

MISCELLANEOUS
BIBLICAL STUDIES

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONSIDERING
THE ARABIC COGNATES
WHICH CLARIFY PSALM 40:7

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IV

RECONSIDERING THE ARABIC COGNATES WHICH CLARIFY PSALM 40:7 (MT)

PSALM 40:7 (MT)

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתָּ אֲזִנִּים כְּרִיתָ לִי
עוֹלָה וַחֲטָאָה לֹא שָׁאַלְתָּ:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire;
ears you dug for me.

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require.

LXX Psalm 39:7

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας
σῶμα (G^{ABS})/ὠτία (α', σ', θ') δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι
ὀλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire;
but a *body* (G^{ABS})/*ears* (α', σ', θ')
you have prepared me:

whole-burnt-offering and for sin you do not require.

As noted in the *Hebrew-English Tanak* (1460, b-b), the meaning of phrase לִי כְרִיתָ אֲזִנִּים is uncertain. As pointed it means literally “ears you dug for me,” a phrase which disrupts the synonymous parallelism of line A, “sacrifice and offering you did not desire,” and line B, “burnt offering and sin offering you have not requested.” The JPS Tanak translation (1985) ignored the phrase and rendered this verse simply as, “You gave me to understand that You do not desire sacrifice and meal offering; You do not ask for burnt offering and sin offering.” However, most translators, past and present, have opted to paraphrase the enigmatic three words as follows:

KJV	mine ears hast thou opened.
ASV	Mine ears hast thou opened
NAS	My ears Thou hast opened.
NAU	My ears You have opened.
RSV	thou hast given me an open ear
NRS	you have given me an open ear
NJB	you gave me an open ear
NKJ	My ears You have opened
NIV	my ears you have pierced.
NIB	but my ears you have pierced
YLT	Ears Thou hast prepared for me
NAB	ears open to obedience you gave
DRA	thou hast pierced ears for me
VUL	<i>ures autem perfecisti mihi</i>

But, as noted in the variants of the Greek text cited above, the direct object of the verb may not have been “two ears” but “a body.”¹ And the verb was understood by some to mean “to perfect” or “to prepare” rather than “to dig” or “to pierce.” These difference are also reflected in the Syriac tradition, where the Syro-Hexapla reads ܐܠܗܝܢܐ ܕܢܩܒܬܐ ܠܝܢܐܢܐ (pagra³ den tqant lî) “but a body hast thou prepared me,” with a marginal note reading ܐܠܗܝܢܐ ܕܢܩܒܬܐ ܠܝܢܐܢܐ (°ednā³ den hpart lî) “but ears you dug for me,”² which approximates the Peshiṭta ܐܠܗܝܢܐ ܕܢܩܒܬܐ ܠܝܢܐܢܐ (°ednā³ den nqabt lî), where the verb ܢܩܒܬܐ (nqab) “to dig” is a synonym of ܢܩܒܬܐ (hpar) “to dig” (Payne Smith, 1903: 154, 349). Lamsa (1956: 607) paraphrased the Peshiṭta to read, “but as for me, I now have understanding.”

The Greek variant σώμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, “but a body you prepared for me,” appears in Hebrews 10:5,

Διὸ εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον λέγει,
 Θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας,
 σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι.

Therefore, coming into the world, he said,
 “Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired,
 but a body hast thou prepared for me.”

The σῶμα “body” here in Hebrews 10 and in the G^{ABS} of Psa 39:7 was evidently due to a confusion in the (oral) tradition of אָזן “ear” (ὠτία) with עֲצָם “bone, body” (= ὀστέον or σῶμα, as in Lam 4:7, where the עֲצָמוֹ אֲדָמוֹ means “they were ruddy in body”).³ If the original were עֲצָם = σῶμα = “body,” the verb may well have been בָּרִיתָ rather than the MT פָּרִיתָ. This בָּרִיתָ (from בָּרָה) would be the cognate of Arabic برى / برأ (*baraya / barâ*) “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 1863, 178–179 [form 4]; Hava, 1915: 26; Castell, 1669: 431 “*convaluit*”). The Greek κατηρτίσω “to mend, to restore, to make right” would be a good translation of this בָּרָה, as well as the Vulgate’s *perfecisti*.

The commentators and translators, like Lamsa, who paraphrased אָזְנִים פָּרִיתָ לִי and אֲדָנָא דִּמְנַבְלָא לִי (*ednâ den nqabt li*), to mean “you opened my ears” or “you gave me understanding,” have appealed directly or indirectly to Isaiah 50:4–5.⁴

אֲדָנִי יְהוָה נָתַן לִי לְשׁוֹן לְמוֹדִים
 יַעִיר בְּבִקְרִי בְּבִקְרִי

יָעִיר לִי אָזֶן לְשִׁמְעַת פְּלִמּוּרִים:
 אֶדְנִי יְהוָה פָּתַח־לִי אָזֶן
 וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא מָרִיתִי

My Lord Yahweh gave me the tongue of a teacher

Morning by morning he wakens,
 he wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

My Lord Jahweh opened for me an ear,
 and I was not rebellious

However, כָּרָה “to dig” would be a synonym for the חָצַב “to dig, to hew” and the נָקַר “to dig, to bore” in Isa 51:1, but not a synonym of the עִיר “to awaken” or the פָּתַח “to open” in Isa 50:5. An accurate interpretation of the כָּרִיתִי אֲזִנִּים requires the repointing of the dual אֲזִנִּים as the plural אֲזִנִּים and recognizing it as the cognate of the Arabic أَذَانٌ (*ʿadân^{um}*) “a notification; an announcement,” as in the *Qurʿan*, *Sura* 9:3,⁵

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ

*And an announcement from Allah and His Apostle, to
 the people on the day of the Great Pilgrimage.*

The אֲזִנִּים “notifications” in Psa 40:7 refers to Yahweh’s announcements, scattered in these various texts

I Sam 15:22

Isa 66:3–4

Hos 6:6

Jer 7:21–23

Amos 5:15–21

Psa 50:8–16, 23⁶

Mic 6:6–8

Psa 51:16–17

Isa 1:11–17

Psa 69:30–31,

that he did not desire blood sacrifices and burnt offerings.⁷

Similarly, the פָּרִיתָ “you dug” in the phrase $\text{אֲזַנִּים פָּרִיתָ}$ “ears you dug” needs to be reinterpreted in light of the Arabic cognate ك (*karra*), which in forms 2 and 5 means “to repeat, to reiterate, to do repeatedly,” as in كر على سمعه كذا (*kar-rara ‘alay sam‘ihi kaḏa*) “he reiterated such a thing to his hearing” (Lane 1885: 2601; Wehr 1979: 958; Castell, 1669: 1794, included “*reduxit, repetavit, iteravit, replicavit*”).⁸ Thus, the revocalized $\text{אֲזַנִּים פָּרִיתָ לִּי}$ means “you reiterated for me the pronouncement.” The plural אֲזַנִּים could be a plural of intensity (GKC §124^d), suggesting the significance of the pronouncement in Psa 40:6 that God has no desire for sacrifices. But given the ten texts listed above and cited in the ADDENDUM, a regular plural cannot be ruled out. This plural may really do double duty:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire.

You *reiterated* to me the *pronouncement(s)*:

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not request!

Thus, the Arabic cognate برى (*baraya*) = ברה “to restore the body” clarifies the κατηρτισω σωμα “prepared / perfected a body” in the Septuagint (G^{ABS}) of Psa 39:7 and Heb 10:5. The cognates أذنان (*‘aḏân^{um}*) “a notification” and كر (*karra*) “to reiterate” clarify the problematic phrase $\text{אֲזַנִּים פָּרִיתָ}$ in the MT of Psalm 40:7.

NOTES

1. The σωμα “body” may be due to scribal errors in which the final ς of ἠθέλησας was mistakenly read as the initial letter of the ὠτία “ears.” Then the $\tau\iota$ of the erroneous σωτια was misread as a μ , resulting in the σωμα now in the texts.
2. See Field, 1964: 151 and McDaniel, 2007: 129–134.
3. See Briggs, 1906:358 for this and other proposals of the earlier commentators. In an earlier study on Psalm 40, I argued that the lack of a word in some of the Greek and Syriac texts for the MT אֲזַנִּים was due to a confusion in the respective *Vorlagen* of (1) אִ and ד, (2) אִ and נ, and (3) אִ and מ, which resulted in the אֲזַנִּים being read as אֲדַיִן (= אֲדַיִן), a by-form of עַדַיִן “yet, as yet, still,” which was translated into Greek as δε and into Syriac as ܕܢܐ (*den*) “but, for, then.” (McDaniel, 2007: 129–134.)
4. See for example Clifford, 2002: 206; and Mays, 1994: 168.
5. In my earlier study (McDaniel, 2007: 129–134) I argued for emending the פְּרִיתָ to בְּרִיתָ “you freed (me),” and for reading the אֲזַנִּים/אֲזַנִּים as זַנִּים/זַנִּים (or אֲזַנִּים/אֲזַנִּים with a prosthetic א) which would be the cognate of the Arabic ذَلَن (*dân*) and ذِينَ (*dîn*) “a vice, fault, defect.” This led me to conclude that the אֲזַנִּים בְּרִיתָ לִי in Psa 40:6b was the psalmist’s assertion that, by God’s grace, he was free of the אֲזַנִּים “vices / faults” which plagued him. The case being made in this study—now that أَذَانٌ (*ʿadân^{um}*) “announcement” is in focus—requires no emendation of the consonantal MT.

6. The MT negative לֹא needs to be read as the emphatic לֹא־ “indeed.” For the literature on the emphatic ל and לֹא, see Gordon (1965: 76, 425); Richardson (1966: 89); McDaniel (1968) 206–208; Blommerde (1969) 31; Dahood (1975) 341–342); Whitley (1975) 202–204; and Huehnergard (1983) 569–593, especially 591.

7. These texts are cited in full in the ADDENDUM below.

8. For the by-forms כרה and כרר “to reiterate, to repeat” note the by-forms cited in GKC §77^{a,c}: נדר / נדה “to flee”; דמם / דמה “to be quiet”; חנן / חנה “to incline”; and כלל / כלה “to end.”

ADDENDUM

I Samuel 15:22

And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

Hosea 6:6

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Amos 5:21–25

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down

like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

Micah 6:6–8

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Isaiah 1:11–17

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 66:3–4

Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being; whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever presents a grain offering, like one who offers swine's blood; whoever makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and in their abominations they take delight; I also will choose to mock them, and bring upon them what they fear; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my sight, and chose what did not please me.

Jeremiah 7:21–23

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you.”

Psalm 50:8-16, 23

Indeed,⁵ for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house, or goats from your folds. For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. . . . Those who bring thanksgiving as

their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.

Psalm 51:16–17

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 69:30–31

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.