

PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

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

Most of the quotations in the epistle are rather straight forward from the Hebrew text or the Septuagint with only minor variations—as if they were quoted from memory—and are trouble free.² However, some of the author's allusions 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

- Pro 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.”

2 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

- Wisdom of Solomon 7:22, “For Wisdom [is] the fashioner of all things.”
- Wisdom of Soloon 8:4, “[Wisdom] glorifies her noble birth by living with God . . . she is an initiate in the knowledge 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 Hebrews 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 חָכְמָה / Σοφία (“Wisdom”) tradition into a masculine Λογός / Χριστός (“Word/Christ”) tradition, so the prologue in the Epistle to the Hebrew reflects the transformation of the חָכְמָה / Σοφία tradition into the υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ / Χριστός (“Son of God/Christ”) tradition. And, whereas Matthew appealed to the Greek text of Isaiah 7:14 for a prophecy of a virgin birth, the author of Hebrews appealed to the metaphor of adoption in Psalm 2, בְּנֵי אֲתָהּ אֲנִי הַיּוֹם, יְלִדְתִּיךָ “you are my son, today I have begotten you,” (which was a declaration of the divine origin and supremacy of the Israelite monarchy) to proclaim the reality of the “first born” Son of God who sat at “the right hand of Majesty on high”

and was superior to the angels.⁴ Moreover, to support this affirmation, the author appealed to the same metaphor in II Sam 7:14, אָנִי אֶהְיֶה־לוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן, “I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son”—disregarding the historical 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 (בְּמִעֵיךָ / κοιλίας 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.”

HEBREWS 1:6 AND DEUTERONOMY 32:43

הֲרַנִּינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ
 כִּי דָם־עַבְדָּיו יִקּוּם
 וְנָקָם יִשָּׁיב לְצָרָיו
 וְכִפֶּר אֲדָמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ:

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

The quotation in Heb 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”

4 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

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 text corresponds to the Hebrew text of Deut 32:43, and the underlined text matches the quotation in Heb 1:6.

Deut 32:43

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

Praise, ye heavens, with him, and let all the sons of God
worship him. **Rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people**, and let

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

Heb 1:6

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

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

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

וַיִּקַּח אֶת־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר
וְאֶת־קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרִקְנִים
וַיַּדַּע בָּהֶם אֶת אַנְשֵׁי סֻכּוֹת

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 ἠλόησεν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοὺς ἄνδρας 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 **וידע** “he knew/made known” was obviously read as **וידש** “he threshed,” which is contextually the pre-

6 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

ferred reading.⁶ A similar error occurred in the MT of Deut 32:43, where the $\text{הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ}$ “Praise, O Gentiles, his people,” was—in light of the Septuagintal variant—originally $\text{הַרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עַמּוֹ}$ “Praise, O heavens, his people” or “Praise, O heavens, with him.” This phrase became corrupted when the ש of שָׁמַיִם was read as an ע , and it became $\text{הַרְנִינוּ עַמּוֹיִם עַמּוֹ}$ “Praise, O peoples, his people.” The ambiguity of this $\text{הַרְנִינוּ עַמּוֹיִם עַמּוֹ}$ was reduced when גוֹיִם was substituted for the עַמּוֹיִם . This change, which survives in the MT $\text{הַרְנִינוּ עַמּוֹיִם גוֹיִם}$, would have been unnecessary had the original שָׁמַיִם not been misread as עַמּוֹיִם .

The Septuagint of Deut 32:43 has two doublets. The first one is (a) the $\epsilon\upsilon\phi\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\ \sigma\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$ (“Praise, O heavens, with him”), reflecting a *Vorlage* with $\text{הַרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עַמּוֹ}$, coupled with (b) the $\epsilon\upsilon\phi\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\theta\nu\eta\ \mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\alpha\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ (“Rejoice, O nations, with his people”), which reflects a *Vorlage* with $\text{הַרְנִינוּ עַמּוֹיִם עַם עַמּוֹ}$. The second doublet is (c) $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\rho\sigma\kappa\upsilon\nu\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\sigma\alpha\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \nu\iota\omicron\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ “and let all the sons of God worship him,” coupled with (d) $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\sigma\chi\upsilon\sigma\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\sigma\alpha\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ “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 $\text{שָׁמַיִם} / \sigma\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\omicron\iota$ “heavens” mentioned in the first doublet just cited. 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*—clenching the argument that the MT גוֹיִם was not original but a secondary clarification once שָׁמַיִם was misread as עַמּוֹיִם . 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 unrelated to the Hebrew text and context of the Song of Moses.

HEBREWS 1:8–9 AND PSALM 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 ךְ “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 αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, “your throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And many subsequent translators have followed the Greek texts of Psalms and Hebrews, which understood the אֱלֹהִים in the phrase כְּסֵאֶךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד to be the vocative “O God.” Thus, the כְּסֵאֶךָ “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 ךְ suffixes referring to the earthly king, it is most likely that the psalmist intended כְּסֵאֶךָ אֱלֹהִים to mean “your divine throne,” with the אֱלֹהִים used here as an adjective rather than as a vocative.⁷ This statement about Israel’s or Judah’s “divine throne” being “for ever and ever” reflects the same affirmation made in Psa 89:29, 35–37, “I will establish his line for ever . . . I will not lie to David. His line shall endure for ever, and his throne as long as the sun before me.”

8 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

The last phrase from Psalm 45 quoted in Heb 1:9^b, “God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (תְּבַרְיִי),” 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 Son; but the “your” suffix in the phrase “your God has anointed you” (1:9) has as its reference God the Father. And, whereas the תְּבַרְיִי “your fellows” in Psa 45:7 referred to fellow monarchs of the nations surrounding Israel and Judah, 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).

HEBREWS 2:7, 9 AND PSALM 8:5⁸

וַתִּקְטַן־הוּא מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ

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

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

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

Hebrews 2:7

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

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

The single word קָטַן “little” became translated into Greek with two words: βραχύ “short” and τι “some, somewhat, only,” both of which were used for space, status, or time. Thus translations differ as to whether the βραχύ τι meant “a little lower” (spacial/social status) or “a little while” (temporal). The Hebrew text of Psa 8:5 clearly means “you have made him [= Adam = human beings] *only a little lower than God*,” thereby affirming the very high social status of humans who were given dominion over the works of God’s hands, as stated also in Gen 1:26–28. But once the אֱלֹהִים “God” was read or interpreted here as בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים “the sons of God” or “angels,” then the βραχύ τι, which translated the קָטַן “a little lower” (with reference to status), was interpreted by some as “a little while.”

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

10 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

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.

HEBREWS 8:9^b AND JEREMIAH 31:32^b

The initial הִנֵּה “Behold!” (= ἰδοὺ) of Jer 31:31 is not found in Heb 8:8^b; and the הִנֵּה יְהוָה “oracle of Yahweh” (= φησὶν κύριος “says the Lord”) became in Heb 8:8–10 λέγει κύριος “declares the Lord.” The more significant differences in the verses below (highlighted in boldface) have a ready explanation.⁹

Jer 31:32

אֲשֶׁר־הִתַּמָּה הַפָּרוֹ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי
וְאֲנִכִּי בַעֲלֹתֵי בָם נִאֲסִיָּהוּהָ:

. . . 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.

Jer 38:31 (LXX)

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

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

Heb 8:9^b

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

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

The translation of **בְּעֵלְתֵּי בָם** in the Septuagint as ἡμέλησα “I disregarded” may reflect a *Vorlage* with **נִעַלְתִּי** “to loathe, to abhor,” rather than **בִּעַלְתִּי**. However, an emendation here is probably unnecessary. Hebrew **בִּעַל** had more than the one meaning recognized in current Hebrew lexicons. It may be a homograph of the two meanings attested for the Arabic **بعل** (*ba^cala*): (1) “he became a husband, or lord, or master,” with its noun **بعل** (*ba^cl*) “husband, lord, master, owner,” and (2) “he became confounded or perplexed, he was disgusted,” with its participle **بعل** (*ba^cil*) “confounded, perplexed” (Lane 1: 228). The translation of **בִּעַל** into Greek as ἡμέλησα “disregarded” makes sense once the second definition of the cognate **بعل** (*ba^cala*) comes into focus. Instead of interpreting **בְּעֵלְתֵּי בָם** as “I was their husband,” the context, the versions,¹⁰ and cognates 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 Masoretic text in favor of the Septuagint. The texts to be compare include

כִּי עוֹד חָזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד
וַיִּפֶחַ לִקְצֵץ וְלֹא יִכְזֹב
אִם־יִתְמַהֲמַה חִפְּה־לוֹ
כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יֵאָחֵר:
הִנֵּה עֹפֵלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נִפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
וַיִּצְדִּיק בְּאִמּוֹנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה:

12 **PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS**

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 10: 37–38

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

For yet a little while

(= MT Hab 2:3^a)

the coming one shall come and shall not tarry;

(= MT Hab 2:3^d)

but my righteous one shall live by faith,

(= MT Hab 2:4^b)

and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.
 (= LXX Hab 2:4^a)

The MT עֹד is reflected in the first of the two ὅσον, meaning “a while”; and the לְמוֹעֵד “appointed time” was read as a poetic preposition and an adverb—לְמוֹ עֹד “for a while”—reflected by the second ὅσον. There is nothing in Heb 10:37 for the MT חִזּוֹן “vision.” Nor is there anything in 10:37 for the MT וַיַּפֵּחַ לְקֶץ וְלֹא יִכְזֹב אִם־יִתְמַמָּה חֶפְזָה־לוֹ and its translation in the Septuagint as καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν “it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it.”

The translation of the MT בּוֹ עֲפָלָה לֹא־יִשְׂרָה נִפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ has been very problematic for the following two reasons.

- The *pu^cal* עֲפָלָה “she became swollen” has been widely identified as a cognate of the Arabic عَفَل (*afal*) “tumor” and عَفَل (*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), “succumb” (NJB), “rash” (NAB), “proud [ones]” (NAS, NAV, NRS, NKJ), with the Vulgate’s having “*incredulus*.”
- The verb יִשְׂרָה is commonly identified as יָשַׁר “to be upright,” the cognate of Arabic يَسَّر (*yasara*) “to be gentle, to be easy”—which, with the modifier בְּעֵינַי, means “to be right in the eyes of,” i.e., “to be pleasing.” (BDB 448).

However, the MT עֲפָלָה should be corrected to עֲבָלָה, in agreement with the Septuagint’s ὑποστείλῃται and its quota-

14 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

tion in Heb 10:37. The Hebrew stem עבל, as understood by the Greek translators, is the cognate of Arabic عبل (*‘abala*) “he held back, he drew back, he withheld, he diverted, he was cut off [by death]” (Lane 5: 1941–1942; Hava 451).¹¹ With this definition in focus, the corrected MT עבלה לא־ישרה נפשו בו means “his unrighteous soul was cut off,” i.e., the unrighteous have been *cut off* [from life], but “the righteous shall *live* by faithfulness.” With this correction of עפלה to עבלה¹² and with insight from the cognate عبل (*‘abala*), the contrast between the fate of the *unrighteous* and the fate of the *righteous* is clear—the former *dies* and the latter *lives*.

The Greek translation (including the quotation in Heb 2:4) of the MT לא־ישרה נפשו בו as οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ “my soul has no pleasure in him,” reflects a *Vorlage* with לא שרה נפשי בו.¹³ The Greek translators did not have a text with the 3fs perfect ישרה “she was upright,” but a 3fs perfect of שר/שרר “to have pleasure.” This stem is the cognate of Arabic سر (*sar/surra*) “he rejoiced, was glad, happy, he experienced a pleasure, or delight.” (Lane 4:1337).¹⁴

HEBREWS 10:5–7 AND PSALM 40:6–8

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתִי
 אֲזִנִּים כְּרִיתִי לִי
 עוֹלָה וְחֹטְאָה לֹא שָׂאֵלָתִי:
 אֲזִ אֲמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאתִי
 בְּמִגְלַת־סֹפֶר כְּתוּב עָלַי:
 לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי חָפְצָתִי
 וְתוֹרַתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי:

PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS 15

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*.’”

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

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire;
but ears/body you prepared for me:
burnt-offering and sin offering you did not require.
Then I said, Behold, I come:
in the volume of the book it is written concerning me,
I desired to do your will, O my God,
and your law in the midst of my stomach.

Heb 10:5–7

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

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

16 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

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 לִי אֲזִנִּים כְּרִיתָ “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 אֶזְנוֹ “ear” (ὠτία) with עֲצָם “bone, body, self” (= ὀστέον or σῶμα; see especially Lam 4:7, אֲדָמוּ עֲצָם “they were ruddy in body”). If the original were עֲצָם = σῶμα = “body,” the verb may well have been כְּרִיתָ rather than the MT כְּרִיתָ. This כְּרִיתָ (from כָּרָה) would be the cognate of Arabic برأ / برى (*baraya*) “to cleanse, to restore the body;” as in the expression “He [God] restored him to convalescence from disease, sickness or malady”; and the noun باری (*bâri*^{um}) “recovering from disease, sickness, or malady, convalescent, healthy” (Lane 1: 178[form 4], 179; Hava 26). The Greek καταρτίσω “prepared” would translate Hebrew כּוּן “to prepare,” not the MT כָּרָה “to dig, to pierce.”

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

NOTES

1. Henry Shires (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 וְכֻלָּם כְּבִגְדֵי יִבְלוּ כְּלִבְוֹשׁ תִּחְלִיפֵם וְיִחַלְפוּ “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) ἱμάτιον translated כְּבִגְדֵי “garment” and περιβόλαιον translated לִבְוֹשׁ “raiment,” with the repeated use of חֲלַף “to change” matched by the repeated use of ἀλλάσσω “to change.” But in Heb 1:10 ἱμάτιον “garment” appears twice and περιβόλαιον “cloak” once; and the first ἀλλάσσω in the Septuagint became in the epistle ἐλίσσω “to roll up.”

3. James Moffatt (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 (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, צֹר יִלְדֶךָ תִּשִׁי וְתִשְׁכַּח אֱלֹהֵי לִדְךָ “(the) Rock that begot you you forgot, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.”

18 PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS

5. The fragment of the Song of Moses which was found in Qumran Cave 4, cited by Buchanan (1976: 15), reads, “Praise his people, O heavens.”

6. For other example of the confusion of ψ and ν , see Delitzsch (1920): 119, §131.

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

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

8. See the Addendum at the end of this study for an explanation of the difficulties underlying the various translations of Psalm 8:2.

9. 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 8:8^b *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."*

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

11. Lane (4: 1555 and 5: 1941) cited the expression عبلته عبول (‘abalathu ‘abûlu) and شعبته شعوب (ša‘abathu ša‘ûbu), both

20 **PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS**

meaning “*death separated him* from his companions.”

12. For the confusion of א and א, see Delitzsch (1920): 115, §118.

13. For the confusion of ו and ו, see Delitzsch (1920): 103–105.

14. Also noteworthy is سرور (*surûr*) “happiness, or joy, or gladness, . . . or dilatation of the bosom with delight or pleasure . . .” (Lane 4: 1339; KBS 4:1657). Although BDB (1057) recognized the Arabic cognate of Hebrew שָׂר “navel string” (= سر [surr]), the verb שָׂר and its cognates were not cited.

ADDENDUM

Matt 21:16–17 and Psa 8:2–3 (MT)

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 perfected 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 עִז “bulwark, strength” but עָן meaning αἶνον “praise,” matching the Vulgate’s *lauden*, reflecting the well attested confusion of ע and נ, especially when the sub-linear stroke of the נ was abbreviated so as to appear as a ע or

‡. Delitzsch (1920: 113 §112^d) cited among his examples of such confusion (1) Isa 44:14 having in the MT אֶרֶן, but two manuscripts listed by Kennicott have אֶרֶז; and (2) the *Qere* and *Kethib* in Psa 31:3 and 71:3, with the variants מְעוֹן “habitation” and מְעוֹז “stronghold.” The stems עָן and עָנָה “to praise” are cognates of Arabic غن (^c*an*) and غنّى (^c*anaya*) (Lane 6: 2293). In Neh 12:37, the וַעֲלֵ שַׁעַר הַעַיִן וְנִגְדָם “at the gate of the fountain, and before them” appears in the Septuagint as ἐπὶ πύλης τοῦ αἰνεῖν κατέναντι αὐτῶν ἀνέβησαν “at the gate in order to praise before them”—showing that the translators understood the הַעַיִן as a *Hiph^cil* of עָן “to praise.” (Contra Rahlfs [1935: 947] who emended the τοῦ αἰνεῖν to simply τοῦ αἰν, making it a partial transliteration of הַעַיִן “the fountain,” as found in Neh 2:14 where the τοῦ translated the הַ and the αἰν transliterated the עַיִן.)

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 עֲזָרָתָּ עָז of Psa 8:2 (MT 3^a) as “you ordained praise.” The NLT reads, for example, “*You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise. They silence your enemies who were seeking revenge.*” But, whether the original text had עֲזָרָתָּ “bulwark” or עָן “praise,” the problem remains of explaining how or when infantile voices ever did or could or would *destroy* (הַשְׁבִּית / καταλῦσαι) an enemy. Thus, the cluster of words as they stand in the MT of Psa 8:3 (MT) remains an enigma.

However, once the MT עֲזָרָתָּ is corrected to עָן “praise” (as found in the *Vorlage* used by the Greek translators), and the

PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS 23

last five Hebrew words Psa 8:3^c are recognized as a misplace phrase, clarity comes immediately. At one time the words of Psa 8:2^c, “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 8:3^c 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 8:3^c removes the insurmountable problem of explaining how babies or their infantile voices served as a defense against one’s foes or against God’s foes. With these corrections, Psa 8:3^a and 4^a can be read as

Out of the mouth of babies and nursing infants
you have perfected praise.
When I look at your heavens

This interpretation, which finds two errors in the MT—the original ׀ became corrupted to ׀, and the misplacement of five words from Psalm 7 into Psalm 8—concur with the texts of Matt 21:16 and the Septuagint text of Psa 8:3. It accounts for the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts and eliminates all questions about babies destroying either the (mythic) enemies of God or earthly avengers.

Other commentators have struggled to make sense out of these verses as they stand in the MT. For example, Charles Briggs (1906: 63) conjectured

24 **PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS**

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

More recent commentators have been more creative but not necessarily more convincing. Mitchell Dahood (1966: 48–50) reworked the MT $\text{אֲשֶׁר תִּנְהַ$ to read אֲשֶׁר־תִּנְהַ , a *Piel* of the root שׂרַת “to minister, to serve,” and by extending its meaning to “worship, adore” translated

I will adore your majesty above the heavens,
With the lips of striplings and sucklings.”
You built a fortress for your habitation,
having silenced your adversaries

He noted, “Before the majesty of God the psalmist can but babble like and infant”—thereby eliminating any real babies being involved in destroying enemies or praising God.

J. Alberto Soggin (1971: 571) followed Dahood (translating “. . . *Deine Pracht ich besingen möchte . . . stammelnd, wie Kinder und Säugling!*”) and further isolated the *infants* of 8:3^a from the *bulwark/strength* of 8:3^b by putting his translation of the last seven Hebrew words of 8:3 into a separate stanza set off by blank lines from the rest of the text.

Mark Smith (1997: 637) took an essentially the same approach as that of Dahood and Soggin and rendered the MT אֲשֶׁר תִּנְהַ as “let me celebrate,” as though it were אֲשֶׁר־תִּנְהַ . He translated Psa 8:2 as “Let me celebrate your splendor over the heavens. From the mouth of suckling babes you established a strong place. For your stronghold you indeed ended

the avenging enemy.”

However, despite the agreement of Smith and Soggin with Dahood’s changing the MT אֲשֶׁר תִּנְהָה to אֲשֶׁר־תִּנְהָה, another interpretation is available. First, the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר refers back to “Yahweh our Lord,” not to the הוֹדֹדְךָ “your majesty” which follows it. Secondly, the verb תִּנְהָה is the cognate of Arabic verb *تنأ / تأن* (*tanna / tana^{ʿa}*) “he remained, he dwelled” and the noun *تأنى* (*tāni^ʿ*) “resident,” having overtones of being a *permanent* resident (Lane 2: 318; Wehr 118). This תִּנְהָה is the participle תִּנְהָה (= תוֹנֵה). Thirdly, the MT הוֹדֹדְךָ “your majesty” is not a direct object but an adverbial accusative. With these three points in focus, the corrected אֲשֶׁר תִּנְהָה הוֹדֹדְךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם means, “[O Yahweh, . . .] *who resides in your majesty above the heavens.*”

In summary, both Psalm 7 and Psalm 8 can be clarified once the verb תִּנְהָה “to dwell” is restored in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew and two scribal errors are recognized, namely, the error of misplacing five words into Psa 8:3 from Psa 7:6, and the misreading of of the original עַן “praise” as עֹז “strength.” With these correction, Psa 7:6 now reads

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.

Psa 8:2–3 must have once meant

O Yahweh, our God,
how excellent is your name in all the earth!

26 **PROBLEM QUOTATIONS IN HEBREWS**

Who resides in your majesty above the heavens!
Out of the mouth of babies and infants
you have perfected praise.

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