

**THE SEPTUAGINT
HAS THE CORRECT
TRANSLATION OF
EXODUS 21:22-23**

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When Nina Collins (1993: 290) concluded with reference to Exod 21:22 “Yet the verse as a whole fails to make sense” she was referring to the Hebrew Masoretic text of this verse and its many variant translation, not to the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Greek translation in the Septuagint (250 B.C. to 132 B.C.), a translation which makes perfect sense. Consider first the Masoretic text and its varied translations.

EXODUS 21:22–23 (MT)

וְכִי־יִנְצוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְנָגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה
וַיֵּצְאוּ יַלְדֶיהָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסְוֹן
עָנוּשׁ יַעֲנֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁית עָלָיו בֶּעַל הָאִשָּׁה
וְנָתַן בַּפְּלָלִים:
וְאִם־אֶסְוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנָתַתָּה נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ:

KJV

“If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*. And if *any mischief* follow, then thou shalt give life for life.”

PESHITTA

כִּי־יִנְצוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְנָגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה
וַיֵּצְאוּ יַלְדֶיהָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסְוֹן
עָנוּשׁ יַעֲנֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁית עָלָיו בֶּעַל הָאִשָּׁה
וְנָתַן בַּפְּלָלִים:
וְאִם־אֶסְוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנָתַתָּה נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ:

הם סאזעל מזה
 נפצא סלף נפצא

If two men quarrel, and strike
 a pregnant woman and her fetus (m. sg.) comes out,
 — it not become a calamity —
 he shall surely pay a fine
 such as the woman's husband will lay upon him;
 he shall pay as the judges determine.
But if it is a calamity, life in exchange for life¹

TARGUM ONKELOS²

נארי יצון גברין וימחון איתחא מעדינא
 ויפקון ולדתא ולא יהי מותא איתגבא יתגבי
 כמא דישיי עלוהי בעלה דאיתחא ויתין ממימר
 דיניא ואם מותא יתי ותייתין נפשא חלף נפשא:

ETHERIDGE'S TARGUM PARAPHRASE³

“If men when striving strike a woman with child, and cause her to miscarry, but not to lose her life, the fine on account of the infant which the husband of the woman shall lay upon him, he shall pay according to the sentence of the judges. But if death befall her, then thou shalt judge the life of the killer for the life of the woman.”

Once upon a time there were two distinctly different Hebrew words which were spelled consonantly as אסון. There was the well recognized אסון, cited in all the standard Hebrew lexicons,⁴ which was related to the Arabic أسى (*asaya*) “he grieved or mourned” (Lane, 1863: 61).⁵ There was also another אסון in the early Israelite and Alexandrian dialects of Hebrew which became lost in the later

Judean and Samaritan Hebrew dialects. This lost אָסוֹן was related to the Arabic *سوى* (*sawaya*) “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body” and “of regular build and growth” (Lane, 1872: 1478).⁶ This lost אָסוֹן — which was in the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Septuagint — has yet to be recognized by the Hebrew lexicographers.

In the KJV, cited above, the MT אָסוֹן became “mischief,” which appears also in the WEB and YLT. Other English translations include “harm” (ASV, RSV, NRS, NKJ, JPS), “further harm” (NJB), “injury” (NAB), “serious injury” (NIV, NIB), and “further injury” (NAS, NAB, NAU, NLT).

In the Targum, cited above, the MT אָסוֹן אֵינָהּ יְהִי מוֹתָא was translated as אֵינָהּ יְהִי מוֹתָא “and there is no death” [of the woman]. A similar interpretation appears in the Vulgate and DRA, which read:

Si rixati fuerint viri et percusserit quis mulierem praegnantem et abortivum quidem fecerit sed ipsa vixerit subiacebit damno quantum expetierit maritus mulieris et arbitri iudicarint. Sin autem mors eius fuerit subsecuta reddet animam pro anima..

“If men quarrel, and one strike a woman with child and she miscarry indeed, but live herself he shall be answerable for so much damage as the woman's husband shall require, and as arbiters shall award. But if her death ensue thereupon, he shall render life for life.”

Josephus (37 A.D. to 101 A.D.), in *Antiquities* 4: 278,⁷ also made the MT אָסוֹן אֵינָהּ יְהִי מוֹתָא apply to the mother, stating:

“He that kicks a pregnant woman, if the woman miscarry, shall be fined by the judges for having, by the destruction of the fruit of her womb, diminished the population, and a further sum shall be presented by him to the woman's husband. If she die by the blow, he shall also die, the law claiming sacrifice of life for life.”⁸

Similarly, the אָסוֹן which is related to the Arabic *أسى* (*asaya*) “he grieved, mourned”⁵ appears in Genesis 42:38,

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֶיכָרְד בְּנֵי עַמְכֶם כִּי־אָחִיו מָת
וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ נִשְׂאָר וּקְרָאתוֹ אָסוֹן בַּדֶּרֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכוּ־בָהּ וְהוֹרְדְתֶם אֶת־שִׁיבְתִי בִּיגוֹן שְׂאוּלָה:

KJV

“And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

TARGUM ONKELOS

“But he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone remains of his mother; and if death should befall him (וַיַּעֲרֵעֵינִיהָ מוֹתָא) in the way that you go you will bring down my age with mourning to the grave.”

SEPTUAGINT

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν οὐ καταβήσεται ὁ υἱός μου μεθ' ὑμῶν ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ ἀπέθανεν καὶ αὐτὸς μόνος καταλείπεται καὶ συμβήσεται αὐτὸν μαλακισθῆναι ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἢ ἂν πορεύησθε καὶ κατὰξετέ μου τὸ γῆρας μετὰ λύπης εἰς ἄδου.

BRENTON'S TRANSLATION

“But he said, My son shall not go down with you, because his brother is dead, and he only has been left; and *suppose* it shall come to pass that he is afflicted by the way by which you go, then you shall bring down my old age with sorrow to Hades.”

All of the above translations which read the אָסוֹן as אָסוֹן “mischief, harm, injury, death” can be recognized as extensions of the

basic meaning of the Hebrew lexeme which was related to the Arabic *أسى* (*ʿasaya*) “he grieved, mourned.”⁵ Even the *μαλακισ-θῆναι* “to be afflicted” in the Septuagint of Gen 42:38 can be so identified—as well as the *אָסוֹן* in Gen 42:4, *פֶּן יִקְרָאנוּ אָסוֹן*, γάρ μήποτε συμβῆ αὐτῷ μαλακία, “lest disease befall him,” and in Gen 44:29, *אָסוֹן וְקָרָהוּ*, καὶ συμβῆ αὐτῷ μαλακία, “lest disease befall him.” Even the *אָסוֹן* in the Hebrew text of Sirach 41:9 (which was published by Cowley and Neubauer⁹ can be related to the Arabic *أسى* (*ʿasaya*) “he grieved, mourned.”⁵ It reads as follows:

אם ת ידי אָסוֹן [ת]ולידו לאנחת
 [א]ם תכשלו לשמחת עולם ואם תמותו לקללה:

If [ye increase, it shall be into]
 the hands of bodily mishaps,
 and [if ye] begat, it will be for sighing”
 If ye stumble it will be for perpetual joy;
 and if ye die it shall be for a curse.¹⁰

However, the translation of the *אָסוֹן* in the Septuagint of Exodus 21:22–23 cannot be related to this *אָסוֹן* which is related to the Arabic *أسى* (*ʿasaya*) “he grieved, he mourned.”¹¹ The Septuagint translation of Exod 21:22–23 reads:

ἐὰν δὲ μάχωνται δύο ἄνδρες καὶ πατάξωσιν γυναῖκα ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσαν καὶ ἐξέλθῃ τὸ παιδίον αὐτῆς μὴ ἔξεικονισμένον ἐπιζήμιον ζημιωθήσεται καθότι ἂν ἐπιβάλῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ τῆς γυναικός δώσει μετὰ ἀξιώματος ἐὰν δὲ ἔξεικονισμένον ἦν δώσει ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς.

BRENTON’S TRANSLATION

“And if two men strive and smite a woman with child, and her child be born imperfectly formed, he shall be forced to pay a penalty: as the woman’s husband may lay upon him, he

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shall pay with a valuation. But if it be perfectly formed, he shall give life for life.”

In addition to the well recognized אָסוֹן which was related to the Arabic *أسى* (*asaya*) “he grieved, mourned,”⁵ there was, as noted above, also the word אָסוֹן which was related to the Arabic *سوى* (*sawaya*) “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body” and “of regular build and growth.”¹² This אָסוֹן is a perfect match for the Septuagint’s ἐξεικονισμένον, “to make like, to be perfectly/fully formed.”¹³ Thus the אָסוֹן in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint could have been read as אָסוֹן (*eswon*) or אָסוֹן (*eswan*) from the stem סוה — with (a) a prosthetic א,¹⁴ (b) an affixed ן,¹⁵ and (c) the ן of the אָסוֹן being a consonant rather than a vowel letter.¹⁶

Contra the MT plural וַיֵּצְאוּ יְלִדֶיהָ “and her children come out,” the Septuagint has the singular καὶ ἐξέλθη τὸ παιδίον αὐτῆς, “and her child came out,” which is in agreement with the Samaritan Pentateuch which has the singular וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדָּה. Once the singular וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדָּה “and her child came out” is in focus it becomes obvious that the subject of the masculine singular verb יהיה in the phrase וְלִדָּה וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדָּה (v. 22) and וְלִדָּה וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדָּה (v. 23) is the singular וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדָּה “her child,” permitting the following translation of these phrases: “. . . her child come out but *HE* is not fully formed, . . . but if *HE* is fully formed.” The masculine ילד/וֹלֵד “child” is obviously gender inclusive like the אָדָם “man” in Gen 1:27 and 5:2.

Simply by substituting the antecedent noun *child* for the pronoun *HE* the Septuagint text in 21:22–23 stipulated:

“And if two men strive and smite a woman with child, and her *CHILD BE NOT FULLY FORMED*, he shall be forced to pay a penalty as the woman's husband may lay upon him, he

shall pay what seems fitting. But if the *CHILD BE FULLY FORMED*, he shall give life for life.”

This law was so perfectly clear that Sprinkle (1993:247) well noted:

The penalty paid is assessed on the basis of the stage of the development of the dead fetus. The rationale for this view is that the later the stage of pregnancy, the more time has been lost to the woman, the greater the grief for the loss of a child, and the more difficult. This may have been the view of the LXX, which paraphrases **וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסּוֹן** as “imperfectly formed child” and translates **בְּפִלְלִים** “with valuation.” Furthermore, Speiser’s¹⁷ view gains credibility in that penalties for miscarriage actually do vary with the age of the dead fetus in the parallel ancient Hittite Law §17, which states, “If anyone causes a free woman to miscarry—if (it is) the 10th month, he shall give ten shekels of silver, if (it is) the 5th month, he shall give five shekels of silver and pledge his state as security.”¹⁸

A fetus aborted in an accidental miscarriage which is not fully formed—nor equal to an infant born prematurely—was to be treated as *property*.¹⁹ However, if the aborted fetus was fully formed—and equal to an infant born prematurely—it was to be treated as a *person*. A *property* which is accidentally destroyed called for a fine to be paid by the destroyer. But the *lex talionis* became applicable when a *person*—including a fully developed fetus—was accidentally injured or killed. Accordingly, in Mosaic law a woman’s fertilized egg or an imperfectly formed fetus was not considered to be a **נֶפֶשׁ**, a *person*.²⁰ Only a fetus that was **אֶסּוֹן / אֶסּוֹן** (*°eswon / °eswan*) “fully formed” was recognized as a **נֶפֶשׁ**, a *person*.²¹

Unfortunately the Septuagint translators were the only ones who recognized the rare *hapax legomenon* **אֶסּוֹן** (= **אֶסּוֹן / אֶסּוֹן**) “fully formed.” They did not confuse it with the well attested **אֶסּוֹן**. But the

rare $\text{סָוֶן} / \text{סָוֶן}$ never made it into the Masoretic or rabbinic texts nor the Hebrew lexicons.²² Instead every סָוֶן in Hebrew became סָוֶן , with its various translations cited above: “mischief, injury, harm, death, etc.”

However, Philo (20 B.C. to 40 A.D.) followed the Septuagint’s translation of סָוֶן as $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\epsilon\lambda\kappa\omicron\nu\lambda\omicron\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu$, “fully formed.” In his *Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*, xxiv 137,²³ he wrote:

And with respect to these matters the following law has been enacted with great beauty and propriety: “If while two men are fighting one should strike a woman who is great with child, and her child should come from her before it is completely formed, he shall be mulcted in a fine, according to what the husband of the woman shall impose on him, and he shall pay the fine deservedly. But if the child be fully formed, he shall pay life for life.” {35}. For it was not the same thing, to destroy a perfect and an imperfect work”

Similarly in *De Specialibus Legibus*, iii 108–109,²⁴ Philo wrote:

But if any one has a contest with a woman who is pregnant, and strike her a blow on her belly, and she miscarry, if the child which was conceived within her is still unfashioned and unformed, he shall be punished by a fine, both for the assault which he committed and also because he has prevented nature, who was fashioning and preparing that most excellent of all creatures, a human being, from bringing him into existence. But if the child which was conceived had assumed a distinct shape in all its parts, having received all its proper connective and distinctive qualities, he shall die; for such a creature as that is a man, whom he has slain while still in the workshop of nature, who had not thought it as yet a proper time to produce him to the light, but had kept him like a statue lying in a sculptor’s workshop, requiring nothing more than to be released and sent out into the world.²⁵

Other than being quoted by Philo the Septuagint translation of Exod 21:22–23 has not been taken seriously. For example Bernard Jackson (1973: 293) stated:

The LXX and Philo preserve the meaning of the original in that they take *aswn*, both in v. 22 and in v. 23, to refer to the child But if *aswn* refers to the foetus, does not Exod. xxi 23 indicate that causing a miscarriage was treated as homicide, and thus that legal personality was accorded the foetus? Once Exod. xxi 23 is freed from the context forced upon it by the addition of vv. 24–5, this phrase does not have to indicate the death penalty. . . . But though the MT uses *aswn* in reference to the foetus, it is impossible to read into it the LXX's distinction based on viability.²⁶

William Propp in his Anchor Bible Commentary, *Exodus 19–40* (2006), simply concluded, “this [translation of אָסוֹן as “fully formed.”] cannot be a straight rendering of a Hebrew *Vorlage*.” Having dismissed the Septuagint translation and being unaware of the rare *hapax legomenon* אָסוֹן/אֲסוֹן “fully formed,” Propp concluded that the Hebrew text is deliberately ambiguous, stating:

Something comes out of the pregnant woman. There are four possible outcomes: healthy mother and child, dead-or-injured mother and healthy child, healthy mother and dead-or-injured child, and dead-or-injured mother and child.

The Septuagint though is unambiguous: aborted the fetus may or may not be fully formed. Once its form was decided (be it אָסוֹן or אֲסוֹן לֹא) a penalty was fixed. If it was אָסוֹן “fully formed” the penalty was death (נָפֶשׁ תַּחַת נָפֶשׁ). If it was אֲסוֹן לֹא “not fully formed” the penalty was a fine.²⁷

CONCLUSION

The Septuagint translators understood correctly the meaning of Exod 21:22–23 which states quite clearly that a fully developed fetus was a person protected by the *lex talionis*, but a fetus which was not fully formed was not a person but was a property properly protected by the *lex pensationis*. The Hebrew dialect of the Septuagint translators in Alexandria included two words spelled **וְאִסָּו**, namely, (a) the **וְאִסָּו** which was translated as *μαλακία*, “affliction, disease” (Gen 42: 28) and (b) the **וְאִסָּו** / **וְאִסָּו** which was translated as *ἐξείκονιζομαι*, “to be fully formed” (Exod 21: 22–23) The word **וְאִסָּו** / **וְאִסָּו** / **וְאִסָּו** did not survive in the Judean and Samaritan Hebrew dialects.

Thanks to Septuagint translation of Exod 21:22–23 and the Arabic cognate *سوى* (*sawaya*), “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body,” the lost lexeme **וְאִסָּו** / **וְאִסָּו** has been recovered. Exod 21: 22–25 can be properly interpreted once the accuracy of the Septuagint translation is duly recognized. This old lost lexeme **וְאִסָּו** / **וְאִסָּו**, “fully formed / full-grown,” needs to be included in all the new commentaries of today and the Hebrew lexicons of tomorrow.²⁸

NOTES

1. For the Syriac terms **ܩܘܠܘܢܐ** “pregnant,” **ܥܘܠܘܢܐ** “fetus, embryo,” and **ܩܘܠܘܢܐ** “misfortune, calamity” see Payne Smith, pages. 42, 405, and 486, respectively. (Click on the page number.) Lamsa (1933) translate the phrase as “and yet no mischief follow.”
2. A. Berliner, *Targum Onkelos: Herausgegeben und Erläutert*. (Berlin: Gorzrlancyk, 1884).

3. J. W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel On the Pentateuch With The Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum From the Chaldee*. The **וְלֹא יָהִי מוֹתָא** “and there not be death” is paraphrased as “but not to lose her life,” and the **וְאִם יָהִי מוֹתָא** became “if death befall her.”

4. See *sub voce*: (a) Francis. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*; (b) David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*; and (c) Ludwig. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

5. [Click here to view Lane, 1863: 61, column 1.](#)

6. [Click here to view Lane, 1872: 1478, column 2.](#)

7. H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus*, Vol. IV [Loeb Classical Library], Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; London: Heinemann, 1967. This quotation from Josephus was also noted by Stanley Isser (1990: 33)

8. In light of all these varied translations it is not surprising that scholars like Nina Collins (1993: 290), as noted above, would conclude “Yet the verse [21:22] as a whole fails to make sense.” Note the statement of Bernard Jackson (1973: 292), “Exod. xxi 22 refers not to a miscarriage, but rather to a premature birth, a *Frühgeburt*, not a *Fehlgeburt* In fact, *aswn* did not originally refer to the mother, but to the child.” Compare the following opinion of Joe Sprinkle (1993: 253):

On the other hand, the case of the pregnant woman cannot be used to prove the humanity of the fetus either. Contrary to the exegesis common among certain anti-abortion Christian theologians, the most likely view is that the death of the fetus

is to be assumed throughout the entire case. It cannot be proven whether the formula "life for life" applies to the fetus since it occurs in the instance with יָדָאָה ("serious injury"), which deals exclusively with injuries to the mother. The wording of the case does not rule out the possibility that the fetus was considered subhuman.

9. A. E. Cowley and Ad. Neubauer, 1897. *The Original Hebrew of a Portion of Ecclesiasticus (xxxix. 15 to xlix. 11) Together with the Early Versions and an English Translation . . .* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 8 and 10.

10. The Greek text Sirach 41:9 is καὶ ἐὰν γεννηθῆτε εἰς κατάραν γεννηθήσεσθε καὶ ἐὰν ἀποθάνητε εἰς κατάραν μερισθήσεσθέ, "when you were born, you were born to be accursed, and when you die, that curse will be your portion."

11. Note the conclusion of Stanley Isser (1990: 30):

Either the translators worked from a Hebrew text that differed from MT, i.e., it had a different word in the place of ^ʿ*âsôn*, or the translation represents an interpretation of ^ʿ*âsôn*, whose original meaning may have been unclear to the translators. In any case LXX relates ^ʿ*âsôn* not to the mother but to the fetus—whether it be formed or unformed—and *wênâtan bipêlîlîm* to a determination of the value of the unformed fetus. Thus there were two separate legal traditions concerning the law of Exod 21:22–23, one based on damage to the woman, and one based on the stage or age of the embryo.

12. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1872: 1478 and H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1979: 519. The Arabic سَوِيَ (*sawaya*) "he became full-grown in body, of full vigour, or mature in body and intellect" is a synonym of بَلَغَ (*balāġa*) "he attained his manly vigor or full maturity," which appears in the

Qurʾan in 12: 22, “When Joseph attained his full manhood (بلغ أشده) ([*balaġa ʾašuddahu*]), We gave him power and knowledge” (Lane 1863: 250). (Click here to view Lane 1863: 250, column 3, and here to view Lane 1872: 1478, column 2).

13. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, New (ninth) edition, 1966: 589.

14. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, E. Kautzsch, editor, A. E. Cowley, translator. 1974: §19^m. (Click here.)

Note for example (a) אַבְוֹל “gateway,” from the root יָבַל, (b) אֲבַעְיָה “begging” from the root בָּעָה, (c) אִיבֵלָא “vessel, basket” from the root יָבַל, and (d) אֲפִיקַי “exit, end” from the root פִּיַק / נִפַק (Jastrow, 1903: 4, 8, 21, 101).

15. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, E. Kautzsch, editor, A. E. Cowley, translator. 1974: §85^u. (Click here.)

16. Stanley Isser (1990: 42, 45) considered the possibility of emending the אֲסוֹן, stating:

The Greek version reads *ʾâsôn* as an adjective referring to the embryo and does not translate it as *malakia*. There have been suggestions that either the Greek translator misunderstood the Hebrew or that his Hebrew *Vorlage* had something beside *ʾâsôn*. Given its odd appearance in the Hebrew text and the problem of phrasing, the latter is not unlikely. We can only speculate how to emend the original text to give it the sense of “unformed . . . formed.” Was there a term commonly used in reference to a fetus, functionally similar to the rabbinic *ben qayyâmâ* or *mêrûqam*? . . . As difficult as it may be to make a case for emending the text, that the reading *ʾâsôn* may be corrupt should not be dismissed out of hand.

The אָסוֹן needs simply to be vocalized differently as אֶסוֹן or אִסוֹן .

17. E. A. Speiser, “The Stem פלל in Hebrew,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 536–541.

18. Russell Fuller (1994: 171, n. 8) noted that Albrecht Goetze, (in *Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by James Pritchard) cited this Hittite law on page 190 §17.

19. Note Joe Sprinkle’s statement (1993:247) :

The LXX seems to imply the view that an imperfectly formed child who is not yet viable independently of the mother is not yet fully human; consequently, there can be no case of אָסוֹן (“deadly injury”) in the case of the death of the fetus.

Note that Russell Fuller (1994: 174, 179, 180) argued as follows for the personhood of every fetus:

Consistent with the culture and society of the ancient Near East, the Exodus covenant code also refutes the argument that differences in punishments imply differences in personhood by showing various legal statuses, the parade example being the slave. . . . Hence whereas Exod 21:22 does not directly address the personhood of the fetus, the passage does intimate, by using *yeled* instead of *gōlem* or *nepel*, that the fetus is more than just parental property. It is a *yeled*, a human being, a child, a fetus with personhood. . . . Various Biblical passages and Exod 21:22, by specifying the fetus as a *yeled*, clearly suggest the personhood of the fetus. . . . Exodus 21:22 does not indicate that the Bible values the fetus as less than human or as non-human.

20. In light of the Septuagint’s reading of Exod 21:22–23 whereby only a fully formed fetus required the *lex talionis* it is impossible to concur with Robert Congdom (1989: 146) who affirmed, “It has been shown that the unborn fetus was regarded as fully human life from the

time of conception. However, the valuation placed on the unborn was less than that placed on a Hebrew adult or child.” Likewise it is not possible to concur with Meredith Klien (1997: 200) who stated:

It is of particular importance for the Biblical view of the nature of the fetus that the life-for-life formula is applied to the destruction of a fetus, with no qualification as to how young the fetus might be. The fetus, at any stage of development, is in the eyes of this law a living being, for life (*nepes*) is attributed to it. . . . But if it is the fetus of a human mother that is identified by the life-for-life formula as a living being, there can be no question that this living being is a living *human* being.

21. Note the rabbinic conclusions in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Niddah III, about a woman’s status after an abortion. (Click here for the text of Folio 21a.)

22. For rabbinic texts referring to Exod 21:22–23 Jastrow (1903: 374) cited *Baba Kama* VIII, 2, “damages for causing an abortion.” See the Soncino online edition of *Baba Kama* Chapter V, §42a, 42b, 43a (click here for pp. 147–150) and §49a-b (click here for pp. 170–173).

23. Yonge’s Chapter 18, “On Mating with the Preliminary Studies,” which he entitled “A Treatise on the Meeting for the Sake of Seeking Instruction.” (Click here.)

24. Yonge’s Chapter 29, Special Laws III, which he entitled *A Treatise on Those Special Laws Which Are Referrable to Two Commandments in the Decalogue, the Sixth and Seventh, Against Adulterers and All Lewd Persons, and Against Murderers and All Violence*. (Click here.)

25. The references to Philo’s following the Septuagint were well noted by Nina Collins (1993: 292, note 14).

26. Bernard Jackson (1973: 293) argued at length that Exod 21:24–25 was a late interpolation, noting,

Only the LXX and PHILO (*DSL*. iii 108–9) took the view that the death of a foetus could be homicide, by interpreting Exod. xxi 23 to mean that if a viable foetus was miscarried, the penalty was death. The view of the interpolator of vv. 24–5 was reaffirmed by the Rabbis, who gave damages, whether the foetus was viable or not.

27. Given the fact that the Latin technical term *lex talionis* was not available to Moses and the lawyers who followed him the *lex talionis* was fully spelled out in verses 21:23–25. These three verses in the MT could be paraphrased simply as “If any harm follows, then you shall implement the *lex talionis*.”

28. The Septuagint translation of Exod 21:22–23, which is the oldest available translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, needs to be included in the current political debate about whether or not *personhood* begins at conception or when an embryo is fully developed.

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