמה (hašama) “to destroy.” \(^{5}\)

Lane (1872: 1505) cited ten different epithets for the different levels of “skull bashing,” the first five of which are not serious enough to require retaliation. But the seventh epithet, which requires a mulch of ten camels, is חָשָׁם (hašimat) “a broken bone, a fracture of the skull.” Therefore, when in Hebrew the enigmatic כִּים (used in reference to כִּים “human being”) and the problematic כִּים (used in reference to כִּים “human being”) appear in adjoining verses in a text which rails against human violence, they are likely to be related to each other as the Arabic שַׁג (šaj) and הָשֵׁמה (hašama) would be in a similar text.

CONCLUSION

Plaut (1974:58) acknowledged that Gen 6:1–6 was “the one mythological fragment retained in Genesis,” and then demythologize it with the following interpretation:
Men became giants, achieved renown in their time, and were heroes by their own values. When God evaluated human development, He looked neither at man’s size nor at his reputation, but at his heart, and he found its devices evil. Hence, God resolved to make a new start with Noah.

But quite to the contrary, for the narrative theologian who penned Genesis 6, the Nephilim were neither ארח “men” nor אשיש “men of renown.” They were infamous, not famous. Contrary to Enoch 15:8, which states “the giants . . . shall be called evil spirits,” in Gen 6:3–4 the giants were fictional corporeal beings (בְּךֶשֶׁם), a mixed breed from supra-terrestrial fathers and terrestrial mothers. Scholarly conjectures about lost legends of beloved human heroes of yore—seemingly hinted at in the epithet אשיש—have been misdirected because the epithet originally was probably אשיש “men of destruction,” i.e., those who were gifted in skull bashing (בֵּנַי = בֵּנֶיהוֹן) and skulldugery (Enoch 9:6).

Genesis 6:1–6, as narrative theology, used mythology to offer an alternative explanation on the origin of evil other than the one given in Genesis 1–3. The creation story affirmed that evil did not came from God because everything God created was good or very good. The Eden story affirmed that evil was earthly in its origin and the responsibility of earth’s preeminent creatures: Adam and Eve, who were in the image of God, and the serpent which was the “wisest of the beasts of the field.”

Genesis 6 marks the beginning of a theology of victimization which eventually ended up with the affirmation “the devil made me do it.” To be sure, there is no devil in Genesis 2–3 nor in Genesis 6—only a renegade reptile in the former story and some horny angels in the latter text. But the brief account in Gen 6:1–6 became the catalyst for expanded narratives
NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

(like Enoch 6–11) about fallen angels (נֵלְקַיִים) which were ultimately responsible for human violence, sin, and sorrow.

The four definitions cited above for the בָּשֶׁם of בָּשֶׁם (namely, בָּשֶׁם “multitudes,” בָּשֶׁם “grief,” בָּשֶׁם “error,” and בָּשֶׁם “skull bashing”), suggest an author’s well intentioned multiple layers of meaning and permit the following paraphrase of several phrases in Gen 6:3–4.

My spirit will not abide in men and women forever.

Multitudinous human beings are into skull bashing, in grief, in sin.

So their days will be one hundred twenty years.

The Nephilim . . . were the giants of yore, the men of violence.

NOTES

1. Reading the MT בָּשֶׁם as a compound of the preposition ב, the relative particle ב, and the adverb ב, a combination which occurs only in this verse (BDB 993; GKC 671; Skinner 1910: 143–244; von Rad 1961: 111). Skinner provided a list of objections to this derivation. The Septuagint’s διὰ τὸ “because” does not reflect the ב “moreover.”

2. Given the graphic similarity of ב and ב and the occasional confusion of ב and ב, the ב of the MT בָּשֶׁם may have been misread as הב by the Septuagint translators. Delitzsch (1920: 116) cited seven examples of he ב/בת confusion, including (1) Psa 35:5 where the MT תַּחַזְרֶה “driving away” became ἐκθάλιβων αὐτοῦς “afflicting them” (= בָּשֶׁם) in the Septuagint, and (2) Ezek 45:1
where the MT אָלָף אַלְכָּה "10,000" became εἰκοσά χιλιάδας "20,000" (= אַלְכָּה).  

3. Although one might expect the Hebrew cognate to be שַנִּים rather than שָנִים, the interchange of a ב and ג is well attested. The Arabic ُن ("in") “if” and the Hebrew ב ג “if” is one example of the ב and ג variation. The מָגוֹר variant in Ezek 21:17 and 35:5 is another, for 21:17 reads מָגוֹר אָלָף אַלְכָּה תַּחַת אַלְכָּה תַּמָּרוֹת (מָגוֹר) “they are delivered over (מָגוֹר) to the sword with my people,” whereas 35:5 reads מָגוֹר אֱלֹהִים בְּרֵיתוֹתָם אֲלֵי-רֹאשׁ-הָרֶם "you delivered (מָגוֹר) the Israelites over to the power of the sword.” See also note 4. 

4. Ordinarily the Arabic ش (š) would be a ב in Hebrew, but there are a number of cognates where a ב matches the Arabic ش (š), including: (1) “flame” and שָבָב (šabbab) “to kindle a fire, to blaze, to flame” and שִׂבֵּה (šabbat) “a blazing, flaming fire”; (2) שַׁוֲק (šawq) “desire, longing” and שִׂוק (šawq) “desire, yearning, longing of the soul” and דֶּשֶׁק (šawqin) “an admiring lover”; and (3) הַסַּר (hashara) “to collect.” If the MT ש of שְׁנֵים is retained rather than repointed as a ב, the ש which is the cognate of שַׁג (šaj) could be another example of exceptions to the general pattern of ש (š) = ש (š) and س (š) = ש (š). 

5. On the elision of the א, note Delitzsch, 1920: 21–22, §14 and 68א with 23ד and GKC 68ב. Other noteworthy elisions include: יְאָרֹתִין and יֶאָרֹתִים and יַרְוִים in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40; יָאָרְוִים and יָאָרְוִים and יָרְוִים in Ecc 4:14; יָאָרְוִים for יָאָרְוִים in Isa 13:14; יָאָרְוִים and יָאָרְוִים for יָאָרְוִים and יָאָרְוִים in Lev 26:18 and 26:21 in 11QpaleoLev. 

6. The theme of inadvertent sin becomes very dominant in the post-diluvian Noah narrative when (1) Noah innocently drinks stale
grape juice, (2) became unintentionally intoxicated, (3) unknowingly exposed himself while asleep, (4) whereupon Ham accidentally saw his nakedness—which led Noah in his stupor to incoherently cursed his grandson, Canaan, because of what Ham inadvertently did. The only intentional acts in the entire episode were those of Ham who alerted his brothers who were then careful to cover their father without looking at him.

7. Jubilees 5:2–3 reads in part, “. . . all flesh corrupted its ways, alike men and cattle and beasts and birds and everything that walks on earth—all of them corrupted their ways and their orders.”

8. Note the use of the verb בָּכֹר in Gen 7:18–20, 24 and the noun בָּכֹר in 6:4. There would be enough flood waters to drown the “giants,” i.e. the בָּכֹר who were also known as the בֶּנֶיהָלֶמֶת.

9. Note the Arabic cognates نفس (nafs) “soul, spirit, vital principle” and نفس (nafas) “breath,” the latter of which suggest that نفس here may be the synonym of רוח “breath.” Lane (1893: 2827) provided an extended citation dealing with the differences between theنفس (nafs) and theروح (ruh), i.e.,نفس andروح, noting that God takes awayنفس when one sleeps and theروح is taken away when one dies.

10. The transliteration of בֶּנֶיהָלֶמֶת as Nephilim appears in the ASV, NAB, NAS, NAU, NIB, NIV, NJB, NRS, and RSV, in disagreement with the Septuagint, Vulgate, Targum, KJV, and NKJ which understood בֶּנֶיהָלֶמֶת to mean “giants.”

11. The Greek γίγαντες for the Hebrew בָּכֹר הָאָב which corresponds to the Arabic cognate جَبَّار (gab-bâr) “huge, tall, and strong, a giant, one who is tyrannical, who is extravagant in acts of disobedience and in wrong doing” (Lane 1865: 375) and the Aramaic נְפִילִים “strong, hero, giant” (Jastrow 234).
12. It is most unlikely that the הָשַׁם in Gen 6:2 is related to the Arabic هشام (haššama) “to honor anyone,” هشيم (hašim) “generous, bountiful,” هشام (hišâm) “generosity, bounty,” or تهشيم (tahaššama) “to conciliate anyone, to show kindness” (Castell 1669: 891; Wehr 1979: 1206; Hava 1915: 828). Note the name יֶשֶם in I Chron 11:34 and the modern day Hashemite kingdom in Jordan. See above, note 4, for ש (š) being a ש or ש in a Hebrew cognate.

13. Enoch 6:4–5 reads as follows, “‘Let us all swear an oath and all bind ourselves by mutual imprectations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing [to choose wives from among the children of men].’ Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprectations upon it. There were in all two hundred ....” The Nephilim in this tradition became “ones who swore oaths,” as though the הֶּלֶל of הֶלֶל (nafala) “to swear, to take an oath” and naffala “to give an oath to” (Hava 1915: 789–790).

14. In this tradition the enigmatic הֶלֶל was taken to be a variant form of הֶלֶל “foolish ones” (BDB 614). The ב/פ variation is found elsewhere, like גז:ב and גז:פ “to scatter.” For the confusion of ב and פ, see Delitzsch 1920: 115.

15. Other parts of the “Book of Giants” found at Qumran are found in 4Q203, 2Q26, 4Q530–532, 6Q8, available online at http://www.piney.com/DSSBkGiants.html, or in The Dead Sea Scrolls, A New Translation, by Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishing )1996.

16. For the MT יֶלֶל, the Septuagint reads καὶ ἐκοιμήθησαν μετὰ τῶν γυναῖκων τῶν πεπωκότων ἀπὸ αἰώνων, “and they are laid with the giants that fell of old.” The significant differences in the Septuagint are (1) the absence of any negative for the MT יֶלֶל, and (2) reading
NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

“from of old” for the MT נְפֶלִים “from the uncircumcised.” The πετωκότων “fallen ones” supports the MT נְפֶלִים נְפֶלִים, although it is very tempting to repoint נְפֶלִים נְפֶלִים to or to assume a haplography of what was originally נְפֶלִים נְפֶלִים.

Rather than ignoring the MT נְפֶלִים in Ezek 32:27, as did R. S. Hendel (“Of Demigods and the Deluge,” JBL 106 [1987]: 22), it should be repointed as נְפֶלִים, i.e., the conjunction followed by the emphatic נְפֶלִים “surely, actually, indeed.” This emphatic particle appears also in Ezek 20:25, “I gave them statutes that were indeed good,” in agreement with 20:11, “I gave them my statutes . . . by whose observance man shall live.” Once the emphatic particle is restored in 20:25, most of 20:26 should be restored to follow 20:27, reading,

It is again your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me, (saying) that I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them.

This restoration has the support of 20:31, where Ezekiel quotes God as saying, “when you offer your gifts and sacrifice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day.”

The point being made in Ezek 32:27 is that whereas (1) the king of Meshech-Tubal, along with all his hordes, was actually (= נְפֶלִים) buried alongside the fallen giants of yore, and (2) was adorned in death with his sword as a pillow and his body-shield as a blanket, but (3) the Pharaoh of Egypt shall be slain by the sword and buried simply with uncircumcised and unadorned rival warlords.

17. This identification of the Anakim with the Nephilim assumes that some of the Nephilim survived the flood. But the Wisdom of Solomon 14:6, “for even in the beginning, when arrogant giants were perishing, the hope of the world took refuge on a raft,” suggests otherwise.
III

AMBIGUITIES ABOUT
ABRAM AND ISHMAEL

In the Qur’an, in Sura 37:80–84, Noah and Abraham are mentioned in almost the same breath:

Peace be upon Noah among the worlds (peoples)! Thus do We regard those who do good. He was indeed of Our believing servants. . . . of his party was Abraham, when he came to the Lord with a submissive heart.

Whereas in the Biblical tradition Abraham’s monotheistic faith is assumed or insinuated, in the Qur’an it is very clearly articulated:

He [Abraham] asked his father and his people: What is it that you worship? Do you falsely seek gods beside Allah? Or what do you think of the Lord of the worlds? . . . Then he went quietly to their gods and addressed them: Do you not eat? Why do you not speak? Then he struck them forcibly with his right hand. When the people learned of it they came to him running. He said to them: Do you worship that which you yourselves have carved out, whereas Allah has created you and your handiwork?”

Abraham’s kinfolk were ready to burn him alive for his verbal and physical abuse of their gods, but he was delivered by God. And having experienced their violence toward him, Abraham prayed: *rabbī, habu lī min aṣṣaliḥīna*, “Lord grant me righteous progeny (literally, “from the righteous,” noting that the *ṣaliḥ* “righteous, pious” used here is related to *ṣulḥ* meaning “reconciliation, peace”).

God answered Abraham’s prayer for a different kind of family than that of his family-of-origin with a birth announce-
ment: “So We gave him glad tidings (baššara = רַעַבָּר = εὐαγγελίζω) of a gentle son (γυλαμίν ἤλιμιν).” This would be Ishmael, born of Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid, who was given to Abraham as a second wife.

Below I address in some detail the differences between the Qur’anic statement that Ishmael would be ḫalîm “gentle, mild, patient,” over against the tradition in Gen 16:10, that Ishmael would be a “wild ass of a man.” But first a word about God’s covenant with Noah which bears upon Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son, then a word about the varied interpretations of God’s covenant with Abraham, and finally some insights concerning Ishmael’s disposition.

THE COVENANT WITH NOAH

In forty plus years of teaching in Yokohama, Tokyo, Philadelphia, and Wynnewood, Pennsylvania I found that the mere mention of Noah’s name would trigger excited responses from seminarians about a universal flood and the rainbow which followed the flood—and the promise that God would never do it again. But when asked about the prohibition and the irrevocable penalty component of God’s covenant with Noah, most seminarians have responded with bewildered silence. Gen 9:6 went unnoticed or unaddressed in their Sunday school classrooms and in their church school curricula. Gen 9:6 is where God told Noah “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.” With this stipulation, capital punishment was introduced to Noah and his progeny as the deterrent against humans killing fellow human beings. It was a succinct prohibition against (1) human sacrifice, (2) against murder, and (3) against warfare.

If Abraham was, as stated in the Qurʾan, in “Noah’s party” and was Noah’s “follower” (ṣīʾat) he would surely have been
aware of God’s prohibition of and penalty for any human sacrifice. Thus, when Abraham was tested by God’s call in a dream for him to sacrifice Ishmael (according to the Qur’an, Sura 37:101–110), or in real life for him to sacrifice Isaac (according to Genesis 22), two lives were at risk—Abraham’s own life, as well as his son’s. Not only were Isaac and Ishmael, according to the different traditions, willing to co-operate with their father and be obedient unto death, but Abraham, too, was willing to die—for the covenant with Noah was in force and Abraham was no exception: “Abraham, if you slaughter/sacrifice a human being, you die also.” It was just that simple. The truth revealed was that God did not want the blood of Isaac, or of Ishmael, or of Abraham. The covenant with Noah remained sacrosanct. Human sacrifices had become a sacrilege.

**THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM**

The covenant with Abraham, as found in Genesis 12, 15, and 17, reflects three different theological traditions, for which we can borrow the designations offered by the literary critics. Genesis 12 is “J,” the Yahwistic tradition (so called because the deity is referred to by the holy name YHWH = Jehovah = ‘Adonay = LORD); Gen 15 is “E,” the Elohistic tradition (so called because the deity is referred to by the honorific plural noun ‘Elohim “God”); and Genesis 17 is “P,” the Priestly tradition. There are three parts to each of these three traditions.

First is the announcement that Abraham’s progeny will become as prolific as the dust of the earth, as the sands of the seashores, as the stars of the sky, and as the droplets of a fine drizzling rain (assuming the raham of Abraham is related to the Arabic ruham “drizzle,” as suggested by Delitzsch in 1887). Secondly, Abraham’s vast progeny will be given a
place to live, either in the land of Canaan (in the Yahwistic and Priestly traditions) or in all the land between the Nile and the Euphrates (in the Elohist tradition). The third element in the Yahwist’s tradition (12:3) was that “by you [Abraham] all the families in the earth shall be blessed.” But the third element in the Elohist’s tradition (15:18–20) was that at least ten nations would be dispossessed, rather than being blessed by Abraham and his progeny. Here was the first hint of the bloodshed and ethnic cleansing of Canaanites which was to follow. The Priestly tradition was also silent about Abraham’s progeny being a blessing for all the families on earth, having instead as its third element the requirement for male circumcision as a sign of the covenant and a permanent proof of one’s ethnic identity.

A survey of the literature of the Pentateuch reveals (1) the increasing marginalization and violations of God’s covenant with Noah which prohibited humans from killing other humans (as when Moses required the Levites to kill the members of their immediate families as part of their ordination rite [Exo 32:25–29, RSV]), and (2) the marginalization of the universalism of the Yahwist who understood that Abraham and his progeny were chosen (i.e., drafted for service, not selected for privilege). Once we leave the Yahwistic tradition in Genesis (12:1–4; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14) the phrase “a blessing for all the families of the earth” does not appear again until Jer 4:2 and Acts 3:25.

The universalism was replaced by an increasing ethnocentrism, culminating in Deut 32:8 where, with the exclusion of Esau and exclusion of Ishmael, Jacob alone is recognized as “LORD’s portion,” as God’s “allotted heritage.” These theological revisions were one way in which some early Israelites exercised their right of religious freedom and thereby created security issues for themselves and their neighbors. If my opinion the covenant with Noah forbidding human bloodshed and the covenant with Abraham whereby
all the families of the earth were to be blessed were the prelude to the universalism found in the later revelation in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world . . . .”

ISHMAEL: A GENTLEMAN OR A WILD MAN

The third ambiguity about the covenants with Noah and Abraham concerns Judaeo-Christian traditions about Ishmael, rooted in Genesis 16:10–12, which allegedly states, “You [Hagar] shall bear a son and call his name Ishmael. He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man; and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen” (KJV, RSV).

Traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations considered Ishmael to have been predestined by God to be an internecine fighter, as though he were some wild animal devouring his own kind. Ishmael’s descendants were supposedly destined to make raids against members of their extended family which would be scattered from the borders of Assyria to the borders of Egypt. Thus, the ambiguities are at least two fold. First, if the shedding of human blood was really forbidden by God in his covenant with Noah, why would God predestine Abraham’s firstborn to be a wild killer? Secondly, if Abraham and his progeny were to be a servant people by whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, how could this happen if half of Abraham’s progeny were wild ass warriors?

Attempts has been made by a number of commentators to turn Ishmael’s label “a wild ass of a man” into some sort of a compliment. The Arabic cognate of פֶּרֶה (pere) “wild ass” is فَرَأ (fara), about which is the saying “every kind a game is in the belly of the wild ass,” meaning “every animal is inferior to the wild ass,” as though the wild ass were a carnivore able to devour whatever it chooses (Lane 1877: 2357).

By making the wild ass the “king of the wastelands” it was supposedly equal to the lion’s being the “king of the jungle.”
Skinner (1930: 287) suggested translating הֲדַמְאָל פֶּרְי (pere' 'ādām) as “the wild ass of humanity” and, in light of Job 39: 5–8 (“who has let the wild ass go free . . .”) and Jer 2:24 (“a wild ass used to the wilderness . . .”), commented: “It is a fine image of the free intractable Bedouin character which is to be manifest in Ishmael’s descendants.” Skinner also conjectured that the הֵלָּחֵשׁ פֶּרְי (‘al pēnê kōl ṣehayw = “upon the faces of all his brothers”) in Gen 16:12 “seems to express the idea of defiance.”

Similarly, von Rad (1961: 189) noted, “He will be a real Bedouin, a ‘wild ass of a man’ (pere’, zebra), i.e., free and wild (cf. Job 39.5–8), eagerly spending his life in a war of all against all—a worthy son of his rebellious and proud mother!” Speiser (1964: 117–118) translated “He shall be a wild colt of a man, His hands against everyone, And everyone’s hand against him; And in the face of all his kin he shall camp.” Speiser then identified Ishmael’s being הָדַמָל פֶּרְי (pere') with Joseph’s being הָלָּחֵשׁ בֵּן פֶּרְי (bên porat) “a fruitful bough” in Gen 49:22, which he translated as “wild colt” and called attention to the Akkadian lullū-awēlu “savage of a man” as being a parallel expression.

However, the Hebrew הָדַמָל פֶּרְי (pr') can also be from the stem פֶּרְי (pērā') “fruit.” The usual spelling in Hebrew of “fruit” and “to bear fruit” is פֶּרִי (pērī) and פָּרָה (pārāh). But in Hosea 13:15 הָדַמָל פֶּרְי (yapri”) “he will be fruitful, he will have progeny” appears, as though the stem could be הָדַמָל (pr') as well as הָדְמָל (prh). Instead of הָדְמָל פֶּרְי (pere' 'ādām) meaning “wild ass man” it may simply be another way of stating what appears unambiguously in Gen 17:20, “I will make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous. He will be the father of twelve chieftains; and I will make him a great nation.” (Ordinarily, this would have been written as ‘ādām pōre’, rather than the inverted pōre’ ‘ādām.)
The Greek Septuagint of Genesis 16:11–12 reads in part as follows:

You shall bear a son and call his name Ishmael . . . He shall be a countryman, his hands on all, and the hands of all on him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

This Greek text reflects a slightly different reading of the Hebrew. The phrase “he will be a country man” (i.e. a rustic living in the wilderness) is obviously from a Vorlage reading בָּרָא (bārā’) “country, forest, prairie” for theパーָּ (pere’) of the Masoretic text. The Greek text made the land wild rather than making Ishmael wild.

The options suggested by this variant in the Septuagint have generally gone unnoticed. If the Vorlage of the Septuagint had בָּרָא (bārā’), instead ofパーָּ (pere’), the Arabic cognate بَرَأ (bara’) “free, secure, safe, free from disease, distress or debt” needs to come into focus. For the slave woman to be promised that her son would be free would have been great news, helping her make her own bondage bearable.

By using the language of Ishmael to interpret statements in Hebrew about Ishmael (i.e., by appealing to Arabic cognates of Biblical Hebrew as scholars have done for centuries), I propose the following translation of Gen 16:11–12,

You shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael . . .

He shall be a peacemaker, a reconciler—
his hand in everyone’s
and the hand of everyone in his;
and in the favor of all his brothers
he will dwell (in tranquility).1

This translation recognizes theパーָּ (pere’) here as the cognate of the Arabic verb פָּרָא (fara’a) “he intervened, he made
peace, or effected a reconciliation” and noun مفرع (mifra’)
“makes peace or effects a reconciliation between people.” For
the well attested interchange of the ‘aleph (א) and the ‘ayin
(א)—which suggests that the פורע (pr) could equal the פּוּר (pr) “peacemaker”—the following examples are noteworthy:

דָּאֶה and דָּאֶה “to be sad” (דָּאָג and דָּאָג)
דר and דָּאָה “to turn” (דָּע and דָּע)
ַנָל and נַנָל “to pollute” (גָּא’ל and גָּא’ל)
תַּכָּב and תַּכָּב “to abhor” (תָּא’ב and תָּא’ב)
בֵּן and בֵּן “to suck” (גָּמָא and גָּמָא)
פֹּהָס and פֹּהָס “a moment.”2 (פִּית’ומ and פֵּטֶה’)
פָּרָא and פָּרָא “wild”3 (פֶּרֶה and פֶּרֶה’)

Support for reading the פורע (pr) as a by-form of the פורע (pr) “peacemaker” comes from an Arabic cognate of אדאם (אָדָם), namely, אָדָם (אָדָם) “he effected a reconciliation between them; brought them together, made them sociable, or familiar with one another . . . and induced love and agreement between them.” The combination of פורע (pr) “peacemaker” and בָּדוּ (בָּדוּ) “reconciler” makes for an emphatic equivalence to Abraham’s request in Sura 37:100, noted above, “Lord grant me righteous progeny,” noting that the word 살יח “righteous, pious” is related to סליח “reconciliation” and “peace.”

The phrase ידוּ בּדָּקֵל וְיַדּוּ לוֹ (yadô bakkol wēyad kol bô) in Gen 16:12, when taken literally (“his [Ishmael’s] hand in everyone’s and the hand of everyone in his”), further supports the idea of Hagar’s being given the good news that Ishmael would become a congenial person active in reconciliation and peace.

The phrase יִלְעַל פּוּרוּ פּוּרוּ אֵלֹהִי נָפַאל (‘al pēnê kôl ‘ēhayw nāpāl) in Gen 25:18b has been variously translated. Speiser
(1964: 187) rendered it, “and each made forays against his various kinsmen.” The Torah translation read the MT נָפָל (nāpāl) “he fell” as a plural and settled for “they [the Ishmaelites] made raids against all their kinsmen.” The NRSV kept the singular and opted for “he [Ishmael] settled down along side of all his people,” with a footnote option for “down in opposition to” for the הַלְדַעַנָּא (‘al pēnē) “upon the faces.”

The translation proposed here, “he embraced all his brothers,” recognizes that בֶּןַל עַל מְמֻנָּא קלְרָאָיִיו (nāpāl ‘al pēnē kōl ʾehayw), “he fell upon the face of all his brothers,” is essentially the same idiom as that found in Gen 45:14,

\[
\text{wayyippol ‘al šawwē’re binyāmin ʾahìw}
\]
“and he embraced Benjamin his brother”

and exactly the same as that in Gen 50:1

\[
\text{wayyippol yōsep ‘al penē ʾabìw}
\]
“Joseph embraced his father.”

Were these phrases taken literally (“he fell upon the neck/face of his brother/father”) it would mean that “Joseph assaulted his brother/father.” Such a translation would be lexicographically correct, but otherwise ridiculous. Ishmael can surely be extended the same courtesy given to Joseph when the הַלְדַעַנָּא (‘al pēnē kōl ʾehāyw nāpāl) of 25:18b is simply recognized as the same idiom for an affectionate embrace—but with an inverted word order probably used for emphasis.4

CONCLUSION

The angel’s word to Hagar that Ishmael would be a ʿאֵל מְרֹא (pr ʾdm) is unfortunately ambiguous. Serious exegesis of the Greek and Hebrew texts of Gen 16:10–12 requires careful consideration of a number Hebrew roots and defini-
AMBIGUITIES ABOUT ABRAM AND ISHMAEL

tions, most of which have survived as cognates in classical Arabic. These include:

- **בָּרָא (br^)** “forest, wilderness, country”
- **בָּרָא (br^)** “free, secure, safe”
- **פָּרָה (pr^)** “to bear fruit, to have progeny”
- **פָּרָה (pr^)** “a peacemaker”
- **אָדוֹם (‘dm)** “a reconciler, mediator”
- **שקן (škn)** “quiet, calm, tranquil, peaceful”

Five of these six words carry explicitly positive meanings and would have been well received by any expectant mother as a good omen for her child. Only **בָּרָא (bārā‘)** “wilderness” would be a neutral term; and only **סָרָה (pere‘)** “wild ass” would have had definite negative connotations. Setting aside the two definitions which are suggested by the Septuagintal variant, it seems quite likely that the angel’s words to Hagar included two word plays: (1) Ishmael would be **prolific** (**pōrē‘** = **pōrē‘** = **pōrē‘** = **pōrē‘**) and a **peacemaker** (**pōrē‘** = **pōrē‘**) and (2) a **reconciler** (**‘ōdēm**) and a “gentleman” (**‘ādām**). Far from being negative, derogatory, or inflammatory, the words about Ishmael and the Ishmaelites in Genesis were laudatory and fully compatible with the divine promise to Abraham that through **all** his progeny “**all** the families of the earth shall be blessed” *(Gen 12:3)*; and they are fully compatible with God’s covenant stipulation to Noah that all human beings are uniquely in the image of God. Consequently, human life is **sacred** and the killing of humans by humans is **anathema**.

NOTES

1. The **יִשְׁקֹן (yiškon)** is the cognate of Arabic **سَكَن (sakana)**, which means not only “he inhabited, or dwelt, or abode,” but also “he became still, quiet, calm, tranquilized unruffled, peaceful” *(Lane 1872: 1392–1393; Wehr 1979: 487–488).*
2. Examples of the interchange of א (aleph) and כ (ayin) in Arabic include (1) أعراض أرض (‘arada) “he asked for, or petitioned for, a thing he wanted” and أعراض (‘arada) “he asked for, or petitioned for, a thing he wanted” (Lane 1863: 48; 1874: 2005) and (2) أعراض (‘afurra) and أعراض (‘afurra) “the beginning, or first part of the heat . . . or the vehemence thereof” (Lane 1877: 2356).

3. Jastrow 1213 “savage, cruel” (where Midrash Rabbah on Gen 16:12, “‘a savage among men’ in its literal sense, for all other plunder goods, but he [Edom-Rome] captures souls,” was cited); and Jastrow 1221 “wild, wild hair, neglected condition.”

4. The Septuagint’s κατὰ πρόσωπον πάντων τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ κατάκηκεν, “he dwelt before all his brothers,” reflects a Vorlage with בֵּל זֶבַל (zābal) “to dwell” (so translated in the KJV of Gen 30:20) for the בֵּל (nāpal) “to fall” of the Masoretic text.
WHAT KIND OF ARAMEAN WAS JACOB?
A CLUE FROM THE LANGUAGE OF ISHMAEL

In Tractate Pesahim 10:4 of the Mishnah (Danby, 1933: 150) instructions are given for the a son to ask his father on the eve of Passover, “Why is this night different from other nights?” The father then “begins with the disgrace and ends with the glory; and he expounds from A wandering Aramean was my father [Deut 26:5] . . . until he finished the whole section.” But in the traditional Passover Haggadah Deut 26:5 is translated as

An Aramean [sought to] destroy my forefather and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there with a small number of people and there he became a great mighty and numerous nation.

The Midrash for the Passover Haggadah interpreted and paraphrased Deut 26:5 to mean

Come and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do to our father Jacob. For Pharaoh issued his edict against only the males, but Laban sought to uproot all, as it is said, “An Aramean would have destroyed my father, and he went down to Egypt and he became there a nation, great, mighty and populous.

Thus, the identity of the Aramean in this verse and the meaning of the modifier יָבָא, “wandering” or “would have destroyed” or something else, warrants further investigation.

MT DEUT 26:5

וענייה יאמורת לפני יהוה אלהי
אירימ אבר אבר
And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God,
A Syrian ready to perish was my father,
and he went down into Egypt,
and sojourned there with a few,
and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

he shall answer and say before the Lord thy God,
My father abandoned Syria,
and went down into Egypt, and sojourned there
with a small number, and became there
a mighty nation and a great multitude

et loqueris in conspectu Domini Dei tui
Syrus persequebatur patrem meum
qui descendit in Aegyptum et ibi peregrinatus est
in paucissimo numero crevitque
in gentem magnum et robustam et infinitae multitudinis
DEUTERONOMY 26:5

DOUAY-RHEIMS
And thou shalt speak thus in the sight of the Lord thy God:
The Syrian pursued my father,
who went down into Egypt, and sojourned there
in a very small number, and grew
into a nation great and strong and of an infinite multitude.

LAMSA’S PESHIŢTA
And you shall speak and say before the Lord your God:
My father was led to Aram
and he went down into Egypt,
and sojourned there for a short time,
and there he became a nation
great, mighty, and populous.

Noteworthy is the Vulgate’s accusative patrem meum, compared with the other translations which recognize the MT יבּא “my father” as a nominative. None of the versions understood the MT יבּא to mean “wandering.” Nonetheless, most standard English translation read “a wandering Aramean was my father,” including the RSV, NRS, NAB, NJB, NLT, NAS, NAU, NIB, and NIV. The KJV “ready to perish” has been followed by the ASV, NKJ, YLT, RWB, and appears paraphrased in The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew as “an Aramean on the point of death was my father.” Support for this interpretation of יבּא comes from the well attested Hebrew / Aramaic יבּא and Syriac יבּא (ebad)—all meaning “to perish, come to nought, to get lost” (KBS, 1994, I: 2; Payne-Smith, 1903: 2). It is surprising that the Peshiţta did
not equate the Hebrew בֵּית with the Syriac ṣebad (‘ebad) but rendered it by ṭaḥ (dēbar) “to lead, to drive away, to go hither and thither,” as though the Syriac Vorlage read בֵּית 2 rather than בֵּית 3.

Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, including BDB, KBS, and DCH, have paid little attention to the Arabic cognates of בֵּית. Only in KBS is there a reference to Arabic بِدَ (‘abada), stem 1, “to become wild” and stem 2, “to last forever,” whereas in BDB and DCH no Arabic cognates are cited. The meanings of the Arabic بِدَ (‘bd) and its derivatives, as cited by Castell (1669: 6), Lane (1863: 4–5), and Wehr (1979:1) are quite diverse, including several verbs spelled بِدَ (‘abada) with these various meanings:

1. “he remained, stayed, abode, or dwelt constantly, continually, or permanently without quitting,”
2. “he took fright and fled or ran away at random,”
3. “he became unsocial, unsociable, unfamiliar, or shy like a wild animal,”
4. “he became angry,”
5. “he was long distant from his home,”
6. “he was long in a state of celibacy . . . or little in need of or desirous of women.”

The different Arabic nouns which could be cognates of בֵּית include:

7. بِدَ (‘abad) “time in an absolute sense, a long time that is unlimited, and extended space of time that is indivisible,”
8. الْبِدَ (‘al‘abadu) “the Everlasting, i.e., God,”
9. āḇīd (‘abid) “an unsociable, unfamiliar, or shy person,”
10. āḇīdāt (‘abidat) “a calamity ever to be remembered . . . or a strange, abominable or evil thing,”
11. āḇīd (‘abid / ‘ibid) “a prolific person that breeds or brings forth plentifully.”

The verbs numbered above as 1, 4, and 6 and the nouns numbered 7, 8, and 10 definitely do not fit the context of Deut 26:5 and can be ruled out as possible cognates of the ṣbā’ in this verse. But verbs numbered 2, 3, and 5, along with the noun numbered 10, could well be the cognates of the translated as “wandering” (RSV, NRS, etc.), or “fugitive” (Albright, 1940: 181), or “vagrant” (Mazar, 1962: 101), or “refugee” (Millard, 1980: 155). Basically, this makes a synonym of the ḇā’ “to sojourn,” which appears four words later in 26:5.

But, in light of the last six words of Deut 26:5, “...and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous,” the Arabic cognate of the ṣbā’ in 26:5 must surely be āḇīd (‘abid / ‘ibid) “prolific” (above, number 11). This definition fits the context perfectly. Psalm 105: 23-24, “then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham; and he increased (‘abīd = LXX ἐγείρα) his people greatly and made them stronger than their foes,” provides a close parallel to Deut 26:5 and clearly identifies Jacob as the patriarch who went to Egypt. With twelve sons and at least one daughter Jacob well deserved to be called “a prolific Aramean”—not to mention that his progeny at the time of the exodus numbered six hundred thousand men, plus children (Exod 12:37). Not only was he prolific but he also
became prodigious (לְנוֹרָא הַרְוֹאִים לְרָם),\(^\text{4}\) for there is power in numbers! Contrary to the claim of Samuel R. Driver (1902: 289) that Jacob’s being identified as “a wandering Aramean” reflected an “intentional disparagement,” the statement —when properly interpreted as “a prolific Aramean was my father”— is quite laudatory.

Recognition of Jacob’s having been prolific finds its parallel in the renaming of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. Franz Delitzsch (1887: 292; 1888: II: 34) identified the Arabic رُحمٌ (ruhâm) “a large number,” used in reference to the small drops of water in a drizzling rain,\(^\text{5}\) as the cognate of the שֵׁרְדָּם in the name Abraham. The innumerable rain drops are like the stars mentioned in Gen 15:5 and the sand mentioned in Gen 22:17. Similarly, the Arabic cognate related to the name Sarah is تَآرَ / ثَآرٍ (tarrâ / tārî) “to become great in number or quantity/ many, numerous” (Lane 1863:335), as interpreted in Gen 17:15, لَوْتِي لَنُوْمُ “she will become nations.”\(^\text{6}\)

Thus, the names Abraham and Sarah, along with the epithet “prolific Aramean” given to Jacob, find their proper interpretation from clues provided by the language of Ishmael. Arabic lexicons have proven to be more helpful than rabbinic traditions in recovering the original meaning of Abraham, Sarah, and the epithet for Jacob the Aramean.

One line of rabbinic tradition (found in the Passover Haggadah) changed the participle הָבָרָא into the verb הָבָרָא “he destroyed,” with the subject of the verb being identified as Laban the Aramean—thereby creating a bit of pure fiction that Laban destroyed (or desired to destroy) all of Jacob, in contrast to the Pharaoh who wanted to kill only the male
children. In France the renown Rashi (1040–1105) accepted this fiction as a valid interpretation. In Spain, however, the distinguished Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) rejected the fiction because the text clearly stated that Jacob—far from being destroyed by Laban—went safely down to Egypt. Other rabbinic notables simply identified the lost or wandering Aramean of Deut 26:5 with Abraham. But, as noted above, Psalm 105: 23–24, “Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham; and he increased his people greatly,” supports the interpretation presented here that the MT אֶלֶף יַבֵּית אֲבִירֵם should be re-pointed as אֶלֶף יַבֵּית אֲבִירֵם, meaning “my father was a prolific Aramean.”

NOTES


2. A by-form of אֶלֶף, which in the hithpa‘el means “to turn this way and that way” (BDB 5, 246).

3. See Delitzsch (1920: 119 §131) for another example of a possible confusion of א and ו in Psalm 15:5, where the MT אִלִּית could be read as אִלִּית.

4. In modern literary Arabic أُبْيَدَة (‘abidat) means a “prodigious event” (Wehr, 1979: 1).

5. Note the “numerus copiosus” in Castell’s lexicon (1669: 3537) and the “drizzling and lasting rain . . . consisting of small drops” in Lane’s lexicon (1867: 1171).
6. The Arabic ث († = th) rather consistently appears in Hebrew cognates as ˀ and as a ˀ in Aramaic cognates. Therefore, given this proposed etymology, one would expect the name ˀ to have change to ˀ. And it may well have been the change that was made—but one would never know it from the written text because pre-Masoretic spelling use the ˀ for both sounds, s and Š (= sh).

The distinction between s and Š was not absolute, as is apparent from (1) the הֵחָלָה and כֶּלֶל הֵחָלָה story in Judges 12, and (2) the s and Š variation between the Hebrew שָׁנִים “sun” and its Arabic cognate سَمْس (sams), though one would expect it to be سَمْس (sams). The Masoretic vocalization reflects the tradition adopted by most scholars that ˀ is only an updated pronunciation and spelling of the archaic ˀ “princess.”

7. See GKC §84ᵉ for the vocalization of this class of nouns.
V

MOSES SAID “PLEASE! BEHOLD!”

There are two accounts in the Bible of Moses’ striking a rock in the wilderness in order to provide water for thirsty and contentious Israelites. The first account appears in Exod 17: 1–7, which tells of the Israelites’ camping at Rephidim as they moved from the wilderness of Sin to Mount Sinai. The account (vss 5–7) reads as follows:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel,
and because they put the LORD to the proof by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Aside from the uncertain location of Horeb, Rephidim, Massah, and Meribah, Exod 17:1–7 provides few serious problems for commentators. Conspicuous in the Hebrew text, though not obvious in translations, is the etymology of the names Massah and Meribah. The former, meaning “Place of Testing,” is from הָסָּה “to test”; the latter, meaning “Place of Contention,” is from רוּב “to dispute, to contend.”

The account in Numbers 20, of Moses’ striking a rock to get water, is far more problematic. Verses 20:8 and 10 require careful reconsideration. The texts read

RSV
Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle.
And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?”

The words above highlighted in italic bold font rightly translate the Hebrew MT; but a different translation—based upon a repointing of three words in the MT—will be offered in the following paragraphs. But, by way of introduction to clarifying the unresolved problems in Num 20:8 and 20:10, a word about the relationship between Num 20:2–9 and Exod 17:1–7.

Milgrom (1990: 49–50) noted

The remarkable parallels in both content and style between Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 have led most critics to posit two variant accounts for the same incident. This possibility was not lost upon one of the medieval Jewish exegetes, Joseph ben Isaac of Orléans, France, known as Bekhor Shor. He postulates the existence of duplicate narratives in our text not just for the rock incident, but also for the stories about the manna and the quail. . . . Thus the possibility exists that the two episodes of Moses’ drawing water from the rock are but variants of the same tradition. Yet they cannot be equated because of one major difference: In Exodus, Moses is told to strike the rock; in Numbers he is told to speak to it.

Milgrom followed the suggestion of Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (1194–1270 C.E.) to transpose the לֹּאִיָּבָה and the לֹּאִיָּבָה, so that Num 20:8 reads, “You and your brother Aaron take the rod and assemble the community at the rock and speak in their presence so that it will yield its water.”
Milgrom concluded, “the command *vedibbartem*, ‘you shall speak,’ like *va-yo’mer lahem* (v. 10) is therefore directed to the people, not to the rock.”

Thus, the punishment announced in Num 20:12,

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them,”

was not due to Moses’ disobediently *striking* the rock instead of obediently *speaking* to the rock. Milgrom (1990: 448) commented and questioned: “Down through the ages, the sin of Moses, as described in Numbers 20:1–13, has been regarded as one of the Gordian knots of the Bible. The punishment is clear; but what is the crime?”

Although Num 20:24, speaking of Aaron, states “you rebelled against my command” and Num 27:14, speaking of Moses, states “you rebelled against my word,” the exact nature of that rebellion was not spelled out. Moreover, if the MT רבדַהֲתָם אלָרַכְפֵּלֶת really meant “and you [plural for Moses and Aaron] shall speak to the rock,” there is no hint in the Hebrew text as to how and what they were to say to the rock. Was it to be a duet or two solo speeches? Who was to go first? The RSV, NRS, NAB, NLT, and NJB circumvent the problem by treating the indicative יְתַן הֶגִיאֵי “it will give forth its waters” as the infinitive “to yield its water.”

The Gordian knot can be untied by recognizing four unusual words which were not widely used in the Judean dialect of Hebrew and, consequently, never made it into the standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. First, the פֶּרֶב which appears in Num 20:8 is not the verb meaning “to speak.” Secondly, the
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which appears in the same verse is *not* the word meaning “eye.” Thirdly, the לְרָוִי in 20:10 is *not* the plural participle of the root רָוְר הָרְוָר “ro rebel.” Fourthly, the ה of the_words in 20:10 is *not* the interrogative particle ה attached to the preposition ה. My alternative interpretation of these words now follows, using this same sequence.

Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew (like BDB 180–185) recognize the following definitions and cognates of דָּבָר:

- דָּבָר “to speak,” with its Arabic cognate being דבער (daba-)
- דָּבָר “pestilence, with its Arabic cognate being דבער (dabra-
- דָּבָר “departure, death”
- דָּבָר “the innermost room of Solomon’s temple,” with its Arabic cognate being דבער (dibur) “back, hindmost”
- דָּבָר “Deborah,” meaning “(honey) bee, wasp,” with its Arabic cognate being דבער (dibr) “swarm of bees.”

A fifth definition needs to be added to this list, namely that דבער which was the cognate of Arabic دَبَّار “ridges of earth, which retain water for irrigation” and دِبَارَة (dibâarat) “channels, rivulets that flow through a land” (Lane 1867: 845). The verb דבער in Num 20:8 needs to be repointed as דבער, and then דבער means “you will make channels up to the rock.” The plural verb includes more than Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation of Israelites were to participate in the preparation for
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the miracle of water flowing from a rock. Working from the periphery to a rock at the center, everyone was expected to facilitate an efficient distribution of the water when it came by having small streamlets flowing down throughout the camp.

This interpretation of the plural suffix ה- of the נברתם ה—leads to the second of the four misunderstood words cited above, namely the לְעָנִינַוֹת, meaning literally “to their eyes” but paraphrased in the Septuagint as ἰδοὺ ἀντίῳν “before them.” One would expect the verb “to speak” to be followed by the phrase “in / into their ears,” rather than “to their eyes.”

However, the לְעָנִינַוֹת of the MT לְעָנִינַוֹת was probably not the original reading. In the context of Num 20:8, where the verb נברתם means “you will make rivulets/streamlets,” the MT לְעָנִינַוֹת should be corrected to לְעָנִינַוֹת so that the לְעָנִינַוֹת ה “to their eyes” becomes לְעָנִינַוֹת לְעָנִינַוֹת, meaning “with their help” or “with their assistance—with the possessive pronoun referring to the whole congregation (הַדְּבֶּר).” (Translating the ל here as “with” matches a similar use of the ל in the phrase in Gen 23:16, מַכְּכֶּה לֵבֶר לֵאָלָהוֹר “silver passing with the merchant” [BDB 512, sub definition 5]).

The Hebrew lexeme דָּלָה “help, aid, assistance,” is the cognate of Arabic عون (awn) “help, aid, assistance. . . an aider, a helper, or an assistant” (Lane 1874: 2203; Wehr 1979: 772). Thus, in 20:8 the reconstructed phrase נָבְרָתִים אֲלֵי הַסְּפָלָה לְעָנִינַוֹת means “and make channels up to the rock with their help”—with the singular collective “help” translating the Hebrew plural נָבְרָתִים “helps” to accommodate English idiom.
In support of this translation of Num 20:8 are three other passages where this stem וַיַּעַל has been identified, namely,

• Deut 33:27, where מָעַן הַאֱלֹהִים מִפְּרָעָם in context means “(Your) Savior/Helper is the God of Old.”

• Deut 33:28, where the MT בָּרָה עָנַיָּמִי should be re-pointed to בָּרָה עָנַיָּמִי, meaning “By himself he helped Jacob.”

• Psalm 18:36, where the MT וֹתֵעֲנָה הָרְבֵּנוּ appears in the RSV as “and thy help made me great.”

The third word listed on page 48, above, which is not what it appears to be is the וַיִּרְאָה in the phrase וַיִּרְאָה מֵרָה in Num 20:10. Although vocalized as the plural participle of the מִרְאָה “ro rebel” it needs to be vocalized as מִרְאָה (scriptio defectiva for מֵרָה), the Hiphîl participle plural of מִרְאָה, matching the singular Hiphîl participle מִרְאָה, “he who waters, water carrier, drawer of water” found in Prov 11:25.

To be sure, the verb מֵרָה “ro rebel” does appear in Num 20:24 and 27:14, which speak of Yahweh’s charging Aaron and Moses with rebellion at Meribah. And Deut 9:7 and 9:24 contain that same charge against the Israelites in general, stating מֵרָה הָרְבֵּיאָה מֵרָה, “you have been rebellious against Yahweh.” Thus, there is no problem, per se, with Moses’ calling the Israelites מֵרָה “rebels.” But in the context of the theophany in 20:6, מִרְאָה הָרְבֵּיאָה אֲלֹהִים, “the glory of Yahweh appeared to them,” and the polite imperative נא “Please listen!” in 20:10, it staggers the
imagination to have an *angry* Moses saying “Please!” to a bunch of rebels. Once the shift is made from מְרִים “rebels” to מִמְרִים / מִמְרָים “water carriers,” it becomes easier to accept the idea that Moses actually said “Please!” Thus, there is no need to delete the נַא or to ignore this particle of entreaty to accommodate what some commentators see as a very *angry* and indignant Moses denouncing some very thirsty people—an interpretation based solely on one word in the MT, מְרִים “rebels.” It is more likely that the theophany mentioned in 20:6 made Moses and Aaron glow with excitement—glowing enough to make even Moses cordial and polite to the מִמְרִים / מִמְרָים, “the water carriers” who waited around the rock.

The fourth word listed on page 48, above, which is not what it appears to be is the נ of the MT נַא in 20:10. It has been consistently read as the interrogative particle introducing a question, as in the Septuagint which reads μή ἐκ τῆς πέτρας ταύτης ἐξάζομεν υμῖν ύδωρ, “must we out of this rock bring you water?” The נ is better read as the interjection ה', or ה (without an נ) as in the interjection ה', יָד (By God!” (Jastrow 1903: 67, 328; BDB 21). This Hebrew יָד “Behold!” was uttered by Joseph in Gen 47:23, along with the more widely used interjection ה'. Also in Ezek 16:43, יָד “Behold!” appears in the oracle of Yahweh against Jerusalem, “therefore, behold (יָד), I will requite your deeds upon your head.”

The elision of the נ in Hebrew was quite common. For example, in 1 Sam 2:16 and 20:2, the negative particle ני/
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appears simply as אֵל. A sampling of other words where the א was elided include:

- מָאָשָׁה for מָאָשָׁהְוָנָה, from the stem מָאָשָׁה “to come,” in Deut 33:21;
- מָאָשָׁה for מָאָשָׁהְוָנָה, from the stem מָאָשָׁה “to pitch a tent,” in Isa 13:20;
- מָאָשָׁה for מָאָשָׁהְוָנָה, from the stem מָאָשָׁה “to come,” in Isa 21:14;
- מָאָשָׁה for מָאָשָׁהְוָנָה, from the stem מָאָשָׁה “to tie, to bind” (rather than מָאָשָׁה “to turn aside”), in Exo 14:25;
- מָאָשָׁה for מָאָשָׁהְוָנָה, from the stem מָאָשָׁה “to tie, to bind,” in Ecc 4:14.

In light of this evidence, reading the מ of the MT מָהֲרָם as מ— the defectively spelled equivalent of מָהֲרָם “Behold!”— seems preferable to the speculation as to whether the question of a somewhat befuddled and angry Moses meant (1) “Must we bring you water out of this rock?” or (2) “Shall we bring you water out of this rock?” or (3) Can we bring you water out of this rock?”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The word studies presented above permit the following new translations—cited in italic bold font—of the problematic phrases in Num 20:7–10.

Then Yahweh said to Moses,

“Take the rod, and assemble the congregation,

you and Aaron your brother,
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and make channels up to the rock with their help.
It will yield its water.
You [Moses] shall bring water out of the rock for them;
and you shall give drink
to the congregation and their cattle.”

Moses took the rod from before Yahweh,
as he commanded him.
Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together
before the rock, and he [Moses] said to them,
“Please listen! Behold, O water carriers!
We will bring forth water for you out of this rock!

A series of small scribal errors produced great difficulties
for exegetes and much speculation by commentators as to
what Moses did at Meribah which made him a “rebel,” pre-
cluding his entering the Promise Land. The errors included
two words in which a \( ^\text{\small w} \) was replaced by a \( ^\text{\small y} \) (לעופת became לופת and מרים became ירים) and two cases of defective spelling
(וה became י and ורימים became ירימים). Two
words in these verses never made it into the standard Hebrew
lexicons: \( ^\text{\small דבר} \) “to make rivulets/streamlets” and \( ^\text{\small לוע} \) “help, aid, assist”—even though their cognates were cited by Castell
(1669: 651 and 2701, respectively) and by Lane (1867: 45 and
1874: 2203).

These corrections to the Hebrew text and the new transla-
tions they permit bring into clear focus the ways in which
Moses ignored Yahweh’s instruction, resulting in his being
labeled a “rebel” and being denied the gift of entering the
Promise Land. If these corrections and translation prove to be
correct, the conclusions of some scholars that Exodus 17:1–7
and Num 20:2–13 are variant traditions of the same event
become highly implausible.

In just four simple Hebrew words Moses was instructed to organize a community project of digging small ditches from the periphery of the encampment up to a designated rock from which water would soon flow. But there is not a single Hebrew word in the text telling of Moses’ implementing this order. Yes, he and Aaron assembled the congregation before the rock, but there was no making of rivulets or water channels. The congregation became only spectators of a miracle, not participants along with Moses and Aaron in initiating it. Participation in the process would have promoted anticipation and appreciation of Yahweh’s power and presence, and would have strengthened their faith in him.

Moreover, Moses was instructed by verbs in the second person masculine singular to (1) produce water from the rock and (2) give drink to the assembly and their animals. But when Moses politely (בְּאֵל) and excitedly (אִלּוֹ) addressed the assembled water carriers (בְּאֵל) he used a verb in the first person plural, “we will bring forth for you,” the plural obviously referring to Moses himself and to Aaron. Thus, he struck the rock twice, once for Aaron and once for himself. If only Moses had said “He will bring forth” instead of “we will bring forth,” Yahweh’s presence and power would have been fully acknowledged.

Arden (1957: 52) was correct in stating, “It isn’t a question of God splitting hairs with Moses and meeting out punishment capriciously.” As stated in Num 20:12, Yahweh’s pronouncement against Moses and Aaron is quite specific:
You [Moses and Aaron] did not bring about faith in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the sons of Israel.

Ordinarily the Hiph’il of הָיָם means simply “to believe, to have faith,” not “to cause one to have faith, to make one believe.” Jepsen (1974: 299) noted though the difficulty in properly interpreting this verb.

The whole discussion about the meaning of the hiphil of הָיָם, the purpose of which is to clarify first of all whether the hiphil here is to be understood as a causative, a declarative, or an internal transitive, cannot be resolved. First we must learn how the word was used; then perhaps we will be in a position to determine the category in which the hiphil form הֶשְּמִין belongs.

The verb הָיָם in Num 20:12 is clearly an exception to the rule—if the rule is that הָיָם in the Hiph’il can never be a causative. The phrase לָא יָאַתְמְתִּים בַּיָּם, “you did not bring about faith in me,” is elliptical. The full phrase would have been “you did not cause the sons of Israel to have faith in me.” (Another way to explain it is that “sons of Israel” at the end of the verse does double duty and goes with both verbs in the verse.)

The failure of Moses and Aaron to obey the command of Yahweh to prepare water channels in anticipation of a great miracle was their sin of omission. It was counter-productive for deepening the faith of their fellow Israelites. Their taking all the credit for producing the miraculous water from the rock was their sin of commission. Hubris had subverted humility, with very negative results. Weary Israelites had quenched their thirst at Meribah (Num 20:11); but by the time they set out from Mount Hor they were as faithless as ever,
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complaining anew to God and to Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food” (Num 21:5).

Milgrom (1974: 448–456) provided an excellent critique of ten different rabbinic interpretations of Num 20:1–13. Even though nothing in rabbinic exegesis about Moses’ sin and punishment supports the emendations and translations presented above, Milgrom’s comments (452) about the punishment of Moses and Aaron provide a fitting conclusion here.

In the face of the magnitude of this sin, all prior incidents of Moses’ petulance and doubt pale. Here in a direct address to his people, Moses ascribes miraculous powers to himself and Aaron. Indeed, by broadcasting one word —notsi², “we shall bring forth”—Moses and Aaron might be interpreted as having put themselves forth as God. Considering that Moses’ generation had hardly been weaned from the bondage of Egypt, his error was neither slight nor pardonable. Israel had to be released from more than chains; it still had to be purged of its pagan background. In being redeemed from Pharaoh, it had yet to be bound to its God.

NOTES

1. Vilnay (1978: 341), as cited by Seely (1992), called attention to a tradition which related the name Rephidim to the stem רֵפְדֶּם “meaning ‘to relax, weaken, dishearten’ because ‘Israel cast off the commandments of the Torah’ and because of this an enemy (Amalek) rose up against them.” However, were that the derivation, the name should have been Repha’im, rather than Rephidim. A more likely derivation of the Rephidim is רֵפְדֶּם, a
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cognate of the Arabic رفْد (rafada) “he gave a gift, he assisted, aided,” with special attention given to the رفْدُ (ruffida) and رفْدًا (raffadu) of form 2, meaning, respectively, “[such a one] was made lord, or chief; and was made great, or magnified, or honored,” and “they made [such a one] a lord, or chief, made him great or magnified him” (Lane 1867: 1119). If this is the derivation of Rephidim, then Numbers 17:1 to 18:7, provide an excellent commentary, especially 18:6–7,

“Behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the people of Israel; they are a gift to you, given to the L ORD , to do the service of the tent of meeting. . . . I give your priesthood as a gift, and any one else who comes near shall be put to death.”

2. See Childs 1974: 305–309, who concluded his comments by calling attention to Psalm 95:8–11, “Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, ‘They are a people who err in heart, and they do not regard my ways.’ Therefore I swore in my anger that they should not enter my rest.”

3. The Septuagint reading here is very close to the MT.

λαβὲ τὴν ῥάβδον καὶ ἐκκλησίασον τὴν συναγωγὴν
σὺ καὶ Λαρων ὁ ἀδελφὸς σου
καὶ λαλήσατε πρὸς τὴν πέτραν ἑναντία αὐτῶν
καὶ δώσει τὰ ὑδατα αὐτῆς
καὶ ἔξωσετε αὐτοῖς ύδωρ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας
καὶ ποτείετε τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ τὰ κτήμα αὐτῶν
καὶ ἐξεκκλησίασεν Μωυσῆς καὶ Λαρων
τὴν συναγωγὴν ἀπέναντι τῆς πέτρας
καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀκούσατε μου ὁι ἀπεθείς
μὴ ἔκ τῆς πέτρας ταύτης ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ύδωρ
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Take thy rod, and call the assembly,
thou and Aaron thy brother,
and speak ye to the rock before them,
and it shall give forth its waters;
and ye shall bring forth for them water out of the rock,
and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.

And Moses and Aaron assembled
the congregation before the rock,
and said to them, Hear me, ye disobedient ones;
must we bring you water out of this rock?

4. This solution also required reading (or emending) אל “to” as אל “at” and paraphrased ליעל “to their eyes” as “in their presence.”

5. Compare Ashley (1993: 383–384) who argued that Moses’ penalty was due to his disobedience or his anger and self-centeredness, stating simply, “… inexact obedience on the part of leaders (and others) is the same as disobedience.”


7. The verb דבר, stem 5, could well be a denominative, and like אַל אל “to ask, to make a request,” a Hiph’il form of the verb is not
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required for רֶבֶר to mean “make a streamlet” or “to irrigate.” Thus, there is no need to emend the consonantal text from the Qal זָרַד רֶבֶר to a Hiph'īl חָרַד רֶבֶר.

8. Other examples where יִשְׂנֹן and יָנֹן were confused include (1) Psa 73:7, where יֵשְׁנֹן “their eye” was read as יֵטָנֹן “their iniquity” by the Septuagint translators who rendered it as ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν; and (2) Zech 5:6, where יֵשְׂנֹן “their eye” was also read as יֵטָנֹן “their iniquity” by the Septuagint translators who again rendered it as ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν. For many other examples of the scribes’ confusing the י and the נ, see Delitzsch 1923: 103–105, §103 a–c.

9. This phrase was variously paraphrased as (1) ἀργυρίου δοκίμου ἐμπόροις “silver approved of merchants” in the Septuagint, (2) “silver, according to the weights current among the merchants” in the RSV, and (3) “silver, commercial standard” in the NAS.


11. The Arabic cognates of בַּרְוָה, listed by Lane (1867: 1194–1196), are as follows:

•.rawîya (rawîya), “he drank enough to quench his thirst”;

•.riyy (riyy “n”) “the state of having drunk enough to quench the thirst”;

•.rawî (ra’wi) “one who brings water to his family;

•.rawwâ (rawwâ “n”) “(a man) whose habitual work, or occupation is the drawing of water.”
As used in this verse הָרַבָּה is the synonym of אֲשֶׁר “to draw water;” and the masculine plural participle which makes “the drawers of water” to be men parallels the יִשְׂרְאֵלָה צִבְרֵיהֶם “the young men draw (water)” in Ruth 2:9. It is also possible that the Hebrew מִרְרָם is related to מִרְרָם “drop of water” and to its Arabic cognate מַרְמֶר (marmar) “he made water to pass, or go upon the surface of the ground” (Lane 1875: 2700). On a humorous note, this question comes to mind: Could Moses have been using slang (מִרְרָם instead of מִרְרָם) analogous to “drip” in English, saying, “Hey, please listen, you drips!”?

12. Note also Psalm 106:32, “They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account.”

13. Note also the variants יִתְחַרְוָנִי וְתַחַרְוָנִי and יָתַחְרַוָנִי in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40. In 11QpaleoLev מִרְרָם appears for מַרְרָם in Lev 25:36; and מַרְרָם for מַרְרָם in Lev 26:18; and מַרְרָם for מַרְרָם in Lev 26:21 (Freedman and Matthews 1985: 45–46, 80). See also GKC 68h, k and Delitzsch 1920: 21–22, §14a–c.

14. See, for example, Ashley 1993: 383, n. 17.

15. Arden (1957: 52) rightly noted that

The clear implication is that the people will rejoice at the sight of abundant water, and they will doubly and trebly rejoice at the knowledge that their God is with them and is showing himself by one of his happiest miracles.

All the more so if Moses, as instructed by Yahweh, had engaged them in preparing the channels through which the waters would flow. Arden’s next statement, however, needs to be modified in light of Moses’ having said “Please listen, Behold!”
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It is this circumstance which Moses, in a fit of indignation, turns into a bitter denunciation; he curses the people, and in smiting the magic rod against the rock, destroys the hallowed moment that God had so clearly intended.”

16. Compare Arden (1957: 52) who interpreted Moses’ use of the pronoun “we” to mean Moses and God, stating

Only Moses shows his exasperation, his famous temper, and his astonishing egotism: “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Num 20: 10). Moses in his anger takes it on himself to assume that God is exasperated too, that the two of them, Moses and God, are one in their response. The tone in which he addresses the people is that of annoyance and condescension; the “we” is blasphemous.

Arden obviously ignored Moses’ use of the particle שָׁמְעָה- when he said שָׁמְעָה- “Please listen!”

17. Milgram (1974: 451) provides a brief summary of Jewish exegetes who thought that Moses sin was in his saying נָלַא, “we will bring forth,” instead of נָלַ, “He will bring forth.”

18. As noted above, Ashley (1993: 383–384) argued that Moses’ penalty was due to his disobedience [by striking the rock instead of speaking to it] or his anger and self-centeredness. Cole (2000: 327–328) also considered Moses’ striking the rock instead of speaking to it to be the sin for which he was punished. He commented, “Instead of addressing the rock, he launched into a diatribe against the complaining community. . . . Moses struck the rock not once but twice . . . so striking the rock was in a sense a striking out against God.” Cole also ignored the שָׁמְעָה- particle of entreaty used by Moses when he said שָׁמְעָה- “Please listen!”
VI

PROBLEMS IN THE BALAAM TRADITION
OF JOSHUA 24:9–10

The “Book of the Wars of Yahweh” in Numbers 21:14–15 speaks of violence in Moab, but it is not the violence of Israelite warriors. Rather, Yahweh was believed to have utilized the violence of nature to secure Israel’s passage to Pisgah. Following several of the suggestions of Christensen (1974: 359–360) the short poem can be read as follows:1

The Benefactor came in a storm.
Yea, He came2 to the wadis of the Arnon,
He caused the wadis to rush forth.3
He marched (in an) earthquake to destroy Ar.4
Then we easily entered the very borders of Moab!5

This non-military action is in general agreement with Deut 2:9–29, which speaks of a non-violent, commercial interaction with the Moabites—noted particularly in verses

- 2:9 “And Yahweh said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot for a possession.’”
- 2:18–19 “This day you are to pass over the boundary of Moab at Ar; and when you approach the frontier of the sons of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.”
- 2:27–29, “Let me (Israel) pass through your (the king of Heshbon) land; I will go only by the road, I will turn aside
neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I go over the Jordan into the land which Yahweh our God gives to us.”

These verses agree with Jephthah’s rhetorical questions in Judges 11:25, “Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever go to war with them?” But they disagree with (1) Josh 24:9, “Then Balak . . . king of Moab arose and fought against Israel and sent and invited Balaam,” and with (2) the violence against Moab anticipated by Balaam in Num 24:17,

ָגֶהוֹת יָמֵה בְּשָׂמַע יָשָׁב שְׁבֵּס מַשָּרוֹת

a star shall come forth out of Jacob
and a comet shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab,
and break down all the sons of Sheth.

Nehemiah (13:1–3) reworked the traditions about Balaam and concluded that Balaam had cursed Israel (contrary to Num 23:8, 11, 25; 24:8–9, 19), and he asserted that Moab did not sell water to the Israelites (contrary to Deut 2:18–19, 27–29). Deut 23:3–5, likewise, reflects a reworking of the tradition about Balaam, stating that Balaam had in fact cursed Israel—resulting in the call for Israel’s eternal enmity with Moab.

Moreover, according to Num 31:16 Balaam was responsible for the Israelite treachery against Yahweh (לָעָם מָעֵשַׁי) at Baal-Peor, and, according to Num 25:1–3, their
“playing the harlot” with the daughters of Moab” (נַעֲרַת מֹאָב) — even though Num 24:25 stated that “Balaam had returned to his place” (i.e., to Pethor, along the Sajur River, near the Euphrates, in the land of Amaw which at one time had been ruled over by the king of Alalakh [Num 22:5]). For this alleged evil Balaam was killed in a battle in which all Midianite males were killed (Num 31:7–20 and Joshua 13:22).

Balaam’s name became a pejorative in 2 Peter 2:15 (“they have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing”), Jude 11 (“they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error”), Rev 2:14 (“you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel”), and Pirqē Aboth 5:22 (“If he has an evil eye, and a boastful soul and a haughty spirit, he is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. The disciples of Balaam the wicked inherit Gehenna and go down to the pit of destruction”), associating Balaam with Baalzebub.

An ambiguity in the text in Josh 24:9–10, no doubt, contributed to Balaam’s deprecation in Israelite, Jewish, and Christian traditions. The ambiguity came from the שָׁלֹם, which could be either the negative particle שָׁלֹם “not” or the emphatic particle שָׁלֹם “surely, indeed.” With these two definitions of שָׁלֹם in focus, and by carefully identifying the antecedents of the suffixes and the subject of the verb שָׁלֹם in Josh 24:10, the text of 24:9–10 can be read and translated as follows:
Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and he sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you [Israelites]. I [Yahweh] was indeed willing to listen to Balaam, and he [Balaam] blessed you greatly. I delivered you out of his [Balak’s] hand.12

This interpretation resonates well with Num 22:18, אֵלָי לֹא עָלְכִּי לַעֲבֹר אֶל מִקְרֹת יְהוָה אֶל עָלַי, “I am not able to go beyond the word of Yahweh my God,” and the following notices:

• Yahweh had declared לֹא אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּֽעַרְוָה אֶל, “you shall not curse the people [of Israel] for he is blessed” (Num 22:12),

• Balaam had promised, “I will bring back word to you as Yahweh speaks to me,” and

• in Num 23:11 Balak charged Balaam with having blessed the Israelites (ָּֽלְּלָהּ בְּכַלּוֹת בֶּֽעָרְוָה) instead of cursing them as he had requested and for which he was willing to pay dearly.

Balaam acknowledged that Yahweh was his God (Num 22:18) and that he hears the utterances of God (24:4) and “knows the knowledge of the Most High” (24:16). The Israelites acknowledged that he was in dialogue with Yahweh and had passed the test of obedience to Yahweh given by the angel of Yahweh who had “sataned” him (Num 22: 20–35). The prophet Micah (6:4) recognized him favorably.
Josh 24:10 appears to be find its echo in Deut 23:6,

\[\text{Yahweh your God would not hearken to Balaam;}
\text{but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing for you,}
\text{because Yahweh your God loved you.}\]

Although the rule is that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, there are exceptions when it comes to Hebrew homographs. For example, the הוהי משה “the man Moses” of Exo 11:3 is not the equivalent of the הוהי משה in Num. 12:3, which should be read as הוהי משה, meaning “Moses was made to despair.” For contextual reasons—such as God’s turning a curse into a blessing—the negative אל must be retained in Deut 23:6. Thus, the אֶלֶּ֔ה יָדַ֣וְהַבְּלֵֽנָּ֔ה of 23:6 is not an echo of the אֶלֶּ֔ה יָדַ֣וְהַבְּלֵֽנָ֔ה in Josh 24:10.

Once Balaam was killed in battle by the Israelites whom he had actually blessed, it became necessary for some Israelites to legitimate the killing of a fellow Yahwist. Simply by changing one vowel in the Balaam tradition—the shift from אֶלֶּ֔ה “indeed” to אֶלֶּ֔ה “not”—it was possible to make Yahweh say, “I was not willing to listen to Balaam,” implying that something was radically wrong with Balaam. Once it could be claimed that Yahweh was indeed dissatisfied with Balaam, apologists—past and present—were free to deprecate Balaam as a sinner deserving death. Thus, Balaam’s transformation from a “prophet for Yahweh” to an infidel was accomplished by just one vowel change.
TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN NUMBERS 24:7

Balaam’s blessing of Israel in Num 24:5–9 includes a very enigmatic phrase in 24:7 which has been translated in radically different ways in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, and the Targum of Onkelos. In the following citations of the verse in the MT and the versions, it will become obvious that (1) the first word of the MT, לֹּז, was read as the verb לָז “to flow” or the verb לָז “to go” (with the elision of the ס here as in Jer 2:36, where לָז appears for מָלֵא), and (2) the second word, מַתָּא “water” must have been read as מְת or מְת “a man” (a singular noun as in the names of Methushael “man of God” and Methuselah “man of the sword”) in the Vorlage of the Septuagint and the Peshitta.16

NUM 24:7 MT

יִלַּשֵׁם מַלְאֹלָיו נֶרֶשׁ בְּמִים רַבִּים
וּרֶם נָאָבִין מִלְפָּפוֹת תַּהֲסֵא מַלְכָּה

KJV

He shall pour the water out of his buckets,
and his seed shall be in many waters,
and his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted

NEW JPS TRANSLATION

Their boughs17 drip with moisture,
Their roots have abundant water.
Their king shall rise above Agag.
Their kingdom shall be exalted.18
LXX
ἐξελεύσεται ἀνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἦ Γωγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐξηθήσεται ἦ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ

THOMSON’S LXX
There shall come a man from his seed,
And he shall rule over many nations;
And the kingdom greater than Gog shall be raised up,
And his kingdom shall be enlarged.

PESHITTA
A man shall rise up from his sons and his offspring by many waters;
he shall be exalted more than Agag the king, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

VULGATE
fluet aqua de situla eius
et semen illius erit in aquas multas
tolletur propter Agag rex eius
et auferetur regnum illius.

DOUAY RHEIMS
Water shall flow out of his bucket, and his seed shall be in many waters. For Agag his king shall be removed, and his kingdom shall be taken away.
A king, who will become greater than his sons, shall grow great and he shall rule many nations; and he will become more powerful than Agag his king; and his kingdom will be exalted.

The third word of the MT, יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד, is probably the most enigmatic of all the words in this verse. As pointed in the MT it is a dual form with a 3ms suffix of יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד “bucket” (the cognate of the Arabic دلو (dalw) “bucket” [Lane 1867: 908 – 909] and the Persian دول (dûl), which Golius [1669: 280] defined as “Urna haustoria. Vas ligneum lacti continendo idoneum : aut quo aqua domi servatur & ex quo petitur”). But, of all the version cited above, only the Vulgate with its situla eius “his bucket” approximates the MT יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד “his two buckets.” It is also noteworthy that the Vulgate’s et semen illius erit in aquas multas, “and his seed shall be in many waters,” matches perfectly the MT יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד.

In contrast to the Vulgate’s approximation of the MT, the Septuagint had a different Vorlage. The Greek εξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ, “there shall come a man out of his seed,” reflects a Hebrew text which read יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד. This suggests that the third and fourth words of the MT, יְהֵת וַיְפָקְד, became transposed in the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint. If so, the καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν, “and he shall rule over many nations,” corresponds
PROBLEMS IN THE BALAAM TRADITION

... to the MT יִרְדֹּל בֲּאָמָה יִרְבּוּ דָּוֵל, which must have appeared in the Hebrew Vorlage of the translators as יְרֵדֵל בָּאָמָה יִרְבּוּ דָּוֵל. At first glance the translation of יִרְדֹּל בֲּאָמָה יִרְבּוּ דָּוֵל by ποιησεῖν παράκολα “to rule over” seems unlikely, for the יִרְדֹּל would seem to be restricted to the verbs יָלַה “to draw (water)” or יָלַה “to hang, be low, to languish” and the nouns יָלַה יַדָּה “door,” יָלַה “bucket,” יָלַה “branch,” or the adjective יָלָה “poor, weak.” But the hollow verb יִרְדֹּל needs to be restored in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. It is the cognate of the Arabic دَالُ (dûl / dála) which in form IV means “to give someone ascendency or superiority, to make victorious, to grant victory, to let someone triumph”—with the noun دَوْلَةُ (dawlat‘an) meaning “a turn or change of fortune from bad to good, a change to predominance, mastery, or victory” (Lane 1867: 934–935). Castell (1669: 674) defined this cognate as “fortunae mutatio, conversio temporis, ac fortunae : pec infelicitate, prosperitas : aut prim. in pugna, victoria.” In post-classical times the Arabic noun came to signify “a monarchy, a dynasty, or an empire” (Wehr 1979: 348–349). The Septuagint translators were obviously aware of this rare Hebrew stem when they translated the יִרְדֹּל of MT יִרְדֹּל by ποιησεῖν παράκολα.20

One other variant in the Septuagint of Num 24:7 requires comment. It is the reading of Gog for Agag. The Greek phrase ὑψωθῇ σεται θη Γ’ ωγ, “he shall be raised up (more) than Gog,” should probably be read—with the reduplication of the η which was lost by haplography—as ὑψωθῇ σεται θη γ’ ωγ (or Ἠ ἌΓΩΓ), “he shall be raised up (more) than Agog.” The variation would shift from the different names Gog and Agag to simply a different spelling of the one name: Agag or Ἅγογ.21
PROBLEMS IN THE BALAAM TRADITION

Although Gray (1903: 365) rightly concluded with reference to Num 24:7 that the “MT. must be corrupt,” he was wrong in his conclusion that “G is unfortunately paraphrastic . . . and its evidence in consequence less certain with regard to the original.” Gray’s conjecture that the “ἀνθρωπος is probably a paraphrase for water and σπέρματος for bucket” is less than convincing.21

The Hebrew Vorlage used by the Septuagint translators can be reconstructed as

יִאֶלֶת חָצְיוֹת מְדֻבָּא תְּרוּעָה בָּאֲמִם רָבִים

דְּרוֹסֵי מְאָמְתִּים בֵּיתוֹן בְּתוֹמָא מְלָכָה

A man from his (Jacob’s) seed shall go forth, and he (Jacob) shall become superior by means of many tribes; and his (Israel’s) king shall be higher than Agag, and his (Israel’s) kingdom shall be exalted.

This reconstruction, with support from the Peshitta, is far more likely to reflect the original Hebrew text than Cheyne’s emendation (1899: 401) of the MT וַיֹּאמֶר מַהֲמִלָּהוּ “Let people tremble at his might,” which was adopted by Gray (1903: 360). As reconstructed here, 24:7 expresses the same idea as that found in 23:10a, “Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth of Israel?” The “reversal of fortune” which is expressed by דַּיְדַי appears in 24:20, “Amalek was the first of the nations, but in the end he shall come to destruction.” Adoption of the reconstructed Vorlage given above makes gratuitous all attempts to wrench some meaning from the MT with its “water flows from his two buckets” and “his seed is in many waters.”
The Peshitta followed the Septuagint in reading הָאָחָה/חָּא “man” in lieu of the MT מָם/ָמָ “water.” But the MT מִמְלַעָר/מָלַע “from his two buckets” became חולח, חלח “from his sons” in Syriac. Once the prepositional מ and the possessive suffix מ of the MT מִמְלַעָר were removed, the remaining מְלַעוּר was obviously inverted (or read from left to right) to become מְלַע “child, boy, son.” The balance of 24:7 in the Peshitta follows the MT quite closely, with all of its ambiguity.

The Septuagint translators were not the only ones aware of the rare Hebrew root לְוָו “to reverse one’s fortune, to become prosperous, to rule over, etc.” The translators of Targum Onkelos were seemingly aware of the multiple meanings of מְלַע, which would account for the following five Aramaic translations of this one Hebrew word:

1. (1) יֵבָשֶׁל “he will become great,” which reflects the idea of “good fortune, prosperity, and superiority coming to someone”;  
2. (2) יַחָבֵש “he shall grow great,” which also reflects the idea of “the transition of wealth, blessing, and good to someone”;  
3. (3) מְלַע “the king,” which mirrors the idea of “monarchy, mastery, and becoming victorious”;  
4. (4) רְשַׁלָּמה “he will rule,” which also mirrors the idea of “monarchy and mastery”; and  
5. (5) מְלַע “from his sons” matched the Peshitta in translating the MT מִמְלַע as though the text were מְלַע. Although Onkelos has these five different interpretations of
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the MT, it has nothing for the MT. But in the second half of 24:7 the Targum reflects the MT perfectly.

The unusual use of מִלְכָּב in the singular and the use of the hapax legomenon מֵאָהוָה can be explained by Balaam’s speaking in a dialect which did not conform completely to the lexical options of the Judean Hebrew dialect. The fact that the translators of the Septuagint and Targum Onkelos recognized Balaam’s dialectal Hebrew highlights the limitations of later lexicographers, translators, and exegetes who did not recognize dialectal Hebrew.

THE STAR AND COMET IN NUMBERS 24:17

Milgrom (1989: 207–208), in his commentary on Numbers mentioned that Alexander Yannai (103–76 B.C.E.) had imprinted a star on some of his coins to symbolize that he was the conquering star that rose from Jacob. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, the gods Resheph, Nergal, and Apollo direct shooting stars or comets to destroy their enemies.

He indicated that מִלְכָּב can also mean a “host,” like its Arabic cognate كَوْكَبٌ (kawkab) “star, multitude, host [of an army].” (Lane [1885: 2623] noted that this Arabic quadrilateral stem “is an arabicized word, from the Hebrew מִלְכָּב; and that ignorance of its being so caused the Arabs to dispute respecting its formation [whether the أ (א) or the כ (כ) was the anomalous fourth radical].”) Lane’s definitions include “constellation, chief, lord, prince,” as well as “mass, bulk [of an army].”

The passage from the Babylonian Talmud which Gemser quoted (in German) and Milgrom referred to is Berakôt 58b. It reads as follows:

What are זיקין? Samuel said: A comet. Samuel also said:

I am familiar with the paths of heaven as with the streets of Neharde’a,
with the exception of the comet about which I am ignorant.

(Rabbi Samuel’s knowledge that זיקין “comets” meant כוכב רのでしょう reflects his excellent knowledge of Aramaic/
Hebrew vocabulary; and lexicographers since Rabbi Samuel have had no problem with בֹּלֶל. (Jastrow [1903: 395] defined it as “sparks, burning arrows, meteors, shooting stars [or comet]”; and Payne Smith [1903: 115] has “shooting star” for the Syriac قَايَة [ziqâ’]).

But the בֹּלֶל in Rabbi Samuel’s answer was a different matter. As recognized by Staerk, Gemser, and Milgrom, this בֹּלֶל is not the בֹּלֶל meaning “scepter, ruler, tribe,” nor is it related to שָׁבָט, a Babylonian loanword, for the eleventh month of the Jewish calendar. Rather it is the cognate of the Arabic سیبّاط (sabīṭ/sabaṭ) and سباطة (sībāṭat/sūbāṭat), all meaning “lank, loose, long hair” (Lane 1872: 1294; Wehr 1979: 458; Hava 1915: 306–307). Thus, Rabbi Samuel’s בֹּלֶל meant literally “a star having long hair,” similar to the well attested use in Arabic of نَجَم ذَو ذَنْب (naj-mu dū ḍanab) “a star having a tail.” (Levy [1924: 496] cited the Arabic سیبّاط but gave no definition for it—although he noted for בֹּלֶל “der Planet Schebit. Raschi erklärt das W. vom vorg. זָבָט: der Stern, dessen Schweif wei ein Stab herabhängt.”)

Support for interpreting בֹּלֶל as “a star having long hair” comes from the analogous origin of the English word “comet.” It is derived from the Greek κομή/κομήτης—defined by Liddell and Scott (1966: 975) as (a) “hair/long hair,” (b) foliage, and (c) the luminous tail of a comet. The American Heritage Dictionary (2000 CD Version, s. v.) includes the following notice.

This figurative name [comet] is recorded first in the works of Aristotle, in which he uses κομῆ, the Greek word for “hair of the head,” to mean “luminous tail of a comet.” Aristotle then uses the derived word κομῆς, “wearing long
hair,” as a noun meaning “comet.” The Greek word was adopted into Latin as *comētēs*, which was refashioned in Late Latin and given the form *comēta*, furnishing Old English with *comēta*, the earliest English ancestor of our word *comet*.

Thus, Rabbi Samuel’s explanation that יַבּּוֹשׁ “comets” means כַּבֵּהַּ רַשְׁבִּיס “a star having lank hair” finds its parallel in the Greek/English κομήτης/*comet* “a star having long hair.” Consequently, another definition of שַבִּיס —along with its cognate סָבִית (sabīt/sabat) “long loose hair”— needs to be restored to the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew and post-biblical Aramaic.

As for the nominal parallelism of “star” and “scepter” Levine (2000: 190, 199–201), like Staerk, Gemser, and Milgrom (cited above), referred to *Berakot* 58b and recognized that

Some commentators have taken their cue from קֹכָב “star,” and sought a parallel meaning for שֶבֶט, “the name of a star,” referring to a meteor or shooting star that leaves a “tail” in its wake, having the appearance of a staff or scepter (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakot* 58b; Levy IV, 496, s.v. šebīt), extending the usual meaning of the Hebrew šebēt.

But as already noted, it is not a matter of an “extended meaning” of שֶבֶט “staff” becoming also שֶבֶט “comet.” It was a matter of homographs: two completely different stems—one (“long, lank [hair]”) having an Arabic cognate and the other (“scepter”) having no Arabic cognate, but having the Akkadian cognate šibṭu and the Egyptian cognate ša-ba-† (cited by Albright, 1934: 39).
Levine translated the second couplet of Num 24: 17 as, “A ‘star’ marches forth from Jacob; a meteor rises from Israel.” By placing quotation marks around the word “star,” Levine highlighted his conclusion that the celestial imagery of the “star” was an applied metaphor, “a way of referring to a hero, or victorious king.” For him MT קיֵבָם might mean, “A ‘star’ exercises sovereignty in Israel.” Likewise, he suggested that רָבָם “meteor,” had a “figurative connotation of ‘sovereign, head,’ namely, one who bears a scepter,” and that רָבָם could mean “A sovereign rises to power from Israel” or “A ‘star’ exercises sovereignty in Israel”—as proposed by some interpreters on the basis of the Ugaritic cognate 듭ת “dominion.” However, Levine retained the traditional meaning of קיֵבָם “to tread, to march forth” but opted to follow Rabbi Samuel’s definition and read רָבָם as “meteor.” Levine’s conclusion is especially noteworthy. He stated

It is likely, however, that we have multilayered meanings, and that two dimensions of metaphor are expressed in this verse. Underlying the applied metaphor is celestial imagery. . . . Although the translation given here remains faithful to this celestial imagery, the applied metaphor should be acknowledged as essential for understanding the full thrust of the verse. (Italics added.)
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NOTES

1. Levine (2000: 93) rejected Chistensen’s emendations as excessive and his interpretation for its being forced “into an interpretative mold.” Levine conjectured, “One wonders if Waheb . . . might not, after all, be symbolic or allegorical . . . [which] could be taken to mean ‘gift, grant,’” acknowledging at the same time that “as a toponym, Waheb remains unidentified.” Levine argued, “Generally, Numbers 21 does not speak of theophany, or the acts of YHWH, but of the Israelite advance;” therefore, for Levine, this poetic fragment from the “Chronicles of the Wars of YHWH” should be interpreted simply as a topographic note to fit its prose context. He read the MT נָהַשׁ and נָהַשׁ as prepositions (and added a third נָהַשׁ) and translated

At Waheb in Suphah, and at the wadis;
[At] the Arnon and the cataract of the wadis. Where it bends to the settlement of Ar, and leans toward the boundary of Moab.

2. Christensen is correct in identifying the MT נָהַשׁ with נָהַשׁ “to come,” but he is incorrect in deleting the נ of נָהַשׁ. The words have been misdivided. The נ goes with the preceding נָהַשׁ as the vowel letter ô (see Cross and Freedman 1952: 57). This נָהַשׁ is the infinitive absolute having the force of a finite verb (see GKC 75 and 113y, McDaniel 1968b: 208 – 210).

3. Christensen emended MT נָהַשׁ to read נָהַשׁ “he marched through.” But the emendation is unnecessary. The noun נָהַשׁ “torrent” may also occur in Isa 13:6, נָהַשׁ מְשַׁיָּרָה וּבֵא “(the day of Yahweh) shall come like a raging torrent.” Another possibility is the Amorite and South Arabic cognate asad/asd “warrior” and the denominative verb, “to fight” (see Huffmon, 1965: 169; P. D. Miller, 1973: 79).
4. Christensen is correct in reading MT נָּצָה צֹרֶר as the verb “to march forth.” But his proposal to delete the word is unnecessary since the verb נָּצָה need not be emended to נָּצֵה, nor does the text have a redundant use of נָּצָה “to march forth.” The MT נָּצָה is better read as an adverbial accusative, either the participle “quaking” or the noun “(earth) quake,” from the biliteral base נֶבֶל, with probable by-forms נֶבֶל, נֶבֶל, נֶבֶל, נֶבֶל, like stems דֶבֶל, דֶבֶל and
(GKC a 77, Dahood, 1968: 368). Here the Hiph’il לֶשֶבָה “to destroy” reflects the elision of the ה (GKC 53a), like the לֶשֶבָה in Amos 8:4.

5. Christensen follows a traditional reading of this line. The proposal here calls for reading מָלַשְׁתַּי as the energetic Qal 1cpl imperfect of מָלַשְׁתַּי, a cognate of Arabic سُوَّغ “to enter easily” (Lane 1872: 1468b, 1469a, especially noticing the quotation سَوْغ في الأرض ما وجدت مساغا “Enter the land while thou findest a place of entrance”). For the vocalization of the energetic, see Gordon 1965: 11; Dahood 1965: 21; 1970: 377–378; McDaniel 1968b: 205–206; and Blommerde 1969: 15. The ל is an emphatic ל, and this occurrence should be added to the list cited by Dahood 1965: 22; 1970: 406–407; McDaniel 1968b: 206–208; and Blommerde 1969: 31. מָלַשְׁתַּי is possibly attested in Ezek 23:23, where MT מָלָשְׁתַּי מָלָשְׁתַּי מָלָשְׁתַּי, traditionally read as place names, “Pekod, and Shoa and Koa,” could better be read: מָלָשְׁתַּי מָלָשְׁתַּי מָלָשְׁתַּי “attacking (see Isa 26:14) they will easily enter the plain,” reading an infinitive absolute מָלָשְׁתַּי, used with the yqtl of מָלָשְׁתַּי, followed by the adverbial accusative מָלָשְׁתַּי, which is related to Arabic قَاع “an even place, a depressed plain” (Lane 1893: 2994).


7. The versions took the MT כְּפַרְחַי “corners” in a metaphorical sense meaning “leaders.” The Septuagint reads καὶ ἀναστήσεται
a man shall spring out of Israel and shall crush the princes of Moab.” Similarly, the Vulgate has *et consurget virga de Israhel et percuteet duces Moab* “and the scepter/rod of Israel shall rise up and strike the leaders of Moab.” The Peshitta’s *(ganbura demo’ab)* and the Targum’s *(yarnyeb’ yl)* also interpreted it as “leaders.”

8. Here Seth equals the Aramean Shutu/Suti, the *Swtw* mentioned in the Exe toation texts. (See Albright, 1944: 207–233.) This cannot be the Seth of Gen 4:25 or Luke 3:38. Note that Targum Onkelos reads *(yarnyeb’ yl)* “sons of man” for the MT *(yarnyeb’)*. This conflict may be a reference to Saul’s war with Moab (I Sam 14:47) or David’s conquest of Moab (II Sam 8:2).

9. This revisionism by Nehemiah supported the “divorce of the Gentiles” sponsored by Ezra (Ezra 9:10–10:44).

10. As is obvious from Num 25:2, “they [the Moabites] invited the people [of Israel] to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people [of Israel] ate and bowed down to their [Moabite] gods,” the sin of Israel had more to do with idolatry than harlotry. The Hebrew *yal* may be the verb “to fornicate,” but it is also a homograph for the verb “to commit idolatry,” as evidenced by the Arabic cognate *zun* *(zûn)* “an idol, and anything taken as a deity and worshiped beside God, . . . a place in which idols are collected and set up” (Lane, 1867: 1273).

11. The emphatic *(la)* is the cognate of Ugaritic *l* (Gordon, 1965: 76, 425 [#1339]) and the Arabic *l* *(la)* “verily” (Lane 1893:3006). See also note 5, above.
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12. Woudstra (1981: 348) identified Balaam as the antecedent of the 3ms suffix of the נְפִּירָה “from his hand” in Josh 24:10. Howard (1998: 431) agreed that God had delivered Israel from Balaam, stating, “Strictly speaking, Balaam was only passing on Balak’s request of him, but the context suggests fairly strongly that Balaam’s inclinations were in accord with Balak’s desires.” However, Boling (1982: 536) rightly identified Balak as the antecedent of the suffix on נְפִּירָה.


14. Howard (1998: 431, note 65) stated, “When God said that he was not willing to listen to Balaam (v. 10) he was referring to Balaam’s implicit request that God should put a curse on Israel.”

15. Levine (2000: 240) recognized that

One can only speculate on the motivation for the denigration of a seer who was so highly praised by Micah and celebrated in the Torah tradition of the Balaam Pericope. This trend probably had something to do with the changing attitude toward the Midianites in particular, or toward the Transjordanian people, in general; ... There is also the matter of the changing attitudes toward the Transjordanian Israelites, themselves, in biblical literature.”

16. For the confusion of the ב and the ב, see Delitzsch, 1920: 118 §129b.

17. Reading מַתָּנָה or מַתָּנָה for the MT מַתָּנָה, the New JPS translation shifts from a water motif to arborial imagery, which is followed by Levine’s paraphrase (2000: 189), “Water drips from his boughs; his seed grows near plentiful water.” Levine’s com-
mentary on “The Balaam Pericope” covers 103 pages (plus 34 pages on the Deir ‘Ala‘a Inscription), but only 11 lines are given to the enigmatic first stitch of this verse, with no mention of any of the variants in the versions.

18. The NIV, NIB, and NLT also gratuitously render the four singular suffixes referring to Jacob/Israel as plurals, e.g., “Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water. Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted.”


20. Compare Levine’s statement (2000: 193), made with reference to identifying נֵפֶל “opened” (Num 24:3,16) with the rare נֵפֶל of Talmudic Aramaic and Rabbinic Hebrew,

... it is sound method to factor in a rare verb, and at that, one known only from late Hebrew, in attempting to fathom the meaning of Early Hebrew poetry. This is because the diction of the Balaam poem is so unusual that one would expect to find in them exceptional vocabulary, including *hapax legomena.*

21. Compare Ashley (1993: 493) who concurred with Gray that the Septuagint is of little help in restoring what is patently a corrupt Hebrew text.
22. See note 19, above. One Jewish tradition states that the Hebrew spoken by Balaam’s ass was better than the Hebrew spoken by Balaam himself. For text and bibliography, see Ginzberg, 1968, Vol. 3: 365 and Vol. 6: 128, note 746.

23. My only disagreement with Levine’s exegesis is his translating the יִדְרְכֹּרַי נְפֹשׁ of Judg 5:21 as “my body marches powerfully,” used in support of his conclusion that the verb דֶּרֶך need not be identified with the Ugaritic cognate 드ק “dominion.” When לאֵשׁ means “body” (as in Lev 21:11, Num 6:6, and Hag 2:13) it generally refers to a “dead body” (i.e., נְפֹשׁ נְפֹשׁ). For an entirely different interpretation of Judges 5:21, see McDaniel 1983: 230–231 or http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcDaniel/Deborah.pdf (194).
THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

INTRODUCTION

Sara Japhet (1993: 110) noted concerning the now popular “Prayer of Jabez” in I Chron 4:9–10, that

The language of the prayer is difficult, a fact which is not brought out by the translation. The details are too technical for a full discussion here [i.e., in her commentary] but the point should be noted.

In this study many of the technical details alluded to by Japhet are fully noted in order to recover the original meaning of Jabez’s prayer. There are only thirty-five words in the Hebrew text of I Chron 4:9–10, including the name “Jabez” which occurs three times. Six other words appear twice; thus, the number of different words is but twenty-seven. Because the name “Israel” is a compound, there are actually twenty-eight Hebrew lexemes in these verses; and lexicographers have already recognized that twenty-four of these lexemes have Arabic cognates. A by-product of this study is an increase in the number of known Arabic cognates to the Hebrew lexemes in the Jabez pericope from twenty-four to twenty-six. In addition, corrections to the interpretation of three other Hebrew words are proposed in light of alternative cognates.

Modifying the derivation and interpretation of five of the twenty-eight Hebrew lexemes in these verses has support from interpretations found in the Aramaic Targum of Chronicles. But, at the same time, the alternative translations proposed in this study radically reshape the brief Jabez tradition from that found in the Targum, Talmud, and contemporary Christian exegesis. The differences between the Hebrew text
PRAYER OF JABEZ

in of I Chron 4:9–10 and the Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions are quite conspicuous and require an explanation. My translation of the “Prayer of Jabez” follows the citation of the Hebrew text, versions, and the Targum—all of which is introductory to the critical exegesis presented here.

I Chronicles 4:9–10

New Revised Standard Version
Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.”
Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!”
And God granted what he asked.

Septuagint
καὶ ἡ Ἰαβής ἐνδοξὸς ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰαβής λέγουσα ἔτεκον ὡς γαβῆς καὶ ἐπεκαλέσατο Ἰαβής τὸν θεὸν Ισραήν λέγων ἐὰν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσῃς με καὶ πληθύνῃς τὰ ἀριά μου
PRAYER OF JABEZ

καὶ ἦ ἡ χείρ σου μετ’ ἐμοῦ
καὶ ποιήσεις γνώσιν τοῦ μὴ ταπεινώσαι με
καὶ ἐπήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς πάντα ὡσα ἡτήσατο

Thomson’s Septuagint

Igabes indeed was the most honourable of his brethren;
Now his mother had called his name Igabes, saying,
I have brought him forth Os-gabes [with sorrow].
And Igabes called on the God of Israel and said,
If thou wilt bless me with blessings, and enlarge my borders,
let Thy hand be with me,
and give me knowledge that I may not debase myself
Accordingly God gave him all that he asked.

Peshitta

And one of them was dear to his father and to his mother,
so they called his name My Eye. And they said to him,
The Lord shall surely bless you and enlarge your terri-
tory, and his hand shall be with you and shall deliver you
from evil, that it may not have power over you, and he
shall grant you that which you request of him.

Vulgate

Fuit autem Iabes inclitus prae fratribus suis et mater eius vocavit nomen illius Iabes dicens quia peperi eum in
dolore invocavit vero Iabes Deum Israhel dicens si
PRAYER OF JABEZ

benedicens benedixeris mihi et dilataveris terminos meos et fuerit manus tua mecum et feceris me a malitia non opprimi et praestitit Deus quae precatus est.

Douay Rheims

And Jabes was more honourable than any of his brethren, and his mother called his name Jubes, saying: Because I bore him with sorrow. And Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying: If blessing thou wilt bless me, and wilt enlarge my borders, and thy hand be with me, and thou save me from being oppressed by evil. And God granted him the things he prayed for.

Targum

Jabez, who was Othniel, was more honored and expert in the Law than his brothers; his mother had called his name Jabez, “for,” she said, “I gave birth to him in pain.” Jabez prayed to the God of Israel saying: “O that you might indeed bless me with sons,” and extend my territory with disciples! O that your hand might be with me in debate, and that you might provide me with companions like myself, so that the evil inclination may not provoke me. And the Lord brought about what he had asked for.
McDaniel

And Jabez was more afflicted than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez (“Preemie”), saying, “I indeed gave birth in sudden unexpected haste.”

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Ah, Please! would that you truly bless me, and increase my people, and your hand be with me, and that you keep (me) from sickness, to bring to naught my sorrow.”

And God granted him that which he requested.

THE DERIVATION OF “JABEZ”

The claim by Zuck (2002: 114) that the name Jabez is meaningless is erroneous—though he may well be citing one Hebrew lexicon (BDB: 716) which stated that the meaning of Jabez’s name was now “unknown.” But Zuck is correct in disagreeing with Wilkinson’s statement (2000: 20): “In Hebrew the word Jabez means ‘pain.’ A literal rendering could read, ‘he causes (or will cause) pain.’”

Everyone, however, is an agreement that the meaning of the Hebrew root יֵבֵץ, which appears in Jabez’s name, has been very problematic. Many commentators, not finding the root יֵבֵץ in their Hebrew lexicons, assumed that יֵבֵץ was (via a transposition of the ה and ל) a variant of גם לונב “sorrow, pain, labor.” A wordplay seemed obvious once the initial as-severative קי “indeed,” spoken by Jabez’s mother, was read as the conjunction קי “because.” This assumption was, unfortunately, widely circulated as a fact.
The translation of the name עיניו in the Peshitta of Num 4:9 as حمل (‘ayny) “My Eye”—rather than being transliterated as י mắt (ya‘bes) as in 1Chron 2:55—appears also in the Arabic text of Brian Walton’s London Polyglot (1657: III: 637), which has عيني (‘aynay) “My Eye.” It is obvious that the translators of the Syriac and Arabic texts did not consider the stem לבל to be meaningless nor a wordplay with לבל “sorrow, pain” which appears twice in these two verses.

Jastrow (1903: 1038) cited the use of the Aramaic לבל (with אבסא as a variant) in the Targum of Num 31:22 and Ezek 27:12 for the Hebrew לבל “tin”; and Levy (1924: 609) cited the Aramaic לבל “erblassen, to blanche, to turn pale.” But neither of these definitions fits the context of 1 Chron 4:9; nor does the Ugaritic יבש “weapon” (Gordon 1965: 453; Driver 1971: 142). The definition cited in KBS (778) is more helpful for it links Hebrew לבל with the Arabic cognate عبتة (‘abaqa) “to hasten,” which appears in the Genesis Apocryphon spelled as לבל (Fitzmyer 1966: 54, 113) and is related to the Old Aramaic לבל “hâte, aussitôt, haste, immediately” (Jean and Hoftijzer 1965: 202).

But the most helpful information for derivation of the לבל of “Jabez” comes from the Lexicon Heptaglotton of Edmund Castell (1669: 2644). He cited the Arabic עבש (‘abiša) which was omitted from the later Arabic lexicons of Lane (1883), Hava (1915), Dozy (1927), and Wehr (1979). Castell defined עבש (‘abiša) as

1. Lippitudine valde laboravit (“to be sick with very sore eyes”);
2. Quod fluit ex oculis (“what flows from the eyes”);
3. *Cùm vir plorare vult, sed occulus lachrymas denegat.*
   (“when a man wistfully begs but the tear drops do not come”);

4. *Adventus repentinus* (“a sudden, unexpected appearance”).

With definitions 1, 2, and 3 in focus, the Syriac and Arabic translations of יְלָהּ as “My Eye” become explicable though not defensible. But it is the fourth definition which really fits the context of I Chron 4: 9–10. When the rare יְלָהּ, meaning “sudden appearance” and “haste,” appears in a birth narrative, it most likely refers to a premature birth of a child. Therefore, the name “Jabez” would, in colloquial speech, actually mean “Speedy” or “Preemie”—an appropriate name for a premature baby. According to the Septuagint, what Jabez’s mother said was simply ἐτεκον ως ἑαβης, “I have born very quickly.” Therefore, perhaps with a chuckle, she called him “Gabēs”/“Jabez,” i.e., “Speedy/Preemie.” This interpretation has a ring of authenticity; whereas the alleged wordplay with יְלָהּ “Jabez” and יִלַּהְבָּ “sorrow”—which has no support from the versions—may reflect a late pseudo-correction in the Hebrew text once the meaning of the rare (dialectal) יְלָהּ “a sudden, unexpected appearance” was lost. My translation, given above, follows the εαβης (= יְלָהּ) of the Septuagint.

On the other hand, if the MT יִלַּהְבָּ is retained as the most authoritative text, there is good reason to anticipate that a mother, having had a sudden premature delivery would use the multilayered word יִלַּהְבָּ “labor, worry, pain, hardship, sorrow” when speaking about such a life threatening experience. Just as the name Jacob means “Heel,” and Naomi named her sons Chilon “Diseased” and Mahlon “Sickly,”
there is little reason to be suspicious about Jabez’s mother naming him “Speedy” or “Preemie.” But, far from being a pejorative, “Preemie” or “Speedy” could well have been a name of endearment, as well as a statement of fact.

JABEZ: HONORED OR AFFLICTED?

If means “Preemie,” then there are good reasons to challenge the traditions and translations which interpret the MT , a Niphal (passive) participle, to mean “honored or honorable.” Premature infants always—and many times their mothers also—must fight for their very lives and are constantly in great difficulty and distress, a burden to themselves and to others. Consequently, Jabez, as a preemie, would have experience greater affliction and distress than his siblings (assuming they went full term), and he would have been a burden to his mother. Thus, the MT in this context would surely mean “he had been more afflicted than his brothers” rather than his having been more “honored” or more “honorable” than his brothers.

The lexeme “heavy, weighty” permitted polarized meanings, with the nouns “honor, glory” and “heaviness, difficulty.” The verb , in all its various forms, could mean either “to be honored” or “to be burdensome.” In contrast, the Syriac and Arabic cognates of did not permit such polarized meanings. The Syriac (kabed) meant only “to move to wrath, to be angry” (Payne Smith 1903: 203); and the Arabic noun (kabad) always meant “difficulty, distress, affliction, trouble,” with the verb (kâbada) meaning “he endured, struggled or contended
with (difficulties).” Lane (1885: 2584) cited as an example Sura 90: 4 of the Qur’an, “Verily, we have created man in difficulty (في كبد [fī kabadin]).”\(^{13}\)

Knoopers (2003: 339), aware of the polarized meanings of כבד noted,

It is also possible to translate ‘Jabez was heavier than his brothers.’ If one follows the latter interpretation, the introduction to the tale explains why the birth of Jabez caused his mother so much suffering.

This interpretation well accounts for why Jabez’s mother used the term נצלת “pain, labor” (4:9); but it does not explain why Jabez used נצלת with reference to himself (4:10).\(^{14}\) Knoopers, following exegetical tradition, noted that נצלת “plays on the name of Jabez,” but he makes no reference to the meaning of Jabez’s name itself. But the meaning of the name Jabez is the key for understanding why there was נצלת “pain, labor” in the first place. Had Jabez been a big heavy (כָּבָד) baby who caused pain for his mother, he could have been named something like Ithchabed (אחAb) “Fatty/Hefty,”\(^{15}\) rather than #Be[y: “Speedy/Preemie.” Given the real meaning of Jabez’s name, as proposed here, it is much more likely that he was underweight at birth.

Traditions about Jabez in Talmudic literature indicate that in time Jabez became highly honored; but the כָּבָד in I Chron 4:10, which compared him with his brothers, almost certainly spoke of his health problems as a child due to his premature birth. Jabez’s being afflicted in infancy preceded his being honored in maturity. Thus, a disability from birth may lie behind his request to be delivered from his כָּבָד “sickness” and נצלת “pain.”\(^{16}\)
FIRST WORD IN JABEZ’ S PRAYER

The problem with the first word spoken by Jabez in his prayer is summarized by Japhet (1993: 110), who stated

The prayer’s opening ‘im (‘if’) is the most common conditional lexeme and could imply an oath or a vow: ‘if . . . then’. However, no apodosis follows. It is therefore an implied vow, or a case of the word ‘im serving as a wish: ‘Oh that . . .’ (so RSV). For this last usage Gesenius cites four more instances, but only two of these (Ps. 139.19; Prov. 24.11) seem convincing (Gesenius §151e).

Actually, the optative particle אים is the cognate of the Arabic ايم الله (‘aymu) and ايم ايم (‘aymu ‘lallah) “I swear by God.” This expression is a variation of ايم الله (‘aymunu ‘lallah). Along with the biblical examples of the optative אים cited by Gesenius, these Arabic phrases provide additional commentary on Jabez’s first word. The Arabic يمين (yumina) in form V means “he looked for a blessing,” being a synonym of تبرك (tabarraka) (بُرُكّ “he looked for a blessing, he was blessed.” The MT אים בחרת, “Ah, Please! Would that you truly bless me,” is a perfect match with the Arabic cognates ايم (‘aymu) and تبرك (tabarraka), i.e., having the particle אים initiate an entreaty or oath, which is then followed by the plea for a blessing (בэр).

JABEZ REQUESTED PEOPLE, NOT PROPERTY

At first glance Jabez’s request, ‘ים בחרת, ‘ים בחרת, ‘ים בחרת, “would that you increase/enlarge my territory/border,” appears to have gone unanswered—despite the closing statement that
PRAYER OF JABEZ

“God granted what he requested.” The only mention of a “territory” bearing Jabez’s name is in I Chron 2:55,

The families of the scribes that dwelt at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.

Wherever the town or village of Jabez was located, it certainly could not have been large or enlarged. Consequently, interpreters have taken the גֵּרְנֵלָא “my border/territory” to be symbolic or a metaphor, as Wilkinson (2000: 30) stated.

From the context and the results of Jabez’s prayer, we can see that there was more to his request than a simple desire for more real estate. He wanted more influence, more responsibility, and more opportunity to make a mark for the God of Israel.

A clue to the precise meaning of the גֵּרְנֵלָא spoken by Jabez comes from the Targum, which reads,

O that you might indeed bless me with sons (בְּנוֹי), and extend my territory with disciples! (בְּלַמְדוֹרי) O that your hand might be with me in debate, and that you might provide me with companions (חָбоֹרִי) like myself.

Along with the גֵּרְנֵלָא “my borders,” the Targum delineated sons, disciples, and companions. A similar expansion of Jabez’s request appears in the Talmud (Teruma 16a) where Jabez prayed for an increase of borders, pupils, and friends.
In light of these expanded definitions of הָבָאוֹלָה, it is obvious that the Targum translators and some of the rabbis who contributed to the Talmud were aware of a word הָבָאֵל which was the cognate to the Arabic גִּבּל (jibill/jubull), גִּבּיל (jabil) “a company of men, a great company of men.”¹⁹ According to Lane (1875: 376) the feminine גִּבּלוֹת (jibillat) signified the same as אֹמֶה (ummmat) “a nation or people.”²⁰ Thus, a very reasonable conclusion is that Jabez prayed for an increase of his people (הָבָאֵל), not his property (הָבָאוֹלָה).²¹

Support for this conclusion comes from the mention of the town/village of Jabez in I Chron 2:55, cited above. This verse needs to be read as an integral component of the Jabez pericope.²² I Chron 4:9–10, which interrupts the genealogical listing there, should probably be moved to follow I Chron 2:55, as the last verse of that chapter. Jabez prayed for a community of kindred souls, and God answered his prayer by creating in his hometown—which was named after him—a community of Kenite scribal families. And according to Jewish traditions, these quasi-Israelite²³ scribes, along with Jabez, became honored for their devotion to Torah and its transmission. Knoppers (2003: 315) noted that “recent studies have made progress in understanding the importance of households and larger kinship groups in economic matters.” I Chron 4:9 highlights the importance Jabez gave to kinfolk, family, and community in religious matters. If Jabez’s use of הָבָאֵל had any overtone of “real estate” it was really secondary.

A HINT OF JABEZ’S DIALECT

Curtis (1910: 108) noted well that the הַשְׁמַע מַרְשָׁע of Jabez’s fourth request “is difficult to translate.” The verb
“to do, to make” is translated a hundred different ways in the KJV, forty-three times by the verb “to keep,” which is the verb of choice for English translations here. The Vulgate has *feceris* “to do”; but the Septuagint has the noun γνῶσιν “knowledge,” indicating a *Vorlage* with an erroneous וְדַעְתֶּ הָּ for the MT מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ. It is the MT מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ which is ambiguous.

If the מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ is a noun with a preformative מ, it could be

• (1) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “pasture,”
• (2) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “one causing evil” (a feminine participle),
• (3) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “female friend” (like מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “a male friend”),
• (4) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “place of friendship.”

If the initial מ is the preposition “from,” then מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ could be

• (5) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ / רְעַתָּ “shepherd/shepherdess,”
• (6) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “female companion,”
• (7) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “desire” (an Aramaic loanword),
• (8) מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “evil, misery, distress” (from the stem רְעַתָּ).

The Targum’s reading, “that you might provide me with companions like myself, so that the evil inclination may not provoke me,” is not a free paraphrase but a doublet for the MT מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ. The Targum’s מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “companions” is related to options (3) and (4) above, with מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “friends, companions” having been read for the MT מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ. The Targum’s מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ “evil inclination” clearly reflects option (8).

But none of these obvious meanings would require the anomalous *dagesh* in the initial מ of מֵדַעְתֶּ הָּ, found even in the Leningrad and Aleppo codices. The *dagesh* doubles the מ,
as if הָרֵעָה were to be read as הָרֵעָה, with one ה for the preposition “from” and the second ה being the first letter of the stem—not simply a nominal prefix on the stem מַרְעָה. If so, the root מַרְעָה would be a variant of מַרְעָה “to be sick,” which is the cognate of Aramaic מַרְעָה, Syriac مَرُّ (mēra’), and Arabic مرش (maridā)—all meaning “to be sick” (KBS: 637).

Jabez’s use of מַרְעָה instead of מַרְעָה may well reflect his Kenite dialect. Thus, this ninth definition must be added to the eight interpretations of מַרְעָה noted above. It is possible, given the ambiguity of מַרְעָה, to make Jabez pray for deliverance from (a) a troublesome woman, or (b) a female friend, or (c) desires in general, or (d) just evil in general. But his linking the מַרְעָה with יָבוּס, “my suffering, pain” is sufficient reason for reading מַרְעָה as “sickness.” In so speaking, he provided the reader with another hint of his native dialect. (The first hint being his use of אָמ “Ah! Please!”—analogous to the אָי [‘aymu] and אָמ [‘ami] in Arabic, noted above.)

**SEVERAL SCRIBAL ERRORS**

The NKJ, surprisingly, has “that I may not cause pain” for the MT הָרֵעָה—as if the suffixed infinitive הָרֵעָה were the Hiph‘il jussive הָרֵעָה. The KJV has “that it may not grieve me,” and it remains preferable, along with those translations which make the suffix of הָרֵעָה possessive or objective. More problematic, though, are the translations of the Peshitta and Vulgate. The Syriac has סֵפֶלֶת חַי.
PRAYER OF JABEZ

(dēla' neštalaṭ bak) “that it may not have power over you.” But Syriac سلطان “Sultan”) cannot be a translation of نظم “to rule”; but it can be a translation of ضر “to be strong, to protect.” Thus, in the Vorlage used by the Syriac translators a ب was misread or written as a ر.24

The Vulgate translated the لبلاط رعباري as non opprimi “not to be oppressed,” which became in the Douay Rheims “from being oppressed.” But opprimo cannot be a translation of ضر “to press, squeeze, restrain, retain.” Thus, in the Vorlage used by the Latin translators a ه was misread or written as a ر.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The general consensus among modern commentators that the name #Be[y:] (Jabez) is a variant of ضر “sorrow, pain” does not have the support of the versions. In the Peshitta, the ضر spoken by Jabez’s mother was translated as حضر “My Eye,” but the ضر spoken by Jabez himself was translated as رعباري “overpower.” In the Vulgate, the ضر spoken by Jabez’s mother became dolore “pain,” but the ضر spoken by Jabez became opprimi “oppression.” Similarly, in the Targum, the ضر of Jabez’s mother became ضر “pain, grief,” but from Jabez’s lips it became ضر “it may provoke me.” According to the transliteration used in the Septuagint, Jabez’s mother did not say ضر “pain,” but ضر (= γαβης) —a word which was not meaningless to her or to the author of the Jabez vignette. But the ضر spoken by Jabez became ضر “to humiliate.”
Thanks primarily to the lexicon of Edmund Castell, the meaning of the Septuagint’s γαβης and the Hebrew לֵבֶן has survived. The meaning of Jabez’s name and the source of his mother’s sorrow comes from the fact that he was born prematurely. A disability from birth may well account for the sickness and sorrow Jabez prayed about in his maturity.

As interpreted in this study, Jabez was no land-grabber or nascent imperialist who coveted someone else’s pasture land. The increase he desired was for הַבּוֹלֵךְ, “a great company of people,” not הַבּוֹלֵךְ הָעָרִים, “borders” or “territory.” He was an outsider praying to become an insider; and what he sought for himself he sought for his extended family and clan. According to I Chron 2:55 and 4:10, God answered Jabez’s prayer, and as a result Jabez got a small town named after him where a lot of people from other clans congregated to perpetuate and propagate the Torah.

Along with הַבּוֹלֵךְ “people,” two other words were re-defined in light of alternative cognates, namely, כְּבָדָה “to be afflicted” and נָאוֹר (לָוֹר) “sickness.” The two Hebrew lexemes with Arabic cognates that need to be recognized in any new Hebrew lexicon are (1) נָאָמ (א’מ), the cognate of אמ (“ah! Please!” the cognate of לַעַמ (קאמ)), and (2) לְבֶן (ס) the cognate of עָבִיסא (‘abiša) “an unexpected sudden appearance.”

With twenty-six of the twenty-eight Hebrew lexemes in the Jabez pericope having Arabic cognates, the argument can well be made that Jabez and his mother spoke in a southern (desert) dialect which differed from the dialect of Judah and Jerusalem, which would not likely have such a high ratio of words with Arabic cognates.

It is important to note that Jabez prayed to the “God of Israel,” not to “Yahweh, my God.” He was not from the
family of Jacob nor of the household of Israel. Consequently, in the popular theology articulated, for example, in Deut 32:9,

כֵּי חֲלֵמִי יְהוָה עַמּוֹ נַעֲקָב הַבָּלֶם בִּהלָה

“Indeed, Yahweh’s portion is his people Jacob, Jacob is his allotted heritage,”26

Jabez and his kinfolk were not a part of the blessed people of Yahweh. As a non-Israelite, though, Jabez prayed emphatically (1) that Yahweh would bless him (as though he were an Israelite), (2) that Yahweh would increase his family and clan (as Yahweh had promised his ancestors, Abraham and Ishmael), and (3) that the hand of Yahweh would be with him as it was with the Israelites coming out of Egypt (Deut 4:34, “by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm . . . as Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt”). Jabez was pleading to be included in the household of faith, a part of the blessed people of the covenant. And as noted, according to I Chron 4:10, God answered Jabez’s prayer; and as a result Jabez and his people became quasi-Israelites with a town of their own and the freedom to embrace the Torah and copy the sacred texts. With Jabez and his kinfolk the covenant God made with Abraham, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3), was partially realized.

But Jabez’s sickness threatened his personal status as a quasi-Israelite. In Deuteronomimic theology (Deut 28:20–22) sickness was a curse from God for violating the covenant. Jabez’s sickness threatened his acceptance and participation in Israel’s household of faith. In the Torah sickness was viewed as a punishment for sin. Death and destruction were the prescriptions written for sick sinners. This threat of death or expulsion from the blessed people of Yahweh was the
source of his לְיִלָּדֵה, his suffering, anxiety, and worry” — not the physical pain and discomfort of the illness itself.

Lastly, Jabez’s nameless mother needs to be rehabilitated from being viewed as a nasty woman, who placed a curse of suffering and pain on her helpless newborn when she named him Jabez, to a lovely lady with a sense of humor even when giving birth prematurely. Commentators need to remember that, according to the Septuagint text, Jabez’s mother never spoke of her pain or sorrow. What she said was simply ξηπσον ὡς γαβης, “I have born very quickly.” My translation on page 90 follows the γαβης (= יֵלֶב) of the Septuagint, coupled with the definitions of this יֵלֶב which survive in Castell’s lexicon of 1669 and the definition cited in the KBS lexicon of 1994.

APPENDIX

JABEZ IN RABBINIC TEXTS

Babylonian Talmud: Temurah 16a

A Tanna taught: Othniel is the same as Jabez. He was called Othinel because God answered him, and Jabez because he counselled and fostered Torah in Israel. An what was his real name? Judah the brother of Simeon. And whence do we derive that God answered him — Since it says: And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that thou woudst bless me and enlarge my border, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou woudst keep me from evil that it may not drive me! And God granted him that which he requested. ‘Oh that thou woudst bless me indeed’ with Torah; ‘and enlarge my border’ with pupils; ‘that thine hand might be with me’, that my studies may not be forgotten from my heart; ‘and that
that my studies may not be forgotten from my heart; ‘and that thou wouldst keep me from evil’, that I may meet friends like myself; ‘that it may not grieve me’, that the evil inclination may not have power over me so as to prevent me from studying: If thou doest so it is well, but if not, I shall go with ‘grief’ to the grave. Immediately, ‘God granted that which he requested.’ . . . This is the teaching of R. Nathan. R. Judah the Prince says: ‘If thou woudst bless me indeed’, by multiplying and increasing; ‘and enlarge my border’, with sons and daughters. (Soncino Edition, 110–112)

**Babylonian Talmud: Yoma 80a**

The minimum required for penalties is fixed by laws [communicated] to Moses on Sinai. It was also taught thus: The minimum required for penalties are fixed by laws [communicated] to Moses on Sinai. Others say: The Court of Jabez fixed them . . . . They were forgotten and then they [the Court of Jabez] commanded them anew. (Soncino Edition 390–391)

**Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrein 106a**

Jethro, who fled — his descendants were privileged to sit in the Hall of Hewn Stones, as it is written, And the families of the scribes which dwell at Jabez, the Tirathites, the Shemathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab; whilst elsewhere it is written, And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees. Jethro, who fled, merited that his descendants should sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, as it is said: And the families of scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, the Succathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hammath, the
father of the house of Rechab; and it is written: And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law etc. (Soncino Edition)

Tosephtha Aboth of R. Nathan
Chapter V, Mishnah A

Said R. Jehudah: At the time when it became known that the Temple would be built on the boundaries of Judah and Benjamin, they had improved and separated the suburb of Jericho. And who ate its products all these years? The children of the Kenite, the father-in-law of Moses, as it is written [Numb. x. 32]: “It shall be, that the same goodness which the Lord may do unto us will we do unto thee.” However, when the Temple was built, they vacated. And whence do we know that they were sustained by charity? They said: “When the Lord will reveal His Shekhina, He will reward Jethro and his children, as it is written [ibid. 29]: For the Lord hath spoken (to bring) good upon Israel.” Said R. Simeon: They were prominent men and were proprietors of houses, fields, and vineyards. However, because of the work of the Lord they left everything and went away, as it is written [I Chron. iv. 23]: “There were the potters, and those that dwelt in plantations,” etc. They dwelt with the king in his work. And where did they then go? To Jabez, to study the Torah, and thus have become a people of the Omnipotent. Jabez was a very good and righteous man: he was a truthful man and pious, and occupied himself with the study of the Law; therefore the pious went to a pious.
NOTES

1. Bruce Wilkinson’s small devotional bestseller, The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking through to the Blessed Life (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2000) has sold over nine million copies in four years and has spun off multiple by-products. Reviews of this popular book have been mixed. This study does not focus on Wilkinson’s book. A few reviews of Wilkinson’s book are cited in the bibliography, including those of Clapp, Heath, Schultz, Zaleski, and Zuck.

2. The bracketed [with sorrow] is Thomson’s interpretation of the $\omega$ $\gamma\beta\eta$, which is meaningless in Greek, but an adequate transliteration of $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, for the $\gamma$ was commonly used to transliterate the $\nu$. The intensifying $\omega$ is the translation of the Hebrew $\nu$. The important thing to note is that $\gamma\beta\eta$ transliterates the stem $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, not $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ — suggesting that the Hebrew Vorlage used by the Septuagint translators had $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ rather than $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ “sorrow, pain.” The meaning of $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ was apparently unknown to the translators, therefore they simply transliterated the word, similar to the transliteration of the enigmatic $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$, $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ in Judges 5:22–23 (see McDaniel 2000: 25–26, 199–201).

3. For the Aramaic text see Sperber (1968, Vol. IV), and for the English translation see McIvor (1994).

4. If $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ is parsed as a Hiph‘il, it would have to be a jussive form expressing a wish, “would that he cause pain.” But the $a$ vowel of the preformative $\nu$ probably reflects the influence of the $\nu$, which is almost always preceded by an $a$ vowel.

5. Note that the Targum translated $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ as $\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu$ “lo, behold.”
6. Another possible Arabic cognate of the Hebrew עֲצֵ֣ב (‘əšaba) “he bound, he drew (people) together,” which in form V means “they leagued, or collected themselves together,” with التַּעְשָׁב (’ṭṭa‘aṣṣubu) used in a religious context meaning a “zealot.” The feminine nouns of this stem are (1) עֲבָּשָׁת (’uṣbat) “a company of men who league together to defend one another . . . a company of devotees” and (2) עֲבַסָּת (’aṣabat) “a man’s people, or party, who league together for defense.” The adjective עֲבָשָׁי (’aṣabî) indicates “one who aids his people or party . . . or one zealous in the cause of a party” (Lane 1874: 2058–2059). However, an עֲצָל with any of these meanings would not fit the context of I Chron 4:9–10.

7. Advocates for a wordplay involving עֲצָל and עֲצָל need to consider also (1) the Arabic غَفَّا (ġafaṣa) “he came suddenly, or unexpectedly” (Lane 1877: 2275; Hava 530), which would involve not only the transposition of the ע and ל, but the interchange of ע and ב as well; and (2) the Arabic עַבָּז (’aḏaba) “it rendered (him) weak or infirm: deprived him of the power of motion”; عֲבָּז (’alʿudʿn) “a state of the privation of the power of motion, and unsoundness, and lameness”; معبد (maʿdubʿn) “weak, infirm, crippled, or deprived of the power of motion, by disease, or by a protracted disease” (Lane 1874: 2071). The first of these two cognates suggests a premature birth, and the second one suggests a birth defect which could have done permanent damage. See the next section for a more direct indication of Jabez’s premature birth.

8. Compare Clapp and Wright (2002: 31) who proffered the name “Ouch!” for Jabez because, in their opinion, there was a wordplay with עֲצָל, and Jabez must have been a “heavy” (חֲבַל) baby at birth who caused his mother great pain.
9. See above, note 7. *KBS II*: 864 cited the Ethiopic cognate ‘as(a)ba “to be in a bad way, to be in difficulties, to be in need.” For the trauma that a premature delivery can still cause consider the following death statistics for premature births in the USA in 2003, compiled from the National Vital Statistics Report, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (The bw in the chart below is the abbreviation for birthweight.):

- 856.8 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw under 500g
- 313.0 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 500–999g
- 59.4 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 1,000–1,499g
- 246.9 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw under 1,500g
- 27.6 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 1,500–1,999g
- 11.4 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 2,000–2,499g
- 59.4 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw under 2,500g
- 2.5 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw over 2,500g
- 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 2,500–2,999g
- 2.3 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 3,000–3,499g
- 1.7 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 3,500–3,999g
- 1.6 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw over 4,000g
- 1.5 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 4,000–4,499g
- 2.0 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw between 4,500–4,999g
- 6.5 deaths per 1,000 live births with bw over 5,000g.

Disorders related to prematurity and low birth weight caused 15.7% of deaths less than 1 year old in USA 1999.

Disorders related to prematurity and low birth weight caused 23.1% of deaths for neonates in USA 1999.

(See www.wrongdiagnosis.com/p/premature_birth/deaths.htm.)

10. The prefix of the name הָעַבָּדָעַ is better read as preterite prefix rather than the prefix for the imperfect. For the preterite prefixed forms, see Moscati, 1964: 131–134.

11. Compare Curtis’s (1910: 107) statement, “His mother had given him a name of ill omen [“He causeth pain”], but he prayed that its significance might not be fulfilled and God granted his
request.” This claim that the name Jabez was an ill omen has been reiterated by many, including Williamson (1982: 59), Tuell (2001: 28), and Heath (2002: 11) who concluded, “his name is represented as a kind of curse placed on him by his mother . . . a negative spiritual force is released upon Jabez in his mother’s naming him . . . he was born under a curse.”


13. Compare the Syriac ṭam (yiqar) with its polarized meanings (1) “to be heavy, oppressed, oppressive” and (2) to be honored, honorable, venerated” (Payne Smith 1903: 196–197).

14. Clapp and Wright (2002: 31), though had an answer to this question. They conjectured that “Jabez’s corpulent affliction continues into adulthood, meaning he needs increased amounts of food (an so more arable property) to sustain his girth and, in his anxious and hungry eyes, his very life.”

15. This artificial ḏeK’-tyai (with the Aramaic אֶלֶף instead of the Hebrew יִשָּׁה) is simply an attempt at a wordplay with the well-known Ichabod (יִשָּׁה) of I Sam 4:21.

16. See above, note 7. Jabez’s bc, could mean he was infirm “weak, crippled, or deprived of the power of motion, by disease, or by a protracted disease.”

17. Lane 1863: 138; 1893: 3064; Wehr 1979: 48, 1299; Hava 1915: 904. For the Arabic أيُّم الله (‘aymu ‘lallahi) note also Castell 1669: 100 and 1615, “juramentum per Deinomen”; and “בְּרֵכָה, felicitas: prosperitus Benedictio : rerum copia, oppulentia . . . felix, prosper, fortunatas, 2, adjuravit, ad ajuramentum adegit eum petitiue ab eo ut juraret.”
18. Knoppers (2003: 316) succinctly stated, “The precise location of this town is unknown.”

19. Castell (1669: 474) also cited جبل (jibill), meaning “hominum turba, multos, copiosus.”

20. See BDB 52 and Jastrow 1903: 26–27 for עם “people, nation, government, gentile.” For the Arabic عمة (’ummat) “a nation, people, race, tribe, distinct body, community, family, kinfolk,” see Lane (1863: 90) and the Qur’an, Sura 2: 213 [or 209 in some translations], “mankind were one community.”


22. Compare Myers (1965: 28) who simply conjectured, “This little pericope [4:9–10] is theological in meaning though it may have been intended as a comment on ii 55 where Jabez is a place name. . . This is a case of prayer without a vow, which may have fallen out.”

23. According to Judges 1:16 and 4:11, the Kenites/Qenites are the descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and are thereby distant relatives of the Israelites. See Knooper’s (2003: 315–317) for a detailed discussion on I Chron 2:55. For the possibility that the Song of Deborah was written by Jael, the Kenite heroine, in a Kenite dialect see McDaniel, The Song of Deborah: Poetry in Dialect, 208–209, 247–251, available online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/Deborah.pdf (especially pp. 248–251).

24. For many other examples of the confusion of ב and ב, see Delitzsch, 1920: 113–114, §114а–с.
25. Castell’s lexicon was not widely available in the past, and, therefore, seldom consulted. A cross reference in *KBS* to Castell’s definitions would have been helpful. The two folio volumes of Castell’s *Lexicon Heptaglotten* are now available online at http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/.

26. The name Jacob should be read with what precedes it and what follows it. Compare the “Israel : Jacob” in the Septuagint text of this verse,

καὶ ἐγένηθη μερὶς κυρίου λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ἰακώβ
σχοινισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ Ἰσραήλ

And his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord,

Israel was the line of his inheritance.

These words are echoed in Psa 135:4,

כִּי רָאתָם יְחַנָּן בְּלָדָּם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַלֵּךְ

For Yahweh has chosen Jacob for himself,

Israel as his own possession.
Psalm 19:1–6

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork.
Day by day ‘speech’ pours forth,
and night after night ‘knowledge’ is made known.
There is no (human) speech, nor are there (human) words
without the sounds from the skies heard in the background.
The ‘voice’ of the firmament goes out through all the earth,
and the ‘words’ from space go to the end of the world.¹

Verily, in the skies the scorching sun shines!
He comes out like a fire-carrier from his canopy,
and, like a champion,² runs his course with joy.
His start is from the end of the heavens;
and his finish-line³ is the heavens’ (other) end.
And nothing is hid from his heat.
(McDaniel)

C. S. Lewis (1958: 63), commenting on this psalms, stated
I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the
greatest lyrics in the world. First he thinks of the sky; how,
day after day, the pageantry we see there shows us the splen-
dor of the Creator. Then he thinks of the sun, the bridal joyousness of its rising, the unimaginable speed of its daily
voyage from east to west. Finally of its heat; . . . the cloudless
blinding, tyrannous rays hammering the hills searching for
every cranny. The key phrase on which the whole poem de-
pends is “there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

Weiser (1962: 198), who compared the authors of Psalm 8
and Psalm 19, was of a similar opinion, stating
The author of the latter is undoubtedly the greater artist. His insight, the result of great concentration, combines with his powerful metaphorical language to raise him to a status of a great poet who has stimulated the creative work of such eminent men as Goethe, Haydn, and Beethoven.

By way of contrast, Briggs (1906: 165), while acknowledging that the author of Psalm 19:1–6 (MT 19:2–7) “was a true poet,” considered 19:4 (MT) to be a prosaic gloss, stating, The numerous attempts to get an appropriate meaning out of the verse have all failed to give satisfaction; as indeed they are all awkward and entirely out of place in a Ps. of such wonderful simplicity, terseness, and graphic power.

Although Lewis wrote of the pageantry of the psalm and Weiser wrote of the poet’s profound vision “to express in lyrical language the sentiments which the beauty of Nature has evoked in him” and how “the poet’s vision vivifies the inanimate things of nature,” (italics mine) the psalm lacks any hint of a visual experience of the psalmist. Mays (1995: 96) recognized this and commented, “It is all very mysterious and marvelous. The visible becomes vocal. Seeing is experienced as hearing.” Similarly, Terrien (2003: 210) noted, “The ear dominated the eye.”

In the absence of any hint of visual experiences—such as references to sunlight, a golden sun, a silver moon, crimson sunsets, blue skies, billowing clouds, or the star studded heavens, it is reasonable to assume that the poet who composed Psa 19:1–6 was blind. But, though blind, the psalmist was not deaf. When extolling the firmament and the heavens, the poet’s auditory experience was quite pronounced, with מַלְאָךְ and מַשָּׂאָם appearing in 1:2 (MT), מַחְדָּשׁ coming in 1:4 and 1:5, and מַלְאָךְ מְנוּשָׁאָם, מַשָּׂאָם, and מַלְאָךְ found in 1:5. Although
“wind” and קֵול “thunder” do not appear in these verses, the קֵול in 1:5 is most likely a synonym of קֵול—like the “thunder” appearing in twelve verses in the KJV for קֵול.

In addition to the heavens, the firmament, the day, and the night being personified, the rumbling thunder and the howling winds from heaven were considered by this psalmist to be a language all of its own by which the glory of God was continually communicated to the people on earth. On the wind-swept hill or plain where the psalmist lived, no one could ignore or escape the continuous sound of the wind, day by day and night after night. It was a fact of life for the psalmist—perhaps more apparent to a blind poet—that all human speech is accompanied by these ‘wind instruments’: the howling in the firmament, the winds whispering from the heavens, and the rumblings of the stormy skies. For the blind psalmist, the aerial currents of sounds and scents spoke volumes in their own unique dialects.\(^4\)

Commentators gifted with sight have failed to appreciate the voice of this poet who, though living in darkness, extolled the grandeur of the of the heavens based upon auditory, olfactory, and thermal sensations. The poet’s paean of praise was not a product of the imagination, but an expression of personal experience. In a more prosaic paraphrase the poet was making the point that there is no human speech, nor are there any human words articulated anywhere in the world without the concurrent ethereal sounds and scents in the background which make one aware of the glory of God.\(^5\) The shift from the poet’s focus on aural and auditory sensations to thermal sensations is made after 19:4a (MT 19:5a).
A PSALM BY A BLIND POET

Psa 19:5b–7 (MT)

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

(NRS)

In the sun he has set his tabernacle; and he comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber: he will exult as a giant to run his course. His going forth is from the extremity of heaven, and his circuit to the other end of heaven: and no one shall be hidden from his heat.

The MT has been misunderstood in tradition and by contemporary commentators. The Septuagint (cited above) and the Vulgate (in sole posuit tabernaculum suum) reflect a Vorlage reading, with the MT conspicuously missing. Several commentators, including Weiser (1969: 199), needlessly emended the to

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A PSALM BY A BLIND POET

so as to read “(God) set a tent for the sun in the sea.” Dahood (1966: 122) opted to translate the בֶּהֶר “in them” as “from/after these” with the force of the conjunction “then.” However, the בֶּהֶר “in them” (i.e., the firmament and the heavens) should be retained as original, and the לְאֵחָר should be read as the emphaticוּ “indeed, verily,” much like the ָו in Lam 4:3, where לְאֵחָר means “was indeed cruel.” Moreover, the MT הָעַמ “he set” needs to be repointed as הָעַמ “scorching” and read as the cognate of Arabic سموم (samūm) “a hot violent wind” (Lane 1972: 1420). Wehr (1979: 499) defined it as a hot sandstorm known as a simoom, which has become a loanword in English. Instead of reading the MT לָשָׁם as לָשָׁם “tent” it should be read as לָשָׁם “shining,” the Hiph’il of which occurs in Job 25:5, “if even the moon does not shine” (NKJ). Thus, the MT of 19:5b, הָעַמ לָשָׁם הָאַלֶּב “for the sun he set his tabernacle in them” can be read as לָשָׁם הָאַלֶּב “Verily, the scorching sun is shining in them,” i.e., in the heavens.

The poet’s seeming use of הָאַלֶּב “bridegroom” as a metaphor for the sun was given sexual connotations by Terrien (2003: 211) who stated . . . the sun, a lively athlete, spends each night under the shelter of a tent Yahweh has set up for the rest and erotic play of his champion (v. 5c). The sexual aspect of Near Eastern myths is here reduced to a comparison with a young bridegroom who jumps, alert, from his nuptial couch. Nothing will escape his ardors.

However, if הָאַלֶּב in 19:6 (MT) really means “bridegroom,” it appears much more likely that the poet chose הָאַלֶּב because
of its aural proximity to הָרָה הָרָה “to snatch up (fire, coals)” and הָרָה הָרָה “a fire-holder.” The MT הָרָה הָרָה could be repointed as הָרָה (scriptio defectiva for הָרָה הָרָה) “a fire-carrier,” in which case the original הָרָה הָרָה would be to הָרָה הָרָה what הָרָה הָרָה “pride” is to הָרָה הָרָה, what הָרָה הָרָה “noise” is to הָרָה הָרָה, and what הָרָה הָרָה “vision” is to הָרָה הָרָה. Removing the simile of the “bridegroom” from 19:6 (MT) and restoring the “fire-carrier” motif is supported by 19:7b, הָרָה הָרָה, “and nothing is hidden from his heat,” i.e., “from the heat of the sun.” As might be expected, a blind psalmist would more likely speak about solar heat than about sunlight.

The removal of the “bridegroom” from this verse requires also the removal of any “wedding canopy” (NRS) or “nuptial couch” (Terrien). The הָרָה הָרָה “canopy, chamber” is a cognate of Arabic حَفِيفُ/حَفِيفُ (haffa /hafif) “to circuit, to surround, to enclose” and “to make (rustling) sounds (from running feet), or the whizzing sounds of wind” (Lane 1865: 597–598; Wehr 1979: 219). With these nuances of הָרָה הָרָה in focus, the transition was easily made to the הָרָה הָרָה “circuit” of the sun and a (noisy) running athlete. The psalmist made an association between solar heat and rustling winds, and experienced both as declarations of the glory of God.

Weiser (1962: 199) thought that the psalmist had reworked “with remarkable freedom and ease” (1) an “ancient mythical idea of the abode which the Sun-god has built for himself,” (2) the “widespread mythological idea that the Sun-god rests during the night in the sea, lying in the arms of his beloved,” and (3) a mythological “image of the champion who delights
in contest.” However, philology rather than mythology provides the better clues for recovering the original meaning of the poem. Replacing the “bridegroom” and “warrior” with a “fire-carrier” and a “star runner” (no pun intended), removes erotic nuances and military overtones.

The poet’s lexicon for the communications coming from the skies included שמות “speech” (vss. 3, 4), ידועה “knowledge” (v. 3), ידועה דרבדים “words” (v. 4), קול “sound” (v. 4), קול מילים “voice” (v. 5) and מילים מילים utterances (v. 5). These six synonyms are matched by six synonyms for the communications received directly from Yahweh, spelled out in 19:8–10, which are לכיר “law,” תורדה “testimony,” פריון “precept,” יהורדה “commandment,” בורדו “word” (for MT חרדה “fear”), and שופט “judgment.”

The statement in 19:8b (English text), “the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes,” was unlikely to have been made by a blind person. If 19:1–6 was written by a blind person, as proposed in this study, 19:7–14 was indeed a separate poem, as argued by a number of commentators like Briggs (1906: 162), who stated,

Ps. 19 is composed of two originally separate poems: (A) a morning hymn, praising the glory of °El in the heavens (v.2–5b), the glorious movements of the sun (v.5c–7); (B) a didactic poem, describing the excellence of the Law (v.8–11), with a petition for absolution, restraint from sin, and acceptance in worship (v.12–15).

Weiser’s concluding remark (1962: 200) on 19:1–6 is especially noteworthy if these verses were composed by a blind
psalmist, “The comprehensiveness of the poet’s belief in God thus enables him to grasp the true meaning and significance of those phenomena [in the heavens and the firmament] to which anxious and prejudiced minds turn a blind eye.”

NOTES

1. This is not to suggest that the psalmist knew about solar winds or anticipated radio astronomy.

2. Following here the NJB and the NIB. Note also the NAB which translated אבג as “athlete.”

3. For this meaning of חrxjs / חקט, compare Job 1:5,

     חxs xנ yטעפס ימי תמשח
     כנ ענ סונטלקסיתא wי הימרא תוע פוני
     and when the days of the feast had run their course.

4. The following brief report from ABCNews.com about the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Jordan River on March 22, 2000 illustrates the point:

   A windswept crowd of thousands listened to the pope recite a reading and deliver prepared remarks during the brief ceremony. “On the banks of the River Jordan, you [God] raised up John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness... to prepare the way of the Lord, to herald the coming of Jesus,” the pope said, his soft voice all but drowned out by the strong gusts of wind.

5. The MT ביר "their line” (KJV) or “their voice, sound” (Septuagint, Vulgate) or “their chord = music” (BDB 876) is probably a double entendre involving (1) ביר stem II, “to call, to proclaim,” as advocated by Barth (1893: 29, followed by Dahood 1965:
121–122), and (2) ـى، stem III, the cognate of Arabic قوة / قوي (qawiya/guwwat) “to be strong, strength, power, might, force” (Lane 1893: 2997). The Septuagint’s φθόγγος “voice” reflects the meaning of stem II. The widely recognized ملأ ين “their words” can be added to the above list of auditory terms in this passage.


7. The ـى stem مهسـي would be analogous to مهـي which has the lengthened adjective مهيـي and the shorter ـي، both meaning “complete, sound” (BDB 1070). The ـي، “scorching” is to مهـي what مهيي is to مهيي.

8. This ـأ would be a by-form of ـأ، stem I, “to shine” (BDB 14, KBS I: 19, citing Driver AJSL 52: 161.

9. See GKC 85a for nouns with a ـأ affixed. For scriptio defectiva of nouns in this class, note مهلـأ in Joel 4:14, ـأ in Ezek 29:19, and ـأ in I Sam 13:21 and ـأ in Ecc 2:11.

10. The universal and timeless heat of the sun cannot be convincingly likened to the episodic and sporadic heat of erotic passion found in myth or in reality.
IX
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

Psalm 70:1

For the choir director.
A Psalm of David; for a memorial.
O God, hasten to deliver me;
O LORD, hasten to my help!

LXX
eἰς τὸ τέλος τῷ Δαυίδ eἰς ἀνάμνησιν
eἰς τῷ σώσαι με κύριον
ὁ θεός eἰς τὴν βοήθειάν μου πρόσχες

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 אֲלָהָו, “O God,” followed by the sequential
infinitive לֶחֶם לְלָהָו “to deliver me.” The original finite verb
which began the verse survives in the לֶחֶם לְלָהָו “to hold in
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

memory” of the superscription. This יִנָּאֶֽפֶר was mistakenly read as the Hiph‘il infinitive—hence its being given secondarily the preposition ל and made the final word of the superscription.

However, this יִנָּאֶֽפֶר was a Hiph‘il imperative and was originally the first word of the psalm itself: “Remember, O God, to save me . . . .” On the other hand, if the infinitive לַעֲשֹׁה was always a part of the superscription, the text would have included the infinitive and the imperative: יִנָּאֶֽפֶר לַעֲשֹׁה, with the imperative רְאֵה having dropped out by haplography. Thus, there is no need to assume that the imperative רְאֵה “be pleased,” found in Psa 40:14, was ever a part of Psa 70:1. A typical 3 + 3 bi-colon can be restored simply by borrowing the יִנָּאֶֽפֶר 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 רְאֵה “be pleased” in 40:14, the לַעֲשֹׁה “together” in 40:15; the לָטֹאָפַּה “to snatch it away” in 40:15; and the בְּ “to me” in 40:16. The other eight variations between the psalms are

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NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

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

\[ \text{בְּמִנְלָתָה-סֵפֶר} \text{ פָּתָחָה עַל-יְ} \]

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 \[ \text{בְּמִנְלָתָה-סֵפֶר} \text{ פָּתָחָה עַל-יְ} \] 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 "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 "scroll of scripture" with the Torah of Moses, or the Deuteronomistic 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.\textsuperscript{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):

\textbf{40:7b.} In the scroll of scripture it is written about me:

\textbf{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!

\textbf{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.

\textbf{40:1–6.} I waited patiently for Yahweh; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the \textit{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 \textit{skeptics} or \textit{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.”* 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)**

חֹמֶל נְבָאָר נַפְשֵׁי מֶפֶשׁ חֵנֹן

RSV

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

LXX

καὶ ἁνηγαγέν με ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας
καὶ ἀπὸ πηλοῦ ἠλύος

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 בֵּר נַפְשֵׁי 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. The ʼawāy in Psa 40:2a is actually the cognate of Arabic ʼawāy (ʼawāy) “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 ʼawāy (ʼawāy) meaning “he was buried.” The noun ʼawāy (ʼawāy) 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, ʼawāy would mean “the final resting place” and the ʼawāy would be equal to “grave site” or “burial plot,” with the ʼawāy perhaps being read as ʼārāb “field, uncultivated ground.”

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

\[ \text{Desolation is left in the city,} \]
\[ \text{the gates are battered into ruins (RSV).} \]
\[ \text{kai kataleifqh, sontai po, leij e;rhmoi} \]
\[ \text{kai oi= koi evkataleleimme, noi avpolou/ntai} \]
\[ \text{and cities shall be left desolate,} \]
\[ \text{and houses being left shall fall to ruin.} \]

Hatch and Redpath (1897: 138, 366, 980) identified the ʼēγκαταλελειμένοι “ones being left” with the MT ʼawāy and the ʼapoloûntai “fall to ruin” with the MT ʼārāb. According to this analysis, the MT ʼawāy “gate” has no equivalent in the Greek translation. They did not identify the ʼōkoi of Isa 24:
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

12 (marked with a †) with any Hebrew stem. However, the oīko reflects the MT ḥY"aiv. (perhaps read as the plural [scriptio defectiva] in the Vorlage). This hY"aiv. /tY"ov, like the ḥY"aiv. of Psa 40:2, is a cognate of the Arabic ﷺوثوى (tawayya) “he dwelt, or abode,” and ﷺوثوى (mat"wan) “a place where one stays, dwells, or abides, an abode or a dwelling,” i.e., the oīko of the Greek translation.13

Although the Septuagint translators of Psa 40:2 translated ﷺしましょう as ταλαντωρίας “misery, distress” (as though it were from the root שיאו—like the שיאו והשאיא “distress and misery” in Job 30:3—rather than from the root שיאו / שיאו), the fact that the Septuagint translators rendered hY"aiv. in Isa 24:12 as oīko is sufficient reason to add שיאו, stem III, the cognate of ﷺوثوى (tawayya), to the lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, and to recognize that the שיאו of 40:2 was derived from it.

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

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

LXX

καὶ οὐκ ἐνέβλεψεν εἰς ματαιότητας καὶ μανίας ψευδείς

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 רהָבִים of 40:4 as “proud, arrogant, boisterous” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1193), Dahood (1965: 243) paraphrased רהָבִים as “pagan idols.” He argued that the usual derivation of רֶהָבִים from רָהָב, “to be arrogant,” is supported by analogous צְדִים, a term for pagan deities in Ps xix 14 deriving from צָדוֹ, “to act stormily, arrogantly.” Hence the mythical sea monster Rahab is “the Arrogant One.” Note too that LXX translates רֶהָבִים by ματαιότητας which elsewhere reproduces Hebrew words for “idols, gods.”

But this argument is weakened by two facts. First, the רהָבִים in Psa 19:14 was translated in the LXX as ἀλλόσπριῶν “strangers, foreigners” (as though רהָבִים were רָהָב), not by ματαιότητας “vanities.” Secondly, רהָבִים was used elsewhere to modify ישׁים “men” (as the “godless men” in Jer 43:2) and used with כי “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 רהָבִים means “pagan idols.” Moreover, ματαιότητας was used to translate byִים, רִים, דִּי, חִים, נִים, and כֶּל, but never the words for idols, like מִלְּתָא, מִלְּתָא, נַעְלָא, and לַעְדָא.15

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

The ματαιότητας “vanities” in the Septuagint and the sērīqūta (sērīqūta) “vanity, nothingness” in the Syriac of
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Psa 40:4 suggested for Briggs (1906: 358; BDB 923) and others a *Vorlage* with דַּלּוּלָה/דָּלָל for the MT דַּלּוּל. But the translation of both דַּלּוּל and דַּל in Isa 30:7 as מַעַרְא/מַעַרְאה “vain” and as רָאָה/רָאָה (סְרִי/סְרִיִּיתָה) “vanity,” supports the integrity of the MT דַּל in 40:4.

In light of the Arabic راب/ریب (raib/râba) “it made me to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” ریب (rayb) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” and مرتاب (مَرِتْب) “a sceptic in matters of religion,” (Lane 1867: 1197–1198), one can postulate the Hebrew root דַּל, stem II, and its by-form דַּל, which would be the cognate of Arabic ارِهِب/رَهِب (rahiba/arhab) “he feared, he frightened” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1192), as in the phrase لَم أرَهِب بِك (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 דַּל has four possible meanings: (1) proud, boisterous, frightening (2) the “Rhabeans,” 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 דַּל to be a synonym of דַּל, and (4) “doubtful, suspicious, skeptical.” Given the positive references to those who trust (דַּל in 40:3–4, a negative reference to skeptics and doubters (דַּל) in 40:5 would be contextually appropriate.

The MT דַּל is generally translated as “those who turn aside” or “go astray” or “lapse into,” and is derived from דַּל, a by-form of דַּל/דַּל “to swerve, to fall away” (BDB 962; KBS 4:1439). But the Septuagint translators interpreted it
differently. The μανίας 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 מַשְׁמַח appearing twice in Hos 9:7–8). But the yjev./ay “to become demented” and the הָיָה/יָבֵה “madman, fool” (as cited in Jastrow 1531, 1553) is a good match for the Septuagint’s μανίας ψευδές “false frenzies.”

However, the MT כָּתוּב is singular and the הָיָה 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 כ (Delitzsch 1920: 111 §109a), the כָּתוּב in 40:4 may have been originally the כְָּתִים “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 سَتَّار (saṭara) “he composed lies, falsehoods” and أَسْتوُرَة/سَتَّار (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 כְָּתִים כָּתוּב (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 כְָּתִים כָּתוּב
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 שֶׁפֶר כּוֹב “a written lie” compared to the thoughts, wonders, and law of Yahweh (40:5, 8).

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

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 ἡθέλησας
Sacrifice and offering you desired not.

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι (σ A B S)
But a body you restored for me

ὠτία δὲ ἐσκαψάς μοι (Aquila)
But ears you covered/protected for me

ὠτία δὲ κατεσκεύασάς μοι (Symmachus)
But ears you prepared for me

ὠτία κατηρτίσω μοι (Theodotian)
But ears you restored to me
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Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not

Syriac Texts of Psa 40:6b (40:7b)\(^{19}\)

Pagrā\(^{2}\) den tēqant liy
then you restored the body for me

\(^{2}\)ednā\(^{3}\) den ḥēpārt liy
then you dug the ear for me

\(^{2}\)ednā\(^{3}\) den nēqabt liy
then you pierced the ear for me

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

Briggs (1906: 358) cited a number of proposed emendations, like reading בנים "bone, body, self" for יאורים "ears," and offered his own emendation of לְ הָדוֹנָה לָי "then had I the covenant." His assertions that "G translates as if it rd.
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

(sic) and had supplied the obj.” and “יהו mistook... for יד for יד” are, in my opinion, mistaken. Although his recognition that “יהו mistook ב for ב” was correct, the original spelling of the MT כריתת “you dug” was not כריתת “covenant” but the Pi’el כרתי “you set free” (discussed below on page 133).

Dahood (1966: 246), by (1) reading כרת “you cut, you circumcised” for MT כריתת “you bored” and by (2) appealing to the כנות כרית הלה “their uncircumcised ear” in Jer 6:10, paraphrased the כנות כרית ל as “so you made my ear receptive” (to divine inspiration). However, had the psalmist intended to say “you circumcised ears for me,” the noun כנות כרית “foreskin” and/or the verb מהל, 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 ב, 21 I would emend the MT כריתת “you dug” to כרתי and derived it from כרה, stem III, 22 the cognate of

- Aramaic ברו/ברוי to get well, recover, to be strong or stout”, בורא/בריא “to make well”; and ברו/בריא “healthy, strong, stout” (Jastrow 192; KBS 1: 154) and

- Arabic برت (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 أبوي (‘abahu) and باري (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 “convaluit”)).
Consequently, the σώμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, “but a body you restored for me,” in GΛΒ and the, “then you restored the body for me,” in the Syro-Hexapla would be very literal translations of the restored בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה, without a separate word like כָּנָה or הָנֵּשֶׁר or הָנֵּשֶׁר for the σώμα.

The lack of any word in these Greek and Syriac translations for the MT בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה is due to a confusion in the respective Vorlagen of (1) a י and י, (2) a י and י, and (3) a י and י, which resulted in the בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה being read as יִתְנָה (נִתְנָה), a by-form of מִתְנָה “yet, as yet, still,” which was translated into Greek as δὲ and into Syriac as נִתְנָה (den) “but, for, then.”

Given the implicit reference to healing in 40:2, “he drew me up from the the burial pit,” a reference to restored health in 40:6 would be contextually very appropriate. But the immediate context of the בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה in 40:6 deals with the sacrifices and offerings, suggesting that this difficult phrase has more to do with sin than with sickness. (The translations of the Gאקפ and of the Peshitta, cited above, are obviously corrections to the MT.)

If the MT בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה was originally בַּרְחָה יִתְנָה, as I propose, the יִתְנָה is not likely to mean “ears.” The initial י of יִתְנָה could be a prosthetic י (GKC 19m, 85b) prefixed to the noun י or י, much like the variants (1) יִרְאוֹת and יִרְאוֹת “arm”; (2) יִרְאֶה and יִרְאֶה “memorial/remembrance”; (3) יִרְאֶה and יִרְאֶה “fetter, manacle”; (4) יִרְאֶה and יִרְאֶה “deceptive, lie”; and (5) יִרְאֶה and יִרְאֶה “Zerahite/Ezrahite.”
The noun יז or יָז (or יזא or יזאא) would be the cognate of Arabic ذَان (dān) and ذَين (dīn) “a vice, fault, defect, or the like” (Lane 1867: 976, 989, 991; Castell 1669: 697, 700–701).25 In the psalmist’ quotation from the “scroll of scripture” reference was made to the רע ה “harm, trouble” others wanted to inflict (Psa 70:2; 40:14), but the psalmist also confessed that he had more than enough רע ה 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 רע ה was used as a synonym for רע ה רע ה. The verb נב תיירב in Psa 40:6b is the psalmist’ assertion that he was free of the נב תיירב “vices/faults” which plagued him. Once נב תיירב is emended to נב תייר ב, the verb נב תייר, discussed above on page 131, comes back into focus. Not only can it mean “(God) restored him to convalescence,” but, like its Arabic cognate בָּרָא (bara’a), it could also mean “he was, or became clear or free,” and a causative Pi’el נב תייר (like the Arabic form IV) would mean “(God) made one guiltless . . . free from the fault, defect, imperfection, blemish, or vice.” The noun נב, like the cognate ברי (bariy²), 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):
Sacrifice and offering you desired not

Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not.

The psalmist was not making a forensic repudiation of the sacrificial cult 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 (חַזֹּקָה) and deliverance (לֶגֶד) 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 “then I said, ‘behold I came.’” While the MT יָהַב has been derived from the common verb יָהַב “to come,” it is better derived in this context from בָּא, stem II, which is the cognate of Arabic بَأَء (bawai / bā'ā) “he returned . . . he made himself answerable, responsible, or accountable for it [sin] by an inseparable obligation, . . . he acknowledged it or confessed it.” In prayer one says أَبُو الْيَلِيكَ بَنْعَمْتَكُ (‘abū‘ilayka bini‘matika) “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
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of this prayer could well have been a paraphrase of the psalmist words in 40:7a-8

Behold I confessed:

“to do your will, O my God, is my desire
your Law has been internalized.”

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 ὁ λοκαυτῴμα “burnt offering” (39:7) became the plural ὁ λοκαυτῷματα (10:6); (2) the οὐκ ἡθε-λησάς “you did not desire” in 39:7 became οὐκ εὐδόκησας “you did not find pleasure in” (10:5); (3) the τοῦ ποιήσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλήθην “to do your will, O my God, I desire” (39:8b) became simply οὐ ποιήσαι ὁ θεός τὸ θέλημά σου “to do, O God, your will” (10:7); and (4) the ὅτια “ears” of ἘαθΣ (39:7)—like the אֶדְנָה (edna)” “ear” of the Peshitta and in the margin of the Syro-Hexapla—became σῶμα “body” as in the אבס.

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 σωμα 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 ωτια in G, 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 did differ from the MT; (3) the LXX variant σωμᾶ, instead of ωρα (ονειρ), 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 (ἐν θελήματι) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (ἐφάπαξ) (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 Προφ Εβραίους was, in the words of Buchanan (1976: xix, xxi), a “homiletical midrash based on Ps 110.” The epistle received the title Προφ Εβραίους 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) were obviously more attuned to the rhetoric of the Targumim and Midrashim than to the canons of Quintillian elocution.
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

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’ 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
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

of Psalms 40 and 70, as well as Heb 10:5–7 and Isa 24:12. These cognates are (in Arabic alphabetical order)

- **bara’a** (bara’a) the cognate of בָּרֹא / בָּרָא, “to restore the body,” found in Vorlage of the LXX (39:7) which has σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω; whereas the MT (40:7) has כֹּרֵה “to dig.”

- **baraha** (baraha) a by-form of ברָא / בְּרָא, “to make pure, guiltless, to heal the body,” found in the restored Hebrew text of 40:7 (MT 40:8).

- **bawa’a / bâ’a** (bawa’a / bâ’a) the cognate of בָּאוּ, stem II, “to confess,” found in 40:7 (MT 40:8).

- **tuwiya / matwan** (tuwiya) the cognate of תֻּיוֹ / מָתָן and the noun מָזַח / מְזַח in Isa 24:12 (LXX οἶκος), as well as the pronoun מְזַח וְם “(final) resting place” in Psa 40:2 (MT 40:3).

- **dän/din** (dän/din) the cognate דֶּין/ דִּין “vice, fault, defect” as restored from the הָאֵזַי “ear” in 40:6 (MT 40:7).

- **raib/râba** “to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” and **rayb** (rayb) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” the cognate of the אֹב “sceptics (in matters of religion).”

- **sâṭara** (sâṭara) the cognate סָטָר “a writer, a writer of lies, legends” and סָטָר “myths” in 40:4 (MT 40:5) when the MT is restored to סָטָר or סָטָר.

The working Hebrew vocabulary of the Septuagint translators included כֹּרֵה “to heal the body” and כֹּרֵה “resting
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

place, home,” two words which have have gone unrecognized in the current lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Had this הָרָם survived in post-biblical Hebrew—as its cognate survived in Arabic—there would have been no need for all the speculation of how Hebrew בְּנֵי (= oτια = ears) ended up in the Septuagint as σῶμα “body.” Other words still needing to be added to the Hebrew lexicons include בַּרְזֶה “to confess,” וַשַׁל ל “(burial) place,” וַיָּשָׁר “vice,” and רַמֵּר “skeptic.”

Ambiguities in handwriting contributed to a number of variants, like the בְּנֵי being read as יְנֵם (= δ新浪微博 = then) and the confusion of ב and ב, ב and מ, ו and נ, etc. The ambiguity of homographs like יָנָה, בּא, וּזַר, and רֵדָב also contributed to a number of poor translations.

NOTES

1. Dalglish (1962: 237–238) noted “... the phrase לָנֵי 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)φ-flute, to intone to the lyre (knnr), and to sing to the nezekh (nîlî) [ = לָנֵי].

Dalglish concluded:

The phrase לָנֵי 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 נֶשַׁה (nēṣah) “to celebrate, to triumph” when used of the voice meant “clear, sonorous” (Payne Smith 1903: 348), a
NOTES ON PSALMS 70 AND 40

definition which would also fit well the Egyptian exhortation cited above. This cognate is the basis for my translation.

2. See Dalglisch (1962: 239), who cited (1) Dossin (1938: 110), “le terme dawiudum 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 רַוְיָד וֹדִיר 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 רַדְאֵס “memorial offering” in Lev 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8; 24:7; Num 5:26. The רַדֵּשׁ in Psa 70:1 could well be a variant spelling of רַדְאֵס.

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

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 ב see Delitzsch 1920: 113–114 §114c.

8. For the confusion ב and ב see Delitzsch 1920: 114 §116d 117.

9. No examples of a confusion of ב and ב were cited by Delitzsch. The MT רַדָּבַה became in ג 39:18 φροντεῖ “consider.” The MT רַדָּבִּיא—which was rendered in ג 39:14 as πρόσχες “give
heed” and in G4 as σπεύδων “hasten”—was translated in G1B1 S2 in 69:1 as σπεύδων and in GS1 as θέλησον “be pleased.”


11. MT בחרה יאני “within my bowels.” See note 30.


13. The MT ירא שני was obviously read as the equivalent of ירא ירה “to remain” (= ἐγκαταλέξει ποι. Like הראה ירה “to gaze” (BDB 981, 1043), יראה ירה and יראה ירה could be by-forms, although it is more likely that a יראה ירה and יראה ירה variation simply reflects an aural error once the ו was softened into a glottal stop.

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

15. See Hatch and Redpath 1897: 899. In Zech 11:17, ירא הַאָלָיו “my worthless shepherd” became οἱ ποιμαίνοντες τὰ μάταια “the worthless shepherds” in the Septuagint. But the “idol shepherd” of the KJV here notwithstanding, the ירא הַאָלָיו, like the יראה ירה (ποιμένος ἀπέιρου “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”; אֲרוֹמָּה (ʾirhāb) terrorism”; and אֲרוֹמָּה (ʾirhābi) “terrorist.”

17. The Peshitta has מָלֶל מָלֶל (mamlēlā dagāl) “lying speech,” apparently reading שפה שפה for MT שפה שפה.

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

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


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

23. For the confusion of (1) מַחֲלָל and מ (like the מַחֲלָל / מ / מ variants in I Chron 24:6), (2) מ and מ (like the מ / מ / מ Qere/Kethib in Pro 3:15); and (3) מ and מ (like the מ / מ / מ variant in II Sam 19:41), see Delitzsch 1920: 111–112 §110a; 116–119 §120b, 128a, and 131.

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

25. Its synonyms are מ (dib), דִים (dim), and דּוּמָה (dumûm) which Castell defined as מ “culpa, labes, ignominiosus,” מ (dib) “macula, vitium,” and מ (dim) “vitium, vituperium.”


27. For statements repudiating sacrifice note I Sam 15:22; Psa 50:7–15 (with the initial נ of vs. 8 being read as the emphatic נ “I do indeed reprove you . . .’’); Psa 51:16–17; Psa 69:30–33; Isa (“treat with despite”; or מ “acacia, tree and wood”) correspond to the Greek μανιας.
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28. The Qal perfect נָגָרַה “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 הָיוֹ 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 בְּעָמִּי mean literally, “in the midst of my bowels.” It was used figuratively for the seat of emotions.


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 devise 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 χώρᾳ
καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.

Isa 9:2

ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει
Ἰδετε φῶς μέγα
οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρᾳ
καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
φῶς λάμψει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς
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.
The proper interpretation of Psalm 109 as a whole is dependent upon the correct understanding of the לָעֲנִי בַּעֲלֵיהֶם in v. 4. As pointed in the MT, these two words are the conjunction + pronoun subject and a noun predicate, meaning “I (am) a prayer.” Because this literal meaning is senseless, it has been paraphrased as

- ἐγώ δὲ προσευχόμην “but I continue to pray” (Septuagint),
- ego autem orabam “but I pray” (Vulgate),
- ἐγὼ δὲ προσευχόμην ἄγαν “but I have prayed for them” (Peshitta),
- “but I give myself unto prayer” (KJV),
- “but I am a man of prayer” (NIV, NIB),
- “even while I make prayer for them” (NRS),
- “and all I can do is pray!” (NJB),
- “even me. My prayer . . .” (Dahood (1970: 97)).

But the לָעֲנִי בַּעֲלֵיהֶם in this verse is not the same as the לָעֲנִי בַּעֲלֵיהֶם found in 109:7, which is the noun “prayer” from the stem לָעֲנִי (BDB 813; Jastrow 1182–1183). The initial ל of the לָעֲנִי in 109:4 is not a noun prefix but the first letter of the stem לָעֲנִי “to be unseemly, to be indecent.” Thus, this לָעֲנִי “prayer” should be pointed as (1) לָעֲנִי “impropriety, indecency,” the abstract of which is לָעֲנִי “obscenity, triviality,
frivolity” (Castell 1669: 3932; BDB 1074; Jastrow 1903: 1686–1687), or as (2) חלֶּף (halēf), a feminine singular participle (GKC 84a*), meaning “an indecent/obscene (woman).”

The noun חלֶּף appears in Jer 23:13 לחזֶהֶה אֱרָאִית חלֶּף; which the Septuagint appropriately translated as καὶ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις Σαμαρείας εἶδον ἀνομήματα, “and in the prophets of Samaria I have seen lawless deeds.” This Hebrew חלֶּף is the cognate of the Syriac ḫalā (ṭēpal) “defiled, corrupt” (Payne Smith 1957: 180); 1 and the by-form חלֶּף שלח appears in Job 13:4, יִשָּׁלְחֹת שֵׁלֶחֶל “but all of you are forgers of lies,” 2 and in Psa 119:69, יִשָּׁלְחָה שֵׁלֶחֶל, “the godless besmear me with lies” (RSV). 3

When the problematic חלֶּף אֵֶֽנֶּה לי “and I prayer” is read as חלֶּף אֵֶֽנֶּה לי “and I (am) an obscene (woman),” the various pieces of the psalm fall into order. The female psalmist laments the deceitful mouths, lying tongues, words of hate, and verbal attacks which besmirch her. This besmirchment was summed up in the phrase חלֶּף אֵֶֽנֶּה לי, “that I (am) indecent.” The mention of the psalmist’s love being rejected by (male) liars and attackers, who return hate for love, provides a hint of a failed family or romantic relationship which resulted in the men of the male’s family (which accounts for the plural masculine verbs) verbally attacking a dismissed concubine or a divorced secondary or tertiary wife. As a result of being jilted and threatened with trumped up charges that could bring death, the lady invokes a string of curses against her former lover, master, or husband (which accounts for the singular “him” and “his” in the twenty-some curses invoked in verses 6–19). The masculine plurals which reemerge in
109:20 again focus on the (male) family members of the man who jilted or divorced her.

As permitted in Deut 24:1, a man could give a woman a bill of divorce (בְּעִירָת מֵאָשָׁה) if he was not satisfied with her or found something obscene (נְּשָׁרָה לִבְּרָא) about her. A charge of obscenity was something other than adultery, for the latter crime carried an immediate death penalty (Lev 20:10), and there would have been no time to compose a lament or write out curses. Although נְשָׁרָה לִבְּרָא and לִבְּעֹר “lewdness”(Lev 18:17) are not found in this psalm, the same issue appears with the use of לֵפָּן “obscene, lewd (woman)”—which is the label the psalmist feels she now bears thanks to the false testimony of a hateful man and his conspiratorial fellows.

The ancient Israelite divorce hinted at in this psalm was certainly not amicable. As noted, retaliation for the false charges brought against her, the woman invokes at least twenty curses against the nameless male. From the curses invoked the reader learns that the man being cursed was married and had children. (This did not preclude his having other women in his life according to his pleasure—as long as they were single.) He had property, but at the same time had unpaid debts. He is alleged to have been stingy and given to cursing a great deal. The woman invoking God’s blessing upon herself—all the while invoking curses of death against her former male mate and his people—claimed to be poor, needy, depressed, and dishonored by the false charges of her being an indecent obscene woman. While begging to be saved the psalmist expressed her confidence in God’s defending the poor and needy, stating in the Septuagint of 108:31, ὅτι παρέστη ἐκ δεξιῶν πένητος τοῦ σῶσαι ἐκ τῶν καταδιωκόντων τὴν ψυχήν μου, “For He stood at the right hand of the poor, to save me from them who pursue my soul.”
PSALM 109: A WOMAN’S LAMENT

Two problems with this interpretation of the Psalm 109 which need to be addressed are (1) the reference in v. 28 to the psalmist as ἡ θεία ἡττήσας “your servant” (a masculine noun) translated as ὁ δὲ δοῦλος σου, and (2) the MT ἦσσας “his soul” in v. 31 (a masculine suffix). These would indeed make the psalmist a man if they were in the original psalm. In the Septuagint (108:31) the MT ἦσσας was translated as τὴν ψυχὴν μου, which reflects the gender neutral ἦσσας “my soul,” which may well be the original reading.

Moreover, v. 28 has three problems of its own: (1) the MT ἔρχονται καὶ ἐτύμαντο “they arose and were put to shame” is not reflected in the Peshitta; (2) the Septuagint read οἶ ἐπανεισπράττονες μοι, reflecting a Vorlage with ἐπεζήσας ἐπεζήσας for the MT ἠσσας; and (3) as is evident by looking at the text in BHS, the poetic line is overly long. In the Septuagint Vorlage of nine words, v. 28 would scan as a 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 line; and the eight words in the MT could be scanned as a 3 + 4 line or a 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 line. Most other lines have five to seven words and scan as 2 + 2 or 3 + 2 or 3 + 3.

Thus, based upon the extended line length and the fact that the singular ἦσσας interrupts the series of five plural imprecatives in vv. 27–29, the MT ἠσσας ἠσσας ἠσσας “and may your servant rejoice” in v. 28 can be isolated as a later addition to the original 2 + 2 + 2 colon. The phrase may well be a misplaced insertion from the margin, which should have been inserted in the text after Psa 108:6 (MT), so as to read there, “That thy beloved may be delivered, give help by thy right hand, and answer me! And let thy servant rejoice!”

The minor adjustments to the MT of Psalm 109 proposed here are, in inverse order, (1) to move ἠσσας ἠσσας ἠσσας to
follow Psalms 108:6, (2) to follow the Septuagint’s ῥῆμα ψυχῆν μου and read the gender neutral ἐμὴν “my soul” for the MT ἐνέσχα “his soul”; and (3) to repoint ἡγέων “prayer” as the feminine participle ἐγένετο “(a woman) being indecent.” These modest changes compare favorably with the rather radical interpretation of Briggs (1907: 364–365), who considered Psalm 109 to be a composite—with vv.2a, 3b–5a, 19–20, 25, 28–29 being glosses and vv. 6–15 being an independent imprecatory psalm which was later inserted into the text at the end of the first strophe (composed of vv. 1b, 2b, 3a, 5b, 16–18, and 21–27).

The interpretation presented above that Psalm 109 was composed by a woman stands also in sharp contrast to that of Weiser (1962: 690) who stated

This psalm is an individual lament, prayed by a man who, if we understand the psalm aright, is accused of being guilty of the death of a poor man (v. 16), presumably by means of magically effective curses (vv. 17ff.).

The curses (which, in my opinion, were invoked by a castaway concubine or a divorced wife against her former mate, his fellows, and his family) were, according to Weiser, invoked against the psalmist himself by his adversaries—thus, the psalmist recited them by way of review but did not invoke them. Weiser argued unconvincingly, “The change from the plural in vv. 1–5 and 20 ff. to the singular in vv. 6–19 is satisfactorily accounted for only if vv. 6–19 are interpreted as a quotation of the imprecations directed against the psalmist.” But as Anderson (1972: 758) noted in his criticism of similar statements made by Kraus (1960: 747), “in view of the current belief in the inherent power of the spoken word, it is questionable whether one would venture to repeat such curses originally directed against oneself.”
Psalm 109:23

The interpretation presented above also stands in sharp contrast to that of Dahood (1970: 99) who identified the psalmist as an aged man and stated

A perplexing Hebrew text makes it difficult to identify with certainty the dramatis personae and the sequence of action in this lament of an individual... In vss. 6–19, the psalmist directs a series of dreadful imprecations against the venal judge (see vs. 31) who, instead of throwing out the case as preposterous, agrees to hear the case.

Dahood rendered 109:23, כָּמַלְתּוּ כָּמַלְתּוּ נֹשֵׁלָה יִבְּשֵׁשֵׁשֵׁשֵׁשֵׁש, as “Like a shadow indeed have I tapered, and am passing away. I have lost my youth, truly I have aged,” which, for contrast, should be compared with the NKJ, “I am gone like a shadow which lengthens; I am shaken off like a locust.” The Arabic cognate of הלך (stem II) can mean either (1) “he perished, came to nought, passed away, died” or (2) “he became in a bad, or corrupt state, marred, or spoiled, or went away,” with form 10 of מָלַך (halaka) indicating “he became distressed, trouble, or fatigued” (Lane 1893: 3044). It is obvious that the psalmist was still alive while reciting the lament and its curses; therefore, the MT נֹשֵׁלָה יִבְּשֵׁשֵׁש (a Niph’al perfect) cannot mean “I died”—nor should it be paraphrased as an imperfect meaning “I am passing away.” It can mean, however, “I became fatigued, worn out,” i.e., “like a fading shadow I became worn out,” which does justice to the perfect tense of the נֹשֵׁלָה יִבְּשֵׁש and the context wherein the psalmist had become weary of the false allegations and lies.
Dahood’s proposal to read the MT נָנַעְרָתִי כַּאֲרָבָה “as I have lost my youth, truly I have aged,” is possible but not at all probable. The psalm is a lament, and although in contemporary western culture becoming old is something to lament, in Eastern and Near Eastern cultures advanced age engendered esteem and respect, and age was evidence of God’s blessing, as stated in Prov 3:2, “For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they [the laws] add to thee,” and Exod 20:12, “that thy days may be long upon the land which the Yahweh thy God giveth thee.” Therefore, it remains preferable to keep the נָנַעְרָתִי as “locust,” although the נָנַעְרָתִי may be derived from בֵּית, stem I, the cognate of the Arabic نَعْرَة (na’ara) “he uttered a noise, he called out, he cried out” (Lane 1983: 2815; BDB 654; Jastrow 921–922). The noise made by locusts was proverbial; and in a lament it should not be surprising to have a reference to the outcry or constant crying of the one raising the lament.5

Psalm 109:4a, 6, 20, and 29

Psa 109:4a reads נַעְרָתִי אֵלַי יָשַׁבְּנֵנֵה, and a literal translation would be “instead of my love they sataned me.” It has been customary in English to transliterate the noun שֶׁשָּׁן as Satan, even when it comes with the definite article, precluding the noun from being a name (as has happened to the noun in Job 1:6–2:7). But the verb שָׁן (found in Psa 38:21; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; and Zech 3:1) was never borrowed into English as the loanword “to satan.” The verb שָׁן in Psa 109 was translated into English by the verbs
PSALM 109: A WOMAN’S LAMENT

• to be an adversary (KJV, WEB),
• to accuse (NIV, NIB, NAU, RSV, NRS, NKJ, RWB, NLT [in vv. 20, 29]),
• to detrap (DRA, following the Vulgate’s detranebant),
• to oppose (YLT in v. 4, but accusers in vv. 20, 29),
• to denounce (NJB in v. 4, but accusers in vv. 20, 29),
• to try to destroy (NLT in v. 4, but accusers in vv. 20, 29),
• to caluminate (for the Septuagint’s ἐνδεικνύειν).

By contrast, the noun שָׁנַן in Psa 109:6, became Satan in the KJV, WEB, and RWB; but in the NIV, NIB, NAU, RSV, NRS, NKJ, RWB, NLT שָׁנַן was translated as “an accuser.” The Septuagint translated it as διάβολος, and the Vulgate has diabulus, which became “the devil” in the DRA.

Briggs (1907: 366) translated Ps a 109:4 as “For my love they are mine adversaries while I am in prayer,” and the MT of 109:6, as “Appoint a wicked one over him, and let an adversary stand at his right hand.” By contrast, Dahood (1970: 97) translated the two verses as (1) “in return for my love, they slander me, even me. My prayer they . . .” and (2) “Appoint the Evil One against him, and let Satan stand at his right hand.” But Dahood interpreted the plural participles שלמה/שֵׁם in vv. 20 and 29 as being ordinary human “slanderers.” For Dahood the Satan in Psalm 109 was the same supra-human celestial prosecutor who appears in I Chron 21:1, Zech 3:1–2, and Job 1–2. He concluded,

These descriptions warrant, then, the interpretation of the Evil One and Satan as one personage who will serve as
the prosecutor at the trial of the psalmist’s adversary before the divine judge after death.

Missing from Dahood’s interpretation is any reference to the verb יָשָׂר in Num 22:22, 32, where the angel of Yahweh went forth “to satan” (לְשָׂר) Balaam who was on his way to meet Balak, the king of Moab. This was a celestial satan who encountered Balaam long before he died, not the celestial Satan who, according to later intertestamental traditions, prosecutes after death. Moreover, Balaam’s satan was doing God’s will; he was not an evil one. The automatic equation of a satan with the Evil One obscures the role of a satan as a prosecuting attorney—human or celestial—seeking to establish truth and justice for the good of all. Consequently, Dahood’s statement, “If this analysis proves correct, the widely held view that the designation of Satan as the Evil One is a development of the intertestamental period will need to be reexamined,” can readily be dismissed. Nothing in Psalm 109 suggests, let alone requires, a Satan who judges after death.

Psalm 109:31

For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save from the ones pursuing my soul.

Briggs (1907: 373), after noting the variant reading in the versions of יָשָׂר for the MT לְשָׂר, proposed emend-
ing the מָשָׁמַר מִי “adversaries.” However, there is no way that the Septuagint’s καταδιώκω “to pursue closely” can be a translation of either מָשָׁמַר מִי “to judge” or מָשָׁמַר מִי “to satan.” Anderson (1972: 767) suggested that the Septuagint translated מָשָׁמַר מִי, but it is hard to see how the MT could be misread as מָשָׁמַר מִי. Dahood (1970: 110) speculated that the MT should be repointed as מָשָׁמַר מִי with the suffix being used for the third person. He translated “to save his life from his judge.” But his argument is less than convincing. The Septuagint, properly understood, provides the best clue for the correct interpretation of 109:31, and it should be followed—in preference to the MT—without reservation.

The MT מָשָׁמַר מִי “from the ones judging” was read by the Septuagint translators as the Šaphèl participle of the stem מָשָׁמַר מִי, the cognate of Arabic ‏(fîd)‏ and ‏(fîd)‏ “to die,” as in the expressions ‏(fâd at nafsu hu)‏ and ‏(fâd at nafsu hu), meaning “his soul departed.” The מָשָׁמַר מִי when pointed as מָשָׁמַר מִי becomes a perfect match with the Arabic cognate in form IV, ‏(afaq tu nafsahu)‏ “I made his soul to depart” (Lane 1877: 2472–2474). The initial מ of the repointed מָשָׁמַר מִי should probably be pointed as מ, with the מ doing double duty as (1) the prefix of the causative participle, and (2) the prefixed preposition מ רע “from.”

CONCLUSION

Psalm 109 provides another example of the fact that in Biblical Hebrew things equal to the same thing may not be equal
to each other. The case in point is the אִירְפָּה in 109:4 is not the same as the אִירְפָּה in 109:7. The latter is אִירְפָּה “prayer,” but the former is אִירְפָּה “an indecent/obscene (woman).” It is this feminine participle which identifies the psalmist as a woman. The psalmist’s reference to rejected love corroborates this identification. This psalmist has been besmirched by accusers who have labeled her as an indecent, obscene lady, an accusation which could prove to be deadly.”

The woman presents God with a number of request for herself: “Be not silent!” (v. 1), “Deal on my behalf” (v. 21), “Help me, Save me!” (v. 26), and then ends her psalm with a doxology (vv. 30–31). Seven of the thirty-one verses (vv. 3–5 and 22–25) are biographical, and leading this list is the fact that men have returned hate for her love. Because fourteen of the thirty-one verses are curses invoked against one man, it can be assumed that he was her former mate when she was a concubine or one of his wives. In short, she wanted him dead; but not just him—her imprecations were against his ancestors and his posterity as well. In vv. 20, 28, and 29 the curses are directed at other male accusers, apparently her former mate’s fellow conspirators.

The psalmist confessed to being unloved, poor, needy, depressed, weak, gaunt, and, above all, innocent of the charge of being an indecent lady. Though the psalmist never said so, it is obvious that she was also a learned poet and outspokenly independent. Proof of her innocence and that God answered her prayer—if not her imprecations—comes from the fact that her lament was included in the canonical psalter.

Although the Septuagint translators missed the true meaning of the אִירְפָּה in 109:4, they were right on target with their
understanding of the rare idiom נְהַמָּה נָשָׂא in 109:31. But appreciation for their correct translation of this expression would not have been possible without the contributions of Arabic lexicographers who kept alive the knowledge of the Semitic lexeme סְמִית, as well as the Hebrew grammarians who kept alive the knowledge of the ancient Šaph’ēl form.

NOTES

1. On the interchange of מ and נ, note the by-forms בְּשַׂנֵא and בְּשַׂנֵת “to go astray,” בְּשַׂנֵﬠ and בְּשַׂנֵת “to seize,” and לַכְּלָא and לַכְּלָה (qatala) “to kill.”

2. Here the Septuagint reads, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε ἴατροι ἀδικοὶ, “but you are bad physicians,” apparently reading the מְבֹל as מִבֹל, which appears in Jer 30:13 (= ἰατρεύθης “treated / healed”) and 46:11 (= ὀφέλεια) “there is no healing for you.”

3. The Septuagint ἐπιλθμησθη “it has been multiplied” seems to be a paraphrase, for this is the only text in which πλθψη (which translated fourteen different Hebrew words in one hundred fifty different verses) was used to translate מְבֹל.


5. If the nuances of Hebrew נְאָרָה match those of the Arabic نُعَرَ (na’ara), even the psalmist’s cries could be held against her, for the noun נָאָר (nā’irat) applied to a woman signified “a clamorous and foul, or immodest woman” (Lane 1893: 2815).
6. There was apparently a haplography of the ש in the Vorlage of the Septuagint, which must have read ש ו תפיה for the MT ש ו תפיה.

7. ᾭτοδιώκω appears only here as an odd translation of לאזים. Liddell and Scott (19: 889) noted its use in Mark 1:36. Anderson (1972: 767) opted for the RSV which reads, “For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who condemn him to death.”

8. The Šaphel form is rare in Hebrew but occurs frequently in Syriac (see GKC § 55\(\text{I}\)) and is the regular causative form in Ugaritic (Gordon, 1965: 83, § 9.38, 9.48 and the chart on p. 155). Ordinarily, the Arabic ط (צ) became a ל in Hebrew and a מ in Aramaic and Syriac, whereas the ض (כ) became a ל in Hebrew and an ל in Aramaic and Syriac. The Šaphel form itself, when coupled with the cognate ב (צ) becoming a מ, suggests that the psalmist spoke a northern dialect of Hebrew which retained some influence of surrounding dialects.

9. Compare the initial מ of המרה in I Chron 4:10, found in the Leningrad and Aleppo codices. The dagesh doubles the מ, as if מורה were to be read as מורה, with one מ for the preposition “from” and the second מ being the first letter of the stem. See above, pp. 95–97, for a full discussion on this MT מורה.
XI

THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31

Prov 31:1 MT

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

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

The name Lemuel (למואל / לְמָואֵל) calls to mind the Arabic phrase الله لامِ على (lamma `allahu) “God rectified, restored someone to good condition, reunited (people)” (Lane 1893: 3013; Wehr 1979: 1029). Given the well attested interchange of verbs (GKC 77°) one can posit the Hebrew cognate לַמָּאֵל / לֶמָּאֵל which would account for the w in לַמָּאֵל, rather than לַמָּא, which would have called for the name לַמָּאֵל (like the לַמָּאֵל of Num 34:23) or לַמָּאֵל (like the לַמָּאֵל of Jer 31:38). The לַמָּאֵל of Prov 31:4 is most likely to have been the original vocalization since an original would have contracted (lamaw > lamó) to לָמָּא, not לָמָּא.

Whereas the נָשַׁא of Prov 30:1 is best read as the cognate of Arabic نَشَا (naša‘a, form IV) “he created, produced, origi-
nated” and منشئ (munšî) “author, originator” (Lane 1893: 2791; Wehr 1979: 1131), in Prov 31:1 the is best read as a proper noun related to the Ishmaelite 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 “oracle.”

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 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 “words to Lemuel by which his mother instructed him.”

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

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

тi тéκνον тηρήσεις
ti rhíseis theou
πρωτογενές σοι λέγω υιέ
ti teknon emhe koulias ti teknon emow evxwn

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

Prosper, my son! Flourish, son of my womb!
Thrive, son of my vows!

Behind the threefold interrogative ֵּ. . . ֵּ. . . ֵּ. . .
“What... what... what?” of the MT stand three imperatives from the stem ֵּ, the cognate of Arabic نماء/نامأ (namy/namā) “to grow, increase, expand, prosper, flourish, thrive” (Lane 1893: 3038; Wehr 1979: 1174–1175). Like the verbs ֵּ and ֵּ, which drop the initial ִ in the imperative, the imperative ֵּ became simply ֵּ, a homophone and homograph of the interrogative ֵּ. The verb ֵּ is found in the proper name ֵּ (Naμουηλ) and the gentilic ֵּ (ד נאμουηל) in I Chron 4:24 and Num 12:26. Otherwise, ֵּ may never have been used in the standard Judean dialect of Hebrew. The use of ֵּ “son” by Lemuel’s mother, instead of ֵּ, 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.

The Septuagint (24:70 = 31:2) has an expanded text which includes (1) τηρήσεις “you will keep,” (2) ρήσεις θεοῦ “the dictates of God,” and πρωτογενεῖς σοι λέγω υἱὲ (prwtogenej soi lēgw uië “my first-born, to you I am speaking, O son,” suggesting that the θεοῦ in the Vorlage was also read as μάρτυς which could account for the ρήσεις and the λέγω. The τηρήσεις is either a doublet of the τι ρήσεις (τιρήσεις > τηρήσεις) or a doublet of the νόμος “vow” which was read as νόμος “to keep.” The πρωτογενεῖς σοι can be a doublet of the βεβηρ “read as
“my firstborn,” originating from a dittography of the ב which was in turn misread as a ב so that the ב❝ר was in turn misread as a ב so that the ב❝ר became בכר.

Prov 31:3 MT (LXX 24:71)

אֶלְתָּהַם לָשְׁמִים חִילֶךְ וּרְכֹבָּה וַלִּחַת יָלֵכָה

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

μὴ δῷς γυναιξὶ̂ σῶν πλοῦτον
καὶ τὸν σῶν 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 השם in ten other texts, and remains the best understanding of this verse and in 31:29. Interpretations which associate השם 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. Once the focus on השם took on sexual overtones, it became necessary to emend השם to יָקְרַד “your thighs” (BHS note) for a implicit sexual parallel to go with an implicit sexual שִׂמְח.

Defining השם as “your wealth” and יָקְרַד as “your acquisitions” recovers the anticipated parallelism. The Hebrew יָקְרַד is the cognate of Arabic دَرَك (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 לְאִמָּהָה. The initial ל is the preposition affixed to the feminine plural participle מַחָּה, from the stem מָחַה, which is the cognate of Arabic مَحَّة (mahhâh) 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 مَحَّة (mahhâh) simply as “liar, deceiver.” The מַח (mah) is a contracted form of מַחָּה (makhâh), like the feminine singular participle מַחָה (makhâh) in Prov 25:19, which is a contraction of מַחָּה (makhâh) (GKC 67s). 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 νοῦν λήμ, which was read as though it were the cognate of Arabic خال/خيل (hyl/âlā) “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 הָיוֹת (hîyôt) which was read as הָיוֹת לִבּ (hîyôt lîb) and then inverted to לִבּ הָיוֹת (= βίον εἰς (= לִבּ הָיוֹת)).

The ὑστεροφόρο υστεροβουλίαν “deliberation after the fact” (Liddell and Scott 1940: 1906) comes from (1) a variant reading of ὑστεροφόρο as ὑστεροφόρο (= ὑστερεῖω) “to lack,” and (2) the βουλίαν is an alternative rendering of the ἐν βουλίαν when
derived from דָלַּה “counsel, advice” (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 971). Coming together they amount to the idea of “second
guessing.”

Prov 31:8

=Integerilitary לָאֵלָה אֲלָא-יוֹ יִפְלַה

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

אָנוּאֵלָה יַפְלַה זוֹרָן סֵדֶר אֱלֹהִים תֵאֹלְוַי קאֵל קְרִיָּה פָּאֵנְתָא פַּלְוֶאָה יָגִא

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

The Septuagint’s λόγος θεοῦ “to the word of God” translates what now stands in the MT as לָאֵלָה אֲלָא, as though the Vorlage read לָאֵלָה אֲלָא, with the stem לָאֵלָה being the cognate of Arabic كلام(kalâm) “saying, words”, used in a similar expression, فتح فمه بالكلام (fataḥa famahū bi’kalām) “he opened his mouth to say something” (Lane 1893: 3003; Wehr 1979: 981). The υγιός “fairly” reflects a variant in which the וָלָאֵלָה אֲלָא was read as מַאֵלָה בַאֲלָא ( = בַאֲלָא + בַאֲלָא נ) “without” and the לָאֵלָה אֲלָא was reads as a cognate the Arabic

*حلف (hulf) “the breach, or non-fulfilment, of a promise . . . disagreement, difference, dissension in opinions”;

*حلف (hîlîf) “one who perseveres in opposition or contention”;

*حلفة (ḥulfat) “a vice, a fault, or an imperfection; badness, corruptness, vitiuousness, or dishonesty”;

*أجلف (caḥlafî) “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 הָלָּא “to” as the imperative הָלָּא “hasten,” a cognate of Arabic أَلْ (‘all) (Hava 1915: 11). He also proposed to read הָלָּא as the cognate of Arabic خَرف (haraf/harif) “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 הָלָּא 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

Scholars have been looking for a definition of הָלָּא which would balance the הָלָּא “for a mute” in the first part of the line and the הָלָּא “poor and needy” in 31:9. However, the הָלָּא needs to be recognized as the equivalent of הָלָּא “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 הָלָּא is חַלְפָּא (halif) 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). The Arabic translation of حلف (halif), as in Jud 9:46 where the MT بيت الابن ليتحالفوا (bayti ‘il liyatahālafū) “ut ibi conjurarent conspirarentque,” i.e., the place where they made an alliance and were united. The cognates of this حلف (halif) are (1) حلف “covenant, friendship, brotherhood, league” and (2) حلف “a sincere friend who swears to his companion that he will not act unfaithfully with him.”

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, “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, where the needs to be vocalized as غني and identified as the cognate of the Arabic غني (ganiya) “he was free from want . . . he became rich, wealthy,” and the nouns غني (ginan) and غني (gana) “wealth, affluence, riches” (Lane 1877:2301–2304; Wehr 1979: 803).

Contrary to the pointing in the MT, this غني is certainly attested in I Chron 22:14, where David declared بهلاhte بتعني meecatey ليرباه “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 *παντοκρατοριαν* “poverty” in the Septuagint, the MT  יָבֵןוּי “my poverty” needs to be read as  יָבֵןוּי “my wealth.” Similarly, the  הָכְיָרִי of Prov 31:5 can be repointed as  יָכְיָרִי meaning “the sons of wealth,” i.e., the rich. If Lemuel listened to his mother he soberly and rightly judged the poor (כָּלִי), the needy (כָּלִי), and the wealthy (כָּלִי). Just as Arabic cognates helped to clarify the meanings of הָכְיָרִי יָבֵןוּי “sons of the covenant, allies” and הָכְיָרִי יָבֵןוּי “sons of wealth, the rich,” another Arabic cognate, עֲלָהֵי עַל (עֲלָהֵי עַל) “family, relatives, kith-and-kin, consanguinity” (Lane 1863: 75, 127–128; Wehr 1979: 27, 44), helps to clarify the original meaning of the MT הָכְיָרִי “dumb” in 31:8. Although, as noted above (page 164), the Septuagint apparently read הָכְיָרִי “word” for הָכְיָרִי; the הָכְיָרִי remains the preferred reading. However, it should be read as *scriptio defectiva* for הָכְיָרִי and vocalized as הָכְיָרִי or הָכְיָרִי, the plural of לְיָלֶה/לְיָלֶה “family, kith-and-kin,” like its cognates. Just as the Arabic עֲלָהֵי (עֲלָהֵי) is a synonym of הָכְיָרִי (כָּלִי), the הָכְיָרִי is the synonymn of the הָכְיָרִי in Prov 31:8.

Although noted in Castell’s 1669 lexicon (58, 115) and defined as “populus, asseclae, affines, familia, domestici,” the cognate עֲלָהֵי/עֲלָה (עֲלָה) has dropped out of subsequent lexicons. Although rarely found in the literature, it probably appears in the name עֲלָה (אַלָּא/אַלָּא) in I Chron 11:
46–47, meaning the same as the בַּתְיָהוֹת (Eliab) in II Sam 11:3 and the אֱלֶהָי (Ammi), in I Chron 3:5. They all mean “God is my kinsman” and are much like the names βαγγουηλ (P’gounel) “God is my kinsman,” בַּתְיוֹה יָאָה, and יָאָה יָאָה “Yahweh is my brother/father.” According to these interpretations of בַּתְיָהוֹת, and בַּתְיָהוֹת, Lemuel’s mother instructed her son to judge the poor (בָּנָי), the needy (טַנְי), the rich (בָּנָי), all tribal allies and confederates (בָּנָי בָּנָי), and his own kith-and-kin (בָּנָי בָּנָי). Her advice covered all social classes, as well as the needs of the royal family and the affairs of state.

Prov 31:10–31
אֲשֶׁר-הִלָּה
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 בְּרֵי לֹהוֹת יְאָה מַשְׁא “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 אֲשֶׁר-הִלָּה “a woman of
power,” or, as the Septuagint has it, a γυναικα ἀνδρείαν “a
manly woman.”

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

(1) חַל/חַל (hyl/hâl/hawl) “strength, power, might.”

(2) חוּוּוָל (huwwal) “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) خֵיל/خيل (hyl/hâl) “a liberal, bountiful, generous person
... one who keeps a thing, and manages, orders, or regu-
lates 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 intel-
lectual, managerial, and charitable qualities of the woman
cannot be ignored. The word לְיִלּוֹ 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?”
THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31

Prov 31:11b

“He will not lack a son.”

Despite McKane’s dismissal of Driver’s proposal to read the אֶלֶּל of 31:11 as the cognate of Arabic سَلِيل (salîl) “a child or male offspring,” and سَلِيلة (salîlat) “daughter” (Lane 1872: 1397; Wehr 489), Driver was certainly correct. McKane (1970: 667) argued that Driver’s interpretation

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 אֶלֶּל in 31:11 with the Arabic cognate ثَلَّة (tallat) “wool” and (2) add הָיָה “for her”—to accommodate the feminine אַנָּו—so that the text reads, “Wool is not lacking to her.” McKane concluded, “I retain the MT, recognizing that ṣālāl 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 אַנָּו 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, אַנָּו. 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 رفأ (rafā) 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 (رفاع [rifāʼun]), constancy and the begetting of sons not daughters” (Lane 1867: 1117–1118, 1129). Wehr (1979: 403) rendered this feliciton 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**

בָּחוֹרָה גַּם וְאַלְכָּה יָלְמָה תַּחְיָה

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 בָּחוֹרָה 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 (Pale [11], אָבַד [15], אָבַדְתָּ [18], הָרָאת [21], לָבַשׁ [27], and מָצַה [30]), and one is in the *imperative* (לְאָה [31]). Even the *imperfect* verbs may indicate past time for actions which continued over a period of time (GKC 107bc). 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 (ולא רשת) “and not bad” became тов άνδρα “to the husband,” in the Septuagint, reflecting a Vor-
lage with לאה, with (1) a confusion of a ר and a ג, (2) a con-
fusion of an נ and a ש, and (3) the loss of the conjunctive ג. Delitzsch (1920: 111 §109a and 119 §131) has cited other ex-
amples of such confusion.

Prov 31:14

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

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

Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus\(^1\) have αυτη тον βιον “her
livelihood” for the MT לאה “her food,” but Codex Alexand-
drinus and Sinaiticus\(^2\) have εαυτης тον πλουτον “her riches.”
The former reflects a Vorlage with לאה לחיי for the
MT לאה. Reading the ל of לאה as a preposition is sug-
gested by the נו הריכים לחייה “nourishment for your servant-
girls” (NRS, NKJ) in Prov 27:27. In light of Ecc 5:9, where
לחיי “wealth” appears in parallel with תכסים “silver,” the
πλουτον in Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus\(^2\) probably reflects a
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

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 ἐδωκεν βρώματα τῷ οἴκῳ καὶ ἐργά ταῖς
θεραπαίναις

And she arose by night, and gave food to her household,
and tasks to her maidens.

The paired words שְׁתֵּי and שֵׁרֶךְ appear also in Prov 30:8,
“feed me with the food that is my portion” (NAS).Both words are very problematic. The שֵׁרֶךְ, meaning “to tear, rend, pluck” appears in Gen 37:33 where Jacob cried, שֵׁרֶךְ "Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.” שְׁתֵּי 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, "her hands don’t fear for her family when it snows for all of them are doubly clothed." (Scott)

"If she fears nothing, she is doubly clothed." This ambiguity accounts for the Septuagint’s "τρέφεται" 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**

She does not fear for her family when it snows for all of them are doubly clothed. (Scott)
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 אָרָיִת as אָרָיִי, (2) a misreading of MT פֶּלְטָל “snow” as שְׁלוֹן “consort, spouse,” and (3) a doublet for the MT חַיָּה which became (a) ἐν οἴκῳ and (b) χρονίζῃ, “he would delay”—which was evidently a secondary misreading of the בִּיתוֹ as μνήμη, “scarlets” as διπλά “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

בְּשָׂרָה בֵּיתָהּ בְּשָׂרָה בֵּיתָהּ תָּמָרָה־אָרָיִת

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

περίβλεπτος δὲ γίνεται ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἀνήρ αὐτῆς
ἡνίκα ἀν 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 בְּשָׂרָה “with his sitting” as ἡνίκα ἀν καθίσῃ ἐν συνεδρίῳ “whenever he sits in
a *sanhedrin*/council.” In Exo 18:14, אֶרֶץ אֱלֹהִים 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 (יִשְׂנָה) 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 (סאָנַדּרֶין) of the tribal elders.27 Thanks to the sterling character of the קִנְיָמָן, her charities and beautiful household, the prestige of her husband when in public and when in court was greatly enhanced.

**Prov 31:24**

ָשַׁלְחָה שָׁלֹחָה לְוֶדֶר מַלְאֹךְ לָתוֹחֵן שָׁלָה לְקִנְיָמָן:

she made and sold a linen garment to the merchant.

σινδόνας ἐποίησεν

καὶ ἀπεδότο περιζώματα δὲ τοῖς Χανααναίοις

She made fine linens, and sold girdles to the Canaanites.

The Septuagint did not translate the MT שָׁלֹחָה “she gave,” and the שָׁלָה was simply transliterated into the plural Χανααναίοις “Canaanites.” But, as noted in BDB (489) and Jastrow (650), שָׁלָה was a proper noun which also carried the meaning of “merchant, trader.”28 The Syro-Phoenician woman (Συροφωνίκισσα in Mark 7:26) who asked Jesus to heal her daughter was identified in Matt 15:22 as γυνὴ Χανααναία. In the *Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Howard 1995:
74–75) she is identified as 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 “merchant” in his Hebrew source and simply updated the old name “Canaan” to the contemporary name of “Syro-Phoenicia.”

**Prov 31:30a**

Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting. (Scott)

ψευδεῖς ἀφέσκειαι
καὶ μάταιον κάλλος γυναικός  
False are desires-to-please
and vain the beauty of a woman.

**McDaniel Translation**

Infidelity is deceitful, and beauty is fleeting.

The stem יָנָה “to be gracious” appears in such names as יָנָה “God is gracious” and יָנָה יֶהוּדָה “Yahweh is gracious” the latter of which became Ἰωάννης in Greek and John in English. Hebrew יָנָה is the cognate of Arabic حن (hann) “he was merciful, compassionate, he became affected with a yearning, longing, desire,” and حنان (hanân) “mercy, pity, compassion” (Lane 1865: 652–654; Wehr 1979: 244). Therefore, it is quite surprising to have this quality labeled as a
“a lie.” Some commentators, like McKane (1970:670), avoided the issue altogether, while others, like Scott (1965:186), followed the Septuagint (ἀρεσκελεῖ “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 יָשָׁר is better derived from יָשָׁר, which was cited by Castell (1669:1166) as the cognate of Arabic خُون / خُن (ḥwn / ḥûn) 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 خاشن (ḥâzn) “unfaithful, disloyal, false” and خاشنة (ḥâznat) “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 יָשָׁר / יָשָׁר “infidelity” is the word of choice for 30:31a, and it has nothing to do with יָשָׁר / יָשָׁר “grace, compassion,” aside from the fact that they became confusing homographs in Hebrew.

It is difficult to relate the Septuagint’s ἀρεσκελεῖ “desires to please” with either יָשָׁר “unfaithful” or יָשָׁר “graciousness.” It is much more likely that פֶּטְנָדְכָּא ἀρεσκελεῖ “false desires-to-please” is a doublet reflecting the MT יָשָׁר “a lie” and a variant which was read as יָשָׁר / יָשָׁר “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 ḫṣım.

The γυνὴ γὰρ συνετὴ ἑυλογεῖται “for a wise woman is blessed” in 31:30 comes from variant readings of the MT ᾧ ἡ γυνὴ ἑυλογεῖται. The ἑυλογεῖται reflects a double reading of ἑυλογεῖται (= γυνὴ) as ἑυλογεῖται (= ἑυλογεῖται)—thanks to a confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116 for examples). The συνετὴ reflects a double reading of συνετὴ (= φόβον) and as τυνεί (= συνετὴ)—thanks to the confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104 for examples), plus the aural confusion of the נ and נ.

Prov 31:31

ויהי הללאה השררה ממעdetalle

And let her works praise her in the gates.
καὶ αἰνεῖσθω ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἄνὴρ αὐτῆς

And let her husband be praised in the gates.

The ἀνακαίνω “he was industrious” in I Kings 11:28 was translated in the Septuagint as ἄνηρ ἐργῶν ἐστίν, rendering the Hebrew participle נְשֵׁי “one making” by the noun ἄνηρ “man, husband.” A similar liberty with the text occurs here in 31:31. By dropping the suffix נ of נְשֵׁי and the מ nominal prefix of נֶשֵׁי, the resulting נֶשֵׁי was read as a suffixed participle, much like the נֶשֵׁי (with no suffix) in I Kings 11:28. In this way the נֶשֵׁי “her works” became (mis)read as נֶשֶׁי “her doer,” which was the basis for the Greek ὁ ἄνηρ νευτίς “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 (καθ' ὁσὶν ἐν συνεδρίῳ).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The two literary units of Proverbs 31 are 31:1–9, which are a mother’s advice to her son, Lemuel (לֵאמוּל), and 31:10–31, which are Lemuel’s words of praise (לֵאמוּל) 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, admonishing 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 לָשׁוֹנָה 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, children, maidens, and the whole household are mentioned in verses 15, 21, 27, 28. The words praising the לָשׁוֹנָה 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. 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 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 them31 . . . 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 .

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 ב and י for “son” rather than ב. The old words from the Massa dialect which need to be added to the new lexicons of Biblical Hebrew include:
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 הָדוֹס הָאוֹתִיִּים 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 τακυλή ἡ παρδοχή as στεγναὶ διατριβαὶ “the ways-of-life were kept under cover/secret” 355 as though ὑπωκαὶ were a passive of ἡ παρδοχή, stem II, “to cover, to overlay.” Moreover, Kennicott (1780: 477) cited the variant perfect form ἡ παρδοχή 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 31:10–31 is 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
THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31 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

אֲלִלְוָהָ הַמְּרָהָカード אָרִיחַשׁ

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

The Septuagint has a expanded text reading

καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐμπεριπατῶν θηλείας εὐψυχος
καὶ τράγος ἑγούμενος αἰπολίου
καὶ βασιλεύς δημηγορῶν ἐν ἑθνεὶ

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

The MT 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 ṣ̄̂̂r̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ can be related to ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ “strength, valor, belt, garments” and ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ “to be quick” or “to harness.” When used with ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ “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 ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ 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 ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ was taken to mean “strutting,” which would be the cognate of Arabic شنئ (tanaya), 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 ꞌ 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 ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ “strutting roosters” for the MT ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂ “girded loins.” The αλέκτωρ “cock” and the εὐψυχος “bold” are a doublet for the ṣ̄̂̂חנ̄̂̂. The θηλείας “females, hens” and the ηγούμενος αἱ πολιοῦ “leading the herd” have no correspondents in the MT.

The real crux of 30:31 has been the ḫ in the phrase ḫ. 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

- \( נְפֵד לְאַל-כֹּהֵן \) “who like a god stands among his people” (Ringgren 1947);
- \( נְפֵד לְאַל-כֹּהֵן \) “a leader preceding his people” (Bewer 1948: 61);
- \( נְפֵד לְאַל-כֹּהֵן \) “against whom there is no rising up, i.e., a king who is irresistible” (Driver 1951: 94, citing Hitzig);
- \( נְפֵד לְאַל-כֹּהֵן \) “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 (אֲרָאָבָה) standing up in front of his people” (Roth 1965: 20).

The consonantal MT can be retained if the אֲרָאָבָה is divided to read אֲרָאָבָה and the אֲרָאָבָה is recognized as the cognate of the Arabicアルバム (אָל) “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 אָלָא (אָל) means “government, rule,” and in form II אָלָא (אָל) 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 אֲרָאָבָה as δημηγορίαν “dемагогуя, оратор” with all the body language that goes with it.
The לְאָב of כֹּחֲבָה is the cognate of Arabic قُوم (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 قُوم (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, רוֹמֶל לְאָב כֹּחֲבָה, means “and a king governing/demagoguing a tribe of his people.” A very similar phrase appears in Arabic, namely, هو مُؤَل لقومه (hû mû’yâl liqawmîhi) “he is ruler, governor of his people” (Lane 1863: 128). The مُؤَل (mû’yâl) is but a variant prefixed form of آل (‘āla) which equals לְאָב, and the قُوم (qawm) equals כֹּחֲבָה. In Hebrew the aw diphthong of qawm would have contract to ô so that כֹּחֲבָה should be read as כֹּחֶב. The כֹּחֶב “his people” could well be a gloss on the rare (in Judean Hebrew) noun כֹּחֶב “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.

2. The Septuagint’s οἱ λόγοι ἐφημέρατε reflects a Vorlage which was read as ἐφημέρατε καὶ ἐφημέρατε “my words were spoken (by) God,” with the inversion of the l and m of lawml and the inverted word order of ἐφημέρατεκαὶ ἐφημέρατε.

3. Note Scott’s (1965: 183) emendation and translation, “Words [of advice] to a king acting foolishly.” This required reading λείματα (from λείματα “to be foolish”) for the MT λείματα.

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 יִמוֹשְׁלָה (אֶמְלַע/אֶמְלוּעַ), providing another example of the confusion of מ and ל, as well as מ and ל. For other examples of such confusion see Delitzsch 1920: 103–105, §103.e 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 מ (ma) exists in Arabic.” This suggestion was followed by McKane (1970: 408). But the numerous definitions of
(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/k and פ, 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 to the root לְמָה to “wipe out, destroy, exterminate” and the מָלֵל “counsel, advice” (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 791).

11. Note the מַלְּפָה which was translated as בּוּ in Prov 4:10. For other examples of the confusion of מ/a and פ and מ and פ, see Delitzsch 103–105, §103 a–c, 107–108, §105 a–b.

12. Note also Driver’s (1951: 194) summary of interpretations. The meanings of the Arabic cognates حَلَفَ (halaf) and حَلَفُ (halaf) 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 حَلَفُ (halaf)—not to be confused with حَلَفُ (halaf)—meaning “he came after, followed, succeeded,” with the noun حَالِفُ (hâlif) “successor, follower, caliph” (Lane 1865: 792–799). This cognate was cited in BDB
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(322) and provided the basis for translating the כנין כנין 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 כנין (hilfat) is also attested. According to Simon (1793: 564, citing Schultens), כנין (ḥalafa) is the cognate of the כנין in Psa 55:19–20,

איהם חלפים להם ולא ראו אלוהים
שלא חזרו בשלאיים חלף בים:

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 103 for reading כנין as a plural, and UT 425, #1337, for reading כנין “from.”

15. Although KBS (321) cited כנין stem II, the cognate of Arabic כנין (halaf) “sharp, high coarse grass, a writing reed,” the כנין (halafa) meaning “to swear an oath, to establish a brotherhood, to unite in a covenant” and the noun כנין (ḥilf) “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 כנין, in Syriac as כנין (halpay), and in the Arabic as כנין (ḥalfî). It can be derived from this stem (Jastrow 457).

16. This כנין “rich” is not to be confused with כנין “poor” or כנין “poor.” Given the frequent interchange of כנין and כנין in Hebrew roots, the graphic similarity of כנין and כנין in certain scripts, and the coales-
cence in Hebrew of the \( \text{gayin} \) (גא) with the \( \text{ayin} \) (ע), its is not surprising that \( \text{ayin} \) and \( \text{ayin} \) were so easily confused that \( \text{ayin} \) 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 written 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 \( \text{ayin} \) “to sing” is \( \text{ganaya} \). It has been recognized in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, along with \( \text{canawa} \) “to be humble, submissive,” the cognate of \( \text{ayin} \) “poor, meek.” The name of the Levitical singer \( \text{ayin} \) (LXX \( \text{ayin} \)), mentioned in I Chron 15:18, 20 and the \( \text{Qere} \) of Neh 12:9, was probably a \( \text{Pu'al} \) perfect (\( \text{ayin} \) > \( \text{ayin} \) meaning either “he was afflicted” 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 position. Thus, the lexeme \( \text{ayin} \) “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 \( \text{ayin} \) 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 \( \text{ayin} \) was translated literally in the NJB as “poor as I am” and in the DRA as “in my poverty.” Curtiss (1910: 259) argued unconvincingly, “possibly in Gn 31:32 and certainly in Dt 26:7 \( \text{ayin} \) means oppressive toil. . . . The parallel \( \text{ayin} \) [“with all my power”] in
29 favour by my hard (or painful) labor.” In BDB (777) was paraphrased as “in spite of my frustration.”

19. The words הילנה (“poor” and הילנה “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 אל (“ill) 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. חלף (hif), 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/tmc/daniel/CBBP.pdf and view Chapter 33, pp. 360–363).

21. Liddell and Scott (1940: 128) defined אנדפי as “manliness, manly spirit” and the opposite of דלי, “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 חלף ‘booty’ in v. 11, חומד ‘power’ in v. 10 and 29, ע ‘might’ in v. 25, and ינות ‘loins,’ ע ‘might,’ והירה ‘arms’ and ינש ‘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 ה תולעת “such a (woman)” nor the כל ו, 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 §107r-w). The brief but important article by Joüon (1922: 349–352) has, unfortunately, been ignored. Joüon called attention to the fact that the Pehîtta 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.


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 כְּנָנִי “Canaanite” from the כְּנָנִי* “merchant.”

29. The γυνὴ γὰρ οὕτως εὐλογεῖται “for a wise woman is blessed” comes from variant readings of the MT פִּנְחֶשׁ מַעֲשֶׂה. The εὐλογεῖται reflects a double reading of פִּנְחֶשׁ as γυνὴ and as
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εὐλογεῖται (= ἶν) — thanks to a confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116c for other examples). The συνετή reflects a double reading of ἁνάκριτος (= φόβον) and as ἄρδευ ( = συνετή) — thanks to the confusion of a ה and a ר (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104–c for examples). There was also the aural confusion of the ש and the ב.


32. See the quotation of Joüon in note 23.


35. See Liddell and Scott 1636, s.v. στεγνός and στέγω B, III.
THE “STRANGER WOMEN” OF PROVERBS

In Prov 2:1–11 הָלַמְתָּה “wisdom,” הָלָּה “understanding,” בֵּיןָה “discernment,” לֶא הָנָה “knowledge,” מֵי וָדָה “erudition,” בֵּיןָה “prudence” are listed as the antidotes

- against the evil, “perversities,” לֹא וָדָה “distortions,” and לָוָדָה “deviations” coming from those men who walk in the ways of darkness (2:12–15), and
- against deceitful and seductive women (רָחֵם) who, though smart, are disgusting and blameworthy (נַכְרֵיהָ), having forsaken their companions and having forgotten the covenant of God. The houses of such women sink down to death; and their paths lead to the shades from which none return or regain the paths of life (2:16–19).

The feminine nouns רָחֵם and נַכְרֵיהָ appearing in Proverbs require careful attention. Whereas the masculine nouns רָחֵם and נַכְרֵיהָ are translated as “stranger” or “foreigner”—without sexual connotations—the feminine רָחֵם and נַכְרֵיהָ are given very definite sexual nuances in many translations. A review of the following texts from Proverbs will demonstrate this difference (the key words are in bold).

Proverbs 2:16

לְהָפְקִיתָה מָאָשֶׂה רָחֵם
מַכְרֵיהָ אֲפוֹרֶה הָלַמְתָּה

To deliver you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress who flatters with her words. (NKJ)
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Saving you from the wife of another, from the adulteress with her smooth words. (NAB)

toû μακράν σε ποιήσαι ἀπὸ ὀδοὺ εὐθείας καὶ ἄλλοτριον τῆς δικαίας γνώμης
to remove you far from the straight way, and to estrange you from a righteous purpose.

Proverbs 5:3

For the lips of a strange woman drop honey, And smoother than oil {is} her mouth. (YLT)
The lips of an adulteress drip with honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. (NAB)

μέλι γὰρ ἀποστάζει ἀπὸ χειλέων γυναικός πόρνης ἢ πρὸς κατσᾶν ἠπαίνει σοῦ φάρυγγα
for honey drops from the lips of a harlot woman, who for a season pleases your palate.

Proverbs 5:10

Lest aliens be filled with your wealth,

And your labors go to the house of a foreigner. (NKJ)

Lest strangers be filled with thy strength, and thy labors come into the houses of strangers.

Proverbs 7:5

That they may keep you from an adulteress,
From the **foreigner** who flatters with her words. (NAS)
That they may keep you from the **immoral** woman,
From the **seductress** who flatters with her words. (NKJ)
That they may keep you from another’s wife,
from the **adulteress** with her smooth words. (NAB)

That she may keep you from the **strange** and **wicked one**, if she should assail you with flattering words.

**Proverbs 11:15**

He is in a bad way who becomes surety for a **stranger**, but he who hates giving pledges is safe.

A bad man does harm wherever he meets a **just man**: and he hates the sound of safety.

**Proverbs 14:10**

The heart knows its own bitterness, and no **stranger** shares its joy.

the heart of a man is perceptive his soul is sorrowful; and when he rejoices, he has no fellowship with **pride**.
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Prov 20:16

Take the garment of one who is surety for a stranger, And hold it as a pledge when it is for a seductress. (NKJ)

Proverbs 22:14

The mouth of the adulteress is a deep pit; he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it. (NAB)

Proverbs 23:33

Thy eyes shall behold strange women, and thy heart shall utter perverse things. (DRA)

Proverbs 27:2

Let another praise thee, and not your own mouth, A stranger, and not your own lips.
Let your neighbor, and not your own mouth, praise you; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Proverbs 27:13

Take his garment when a stranger has been surety, and for a strange woman pledge it.

Take away the garment for a scorners has passed by whoever lays waste another’s goods.

These English translations of הָרָה include (1) “strange, stranger, foreigner, alien,” and (2) “seductress, immoral woman, adulteress, harlot, another’s wife.” The translations of הָרָה (1) include “stranger, strange woman, foreigner,” and (2) “seductress, adulteress, and immoral woman.”

In the Septuagint there is a much wider range of meanings for הָרָה, including

2:16 εὐθείας “straight” (a different Vorlage ?)
5:3 γυναικὸς πόρνης “harlot”
5:10 ἀλλότριος “stranger, another”
7:5 ἀλλοτρίας “stranger, another”
11:15 δικαιωτῆς “righteous man” (a different Vorlage ?)
14:10 ὑβρεὶ “pride”
22:14 παρανόμου “transgressor”
23:33 ἀλλοτριῶν “strange woman”
27:2 πελάς “neighbor”
27:13 ὑβριστής “scorners”
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The MT יָרִיאָה (yari‘a) was rendered a bit more consistently as
2:16 δικαίας “righteous” (a different Vorlage ?)
5:10 ἀλλοτρίων “stranger, another”
7:5 πονηρᾶς “wicked”
27:2 ἀλλότριος “stranger, another”
27:13 ἀλλότρια “stranger, another”

The plural יָרִיאָה, which does not appear in Proverbs, is regularly translated as γυναῖκας ἀλλοτρίας “foreign women”—like the masculine singular יֵרֵם—and יָרִיאָה—without any sexual connotations. Fair questions to consider are “Why have the feminine singular יֵרֵם and יָרִיאָה been translated as “immoral woman, adulteress, harlot” rather than simply as “stranger, foreign (woman)”? and “Do these translations reflect a chauvinist bias?”

THE DERIVATION OF יֵרֵם / יָרִיאָה

The lexicons recognize three independent stems for יֵרֵם:

1. Stem I “to be strange” from the perspective of the person, the family, or the land, with the Arabic cognate زَارِ (zyr/zâra) “to honor as a visitor or guest,” and زَارِ (zâ‘ir) “visitor”; and the Akkadian cognate zâ/i‘uru “hostile” (BDB 288; KBS I: 279; CAD XXI: 97–99).

2. Stem II “to be loathsome,” with the Arabic cognate دَارِ (dâra) “to distain, to be adverse” (BDB 288; KBS I: 267).


Missing from the lexical notices is any reference to the Arabic زور (zûr) “a lie, falsehood, untruth, what is false or
vain,” as in the phrases زور كلامه (zawwar kalâmhu) “he embellished his speech with lies” and زور الكذب (zawwar ʿal-kaḏiba) “he embellished the lie” (Lane 1867: 1268). Castell’s definition (1669: 1034) included “Mentitus fuit, adornavit falsum quid, adulteravit; Testimonium irritum reddidit, mendacci arguit.” Also missing is any notice of زور (zûr) “judgment, intellect, intelligence,” which is especially significant in view of the fact that in Proverbs this زور “intelligent lady” competes with مريم “Lady Wisdom” for the attention and obedience of the “sons” being instructed.

Although زائر (zâʾir) “visitor” was cited in the lexicons, the notices have been too brief to be of any benefit for clarifying the use of زائر (zîr) in Proverbs. A closer look reveals that زائر (zîr) means “a visitor of women, a man who loves to discourse with women, and to sit with them and to mix with them, so called because of his frequent visits to them; or who mixes with them in vain things . . . with or without evil.”

A woman was also called زائر (zîr), as in the expression امرأة زير رجال (ʿimraʾat zîr rijâl) “a woman who loves to interact with a man” (Lane 1867: 1269). Wehr (1979: 449) defined زائر (zîr) as “a ladies’ man, a philanderer” (= φιλογυναῖος “lover of women”). Thus, a زائر (for the MT זִר) would be the equivalent of the Greek φιλανδρία/φιλήνωρ “a lover of men.” The feminine زائر (zîr) differed from the مریم (maryam) because the latter term meant “a woman who loves the discourses of men but does not act viciously or immorally, or commit adultery or fornication” (Lane 1867: 1204).

Thus, the Hebrew زائر، like its Arabic cognate, had layers of meaning which may require a paraphrase to do justice to all
of the shades of meaning. Although some translate נאשֶׁה אֵר as “another’s wife”—as if the text read נאשֶׁה אֵר—as the expression actually means “an intelligent but deceptive female who loved to lie to men and to lie with men.” She need not have been a stranger or foreigner; nor did she have to be married. Although the term נאשֶׁה אֵר may have contributed to post-exilic Jewish xenophobia, it was probably a case of coincidental homographs which permitted נאשֶׁה אֵר to be consistently interpreted as “stranger” while the other meanings, which survived in Arabic, became lost in post-exilic Hebrew.

THE DERIVATION OF נאשֶׁה אֵר/נָאשֶׁה אֵר

The lexicons recognize the following two stems for נאשֶׁה אֵר, which could possibly be related to each other,

- Stem I “to regard, to recognize,” with the Arabic cognate נָאָר (nakara) “to be shrewd” (BDB 648, 1125).
- Stem II “foreign, alien,” with the denominative verb “to act or treat as foreign,” with the Arabic cognate נָאָר (nakara) “to be bad, evil” and the Akkadian cognate nakāru “to be hostile, to be at war, to become estranged” (BDB 648; KBS 699–700; CAD XI: 165; and GKC 86 for the noun form).

A check of the Arabic lexicons shows that נָאָר (nakira) meant “it was disapproved, or bad, or evil, abominable, or foul, or disallowed”; and the noun מנָאָר (munkar) was used in epithets for “any action disapproved, or disallowed, by sound intellect, or deemed or declared thereby, to be bad, evil, hateful, foul, abominable, . . . .” (Lane 1893: 2848–2851). Wehr

Missing from the lexical notices is any reference to the Arabic نكر (nakir and nakur) “possessing cunning; or intelligence mixed with cunning and forecast . . . and [simply] intelligent, or skillful and knowing, and so applied to a woman” (Lane 1893: 2850). The opposite meaning of “ignorance” can also be expressed by the feminine noun نكره (nakarat), as in the expression concerning a male، فيه نكره (fihi nakarat) “in him is ignorance.” The cognate نكر (nakur) “intelligence, knowing” is as significant for the interpretation of هِرِكَن (hYrkn) as is زور (zûr) “intellect, intelligence” for the interpretation of هِرِز (hrz) “intelligent lady.” Thus informed by cognates, it appears that the هِرِكَن while smart, was not good. She could be like the serpent in the garden of Eden, whose أَفْلَام (afalām) “prudence” turned out to be nothing more than shrewdness and cunning. The هِرِكَن “lady of intellect” also competed with هِرِز (hrz) “Lady Wisdom” for the attention and obedience of the “sons” being instructed.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

According to Proverbs the choices facing Israelite young men were either to follow Lady Wisdom or to follow the man-loving “Ladies of Intellect” (תַּרְצָר) and the “Ladies with Intelligence” (תַּרְצָר) who have only sex on their minds and seduction in their speech. Such a licentious, lascivious, promiscuous, wanton lady could be a foreigner (but need not be for هِرِز and هِرِكَن have other meanings), or a harlot (called
a פָּנִית in 7:10), or an *hierodule* (both sacrifice and vows are mentioned in 7:14), or an *adulteress* (a husband is mentioned in 7:19). In good Lucianic style all of these possible roles could be combined, making the lady a married foreign hierodule who got paid for her extramarital affairs with Israelite youth in her devotion to Aphrodite or Ishtar or Astarte. However, it seems wisest to permit the instructions to reference any number of different women with various social, marital, geographical, and religious affiliations.

McKane (1970: 311–341) provided a helpful summary of the debate over the cultic interpretation of Proverbs 5 and 7. Without entering the debate, I simply note that these chapters in Proverbs do not deal with a fertility cult! There is far too much death associated with the נְכַרְוָה and חָרְוָה for any sexual contact to have been focused on fertility. The following verses illustrate how frequently the (sexual) contact with the נְכַרְוָה and חָרְוָה were associated with dying, death, and Sheol.

- 5:5 “her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol”; the Septuagint reads, “For the feet of folly lead those who deal with her down to the grave with death . . .”;
- 5:9 “lest you give your vigor to others and your years to the merciless”;
- 5:10 “lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of an alien”;
- 5:14 “I was at the point of utter ruin in the assembled congregation”;
- 7:22 “all at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter”;
• 7:23 “he does not know that it will cost him his life”;
• 7:26 “For many are the victims she has cast down, And numerous are all her slain”;
• 7:27 “Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death”;
• 9:18 “But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

McKane suggested (1970: 341) that . . . the mythology of the Canaanite god Mot [Death] exercises some influence on the construction of this figure of the woman as a way of death. To be led away by desire for her is to take the road to Sheol and to arrive at a point of no return. This is a deviation from the way of life which does not admit of subsequent correction; it is a commitment to death and there is no way back to a safe road (v. 25).

The appeal to myth in the ancient world produced answers to question about life and death which today are answered by medical science and competent pathologists. When promiscuous sexual activity, such as that addressed in the father’s instruction to his sons, is identified with death and Sheol, it suggests epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases which in the past were as deadly as AIDS is in the present. To avert possible premature death, Lady Wisdom required abstinence from promiscuity, whereas Dame Folly permitted passionate liaisons with the נשים/רעות, “the lying ladies wanting to be laid,” and the נשים/רעות, “the shrewd strange or estranged forbidden females.” Whereas Lady Wisdom would sustain life through covenantal relationships, Dame Folly would fell the foolish through indiscriminate sexual activity.
The association of death and Sheol with the נֵרִים נֵרִים in these scattered texts in Proverbs may have been the source for the names given to two angels who, according to Islamic traditions, interrogate in the grave the newly dead. The angels are Munkar ( = נֶבֶר נֶבֶר) and Nakir ( = נָכִיר נָכִיר), and their function is to prop the deceased upright in the grave and ask “Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet? What is your Book?” Depending upon the answer given the deceased enters Paradise or is cast into hell.\footnote{These names are not in the Qur’\^{a}n but in tradition. Wensinck, writing on “Munkar wa-Nakîr” in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (7: 576–577) stated, “The origin of the names is uncertain, the meaning ‘disliked’ seems doubtful. . . . Apparently these names do not belong to any old stock of tradition.”} But it seems most unlikely that the association of the נֵרִים נֵרִים in Proverbs with death and Sheol and the association of Munkar and Nakir with death and hell is just coincidence. If there is a connection, it would support my argument that נֵרִים נֵרִים had multiple levels of meaning and “stranger woman” need not be interpreted as a metaphor for an adulteress. Likewise, נֶרְדָּה נֶרְדָּה had multiple layers of meaning, from “foreign” to “philanderer,” from “false” to “intelligent.” While some scholars have explained the “stranger ladies” in Proverbs by looking at the cult, greater success has come by looking at the cognates.

NOTES

1. Maxim 9 of the Wisdom of Ani, cited by Ringgren (1947: 135) explicitly warns against the foreign woman. It reads

   Beware of the woman from abroad
   whom nobody knows in the town . . .
THE "STRANGE WOMEN" OF PROVERBS

A woman whose husband is far away,
says every day to you:
“I am beautiful” when she has no witnesses . . .
This is a crime worthy of death.

2. Ringgren (1947: 136–137) cited the following Akkadian parallel

Do not take a harlot, whose husbands are multidudinous,
an Ishtar priestess who has been devoted to a god,
a hierodule whose speech is abundant.
In thine adversity she will not lift thee up,
in thy conflict she will be ridiculing thee.
Reverence and humility are not with her.
If she comes into the house, lead her therefrom;
upon the track of a stranger let her attention be turned.

This was first published in Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology (1916) 38: 105ff.

3. See above, note 2, where reference is made to both the harlot and the hierodule.

4. Ringgren (1947: 135) cited the following lines from the Instructions of Ptahhotep:

. . . beware of approaching the women . . .
A thousand men have been led aside from their good,
a man is but mocked by their glistening limbs . . .
death is the penalty for enjoying it

In Pritchard’s ANET (1955: 413), Wilson provided the following translation of a larger segment of this text which makes it quite clear that concern was about sexual contact with a woman in the household, not a foreign woman.

If thou desirest to make friendship last in a home to which thou hast access as master [variant: ‘as a son’], as a brother, or as a friend, into any place where thou mightest enter, beware of approaching the women. It does not go
well with the place where that is done. *The face has no alertness by splitting it* [variant translation: ‘he who has a wandering eye for the women cannot be keen’]. A thousand men *may be distracted from* their (own) advantage. One is made a fool by limbs of fayence, as she stands (there), become (all) carnelian. A mere trifle, the likeness of a dream—*and one attains death through knowing her.*

... Do not do it—it is really an abomination—and thou shall be free from sickness of heart everyday As for him who escapes from gluttony for it, all affairs will prosper with him . . . .

5. When the Muslim responds correctly he will be shown the place reserved for him in Hell and then informed that Allah has exchanged it for a place in Paradise. An infidel, lacking the correct answers, will be hit with iron instruments between his ears and then shown what could have been his place in Paradise—after which he is thrown into Hell.
INTRODUCTION

The seven problems for translators and exegetes of Isaiah 8:1–15 include four lexical difficulties, one scribal error of confusing a י and a ר, and two cases of words and verses which have ‘migrated’ from their original position in the text. The two phrases in Isa 8:1–15 which must be restored to their former places are

• The MT为什么不“with Rezin and the son of Remaliah” in 8:6, which must be restored to 8:4, so that the text reads, “... the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria—along with Rezin and the son of Remaliah—will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

• Verses 14–15, “And he will become a sanctuary (?) and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel . . .,” must be restored to the end of 8:8, with the subject of the verb י„“being the king of Assyria who is mentioned in 8:7 (see below).

The four words in Isa 8:1–15 which are problematic are the the כפזימ י“rejoicing” in 8:6, the כפזימ י“its wings” in 8:8, the י“be terrified” in 8:9, and the י“sanctuary” in 8:14. However, by looking at Arabic cognates of these four words contextually appropriate definitions and translations become available, requiring only the emendation of the one י to a ר in 8:14.
The second of these three words, the קְנִיָּה “its wings” in 8:8, appears to reference the breadth of the flooding of the Euphrates. However, it appears in the Septuagint as παρεμβολή, meaning “a fortified camp, barracks, an enclosure.” The relevant line from 8:8 reads,

ρηκεῖ ὡς τοῖς κεναίοις μαλακὰς ῥήματα
and it will become the stretchings of its wings
the filling of the breath of your land
καὶ ἔσται ἡ παρεμβολή αὐτοῦ ὡστε πληρώσαι
tὸ πλάτος τῆς χώρας σου,
and his camp shall thus fill the breadth of thy land.

Hatch and Redpath (1954:1068) did not identify the MT קְנִיָּה as the text behind this Greek translation. Commentators, such as Gray (1912:148), Clements (1980: 97) and Blenkinsopp (2000: 241), ignored the Septuagint translation of the verse. However, the Greek translators were obviously aware of a meaning of קְנִיָּה in Biblical Hebrew which was lost in post-Biblical times—though its cognate survived in Arabic.³ The Arabic verb کَنَف (kanafa) “to guard, to protect, to provide with an enclosure” and the noun کَنَف (kanaf) “shelter, fold, protection, wing, aegis” (Lane 1893: 3004; Wehr, 1979: 988; Castell 1669: 1760 [cinxit, custodivit, protexit, circumtextit]) correspond perfectly with the Greek παρεμβολή “a fortified enclosure, camp.” In light of this Arabic cognate, the Septuagint provides the best interpretation of the קְנִיָּה in 8:8. Thus, the paraphrase of קְנִיָּה as “its branches” (Blenkinsopp
SEVEN PROBLEMS IN

2000: 240), when speaking of the river rather than the king, is unnecessary; and the objection of Clements (1980) that

The sudden transition to the imagery of a bird with outstretched wings is awkward and unanticipated, with most modern commentators it should be regarded as a later addition . . .

cannot be sustained. Moreover, Irvine’s (1990: 193) interpretation that “The words to Immanuel depict Yahweh as a great bird . . . [and] the temple iconography is probably the source of Isaiah’s metaphor” can be readily dismissed since he had to reach back thirty-one words in the Hebrew text skipping over the masculine nouns נַעַר and מֵאֶלָּא — to reach the אָנָּא for the antecedent of the suffix of כִּיָּא “its/his wings.”

FROM “REJOICING” TO BEING
“BARELY VISIBLE”

By appealing to the Arabic cognates of the three other problematic Hebrew words in Isa 8:1–15, clarification becomes immediately available. Consider next the לָשׁוֹן in Isa 8:6, which has been variously translated as

- “rejoice” (KJV, NKJ, NIV, NIB, NLT, YLT, WEB, RWB, and the Syriac ܪܬܐ (ḥāda) being the basis for Lamsa’s “rejoice”).
- “melt in fear” (RSV, NRS)
- “tremble” (NJB)
- “to take up” (DRA, Vulgate adsumptsi)
- “desires to have . . . a king over you” (LXX βούλεσθαι εἶναι . . . βασιλέα ἐφ’ ὑμῶν).
Fullerton (1924) and Sweeney (1993) have provided summaries of the varied scholarly interpretations of this form (which is followed by the direct object sign and the preposition “with”), beginning with Kimhi and Gesenius who read it as a construct noun or a verbal noun with the force of a finite verb, meaning “they [many in Judah] will rejoice with them [Rezin and ben Remaliah].” However, a number of scholars opted to emend the MT “and rejoicing” to “and dissolving, melting, fading away,” or “gently,” including Hitzig (1833), Bredenkamp (1887), Procksh (1930), Wildberger (1972), Schoors (1972), Clements (1980), and Kaiser (1983). Honeyman (1944) emended the form to (from “to draw up”), to convey the idea that Judah’s water bucket “drew up” the dangerous kings Rezin and Pekah. A number of other commentators dismissed as a gloss, including Schroeder (1912), Fullerton (1924), and Dietrich (1976). But Irvine (1990: 187) cautioned, “Without textual evidence to the contrary, however, the Masoretic text should be retained and the historical background understood accordingly.”

Auret (1990: 112–113) and Sweeney (1993: 46–52) likewise rejected all proposed emendations and claims about glosses. In order to accommodate the MT “rejoicing,” Auret argued for a change of assumptions about the historical setting, shifting it from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war (735 B.C.E.)—when no Judean would have rejoiced with Pekah or Rezin—to the time of Tiglath-Pileser III (732 B.C.E.). Auret stated,

With the overrunning of Aram and the Northern Kingdom by the invading troops of Tiglath-Pileser III, it
requires no major feat of the imagination to picture the satisfaction and joy of Ahaz and his court . . . , permitting his translation of 8:6 to become

Because these people rejected the calm waters of Shiloah and rejoice in (implicit: the face [sic] of the destruction of) Rezin and the son of Remaliah . . . .

Thus, Aret emended only the context, but not the text. Instead of rejoicing with Rezin and Pekah, the Judeans addressed in 8:6 actually rejoiced with the destruction of the two kings, a fait accompli.6

By contrast, Sweeney rightly argued that the MT י الثلاثים “rejoicing,” lies behind the י하신הש “they preferred / delighted in,” found in Targum Jonathan. But with less success, he argued that the Septuagint’s βοὐλεσθαὶ εξελεύν...βασιλέα ἐφε’ ὕμων, “desires to have ... a king over you,” corresponds to a verbal understanding of MT י الثلاثים as “delight in” or “choose.” But to the contrary, the Greek εξελεύν...βασιλέα reflects the identification of the MT י threesome with the Hebrew stem ישש which was the cognate of the Arabic ساس / سوس (saws/sás) “he ruled, he governed, he became head, chief, commander” (Lane 1872: 1465; Wehr 1979: 514), providing another example of the Septuagint translators’ knowledge of rare words in Biblical Hebrew which became lost in post-Biblical and rabbinic Hebrew. Moreover, the βοὐλεσθαὶ “to desire” was probably a translation of the MT נא, which must have appeared in the Vorlage of the Septuagint with full spelling as נא and was read as the construct of נו “desire.

Similar to Aret’s changing the historical context of Isa 8:6 to a time when the people of Judah could be expected to
rejoice over the demise of Rezin and Pekah, Sweeney opted to interpreted Isa 8:6 in the light of Isa 66:10–14, which also speaks of overflowing streams and of people rejoicing (לָבָהָר and שְׁרִ新た), coupled with the use of ה in with these two verbs, like the בָּהָר in 8:6. His conclusions (1993: 49–50) that “. . . there is no secure alternative to the reading יִמְּרָשׁ in Isa. 8.6,” and “the reading [of מִשָּׁהוֹ] may appear awkward, but it must stand,” can be sustained—but for different reasons and with different definitions than those found in Sweeney’s study.

The MT מִשָּׁהוֹ is the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic adjective מֶשָּׁהוֹ (mušâwis / mušawiš) which Lane (1872: 1618) defined as “water hardly to be seen, by reason of its remoteness [from the surface of the ground] or its paucity and the depth to which it has sunk.” The vocalization of the MT מֶשָּׁהוֹ needs to be repointed as מֶשָּׁהוֹ or מֶשָּׁהוֹ and read in conjunction with the four words which precede it rather than the four word which follow it, so that the entire phrase reads as מֶשָּׁהוֹ יַלָה: מָשַׁשׁ אֵלֵבָה שָׁלֵא, “the waters of Shiloah that flow gently and are barely visible,” with the “barely” focusing on the paucity of the water and the “visible” focusing on its partial invisibility.

It is well known that (1) some sections of the aqueduct from the Spring of Gihon to the Pool of Siloam were covered with slabs, while other parts of the channel were underground due to higher rock levels; and (2) the water which gushed from the Spring of Gihon was sometimes scarce, but always sporadic (gushing out of the spring only twice a day at the end of the dry season, but four to five time a day after a rainy season). The MT מֶשָּׁהוֹ, like its Arabic cognate, referenced
both the paucity of the water and its being scarcely visible at certain places and at certain times. Another hint of the Shiloah aqueduct’s being partially covered appears when it recognized that לֵכָּה “gently” (i.e., + plus לָכָה) is a homograph of the stem לָכָה “to cover” (which in Modern Hebrew also means “to speak softly, gently”). The imagery of the “gently flowing and barely visible waters of Shiloah” presents quite a contrast to the imagery of the conspicuously surging and overflowing Euphrates.

THE AMBIGUITY OF רָשָׁא IN ISAIAH 8:9

The identification of the stem of MT רָשָׁא has proven to be quite controversial. While no one has read it as the imperative of (1) רָשָׁא, (stem I) “be shepherds!” or (2) רָשָׁא (stem III) “be desirous!” three other stems were recognized in the various translations and commentaries, namely,

- (stem II) “to associate with” (the Vulgate’s con-
gregamini, followed by KJV, NRS, WEB, RWB, DRA, YLT)\textsuperscript{10}
- “to break” (NKJ, RSV, NAV)
- “to shout” (NIV, NIB).\textsuperscript{11}

The Septuagint’s γνῶτε “know ye” reflects a Vorlage with רָשָׁא, and has been followed by Gray (1912: 149), Kaiser (1972: 115), and Blenkinsopp (2000: 239). But contextually it does not appear to have been the original Hebrew reading. In contrast, the Syriac text reads צֹעַע “quake, quiver, totter, tremble” (Payne Smith 1903:113),
which obviously does not reflect any of the six definitions cited in the paragraph above. A seventh definition must be added to the list to accommodate the reading of the Peshitta, namely רוח (stem II) “to be frightened, to tremble with fear.” It is the cognate of the widely attested Arabic راًع/روح ( slaughter /rawc /racrap “he was frightened, it affected his heart [raapr] with fear, fright,” and the nouns روعة/روح (rawc /rawcat) “fright, fear” (Castell 1669: 3552, territ, timor, timuit, Lane 1867: 1187–1189; Wehr 1979: 426). This seventh definition of רוח “to tremble with fear” is the perfect parallel for the imperative רוח “be dismayed, scared, terrified” which follows. It is obvious that the Syriac translator knew of this rare Hebrew word which became lost in rabbinic Hebrew but survives as a cognate in Arabic.

Unfortunately, the Peshitta text of 8:9 was ignored by Gray, Kaiser, Clements, Irvine, Blenkinsopp, and others, but was recognized by Wildberger (1991: 349) only to be dismissed because it “does not establish a parallel to מָדַבֶּהוּ (gird yourselves) and מָכֵהוּ מִקְרֶה (forge a plan).” Wildberger was apparently unaware of the Arabic cognate cited above; but with that cognate now in focus, his conclusion is unacceptable.

The Vulgate translated the repeated מָדַבֶּהוּ in 8:9b in two different ways. The first one became confortamini “strengthen yourselves” and the second one became accingite vos “gird / prepare yourselves.” This reflects the same semantic range of אָזָר in Hebrew as that found in Arabic, where אָזָר (azara) means (1) “he aided, assisted, helped, strengthened him” and (2) “he clad, covered, girded him” (Lane 1863: 52–53; Wehr 1979: 17). The Targum’s repeated מָכֵהוּ “to strength one’s
self” reflects the fact that the Biblical נון had a semantic range comparable to that of its Arabic cognate, but the targentist opted to use the more common verb יבנה.

FROM “SANCTUARY” TO “OPPRESSOR”

A number of emendations have already been proposed for the MT לְמַעְרָשׁ in Isa 8:14. Gray (1912: 151) left the word untranslated and commented, “Not improbably לְמַעְרָשׁ is a corruption of לְמַעְרְשֵׁה יבנה [‘for a snare’], which was itself erroneously substituted from the following distich for the term which stood in the original text.” Driver (1955:82) emended the text to יבנה כו “cause of difficulty”; and Clements (1980: 99), noting that "sanctuary sounds strange in a verse which affirms the threatening aspect of Yahweh’s purpose towards Judah,” likewise opted for יבנה כו כו, reading it as the hipchîl participle meaning “one who conspires against.” Blenkinsopp (2000: 241) also thought that sanctuary “makes no sense in the context” and agreed with Clements and others, but opted for the picel participle יבנה כו כו “co-conspirator.”

Irvine (1990:203), unimpressed with the emendations of others, offered his own. For the MT לְמַעְרָשׁ יבנה כו כו “for a sanctuary, and for a stone of offense,” he divided the words as לְמַעְרָשׁ יבנה כו כו, which, with the הh’w>, means “Then he [Yahweh] will become for the sake of his holy domain a stone of offense . . . .” But isolating the first and last of the seven ל’s in a series in this verse as alternatives for the usual לם -למה “for the sake of”—in order to prove that “Isaiah 8:14 makes good sense as a promise of divine protection for Zion and the Davidic house”—is less than convincing.
As Blenkinsopp noted, the problem in 8:14 is partially one of context. The more appropriate context for the metaphors “a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling . . . a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” is at the end of Isa 8:8, where the metaphors would apply to the king of Assyria who is mentioned in 8:7. But, in this restored context, a reference to the king of Assyria being a “sanctuary” for both house of Israel and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem makes no sense. Therefore, an emendation of the MT לְחִמָּשׁ לְחִמָּשׁ to לְחִמָּשׁ לְחִמָּשׁ (i.e., changing the ק to a ר and reading a hiph‘il participle rather than a noun) is required. The Hebrew לְחִמָּשׁ is the cognate of the Arabic كَرَتْ “it oppressed, it afflicted, it grieved [him]” (Lane 1885: 2604; Wehr 1979: 959–960, where كَارْتَة [kâritat] “disaster, catastrophe, torrential rains” is also noted). Thus, the king of Assyria—not Yahweh—will become the “oppressor” (literally, “the grief-maker”) as well as his becoming “a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling, . . . a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The biblical book of Lamentations, though it is from a later period, illustrates well the grief generated by Israel’s oppressors.

CONCLUSION

Other minor problems can be identified in these fifteen verses, like the MT רֵשְׁפִּים “conspiracy” in 8:12 being twice translated in the Septuagint as σκληρόν “hard,” indicating that its Vorlage read רֵשְׁפִּים rather than רֵשְׁפִּים. But the major problems have been addressed and Arabic cognates have facilitated the recovery of rare Hebrew words—some of which were known to the Greek, Latin, and Syriac translators but subsequently became lost in post-Biblical Hebrew. These
rare words can now be restored to the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew.

The relocation of the phrase “with Rezin and the son of Remaliah” may have been an early editorial change, since, as stated in the restored version of Isa 8:4, Isaiah said that Rezin and Pekah would be carried away before the king of Assyria. But according to 2 Kings 16:9, Rezin was killed in Damascus; and according to 2 Kings 15:30, Pekah was killed by Hoshea, a fellow Israelite. Neither king was literally “carried away before the king of Assyria.” Thus, their names were retained in the text but moved out of the Maher-shalal-hash-baz prediction passage.

Once the original מָעַד מַלְאָלָה “oppressor, grief-maker” was misread as the noun מָעַד מַלְאָלָה “sanctuary,” a pseudo-correction was made which involved moving the words associated with the מָעַד מַלְאָלָה to be in proximity to the verse containing the verb מָעַד מַלְאָלָה. This transposition was done quite early for the Qumran scrolls and the versions reflect the same placement of these verses as that found in the MT.\(^{15}\) Unwittingly, this led to the subject of the verb מָעַד מַלְאָלָה becoming Yahweh, rather than remaining the king of Assyria. Thus, simple misreading of one מָעַד מַלְאָלָה as a מָעַד מַלְאָלָה led to a pseudo-correction, and it in turn has led to a wide variety of pseudo-interpretations about Isaiah’s understanding of the nature and workings of Yahweh. The transposition of Isa 8:14–15 to follow 8:8, coupled with the recovery of the rare word מָעַד מַלְאָלָה in Isaiah’s vocabulary, redefines the parameters of the discussion.

An English translation of Isa 8:1–15 is provided here for a summary and a conclusion. My proposed readings and the proposal of others which have been adopted are in **BOLD SMALL CAPS** and transposed texts are in lower case **bold** font.
Isaiah 8:1–4

Then Yahweh said to me, “Take a large tablet and write upon it with a soft stylus, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’” And I got reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; for before the child knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria, along with Rezin and the son of Remaliah, will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

8:5–8 and 8:14–15

Yahweh spoke to me again: “Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently and are barely visible, therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory; and it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks; and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck; and his [the Assyrian king’s] outspread garrisons will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” And he [the King of Assyria] will become an oppressor and a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

8:9–13 and 8:16–18

Tremble with fear, you peoples, and be terror-stricken; give ear, all you far countries; strengthen yourselves and be terror-stricken; strengthen yourselves and be terror-stricken. Take counsel together, but it will come to nought; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us. For Yahweh spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: “Do
not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.” But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

NOTES

1. Instead of identifying  הָרְשִׁיָּה  כִּבְשֵׁי יְהוֹוָה as a misplaced fragment, Fullerton (1924: 267), partially following Giesebrecht (1888: 227), proposed deleting the phrase and the  עֲמַרַת which precedes it as a gloss which originated as a marginal comment. With the removal of these five words, Fullerton argued, 8:5–8a becomes a coherent literary unit.

2. Compare Fullerton’s proposal (1924: 289) to move 8:8b–10 to precede 7:10.

3. Talmage (1967: 467) suggested that the Arabic cognate  אָנָּתוּ (‘anuta) “soft, blunt” provides the clue for understanding the phrase  הָרְשִׁיָּה  כִּבְשֵׁי יְהוֹוָה in Isa 8:1 (usually translated “a man’s pen”) to “refer to a broad nibbed, flexible pen capable of making the bold stroke expected in the context.”

4. Even if the 3ms suffix of  חֶבְלוֹ ר יי referred to the river, rather than to the king, the Arabic  כָּנָּף (kanaf) would still be relevant because it can also mean “the right and left side” of a person or place and would permit the translation, “and it will come to pass (sg,) the [river’s] stretchings (pl.) to its right and its left, the filling of the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” This interpretation would also mitigate against Auret’s argument (1990:109–110) that a redactor has made the “wings” which would cover Judah to be those of Immanuel (= Yahweh, not Hezekiah), “which changes the original message of doom to one of promise.” Sweeney’s suggestion that the reference to the “wings” of the king of Assyria carries sexual
ISAIAH 8:1–15

overtones comparable to the spreading of one’s skirt, is less than convincing.

5. Fullerton (1924: 265–266) rejected this emendation, stating, “It is one of those ingenious conjectures which at first sight captivate the hard-pressed exegete but which prove in the end to be will-o-the-wisps, leading him off into false paths.” Unfortunately, too few commentators took Fullerton’s criticism seriously.

6. If there is any historical validity to the account in 2 Chron 28:5–15 and 2 Kings 16:5–6 about Rezin’s and Pekah’s plundering Judah and Jerusalem—killing well over one hundred twenty thousand and taking two hundred thousand Judeans as prisoners to become slaves in Samaria—it is difficult to concur with Irvine’s speculation (1990: 191) that

On the eve of the Syrian-Israelite invasion, a large part of the country was ready to accept a new non-Davidic leadership that would cooperate with the Syrian and Israelite kings. . . If (my italics) the wider Judean public outside the capital city and its environs opposed the Davidic regime and “rejoiced in Rezin and the son of Remaliah,” disaster would overtake them as well.

The “if” is a big if. Irvine invests great historical validity in the Targums’ reading of Isa 8:6, “Because this people despised the kingdom of the house of David . . . and are pleased with Rezin and the son of Remaliah.” But he unfairly faults Fullerton—who asserted, “. . . every datum in vv 7 and 8 except 8:6b indicates that he [Isaiah] was doing his utmost to allay the popular fear of the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition in order to prevent both court and people from appealing to Assyria for help”—for simply assuming “the reliability of the Kings text and so infers Isaiah’s opposition to both Ahaz and ‘this people.’” However, Irvine’s assumptions about the Targum of Isaiah are not as compelling as Fullerton’s assumptions about the Hebrew text of Kings and Chronicles.
7. Sweeney (1893: 52) also argued that the implicit sexual imagery of Isaiah 8 and Isaiah 66 “present parallel but contrasting descriptions of the circumstances that led to the punishment and the results of the restoration”—supporting his claim that the ָּּּּּּּשׁ in Isa 8:6 was there already by the time of Trito-Isaiah.

8. The identification of this Arabic cognate was first made by Popper (1923: 348) but, aside from a footnote in Fullerton’s study (1924: 267) it has received scant attention since then.

9. The “barely visible waters” is not a reference to Hezekiah’s tunnel which was constructed about thirty years later (Isa 22:11; 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron 32:30; and Sirach 48:17).

10. Wildberger (1991: 350) noted that Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian’s συνασπίσθε “assemble” and the Targum’s חֲבֹרָה “gather together” are based upon this stem.

11. Wildberger (1991: 350) noted that this is the preferred reading of Schmidt (1930: 7) and Sæbø (1964: 132).

12. The problems with the השפָּה “sanctuary” in 8:14 led Blenkinsopp (2000: 241) also to emend unnecessarily the MT השפָּה “you shall regard as holy” in 8:13 to השפָּה “with him you shall conspire.”

13. In light of the Arabic variants قَرَضَنِي (qarāṭanī) and كَرَضَنِي (karaṭanī) “it grieved me” (Lane 1885: 2509, 2604), coupled with the frequent interchange of ב and כ in Hebrew (e.g., כב and כב, כב, כב, כב, כב), there is no need to emend further the השפָּה to השפָּה. The Arabic ת (t) routinely becomes a ש in Hebrew.
14. For other examples of the confusion of the ℎ and the ℱ, see Delitzsch, 1920: 114, § 116c.d.

XIV

TWO UNRECOGNIZED WORDS IN ISAIAH 53:9a AND EZEKIEL 43:7b

The seven Hebrew words in Isa 53:9a have presented a number of problems for interpreters. The following text and its varied translations speak for themselves.

Masoretic Text

The different English translations include

- And he shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death (Douay Rheims),
- And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death (KJV, WEB, RWB),
- And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death (ASV, RSV),
- And they made His grave with the wicked — But with the rich at His death (NKJ),
- He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death (NIV, NIB),
A grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers (NAB),

His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death (NAS, NAU),

They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich (NRS),

He was given a grave with the wicked, and his tomb is with the rich (NJB),

And it appointeth with the wicked his grave, And with the rich {are} his high places (YLT),

But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave (NLT),

He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, (Lamsa).

The 3ms waw-consecutive הָלַךְוּ “he gave” became δῶσον “I will give” in the Septuagint, as though the Hebrew verb were a 1cs waw-consecutive. The ASV, RSV, NKJ, and NRS translated this verb as a 3mpl waw-consecutive וָיַּלְכֶה “they made,” as though יָלַךְ “to give” were a synonym of יָבֶשֶׁת “to make” (like the English “give a burial” and “make a grave”). Seven translations (NIV, NIB, NAB, NAS, NAU, NJB, NLT) rendered the active יָלַךְ “he gave” as the passive “was given,” or “was assigned,” or paraphrased it as “was buried.”

The second and fifth word, מַלְכֶה, was read as the preposition “with” in all of the English translations, aside from the Douay Rheims which translated the Vulgate. The Vulgate and the
Septuagint, though, read the ἀντί as the sign of the direct object. The third word, ἀντί ἁνάστιμα “wicked (ones),” and the fourth word, ἄνεμος “his grave,” have not been problematic—but the initial ἀντί in the Septuagint and the initial pro in the Vulgate have no corresponding preposition in the MT.

The sixth word, ἄναστι “rich,” has led to much speculation since it is not a fitting parallel for the preceding ἀντί “wicked ones.” Several scholars, cited in BDB (799), proposed emending the ἁνάστιμα to ἁνέκαμπτομα “transgressors” and then changing the ἄνεμος to ἁνέκαμπτομα “wicked (ones),” thereby restoring parallel synonyms. More recently John McKenzie (1968: 130) emended the MT ᾄστι “rich” to ᾄστι “evil-doers” in order to get an appropriate parallel for the ἁνέκαμπτομα “wicked.” The emendation was followed by the NAB in 1970.

But the real problem with the MT ἄναστι is not with the consonants but with its etymology and vocalization. The unpointed Hebrew נָאָס could be the cognate of five different Arabic words, including

• عشر (‘ašr) “ten” (BDB 796; Lane 5: 2050–2052).
• عشر (‘ašr) and عشرة (‘aširat) “a relation, a friend, a man’s kinfolk” (Lane 5: 2053).
• عشر (gāṭara) “to abound with herbage or with goods” and عشرة (gāṭrat) “abundance of the goods, conveniences, or comforts of life” (BDB 799; Lane 6: 2230).
• عشر (‘usr) and عشرة (‘usrat) “poverty, littleness of possessions, of property, of wealth, or of power” (Lane 5: 2043).
• غثر (gutru) and غثراء (gatrâ‘u) “the low, base, vile, ignoble, mean, sordid, or the refuse, or rabble, of mankind” (Lane 6: 2230). Castell (1669: 2949) included the definitions, “injuria, molestia, . . . tyrannus, iracundus, truculentus, . . . Homo improbus, impudicus, scelestus” (abuse, trouble, tyrannical, angry, ferocious, morally unsound, shameless, infamous).7

Tradition and translators have, partly for theological reasons, taken the غثر of Isa 53:9 to be the cognate of غثرة (gatrât) “rich”; and some have cited this verse as a prediction of Jesus’ being buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea. However, the contextually desired parallel for the غثار “wicked (ones)” is obviously the last in the list, i.e., غثار (gutru) “vile, ignoble.” In light of the u vowel of this cognate the MT غثار can be repointed as غثار or as a segolate غثار, with the י removed as a later scribal addition once the word was misunderstood as the widely used word for the “rich” rather than the rare word used for the “vile.”8

The fourth cognate cited above، غسر (‘usr) “the poor” or “the powerless,” should also be kept in focus. The prophet may well have intended a double entendre constructed with rare words for “the poor” and “the lowly.” No honor would be bestowed on those buried in a potter’s field or a cemetery for sinners.

The last word of 53:9a، بُتْمَتْ can be vocalized as بُتْمَتْ “his high place” (which in context would mean “his burial mound”) or بُتْمَتْ (with the MT) meaning “in his death” (BDB 119 and 560).9
A similar ambiguity with the בָּנוֹת occurs in Ezek 43:7, which reads

וְלֹא יַעֲבֹדֵהוּ עוֹד בִּטְיוֹרֵיהֶםּ אֶל כִּרְשֵׁי הַמֶּרְכּוֹז הָעָלָהָם יָצִירָם וְיָפָרֵהוּ בִּטְיוֹרֵיהֶם מֵהָלְכוֹז הָעָלָהָם

KJV

and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places.

NAS and NAU

And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die.

McDaniel

And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their child-sacrifices at their high places.

The last word in the MT, בְּנוֹתָם, was translated in the Septuagint as ἐν μέσῳ ἀντοῦν “in their midst,” evidently having a Vorlage with הָבְהָרֵיכָם for the MT בָּנוֹתָם. The Vulgate has in exelsis, which is reflected not only in the Douay Rheims and KJV, but also in the ASV, NKJ, NIV, NIB, NAB, WEB, and YLT—all having “their high places.” But the NRS has “at their deaths,” like the NAS and NAU which have “when they die,” as if the text were בָּנוֹתָם. The RSV and the NJB have nothing for the בְּנוֹתָם, evidently viewing the בָּנוֹתָם as a variant dittography of the MT בָּנוֹת “in their placing” which begins the next verse.
The clue for deciding whether to read יַמְלַחֲשׁ as “their high places” or “in their dying” is found in a proper understanding of the second יַמְלַחֲשׁ in Ezek 43:7b. The first occurrence of יַמְלַחֲשׁ in the verse certainly means “their kings,” but the second יַמְלַחֲשׁ needs to be repointed as יַמְלַחֲשׁ, a sego- late plural meaning “their child-sacrifices”—which accounts for the reference to all of the dead bodies. The noun יַמְלַחֲשׁ “child-sacrifice” is well attested, although traditionally it was treated as the name of the deity mentioned in I Kings 11:7, “Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech (מֹלֶכֶת) the abomination of the Ammonites.” But in I Kings 11:5, the Ammonite Molech appears as מֹלֶכֶת שְׂכָנִים נְעָרִים, “Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.” This difference suggests that the מֹלֶכֶת of 11:7 is simply a misspelling of the מֹלֶכֶת of 11:5, 11:33, II Kings 23:13, as well as the מֹלֶכֶת (Mֶלַחֲשׁוּמִ) in Jer 49:1, 4, and Zeph 1:5—all of which the NIV and NIB transliterated as Molech. (Noteworthy also is the מֹלֶכֶת of II Sam 12:30 and I Chron 20:2, where the Septuagint has the doublet ἡγεμόνα τοῦ βασιλεῶς αὐτῶν, “Melchol their king.”)

In light of Otto Eissfeldt’s study in 1935, in which he convincingly argued that מֹלֶכֶת was not a divine name but a technical term for a child-sacrifice, the reference to “Molech” in the seven verses cited next should be read as the noun meaning “a molk-sacrifice” or “a child-sacrifice” rather than the name “Molech” appearing in the translations. The pointing of the preposition in the following texts as יָהָה (לֶא + יָהָה)
reflects the scribal recognition that מֹלֶךְ was a common noun, not a proper name:

- Lev 18:21, "You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Molech" (i.e., “for a molk-offering” or “for child-sacrifice”).
- Lev 20:2, "who gives any of his children to Molech shall be put to death."
- Lev 20:3, "he has given one of his children to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name."
- Lev 20:4, "when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death."
- Lev 20:5, "all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech."
- II Kings 23:10, "that a man make a son or a daughter pass through fire for Molech."
- Jer 32:35, "to make their sons and their daughters pass through fire for Molech."

Other texts which speak of child-sacrifice, without using the technical term מֹלֶךְ, include Psa 106:37–38; Isa 57:5–9; Jer 7:31–32; Ezek 16:20–21; 23:36–39; and Mic 6:7.¹⁰
UNRECOGNIZED WORDS

CONCLUSION

Once the second מַלְכִּיָּה of Ezek 47:3 is repointed as מַלְכִּיָּה “their child-sacrifices,” there is no need to repoint the MT בְּמַחְשְׁבֹת “their high places” as בְּמַחְשְׁבֹת “when they die” or “at their dying.” A reference in the same half-verse to “high places,” where sacrifices were made, and the technical term for a “child-sacrifice” seems contextually quite natural. However, the last word of Isa 53:9a, בְּמַחְשְׁבֹת “in his dying” needs to be repointed as בְּמַחְשְׁבֹת “his (burial) mound”—the perfect parallel to בְּמַחְשְׁבֹת “his grave.”

The two words which have to date gone unrecognized by most translators and interpreters are (1) the מַלְכִּיָּה “child-sacrifice” in Ezek 47:3, where it provides paronomasis with מַלְכִּיָּה “king,” and (2) the ryvî’/rvî’ “vile, ignoble, base” in Isa 53:9a, which, for theological reasons, has been identified as the well attested ryvî’ “rich.”11 Therefore, for philological reasons, the translation of the NAB for Isa 53:9a is preferable: “A grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers”—recognizing that the MT Qal יְהַבֵּית can be read as the passive Hoph’al יְהַבֵּית and that the Hebrew has the plural “wicked (ones)” followed by the singular “vile.” Repointing some vowels in the MT is necessary, but no emendation of the consonants is required.

The correct translation of Ezek 47:3, as proposed above, is “And the house of Israel will not again defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the dead bodies of their child-sacrifices at their high places.” The
vocable ܢܲܛܲܪ / ܠܲܢܲܛܲܪ “vile, ignoble, base” needs to be added to adjectives listed in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew.

NOTES

1. James McDonough (private communication, 2004) translated the Greek somewhat more literally as, “And I will give away the wicked men instead of that man’s burial and [I will give away] the rich men instead of that man’s death.”

2. McDonough noted also that the antecedent of the Vulgate’s *sua* could be “the rich man” or the subject of the verb: “And he shall give away impious men for burial and [he shall give away] the rich man for his death.”

3. The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll (IQIsa) has a plural verb. The line reads נִשְׂרָרֵים אַהֲרָנּוֹת אֶת רַשׁיָּם כֹּבָּר וּכְּסִיָּרִים בְּרָם. Differences from the MT include (1) the plural verb, (2) the plural נִשְׂרָרֵים “riches” / “vile ones,” (3) the preposition כֹּסֵם [the כ being over-written by a indistinguishable correction] for the second כֹּסֵם, and (4) בְּרָם, which can mean “his (burial) mound” but cannot mean “with his dead/death.” The כ of the נִשְׂרָרֵים is blurred but the letters are clearly in the text.

4. Whybray (1975: 178) commented,

That the burial place of rich men and criminals should be identical is highly improbable, and makes the lines meaningless. Of the emendations which have been proposed, ʻošē raʿ, ‘doers of evil’ and šśʾīrīm, ‘demons’, are the most plausible, but the text may be correct: it has been suggested that ʻāšīr here is unconnected with ʻāšīr meaning ‘rich’, but related to an Arabic word meaning ‘refuse, rabble’. 
5. Albright (1956: 246), in light of Lev 17:7, “they shall no more slay their sacrifices for satyrs,” emended the לְשׁוֹנִיָּמָה לְשֵׁשֵׁר and translated, “His grave was put with the wicked. And his funerary installation with the demons” (with the plural “demons” reflecting the plural לְשׁוֹנִיָּמָה in DSIs).

6. This cognate probably contributed to the later tradition that Joseph of Arimathaea, “a rich man” (טֶהֶרָה לְשֵׁשֵׁר), was also a “kinsman” (לְשֵׁשֵׁר) of Joseph, Mary and Jesus.

7. See Reider, 111–130, especially page 118.

8. Westermann (1969: 266) translated the synonyms as “male-factors and miscreants.”

9. In light of the בְּהֶמֵהַ where the medial  ה reflects the vowel shift from ה to  ה, Albright (1956: 244–246) proposed the emendation of MT בֵּית מָתָן “in his deaths” to בֵּית מָתָה “his burial mound.” Reider (1952: 118) proposed emending the MT בֵּית מָתָה to בֵּית מָתָה “the house of his death,” meaning in this context “his tomb.”

10. See below Chapter XVI, “Deceived or Deceiving Prophets,” for a full discussion of Ezekiel 14:9 and 20:25–27.

11. In light of the following four Gospel statements about Joseph of Arimathaea, it is very difficult to associate him or his tomb with the wicked and their graves, or to make Isa 53:9 a prophecy about Jesus’s burial in Joseph’s tomb:
   - “there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple . . . ” (Matt 27:57).
   - “Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also looking for the kingdom of God . . . .” (Mark 15:43).
• “Behold there was a man named Joseph, who was a councillor, a good and righteous man, who had not consented . . .” (Luke 23:50).

• “And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly . . .” (John 19:38).
XV

JEREMIAH WAS NOT DECEIVED

JEREMIAH 20:7a

חָתַתְנִי יְהֹוָה וְאָסַפְתִּי תוֹכְלֵל

Septuagint

ηπάτησάς με κύριε καὶ ἡπατήθην ἐκράτησας καὶ ἡδυνάσθης

Vulgate

seduxisti me Domine et seductus sum
sum fortior me fuisti et invaluisti factus.

NIV

O LORD, you deceived; me, and I was deceived you
overpowered me and prevailed.

McDaniel Translation

You told me, O Yahweh, of the fiat
and I was informed of the decree.
You made me articulate
and intrusted (me).

The Meaning of הָתוֹל

Failure to recognize that the הָתוֹל in Jer 20:7 was not the
denominative of יַתִּל / יַתָּל “simple/simplicity,” meaning in
the Pi'el “to deceive or to seduce” (BDB 834; KBS 3: 984),
but a cognate of the Arabic فَتَوَ (fatawa) “he notified the
decision of the law,” has created serious problems for com-
mentators.¹ The Septuagint’s use of ἀπατάω “to deceive,
cheat, mislead” and Vulgate’s use of seduco “to lead astray,
to seduce” have been followed by many subsequent translators and interpreters. As a consequence, commentators from Calvin to Clines have been hard pressed to save Jeremiah from the charge of blasphemy.

Calvin [1509–1564], in defense of Jeremiah, argued unconvincingly,

But there is no doubt that his language is ironical, when he says that he was deceived. He assumes the character of his enemies, who boasted that he presumptuously prophesied of calamity and ruin of the city, as no such thing would take place. . . .

Clines and Gunn (1978: 21–23) followed Calvin’s translator John Owen [1616–1683] (though not mentioned) and argued that in this text actually meant God “tried to persuade” Jeremiah to become a prophet. They stated

“It appears likely that pittâ does not describe an act carried through to a successful conclusion, but an attempted act. That is, it seems to be more like our verbs “urge”, “advise”, “attempt”, than like “convince”, “induce”, “compel”.

But it is difficult to recognize any such tentativeness in Jer

Persuasion, therefore, seems not to have been a part of the process of Jeremiah’s appointment as a prophet by Yahweh.

Holladay (1986: 552), on the other hand, appealed to the words of Micah ben Imlah (I Kings 22:21ff.)

...
And he said I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.

And he [Yahweh] said, ‘You shall deceive’ . . . Yahweh put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours.

According to Holladay (1986: 552–553), Jrm interpreted the contrast between the prophets of his own day who proclaimed good news and his own proclamation of bad news in the same way: Yahweh had “deceived” this people and Jerusalem ”. . . Jrm questions the effectiveness of Yahweh’s word and accuses Yahweh of misleading him . . . the implication is that Yahweh has broken his own torah in his treatment of Jrm. . . . Verse 7a thus embodies an outburst that is deeply rebellious, not to say blasphemous: Jrm understands Yahweh as brute force, as deceptive, beyond any conventional norm.

Jeremiah’s words in 15:16, קְפֹר מִשְׂרָת לִבְּךָ אָפָל הָוֹז, “Verily, you are to me like a deceitful brook,” could be a variant of the charge in 20:7 that Yahweh had deceived him. But the Septuagint reads γυνομένη ἐγενόθη μοι ὡς ὕδωρ ψευδές, “it indeed became to me as deceitful water,” with an (impersonal) third person rather than the second person addressed to Yahweh. The Vorlage could have been שִׁבֵּית נָהָר or שִׁבֵּית נָהָר for the MT נָהָר נָהָר. Similarly, the Vulgate has facta est mihi quasi mendacium aquarum “it became to me as of deceitful waters,” reflecting the same Vorlage as the Septuagint, while the Syriac agrees with the MT. No doubt, Jeremiah felt deceived, but the question remains as to whether or not Jeremiah believed Yahweh had deceived him.⁵

In light of יְנֵה appearing in Exod 22:15 for sexual seduction and קָנִים being used in Deut 22:25 in reference to forcing
a woman sexually, McKane (1986: 470) simply concluded, 

... the right conclusion is that v. 7a employs the language of seduction and violation. Jeremiah feels a deep sense of betrayal in view of his sorrowful experiences as a prophet and the bitterness of the outcome of his acquiescence. Yahweh overpowered him, crushed his resistance and compelled him to be a prophet, and he has found the office a bed of nails.

But once the Arabic cognate (fatawa) becomes the key for interpreting Jer 20:7, Jeremiah appears as a bewildered prophet, but not a quasi-blasphemous one. The verb (fatawa) in form IV means “he notified the decision of the law, . . . made known, or explained to him, [what he required to know, and in particularly what was the decision of the law, in, or respecting,] the case.” The noun (fatwā) means “the giving of an answer, or a reply, stating the decision of the law respecting a particular case . . . an answer, or a reply, to a question relating to a dubious judicial decision”; and the related noun (muftī) means “a jurisconsult who notifies the decisions of the law, in, or respecting, cases submitted to him for guidance of the (qāfī), who is the “magistrate” issuing a (qādī ‘ā), which is a “decree; ordinance; sentence, or judicial decision” (Lane 1877: 2336–2337; 1893: 2990; Wehr 1979: 815, 904). The lexeme , the father of the prophet Joel (Joel 1:1), which could mean “young man of God,” or “tempted by God” (see KBS 3: 985), or “God announced (the verdict/decree).”

Thanks to the fatwa of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued on February 14, 1989, calling for the death of Salman Rushdie upon the publication of his novel Satanic Verses, and the subsequent declaration by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on December 26, 1990, that the fatwa was irrevocable, the word fatwa and its association with death became known world-
Furthermore, the fatwa signed by Sheikh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Ladin on February 23, 1998, urging a jihad against Americans, made the Arabic fatwa a household word in America after September 11, 2001. At onetime fatwa (fatwa/fatwah) was a recognized term in Biblical Hebrew.

The case in point for Jer 20:7 had to do with Yahweh’s decision to implement the penalty clauses contained in the Torah—summarized in Deut 28:15–68. The covenant called for Israel’s recognition of Yahweh as God alone, requiring total obedience to his will. Failure of Judah and Jerusalem to fulfill the covenant stipulations would result in their death and destruction—just as Ehpraim and Samaria had been destroyed for violating the same covenant.

Jeremiah had been informed—to borrow the Arabic term—of the divine fatwa, and had been called as a prophet to announce the divine decree, especially the fact that the fatwa/fiat was revocable! Repentance by Judah and Jerusalem and the renewal of covenantal obligations to Yahweh would make null and void Yahweh’s death sentence for them.

Jeremiah acknowledged earlier “Yahweh made known to me, and I knew” (11:18), which has essentially the same meaning as the fatwa/fiat (20:7), except the fatwa includes in itself the object of what became known—the fiat, the decree, the sanction—without a separate word as the direct object.
The Meaning of \( q^z:x \)

In a similar manner, failure to recognize that the \( q^z:x \) in Jer 20:7 is not the verb meaning “to be strong, to strengthen,” but the cognate of the Arabic حذق (\( hadjqa \)) “he became skilled, learned,” led to highly improbable interpretations of this verse. For example, Clines and Gunn (1976: 395, 397) concluded,

In v. 7f. Yahweh is cast in the role of the traditional “enemy” of the psalmist. Jeremiah’s complaint, “Thou art stronger \( (\overline{\text{רומא}PROP}) \) than I / and thou hast prevailed \( (\overline{\text{יבא PROP}}) \)”, exemplifies the classical theme of the powerful persecutor that one meets, e.g. in Ps 3510 . . . or Ps 134f. . . . But Yahweh, to whom the psalmist in his weakness conventionally appeals against the powerful persecutor, has ironically become in Jeremiah’s experience the very one who has ruthlessly used his strength against frailty.

It is precisely because in the prophet’s own experience Yahweh is an oppressive and irresistible God, who is stronger than his victim, prevails over him and commits violence and outrage against him (v. 7f.), that he may be called on in turn to become the irresistible divine oppressor of the prophet’s human oppressors (v. 11).

Holladay (1986: 553), on the other hand conjectured,

It is conceivable that this verb \( [\overline{\text{ינב קזנה}PROP}] \), like those in the first colon, can carry sexual connotations: \( קזנה qal does in 2 Sam 13:14 \( (\overline{\text{ינב קזנה מלהי}PROP}), “and he was stronger than she),” and the hip\( il of \( קזנה does in Deut 22:25 \( [\overline{\text{רומא קזנה מלהי}PROP}], a law analogous to that in Exod 22:15 \( [\overline{\text{רומא קזנה מלהי}PROP}], . . . . the probability is strong that the verb “you are stronger than I” continues the semantic field of sexual violence with which the verse began.
Thus, Holladay was in agreement with McKane (1986: 470), Baumgartner (1917: 64), and Rudolph (cited by McKane) that “Yahweh’s deception of Jeremiah is like the seduction of an innocent girl . . . the right conclusion is that v. 7a employs the language of seduction and violation.”

But once כָּפַן is identified as the cognate of חֲדָעִק (ḥadakah) “he made him skilful” (form II) and חֲדָעִק (ḥādaq) “a man chaste or eloquent, of tongue, perspicuous in language . . . skilled, or skillful, and thoroughly learned, . . . skillful in his art, or habitual work or occupation” (Lane 1865: 536; Castell 1669: 1123), a contextually more appropriate interpretation becomes obvious.

Initially, Jeremiah lacked confidence in becoming a prophet, saying, “I do not know how to speak for I am a youth” (1:5). At which point, “Yahweh then put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and Yahweh said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth” (1:9). Gifted with God’s words, Jeremiah became כָּפַן, i.e., “eloquent, articulate, masterful in speech,” and he would later affirm, “your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Yahweh, God of hosts” (15:16) and “I stood before you [O, God,] and spoke well (חֲדָעִק) concerning them to turn away your wrath from them” (18:20). Thus, the MT כָּפַן in 20:7 can be translated “you made me eloquent” or “you made me quite articulate,” an idea which is reinforced by Yahweh’s promising Jeremiah כָּפַן “you will become as my mouth” (15:19).

The Meaning of כָּפַן and כָּפַן

Moreover, the failure of translators and commentators to recognize that the כָּפַן in Jer 20:7 is not from the verb כָּפַן
“to be able, to prevail” has contributed to some of the contrived interpretations. The Հեք in 20:7 is the cognate of the Arabic 周转 (wakala) “he left him to his opinion, judgment,” and in form II, “he appointed him, or intrusted him, as his commissioned agent, or deputy,” and in form V “he relied upon him and confided in him” (Lane 1893: 3059; Wehr 1979: 1283–1284; and Castell 1669: 938 “commisit, commendavit . . . fretus, fisus fuit”).

The appointment of Jeremiah was announced in 1:10, “today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms” and 1:18. “I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land.” Jeremiah’s being taken into the confidence of Yahweh is found in 11:18, יָתְנַנְיָה יִרְהָהָ וְדוֹרָה, as interpreted above, “Yahweh made known to me, and I knew” and 20:7, יָתְנַנְיָה וְדוֹרָה יָכֵּא, as interpreted above, “You told me, O Yahweh, of the sanction and I was informed of the decree.”

McKane (1986: 471–472) provided a helpful summary of the interpretations of 20:8a (“For whenever I speak, I have to howl and proclaim ‘violence and ruin!’”) found in the versions and in Rashi and Kimchi. There is general agreement in these sources that the “violence and destruction” is part of Jeremiah’s prophetic message. But McKane argued,

The view that v. 8a is a reference to the prophecies of doom uttered by Jeremiah should be rejected. . . . must mean something like ‘I cry out for help’, and if this is so ԩ Վ  cannot be an allusion to prophecies of doom. It too like ԩ Վ must refer to an expression of inner desperation and extremity. . . . He is saying that his speech has been reduced to a continuous cry for help (Հ Մ ԩ), to an explosive verbal expression of inner despera-
tion (חָרָם וְשָׁוָא אַפַּרַת), and that it is his obedience to his
prophetic calling which has reduced him to this condition.

But קִסֵּס is an interchangeable by-form of קִסָּס and is well attested as a part of the doom prophecies, such as Jer 25:36 “A shriek (חָלָה קִסָּס) from the shepherds . . . for Yahweh lays waste their pasture,” and Jer 48:3–5, “Hark! a cry (חָלָה קִסַּה) from Horonaim, desolation and great destruction . . . the have heard the cry of destruction.”

Therefore, contra McKane, the קִסַּה עָשָׂה אַפַּרַת of 20:8 must be recognized as part of the prophecy of impending death and destruction. Holladay (1986: 554) listed the following interpretations given for the “violence” and “destruction” in 20:8.

• it proclaims the coming punishment on the nation
• it denounces the people’s sins of violence and destruction
• it refers to the violence done to Jeremiah by his opponents
• it is a complaint by Jeremiah for Yahweh’s violence to him.

Contrary to Holladay’s assertion, “Given the general density of the imagery in the passage, all four possibilities may compete for the hearer’s attention,” the first in this list is surely the correct one. The impending violence and destruction announced in Yahweh’s fatwa or fiat are spelled out in a number of prior passages, including 6:8, 6:12, 8:3, 9:11, 13:14, 14:11, 15:3, 15:8–9, 16:18, 17:27 and 19:8–9, not to mention the texts that come after 20:8, like 21:3–10 and 22:5–7, “But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, the oracle of Yaweh, that this house shall become a desolation . . . I will prepare destroyers against you, each with his weapons.” Consequently, Jer 20:8a is best understood as
meaning “Yea, whenever I declare (the fatwa), I cry out ‘Violence!’ I shout ‘Destruction!’”

Jeremiah’s Bewilderment and Anger

Jeremiah’s proclamation of impending violence produced hostility, not repentance. Jeremiah anticipated appreciation from those who heard his warnings. But prophets, priests, and people who had absolutized the inviolability of Jerusalem (see note 4), took Jeremiah to be a liar and a traitor who needed to be silenced. Thus, according to Jer 18:18, “they said, ‘Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not heed any of his words.’”

Jeremiah resented this response, complaining “I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. . . . For the word of Yahweh has become for me a reproach and derision all day long” (Jer 20:7b, 8b). His decision to cease announcing the fatwa (Jer 20:9) put him into a terrible bind: “then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am wearied with holding it in, and I cannot (i.e., I cannot hold in the fatwa).”

This confession of his weariness and inability to remain silent should be followed by the statement in 20:10c, which in the MT reads גְּלֵל אַמָּה שָׁלוֹם שְׁמֹרָה פָּלֻתָה, meaning literally “every man of my peace watching my side/ my stumbling.” But the MT needs to be repointed and translated as גְּלֵל אַמָּה שָׁלוֹם שְׁמֹרָה פָּלֻתָה, “An incurable weariness is my recompense; my being on guard is my undoing.” The derivations supporting this translation are

• The אַמָּה אַמָּה should have been read as אַמָּה rather than אַמָּה and given the same meaning as that found in Jer 15:18,
“my wound is incurable, refusing to be healed.” This singular לְחָלָה אָכְרוּ is not the same as the plural לְחָלָה אָכְרֵים in 38:22.\textsuperscript{16}

- The MT לְחָלָה is the cognate of the Arabic كل (kalla) “he became fatigued, tired, weary, incapacitated” and كليل (kalil) “weak, faint,” as in the expression لسان كليل (lisân kalîl) “a dull tongue, lacking sharpness” (Lane 1893: 3002).\textsuperscript{17}

- The MT לְחָלָה, translated variously as “side” or “stumble,” or by some synonym of the latter, is not the cognate of the Arabic ضلع (dîl) “rib” or “side,” nor the cognate of أصلع (asla) “to limp”; but it is the cognate of أصلع (asla) and صلىاء (ṣulay'ê) “hard, distressing, calamitous... any notorious affair or event... of great magnitude or moment, to accomplish which, or to perform which, one finds not the way... an evil, abominable, or unseemly, action or saying, such as is apparent, manifest, or unconcealed, or a calamity, or misfortune, hard to be borne” (Lane 1872: 1717).\textsuperscript{18} It is used here as a variant for לא אֶכְרֵי “I am not able.”

Jeremiah’s bewilderment turned to anger after hearing the “defamation of many” (הֹרְבִים רָבִים), whereby he recognized that everyone—aside from the Babylonians—was surrounded by terror (נְפָרָה נֶפֶר). Jerusalem was surrounded by Babylonian terrorists and Jeremiah was himself surrounded by Judean terrorists. Despite the many translations of רָבִים as “whispering,”\textsuperscript{19} Jeremiah’s enemies were vocal and vicious, shouting עליה נָפָר נְפָר “Overpower him! Let us overpower him!”
Elsewhere נַבְטָדָד (used in the Hiph‘il) means “to announce, tell, proclaim,” but not “denounce.” In a context of hostility, such as that found in Jer 20:10, the Arabic نَجَدُ (najada) provides the clue for the interpretation of this particular נַבְטָדָד. It means, among other things, “he overcame, conquered, subdued, overpowered, prevailed over, or surpassed” (Lane 1893: 2766). The Septuagint translators certainly understood the נַבְטָדָד here in this way for they rendered נַבְטָדָד as ἐπισυνστήθηκεν καὶ ἐπισυνστῶμεν αὐτῷ “Attack! Let us attack him!”20

The הָעַסֶּה in Jer 20:10 is the well used verb “to entice,” not the rare הָעַסֶּה in 20:7, related to a fatwa. Were Jeremiah’s enemies able to entice him, they could prevail (חַלּ) against him and take their full revenge. Jeremiah’s response to their hostility was at first tit for tat, his response being, “Let those be put to shame who persecute me, but let me not be put to shame; let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed.” But then—mid sentence—the level of violence escalated from “smiting with the tongue” to “smiting with the sword.” Jeremiah ended this sentence with the petition “Bring upon them the day of evil; destroy them with double destruction!” He went on to plead with God, “let the fatwa begin,” expressed in these words:

Therefore deliver up their children to famine; give them over to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be slain by the sword in battle. May a cry be heard from their houses, when thou bringest the marauder suddenly upon them! . . . Yet, thou, O Yahweh, knowest all their plotting to slay me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from thy sight. Let them be overthrown before thee; deal with them in the time of thine anger. (RSV 18:21–23)
It is difficult to know whether Jeremiah’s bewilderment abated once his anger was expressed. On the one hand, he was confident that Yahweh was with him as an awesome warrior who would make his enemies stumble (20:11–12). But, as the text now stands, after his affirmation of confidence Jeremiah proceeded with (a) a prayer for vengeance (in 20:12, which is essentially a repeat of 11:20 and 18:21), (b) a one verse doxology acknowledging Yahweh’s salvation of the poor (20:13), and (c) a five verse lament (20:14–18), cursing the day he was born (reminiscent of 15:10). Jeremiah’s mood swings in eleven verses went from

- **humility** in his acknowledgment of Yahweh’s informing him and entrusting him to announce the divine fiat
- **humiliation** when his warnings were met with derision
- **frustration** that he could not keep his mouth shut
- **fear** because there was terror and adversaries on every side
- **confidence** that Yahweh was with him and would save him
- **anger** expressed in a call for divine vengeance
- **jubilation** that Yahweh delivered the needy from evil doers
- **depression and despair** that he was even born.

The doxology would fit better at the end of 38:12, where Jeremiah might well have praised God after the Ethiopian Ebed Melek saved him from certain death in the muck of Malchiah’s cistern. The lament might well have been composed while he was imprisoned in the cistern before Ebed Melek and some of the king’s bodyguards rescued him.

This lament could have been uttered by any number of Jewish exiles in Babylon, especially by King Zedekiah after
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“the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; and the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah” (Jer 39:6) . . . . “He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in fetters to take him Babylon and put him into prison until the day of his death” (52:11).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Holladay (1986: 558) wrote that in Jer 20:7–13 Jeremiah conveyed a sense of his being “existentially trapped” and that

Initially he [Jeremiah] expresses his bitter accusation to Yahweh that Yahweh has deceived him, seduced him, tricked him; in blasphemous daring this accusation is unmatched in the Bible. . . . an accusation of deception presses God into a diabolic frame which is unique.

However, recognition of several rare Hebrew words clears Jeremiah of any and all charges or hints of blasphemy.

The Hebrew הָקַלְפָּה is a homograph of two totally unrelated verbs. הָקַלְפָּה, stem I, means “to deceive” and הָקַלְפָּה, stem II, is the cognate of פַּתָּה (fatawa) “to make known a judicial decree, fiat, or fatwa.” Once Jeremiah became informed of God’s intent to enforce fully the covenantal curses, he became a doomsayer. The good news that God would relent if Judeans would repent—which was at the core of his message—was not heard nor heeded. Bewildered by the hostility his warnings generated, Jeremiah bemoaned the terror from fellow Judeans which surrounded him and the terror from the Babylonians which surrounded his fellow Judeans. But down to the very end of his life Jeremiah was faithful in the proclamation of the fateful fatwa: “Repent and Yahweh will relent! Continued disobedience will bring destruction and death!”
The cognate حَدِّيق (ḥaḍqa) “eloquent, perspicuous” clarifies the second meaning of يَقَزُّ (qz). Far from implying something analogous to an overpowering sexual seduction of Jeremiah by Yahweh, the يَقَزُّ in Jer 20:7 means Yahweh had gifted Jeremiah with language skills befitting someone entrusted to be the “mouth” of God. Jeremiah’s vocabulary was so exceptionally erudite it has confounded translators and interpreters down to this day. Only thorough philological inquiry, making use of comparative Semitic lexicography, can some of the rare words used by Jeremiah be recovered.

Just as ṣ även, like יָכָה (yq), is a homograph of two unrelated stems, so also is הַכֵּל (hakel). It is a homograph for (1) the verb “to prevail” in 20:11, and (2) the cognate of וּקַל (wakala) “to appoint, to entrust” in 20:7. Other homographs which have contributed to mistranslations and contrived interpretations are (1) אָנוֹשׁ = כָּל “all” or כֹּל (kōl, not kōl) “weariness,” (2) אֵשׁ = שֲלָה “man” or אֵנֶשׁ “incurable,” (3) מַעֲשֶׁה = שָׁלוֹם “peace” or שלום “recompense,” (4) מְצָל = לְמֵד “side” or שלון “stumbling” or לְמַדֵּל, the cognate of אַסְלָא (“asla”) “undoing, inability, misfortune,” and (5) נֵד = נָדַד “to tell” or the cognate of נָדַד (najada) “to overpower, prevail over.”

Of the seventeen words lurking behind these eight homographs, five have yet to be recognized in current Hebrew lexicons, although the cognates were cited in Castell’s lexicon of 1669. It is ironic that the prophet who was gifted with eloquence and became the “mouth of God” has had some of his rare words so misconstrued that he is charged by his interpreters and translators with blasphemy, and Yahweh is even charged with being diabolic in the seduction of his servant. But Jeremiah was bewildered and pained, not by Yahweh, but by his fellow Judeans.
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NOTES

1. KBS 3: 984 cites the Arabic 
فَتَى (ftw/y) “youthful, young” but does not cite 
فَتَيْ (ftay) “the giving of an answer or stating the decision of the law” (Lane 1877: 2336–2337). The יָשָׁב of Jer 20:7 was translated as “to let oneself be deceived” or “to let oneself be taken as a fool.”

2. Calvin stated further (28), “He [Jeremiah] afterwards adds, Thou hast constrained me. By saying that he had been deceived, he meant this,—‘O God, if I am an imposter, thou hast made me so; if I have deceived, thou hast led me; for I derive from thee all that I have; it hence follows, that thou art in fault, and less excusable than I am, if there be anything wrong in me.’

3. John Owen, added a footnote at this point in Calvin’s commentary on Jeremiah, stating

I find none agreeing with Calvin in his view of this verse; nor many with our versions in rendering the first verb “deceived.” So is the Septuagint, but the Vulgate, Syriac, and Targum have “enticed.” In other parts it is rendered in our versions “enticed,” “allured,” and “persuaded.” Blayney has “allured,” but Gataker and Lowth prefer “persuaded; . . . . I would render the verse,—Thou didst persuade me, O Jehovah, and I was persuaded; Thou didst constrain me, and didst prevail: I am become a derision every day; the whole of it [the city] are jeering me.”


5. Jeremiah was aware of much deceit coming in the name of Yahweh from fellow prophets and priests, as in

• 4:10 “I said, ‘Ah, Lord Yahweh, how sadly you deceived this people and Jerusalem when you used to say, ‘You will have
Jeremiah was apparently referring to the false security provided by those who took these words of Isaiah as absolutes:

Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria:
‘He shall not come into this city, or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city,’ says Yahweh.
For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David (Isa 37:33).

6. In 1998, the Iranian government revoked its support of the bounty for anyone who would kill Rushdie, but religious hardliners have continued their threats against him.

7. On the relationship of יָכָל / כָּל and ḫָל stems see GKC 75a.

8. See, for example, Jer 3:11–18, 4:1–4, 7:5–7, and 17:24–27.

9. Compare the translations of the ASV “you persuaded me,” NKJ “you induced me,” NRS “you enticed me”—which softened Jeremiah’s words—to the NAB “you duped me,” NJB “you seduced me, and the KJV, DRA, RSV, NIV, NIB, NAS and NAU, all of which have “you deceived me.”

10. The MT נִאָר could well mean “servant,” in which case, by reading the אַל as an emphatic particle rather than the negative, God’s reply, אַל-יָאֹמָר נִאָר עָנָא, would mean, “You well said ‘I am a servant,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.”
11. Reading the הָּבַּשְׁלִּין "well" as an adverbial accusative rather than as "good," the direct object of יָבֹא.

12. The kingdom and nations may have included Ephraim and Judah only. Compare Ezek 37:21–22.

13. For the MT "Whenever I speak, I must cry out," the Septuagint reads ὅτι πικρῷ λόγῳ μου γέλασομαι "For I will laugh with my bitter speech." The πικρῷ reflects a misreading of MT "whenever" as μὲρ "bitter," reflecting the confusion of a ו and כ, as well as a כ and ל (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107 §104a–c and 111 §109a–b for other examples). Although Hatch and Redpath (1897: 235) marked γέλασομαι with a ‡ indicating that it lacked a corresponding word in the MT, γέλασομαι reflects a confusion of קָבַע "to cry out" with צָחַק "to laugh."


15. Prov 21:23, שָׁמְרָה פִּי וַעֲלֵיהוֹן שָׁמְרָה מְשַׁרְחָה לְפָשׁוֹת, “he who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble,” provides a good commentary for understanding Jeremiah’s desire to keep his mouth shut.

16. Jer 38:22, reads יָסִיתוּךְ לְעַלָּךְ לְאַנְשֵּׁי שָׁלְמָה, “Your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you.”

17. Hebrew כל "all, every" is the cognate of כל "all, everyone, entirety" (Lane 1893: 3002; Wehr 1979: 977–978).

18. Compare the use of כָּלַע "adversity" in Psa 35:15 (KJV, NKJ,
ASV), which also reflects the Arabic cognate أصلح ("asla") “a calamity, or misfortune, something hard to be borne.” The Septuagint, which reads πάντες ἅνδρες φίλοι αὐτοῦ τηρήσατε τὴν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ, “All (you who are) his male friends, watch his intentions!” reflects a different Vorlage for ἔλαβε that has yet to be identified.

19. See the NIV, NIB, NAS, NAV, NRS, NAB, and BDB 179.

20. See Liddell and Scott : 662, s.v. 4.


22. Compare Clines and Gunn (1976: 407) who stated,

We suggests, therefore, that the form and function of the unit 24:14-18 should be distinguished and that these verses did not originally express the prophet’s private emotions of despair at some personal calamity (such as disappointment in his prophetic ministry), but was a conventional utterance of distress accompanying a judgement-speech or woe-oracle.

23. The MT יִלְּשָׁנֵי בָּעָשָׁה יִלְּשָׁנֵי מִלְּשָׁנֵי "30 men” in Jer 38:10, on the support of one manuscript with יִלְּשָׁנֵי בָּעָשָׁה יִלְּשָׁנֵי מִלְּשָׁנֵי "3 men,” has been reduce from 30 to 3 in the RSV, NRS, NAB, and by Holladay (1989: 267) who noted, “One would expect the singular יִלְּשָׁנֵי with ‘thirty.’ And certainly the task would have demanded only the smaller number.” But the יִלְּשָׁנֵי may have nothing to do with the numbers 3 or 30. Cowley (1920: 327) suggested that the well attested יִלְּשָׁנֵי did not refer to “the third man in a chariot” but was the Hittite loanword šal-la-e-eš used for “an important official in close attendance on the king.” This being the case, the יִלְּשָׁנֵי would not be “men” as a gender marker but a marker of intimacy and familiarity (Lane
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1863: 113–114), so that נַלְשִׁים would refer to King Zedekiah’s “personal bodyguards.” Ebed Melek, accompanied by an unspecified number of the king’s bodyguards, could expect compliance from the officers holding Jeremiah prisoner to the king’s orders for his release.
And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

(RSV)¹

Like the two verbs פָּתִית and פָּתִית in Jer 20:7, the verbs פָּתִית and פָּתִית in Ezek 14:9 have been read as a simple repetition of פָּתִית "to deceive." The following quotations are typical of traditional interpretations of Ezekiel’s reporting God’s acknowledgment that he deliberately deceived some of Israel’s prophets. Cooke (1936: 151) stated

Ez[ekiel] here goes deeper into the causes of false prophecy. Not merely self-delusion (13.6), and the influence of idolatrous clients (v.7), may lead a prophet to utter false oracles, but the divine will itself: I Jahveh have deceived that prophet. Such a statement is only intelligible when we remember that ancient habits of thought overlooked secondary causes, and attributed events direct to the action of God; see Am 3⁶, Is 45⁷.
Several decades later Eichrodt (1970: 183) concluded

The only explanation is that it [the lapse of a prophet] is a blindness caused by God himself. . . . Deuteronomy 13.3 shows a similar outlook. It explains that if a miraculous sign takes place, by which a prophet tries to win people’s faith when he is leading them into idolatry, then that sign has been brought about by God himself to test [יִּבָּטֵל] or tempt his own people.

A few years later Zimmerli (1978: 308, 309) asserted

That people knew of the possibility of a prophet being deceived (נֶאֶסֶד) is shown by the narrative of the prophetic school in 1 Kings 13. With Ezekiel it undergoes a grim heightening in the statement that what at first appears to be an occasion of human guilt may be a serious involvement in divine punishment (cf. 1 Kings 22). . . . God kills in order to save. In his judgment he is zealous for his people. The choice of language of the sacral law brings to expression this will for the purity of the people—and this will is a zeal full of compassion.

Greenberg, more recently, (1983: 253–254) concluded

For Ezekiel, the illegitimate prophet is himself a victim and sign of God’s fury. This goes further than Deut 13:2ff., which interprets the confirmatory signs of a subversive prophet as a test of the people’s loyalty to YHWH; further also than I Kings 22:20ff., in which a “lying spirit” is commissioned to enter Ahab’s prophets in order to assure his death in battle (we are not told that those prophets suffered any penalty, human or divine). Our passage ascribes the error of a prophet in responding to inquiry to divine misguidance. The obtuseness of the Israelites, including prophets, is culpable, and God punishes it by corrupting the spring of inspiration, leading inquirer and respondent alike to destruction.
Greenberg found a parallel in Ezekiel 20, where “in order to punish the guilty Israelites God gave them (misled them with) bad and fatal laws ‘so that I might desolate them (vss. 25f).’” It is important to note that Greenberg (1983: 368–369) did not comment on Ezek 20:30–31, which he translated as

Say, then to the house of Israel: Thus said Lord YHWH: You defile yourselves in the manner of your fathers, you go whoring after loathsome things; you defile yourselves by the offer of your gifts by delivering up your sons to the fire — your idolatries of all sorts—to this day; shall I then respond to your inquiry, house of Israel? By my life, declares Lord YHWH, I will not respond to your inquiry!

The repeated statement of Yahweh in Ezek 20:30, “you defile yourselves” (אֲדוּנַנִּים אָדָם אֵלָה יִהְיוּ)² and the assurance given in Ezek 20:11

אַל-נִעְשֶׁה אֲדָמָה אֱלֹהִים יִהְיוּ בִּדֵמְךָ

I [Yahweh] gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live, are difficult to reconcile with Ezek 20:25–26, as traditionally translated below.

EZEKIEL 14:9 AND 20:25–27

EZEKIEL 20:25–26

I [Yahweh] gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live,

EZEKIEL 20:30

I then respond to your inquiry, house of Israel? By my life, declares Lord YHWH, I will not respond to your inquiry!

EZEKIEL 20:31

The repeated statement of Yahweh in Ezek 20:30, “you defile yourselves” (אֲדוּנַנִּים אָדָם אֵלָה יִהְיוּ)² and the assurance given in Ezek 20:11

אַל-נִעְשֶׁה אֲדָמָה אֱלֹהִים יִהְיוּ בִּדֵמְךָ

I [Yahweh] gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live,
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Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life.
And I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them;
I did it that they might know that I am the Yahweh

The statement in Ezek 20:25, as translated and interpreted above, obviously contradicts the promise in Lev 18:5

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live.

The difficulties raised by these contradictory verses has been well expressed by Block (1997: 636).

One can see how radical this notion [that Yahweh defiled his people] is in that nowhere else in the OT does Yahweh appear as the subject of the verb ክሮማወ (Piel). . . But in v. 26 Yahweh declares his intentions explicitly: so that I might devastate them (lēma’an ፋስማወ). Interpreted at face value, these verses create horrifying and intolerable theological problems. How could Yahweh, the gracious covenant God, be portrayed as granting his people “bad” laws that would not result in life? Even more unconscionable, how could he defile the nation by demanding of them their firstborn, offered up as child sacrifices, so he could destroy them? Students of Scripture have struggled with these problems through the centuries.

But according to van der Horst (1992: 98) many centuries went by before there was any struggling with these texts. He noted

One looks in vain for it [a reference to Ezek 20:25–26] in all the Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, nor does one find
any reference or allusion to, let alone quotation of, our text in Philo or Josephus or any of the other Jewish-Greek authors. In the Qumran scrolls our text is never quoted or even alluded to. In Tannaitic literature no trace of our text is to be found. It is only in the 3rd through 6th centuries that we find rabbis discussing the meaning of this passage.

The current struggle with Ezekiel’s quotations about Yahweh’s deceiving prophets and giving laws which would bring certain death can be resolved once several words used by Ezekiel become recognized in future lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. For example, the Hebrew התייתו can be read as either the Pi’el “to deceive, to seduce” (BDB 834; KBS 3: 984) or as the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic فتوى (fatawa) “he notified the decision of the law . . . respecting the case, to give a formal legal opinion,” including a death sentence (Lane 1877: 2336–2337; Wehr 1979: 815).

As a matter of fact, both words appear in Ezek 14:9. The Pu’al התייתו “he will be deceived” needs to be repointed as the Pi’el התייתו “he deceives” (and the MT רבד “and he spoke” needs to be corrected to רבד: “he speaks”). With these corrections to the MT the phrase התייתו יתן לא תומך ירבד ירבד: means “if the prophet deceives when he speaks a word.” The apodosis which then follows contains a wordplay on the Pu’al התייתו “he deceives,” requiring the Pi’el יtenantי “I deceive” to be repointed as the Qal יtenantי “I decree/ I issue a sentence.” Thus, Yahweh proclaimed אני יהוה יתן לא יתן לא תומך את אתייתו: “I am Yahweh, I have sentenced that prophet.” Yahweh then explicitly spelled out the death sentence: ואת אתייתו ואת תומך ואת שופתי ואת שתלת ואת להא: “and I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from among my people Israel.”
Another word used by Ezekiel in 20:25 which has gone unrecognized by commentators is the emphatic particle עַלְעַל “indeed.” This עַלְעַל was always misread by the Masoretes as the negative particle עַל. But for Ezekiel הָרוֹם לָא לְעָבַר would have been synonymous with הָרוֹם פְּלַבּוֹת מִאָד “exceedingly good statutes.”

Thus, the statements in Ezekiel 20 are quite consistent in affirming the goodness of Yahweh’s law by which life is guaranteed. In 20:11 Ezekiel quoted Yahweh as saying, “I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live”; and in 20:21 Yahweh declared, “they did not observe my statutes or keep my ordinances that bring life to those who observe them” (NAB). Also in 20:25—when properly interpreted—Yahweh emphatically affirmed, “I gave them statutes that were indeed good and ordinances by which they could indeed have life,” with 20:26c concluding, “I did it [the giving of good laws which give life] that they might acknowledge that I am Yahweh.”

When עַלְעַל “indeed” and הָרוֹם “to issue a fiat/fatwa” are added to Ezekiel’s active vocabulary, the problems of 20:25, per se, disappear. But different problems emerge with 20:26, where, seemingly, Yahweh admitted “I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them.”

Thus, new contradictory statements appear. Whereas Ezek 20:13, 16, 21, and 24 speak of Israel’s rebellion and refusal to obey God’s ordinances, 20:26 would seem to indicate that Israel was indeed faithful in obeying Yahweh’s commands for child sacrifice. Yet in 20:31, Yahweh declared, “When you offer your gifts and sacrifice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day.” The question becomes, “According to Ezekiel, were children sacrificed in
Israel because Yahweh—at some time or place—required it (according to 20:26), or was such sacrifice contrary to Yahweh’s will (according to 20:30–31)?

Once it is recognized that the first nine of fifteen Hebrew words in 20:26 (or 28 words in KJV) are out of place, the question just raised can be dismissed. The statement in 20:26, “and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them” (RSV), needs to be restored to the end of 20:27. There it restores the direct quotation of the blasphemy spoken by the fathers of Israel to legitimate their sacrificing of children. The restored lines of 20:25–27 need to be read in this sequence:

Moreover I gave them statutes that were indeed good and ordinances by which they could indeed have life.

I did it that they might know that I am Yahweh. Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, “Thus says the my Lord Yahweh:

‘In this again your fathers blasphemed me, in their transgressing they transgressed against me,
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{saying}
“I defile them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them.””

CONCLUSION

The problems presented by Ezek 14:9 and 20:25–26 are not really theological, as Blenkinsopp (1990: 89) suggested, but scribal and lexicographical. The two minor scribal errors were the misreading of an original רָדבר "he speaks" as רָדברָב "and he spoke" and the misreading of an original מָעַלְוָ "they transgressed" as מָעַל "a transgression." The more significant scribal error (or editorial decision) was the relocation of the nine Hebrew word quotation of the blasphemy of the “fathers” (originally belonging at the end of 20:27 but now found in the MT as 20:26ab), so that it became an admission on the lips of Yahweh.

The lexicographical problems come from the omission, to date, of הָמַת (stem II)—which is the cognate of Arabic قَتُو (fatawa/fatwa) “a judicial sentence [of death]”—from the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Although the emphatic לְ has been recognized in a number of biblical texts and is cited in some current Hebrew lexicons, it has not been recognized by past or current commentators as the significant key for interpreting these difficult verses, as proposed in this brief study.

NOTES

1. The KJV, ASV, NRS, and DRA read essentially the same as the RSV. Other translations of the MT הָמַת and מָעַל in Ezek 14:9a include seduced (NJB), beguiled (NAB), enticed (NIV), induced (NKJ), prevailed (NAU), befooled (Zimmerli 1979: 302), and
misled (Greenberg (1983:253). The Vulgate has erraverit and decepi for these verbs. The Septuagint translated quite literally,

καὶ ὁ προφήτης ἐὰν πλανηθῇ καὶ λαλήσῃ
ἐγὼ κύριος πεπλάνηκα τὸν προφήτην ἐκείνονκαὶ
ἐκτενῶ τὴν χειρα μου ἐπ’ αὐτὸν καὶ ἀφανιῶ αὐτὸν
ἐκ μέσου τοῦ λαοῦ μου Ισραηλ.

The Greek πλανηθῇ . . . πεπλάνηκα could be translated by any of the above words.

2. Compare Ezek 23:30, “you played the harlot with the nations, and polluted yourself with their idols,” and Ezek 36:31, “Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”

3. On the frequent confusion of ר and ש see Delitzsch (1920) 103–105, §103 a–c.


5. Another example of the emphatic ה “indeed” in Ezekiel appears in 32:27, where the negative ולל יћהב יא וּל יָבְרְרִים יַפְלִים “and they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen,” appears as an affirmative in the Septuagint, καὶ ἐκομήθησαν μετὰ τῶν γυναῖκων τῶν πεπτωκότων, “and they are laid to rest with the fallen giants.” The affirmative statement in 32:28, “So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword,” supports the reading of the Septuagint and reading the ה as יו.

7. Restoring MT מַעֲלָה to מַעֲלָה with the Septuagint’s παρέπεσον “they transgressed.” The 1 suffix of מַעֲלָה comes from the initial מ of the preceding אָמָה in the reconstructed text.
NOTES ON HABAKKUK 2:1–5

Five Arabic cognates, coupled with a reordering of the verses in Hab 2:1–5, clarify the meaning of this difficult passage. A logical transition of thought can be restored by transposing verses 2 and 3, along with moving three words from 2:5 to 2:15. The Arabic cognates are:

1. قاص (qâṣ) “a narrator, preacher,” a synonym of خطيب (ḥatīb) “one who recites, exhorts, preaches from a pulpit” and delivers an exhortation or sermon called خطبة (ḥubbat) (Lane 1885: 2528).

2. رض/روع (rûd/râda) “to train, to discipline, or subdue oneself (through piety)” (Lane 1867: 1186).

3. عبل (‘abala) “he cut it, or, cut it off, so as to extirpate it,” with عبله عبول (‘abalahu ‘abûlu) “death separated him, cut him off, extirpated him” being said of a man when he has died; as well as عابلتي عبول (‘ābili‘abûlu) “my separator [from my companions] is death, or shall be death alone” (Lane 1874: 1941–1942).

4. فحا/فجر (fahw/fahâ) “he meant or intended (by his saying)” and “the meaning or saying of a speech, its intended sense or import . . . I knew it, or I understood it.” (Lane 1877: 2347–2348).

5. هار/هور (hwr / hárah) “he threw it down, demolished it,” and هار ألقوم (hâra ‘alqawma) “he slew the people” (Lane 1893: 2906).
The first of these five is the cognate of the \( \text{\textit{\textit{hlp}}} \) in Hab 2:3, which has traditionally been read as \( \text{\textit{\textit{hlp}}} \) “end” (the Septuagint has \( \pi\epsilon \rho \alpha \zeta \)). The second is the cognate of the \( \text{\textit{\textit{Wr}}} \) in 2:2, which has traditionally been read as \( \text{\textit{\textit{Wr}}} \) “to run” (the Septuagint has \( \delta\iota \omega \kappa \eta \)). The third is the cognate of the \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \), which was in the \textit{Vorlage} of the Septuagint (which has \( \upsilon \pi\omicron \omicron \sigma \tau\omicron \epsilon \lambda \eta \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \) “should he draw back”), differing from the MT which has \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) “was swollen (with a tumor or hemorrhoid).” The \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) is generally paraphrased as “his soul which is \textit{lifted up}” (KJV); “his soul is \textit{puffed up}” (ASV); “he that is \textit{unbelieving}” (DRA, following the Vulgates’ \textit{qui incredulus est}); “\textit{a presumptuous one}” (YLT); and even “he shall \textit{fail}” (RSV).3

Moreover, the MT \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) was translated by Aquila as \( \nu\omicron \chi\epsilon\omicron\lambda\epsilon\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu \) “slothful,” apparently from a text with \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) “slothful” instead of the MT \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \). The Targum and the Peshitta evidently read \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) as \( \nu\omicron \omicron \omicron \lambda \eta \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \) “iniquity”—indicating that the second letter in this word was so poorly written, or became so badly damaged, that it could read as a \( \nu \) or a \( \beta \) or a \( \omicron \) or a \( \lambda \).4

In Hab 2:4 the Septuagint’s \( \upsilon \pi\omicron \omicron \sigma \tau\omicron \epsilon \lambda \eta \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \) “should he draw back” has been dismissed by commentators who assumed that two letters in the \textit{Vorlage} were transposed, with the MT \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) “swollen” having been read as \( \nu\omicron \omicron \lambda \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \) “to cover, to enwrap, to faint”—even though \( \nu\omicron \omicron \lambda \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \) fits the context no better than \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \).

Thanks, however, to the Septuagint’s \( \upsilon \pi\omicron \omicron \sigma \tau\omicron \epsilon \lambda \eta \tau\omicron \alpha \iota \), the stem \( \text{\textit{\textit{nbl}}} \) and its Arabic cognate \( \text{\textit{\textit{abala}}} \) “he went away, he died” comes into focus. This stem occurs in the name of Mount Ebal (\( \text{\textit{\textit{\textit{vr\nu\nu}}} \)), which was known as the
HABAKKUK 2:1–5

mountain of the curse (Deut 11:29; 27:4, 11), and its name could well have been understood as “the mountain of death” (= عرب [‘abûlu]) in light of the implicit and explicit curses of death which were pronounced (Deuteronomy 27–28) from Mount Ebal.5

The fourth Arabic word in the list above is the cognate of the הָעֹלָה in the verb הָעָלַם in 2:3, traditionally understood as הָעַלְתָה “to blow, to breathe.” The Septuagint has ἀνατέλει “it shall shoot forth,” as if the word were ἀρη “to bud, sprout,” rather than הָעַלְתָה. But the expressions “a vision will sprout” or an “a vision will exhale” do not conform to normal Hebrew idiom. The fifth word is the cognate of the ꠱쥴 in the MT ꠱culo in 2:5, usually interpreted as “haughty” (= the Septuagint’s ἀλλεξεων).

With these five cognates in focus, Hab 2:2–4 can be translated as follows (with further comments in the notes).

2:1

Let me stand upon my watch,
and station myself on the rampart;
then let me keep watch to see what He will say to me,
and what I might requite about my complaint.6
For a vision was promised to the protestor; its intent would be understood by the preacher, and it would not disappoint. If it seem slow, wait for it. It will surely come; it will not be postponed.

Then Yahweh answered me, saying: “Write the vision! Make it plain upon tablets, so that the one reading it may be disciplined!”

The unrighteous soul has been cut off, but the righteous lives by his faithfulness.”
HABAKKUK 2:1–5

2:5

Indeed, the strongman demolishes and cannot be sated; He enlarges his appetite like Sheol; and like death, he is never satisfied. He gathers to himself all the nations; and collects for himself all the peoples.

When Hab 2:5 is read in this manner, it would be better to transpose it to the end of 1:13 (or even after 1:17), making it a part of Habakkuk’s complaints, rather than its being a part Yahweh’s response to Habakkuk’s questions. If the MT were read as and the repointed as , then the 2:6 meant “Did not?” rather than “Shall not?” The woes which follow in 2:6–19 could have been uttered over time in the past, for, according to the vision in 2:4 the maledictions had come true: “the unrighteous soul has been cut off” (a Pu‘al perfect, whether the verb is a masculine, as proposed here, or a feminine with the MT), whereas the righteous lives (a Qal imperfect).

The intent of the vision was to affirm what was expressed elsewhere in the language of sowing and reaping, as in Pro 22:8, “he who sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail”; Job 4:9, “those who plow iniquity and
sow trouble reap the same; by the breath of God they perish’; Hos 8:7, ‘for they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind’; and Hos 10:12, ‘sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love.’

The theological assertion made via the vision was: those who perished at the hands of the Chaldeans, and the Chaldeans themselves who perished later were unrighteous and got what they deserved—death! The survivors, like Habakkuk himself, were the righteous who received what they deserved—life! Whereas Habakkuk (1:13) had posited two categories—the ‘wicked’ (who oppressed) and the ‘man more righteous than the wicked’ (who was oppressed)—there were really three categories: (1) the wicked, (2) those less wicked, and (3) the righteous. Survivors of the Chaldean oppression and the oppression by their fellow Judeans were all in the third group, thanks to their faithfulness. The wicked and those less-wicked were cut off, regardless of the degree of the wickedness. This affirmation became the basis for Paul’s assertion, ‘for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness’ (Rom 1:18).

The vision ends at 2:20 with the admonition for all the earth—including Habakkuk—to hush. Enough complaints! ‘Yahweh in his holy temple.’ Justice is being done. The wicked had perished; the righteous live. As the text now stands, the silence before Yahweh was broken by Habakkuk’s prayer which was filled with praise and affirmation, without petitions nor complaints—suggesting that Habakkuk understood the content and intent of the vision: the righteous live by faithfulness.

Centuries later, the Apostle Paul gleaned a different meaning from the vision, stating in Romans 1:17 “For in it [the gospel of Christ] the righteousness of God is revealed through
HABAKKUK 2:1–5

faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” Doing what was right (= faithfulness) became then a matter of believing what was right (= faith). An attempt to reconcile the tension between these two interpretations of Habakkuk’s vision appears in James 2:18–26, which concluded that “faith apart from works is dead.”

NOTES


2. Wellhausen (1898) and Stade (1906), cited by Ward (1911: 19) proposed a similar transposition of 2: 18 and 19.

3. The only possible Arabic cognates of Hebrew לְפָלָל would be غفل "he was unmindful, forgetful, neglectful” and غفل "one whose beneficence is not hoped for, nor his evilness feared; he being like the shackled that is neglected . . . one having no grounds of pretension to respect or honour; of whom
one knows not what he possesses” (Lane 6: 2276; Tregelle 1875: 565). But these definitions, though very negative, do not fit the context of Hab 2:2–4, where an antonym of “life, to live” is anticipated.

4. The confusion and/or the interchange of the ב and מ is well attested, and numerous examples have been the cited by Delitzsch (1920: 115 §118a,b).

5. Lexicographers of Biblical Hebrew have cited only the Arabic عمل (“abala) “to be bulky, chubby, stout” (BDB 716; KBS 2: 816), with no mention of the noun عمل (‘abûlu) “death” or the verb عمل (“abala) “to hold back, to take away,” the latter of which the Septuagint translators obviously knew. The by-forms meaning “separation, death” need to be recognized along with פזר/פזר “iron” and פזר/פזר “to disperse.”

6. Habakkuk’s first complaint (1:2–4) was followed with an immediate answer (1:5–11). The response to his second complaint (1:12–17) was delayed, requiring Habakkuk to be watchful since the time set for God’s response was unknown to him. This delay gave Habakkuk time to think through what would be his response in his next dialogue with God.

7. Reading the MT יָצִיא as יָצִיא, restoring a ה lost by haplography, and vocalizing the יָצִיא as a passive participle. Hebrew יָצִיא “to appoint” may have had nuances of “threat” and/or “promise,” like its Arabic cогate وعد (wa‘ada) “he promised” or “he threatened” (Lane 8: 2952; BDB 416).

8. Reading here instead of the MT מָצֵא “appointed time or place,” the Hiphil participle מָצֵא/מָצֵא, from II
“to exhort, to protest, to warn, to testify” (BDB 730) or its by-form דַּבֵּר (with the הָרָה הָאָרָה being like לָבָשׁ / לַבָּשׁ “to be good”).

9. The meaning of MT וַהֲוָה יְנֵהַר, “(the vision) breathes/exhales to the end,” is, to say the least, ambiguous if not senseless. Interpretations which make יָכַשׁ “to breathe, to exhale” a synonym of יָכִית “to hasten” or יָשִּׁחַ “to make haste” are misleading, for four words later in the line it states clearly, “though it tarry, wait for it.” The vision could not have sped and tarried at the same time. The Septuagint’s ἀνατελεῖ ἀπό “it will rise” is of no help because it simply reflects a Vorlage with πρῆσε “to bud, sprout, shoot” for the MT וַהֲוָה. (Delitzsch [1920: 111 §109 a-b] cited many other examples of the confusion of a כ and a ר.)

The MT וַהֲוָה יְנֵהַר needs to be repointed as יְנֵהַר and recognized as the ע"ע verb יָכַשׁ, a by-form of the כ"ל verb יָכִית (see GKC 77c for other examples of ע"ע and כ"ל verbs having the same meaning). This יָכַשׁ is the cognate of the Arabic فَهَا (fāha), cited above which is a synonym of לָחַנה (lahana) meaning “an indication whereby the person addressed is made to understand one’s intent” (Lane 8: 3008). The vision would be clearly understood by Habakkuk, without ambiguity and without deception. It is ironic that the language used to tell about Habakkuk’s vision—which was to have been understood perfectly—has been misunderstood ever since it was written without a distinction between the כ and the ל.

10. The MT יָכַשׁ יְנֵהַר “to the end” needs to be repointed to יָכַשׁ לָבָשׁ “to the narrator/preacher,” with לָבָשׁ being the cognate of קָשׁ (qāš), noted above, with the verb meaning “he related” or “he explained.” The object of the verb could be an admonition, an exhortation, a sermon, a speech, an oration, a dream, or a harangue. In Habakkuk’s case, as a narrator/preacher/prophet (= לָבָשׁ), he would grasp the meaning and intent of the vision—whenever it
came—and would proclaim it and explain it accurately and honestly. (In modern literary Arabic a مکگ (qaṣāṣ) means a novelist or storyteller.)

11. Following the translation in BDB 469.

12. Repointing the MT مکگ as a Puʿal or Hophʿal (Jastrow 40).

13. The MT مکگ is a homograph for two verbs, one meaning “he may run,” and the other meaning “he may train/discipline himself.” Many commentators (who, in the language of Habakkuk, could be called story tellers intending to get it right”) have created a word picture of (1) Judean joggers reading highway billboards (“so that a runner may read it”) or (2) a track coach’s notes for a pep rally (“so that one who reads it may run”). The wrong مکگ is to be blamed for these mistranslations—even though it is the only مکگ currently in the Hebrew lexicons. The right مکگ has yet to make it into the lexicons, which is the مکگ that is the cognate of (rūḏ/ rāda) “to train, discipline oneself,” introduced above. The phrase مکگ مکچج “discipline thyself well by piety” provides the clue to the meaning of مکگ in this verse.

14. The final ح of حل needs to be shifted to the مکچج thereby making the verb masculine (مکچجد) and the noun definite (مکچجه).

15. Moving مکچجد from 2:2 to the last line in 2:15, permits the rest of 2:5 to be read as a description of the unrighteous person mentioned to in 2:4a.

16. Reading the MT مکگ “man, servant” as scriptio defectiva for مکگ “mighty man” which, given the political overtones of the passage, is best rendered “strongman.”
17. Recognizing that the הָרָה of the MT הָרָה is the cognate of Arabic حَيْر (hayyir) “he threw down, he demolished.”

18. Following Wellhausen (cited by Ward, 1911: 14) who thought the MT הָרַה וּלְּאָל “he will not abide” should be read as הָרַה וּלְּאָל “he will not be sated,” which balances the לְאָל וּלְּאָל “he will not be satisfied” that follows in the next line.

19. See Delitzsch 1920: 111–112 § 110* for other examples of the confusion of the י and י.

A. 1 SAMUEL 25:22 and II SAMUEL 12:14

Commentators have failed to recognize that the problematic יְ בֵי- אָוָּב in II Sam 12:14 (which was relegated to a footnote in the RSV, NRS, and NJB because it was not reflected in the Septuagint) is not the well attested noun יֵ֣י אָוָּב “enemy,” but the Hithpa‘el of the rare verb יֵ֣י אָוָּב (ֱיִיֵּ֣י אָוָּב), the cognate of the Arabic أَوْب (‘awwâb) “wont to repent, frequent in repenting unto God, or turning from disobedience to obedience” (Lane 1863: 124; Castell 1669: 54). The name Job may well be derived from this stem (BDB 33), especially in light of the secondary form أَوْب (‘awwâb) “frequent in returning to God.”

McCarter (1984: 296) provided a helpful summary of the traditional interpretations of this phrase in 12:14, stating

As first noted by Geiger (1857: 267), the chief witnesses are euphemistic, and the primitive reading, יֵ֣י הַיָּהָוָּה, is reflected only in a single Greek cursive MS (c = 376). MT (cf. LXX, OL, Syr., Targ.) has יֵ֣י הַיָּהָוָּה, “the enemies of Yahweh.” Some of the ancient translations (LXX, Vulg., Symmachus) did not take this as euphemistic, choosing instead to render the preceding verb (נִּזְּשׁ נִּזְּשָׁתָה) as a causative Pi‘el (GKC §52g), a solution followed by the AV (“thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme”) and a few modern interpreters (Hertzberg, Goslinga); but Mulder
(1968: 110–12) has demonstrated the impossibility of this position in the grounds that *ni'ëš* never has such a meaning elsewhere and that in the context it makes no sense to think of David’s sin, which is a secret, as having caused Yahweh’s enemies—whoever they might be—to blaspheme. . . . Such euphemisms were not introduced to falsify a text but rather out of respect for God and saintly persons (Mulder 1968: 109–10).

But the reading of the אַתָּרָאָבִיִּים as a euphemistic addition in this verse falters in light of the 5,930 other occurrences of the name *Yahweh* in the Hebrew Scriptures which did not receive a euphemistic addition. Therefore, a better explanation is required, and one is readily available.

The final ג of the MT אַתָּרָאָבִיִּים can be transposed to become an initial ג and the reconstructed אַתָּרָאָבִיִּים can be pointed as הֹאָדָאִים, a *Hithpael* (GKC §54ε) imperfect meaning “but I have shown myself to be repentant.” Once this derivation comes into focus it is obvious that the phrase does not belong in verse 12:14, but fits perfectly in 12:13. The two verses can be restored as follows:

וַיִּאֶשְׁתָּרְאָבִיִּים לְלוֹדוֹ גֵּרְנָא
וַיִּאֶשְׁתָּרְאָבִיִּים לְלוֹדוֹ גֵּרְנָא

הָיָה לְלֹו גֵּרְנָא תַּעֲשֵׂה

וַיִּאֶשְׁתָּרְאָבִיִּים לְלוֹדוֹ גֵּרְנָא

And David said to Nathan,

“I have sinned against Yahweh,
but I have shown myself to be repentant.”

And Nathan said to David,

"Indeed, Yahweh has transferred your sin, you will not die. But, since you have outraged Yahweh with this matter, the child born to you will die."

This rare word יִּבְיָא (‘iyyēb) “to return, to repent”—which is a synonym of the widely used verb שָׁכַב “to return, to repent”—appears also in I Sam 25:22. In this verse the verb carries a nuance which survived in its Arabic cognate, أوُبِ (‘awwāb) “to return” and especially “to return home to one’s family at night” (Lane 1863: 123–124). As I Sam 25:14 and 22 indicate, David’s intention—before Abigail persuaded him not to shed blood—was to wipe out Nabal and his forces overnight (ךֵּלֶּה יָבֵא), before he would return to camp for sleep.

The name David in I Sam 25:22 can be treated as an unnecessary gloss identifying the 1cs suffix on the noun יִּבְיָא “my returning,” although it was probably added at first as a gloss when יִּבְיָא was misunderstood—in grammatical terms—as the nomen regens יִּבְיָא יִּבְיָא “the enemies of,” which required the nomen rectum modifier. Thus, while some interpreters follow the Septuagint, which has simply τό Ἃρειον Δαυίδ “to David,” and treat the MT יִּבְיָא as a gloss, I consider the MT יִּבְיָא “my returning (at night)” to be original, with the name David being a gloss. David’s statement in I Sam 25:21–22 included these words:

וַיַּמֶּשׁ לְדָוִד הַשָּׁה הָשָּׁה פֶּתַחְתָּה;
כִּי בָּשָׁה אֶלֶּה הָאֲלֹהִים לַאֲוָם הָאָדָם
And he [Nabal] returned to me evil for good. 
Thus may God do, and more also, 
upon my returning for the night 
if I leave from all who belong to him by morning, 
one who urinates at a wall.

David’s zeal was offset by Abigail’s appeal. He was ready for God to return upon him evil for good if he failed to kill every last man of Nabal’s forces during that very night before he returned to his base for sleep before daybreak or by daybreak. The only “enemy” mention in these verses is the one mentioned by name, namely, Nabal.”

B. RESTORING A ָּ IN EZEKIEL 38:21

LOST BY HAPLOGRAPHY

MASORETIC TEXT

פַּרְקְתִים עָלָיוּ לְכָל־הָרוֹם חְרֵב
לְאִם אָלֵנוּ יָרְאֵה חָרְב זַא שְׁבֵּיתֵי חָרֵב:

And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, 
oracle of my Lord Yahweh: 
every man’s sword shall be against his brother.

SEPTUAGINT

καὶ καλέσω ἐπὶ αὐτὸν πᾶν φόβον λέγει κύριος μάχαιρα ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἔσται
And I will summon against it every fear, saith the Lord: 
the sword of every man shall be against his brother.
In Exek 38:21 the MT יָרֹקֵר שְׁמִי הֵרְכָּב, meaning literally “to all of my mountains a sword,” has baffled many interpreters. Wevers (1969: 290) stated, “Possibly MT means, ‘And I will give the name: Sword, to all my mountains against him’, i.e. God will summon the falling mountains to act as swords, i.e. destroy Gog.” But this interpretation found few followers. Eichrodt (1966: 516) translated “And I will summon every kind of terror against him, says [. . .] Yahweh, every man’s sword will be lifted up against his brother,” based upon the proposed emendation of the MT יָרֹקֵר שְׁמִי הֵרְכָּב to יָרֹקֵר שְׁמִי יַהוָה, following the Septuagint’s φόβον, as noted in BHS³.

Zimmerli (1983: 289) simply listed the variants in the versions, including (1) the Geniza text’s יָרֹקֵר בְּכֶלֶלְהוֹן מַעְוֹרֵי "a sword in all of them my mountain(s),” (2) the Vulgate’s et convocabo adversum eum in cunctis montibus meis gladium, “and I will call in the sword against him in all my mountains,” (3) the Targum’s “and I appointed him to fall by the sword on the mountains of my people,” (4) the Septuagint (cited above), and (5) the Latin variant, omnem timorem gladia, which follows the Greek text in reading יָרֹקֵר יַהוָה for the יָרֹקֵר שְׁמִי יַהוָה.

Allen (1990: 201) viewed the MT יָרֹקֵר as an “adapted torso” having been written for יָרֹקֵר under the influence of the יָרֹקֵר שְׁמִי יַהוָה in 38:20—which was “then made more sensible by adding the suffix.” But this interpretation is less convincing than that of Wevers, noted above. Block (1998: 452, 458) simply stated, “The MT is difficult but not impossible, LXX φόβον “fear,” seems to presuppose הָרָדָדָה הֶרֶב for הָרָי הֶרֶב, concluding that “the LXX reading
may itself reflect the translator’s uncertainty regarding the meaning of the word [ַיִּרְכָּּת].”

Block’s suspicion that the Greek translators did not know the meaning of הָרֵי is right on target, for this word is actually a rare word in Hebrew, a *hapax legomenon* and only a homograph of the common suffixed noun הָרֶשׁ “my mountain(s).” Instead of being read as a parallel to the יִרְכָּּת “and upon my mountains” in Isa 14:25 or the יִרְכָּּת of Zech 14:5, the הָרֵי in Ezek 38:21 needs to be repointed as הָרֶשׁ and recognized as the cognate of the Arabic verb הָרֶשׁ/הָרֶשׁ (hwr/ hâra) “he threw it down, pulled it down, demolished it” and the adjectives הָרֶשׁ (hârî)/הָרֶשׁ (hâ`îr), meaning “becoming thrown down, pulled down, pulled to pieces, demolished” (Lane 1893: 2906–2907). The הָרֵי is not a 1cs suffix but a part of the stem, like the הָרֶשׁ “fruit.” In the context of all the destruction mentioned in Ezekiel 38, this הָרֵי is best translated as “demolition” or “collapse.”

If this interpretation of the הָרֵי is correct, then the next word, הָרֶשׁ “sword,” should be repointed as הָרֶשׁ/הָרֶשׁ “desolation.” And, if the repointed הָרֶשׁ/הָרֶשׁ means “demolition, desolation,” then the preceding word, לְכָּּת “to all,” should be emended to לְכָּּת/לְכָּּת “for annihilation,” restoring a ה which was lost by haplography. This restoration of לְכָּּת in Ezek 38:21 finds support in the use of לְכָּּת in Ezek 13:13,
and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger,
and great hailstones in wrath for annihilation.

Similarly, the mention in Ezek 38:19–20 of a “great shaking”
(רָעָתָא מָניִית) and the “falling to earth of all
the walls” (רָעָתָא מָניִית) support the interpre-
tation ofgrounds as “collapse” or “demolition.”

Thus, in summary, the problematic phrase in Ezek 38:21,
“And I called against him
to all of my mountains a sword,” should be emended and re-
pointed to read “And
against him I have called for annihilation, demolition, desola-
tion.”

C. ZECHARIAH 2:8 (MT 2:12)
“THE APPLE OF HIS EYE”

The expression or idiom “the apple of his eye,”
occurring in Zech 2:8 (MT 2:12), is also found in Arabic and
Syriac. The Hebrew word for the fruit called an “apple” is
x;WPT, which is totally unrelated to the word hb'B,
appearing in Zech 2:8. The Hebrew word hb'B,
used in this idiom may be derived from (1) a word for “baby, babe,” indicating the
“baby of the eye,” or (2) from aB'B meaning “gate,” indicating the “gate of the eye.”

The Greek translation of Zech 2:8 (LXX 2:12) used the
word κόρη meaning “damsel, maiden, daughter,” but translated “pupil” when used with reference to the eye. The Vul-
gate has pupillam oculi eius “the pupil of his eye.” The
English “pupil” is the diminutive of *pupa* “girl, doll,” so called because of the image which is reflected in another person’s eye—which appears like a tiny doll. (The English word “apple” indicated in Old English and Middle English “fruit, apple, the eyeball, or anything round.) The “apple of the eye” meant nothing other than the “round [center] of the eye.”

In Deut 32:10 the expression “the apple of his eye” also appears, but a different word is used for the “apple.” There it is אַיָּה יִרְאָה, the meaning of which is clarified by the same expression in Arabic, إنسان عين (אַיָּה יִרְאָה), which means “the image that is seen [reflected] in the black of the eye, what is seen in the eye, like as in a mirror, when a thing faces it . . . the pupil or the apple of the eye, or the black of the eye” (Lane 1863: 115). The derivation of the word אַיָּה יִרְאָה could be related to the word אַיָּה “man,” but it is more likely a noun related to the word יִרְאָה “to glitter, to be dark.”

In Psalm 17:8 the expression appears as אַיָּה יִרְאָה, which adds the word *daughter of the eye,* like the Greek expression noted above, “the daughter of the eye.” Thus, “the apple of the eye” can be expressed three different ways in Hebrew, and all three were used to express affection. Jerusalem and Zion were considered to be the objects of God’s affection. The translation of Zech 2:8 in the NRSV “. . . truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye,” rather than reading “his eye,” remains preferable.
XIX
THE DERIVATION OF NAZARETH AND NAZARENE

MATTHEW 2:23
καὶ ἐλθὼν κατούχουσαν εἰς πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτιν 
ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ρηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν 
ὅτι Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται.
And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, 
that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 
“He shall be called a Nazarene.”

NAZAPEAT / NAZARETH

The place named Nazareth does not appear in the Old Testament, Josephus, Talmud Babli, Talmud Yerushalmi, nor in Midrashic literature. Moreover, the quotation “spoken by the prophets” in 2:23b cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible. Attempts to relate Nazareth to the Nazirites have been less than convincing, given the simple fact that Jesus was called a winebibber (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34), not a teetotaler. While much attention has been given to the question of how Ναζωραῖος “Nazarene” is related to the name Ναζαρέτ “Nazareth,” little attention has been given to the derivation of the name Nazareth.

What is known about Nazareth in the Herodian period has been succinctly summarized by Strange (1992) who noted,

As inferred from the Herodian tombs in Nazareth, the maximum extent of the Herodian and pre-Herodian village measured about 900 x 200 m, for a total area just under 60 acres. Since most of this was empty space in antiquity, the popu-
lation would have been a maximum of about 480 at the beginning of the 1st century A.D.

When the Arabic cognates of נזר come into focus, it appears that Nazareth was, in one respect, true to its name. The Arabic cognate of נזר is nazara “small, little in number” (Castell 1669: 2266–2267; Lane 1893: 2784). Nazareth, with a maximum of sixty acres and just eight people per acre, was a sparsely populated small settlement. The descriptive term for this small community, נזר “little (village),” actually became the name נזר (Nazaret/Nazareth), meaning “Little-town” or “Hamlet.” The Arabic cognate nazara also meant “contemptible, mean, nasty, possessed of little good or having very little wealth” (Lane 1893: 2784). For some Jewish folk in New Testament times the Hebrew cognate נזר apparently had similar connotations.

With this derivation and definitions in focus, Nathanael’s question to Philip in John 1:46, Ἄρα ἐν Ναζαρέτ ἐναὶ ἄγαθον εἶναι; “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” becomes understandable. Nathanael obviously knew of the hamlet named נזר, and he obviously knew at least one meaning of the town’s name.

Another Arabic cognate of Hebrew נזר (naṣara /naḏir) “to inform, to warn, to put people on guard” [form 6], and “an informant, one who cautions.” The question in Qur’ān Sura 35:34, “Did not a warner (نزير) (naḏir) come to you?” is considered by expositors to be a reference to the prophet Mohammed (Lane 1893: 2781–2782). This definition will come into focus in the discussion below on Luke 4:16–19, 34–35 and Isa 61:1–3.
A third definition of נזר survives in Rabbinic Hebrew in the exposition of Lev 25:5, where the MT reads ניזר של הגרעון “and the grapes of your undressed vine you shall not gather” (RSV). The Septuagint has καὶ τὴν σταφυλὴν τοῦ ἀγιάσματος σου οὐκ ἐκτρυγῆσες “and you shall not gather the grapes of your dedication.” Rashi interpreted the ניזר of ניזר as נזר moreh תמרע “that which is guarded in the ground,” i.e., the opposite of מבואך “free (for gleaning).” This would make נזר a by-form of the well attested נזר “to guard” (Jastrow 891, 929).¹⁰

In summary, נאץ'ראט / Nazareth could, theoretically, be derived from different words spelled נזר meaning (1) small, (2) mean, nasty, (3) a vow, (4) a Nazirite, (5) to inform, to warn, and (6) to guard. The mostly likely meaning of נאץ'ראט / Nazareth is the first listed. נאץ'ראט / Nazareth was a small village or hamlet which became known as “Hamlet.”

NAZΩΡΑΙΟΣ¹¹ / NAZARENE¹²

As six definitions came into focus in reference to נאץ'ראט “Nazareth,” so also a number of words need to be reviewed when considering the derivation of נאץ'ורהיאס and נאץ'ורה-ηνος.¹³ As noted already, נזר could be a by-form of נזר “to guard, to keep, to observe,” which is the cognate of Aramaic נזר (BDB 665; Jastrow 901), Syriac נזר (nētar) (Payne Smith 337), and Arabic نزار/نظير/نظور “to look, examine, a guardian, keeper, watcher, a chief person to whom one looks as an example” (Lane 1893: 2810–2813).¹⁴ If the name נזר “Nazarene/Christians” was derived from נזר נזר “to guard / be observant,” the נזר of the
HEBREW "NAZARENE" AND "CHRISTIANS"

Hebrew נֶגֶרְנָה would most likely have become a נֶגֶרְנָא in Aramaic and Syriac and a نَجَدي (z) in Arabic—the possible Hebrew by-form נִגְרָנָא notwithstanding. The names נַגְרְנָא “Nazarene” and נַגְרָנָא “Christians” appear in Syriac as μενασραγα (nasrāyā), in Arabic as (١) نَسْرَانِي (nasrānī), (٢) نَسْرَان (nasrān), (٣) نَسْرَيْ (nasrī) or (٤) نَاصِرِيْ (nāṣiriyyā), and in Persian as نَسْرِي (nāsrī). The Syriac نَسْرَانْ (s) instead of نَجَرْن (t) and the Arabic نَسْر (s) instead of نَجَرْن (z) in these names mitigates against deriving נַגְרְנָא and נַגְרְנָא from נַגְרָא “to guard.”

The second word from which some scholars would derive נַגְרְנָא and נַגְרְנָא is נֶגֶרְנָא “sprout, shoot, branch” the cognate of Arabic نَضْر (nasr) (BDB 666; Jastrow 930; Lane 1893:2808). Davies and Allison (1988: 277–279) listed seven reasons for making Isa 11:1, “There shall come forth a shoot (רַגְרַנ) from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (רַגְרַנ) shall grow out of his roots,” the key for interpreting the “Nazarene” of Matt 2:23. The reasons led them to conjecture: (1) “Perhaps we should speak of a secondary allusion.” Might our evangelist have found ‘Nazarene’ to be coincidentally similar to more than one OT key word or text?” and (2) “Indeed it might even be that Matthew found authorial delight in hiding ‘bonus points’ [France’s phrase] for those willing and able to look a little beneath the gospel’s surface.”

Davies and Allison assumed that Matthew was writing in Greek and that “Matthew was not above scattering items in his Greek text whose deeper meaning could only be appreciated by those with a knowledge of Hebrew.” However, Matthew, without a doubt, wrote in Hebrew and his first readers probably had a knowledge of Hebrew superior to that of subsequent translators, commentators, and critics.
Gundry (1967: 104) related the Ναζωραῖος of Matt 2:23 to the נָצָר of Isa 11:1—alluding to the Targumic and Rabbinic literature cited by Strack and Billerbeck (1922: 93–96) and the Qumran Hodayoth (VI: 15; VII: 19; VIII: 6–10)—and concluded that the “Branch” passages are interpreted as meaning the Messiah will come out of obscurity and a low estate . . . . Thus Mt builds his citation upon the נָצָר = lowliness motif as well as upon phonetic similarity [with Ναζωραῖος].

However, the “Branch” passages in the Hodayoth are paens of praise, such as

And Thou hast sent out a sprouting as a flower that shall bloom for ever, and the Shoot (נָצָר) may grow into the branches of the eternal planting. And its shade shall spread over all [the earth] [and] its top reach to the heaven [and] its roots to the Abyss, And all the rivers of Eden [shall water] its [boughs and it shall become a mighty forest, [and the glory of] its [rest shall spread over the world without end, as far as Sheol [for ever]. . . (VI: 15–17).18

Moreover, if Ναζωραῖος is linked to נָצָר, it is difficult

• to reconcile the idea of “obscurity and lowliness” with Matthew’s account (2:1–12) of the star in the East, the Magi, gifts of gold, frankinsence, and myrrh—not to mention the elevated status of being of the linage of David.

• to ignore the Arabic cognate of נָצָר “branch” which is نَضْر (naḍara), noted in BDB (1907: 666) as meaning “be fresh, bright, grow green,” but Castell (1669: 2391) defined it as à splendore et nitore “brilliant and bright,” aurum “gold,” argentum “silver,” pulchritudo “beauty,” and bonorum affluentia “abundant possessions.” Lane’s more detailed definition (1893: 2808) included (1) “intense greenness,”
“bright and beautiful (faces),” (3) “(a tree) was beautiful,” (4) “(life) became plentiful and pleasant, and easy,” (5) (God) made one have a good rank or station,” and (6) the noun نضرة (nadrat) meant “enjoyment, a plentiful and pleasant and easy life.”

• to account for the ω vowel of نازراى and نازرين were a transliteration of نازراى means “enjoyment, a plentiful and pleasant and easy life.”

Therefore, like نازراى “guard,” نازراى “branch” is not the most likely link between نازراى and نازرين.

However, the relationship of these two names can be clarified by نازراى once the meaning “to aid, to assist, to conquer, to be victorious” comes into focus. This نازراى is the cognate of Arabic نصر (naşara), from which the Arabic word for “Christian” is derived (see above). Behind the Arabic name for “Christian” is the Arabic cognate of نصر meaning “he aided or assisted him, namely a person wronged, misused, or treated unjustly or injuriously . . . aided him against his enemy, he avenged him,” as in the expression نصر الله (nasarahu Allah) “God made him to be victorious,” used with reference to the prophet Mohammed in Sura 22:15 (“will not Allah help him in this world and the hereafter”). The nouns نصر (našr) and نصرة (nasarat) mean “aid, assistance (especially against an enemy), victory or conquest” (Castell 1669: 2390–2391; Lane 1893: 2802; Wehr 1979: 1138; KBS 1994: 2: 718).

Consequently, with help from Arabic cognates and the recognition that ل and ت were frequently interchanged in Hebrew, the derivation of نازرين (Hamlet, Littletown”) and نازرين (Helpers/Victors”) can be established with a high degree of certainty. A Nazarene ( = Christian) was more than someone who came from Nazareth or the
follower of someone from Nazareth. Nazarenes were those
helped/saved (צלזראים) from sin and the world’s injustice.
Their faith in resurrection (I Cor 15:54–57) made them
“Victors” (צלזראים) over sin and death. Etymologically, the
name had moral, ethical, and political overtones which were
more significant than any geographical connotation.

With this derivation of Naζαρηνός/Naζώραίος in mind,
the words of the demoniac in Luke 4:34, “Ah! What have you
to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy
us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God,” become clear.
Nazareth had become more than a name meaning “Hamlet.”
It had multiple levels of meaning—even for the demoniac!
Were “the holy one of God” from Nazareth (נזרה) to help/aid
(זרה) the demoniac, Jesus would have to conquer
(נזר) the demonic power—which the demoniac feared would
be his own destruction and death. But Jesus proved to be
victorious (נזר) without being deadly.

With the above derivations of Naζαρηνός/Naζώραίος and
Naζαρέτ in mind, the account of Jesus’ visit to the synagogue
in Nazareth (Luke 4:15–19 and Mark 1:24) reveals several
layers of meaning. By first reading the words of Isa 61:1–3,
the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to
set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the ac-
ceptable year of the Lord,
and then declaring, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in
your hearing.” Jesus announced, in so many words, that he
was a Naζώραίος—not just a former resident of Nazareth,
but the anointed “helper of those who were wronged, misused
or treated unjustly or injuriously” (borrowing Lane’s defin-
tion of نصر [naṣara] = Naζώραίος).
A second implicit wordplay on the name of Nazareth follows when, according to Luke 4:25–27, Jesus warned his listeners about a prophet’s not being welcomed in his own hometown. Nothing in the Greek text suggests that ἡ ἡμέρα “to warn,” discussed above, was used by Jesus. But recognition of the multiple meanings of ἀπέρριψεν/ἀπέρριψε suggests that with Nazareth some things were understood without being said.

When the Hebrew words behind נָזָרֶה, נָזָרֶה are understood to mean “to aid, to help, to conquer, to be victorious” (like its Arabic cognate نصر [naṣara]), rather than meaning simply “one from Nazareth,” it is very easy to see how the נָזָרֶה “helpers”—when interpreted as נָזָרֶה “victors”—were viewed as a threat by Roman rulers.

**AN UNRECOGNIZED BY-FORM OF NAṢARA**

The vocables בָּרָה “to roar, to murmur” and מָרָה “to growl, to groan” are related to each other in the same way that בָּר “to breathe” and מָר “to breathe” are related. These by-forms suggest that מָר can be paired with the by-form מֶר. Support for the מָר by-forms comes from the Septuagint. In the Greek text מֶר was rendered twenty eight times by πέτρα “rock”; but in I Sam 2:2 the MT מֶר וְאֵין מֶר “there is no rock (like our God)” became in the Septuagint οὐκ ἦστιν ἡγιασμένος “there is none holy (besides thee),” suggesting that מֶר for the Septuagint translators was treated as a by-form of the מָר which in the B-text of Judges 13:5 and 7 was also translated as ἡγιασμένος “holy.” Moreover, the following translations of מֶר are attested:
DERIVATIONS OF NAZARETH AND NAZARENE

• in Deut 32:4, 15, 18; Psal 18:32 [= 2 Sam 2:32], 62:3, 63:7 and 91:5 was rendered by θεός “God”;\(^{22}\)
• in 2 Sam 22:47 צַלְעֵל was translated as φυλακίς “guardian”;\(^{23}\)
• in Psa 17:3, 19:15, 78:35, 89:44, and 94:22 צלע was translated by βοηθος “helper.”\(^{24}\)
• in Hab 1:12 צָלַע was translated πλάσσω “to form, create.”
• in 1 Sam צָלַע was translated δίκαιος “righteous.”

The צָלַע which was translated as φυλακίς “guardian” or βοηθος “helper” can be identified as a by-form of צָלָע “to guard” (= Aramaic צָלָע) or צָלַע “to help, to aid” (= Aramaic צָלַע). The צָלַע with either of these two definitions could also appear as a variant צָלַע, in which case its derivation becomes obscure.

SUMMARY

Hebrew lexicons generally list five different roots for צָלַע, צָלָע, צָלָע, and one for צָלַע. When the various translations of צָלַע, צָלַע, צָלַע, צָלַע in the Septuagint are taken into account, four additional definitions must also be dealt with, including the צָלַע and צָלַע צָלַע meaning βοηθος “helper.” Of these fifteen options for the derivation of נָגָרְאֵן/Nazarene and נָגָרְאֵן/Nazareth, the two which are at the top of the list are the צָלַע meaning “small, few in number, nasty, mean” and the צָלַע meaning “to help, to aid, to be victorious.” The name of Nazareth (= “Littletown”) and its negative reputation (in some circles) is to be derived from the former, and the name Nazarene (“victor”) is derived from the latter. Matthew’s
statement (2:23) that Jesus dwelt in a city called Nazareth to fulfill a prophetic statement that “He shall be called a Nazarene” was a wordplay in Hebrew. It did not involve a pun on the names Nazareth and Nazirite.

The best commentary on Matthew’s wordplay was provided by Jesus when he returned to the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16–20) and read from Isaiah 61:1–2. The messianic reference, “Yahweh anointed me” (יִהְוֶה יָשָׁב וַיְקָרְבֵּנָה יַעֲנֵיהוּ) was explicit; and Isaiah’s words defined Ναζαρετ/NaZaReNEnE as “victorious”—without even mentioning the name.

NOTES

1. The Greek πόλις is read here as in the A-text of Job 2:11, where the MT עֲצָא̊זֶא̊י אִשָּׁת מָקָמָה “each one from his place” became ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας πόλεως πρὸς αὐτόν “each one from his city/place,” the equivalent of the B-text, ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας χώρας πρὸς αὐτόν.

2. The name of Nazareth (Ναζαρέτ) appears in Syriac as نازراط (nasrāṭ), and in Arabic as (1) ناصرة (nāsi̇ratu), (2) نسرانة (nasrānata), and (3) نصرية (nasiriyyatu). In the Persian of the London Polyglot it appears as ناصرة (nāsiratu) (Jastrow 889; Payne Smith 349; Lane 1893: 2803; Walton, Vol. V: 11).

3. Consequently, the name Nazareth does not appear anywhere in the seven volumes of Ginzberg’s (1909–1938) The Legends of the Jews.


Mussner (1960: 285), for example, appealed to Jdg 13:7, נָזִיִּיִּים הָיוּ הָנֵגָע “for the child shall be a Nazarite to God,” to interpret Mark 1:24, 'Ἡσωῦ Ναζαρηνέ... οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, “Jesus of Nazareth ... I know who you are the Holy One of God.” Mussner recognized in the words spoken by the demoniac the variants in the Greek text of Judges 13:7, where the A-text has ὅτι ναζηραῖον θεοῦ ἔσται τὸ παιδὰριον, “for the child [Samson] shall be a Nazarite of God,” and the B-text has ὅτι ἅγιον θεοῦ ἔσται τὸ παιδὰριον, “for the child [Samson] shall be a holy one of God,” thus equating ‘Nazarite’ and ‘holy one.’

While Mann (1986: 212) was content simply to call Mussner’s ideas to the attention of the reader, Davies and Allison, (1988: 276) followed Mussner and others in concluding that “Mt 2.23 almost certainly has to do with a play on the word naṣîr’”—citing, as did Mussner, the variants ἅγιον and ναζηραῖον in the Greek text for the נָזִיִּים of Judges 13:7. Davies and Allison reasoned as follows

We should probably conclude that before us is an involved word play. ‘He will be called a Nazarene’ depends upon (a) the equation of ‘Nazarite’ and ‘holy one of God’; (b) the substitution of ‘Nazarite’ for ‘holy’ in Isa 4.3 (cf. the LXX variants in Judges); and (c) the substitution of ‘Nazarene’ for ‘Nazarite’.

See Gundry (1967: 98–99) and Davies and Allison (1988: 276, 283) for other summaries and bibliographies of those who view נָזִיִּים “Nazirite” as the clue to the meaning of נָזָרֶה Nazareth” and נָזָרֶה Naṣoreth.”

6. Unfortunately, these cognates go unnoticed in the Hebrew lexicons currently available.
7. Compare Strange (19: 248) who argues, “. . . the remoteness of Nazareth would thus give it a derogatory sense of ‘backwoodsman’ particularly for the Judean whose view of Galilee in general was not flattering.”

8. Thanks to Arabic lexicography and the recognition that Hebrew was alive and well among the disciples of Jesus and the folk for whom Matthew wrote his gospel, the multiple meanings of נַאֲשָרָּה can be recovered. Compare the opinion of Schaeder (1967: 878) who asserted that “Mt., however, was trying to make himself understood by Gk. readers. If, then, it is possible to find a serviceable explanation in Gk. or LXX terms, this deserves precedence.” But Schaeder, finding no serviceable explanation in Greek, summarized his case as follows

. . . it may be said that the understanding of נַאֲשָרָּה as a rendering of Aram. nāsrājā, derived from the name of the city of Nazareth (Aram. nāsrāt), is linguistically and materially unassailable.

But Schaeder never addressed the meaning of Nazareth.

9. This definition of נַזִיר is not cited in the Hebrew lexicons checked by the author. One finds נַזִיר “to vow, to abstain, a Nazirite,” the cognate of Syriac ܢ"
/"制订knife (nēzar / nēzirāyit), Aramaic פֵּזֵר פָשַׁר / פָשַׁר (BDB 634; KBS 2: 684; Jastrow 893; Payne Smith 328; Lane 8: 2781). But Arabic does not use the term Nazirite. In Num 6:2, the MT פֵּזֵר פָשַׁר פֵּלַיְהוֹן פֵּלַיְיָהוֹן פֵּלַיְיָעַר “the vow of a Nazirite to devote oneself,” appears in the Arabic text of the London Polyglot (1657) as נָזַר נָסק לִינְסַק (niḏra naskin lata-nassuka) “the vow of devotion to devote oneself.” Compare פֵּזֵר “to vow” the cognate of Syriac ܢ"
/"制订knife (nēdar), Aramaic פֵּזֵר פָשַׁר and Arabic נָזַר (naḏara) (BDB 623; KBS 2: 674; Payne Smith 328; Jastrow 879; Lane 8: 2781–2782).
10. The interchange in Hebrew of נ and לא is well attested, as in the by-forms (1) נ comunità / לא comunità “to cry out,” the cognates of Arabic زع (za’aqa) “to cry out” and صع (sa’aqa) “to bellow, to thunder” and (2) לא comunità / comunità “to exult” (BDB 277, 759, 763, 858; Jastrow 408, 1083, 1085, 1294; and Lane 1867: 1231).


13. Excluding נץ “willow, wicker” (Jastrow 930), Aramaic נץ “to chirp/a cricket,” and Syriac נץ (nēsar) “to chirp, to twitter, squeal, chant, laud” (Jastrow 889, 930; Payne Smith 349).

14. Albright and Mann (1971: 21) thought that Jer 31:6, when properly restored to read “There is a day when the defenders [Hebrew nōsrīm] will be called on Mount Ephraim,” was the prophetic text Matthew had in mind—while admitting, “It is clear that the verse in Matthew does not fully conform either to the LXX or the MT [of Jer 31:6].”

15. The speculative nature of the proposals is betrayed by phrases such as (1) “could readily have identified,” (2) “appears to have been,” (3) “may have recalled,” (4) “Matthew could have thought,” and (5) “may have been pronounced.” Davies and Allison also dismissed proposals to interpret Matt 2:23 in the light of Gen 49:26, Isa 42:6, 49:6, and Jer 31:6–7.

16. For Davies and Allison the primary wordplay in Matt 2:23 was with Nazareth and נזיר, the latter word meaning “holy” and the
fact that “Jesus was known as ‘the holy one of God’ (Mk 1.24; Lk 4.34; Jn 6.69; cf. Acts 3.14; 1 Jn 2.20; Rev 3.7).”


19. The ω of Ναζωραῖος reflects the form πνεῦμα like πνεῦμα.

20. This meaning of נֵזָר appears in Isa 42:6, which reads אֶלְעָדָע אֱלֹהִים “I will aid/help you and I will give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles.”

21. Given the by-forms נֵזָר and נֵזֶר, the נֵזֶר in Gen 49:26 and Deut 33:6 would mean that Joseph was “the aider/helper of his brothers” rather than his being the one “consecrated among his brothers,” or the like.

22. Deut 32:4 reads בְּרֵאשִׁית “the Rock, His work is perfect,” but the Greek has θεός ἀληθινά τὰ ξένα αὑτοῦ “God his works are true.”

Deut 32:15 reads רָעַב הָאֱלֹהִים “he scoffed at the rock of his salvation,” but the Greek has καὶ ἀπέστη ἀπὸ θεοῦ σωτήρος αὐτοῦ “and departed from God his Saviour.”

Deu 32:18 reads πέτρα “you forgot (the) rock who begot you,” but the Greek has θεὸν τὸν γεννήσαντά σε ἐγκατελίπος “you have forgotten God who begot you.”

Psalm 18:32 reads ῥέμα θεοῦ “and who is the rock except our God,” but the Greek has αὐτῷ τίς θεός πλην τοῦ
θεοῦ ἡμῶν “and who is God except our God.”

Psalm 62:3 and 63:7 read ἐκεῖνος ἐστίν ὁ ἡσαύριος ἡμῶν “For he is my rock and my saviour,” but the Greek has καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς θεός μου καὶ σωτὴρ μου “For he is my God, and my saviour.”

Psalm 95:1 reads ἅμα πάντες ἐκπλησθήσετε ἡμῶν “let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!” But the Greek has ἀλαλάζωμεν τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτηρίῳ ἡμῶν “let us make a joyful noise to God our Saviour.”

23. 2 Samuel 22:47 has κράζει ἡ φωνή τοῦ Θεοῦ ἥταν ἡ φωνὴ Ἰαχεὶρ, “Yahweh lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.” The Greek has ζητεῖ κύριος καὶ εὐλογεῖτος ὁ φύλαξ μου καὶ ψωθησεται ὁ θεός μου ὁ φύλαξ τῆς σωτηρίας μου “the Lord lives, and blessed be my guardian, and my God shall be exalted, the guardian of my salvation.”

24. Psalm 17:3 reads in part ὁ θεός μου ἡ φωνὴ “My God, my strength, in whom I will trust,” whereas the Greek has ὁ θεός μου βοηθός μου καὶ ἐλπιδῶ ἐπ’ αὐτῶν “my God is my helper, I will hope in him.”

Psalm 19:15 reads in part ὁ θεός μου “O Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer,” but the Greek has κύριε βοηθεῖ μου καὶ λυτρωτά μου “O Lord, my helper and my redeemer.”

Psalm 78:35 reads in part ἐπέμνησαν ὅτι ὁ θεός βοηθός αὐτῶν ἐστίν “And they remembered that God was their helper.”

Psalm 89:43 [MT 89:44] reads ἔστω ὁ θεὸς ἡ φωνὴ ἡ ῥάβδος “you have turned back the edge of his sword,” whereas the Greek reads
"you have turned back the help of his sword."

Psalm 94:22 reads in part "and my God, for the rock of my refuge," whereas the Greek reads "and my God for a helper."
A NOTE ON THE WIDOW’S DONATION
Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2

Dr. Parker Thompson called my attention to the following statement of John Gill (1810: 474, 699) with reference to the widow’s mites in Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2, “The Persic version here, different from all others, instead of two mites, renders it, two bottoms of thread, or yarn.” But John Gill offered no suggestions which would account for the difference in the Persian translation. The Persian translation in the London Polyglott of 1657, indeed, has دو کروهه ریسمان (dù karûhah rîsmân) “two balls of thread” for the Greek λεπτὰ δύο, the Latin duo minuta, and the Arabic has فلسین (falsain)—all meaning “two small coins.” The Syriac reads مینین دیتٮحٮن شنمٮن (têrên mênîn di’tâhûn šêmûnê) “two small coins, which were one-eighth (coins).”

In light of these variants, it appears that a Syriac translation was used by the Persian translator, who (1) interpreted the مینین (menîn) as “hair, string” rather than مین (mênîn) “a coin, a mina, a measure of weight” and (2) misread the شمٮن (šêmûnê) “a farthing, a small coin” as شمٮت (šêmûtê) “a ball of thread, thread wound on a spindle” (Payne Smith 1903: 281, 583).

The Persian variant is due, then, to the simple misreading of the مین (n) of شمٮن (šêmûnê) as a ت (t). Perhaps the sublinear part of what appeared to be a ت came from the bleeding of the ink from the reverse side of the manuscript. Were this the case, it suggests that the Persian translator worked with only one Syriac manuscript (or manuscript family in
which the misreading was perpetuated) and did not consult or concur with the Greek text or other translations of these two accounts about the poor widow’s donation. Or, having decided that (menîn) meant “hair, string,” the Persian translator took the explanatory gloss (šēmûnēʾ) to be a synonym of “hair/string” and corrected what he thought was an erroneous (šēmûnēʾ) to (šēmûṭēʾ). Either way, the Persian text cannot be viewed as a more reliable alternative to the Greek text and the other translations.

NOTES


2. Lane 1877: 2440.

3. Gill (1810: 474) noted, “The Syriac version renders it, two menim, that is, eighths.” But the Syriac word for “eight” is (tēmûneʾ) (Payne Smith 1903: 615; BDB 1032). Consequently, (šēmûnēʾ) would have been a Hebrew loanword in Syriac for a “one-eighth” coin. Godet (1890: II: 255), without mentioning the Syriac, stated, “λεπτόν, mite: the smallest coin, probably the eighth part of an as, which was worth from six to eight centimes (from a halfpenny to three-farthings).” However, Mark 12:42 reads λεπτὸν δῦνο, ὦ ἐστὶν κοδράντης (the Vulgate has duo minuta quod est quadrans), indicating that the coin was one-fourth of the as/assarius [אבר], which was one-sixteenth or one twenty-fourth of a denarius. The coin which was one-eighth of the as/assarius was the (Jastrow 1903: 57, 1219). However, the
terminology for coins was very fluid, with the κοδράντης “quarter” in Matt 5:26 appearing in the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew as a חרב (Howard 1995: 18–19).
XXI

THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS
OF “HOSANNA”

The exclamatory “Hosanna!” has multiple meanings. It is first of all the polite imperative הושענא, as found in Psa 118:25, "O Yahweh, please save! O Yahweh, please send prosperity!" The initial ho of hosanna marks it as a Hiphil imperative of ישים “to save” and the nna ending of hosanna reflects the polite particle of entreaty, נן “please,” frequently attached to imperatives. The sa syllable in the middle of hosanna is a contraction of the original syllables יהושע (šî’â), with the i being the thematic vowel of the Hiphil and the â vowel being the furtive patah, augmented by a paragogic ה, to facilitate the articulation of the י. When יהושע was transliterated into Greek, the ה was reflected by a smooth or rough breathing mark, the υ (sh) became a σ (s) and the Ι was ignored, resulting in the ὕσσανα found in the Gospels—which was subsequently transliterated as hosanna in English instead of the more accurate ḫoshianna (for ḫôšî’‘anna”) of the Hebrew.¹

The synonymous parallelism of ישים “to save” and יושע “to prosper” in Psa 118:25 makes it quite clear that “Hosanna” was focused on temporal, socio-economic, and socio-political benefits rather than on eternal benefits, such as victory over death or one’s going to heaven. The Arabic cognate (wasa‘a/wassa‘) “(God) made one’s means of subsistence ample and abundant” adds support for this understanding of

The “Hosanna!” in Matt 21:9 in the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew may well mean “Please save!” The text reads, in part, Hosanna מְשִׁרַתַּם הָלוֹלָה... הָלְשַׁנָּה מְשִׁרַתִּים, which Howard (1995: 102–103) translated “Hosanna, savior of the world... hosanna, our savior.” Of interest is the repeated use of the participle מְשִׁרַתַּם “savior” along with the repeated polite imperative מְשִׁרַתַּם, which, when coupled with מְשִׁרַתַּם, should certainly be read as the plea “please save!” The text “the world” would be better read as scriptio defectiva for the plural מְשִׁרַתִּים “the poor,” with the noun מְשִׁרַתִּים being the cognate of the Arabic עָל (‘ayl or ‘āl) “he was, or became, poor,” עָל (‘āl) “poor, needy,” and עָל (‘aylat) “poverty” (Lane 1874: 2212–2213). There is even the good chance that the בֵּי בֶּן בַּיָּם “Hosanna in the highest” (Matt 21:9) may have come from the plea מְשִׁרַתַּם הָלוֹלָה “Please save the weary,” in which case there was a confusion of הָלְשַׁנָּה stem I “to be weary” and הָלְשַׁנָּה stem II “to be high, elevated.” (Compare the Arabic [yafa] “hill” and [wa‘gafa] “to show weariness.” [cited in BDB 419].)
However, the ‘Ωσεννά / Hosanna in the Gospels (Matt 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9–10; and John 12:13) is clearly presented as an expression of praise rather than a pitiful plea for help. When the chief priests and the scribes heard the children shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant and asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus understood the children’s “Hosanna” to be a word of praise, for he answered his critics with a quotation from Psa 8:2, “Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise’?”

How and when the polite but pitiful plea ḥוֹרָנִיָּה became transformed into an expression of exuberant praise has been a mystery. Lohse (1974: 682) commented the common use of ḥורָנִיָּה (sic) shows that it had become a liturgical formula. The prayer for help has also become an expression of praise. This sense must have been acquired already in pre-chr. Judaism, for when the temple was still standing, i.e., prior to 70 A.D., hosanna was shouted out repeatedly as a fixed formula in the procession round the altar of burnt offering. As Tabernacles itself became a feast of praise instead of petition, the hosanna shared this movement and the cry for help became a shout of jubilation.

The traditional interpretation is well reflected in Jastrow’s lexicon (1903: 341) where ḥוֹרָנִיָּה is equated with ḥוֹרָנִיָּה and it, in turn, is equated with ḥוֹרָנִיָּה “Help, I pray.” This hosanna is the name of parts of, or of the entire, festive wreath (Lulab) carried in procession on the Feast of Booths . . . especially the separate branches of the willow carried in procession on the last day of Succoth, whence ḥוֹרָנִיָּה, the seventh day of the Feast of Booths (now called ḥוֹרָנִיָּה).
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However, the נְחָנָן of the Feast of Booths (Succoth) is more likely to be the cognate of Arabic وشعبة (wašiʾ) than the cognate of وسع (wasīʾ) “to enrich, to empower,” discussed above. Although standard lexicons cite only יְשַׁלָּל “to save,” a second יְשַׁלָּל, the cognate of وشع (wašaʿa) “to mix things,” needs to be added. The festival of Succoth, based upon Lev 23:40, requires the mixing of a piece of quality fruit with branches from palm, willow, and myrtle trees. Although the instruction הָשַׁלַּל הָעֶשֶׁרָה לֶךְ לְעִם הָעֵ både “please mix the branches of the trees” is not in the text of Leviticus, it would be a very fitting, though abbreviated, targumic paraphrase. Moreover, the Arabic cognate وشع (wšʿ) (= يشلا or possibly يشلا) is also the lexeme used for: (1) وشع (wašʿ) “the Egyptian willow,” (2) وشع (wašiʾ) “a layer of palm leaves used on a roof,” and (3) “the distinctive tent of a chief” (Hava 1915: 871–872). In light of these definitions of وشع (wšʿ)—which are a perfect match for the נְחָנָן of Succoth—nothing is gained by insisting that وسع (wasaʾ/wassaʾ) is the actual cognate of נְחָנָן or that the נְחָנָן נְחָנָן “please save!” is its proper derivation.

Just as it is difficult to account for the transformation of the pitiful plea נְחָנָן נְחָנָן “Please save!” into the joyful and exuberant Ὅςαννα/Hosanna of the Gospels, it is equally difficult to derive the jubilant Ὅςαννα/Hosanna from the נְחָנָן having to do with the mixing of palm, myrtle and willow branches, or having to do with booths, roofs, or tents.
The ʿΩσαννᾶ / Hosanna of the Gospels may well be the transliteration of the Aramaic noun ḫsa ʿan ḫašš which was from the root ḥšš, having an affixed ū analogous to the nouns ḫšš “acquisition” and ḥšš “offering” (GKC 85u). If so, the noun obviously functioned as an exclamatory interjection meaning “Hail!” or “Rejoice!” or “Cheer!” It would be the cognate of Arabic giatan /  hargaš “he was, or became, cheerful, or joyful; one who rejoices or is glad,” as in the expression ḥnā ṣ bihi ḥašš bašš “I am cheerful, brisk, lively, or sprightly in behaviour toward him, . . . joyful, happy” (Lane 1893: 2894–2895; Wehr 1979: 1206; Hava 1915: 828). The “lively and sprightly” behavior suggested by ḫsa is mentioned in Matt 21:10, “all the city was stirred.”

Moreover, if the Aramaic ḥšš retained nuances attested for the Arabic hargaš (hargaš), the waving of palm branches and the scattering of their leaves—as mentioned in Matt 21:8, Mark 11:8, and John 12:13—would fit the non-verbal activities associated with ʿΩσαννᾶ / Hosanna. The cognate hargaš (hargaša) was used for wood or sticks which could be easily broken,” and the scattering their leaves with a staff, or stick,” as in the expression hargaš a ṣ alhašîm “he broke into pieces the dry herbage/stalks” (Lane 1893: 2894; Wehr 1979: 1206).

This association of ʿΩσαννᾶ / Hosanna with dry herbage and stalks accounts perfectly for Mark’s statement that some of the people “spread brushwood which they had cut in the fields.” Mann (1986: 435) noted that Mark was the only one who mentioned στρεβλάδακς, which he translated as “brushwood” (which is cited in Liddell and Scott [1966: 1645] as
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*bed of straw, rushes or leaves, whether strewn loose, or stuffed into a mattress . . . straw strewn at a sacrifice.*” Mann conjectured, “This is certainly from an eyewitness account and an example of Mark’s independence on this occasion from his principal source in Matthew.” But to the contrary, Mark’s reference to στιβάδας simply provides evidence of Mark’s knowledge of the Hebrew/Aramaic שָׂרִי (or the augmented שַׂרִי) “straw, sticks” and associated ωσαννά with that word. He need not have been an eyewitness to have made the association of שָׂרִי or שָׂרִי with שָׂרִי.

Thus, the exclamatory Aramaic שֵׁרִי “Hurrah! Hooray! Cheers!” and the Hebrew polite imperative שֶׁלִי נֹבֶה “Help please!” became blended—with the ש of שֶׁלִי being transformed into the ש of שֶׁלִי and the נ of שֶׁלִי being transformed into the נ of שֶׁלִי. The blended ωσαννά could have carried either meaning of “petition” or of “acclamatio.”

Thus, Pope (1992) was partially on target when he argued

It was Christian misapprehension of a well-known Hebrew term that has confused even scholars to this day. The difference between acclamation and a stark cry, “Help, please!” is too great to be glossed over. How could such misapprehension occur? Why did not the gospel writers look to the Gk of Ps 118:25 and some thirty other passages where the Hebrew imperative is duly rendered by the Gk imperative σοσον, “save”? The crux of the problem lies in the nonsensical cries “hosanna to the son of David” and “hosanna in the highest” which indicates that the cry was not understood because of the Semitic particle l- before the addresses “Son of David” and “highest.”
But, in addition to the recognition of the vocative in Biblical Hebrew there must also be the recognition that ὧσαννα HOSANNA can be the transliteration of (1) ἀν’ış’a-yah, (2) ἀν’ış’āy, or (3) ἀν’ísimo. The Arabic cognates of these different words provide the answer to Pope’s question, “How could such misapprehension [of interpreting a plea and an acclamation] occur?” The pronunciation of the first two was quite similar and they could be easily confused with each other. The first two words could not be accurately transliterated in Greek, which lacks in speech and spelling the sh sound of the ו. The third word, ἀν’ísimo “Cheers!” should have been transliterated as ἀσαννα but it was merged with the ὧσαννα.

Some of Jesus’ followers begged, “Save us, O Son of David!” and others acclaimed, “Hail to the Son of David!” But both phrases ended up as ὧσαννα—which became HOSANNA in English, and it has been understood to date as one word meaning both “to plead for salvation” and “to shout in acclamation.” Now we know better. There were really three words:

- the ἀν’ísimo (hō’ša’nā/ hoshana) used for the “mixing/ mingling” required for Succoth,
- the ἀν’ísimo (hassānā/ hassana) in the acclamation of Palm Sunday,
- the ἀν’ísimo (hō’ši’aannā/ hoshianna) in the petition of Palm Sunday.
NOTES

1. It was transliterated in Arabic as هوشتنا (hûša‘nâ) and in Syriac as حوشنا ("ûšana"). Noteworthy is the use of يسوع (yasû') for Jesus compared with the Qur‘anic عيسى (‘îsây) for in which there has been the transposition of the ي and the ل (i.e., the ì and the ع).

2. The ambiguous لويل، ين in Job 24:9, translated variously as
   - “and take a pledge of the poor” (KJV, NKJ, ASV),
   - “the infant of the poor is seized for a debt” (NIV, NIB),
   - “the child of the poor is exacted as security” (NJB),
   - “the suckling of the poor they seized” (Pope 1965: 158–160)
may well contain the noun ين/نو ن “poor,” with the لين/لويل being a clarifying gloss. See Driver and Gray (1921: Part 1: 207 and Part 2: 167) for a summary of the interpretations of this verse.

3. Compare Pope (1992, “Hosanna” in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, CD Version) who interpreted the acclamation as follows:

The title “Highest” is used many times of God in both the OT and the NT. Accordingly, thanks to ancient W Semitic usage of vocative ل-، we can finally explain how the cries حوشنة ل بن داوید and حوشنة ل اليون, “Save/help, please, O Son of David!” and “Save/help, please, O Highest!” came to be misunderstood.

4. Ordinarily the Arabic ش (š) would be a צ in Hebrew, but there are a number of cognates where a צ matches the Arabic ش (š), including: (1) “flame” and شب (šabba) “to kindle a fire, to blaze, to flame” and شبة (šabbat) “a blazing, flaming fire”; (2) شوق (šawq) “desire, yearning,
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longing of the soul” and در رشوق (dū šawqin) “an admiring lover”; and حشر (ḥašara) “to collect.”

5. Note also Castell’s (1669: 998) many definitions for وشع (wš'): “Miscuit, . . . ornavit, . . . IV Floruit arbor, olusve . . . Flores olerum . . . Stratum textile ex palmae foliis & caudicis fibris, similibusve rebus siccis, quod injicitur supremis domús tignis, lignisve . . . Umbraculum, . . . Truncus arboris,” i.e., “He mixed/ mingled, . . . he adorned/decorated, . . . IV Tree, vegetation blossomed . . . Blossom of vegetables . . . Woven cover from palm leaves and wooden fibers like a dry thing which is put on the top of house beams, timbers . . . Shelter/shade . . . tree trunk.”

6. Castell (1669: 830, 890) defined (1) هاش (hašša) as “Fuste decussit de arebore . . . Agilis, letus, ac lubens fuit . . . Facilis, comis, benignus humanus fuit . . . Alacrem, lætum, lubenten red-didit . . . VIII Lubentem, comem, & benignum, se præbuit . . ., and (2) هاش (hâša) as “Commisti fuerunt inter sese, et tumultuati homines . . . Turba hominum,” i.e., “A stick broken off from a tree . . . Rousing, happy and also to be cheerful . . . Courteous, gracious, to be affable, kind . . . he responded with excitement, cheer, happiness, . . . VIII he showed himself to be cheerful, gracious, and kind”; and (2) “they were confused/mixed up among themselves, and an uproar of people . . . disturbance/crowd of people.”
XXII

THE MEANING OF EPHRATHAH

Micah 5:1 (English 5:2)

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from the days of antiquity.

SEPTUAGINT

And you, Bethlehem, house of Ephrathah, are few in number to be among the thousands of Judah; out of you shall one come forth to me, to be a ruler of Israel; and his goings forth were from the beginning, from days of old.¹

The first step in determining the etymology of the name Ephrathah (אפרתָה) and the gentilic Ephrathite (אפרתִית) is to recognize the occasional interchange in Hebrew of the נ and the ה. The following examples are widely recognized:

- נָשָׁה “to err, to go astray” and מָשָּה (נשא, נשא) “to stray, to wander” (BDB 380, 1073; Jastrow 542, 1683)
- חָסֵף “to seize, snatch away” and חָסֵף “to seize, to rob, to catch” (BDB 310, 369; Jastrow 450)
THE MEANING OF EPHRATHAH

“to kill,” Aramaic יֵלַח, Arabic قَتَلُ (qatala), and Ethiopic ኢፒት (qatala) “to kill” (BDB 881).

The root of לַח הָרֶפֶת can be identified as לַח הָרֶפֶת, which has been augmented with a prosthetic כ and the feminine suffix ה or the locative ה (= εἰς).² This לַח הָרֶפֶת was used for the river Euphrates (הָרֶפֶת) and is probably related to the Arabic فَرَاتُ (furat) “sweet,” a term applied to water “that subdues thirst by its excessive sweetness” (Lane 1877: 2358). But “sweet water”—whether it be a clan name or a place name—does not fit the context of Micah 5:1 or the geography of the Judean hill country. However, with the ה/נ variable in focus, a very satisfactory derivation of Ephrathah is available once (1) לַח הָרֶפֶת is recognized as a variant of לַח הָרֶפֶת, and (2) לַח הָרֶפֶת (or לַח הָרֶפֶת, as in Gen 48:7) are treated as the equivalents of the conjectured variants לַח הָרֶפֶת and לַח הָרֶפֶת.

The noun לַח הָרֶפֶת means “that which is singled out,” and the verb לַח הָרֶפֶת means “to specify, to designate” or “to belittle.” Related nouns are לַח הָרֶפֶת “a small portion” and לַח הָרֶפֶת, לַח הָרֶפֶת “small change, a small coin,” which are cognates of the Arabic فَرَطُ (furāṭ) “small coin, change” (Jastrow 1903: 1219, 1224, 1225; Wehr 827; BDB 827).

Most relevant for Micah 5:2 are the Arabic cognates فَرَطُ (faraṭa) “he preceded, he was or became first, foremost,” فَرَطُ (furāṭ) “mastery, ascendency, prevalence, or predominance,” and فَرَطُ (fārāṭ) “becoming foremost, getting priority or precedence,” as well as فَرَطُ (furāṭa) “a small mountain” and فَرَطُ (furāṭa) “an eminence resembling a mountain” (Lane
1877: 2375–2377). Because Bethlehem Ephrathah was situated 2,550 feet above sea level—and was 100 feet higher than Jerusalem—ephrathah could well reference its size and elevation along a ridge—analogous to the cognates cited here for small portions, small coins, and a small mountain.  

Moreover, the conclusion that the trp in ephrathah was a by-form of "small" receives confirmation from the very next word in Micah 5:1, which is "small." Thus, by definition and by description Bethlehem Ephrathah was such an insignificant village that Micah could state “you are too little to be among the clans of Judah” (NAS) or “too small to be among the rulers of Judah” (NIV, NIB).

However, as suggested by the cognates (faraṭa/farṭ) and farit (farṭ), the by-forms indicated not only the “smallness” of something, but also conveyed ideas of mastery, ascendancy, prevalence, and prominence. In Micah 5:1, the prophet capitalized on these disparate nuances of ephrathah. Insignificant Ephrathah would become prominent; small Ephrathah would become great—for a “ruler in Israel” would come from Bethlehem.

For Micah the appointment of a “ruler” from Ephrathah had been predicted “from of old” (miḥōrām), “ages ago” (miḥōrām), when the epithet ephrath/ Ephrath was first given to the father of Bethlehem (I Chron 4:4). For the prophet Micah, little Bethlehem would fulfill at least two definitions hidden in the epithet Ephrathah. Although Bethlehem was but a minor village she would soon become preeminent and foremost by providing the ruler for the restoration of “the former dominion of the daughter of Jerusalem” (Micah 4:8).
Micah’s expectations about the ruler coming from Bethlehem can be reorganized and summarized as follows:⁶

• from you [Bethlehem] shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel . . . . (MT 5:1b),

• and he⁷ shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border (MT 5:5b),

• and he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of YHWH, in the majesty of the name of YHWH his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth (MT 5:3).

Once these verses are united it becomes quite clear that Micah’s prediction about the Israelite ruler coming from Bethlehem was grounded in history, including

• the remote past when the epithet Ephrath(a), with its different levels of meaning, was given to Bethlehem, and

• Micah’s own historical moment when Israel was in immediate need of a ruler who could rescue the country from Assyrian aggression and oppression.

The first words of 5:4 (MT), “And this shall be peace,” make a fitting close to the prophecy about the coming ruler, as well as an introduction to the prediction about the next appointment of seven shepherds and eight princes who, in a great reversal of power, would rule the land of Assyria with the sword and thereby maintain the peace for Israel.

Although this latter prediction in 5:4b–5 (MT) was never fulfilled, according to the Magi and Matthew, the former prediction in 5:1 and 5:3 (MT) was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The appeal of the Magi to Micah’s prophecy (as quoted in Matt 2:6), requires comment because
neither the Magi nor Matthew mentioned Ephrathah. And, surprisingly, Micah’s assertion that Bethlehem Ephrathah was “(too) little to be among the clans of Judah,” was turned into a negative: “you are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.”

Matthew 2:6

καὶ σὺ Βηθλέεμ, γῆ Ισραήλ,
oúδαμως ἔλαχιστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἤγεμόσιν Ιουδα.
ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἤγομενος,
όστις ποιμανεὶ τὸν λαὸν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ.  
And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,⁸ are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.

It is obvious that the Magi were not quoting the Septuagint. Their use of ἤγομενος “princes” for the MT צאלים, instead of χιλιάδοις “thousands,” with the Septuagint, is one example of the independent reading of צאלים as צאלים⁹. As in Gen 48:7b, where Ephrathah appears without the final ה (as תפרת instead of the תפרת in 48:7a), the shorter תפרת was probably in the Vorlage used by Matthew or the Magi (or by their source). Secondarily, this תפרת became corrupted to תפרת “you ceased”¹⁰ and was then translated into Greek with the force of οὐδὲν “not at all,” similar to the translation in the Septuagint of οὐκ ἂσ as οὐδὲν “in no way.”¹¹ Thus, the Magi’s quotation from Micah lacks any mention of בֵּית אֵפְרָתָה / Ephrathah or the οἶκος τοῦ Ἐφρα-θῶ “house of Ephrathah,” found in the Septuagint.¹² Seemingly, then, a single scribal error in the textual tradition used by
the Magi and Matthew—the misreading חֲמָה—as חֲמָה accounts for the two significant variations in the abbreviated quotation of Micah 5:2 (MT) in Matthew 2:26.

NOTES

1. The מַעֲרַת מִרְיָם מִרְיָם in the phrase מַעֲרַת מִרְיָם מִרְיָם do not indicate any kind of pre-existence. Compare the phrases in (1) Amos 9:11, וְאֵנִי אֲנַלְּקֶה לְךָ וְאֵנִי אֲנַלְּקֶה לְךָ “and I will build it [the booth of David] as in the days of old” and (2) Malachi 3:4,

הָשָׁבֵכָה לָזִיתָה תְּמַנָּה וְהוֹדוֹהוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוֹוְw

καὶ ἄρεσει τῷ Κυρίῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ

And the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the Lord, according to the former days, and according to the former years.

2. The names אַפְרָה, אַפְרָה, אַפְרָה, אַפְרָה, אַפְרָה, and אַפְרָה are cited in BDB (68) under the root מַעֲרַת, stem II, without definition.

3. The מַעֲרַת in Amos 6:5, used with reference to ecstatic singing or playing a musical instrument, would be the cognate of Arabic فِرْط (faraa) “to speak (thoughtlessly) or act hastily” (Lane 1877: 2375).

4. Note that מַעֲרַת also has the by-form מַעֲרַת “small.”
5. Reading perhaps מַעֲלָּפֶה יְהוֹמָר for the MT מַעֲלָּפֶה יְהוֹדֶה and the Septuagint’s ἐν χιλιάδσεων Ιουδα “among the thousands of Judah.”

6. Micah 5:2 (MT) is a misplaced verse which interrupts the natural transition from 5:1 (MT) and 5:3 (MT). It reads as follows:

   Therefore He (YHWH) shall give them (“the heads of the house of Jacob and the rulers of the house of Israel” [MT 3:8]) up until the time when she (the “daughter of Zion” [4:10]) who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his (Jacob’s) brethren shall return to the people of Israel.

   This verse, when moved to follow 3:12, provides a second “therefore” clause corresponding to the “therefore” at the beginning of 3:12. The two verses when so united speak of the impending fall of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon (alluded to also in 4:10).

7. The RSV and the NRS make the verb plural as though its antecedent were the “seven shepherds and eight princes of men who shall rule the land of Assyria with the sword,” mentioned in 5:6a. The NAB opted for “we will be delivered.” But the versions follow the singular in the Hebrew text, as do most English translations. Elliger proposed in BHS to emend יִהְשֹׁלֶם יְהֹשֵׁעְי “he will deliver us,” and this has been followed by many translators.

8. The MT יָאַהְּתָה בֵית לָהֶם אֱפֻרָתָהּ צֶעִיר was expanded in the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew to read (with additional words underlined):

   יָאַהְּתָה בֵית לָהֶם אֱפֻרָתָהּ צֶעִיר
   אֶרֶץ יְהוֹדֶה תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר צֶעִיר

   Six of the nine Shem Tob manuscripts (ABDEFG) read the negative יָאַהְּתָה בֵית לָהֶם אֱפֻרָתָהּ צֶעִיר instead of interjection יָאַהְּתָה בֵּית לָהֶם אֱפֻרָתָהּ צֶעִיר (= ἄδου).
9. See above, note 5.

10. For the confusion of the ר with מ and the מ with ס, see Delitzsch 1920: 119–120 (§131).

11. The פסחף in 5:3b (MT) may have influenced the reading of פסחף as פסחף in 5:1 (MT) in the Vorlage reflected in Matt 5:26. The use of מַפָּרְט (mafāritu) in Arabic for “the extremities of a country” (Lane 1877: 2378), like the פסחף “ends of the earth,” provides another possible explanation of how the stem פֶּרֶה (and its by-form פֶּרֶה) took on negative as well as locative connotations like the root פסחף. Were this the case, there would be no need to appeal to a scribal error of misreading פסחף as פסחף.

12. Note John 7:42,

οὐχ ἡ γραφὴ εἶπεν ὅτι
ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ καὶ ἀπὸ Βηθλεὲμ
τῆς κώμης ὃπου ἦν Δαυὶδ ἔρχεται ὁ Χριστός;

Does not scripture say that
from the seed of David and from Bethlehem,
the village where David lived, the Christ will come?
XXIII

CLARIFYING MARK 3:17 AND 9:49

Mark 3:17

Greek Text
καὶ Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου
καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Ἰακώβου
καὶ ἐπέθηκεν αὐτοῖς ὄνομα[τα] Βοανηργές,
ὄ εστιν Υἱοὶ Βροντῆς

Vulgate
et Iacobum Zebedaei et Iohannem fratrem Iacobi
et inposuit eis nomina Boanerges quod est Filii tonitrui

RSV
And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, whom he surnamed Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder.

The Meaning of the Boane- Found in Boanerges

Mann (1986: 249) commented about this verse as follows:
The title Boanerges represents a so far unsolved problem. Presumably the word should be divided as Boane-rges in the Greek text, but while the first part of the word can be easily understood as a rendering of the Hebrew Bene (sons of), there is no word similar in Hebrew or Aramaic to explain the second part as ‘thunder.’ Perhaps the best suggestion is still that of Lagrange (p. 65), that the Arabic radjas (sic) did mean ‘thunder’ and that the word may have passed into common usage. . . . We can only conclude that Mark found a complicated word and made of it what sense he could.”

By way of contrast, Parker (1983: 70–71), arguing for the posteriority of Mark, stated, “He [Mark] knows little Hebrew or Aramaic. True, he likes to include words from those languages. But every time he does, he gets something askew”
CLARIFYING MARK 3:17 AND 9:49

(Parker’s italics). To illustrate this point, Parker cited from Mark 3:17, “he surnamed them Boanerges, that is Sons of Thunder” and commented,

No one knows where the author got the syllables boan or boane: “son” is ben in Hebrew, bar in Aramaic. If the ending -rges reflects Hebrew regesh, that means not “thunder” but “bustle,” or else “wrath.” If it represents ragaz or ra’ash, both of these properly mean “tremble,” “quake,” as in “earthquake.” Did Mark’s source perhaps intend something like “quaking of the heavens”?

The answer to Parker’s question is an emphatic “No!” Taylor (1952: 231–232) had noted that Boanηργεζ (with just the α in lieu of the ω) appears in MS 565 and Βοανηργέζ appears in MS 700, as well as the Syriac Sinaiticus, Harclean, and Peshitta’s readings of בְּנֵי רֶגֶשׁ (b’nai r’geshy)—all of which equal the Hebrew “the sons of (יהו) thunder.” Taylor thought that either the α or the o in Boanηργέζ was a later intrusion or gloss. However, given the preponderance of manuscripts which read Boanηργέζ, I argue below that Boanηργέζ was the correct transliteration of the original Hebrew surname and that the Boan- element has nothing to do literally with the Hebrew בְּנֵי “the sons of.” I also argue, contra Parker, that the -ργέζ element of Boanηργέζ has nothing to do with the “quaking of the heavens.”

Jastrow (1903: 147, 870) cited Hebrew בָּלָה meaning “to swell, burst forth, whence (of sound) to shout, rejoice,” and he called attention to the by-form בָּלֹה “to burst forth, to give forth, to utter.” Given the ν in the Boanηργέζ of Mark 3:17, it is reasonable to assume that the verb בָּלָה had not only the attested by-forms בָּלָה and בָּלָה (with an initial ל) but also the by-form with a final ג, i.e., בָּלֶה ג— the participle
of which would be בנים, and the plural construct of which would be בנים (vocalized like the נָבִים in Isa 45:17). This was correctly transliterated by Mark, or his source, into Greek as Boanη, meaning literally “the shouters of;” which Mark paraphrased as Υἱοὶ “the sons of.”

The Meaning of the -rges Found in Boanerges

The -ργές of βοανηργές is indeed the transliteration of the Hebrew רַגְשׁ “thunder,” despite the reservation of many commentators to concur with this identification. Because רַגְשׁ “thunder” is not attested in the standard Hebrew lexicons some have opted to emend the underlying Hebrew text from רַגְשׁ to רַגְעַ אוֹר “excitement, raging” or to רַגְעַ “thunder.” Taylor (1952: 232) noted that Lagrange (1929: 65) preferred to find the original in רַגְעַ. Lagrange recognized “that רַגְשׁ is not found in the sense of ‘thunder’ in Hebrew or Aramaic texts, but he pointed out that radjas (sic) has this meaning in Arabic, and suggests that it may have been current in popular usage.” Taylor noted that Torrey (1933: 298) stated also that “thunderstorm” would perhaps be a more accurate rendering of רַגְשׁ and rugsha.

Rook (1981: 94), however, dismissed the proposals of the commentators who derived Mark’s βοανηργές from an original בְּנֵי רַגְשׁ “excitement” or בְּנֵי רַגְעַ “commotion.” He concluded, “Taylor also suggests that the Arabic cognate radjas (sic) means ‘thunder,’ but a relationship between the word used by Mark and an Arabic loan word is suspect.” He proposed reading the γ of βοανηργές as the transliteration of a Hebrew נ. For Rook, Mark’s βοανηργές came thus from a Hebrew text having בְּנֵי רַגְשׁ, meaning “Sons of (the)
quaking (heavens),” which, he asserted, creates a parallel to Mark’s interpretation of βοανηγεζες as “the Sons of Thunder.”

Rook, however, offered no suggestion of how or why the Hebrew בנים (= bēnē or b’nē) was transliterated as βοανη (= boanē).

In support of recognizing the -γεζες of βοανηγεζες as being a Semitic term for “thunder,” the following evidence comes into focus.

- Aramaic רְמַנְתָּא “movement, noise” and רְמַנְתָּא “noises” (Jastrow 1903: 836, 1451; KBS 1189);
- Syriac ργσ “uproar” (Payne Smith 1903: 529), which appears as ργσ (rēgešy) in Mark 3:17.
- and the Arabic cognates رجس (rajasa) “it thundered” and رجس/راجع (rājis/rajjas) “thunder, or a vehement sound” (Lane 1867: 1037; Wehr 1979: 378; Hava 1915: 242). Castell (1669: 3519) defined it as tonuit, concussum fuit cum valido fragore, vehementiore sono.

However, Hebrew רָמַנְתָּא, like its Arabic cognate(s), may well have meant more than “noise” or “thunder” or “to make a concussion with a powerful noise” (as defined by Castell). The consonantal Arabic رجس meant not only “it thundered,” it was also the spelling for

- רגס (rajasa) “it was unclean, dirty or filthy,”
- רגס (rajasa) “he did a bad, an evil, an abominable, or a foul action,”
- רגס (rijs) “uncleanness, dirt, or filth... anything that is disliked, or hated, for its uncleanness, dirtiness, or filthiness.”
This ambiguity with رجس (rjs) was probably true also with the Hebrew בן רגש. If so, Hebrew בן רגש could have meant not only “sons of thunder” but also “sons of filth.” For this reason Mark 3:17 does not read βενηργεζ, ( = בן רגש), which would have been ambiguous as to whether James and John were surnamed “Sons of Thunder” or “Sons of Filth.” Mark rightly recorded their surname as βοανηργεζ, which rightly transliterates בן רגש “the shouters of thunder.” However, instead of translating it, Mark simply paraphrased it as יוֹוָי בֵּרֹנַת legitimus, “Sons of Thunder.” Were בן רגש in a Hebrew consonantal text there would be ambiguity about the meaning of בן רגש; but when the construct בן נב ( = βοανη) “the shouters of” appears with the unvocalized בן, the בן must certainly mean “thunder” rather than “filth.” The verbs and its by-forms בן נב and יְנִּא, used for exuberant rejoicing, would not be the verbs of choice were the shouting of obscenities and verbal filth the subject of discussion. (By analogy, if English spelling were like Hebrew spelling, then BS could mean “bass” (=bäs) when used along with sonorous, or the BS could mean “base” (= bäs) when used along with onerous.)

**Mark 9:48/49**

**Greek Text**

πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀληθῆσεται.
MSS Μ W Δ, etc.
+ καὶ πᾶσα θυσία ἀλὶ ἀληθῆσεται
MSS A C Θ W, etc.
+ πᾶσα γὰρ θυσία ἀλὶ ἀληθῆσεται
MSS D a b c d, etc.
CLARIFYING MARK 3:17 AND 9:49

Vulgate 9:48
omnis enim igne sallietur
et omnis victima sallietur

Douay-Rheims
For every one shall be salted with fire:
and every victim shall be salted with salt.

KJV
For every one will be salted with fire.
+ and every sacrifice with salt shall be salted.

Taylor (1952: 413) provides a helpful survey of the textual variants and contextual problems in these verses; and Gundry (1993: 526–528) presents a concise review of the many different interpretations proposed over the years for these verses (without proffering an interpretation of his own.) A common assumption of Taylor and Gundry—and most other commentators before and after them—needs to be challenged in order to understand properly the unity of Mark 9:42–50. That assumption is that the γῆ νη ἡ γηννα, “Gehenna,” found in Mark 9:43, 45, and 47 refers to Hell, rather than to the literal earthly γῆ νη ἡ γηννα “the Valley of Hinnom,” which was accessible through Jerusalem’s Dung Gate (שער כבש) and became the municipal dump for corpses, carcasses, excrement, and garbage. There the maggots thrived on the rotting entrails and the partially cremated remains of those who were not wealthy enough or honorable enough to be buried. The spontaneous combustion of the methane gas generated by the offal, garbage, and dung produced endless fires and hot spots ready to reignite.

Criminals executed by stoning for breaking the Law (such as “anyone who causes one of these little ones to stumble” [Mark 9:42]) were more likely to be cremated in the Valley of Hinnom than to be buried in the tombs of their fathers. In
Israelite and Jewish culture cremation was shunned because the body of the deceased would become dismembered. Therefore, it would be better to have a watery burial whereby one’s body would at least for a while remain intact. Thus, Jesus’ fair warning in Mark 9:42, “It would be better for [the offender] if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea”—rather than being cast onto the municipal dump beyond of the Dung Gate in the Hinnom Valley. Many would have agreed with Jesus that a watery burial was preferable to all the maggots, methane, and mutilation awaiting the corpse at Jerusalem’s “Hinnom Mortuary.”

Taylor’s statement, “The fire of [verse 9:] 49 has nothing to do with that of [verse 9:] 48,” is quite misleading, even though it is quite understandable in light of the ambiguity of Hebrew homographs and the limitations of Hebrew lexicography. What follows is a new interpretation Mark 9:49 based upon a retroversion of the Greek πᾶς γὰρ ἀλισθήσεται into Hebrew as בִּי הַכָּל יְמולָה בֵּבחֶר, which can mean not only “for everyone [who ever lived] will be salted with fire” but it can also mean “for everyone [deposited at the dump] will be dragged through the muck.” This proposal is similar to Parker’s suggestion (1983: 71–72) that

in the first clause, the translator has perhaps confused Hebrew malach, ‘to vanish,’ with melach, ‘to salt.’ The original verses of 48–49a would then have read, ‘. . . where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched, for everyone shall vanish in fire.’”

Homographs and Cognates of ימְלוּה

The first Hebrew word requiring comment is ימְלוּה, which must lie behind the Greek ἀλλὰ “salt” and the ἀλισθήσεται “shall be salted.” As cited in the standard lexicons of Biblical
Hebrew (like BDB 571), מלח, had three meanings, namely

1. מלח “salt,” which is the cognate of Arabic ملح (milḥ), Syriac ملخ (melḥā’), Aramaic מלח. Its derivatives were [a] the verb מלח ע ”to salt, to season,” [b] the noun מלח “saltness” or “the barren salt plain which was the habitat of the wild ass,” and [c] the noun מלח “a mallow plant which grows in a salt-marsh.”

2. מלח “mariner,” which is the cognate of the Akkadian malāḥu, Arabic ملاح (mallāḥ), and Syriac ملخ (malāḥā’), all meaning “sailor.”

3. מלח “to tear away, to dissipate, to vanish” the cognate of Arabic ملاح (malāḥa) “he pulled, or drew a thing, he drew it forth quickly, vehemently.” This מלח appears only in Isa 51:6, נבג מלח וינא מלח ונס אתウォא ענאמ נבל מלח “for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment.”

It is this third definition which appears in my translation of Mark 9:49 as “for everyone [deposited at the dump] will be dragged through the muck.”

However, מלח probably had other meanings in Biblical Hebrew—meanings which were lost in later Rabbinic Hebrew and, consequently, are not found in standard Hebrew lexicons. But those meanings may well survive in Arabic cognates. Lane (1885: 2731–2734) listed the following definitions for מלח (milḥ = מלח) and מלח (milḥ, which also = מלח).
(4) ملح (malaha) “he suckled” and ملح “milk” and “the act of sucking” (an Indo-European loanword);
(5) ملح (malaha) “he become fat”;
(6) ملح (malaha/mallaha) “he became goodly, beautiful, or pretty / he produced something goodly, beautiful or pretty,” and ملح (malih) “goodly, beautiful, pretty”;
(7) ملح (milh) “knowledge, science, learning” or “men of science, learned men”;
(8) ملح (milh) and ملحمة (milhai) “a sacred or inviolable bond, or the like, or any compact, bond, or obligation, which one is under obligation to respect, or honor, or the cancelling or breaking of which renders one obnoxious to blame.” Lane included this explanation: “[This meaning is derived from ملح (milh) as signifying ‘salt;’ the eating of which with another imposes upon the two parties a sacred mutual obligation.]”
(9) ملح (malih) “tasteless, insipid, applied to flesh-meat . . . that has no taste.”

Definitions 4–6 have no Hebrew cognates. However, definition (7) serves as a commenary on the ἀλατι in Col 4:6, ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἀλατι ἡρτυμένος, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.” The verb ἁρτύω means “arrange, prepare, make ready, of things requiring skill or cunning,” the culinary sense of “seasoning” is not required (Lidell and Scott 1966: 250). If the word “season” is retained in translation the idea expressed equals “season with reason so that . . . .” Otherwise the idea could be expressed by
“prepare with erudition so that . . .,” an idea similar to that found in 2 Tim 2:5, “study to show thyself approved . . .”12

Definitions (1) and (8) serve as a commentary on Mark 9:50b, ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀλα καὶ εἰρήνευτε ἐν ἀλλήλοις, “have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.”13 A similar idea which relates salt and honor appears in Ezra 4:14, “Now because we eat the salt of the palace (εὐς ἀλῆς ἀριθμὸς) it is not fitting for us to witness the king’s dishonor”; and in 2 Chron 13:5, “Ought you not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel for ever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt (בְּרֵיחֶת מִלּוֹן)?”

Parker (1983: 71), in his discussion of Mark 9:50 asserted that the verse “is hardly intelligible as it stands,” and asked: “Did the Aramaic first give the Hebrew shalom, then translate this into Aramaic sh’lam? And did our author or a previous translator take this to be Latin salam [‘salt’]?” Parker seems to be unaware that Harris (1937: 185) appealed to a Latinism in his interpretation of this verse, noting that in idiomatic Latin ‘salt’ equals the accusative salam (not the nominative sal), which led him to conclude that “the writer, whoever he was, of this verse contrasted [Latin salam] salt and [Hebrew shalom] peace and made them correlative with one another.”

Mann (1986: 384–385), commenting on Mark 9:50, cited Harris’s interpretation and concluded that it was “still worthy of consideration.” But, in my opinion, the Semiticism /Arabism cited in definition (8), above, provides a far more reasonable interpretation of why ἀλα καὶ εἰρήνευτε “salt and peace” were so formally linked, making automatically a “covenant of salt” (בְּרֵיחֶת מִלּוֹן) into a “covenant of peace” (שֵׁלום בְּרֵי). Definitions (1) and (9) serve as a commentary on Mark 9:50a, ἔαν δὲ τὸ ἀλαζ ἀναλον γένηται ἐν τίνι αὐτῷ
“but if the salt has become insipid, how will you season it.” The Hebrew Vorlage could have read נָּחַם מִלְחָא מֵלָה בְּכֵהוֹת מִלְחָה, wherein the noun מִלְחָה “salt” is definition (1); the verb מִלְחַה יֵלֵלָה חַמָּה מִלְחָה אָרוּ “were to become insipid” is definition (9); and the verb מִלְחַה יֵלֵלָה חַמָּה מִלְחָה אָרוּ “you will season” is definition (1 [a]). The saying involved more than simple repetition of one lexeme. A verb and noun from one lexeme (מלוח) and another verb from a second lexeme (מלוח) provided paronomasia enhanced by assonance. But the lexemesملוח andملוח became homographs in Hebrew which created confusion.

**Homographs and Cognates of בֵּעֶר**

The second Hebrew word requiring comment in support of my reconstruction of the Hebrew text behind Mark 9:49 as כֵּי הֶבַל יִמְלָח בֵּעֶר, “for everyone will be dragged through the muck” is בֵּעֶר, stem III, meaning “dung, muck.” This בֵּעֶר is the cognate of Arabicبَعْر (ba’ar) “he voided dung”; بَعْر (ba’ar) “dung”; and مَبَعْر (mab’ar) “rectum, intestines, gut” (Lane 1863: 226–227; KBS 1: 146,). In my opinion, this rare word appeared in the Hebrew source used by Mark, and it was read by Mark as the more common homograph בֵּעֶר “to burn, to ignite” and the name תּוּר “Torch / Burning” and the noun זָרָה “torch, fire” (BDB 128–129; Jastrow (1903) 183; KBS 1: 145–146). Other Semitic homographs could easily be confused with בֵּעֶר, stem I “to burn” or stem III “dung”—like stem II “cattle” and its Arabic cognateبَعْر (ba’ir) “ass, camel,” and Ugaritic ב’ר “to pillage” (UT 375: #495], but none of them fit the context of Mark 9:49. (Hatch and Redpath [1897: 1242], listed eight different Hebrew words which were translated by πῦρ, including עָשׁ, נַוֶּר, אֵלֶּר, and
The homographs בָּשָׂר “fire” and בָּשָׂר “dung,” along with the homographs מַלּוּחַ “salt” and מַלּוּחַ “to drag,” provide the clues for reconstructing and reinterpreting the enigmatic saying “all will be salted with fire.”

CONCLUSIONS

The rush by commentators to interpret εἰς τὴν γένναν “into the valley of Hinnom” of Mark 9:43, 45, 47 as a metaphor for Hell has been counterproductive. Certainly in Mark 9, τὴν γένναν meant literally “the valley of [the sons of] Hinnom,” i.e., the place just beyond Jerusalem’s Dung Gate where more that just dung was deposited. In a culture where cremation and dismemberment were anathema the watery burial mentioned in Mark 9:42 may have been preferable to having one’s corpse dragged through the dung and the decay at a dump. Jesus gave a fair warning which had overtones of Deut 13:1–10, which spelled out the penalty for any Israelite who caused fellow Israelites to stumble from their love and allegiance to their God. They were to be stoned! In Mark 9:42–49, Jesus threatened the same fate for anyone who “causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble out of faith in me (ὅς ἂν σκανδαλίσῃ ἄνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμε). Therefore, instead of being stoned and then dragged through filth, a clean watery drowning could be seen as a better option for an offender.

But the best option was to enter the Kingdom of God as a righteous soul, even if dismembered. Jesus may have had in mind the faithful mother and her seven tortured and dismembered sons who defied Antiochus’ command to violate the Torah by eating swine’s flesh. One son, speaking out of a faith shared with his siblings and his mother, said to Antiochus “You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present
life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for His laws” (2 Macc 7:9). Jesus envisioned such faith from his little ones.

Mark’s Greek text makes it possible to add at least three lost lexemes to the Hebrew lexicons, namely (1) the כָּפָן “to shout, to rejoice” which survives in the Boanerges of Mark 3:17; (2) the αἰων “thunder” which survives in the -αιωνες ending of Boanerges; and (3) the מָכְרָה “dung,” hidden behind the πῦρ “fire” in Mark 9:49. The בוער which must have been in Mark’s source should have been translated either as κοπρία “dung heap, garbage pile” or βόλβιτον “dung, filth,” instead πῦρ “fire.”

The enigmas in Mark 9:49–50 become understandable once it is recognized that the Greek ἄλληθρη “shall be salted” and ἁλλὰ “salt” translated a Hebrew text having מָלַח. That original מָלַח in Mark’s Hebrew source—even though it was the מָלַח which meant “to drag, to pull”—attracted to itself a number of other מָלַח sayings which contained the מָלַח meaning “salt.” In the oral tradition the precision in vocalization precluded ambiguities about what was being said; but the clarity of speech was lost when the sayings became scripted into consonantal texts which inadvertently created ambiguities due to homographs. Once מָלַח “to drag” was misread as מָלַח “to season,” secondary misreadings were inevitable, such as reading the rare בוער “dung” as the more common בוער “torch, fire”—which produced the problematic “for everyone will be salted with fire.” Mark’s Hebrew Vorlage probably read כִּי מִלָּח יְהוָה בּוּעֵר, meaning “for every [offender] will be dragged through the muck,” proving Jesus’ point that “it would be better for him [the offender] if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into
the sea” than to end up at the local dump. The unseen scavengers in the sea were regarded more favorably than the visible worms and the smelly smoldering offal just beyond Jerusalem’s Dung Gate.

NOTES

1. The quadri-literal stem رجس (radjis), allegedly meaning “thunder,” was also cited by Rook (1981: 94), who cited Taylor (1954: 232), who cited Lagrange (1929: 65). Mann (1986: 249), on the other hand, cited Lagrange directly. But I have been unable to find the quadri-literal stem رجس (radjis) in the lexicons of Castell (1669: 3522–23), Lane (1867: 1065), Hava (1915: 247), Dozy (1927: 521), or Wehr (1972: 387) [with the page numbers cited here being where the word should appear]. I have not seen the commentary by Lagrange in order to check out his source, but I suspect that a typographical error has occurred along the way wherein the letter d was inadvertently added to the transliteration of the tri-literal stem رجس (rajis) “thunder,” and the erroneous quadri-literal رجس (radjis) took on a life of its own.

2. Parker’s question (in 1983) about βανηργες meaning “the quaking of the heavens” may have been inspired by Rook’s proposal (in 1981) that βανηργες comes from an original בני רעון, meaning “Sons of (the) quaking (heavens),” which is discussed below.

3. See GKC 85u and 86g for a discussion of the affixed ן. The place name בון (Beon) appears in Num 32:3 and in Jubilees 29:10; and the name באה (Baean) appears in 1 Macc 5:4. Because בון of Num 32:3 appears in Num 32:38 as בונה באה, it is commonly assumed that the name בונה is an abbreviation of בנה (Moabite Stone, line 9), or בנה כה (Josh 13:17 and the
CLARIFYING MARK 3:17 AND 9:49

Moabite Stone, line 30), or יִמְרֵי (Jer 48:23). However, it seems best to recognize the stem בָּרַע as a by-form of the root בָּרַע, rather than a rare abbreviation for three different designators (see KBS 1: 145). If the place name בָּרַע is related to the verb בָּרַע “to shout,” it would be analogous to the place name הָמוֹנָה (in Ezek 39:16) which is derived from the stem הָמוֹנָה הָמוֹנָה “to roar, to be boistrous.”

4. For the different ways in which the Hebrew בָּרַע was transliterated in Greek, see the Supplement in Hatch and Redpath (1897: 1–162), passim. It appeared as the smooth breathing mark ', or as a γ, or it was simply ignored.

5. An analogy for the verb בָּרַע having the by-form בָּרַע with an affixed י is the verb בָּרַע “to be ashamed” having the by-forms מָשָׁה, מָשָׁה, and מָשָׁה — all meaning “shame.”

6. See above, note 1.

7. France (2002: 161) parenthetically noted “(regesh means ‘a crowd’ or ‘commotion’, and a related Arabic word means ‘thunder’; . . . ” W. L. Lane (1974: 135, fn 60) noted that “רָגֶשׁ does not mean ‘thunder’ in known Hebrew or Aramaic texts. A related word in Arabic, however, has this meaning and it is possible that the expression existed in the popular idiom of Jesus day.”

8. Lightfoot (1859: I: 85–86) in his commentary (first published in Latin between 1658 and 1674) noted, “The mention of it [the Valley of Hinnom] in the New [Testament] is only mystical and metaphorical, and is transferred to denote the place of the damned. . . . It was the common sink of the whole city; wither all filth, and all kind of nastiness, met.” Lightfoot (II: 425) had no comment for 9:42, but stated concerning 9:49, “for everyone of them [‘whose worm dieth not’] shall be seasoned with fire itself, so as to become
unconsumable, and shall endure forever to be tormented, as salt preserves from corruption.” Thus, the problem of how a millstone and a burial at sea can save a sinner from the eternal fires of Hell and its everlasting fire-resistant worms was not addressed.

9. The phrase in Mark 9:48, ὅπου ὁ σκόλης αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ καὶ τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” matches the phrase in Isa 66: 24, כר חלְתָם, לא תמות ואשֶׁם לא תכְבֶה, “their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched,” which became in the LXX σκόλης αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτήσει καὶ τὸ πῦρ αὐτῶν οὐ σβεθήσεται. Isa 66:24 belongs to a fragmented literary unit consisting of Isa 65:1–7, 66:17, and 66: 24. This unit had nothing to do with Gehenna or Hell, but speaks of the penalty to be inflicted upon the idolaters who worshiped in gardens and tombs. But they themselves would never be buried or entombed. The very same idea is found in Jeremiah 8:2, יֵלֶךְ יָכְרוּ מָלֶךְ יִלְיָפֵי חָרִים יִרְחֶה, “and they shall not be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground,” and in 9:22, נפָלָה נְכַלַּת הָאָדָם כִּרְמָה עַל פְּנֵי מְשָרָה, “the corpse of the man will fall like dung on the open field.” Jer 16:4, “They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground,” and Jer 25:33, “They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground,” are also relevant.

10. Tim McGirk reported in Time magazine (October 21, 2005) that on the hilltop above the village of Gonbaz in southern Afghanistan some American soldiers burned the corpses of the two Taliban fighters. The U.S. military had asked the villagers to pick up the bodies and bury them according to Muslim ritual, but the villagers refused. The Australian journalist, Stephen Dupont, video-taped the cremation and when the tape was aired on Australian television on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, it unleashed outrage in Afghanistan and in the Muslim world. Mohammed Omar, a Kabul cleric, told newsmen, “the burning of these bodies is an offense against
Muslims everywhere. Muslims traditionally bury their dead. Bodies are burned only in Hell.” Four American soldiers involved in this battlefield cremation were officially reprimanded, though not charged with a criminal offense.

11. Jer 38:11 reads in part, יִנָּהַ אֶלֶבֶּלָה יְשָׁנָהָ חוּדָה יָבֵלְיהוּ והַלָּעָהוּ, “and [Ebedmelek] took from there old rags and worn-out clothes.” The stem סִבְּבָה “to pull, to drag about” is the cognate of Arabic سَبِيب “to drag” (Lane 1872: 1314); and a synonym of מָלָא “to tear away, to fragment,” the cognate of Arabic مَلْحَة (malaha) “to pull, drag, to break off” (Lane 1885: 2734a; Dozy 1927: II: 611).

12. Nauck (1953: 166–168) proposed reading the מִמְּלוֹךְ be מִמְּלוֹךְ “industrious and salted” at the beginning of the Talmudic Tractate Derek Eretz Zuta as “industrious and bright,” arguing that מִמְּלוֹךְ —meaning literally “having been salted oneself”—was a metaphor meaning “to be sagacious.” But, in light of definition (7) the Hebrew המלח meaning “salt.” Far from being a metaphor, it was an independent lexeme meaning “knowledge, science, learning.” But Nauck took the phrase מִמְּלוֹךְ be מִמְּלוֹךְ to mean, “he should not be like a cooking pot in which is no salt.” But, in light of the fact that מִלְּחַה “cooking pot” was also used for “skull” (Jastrow 1903: 1318) and מִלְּחַה could be the cognate of מִלְּחַה (milh) “knowledge, learning” Rabbi Yehudah may have said, “he should not be like a skull in which is no knowledge,” i.e., he should not be a numskull or nitwit.
“he should not be like a skull in which is no knowledge,” i.e., he should not be a numbskull or nitwit.

13. The Alexandrian and Caesarean MSS lack the phrase in Mark 9:49b καὶ πᾶσα θυσία ἀλλ’ ἀλλοθήσεται, “and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,” which is clearly a reference to Lev 2:13,

\[
\text{וְלָמָּה רָכַבְּךָ מַעָּה בֵּרֹי אָלָהָה מִלָּה מִנָּהָה}
\]

And every offering of your grain offering
you shall salt with salt;
you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God
to be lacking from your grain offering.
With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

14. Death to infidels for violating the first two commandments of the Decalogue was normative and routine, with most executions being so insignificant they warranted no historical notice. The stoning of the nameless woman caught in adultery (John 8:3–9) would have taken place without any historical record had it not been for the attempt of the scribes and Pharisees to have Jesus come to the woman’s defense and thereby have Jesus contradict Moses—then they could have stoned Jesus along with the adulterer. Similarly, Stephen’s being stoned as an infidel (Acts 7:54–8:3; 9:1–2) was just routine business for Saul of Tarsus who, having consented to Stephen’s death, proceeded “to lay waste to the church, and entering house after house he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison, . . . still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” The number of and the names of Saul’s victims, aside from Stephen, were not worth any historical recognition or record. According to Acts 14:19 “Jews came there [to Lystra] from Antioch and Iconium; and having persuaded the people, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead” (but Paul was actually just knocked unconscious and shortly recovered.). Theological
vigilantes enforcing the Torah were accountable to no one. Their victims experienced an ignominious death; their remains being dragged away as trash to be burned. (See McDaniel, “The Ten Commandments,” pp. 165–170, in The Pastor's Bible Study: A New Interpreter's Bible Study, Volume II (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

15. If Gehenna in Mark 9 meant Hell rather than the dump beyond the Dung Gate, it is difficulty to understand why Jesus said that death by drowning (9:42) was the better way (καλῶν) to get to Gehenna or to go to Hell. There is no hint that sea water would be able to quench the fires of Hell.

16. The mother, who witnessed the torturing and dismemberment of her children at their martyrdom declared to each son, “. . . the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws” (2 Macc 7:23).

17. Note also the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–8,

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.

The punishment of the wicked is spelled out in 3:10–13a, 18–19,
But the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves, who disregarded the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord; for whoever despises wisdom and instruction is miserable. Their hope is vain, their labors are unprofitable, and their works are useless. Their wives are foolish, and their children evil; their offspring are accursed. . . . Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honor. If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation in the day of decision. For the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous.

XXIV

HOW DID “RUST” GET INTO MATT 6:19–20 AND “PURSES” GET INTO LUKE 12:33?

Matthew 6:19
Μὴ θησαυρίζετε υμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
όπου σὰς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει καὶ οποὺ κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλεπτουσιν.

NAB
Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and decay destroy,
and thieves break in and steal.

KJV
Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
where moth and rust doth corrupt,
and where thieves break through and steal.

Several commentators, including Mounce (1985: 56), Beare (1987: 182), and Blomberg (1992: 122),¹ are of the opinion that “rust” was first introduced into the English translations of Matt 6:19–20 by William Tyndale (1526), who translated these verses as

Gaddre not treasure together on erth, where rust and mothes corrupte, and wher theves breake through and steale. But gaddre ye treasure togedder in heven, where nether rust nor mothes corrupte, and wher theves nether breake vp, nor yet steale.

But Tyndale was actually following John Wycliffe (1389) who translated the verses as
Nyle de tresoure to theou tresours in erthe, wher rust and mouthe distruyeth, and wher theues deluen out and stelen. But tresoure see to theou tresouris in heuene. Wher neither rust ne mouthe distruyeth, and wher theues deluen nat out, ne stelen.

It is obvious that Wycliffe and Tyndale were not translating here from the Greek text which has βρῶσις meaning “food.” According to Hatch and Redpath (1954: 231–232), the Greek βρῶσις appears in the Septuagint thirty-three times as the translation of the Hebrew בָּלָק “to eat/food”—which is comparable to the thirty-nine times the synonym βρῶμα “food” was used to translate בָּלָק or one of its derivatives.²

It is equally obvious that Wycliffe and Tyndale were translating here from the Vulgate which, for these verses, reads

\[ \text{Nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra} \]
\[ \text{ubi erugo et tinea demolitur} \]
\[ \text{ubi fures effodiunt et furantur.} \]

Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth:
where the rust and moth consume,
and where thieves break through and steal.

The Latin erugo/aerugo definitely means “rust” and it was used correctly to translate the ἰος “rust” in James 5:3. Moreover, just as the “rust” in the translations of Wycliffe and Tyndale does not render the Greek βρῶσις “food,” neither does the Vulgate’s erugo “rust” translate βρῶσις. The Greek βρῶσις and the Vulgate’s erugo—along with the Peshitta’s מַשְׁחַל (‘akla²) “eaters/worms” and the Old Syriac’s מַשְׁחַל (mḥabel) “worm”—can be accounted for by postulating a Hebrew Vorlage which read אָבַר שְׁמֶשׁ וַאֲוֶלֶל יַאֲבַל. This Hebrew phrase is unintentionally ambiguous.³ It can mean
literally “where maggot and worm eat” or “where moth and food eat.” In my opinion, Jesus intended his words to mean the former, but when the phrase was translated into Greek (σῆς καὶ βρῶσις), it was given the latter meaning.

Another ambiguous לְכָל appears in Mal 3:11, which reads וְנֶאֶם לְכָל הַאֲרֵבָּה לְכָל אֱלֹהֵי הָאָדָם and was translated in the NRS as, “I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil” (italics added). Other translations render the MT לְכָל as “devourer, insects, pests.” But the Septuagint reads, καὶ διαστελῶ ὑμῖν εἰς βρῶσιν καὶ οὐ μὴ διαφθείρω ὑμῶν τὸν καρπὸν τῆς γῆς, “and I will appoint food for you, and I will not destroy the fruit of your land.”

The לְכָל in the Hebrew Vorlage of Matt 6:19–20 suffered the same misunderstanding when it was translated from Hebrew into Greek. The translator of the Greek rendered it as βρῶσις “food” when it should have been σκώλης “maggot, worm.”

Support for the above reconstructed Hebrew Vorlage comes from the Peshitta, which reads as follows in Matt 6:19,

lāʼ tāsimūn lkūn sīmātāʼ bā’rāʼa
atar dsāsāʼ wa’klāʼ mḥablin
wa’ykaʼ dganābeʼ pālsin wgānbīn

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where the maggot and worm are destroyers.
and where thieves are breaking in and stealing.
Noteworthy is the אֵלָל = אֶלַל “eater/worm/maggot” (Payne Smith 1903: 15; Jennings 1926: 21) Although it could be a contextually meaningless translation of the Greek βρῶσις “food” or a meaningful translation of the Vulgate’s erugo “rust,” it may well retain the noun that was in the original Hebrew saying and point the interpreter in the right direction for reconstructing the phrase.

The Old Syriac of Matt 6:19 differs from the Peshitta. It reads

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where the maggot and destroyer devour, and where thieves are breaking in and stealing.

The verb נָכַל (nekul) is a defective spelling for the 3ms imperfect נַכֵּל (nekül) “it will devour” (=לָל). It provides the clue for reconstructing the verb in the Vorlage as לָל “they will devour.”

The Peshitta of Matt 6:20 has מַהְבִּל (mahbil) “where neither the maggot nor the worm are destroyers”—which matches the words in 6:19. But the Old Syriac varies a little, reading מַהְבִּל (mahbil). “where there are not devouring maggots [.] and eaters/worms.”
AND “PURSES” GET INTO LUKE 12:33?

The various words attested in the versions of Matt 6:19–20, along with cognates, permit the following equation:

\[
\text{שָׁוֵא (sāšā)} = \text{סָוס (sūs)}
\]
\[
\text{רֶגוֹ = רְפֹ = חָלִיל = אִלֹנִי}
\]
= “moth, maggot, worm, eater, borer
+ decay, rottenness, and rot.”

All of the words in this equation could well translated the Semitic שׁלָל and/or one of its derivative forms. The precise identification of the insect or rot involved will be determined by context. If the insect is feeding on clothes it will be the larvae of the moth; but if it is feeding on a carcass, it will be a maggot. In the case of Matt 6:19–20 the translation will be different if the focus is on the treasure or on the ‘treasurer’ (the ‘treasurer’ found seven times in this study does not mean ‘the controller of funds’ but those ‘controlled by treasures’).

Davies and Allison (1988: 628) noted that James 5:2–3 “may well be based upon the saying preserved in Mt 6. 19–21.” Or it may go the other way around. These words from James 5,

\[
\text{your riches have rotted (σέσπεσεν),}
\]
\[
\text{and your garments are moth-eaten (σητόβρωσα),}
\]
\[
\text{your gold and silver have rusted (κατίωσα),}
\]

appear to have influenced the interpretation of Matt 6:19–20 and Luke 12:33, in that the focus of attention has been on the loss treasures of garments and gold, rather that being on the treasurer’s mortality wherein worms and maggots will have the last word, so to speak.

Beare (1987: 181–182) in his following statement reflects the interpretation of most commentators that the focus in Matt 6:19–20 was on the treasure, not the ‘treasurer.’
The kind of ‘treasures on earth’ which are envisaged in the basic charge are textiles, which may be destroyed by insects, and such things as gold, silver, and jewels, which may be carried off by robbers. . . . If he accumulates earthly treasures—chests of sumptuous clothing or of gold and jewels—his heart is bound to the earth; if he seeks to accumulate treasures in heaven, his heart is fixed on heavenly things.


μὴ βαστάζετε βαλλάντιον, μὴ πήραν, μὴ υποδήματα, καὶ μηδένα κατὰ τὴν ὄδον ἀσπάσησθε,

Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road.

Luke 22:34 indicates that the disciples had carefully obeyed,

Ότε ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς ἄτερ βαλλαντίου καὶ πήρας καὶ υποδη μάτων, μὴ τινὸς ύπερηφάνετε; οἱ δὲ εἴπαν, Οὔθενός

When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, “Nothing.”

Thus, it is surprising to learn in Luke 12:33 that Jesus instructed not just his disciples but his entire “little flock” (τὸ μικρὸν ποιμνιον) to “get yourselves purses that do not wear out” (ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς βαλλάντια μὴ παλαιούμενα). This seeming contradiction in Jesus’ instructions apparently emerged when one word in Luke’s Hebrew source was misread. In
the Septuagint βαλλάντια “purse” translated the ירה in Job 14:17 and the בֵּית in Prov 1:14. If Luke’s Hebrew source read נֵאֶשׁ לֶמֶשׁ כָּסָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא בֵּית, it could mean either (1) “make for yourselves purses (βαλλάντια) which do not wear out,” or (2) “make for yourselves clothes (יִמְּאָתְיָא) which do not wear out.” The Hebrew כִּסְרֵיה (scriptio defectiva) is unintentionally ambiguous. It can be read as כִּסְרֵי, the plural of כֵּיס “purse,” or as כִּסְרֵי, the plural of כֵּיס “clothing, cover” (Jastrow 1903: 633, 652).  

In light of the promise in Luke 12:28, “if God so clothes the grass . . . how much more will he clothe you,” the כִּסְרֵיה in Luke’s Hebrew source should have been read as כִּסְרֵי “clothes” (scriptio plena = כִּסְרֵי) rather than as כִּסְרֵי “purses” (scriptio plena = כִּסְרֵי). This interpretation brings Jesus’ instruction in line with his earlier prohibition against the use of purses. Once Luke 12:33b is read as “provide for yourselves clothes which do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail,” the metaphor and equation become obvious: the ageless clothes = heaven’s everlasting treasure, i.e., everlasting life. This interpretation matches perfectly with the words of Paul in 2 Cor 5:2–4, “We groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, . . . not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Paul would have the Corinthians “provide for themselves ageless clothes,” i.e., God’s gift of heaven’s treasure. The words ring true to the words of Isaiah (61:10), “For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” This interpretation also matches perfectly with the words of Enoch 62:13–16,
And the righteous and elect shall be saved on that day, and they shall never thenceforward see the face of the sinners and unrighteous. And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them, and with that Son of Man shall they eat and lie down and rise up for ever and ever. And the righteous and elect shall have risen from the earth, and ceased to be of downcast countenance. And they shall have been clothed with garments of glory, and these shall be the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits. Your garments shall not grow old, nor your glory pass away before the Lord of Spirits.

In the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12 the focus of attention was not on the *treasure* but on the ‘*treasurer*.’ The *treasure* was simply a lot of κρυπτός “crops,” stored in easily accessible barns; but the ‘*treasurer*’ was a πλούσιος “a rich man.” As depicted by Jesus, though not stated directly, the foolish farmer lived according to the maxim espoused in Prov 13:8, כֵּן יִבָּשֵׁשׁ אֵין כּוּר, “The ransom of a man’s life is his wealth!” Prosperity was the LORD’s gift to the righteous as promised in the Torah: “The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns . . . . The LORD will make you abound in prosperity . . . in the fruit of your ground” (Deut 28:9, 11). The foolish farmer was religious man in traditional ways, so “the more the merrier!” But before the bugs would make their way into the foolish farmer’s barns, the maggots and worms would feast on his body: “Fool! This night your soul is required of you!” The rich man had laid up treasures on earth, but maggots and worms were his final acquisition and the grave his final destination.”

But there was no security for the foolish farmer even in his grave—not for him nor for any treasure buried with him. Grave robbers were real and abundant; and in their own way they too were just laying up treasures on earth for themselves,
not knowing that their souls would be required of them. More worms and maggots—not rust and larvae—would feast on newly fallen fools. Such is the fate of those who lay up for themselves treasures on earth were maggots and worms consume ‘treasurers’—not just treasures.

Once the זָמָנִים “maggots and body-worms” in the Vorlage of Matt 6:19–20 became σῆς καὶ βρῶσις “moths and food”—which eventuated in English to the “moth and rust”—a disconnect was made, precluding the parable of the rich fool from becoming a commentary on the command to “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,” i.e., “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt 6:33) . . . and you will have treasure in heaven (Luke 18:22), for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:34, Matt 6:21).”

The question raised above in the title, “How did ‘rust’ get into Matt 6:19–20 and ‘purses’ get into Luke 12: 33?” has now been answered. When Jesus spoke his words in Hebrew or Aramaic they rang with clarity and were deemed by others to be worthy of being recorded. But, thanks to a spelling system which used only consonants, ambiguities became rampant once sayings were written down. Homographs were no problem for those who had actually heard Jesus speak. But where there was no oral recollection, varied interpretations of the written consonant clusters soon emerged, like the זָמָנִים, noted above, which could mean either “purses” or “clothes.” Compounding the problem was the semantic range of some Semitic stems like זָמָנִים, which could mean either “food” or “feces,” as well as “eater”—which in turn could mean “rust” or “worms” or “maggots.”
Once the “maggot” is restored in Matt 6:19–20 and the thieves mentioned there are recognized as “grave-robbers,” it becomes obvious that “laying up treasure in heaven,” and “providing one’s self with the ageless clothes of heaven’s eternal treasure” (Luke 12:33) address the reality of human mortality, as well as the promise of immortality. This is the reality about which Paul wrote in 1 Cor 15:53–54,

For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

It is not just earth’s treasures which are perishable, earth’s ‘treasers’—those who lay up treasures—are equally destined for death and decay. Thus, Jesus commanded his little flock to “be rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) and secure the ageless clothes of heaven’s everlasting treasure (Luke 12:33).

NOTES

1. Beare stated in his commentary,

There is no word corresponding to ‘worm’. In Matthew, the Greek word is \( \beta\rho\omega\sigma\iota\zeta \), which means literally ‘eating’. The more familiar rendering ‘rust’ goes back to Tyndale, and is used in all classic English versions except the Geneva Bible (1562), which replaces it with ‘canker’.

Bloomberg noticed, similarly, that the “rust” really meant “eating.” Davies and Allison (1988: 629) referred to Tyndale but did not identify him as the first to introduce “rust” into this verse.

2. Liddell and Scott (1940:332) gave the following definitions for \( \beta\rho\omega\sigma\iota\zeta \): (1) meat, (2) pasture, (3) eating, (4) taste, flavor, (5)
AND “PURSES” GET INTO LUKE 12:33?

decay, and (6) corrosion, rust in Matt 6:19. Its synonym, βρωμα, can mean (1) food, meat, that which is eaten, (2) tooth cavity, (3) moth eating, (4) filth [i.e., the food in the intestines, like the Aramaic אֵלֶּכֶּמִי “excrement,” cited by Jastrow 1903: 25]. Definition (6) above for βρωμας cannot be sustained. Arndt and Gingrich (1957: 147) called attention to the Epistle of Jeremiah 1:10 (= RSV 6:12) which reads in part, “[gods] which cannot save themselves from rust and corrosion (ἐποὶ ἵον καὶ βρωμάτων).” They noted that a few manuscripts of the epistle have βρωμα instead of βρωμάτα being used along with the ἵος “rust.” These variant readings led them to conclude rightly that this combination of ἵος and βρωμας argues against the identification of βρωμας in Matt 6:19–20 with ἵος. (For ἵος “rust” see Liddell and Scott : 832.)

3. Compare the text in Shem Tob’s Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, where the ambiguities in 6:19 were modified by having רָפֶט “decay” (but not רְפֶט ‘rust’) rather than צֶמֶס, and חַלְעֲחָה “grub” rather than אָכָל. The full verse reads:

עַד אָמַר לְהָם אֶל הָרָב
לָכָּבָר אֶצֶּאִיר בַּאֲרֵם
כָּדָּי שִׂישָאלוּ רָפֶט חַלְעֲחָה.
אֲרָי הֵפָרָה הָגִנְמוֹת יְנָגִנְמוֹת.

Again he said to them:
Do not keep on heaping up treasures on earth so that decay and grub devour it or thieves dig through and steal.

The ambiguities in 6:20 were fixed by having רֶם “worm” rather than צֶמֶס, and again חַלְעֲחָה “grub” rather than אָכָל. The full verse reads:
How did “rust” get into Matt 6:19–20

4. Davies and Allison (1988: 629) are incorrect in their statement that, “In Mal 3.11 LXX A, the word [βρῶσις] means ‘grasshopper.’” Hebrew לְכָל could be used for a grasshopper, as well as for food; but βρῶσις did not mean “rust,” nor did it mean “grasshopper.”

5. Davies and Allison (1988: 631) conjectured a bit about the Semitic original of this saying since Matthew’s διορύσσω “to break in” appears in Luke 12:33 as ἐγγίζω “to draw near.”

If Luke is in fact original, it is more likely that assonance characterized the Semitic original, for ‘draw near’ could be qēreb, ‘moth’ could be rūqābā, ‘destroy’ could be rēqāb, and ‘worm’ could be raqqābā. [Does one interpretation of ṭqb = ‘worm’ or ‘rust’ stand behind Jas 5.2–3, another behind the synoptics?]

The answer to their closing question is a “No!” The attested misinterpretation of לְכָל in Mal 3:11 tilts the scales in favor of reconstructing the Vorlage with לְכָל rather than רֶפֶן — for there is no attested confusion between the Hebrew רֶפֶן, “decay” and the Aramaic אב’ר, “wood-worm” or אב’ר, “rust.” For the combination of “moth” and “worm,” note the addition in the Septuagint to Prov 25:20, ὃσπερ σῆς ἰματίῳ καὶ σκόλης ξύλῳ σύντως λύπη
AND “PURSES” GET INTO LUKE 12:33?

ἀνδρός βλάπτει καρδίαν, “as a moth in a garment, and a worm in wood, so the grief of a man hurts the heart.”

6. Lamsa (1957: 956), following the Vulgate, paraphrased the Peshîtta’s reading Matt 6:19–20 as follows:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures buried in the ground, a place where rust and moth destroy and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, where neither rust nor moth destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

7. The root meaning of סַמה (ḥbal) is “to twist, to writhe,” suggesting that the “destroyer” in this context—where the maggot is mentioned—is a twisting, slithering worm.

8. See the various lexicons, sub voce. The Greek σῆς “moth” is no doubt a loanword from Semitic. In the Septuagint σῆς “moth” occurs in Isa 50:9, 51:8; Job 4:19, 27:18; and Prov 14:30. These bugs gave those who translated the Hebrew into Greek a hard time. Although the שֵׁן in Isa 50:9 was rightly translated by σῆς “moth,” the שֵׁן in Isa 51:8 became χρόνος “time,” as though the Vorlage had ῥῆν instead of שֵׁן. But the סִים in this verse was rightly rendered as σῆς. In Hosea 5:12 the שֵׁן “moth” was translated as παραχή “trouble,” and the קֶבֶר “decay, wood-worm, or rust” became κέντρον “goad.”

9. The following Arabic cognates of Hebrew הֶלְכָנוּ provide evidence that the Hebrew root could also have been used for “rust” and “corrosion,” as understood by the Saint Jerome.
  • אַכַל (ʼakala) “to eat, eat away, corrode, to rust,”
  • אַקובָל (ʼakilat) “corrosion, rust,”
HOW DID “RUST” GET INTO MATT 6:19–20

- אָכוֹל (’ukāl) “corrosion,”
- אָכוֹל (’ukāl) “corroded, cankered, decayed,”
- מַתוּאָקָי (mutaʾakkil) “corroded, rusty, rust-eaten,”
- מַתוּאָקָי (mutaʾakkil) “corroded, rusty, rust-eaten.”

See Lane 1865: 71–72; Wehr 1979: 27; Hava 1915: 11.

10. The following texts provide compelling commentary for this interpretation.

Job 25:6

אָכַלְךָ אֵנָהּ רֵעָהוֹ יְמֵי אֶזְאֶל תְּלֻלּוּת

“How much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!”

Isaiah 51:12

כֹּל אֲחֵי הַמְּרֵאָיָם וְאִמֵּנוֹ

Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass.

Sirach 17:30

οὐ γὰρ δύναται πάντα εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώπως ὅτι οὐκ ἄθανατος υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου

For not everything is within human capability, since human beings are not immortal.

11. Allen (1912: 61) cited the Testament Levi 13:6, “Do righteousness, my sons, upon earth, that you may have treasure in heaven.” By way of commentary Albright and Mann (1971: 79) cited from Baba Bathra 11a and Tosefta Peah iv, 18 two sayings of King Monobaz of Adiabene who had embraced Judaism: “My fathers stored in a place where the hand can reach, but I have stored in a place where the hand cannot reach,” and “My fathers gathered for
this world, but I have gathered for the future world.” (Simon and Slotki, 1935: 52–53). Davies and Allison (1988: 631) provide a few more lines in their quotation of King Monobaz and call attention to Tobit 4:8–9, Psalms of Solomon 9:5, 2 Baruch 24:1; Sirach 29:10–13; Gospel of Thomas 76; and a number of other texts. Keener (1999: 228–231) also provides a very helpful survey, with full bibliography, on the attitudes toward wealth and possessions in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish literature.

12. According to Matt 10:9 and Mark 6:8, purses were allowed but money was not to be put in them. But in John 13:29 and Luke 22:36 some disciples carried purses in which there was money.

13. It could also be קֵיָץ, the plural of קֵיֶץ “cup” or קֵיֶץ “thorn.”

14. Hebrew קֵיֶץ “bag, purse,” is the cognate of Arabic كيس (kīs) “purse,” which is perhaps a loanword from the Persian کيسة (kīst). Hebrew קִסּוֹר “to clothe, to cover” is the cognate of the Arabic كسو (kasa/kasw) “to clothe, to dress” and كسارة (kisā) “clothes, garment, dress” (Castell 1669: 1718, 1767; Golius 1669: 487; Lane 1885: 2640; 1893: 3000; Hava 1915: 655; Wehr 1979: 969–970; BDB 476, 491–492).

15. The words of James 5:3, καὶ ὁ ἰὸς...φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν ὡς πῦρ “and the rust... shall eat your flesh like fire,” could well refer to the grave worms.

16. Brown (1970: 984) noted that “Tomb robbery was a troublesome crime at this time [early 1st century A.D.], as witnessed in an imperial edict against it.” This edict was issued by Claudius and was found in an inscription discovered at Nazareth. Barrett (1989: 15) provides bibliography and the following translation:
Ordinance of Caesar. It is my pleasure that graves and tombs remain undisturbed in perpetuity for those who have made them for the cult of their ancestors or children or members of their house. If however any man lay information that another has either demolished them, or has in any other way extracted the buried, or has maliciously transferred them to other places in order to wrong them, or has displaced the sealing or other stones, against such a one I order that a trial be instituted, as in respect of the gods, so in regard to the cult of mortals. For it shall be much more obligatory to honour the buried. Let it be absolutely forbidden for anyone to disturb them. In case of contravention I desire that the offender be sentenced to capital punishment on charge of violation of sepulture.
XXV
ADAM, ENOSH, AND “THE SON OF MAN”

INTRODUCTION

In John 9:35 the manuscripts and versions differ over which title was actually used by Jesus. The Greek manuscripts μ 66,75 B D W read τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the son of the man,” but manuscripts A K L X Δ Θ Ψ read τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ “the Son of the God.” The Peshitta reads here רַעַיד רַעַיד “in the Son of the God,” but the Old Syriac reads יָמִּי יָמִּי “in the Son of the Man.” Bernard (1923: 338) opted for the reading ἀνθρώπου, arguing “if the ‘Son of God’ were the original reading here, it is surprising that scribes should have altered it to ‘the Son of Man,’ which does not appear in any of the other confessions of faith . . . .” Likewise, Brown (1966: 375) considered the “Son of God” reading to be “clearly the substitution of a more customary and complete formula of Christian faith, probably under the influence of the use of this passage in baptismal liturgy and catechesis.”

But in light of John 3:16–18, 10:34–36, and 11:4, the manuscript tradition followed by the Vulgate (tu credis in Filium Dei) seems preferable. Had the question by Jesus been “Do you believe in ‘the Son of the Man?’” the man’s reply might well have been, “Sir, what do you mean by that?” Biblical scholars have ever since been asking “What is the meaning of the arthrous ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου?” 1 Bernard (1928: cxxii–cxxxiii) presented a helpful summary of the issues involved in the interpretation of “the Son of the Man,” and he concluded (cxxxiii), “It was not a recognized title of Messiah, and was not interpreted as such; rather was it always enigmatic to those who heard it applied by Jesus to Himself.”
But Fitzmyer (1979, 154) concluded that the arthrous ὁ ἡμῶν 
τοῦ ἄνθρωπου must be read as a title for Jesus, although the
“development of the titular usage is not immediately obvious,
and the missing link still has to be found.” The remainder of
this study focuses on the enigmatic Hebrew בנים א الإسرائيل,
and the Aramaic בר אנוש. All possible options
will be reviewed, and the “missing link” will be presented.

An important clue to the different meanings of בנים אسرائيل in
Biblical Hebrew comes from the statement made by the
Roman centurion found in Matt 8:9 in the Shem Tob Hebrew
Gospel of Matthew, which dates to the fourteenth century.²
The verse reads,

This was interpreted by George Howard (1995: 33) to mean

I am a sinful man and I have authority
under the Pharisees and [I have] horses and riders
and I say to one of them go and he goes,
come and he comes,
and to my servants do this and they do it.

The very idea, though, of a Roman centurion’s being ac-
countable to the Pharisees staggers the imagination. But this
is the only translation available given the definitions in
current lexicons of Biblical and post-Biblical Hebrew and
Aramaic, where אדר must mean (1) man, (2) red, (3) blood,
(4) Adam, or (5) Edom, which was also a code word for
Rome (BDB 9–10; Jastrow 1903: 15–17; KBS 70–73).
Ugaritic and Arabic cognates (Gordon 1965: 352; Lane 1863: 35–36) support all of these definitions except for making Edom a code name for Rome. But only the first of these definitions, “man,” fits the context of the centurion’s self introduction and was consequently the basis or Howard’s translation and has been the basis for all studies to date on the meaning of בֵּית מָנוּן (נָרָא נָזַר וּנְזַר וּנְזַר) “Son of Man” or בֵּית מָנוּן (נָרָא נָזַר וּנְזַר וּנְזַר) “the Son of the Man.”

But other definitions of בֵּית מָנוּן, attested in Arabic cognates, need to be added to the Hebrew lexicons. In addition to the Arabic אֱדֹם (‘adamit) “relating to Adam” = “human” 3 are the following Arabic words for which there were certainly Hebrew cognates in use in Biblical times:

• אֱדֹ מ (‘idāmu) and אֱדֹ מ (‘adamat) “the chief, and provost, of his people, the aider, the manager of the affairs,” which would be the cognate of the בֵּית מָנוּן in Gen 1:26, “let us make ADAM . . . and let them rule.”

• אֱדֹ מ (‘adama) “he effected a reconciliation between them and brought them together, made them sociable, or familiar with one another, made them to agree, induced love and agreement between them,” the participle of which would appear as בֵּית מָנוּן in Hebrew;

• אֱדֹ מ (‘udmat) “agreement, familiarity, sociableness, companionship, a means of access,” which would be בֵּית מָנוּן in Hebrew;

• בֵּית מָנוּן (mū’dam) “beloved, an object of love,” which is from the root בֵּית מָנוּן and would appear as בֵּית מָנוּן. 4

The first of these definitions was surely to be found on the lips of the Roman centurion (ἐκατόνταρχος) when he identi-
fied himself to Jesus as an אֶֽהָנֹש “a provost.” This interpretation is reenforced by the second word from the centurion’s lips, אָֽפִּלְאָהאֵל, which is not the very common participle אֵלָהאֵל “sinner,” where the א is the vowel letter for א. This אָֽפִּלְאָהאֵל is the cognate of the Arabic حواط (huwwāṭ) “superintendent, manager, the one in charge.” Thus, the א of אָֽפִּלְאָהאֵל here is a consonant; and the א of this אָֽפִּלְאָהאֵל is an Aramaism in the dialect of the centurion (for the ה of הָלָה one would expect in Hebrew).5 Consequently, a more accurate translation of אָֽפִּלְאָהאֵל in the centurion’s self introduction to Jesus would be “for I am a provost, the one in charge.”6

In the Shem Tob text this is followed quite logically by the statement רֵדֵל לֵי מִמִּשְׁלָל “and I have authority,” after which the centurion spelled out the nature of his authority. But the Greek and Latin texts of Matt 8:9 differ from the Shem Tob text—which is but one piece of evidence that the Shem Tob text is not a simple translation of the Greek or Latin Gospel of Matthew. The Greek and Latin texts of Matt 8:9, along with their English translations, read as follows:

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἀνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν,
ἐξων ὑπ᾽ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας,
καὶ λέγω τούτῳ, Πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται,
καὶ ἄλλῳ, Ἐρχο, καὶ ἔρχεται,
καὶ τῷ δοῦλῳ μου, Ποίησον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.7

RSV
For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.
ADAM, ENOSH AND “THE SON OF MAN”

VULGATE

nam et ego homo sum sub potestate habens sub me milites
et dico huic vade et vadit et alio veni et venit
et servo meo fac hoc et facit.

DOUAY RHEIMS

For I also am a man subject to authority,
having under me soldiers; and I say to this,
Go, and he goeth, and to another Come, and he cometh,
and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

The most conspicuous difference between the Greek and
Latin texts when compared with the Shem Tob text is that
the ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν and sub potestate have the centurion saying he
is “under authority” rather than “I have authority.” The one
translation agreeing with Shem Tob in the centurion’s “hav-
ing authority” is the Old Syriac text which reads

اُلِامِلِسُسُ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ دَيُحُتُ وَلْيُقُدُّ ولْيُقُدُّ او

“for I am also a man having authority.”

However, the Peshīṭta here has اُلِامِلِسُسُ دُوَسُ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ (ًئِنَّ او dīḥēṭ ṣūltānā ً), “I am under authority.” In the parallel
account in Luke 7:8, both the Peshīṭta and Old Syriac have

اُلِامِلِسُسُ دُوَسُ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ وَهَجَرُوُلُسَ (ًئِنَّ او dīḥēṭ ṣūltānā ً)
I am made to serve, I am under authority.

Because everyone in the Roman Empire was under the
authority of Caesar, there was little need for the centurion to
state this in his self introduction. Therefore, the reading of the
Old Syriac and the Shem Tob texts reflect the most accurate
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Hebrew textual tradition. The words ידומא בש ל משללח “the-one-in-charge and I have authority” are reflected nowhere in the Greek and Latin text traditions. But it is most unlikely that a redactor would have created the phrase which included the rare רודס אדומא “a provost, the-one-in-charge.” Thus the rare רודס אדומא “a provost” and רודס אדומא “the-one-in-charge” definitely need to be added to the Hebrew lexicons.8

EZEKIEL AS A רודס אדומא

Just as the Arabic cognate אדומא (“idāmu”) “provost” clarifies the meaning of the רודס אדומא (אדמ) spoken by the Roman centurion, the Arabic אדומא (“adama”) “he effected a reconciliation” clarifies the רודס אדומא (אדמ) רודס אדומא “son of man” which appears about one hundred ninety times in the Bible, most frequently in Ezekiel where it appears ninety-three times.9 The רודס אדומא in Ezekiel may not have been the generic “Son of Man” but the title רודס אדומא “Conciliator/Reconciler.” The רודס אדומא in this title may have done double duty, referring

- to Yahweh who was seeking reconciliation with the unrepentant Israelites: “For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord Yahweh (יהוה יהוה), there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them (odie apt). . . . As a soothing aroma I will accept you (odie apt) when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations” (Ezek 20:40–41); and
- to Ezekiel who was Yahweh’s agent of reconciliation: “So you, רודס אדומא ‘Reconcilor,’ I have made a watchman for the
house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me” (Ezek 33:7).

Failure to recognize that the בֶּן אֱדוֹם אֶנֹשׁ in Ezekiel was not “the son of man” but the “Son of Conciliation/Conciliator” greatly distorted the balance in the book between (1) the manifold threats of death for the inhabitants of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem, and (2) the far fewer promises that Yahweh would be their Good Shepherd (Ezek 34:11–31) and give the Israelites a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26–30). Punctuated throughout the entire book of Ezekiel is Yahweh’s call for reconciliation with the rebellious Israelites—announced ninety-three times, as a matter of fact, in Ezekiel’s title, “Son of Conciliation/Reconciler.”

**THE MEANINGS OF בֶּן אֱדוֹם AND בֶּן נֵשׁ**

Just as בֶּן אֱדוֹם had all the different meanings noted above (man, red, blood, Adam, Edom, Rome, provost, and conciliator), so also בֶּן נֵשׁ had multiple meanings. Psa 144:3 provides one clear definition:

יְחַרּוּת מֹהְלָאִים וַחֲרוֹנִים בֶּן-אֱדוֹם וַחֲרוֹנִים וַחֲרוֹנִים
Yahweh, what is man that you acknowledge him, or the son of man that you take thought of him?

The בֶּן אֱדוֹם and בֶּן נֵשׁ are synonymous, meaning “man” (i.e., gender inclusive human beings). The Arabic cognate of אֱדוֹם is אֱנאֶס (canisa) “to be friendly, to be social” (Lane 1863: 113). Hebrew lexicons list several other meanings:

- נֵשׁ “to be weak, to be sick,” with אָנִית (anîţa) being its Arabic cognate,
“to be soft, to be delicate,” with انثُ (anuth) being its Arabic cognate.

• ﷚ ﷿ “to be strong, severe, overwhelming.”

These meanings are of no help in clarifying the title “Son of Man,” whether it be the Hebrew ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ and ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ or the Aramaic ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ .

Hebrew ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ and Aramaic ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ (unlike ﷖ ﷞ ﷢ ﷟ ﷟ ) could have triggered a number derogatory word-plays, analogous to that of Simon Bar-Kokba, “Son of a Star,” who was known to his enemies as Simon Bar-Kozeba, “Son of a Lie.”

Given the occasional interchange of ﷚ / ﷙ / ﷘, the ﷖ ﷢ ﷟ ﷢ ﷞ could equal ﷚ ﷢ ﷞ “a violent man” (Jastrow 1903: 86), and could mean “son of violence, a felon.” Also, given the occasional interchange of ﷚ and ﷙, the ﷖ ﷢ ﷞ could be a variant of ﷚ ﷢ ﷞, meaning “convict” (derived from ﷚ ﷢ ﷞ “punishment, fine, mulct”) (Jastrow 1903: 1055). And given the interchange of ﷚ and ﷙, the ﷖ ﷢ ﷞ could be the cognate of the Arabic ﷢ ﷬ ﷢ ﷨ ﷨ ﷨ (ًانس) “a man who is far advanced in age and has not married” or “a virgin woman” (Lane 1874: 2173). Thus, ﷢ ﷬ ﷢ ﷨ ﷨ (as a by-form ﷢ ﷬ ﷢ ﷨ ﷨) could mean a “mature bachelor” or “the son of a virgin.”

Moreover, the need not be the Aramaic for “son” but the Hebrew/Aramaic ﷢ ﷬ ﷢ ﷨ “pure” (BDB 141; Jastrow 1903: 189), with some if not all of the overtones of its Arabic cognate ﷢ (barr). Lane (1863: 176) cited ﷢ (barr) as meaning pious [towards his father or parents, and towards God; obedient to God, serving God, or rendering religious service to God; and kind, or good and affectionate and
gentle in behaviour, towards his kindred; and good in his dealings with strangers]; good, just, righteous, virtuous, or honest, true, or veracious... abounding in filial piety... dutifulness or obedience... benevolent, goodness, beneficence.

Thus, גֵּרָה need not be the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew בֵּית אָבִים, but a Hebrew phrase in its own right expressing a superlative by means of the nomen rectum בֵּית אָבִים being modified by the nomen regens ב. Ordinarily the attributive adjective follows the noun, but there are good examples of the modifying adjective being in the construct state and the noun being in the absolute state (GKC 132c). Consequently, the Hebrew בֵּית אָבִים “the most pure man / the man of purity” or “the Perfect Person”13 would have been a homograph of the Aramaic בֵּית אָבִים “the son of man,” but not a homophone. Like the unvocalized בֵּית אָבִים, the unvocalized בֵּית אָבִים and the בֵּית אָבִים could be very ambiguous.

I ENOCH 46 AND 48

The “Son of Man” texts in I Enoch 46 and 48 also point to a tradition in which both בֵּית אָבִים and בֵּית אָבִים may have been in the original parable. Verses 46:1–3 point to a בֵּית אָבִים “son of man” who can be recognized as “the Perfect Person” as interpreted above,

And I saw there One who had a head of days, and his head was white like wool and with him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was and whence he was... and he answered and said unto
me: This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness.\textsuperscript{14}

The focus on the righteous continues in 48:1, 4, and 7, “And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness . . . He shall be a staff to the righteous, for he hath preserved the lot of the righteous.” In 53:6 “the Son of Man” is named “the Righteous and Elect One.”

But the power exercised by “the Son of Man” reflects that of the בָּן עַד as interpreted above, “the Son of Authority” who is in full control—like the centurion who told Jesus he was the provost (בָּן עַד) in full control (יְרֵסֵו). Enoch 46:4–6 reads,

This Son of Man [or Son of Authority/One in Authority] whom you have seen is the one who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones. He shall loosen the reigns of the strong and crush the teeth of the sinners He shall depose the kings from their thrones and kingdoms. The faces of the strong will be slapped and be filled with shame and gloom. Their dwelling places and their beds will be worms.\textsuperscript{15}

**NEW TESTAMENT USAGE**

Johnson (1962: 418), along with many other commentators, rightly recognized that the Greek ὁ ὑιός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the New Testament “is a Semitic phrase that would be familiar to Jewish hearers, however ambiguous it was, but no Hellenistic Christian would be likely to insert it into the tradition.” The two key words to note are “Semitic” and “ambiguous.” The
ambiguity of the Old Testament בָּרִיָּהוּ is minimal compared to the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωπος in the New Testament. Johnson noted also that

The double question, whether Jesus described himself as Son of Man and what he meant by it, is of great importance. . . . The most powerful affirmative argument is that in the gospels the term is always found in words attributed to Jesus himself. One gains the impression that he used it without explanation and left it to his hearers to decide what meaning should be attached to it.

Once the Greek ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωπος is translated back into Hebrew and Aramaic—and written without vowels—at least fifteen meanings become possible (as noted above, seven for בָּרִיָּהוּ and eight for שִׁית). Even if Jesus and the disciples knew perfectly well what was meant when they spoke in Hebrew and Aramaic, ambiguity was unavoidable once the Hebrew and Aramaic sayings were written using consonants only. Nickelsburg (1990) questioned, “How was the Aramaic term בָּרִיָּהוּ used in 1st century Palestine?” But the بَيْتُسْدَثا in his question should have been written without vowels, for his vowels reflect but one of many interpretations. The real questions is, “What did בָּרִיָּהוּ and שִׁית mean in 1st century Palestine?” The بَيْتُسْدَثا “man” is just one of eight possible meanings, as noted above.

The five most likely meanings of בָּרִיָּהוּ, שִׁית, בָּרִ, שִׁית, וּבָּרִ which became the anarthrous ὁ υἱὸς ἄνθρωπος “the son of man” and the arthrous ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωπος “the son of the man” can be summarized as follows:

- the son of man = a human being, a mortal
  (בֵּן + רַדָּם, or בֵּן + רַנֹּס, or Aram. בָּר + רَנֹּס);
• the man of purity = the purest person (Heb. bār ‘pure’ + ḫēnāš ‘man’).
• the son of the reconciler = conciliator (ben + ḥōdēm);
• the son of authority = one in authority (ben + ḥēdām);
• the Son of “the-One-In-Charge,” i.e., THE SON OF THE SOVEREIGN (ben + ḥā ḥēdām).

Early on Jesus was recognized as ὦιὸς θεοῦ “the Son of God” (ὁμό) and as ὦιὸς τοῦ θεοῦ “the Son of the God” (ὁμό). The designation of Jesus as ὦιὸς Μου ὄ ὀγαπητός, “my Beloved Son,” appears six times in the Gospels. Three of these are in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist when the voice from heaven declared, “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17, Mark 1:11, and Luke 3:22); and three of them are in the Synoptic accounts of the transfiguration when the voice from heaven declared, “This is my beloved son” (Matt 17:5, Mark 9:7, and Luke 9:35). These quotations are indirect affirmations that Jesus was recognized by some as “the Son of God.”

The title “Son of God” appears in the Gospels twenty-eight times, and its meaning is unambiguous. It was affirmed by

• Gabriel when he told Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

• John the Baptist, who at Jesus’ baptism stated, “I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

• Nathaniel, when he came to Jesus, declared, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49).

• the disciples in the boat after Jesus walked on the water, who
“worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’” (Matt 14:33).

- Martha who confessed, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God” (John 11:227).

- the Satan who twice challenged Jesus saying, “If you are the Son of God . . . .” (Matt 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3, 9).

- the unclean spirits after they were cast out of the sick “fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God’” (Mark 3:11), or “What have you to do with us, O Son of God?” (Matt 8:29); and Luke adds (4:41) “they knew that he was the Christ.”

- the Gaderene demoniac who asked, “What have you to do with me, Jesus Son of the Most High God?” (Luke 8:28).

- the centurion and guards at the cross who stated, “Truly this was a /the Son of God” (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39).

- John who wrote, “these [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

- Jesus himself when he reported to Mary and Martha, “This illness [of Lazarus] is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it” (John 11:4).

- Jesus himself in his answer to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world . . . God sent the Son into the world . . . He who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:16–18).

- Jesus when he defended himself against blasphemy for having said, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:34–36).19

- Jesus when he asked the blind man to whom he gave sight, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” and then answered the man’s
Therefore, it is unlikely that שֵׁם בָּרֶךְ—meaning either the lofty but sub-divine “Perfect Person” or the mundane “son of man”— was ever interchangeable with the title “the Son of God.” The title מַטְרֵךְ “the one-in-charge” or “the conciliator,” would have properly defined Jesus’ mission, but not his person. Only the last of the five titles listed above does justice to his person. He was מַטְרֵךְ “the Son of the Sovereign,” with the מַטְרֵךְ “the Sovereign” being Yahweh. מַטְרֵךְ was the equivalent of מַטְרֵךְ “the Son of God.” This is what lies behind the anarthrous מַטְרֵךְ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The title מַטְרֵךְ (without the definite article on the מַטְרֵךְ) means “One-in-Authority” (as מַטְרֵךְ means “mighty man”) and refers to Jesus who said, Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ Γῆς “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” This מַטְרֵךְ is the title behind the anarthrous מַטְרֵךְ ἀνθρώπου “the Son of Man.”

Support for this interpretation that מַטְרֵךְ “the Sovereign” is an epithet for Yahweh, and the מַטְרֵךְ is a title for Jesus finds support from three sources. First is the use of the epithet מִרְמֶשֶׁת “the Rock” for Yahweh in Deut 32:4, which was translated as θεός “God” in the LXX. The epithet מִרְמֶשֶׁת “Rock,” without the מ, appears again in Deut 32:18, where it is again translated as θεός “God.” The epithet comes a third time in Deut 32:31. מִרְמֶשֶׁת כָּפָרְנַשׁ “like our Rock, their Rock.” This became in Greek ως ὁ θεός ἡμῶν οἱ θεοὶ αὐτῶν “like our God, their god.” The same epithet found in Hab 1:12 is also
noteworthy:

Yahweh, my God, my Holy One . . . and, O Rock, . . .

κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἅγιος . . . καὶ ἐπλασέν με
O Lord, God, my Holy One . . . you formed me.

Here the Greek translator read the MT קָרָן as the verb “to form, fashion,” and Jastrow (1903: 1270) noted that “in the Agadah קָרָן “Rock” was used for the Lord and for the Creator, as though קָרָן was derived from קָרָא “to fashion, to create.” In the Psalms קָרָן “Rock” was translated by θεὸς “God” in 18:31 (LXX 17:32 = II Sam 2:32), 62:3, 63:7 and 91:5. Thus comes the equation: Rock = God = Yahweh. The name, noun, and epithet were interchangeable.20 By analogy a similar equation can be postulated: קָרָן “The Sovereign” = God = Yahweh.21

The second source supporting the interpretation that קָרָן is an epithet for Yahweh comes from parallels in Arabic usage of epithets for Allah. Among the epithets for Allah in Arabic are:

• الرحیم (‘alrahîmu) “the Merciful” (= رحیم);
• الرحمن (‘alrahmanu) “the Compassionate” (= رحمان);
• الأحد (‘alâhadu) “the One” (= واحد), with the definite article;
• واحد (‘ahadun) “(the) One” (= واحد), without the definite article);
• واحد (wa‘hidun) “(the) One” (= واحد a by-form of واحد), without the definite article).
Lane (1863: 27) noted that “ال الأحد [‘alâhadu], as an epithet, is applied to God alone and signifies The One; the Sole; He who as ever been one and alone . . .” and he called attention to the Qur’an Sura 112:1, (qul huwa ‘lalahu ‘ahadun), “Say, He is God, One God,” and noted that here the indefinite “One” equals the definite “The One” and it can be a substitute for the name Allah. The Hebrew הֵאָלִים “The Sovereign” parallels the Arabic and Hebrew הֵאָלִים “The One.”

The third source supporting the interpretation that הֵאָלִים is an epithet for Yahweh is a variant in the Shem Tob Text of Matt 19:17, where the phrase כי הֵאָלִים לֶבֶרְהוֹ הָאָדָם פֶּקֶב “for God alone is good” appears in Greek as εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄγνωθός “one is the good.” This indefinite εἷς “one” means “The-One-and-Only-God” This interpretation of the εἷς is supported by the εἷς ὁ θεὸς “one the God” in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19, where the ὁ θεὸς “the God” is the appositional modifier of the indefinite εἷς (= הֵאָלִים). The הֵאָלִים in the Vorlage became in the Shem Tob text a doublet, wherein the הֵאָלִים became both הֵאָלִים “the God” and לֶבֶרְהוֹ “alone.” There is no way to relate the εἷς “one” in Matthew and the ὁ θεὸς “God” in Mark and Luke until the Hebrew הֵאָלִים “the One = God” comes into focus.

As a matter of fact, in Matt 16:27 the ὁ γιὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώ-που appears in the Shem Tob Text as הַאָלִים בן “the son of the God.” and the τὸν γιὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Matt 16:28 also appears as הַאָלִים בן “the Son of the God.”
CONCLUSIONS

In speech the vowels precluded most ambiguities. The ʿādām “man,” the ʿōdēm “reconciler,” and the ʿēdām “provost” were as distinctly different as the English ‘a dam,’ ‘a dame,’ and ‘a dome.’ The Aramaic bar + ʿēnāš has to mean “son of man” and the Hebrew bar + ʿēnōš has to mean “the most pure person.” The  ā vowel of ʿēnāš and the ō vowel of ʿēnōš make all the difference. The Hebrew ʿēnōš “man” requires the bar to be read as the Hebrew word for “pure,” whereas the Aramaic ʿēnāš “man” requires the bar to be read as the Aramaic word for “son.” When these words were spelled without vowels, ambiguity was inevitable.

With all of the right vowels restored and with the lexical options (summarized above, pp. 360–69) in focus, it should be just as easy to recognize יְהוָה יָבֵד “the Sovereign” as a title for Yahweh as it is to recognize הָאָב “the Rock” and הָאָב “the One.” Reverence for the holy name, whereby every reading of הָאָב became יָבֵד, was no doubt a contributing factor for using epithets—and even they may have been reverentially changed, as אלהים became יִשְׂרָאֵל and as “God” became “G-d.”²² Reverence for the name may well have been extended to יָבֵד itself so that the יְהוָה יָבֵד “the Son of the Sovereign” was intentionally mispronounced as יָבֵד יְהוָה יָבֵד “the Son of the Man” which, in turn, produced the baffling οὐκ ὡς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The disciples and those in the early church certainly knew that “the Son of the Man” meant “the Son of the Sovereign,” which was but another way of saying “the Son of God.” It was so well understood it required no commentary.
Reading “the Man of Purity” for the “Son of Man” in I Enoch clarifies there the ambiguity of the υἱὸς ἄνθρωποῦ. The disciples’ answer to the question of Jesus in Matt 16: 13, “Who do men say that the Son of Man to be?” is the clue for interpreting the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωποῦ in the question as the Hebrew יאנס “the Most Pure Man” (the superlative of יאנס). Their answer, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets,” makes perfect sense with this meaning.

More ambiguity can be removed when it is recognized that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωποῦ could translate not only the Aramaic יאנס “the Son of the Man” and the Hebrew יאנס “the Purist Person” but also the Hebrew יאנס “Son of Man” and the Hebrew יאנס “Son of the Reconciler,” i.e., “the Concilator,” which was probably the title given to Ezekiel (contra the MT vocalization and the υἱὸς ἄνθρωποῦ in the Septuagint). It may have been the inspiration for Paul’s affirmation in II Cor 5:19, θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἐαυτῷ, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”

In Matt. 16:27, Jesus stated, “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.” In this saying the υἱὸς τοῦ ἄνθρωποῦ, “the Son of the Man,” could be the יאנס where the יאנס was יאנס “the-one-in-charge.” The title “Son of Authority” may well underlie the texts were the “Son of Man” functioned as the judicial authority. Nickelsburg (1990) noted:

Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the NT son of man traditions is their consistent ascription of judicial
functions to the exalted Jesus. In spite of the frequent use of Danielic language and imagery, these texts, with the exception of Revelation, do not emphasize the Danielic motif of “kingship,” much less an eternal reign. Constitutive and central is Jesus’ role as judge (or, occasionally, witness), an element introduced into the tradition from non-Danielic, albeit royally oriented sources. This judicial element, more than any other, identifies the NT texts as derivative from the conflated Jewish traditions.

However, it was not just a matter of “conflated Jewish traditions,” it was a matter of deflated lexical data—with some Hebrew and Aramaic lexemes having been lost in the post-Biblical period. Thanks to Arabic cognates, the recovery of ~da’ “the-one-in-charge/the Sovereign” and ~da’ “the Reconcilor” provides a reasonable explanation of the enigmatic ἀνθρώπου “man” in the title used by and about Jesus. Every occurrence of ὁ ὑιός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου can be interpreted as “the Son of the Sovereign.” It was just another way of safely saying “the Son of God”—without possibly profaning the name or the epithet simply by saying it properly.

The name Yahweh occurs over six thousand times in the Hebrew Scriptures but not once in the New Testament. But, in the epithet ὁ ὑιός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the Son of the Man,” the holy name appears in reverent disguise. Behind the Greek is the Hebrew דָּוִד הַמָּנָה, “the Son of the Man,” and behind this is the epithet דָּוִד הַמָּנָה “the Son of the Sovereign”—and “the Sovereign” is none other than Yahweh, God the Father.
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ADDENDUM

THE ḪAQ AND ἀνθρώπου IN
AMOS 9:11–12 AND ACTS 15:16–17

Amos 9:11 and an abbreviated quotation of it in Acts 15:16 read much the same. But Amos 9:12 and Acts 15:17 have very different meanings, the latter being almost identical with the Septuagint reading of Amos 9:12. These texts read as follows:

AMOS 9:11

In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old.

SEPTUAGINT OF 9:11

In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and will rebuild the ruins of it, and will set up the parts that have been broken, and will build it up as in the ancient days.
ADAM, ENOSH AND “THE SON OF MAN”

ACTS 15:16

Metà tauta ánanastreψω
cai ånoikodómmhòs tìn skhnh Dauil d
thèn ðeptwkkìan
kai tà kateskamènà autìs ånoikodómmhòs
cai ånorðwòs autìhn.

After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;
I will rebuild its ruins, and I will strengthen it.

AMOS 9:12

“On order that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,”
says the LORD who does this.

SEPTUAGINT OF 9:12

that the remnant of men, and all the gentiles
upon whom my name is called,
may earnestly seek,
saith the Lord who does all these things.

ACTS 15:17

òpwç òn èkζhòswçn oì katalòpòi
tòw ånthrwòpòw tòv kûrion
that the rest of men may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who are called by my name.

According to Hatch and Redpath (1954: 430–431) ἐκζητέω “to seek” was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew שָׁאָל “to seek” over seventy times, but only here in Amos 9:12 does it appear as a questionable translation of שָׁאָל “to possess.” Therefore, it is most likely that in the Masoretic tradition the ד of רָשָׁן was misread as a ר. Consequently, the verb became רָשָׁנִים “they may possess” when it was originally רָשָׁנִים “they may seek.”

A second misreading in the MT was the reading of יִדְרִים in 9:12 as יִדְרִים “Edom.” The Septuagint translators read it as יִדְרִים “man,” which was followed by Luke in Acts 15:17. But there is a third option for interpreting the יִדְרִים in Amos 9:12. As discussed above (pp. 360-364) יִדְרִים can be read as the cognate of the Arabic أدما (adama) “he effected a reconciliation between them . . . induced love and agreement between them . . . that peace, or reconciliation, and friendship should continue ” (Lane 1863: 35–36). Thus, יִדְרִים (or יִדְרִים, with full spelling) could be read as the sequential infinitive construct יִדְרִים/יִדְרִים “to reconcile.” By inverting the יִדְרִים/יִדְרִים, the purpose for Yahweh’s rebuilding the fallen booth and breaches of David was “in order that they seek to reconcile the remnant and all the gentiles upon whom my name is called.” The imperial and ethnocentric statement in the MT in Amos 9:12 may well
come from a triad of scribal errors: (1) misreading ד as a ר, adding the י to אדום and thereby changing the infinitive “to reconcile” into the name Edom, and inverting three words once the name Edom was mistakenly created.

NOTES

1. Davies and Allison (1991: 43–53, Excursus VI, The Son of Man) provide a helpful summary of the debate over the last half of the twentieth century about the meaning of “the mysterious synoptic title ‘the Son of Man’” in the Gospels. They concluded

In view of all we have said, we are inclined to think that Jesus used the son of man idiom on more than one occasion in a novel or quasi-titular manner with the intent of directing his hearers to Dan 7, and that he saw in Daniel’s eschatological figure a prophecy of his own person and fate.

Davies and Allison referred to the one occurrence of the קבֶרֶשׁ אדום, “like the son of a man” (in Dan 7:13) forty-six times; but the בְּרֵשׁ, which appears ninety-three times in Ezekiel, is mentioned only three times (in just two sentences in the whole excursus).

by George Howard (1987, 1995). In the preface to the Second Edition, Howard stated,

The main thrust of this second edition is to demonstrate that the Hebrew Matthew contained in Shem-Tob’s *Evan* (sic) *Bohan* predates the fourteenth century. In my judgment, Shem-Tob the polemist did not prepare this text by translating it from the Latin Vulgate, the Byzantine Greek, or any other known edition of the Gospel of Matthew. He received it from previous generations of Jewish scribes and tradents.”

3. The usual word for “human” in Arabic is مَّشْرُ (bašar); and أبو البشَر (‘abû’albasar) means “Adam, the father of mankind” (Lane 1863: 208).

4. See Lane 1863: 35–37 and Castell 1669: 41–42, where the following definitions are included: “*pacem fecit, amore junxit, redintegravit amorem, concordia & consensum conciliavit, firmavit, . . . dux & antistes est.*”

5. Compare Hebrew חוט (hawt) “thread, cord line” and its Arabic cognate خيط (hayt) “string, thread” (Lane 1865: 671, 831; BDB 296). The Arabic حيَّيَت (hayyit) “a man who guards, protects, defends” is also noteworthy.

6. Note also the by-form حيَّات cited by Jastrow (1903: 448–449) meaning “to live in luxury as a nobleman, to be imperious, to lord it.” For the cognate حِوَّات (hūwāʾt), Hava (1915: 150) included “tax collector” in his definitions. Had the centurion confessed that he was a “sinner,” one would
expect the tradition to have had some recollection of how Jesus responded to that confession.

7. According to Luke 7:2–10, Jesus and the centurion never actually met each other, the communication between the two of them being carried out by a deputation of Jewish elders. Luke 7:8, which reads, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἀνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν τασσόμενος “for I also am a man being placed under authority,” differs from Matt 8:9 only by the addition of τασσόμενος “being placed.”

8. The phrase וּרְחֵי הַרְחֵבָּם, פְּרָורֶשֶׁת in Shem Tob’s Matthew requires a comment. Howard translated this as “the Pharisees and [I have] horses and riders.” But “Pharisees” and “horses” just do not go together like “Pharisees and Sadducees.” The וּרְחֵי הַרְחֵבָּם reflects the confusion in distinguishing between the ו and the ר, so that the וְרָורֶשֶׁת should be corrected to וּרְחֵי הַרְחֵבָּם, the latter being the Hebrew cognate of Arabic فارس (fāriš) “(mounted) horseman.” The three Hebrew nouns correspond to the Latin celeres, equestris, currus and to the English “cavalry, charioteers, and chariots.”

9. It appears 192 times in KJV; 190 times in NKJ; 189 times in RSV; 183 times in NAB, and 182 times in NIV. It appears 28 times in Matthew, 13 times in Mark, 25 times in Luke, 12 times in John, twice in Rev 1:13 and 14:14, and just once in Acts 7:56, Hebrews 2:6, and Sirach 17:30. In the Hebrew scriptures בֵּן אָדָם “son of man” comes nine times as the parallel synonym of בָּמַן “man” (Num 23:19; Job 25:6; 35:8; Psalm 8:4; 80:17; Isa 51:12; 56:2; and Jer 50:40). In Jer 51:43 and Psa 146:3 בֵּן אָדָם appears without the synonymous בָּמַן.
“man,” and Psa 144:3 has נֶדֶלֶח.

10. Given the interchange of the א and the ד (as with אָנַה and דָּפַל, both meaning “to suck”), וְנָה could be a by-form and cognate of Arabic عنس (‘ans) “rock, hard, firm” (Lane 1874: 2173).

11. Simon Bar-Kokba lead the third revolt against Rome during the reign of Hadrian after the Aelia Capitolina was built by Hadrian in 131 in Jerusalem and occupied by a Roman colony. (Aelia was derived from the emperor’s family name, and Capitolina from that of Jupiter Capitolinus, to whom a temple was built on the site of the Jewish temple.) Bar Kokhba’s revolt lasted for three years (132–135), but he was defeated by General Julius Severus.

12. This type of word-play may have contributed to the tale in Sabbath 104b, which was thought by many, including zealous Christian censors, to have identified Mary Magdalene with Mary, the mother of Jesus, because it speaks not only of an adulteress but identifies her as the mother of a man who for his violence had been crucified.

13. In English the superlative “the most pious man” or “the most righteous man” may have overtones of a person’s being self-righteous. Thus, the superlative “the Most Pure Person” may best translate the title בְּרֵא פִּנְחָשׁ “the Most Pure Man” (which could be misinterpreted as machismo) or “the Man of Righteousness / Purity” (which ignores the superlative).

14. Translation by Charles (1913: 216). For an extended discussion on the original language of I Enoch and the various

15. The translation is by Isaac (1983: 34). For a brief note by Isaac on the date of the Similitudes (37–71) being between 105–64 B.C., and the original language of I Enoch being partially in Aramaic and partially in Hebrew, see his *Introduction* on pages 6–7.

16. The Aramaic כֶּבֶר “like the son of a man” in Dan 7:13 is a personification for the “kingdom of the saints of the Most High” (7:17, 21–22), which is the counterpart to the zoomorphic representations of the nations in Dan 7:2–8. According to Dan 8:15–17, Daniel saw “one having the appearance of a man” (בֶּן אָדָם) who had the “voice of a man” (כֹּחַ לְאָדָם). His name was Gabriel (= כֶּבֶר “warrior/man” + גָּאָל “God”), and he called Daniel in Hebrew והָאָדָם “the son of a man.

17. See Aland (1968: 246) for Luke 9:35 which has ὁ γιος μου ὁ ἐκλεξεγμένος, “my Chosen Son” as a textual variant in a number of manuscripts.

18. Not included in this list are the title “Son of God” found in (a) the title of Mark 1:1, (b) the questions and charges of blasphemy made by the chief priests and scribes (Matt 26:63; Luke 22:66–70; and John 19:7), and (c) the taunts of those reviling Jesus (Matt 27:40, 43; Luke 22:70).

19. Psalm 82 is a short poetic parable which depicts the demise of henotheism and the rise of absolute monotheism.
The gods (sun, moon, and stars, etc) allotted by Yahweh “to all the peoples under the whole heaven” (Deut 4:19) failed to adjudicate justly in their respective realms and were, consequently, sentence to death, as though they were mere mortals. Psalm 82 ends with this plea for monotheism: “Arise, O God, judge the earth, for to thee belong all the nations.” Brown (1966: 409) made no reference to this plain meaning of the psalm, but was correct “in recognizing that Jesus was arguing according to the rabbinic rules of hermeneutics which were often different from modern attitudes.” In the rabbinic tradition followed by Jesus the “sons of the Most High” were deemed to be earthly judges for whom “god” was an honorific title. Brown (1966: 410) noted “if there appears to be sophistry in John x 34–36, we are not certain that either the speaker or the audience would have had that impression.”


21. Note the beloved hymn of Augustus Toplady entitled Rock of Ages, written in 1776. Similar to the way Toplady made the “Rock of Ages” apply to Jesus rather than to Yahweh, scholars have tried to make the τῶν ἄνθρωπων ( = Ἰάκωβ) refer to Jesus. But in reality the Ἰάκωβ ( ≠ ἄνθρωπων) in the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Βασιλέα “Son of the Sovereign” referred to Yahweh.

22. It is analogous to Jastrow’s citation (1903: 73) on אָלִיל, which is nothing but a cross reference to בֶּן הָאָלִיל, where it is
simply noted that אדמון and ענוש were “adopted in order to avoid uttering the divine name.” It goes without explanation; but questions loom as to why the ר יפמ became a ל א. Was the ל א randomly selected or was ענוש an indirect reference to the Shekinah since אדמון (the cognate of Arabic [عَلَا]الله) means “to shine, glow, gleam” and the plural ענוש could mean “lightnings,” like those mentioned in Rev 4:5?

23. The parallel texts suggest that three questions were asked, the second one being, Τίνα μὲ λέγουσιν οἱ ἀνθρώποι εἶναι; “who do men say that I am?” (Mark 8:27) or Τίνα μὲ λέγουσιν οἱ ὄχλοι εἶναι; “who do crowds say that I am?” (Luke 9:18); and the third being, ὃμειξ ὅ τινα μὲ λέγετε εἶναι; “but who do you say that I am” (Matt 16:15; Mark 8:28; Luke 9:20). The Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew at 16:13–15 omits the first question all together. The Peshitta and Old Syriac of Matt 16:13 conflated the first and second questions, “What do men say concerning me, that I am a son of man?” But the answer in Matt 16:14, which mentions John the Baptist, Elijah and Jeremiah, is not a logical answer to this question. (The Peshitta and Old Syriac of Mark 8:27–29 and Luke 9:18–20 also omit the first question.) Mark 8:28 and Luke 9:19 are perfectly good answers to the question in Matt 16:13, but not to the question in Mark 8:27 or Luke 9:18.
XXVI

NEW TESTAMENT MISCELLNEA

A.

TEXTUAL VARIANTS AND AMBIGUITIES
IN MATTHEW 1:23 AND ISAIAH 7:14

Matthew 1:23

'İðoû ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται νιόν,
καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουὴλ,

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel

הנה הָעְלָפָה הָרָה וְחֵלָה בֵּן
ocrat שְׁמוּ נַמְנַאֲל

Behold the young woman is pregnant and will bear a son;
and you shall call his name Emmanuel.¹

Isaiah 7:14

הָנָה הָעְלָפָה הָרָה וְחֵלָה בֵּן
ocrat שְׁמוּ נַמְנַאֲל

Behold the young woman is pregnant and is bearing a son;
and she will call his name Emmanuel.

Septuagint

ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται νιόν
καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουὴλ

Behold the virgin will conceive and will bear a son;
and you will call his name Emmanuel.
The first difference to be noted in these four texts concerns the naming of the infant. According to the הָּלָהָמָה of Isa 7:14 “she will call” (a 3fs waw-consecutive perfect indicating a future action), the mother will name the child. The unusual 2fs חָּלְמָה (see GKC 748) in lieu of the normal חָּלְמָה could (1) be repointed as the participle חָּלְמָה, indicating that the pregnant woman had already named her unborn son, or (2) חָּלְמָה could be emended to read with the Dead Sea Scrolls which have שְׁלָמָה, “and he called/will call.” But the Greek καλέσεις in Isa 7:14 means “you (sg.) will call,” and the καλέσουσιν in Matt 1:23 means “they will call,” as if the text were חָּלְמָה rather than the MT חָּלְמָה. The Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel read the חָּלְמָה of Isaiah as the 2ms חָּלְמָה “and you shall call,” following the Greek singular of Isaiah rather than the Greek plural of Matthew.

The Hebrew adjective הָלָהָמָה “is pregnant” was translated into Greek as a future active verb (ἐν γαστρὶ ἐξεῖ), and the participle חָלְמָה “and is birthing” became a future middle verb (τεξεῖται) — as though the Hebrew were חָּלְמָה חָּלְמָה “and she will conceive and she will bear.”

In summary, the first part of the “sign” given in the Hebrew of Isa 7:14 contains one adjective (חָּלָהָמָה), one participle (חָּלְמָה), and one finite verb — a waw-consecutive perfect coming after the imperfect חָּלָהָמָה “he will give,” which introduced the “sign.” That one verb (חָּלָהָמָה “to call”) in the “sign” itself became (1) a 3fs in the MT of Isaiah, (2) a 3ms in the Qumran text of Isaiah, (3) a 2ms in the Septuagint, (4) a 2ms also in the Hebrew Shem Tob Matthew, and (5) a 3mpl in the
Greek Matthew. The Septuagint translators transformed the Hebrew statements of fact—expressed by adjective and participle [i.e., the maiden is pregnant and is now bearing a child]—into future verbs, making them predictive rather than indicative.2

On the varied and sometimes ambiguous use of הַעֲלָמָה “young woman” and בָּתֵּי לֶחָלָה “virgin,” the following texts in Hebrew and Greek illustrate the fact that הַעֲלָמָה was not always translated by παρθένος “virgin.”3 When הַעֲלָמָה was used for a “virgin” it required the use of בֶּתֶר לֶחָלָה as a modifier, which in turn required a modifying phrase like “whom no man had not known.”

- Gen 24:43 הַעֲלָמָה הַנִּיָּא “the young woman (‘almah) going forth”; and αἴ θυγατέρες . . . ἐξελεύσονται “the daughters going forth.”
- Proverbs 30:19 הַעֲלָמָה בָּר “an the way of a man with a young woman (‘almah’); and καὶ ὁ δῶρός ἀνδρός ἐν νεότητι “an the way of a man in youth.”
- Exod 2:8 הַעֲלָמָה שָׂנָה “and the young woman (‘almah’) went”; and ἐλθοῦσα δὲ ἡ νεῶν “and the young woman (neanis) went.”
- Deu 22:23 נְעֶרֶת בְּתֵי לֶחָלָה מֵאָרָרָה לְאָשָׁי “young woman, a virgin (bethulah) espoused to a man”; and παῖς παρθένος μεμνηστευμένη ἀνδρὶ “a young virgin (parthenos) espoused to a man.”
- Gen 24:16 נָשִׁיָּה נְעֶרֶת בְּתֵי לֶחָלָה “The maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin
NEW TESTAMENT MISCELLANEAA

(bethulah), whom no man had not known”; and παρθενος ἦν καλὴ τῇ ὄψιν σφόδρα παρθενος ἦν ἀνήρ οὐκ ἔγνω
“the virgin (parthenos) was very fair to look upon, a virgin (parthenos), whom no man had not known.

In Hebrew the term “Virgin” (bethulah) was used as a title of honor in the epithets “the Virgin Daughter Judah” (Lam 1:15), “the Virgin Daughter Sidon” (Isa 23:12), “the Virgin Daughter Babel” (Isa 47:1), and “the Virgin Daughter Egypt” (Jer 46:11). These “virgins” were castigated by the prophets for their wanton adultery/idolatry, but the honorific “Virgin” was retained in the epithets. The Canaanite goddess of love and war, Anat, was known by the epithet “the Virgin Anat.” In Aramaic, “virgin” may refer to a young woman having difficulty in bearing her first child. Note-worthy also is the Islamic tradition in which Mohammed’s daughter Fatima— who was married to Ali Ibn Abu Talib and was the mother of Hasan and Husein— is honored by nine titles, including the title batûl “Virgin.”

Given these varied uses of both bethulah and hul’ for women with or without sexual experience, the only way to be explicitly clear about the celibacy of a person was to spell it out with a modifying clause such as הולא לארשׁו לודעה “a maiden/a virgin whom a man had not known.” In Matt 1:20, the modifying clause stated: “for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” Without such modifying statements even the honorific epithet “Virgin” could be misleading about one’s truly being celibate.
THE MEANING OF “ISCARIOT”

The names Judas and Judas Iscariot appear in a variety of forms in the Gospels and the actual meaning of Iscariot has yet to be agreed upon. Here are the different readings:

- Mark 14:43, Ἰούδας “Judas”;
- Matthew 26:14, Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης “Judas Iscariot”;
- Mark 3:19, 14:10, Luke 6:16, Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ “Judas Iscarioth” or Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώθ “Judas the Iscarioth”;
- John 14:22, Ἰούδας οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, Ἰουδασ, not the Iscariot.” Ms. D reads Ἰούδας οὐχ ὁ ἀπὸ καρυῶτον, “Judas, not the one from Karuot”;
- John 6:71, 13:26, Ἰούδαν Σίμων Χριστοῦ Ἰσκαριώτου “Judas Simon of Iscariot”;
- Luke 22:3, Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Ἰσκαριώτην “Judas, the one called Iscariot.”
- Ἐκαριώτης, Ἐκαριώθ, Scarioth, Scariota, Carioth, and Cariotha are variants found in the numerous manuscript traditions of all of the verses above.

OLDER DERIVATIONS OF “ISCARIOT”

Davies and Allison (1991: 157) and Klassen (1992:1091) have provide helpful summaries of the various interpretations.
of ‘Iscariot’—none of which accommodate all of the variants cited above. The place name בא יא in 2 Sam 10:6, 8 (which became Ἰστωβ in the Septuagint) provides a clue for those who, by analogy, read Ἰσκαριώτης as the noun יא and the place name קדמ, meaning “the man of Kerioth.” This accommodates ms. D in John 13:2 and 14:22 which read Ἰούδα Σίμωνος ἀπὸ καρυώτου, “Judas Simon from Karuot.” Some preferred to interpret Ἰσκαριώτης as יר א, “man of Jericho.”

Others take their cue from the Σκαριώτης, Σκαριώθ, Scarioth, and Scariota variants, and identify ‘Iscariot’ as the Greek σκάριος and Latin sicarius, both meaning bandit, assassin.” If this were the case, the initial 'l of Ἰσκαριώτης would reflect the prosthetic Χ, which in Hebrew is prefixed to some words to facilitate pronunciation, as opposed to taking the initial 'l of Ἰσκαριώτης as the Hebrew יא “man.” This identification of the 'l of Ἰσκαριώτης as a prosthetic Χ also works for those who read the σκάριος of Ἰσκαριώτης as being

- the Aramaic יא יא “the false one, a liar, a traitor”;
- the Aramaic יא יא “red paint,” making Judas a “dyer” or a “red head”;
- the Hebrew יא יא as found in Isa 19:4, which became παραδώσω “I will hand over” in the Septuagint;
- the Latin scortea “coat or apron of leather,” becoming secondarily a “purse” or a “purse-bearer”;
- the Greek καρυωτός “one who is (from a town of) date palms.”
A NEW DERIVATION OF “ISCARIOT”

Jastrow (1903: 1413, 1417) cited the Hebrew masculine plural noun מַשְׂכָלוֹן קִרְיֹת, “persons called up to read from the Scriptures” and the Hebrew מַשְׂכָלוֹן קִרְיֹת “those called up to read from the Torah,” i.e., lectors. This מַשְׂכָלוֹן קִרְיֹת is a cognate of the Arabic قارئ (qâʿrīʿ)” “a reader/reciter of the Qurʾan,” and similar to the Arabic قرآن (qurrāʾ) “a devotee, one who devotes himself/herself” to religious exercise . . .” (Lane 1885: 2504, from the verb قرأ (gara) “to call, to read, to recite, to chant [Scripture]).

This interpretation does justice to the Greek definite article ὁ in the named spelled out as Ἰουδαν ὁ Ἰσκαριωθ or as Ἰουδας ὁ Ἰσκαριωτης. This definite article in Greek requires the name to be reconstructed as ῬΗῤῤῼ ῬΗῤῼ, with the ὁ Ἰσκαριωτης reflecting an ων in the construct state (“the man of”) followed by the ῬΗῤῤῼ in the absolute state. This derivation means that Judas would have been a man familiar with the Tanakh, a lector who read aloud well and probably had read widely. Religious texts like the Psalms of Solomon may have contributed to a messianic zeal which envisioned the coming of a Son of David who would “purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction . . . and the alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them” (Ps Sol 17:22, 29) (Wright 1985: 667). Judas zeal for Jesus may have led him to think that a staged betrayal would be a sufficient catalyst to get the Messiah to demonstrate his power to “destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth” (Ps Sol 17:24) and bring about a gentile free Jerusalem. When his scheme backfired suicide became Judas’ option of choice (Matt 27:5).
The name Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, “Judas Simon of Iscariot,” suggests that Judas’ fathers’ name was Simon and that father Simon was a lector. If so, it was a good example of “like father, like son,” for both could have been lectors, one after the other.

C.

Revelation 13:18

A Clue from the Monk Beatus

This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

J. Massyngberde Ford (1975: 216), citing H. A. Sanders, (1918: 95–99), quoted the commentary of the monk Beatus of Liébana (in the Cantabrian Mountains of northern Spain), written around 776 A.D. On Rev 13:18, Beatus commented:

“This is wisdom; he who has understanding let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man,” that is, of Christ whose name the beast takes for himself. . . . (my italics)." 9

In the opinion of the writer the most obvious name which the Christ and the beast shared in common with a numerical equivalent of 666 would have been sôter, which had antithetical meanings depending on whether the sôter was a
Greek word or a Hebrew word. The Greek σωτήρ “savior” (as in Luke 2:11 σωτήρ ὁς ἐστιν Χριστός κύριος “a savior who is Christ, the Lord”) would be transliterated in Hebrew and Aramaic as בָּשַׁר (= swtr = sôtēr). In Hebrew the ב (s) = 60, the ו (w/ô) = 6, the ת (t) = 400, and the ר (r) = 200, which all together equal 666.

The Hebrew and Aramaic word בָּשַׁר (= swtr = sôtēr), in contrast to the Greek word transliterated into Hebrew using these same letters, means “destroyer” or “one who tears down” (Jastrow 1903: 1022); and its Arabic cognate is شَتَر (šatar) “to offend, abuse, revile” and شَتَر (šâr) “knave, rogue” (Lane 1872: 1503; Hava 1915: 351). Therefore, 666 can be a numeric code for “savior”—when based upon the Greek loanword σωτήρ (sôtēr)—or 666 can be a numeric code for “destroyer” when based upon the Hebrew/Aramaic בָּשַׁר (= swtr = sôtēr).

The phrase “it is the number of a man” (אֵלֶּה שֵׁם אֲדֹנִי בִּשְׂמַר) would have been מִסְפַּר אֶשֶּׁת הָעִיר (mispar ʾīš hûʾ) or מִסְפַּר אֵדֶם בִּשְׂמַר (mispar ʾāḏām hûʾ). Were it the latter phrase with אֵדֶם (ʾāḏām / Adam), the phrase could also mean in light of Arabic cognates cited by Lane (1863: 36) “it is the number of a ruler/provost” or “it is the number of a peacemaker, reconciler, examplar.”

Thus, Beatus’ comment, “[it is the mark/number of] Christ whose name the beast takes for himself” indicates the hidden wordplay requiring certain linguistic skills to recognize that Christ’s Greek title πᾶσας / σωτήρ / swtr “Savior”—being one way to indicate 666—was transformed to become also the Aramaic/Hebrew name and mark of the beast called בָּשַׁר / σωτήρ / swtr “Destroyer.”
1. The נְקָרַה could be read as נְקָרֶּה “she will call” as in the MT of Isa 7:14; but in light of the 3ms נְקָרֶּה in Matt 1:25, it is properly read as the 2ms waw-consecutive “you (Joseph) shall call.”

2. For the use in Hebrew of an adjective as a noun, see GKC § 132a, note 2.

3. On the ambiguity of παρθένος (as in the Illiad II: 514, “She, a modest virgin, went upstairs, where the god lay with her in secret,” see Liddell and Scott 1966: 1339.

4. The -της ending of Ἰσκαρίωτης is the nomen actoris suffix and the -ωθ ending of Ἰσκαρίωθ is the spirantized Hebrew נ, the original ending of the noun to which the -ης suffix was added.

5. See Aland (1968: 34) for the variants Scarioth, Scariota, Carioth, Σκαριώτης, and Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου.

6. See Aland (1968: 389) also for the variants Scarioth, Scariotha, Scariotis, οὖχ Σκαριότα.

7. Josephus (Antiquities. 7:121) refers to it as Ἰστοβός.

8. In Josh 15:25 the city named קָרַת חֵרֶן חַוֵּית הָא — which became “Hazorhadattah, Keriothezron (that is, Hazor)” in the RSV—was among the cities belonging to the tribe of Judah. The Septuagint reads here καὶ αἱ πόλεις Ἀσερων αὐτῆς Ασωρ, the initial Ἰονία of read as the plural noun “cities.” In Amos 2:2, πόλεων αὐτῆς “her cities,” whereas the Vulgate read it as a place named Carioth, which came
into English as Kerioth. In Jer 48:21 the place name יִרְיוֹת became קָרְיוֹת, and the noun יִרְיוֹת became πόλεις “the cities,” but in Jer 48:41 the name appears also as יִרְיוֹת, which became Ακκαριωθ in Greek. Some have conjectured that the definite article attached to this intensive plural would mean “The City,” meaning Jerusalem.

9. Beatus wrote his commentary on the Apocalypse believing that the Savior would come at the turn of the millennium (1,000 A.D.) and bring to an end the world as he knew it.
XXVII

PROBLEM QUOTATIONS
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews contains about ninety quotations or allusions from the Hebrew scriptures. 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 straightforward from the Hebrew text or the Septuagint with only minor variations—as if they were quoted from memory—and are trouble free. 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-
PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS 399

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 הָעִקְבָּה/Σοφία (“Wisdom”) tradition into a masculine Λόγος/Χριστός (“Word/Christ”) tradition, so the prologue in the Epistle to the Hebrew reflects the transformation of the הָעִקְבָּה/Σοφία tradition into the νεόν του Theou/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, הַנַּתַּן אֶלַי הָוִי לְךָ, נַתַּן יָדִי: (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, לְךָ אֲמִיתָהוָו לְךָ וּדָוָד וַיִּתְּנוּ לְךָ מִלֶּת הָוִי, “I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son”—disregarding the histor-
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 (מָשָׁהְךָ וְעָלָהְךָ /κοιλίαξ 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

הָרְגֵגְנֵי נוֹרֵם עֵפָה
כִי דָסִירֵי יִהוָה
נֶקֶם נְשֵׁי לַעֲדֵי
וּכְפֵר אֲדֹנִי עֵפָה:

Praise his people, O you nations; 
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 οὐρανοὶ ᾧμα αὐτῷ καὶ προσκυνήσατωσαν
αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ
αὐτοῦ καὶ ἑνισχύσατωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ
ὅτι τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικάσαται καὶ ἐκδικήσει
καὶ ἀνταποδώσει δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν
ἀνταποδώσει καὶ ἐκκαθαρίσει 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 (ὑἱῶν / פָּטָלָי) 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

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 ל and a ש, as attested, for example, in Judges 8:16 where the MT reads

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

The senseless last line here appears in the Septuagint as καὶ ἡλόησεν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοὺς ἀνδρὰς τῆς πόλεως “and with them [the thorns and briers] 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 “he knew/made known” was obviously read as ירדה ירדש “he threshed,” which is contextually the preferred reading. A similar error occurred in the MT of Deut 32:43, where the ירדה נלים נשל עלמה “Praise, O Gentiles, his people,” was—in light of the Septuagintal variant—originally ירדה נשל נשל “Praise, O heavens, his people” or “Praise, O heavens, with him” This phrase became corrupted when the ש of עלמה was read as an ל, and it became ירדה נשל עלמה.
“Praise, O peoples, his people.” The ambiguity of this was reduced when was substituted for the . This change, which survives in the MT, would have been unnecessary had the original not been misread as .

The Septuagint of Deut 32:43 has two doublets. The first one is (a) the εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ άμα αὐτῷ (“Praise, O heavens, with him”), reflecting a Vorlage with , coupled with (b) the εὐφράνθητε έθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ (“Rejoice, O nations, with his people”), which reflects a Vorlage with . The second doublet is (c) καὶ προσκυνήσατωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ “and let all the sons of God worship him,” coupled with (d) καὶ ἐνιαχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἀγγέλοι 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 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—clutching the argument that the MT was not original but a secondary clarification once was misread as , 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 ב “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 ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ αἰώνος, “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 καιρὸς ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ σου to be the vocative “O God.” Thus, καιρὸς ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ του θεοῦ “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 ב suffixes referring to the earthly king, it is most likely that the psalmist intended καιρὸς ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ σου to mean “your divine throne,” with the καιρὸς ἐν used here as an adjective rather than as a vocative. 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 Heb1:9b, “God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (קַּחְמָה),” 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 "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**

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

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

**Hebrews 2:7**

You diminished him a little less than angels.

The single word "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 בָּנֵי בָּרָאָתָם "God" was read or interpreted here as בָּנוֹי בָּרָאָתָם "the sons of God" or "angels," then the βραχυ τι, which translated the מִין "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 βραχυ τι of Psa 8:5 as “a little lower than,” the same βραχυ 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 בָּנוֹי / אֵלֶּה תּוּכָה "man" and the בָּנוֹי / וּדָד אֵל "the son of man" to be the “last Adam” (I Cor 15:45), even though the Hebrew has בָּנוֹי “Enosh” for “man” rather than בָּנוֹי “Adam”—not to mention that the Hebrew has בָּנוֹי “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 (βραχυ 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 בְּהֵן “Behold!” (= יְדֻעְתִּי) of Jer 31:31 is not found in Heb 8:8b; and the הָרֹאשׁי יָרָד "oracle of Yahweh" (= φθονόν κύριος "says the Lord") became in Heb 8:8–10 λέγειν κύριος "declares the Lord." The more significant differences
in the verses below (highlighted in boldface) have a ready explanation.⁸

**Jeremiah 31:32**

... 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)**

for they abode not in my covenant,

and **I disregarded** them, saith the Lord.

**Hebrews 8:9b**

because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,

and I disregarded them, declares the Lord.

The translation of בָּלַע in the Septuagint as ημέλησα “I disregarded” may reflect a Vorlage with בָּלַע “to loathe, to abhor,” rather than בָּלַע. However, an emendation here is probably unnecessary. Hebrew בָּלַע 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
(baʿala): (1) “he became a husband, or lord, or master,” with its noun בֵּאל (baʿl) “husband, lord, master owner,” and (2) “he became confounded or perplexed, he was disgusted,” with its participle בֵּאל (baʿil) “confounded, perplexed” (Lane 1: 228). The translation of בֵּאל into Greek as ἤμιέλησα “disregarded” makes sense once the second definition of the cognate בֵּאל (baʿala) comes into focus. Instead of interpreting בֵּאל as “I was their husband,” the context, the cognates and versions 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 Mosoreotic text in favor of the Septuagint. The texts to be compare include

כִּי צֶוָּא הוֹי לְמַעַרְר
יִומֵס לַאֵין לְאָם יְבֹז
אֶרְיָה גְּמָה הַמֶּרֶּל
כִּי לֹא בְּאָם לֹא יָאָהְר:  
הָגָה תֵּשָּׁה לְאָרְיָה יַעֲשֹׂה בּו
עָזָרֵךְ בְּאֶמֶנָּתָה: ְרָהְב:  

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.
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

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 יְהֹוָה is reflected in the first of the two עוֹסֵן, meaning “a while”; and the לְפָתֵית הָעִדָּה “appointed time” was read as a poetic preposition and an adverb—לְפָתֵית הָעִדָּה “for a while”—
reflected by the second ὁσιν. There is nothing in Heb 10:37 for the MT יָתֵרָהוּ “vision.” Nor is there anything for the MT יַחַם לַאֵנִי לַאֵנִי יַחְיָהוּ אָסִיָּהְיוֹתָהוּ חָפָר לְעַל and its translation in the Septuagint as καὶ ἀνατελεῖ ἐφὶ πέρας καὶ οὐκ ἐφὶ 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 כְּפָלָה לְאַרְישֶרֵה יִפְשָׁא בָּּו has been very problematic for the following two reasons.

• The pu‘al כְּפָלָה “she became swollen” has been widely identified as a cognate of the Arabic عَنْفُل (‘afal) “tumor” and عَنْفُل (‘ofel) “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), “succeed” (NAB), “proud [ones]” (NAS, NAV, NRS, NKJ), with the Vulgate’s having “incredulus.”

• The verb יַחַם is commonly identified as יָשָׁר “to be upright,” the cognate of Arabic يَسَر (yasara) “to be gentle, to be easy”—which, with the modifier בֵּין נַפְנָפִים, means “to be right in the eyes of,” i.e., “to be pleasing.” (BDB 448).

However, the MT כְּפָלָה should be corrected to כְּפָלָה, in agreement with the Septuagint’s ὑπόστε ὑλήταὶ and its quotation in Heb 10:37. The Hebrew stem כְּפָלָה, as understood by the Greek translators, is the cognate of Arabic عَبَالا (‘abala) “held back, he drew back, he withheld, he diverted, he was cut off [by death]” (Lane 5: 1941–1942; Hava 451). With this definition in focus, the corrected MT כְּפָלָה לְאַרְישֶרֵה יִפְשָׁא בָּּו means “his unrighteous soul was cut off,” i.e., the
unrighteous have been cutoff [from life], but “the righteous shall live by faithfulness.” With this correction of יפלה to יפלה and with insight from the cognate עיב (‘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 לְאָרָיוּדָה יִפְשֶׁת בִּנְּאָה בַּעֲלָה as οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἢ ὑπερφήμον εὖ αὐτῷ “my soul has no pleasure in him,” reflects a Vorlage with לְאָרָיוּדָה יִפְשֶׁת בִּנְּאָה בַּעֲלָה. 12 The Greek translators did not have a text with the 3fs perfect יִשְׁרָה נפֶשֶׁי בַּעֲלָה “she was upright,” but a 3fs perfect of יִשְׁרָה/שָׁר “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

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

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.

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Heb 10:5–7

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 "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 ἀκήρ συν "ear" (ωτία) with ἄραμα "bone, body, self" (= ὀστέον or σῶμα; see especially Lam 4:7, ἄραμα ἄραμα ἄραμα "they were ruddy in body"). If the original were ἄραμα = σῶμα = "body," the verb may well have been ἄραμα rather than the MT ἄραμα. This ἄραμα (from ἄραμα) would be the cognate of Arabic بارى (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 بارى (bārirawn) "recovering from disease, sickness, or malady, convalescent, healthy" (Lane 1: 178[form 4], 179; Hava 26). The Greek καθητρύσα "prepared" would translate Hebrew ביק "to prepare," not the MT בק "to dig, to pierce."

The "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).
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 "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) ἵματος translated βελοθαλαμίς “garment” and περιβολαίον translated θυματοθήν “cloak,” with the repeated use of ἐλευθεράω “to change” matched by the repeated use of ἐλλασσαίω “to change.” But in Heb 1:10 ἵματος “garment” appears twice and περιβολαίον “cloak” once; and the first ἐλλασσαίω in the Septuagint became ἐλλογοῦ “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 un-borrowed 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.
4. Compare Deut 32:18, וַיְשָׁמֶר אֶל מִשְׁכָּבָתְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לְךָ "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.”


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 (حمد [bēsīt]) them,” but the Vulgate reads “ego dominatus sum eorum.”

10. Lane (4:1555; 5: 1941) cited the expression ʿabalathu ʿabûlu (ʿabalathu ʿabûlu) and šaʿabathu šaʿûbu (šaʿabathu šaʿûbu), both meaning “death separated him from his companions.”
11. For the confusion of ד and נ, see Delitzsch, op.cit., 115, §118.

12. For the confusion of י and ל, see Delitzsch, op.cit., 103–105.

13. Also noteworthy is סורר (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 שור “navel string” (= סור [surr]), the verb שור 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 שד “bulwark, strength” but שד or שד meaning αὐνοῦ “praise,” matching the Vulgate’s lauden, reflecting the well attested confusion שד and שד. (Delitzsch, op cit., 113 §112d [see above, note 6] cited examples from (1) Isa 44:14 with the MT שד and the שד in two manuscripts listed by Kennicott, and (2) the Qere and Kethib in Psa 31:3 and 71:3,
with כֶּלֶשׁ “habitation” and כְּדֶשׁ “stronghold.” The stems קָנָה “to praise” are cognates of Arabic غَنٰ (g̣ an) and غَنَة (g̣ anaya) (BDB 777; Lane 6: 2299, 2302). In Neh 12:36–37 both קָנָה and כְּדֶשׁ were translated by αἰνέω “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 קָנָה 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 קָנָה “bulwark” or קָנָה “praise,” the problem remains of explaining how or when infantile voices ever destroyed יָרוֹד an enemy or an avenger. Thus, the cluster of words as they stand in Psa 8:2 remain an enigma.

However, once the MT קָנָה is corrected to קָנָה “praise”—as found in the Vorlage used by the Greek translators—and the last five Hebrew words Psa 8:2c are recognized as a misplaced 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 as thinking of the divine strength as recognized and praised by children, in accord with the rendering of the Ø.

More recent commentators have been a bit more creative but not more helpful.
CHAPTER XXVIII
LUKE’S MISREADING IN 16:9
OF TWO HEBREW WORDS

INTRODUCTION

According to Matt 6:19 Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,” but in Luke 16:9 Jesus said, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.” The two imperatives are inconsistent, if not contradictory. A similar problem appears in Luke 14:26 where Jesus said, “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” But in Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31, and Luke 10:27 Jesus declared that Lev 19:18, “you shall love your neighbor (ךָר) = kith-and-kin) as yourself,” was the second greatest commandment, exceed only by the commandment to love God. A third problem appears in Matt 10:34–36, where the Prince of Peace —having stated in Matt 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”—announced, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” And yet there is no record that Jesus ever touched a sword.

I have already published my interpretation of the difficult sayings in Luke 14:26 and Matt 10:34, in which I conclude that a few statements of Jesus were mistranslated when they went from Hebrew into Greek.¹ The clarity of Hebrew speech can readily be lost when, as was the custom, Hebrew spelling did not use vowels. In Luke 14:26 the Hebrew word שָׂם /
HALO, meaning “to forsake” was misread as the word “to hate.” In Matt 10:34, סְלָלֶה “end” was misread as “Shalom”; and the word חֲלָלָה “change” was misread as “sword.” In this study, using the same philological methodology, I focus on the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1–13, giving primary attention to verses:8 and 9.

Gächter (1950: 121) rightly noted with reference to the parable of the unjust steward (ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς ἀδικίας) in Luke 16:1–13 that “this parable until now is still a crux interpretum, and much more a crux praedicantium. Twenty-five years later Topel (1975: 216) similarly noted,

The literature dealing with the parable of the unjust steward is staggering, and after all the effort expended, its meaning still eludes us. Indeed, more than any other parable it can be expected to keep its mystery for future generations of exegetes, for it bristles with difficulties.

But a few years earlier Fletcher (1969: 19, 24) rightly narrowed the problems down to just one verse: V[erse] 9 is the real crux interpretationis of the parable. . . The saying is so difficult that there seems to be no disposition on the part of interpreters to question its authenticity; presumably nothing so obscure would have been introduced into the tradition and erroneously attributed to Jesus. It must have been spoken by the Master himself. . . . Does Jesus actually mean to counsel one to use money to make friends in order in some way to assure one’s admission to a heavenly dwelling? [italics added]

The answer to Fletcher’s question is an emphatic “No!” and this study, focusing on Luke 16:8–9, presents the reasons for my coming to this conclusion. First, a look at Luke 16:8.
Luke 16:8

καὶ ἐπήνεσεν ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἁδικίας
ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν.
ὅτι οἱ γιοί τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμότεροι ὑπὲρ
tοὺς γιούς τοῦ φωτὸς
εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἑαυτῶν εἰσιν.

And the lord commended the unrighteous steward
that he did prudently,
because the sons of this age are more prudent
than the sons of the light,
in respect to their generation.

Vulgate

et laudavit dominus vilicum iniquitatis
quia prudenter fecisset
quia filii huius saeculi prudentiores filiis lucis
in generatione sua sunt

Peshiṭta Transliterated

_website_ omalat े े े े े े े
_बन्नी बन्नी नागा नागा नाम_ नाम नाम नाम नाम
_म_ मम मम मम मम मम नाम नाम

Peshiṭta

_website_ के , नम_के , नम_के , नम_के , नम_के , नम_के , नम_के , नम_के
_बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी बन्नी
_म_ मम मम मम मम मम मम मम मम_मम
OF TWO HEBREW WORDS

Lamsa
And the lord praised the unjust steward
because he had done wisely;
for the children of this world are wiser
in their generation than the children of light.

Plummer (1922: 380–381) noted with reference to the early contradictory allegorical interpretations (which identified the steward variously with the Jewish hierarchy, publicans, penitents, Paul, Pilate, Judas, Satan, or Jesus) that “A catalogue of even the chief suggestions would serve no useful purpose . . . The literature on the subject is voluminous and unrepaying.” Landry and May (2000: 287–288) expressed a similar sentiment: “This parable has spawned a wide variety of interpretations, although none has produced anything resembling a scholarly consensus. . . it would not be wise to provide a comprehensive review of the literature. . . .” Therefore they discussed only “the most popular and the most recent solutions to the puzzle of the Unjust Steward,” as they presented the following interpretation of Luke 16:1–8a, with no mention of the real crux interpretationis in Luke 16:9.

[The unjust steward] tries to get himself out of trouble by restoring his master’s honor and salvaging his reputation as a good, loyal steward. He forgives a portion of the amount owed by his master’s debtors. People would assume that the steward was acting on the master’s orders, so these gestures would make the master look generous and charitable in the eyes of society. The prestige and honor gained by such benefaction would far outweigh the monetary loss to the master. The master hears what the steward has done and praises him for his actions since his honor has been restored. Moreover, the steward is now in a position either to keep his
position with this master or to secure one elsewhere, since his reputation for loyalty and good service has been recovered.

Thus, like the steward of the parable, Landry and May can be praised (ἐπαινέω) for their astuteness (φρονιμός) in suggesting indirectly that we take our text (γράμματα) of 16:8 and change the negative ἁδικίας to the affirmative δικαιίας “faithful.” Thus interpreted, Jesus presented this fictitious character as a model for his disciples to emulate, for through his cleverness he had come up with a win-win solution to his pending unemployment. The steward had been “unrighteous” in the squandering his lord’s possessions; but he had redeemed himself and become praiseworthy through a manipulation of his lord’s assets to his personal advantage and benefit to others.

Mann (1992:34–35), who thought the “lord” in the parable referred to Jesus, suggested that the ΑΛΙΚΙΑΣ “experience/expertise” in the original uncial text of Luke 16:8 was misread as ΑΔΙΚΙΑΣ “unjust.” For Mann Jesus was commending the prudent and experienced manager because he acted wisely in the face of a situation that was beyond his control. (But Matthewson [1995: 34–37] faulted Mann’s “guesswork” as a hypothetical textual error for which there is no evidence.)

**THE REAL CRUX INTERPRETATIONIS**

**Luke 16:9**

Καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἐαυτοῖς ποιῆσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἁδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλήρῃ δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνὰς.
RSV
And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

Vulgate
Et ego vobis dico facite vobis amicos de mamona inquitatis ut cum defeceritis recipiant vos in aeterna tabernacula.

DRA
And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity: that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Peshiṭta
אַחַי אֲנָא אֲמַר אֲנָא לֶבַן דַעְבַּר לֵבַן רַחֲמָא
מִנָּא מְמוֹרָא הָנָא דַעֲלוָא
דָּרָא דָּנָא נַכְסַלְנוּן חָמָלְיוֹתָן דַעֲלוָא
And I also am saying unto you, make for yourselves friends from this unrighteous mammon, so that when it is gone they will receive you into their everlasting tabernacles.

Although Landry and May translated the ὁ μαμωνᾶς τῆς ἀδικίας “the mammon of unrighteousness” in Luke 16:9 as
“dishonest wealth” or “ill-gotten gains,” they omitted the word ἀδικίας in their commentary, stating simply “It is indeed a shrewd use of wealth where everyone wins, and Luke has no problem showing Jesus enjoining his followers to be so clever.” This omission of ἀδικίας followed the same omission by Gäther (1950: 131) who stated “Jesus brings home to his disciples how they should detach themselves from riches, apply it to their brethren in need, and thus secure for themselves an eternal reward.”

Although Fletcher (1963: 28) had recognized ὁ μαμώνα/τής ἀδικίας “the mammon of unrighteousness” as a “scornful Semitism,” other authors when commenting on Luke 16:9 interpreted the text as if the τής ἀδικίας “the unrighteous” were not there or was not to be taken literally. For example, Fitzmyer (1964: 41) commented on the phrase “make friends with the wealth of dishonesty” to mean:

Use prudently the wealth that you have to insure your status when the eschaton arrives. It does not mean that Christians are to make use of ill-gotten gain; the expression is pejorative and expresses only the tendency of wealth as such.”

Topel (1975: 220), in his following statement, appears to be comfortable in making the mammon of iniquity the equivalent of “riches” and “money” in general:

Thus Luke means by the parable that the unjust man can show the Christian how to use riches to help the poor and so gain God’s favor. Now this focus on the use of money is probably the reason for the adjoining verses on the mammon of iniquity, and so the proper use of money is an important part of the Lucan version of the parable.

Parrott (1991: 560), citing Jeremias (1963: 46, n. 86), stated:
Unrighteousness mammon presumably does not mean here ill-gotten gains, since it is impossible to believe that thievery is being recommended. More likely the master’s goods . . . are interpreted as representing any worldly goods . . . one’s possessions.

So also DeSilva (1993: 255) paraphrased ὁ μεμωνᾶς τής ἀδικίας as “material wealth” in his introductory statement:

The hermeneutical move, as it were, centers on the expedient use of material wealth, and moves from the steward’s context of remitting debts to the context of using wealth to benefit the disenfranchised members of the community and society.

Likewise, Matthewson (1995: 33–34), omitted or paraphrased the τής ἀδικίας when he concluded:

Yet the parable as it stands in its present redactional context concerns the wise use of possessions . . . the “sons of light reflect prudence in the use of worldly possessions . . . one’s use of worldly possessions is an effective test of one’s ability to handle eternal reward because it reveals where ultimate loyalties lie (v. 13). A disciple cannot render loyalty to mammon and at the same time give to God the exclusive loyalty that he deserves.

The omissions of the τής ἀδικίας or paraphrases of it as “material” or “worldly” (so translated in the NIV and NLT) are indirect responses to questions raised by many, including Gächter (1950:121, 123), who asked, “How can Jesus make villainy an example for his followers?” and “Did Jesus, who otherwise knew so well how to speak to the hearts of men, really propose a parable which necessarily strikes one as touching on what according to all standards of morals is wrong?” (italics mine)
This is the crux! A straightforward and simple translation of the Greek ἐαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας has Jesus commanding the disciples to make friends for themselves from:

- the mammon of unrighteousness (KJV, ASV, NAS, YLT)
- unrighteous mammon (RSV)
- mammon of iniquity (DRA)
- wealth of unrighteousness (NAU)
- dishonest wealth (NAB, NRS).

That is what comes from the Greek. But did Jesus teach this parable in Greek? Probably not! Torrey (1933: 157, 311) argued that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and that some of the Aramaic quotations were misunderstood when translated into Greek. Assuming that an initial interrogative particle was lost in translation from Aramaic to Greek, Torrey restored the particle, thereby removing the difficulties in Luke 16:8–9 by making Jesus’ statements into these questions: “Did the lord of the estate praise his faithless manager? . . . and do I say to you . . . ?” The anticipated answer would have been in the negative. Parrott (1991: 513, n. 50) favorably cited Torrey’s Aramaic reconstruction, and suggested that parable could have been a “parable of preparation,” in which case the proposed question in 16:8a could have been answered in the affirmative. However, most scholars have ignored Torrey’s proposals about an Aramaic original having an interrogative particle which was lost in transmission or translation.

Nevertheless, many critics recognize “Semitic” elements in the parable in which the Aramaic ממון (mammon) is the most conspicuous. Fletcher (1963: 28, 30) noted the “scornful Semitism” and a “Semitic aphorism”; Williams (1964: 296) recognized the “Semitic type parable”;
Hiers (1972: 32) spoke of the “Semitic genitive construct”; Topel (1975: 218) also recognized a “Semitic construct state”; Ireland (1992: 97) identified the της ἀδικίας “as an instance of the so-called Hebrew genitive”; and DeSilva (1993: 264–265) noted the “Semitic counterparts” and “simple Semitisms.”

But, aside from Torrey’s working with the Aramaic, no one that I am aware of has offered a reconstruction of the Hebrew Vorlage of Luke 16:9—although the Hebrew translations by Salkinson-Ginsburg, Delitzsch, and others—as well as the Aramaic Peshitta cited above—are readily available. Certainly Jesus, as an itinerant teacher (ἀδελφοὶ, ἀδελφοῖς), may have taught the multitudes in Aramaic or Greek. But as an honored Rabbi / Rabban (Ῥαββί / Ραββουν = רבי) Jesus surely taught his disciples using Hebrew—just as the “Teacher of Righteousness” at Qumran taught the “sons of light” using Hebrew. It is inconceivable that Sadducees, and Pharisees would have taken Jesus seriously if he and his disciples handled Torah and Halakah only in Aramaic.

The solution to the crux of Luke 16:9 becomes obvious once an unverifiable but logical reconstruction of the Hebrew Vorlage of the verse is made. Thus I offer this reconstruction of the Hebrew Vorlage—the unvocalized text with ambiguities and a vocalized text which removes of those ambiguities:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{εὐαγγελίζετε} & \text{ ἰδιώτες, ἵνα ἔχετε ἀδελφούς ὑμῶν} \\
\text{εὐαγγελίζετε} & \text{ ἰδιώτες, ἵνα ἔχετε ἀδελφούς ὑμῶν} \\
\text{εὐαγγελίζετε} & \text{ ἰδιώτες, ἵνα ἔχετε ἀδελφούς ὑμῶν} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The intensive reflexive Hithpa’el ἀδελφούς ἰδιώτες matches the ἐαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους “make friends for yourselves,” the
same form found in Prov 22:24, where the negative imperative "do not make companionship" (BDB 945) was translated as μὴ ἱσσοῦ ἐπαίρος “be not a friend.” But the (spelled with a *qames* under the ר over against ר) may have had another meaning. Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic list three stems spelled רְעִהּ:

- **Stem I**, רְעִהּ, “to pasture, to tend, to graze.” Its Arabic cognate is رعى (ra‘aya).
- **Stem II**, רְעִהּ, “to associate with, to cherish, to make a friend.” Its Arabic cognates are راعى (rāʿī) “master, owner” and مرياغ (miryāq) “companion,” which equals the Hebrew רְעִה “friend, companion.”
- **Stem III**, the Aramaic רְעִהּ, “to desire.” Its Arabic cognate is رضى (raṣaya) and its Hebrew cognate is רעִה (BDB 945–946; Jastrow 1903: 1486).

A fourth רְעִהּ needs to be added to the lexicons of Aramaic and Hebrew. It is the רְעִהּ which is the cognate of the Arabic رعا / رعا [ra‘wa / ra‘ā] meaning “he refrained from things or affairs, he forebore, or he abstained from bad or foul conduct” (Lane 1867: 1108; Wehr 1979: 401). This cognate was cited by Castell (1669: 3613) as meaning “abstinuit ab aliqua re”). This verb, רְעִהּ stem IV “to abstain from, to refrain from” (not רְעִהּ stem II “to make friends”) would have been the verb which Jesus used and found its way into the Hebrew Vorlage of Luke 16:9. Consequently, the first half of the verse, רְעִהּ אָמַר לָהֶם הַהֹרָשָׁה מֵהַפְּרוֹמָה הָעָוָל, actually meant:
OF TWO HEBREW WORDS

“But I say unto you ‘Abstain yourselves from unrighteous mammon!’”

In the parable the unjust steward was praised by his master for the clever use he made in the acquisition, dispersion, and distribution of unrighteous mammon, even though it was at the master’s own expense. The first point Jesus made in the application of the parable was his own recognition that “the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light” (NIB 16:8). The second point Jesus made in his application of the parable was his injunction: “Abstain yourselves from (such) unrighteous mammon!”

Shrewd, clever or crafty acquisition, dispersion, and distribution of unrighteous mammon was not to be a practice among the children of light. It was just that simple. For “whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” and “if then with the unrighteous mammon you have not been faithful, who will trust you with that which is true?” (Luke 16:10–11). Once the imperative וּמַרְתָּן in the Vorlage of 16:9a is recognized as וּמַרְתָּן stem IV everything in the parable fits together perfectly, even down to theʾek in the phraseʾek τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, “[abstain] from unrighteous mammon.”

Luke’s misunderstanding of the proper derivation of the imperative וּמַרְתָּן in the Hebrew source he was using is understandable in light of the fact that וּמַרְתָּן stem IV “to abstain from” was as rare as וּמַרְתָּן stem II “to make friends” was common. Even if Luke had had access to our current Hebrew lexicons they would have been of no help with this hapax legomenon. The notorious ambiguity of Hebrew homographs can be blamed for Luke’s first misreading of what he saw in his unpointed Hebrew source.
This appeal to an Arabic cognate to establish the existence of \( \text{صلاة} \) stem IV “to abstain” in Jesus’ vocabulary receives indirect support from the way in which the Arabic \( (\mathit{sadaqat}) \) “alms, charity” (Lane 1872 1668) matches the use of \( \text{צדקה} \) “alms, charity” in Hebrew (Jastrow 1903: 1264). In the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew \( \text{צדקה} \) translates the \( \text{عَدَد} \) “alms” in Matt 6:1–4, which matches the Arabic \( (\mathit{sadaqat}) \) “alms.” The opposite of \( \text{مَلَامَة} \) “unrighteous wealth” would be \( \text{مَلَامَة} \) “honest wealth.” Changing the masculine \( \text{مَلَامَة} \) into the feminine changes the phrase into \( \text{مَلَامَة} \) “mammon of charity,” with the \( \text{مَلَامَة} \) meaning “liberality,” especially with reference to alms and almsgiving.

Luke’s second misreading involved Jesus’ use of \( \text{לֶבֶן} \) stem I “to forsake, to abandon” which was a homograph to \( \text{לֶבֶן} \) stem II “to restore, to renew.” The translators of the Septuagint and Vulgate were unaware of \( \text{לֶבֶן} \) stem II—just as Luke was unaware of \( \text{לֶבֶן} \) stem IV, “to abstain.” In the MT of Neh 3:8 is the phrase \( \text{חֲבֵרוּתֵן} \) meaning “they restored Jerusalem,” which is the translation found in the NIV, NIB, NAS, NAU, NAB, and RSV, with the KJV, NKJ, and ASV having “they fortified Jerusalem.” However, the Septuagint (contrary to historical fact) reads \( \text{καὶ κατέλιπον Ιερουσαλήμ} \) “and they abandoned Jerusalem.” Similarly, the Vulgate reads \( \text{et dimiserunt Hierusalem} \), which became “and they left Jerusalem” in the Douay Rheims. Jastrow (1903: 1060–1061) does not cite this \( \text{hapax legomenon} \) \( \text{לֶבֶן} \) stem II in Neh 3:8, although it was cited by Castell (1669: 2714) and defined by him as \( \text{erexerunt, instaurarunt, roborarunt} \) (erect, restore, reinforce).
But Luke’s second misreading had nothing to do with stem I and stem II. Rather it was his misreading in the Vorlage the Niph‘al passive יִנֵּלֵז ( = יִנֵּלִז ) “it will be forsaken” as the Qal active יִנֵּלֵז “it will fail” ( = ἐκλείπει ). Either way, the subject of the verb was the unrighteous mammon from which the children of light must abstain.12

With Luke’s two misreadings now identified, the Vorlage, in 16:9b can be translated as “and when [the unrighteous mammon] is forsaken they will welcome you into the eternal tents.”

Thus, in Luke 16:9 according to a Hebrew Vorlage, Jesus probably said:

“But I say unto you ‘Abstain/restrain yourselves from unrighteous mammon!’
And when it is forsaken/abandoned they will welcome you into the eternal dwellings.”

These words echo the admonition in I Enoch 104:6, “Now fear not, righteous ones, when you see the sinners waxing strong and prospering; do not be partners with them, but keep far away from all their injustice.” The Greek text of Luke 16:9 —under the influence הָרַע stem II “to make a friend”— has Jesus repudiating this admonition of I Enoch; whereas the Vorlage with its הָרַע stem IV “to abstain, refrain” has Jesus confirming the stated prohibitions.

Those who would welcome (δέξεται γνωριματι = רע) those abstaining from unrighteous mammon would be heavenly angels such as those present at the empty tomb upon Jesus resurrection. I Enoch 104:1–2 provides a good commentary for this
identification.

I swear unto you that in heaven the angels will remember you for good before the glory of the Great One; and your names shall be written before the glory of the Great One. . . . But now you shall shine like the lights of heaven, and you shall be seen; and the windows of heaven shall be open to you.

CONCLUSION

When Luke misread in a Hebrew Vorlage of the parable of the unjust steward the passive verb יועב “it will be forsaken” as the active verb יועב “it will fail” he compounded the problem of his having also misread in the same verse the verb הרים as if it were from the well attested stem רעה “to be a friend” rather than the hapax legomenon of the verb רעה “to abstain.” As a result Jesus is quoted as saying enigmatically “make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.” Reconstructing the Hebrew Vorlage with these two corrections in mind the text probably read

"But I say unto you ‘Abstain yourselves from unrighteous mammon!
And when it is forsaken they will welcome you into the eternal dwellings.”

With this reconstruction and interpretation, Jesus’ application of the parable fits perfectly with Luke 16:10–13. The declaration “you cannot serve God and mammon” (οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνα), read as an injunction, means
“Serve God! Master mammon!” The disciples as children of light are to repudiate the mammon of unrighteousness. They are to control their legitimate wealth, their honest assets so that their mammon becomes charitable resources for alms.” This interpretation resonates well with Matt 6:19–20, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” I Tim 6:9–12 would be an excellent application of this parable if its Hebrew Vorlage approximated what has been proposed above,

... those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

NOTES


2. Note how Fletcher reduced the τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας “unrighteous mammon” to the one word “money.” See below pp. 6–8.

3. Kissinger in his Parables of Jesus (1979: 398–408) provided a bibliography of one hundred thirty-three titles dealing directly with just this parable. Ireland has provided the best

4. The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation reads:

נישבתי האורון אתריכו חטיה לה סלקס
אשר שלח אתרמשה
כי בני הערלים הזה משיכים הם
מלע בני הארץ בדורות:

Full text is available online at http://www.dvar-adonai.org/.

5. The Delitzsch translation has:

נישבתי האורון אתריכו חטיה
על־אשר חרבו לשלשה
כי בני הערלים הזהetroitים הם בדורות
מלע בן האור בדורות:

Full text online at http://www.kirjasilta.net/ha-berit/ Luq.16.html.

6. The imperative הhasOne can be vocalized in two different ways:

- as ה혼, with the short *patah* under the ל because the following י cannot take the *dagesh* which doubles the middle letter of the stem in the *Hithpa‘el*. The י of this
would have what the Hebrew grammarians call an “implicit dagesh,” with the patah theoretically being in a closed syllable;

- as הָיָה, with the long qames under the ר for compensatory lengthening of the vowel because the following ל cannot take the dagesh and the vowel under the ר is in an open syllable.

The quantitative length of the vowel in speech (ā, a, or ā) would preclude any ambiguity about the meaning; but once the words were written without vowels unintentional ambiguity was inevitable.

7. Sometimes the verb הָיָה stem I “to be evil, bad,” was confused with the verb הָיָה stem II, as in Prov 18:24, where the MT נָשַׁעְתֵּךְ became in the KJV “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly“ (as though the text were the Hithpa‘el infinitive הָיָה הָיָה וְהָיָה of הָיָה stem II). But by identifying the נָשַׁעְתֵּךְ as the Hithpa‘el infinitive of נָשַׁעְתֵּךְ stem II “to break” the ASV reads “He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction.” The NIV and NIB read similarly, “A man of many companions may come to ruin.”

8. On the relationship of the ל verbs to the נ verbs, see GKC §75a.

LUKE’S MISREADING IN 16:9

10. Note that in Arabic صَدَاقة (ṣadāqat) means “love, affection” and صَدِيق (ṣadiq) means “a sincere and true friend” (Lane 1872:1668).

11. Compare the difference of the English word refrain when it is a noun and when it is a verb.

12. In the Septuagint λείπειν translated just two Hebrew words, but ἐκλειπεῖν translated forty-seven different Hebrew words, and γαρτερεῖν translated fifteen different words. Given these options for constructing the Vorlage, the root לֵב became the verb of choice in light of the Septuagint ἔλεβε “was abandoned” (= γαρτερεῖνφθη) in Jer 4:29 and the יִנָּה “it will cease” (= ἐκλειπεῖνψουςεν) in Jer 18:14.


The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation of the same text has

See notes 4 and 5 for the internet addresses for the full text of these translations online.
SUMMARY

In the twenty-eight chapters above over seventy problematic words found in more than sixty different verses have been given a new interpretation. Only a few of the problematic words involved scribal errors, such as the confusion of a ר and a נ, a ד and a נ, or a ב and a ב. There was just one example of haplography involving the loss of a ב. Otherwise emendation of the text was unnecessary in the determination of a contextually appropriate meaning. The primary basis for a new translation was provided by Arabic cognates of the Hebrew word under investigation. In summary, the following list contains the texts, the Hebrew word(s) investigated, and the proposed new translation based upon an Arabic cognate.

Gen 2:1  רכבלא “they were perfected”

Gen 2:2  רכבלא אלהים “and God was fatigued”

Gen 2:23  לשחנה “to sustain life”

Gen 6:3  השם ההמה ביטל “humans are into skull bashing”

Gen 6:4  insanee hashem “men of violence”

Gen 8:11  עלה דרי פרות “fresh olive leaf”

Gen 16:10  גרה אלם “peacemaker, reconciler”

Gen 39:6  להראות אתו כל מה “he would indeed entrust to him whatever”

Deut 26:5 رامי אבור אבר “a prolific Aramean was my father”
SUMMARY

Num 20:7 "make channels up to the rock with their help"

Num 20:10 "Please listen! Behold, O water carriers!"

Num 24:7 LXX Vorlage) “there shall come a man from his seed and he shall rule over many nations”

Num 24:17 “a comet [i.e., a star having lank hair] shall arise”

Josh 24:10 “I was indeed willing to listen to Balaam”

II Sam 12:13 “I have sinned against Yahweh, but I have shown myself to be repentant”

I Chr 4:9 “and Jabez was more afflicted than his brethren”

I Chr 4:9 “she call his name Preemie”

I Chr 4:10 “Ah, Please! Would that you truly bless me”

I Chr 4:10 “increase my people”

Psa 8:2 “you ordained strength” read as in the LXX Vorlage = κατηρτίσω αἶνον “you have perfected praise”

Psa 19:5 “verily, in the skies
“the scorching sun shines!”

Psa 19:6  “he comes out like a fire-carrier from his canopy”

Psa 40:2  “he drew me up from the burial plot”

Psa 40:2  “who does not turn to skeptics nor misleading myth”

Psa 40:6  “ears you dug for me” became “you have freed me of faults”

Psa 40:7  “then he said ‘Behold I confessed [sin]’

Psa 109:23  “like a fading shadow I became worn out”

Psa 109:31  “to save from the ones pursuing my soul”

Pro 30:31  “and a king governing / demagoguing a tribe of his people”

Pro 31:1  “Prosper, my son! Flourish, son of my womb! Thrive, son of my vows!”

Pro 31:3  “give not your strength to women”

Pro 31:3  “nor your acquisitions to (women) who deceive kings”
Pro 31:8  יָלִים = ָֽיִלֶּם  “kith-and-kin”
Pro 31:8  שָׁלוֹם-בֵּנוֹ-חָלְתָּה  “all the sons of the covenant”
Pro 31:8  רְאִי  שְׁלוֹם-בֵּנוֹ-חָלְתָּה  “judge all of the sons of the rich”
Pro 31:10  אֶשְׁתָּר עָלָּי  “a woman of power” or “a woman of intellect” or “a generous woman”
Pro 31:11  שָׁלַל לָא  וּרְכָּר  “he will not lack a son”
Pro 31:15  מְדִינָתָהּ יָכַֽתְשׁוֹת לֵבְתָּה  “she gave quality food to her household”
Pro 31:30  מְשַׁלֵּף “infidelity is deceitful”
Isa 8:6  לְמַשָּׁהֲךָ (לְמַשָּׁהֲךָ הַמַּשָּׁהֲךָ)  “barely visible”
Isa 8:8  רִיְמָה מִפְּתוֹת מֵפְּתָיו מַלַּא רַחְבּ-אֹמְרֵךְ  “and his camp shall thus fill the breadth of thy land” (LXX)
Isa 8:9  רֻגְנֵי עֵמִים רָחָה “tremble with fear, O nations, and be terrified”
Isa 8:14  מִקְרָשָה מִקְרָשָה  “oppressor, grief-maker”
Isa 53:9  גָּפְרָה/עָשָּׁר  “vile, ignoble”
Jer 20:7  פָּשִּׁיתָנִי, רוֹדָה רֵאָתָה  “O Yahweh, you told me of the fiat (fatwa) and I was informed of the decree (fatwa)”
Jer 20:7  חֶסְדִּיתָנִי  “you made me eloquent”
Jer 20:7  דַּחֲכֵל  “and you entrusted”
SUMMARY

Jer 20:10  "an incurable weariness is my recompense; my being on guard is my undoing"

Jer 38:31  "I was disgusted with them"

Ezekiel (passim)  "son of reconciliation" = "the reconciler" or "the son of authority" = "the One with Authority," and מַעֲלֹמִים = "the Son of the Soverign"

Eze 20:25  "I gave them statutes that were indeed good"

Eze 20:25  "and ordinances by which they could indeed have life."

Eze 38:21  "and against him I have called for annihilation, demolition, desolation"

Micah 5:1  "insignificant Bethlehem" or "preeminent Bethlehem"

Hab 2:3  "for a vision was promised to the protestant"

Hab 2:3  "its intent would be understood by the preacher"

Hab 2:3  "so that the one reading it may be disciplined!"
SUMMARY

Hab 2:4  נפלת ל׳א-ירשיה ימushman בּוּ_corrected to נפלת ל׳א-ירשיה ימushman בּוּ “his unrighteous soul was cut off [from life]”

Hab 2:5  בִּבְוזר יְהוֹרָה נֵבֶר יְהוֹרָה_corrected to יְהוֹרָה נֵבֶר יְהוֹרָה “the strong man demolishes”

Hab 2:5  יְהוֹרָה נֵבֶר יְהוֹרָה_corrected to יְהוֹרָה נֵבֶר יְהוֹרָה “and cannot be sated”

Gospels (passim) ὁ γιὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the son of Man” =

(1) Βρὸς ἀνής = “the son of man” or “the Most Pure person” or (2) Βρὸς ἀλόμ = “son of man” or “the Concilator” or “One with Authority,” and Βρὸς ἀρὰμ = “the Son of the Soverign”

Matt 2:23 ἔνος Nazaret / Nazareth = “Hamlet”

ניֵצֶרי Nazarene = “Helper/Victor”

Matt 6:19 ὁποῦ σῆς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει = ΣΗΣ ἄλλοις καὶ ἀπάλοις “where the maggot and lice devour”

Matt 8:9 ἀναίρετος χώστα (Shem Tob Text) “and I am a provost, a commander”

Matt 21:9 ὅμος μισίς χορής (Shem Tob Text) “Please save, O Savior of the poor,” (2) whereas the ἀνυῖς of Succoth means “wave/mix branches,” and (3) the Aramaic ἀνῦῖς means “Cheers! Hooray! Hurrah!”

Matt 26:14 Ἰουδας Ἰσκαριώτης = Ἰουδάς Ἰσκαριώτης = “Judas the Lector”
Mark 3:17  Βωανηργής “shouters of thunder”

Mark 9:49  πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀληθῆσεται = Ἐξακοσιοί, ἡμᾶς “for everyone will be dragged through the muck”

Luke 19:9  ἔαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους “make friends for yourselves” translates ἡρων in the Vorlage, as if it were from ἡρων, stem II, but it was a hapax legomenon from ἡρων, stem IV, meaning “abstain yourselves.”

Rev 13:18  ἔξακοσιοι ἔξηκοντα ἔξ = (1) σωτῆρ “savior” or (2) σαλτρ = “knave, rogue.”
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