

CLARIFYING

MORE

BAFFLING

BIBLICAL

PASSAGES

BY

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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.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A-text	Codex Alexandrinus
AB	Anchor Bible, New York
<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i> , Chicago
AnBib	Analecta Biblica, Rome
AOS	American Oriental Society, New Haven
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Göttingen
AV	Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611 (same as KJV, 1611)
B-text	Codex Vaticanus
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> , Philadelphia
<i>BCTP</i>	A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , New York
BH ³	R. Kittel, <i>Biblica Hebraica</i> , third edition, Stuttgart, 1937
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia, Rome
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BSC	Bible Student's Commentary
<i>BibT</i>	<i>Bible Today</i>
BTal	<i>Bet Talmud</i>
<i>CAD</i>	I. Gelb, L. Oppenheim, et al., eds., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> , Washington, D. C.
CTM	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
CV	<i>Communio Viatorum</i>
DR	<i>Downside Review</i>
EBC	The Expository Bible Commentary
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzsch, tr. A. E. Cowley, Oxford
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i> , Cambridge, Massachusetts
IBCTP	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary Series
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New Haven, Boston
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> , Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Missoula, Montana

ABBREVIATIONS

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

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I

SUGGESTIONS FOR GEN 2:1–3, 8:11 AND 39:6¹

Genesis 2:1-3

וַיִּכְלֹוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם:

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

וַיִּכַּל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

[מִן] מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

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

וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

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

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְלַאכְתּוֹ

אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת [לַעֲשׂוֹת MT]

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 (וַיִּכְלֹוּ, הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְהָאָרֶץ, וְכָל-צְבָאָם, and אֱלֹהִים) appear three times, with מְלַאכְתּוֹ coming twice. In addition אֲשֶׁר, עָשָׂה, and שָׁבַת 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 וַיִּכַּל 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 וַיִּכַּל of 2:2a as “brought to a close” and “brought to a (gratifying) close,” suggested by the Akkadian *šuteṣbû* used in the sense of “inspect and approve,” but without any lexical or cognate support. The אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא . . . לַעֲשׂוֹת 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, וַאֲשֶׁתְּכִלְלוּ . . . וַשִּׁיבֵי. The first verb is a Shaphel reflexive of כָּלַל “to crown, to finish, to perfect”; the second is a Shaphel of יָצָא, meaning in this form “to finish, to complete,” like the Shaphel reflexive אֲשֶׁתִּיבֵי “to be finished” cited by Jastrow (1903: 1567). Although the MT *Pu^cal* plural וַיִּכְלְלוּ in 2:1 and the *Pi^el* singular וַיִּכְלַל in 2: 2 appear to be from כָּלַה “to be complete, to be finished” (BDB 447), the וַיִּכְלְלוּ is more likely to be from כָּלַל “to perfect, to complete,” as interpreted in the Targum and found in Ezek 27:4 (כָּלְלוּ יְפִיךָ) “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 וַיִּכָּל in 2:2 needs to be repointed as וַיִּכָּל and derived also from כָּלַל. However, the narrator shifted the verb from כָּלַל stem I (“to perfect”) to כָּלַל stem III, “to be tired, fatigued, weary.” This כָּלַל is the cognate of the Arabic كل (*kalla*) “he was, or became, fatigued, weary, tired” (Lane 1893: 3002; Wehr 1979: 977). In view of the use of عن (*‘an*) “from” with this verb, it seems best to restore an initial מ (= “from”) to the MT מִלְאֲכָתוֹ “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,”

עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹּשׁ:

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 כָּלַל, stem III, dropped out of tradition, translations, and Hebrew lexicons.

The theme of fatigue among the gods is dominant in the *Atra-Hasīs* 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-Ḥasīs* 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 **לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא** in Gen 2:3, meaning literally, “which God created to make,” is awkward. The Septuagintal reading, ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι “which God began to make,” reflects a *Vorlage* having **בָּרָא** for the MT **בָּרָא**. Hebrew **בָּרָא** appears in I Kings 12:33 (with **עָשָׂה**) and in Neh 6:8, meaning “to invent, to devise” (BDB 94: KBS I: 109). It is the cognate of Arabic **بَدَأَ** (*badaʿ*) “he began” (Lane 1863: 163–165), which appears in the *Qurʾan*, *Sura* 32:6, “He *began* the creation of man from clay,” and as a title of God, **المبدئ** (*ʾalmubdiʿu*) “the Creator, the Originator.”

English translations have played freely with the finite verb **בָּרָא** and the infinitive **לַעֲשׂוֹת**. The KJV, NKJV, NAS, NAV RSV, NRSV, NIV and NIB render **לַעֲשׂוֹת** as the finite verb “(he) made”; the RSV, NRSV, NAB, and NLT read **בָּרָא** 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 **בָּרָא** intact, once another Arabic cognate

comes into focus, similar to the way an Arabic cognate clarified the Septugintal reading of **בָּרָא** as ἤρξατο “he began” (discussed above).

As indicated in the opening translation, the MT לַעֲשׂוֹת “to make” needs to be repointed as לַיעֲשׂוֹת, i.e., the preposition ל attached to עֲשׂוֹת, an abstracted noun meaning “livelihood, life, the sustenance of life.” This עֲשׂוֹת is the cognate of Arabic (1) عاش (‘āšā) “he became possessed of life,” (2) عيش (‘aiš) “life, that whereby life subsists; the means of life or subsistence, livelihood, the way of living,” (3) عيشة (‘aišat) “a state of life,” (4) عايش (‘ā’iš) and (5) عياش (‘ayāš) “having much of the means of life, living well” (Lane 1874: 2210; Wehr 1979: 775). The contraction of the diphthong in עֲשׂוֹת to עִישׁוֹת, coupled with *scriptio defectiva*, resulted in the homograph עֲשׂוֹת/עִישׁוֹת, which was subsequently read as the infinitive of עָשָׂה “to make,” rather than being read as the rare synonym of חַיִּוּת “life, living, livelihood” (Jastrow 452).

This עֲשׂוֹת “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 נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה “living creature”—for birds, beasts, and human beings. This עֲשׂוֹת 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 עֵלֶה־זַיִת טָרֵף in Gen 8:11 has proven to be very problematic. The עֵלֶה־זַיִת is without a doubt “an olive leaf,” but the טָרֵף has been variously rendered. The Septuagint has φύλλον ἐλαίας κάρφος, “an olive leaf, a dry twig,” with the κάρφος (= טָרֵף) 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 טָרֵף 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 טָרֵף being read as “green, verdant,” as though the text had תֵּרֵף, a noun with a preformative ת from יֵרֵף “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 טָרֵף is a homograph for two distinctly different words. One word comes in Gen 37:33 חָיָה רָעָה אֲכָלָתָהּ יוֹסֵף טָרַף יוֹסֵף, “a wild animal has devoured him, Joseph has *surely been torn in pieces!*” The second טָרַף occurs in Ezek 17:9, וַיִּבֶשׂ כָּל־טְרֵפֵי צִמְחָהּ, “all the *fresh ones* of her sprouting will wither” (n.b., the NLT has simply “its leaves wither,” completely ignoring the טָרַף). This second טָרַף is

the cognate of Arabic طريف (*tarīf*) “a thing that is *good* [*and recent or new or fresh*]” and طريفة (*tarīfat*) “*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” (= טרף, stem II) and (2) “plucked” (= טרף, 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.

וַיַּעַזֹּב כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ בְּיַד-יֹסֵף

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

וְלֹא-אֵדָע אֶתֹּךְ מֵאֲוִמָּה

(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

καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει τὼν καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὐδὲ

and he did not know of anything that belonged to him

כִּי אִם-הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר-הָיָא אוֹכֵל

except the food which he ate.

As is evident from the paraphrases cited above, the second phrase of Gen 39:6, וְלֹא-אֵדָע אֶתֹּךְ מֵאֲוִמָּה (literally, “he did not know with him anything”) is problematic. The reason for

the difficulties is that the לֹא and the יָדַע are homographs of distinctly different words. The unvocalized לֹא can be read as the negative particle לֹא “not” or as the emphatic לֹא־לֵא “surely verily, indeed.” The יָדַע is a homograph of (1) the verb “to know,” as in I Sam 21:3, אִישׁ אֶל־יָדַע מְאוּמָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר, “let no one know anything about the matter,” as well as (2) the verb וָדַע / וָדַע which is the cognate of the Arabic وَدَعَ / يَدَع (*wadaʿa / yadaʿa*) “to entrust, to consign for safekeeping” (Lane 1893: 3051; Wehr 1979: 1240)². The consonantal MT וְלֹא־יָדַע אֶתּוֹ מְאוּמָה can readily be translated, “he would actually/indeed *entrust* to him anything.” The כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ and the מְאוּמָה, 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 וַיִּכַּל אֱלֹהִים . . . מְלֶאכְתּוֹ 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 وَدَعَ (*wadaʿa*) “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 وَدَع (*wadʿ*) “depositing” and وَدِيعَةٌ (*wadiʿat*) “trust, charge, deposit.”

II

NOTES ON GENESIS 6:3–4

GENESIS 6:3

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
לֹא־יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בְּאָדָם לְעֹלָם
בְּשָׁנִים הוּא בָשָׂר¹
וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה

And the LORD said,
“my spirit will not always strive with man forever
for that he also *is* flesh
yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεός οὐ μὴ καταμείνη τὸ πνεῦμά μου
ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις² εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα
διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς σάρκας
ἔσονται δὲ αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτῶν ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι ἔτη

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 בְּשָׁנִים הוּא בָשָׂר “for that he also *is* flesh” in 6:3b needs to be read in reverse order and repointed to read בְּשָׂר הוּא בְּשָׁנִים. Then the antecedent of הוּא “he” is the preceding בְּשָׂר “human” or אָדָם “man” (gender inclusive), precluding the reading of the ם of MT בְּשָׁנִים as the suffix “their,” for which there is no antecedent. Because a verbless clause is unlikely to have the adverbial suffix ם־, the ם of

בְּשִׁנִּים must be either a part of the stem or the plural יָ- ending written *scriptio defectiva*.

If the stem were שָׁגַם/שָׁגַג, it could be the cognate of Arabic شَجِن/شَج (šajin/šajin) “grief, sorrow, sadness” (Lane 1872: 1510; Wehr 1979: 533).³ If the word were שָׁג it could be either (1) שָׁגַג “to go astray, to sin inadvertently” (BDB 992) or the cognate of Arabic شَجَّة/شَج (šaj/šajjat) “to bash in the skull, skull fracture” (Lane 1872: 1504; Wehr 1979: 532).⁴ In light of the focus in 6:5 and 6:11–13 on the increased violence on earth, the Arabic شَج (šaj) “skull bashing” is more likely to be the cognate of the שָׁג in 6:3. In this case the יָ of שָׁגַם would be the suffix יָ-, indicating here a *pluralis intensivus*, like the plural עֲוֹנוֹתָם “perverseness” in Isa 19:14 and the נִאֲפִים “adultery” in Ezek 23: 43.

Given the well attested elision of an א, as in Exo 14:25 where וַיֵּאָסֶר appears for וַיֵּאסֶר,⁵ the stem סָגַי/סָגָה/שָׁגָא “to grow, to increase” cannot be rule out as another derivation for the שָׁג of MT בְּשִׁנִּים. The Aramaic cognate סָגַי/סָגָה “multitude/great, greatness” appears regularly without the א (BDB 960; Jastrow 954).

Thus, the MT בְּשִׁנִּים, 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 הוּא בְּשִׁנִּים “flesh” in the revised phrase בָּשָׂר הוּא בְּשִׁנִּים, used in reference to אָדָם “earthling, mankind, humanity,” would be best understood as “physical/corporal beings” or “a

human being,” like the Arabic *بشر* (*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 *בָּשָׂר* “flesh, human being(s).”

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

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* (*עֲצָבוֹן*) 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 **בשגם** meant **בְּשִׁגְיִים** “into *inadvertent* sin.”⁶

Option three, skull bashing, anticipates the violence spelled out in Gen 6:11, **וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא חַמָּס הָאָרֶץ חַמָּס כִּי־הִשְׁחִית כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר אֶת־הַרְכּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ** (“now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence”), in 6:12, **כִּי־מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חַמָּס** (“for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”), and in 6:13, **כִּי־מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חַמָּס** (“for the earth has become full of violence”). Four words taken from 6:3–4, create the mental image of club swinging cave men: **הַגְּבֻרִים הַשְּׁגִיִּים אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם**, “the skull bashing giants of yore.”

According to *option four* the *singular* Adam (**אָדָם**) had become the *multitudinous* (**שְׁגִיָּאִים = שְׁגִיָּאָם = שְׁגָם**) human race (**אָדָם**). 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.⁷ If the MT **בשגם** in Gen 6:2 referenced the multitudes of human beings, it would have provided a reason for the *gigantic* flood (**וְהַמַּיִם גָּבְרוּ מְאֹד**)⁸ to destroy the scattered human masses and their gigantic half-brothers, as narrated in Gen 6:5–7:24.

Recognition of the **שגם** in Gen 6:3b as a possible cognate of **شجن** (*šajin*) “grief” or **شج** (*šaj*) “skull bashing” provides the clue for determining the meaning of **יָדוֹן** in Gen 6:3a. Although the Septuagint translated this verb as *καταμείνη* “dwell, remain,” this evidence was dismissed by many commentators. Skinner (1930: 143) thought that *καταμείνη* was “perhaps nothing more than a plausible guess at the meaning, though a variant text has been suspected (**יכון, ידור, ילון**), 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 *καταμείνη* “remain” has good linguistic support from the Arabic **دام / دوم** (*dum / dāma*) 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 **דָּוַן** is related to **دوم** (*dum*) in the same way that **דָּשֵׁן** “fat” and **داسم** (*dasam*) “fat” are related. There is simply the well attested **ד / נ** variation, as in the case of **שָׁטָן** (Num 22:32) and **שָׁטָם** (Job 30:21), and the names Satan and Mastema (Jubilees 10:8 and 23:25), the latter being the ^o*Aph^el* participle in the emphatic state (= **מִשְׁטָמָא**).

Because **דָּוַן** by itself could have meant “to remain/abide for ever,” the adverbial modifier **לְעֹלָם** “forever” may be a later clarifying gloss for the rare **דָּוַן**. While Job 12:10 affirmed **בְּיָדוֹ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חַי וְרוּחַ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר־אִישׁ**, “in His hand is the *breath*⁹ 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

הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָּאָרֶץ בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם
 וְגַם אַחֲרֵי־כֵן . . .
 הַקִּמָּה הַגְּבֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מְעֹלָם אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁמַיִם . . .

the *Nephalim*¹⁰ were on the earth in those days
 and also afterward . . .

Those were the mighty men¹¹ who were of old,
 men of renown (NKJ)

οἱ δὲ γίγαντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
 ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ μετ’ ἐκείνῳ

... ἐκεῖνοι ἦσαν οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος
οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ὀνομαστοί

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

- עֲדָה נְשִׂיאֵי (ἀρχηγοὶ συναγωγῆς) “chiefs of the assembly”
- קְרָאֵי בּוֹעֵר (σύγκλητοι βουλῆς) “chosen councillors”
- אֲנָשֵׁי-שֵׁם (ἄνδρες ὀνομαστοί) “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 אֲנָשֵׁי-שֵׁם “men of renown” used in describing Moses’ challengers has been appealed to by commentators to clarify the אֲנָשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם in Gen 6:4c, which was translated in the Septuagint as οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ὀνομαστοί and in the Targum as אֲנָשֵׁין דְּשֵׁמָא, both meaning “the men of renown.” The Arabic *sumâ* (سما) “good repute, fame” (Hava 1915: 338) would be the obvious cognate of שֵׁם “renown.”

However, the original אֲנָשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם in 6:4c may not have been what it came to be in the MT, namely, the definite article הַ attached to the noun שֵׁם “name,” requiring the אֲנָשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם to mean literally “the men of *the* name,” without any hint as to why “name” became definite. Another derivation of אֲנָשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם needs to be considered.

In *Genesis Rabbah* 26, Rabbi Aha offered a twofold challenge to the interpretation that the אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם was the same as אֲנָשֵׁי שֵׁם. He associated the נַפְלִים with נָפַל “foolish,” citing Job 30:8, בְּנֵי-נָפַל גַּם-בְּנֵי בְלִי-שָׁם “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 אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם to mean “they laid desolate (הַשְׁמִינּוּ) the world, were driven in desolation (הוֹשְׁמִינוּ) from the world, and caused the world to be made desolate (יִשׁוּם).” He obviously associated אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם with הַשָּׁם/הַשְׁמָה, the *Hiph^{il}* of שָׁמַם “to ravage, to terrify” (Jastrow 1597; Ben-Yehuda 73). But it is difficult to accommodate the ה of the *Hiph^{il}* in a noun form.

The Hebrew הַשָּׁם in this context is more likely to be the cognate of Arabic هشم (*hašama*) “to destroy, smash, shatter” and its adjective هشيم (*hašîm*) “broken, crushed” (Castell 1669: 891 [*fractus, confractus*]; Lane 1893: 3043; Hava 1915: 828; Wehr 1979: 1206), so that הַשָּׁם/הַשְׁמָה is a synonym of הַזִּמָּה “to treat violently.”¹² If so, the phrase needs to be re-pointed as אֲנָשֵׁי הַזִּמָּה “men of violence.” The following texts addressed the violence initiated by the gigantic *Nephalim*.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

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.”¹⁴
- *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 [. . .].”¹⁵
- *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 (גְּבוּרִים נְפִלִים) men of old because they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.”¹⁶

- *Numbers 13:33*, there we saw the *giants* (הַנְּפִילִים) who were the sons of Anaq from the *giants* (הַנְּפִילִים), 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, עֲוֵה עֲוֵה עֲוֵה ‘A ruin, a ruin, a ruin’ will I make it” (Ezek 21:27, MT 21:32).

If the שג of MT בַּשָּׂגִים in 6:3 is related to the Arabic شج / شجة (*šaj/šajjat*) “skull bashing, breaking someone’s head,” as suggested above, there is additional support from Arabic that the השם of 6:4 is related to هشم (*hašama*) “to destroy.” 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 هاشمة (*hâšimat*) “a broken bone, a fracture of the skull.” Therefore, when in Hebrew the enigmatic שג/שגים (used in reference to בְּשָׂר “human being”) and the problematic השם (used in reference to אָנָשׁ “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 شج (*šaj*) and هشم (*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 אָרְרָם “men” nor אֲנֹשִׁי־רִמָּה “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 corporal beings (בְּשָׂר), 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 אֲנֹשִׁי־הַשָּׁמַיִם—have been misdirected because the epithet originally was probably אֲנֹשִׁי־הַשָּׂדֶה “men of destruction,” i.e., those who were gifted in *skull bashing* (שָׂדֶה = שָׂגִים) 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 come 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

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

The four definitions cited above for the בְּשֵׁנִים of שְׁנֵים (namely, שְׁנֵי אִים “multitudes,” שְׁנֵים “grief,” שְׁנֵים “error,” and שְׁנֵים “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 Nephalim . . .
were the giants of yore,
the men of violence.*

NOTES

1. Reading the MT בְּשֵׁנִים as a compound of the preposition בְּ, the relative particle שֵׁ, and the adverb נִים, a combination which occurs only in this verse (BDB 993; GKC 67^p; 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 נִים “moreover.”

2. Given the graphic similarity of נ and ז and the occasional confusion of נ and ה, the נִים of the MT בְּשֵׁנִים may have been misread as זִים by the Septuagint translators. Delitzsch (1920: 116) cited seven examples of the נ / ה confusion, including (1) Psa 35:5 where the MT דוּחָה “driving away” became ἐκθλίβων αὐτούς “afflicting *them*” (= דוּחָה in the Septuagint, and (2) Ezek 45:1

where the MT עשרה אלף “10,000” became εἴκοσι χιλιάδας “20,000” (= עשרים אלף).

3. Although one might expect the Hebrew cognate to be שגן rather than שגם, the interchange of a ם and נ is well attested. The Arabic ان (*in*) “if” and the Hebrew אם “if” is one example of the מ and נ variation. The נגר/מגר variant in Ezek 21:17 and 35:5 is another, for 21:17 reads מִגְרֵי אֶל־חֶרֶב הָיוּ אֶת־עַמִּי “they are *delivered over* (מגר) to the sword with my people,” whereas 35:5 reads וַתִּגַּר אֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־יְדֵי־חֶרֶב “you *delivered* (נגר) the Israelites *over* to the power of the sword.” See also note 4.

4. Ordinarily the Arabic ش (*š*) would be a ש in Hebrew, but there are a number of cognates where a ש matches the Arabic ش (*š*), including: (1) שָׁבִיב “flame” and شب (*šabba*) “to kindle a fire, to blaze, to flame” and شبة (*šabbat*) “a blazing, flaming fire”; (2) תְּשׁוּקָה “desire, longing” and شوق (*šawq*) “desire, yearning, longing of the soul” and ذو شوق (*dū šawqin*) “an admiring lover”; and (3) חֲשָׂרָה “collection” and حشرا (*ḥašara*) “to collect.” If the MT ש of שגם is retained rather than repointed as a ש, the שג which is the cognate of شج (*šaj*) could be another example of exceptions to the general pattern of ش (*š*) = ש and س (*s*) = ש.

5. On the elision of the א, note Delitzsch, 1920: 21–22, §14^{a-c} and GKC 23^f and 68^{h,k}. Other noteworthy elisions include: ותאזרני and ותזרני in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40; האסורים and הסורים in Ecc 4:14; יהל for יאהל in Isa 13:20; חמתיכם and תבו for תאבכו and חמאתיכם 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 נָבַר in Gen 7:18–20, 24 and the noun גְּבֵרִים in 6:4. There would be enough flood waters to drown the “giants,” i.e. the גְּבֵרִים who were also known as the נְפִלִים.

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

10. The transliteration of נְפִלִים 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 נְפִלִים to mean “giants.”

11. The Greek γίγαντες for the Hebrew גְּבֵרִים reflects a definition of גָּבַר which corresponds to the Arabic cognate *جبار* (*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 גְּבֵרָא “strong, hero, giant” (Jastrow 234).

12. It is most unlikely that the השם in Gen 6:2 is related to the Arabic هشام (*haššama*) “to honor anyone,” هشم (*hašim*) “generous, bountiful,” هشام (*hišām*) “generosity, bounty,” or تہشم (*tahaššama*) “to conciliate anyone, to show kindness” (Castell 1669: 891; Wehr 1979: 1206; Hava 1915: 828). Note the name השם 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 imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing [to choose wives from among the children of men].’ Then swore they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. There were in all two hundred” The *Nephilim* in this tradition became “ones who swore oaths,” as though the נפלים of נפלים were the cognate of Arabic نفل (*nafala*) “to swear, to take an oath” and *naffala* “to give an oath to” (Hava 1915: 789–790).

14. In this tradition the enigmatic נפלים was taken to be a variant form of נבלים “foolish ones” (BDB 614). The ב/פ variation is found elsewhere, like בזר and פזר “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 $\text{וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּבוּ אֶת־גְּבוּרִים נִפְלִים מִעַרְלִים}$, the Septuagint reads $\text{καὶ ἐκοιμήθησαν μετὰ τῶν γιγάντων τῶν πεπτωκότων ἄπὸ αἰῶνος}$, “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 וְלֹא , and (2) reading

מְעוֹלִים “from of old” for the MT מְעַרְלִים “from the uncircumcised.” The πεπτωκότων “fallen ones” supports the MT נְפֻלִים, although it is very tempting to reposit נְפֻלִים to נְפֻלִים or to assume a haplography of what was originally נְפֻלִים נְפֻלִים.

Rather than ignoring the MT וְלֵא in Ezek 32:27, as did R. S. Hendel (“Of Demigods and the Deluge,” *JBL* 106 [1987]: 22), it should be repositied as וְלֵא, i.e., the conjunction followed by the emphatic לְ/וְלֵא “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* (= וְלֵא) 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 *Qurʾan*, 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 *Qurʾan* 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: *rabbi, habu li minasṣāliḥîna*, “Lord grant me righteous progeny (literally, “from the righteous,” noting that the *ṣāliḥ* “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-

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ment: “So We gave him glad tidings (*baššara* = בָּשָׂרָה = εὐαγγελίζω) of a gentle son (*ḡulamin ḥalīmin*).” 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 *Qurʾanic* statement that Ishmael would be *ḥalīm* “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 Wynnwood, 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” (*šīʿat*) 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 *Qu'ran*, *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 cooperate 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 = *ʿAdonay* = LORD); Gen 15 is "E," the Elohist tradition (so called because the deity is referred to by the honorific plural noun *ʿElohîm* "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

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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. In 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 פֶּרִיאַ (*pereʿ*) “wild ass” is فرأ (*faraʿ*), 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.”

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Skinner (1930: 287) suggested translating פְּרָא אָדָם (*perē^o ʾādām*) 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 עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-אָחָיו (*ʿal pēnê kōl ʿehayw* = “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’ (*perē^o*, 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 a פְּרָא (*perē^o*) with Joseph’s being a בֶּן פֶּרֶת (*bēn 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 פְּרָא (*pr^o*) can also be from the stem פִּירָא (*pērā^o*) “fruit.” The usual spelling in Hebrew of “fruit” and “to bear fruit” is פְּרִי (*pērī*) and פָּרָה (*pārāh*). But in Hosea 13:15 יִפְרִיא (*yapri^o*) “he will be fruitful, he will have progeny” appears, as though the stem could be פְּרָא (*pr^o*) as well as פָּרָה (*prh*). Instead of פְּרָא אָדָם (*perē^o ʾādām*) 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 *ʾādām pōre^o*, rather than the inverted *pōre^o ʾādām*.)

The Greek Septuagint of Genesis 16:11–12 reads in part as follows:

ἰδοὺ σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις καὶ τέξῃ υἷόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰσμαηλ . . . οὗτος ἔσται ἄγροικος ἄνθρωπος αἱ χεῖρες αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πάντας καὶ αἱ χεῖρες πάντων ἐπ’ αὐτόν καὶ κατὰ πρόσωπον πάντων τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ κατοικήσει

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** (*bārāʾ*) “country, forest, prairie” for the **פֶּרֶא** (*pereʾ*) 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** (*bārāʾ*), instead of **פֶּרֶא** (*pereʾ*), the Arabic cognate **بَرَا** (*baraʾ*) “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 **פֶּרֶא** (*prʾ*) here as the cognate of the Arabic verb **فَرَعَ** (*faraʿa*) “he intervened, he made

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peace, or effected a reconciliation” and noun *مفزع* (*mifra^c*) “makes peace or effects a reconciliation between people.” For the well attested interchange of the ^ʾ*aleph* (א) and the ^c*ayin* (ע)—which suggests that the פרא (*pr^ʾ*) could equal the פרע (*pr^c*) “peacemaker”—the following examples are noteworthy:

אָגַם	and	עָגַם	“to be sad”	(<i>ʾāgam</i> and <i>ʿāgam</i>)
אָד	and	עָד	“to turn”	(<i>ʾûd</i> and <i>ʿûd</i>)
גָּאַל	and	גָּעַל	“to pollute”	(<i>gāʾal</i> and <i>gāʿal</i>)
תָּאַב	and	תָּעַב	“to abhor”	(<i>tāʾab</i> and <i>tāʿab</i>)
גָּמָא	and	גָּמַע	“to suck”	(<i>gāmāʾ</i> and <i>gāma^c</i>)
פְּתָאָם	and	פְּתָעָם	“a moment.” ²	(<i>pitʾom</i> and <i>peta^c</i>)
פְּרָא	and	פְּרֹעַ	“wild” ³	(<i>pereʾ</i> and <i>perûa^c</i>)

Support for reading the פרא (*pr^ʾ*) as a by-form of the פרע (*pr^c*) “peacemaker” comes from an Arabic cognate of אדם (*ʾādām*), namely, آدم (*ʾadama*) “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 פרא (*porēʾ*) “peacemaker” and אדם (*ʾodēm*) “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 *ṣalih* “righteous, pious” is related to *ṣulḥ* “reconciliation” and “peace.”

The phrase יָדוֹ בְּכָל יָד וְיָד בְּכָל יָד (*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 עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-אָחָיו נָפַל (*ʿal pñê kōl ʿeḥayw 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 נָפַל (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 עַל־פְּנֵי (°al pēnē) “upon the faces.”

The translation proposed here, “he embraced all his brothers,” recognizes that נָפַל עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אָחָיו (nāpāl °al pēnē kōl °ehayw), “he fell upon the face of all his brothers,” is essentially the same idiom as that found in Gen 45:14,

וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוְאֵרֵי בְנֵי־מִן־אָחָיו
wayyippol °al ṣawwē°ré binyāmin °ahîw
“and he embraced Benjamin his brother”

and exactly the same as that in Gen 50:1

וַיִּפֹּל יוֹסֵף עַל־פְּנֵי אָבִיו
wayyippol yōsep °al penē °abîw
“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 נָפַל עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אָחָיו (°al pēnē kōl °ehāyw 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 פֶּרֶא אָדָם (pr° °dm) 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-

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

- **בְּרָא** (*br^o*) “forest, wilderness, country”
- **בְּרָא** (*br^o*) “free, secure, safe”
- **פָּרָא** (*pr^o*) “to bear fruit, to have progeny”
- **פָּרַע** (*pr^e*) “a peacemaker”
- **אַדָּם** (*^odm*) “a reconciler, mediator”
- **שָׁכַן** (*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 **בְּרָא** (*bārā^o*) “wilderness” would be a neutral term; and only **פָּרָא** (*per^e*) “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^o*) and a *peacemaker* (*pōrē^o* = *pōrē^e*) and (2) a *reconciler* (*^odēm*) and a “gentleman” (*^odām*). 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 **יִשְׁכֹּן** (*yiškon*) is the cognate of Arabic **سكن** (*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 ע (*ayin*) in Arabic include (1) أَرْض (*ʿaraḍa*) “he asked for, or petitioned for, a thing he wanted” and عَرْض (*ʿaraḍa*) “he asked for, or petitioned for, a thing he wanted” (Lane 1863: 48; 1874: 2005) and (2) أْفْرَة (*ʿafurrat*) and عْفْرَة (*ʿafurrat*) “*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 κατώκησεν, “he dwelt before all his brothers,” reflects a *Vorlage* with זָבַל (*zābal*) “to dwell” (so translated in the KJV of Gen 30:20) for the נָפַל (*nāpal*) “to fall” of the Masoretic text.

IV

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 אֲבִיר, “wandering” or “would have destroyed” or something else, warrants further investigation.

MT DEUT 26:5

וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
אֲרָמִי אֲבִיר אָבִי

וַיִּדְרֹךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מֵעוֹט
וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עֲצוּם וְרַב:

KJV

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.

LXX

ἀποκριθήσῃ καὶ ἐρεῖς ἔναντι κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου
Συρίαν ἀπέβαλεν ὁ πατήρ μου
καὶ κατέβη εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ παρώκησεν ἐκεῖ
ἐν ἀριθμῷ βραχεῖ καὶ ἐγένετο ἐκεῖ
εἰς ἔθνος μέγα καὶ πλῆθος πολὺ καὶ μέγα

BRENTON'S LXX

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

VULGATE

*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 magnam et robustam et infinitae multitudinis*

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 PESHITTA

And you shall speak and say before the Lord your God:
 My father **was led** to Aram
 (אֲבִי אֶרְדָּמָה בְּעַבְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָם)
 (*lē'aram 'ethdēber 'ăbî*)
 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 אֲבִי "my father" as a nominative. None of the versions understood the MT אֶבְרָא 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."¹ Support for this interpretation of אֶבְרָא comes from the well attested Hebrew / Aramaic אֶבְרָא / אֶבְרָא and Syriac אֶבְרָא (*'ebad*)—all meaning "to perish, come to nought, to get lost" (KBS, 1994, I: 2; Payne-Smith, 1903: 2). It is surprising that the Peshitta did

not equate the Hebrew אָבַד with the Syriac ܐܒܕ (*ʿebad*) but rendered it by דָּבַר (*dēbar*) “to lead, to drive away, to go hither and thither,” as though the Syriac *Vorlage* read אָבַד² rather than אָבַד.³

Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, including BDB, KBS, and DCH, have paid little attention to the Arabic cognates of אָבַד. Only in KBS is there a reference to Arabic اَبَد (*ʿabada*), 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 اَبَد (*ʿbd*) and its derivatives, as cited by Castell (1669: 6), Lane (1863: 4–5), and Wehr (1979:1) are quite diverse, including several verbs spelled اَبَد (*ʿabada*) 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 אָבַד include:

7. اَبَد (*ʿabad*) “time in an absolute sense, a long time that is unlimited, and extended space of time that is indivisible,”
8. اَلْاَبَد (*ʿalʿabadu*) “the Everlasting, i.e., God,”

9. אִבֵּד (*ʿabid*) “an unsociable, unfamiliar, or shy person,”
10. אִבְדָּה (*ʿabidat*) “a calamity ever to be remembered . . . or a strange, abominable or evil thing,”
11. אִבֵּד (*ʿabid / ʿibid*) “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 אֲבָד in this verse. But verbs numbered 2, 3, and 5, along with the noun numbered 10, could well be the cognates of the אֲבָד translated as “wandering” (RSV, NRS, etc.), or “fugitive” (Albright, 1940: 181), or “vagrant” (Mazar, 1962: 101), or “refugee” (Millard, 1980: 155). Basically, this makes אֲבָד a synonym of the גָּוַר “to sojourn,” which appears four words later in 26:5.

But, in light of the last six words of Deut 26:5, וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרָב, “and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous,” the Arabic cognate of the אֲבָד in 26:5 must surely be אִבֵּד (*ʿabid / ʿibid*) “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* (וַיַּפֵּךְ = LXX ηὔξησεν) 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* (לְגוֹי גְדוֹל עֲצוּם וְרַב),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 אָבִי אֲרָמִי אֲבֵר אֲבִי—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 رَهَام (*ruhâm*) “a large number,” used in reference to the small drops of water in a drizzling rain,⁵ as the cognate of the רָהַם 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 ثَرَى/ثَرُو (*tarrâ/tarî*) “to became great in number or quantity/ many, numerous” (Lane 1863:335), as interpreted in Gen 17:15, וְהִיְתָה לְגוֹיִם “she will become nations.”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 אֲבֵר into the verb אֲבֵד “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 אֲרַמִּי אֲבִד אֲבִי should be pointed as אֲרַמִּי אֲבִד אֲבִי⁷, meaning “my father was a prolific Aramean.”

NOTES

1. David J. A. Clines, ed. 1993. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 383. (Cited as DCH.)
2. A by-form of הָפַךְ, 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 ך and ך in Psalm 15:5, where the MT תִּמְיֵד תוֹבִיךְ could be read as תִּמְיֵד .
4. In modern literary Arabic آبدة (*ābidat*) 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 ($t = th$) rather consistently appears in Hebrew cognates a שׁ and as a ת in Aramaic cognates. Therefore, given this proposed etymology, one would expect the name שְׁרִי to have change to שְׁרִה. 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 שׁ for both sounds, s and \check{s} ($= sh$). The distinction between s and \check{s} was not absolute, as is apparent from (1) the שְׁבִלֶת and סְבִלֶת story in Judges 12, and (2) the s and \check{s} variation between the Hebrew שֶׁמֶשׁ “sun” and its Arabic cognate شمس ($\check{s}ams$), though one would expect it to be سمس ($sams$). The Masoretic vocalization reflects the tradition adopted by most scholars that שְׁרִה is only an updated pronunciation and spelling of the archaic שְׁרִי “princess.”

7. See GKC §84^e 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 Rephidim¹ as they moved from the wilderness of Sin to Mount Sinai. The account (vss 5–7) reads as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עֲבֹר לִפְנֵי הָעָם
 וְקַח אִתְּךָ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִטֶּבֶד
 אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ בוֹ אֶת-הַיָּאֵר קַח בְּיָדְךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ:
 הֲנִי עֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ שָׁם עַל-הַצּוּר בְּחֹרֵב
 וְהִכִּיתָ בַצּוּר וַיֵּצְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם
 וְשָׁתָה הָעָם וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מַסָּה וּמֵרִיבָה
 עַל-רִיב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל גִּסְתָּם
 אֶת-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הִישׁ יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם-אֵין:

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.² 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 נִסָּה “to test”; the latter, meaning “Place of Contention,” is from רִיב “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

קח אֶת־הַמִּטָּה וְהִקְהַל אֶת־הָעֵדָה
אֹתָהּ וְאֶהְרֹן אֶחָיִךְ
וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֵּלַע לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְנָתַן מִימָיו
וְהוֹצֵאתָ לָהֶם מַיִם מִן־הַסֵּלַע
וְהִשְׁקִיתָ אֶת־הָעֵדָה וְאֶת־בְּעִירָם:

וַיִּקְהֲלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַקָּהָל אֶל־פְּנֵי הַסֵּלַע
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם שְׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמְּרִים
הַמִּן־הַסֵּלַע הַזֶּה נוֹצֵיא לָכֶם מַיִם:

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?”³

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 וְדַבַּרְתֶּם and the אֶל-הַסֵּלֶע, 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.”⁴

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.⁵ Moreover, if the MT **וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל־הַסֵּלֶע** 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 **וְנָתַן מַיָּמָיו** “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 **דַּבַּר** which appears in Num 20:8 is *not* the verb meaning “to speak.” Secondly, the

עין which appears in the same verse is *not* the word meaning “eye.” Thirdly, the מַרְיִם in 20:10 is *not* the plural participle of the root מָרָה “ro rebel.” Fourthly, the הַ of the הִמָּן in 20:10 is *not* the interrogative particle הַ attached to the preposition מָן. 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 דָּבַר :

- דָּבַר “to speak,” with its Arabic cognate being دَبَرَ (*dabbara*) “to consider, to relate”;
- דָּבָר “pestilence, with its Arabic cognate being دَبَرَ (*dabara*) “to depart, to follow behind, to perish” and دَبْر (*dabr*) “departure, death”;
- דְּבִיר “the innermost room of Solomon’s temple,” with its Arabic cognate being دَبْر (*dubur*) “back, hindmost”;
- דְּבוּרָה “Deborah,” meaning “(honey) bee, wasp,” with its Arabic cognate being دَبْر (*dibr*) “swarm of bees.”⁶

A fifth definition needs to be added to this list, namely that דָּבַר which was the cognate of Arabic دَبَار (*dibâr*) “ridges of earth, which retain water for irrigation” and دَبَارَة (*dibârat*) / دَبَارَات (*dibârât*) “channels, rivulets that flow through a land” (Lane 1867: 845). The verb וְדָבַרְתֶּם in Num 20:8 needs to be repointed as וְדָבַרְתֶּם, and then וְדָבַרְתֶּם אֶל-הַסֵּלַע means “you will make channels up to the rock.”⁷ The plural verb includes more than Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation of Israelites were to participate in the preparation for

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 **תם**- of the **ודברתם** leads to the second of the four misunderstood words cited above, namely the **לְעֵינֵיהֶם**, meaning literally “to their eyes” but paraphrased in the Septuagint as $\xi\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$ “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 **עין** of the MT **לְעֵינֵיהֶם** was probably not the original reading. In the context of Num 20:8, where the verb **ודברתם** means “you will make rivulets/streamlets,” the MT **עין** should be corrected to **עון** so that the **לְעֵינֵיהֶם** “to their eyes” becomes **לְעוֹנֵיהֶם**, meaning “with their help” or “with their assistance—with the possessive pronoun referring to the whole congregation (**הָעֵדָה**).⁸ (Translating the **ל** here as “with” matches a similar use of the **ל** in the phrase in Gen 23:16, **כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לְסַחֵר** “silver passing *with* the merchant” [BDB 512, sub definition 5]).⁹

The Hebrew lexeme **עון** “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 **וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל-הַסֵּלֶע לְעוֹנֵיהֶם** means “and make channels up to the rock *with their help*”—with the singular collective “help” translating the Hebrew plural **עונים** “helps” to accommodate English idiom.

In support of this translation of Num 20:8 are three other passages where this stem עֵן has been identified, namely,

- Deut 33:27, where מְעַנֶּה אֱלֹהֵי קְדָם in context means “(Your) Savior/Helper is the God of Old.”
- Deut 33:28, where the MT בָּדָר עֵין יַעֲקֹב should be re-pointed to בָּדָר עֵין יַעֲקֹב, meaning “By himself he helped Jacob.”
- Psalm 18:36, where the MT וְעִנֹתֶךָ תִּרְבִּי appears in the RSV as “and thy help made me great.”¹⁰

The third word listed on page 48, above, which is not what it appears to be is the מְרִים in the phrase הַמְרִים שָׁמְעוּ-נָא in Num 20:10. Although vocalized as the plural participle of the מָרָה “ro rebel” it needs to be vocalized as מְרִים (scriptio defectiva for מְרִיִּים), the *Hiph[‘]il* participle plural of מָרָה, matching the singular *Hiph[‘]il* participle מְרִי, “he who waters, water carrier, drawer of water” found in Prov 11:25.¹¹

To be sure, the verb מָרָה “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 מְרִים הָיִיתֶם עִם-יְהוָה, “you have been rebellious against Yahweh.”¹² Thus, there is no problem, *per se*, with Moses’ calling the Israelites מְרִים “rebels.” But in the context of the theophany in 20:6, וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד-יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם, “the glory of Yahweh appeared to them,” and the polite imperative שָׁמְעוּ-נָא “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 מְרִיִּים “rebels” to מְרִוּוֹת / מְרִוּוֹתִים “water carriers,” it becomes easier to accept the idea that Moses actually said “Please!” Thus, there is no need to delete the אֵל 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, מְרִיִּים “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 מְרִוּוֹת / מְרִוּוֹתִים, “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 הֵּ of the MT הֵּ מֵן 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 ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ὕδωρ, “must we out of this rock bring you water?” The הֵּ is better read as the interjection הֵּ or הֵּ (without an אֵל) as in the interjection הֵּ אֱלֹהֵי הֵּ “By God!” (Jastrow 1903: 67, 328; BDB 21). This Hebrew אֵל הֵּ “Behold!” was uttered by Joseph in Gen 47:23, along with the more widely used interjection הֵּ הֵּ. Also in Ezek 16:43, אֵל הֵּ “Behold!” appears in the oracle of Yahweh against Jerusalem, “therefore, behold (אֵל הֵּ), I will requite your deeds upon your head.”

The elision of the אֵל in Hebrew was quite common. For example, in 1 Sam 2:16 and 20:2, the negative particle אֵל /

לֹא appears simply as לוֹ. A sampling of other words where the לֹ was elided include¹³

- וַיֵּתֵא for וַיֵּאתֵא, from the stem אָתֵא “to come,” in Deut 33:21;
- יֵהֵל for יֵאֵהֵל, from the stem אָהֵל “to pitch a tent,” in Isa 13:20;
- הֵהָתִיּוּ for הֵהָאֵתִיּוּ, from the stem אָתֵא “to come,” in Isa 21:14;
- וַיִּסֶּר for וַיֵּאֶסֶר, from the stem אָסֶר “to tie, to bind” (rather than סָוֵר “to turn aside”), in Exo 14:25;
- הֵסִוְרִים for הֵאֶסֶוְרִים, from the stem אָסֶר “to tie, to bind,” in Ecc 4:14.

In light of this evidence, reading the הֵ of the MT הֵפְנוּרִים as הֵהּ—the defectively spelled equivalent of הֵהּ “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?”¹⁴

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,

*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,” precluding his entering the Promise Land. The errors included two words in which a ך was replaced by a ך (עון became עין and מרום became מרים) and two cases of defective spelling (הא became ה and מרוים became מרום/מרים). Two words in these verses never made it into the standard Hebrew lexicons: דבר “to make rivulets/streamlets” and עון “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 translations 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.¹⁵ 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 (נָא-) and excitedly (וְהִנֵּה) addressed the assembled *water carriers* (מַזְרִימִים) 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.¹⁶ Thus, he struck the rock twice, once for Aaron and once for himself. If only Moses had said וְיָצִיא “He will bring forth” instead of נֹצִיא “we will bring forth,” Yahweh’s presence and power would have been fully acknowledged.¹⁷

Arden (1957: 52) was correct in stating, “It isn’t a question of God splitting hairs with Moses and meeting out punishment capriciously.”¹⁸ As stated in Num 20:12, Yahweh’s pronouncement against Moses and Aaron is quite specific:

לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי
לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינַי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

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^cîl* of אָמַן 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 אָמַן, 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 *he³emin* belongs.

The verb אָמַן in Num 20:12 is clearly an exception to the rule—if the rule is that אָמַן in the *Hiph^cîl* can *never* be a causative. The phrase לֹא־הֵאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי, “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,

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 — *notsi*’, “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 רָפָה “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 רַפַּד, a

cognate of the Arabic رفد (*rafada*) “he gave a gift, he assisted, aided,” with special attention given to the رفد (*ruffida*) and رفدوا (*raffadû*) 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 LORD, 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.

λαβέ τὴν ῥάβδον καὶ ἐκκλησίασον τὴν συναγωγὴν
 σὺ καὶ Ααρων ὁ ἀδελφός σου
 καὶ λαλήσατε πρὸς τὴν πέτραν ἔναντι αὐτῶν
 καὶ δώσει τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῆς
 καὶ ἐξοίσετε αὐτοῖς ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας
 καὶ ποτιεῖτε τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ τὰ κτήνη αὐτῶν
 καὶ ἐξεκκλησίασεν Μωσῆς καὶ Ααρων
 τὴν συναγωγὴν ἀπέναντι τῆς πέτρας
 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς ἀκούσατέ μου οἱ ἀπειθεῖς
 μὴ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας ταύτης ἐξάξομεν ὑμῖν ὕδωρ

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) אֶל “to” as על “at” and paraphrased לְעֵינֵיהֶם “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.”

6. The name דְּבוֹרָה “Deborah,” however, is best derived from the Hittite-Luwian *t/dapara* “ruler, governor.” The word דָּבַר appears in Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, and Ugaritic—all meaning “to rule, to govern, to manage the affairs (of a province, not just a flock), a leader” (Lane 1872: 844b; Gordon 1965: 383–384, no 641; J. Payne Smith 1903: 82–83; R. Payne Smith 1897–1901: 815a; Jastrow 1903: 279, 731). Thus דְּבוֹרָה means “Lady-governor, Ladyship,” much like שָׂרָה “Princess” and מַלְכָּה “Queen.” For a full discussion and bibliography see McDaniel 1983: 108–125; 2003: 73–81.

7. The verb דָּבַר, stem 5, could well be a denominative, and like שָׂאַל “to ask, to *make* a request,” a *Hiph’il* form of the verb is not

required for רבר to mean “make a streamlet” or “to irrigate.” Thus, there is no need to emend the consonantal text from the *Qal* וְהַרְבִּירְתֶּם to a *Hiph^{el}* וְרַבְרַתֶּם.

8. Other examples where עין and עון were confused include (1) Psa 73:7, where עֵינָמוּ “their eye” was read as עֲוֹנָמוּ “their iniquity” by the Septuagint translators who rendered it as ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν; and (2) Zech 5:6, where עֵינָם “their eye” was also read as עֲוֹנָם “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 ו, see Delitzsch 1923: 103–105, §103^{a-c}.

9. This phrase was variously paraphrased as (1) ἀργυρίου δοκίμου ἐμπόρις “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.

10. For a fuller discussion of עון “to help, to aid, to rescue,” see McDaniel 1983: 70–86 and 2000: 53–60, 109–110.

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

- روى (*rawiya*), “he drank enough to quench his thirst”;
- رى (*riyy^{un}*) “the state of having drunk enough to quench the thirst”;
- رآو (*ra^owi*) “one who brings water to his family”;
- رآء (*rawwā^{o un}*) “(a man) whose habitual work, or occupation is the drawing of water.”

As used in this verse **רָוָה** is the synonym of **שָׁאב** “to draw water,” and the masculine plural participle which makes “the drawers of water” to be men parallels the **יְשָׁאֲבוּן הַנְּעָרִים** “the young men draw (water)” in Ruth 2:9. It is also possible that the Hebrew **מְרִים** is related to **מָר** “drop of water” and to its Arabic cognate **مرمر** (*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 (**מְרִים** instead of **מְרִים**) 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 **וּתְאֹזְרֵנִי** and **וּתְזַרְנֵנִי** in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40. In 11QpaleoLev **וִירַת** appears for **וִירָאת** in Lev 25:36; **חַטַּתִּיכֶם** for **חַטָּאתִיכֶם** in Lev 26:18; and **תְּבוּ** for **תֵּאָבוּ** in Lev 26:21 (Freedman and Matthews 1985: 45–46, 80). See also GKC 68^{hk} 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!*”

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 אָנֹכִי when he said שְׁמַעוּ-אָנֹכִי “Please listen!”

17. Milgrom (1974: 451) provides a brief summary of Jewish exegetes who thought that Moses sin was in his saying נוֹצִיא, “we will bring forth,” instead of יוֹצִיא, “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 אָנֹכִי particle of entreaty used by Moses when he said שְׁמַעוּ-אָנֹכִי “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,

דָּרָךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב וְקֵם שֶׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
וּמַחֲזֵן פְּאֵתָי מוֹאָב וְקִרְקַר כָּל-בְּנֵי-שֶׁתַּח

a star shall come forth out of Jacob
and a comet⁶ shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead⁷ of Moab,
and break down all the sons of Sheth.⁸

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).⁹ 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 (לְמַסְרֵי-מַעַל) (בִּיהוּדָה) at Baal-Peor, and, according to Num 25:1–3, their

“playing the harlot¹⁰ with the daughters of Moab” (וַיִּחַל הָעָם) (לְזָנוֹת אֶל-בָּנוֹת מוֹאָב)—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 Pirque 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 לֹא, which could be either the negative particle לֹא “not” or the emphatic particle לֵא “surely, indeed.”¹¹ With these two definitions of לֹא in focus, and by carefully identifying the antecedents of the suffixes and the subject of the verb וַיִּבְרָךְ in Josh 24:10, the text of 24:9–10 can be read and translated as follows:

וַיִּקָּם בְּלֶק בֶּן-צְפוּר מִלֶּךְ מוֹאָב וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
 וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּקְרָא לְבַלְעָם בֶּן-בְּעוֹר
 לְקַלֵּל אֶתְכֶם: וְלֹא אָבִיתִי לְשִׁמְעַ לְבַלְעָם

וַיִּבְרַךְ בָּרוּךְ אֶתְכֶם וְאַצֵּל אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדוֹ:

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, לֹא
אֵיכָל לְעֵבֵר אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי “I am not able to go beyond
the word of Yahweh my God,” and the following notices:

- Yahweh had declared לֹא תֵאָר אֶת־הָעַם כִּי בָרוּךְ הוּא “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 (וַיְהִי בִּרְכַת בָּרוּךְ) 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,

וְלֹא־אָבָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֹעַ אֶל־בְּלִעָם
 וַיַּהֲפֹךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַקְּלָלָה לְבִרְכָה
 כִּי אָהַבְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

Yahweh your God would not hearken to Balaam;
 but Yahweh your God turned the curse
 into a blessing for you,
 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 *הַאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה* “the man Moses” of Exo 11:3 is not the equivalent of the *הַאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה* in Num. 12:3, which should be read as *הָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה*, meaning “Moses was made to despair.”¹³ For contextual reasons—such as God’s turning a curse into a blessing—the negative *לֹא* must be retained in Deut 23:6. Thus, the *וְלֹא־אָבָה יְהוָה* of 23:6 is not an echo of the *וְלֹא אָבִיתִי* 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 *לֹא* “indeed” to *לֹא* “not”—it was possible to make Yahweh say, “I was *not* willing to listen to Balaam,” implying that something was radically wrong with Balaam.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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, יִזַּל, was read as the verb נָזַל “to flow” or the verb אָזַל “to go” (with the elision of the א here as in Jer 2:36, where תִּאֲזֹלִי appears for תִּזְזֹלִי), and (2) the second word, מַיִם “water” must have been read as מַת or מַתו “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

יִזַּל-מַיִם מִדִּבְרֵי וְזָרְעוּ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים
וְיָרֵם יְמֻאָנְג מְלָכּוֹ וְתִנְשֵׂא מְלֻכְתּוֹ

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 ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ
καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν
καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἢ Γωγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ
καὶ αὐξηθήσεται ἡ 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

ⲙⲁⲛ ⲉⲃ ⲉⲃ ⲛⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲛⲁ
ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃ
ⲛⲁⲛⲁ ⲉⲃ ⲉⲃ ⲛⲓⲛⲁ
ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲃ

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.

TARGUM ONKELOS

יִסְגִי מַלְכָא דִּיתְרַבָּא מִבְּנוֹהֵי
 וַיִּשְׁלוּט בְּעַמְּמִין סְגִיָּין
 וַיִּתְקוֹף מֵאַגַּג מַלְכִּיהָ וְתִינַטַל מְלְכוּתֶיהָ

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, מְדֻלִּי, 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 דְּלִי “bucket” (the cognate of the Arabic دلو (*dalw*) “bucket” [Lane 1867: 908–909] and the Persian دول (*dúl*), 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 דְּלִי “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 וְזָרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים.

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

to the MT **וַיִּדְרֹל בְּאֵמִים רַבִּים . . . מִדְּלִיּוֹ**, which must have appeared in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the translators as **וַיִּדְרֹל בְּאֵמִים רַבִּים**.¹⁹ At first glance the translation of **מִדְּלִיּוֹ** by κυριεύω “to rule over” seems unlikely, for the **דל** would seem to be restricted to the verbs **דָּלָה** “to draw (water)” or **דָּלַל** “to hang, be low, to languish” and the nouns **דֶּלֶת/דְּלָה/דֶּלֶת** “door,” **דֵּלִי** “bucket,” **דְּלִית** “branch,” or the adjective **דָּל** “poor, weak.” But the hollow verb **דוּל** needs to be restored in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. It is the cognate of the Arabic **دول/دال (dûl/ dâla)** which in form IV means “to give someone ascendancy or superiority, to make victorious, to grant victory, to let someone triumph”—with the noun **دولة (dawlat^{um})** 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 “*fortuna mutatio, conversio temporis, ac fortunæ : 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 **דל** of MT **מִדְּלִיּוֹ** by κυριεύω.²⁰

One other variant in the Septuagint of Num 24:7 requires comment. It is the reading of Gog for Agog. The Greek phrase **ὕψωθήσεται ἢ Γωγ**, “he shall be raised up (more) than Gog,” should probably be read—with the reduplication of the **η** which was lost by haplography—as **ὕψωθήσεται ἢ ἠγωγ** (or **Ἡ ἩΓΩΓ**), “he shall be raised up (more) than Agog.” The variation would shift from the different *names* Gog and Agog to simply a different *spelling* of the one name: Agog or Ēgōg.

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 “ $\alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ is probably a paraphrase for *water* and $\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ for *bucket*” is less than convincing.²¹

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

יֵאָזֵל מִתּוֹ מִן זָרְעוֹ וַיִּדּוֹל בְּאֲמִים רַבִּים
וַיֵּרָם מֵאֲנָג מְלָכֹו וְתַנְשֵׂא מְלָכְתּוֹ

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 $\text{יֵלְ-בַיִם מִדְּלִיּוֹ}$ to $\text{יֵלְ-בַיִם מִחִילוֹ}$ “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 דָּוָל 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 **מתו/מת** “man” in lieu of the MT **מַיִם** “water.” But the MT **מִדְּלִיּוֹ** “from his two buckets” became **מִבְּנֵי** “from his sons” in Syriac. Once the prepositional **מִ** and the possessive suffix **וֹ** of the MT **מִדְּלִיּוֹ** were removed, the remaining **דְּלִי** was obviously inverted (or read from left to right) to become **יֶלֶד** “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 **הָיַל** “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 **הָיַל**, which would account for the following five Aramaic translations of this one Hebrew word:

- (1) **יִסְגִּי** “he will become great,” which reflects the idea of “good fortune, prosperity, and superiority coming to someone”;
- (2) **יִתְרַבָּא** “he shall grow great,” which also reflects the idea of “the transition of wealth, blessing, and good to someone”;
- (3) **מְלָכָא** “the king,” which mirrors the idea of “monarchy, mastery, and becoming victorious”;
- (4) **יִשְׁלוּט** “he will rule,” which also mirrors the idea of “monarchy and mastery”; and
- (5) the **מִבְּנֵי** “from his sons” matched the Peshitta in translating the MT **מִדְּלִיּוֹ** as though the text were **מִיֶּלְדֵי**.

Although Onkelos has these five different interpretations of

the MT **מִדְּלִיּוֹ**, it has nothing for the MT **וַיִּזְרְעוּ . . . יִגְל־מִים**. But in the second half of 24:7 the Targum reflects the MT perfectly.

The unusual use of **מִתְּוֹ / מִתְּוֹ** in the singular and the use of the *hapax legomenon* **דִּגְלִל** can be explained by Balaam's speaking in a dialect which did not conform completely to the lexical options of the Judean Hebrew dialect.²² 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 **כּוֹכַב** can also mean a “host,” like its Arabic cognate **كوكب** (*kawkab^m*) “star, multitude, host [of an army].” (Lane [1885: 2623] noted that this Arabic quadrilateral stem “is an arabicized word, from the Hebrew **כּוֹכַב**; and that ignorance of its being so caused the Arabs to dispute respecting its formation [whether the **ו** (ו) 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].”

Milgrom concluded that שֵׁבֶט “scepter, ruler, tribe” can also mean “comet, meteor,” based on the Akkadian cognate *šibtu* and Talmudic Aramaic, reflecting the same suggestion made by Staerk (1922: 28, 65) and Gemser (1924: 301), who are cited in KBS (1994: vol. 4: 1389). Staerk stated, “Der Apokalyptiker hat Num 24₁₇ nicht שבט im Sinne von שֵׁבֶט ‘Szepter’ gelesen, wie noch immer viele Exegeten, sondern = שְׁבִיט (שְׁבִיט) ‘Stern, Komet’, und so muß übersetzt werden.” In full agreement Gemser concluded “. . . glaube ich, daß Staerk im allgemeinen Recht hat, und daß man speziell in Num 27₁₇ dieses Wort nicht als ‘Stab’, sondern als ‘Komet’ aufzufassen hat.” Milgrom reinforced his argument by a citation from a stela of Thutmose III (1504–1450 B.C.E.), “where the god Amen-Re proclaimed: I let them see your majesty as a shooting star, that scatters fire as it sheds its flame.”

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

מאי זיקין אמר שמואל ככבא דשביט ואמר שמואל
 נהירי לי שבילי ושמאי כשבילי דנהרדעא
 לבר מככבא דשביט דל ידענא מאי
 (Goldschmidt 1933: 216)

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.
 (Simon and Epstein 1948: 361)

Rabbi Samuel’s knowledge that זיקין “comets” meant שְׁבִיט reflects his excellent knowledge of Aramaic/

Hebrew vocabulary; and lexicographers since Rabbi Samuel have had no problem with זִיקָה. (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 زَيْقَا [zīqā]).

But the שְׁבִיט in Rabbi Samuel’s answer was a different matter. As recognized by Staerk, Gemser, and Milgrom, this שְׁבִט is *not* the שֶׁבֶט meaning “scepter, ruler, tribe,” nor is it related to Šabaṭu, a Babylonian loanword, for the eleventh month of the Jewish calendar. Rather it is the cognate of the Arabic سَبَط (sabiṭ/sabaṭ) and سِبَاطَة (sibâṭat/ sūbâṭat), all meaning “lank, loose, long hair” (Lane 1872: 1294; Wehr 1979: 458; Hava 1915: 306–307). Thus, Rabbi Samuel’s כְּכַבָּא דְּשְׁבִיט meant literally “a star having long hair,” similar to the well attested use in Arabic of نجم ذو ذنب (najmu ḍū ḍanab) “a star having a tail.” (Levy [1924: 496] cited the Arabic سَبَط (sabiṭ/ sabaṭ) but gave no definition for it—although he noted for כְּכַבָּא דְּשְׁבִיט “*der Planet Schebit. Raschi erklärt das W. vom vorg שְׁבִט: der Stern, dessen Schweif wei ein Stab herabhängt.*”)

Support for interpreting כְּכַבָּא דְּשְׁבִיט 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 *komē*, the Greek word for “hair of the head,” to mean “luminous tail of a comet.” Aristotle then uses the derived word *komtēs*, “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 זיקין “comets” means ככבא דשביט “a star having lank hair” finds its parallel in the Greek/English κομήτης/*comet* “a star having long hair.” Consequently, another definition of שבת—along with its cognate سبط (*sabit/sabaṭ*) “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* 58^b and recognized that

Some commentators have taken their cue from *kôkăb* “star,” and sought a parallel meaning for *šēbet*, “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, *Berakôt* 58^b; Levy IV, 496, s.v. *šebîṭ*), extending the usual meaning of the Hebrew *šēbet*.

But as already noted, it is not a matter of an “extended meaning” of שבת “staff” becoming also שבת “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 *šibtu* and the Egyptian cognate *ša-ba-ṭ* (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 כֹּכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב יֵרֶךְ could mean, “A ‘star’ exercises sovereignty in Israel.” Likewise, he suggested that שֶׁבֶט “meteor,” had a “figurative connotation of ‘sovereign, head,’ namely, one who bears a scepter,” and that שֶׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל 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 *drkt* “dominion.” However, Levine retained the traditional meaning of יֵרֶךְ “to tread, to march forth” but opted to follow Rabbi Samuel’s definition and read שֶׁבֶט 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.)²³

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 typonym, 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 **אָת** and **וְאָת** as prepositions (and added a third **אָת**) 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 **וְאָת** with **אָתָה** "to come," but he is incorrect in deleting the **ה** of **הַנְּחָלִים**. The words have been misdivided. The **ה** goes with the preceding **אָת** as the vowel letter *ô* (see Cross and Freedman 1952: 57). This **אָתָה** is the infinitive absolute having the force of a finite verb (see GKC 75ⁿ and 113^y, McDaniel 1968b: 208–210).

3. Christensen emended MT **וְאָשַׁד** to read **אָשַׁר** "he marched through." But the emendation is unnecessary. The noun **שׁוּד** "torrent" may also occur in Isa 13:6, **כַּשֵּׁד מְשׁוּדֵי יְבוּא**, "(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 אָשַׁר as the verb “to march forth.” But his proposal to delete the word is unnecessary since the verb אָשַׁד need not be emended to אָשַׁר, nor does the text have a redundant use of אָשַׁר “to march forth.” The MT נָטָה is better read as an adverbial accusative, either the participle “quaking” or the noun “(earth) quake,” from the biliteral base נָט, with probable by-forms נוֹט, נָטַט, נָטָה, like stems נָךְ and נָךְ (GKC^a 77, Dahood, 1968: 368). Here the *Hiph^{il}* לְשַׁבֵּת “to destroy” reflects the elision of the הָ (GKC 53^q), like the לְשַׁבִּית in Amos 8:4.

5. Christensen follows a traditional reading of this line. The proposal here calls for reading נִשְׁעַן as the energetic *Qal* 1cpl imperfect of שׁוּעַ, a cognate of Arabic سَوَّغ “to enter easily” (Lane 1872: 1468b, 1469a, especially noticing the quotation سَعَّ فِي مَسَاغَا “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 לֹ is an emphatic לֹ, 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. שׁוּעַ is possibly attested in Ezek 23:23, where MT פְּקוֹד וְשׁוּעַ וְקוֹעַ, traditionally read as place names, “Pekod, and Shoa and Koa,” could better be read: פְּקוֹד יְשׁוּעוֹ קוֹעַ “attacking (see Isa 26:14) they will easily enter the plain,” reading an infinitive absolute פְּקוֹד, used with the *yqtl* of שׁוּעַ, followed by the adverbial accusative קוֹעַ, which is related to Arabic قَاع “an even place, a depressed plain” (Lane 1893: 2994).

6. See below, pages 74–77.

7. The versions took the MT פְּאַתָּי “corners” in a metaphorical sense meaning “leaders.” The Septuagint reads καὶ ἀναστῆσεται

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ἄνθρωπος ἐξ Ἰσραηλ καὶ θραύσει τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς Μωαβ, “a man shall spring out of Israel and shall crush the princes of Moab.” Similarly, the Vulgate has *et consurget virga de Israhel et percuetiet duces Moab* “and the scepter/rod of Israel shall rise up and strike the leaders of Moab.” The Peshitta’s **ܘܒܘܪܐ ܕܝܫܪܐܝܝܠ ܕܡܘܒܐܝܢܐ** (*ganbura³ dēmo³ab*) and the Targum’s **וְבַרְבֵּי מוֹאָב** also interpreted it as “leaders.”

8. Here Seth equals the Aramean Shutu/Suti, the *Swtw* mentioned in the Execration texts. (See Albright, 1944: 207–233.) This cannot be the Seth of Gen 4:25 or Luke 3:38. Note that Targum Onkelos reads **בְּרֵי אֲיִנְשָׁא** “sons of man” for the MT **בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל**. 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 **זָנָה** may be the verb “to fornicate,” but it is also a homograph for the verb “to commit idolatry,” as evidenced by the Arabic cognate **زُون** (*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 **לָא** is the cognate of Ugaritic *l* (Gordon, 1965: 76, 425 [#1339]) and the Arabic **ل** (*la*) “verily” (Lane 1893:3006). See also note 5, above.

12. Woudstra (1981: 348) identified Balaam as the antecedent of the 3ms suffix of the מִיָּדוֹ “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 מִיָּדוֹ.

13. See Chapter 7, “Moses was Made to Despair,” in my book, *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available on the internet at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/>.

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 נ and the ת, see Delitzsch, 1920: 118 §129^b.

17. Reading הִלִּיֹתָם or הִלִּיֹתָיו for the MT מוֹדֵלָיו, the New JPS translation shifts from a water motif to arboreal 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 °Alla 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.”

19. On the confusion of וי and מ, see Delitzsch, 1920: 120 §132^c and 132^e. On the absence of an נ, see GKC § 19^k 68^{h,k} and note the variants ותאזרני and ותזרני in the parallel texts of Ps 18:40 and 2 Sam 22:40. In 11QpaleoLev (Freedman and Matthews 1985: 45–46, 80) וירת appears for ויראת in Lev 25:36, חטתיכם for חטאתיכם in Lev 26:18, and תאבו for תבו in Lev 26:21. See also Delitzsch 1920: 21–22, §14^{a–c}. The masculine plural אֲנִיִּם (rather than אֲנֹתָם) appears also in Psa 117:1.

20. Compare Levine’s statement (2000: 193), made with reference to identifying שָׁתַם “opened” (Num 24:3,16) with the rare שְׁתַם 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 **אֲדַרְכִּי נַפְשִׁי** of Judg 5:21 as "my body marches powerfully," used in support of his conclusion that the verb **דָּרַךְ** need not be identified with the Ugaritic cognate *drkt* "dominion." When **נַפֶּשׁ** means "body" (as in Lev 21:11, Num 6:6, and Hag 2:13) it generally refers to a "dead body" (i.e., **נַפֶּשׁ מֵת**). For an entirely different interpretation of Judges 5:21, see McDaniel 1983: 230–231 or <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/Deborah.pdf> (194).

VII

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

INTRODUCTION

Sara Japhet (1993: 110) noted concerning the now popular “Prayer of Jabez”¹ 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

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

וַיְהִי יַעֲבֵץ נִכְבָּד מֵאַחָיו
וְאִמּוֹ קָרְאָהּ שְׁמוֹ יַעֲבֵץ לְאֹמֶר כִּי יִלְדֹתִי בְעֶצֶב:
וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲבֵץ לֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר
אִם־בְּרַךְ תְּבָרַכְנִי וְהִרְבִּיתָ אֶת־גְּבוּלֵי
וְהִיתָה יַדְךָ עִמִּי וְעָשִׂיתָ מִרְעָה לְבִלְתִּי עֲצָבִי
וַיַּבֵּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר־שָׂאֵל:

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,
“O 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 ἦν Ἰγαβης ἔνδοξος ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ
καὶ ἡ μήτηρ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰγαβης
λέγουσα ἕτεκον ὡς γαβης
καὶ ἐπεκαλέσατο Ἰγαβης τὸν θεὸν Ἰσραηλ λέγων
ἐὰν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσῃς με καὶ πληθύνῃς τὰ ὄριά μου

PRAYER OF JABEZ

καὶ ἦ ἡ χεὶρ σου μετ' ἐμοῦ
καὶ ποιήσεις γνώσιν τοῦ μὴ ταπεινώσαί με
καὶ ἐπήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς πάντα ὅσα ἠτήσατο

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].²
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

ܡܝܢ ܕܒܢܝ ܐܝܬܝܗ ܕܝܓܒܝܫ ܕܝܓܒܝܫ ܕܝܓܒܝܫ ܕܝܓܒܝܫ
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Lamsa's Peshitta (modified)

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 peperit eum in dolore invocavit vero Iabes Deum Israhel dicens si

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 Jabez was more honourable than any of his brethren, and his mother called his name Jabez, 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.

Targum³

והוה יעבץ [הוא עתניאל] יקיר [וחכים באוריתא]
 יתיר מן אחוהי ואמיה קרת שמיה יעבץ ארום בצערא
 ילדתיה: וצלי יעבץ לאלהא דישראל למימר
 אין ברכא תברכנני בבניא ותסני ית תחומי בתלמידיא
 ותהי ידך עמי || במשקל ומטרא ותעביד לי חבריא
 דכמתי מן בגלל דלא ירגזנני יצרא בישא ||
 ואיתי יהוה ית מה דשאל:

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.’”⁴

Everyone, however, is in agreement that the meaning of the Hebrew root עבץ, which appears in Jabez’s name, has been very problematic. Many commentators, not finding the root עבץ in their Hebrew lexicons, assumed that עבץ was (via a transposition of the ב and צ) a variant of ענב “sorrow, pain, labor.” A wordplay seemed obvious once the initial asseverative כִּי “indeed,” spoken by Jabez’s mother, was read as the conjunction כִּי “because.”⁵ This *assumption* was, unfortunately, widely circulated as a *fact*.⁶

The translation of the name יַעֲבֵז in the Peshitta of Num 4:9 as **حبر** (*‘ayny*) “My Eye”—rather than being transliterated as **محبي** (*ya^cbes*) 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 **עבז** to be meaningless nor a wordplay with **עצב** “sorrow, pain” which appears twice in these two verses.⁷

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

But the most helpful information for derivation of the **עבז** of “Jabez” comes from the *Lexicon Heptaglotton* of Edmund Castell (1669: 2644). He cited the Arabic **عبس** (*‘abiṣa*) which was omitted from the later Arabic lexicons of Lane (1883), Hava (1915), Dozy (1927), and Wehr (1979). Castell defined **عبس** (*‘abiṣa*) 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 oculus 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 עֵבֶץ 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 עֵבֶץ, 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 “Premie”—an appropriate name for a premature baby.⁸ According to the Septuagint, what Jabez’s mother said was simply ἔτεκεν ὡς γαβης, “I have born very quickly.” Therefore, perhaps with a chuckle, she called him “*Gabēs*”/“Jabez,” i.e., “Speedy/Premie.” This interpretation has a ring of authenticity; whereas the alleged wordplay with יֵעֶבֶץ “Jabez” and עֵצֶב “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) עֵבֶץ “a sudden, unexpected appearance” was lost. My translation, given above, follows the γαβης (= עֵבֶץ) of the Septuagint.

On the other hand, if the MT עֵצֶב 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 עֵצֶב “labor, worry, pain, hardship, sorrow” when speaking about such a life threatening experience.⁹ 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 "Premie."¹⁰ But, far from being a pejorative, יַעֲבֵץ "Premie" or "Speedy" could well have been a name of endearment, as well as a statement of fact.¹¹

JABEZ: HONORED OR AFFLICTED?

If יַעֲבֵץ means "Premie," then there are good reasons to challenge the traditions and translations which interpret the MT נִכְבָּד, a *Niph^eal* (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 מֵאֲחָיו נִכְבָּד 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 כָּבַד "heavy, weighty" permitted polarized meanings, with the nouns כְּבוֹד "honor, glory" and כְּבִדָּת "heaviness, difficulty." The verb כִּבֵּד, in all its various forms, could mean either "to be honored" or "to be burdensome."¹² In contrast, the Syriac and Arabic cognates of כִּבֵּד did not permit such polarized meanings. The Syriac כַּבַּ (kabad) meant only "to move to wrath, to be angry" (Payne Smith 1903: 203); and the Arabic noun كَبَد (kabad) always meant "difficulty, distress, affliction, trouble," with the verb كَابَدَ (kâbada) meaning "he endured, struggled or contended

with (difficulties).” Lane (1885: 2584) cited as an example *Sura* 90: 4 of the *Qurʾan*, “Verily, we have created man in difficulty (فی کبد [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 עֶצֶב “pain, labor” (4:9); but it does not explain why Jabez used עֶצֶב with reference to himself (4:10).¹⁴ Knoopers, following exegetical tradition, noted that עֶצֶב “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 עֶצֶב “pain, labor” in the first place. Had Jabez been a big heavy (כִּבֵּד) baby who caused pain for his mother, he could have been named something like *Ithchabed* (אֵית־כִּבֵּד) “Fatty/Hefty,”¹⁵ rather than יֶעֱבֵץ “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 כבד 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 מַרְעָה “sickness” and עֶצֶב “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 *ʿim* ('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 *ʿim* 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 אִם is the cognate of the Arabic أَيْم (*ʿaymu*) and أَم (*ʿami*) appearing in the expression أَيْمُ اللَّهِ (*ʿaymu ʿlallahi*) "I swear by God." This expressoin is a variation of أَيْمُنُ اللَّهِ (*ʿaymunu ʿlallahi*). Along with the biblical examples of the optative אִם cited by Gesenius, these Arabic phrases provide additional commentary on Jabez's first word. The Arabic يَمِنُ (*yumina*) in form V means "he looked for a blessing," being a synonym of تَبَرَّكُ (*tabarraka*) (= בָּרַךְ) "he looked for a blessing, he was blessed."¹⁷ The MT אִם-בָּרַךְ אֱת-בְּרַכְתִּי, "Ah, Please! Would that you truly bless me," is a perfect match with the Arabic cognates أَيْم (*ʿaymu*) and تَبَرَّكُ (*tabarraka*), i.e., having the particle אִם initiate an entreaty or oath, which is then followed by the plea for a blessing (בָּרַךְ).

JABEZ REQUESTED PEOPLE, NOT PROPERTY

At first glance Jabez's request, וְהִרְבִּיתָ אֶת-גְּבוּלִי, "would that you increase/enlarge my territory/border," appears to have gone unanswered—despite the closing statement that

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

וּמִשְׁפַּחַת סֹפְרִים יָשְׁבוּ [יִשְׁבִּי] יַעֲבִיז
 תְּרַעְתִּים שְׁמֵעַתִּים שׁוֹכְתִים
 הַמָּה הַקִּינִים הַבָּאִים מִחַמַּת
 אָבִי בֵית־רֶכָב:

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 located¹⁸ it certainly could not have been large or enlarged. Consequently, interpreters have taken the גְּבוּלִי “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 גְּבוּלִי spoken by Jabez comes from the Targum, which reads,

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

Along with the תְּחוּמֵי “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 גְבוּלָה, it is obvious that the Targum translators and some of the rabbis who contributed to the Talmud were aware of a word גּוּבָל which was the cognate to the Arabic جبل (*jibill / jubull*), جبيل (*jabîl*) “a company of men, a great company of men.”¹⁹ According to Lane (1875: 376) the feminine جبلة (*jibillat*) signified the same as أمة (*‘ummat*) “a nation or people.”²⁰ Thus, a very reasonable conclusion is that Jabez prayed for an increase of his *people* (גְבוּלָה), not his *property* (גְבוּלָה).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 גְבוּלָה had any overtone of “real estate” it was really secondary.

A HINT OF JABEZ’S DIALECT

Curtis (1910: 108) noted well that the וְעָשִׂיתָ מִרְעָה of Jabez’s fourth request “is difficult to translate.” The verb

עשה “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 γυῶσις “knowledge,” indicating a *Vorlage* with an erroneous מרעה for the MT מִרְעָה. It is the MT מִרְעָה which is ambiguous.

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

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

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

- (5) רֵעָה / רֵעָה “shepherd/shepherdess,”
- (6) רֵעָה “female companion,”
- (7) רֵעָה “desire” (an Aramaic loanword),
- (8) רֵעָה “evil, misery, distress” (from the stem רָעַע).

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 מִרְעָה. The Targum’s חבֵּרִיא “companions” is related to options (3) and (4) above, with מרעים “friends, companions” having been read for the MT מִרְעָה. The Targum’s יצרא בישא “evil inclination” clearly reflects option (8).

But none of these obvious meanings would require the anomalous *dagesh* in the initial מ of מִרְעָה, found even in the Leningrad and Aleppo codices. The *dagesh* doubles the מ,

as if *מרעה* were to be read as *ממרעה*, with one *מ* for the preposition “from” and the second *מ* being *the first letter of the stem*—not simply a nominal prefix on the stem *רעה*. If so, the root *מרע* would be a variant of *מָרַץ* “to be sick,” which is the cognate of Aramaic *ܡܪܥܐ*, Syriac *ܡܪܥܐ* (*mēraʿ*), and Arabic *مرض* (*marīḍa*)—all meaning “to be sick” (*KBS* : 637).

Jabez’s use of *מרעה* instead of *מרצה* may well reflect his Kenite dialect. Thus, this ninth definition must be added to the eight interpretations of *מִרְעָה* noted above. It is possible, given the ambiguity of *מרעה*, 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 *מִרְעָה* with *עֲצָבִי* “my suffering, pain” is sufficient reason for reading *מִרְעָה* as “sickness.” In so speaking, he provided the reader with another hint of his native dialect. (The first hint being his use of *אִם* “Ah! Please!”—analogous to the *أيم* [*ʾaymu*] and *أم* [*ʾami*] in Arabic, noted above.)

SEVERAL SCRIBAL ERRORS

The NKJ, surprisingly, has “that I may not cause pain” for the MT *לְבַלְתִּי עֲצָבִי*—as if the suffixed infinitive *עֲצָבִי* were the *Hiphʿil* jussive *אֲעֲצִיב*. The KJV has “that it may not grieve me,” and it remains preferable, along with those translations which make the *’* suffix of *עֲצָבִי* possessive or objective. More problematic, though, are the translations of the Peshitta and Vulgate. The Syriac has *ܕܠܐ ܡܪܥܐ ܟܝ*

(*dēla² neštalaṭ bak*) “that it may not have power over you.” But Syriac ܘܠܗܐ (= שלט “to rule” = سلطان “Sultan”) cannot be a translation of עֲצַב; but it can be a translation of עֲצָם “to be strong, to protect.” Thus, in the *Vorlage* used by the Syriac translators a ܘ was misread or written as a ܘ.²⁴

The Vulgate translated the לְבַלְתִּי עֲצָבִי as *non opprimi* “not to be oppressed,” which became in the Douay Rheims “from being oppressed.” But *opprimo* cannot be a translation of עֲצַב; but it can be a translation of עָצַר “to press, squeeze, restrain, retain.” Thus, in the *Vorlage* used by the Latin translators a ܘ was misread or written as a ܘ.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The general consensus among modern commentators that the name יַעֲבֵז (Jabez) is a variant of עֲצַב “sorrow, pain” does not have the support of the versions. In the Peshitta, the עֲצַב spoken by Jabez’s mother was translated as حَمِي “My Eye,” but the עֲצַב spoken by Jabez himself was translated as ܘܠܗܐ “overpower.” In the Vulgate, the עֲצַב spoken by Jabez’s mother became *dolore* “pain,” but the עֲצַב spoken by Jabez became *opprimi* “oppression.” Similarly, in the Targum, the עֲצַב of Jabez’s mother became צַעֲרָא “pain, grief,” but from Jabez’s lips it became יִרְגַזֵּנִי “it may provoke me.” According to the transliteration used in the Septuagint, Jabez’s mother did *not* say עֲצַב “pain,” but עֲבִי (= γαβης) —a word which was not meaningless to her or to the author of the Jabez vignette. But the עֲצַב spoken by Jabez became ταπεινωσαι “to humiliate.”

Thanks primarily to the lexicon of Edmund Castell, the meaning of the Septuagint's $\gamma\alpha\beta\eta\varsigma$ and the Hebrew עֲבֵיץ has survived.²⁵ 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 גְּבִילִים "a great company of people," not גְּבִילִים "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 גְּבִילִים "people," two other words were re-defined in light of alternative cognates, namely, כָּבַד "to be afflicted" and מִרְעָה (= מִרְצָה) "sickness." The two Hebrew lexemes with Arabic cognates that need to be recognized in any new Hebrew lexicon are (1) אָם "Ah! Please!" the cognate of $\text{أيم} / \text{أم}$ (*aymu / ami*), and (2) עֲבֵיץ the cognate of عَبَس (*abiṣa*) "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,

כִּי חֵלֶק יְהוָה עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחֲלָתוֹ

“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 Deuteronimic 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 עֲצָב / עֲצָב, 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 ἔτεκον ὡς γαβης, “I have born very quickly.” My translation on page 90 follows the γαβης (= עֲבִי) of the Septuagint, coupled with the definitions of this עֲבִי which survive in Castell’s lexicon of 1669 and the definition cited in the *KBS* lexicon of 1994.

APPENDX

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 wouldst keep me from evil that it may not drive me! And God granted him that which he requested. ‘Oh that thou wouldst 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 wouldst 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 Shemeathites, 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 Suchathites. 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 ὤς γαβης, which is meaningless in Greek, but an adequate transliteration of יַעֲבִיץ, for the γ was commonly used to transliterate the ע. The intensifying ὤς is the translation of the Hebrew פִּי. The important thing to note is that γαβης transliterates the stem עֲבִיץ, not עֲצֵב — suggesting that the Hebrew *Vorlage* used by the Septuagint translators had עֲבִיץ rather than עֲצֵב “sorrow, pain.” The meaning of עֲבִיץ was apparently unknown to the translators, therefore they simply transliterated the word, similar to the transliteration of the enigmatic הַלְמוּ, מַדְהַרוּת, and מַרוּז 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 יַעֲבִיץ 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 יַ probably reflects the influence of the ע, which is almost always preceded by an *a* vowel.
5. Note that the Targum translated פִּי as אֲרִימַם “lo, behold.”

6. Another possible Arabic cognate of the Hebrew **עצב** is **عصب** (*‘aṣaba*) “he bound, he drew (people) together,” which in form V means “they leagued, or collected themselves together,” with **التعصب** (*‘tta‘aṣṣubu*) used in a religious context meaning a “zealot.” The feminine nouns of this stem are (1) **عصبة** (*‘uṣbat*) “a company of men who league together to defend one another . . . a company of devotees” and (2) **عصبة** (*‘aṣabat*) “a man’s people, or party, who league together for defense.” The adjective **عصبي** (*‘aṣabî*) indicates “one who aids his people or party . . . or one zealous in the cause of a party” (Lane 1874: 2058–2059). However, an **עצב** with any of these meanings would not fit the context of I Chron 4:9–10.

7. Advocates for a wordplay involving **עבץ** and **עצב** need to consider also (1) the Arabic **غفص** (*‘gafaṣa*) “he came suddenly, or unexpectedly” (Lane 1877: 2275; Hava 530), which would involve not only the transposition of the **ב** and **צ**, but the interchange of **ב** and **פ** as well; and (2) the Arabic **عضب** (*‘adaba*) “it rendered (him) weak or infirm: deprived him of the power of motion”; **العضب** (*‘al‘ud^{un}*) “a state of the privation of the power of motion, and unsoundness, and lameness”; **معضوب** (*ma‘dûb^{un}*) “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 **עצב**, and Jabez must have been a “heavy” (**כבד**) 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 יְעֲבֹדֵי 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.”

12. See *BDB* 457–459; Jastrow 1903: 606–607, and *KBS* II: 455–456.

13. Compare the Syriac ܝܩܪ (*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 אֵית־כָּבֵד (with the Aramaic אֵית instead of the Hebrew יֵשׁ) is simply an attempt at a wordplay with the well-known Ichabod (אֵי־כְבוֹד) of I Sam 4:21.

16. See above, note 7. Jabez’s עֵצֵב, 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 ايم الله (*aymu ʿallahi*) note also Castell 1669: 100 and 1615, “*juramentum per Dei nomen*”; and “*ברכה, felicitas : prosperitus Benedictio : rerum copia, oppulentia . . . felix, prosper, fortunatas, 2, adjuravit, ad ajuramentum adegit eum petiitve 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 אִוְנִיָּה “people, nation, government, gentile.” For the Arabic أُمَّة (*‘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.”

21. For the confusion of the ך and the ך, see Delitzsch, 1920: 103–105, §103^{a-c}.

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 Knooppers (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 ך and ך, see Delitzsch, 1920: 113–114, §114^{a-c}.

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 Heptaglotton* 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 ἐγενήθη μερὶς κυρίου λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ἰακωβ
σχοίνισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ Ἰσραηλ

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־יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לֹו יְהוָה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסִגְלָתוֹ

For Yahweh has chosen Jacob for himself,
Israel as his own possession.

VIII

A PSALM BY A BLIND POET

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 splendor 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 depends 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 מְגִיד and מוֹסְפְּרִים appearing in 1:2 (MT), אָמַר coming in 1:4 and 1:5, and דְּבָרִים, נִשְׁמָע, and קוֹלִים found in 1:5. Although

רוּחַ “wind” and רָעַם “thunder” do not appear in these verses, the קוֹל in 1:5 is most likely a synonym of רָעַם—like the “thunder” appearing in twelve verses in the KJV for קוֹל.

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).

Psa 19:5b–7 (MT)

לְשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם־אֱהָל בְּהֵם
 וְהוּא כְּחָתָן יֵצֵא מִחַפְתּוֹ
 יִשִּׁישׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּיִן אֶרֶח:
 מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ וְתִקּוּפָתוֹ עַל־קִצְוֹתָם
 וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחַמָּתוֹ

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)

ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ ἔθετο τὸ σκῆνωμα αὐτοῦ
 καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς νυμφίος ἐκπορευόμενος ἐκ παστοῦ αὐτοῦ
 ἀγαλλιάσεται ὡς γίγας δραμεῖν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ
 ἀπ' ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἢ ἕξοδος αὐτοῦ
 καὶ τὸ κατάντημα αὐτοῦ ἕως ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ
 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃς ἀποκρυβήσεται τὴν θερμὴν αὐτοῦ

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 לְשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם־אֱהָל בְּהֵם 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 בְּשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם אֱהָלוֹ, with the
 MT בְּהֵם conspicuously missing. Several commentators, in-
 cluding Weiser (1969: 199), needlessly emended the בְּהֵם to

בִּים so as to read “(God) set a tent for the sun in the sea.” Dahood (1966: 122) opted to translate the בָּהֶם “in them” as “from/after these” with the force of the conjunction “then.”

However, the בָּהֶם “in them” (i.e., the firmament and the heavens) should be retained as original, and the ל of לִשְׁמֹשׁ should be read as the emphatic ל “indeed, verily,” much like the ל in Lam 4:3, where לִאֲכֹזֵר means “was indeed cruel.”⁶ Moreover, the MT שָׁם “he set” needs to be repointed as שָׁם “scorching” and read as the cognate of Arabic *سموم* (*samûm*) “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.⁷ Instead of reading the MT אָהֵל as אָהֵל “tent” it should be read as אָהֵל “shining,” the *Hiph[‘]il* of which occurs in Job 25:5, עֲדֹ-יָרֵחַ, וְלֹא יִאֲהִיל הֵן עֲדֹ-יָרֵחַ “if even the moon does not shine” (NKJ).⁸ Thus, the MT of 19:5b, לִשְׁמֹשׁ שָׁם אָהֵל בָּהֶם “for the sun he set his tabernacle in them” can be read as לִשְׁמֹשׁ שָׁם אָהֵל בָּהֶם “*Verily, the scorching sun is shining in them,*” i.e., in the heavens.

The poet’s seeming use of חָתָן “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 חָתָן in 19:6 (MT) really means “bridegroom,” it appears much more likely that the poet chose חָתָן because

of its aural proximity to הָתָה “to snatch up (fire, coals)” and מִחַתָּה “a fire-holder.” The MT הָתָה could be repointed as הָתָה (*scriptio defectiva* for הָתָה) “a fire-carrier,” in which case the original הָתָה would be to הָתָה what גָּאוֹן “pride” is to גָּאָה , what הַמּוֹן “noise” is to הָמָה , and what הָזוֹן “vision” is to הָזָה .⁹ Removing the simile of the “bridegroom” from 19:6 (MT) and restoring the “fire-carrier” motif is supported by 19:7b, $\text{וְיֵאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחַמָּתוֹ}$, “and nothing is hidden from his heat,” i.e., “from the heat of the sun.”¹⁰ 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 הַנִּפְּה “canopy, chamber” is a cognate of Arabic *حاف / حفيف* (*ḥaffa / ḥafīf*) “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 הַנִּפְּה in focus, the transition was easily made to the תִּקְוֵה “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 **אמר** “speech” (vss. 3, 4), **דעת** “knowledge” (v. 3), **דברים** “words” (v. 4), **קול** “sound” (v. 4), **קוה** “voice” (v. 5) and **מלים** 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 **תורה** “law,” **עדות** “testimony,” **פקוד** “precept,” **מצוה** “commandment,” **אמרה** “word” (for MT **יררת** “fear”), and **משפט** “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 ³El 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 גִּבּוֹר as “athlete.”
3. For this meaning of קָוָה / קָוָה, compare Job 1:5,

וַיְהִי כִּי הִקְיִפוּ יְמֵי הַמִּשְׁתֶּה
καὶ ὡς ἂν συνετελέσθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ πότου
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 קָוָה “their line” (KJV) or “their voice, sound” (Septuagint, Vulgate) or “their chord = music” (BDB 876) is probably a *double entendre* involving (1) קָוָה stem II, “to call, to proclaim,” as advocated by Barth (1893: 29, followed by Dahood 1965:

121–122), and (2) קָוָה, stem III, the cognate of Arabic *قوة / قوی* (*qawiya/quwwat*) “to be strong, strength, power, might, force” (Lane 1893: 2997). The Septuagint’s φθόγγος “voice” reflects the meaning of stem II. The widely recognized מִלִּיהֶם “their words” can be added to the above list of auditory terms in this passage.

6. See McDaniel 1968: 206–207; 2000: 11, 20, 156, 181–182, 211; 2003: 95–96, 129–130; 144, 148, 203, 224, 230, 324, and 332.

7. The ע"ע stem שָׁמַע would be analogous to תָּמַע which has the lengthened adjective תָּמִיעַ and the shorter תָּמַע, both meaning “complete, sound” (BDB 1070). The שָׂרַע “scorching” is to שָׂרַע what תָּמַע is to תָּמִיעַ.

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

9. See GKC 85^u for nouns with a ך affixed. For *scriptio defectiva* of nouns in this class, note הַמְנִיעַ in Joel 4:14, הַמְנִיעַ in Ezek 29:19, and הַרְבֵּן in I Sam 13:21 and הַרְבֵּנוֹת 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

לְמַנְצַח לְדָוִד לְהִזְכִּיר:
אֱלֹהִים לְהַצִּילֵנִי
יְהוָה לְעֲזָרְתִּי חוֹשָׁה:

NAS

For the choir director.

A Psalm of David; for a memorial.

O God, *hasten* to deliver me;
O LORD, hasten to my help!

LXX

εἰς τὸ τέλος τῷ Δαυιδ εἰς ἀνάμνησιν
εἰς τὸ σῶσαί με κύριον
ὁ θεός εἰς τὴν βοήθειάν μου πρόσχεε

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 אֱלֹהִים, “O God,” followed by the sequential infinitive לְהַצִּילֵנִי “to deliver me.” The original finite verb which began the verse survives in the לְהִזְכִּיר “to hold in

memory” of the superscription. This הַזְכִּיר was mistakenly read as the *Hiph^cil* infinitive—hence its being given secondarily the preposition ל and made the final word of the superscription.

However, this הַזְכִּיר was a *Hiph^cil* imperative and was originally the first word of the psalm itself: “Remember, O God, to save me”⁴ On the other hand, if the infinitive הַזְכִּיר was always a part of the superscription, the text would have included the infinitive *and* the imperative: הַזְכִּיר הַזְכִּיר (לְ),” with the imperative הַזְכִּיר having dropped out by haplography. Thus, there is no need to assume that the imperative רְצֵה “be pleased,” found in Psa 40:14, was ever a part of Psa 70:1.⁵ A typical 3 + 3 bi-colon can be restored simply by borrowing the הַזְכִּיר 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 רְצֵה “be pleased” in 40:14, the יַחַד “together” in 40:15; the לְסַפּוֹתָהּ “to snatch it away” in 40:15; and the לִי “to me” in 40:16. The other eight variations⁶ between the psalms are

MT Psalm 40:	MT Psalm 70
v.14 יְהוָה	v. 1 אֱלֹהִים
v. 16 יִשְׁמַר	v. 4 יִשׁוּבוּ ⁷
v. 17 יְהוָה	v. 5 אֱלֹהִים

v. 17	תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ	v. 5	יְשׁוּעָתְךָ ⁸
v. 18	אֲדַנִּי	v. 5	אֱלֹהִים
v. 18	יִחְשַׁב לִי	v. 6	חַוְשָׁה-לִי ⁹
v. 18	עֲזָרְתִּי	v. 6	עֲזָרִי
v. 18	אֱלֹהֵי	v. 6	יְהוָה

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

בְּמִגְלַת-סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלַי

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 **בְּמִגְלַת סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלַי** 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 **מִגְלַת-סֵפֶר** “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 **מִגְלַת-סֵפֶר** “scroll of scripture” with the Torah of Moses, or the Deuteronomic 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.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):

40:7b. In the scroll of scripture it is written about me:

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!

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.

40:1–6. I waited patiently for Yahweh; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the *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 *skeptics* or *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.*”¹¹ 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)

וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שְׁאוֹן מִטֵּיט הַיְיֹון

RSV

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

LXX

καὶ ἀνήγαγέν με ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας
καὶ ἀπὸ πηλοῦ ἰλύος

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 **שְׁאוֹן בּוֹר** 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.¹² The שָׂאֵן in Psa 40:2a is actually the cognate of Arabic ثوى (*tawaya*) “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 ثوى (*tuwiya*) meaning “he was buried.” The noun مَثْوَى (*matwan*) 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, שָׂאֵן would mean “the final resting place” and the בּוֹר שָׂאֵן would be equal to “grave site” or “burial plot,” with the בּוֹר perhaps being read as בָּר “field, uncultivated ground.”

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

$\text{נִשְׂאָר בְּעִיר שְׁמָה וְנִשְׂאִיה יִכָּתֵשׂ עָר}$
 Desolation is left in the city,
 the gates are battered into ruins (RSV).
 $\text{καὶ καταλειφθήσονται πόλεις ἔρημοι}$
 $\text{καὶ οἴκοι ἐγκαταλελειμμένοι ἀπολοῦνται}$
 and cities shall be left desolate,
 and houses being left shall fall to ruin.

Hatch and Redpath (1897: 138, 366, 980) identified the ἐγκαταλελειμμένοι “ones being left” with the MT שָׂאֵיה and the ἀπολοῦνται “fall to ruin” with the MT יִכָּתֵשׂ . According to this analysis, the MT שַׁעַר “gate” has no equivalent in the Greek translation. They did not identify the οἴκοι of Isa 24:

12 (marked with a †) with any Hebrew stem. However, the οἴκοι reflects the MT שְׁאִיָּה (perhaps read as the plural שְׁאִיָּת [scriptio defectiva] in the Vorlage). This שְׁאִיָּת/שְׁאִיָּה, like the שְׁאִיָּה of Psa 40:2, is a cognate of the Arabic ثوى (*tawaya*) “he dwelt, or abode,” and مَثْوَى (*matwan*) “a place where one stays, dwells, or abides, an abode or a dwelling” i.e., the οἶκος of the Greek translation.¹³

Although the Septuagint translators of Psa 40:2 translated שְׁאִיָּה as ταλαιπωρίας “misery, distress” (as though it were from the root שָׂא—like the שְׂאָה וּמְשָׂה “distress and misery” in Job 30:3—rather than from the root שָׂה / שְׂאָה), the fact that the Septuagint translators rendered שְׁאִיָּה in Isa 24:12 as οἶκος is sufficient reason to add שְׂהָ, stem III, the cognate of ثوى (*tawaya*), to the lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, and to recognize that the שְׁאִיָּה of 40:2 was derived from it.

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

וְלֹא-פָנָה אֶל-רְהָבִים וְשָׂטִי כָזָב

RSV

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

LXX

καὶ οὐκ ἐνέβλεψεν εἰς ματαιότητας¹⁴
καὶ μανίας ψευδεῖς

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 **רָהַבִּים** of 40:4 as “proud, arrogant, boisterous” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1193), Dahood (1965: 243) paraphrased **רָהַבִּים** as “pagan idols.” He argued

The usual derivation of *r^ehābīm* from *rāhab*, “to be arrogant,” is supported by analogous *zēdīm*, a term for pagan deities in Ps xix 14 deriving from *zyd*, “to act stormily, arrogantly.” Hence the mythical sea monster Rahab is “the Arrogant One.” Note too that LXX translates *r^ehābīm* by *mataiōtētas* which elsewhere reproduces Hebrew words for “idols, gods.”

But this argument is weakened by two facts. First, the **זָרִים** in Psa 19:14 was translated in the LXX as ἀλλοτριῶν “strangers, foreigners” (as though **זָרִים** were **זָרִים**), not by ματαιότητας “vanities.” Secondly, **זָרִים** was used elsewhere to modify **אֲנָשִׁים** “men” (as the “godless men” in Jer 43:2) and used with **אִישׁ** “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 **רָהַבִּים** means “pagan idols.” Moreover, ματαιότης was used to translate **הַבֵּל**, **הַבֵּל**, **הַנָּה**, **רִיק**, and **שׁוֹא**, but never the words for idols, like **עֲצָב**, **סִמָּל**, **מִפְלָצָת**, and **אֱלִיל**.¹⁵

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

The ματαιότης “vanities” in the Septuagint and the **ܫܪܝܩܘܬܐ** (*sērīqūta*) “vanity, nothingness” in the Syriac of

Psa 40:4 suggested for Briggs (1906: 358; BDB 923) and others a *Vorlage* with הַבְּלִים/הַבֵּל for the MT רְהָבִים. But the translation of both רַהַב and הַבֵּל in Isa 30:7 as μάταια/ματαιά “vain” and as *sērîq/sērîqûta* (سَريق/سَريقُتة) “vanity,” supports the integrity of the MT רְהָבִים in 40:4.

In light of the Arabic راب/ريب (*raib/râba*) “it made me to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” ريب (*rayb*) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” and مرتاب (*murtâb*) “a sceptic in matters of religion,” (Lane 1867: 1197–1198), one can postulate the Hebrew root ריב, stem II, and its by-form רַהַב, which would be the cognate of Arabic ارهبه/رهب (*rahiba/ʿarhab*) “he feared, he frightened” (BDB 923; KBS 3: 1192), as in the phrase لم أرهب بك (*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 רַהַבִּים has four possible meanings: (1) proud, boisterous, frightening (2) the “Rahabeans,” 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 רַהַב to be a synonym of הַבֵּל, and (4) “doubtful, suspicious, skeptical.” Given the positive references to those who trust (מִבְּטָח/בְּטָח) in 40:3–4, a negative reference to skeptics and doubters (רְהָבִים) in 40:5 would be contextually appropriate.

The MT שֹׁטִי is generally translated as “those who turn aside” or “go astray” or “lapse into,” and is derived from שָׁטַח, a by-form of שָׁטָה/שָׁטָה “to swerve, to fall away” (BDB 962; KBS 4:1439). But the Septuagint translators interpreted it

differently.¹⁷ The $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ 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 מְשִׁמְרָה [= $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$] appearing twice in Hos 9:7–8). But the $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{שְׂטָא}$ “to become demented” and the $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{שְׂטָא} / \text{שְׂטִיָּה}$ “madman, fool” (as cited in Jastrow 1531, 1553) is a good match for the Septuagint’s $\mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ “false frenzies.”¹⁸

However, the MT כִּזְב is singular and the שְׂטִי 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 ר (Delitzsch 1920: 111 §109^a), the שְׂטִי in 40:4 may have been originally the שְׂטִר “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 سَطَر (*saṭara*) “he composed lies, falsehoods” and $\text{سَطْر} / \text{أسطورة}$ (*saṭr / ʿuṣṭûrat*) “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* $\text{שְׂטִי} / \text{כִּזְב}$ (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 $\text{שְׂטִר} / \text{כִּזְב}$

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 שֶׁטֶר כָּזָב “a written lie” compared to the thoughts, wonders, and law of Yahweh (40:5, 8).

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

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתָּ
 אֲזָנִים כָּרִיתָ לִּי
 עוֹלָה וְחַטָּאתָּ לֹא שְׂאֵלָתָּ:

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 ἠθέλησας

Sacrifice and offering you desired not.

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι (C^A B^S)

But a body you restored for me

ᾠτια δὲ ἔσκαψας μοι (Aquila)

But ears you covered/protected for me

ᾠτια δὲ κατεσκευάσας μοι (Symmachus)

But ears you prepared for me

ᾠτια κατηρτίσω μοι (Theodotian)

But ears you restored to me

όλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας
 Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not

Syriac Texts of Psa 40:6b (40:7b)¹⁹

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝ (Syro-Hex.)

pagrā^o den tēqant liy

then you restored the body for me

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝܢܝܢܝܢ (Syro-Hex. Margin)

°ednā^o den hēpārt liy

then you dug the ear for me

ܐܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܢܝܢܝܢ ܠܝܢܝܢܝܢܝܢ (Peshiṭta)

°ednā^o den nēqabt liy

then you pierced the ear for me

As is obvious from these translations the **אָזְנַיִם כָּרִיתָ לִּי** “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 **אָזְנַיִם כָּרִיתָ לִּי** had been corrupted in the *Vorlagen* used by some Greek and Syriac translators.

Briggs (1906: 358) cited a number of proposed emendations, like reading **עצם** “bone, body, self” for **אָזְנַיִם** “ears,” and offered his own emendation of **אִזְ בְּרִית לִּי** “then had I the covenant.” His assertions that “**אִזְ** translates as if it rd.

כּוֹנֵנֶתָ (*sic*) and had supplied the obj.” and “~~אז~~ mistook . . . אז for אֶזֶן” are, in my opinion, mistaken. Although his recognition that “~~אז~~ mistook ב for כ” was correct, the original spelling of the MT כָּרִיתָ “you dug” was *not* בְּרִית “covenant” but the *Piel* בְּרִיתָ “you set free” (discussed below on page 133).

Dahood (1966: 246), by (1) reading כָּרַתָּ “you cut, you circumcised” for MT כָּרִיתָ “you bored” and by (2) appealing to the אֶזְנוֹתָם עֵרְלָה אֶזְנוֹתָם “their uncircumcised ear” in Jer 6:10, paraphrased the אֶזְנוֹתָי כָּרִיתָ לִי as “so you made my ear receptive” (to divine inspiration). However, had the psalmist intended to say “you circumcised ears for me,” the noun עֵרְלָה “foreskin” and/or the verb מָוַל, 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 כ,²¹ I would emend the MT כָּרִיתָ “you dug” to בְּרִיתָ and derived it from ברה, stem III,²² the cognate of

- Aramaic ברי/ברא to get well, recover, to be strong or stout”; אבְּרִי “to make well”; and בְּרִיא/בְּרִי “healthy, strong, stout” (Jastrow 192; KBS 1: 154) and
- Arabic بَرِهَ (*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 أَبْرَهُ (*‘abrahu*) and بَارِعَ (*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 “*convalluit*”).

Consequently, the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ δὲ κατητίσω μοι, “but a body you restored for me,” in $\mathfrak{S}^{\text{ABS}}$ and the ܩܘܘܡܘܢܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܘܢܝܐ, “then you restored the body for me,” in the Syro-Hexapla would be very literal translations of the restored בְּרִית, without a separate word like נְנִיחָה or עֲצָם or פָּנָה for the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$.

The lack of any word in these Greek and Syriac translations for the MT אֲזַנִּים is due to a confusion in the respective *Vorlagen* of (1) אַז and ד, (2) אַ and נ, and (3) אַ and ׀,²³ which resulted in the אֲזַנִּים being read as אֲדִיִּן (= אֲדִיִּן), a by-form of עֲדִיִּן “yet, as yet, still,”²⁴ which was translated into Greek as δὲ and into Syriac as ܕܢܐ (*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 אֲזַנִּים בְּרִית לִי 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 $\mathfrak{S}^{\text{AqS}}$ and of the *Peshitta*, cited above, are obviously corrections to the MT.)

If the MT אֲזַנִּים בְּרִית was originally אֲזַנִּים בְּרִית, as I propose, the אֲזַנִּים is not likely to mean “ears.” The initial א of אֲזַנִּים could be a prosthetic א (GKC 19^m, 85^b) prefixed to the noun זַן or זִין, much like the variants (1) אֲזַרְעֵ and אֲזַרְעֵ “arm”; (2) אֲזַכָּרָה and אֲזַכָּר “memorial/remembrance”; (3) אֲזַק and אֲזַק “fetter, manacle”; (4) אֲזַבֵּ and אֲזַבֵּ “deceptive, lie”; and (5) אֲזַרְחִי and אֲזַרְחִי “Zerahite/Ezrahite.”

The noun זון or זין (or און or אין) would be the cognate of Arabic ذان (*dân*) and ذین (*dîn*) “a vice, fault, defect, or the like” (Lane 1867: 976, 989, 991; Castell 1669: 697, 700–701).²⁵ In the psalmist’s quotation from the “scroll of scripture” reference was made to the רעה “harm, trouble” others wanted to inflict (Psa 70:2; 40:14), but the psalmist also confessed that he had more than enough רעות 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 אונים/זנים was used as a synonym for רעות.

The אונים ברית לי in Psa 40:6b is the psalmist’s assertion that he was free of the אונים “vices/faults” which plagued him. Once כרית is emended to ברית, the verb ברה, discussed above on page 131, comes back into focus. Not only can it mean “(God) restored him to convalescence,” but, like its Arabic cognate برأ (*bara’a*), it could also mean “he was, or became clear or free,” and a causative *Pi^{el}* ברית (like the Arabic form IV) would mean “(God) made one guiltless . . . free from the fault, defect, imperfection, blemish, or vice.” The noun ברה, like the cognate برى (*bariy³*), 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):

זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חָפְצָתָּ

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας

Sacrifice and offering you desired not

עוֹלָה וַחֲטָאָה לֹא שָׂאֲלָתָּ

ὀλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας

Burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin you required not.

The psalmist was not making a forensic repudiation of the sacrificial cult²⁷ 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 (עֲזָרָה) and deliverance (פְּלִטָה) 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 אָז אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאתִי "then I said, 'behold I came.'"²⁸ While the MT בָּאתִי has been derived from the common verb בּוֹא "to come," it is better derived in this context from בּוֹא, stem II, which is the cognate of Arabic بَوَّأَ / بَأَى (*bawa²a* / *bā²a*) "he returned . . . he made himself answerable, responsible, or accountable for it [sin] by an inseparable obligation, . . . he acknowledged it or confessed it."²⁹ In prayer one says اَبُوْءُ اِلَيْكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ (*abu²u ilayka bini^cmatika*) "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

of this prayer could well have been a paraphrase of the psalmist words in 40:7a-8

הִנֵּה־בִּאֲתִי . . .
 לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי חַפְצָתִי
 וְתוֹרָתֶךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי

Behold I confessed:

“to do your will, O my God, is my desire
 your Law has been internalized.”³⁰

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 ὄλοκαυτώμα “burnt offering” (39:7) became the plural ὄλοκαυτώματα (10:6); (2) the οὐκ ἠθέλησας “you did not desire” in 39:7 became οὐκ εὐδόκησας “you did not find pleasure in” (10:5); (3) the τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλήθην “to do your will, O my God, I desire” (39:8b) became simply οὐ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεός τὸ θέλημά σου “to do, O God, your will” (10:7); and (4) the ὠτια “ears” of $\text{C}^{\text{Aq}^{\theta\Sigma}}$ (39:7)—like the עֲדָנָה (^{edna}) “ear” of the *Peshitta* and in the margin of the *Syro-Hexapla*—became σῶμα “body” as in the $\text{C}^{\text{A}^{\text{B}^{\text{S}}}}$.

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 $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ 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 $\omega\tau\iota\alpha$ in $\Theta^{Aq\Theta\Sigma}$, 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 (אֲרִיִן בְּרִית) did *differ* from the MT (אֲזַנִּים כְּרִית); (3) the LXX variant $\sigma\omega\mu\hat{\alpha}$, instead of $\acute{\omega}\tau\iota\alpha$ (= אֲזַנִּים), 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 ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\omega}$ $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota$) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ($\acute{\epsilon}\phi\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\zeta$) (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 Πρὸς Ἑβραίους was, in the words of Buchanan (1976: xix, xxi), a "homiletical midrash based on Ps 110." The epistle received the title Πρὸς Ἑβραίους 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)³⁴ were obviously more attuned to the rhetoric of the *Targumim* and *Midrashim* than to the canons of Quintillian elocution.

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's 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

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

- **בָּרָא** (*baraʿa*) the cognate of **ברא** / **ברה** “to restore the body,” found in *Vorlage* of the LXX (39:7) which has $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha \delta\epsilon \kappa\alpha\tau\eta\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$; whereas the MT (40:7) has **כרה** “to dig.”
- **בָּרַה** (*baraha*) a by-form of **בָּרָא** (*baraʿa*), the cognate of **ברה** “to make pure, guiltless, to heal the body,” found in the restored Hebrew text of 40:7 (MT 40:8).
- **בָּוֹא** (*bawaʿa* / *bâʿa*) the cognate of **בוא**, stem II, “to confess,” found in 40:7 (MT 40:8).
- **تَوَيَّى** (*tuwiya*) / **مَتَوَّى** (*matwan*) the cognate of **שָׁוָה** / **שָׁוָה** and the noun **שָׁוָה** in Isa 24:12 (LXX $\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$), as well as the **שָׁוָה** “(final) resting place” in Psa 40:2 (MT 40:3).
- **ذَان** / **ذِين** (*dân/dîn*) the cognate **זין** / **זין** (= **אזין** / **אזין**) “vice, fault, defect” as restored from the **אזנים** “ear” in 40:6 (MT 40:7).
- **رَاب** / **رايب** (*raib/râba*) “to doubt, to be suspicious, to be skeptical,” **رايب** (*rayb*) “disquiet, a disturbance, or agitation of the mind . . . an evil opinion,” the cognate of the **רָהֲבִים** in 40:4 “sceptics (in matters of religion).”
- **سَطَّرَا** (*saṭara*) the cognate **שָׁטַר** “a writer, a writer of lies, legends” and **שָׁטַר** myths” in 40:4 (MT 40:5) when the MT **שָׁטַר** is restored to **שָׁטַר** or **שָׁטַר**.

The working Hebrew vocabulary of the Septuagint translators included **כרה** “to heal the body” and **שָׁוָה** “resting

place, home,” two words which have gone unrecognized in the current lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Had this בְּרֵךְ survived in post-biblical Hebrew—as its cognate survived in Arabic—there would have been no need for all the speculation of how Hebrew אָזְנִים (= $\acute{\omega}\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ = ears) ended up in the Septuagint as $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ “body.” Other words still needing to be added to the Hebrew lexicons include בָּנָה “to confess,” שְׂאֵן “(burial) place,” אֵין “vice,” and רֵהַב “skeptic.”

Ambiguities in handwriting contributed to a number of variants, like the אָזְנִים being read as אָרִיִּים (= $\delta\epsilon$ = then) and the confusion of ב and כ , ב and ג , י and ת , etc. The ambiguity of homographs like שְׂטִי , בּוֹא , אֵין , and רֵהַב also contributed to a number of poor translations.

NOTES

1. Dalglish (1962: 237–238) noted “. . . the phrase לְנִצְחֵךְ 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 $w(3)r$ -flute, to intone to the lyre (*knnr*), and to sing to the *nezekh* ($n\bar{t}h$) [= נִצְחֵךְ].

Dalglish concluded:

The phrase לְנִצְחֵךְ 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 ܢܫܐܗ (*nēṣah*) “to celebrate, to triumph” when used of the voice meant “clear, sonorous” (Payne Smith 1903: 348), a

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

2. See Dalglish (1962: 239), who cited (1) Dossin (1938: 110), “le terme *dâwidum* 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 לְדָוִד 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 אֶזְכִּיר “memorial offering” in Lev 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8; 24:7; Num 5:26. The הֶזְכִּיר in Psa 70:1 could well be a variant spelling of אֶזְכִּיר

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

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 נ see Delitzsch 1920: 113–114 §114^{a-c}.

8. For the confusion י and ת see Delitzsch 1920: 114 §116^a 117.

9. No examples of a confusion of ב and ת were cited by Delitzsch. The MT יִחַשְׁבֶּה became in Ⓢ 39:18 φροντισεῖ “consider.” The MT חוֹנֵשָׁה—which was rendered in Ⓢ^{B S} 39:14 as πρόσχες “give

heed” and in S^A as $\sigma\pi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu$ “hasten”—was translated in $\text{S}^{B1 S2}$ in 69:1 as $\sigma\pi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu$ and in S^{S1} as $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\sigma\omicron\nu$ “be pleased.”

10. See Briggs 1906: 355 and Anderson 1972: 318. Other occurrences of מְגַלַּת-סִפֵּר include Jer 36:2, 4 and Ezek 2:9.

11. MT בְּחֹרֶךְ מֵעֵי “within my bowels.” See note 30.

12. Note Psa 31:17–18, 94:17, 114:17, and Isa 47:5, all of which speak of the silence in Sheol.

13. The MT שָׁעַר was obviously read as the equivalent of שָׁאַר “to remain” (= $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\omega$). Like שָׂאָה and שָׂעָה “to gaze” (BDB 981, 1043), שָׂאַר and $\text{שָׂעַר$ could be by-forms, although it is more likely that a שָׂעַר and שָׂאַר variation simply reflects an aural error once the ע was softened into a glottal stop.

14. Note Ecc 1:2, $\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\acute{o}\tau\eta\varsigma \mu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\tau\omega\nu$ “vanity of vanities.”

15. See Hatch and Redpath 1897: 899. In Zech 11:17, רֵעִי הָאֵלִיל “my worthless shepherd” became $\text{o}\acute{\iota} \text{ ποιμαίνοντες τὰ μάταια}$ “the worthless shepherds” in the Septuagint. But the “idol shepherd” of the KJV here notwithstanding, the רֵעִי הָאֵלִיל , like the רֵעֵה אֲוִלִי (ποιμένος ἀπείρου “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”; ارهاب (${}^{\circ}irh\acute{a}b$) “terrorism”; and ارهابي (${}^{\circ}irh\acute{a}b\acute{i}$) “terrorist.”

17. The Peshittā has ܡܡܠܠܐ ܕܓܘܠܐ ($maml\acute{e}l\acute{a} dag\acute{a}l$) “lying speech,” apparently reading שִׁפִּי or שִׁפָּה for MT שִׁטִּי .

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

שׁוֹט “treat with despite”; or שִׁטָּה “acacia, tree and wood”) correspond to the Greek *μαυλάς*.

19. Field 1964: 151.

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

21. See Delitzsch 1920: 110 §107^{a-c}.

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

23. For the confusion of (1) ז and ד (like the אַחַד/אָחַז variants in I Chron 24:6), (2) י and נ (like the מְפַנֵּי/מְפַנֵּיִם *Qere/Kethib* in Pro 3:15); and (3) ן and ם (like the מְמַהֵן/מְמַהֵם variant in II Sam 19:41), see Delitzsch 1920: 111–112 §110a; 116–119 §120^b, 128^a, and 131.

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

25. Its synonyms are ذيب (*dîb*), ذيم (*dîm*), and ذوموم (*dumûm*) which Castell defined as ذين (*dîn*) “*culpa, labe, ignominiosus,*” ذيب (*dîb*) “*macula, vitium,*” and ذيم (*dîm*) “*vitium, vituperium.*”

26. Compare Castell (1669: 425–426) who rendered it “*liberavit, absolvit, . . . justificavit . . . convaluit à morbo, sanatus fuit.*”

27. For statements repudiating sacrifice note I Sam 15:22; Psa 50:7–15 (with the initial לָא of vs. 8 being read as the emphatic לָא “I do indeed reprove you . . .”); Psa 51:16–17; Psa 69:30–33; Isa

1:11–17; 66:1–4; Jer 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6; 8:13; Amos 5:21–25; and Micah 6:6–8.

28. The *Qal* perfect בָּאתִי “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 ἤκω 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 מֵעֵי בְּתוֹבִי means literally, “in the midst of my bowels.” It was used figuratively for the seat of emotions.

31. *Tertium est genus figurarum quod aut similitudine aliqua vocum aut paribus aut contrariis convertit in se aures et animos excitat. Hinc est paronomasia quae dicitur adnominatio.* Book 9: 3: 66. See <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/quintilian.html>.

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 device 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
 ἴδετε φῶς μέγα
 οἱ κατοικοῦντες
 ἐν χώρᾳ
 καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου
 φῶς λάμψει ἐφ’ υμᾶς

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.

X

PSALM 109 A WOMAN'S LAMENT

Psalm 109:4b, 28, 31

The proper interpretation of Psalm 109 as a whole is dependent upon the correct understanding of the **וְאֲנִי תְפִלָּה** 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

- ἐγὼ δὲ προσευχόμενος “but I continue to pray” (Septuagint),
- *ego autem orabam* “but I pray” (Vulgate),
- **וְאֲנִי תְפִלָּה לְעַמִּי** “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 **תְּפִלָּה** in this verse is *not* the same as the **תְּפִלָּה** found in 109:7, which is the noun “prayer” from the stem **פָּלַל** (BDB 813; Jastrow 1182–1183). The initial **ת** of the **תְּפִלָּה** in 109:4 is not a noun prefix but the first letter of the stem **תָּפַל** “to be unseemly, to be indecent.” Thus, this **תְּפִלָּה** “prayer” should be pointed as (1) **תְּפִלָּה** “impropriety, indecency,” the abstract of which is **תְּפִלוּת** “obscenity, triviality,

frivolity” (Castell 1669: 3932; BDB 1074; Jastrow 1903: 1686–1687), or as (2) תִּפְלָה, a feminine singular participle (GKC 84a^s), meaning “an indecent/obscene (woman).”

The noun תִּפְלָה appears in Jer 23:13 וּבְנֵי־אֵי שִׁמְרוֹן וְרֵאִיתִי תִפְלָה, 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 תִּפְלָה is the cognate of the Syriac ܬܦܠܐ (*tēpal*) “defiled, corrupt” (Payne Smith 1957: 180);¹ and the by-form טִפְלוּ appears in Job 13:4, וְאוֹלָם אַתֶּם טִפְלֵי־שִׁקֶר, “But all of you are forgers of lies,”² and in Psa 119:69, טִפְלוּ עָלַי, “the godless besmear me with lies” (RSV).³

When the problematic וְאֲנִי תִפְלָה “and I prayer” is read as וְאֲנִי תִפְלָה “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 וְאֲנִי תִפְלָה, “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 (סִפּוּר כְּרִיתָת) if he was not satisfied with her or found something obscene (עֲרוּת דְּבָר) 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 עֲרוּת דְּבָר and זְנוּה “lewdness” (Lev 18:17) are not found in this psalm, the same issue appears with the use of תִּפְלָה “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 ψυχὴν μου, “For He stood at the right hand of the poor, to save *me* from them who pursue my soul.”

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 **וְעַבְדְּךָ** “your servant” (a masculine noun) translated as ὁ δὲ δοῦλός σου, and (2) the MT **נַפְשׁוֹ** “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 **נַפְשׁוֹ** was translated as τῆν ψυχῆν μου, which reflects the gender neutral **נַפְשִׁי** “my soul,” which may well be the original reading.⁴

Moreover, v. 28 has three problems of its own: (1) the MT **וַיִּבְשׁוּ קָמוֹ וַיִּבְשׁוּ** “they arose and were put to shame” is not reflected in the Peshitta; (2) the Septuagint read οἱ ἐπανιστανόμενοι μοι, reflecting a Vorlage with **עָלִי קָמוֹ וַיִּבְשׁוּ** for the MT **וַיִּבְשׁוּ קָמוֹ**; 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 **יִשְׂמַח** interrupts the series of five plural imprecatives in vv. 27–29, the MT **וְעַבְדְּךָ יִשְׂמַח** “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 **וְעַבְדְּךָ יִשְׂמַח** to

follow Psa 108:6, (2) to follow the Septuagint's τὴν ψυχὴν μου and read the gender neutral נַפְשִׁי "my soul" for the MT נַפְשׁוֹ "his soul"; and (3) to repoint תַּפִּלָּה "prayer" as the feminine participle תַּפִּלָּה "(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 cast-away 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, **כִּצֵּל-כְּנִשְׁתּוֹ נִהְלַכְתִּי נִנְעַרְתִּי**, כַּאֲרֵבָה, 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 **הָלַךְ** (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 **هَلَكَ** (*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 **נִהְלַכְתִּי** (a *Niph^cal* 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 **נִהְלַכְתִּי** and the context wherein the psalmist had become weary of the false allegations and lies.

Dahood's proposal to read the MT **כָּאֲרֵבָה נִנְעַרְתִּי** "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 **אֲרֵבָה** as "locust," although the **נִנְעַרְתִּי** may be derived from **נָעַר**, stem I, the cognate of the Arabic **نعر** (*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 **יִשְׁטְנֵנִי יְשֵׁטְנֵנִי**, and a literal translation would be "instead of my love they *sataned* me." It has been customary in English to transliterate the noun **שֵׁטָן** as *Satan*, even when it comes with the definite article **הַ**, precluding the noun from being a name (as has happened to the noun in Job 1:6–2:7). But the *verb* **שֵׁטָן** (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 **שֵׁטָן** in Psa 109 was translated into English by the verbs

- to be an adversary (KJV, WEB),
- to accuse (NIV, NIB, NAU, RSV, NRS, NKJ, RWB, NLT [in vv. 20, 29]),
- to detract (DRA, following the Vulgate's *detrahebant*),
- 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 calumniate (for the Septuagint's ἐνδιδιβάλλω).

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

Briggs (1907: 366) translated Psa 109:4 as “For my love they are mine adversaries while I am in prayer,” and the MT of 109:6, הַפְּקֹד עָלָיו רָשָׁע וְשָׂטָן יַעֲמֹד עַל־יְמִינֹו, 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 שֹׂטְנֵי/שָׂטָנִי 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 שָׁטַן in Num 22:22, 32, where the angel of Yahweh went forth "to *satan*" (לְשָׁטָן) 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

כִּי־יַעֲמֵד לְיָמִין אֲבִיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשְׁפָּטַי נַפְשׁוֹ

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

ὅτι παρέστη ἐκ δεξιῶν πένητος
τοῦ ὠδῶσαι ἐκ τῶν καταδιωκόντων τῆν ψυχὴν μου

For he stood⁶ at the right hand of the poor,
to save from the ones pursuing my soul.

Briggs (1907: 373), after noting the variant reading in the versions of מִשְׁפָּטַי for the MT מִשְׁפָּטַי, proposed emend-

ing the **מִשְׁפָּטַי** to **מִשְׁטָנַי** “adversaries.” However, there is no way that the Septuagint’s *καταδιώκω* “to pursue closely” can be a translation of either **שָׁפַט** “to judge” or **שָׁטַן** “to *satan*.”⁷ Anderson (1972: 767) suggested that the Septuagint translated **נִפְשֵׁי רֹדְפִים**, but it is hard to see how the MT **מִשְׁפָּטַי** could be misread as **רֹדְפִים**. Dahood (1970: 110) speculated that the MT **מִשְׁפָּטַי** should be repointed as **מִשְׁפָּטִי** with the **י** 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 **מִשְׁפָּטַי** “from the ones judging” was read by the Septuagint translators as the *Šaph^cēl* participle of the stem **פָּיַט**, the cognate of Arabic *فيظ* (*fîḏ*) and *فيض* (*fîḏ*) “to die,” as in the expressions *فاظت نفسه* (*fâḏat nafsuhu*) and *فاضت نفسه* (*fâḏat nafsuhu*), meaning “his soul departed.”⁸ The **מִשְׁפָּטַי** when pointed as **מִשְׁפָּטִי** and coupled with **נִפְשֵׁי** becomes a perfect match with the Arabic cognate in form IV, *أفطت نفسه* (*ʾafadtu nafsahu*) “I made his soul to depart” (Lane 1877: 2472–2474). The initial **מִ** of the repointed **מִשְׁפָּטִי** should probably be pointed as **מִן**, with the **מִן** doing double duty as (1) the prefix of the causative participle, and (2) the prefixed preposition **מִן/מִן** “from.”⁹

CONCLUSION

Psalms 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 תפלה in 109:4 is not the same as the תפלה in 109:7. The latter is תפלה “prayer,” but the former is תפלה “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 תפלה in 109:4, they were right on target with their

understanding of the rare idiom **נשפטי נשפי** 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 **פִּיט**, as well as the Hebrew grammarians who kept alive the knowledge of the ancient *Šaph^cēl* form.

NOTES

1. On the interchange of **ת** and **ט**, note the by-forms **טָעָה** and **תָּעָה** “to go astray,” **טָחַף** and **תָּחַף** “to seize,” and **קָטַל** and **קָטַל** (*qatala*) “to kill.”
2. Here the Septuagint reads, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε ἰατροὶ ἄδικοι, “but you are bad physicians,” apparently reading the **טפל** as **תעלי**, which appears in Jer 30:13 **לָךְ אֵין תְּעָלָה** (= ἰατρούθης “treated / healed”) and 46:11 **לָךְ אֵין תְּעָלָה** (= ὠφέλεια) “there is no healing for you.”
3. The Septuagint ἐπλαθύνθη “it has been multiplied” seems to be a paraphrase, for this is the only text in which πλαθύνειν (which translated fourteen different Hebrew words in one hundred fifty different verses) was used to translate **טפל**.
4. For the confusion of the **ב** and the **בֵּ**, see Delitzsch, 1920: 103–105, § 103^{a-c}. See pp. 154–155 for a discussion of the Septuagint’s having the preferred reading and interpretation of Psa 109:31.
5. If the nuances of Hebrew **נָעַר** match those of the Arabic **نعر** (*na^cara*), even the psalmist’s cries could be held against her, for the noun **נָעִירָה** (*nā^cirat*) applied to a woman signified “a clamorous and foul, or immodest woman” (Lane 1893: 2815).

6. There was apparently a haplography of the ך in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, which must have read כִּי עָמוֹד for the MT כִּי-עָמוֹד.

7. Καταδιώκω appears only here as an odd translation of שָׁפַט. 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 *Šaph^cēl* form is rare in Hebrew but occurs frequently in Syriac (see *GKC* §55¹) 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 (z) became a צ in Hebrew and a ט in Aramaic and Syriac, whereas the ض (d) became a ד in Hebrew and an ט in Aramaic and Syriac. The *Šaph^cēl* form itself, when coupled with the cognate ط (z) becoming a ט, suggests that the psalmist spoke a northern dialect of Hebrew which retained some influence of surrounding dialects.

9. Compare the initial מ of מִרְעָה in I Chron 4:10, found in the Leningrad and Aleppo codices. The *dagesh* doubles the מ, as if מִרְעָה were to be read as מִמְרְעָה, 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 מִרְעָה.

XI

THE ROYAL LADY OF PROVERBS 31

Prov 31:1 MT

דְּבָרֵי לְמוּאֵל מֶלֶךְ מַסָּא אֲשֶׁר־יָסְרָתוּ אִמּוֹ

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

οἱ ἐμοὶ λόγοι ἐῤρηγται ὑπὸ θεοῦ
βασιλέως χρηματισμός ὃν ἐπαίδευσεν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ

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

The name Lemuel (לְמוּאֵל/לְמוֹאֵל) calls to mind the Arabic phrase *لَمَّ اللهُ* (*lamma ʿallahu*) “God rectified, restored someone to good condition, reunited (people)” (Lane 1893: 3013; Wehr 1979: 1029). Given the well attested interchange of *ע"ע* and *ל"ה* verbs (GKC 77^e) one can posit the Hebrew cognate *לְמוֹ/לְמוֹה* which would account for the *ו* in *לְמוֹאֵל*, rather than *לְמוֹם*, which would have called for the name *לְמוֹיאל* (like the *חַנְיָאֵל* of Num 34:23) or *לְמוֹמְאֵל* (like the *חַנְנַיָאֵל* of Jer 31:38). The *לְמוֹאֵל* of Prov 31:4 is most likely to have been the original vocalization since an original *לְמוֹ* would have contracted (*lamaw > lamô*) to *לְמוֹ*, not *לְמוֹ*.

Whereas the *הַמְשָׂא* of Prov 30:1 is best read as the cognate of Arabic *نَشَأَ* (*našaʿa*, form IV) “he created, produced, origi-

nated” and منشى (*munšî*) “author, originator” (Lane 1893: 2791; Wehr 1979: 1131),¹ in Prov 31:1 the מִשָּׁא is best read as a proper noun related to the Ishmaelite מִשָּׂא 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 מִשָּׂא “oracle.”²

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 מִלֵּךְ מִשָּׂא לְמוֹאֵל דְּבָרַי 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 לְמוֹאֵל אֲשֶׁר־יִסְרָתוּ אִמּוֹ דְּבָרַי “words to Lemuel by which his mother instructed him.”³

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

מַה־בָּרַי וּמַה־בָּר־בִּטְנִי וּמַה־בָּר־נְדָרַי:

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

τί τέκνον τηρήσεις

τί ῥήσεις θεοῦ

πρωτογενές σοὶ λέγω υἱέ

τί τέκνον ἐμῆς κοιλίας τί τέκνον ἐμῶν εὐχῶν

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!*⁴

Behind the threefold interrogative **מָה . . . מָה . . . מָה** “What . . . what . . . what?” of the MT stand three imperatives from the stem **נָמַח**, the cognate of Arabic *نماء/نمي* (*namy/namā*) “to grow, increase, expand, prosper, flourish, thrive” (Lane 1893: 3038; Wehr 1979: 1174–1175). Like the verbs **נָשַׂח**, **נָסַח**, and **נָנַח**, which drop the initial **נ** in the imperative, the imperative **נָמַח** became simply **מָח**, a homophone and homograph of the interrogative **מָה**. The verb **נָמַח** is found in the proper name **נְמוּחַל** (Ναμουηλ) and the gentilic **הַנְּמוּחַלִּי** (ὁ Ναμουηλ) in I Chron 4:24 and Num 12:26.⁵ Otherwise, **נָמַח** may never have been used in the standard Judean dialect of Hebrew. The use of **בֵּר** “son” by Lemuel’s mother, instead of **בֶּן**, 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.⁶

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 *πρωτογενές σοι λέγω υἱε* “my first-born, to you I am speaking, O son,” suggesting that the **מָח** in the *Vorlage* was also read as **מֹד** which could account for the *ρήσεις* and the *λέγω*.⁷ The *τηρήσεις* is either a doublet of the *τί ρήσεις* (*τίρήσεις* > *τηρήσεις*) or a doublet of the **נָדַר** “vow” which was read as **נָטַר** “to keep.” The *πρωτογενές σοι* can be a doublet of the **בְּרִי** read as **בְּכָרִי**

“my firstborn,” originating from a dittography of the ב which was in turn misread as a כ so that the בכרי became בכרי.

Prov 31:3 MT (LXX 24:71)

אַל־תִּתֵּן לְנָשִׁים חֵילֶךָ וְדַרְכֶיךָ לְמַחֲוֹת מְלָכִין

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

μη̄ δῶς γυναιξὶ σὸν πλοῦτον
καὶ τὸν σὸν 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 חֵיל in ten other texts,⁸ and remains the best understanding of this verse and in 31:29. Interpretations which associate חֵיל 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.⁹ Once the focus on חֵיל took on sexual overtones, it became necessary to emend דַּרְכֶיךָ to יְרֵכֶיךָ “your thighs” (BHS note) for an implicit sexual parallel to go with an implicit sexual חֵיל.

Defining חֵיל as “your *wealth*” and דַּרְכֶיךָ as “your *acquisitions*” recovers the anticipated parallelism. The Hebrew דַּרְךְ 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 לְמַחֲוֹת. The initial ל is the preposition affixed to the feminine plural participle מַחֲוֹת, from the stem מִחַח, which is the cognate of Arabic مَحاح (*maḥḥâḥ*) 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 مَحاح (*maḥḥâḥ*) simply as “liar, deceiver.” The מַחֲוֹת is a contracted form of מַחַחֲוֹת, like the feminine singular participle רָעָה in Prov 25:19, which is a contraction of רָעָעָה (GKC 67^s).¹⁰ 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 חֵיל which was read as though it were the cognate of Arabic خال/خيل (*ḥyl/hâla*) “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 חוֹת of לְמַחֲוֹת which was read as לֵם חוֹת and then inverted to חוֹת לֵם (= βίον εἰς (= חֵיָה לְמוֹ)).¹¹

The ὑστερο of ὑστεροβουλίαν “deliberation after the fact” (Liddell and Scott 1940: 1906) comes from (1) a variant reading of חֵיל as חָדַל (= ὑστερέω) “to lack,” and (2) the βουλίαν is an alternative rendering of the מְלַכֵּין when

derived from מַלְאָךְ “counsel, advice” (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 971). Coming together they amount to the idea of “second guessing.”

Prov 31:8

פִּתְחֵה-פִּיךָ לְאֵלִים אֶל־דָּוִן כָּל־בְּנֵי חַלּוּף

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

ἄνοιγε σὸν στόμα λόγῳ θεοῦ καὶ κρῖνε πάντα ὑγιῶς
Open your mouth to the word of God,
and judge all fairly.

The Septuagint’s λόγῳ θεοῦ “to the word of God” translates what now stands in the MT as לְאֵלִים אֶל, as though the *Vorlage* read לַכֹּלִים אֶל, with the stem כֹּלִים being the cognate of Arabic كَلام (*kalâm*) “saying, words”, used in a similar expression, فتح فمه بالكلام (*fataḥa famahū bi’lkalâm*) “he opened his mouth to say something” (Lane 1893: 3003; Wehr 1979: 981). The ὑγιῶς “fairly” reflects a variant in which the בְּנֵי was read as בְּאֵין (= בֵּ + אֵין) “without” and the חַלּוּף was reads as a cognate the Arabic

- جلف (*ḥulf*) “the breach, or non-fulfilment, of a promise . . . disagreement, difference, dissension in opinions”;
- جلف (*ḥilf*) “one who perseveres in opposition or contention”;
- جلفة (*ḥulfat*) “a vice, a fault, or an imperfection; badness, corruptness, viciousness, or dishonesty”;
- أحلّف (*ʿahlafu*) “contrariness, 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 אֵל “to” as the imperative אֵל “hasten,” a cognate of Arabic أَل (*ʿall*) (Hava 1915: 11). He also proposed to read חֲלוּף as the cognate of Arabic حَرَف (*ḥaraf/ḥarif*) “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 בְּנֵי-חֲלוּף 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 circumstance¹²

Scholars have been looking for a definition of חֲלוּף which would balance the לְאֵלִים “for a mute” in the first part of the line and the עָנִי וְאֶבְיֹן “poor and needy” in 31:9. However, the בְּנֵי חֲלוּף needs to be recognized as the equivalent of בְּנֵי בְרִית “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 חֲלוּף is حَلَف (*ḥalif*) 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).¹³ The Arabic translation of בְּרִית frequently used حلف (*ḥalif*), as in Jud 9:46 where the MT בֵּית אֵל בְּרִית appears in the London Polyglott of 1667 as بَيْتِ اَيْلٍ لِيَتَحَالَفُوا (*bayti ʿil liyataḥālafū*) “*ut ibi conjurarent conspirarentque*,” i.e., the place where they made an alliance and were united.¹⁴ The cognates of this حلف (*ḥalif*) are (1) חֻלָּה “covenant, friendship, brotherhood, league” and (2) חָלִיף “a sincere friend who swears to his companion that he will not act unfaithfully with him.”¹⁵

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, פִּתַח־פִּיךָ שְׁפֹט־צָדִק וְדִין עָנִי וְאֲבִיּוֹן “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, דִּין כָּל־בְּנֵי־עָנִי, where the עָנִי needs to be vocalized as עָנִי¹⁶ and identified as the cognate of the Arabic غني (*ḡaniya*) “he was free from want . . . he became rich, wealthy,” and the nouns غنيٌّ (*ḡinan*) and غناء (*ḡana*) “wealth, affluence, riches” (Lane 1877:2301–2304; Wehr 1979: 803).¹⁷

Contrary to the pointing in the MT, this עָנִי is certainly attested in I Chron 22:14, where David declared יְהִינָה בְּעֵנִי יְהוָה הַכִּינֹתִי לְבַיַת־יְהוָה “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 *πτωχείαν* “poverty” in the Septuagint, the MT עֲנִי “my poverty” needs to be read as עֲנִי “my wealth.” Similarly, the בְּנֵי-עֲנִי of Prov 31:5 can be repointed as בְּנֵי-עֲנִי meaning “the sons of wealth,” i.e., the rich.¹⁸ If Lemuel listened to his mother he soberly and rightly judged the poor (אֶבְיֹן), the needy (עֲנִי), and the wealthy (עֲנִי).¹⁹

Just as Arabic cognates helped to clarify the meanings of בְּנֵי-חֻלּוֹף “sons of the covenant, allies” and בְּנֵי-עֲנִי “sons of wealth, the rich,” another Arabic cognate, آل / ايلة / آل (°*āl* / °*ilat* / °*il*) “family, relatives, kith-and-kin, consanguinity” (Lane 1863: 75, 127–128; Wehr 1979: 27, 44), helps to clarify the original meaning of the MT אֵלִם “dumb” in 31:8. Although, as noted above (page 164), the Septuagint apparently read כלם “word” for the אֵלִם; the אֵלִם remains the preferred reading. However, it should be read as *scriptio defectiva* for אֵלִים and vocalized as אֵלִים or אֵלִים, the plural of אֵל / אלה “family, kith-and-kin,” like its cognates. Just as the Arabic آل (°*ill*) is a synonym of حلف (*hilf*), the אֵלִם / אֵלִים is the synonym of the בְּנֵי-חֻלּוֹף in Prov 31:8.²⁰

Although noted in Castell’s 1669 lexicon (58, 115) and defined as “*populus, asseclae, affines, familia, domestici*,” the cognate آل / ايلة (= אֵל / אלה) has dropped out of subsequent lexicons. Although rarely found in the literature, it probably appears in the name אֵלִיאֵל (Ελιηλ/Αλιηλ) in I Chron 11:

46–47, meaning the same as the אֱלִיעֶם (Ελιαβ) in II Sam 11:3 and the עַמִּיאֵל (Αμιαλ) in I Chron 3:5. They all mean “God is my kinsman” and are much like the names רְעוּאֵל (Ραγουηλ) “God is my kinsman,” אֶחָיָה, and אָבִיהָ “Yahweh is my brother/father.” According to these interpretations of חֲלוּף, עֲנִי, and אֵלִים, Lemuel’s mother instructed her son to judge the poor (אָבִיוֹן), the needy (עֲנִי), the rich (בְּנֵי-עֲנִי), all tribal allies and confederates (בְּנֵי חֲלוּף), and his own kith-and-kin (אֵלִים/אֱלִים). Her advice covered all social classes, as well as the needs of the royal family and the affairs of state.

Prov 31:10–31

אִשְׁת־חַיִל

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 מִשָּׂא מֶלֶךְ מַסָּא “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 אִשְׁת־חַיִל “a woman of

power,” or, as the Septuagint has it, a γυναικᾶ ἀνδρείαν “a manly woman.”²¹

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

- (1) حال / حیل / حول (*hāl/hâl/hawl*) “strength, power, might.”
- (2) حول (*ḥuwwal*) “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) خال / خیل (*ḥāl/hâl*) “a liberal, bountiful, generous person . . . one who keeps a thing, and manages, orders, or regulates 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 intellectual, managerial, and charitable qualities of the woman cannot be ignored. The word לַיָּלִיָּהּ 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?”

Prov 31:11b

וְשִׁלָּל לֹא יִחְסֵר

“He will not lack a son.”

ἡ τοιαύτη καλῶν σκύλων οὐκ ἀπορήσει

Such a one shall stand in no need of fine spoils.

Despite McKane’s dismissal of Driver’s proposal to read the שִׁלָּל of 31:11 as the cognate of Arabic سليل (*salîl*) “a child or male offspring,” and سليلة (*salîlat*) “daughter” (Lane 1872: 1397; Wehr 489), Driver was certainly correct. McKane (1970: 667) argued that Driver’s interpretation²²

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 שִׁלָּל in 31:11 with the Arabic cognate تَلَّة (*tallat*) “wool” and (2) add לָהּ “for her”—to accommodate the feminine ἡ τοιαύτη—so that the text reads, “Wool is not lacking to her.”²³ McKane concluded, “I retain the MT, recognizing that *šālāl* 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 אִשְׁת־חַיִל 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, a שִׁלָּל. 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 رفا (*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 (رفاء [*rifā’un*]), constancy and the begetting of sons not daughters” (Lane 1867: 1117–1118, 1129). Wehr (1979:403) rendered this felicitation 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

גַּמְלָתָהּ טוֹב וְלֹא־רָע כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ

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 גַּמְלָתָהּ 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 (תִּירָא [21], תֹּאכַל [27], and תִּתְהַלֵּל [30]),²⁴ and one is in the *imperative* (תִּנּוּ [31]). Even the *imperfect* verbs may indicate past time for actions which continued over a period of time (GKC 107^{b,e}). 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 וְלֹא־רָע (= וְלֹא־רָע) “and not bad” became τῷ ἀνδρὶ “to the husband,” in the Septuagint, reflecting a *Vorlage* with לֹא־נָשׁ, with (1) a confusion of a ר and a י, (2) a confusion of an ע and a ש, and (3) the loss of the conjunctive ו. Delitzsch (1920: 111 §109^a and 119 §131) has cited other examples of such confusion.

Prov 31:14

הִיְתָה כְּאֶנְיֹת סוֹחֵר מִמֶּרְחֵק תְּבִיא לַחֲמָהּ

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

ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ ναῦς ἐμπορευομένη μακρόθεν
συνάγει δὲ αὕτη/εαυτης τὸν βίον/πλουτον

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

Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus¹ have αὕτη τὸν βίον “her livelihood” for the MT לַחֲמָהּ “her food,” but Codex Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus² have εαυτης τὸν πλουτον “her riches.” The former reflects a *Vorlage* with לחייה or לחים לה for the MT לחמהּ. Reading the ל of לחמהּ as a preposition is suggested by the לְנַעֲרוֹתַיָּךְ וְחַיִּים “nourishment for your servant-girls” (NRS, NKJ) in Prov 27:27. In light of Ecc 5:9, where הַמֶּוֹן “wealth” appears in parallel with כֶּסֶף “silver,” the πλουτον in Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus² probably reflects a

Vorlage reading להמנה “for her wealth” for the MT לחמה “her bread.”

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

וּתְקַם בְּעוֹר לַיְלָה
וַתִּתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ

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 ἔδωκεν βρώματα τῷ οἴκῳ καὶ ἔργα ταῖς
θεραπαύλαις

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

The paired words חק and טרף appear also in Prov 30:8, לקני הטרפני לחם חקי “feed me with the food that is my portion” (NAS).²⁵ Both words are very problematic. The טרף, meaning “to tear, rend, pluck” appears in Gen 37:33 where Jacob cried, טרף יוסף “Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.” טרף 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, טָרֵף is without a doubt the cognate of Arabic طريف (*tarīf*) “a thing that is good [and recent or new or fresh] . . . [or pleasing to the eye] of fruits and other things”; and طريفَة (*tarīfat*) “anything new, recent, or fresh . . . anything choice” (Lane 1874: 1845; KBS II: 380). Arabic also attests the by-form ترفَة (*turfat*) “good feeding . . . good, sweet, or pleasant food” (Lane 1863: 304). In light of the interchange of the ט and the ת in words like טָעָה “to err” and תָּעָה “to err,” and Hebrew קָטַל but Arabic قَتَلَ (*qatal*) “to kill,” there may well have been טָרַף/תָּרַף by-forms in Hebrew meaning “fresh quality food.”

The חֶק has more to do with something inscribed than something ingested. Only secondarily does it have to do with food allowances and rations, as in Gen 47:22, וַאֲכָלוּ אֶת-חֶקֶם “and they ate their portion.” This ambiguity accounts for the Septuagint’s ἔργα “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

לֹא-תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשָּׁלֵג
כִּי כָל-בֵּיתָהּ לְבָשׁ שְׁנַיִם

She does not fear for her family when it snows
for all of them are doubly clothed. (Scott)

οὐ φροντίζει τῶν ἐν οἴκῳ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς
ὅταν πού χρονίζη πάντες
γὰρ οἱ παρ’ αὐτῆς ἐνδιδύσκονται

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 תִּירָא as יִירָא, (2) a misreading of MT שֶׁלֶג “snow” as שֶׁגֶל “consort, spouse,” and (3) a doublet for the MT בִּיתָה which became (a) ἐν οἴκῳ and (b) χρονίζη, “he would delay”—which was evidently a secondary misreading of the ביתה as במהה.²⁶ McKane’s refusal to reposit the MT שֶׁנִּים “scarlets” as שֶׁנִּים “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

נוֹדַע בִּשְׁעָרִים בְּעֵלְהָ בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עִם־זְקֵנֵי־אֶרֶץ

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

περίβλεπτος δὲ γίνεται ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς
 ἡνίκα ἂν 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 בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ “with his sitting” as ἡνίκα ἂν καθίσῃ ἐν συνεδρίῳ “whenever he sits in

a *sanhedrin*/council.” In Exo 18:14, יָשַׁב 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 (יָשְׁבוּ) 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 (συνεδρίω) of the tribal elders.²⁷ Thanks to the sterling character of the אִשְׁת־חַיִל, her charities and beautiful household, the prestige of her husband when in public and when in court was greatly enhanced.

Prov 31:24

סָדִין עָשְׂתָּהּ וַתִּמְכַּר וַחֲגוּר נָתַתְּהָ לְכַנְעָנִי:

she made and sold a linen garment to the merchant.

σινδόνας ἐποίησεν

καὶ ἀπέδοτο περιζώματα δὲ τοῖς Χαναναίοις

She made fine linens,

and sold girdles to the Canaanites.

The Septuagint did not translate the MT נָתַתְּהָ “she gave,” and the כַּנְעָנִי was simply transliterated into the plural Χαναναίοις “Canaanites.” But, as noted in BDB (489) and Jastrow (650), כַּנְעָנִי was a proper noun which also carried the meaning of “merchant, trader.”²⁸ The Syro-Phoenician woman (Συροφοινίκισσα in Mark 7:26) who asked Jesus to heal her daughter was identified in Matt 15:22 as γυνή Χαναναία. In the *Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Howard 1995:

74–75) she is identified as אשה כנענית באה מארצות מזרח “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-Phoenicia. Like the Septuagint translators before him, Mark may have misunderstood the כנענית “merchant” in his Hebrew source and simply updated the old name “Canaan” to the contemporary name of “Syro-Phoenicia.”

Prov 31:30a

שֶׁקֶר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי

Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting. (Scott)

ψευδεῖς ἀρέσκειαι
καὶ μάταιον κάλλος γυναικός²⁹

False are desires-to-please
and vain the beauty of a woman.

McDaniel Translation

Infidelity is deceitful, and beauty is fleeting.

The stem חָנַן “to be gracious” appears in such names as חַנּוּנְיָאֵל “God is gracious” and חַנּוּנְיָהוּ “Yahweh is gracious” the latter of which became Ἰωάννης in Greek and *John* in English. Hebrew חָנַן is the cognate of Arabic حن (ḥann) “he was merciful, compassionate, he became affected with a yearning, longing, desire,” and حنان (ḥanân) “mercy, pity, compassion” (Lane 1865: 652–654; Wehr 1979: 244). Therefore, it is quite surprising to have this quality labeled as a

שָׁקַר “a lie.” Some commentators, like McKane (1970:670), avoided the issue altogether, while others, like Scott (1965: 186), followed the Septuagint (ἀρέσκειαι “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 חַן is better derived from חוּן, which was cited by Castell (1669: 1166) as the cognate of Arabic خان / خون (*ḥwn / ḥân*) 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 خَائِن (*ḥâ'in*) “unfaithful, disloyal, false” and خَائِنَةٌ (*ḥâ'inat*) “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 חוּן / חוּן “infidelity” is the word of choice for 30:31a, and it has nothing to do with חַן / חַן “grace, compassion,” aside from the fact that they became confusing homographs in Hebrew.

It is difficult to relate the Septuagint’s ἀρέσκειαι “desires to please” with either חוּן “unfaithful” or חַן “graciousness.” It is much more likely that ψευδεῖς ἀρέσκειαι “false desires-to-please” is a doublet reflecting the MT שָׁקַר “a lie” and a variant which was read as שִׁפּוּר / שִׁפּוּר “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 שָׁפַר.

The γυνή γὰρ συνετή εὐλογεῖται “for a wise woman is blessed” in 31:30 comes from variant readings of the MT אִשָּׁה יְרֵאָתָא. The εὐλογεῖται reflects a double reading of אִשָּׁה (= γυνή) as אִשָּׁה (= εὐλογεῖται)—thanks to a confusion of a ה and a ו (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116^c for examples). The συνετή reflects a double reading of יְרֵאָתָא (= φόβον) and as יְדַעְתָּא (= συνετή)—thanks to the confusion of a ו and a ה (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104^{a-c} for examples), plus the aural confusion of the א and ע.

Prov 31:31

וַיְהִלְלוּהָ בְּשַׁעְרֵיהֶם מַעֲשֵׂיהָ

And let her works praise her in the gates.

καὶ αἰνεῖσθω ἐν πύλαις ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς

And let her husband be praised in the gates.

The עָשָׂה מְלָאכָה הוּא “he was industrious” in I Kings 11:28 was translated in the Septuagint as ἀνὴρ ἔργων ἐστίν, rendering the Hebrew participle עֹשֶׂה “one making” by the noun ἀνὴρ “man, husband.” A similar liberty with the text occurs here in 31:31. By dropping the suffix ה of וַיְהִלְלוּהָ and the מ nominal prefix of מַעֲשֵׂיהָ, the resulting עֹשֶׂיהָ was read as a suffixed participle, much like the עֹשֶׂה (with no suffix) in I Kings 11:28. In this way the מַעֲשֵׂיהָ “her works” became (mis)read as עֹשֶׂיהָ “her doer,” which was the basis for the Greek ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς “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* (καθίστη ἐν συνεδρίω).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The two literary units of Proverbs 31 are 31:1–9, which are a mother’s advice to her son, Lemuel (לְמוֹאֵל (לְדַבְרֵי), and 31:10–31, which are Lemuel’s words of praise (דְּבַר לְמוֹאֵל) 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 אִשְׁת־חַיִל 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 אִשְׁת־חַיִל 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*.³⁰ 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 אִשָּׁת־חַיִל 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 אִשְׁת־חַיִל.³²

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 בֵּר and שְׁלִיִל for “son” rather than בֵּן. The *old* words from the Massa dialect which need to be added to the *new* lexicons of Biblical Hebrew include:

אל	family, kith-and-kin (30:8)
דרך	acquisitions (30:3)
חון	infidelity, faithlessness (30:30)
חיל	thought, imagination (30:10)
חיל	liberal, generous (30:10)
חיל	manager, managerial skill (30:10)
חיל	intelligent (30:10)
חלף	ally, confederate, covenant bond (30:8)
טרף	good, fresh food (30:15)
כלם	word (30:8)
למה	rectify, restore, unite (30:1)
מזח	flatterer, liar (30:3)
נמה	prosper, thrive (30:2)
עני	riches, wealth (30:5)
שלל	son (30:11)

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 צוֹפִיָּה 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 **הַלִּיכוֹת הַצּוֹפִיָּה** as *στεγνὰ ἰδιωτικὰ* “the ways-of-life were kept under cover/secret”³⁵ as though **צופיה** were a passive of **צפה**, stem II, “to cover, to overlay.” Moreover, Kennicott (1780: 477) cited the variant *perfect* form **צפיה** 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

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

... זָרִיר מְתַנֵּים אוֹתֵישׁ
וּמֶלֶךְ אֶלְקֹם עֹמוֹ

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

The Septuagint has an expanded text reading

καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐμπεριπατῶν θηλείαις εὐψυχος
καὶ τράγος ἡγούμενος αἰπολίου
καὶ βασιλεὺς δημηγορῶν ἐν ἔθνει

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

The MT זָרִיר מְתַנֵּים 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 זָרִיר can be related to זָרָז “strength, valor, belt, garments” and זָרָז “to be quick” or “to harness.” When used with מִתְנִים “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 זָרִיר 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 מִתְנִים was taken to mean “strutting,” which would be the cognate of Arabic ثَنَى (*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 *t* 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 זָרִיר מִתְנִים “strutting roosters” for the MT זָרִיר מִתְנִים “girded loins.” The ἀλέκτωρ “cock” and the εὐψυχος “bold” are a doublet for the זָרִיר. The θηλείαις “females, hens” and the ἡγούμενος αἰπολίου “leading the herd” have no correspondents in the MT.

The real crux of 30:31 has been the אֱלִקָּם in the phrase וּמִלֶּךְ אֱלִקָּם עֲמוֹ. 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

- **כַּיֵּל קָם בְּעַמּוֹ** “who like a god stands among his people” (Ringgren 1947);
- **אֵיל קָדָם עַמּוֹ** “a leader preceding his people” (Bewer 1948: 61);
- **עַמּוֹ לֹא-קָם/אֵל-קָם** “against whom there is no rising up, *i.e.*, a king who is irresistible” (Driver 1951: 94, citing Hitzig);
- **קָם אֵל-עַמּוֹ** “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 (**אֶקֶן**) standing up in front of his people” (Roth 1965: 20).

The consonantal MT can be retained if the **אלקום** is divided to read **אל קום** and the **אל** is recognized as the cognate of the Arabic **آل** (*āla*) “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 **إيالة** (*iyālat*) means “government, rule,” and in form II **آل** (*āla*) 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 **אל** as **δημηγορῶν** “dema-goguing, orating” with all the body language that goes with it.

The קום of אל קום is the cognate of Arabic قوم (*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 قوم (*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, ומלך אל קום עמו, means “and a king governing/demagoguing a tribe of his people.” A very similar phrase appears in Arabic, namely, هو مويال لقومه (*hû mû³yâl liqawmihi*) “he is ruler, governor of his people” (Lane 1863: 128). The مويال (*mû³yâl*) is but a variant prefixed form of آل (*‘āla*) which equals אל, and the قوم (*qawm*) equals קום. In Hebrew the *aw* diphthong of *qawm* would have contract to *ô* so that קום should be read as קום. The עמו “his people” could well be a gloss on the rare (in Judean Hebrew) noun קום “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.

NOTES

1. The Septuagint's καὶ δεξάμενος αὐτοῦς reflects a reading of נִשְׁן as in Deu 33:3, מִדְּבַר־תִּי, יִשָּׁן (= καὶ ἐδέξατο ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ “and he received from his words”) and Gen 50:17, נִשָּׁן לְפִשֵּׁעַ (= καὶ νῦν δέξαι τὴν ἀδικίαν “now please pardon the transgression”). In Arabic the ʿ of the cognate of נִשָּׁן remains unassimilated. See McDaniel, “Surely There Is a God: Proverbs 30:1–5,” page 128, in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available online at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/CBBP.pdf>.
2. The Septuagint's οἱ ἐμοὶ λόγοι εἴρηνται reflects a *Vorlage* which was read as לִּי בְרַי נְמַלּוּ אֵל “my words were spoken (by) God,” with the inversion of the ל and מ of לְמוֹאֵל and the inverted word order of מִלְּךָ and the מִשָּׂא.
3. Note Scott's (1965: 183) emendation and translation, “Words [of advice] to a king acting foolishly.” This required reading לְנוֹאֵל (from לֵאֵל “to be foolish”) for the MT לְמוֹאֵל.
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 יְמוֹאֵל (Ιεμμηλ/Ιεμουηλ), providing another example of the confusion of ם and ן, as well as ם and ן. For other examples of such confusion see Delitzsch 1920: 103–105, §103^{a-c} 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 ל (ma) exists in Arabic.” This suggestion was followed by McKane (1970: 408). But the numerous definitions of

𐤎 (*ma*) cited in Lane (1893: 3016), Hava (1915: 705), and Wehr (1979: 1042) do not include such a definition.

7. For the confusion of 𐤒/𐤓 and 𐤔, 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 לְמַחֲוֹת to the root מָחָה "to wipe out, destroy, exterminate" and the מְלִבְיָן to מְלִיץ "counsel, advice" (BDB 576; Jastrow 760, 791).

11. Note the חַיִּים which was translated as βίου in Prov 4:10. For other examples of the confusion of a 𐤒 and 𐤓 and a 𐤔 and 𐤕, 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 حلف (*ḥalafa*) and خلف (*ḥalafa*) 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 חלף is خلف (*ḥalafa*)—not to be confused with حلف (*ḥalafa*)—meaning "he came after, followed, succeeded," with the noun خالف (*ḥâlif*) "successor, follower, caliph" (Lane 1865: 792–799). This cognate was cited in BDB

(322) and provided the basis for translating the חֲלוֹךְ בְּנֵי 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 خلفة (*ḥilfat*) is also attested. According to Simon (1793: 564, citing Schultens), حلف (*ḥalafa*) is the cognate of the חֲלִיפּוֹת in Psa 55:19–20,

אֵין חֲלִיפּוֹת לָמוֹ וְלֹא יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים
שָׁלַח יָדָיו בְּשִׁלְמוֹ חֲלַל בְּרִיתוֹ:

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^f for reading לָמוֹ as a plural, and UT 425, #1337, for reading ל “from.”

15. Although KBS (321) cited חֲלַף stem II, the cognate of Arabic حلف (*ḥalaf*) “sharp, high coarse grass, a writing reed,” the حلف (*ḥalafa*) meaning “to swear an oath, to establish a brotherhood, to unite in a covenant” and the noun حلف (*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 חֲלַפִּי, in Syriac as حَلْفِ (ḥalpay), and in the Arabic as حلفي (*ḥalfī*). It can be derived from this stem (Jastrow 457).

16. This עָנִי “rich” is not to be confused with עָנִי “poor” or עֲנִי “poor.” Given the frequent interchange of ם and ן in Hebrew roots, the graphic similarity of ם and ן in certain scripts, and the coales-

cence in Hebrew of the *ḡayin* (ג) with the *ʿayin* (ע), its is not surprising that עני and עני were so easily confused that עני 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 עני “to sing” is غنى (*ḡanaya*). It has been recognized in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, along with ענו (*ʿanawa*) “to be humble, submissive,” the cognate of עני “poor, meek.” The name of the Levitical singer עני (LXX Ωνι), mentioned in I Chron 15:18, 20 and the *Qere* of Neh 12:9, was probably a *Pu^cal* perfect (*ʿunnay* > *ʿunnē*) 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 עני “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 עני 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 עני 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 31³² and certainly in Dt 26⁷, עני means oppressive toil. . . . The parallel בכל כחי [“with all my power”] in

29² favours *by my hard* (or *painful*) labor.” In BDB (777) בְּעֵינַי was paraphrased as “in spite of my frustration.”

19. The words עֵינַי “poor” and עֵינַי “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 *ال* (*ʿill*) 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. *حلف* (*ḥilf*), 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/tmcdaniel/CBBP.pdf> and view Chapter 33, pp. 360–363).

21. Liddell and Scott (1940: 128) defined ἀνδρεία as “manliness, manly spirit” and the opposite of δειλία “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 in this poem comprises שָׁלַל ‘booty’ in v. 11, חֵיל ‘power’ in v. 10 and 29, עָז ‘might’ in v. 25, and מַתְנִים ‘loins,’ עָז ‘might,’ זְרוּעוֹת ‘arms’ and אֲמֹץ ‘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 ἡ τοιαύτη “such a (woman)” nor the καλῶν, 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 §107^{r-w}). The brief but important article by Joüon (1922: 349–352) has, unfortunately, been ignored. Joüon called attention to the fact that the Pehitta 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.

26. On the confusion of פ and פ, see Delitzsch 1920: 108–109 §105^b.

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

29. The γυνὴ γὰρ συνετὴ εὐλογεῖται “for a wise woman is blessed” comes from variant readings of the MT אִשָּׁה יְרֵאָתָא. The εὐλογεῖται reflects a double reading of אִשָּׁה as γυνή and as

εὐλογεῖται (= 𐤒𐤍𐤏)— thanks to a confusion of a 𐤒 and a 𐤏 (see Delitzsch 1920: 114, §116^c for other examples). The συνετή reflects a double reading of 𐤏𐤏𐤒 (= φόβον) and as 𐤏𐤒 (= συνετή)—thanks to the confusion of a 𐤒 and a 𐤏 (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107, §104^{a-c} for examples). There was also the aural confusion of the 𐤏 and the 𐤒.

30. Compare Joüon 1922: 349–352. See note 23.

31. Gous cited Wolters 1988: 451; Gottlieb 1991: 284, 287; Brenner 1993: 129; and Bellis 1994: 196–197.

32. See the quotation of Joüon in note 23.

33. See McDaniel, “Surely There Is a God: Proverbs 30:1–5,” in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available on the internet at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/tmcdaniel/cbbp-chapter15.pdf>.

34. In a separate study of Jeremiah 31, twenty-eight of thirty-three Hebrew lexemes in that chapter having Arabic cognates have already been cited in standard Hebrew lexicons. See McDaniel, *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, 159, 178–180, available at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/cbbp-chapter19.pdf>.

35. See Liddell and Scott 1636, s.v. στεγνός and στέγω B, III.

XII

THE “STRANGER WOMEN” OF PROVERBS

In Prov 2:1–11 חִכְמָה “wisdom,” תְּבוּנָה “understanding,” בִּינָה “discernment,” יְדֵעַת “knowledge,” תּוֹשָׁבָה “erudition,” and מְזֻמָּה “prudence” are listed as the antidotes

- against the רָע “evil,” תְּהַפְּכוֹת “perversities,” עֲקָשִׁים “distortions,” and נְלוּזִים “deviations” coming from those men who walk in the ways of darkness (2:12–15), and
- against deceitful and seductive women (זָרוֹת) who, though smart, are disgusting and blameworthy (נְכַרְיֹת), 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 זָרָה and נְכַרְיָה appearing in Proverbs require careful attention. Whereas the masculine nouns זָר and נְכַרְיָ are translated as “stranger” or “foreigner”—without sexual connotations—the feminine זָרָה and נְכַרְיָה 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

לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה
מִנְכַרְיָה אֲמַרְיָה הַחֲלִיקָה

To deliver you from the **immoral** woman,
From the **seductress** who flatters with her words. (NKJ)

Saving you from the wife of **another**,
from the **adulteress** with her smooth words. (NAB)

τοῦ μακράν σε ποιῆσαι ἀπὸ ὁδοῦ εὐθείας
καὶ ἀλλότριον τῆς δικαίας γνώμης
to remove you far from the **straight** way,
and to estrange you from a **righteous** purpose.

Proverbs 5:3

כִּי נִפְתַּח הַטַּפְּנָה שְׂפָתַי זָרָה
וַחֲלֹק מִשֶּׁמֶן חֶבֶה

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 γυναικὸς πόρνης
ἢ πρὸς καιρὸν λιπαίνει σὸν φάρυγγα

for honey drops from the lips of a **harlot woman**,
who for a season pleases your palate.

Proverbs 5:10

פֶּן־יִשְׁבְּעוּ זָרִים כֶּחֶךְ וַעֲצָבֶיךָ בְּבַיִת נְכָרִי

Lest **aliens** be filled with your wealth,
And your labors go to the house of a **foreigner**. (NKJ)

ἵνα μὴ πλησθῶσιν ἀλλότριοι σῆς ἰσχύος
οἱ δὲ σοὶ πόνοι εἰς οἴκους ἀλλοτρίων εἰσέλθωσιν

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

Proverbs 7:5

לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנְּכֹרֶיהָ אִמְרֶיהָ הַחֲלִיקָהּ

That they may keep you from an **adulteress**,

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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)

ἵνα σε τηρήσῃ ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ πονηρᾶς
 ἐάν σε λόγους τοῖς πρὸς χάριν ἐμβάληται
 that she may keep you from the **strange** and **wicked one**,
 if she should assail you with flattering words.

Proverbs 11:15

רַע־יְרֹעַ כִּי־עָרַב רָץ
 וְשֵׁנָא תִקְעִים בּוֹטְיָ:

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

πονηρὸς κακοποιεῖ ὅταν συμμείξῃ δικαίῳ
 μισεῖ δὲ ἤχον ἀσφαλείας

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

Proverbs 14:10

לֵב יוֹדַע מַרְתָּ נִפְשׁוֹ
 וְבִשְׂמֵחָתוֹ לֹא־יִתְעַרֵּב רָץ

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

καρδία ἀνδρὸς αἰσθητικὴ λυπηρὰ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ
 ὅταν δὲ εὐφραίνεται οὐκ ἐπιμείγνυται ὕβρει

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

Prov 20:16

לְקַח-בְּגָדוֹ כִּי-עֶרֶב זָר
וּבְעֵד נְכָרִים [נְכָרִיָּה] חֲבָלָהּ

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

שׁוֹחָה עֲמֻקָּה כִּי זָרוֹת זַעֲוִם יְהוָה יִפּוֹל-^{וּ}יִפְּלֵ-^{שׁ}שָׁם

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

βόθρος βαθὺς στόμα παρανόμου
ὁ δὲ μισηθεὶς ὑπὸ κυρίου ἐμπεσεῖται εἰς αὐτόν

The mouth of a **transgressor** is a deep pit;
and he that is hated of the Lord shall fall into it.

Proverbs 23:33

עֵינֶיךָ יִרְאוּ זָרוֹת
וְלִבְךָ יְדַבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת

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

οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου ὅταν ἴδωσιν ἀλλοτρίαν
τὸ στόμα σου τότε λαλήσει σκολιά

Whenever thine eyes shall behold a **strange woman**,
then thy mouth shall speak perverse things.

Proverbs 27:2

יְהַלְלֵךָ זָר וְלֹא-פִיךָ נְכָרִי וְאֵל-שִׁפְתֶיךָ

Let **another** praise thee, and not your own mouth,
A **stranger**, and not your own lips.

ἐγκωμιαζέτω σε ὁ πέλας καὶ μὴ τὸ σὸν στόμα
ἀλλότριος καὶ μὴ τὰ σὰ χεῖλη

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Let your **neighbor**, and not your own mouth, praise you;
a stranger, and not your own lips.

Proverbs 27:13

קַח־בְּגָדוֹ כִּי־עָרַב זָר וּבְעֵד נִכְרִיָּה חֲבִלָּהּ׃

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

ἀφελοῦ τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ παρήλθεν γάρ ὕβριστῆς
 ὅστις τὰ ἀλλότρια λυμαίνεται

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

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

- 2:16 εὐθείας “straight” (a different *Vorlage* ?)
- 5:3 γυναικὸς πόρνης “harlot”
- 5:10 ἀλλότριον “stranger, another”
- 7:5 ἀλλοτρίας “stranger, another”
- 11:15 δίκαιῳ “righteous man” (a different *Vorlage* ?)
- 14:10 ὕβρει “pride”
- 22:14 παρανόμου “transgressor”
- 23:33 ἀλλοτρίαν “strange woman”
- 27:2 πέλας “neighbor”
- 27:13 ὕβριστῆς “scorner”

The MT נְכַרְיָהּ was rendered a bit more consistently as

- 2:16 δικάιας “righteous” (a different *Vorlage* ?)
 5:10 ἀλλοτριών “stranger, another”
 7:5 πονηρᾶς “wicked”
 27:2 ἀλλότριος “stranger, another”
 27:13 ἀλλότρια “stranger, another”

The plural נְכַרְיָהּ נְשִׁים, which does not appear in Proverbs, is regularly translated as γυναικας ἀλλοτριας “foreign women”—like the masculine singular זָר and נְכַרְיָ—without any sexual connotations. Fair questions to consider are “Why have the feminine singular זָרָה and נְכַרְיָהּ 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 זָר / זָרָה

The lexicons recognize three independent stems for זָר,

- Stem I “to be strange” from the perspective of the person, the family, or the land, with the Arabic cognate زار/زير (*zyr/zâra*) “to honor as a visitor or guest,” and زائر (*zâ'ir*) “visitor”; and the Akkadian cognate *zā/ē'iru* “hostile” (BDB 288; KBS I: 279; CAD XXI: 97–99).
- Stem II “to be loathsome,” with the Arabic cognate دار (*dâra*) “to distain, to be adverse” (BDB 288; KBS I: 267).
- Stem III “to press down and out,” with the Arabic cognate زیر (*zayyara*) “to twist” (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 °al-kaḏiba*) “he embellished the lie” (Lane 1867: 1268). Castell’s definition (1669: 1034) included “*Mentitus fuit, adornavit falsum quid, adulteravit; Testimonium irritum reddidit, mendacii 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 זָרָה “intelligent lady” competes with חֵכֶם לַאֲדָמָה “Lady Wisdom” for the attention and obedience of the “sons” being instructed.

Although زائر (*zâ’ir*) “visitor” was cited in the lexicons, the notices have been too brief to be of any benefit for clarifying the use of זָרָה in Proverbs. A closer look reveals that زیر (*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 a زیر (*zîr*), as in the expression امرأة زیر رجال (*°imra°at zîr rijâl*) “a woman who loves to interact with a man” (Lane 1867: 1269). Wehr (1979: 449) defined زیر (*zîr*) as “a ladies’ man, a philanderer” (= φιλογύναιος “lover of women”). Thus, a זָרָה/זָרָה (for the MT זָרָה) would be the equivalent of the Greek φιλανδρία/φιλήνωρ “a lover of men.” The feminine زیر (*zîr*) differed from the مريم (*maryam*) because the latter term meant “a woman who loves the discourses of men but does not act vitiously or immorally, or commit adultery or fornication” (Lane 1867: 1204).

Thus, the Hebrew זָרָה, 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 אִשָּׁה זָרָה as “another’s wife”—as if the text read אִשָּׁת זָרָה—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 אִשָּׁה זָרָה may have contributed to post-exilic Jewish xenophobia, it was probably a case of coincidental homographs which permitted זָרָה to be consistently interpreted as “stranger” while the other meanings, which survived in Arabic, became lost in post-exilic Hebrew.

THE DERIVATION OF נִכְרִיָּה / נִכְרִי

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

- Stem I “to regard, to recognize,” with the Arabic cognate نَكَر (*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 نَكَر (*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^h for the noun form).

A check of the Arabic lexicons shows that نَكَر (*nakira*) meant “it was disapproved, or bad, or evil, abominable, or foul, or disallowed”; and the noun مَنكَر (*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

(1979: 1170–1171) cited انكر (*ankar*) “vile, reprehensible, abominable, disgusting” and منكر (*munkar*) “disowned, disavowed, disapproved, forbidden.”

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 نكرة (*nakarat*), as in the expression concerning a male, فيه نكرة (*fihi nakarat*) “in him is ignorance.” The cognate نكر (*nakur*) “intelligence, knowing” is as significant for the interpretation of נְכַרְיָהּ as is زور (*zûr*) “intellect, intelligence” for the interpretation of זָרָה “intelligent lady.” Thus informed by cognates, it appears that the נְכַרְיָהּ, while smart, was not good. She could be like the serpent in the garden of Eden, whose עָרוֹם “prudence” turned out to be nothing more than shrewdness and cunning. The נְכַרְיָהּ “lady of intellect” also competed with חֵכְמָה “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” (זָרוֹת) and the “Ladies with Intelligence” (נְכַרְיָהּ) who have only sex on their minds and seduction in their speech. Such a licentious, lascivious, promiscuous, wanton lady could be a *foreigner*¹ (but need not be for נְכַרְיָהּ and זָרָה have other meanings), or a *harlot*² (called

a זֹנָה in 7:10), or an *hierodule*³ (both sacrifice and vows are mentioned in 7:14), or an *adulteress* (a husband is mentioned in 7:19).⁴ 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 נכריה and זרה for any sexual contact to have been focused on fertility. The following verses illustrate how frequently the (sexual) contact with the נכריה and זרה 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 זָרוֹת/זָרוֹת, “the lying ladies wanting to be laid,” and the נְכַרְיֹת, “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 נכרייה 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 (= מנכר) and Nakir (= נכר), 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.⁵ These names are not in the *Qurʾan* but in tradition. Wensinck, writing on “*Munkar wa-Nakīr*” in the *Encyclopedia 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 נכרייה 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 נכרייה/נכרי had multiple levels of meaning and “stranger woman” need not be interpreted as a metaphor for an adulteress. Likewise, זר/זרה 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 . . .

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 multitudinous,
 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.

XIII

SEVEN PROBLEMS IN ISAIAH 8:1–15

INTRODUCTION

The seven problems for translators and exegetes of Isaiah 8:1–15 include four lexical difficulties, one scribal error of confusing a ך and a ך, 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 **אֶת־רִזִּין וּבֶן־רִמְלִיָּהוּ** “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.”¹
- 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 **וְהָיָה** being the king of Assyria who is mentioned in 8:7 (see below).²

The four words in Isa 8:1–15 which are problematic are the **מְשׁוֹשׂ** “rejoicing” in 8:6, the **כַּנְפָּיו** “its wings” in 8:8, the **רָעוּ** “be terrified” in 8:9, and the **מִקְדָּשׁ** “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 ך to a ך in 8:14.

**A PREFERRED READING
FROM THE SEPTUAGINT**

The second of these three words, the כַּנְפָיו “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,

וְהָיָה מִטּוֹת כַּנְפָיו מִלֵּא רִחְב־אֲרָצְךָ

and it will become the stretchings of its wings
the filling of the breath of your land

καὶ ἔσται ἡ παρεμβολὴ αὐτοῦ ὥστε πληρῶσαι
τὸ 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 כַּנְפָיו 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 כַּנֵּף in Biblical Hebrew which was lost in post-Biblical times—though its cognate survived in Arabic.³ The Arabic verb كنف (*kanafa*) “to guard, to protect, to provide with an enclosure” and the noun كنف (*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 כַּנְפָיו in 8:8. Thus, the paraphrase of כַּנְפָיו as “its branches” (Blenkinsopp

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.⁴ 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 **מֶלֶךְ** and **נְהַר** — to reach the **אֵדֵי נִי** for the antecedent of the suffix of **כְּנַפָּיו** "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 **מִשׁוֹשׁ** in Isa 8:6, which has been variously translated as

- "rejoice" (KJV, NKJ, NIV, NIB, NLT, YLT, WEB, RWB, and the Syriac **ܚܕܐ** (*hāda*²) being the basis for Lamsa's "rejoice").
- "melt in fear" (RSV, NRS)
- "tremble" (NJB)
- "to take up" (DRA, Vulgate *adsumpsit*)
- "desires to have . . . a king over you" (LXX βούλεσθαι ἔχειν . . . βασιλέα ἐφ' ὑμῶν).

Fullerton (1924) and Sweeney (1993) have provided summaries of the varied scholarly interpretations of this **מְשׁוֹשׁ** (which is followed by the direct object sign **אִתָּם** or the preposition “with”), beginning with Kimḥi 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 **וּמְשׁוֹשׁ** “and rejoicing” to **וּמְסֹס** “and dissolving, melting, fading away,” or “gently,” including Hitzig (1833), Bredenkamp (1887), Procksh (1930), Wildberger (1972), Schoors (1972), Clements (1980), and Kaiser (1983).⁵ Honeyman (1944) emended the **וּמְשׁוֹשׁ וּמְשׁוֹ** (from **מִשָּׁה** “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 **וּמְשׁוֹשׁ** 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 **מְשׁוֹשׁ** “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, Auret 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 מְשׁוֹשׁ “rejoicing,” lies behind the אֶתְרֵי אֵיזָר “they preferred / delighted in,” found in Targum Jonathan. But with less success, he argued that the Septuagint’s βούλεσθαι ἔχειν . . . βασιλέα ἐφ’ ὑμῶν, “desires to have . . . a king over you,” corresponds to a verbal understanding of MT מְשׁוֹשׁ as “delight in” or “choose.” But to the contrary, the Greek ἔχειν . . . βασιλέα reflects the identification of the MT מְשׁוֹשׁ with the Hebrew stem שׁוֹשׁ which was the cognate of the Arabic ساس / سوس (*saws/sās*) “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 βούλεσθαι “to desire” was probably a translation of the MT אָסָה, which must have appeared in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint with full spelling as אָסָה and was read as the construct of אָסָה “desire.

Similar to Auret’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 interpret Isa 8:6 in the light of Isa 66:10–14, which also speaks of overflowing streams and of people rejoicing (שְׂמֵחִים and שִׂישׂוּ), coupled with the use of אָתָּה with these two verbs, like the מְשׁוֹשׂ אָתָּה in 8:6.⁷ His conclusions (1993: 49–50) that “. . . there is no secure alternative to the reading *ûm*’*śôś* in Isa. 8.6,” and “the reading [of וּמְשׁוֹשׂ] 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 מְשׁוֹשׂ is the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic adjective مشاوش / مشاوش (*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.”⁸ The vocalization of the MT וּמְשׁוֹשׂ needs to be repointed as וּמְשׁוֹשׂ or וּמְשׁוֹשׂ 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 מֵי הַשְּׁלֹחַ הַהַלְכִים לְאֵט וּמְשׁוֹשׂ, “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.⁹

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 מְשׁוֹשׂ, 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 לֵאֵט “gently” (i.e., לְ plus אֵט) is a homograph of the stem לֵאֵט “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 רָעוּ IN ISAIAH 8:9

The identification of the stem of MT רָעוּ has proven to be quite controversial. While no one has read it as the imperative of (1) רָעַע “be bad!” or (2) רָעָה, (stem I) “be shepherds!” or (3) רָעָה (stem III) “be desirous!” three other stems were recognized in the various translations and commentaries, namely,

- רָעָה (stem II) “to associate with” (the Vulgate’s *congregamini*, followed by KJV, NRS, WEB, RWB, DRA, YLT)¹⁰
- רָעַע “to break” (NKJ, RSV, NAV)
- רוּעַ “to shout” (NIV, NIB).¹¹

The Septuagint’s γινώτε “know ye” reflects a *Vorlage* with רוּעוּ for the MT רָעוּ, 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 ܙܘܥܘܐ (*zû‘û*) “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 רָעַע (stem II) “to be frightened, to tremble with fear.” It is the cognate of the widely attested Arabic رَاعٍ / رَوْعٍ (*rû^c / râ^c*) “he was frightened, it affected his heart [*rû^c*] with fear, fright,” and the nouns رَوْعَةٌ / رَوْعٍ (*raw^c / raw^cat*) “fright, fear” (Castell 1669: 3552, *territ, timor, timuit*; Lane 1867: 1187–1189; Wehr 1979: 426). This seventh definition of רָעַע “to tremble with fear” is the perfect parallel for the imperative הִתְאַזְרִי “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 הִתְאַזְרִי (gird yourselves) and עָצַר עֲצָרָה (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 הִתְאַזְרִי 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 אָזַר in Hebrew as that found in Arabic, where أَزَّرَ (*ʿazara*) 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 אִיתְקַפֵּי “to strength one’s

self” reflects the fact that the Biblical אָזַר had a semantic range comparable to that of its Arabic cognate, but the targumist opted to use the more common verb תִּקַּח.

FROM “SANCTUARY” TO “OPPRESSOR”

A number of emendations have already been proposed for the MT לְמִקְדָּשׁ in Isa 8:14. Gray (1912: 151) left the word untranslated and commented, “Not improbably לְמִקְדָּשׁ is a corruption of לְמוֹקֵשׁ [‘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 מִקְשֵׁיר “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 מִקְשֵׁיר, reading it as the *hiph’el* 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 *piel* participle מִקְשֵׁר “co-conspirator.”¹²

Irvine (1990:203), unimpressed with the emendations of others, offered his own. For the MT וְלְאֶבֶן נֶגֶף לְמִקְדָּשׁ “for a sanctuary, and for a stone of offense,” he divided the words as לְמִקְדָּשׁוֹ לְאֶבֶן נֶגֶף, which, with the וְהָיָה, 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 לְמַעַן “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 לְמִקְדָּשׁ to לְמִקְדָּשׁ (i.e., changing the ך to a ך and reading a *hiph^cil* participle rather than a noun) is required. The Hebrew קרשׁ is the cognate of the Arabic كَرَاثَة “*karāta*” “it oppressed, it afflicted, it grieved [him]” (Lane 1885: 2604; Wehr 1979: 959–960, where كَارِثَة [*kāriṭat*] “disaster, catastrophe, torrential rains” is also noted).¹³ 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 קִשָּׁר “conspiracy” in 8:12 being twice translated in the Septuagint as σκληρόν “hard,” indicating that its *Vorlage* read קִשָּׁה rather than קִשָּׁר.¹⁴ 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 מִקְרָשׁ “oppressor, grief-maker” was misread as the noun מִקְדָּשׁ “sanctuary,” a pseudo-correction was made which involved moving the words associated with the מִקְדָּשׁ to be in proximity to the verse containing the verb תִּקְדִּישׁוּ. 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 וְיִהְיֶה becoming Yahweh, rather than remaining the king of Assyria. Thus, simple misreading of one ק as a ד 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 מִקְרָשׁ in Isaiah’s vocabulary, re-defines 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] **OUT-SPREAD 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 **אֶת־רִצִּין וּבֶן־רַמְלִיהוּ** as a misplaced fragment, Fullerton (1924: 267), partially following Giesebrecht (1888: 227), proposed deleting the phrase and the **וּמִשׁוֹשׁ** 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 **أنث** (*ʿanuta*) “soft, blunt” provides the clue for understanding the phrase **חֶרֶט אָנוֹשׁ** 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 **כַּנְפָיו** referred to the river, rather than to the king, the Arabic **كنف** (*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

overtone 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 **וּמִשׁוֹשׁ** 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 **συναθρίσθητε** “assemble” and the Targum’s **אתחברו** “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 **מִקְדָּשׁ** “sanctuary” in 8:14 led Blenkinsopp (2000: 241) also to emend unnecessarily the MT **תִּקְדָּשׁוּ** “you shall regard as holy” in 8:13 to **תִּקְשִׁירוּ** “with him you shall conspire.”

13. In light of the Arabic variants **قَرَّتَنِي** (*qarātānī*) and **كَرَّتَنِي** (*karātānī*) “it grieved me” (Lane 1885: 2509, 2604), coupled with the frequent interchange of **כ** and **ק** in Hebrew (e.g., **דָּבָר** and **דָּקָק**, **רָבֵן** and **רָקָק**), there is no need to emend further the **מִקְדָּשׁ** to **מִקְרָשׁ**. The Arabic **ث** (*ṯ*) routinely becomes a **שׁ** in Hebrew.

14. For other examples of the confusion of the ה and the ח, see Delitzsch, 1920: 114, § 116^{c,d}.
15. According to Weimert (2004) Jesus' statement about the temple stones being cast down (Matt 24: 1–3, Mark 13:1–2, and Luke 21:5–9) was based upon Isa 8:14 as found in the MT and the versions.

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

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמִתּוֹ

Septuagint

καὶ δώσω τοὺς πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῆς ταφῆς αὐτοῦ
καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἀντὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ

And I will give the wicked for his burial,
and the rich for his death (Brenton's *Septuagint*, 1851)¹

Vulgate

*et dabit impios pro sepultura et divitem pro morte sua*²

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 וַיִּתֵּן “he gave” became $\delta\acute{\omega}\sigma\omega$ “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*-consecutive³ “they made,” as though וַיִּתֵּן “to give” were a synonym of הָעָשָׂה “to make” (like the English “give a burial” and “make a grave”). Seven translations (NIV, NIB, NAB, NAS, NAU, NJB, NLT) rendered the active וַיִּתֵּן “he gave” as the passive “was given,” or “was assigned,” or paraphrased it as “was buried.”

The second and fifth word, אִתּוֹ , 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 אָת as the sign of the direct object. The third word, רְשָׁעִים “wicked (ones),” and the fourth word, קִבְרוֹ “his grave,” have not been problematic—but the initial ἀντὶ in the Septuagint and the initial *pro* in the Vulgate have no corresponding preposition in the MT.

The sixth word, עָשִׂיר “rich,” has led to much speculation since it is not a fitting parallel for the preceding רְשָׁעִים “wicked ones.”⁴ Several scholars, cited in BDB (799), proposed emending the רְשָׁעִים to פְּשָׁעִים “transgressors” and then changing the עָשִׂיר to רְשָׁעִים “wicked (ones),” thereby restoring parallel synonyms.⁵ More recently John McKenzie (1968: 130) emended the MT עָשִׂיר “rich” to עֲשֵׂי רָע “evildoers” in order to get an appropriate parallel for the רְשָׁעִים “wicked.” The emendation was followed by the NAB in 1970.

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

- عَشْر (‘*ašr*) “ten” (BDB 796; Lane 5: 2050–2052).
- عَشْر (‘*ašîr*) and عشيرة (‘*ašîrat*) “a relation, a friend, a man’s kinfolk” (Lane 5: 2053).⁶
- غَثْر (‘*gāṭara*) “to abound with herbage or with goods” and غَثْرَة (‘*gāṭrat*) “abundance of the goods, conveniences, or comforts of life” (BDB 799; Lane 6: 2230).
- عُسْر (‘*usr*) and عُسْرَة (‘*usrat*) “poverty, littleness of possessions, of property, of wealth, or of power” (Lane 5: 2043).

- **غثر** (*gʾutru*) and **غثراء** (*gʾatrâʾu*) “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 **עָשִׂיר** of Isa 53:9 to be the cognate of **غثرة** (*gʾatrat*) “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 desiderated parallel for the **רָשָׁעִים** “wicked (ones)” is obviously the last in the list, i.e., **غثر** (*gʾutru*) “vile, ignoble.” In light of the *u* vowel of this cognate the MT **עָשִׂיר** can be repointed as **עֵשִׂיר** or as a segolate **עֵשֶׁר**, with the **׳** 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, **عسر** (*ʿusr*) “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, **בְּמִתְיוֹ** can be vocalized as **בְּמִתְיֹו** “his high place” (which in context would mean “his burial mound”) or **בְּמִתְיֹו** (with the MT) meaning “in his death” (BDB 119 and 560).⁹

A similar ambiguity with the **במותם** occurs in Ezek 43:7, which reads

וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי
הַמָּה וּמַלְכֵיהֶם בְּזוֹתָם וּבַפְּגָרֵי מַלְכֵיהֶם בְּמוֹתָם

KJV

and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile,
neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom,
nor by the carcasses 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, **בְּמוֹתָם**, was translated in the Septuagint as ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν “in their midst,” evidently having a *Vorlage* with **בתוכם** for the MT **במותם**. 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 **בְּמוֹתָם**. The RSV and the NJB have nothing for the **בְּמוֹתָם**, evidently viewing the **במותם** as a variant dittography of the MT **בְּתַתָּם** “in their placing” which begins the next verse.

The clue for deciding whether to read **בְּמוֹתָם** as “their high places” or “in their dying” is found in a proper understanding of the second **מִלְכִיָּהֶם** in Ezek 43:7b. The first occurrence of **מִלְכִיָּהֶם** in the verse certainly means “their kings,” but the second **מִלְכִיָּהֶם** needs to be repointed as **מִלְכִיָּהֶם**, a segolate plural meaning “their child-sacrifices”—which accounts for the reference to all of the dead bodies. The noun **מִלְךָ** “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 (**מִלְךָ**) the abomination of the Ammonites.” But in I Kings 11:5, the Ammonite Molech appears as **מִלְכָם שֶׁקָן עַמֹּנִים**, “Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.” This difference suggests that the **מִלְךָ** of 11:7 is simply a misspelling of the **מִלְכָם** of 11:5, 11:33, II Kings 23:13, as well as the **מִלְכָם** (Μελχομ) in Jer 49:1, 4, and Zeph 1:5—all of which the NIV and NIB transliterated as Molech. (Noteworthy also is the **מִלְכָם** of II Sam 12:30 and I Chron 20:2, where the Septuagint has the doublet Μελχολ τοῦ βασιλέως αὐτῶν, “Melchol their king.”)

In light of Otto Eissfeldt’s study in 1935, in which he convincingly argued that **מִלְךָ** 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 **לְ** (= **לְ** + **הֵ**)

reflects the scribal recognition that מֹלֶךְ was a common noun, not a proper name:

- Lev 18:21 וּמִזְרַעְךָ לֹא־תִתֵּן לְהַעֲבִיר לְמֹלֶךְ, “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, אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִזְרָעוֹ לְמֹלֶךְ מוֹת יוֹמָת, “who gives any of his children to Molech shall be put to death.”
- Lev 20:3, מִזְרָעוֹ נָתַן לְמֹלֶךְ לְמַעַן טַמֵּא אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי, “he has given one of his children to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name.”
- Lev 20:4, בָּתְחוּ מִזְרָעוֹ לְמֹלֶךְ לְבַלְתִּי הָמִית אֹתוֹ, “when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death.”
- Lev 20:5, כָּל־הַזֵּנִים אַחֲרָיו לְזִנוֹת אַחֲרֵי הַמֹּלֶךְ, “all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.”
- II Kings 23:10, לְהַעֲבִיר אִישׁ אֶת־בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־בִּתּוֹ בָּאֵשׁ לְמֹלֶךְ, “that a man make a son or a daughter pass through fire for Molech.”
- Jer 32:35, לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם לְמֹלֶךְ, “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

CONCLUSION

Once the second מַלְכֵיהֶם of Ezek 47:3 is repointed as מַלְכֵיהֶם “their child-sacrifices,” there is no need to repoint the MT בְּמוֹתָם “their high places” as בְּמוֹתָם “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, בְּמוֹתָיו “in his dying” needs to be repointed as בְּמוֹתָיו “his (burial) mound”—the perfect parallel to קִבְרוֹ “his grave.”

The two words which have to date gone unrecognized by most translators and interpreters are (1) the מֶלֶךְ “child-sacrifice” in Ezek 47:3, where it provides paronomasis with מֶלֶךְ “king,” and (2) the עֲשִׂיר / עֶשֶׂר “vile, ignoble, base” in Isa 53:9a, which, for theological reasons, has been identified as the well attested עֲשִׂיר “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* וְיִתֵּן can be read as the passive *Hoph'al* וְיִתֵּן 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 עֶשֶׂר / עֶשֶׂיר “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 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 (IQIs^a) has a plural verb. The line reads ויתנו את רשעים קברו ועם עשירים בומתו. Differences from the MT include (1) the plural verb, (2) the plural עשירים “riches”/“vile ones,” (3) the preposition עם [the ם being overwritten by a indistinguishable correction] for the second את, and (4) בומתו, which can mean “his (burial) mound” but cannot mean “with his dead/death.” The ים of the עשירים 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, *‘os ê ra^c*, ‘doers of evil’ and *ś^{ec} irîm*, ‘demons’, are the most plausible, but the text may be correct: it has been suggested that *‘āšîr* here is unconnected with *‘āšîr* 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 $\text{שְׁעִירִים עֲשִׂיר}$ and translated, “His grave was put with the wicked. And his funerary installation with the demons” (with the plural “demons” reflecting the plural עֲשִׂירִים in DSIs^a).

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

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

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

9. In light of the בּוֹמְתוֹ in 1QIs^a where the medial ו reflects the vowel shift from \hat{a} to \hat{o} , Albright (1956: 244–246) proposed the emendation of MT בְּבִמְתָיו “in his deaths” to בְּבִמְתוֹ “his burial mound.” Reider (1952: 118) proposed emending the MT בְּבִמְתָיו to בֵּית מְתוֹ “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

פְּתִיתֵנִי יְהוָה וְאַפְּתַח חוֹקֵי תֵנִי וְתוֹכַל

Septuagint

ἠπάτησάς με κύριε καὶ ἠπατήθην
ἐκράτησας καὶ ἠδυνάσθης

Vulgate

*seduxisti me Domine et seductus sum
sum fortior me fuisti et invaluable 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 פְּתַח

Failure to recognize that the פְּתַח in Jer 20:7 was *not* the denominative of פְּתִי / פְּתִי “simple/simplicity,” meaning in the *Pi^cel* “to deceive or to seduce” (BDB 834; KBS 3: 984), but a cognate of the Arabic فتو (*fatawa*) “*he notified the decision of the law*,” has created serious problems for commentators.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. . . .²

Clines and Gunn (1978: 21–23) followed Calvin’s translator John Owen [1616–1683] (though not mentioned)³ and argued that פָּתָהּ 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”.⁴

But it is difficult to recognize any such tentativeness in Jer 1:5, וּבִטְרָם תֵּצֵא מִרְחֹם הַקֶּדֶשׁ תִּשְׁתַּיֵּד נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם נְתַתִּיךָ, “before you come forth from the womb I [Yahweh] sanctified you [Jeremiah], I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” 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.)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵצֶא וְהִיִּיתִי רוּחַ שְׂקֵר בְּפִי כָּל־נְבִיאָיו
 וַיֹּאמֶר תִּפְתָּהּ . . .
 נָתַן יְהוָה רוּחַ שְׂקֵר בְּפִי כָּל־נְבִיאֵיךָ אֱלֹהֵי

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, הָיָה תְהִיָּה לִי כַמּוֹ אֲכָזֵב מַיִם, “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 γλυτομένη ἐγενήθη 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 הִיָּה הַיּוֹת הִיָּה or הִיָּה הִיָּה for the MT הִיָּה תְהִיָּה. 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 פָּתָה appearing in Exod 22:15 for sexual seduction and חָזַק 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 فتو (*fatawa*) becomes the key for interpreting Jer 20:7, Jeremiah appears as a bewildered prophet, but not a quasi-blasphemous one. The verb فتو (*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 فتوى (*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 مفت (*mufti*) means “a jurisconsult who notifies the decisions of the law, in, or respecting, cases submitted to him for guidance of the قاضي (*qâdî*), who is the “magistrate” issuing a قضاء (*qâd'â*), which is a “decree; ordinance; sentence, or judicial decision” (Lane 1877: 2336–2337; 1893: 2990; Wehr 1979: 815, 904). The lexeme פִּתְּוָה is attested in the name פִּתְּוֵאל, 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-

wide.⁶ 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 פְּתָה (= *fatwa/fatwah*) was a recognized term in Biblical Hebrew.⁷

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!⁸ 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 וַיְהוֹה הוֹדִיעֵנִי וַאֲדַעָה “Yahweh made known to me, and I knew” (11:18), which has essentially the same meaning as the פְּתִיתֵנִי יְהוֹה וְאֶפְתָּה (20:7), except the פְּתָה includes in itself the object of what became known—the fiat, the decree, the sanction—without a separate word as the direct object.⁹

The Meaning of חִזַּק

In a similar manner, failure to recognize that the חִזַּק in Jer 20:7 is *not* the verb meaning “to be strong, to strengthen,” but the cognate of the Arabic حَذَق (*ḥaḍaqa*) “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 (חִזַּק) than I / and thou hast prevailed (יָכַל)”, exemplifies the classical theme of the powerful persecutor that one meets, e.g. in Ps 35:10 . . . 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 [חִזַּקְתִּינִי], like those in the first colon, can carry sexual connotations: חִזַּק qal does in 2 Sam 13:14 [וַיִּחַזַּק מִמֶּנָּה], “and he was stronger than she),” and the hip’ il of חִזַּק does in Deut 22:25 [וְהִחַזְּקָהּ הָאִישׁ וְשָׂכַב] and the hip’ il of חִזַּק does in Exod 22:15 [וְכִי־יִפְתָּהּ [עֲמָה] . . . 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 חֲזַק is identified as the cognate of حَذَق (*ḥaḍaqa*) “he made him skilful” (form II) and حَازِق (*ḥāḍiq*) “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).¹⁰ 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 חֲזַק , 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, OYahweh, God of hosts” (15:16) and “I stood before you [O, God,] and spoke well (טוֹבָה) concerning them to turn away your wrath from them” (18:20).¹¹ Thus, the MT חֲזַקְתָּנִי 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 כְּפִי תְהִיָּה “you will become as my mouth” (15:19).

The Meaning of יָכַל and זָעַק

Moreover, the failure of translators and commentators to recognize that the וַתִּיכַל in Jer 20:7 is *not* from the verb יָכַל

“to be able, to prevail” has contributed to some of the contrived interpretations. The **וַהֲוִיכֶל** in 20:7 is the cognate of the Arabic **وكل** (*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”¹² 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, **וַיֵּדְעָה יְיָהוָה הַרְרִיעֵנִי**, “Yahweh made known to me, and I knew” and 20:7, **פְּתִיתֵנִי**, “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.¹³ 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. . . . **אזעק** must mean something like ‘I cry out for help’, and if this is so **חַמַּס אֶקְרָא** cannot be an allusion to prophecies of doom. It too like **אזעק** 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 (**כִּי מְדִי אֶדְבַּר**), to an explosive verbal expression of inner desper-

tion (חַמֹּס וְשָׂדֶה אֲקָרָא), and that it is his obedience to his prophetic calling which has reduced him to this condition.

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

Therefore, contra McKane, the אֲזַעֵק חַמֹּס וְשָׂדֶה אֲקָרָא 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!’”¹⁴

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 כָּל אָנוּשׁ שְׁלוּמֵי שְׁמֵרֵי צִלְעֵי, meaning literally “every man of my peace watching my side/my stumbling.” But the MT needs to be repointed and translated as כָּל אָנוּשׁ שְׁלוּמֵי שְׁמֵרֵי צִלְעֵי, “An incurable weariness is my recompense; my being on guard is my undoing.”¹⁵ The derivations supporting this translation are

- The אָנוּשׁ should have been read as אָנוּשׁ rather than אָנוּשׁ and given the same meaning as that found in Jer 15:18,

וּמִפְתִּי אֲנוֹשָׁה יִמָּאֵה הִרְפָּא כָּל אֲנוֹשׁ “my wound is incurable, refusing to be healed.” This singular כָּל is not the same as the plural כָּל אֲנָשִׁי in 38:22.¹⁶

- The MT כָּל is the cognate of the Arabic كل (*kalla*) “he became fatigued, tired, weary, incapacitated” and كليل (*kalîl*) “weak, faint,” as in the expression لسان كليل (*lisân kalîl*) “a dull tongue, lacking sharpness” (Lane 1893: 3002).¹⁷
- The MT צַלַּע, translated variously as “side” or “stumble,” or by some synonym of the latter, is *not* the cognate of the Arabic ضلع (*dilʿ*) “rib” or “side,” nor the cognate of ظلع (*ḍalaʿa*) “to limp”; but it is the cognate of أصلع (*ʿaṣlaʿ*) and صليعاء (*ṣulayʿā*) “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).¹⁸ It is used here as a variant for לֹא אוֹכֵל “I am not able.”

Jeremiah’s bewilderment turned to anger after hearing the “defamation of many” (דְּבַת רַבִּים), whereby he recognized that everyone—aside from the Babylonians—was surrounded by terror (מַגֵּר מִסָּבִיב). Jerusalem was surrounded by Babylonian terrorists and Jeremiah was himself surrounded by Judean terrorists. Despite the many translations of דְּבַת as “whispering,”¹⁹ Jeremiah’s enemies were vocal and vicious, shouting הַגִּידוּ וְנִגִּידְנוּ “Overpower him! Let us overpower him!”

Elsewhere נגַד (used in the *Hiph^cil*) means “to announce, tell, proclaim,” but not “denounce.” In a context of hostility, such as that found in Jer 20:10, the Arabic نجد (*najada*) provides the clue for the interpretation of this particular נגַד. It means, among other things, “he overcame, conquered, subdued, overpowered, prevailed over, or surpassed” (Lane 1893: 2766). The Septuagint translators certainly understood the נגַד here in this way for they rendered וַיִּגִּדְוּ הַגִּידוּ as ἐπισύστητε καὶ ἐπισυστώμεν αὐτῷ “Attack! Let us attack him!”²⁰

The פָּתָה in Jer 20:10 is the well used verb “to entice,” not the rare פָּתָה in 20:7, related to a *fatwa*. Were Jeremiah’s enemies able to entice him, they could prevail (יָכַל) 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).²¹ 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
- *jubilant* that Yahweh delivered the needy from evil doers
- *depression* and *despair* that he was even born.²²

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.²³

This lament could have been uttered by any number of Jewish exiles in Babylon, especially by King Zedekiah after

“the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; and the king of Bablyon 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 פְּתָהּ is a homograph of two totally unrelated verbs. פְּתָהּ, stem I, means “to deceive” and פְּתָהּ, stem II, is the cognate of فتو (*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 doom-sayer. 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 حذق (*ḥaḍaqa*) “eloquent, perspicuous” clarifies the second meaning of חֲזַק. Far from implying something analogous to an overpowering sexual seduction of Jeremiah by Yahweh, the חֲזַק 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 פָּתָהּ, like חֲזַק, is a homograph of two unrelated stems, so also is יָכַל. It is a homograph for (1) the verb “to prevail” in 20:11, and (2) the cognate of وكل (*wakala*) “to appoint, to entrust” in 20:7. Other homographs which have contributed to mistranslations and contrived interpretations are (1) כָּל = כָּל “all” or כָּל (kāḷ, not kōl) “weariness,” (2) אָנוּשׁ = אָנוּשׁ “man” or אָנוּשׁ “incurable,” (3) שָׁלוֹם = שָׁלוֹם “peace” or שָׁלוֹם “recompense,” (4) צָלַע = צָלַע “side” or צָלַע “stumbling” or צָלַע, the cognate of أصل (*ʿaṣla*) “undoing, inability, misfortune,” and (5) נָגַד = נָגַד “to tell” or the cognate of نجد (*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.

NOTES

1. KBS 3: 984 cites the Arabic فتو *fatā* (*ftw/y*) “youthful, young” but does not cite فتوى *fatway* “the giving of an answer or stating the decision of the law” (Lane 1877: 2336–2337). The פתה 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.”

4. For a summary of the interpretations of other commentators see McKane 1986: 467–475 and Holladay 1986: 548–559; Lubdbom 1999: 851–874.

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

peace,” whereas the sword is now at our throats!” (NJB)

- 7:4–8 “Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh’ . . . Behold you trust in deceptive words to no avail.”
- 6:14, 8:11 “everyone deals falsely . . . saying ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” (RSV)

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 hard-liners have continued their threats against him.

7. On the relationship of ל"י / ל"י and ל"ה stems see GKC 75^a.

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 נַעַר could well mean “servant,” in which case, by reading the אַל as an emphatic particle rather than the negative, God’s reply, אַל־הֵאמַר נַעַר אָנֹכִי, 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 **טוֹבָה** “well” as an adverbial accusative rather than as “good,” the direct object of **הֵבִיר**.
12. The kingdom and nations may have included Ephraim and Judah only. Compare Ezek 37:21–22.
13. For the MT **כִּי־מַדִּי אֶדְבֹר אֶזְעַק** “Whenever I speak, I must cry out,” the Septuagint reads ὅτι πικρῶ λόγῳ μου γελάσομα “For I will laugh with my bitter speech.” The πικρῶ reflects a misreading of MT **מַדִּי** “whenever” as **מַרַר** “bitter,” reflecting the confusion of a **י** and **ר**, as well as a **ר** and **ד** (see Delitzsch 1920: 105–107 §104^{a-c} and 111 §109^{a-b} for other examples). Although Hatch and Redpath (1897: 235) marked γελάσομα with a † indicating that it lacked a corresponding word in the MT, γελάσομα reflects a confusion of **זַעַק** “to cry out” with **צַחַק** “to laugh.”
14. On the use of the asseverative **כִּי** “verily, yea,” see McDaniel 1968: 210–215.
15. Prov 21:23, **שָׁמַר פִּי וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ שָׁמַר מִצָּרוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ**, “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 **הַסִּיתוּךָ וַיִּכְלֹוּ לְךָ אֲנָשֵׁי שְׁלֹמֶךָ**, “Your trusted friends have deceived you and prevailed against you.”
17. Hebrew **כָּל** “all, every” is the cognate of *kull* “all, everyone, entirety” (Lane 1893: 3002; Wehr 1979: 977–978).
18. Compare the use of **צָלַע** “adversity” in Psa 35:15 (KJV, NKJ,

ASV), which also reflects the Arabic cognate أصلع (*ʿaṣlaʿ*) “a calamity, or misfortune, something hard to be borne.” The Septuagint, which reads πάντες ἄνδρες φίλοι αὐτοῦ τηρήσατε τὴν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ, “All (you who are) his male friends, watch his intentions!” reflects a different *Vorlage* for צַלַּע 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.

21. For a discussion of the relationship of Jer 20:14–18 and Job 3, see McKane 1986: 482–484.

22. Compare Clines and Gunn (1976: 407) who stated,

We suggest, therefore, that the form and function of the unit 24¹⁴⁻¹⁸ 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 אַנְשֵׁים אֶשְׁלִים “30 men” in Jer 38:10, on the support of one manuscript with אַנְשֵׁה אֶשְׁלִים “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 אִישׁ with ‘thirty.’ And certainly the task would have demanded only the smaller number.” But the אֶשְׁלִים may have nothing to do with the numbers 3 or 30. Cowley (1920: 327) suggested that the well attested אֶשְׁלִים 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 אַנְשֵׁים would not be “men” as a gender marker but a marker of intimacy and familiarity (Lane

1863: 113–114), so that **שְׁלֹשִׁים אַנְשִׁים** 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.

XVI

DECEIVING OR DECEIVED PROPHETS

EZEKIEL 14:9 AND 20:25–27

EZEKIEL 14:9

וְהַנְּבִיא כִּי־יִפְתָּה וּדְבַר דָּבַר
אֲנִי יְהוָה פְּתִיתִי אֶת הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא
וְנָשִׂיתִי אֶת־יָדַי עָלָיו וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּיו
מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

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 פְּתִיתִנִּי and וְנָשִׂיתִנִּי in Jer 20:7, the verbs יִפְתָּה and פְּתִיתִי in Ezek 14:9 have been read as a simple repetition of פְּתָה “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^{3,6}), 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 [מִנְסֶה] 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 (פְּתוּדָה) 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 1 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” (אַתֶּם נִטְמָאִים)² and the assurance given in Ezek 20:11

וַאֲתַן לָהֶם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי
וַאֲתִמְשֶׁפֶּטִי הוֹרְעֵתִי אוֹתָם
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם וַחֲי בָהֶם

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 20:25–26

וְגַם־אֲנִי נִתְחִי לָהֶם חֻקִּים לֹא טוֹבִים
וּמְשַׁפְּטִים לֹא יִחִיו בָּהֶם
וְאֲטָמָא אוֹתָם בְּמִתְנֹתָם
בְּהַעֲבִיר כָּל־פֶּטֶר רָחִם
לְמַעַן אֲשַׁמֶּם
לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יְהוָה

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

וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם

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* *ṭimmē*^o (Piel). . . . But in v. 26
Yahweh declares his intentions explicitly: *so that I might
devastate them* (*lěma^oan^o ṭāšimmēn*). 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 Scrip-
ture 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 פתה can be read as *either* the *Pi^cel* "to deceive, to seduce" (BDB 834; KBS 3: 984) *or* as the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic فتو (*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^cal* יפתה "he will be deceived" needs to be repointed as the *Pi^cel* יפתה "he deceives" (and the MT ודבר "and he spoke" needs to be corrected to ידבר "he speaks").³ With these corrections to the MT the phrase והנביא כִּי־יפתה יהבר means "if the prophet deceives when he speaks a word." The apodosis which then follows contains a wordplay on the יפתה "he deceives," requiring the *Pi^cel* פתיתי "I deceive" to be repointed as the *Qal* פתיתי "I decree/I issue a sentence." Thus, Yahweh proclaimed אני יהוה פתיתי את הנביא ההוא, "I am Yahweh, I have *sentenced* that prophet." Yahweh then explicitly spelled out the death sentence: ונטיתי את ידי עליו והשמדתיו מתוך עמי ישראל "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 **לֵא** “indeed.”⁴ This **לֵא** was always misread by the Masoretes as the negative particle **לֹא**. But for Ezekiel **לֵא טוֹבִים** would have been synonymous with **חֲקִים טוֹבִים מְאֹד** “exceedingly good statutes.”⁵

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 20:26^c concluding, “I did it [the giving of good laws which give life] that they might acknowledge that I am Yahweh.”

When **לֵא** “indeed” and **פָּתָה** “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 Ezekiel 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)?⁶

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:

25^{a,b} וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָהֶם חֻקִּים לֹא טוֹבִים
 וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לֹא יָחִיו בָּהֶם
 26^c לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵדְעוּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יְהוָה:
 27 לְכֵן דִּבֶּר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּן־אָדָם
 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה
 עוֹד זֹאת גִּדְּפוּ אוֹתִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם
 בְּמַעַלְם בִּי ⁷ מַעַלּוֹ {אָמַר}
 26^{a,b} [וְ] אֲטַמֵּא אוֹתָם בְּמַתָּנוֹתָם
 בְּהַעֲבִיר כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם
 לְמַעַן אֲשַׁמֵּם

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,

{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 יִדְבַר “he speaks” as וְדַבַּר “and he spoke” and the misreading of an original מֵעַל “they transgressed” as מַעַל “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 20:26^{a b}), so that it became an admission on the lips of Yahweh.

The lexicographical problems come from the omission, to date, of פִּתְהָ (stem II)—which is the cognate of Arabic *فتو* (*fatawa/fatwa*) “a judicial sentence [of death]”—from the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. Although the emphatic לֵא 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 יִפְתֶּה and פְּתִיתִי 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 ἔαν πλανηθῆ καὶ λαλήσῃ
 ἐγὼ κύριος πεπλάνηκα τὸν προφήτην ἐκείνον καὶ
 ἐκτενω τὴν χεῖρά μου ἐπ' αὐτὸν καὶ ἀφανιῶ αὐτὸν
 ἐκ μέσου τοῦ λαοῦ μου Ἰσραηλ.

The Greek πλανηθῆ . . . 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 ך and ך see Delitzsch (1920) 103–105, §103^{a-c}.

4. The literature on the emphatic ל and ל continues to grow. In addition to references cited by Richardson (1966: 89), note Mc Daniel (1968) 206–208; Bloomer (1969) 31; Dahood (1975) 341–342; Whitley (1975) 202–204; and Huehnergard (1983) 569–593, especially 591.

5. Another example of the emphatic particle ל “indeed” in Ezekiel appears in 32:27, where the negative לֹא יִשְׁכְּבוּ אִתָּם “and they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen,” appears as an affirmative in the Septuagint, καὶ ἐκοιμηθήσαν μετὰ τῶν γιγάντων 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 ל as ל.

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6. Texts dealing with the sacrifice or redemption of the first born include Exo 13:1, 11–15, 22:28^b (MT), 34:19–20; texts speaking against child sacrifice include Lev 18:21; Deut 12:29–31, 18: 10–12; Jer 7:30–32, 19:4–6, 32:35; and Ezek 16:20–22; Micah 6:7.

7. Restoring MT מַעַל to מַעְלֵי with the Septuagint’s παρέπεσον “they transgressed.” The ו suffix of מַעְלֵי comes from the initial ו of the preceding וַאֲנִיָּא in the reconstructed text.

XVII

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.¹ A logical transition of thought can be restored by transposing verses 2 and 3, along with moving three words from 2:5 to 2:15.² The Arabic cognates are

- (1) قاص (*qâṣ*) “a narrator, preacher,” a synonym of خطيب (*ḥaṭīb*) “one who recites, exhorts, preaches from a pulpit” and delivers an exhortation or sermon called a خطبة (*ḥuṭbat*) (Lane 1885: 2528).
- (2) راض / روض (*rûḍ / râḍa*) “to train, to discipline, or subdue oneself (through piety)” (Lane 1867: 1186).
- (3) عبل (*ʿabala*) “he cut it, or, cut it off, so as to extirpate it,” with عبول (*ʿabalathu ʿabûlu*) “death separated him, cut him off, extirpated him” being said of a man when he has died; as well as عابلتى عبول (*ʿâbilatî ʿabûlu*) “my separator [from my companions] is death, or shall be death alone” (Lane 1874: 1941-1942).
- (4) فحا / فحو (*fahw / faḥâ*) “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 / hârah*) “he threw it down, demolished it,” and هار القوم (*hâra ʾalqawma*) “he slew the people” (Lane 1893: 2906).

The first of these five is the cognate of the קץ in Hab 2:3, which has traditionally been read as קץ “end” (the Septuagint has πέρας). The second is the cognate of the רויץ in 2:2, which has traditionally been read as רויץ “to run” (the Septuagint has διώκη). The third is the cognate of the עבל, which was in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint (which has ὑποστείληται “should he draw back”), differing from the MT which has עפלה “was swollen (with a tumor or hemorrhoid).” The עפלה is generally paraphrased as “his soul which is *lifted up*” (KJV); “his soul is *puffed up*” (ASV); “he that is *unbelieving*” (DRA, following the Vulgates’ *qui incredulus est*); “a *presumptuous one*” (YLT); and even “he shall *fail*” (RSV).³

Moreover, the MT עפלה was translated by Aquila as νωχέλευομένου “slothful,” apparently from a text with עצללה “slothful” instead of the MT עפלה. The Targum and the Peshitta evidently read עפלה as עולה “iniquity”—indicating that the second letter in this word was so poorly written, or became so badly damaged, that it could read as a פ or a ב or a צ or a ג.⁴

In Hab 2:4 the Septuagint’s ὑποστείληται “should he draw back” has been dismissed by commentators who assumed that two letters in the *Vorlage* were transposed, with the MT עפל “swollen” having been read as עלף “to cover, to enwrap, to faint”—even though עלף fits the context no better than עפל.

Thanks, however, to the Septuagintal ὑποστείληται, the stem עבל and its Arabic cognate عبل (*abala*) “he went away, he died” comes into focus. This stem occurs in the name of Mount Ebal (הַר עֵיבָל), which was known as the

mountain of the curse (Deut 11:29; 27:4, 11), and its name could well have been understood as “the mountain of death” (= *عبول* [*‘abūlu*]) 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 פח in the verb וַיִּפַּח in 2:3, traditionally understood as פוח “to blow, to breathe.” The Septuagint has ἀνατελεῖ “it shall shoot forth,” as if the word were פרח “to bud, sprout,” rather than פח. 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 היר of the MT וַיְהִיר in 2:5, usually interpreted as “haughty” (= the Septuagint’s ἀλαζών).

With these five cognates in focus, Hab 2:2–4 can be translated as follows (with further comments in the notes).

2:1

עַל־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי אֶעֱמֹדָה
 וְאֶתִּיצֵבָה עַל־מִצּוֹר
 וְאֶצְפָּה לְרֵאוֹת מִהַיַּדְבָּר־בִּי
 וּמִה אֲשִׁיב עַל־תּוֹכַחְתִּי:

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

2:3

כִּי יַעֲוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד
 [MT = כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד =
 וְיִפְתַּח לִקְיָץ וְלֹא יִכְזֹב
 אִם־יִתְמַהֲמַה חִבְהָ־לוֹ
 כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יֵאָחֵר:]

For a vision was promised⁷ to the protestor;⁸
 its intent would be understood⁹ by the preacher,¹⁰
 and it would not disappoint.¹¹
 If it seem slow, wait for it.
 It will surely come; it will not be postponed.¹²

2:2

וַיַּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
 כָּתוּב חֲזוֹן וּבְאֵר עַל־הַלְּחֹת
 לְמַעַן יִרְוֶץ קוֹרֵא בוֹ:

Then Yahweh answered me, saying:
 “Write the vision! Make it plain upon tablets,
 so that the one reading it may be disciplined!”¹³

2:4

הִנֵּה עֲפָלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
 וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמּוֹנָתוֹ יַחִיָּה:

“Behold!
 The unrighteous soul has been cut off,¹⁴
 but the righteous lives by his faithfulness.”

2:5

וְאִף גְּבוּר יְהִיר וְלֹא יִרְוֶה
 [MT = וְאִף גְּבוּר יְהִיר וְלֹא יִנּוּה =]
 אֲשֶׁר הִרְחִיב כְּשֹׂאֵל נַפְשׁוֹ
 וְהוּא כְּמוֹת וְלֹא יִשְׂבֵּעַ
 וַיֵּאֱסֹף אֵלָיו כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
 וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֵלָיו כָּל־הָעַמִּים:

Indeed,¹⁵ the strongman¹⁶
 demolishes¹⁷ and cannot be sated,¹⁸
 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 of Yahweh's response to Habakkuk's questions. If the MT **יִשְׂאוּ** were read as **נִשְׂאוּ**¹⁹ and the **וַיֵּאֱמַר** repointed as **וַיֵּאֲמַר**, then the **הֲלוֹא** of 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: **עֵפֶל לֹא־יִשְׂרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ** "the unrighteous soul *has been cut off*" (a *Pu^c*al perfect, whether the verb is a masculine, as proposed here, or a feminine with the MT), whereas the righteous *lives* (**יִחִיָּה** 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

faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’”²⁰ *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

1. See William Hayes Ward, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Habakkuk*, in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* by J. M. Powis Smith, W. H. Ward, and J. A. Bewer; New York: Charles Scribners, 1911, pp. 13–14 of the section on Habakkuk. Concerning verse 2:4, Ward despaired, “The first member of this couplet is corrupt past safe reconstruction,” and paraphrased it as, “The upright [shall rest] his soul in me; And the righteous shall live in my faithfulness.” For summaries of subsequent studies see John Marshall Holt, “So He May Run Who Reads,” *JBL* (1964) 83: 298–302; J. A. Emerton, “The Textual and Linguistic Problem of Habakkuk II, 4–5,” *JTS* (1977: 27:1–18; Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, The New American Commentary, Volume 20, Nashville: Broadman and Holman (1999) 318–326. Emerton translated 2:2 as “Behold, he whose personality within him is not upright will fly away (i.e. pass away, perish), but the righteous man will live because of his faithfulness.”

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 עָפַל would be *غفل* (*ḡafala*) “he was unmindful, forgetful, neglectful” and *غفل* (*ḡufl*) “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 כ and פ is well attested, and numerous examples have been cited by Delitzsch (1920: 115 §118^{a,b}).

5. Lexicographers of Biblical Hebrew have cited only the Arabic *عبل* (*ʿabala*) “to be bulky, chubby, stout” (BDB 716; KBS 2: 816), with no mention of the noun *عبول* (*ʿabûlu*) “death” or the verb *عبل* (*ʿabala*) “to hold back, to take away,” the latter of which the Septuagint translators obviously knew. The *עַבַּל* / *עַפַּל* by-forms meaning “separation, death” need to be recognized along with *פְּרֹזַל* / *בְּרֹזַל* “iron” and *פְּזַר* / *בְּזַר* “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 *כִּי עוֹד* as *כִּי יְעוֹד*, restoring a *y* lost by haplography, and vocalizing the *עוֹד* as a passive participle. Hebrew *יְעַר* “to appoint” may have had nuances of “threat” and/or “promise,” like its Arabic cognate *وعد* (*waʿada*) “he promised” or “he threatened” (Lane 8: 2952; BDB 416).

8. Reading here instead of the MT *מוֹעֵד* “appointed time or place,” the *Hiphʿil* participle *מוֹעֵד* / *מוֹעִיד* or *מוֹעִיר*, from *עוֹד* II

“to exhort, to protest, to warn, to testify” (BDB 730) or its by-form יַעֲד (with the עוֹד / יַעֲד being like טוֹב / יַטֵּב “to be good”).

9. The meaning of MT וַיִּפֹּחַ לְקֵץ, “(the vision) breathes / exhales to the end,” is, to say the least, ambiguous if not senseless. Interpretations which make פוּחַ “to breathe, to exhale” a synonym of מְהֵרָה “to hasten” or חוּשׁ “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 “it will rise” is of no help because it simply reflects a *Vorlage* with פָּרַח “to bud, sprout, shoot” for the MT פוּחַ. (Delitzsch [1920: 111 §109^{a-b}] cited many other examples of the confusion of a ו and a ר.)

The MT וַיִּפֹּחַ needs to be repointed as וַיִּפָּח and recognized as the פָּחַע verb ע"ע, a by-form of the פָּחַח verb ל"ה (see GKC 77^c for other examples of ע"ע and ל"ה verbs having the same meaning). This פָּחַח is the cognate of the Arabic فحَا (*fāḥa*), cited above which is a synonym of لَحَنَ (*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 *h* and the *ḥ*.

10. The MT לְקֵץ “to the end” needs to be repointed to קֵץ “to the narrator/preacher,” with קֵץ being the cognate of قَاص (qāṣ), 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 (= קֵץ), 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 **MeKq** (*qaṣāṣ*) means a novelist or storyteller.)

11. Following the translation in BDB 469.

12. Repointing the MT **ΓΧΘ** as a *Pu^cal* or *Hoph^cal* (Jastrow 40).

13. The MT **#Wṛy** 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 **XYXKP** ~ **γCQ** “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 **#Wṛ** is to be blamed for these mistranslations—even though it is the only **#Wṛ** currently in the Hebrew lexicons. The right **#Wṛ** has yet to make it into the lexicons, which is the **#Wṛ** that is the cognate of **QŪ@/Q!@** (*rûḏ / rāda*) “to train, discipline oneself,” introduced above. The phrase **EṆh(d# mCdwQŪ@** (*rawiḏ nafsaka bi’lattaqway*) “discipline thyself well by piety” provides the clue to the meaning of **#Wṛ** in this verse.

14. The final **h** of **h | P.[** needs to be shifted to the **qyDCw**; thereby making the verb masculine (**l P;[**) and the noun definite (**qyDCw**).

15. Moving **dqAB !yvh; yKi** 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 **Γbβ** “man, servant” as *scriptio defectiva* for **ΓABG** “mighty man” which, given the political overtones of the passage, is best rendered “strongman.”

17. Recognizing that the הִיר of the MT יְהִיר is the cognate of Arabic هير (*hayyir*) “he threw down, he demolished.”

18. Following Wellhausen (cited by Ward, 1911: 14) who thought the MT וְלֹא יִנְוֶה “he will not abide” should be read as וְלֹא יִרְוֶה “he will not be sated,” which balances the וְלֹא יִשְׂבֵּעַ “he will not be satisfied” that follows in the next line.

19. See Delitzsch 1920: 111–112 § 110^{a-c} for other examples of the ו and ן.

20. See also Gal 3:11 and Heb 10:38–39.

XVIII
SHORT NOTES
ON OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

A. I SAMUEL 25:22 and II SAMUEL 12:14

Commentators have failed to recognize that the problematic אֶת־אֹיְבִי 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 אֹיֵב “enemy,” but the *Hithpa^cel* of the rare verb אִיַּב (^o*iyyēb*), the cognate of the Arabic اَوَّب (^o*awwāb*) “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 اَوَّب (^o*awwāb*) “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, ^o*t yhw*, is reflected only in a single Greek cursive MS (c = 376). MT (cf. LXX, OL. Syr., Targ.) has ^o*t yby yhw*, “*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 (*ni^oēš ni^oaštā*) as a causative *Pi^cel* (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'ēš* 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 אַתְּ־אֵיבִי 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 י of the MT אַתְּ־אֵיבִי can be transposed to become an initial י and the reconstructed ואתאיב can be pointed as יִאֲתֵאִיב, a *Hithpa^eel* (GKC §54^e) 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:

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־נָתָן
 חָטָאתִי לַיהוָה וְאֲתֵאִיב
 וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל־דָּוִד
 גַּם־יְהוָה הֶעֱבִיר חַטָּאתְךָ לֹא תָמוּת:
 אַפְס כִּי־נִאֲמַן נִאֲצַת יְהוָה בְּדַבַּר תִּזְהַ
 גַּם הַבַּיִת הַיְלֹד לְךָ מוֹת יָמוּת:

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 אִיבִי (*ʿiyyēb*) “to return, to repent”—which is a synonym of the widely used verb שׁוּב “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, أَوْب (*ʿawwâb*) “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 (עֶרֶב הַבֵּקֶר), 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 אִיבִי “my returning,” although it was probably added at first as a gloss when אִיבִי was misunderstood—in grammatical terms—as the *nomen regens* אִיבִי “the enemies of,” which required the *nomen rectum* modifier. Thus, while some interpreters follow the Septuagint, which has simply τὸ Δαυιδ “to David,” and treat the MT אִיבִי as a gloss, I consider the MT אִיבִי “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:

וַיֵּשְׁב־לִי רָעָה תַחַת טוֹבָה:
כִּה־יַעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים לְאִיבִי וְכִה יִסְרֶךָ

אִם-אֲשָׁאִיר מִכָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ עַד-הַבֶּקֶר מִשָּׁתַיִן בְּקִיר:

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 ה IN EZEKIEL 38:21
 LOST BY HAPLOGRAPHY**

MASORETIC TEXT

וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָל-הָרֵי חָרָב
 נְאֻם אֲדָנָי יְהוִה חָרָב אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו תִּהְיֶה:

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 ἐπ' 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 לְכָל-הַרֵי חֶרֶב, 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 הַרֵי חֶרֶב to חֶרֶבָה, 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 חרבא בכלהון טורי “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 חררה for the הַרֵי חֶרֶב.

Allen (1990: 201) viewed the MT הַרֵי as an “adapted torso” having been written for חר under the influence of the וְנִהְרְסוּ הַהָרִים 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 *ḥārādā ḥereb* for *hāray ḥereb*,” concluding that “the LXX reading

may itself reflect the translator's uncertainty regarding the meaning of the word [הַרִי].”

Block's suspicion that the Greek translators did not know the meaning of הַרִי 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 הַרִי “my mountain(s).” Instead of being read as a parallel to the וְעַל-הַרִי “and upon my mountains” in Isa 14:25 or the כִּי-יִגִיעַ גִּי-הַרִים of Zech 14:5, the הַרִי in Ezek 38:21 needs to be repointed as הַרִי and recognized as the cognate of the Arabic verb هارِه/هور (*hwr/hâra*) “he threw it down, pulled it down, demolished it” and the adjectives هارِي (*hârî*) / هَائِر/ (hâ'ir) / هَارٍ (*hârin*), meaning “becoming thrown down, pulled down, pulled to pieces, demolished” (Lane 1893: 2906–2907). The י of הַרִי is not a 1cs suffix but a part of the stem, like the י of פְּרִי “fruit.” In the context of all the destruction mentioned in Ezekiel 38, this הַרִי is best translated as “demolition” or “collapse.”

If this interpretation of the הַרִי is correct, then the next word, חֶרֶב “sword,” should be repointed as חֶרֶב “desolation.” And, if the repointed הַרִי חֶרֶב means “demolition, desolation,” then the preceding word, לְכָל “to all,” should be emended to לְכָלָה “for annihilation,” restoring a ה which was lost by haplography. This restoration of לְכָלָה in Ezek 38:21 finds support in the use of לְכָלָה in Ezek 13:13,

וְגַשְׁמֵם שֶׁטַף בְּאֶפְרַיִם יְהוּהָ
וְאֲבָנֵי אֱלֹגְבִישׁ בְּחִמָּה לְכָלָה

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” (רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל / σεισμὸς μέγας) and the “falling to earth of all the walls” (וְכָל-חֹמֶה לְאַרְצֵי תְּפוּל) support the interpretation of הָרִי as “collapse” or “demolition.”

Thus, in summary, the problematic phrase in Ezek 38:21, וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָל-הָרֵי חָרָב “And I called against him to all of my mountains a sword,” should be emended and re-pointed to read וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָל־הָרֵי חָרָב “And against him I have called for annihilation, demolition, desolation.”

C. ZECHARIAH 2:8 (MT 2:12)

“THE APPLE OF HIS EYE”

The expression or idiom עֵינֹו בְּבֵת “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 תְּפֹיֵחַ, which is totally unrelated to the word בְּבֵת appearing in Zech 2:8. The Hebrew word בְּבֵת, used in this idiom may be derived from (1) a word for “baby, babe,” indicating the “baby of the eye,” or (2) from בְּבֵת 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 Vulgate 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 **אִישׁוֹן עֵינָו**, the meaning of which is clarified by the same expression in Arabic, **إنسان العين** (*‘însân ‘al‘ayin*), 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 **אִישׁוֹן** could be related to the word **אִישׁ** “man,” but it is more likely a noun related to the word **אִשֵּׁשׁ** “to glitter, to be dark.”

In Psalm 17:8 the expression appears as **אִישׁוֹן בַּת־עַיִן**, 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 κατώκησεν εἰς πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτ·
ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν 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.”

NAZAPEΘ / NAZARETH

The place¹ named Nazareth² does not appear in the Old Testament, Josephus, Talmud Babli, Talmud Yerushalmi, nor in Midrashic literature.³ Moreover, the quotation “spoken by the prophets” in 2:23b cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible. Attempts to relate Nazareth⁴ 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.⁵ 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 נֹזַר come into focus, it appears that Nazareth was, in one respect, true to its name.⁶ The Arabic cognate of נֹזַר is نَزْر (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, נֹזְרָה “little (village),” actually became the name נֹזְרֵת (Nazaret/Nazareth), meaning “Little-town” or “Hamlet.”⁷ The Arabic cognate نَزْر (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 נֹזְרֵת apparently had similar connotations.

With this derivation and definitions in focus, Nathanael’s question to Philip in John 1:46, Ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι; “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” becomes understandable. Nathanael obviously knew of the hamlet named נֹזְרָה/נֹזְרֵת, and he obviously knew at least one meaning of the town’s name.⁸

Another Arabic cognate of Hebrew נֹזַר / נֹזִיר is نَذِير / نَذِير (naḍāra / naḍīr) “to inform, to warn, to put people on guard” [form 6], and “an informant, one who cautions.” The question in *Qur’an Sura* 35:34, “Did not a warner (نَذِير) (naḍīr) come to you?” is considered by expositors to be a reference to the prophet Mohammed (Lane 1893: 2781–2782).⁹ 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 וְאֶת־עֲנָבֵי וְאֶת־תְּבַצְרֵי לֹא תִבְצֹר “and the grapes of your *undressed* vine you shall not gather” (RSV). The Septuagint has καὶ τὴν σταφυλὴν τοῦ ἀγιάσματος σου οὐκ ἐκτρυγήσεις “and you shall not gather the grapes of your *dedication*.” Rashi interpreted the נזר of וְאֶת־עֲנָבֵי as הַשְּׂמֹר בְּאֶרֶץ “that which is guarded in the ground,” i.e., the opposite of מוֹבָקָר “free (for gleaning).” This would make נזר a by-form of the well attested נצר “to guard” (Jastrow 891, 929).¹⁰

In summary, Ναζαρέτ/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 Ναζαρέτ/Nazareth is the first listed. Ναζαρέτ/Nazareth was a small village or hamlet which became known as “Hamlet.”

ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ¹¹ / NAZARENE¹²

As six definitions came into focus in reference to Ναζαρέτ “Nazareth,” so also a number of words need to be reviewed when considering the derivation of Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρηνός.¹³ As noted already, נזר could be a by-form of נצר “to guard, to keep, to observe,” which is the cognate of Aramaic נִטַר (BDB 665; Jastrow 901), Syriac ܢܬܪ (nētar) (Payne Smith 337), and Arabic نظور/ناظر/نظر (nazara/nâzir/nazûr) “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 נוֹצְרִים / נוֹצְרֵי “Nazarene/Christians” was derived from נצר “to guard / be observant,” the צ of the

Hebrew נָצַר would most likely have become a ܢ in Aramaic and Syriac and a ظ (z) in Arabic—the possible Hebrew by-form נָזַר notwithstanding. The names נֹזְרִי “Nazarene” and נֹזְרִים “Christians” appear in Syriac as ܢܫܪܝܐ (*naṣrāyā*), in Arabic as (1) نصراني (*naṣrānī*), (2) نصران (*naṣrān*), (3) نصرى (*naṣrī*) or (4) ناصريا (*nāṣiriyyā*), and in Persian as ناصري (*nāsrī*). The Syriac ܫ (š) instead of ܬ (t) and the Arabic ص (ṣ) instead of ظ (z) in these names mitigates against deriving Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρηνός from נָצַר “to guard.”

The second word from which some scholars would derive Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρηνός is נִצֵּר “sprout, shoot, branch” the cognate of Arabic نَضْر (nadara) (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 (הַנֶּזֶר) from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (נִצְּר) shall grow out of his roots,” the key for interpreting the “Nazarene” of Matt 2:23.¹⁵ The reasons led them to conjecture: (1) “Perhaps we should speak of a secondary allusion.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

Gundry (1967: 104) related the Ναζωραῖος of Matt 2:23 to the נִצְרִי 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 נִצְרִי = lowliness motif as well as upon phonetic similarity [with Ναζαρέτ].

However, the “Branch” passages in the *Hodayoth* are paeans of praise, such as

And Thou hast sent out a sprouting as a flower that shall bloom for ever, and the Shoot (נִצְרִי) may grow into the branches of the eternal planting. And its shade shall spread over all [the earth] [and] its top reach to the hea[vens] [and] its roots to the Abyss, And all the rivers of Eden [shall water] its [bou]ghs and it shall become a [mi]ghty forest, [and the glory of] its [fo]rest shall spread over the world without end, as far a Sheol [for ever]. . . (VI: 15–17).¹⁸

Moreover, if Ναζωραῖος is linked to נִצְרִי, 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, frankincense, and myrrh—not to mention the elevated status of being of the lineage of David.
- to ignore the Arabic cognate of נִצְרִי “branch” which is نَضْرًا (*naḍara*), noted in BDB (1907: 666) as meaning “be fresh, bright, grow green,” but Castell (1669: 2391) defined it as *à splendeur 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,”

(2) “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 *نصرة* (*nadrāt*) meant “enjoyment, a plentiful and pleasant and easy life.”

- to account for the ω vowel of Ναζωραῖος if Ναζωραῖος were a transliteration of נֶצֶר “branch, shoot.”¹⁹

Therefore, like נֶצֶר “guard,” נֶצֶר “branch” is *not* the most likely link between Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρέτ.

However, the relationship of these two names can be clarified by נֶצֶר once the meaning “to aid, to assist, to conquer, to be victorious” comes into focus.²⁰ This נֶצֶר is the cognate of Arabic *نصر* (*naṣara*), from which the Arabic word for “Christian” is derived (see above). Behind the Arabic name for “Christian” is the Arabic cognate of נֶצֶר 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 نصره الله (*naṣarahu ʿAllah*) “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 (*naṣr*) and نصرة (*naṣarat*) mean “aid, assistance (especially against an enemy), victory or conquest” (Castell 1669: 2390–2391; Lane 1893: 2802; Wehr 1979: 1138; KBS 1994: 2: 718).²¹

Consequently, with help from Arabic cognates and the recognition that נ and צ were frequently interchanged in Hebrew, the derivation of Ναζαρέτ (“Hamlet, Littletown”) and Ναζαρηνός/Ναζωραῖος (“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* (נְצוּרִים) from sin and the world's injustice. Their faith in resurrection (I Cor 15:54–57) made them “Victors” (נְצוּרִים) 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 Ναζαρηνός/Ναζωραῖος 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 (נִזְרֵת) to *help/aid* (נִזַּר/נִצַּר) the demoniac, Jesus would have to conquer (נִצַּר) the demonic power—which the demoniac feared would be his own destruction and death. But Jesus proved to be victorious (נִצַּר) without being deadly.

With the above derivations of Ναζαρηνός/Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρέτ 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 acceptable 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 Ναζωραῖος—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 definition of نصر [naṣara] = Ναζωραῖος).

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 נזר “to warn,” discussed above, was used by Jesus. But recognition of the multiple meanings of נצר/נזר suggests that with Nazareth some things were understood without being said.

When the Hebrew words behind Ναζαρητός and Ναζωραῖος 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 נוצרים “helpers”—when interpreted as נצורים “victors”—were viewed as a threat by Roman rulers.

AN UNRECOGNIZED BY-FORM OF NAṢARA

The vocables הוים “to roar, to murmur” and נהם “to growl, to groan” are related to each other in the same way that פוּחַ “to breathe” and נָפַח “to breathe” are related. These by-forms suggest that נצר can be paired with the by-form צור. Support for the נצר/צור by-forms comes from the Septuagint. In the Greek text צור was rendered twenty eight times by πέτρα “rock”; but in I Sam 2:2 the MT וַאֲיִן צור “there is no *rock* (like our God)” became in the Septuagint οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος “there is none *holy* (besides thee),” suggesting that צור for the Septuagint translators was treated as a by-form of the נצר which in the B-text of Judges 13:5 and 7 was also translated as ἅγιος “holy.” Moreover, the following translations of צור are attested:

- in Deut 32:4, 15, 18; Psal 18:32 [= II Sam 2:32], 62:3, 63:7 and 91:5 צוֹר was rendered by θεός “God”;²²
- in 2 Sam 22:47 צוֹר was translated as φύλαξ “guardian”;²³
- in Psa 17:3, 19:15, 78:35, 89:44, and 94:22 צוֹר was translated by βοηθός “helper.”²⁴
- in Hab 1:12 צוֹר was translated πλάσσω “to form, create.”
- in I Sam צוֹר was translated δίκαιος “righteous.”

The צוֹר which was translated as φύλαξ “guardian” or βοηθός “helper” can be identified as a by-form of נצר “to guard” (= Aramaic נטר) or נצר “to help, to aid” (= Aramaic נצר). The נצר with either of these two definitions could also appear as a variant נזר, in which case its derivation becomes obscure.

SUMMARY

Hebrew lexicons generally list five different roots for צוֹר, five for נצר, and one for נזר. When the various translations of נצר, נזר, and צוֹר in the Septuagint are taken into account, four additional definitions must also be dealt with, including the נצר and צוֹר meaning βοηθός “helper.” Of these fifteen options for the derivation of Ναζωραῖος/*Nazarene* and Ναζαρέτ/*Nazareth*, the two which are at the top of the list are the נזר meaning “small, few in number, nasty, mean” and the נצר 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” (יְהוָה מָשַׁח אֹתִי / ἔχρισέν με) was explicit; and Isaiah’s words defined Ναζωραῖος / *Nazarene* 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 אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ “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 ܢܫܪܬܐ (*naṣrāt*), and in Arabic as (1) ناصرة (*nāṣiratu*), (2) نصرانة (*naṣrā-natu*), and (3) نصورية (*nasūriyatu*). In the Persian of the London Polyglot it appears as ناصرة (*nāṣiratu*) (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*.
4. The name is variously spelled: ναζαρά in Matt 4:13; Luke 4:16; Ναζαρέθ in Matt 21:11; Luke 1:26, 2:4, 2:51; Ναζαρέθ in Luke 2:39; Acts 10:38; Ναζαρέτ in Matt 2:23; John 1:45; and Ναζαρέτ in Mark 1:9; John 1:46.

5. Those who derived Nazareth and Nazarene from נָזִיר include McNeil (1915: 22), Mussner (1960), Schweitzer (1963), Schaeder (1967: 883), Zuckschwerdt (1975: 69), Soares Prabhu (1976), Brown (1977: 202–230), Allan (1983: 82), and Sanders (1985).

Mussner (1960: 285), for example, appealed to Jdg 13:7, כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר “for the child shall be a Nazarite to God,” to interpret Mark 1:24, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ. . . οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος 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 ναζαράριον θεοῦ ἔσται τὸ παιδάριον, “for the child [Samson] shall be a *Nazarite* of God,” and the B-text has ὅτι ἅγιος θεοῦ ἔσται τὸ παιδάριον, “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 *nāzîr*”—citing, as did Mussner, the variants ἅγιος and ναζαράριον in the Greek text for the נָזִיר 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 נָזִיר “Nazirite” as the clue to the meaning of נִזְרֵת *Nazareth*” and נַצְרֶת *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 נַזִּיר can be recovered. Compare the opinion of Schaefer (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 Schaefer, finding no serviceable explanation in Greek, summarized his case as follows

. . . it may be said that the understanding of Ναζωραῖος as a rendering of Aram. *nāsrājā*, derived from the name of the city of Nazareth (Aram. *nāsrāt*), is linguistically and materially unassailable.

But Schaefer never addressed the meaning of Nazareth.

9. This definition of נַזִּיר/נִזְר is not cited in the Hebrew lexicons checked by the author. One finds נַזִּיר/נִזְר “to vow, to abstain, a Nazirite,” the cognate of Syriac ܢܘܘܪ / ܢܘܘܪܝܝܬ (*nēzar/nēzîrâyit*), Aramaic נַזִּיר/נִזְר (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 נִזְר לְהִזְיֵר, “the vow of a Nazirite to devote oneself,” appears in the Arabic text of the London Polyglot (1657) as نذر نساك لينسك (*niḍra naskin lata-nassuka*) “the vow of devotion to devote oneself.” Compare נִזְר “to vow” the cognate of Syriac ܢܘܕܪ (*nēdar*), Aramaic נִזְר and Arabic نذر (*naḍara*) (BDB 623; KBS 2: 674; Payne Smith 328; Jastrow 879; Lane 8: 2781–2782).

10. The interchange in Hebrew of ז and צ is well attested, as in the by-forms (1) צעק / זעק “to cry out,” the cognates of Arabic زعق (*za^caqā*) “to cry out” and صعق (*ṣa^caqā*) “to bellow, to thunder” and (2) עלץ / עלז “to exult” (BDB 277, 759, 763, 858; Jastrow 408, 1083, 1085, 1294; and Lane 1867: 1231).

11. Ναζωραῖος in Matt 2:23; Luke 18:37; John 19:19; Acts 6:14, 22:9; Ναζωραίου in Matt 26:71; Acts 3:6, 4:10, 26:9; Ναζωραῖου in John 18:5, 18:7; Acts 2:22; and Ναζωραίω in Acts 24:5.

12. Ναζαρηνέ in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; Ναζαρηνός Mark 10:47; Ναζαρηνοῦ in Mark 14:67; Luke 24:19; and Ναζαρηνὸν in Mark 16:6.

13. Excluding נַצֵּר “willow, wicker” (Jastrow 930), Aramaic נַצֵּר and נַצֵּר “to chirp/a cricket,” and Syriac نِصْر (nēṣar) “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 *nōṣrīm*] 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 *Nāzîr*, 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).”

17. Howard (1995: 155–160) summarized the evidence from the church fathers that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. Note my *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, Chapters 26–30, online at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmcdaniel/Volume Two.htm>.

18. Dupont-Sommer 1961: 219.

19. The ω of Ναζωραῖος reflects the form נְצוּרִים / נְצוּר like קְרוּשִׁים / קְרוֹשׁ.

20. This meaning of נָצַר appears in Isa 42:6, which reads וְאֶצְרְךָ וְאֶתְנֶךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם “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 נָזַר and נָצַר, the נִזְיִר אָחִיו 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 הַצּוּר תְּמִים פֶּעֶלּוֹ “the Rock, His work is perfect,” but the Greek has θεός ἀληθινὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ “God his works are true.”

Deut 32:15 reads וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ “he scoffed at the rock of his salvation,” but the Greek has καὶ ἀπέστη ἀπὸ θεοῦ σωτῆρος αὐτοῦ “and departed from God his Saviour.”

Deu 32:18 reads צוּר יִלְדָךָ תִּשִׁי “you forgot (the) rock who begot you,” but the Greek has θεὸν τὸν γεννήσαντά σε ἐγκατέλιπες “you have forgotten God who begot you.”

Psalms 18:32 reads וּמִי צוּר זִוְלָתֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ “and who is the rock except our God.” but the Greek has αὐτὸς τίς θεὸς πλὴν τοῦ

θεοῦ ἡμῶν “and who is God except our God.”

Psalms 62:3 and 63:7 read אֱ-לֹהֵי הוּא צוּרִי וַיִּשְׁוּעַתִּי “For he is my rock and my saviour,” but the Greek has καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς θεός μου καὶ σωτήρ μου “For he is my God, and my saviour.”

Psa 95:1 reads נְרִיעָה לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנו “let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!” But the Greek has ἀλαλάξωμεν τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρι ἡμῶν “let us make a joyful noise to God our Saviour.”

23. 2 Samuel 22:47 has חַי־יְהוָה וּבָרוּךְ צוּרִי וְנִרְמָ אֱלֹהֵי צוּרִי, “Yahweh lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.” The Greek has ζῆ κύριος καὶ εὐλογητὸς ὁ φύλαξ μου καὶ ὑψωθήσεται 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 אֱלֹהֵי צוּרִי אֲחֻסֶּה-בּוֹ “My God, my strength, in whom I will trust,” whereas the Greek has ὁ θεός μου βοηθός μου καὶ ἐλπιδὴ ἐπ’ αὐτόν “my God is my helper, I will hope in him.”

Psalm 19:15 reads in part יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי “O Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer,” but the Greek has κύριε βοηθέ μου καὶ λυτρωτά μου “O Lord, my helper and my redeemer.”

Psalm 78:35 reads in part וַיִּזְכְּרוּ כִּי-אֱלֹהִים צוּרָם “Then they remembered that God was their rock,” but the Greek has καὶ ἐμνήσθησαν ὅτι ὁ θεὸς βοηθὸς αὐτῶν ἐστίν “And they remembered that God was their helper.”

Psalm 89:43 [MT 89:44] reads תִּשְׁיב צוּר חֶרְבּוֹ “you have turned back the edge of his sword,” whereas the Greek reads

ἀπέστρεψας τὴν βοήθειαν τῆς ῥομφαίας αὐτοῦ “you have turned back the help of his sword.”

Psalm 94:22 reads in part **וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה לְצוּר מְחֻסֵּי** “and my God, for the rock of my refuge,” whereas the Greek reads **καὶ ὁ θεός μου εἰς βοηθὸν** “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 کر وهه ريسمان (*dû karûhah rîsmân*) "two balls of thread"¹ for the Greek λεπτά δύο, the Latin *duo minuta*, and the Arabic has فلسين (*falsain*)²—all meaning "two small coins." The Syriac reads ܩܘܨܝܢ ܩܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܝܬܐܗܘܢܐ (ܬܪܝܢ ܡܝܢܝܢ ܕܝܬܐܗܘܢܐ) (*těrēn mēnîn dī'tāhûn šēmûnē*)³ "two small coins, which were one-eighth (coins)."³

In light of these variants, it appears that a Syriac translation was used by the Persian translator, who (1) interpreted the ܩܘܨܝܢ (*menîn*) as "hair, string" rather than ܩܘܨܝܢ (*mēnîn*) "a coin, a *mina*, a measure of weight" and (2) misread the ܩܘܨܝܢܐ (*šēmûnē*) "a farthing, a small coin" as ܩܘܨܝܢܐ (*šēmûṭē*) "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 ܐ (*n*) of ܩܘܨܝܢܐ (*šēmûnē*) as a ܬ (*t*). Perhaps the sub-linear part of what appeared to be a ܬ 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 **מנין** (*menîn*) meant "hair, string," the Persian translator took the explanatory gloss **ܫܡܘܢܐ** (*šēmûnē*³) to be a synonym of "hair/string" and corrected what he thought was an erroneous **ܫܡܘܢܐ** (*šēmûnē*³) to **ܫܡܘܬܐ** (*šēmûṭē*³). Either way, the Persian text cannot be viewed as a more reliable alternative to the Greek text and the other translations.

NOTES

1. Golius's *Persian-Latin Lexicon*: 302 (*chorda, filum netum*) and 451 (*glomus*), in Castell 1669 *Lexicon*, Vol. I.
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 **ܩܘܡܘܢܐ** (*tēmune*³) (Payne Smith 1903: 615; BDB 1032). Consequently, **ܫܡܘܢܐ** (*šēmûnē*³) 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 **λεπτὰ δύο, ὃ ἐστὶν κοδράντης** (the Vulgate has *duo minuta quod est quadrans*), indicating that the coin was one-fourth of the *as/assarius* [אִיסָרָא], which was one-sixteenth or one twenty-fourth of a *denarius*. The coin which was one-eighth of the *as/assarius* was the **פְּרוּטָה** (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 פרוטה (Howard 1995: 18–19).

XXI

THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF “HOSANNA”

The exclamatory “Hosanna!” has multiple meanings. It is first of all the polite imperative הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא, as found in Psa 118:25, אָנָּה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא אָנָּה יְהוָה הַצְּלִיחָה נָא “O Yahweh, *please save!* O Yahweh, *please send prosperity!*” The initial *ho* of *hosanna* marks it as a *Hiph^cil* imperative of ישׁע “to save” and the *anna* ending of *hosanna* reflects the polite particle of entreaty, נָא “please,” frequently attached to imperatives. The *sa* syllable in the middle of *hosanna* is a contraction of the original syllables שִׁיעָה (*šî^câ*), with the *î* being the thematic vowel of the *Hiph^cil* and the *â* vowel being the *furtive pataḥ*, augmented by a paragogic ה, to facilitate the articulation of the ע. When הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא was transliterated into Greek, the ה was reflected by a smooth or rough breathing mark, the שׁ (*sh*) became a σ (*s*) and the ע was ignored, resulting in the Ὡσαννα found in the Gospels—which was subsequently transliterated as *hosanna* in English instead of the more accurate *hoshianna* (for *hôšî^cannâ*) of the Hebrew.¹

The synonymous parallelism of ישׁע “to save” and צלח “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 وسع (*wasac^ca/wassac^c*) “(God) made one’s means of subsistence ample and abundant” adds support for this understanding of

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“Hosanna.” The Arabic expressions *اللَّهُمَّ سَعِّ عَلَيْنَا* (*allahuma ša‘alayna*), “O my God, pour thy favors upon us,” and *اللَّهُمَّ أَوْسِعْنَا رَحْمَتَكَ* (*allahuma ‘awsi‘na rahmataka*), “O God, make thy mercy sufficient for us,” parallel the Hebrew הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא. Noteworthy also is the related noun *سعة* (*sa‘at*) which has the following meanings: “richness, wealthiness, competence, capacity, power, ability, plentifulness, and easiness of life” (Lane 1893: 3052–3053; Hava 1915: 869).

The “Hosanna!” in Matt 21:9 in the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew may well mean “Please save!” The text reads, in part, הוֹשִׁיעֵנָא מוֹשִׁיעַ הָעוֹלָם . . . הוֹשִׁיעֵנָא מוֹשִׁיעֵנּוּ, which Howard (1995: 102–103) translated “Hosanna, savior of the world . . . hosanna, our savior.” Of interest is the repeated use of the participle מוֹשִׁיעַ “savior” along with the repeated polite imperative הוֹשִׁיעֵנָא (= הוֹשִׁיעֵנָא), which, when coupled with מוֹשִׁיעַ, should certainly be read as the plea “please save!” The הָעוֹלָם “the world” would be better read as *scriptio defectiva* for the plural הָעוֹלָיִם “the poor,” with the noun עוֹל being the cognate of the Arabic *عال/عيل* (*‘ayl* or *‘al*) “he was, or became, poor,” *عائل* (*‘ā’il*) “poor, needy,” and *عيلة* (*‘aylat*) “poverty” (Lane 1874: 2212–2213).² There is even the good chance that the Ὡσαννά ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις “Hosanna in the highest” (Matt 21:9) may have come from the plea הוֹשִׁיעֵנָא אֶת יַעֲפִים “Please save the weary,” in which case there was a confusion of יַעֲף stem I “to be weary” and יַעֲף stem II “to be high, elevated.” (Compare the Arabic *يفع* [*yafa‘*] “hill” and *وغف* [*wagāfa*] “to show weariness.” [cited in BDB 419].)³

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However, the Ὡσαννά / *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 הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא became transformed into an expression of exuberant praise has been a mystery. Lohse (1974: 682) commented

The common use of הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (*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 הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא is equated with הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא and it, in turn, is equated with הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא “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 הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא, יוֹם הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא, the seventh day of the Feast of Booths (now called הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא

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רָבָה). [Jastrow’s abbreviations in this definition have been expanded by the writer.]

However, the הוֹשִׁיעֵנָּא of the Feast of Booths (Succoth) is more likely to be the cognate of Arabic وشيع (*wašī^c*) than the cognate of وسع (*wasi^c*) “to enrich, to empower,” discussed above. Although standard lexicons cite only ישע “to save,” a second ישע, the cognate of وشع (*waša^ca*) “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 הוֹשִׁיעֵנָּא אֶת־עֲנָפֵי עֵצִים “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 (*wš^c*) (= ישע or possibly ישע)⁴ is also the lexeme used for: (1) وشع (*waš^c*) “the Egyptian willow,” (2) وشيع (*wašī^c*) “a layer of palm leaves used on a roof,” and (3) “the distinctive tent of a chief” (Hava 1915: 871–872).⁵ In light of these definitions of وشع (*wš^c*)—which are a perfect match for the הוֹשִׁיעֵנָּא of Succoth—nothing is gained by insisting that وسع (*wasa^c/wassa^c*) is the actual cognate of הוֹשִׁיעֵנָּא or that the הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא “please save!” is its proper derivation.

Just as it is difficult to account for the transformation of the pitiful plea הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא “Please save!” into the joyful and exuberant Ὡσαννά / *Hosanna* of the Gospels, it is equally difficult to derive the jubilant Ὡσαννά / *Hosanna* from the ישע/ישע having to do with the mixing of palm, myrtle and willow branches, or having to do with booths, roofs, or tents.

The Ὠσαννά / *Hosanna* of the Gospels may well be the transliteration of the Aramaic noun ܘܫܢܢܐ / ܘܫܢܐ which was from the root ܘܫܢܐ, having an affixed ܢ analogous to the nouns ܩܢܝܢ “acquisition” and ܩܪܒܢ “offering” (GKC 85ⁿ). If so, the noun obviously functioned as an exclamatory interjection meaning “Hail!” or “Rejoice!” or “Cheer!” It would be the cognate of Arabic هاش / هاش (hašš/hâšš) “he was, or became, cheerful, or joyful; one who rejoices or is glad,” as in the expression أنا به هاش بش (ʿanâ bihi hašš bašš) “I am cheerful, brisk, lively, or sprightly in behaviour toward him, . . . joyful, happy” (Lane 1893: 2894–2895; Wehr 1979: 1206; Hava 1915: 828).⁶ The “lively and sprightly” behavior suggested by ܘܫܢܐ is mentioned in Matt 21:10, “all the city was stirred.”

Moreover, if the Aramaic ܘܫܢܐ retained nuances attested for the Arabic هاش (hašš), 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 Ὠσαννά / *Hosanna*. The cognate هاش (hašša) 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 هاش الهشيم (hašša ʿalhašîm) “he broke into pieces the dry herbage/stalks” (Lane 1893: 2894; Wehr 1979: 1206).

This association of Ὠσαννά / *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 σπιβάδας, 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 *στῖβάδας* simply provides evidence of Mark’s knowledge of the Hebrew/Aramaic **שֶׁתֶּ** (or the augmented **שֶׁתֶּן**) “straw, sticks” and associated *Ὠσαννά* with that word. He need not have been an eyewitness to have made the association of **שֶׁתֶּ** or **שֶׁתֶּן** with **הֶשֶׁנָּה**.

Thus, the exclamatory Aramaic **הֶשֶׁנָּה** “Hurrah! Hooray! Cheers!” and the Hebrew polite imperative **הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּה** “Help please!” became blended—with the **ה** of **הֶשֶׁנָּה** being transformed into the **הו** of **הוֹשִׁיעָה** and the **שִׁע** of **הוֹשִׁיעָה** being transformed into the **שֶׁ** of **הֶשֶׁנָּה**. The blended *Ὠσαννά* could have carried either meaning of “petition” or of “acclamation.”

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 *soson*, “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.”

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But, in addition to the recognition of the vocative ל in Biblical Hebrew there must also be the recognition that Ὠσαννά *Hosanna* can be the transliteration of (1) הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא, (2) הוֹשַׁעְנָא, or (3) הַשָּׁנֵא. 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 ש. The third word, הַשָּׁנֵא “Cheers!” should have been transliterated as Ἀσσανα but it was merged with the Ὠσαννα.

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 Ὠσαννά—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 הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (*hōšāʿnāʾ* / *hoshana*) used for the “mixing/ mingling” required for Succoth,
- the הַשָּׁנֵא (*hassānāʾ* / *hassana*) in the *acclamation* of Palm Sunday,
- the הוֹשַׁעְנָא (*hōšāʿannāʾ* / *hoshianna*) in the *petition* of Palm Sunday.

NOTES

1. It was transliterated in Arabic as هوشعنا (*hūša‘nā*) and in Syriac as ܘܫܥܢܐ (*‘ūšana’*). Noteworthy is the use of يسوع (*yasū‘*) for Jesus compared with the *Qur’anic* عيسى (*‘isāy*) for ܝܫܘܥ in which there has been the transposition of the ܝ and the ܥ (i.e., the ܝ and the ܥ).

2. The ambiguous ܘܥܠ-ܥܢܝ ܝܗܒ-ܠܗ 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 ܥܠ / ܥܘܠ “poor,” with the ܥܢܝ “poor” 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 *l-*, we can finally explain how the cries *hōšā‘nna lē-ben dawīd* and *hōšā‘nna lē-‘elyon*, “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 ܫ in Hebrew, but there are a number of cognates where a ܫ matches the Arabic ش (*š*), including: (1) ܫܒܝܒ “flame” and شَب (šabba) “to kindle a fire, to blaze, to flame” and شَبَّة (šabbat) “a blazing, flaming fire”; (2) ܫܘܩܗ “desire, longing” and شوق (šawq) “desire, yearning,

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longing of the soul” and ذوشوقی (*dû šawqin*) “an admiring lover”; and (3) חֲשָׂרָה “collection” and حشَر (*hašara*) “to collect.”

5. Note also Castell’s (1669: 998) many definitions for وِشَع (*wšʿ*): “*Miscuit, . . . ornavit, . . . IV Floruit arbor, olusve . . . Flores olerum . . . Stratum textile ex palmæ foliis & caudicis fibris, similibusve rebus siccis, quod injicitur supremis domûs 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) هَش (*hašša*) as “*Fuste decussit de arbore . . . Agilis, lætus, ac lubens fuit . . . Facilis, comis, benignus humanus fuit . . . Alacrem, lætum, lubentem reddidit . . . VIII Lubentem, comem, & benignum, se præbuit . . .* and (2) هَاش (*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)

וְאַתָּה בֵּית־לְחָם אֶפְרַתָּה צָעִיר לַהֲיוֹת
בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה מִמֶּנּוּ לִי
יֵצֵא לַהֲיוֹת מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
וּמוֹצְאָתוֹ מִקֶּדֶם מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם:

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

καὶ σύ Βηθλεεμ οἶκος τοῦ Εφραθα ὀλιγοστὸς εἰ τοῦ
εἶναι ἐν χιλιάσιν Ἰουδα ἐκ σοῦ μοι
ἐξελεύσεται τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐν τῷ Ἰσραηλ
καὶ αἱ ἕξοδοι αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος

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* (אֶפְרַתָּה) and the gentilic *Ephrathite* (אֶפְרַתִּי) is to recognize the occasional interchange in Hebrew of the ת and the ט. The following examples are widely recognized:

- תָּעָה “to err, to go astray” and טָעָה (= טָעָא, טָעוּ, טָעִי) “to stray, to wander” (BDB 380, 1073; Jastrow 542, 1683)
- חָטַף “to seize, snatch away” and חָטַף “to seize, to rob, to catch” (BDB 310, 369; Jastrow 450)

- קָטַל “to kill,” Aramaic קתל, Arabic قتل (*qatala*), and Ethiopic ለቀተ (*qatala*) “to kill” (BDB 881).

The root of אֶפְרַתָּה can be identified as פֶּרֶת, which has been augmented with a prosthetic א and the feminine suffix ה or the locative ה (= εἶς).² This פֶּרֶת was used for the river Euphrates (פֶּרַת) and is probably related to the Arabic فرت (*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 ת/ט variable in focus, a very satisfactory derivation of Ephrathah is available once (1) פֶּרֶת is recognized as a variant of פֶּרֶט and (2) אֶפְרַתָּה (or אֶפְרַת as in Gen 48:7) are treated as the equivalents of the conjectured variants אֶפְרַתָּה and אֶפְרַט .

The noun פֶּרֶט means “that which is singled out,” and the verb פָּרַט means “to specify, to designate” or “to belittle.” Related nouns are פֶּרְטוֹם “a small portion” and פֶּרְיֹטָה / פֶּרִיטָה “small change, a small coin,” which are cognates of the Arabic فرط (*farṭ^{um}*) “small coin, change” (Jastrow 1903: 1219, 1224, 1225; Wehr 827; BDB 827).

Most relevant for Micah 5:2 are the Arabic cognates فرط (*farāṭa*) “he preceded, he was or became first, foremost,” فرط (*farṭ^{um}*) “mastery, ascendancy, prevalence, or predominance,” and فارط (*fârṭ^{um}*) “becoming foremost, getting priority or precedence,” as well as فرأطة (*furâṭa*) “a small mountain” and فرط (*furuṭ^{um}*) “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—אֶפְרַתָּה / אֶפְרַטָּה 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.³

Moreover, the conclusion that the פרת in אֶפְרַתָּה was a by-form of פֶּרֶט “small” receives confirmation from the very next word in Micah 5:1, which is צָעִיר “small.”⁴ 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 rulers⁵ of Judah” (NIV, NIB).

However, as suggested by the cognates فرط (*farāṭa/farṭ*) and فارت (*fârit*), the by-forms פרת/פֶּרֶט 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 פרת/פֶּרֶט. *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 מוֹשֵׁל “ruler” from Ephrathah had been predicted “from of old” (מִקְדָּם), “ages ago” (מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם), when the epithet אֶפְרַתָּה/*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(ah)*, 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 mentiond *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 Ἰουδα,
οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰουδα·
ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος,
ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν 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 ἡγούμενος "princes" for the MT אֲלֹפִי, instead of χιλιάσιν "thousands," with the Septuagint, is one example of the independent reading of אֲלֹפִי as אֲלוֹפִי.⁹ As in Gen 48:7b, where Ephrathah appears without the final ה (as אֶפְרַת instead of the אֶפְרַתָּה in 48:7a), the shorter אֶפְרַת was probably in the *Vorlage* used by Matthew or the Magi (or by their source). Secondly, this אֶפְרַת became corrupted to אֶפְסַת "you ceased"¹⁰ and was then translated into Greek with the force of אֶפְסַת (a particle of negation) as οὐδαμῶς "not at all," similar to the translation in the Septuagint of אֵין as οὐδεὶς "in no way."¹¹ Thus, the Magi's quotation from Micah lacks any mention of אֶפְרַתָּה / Ephrathah or the οἶκος τοῦ Εφραθα "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 אפרת as אפסת—accounts for the two significant variations in the abbreviated quotation of Micah 5:2 (MT) in Matthew 2:26.

NOTES

1. The עולם and קדם in the phrase מְקֵדָם מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם do not indicate any kind of pre-existence. Compare the phrases in (1) Amos 9:11, עוֹלָם, וּבְנִיתֶיהָ כִּיָּמֵי עוֹלָם, “and I will build it [the booth of David] as in the days of old” and (2) Malachi 3:4,

וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָם
כִּיָּמֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קְדָמֵינוּ:

καὶ ἀρέσει τῷ κυρίῳ θυσία Ἰουδα καὶ
Ἱερουσαλημ καθὼς αἱ
ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος
καὶ καθὼς τὰ ἔτη τὰ ἔμπροσθεν

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 אֶפְרַתִּי, אֶפְרַת, and אֶפְרַתָּה are cited in BDB (68) under the root אפר, stem II, without definition.

3. The פרט in Amos 6:5, used with reference to ecstatic singing or playing a musical instrument, would be the cognate of Arabic فط (faraa) “to speak (thoughtlessly) or act hastily” (Lane 1877: 2375).

4. Note that זָעִיר also has the by-form זָעִיר “small.”

5. Reading perhaps בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה for the MT בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה and the Septuagint's ἐν χιλιάσις Ἰουδα “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 וְהִצִּילנוּ to וְהִצִּיל “he will deliver us,” and this has been followed by many translators.

8. The MT . . . וְאַתָּה בֵּית-לְחָם אֶפְרָתָה צְעִיר was expanded in the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew to read (with additional words underlined):

וְאַתָּה בֵּית לְחָם יְהוּדָה אֶפְרָתָה
 אַרְצָ יְהוּדָה הֵן אַתָּה צְעִיר

Six of the nine Shem Tob manuscripts (ABDEFG) read the negative אֵין (= οὐδὲμῶς) instead of interjection הֵן (= ἰδοὺ).

9. See above, note 5.

10. For the confusion of the ך with ם and the ם with ט, see Delitzsch 1920: 119–120 (§131).

11. The אֶפְסַי־אֶרֶץ in 5:3b (MT) may have influenced the reading of אפרת as אפסת in 5:1 (MT) in the *Vorlage* reflected in Matt 5:26. The use of مفارط (*mafâriṭu*) in Arabic for “the *extremities* of a country” (Lane 1877: 2378), like the אֶפְסַי־אֶרֶץ “ends of the earth,” provides another possible explanation of how the stem פרט (and its by-form פרת) took on *negative* as well as *locative* connotations like the root אפס. Were this the case, there would be no need to appeal to a scribal error of misreading אפרת as אפסת.

12. Note John 7:42,

οὐχ ἡ γραφή εἶπεν ὅτι
ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ καὶ ἀπὸ Βηθλέεμ
τῆς κώμης ὅπου 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 ὀνόμα[τα] Βοανηργές,
ὃ ἐστὶν 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*)¹ 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*”

(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^cash*, 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!"² Taylor (1952: 231–232) had noted that Βαυηργες (with just the α in lieu of the οα) appears in MS 565 and Βαυηργεζ appears in MS 700, as well as the Syriac Sinaiticus, Harclean, and Peshitta's readings of ܒܢܝ ܪܥܫܝ (*b^enai r^egeshy*)—all of which equal the Hebrew "the sons of (בְּנֵי) thunder." Taylor thought that either the α or the o in Βαυηργές was a later intrusion or gloss. However, given the preponderance of manuscripts which read Βαυηργές, I argue below that Βοαυηργές was the correct transliteration of the original Hebrew surname and that the Βοαυη- element has nothing to do literally with the Hebrew בְּנֵי "the sons of." I also argue, contra Parker, that the -ργές element of Βοαυηργές has nothing to do with the "quaking of the heavens."

Jastrow (1903: 147, 870) cited Hebrew בוע and בעי meaning "to swell, burst forth, whence (of sound) to shout, rejoice," and he called attention to the by-form נבע "to burst forth, to give forth, to utter." Given the ν in the βοαυηργές of Mark 3:17, it is reasonable to assume that the verb בוע had not only the attested by-forms בעי and נבע (with an initial נ) but also the by-form with a final ן, i.e., ןבע³—the participle

of which would be בּוֹעֲנִין, and the plural construct of which would be בּוֹעֲנֵי (vocalized like the עוֹלָמֵי in Isa 45:17). This בּוֹעֲנֵי was correctly transliterated⁴ by Mark, or his source, into Greek as Βοανη, meaning literally “the shouters of,”⁵ 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 רגש “thunder,” despite the reservation of many commentators to concur with this identification. Because רגש “thunder” is not attested in the standard Hebrew lexicons some have opted to emend the underlying Hebrew text from רגש to רגז “excitement, raging” or to רעם “thunder.” Taylor (1952: 232) noted that Lagrange (1929: 65) preferred to find the original in בְּנֵי רִגְשׁ. Lagrange recognized “that רגש 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.”⁶ Taylor noted that Torrey (1933: 298) stated also that “thunderstorm” would perhaps be a more accurate rendering of *r^egesh* and *rugsha*.

Rook (1981: 94), however, dismissed the proposals of the commentators who derived Mark’s βοανηργές from an original בְּנֵי רִגְז “excitement” or בְּנֵי רִגְשׁ “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 ע. For Rook, Mark’s βοανηργές came thus from a Hebrew text having בְּנֵי רֵעַשׁ, meaning “Sons of (the)

quaking (heavens),” which, he asserted, creates a parallel to Mark’s interpretation of $\beta\omicron\alpha\nu\eta\rho\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ as “the Sons of Thunder.” Rook, however, offered no suggestion of how or why the Hebrew $\text{בְּנֵי} (= b\check{e}n\acute{e} \text{ or } b^e n\acute{e})$ was transliterated as $\beta\omicron\alpha\nu\eta (= boan\bar{e})$.

In support of recognizing the $-\rho\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ of $\beta\omicron\alpha\nu\eta\rho\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ as being a Semitic term for “thunder,” the following evidence comes into focus.

- Aramaic ܕܢܫܐܘܢܐ “movement, noise” and ܕܡܪܝܢܐܘܬܐ “noises” (Jastrow 1903: 836, 1451; KBS 1189);
- Syriac ܪܓܫܐ (*rgš*) “uproar” (Payne Smith 1903: 529), which appears as ܪܓܫܐ (*r^egešy*) in Mark 3:17.
- and the Arabic cognates رجس (*rajasa*) “it thundered” and راجس / راجس (*râjis / rajjâs*) “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.*⁷

However, Hebrew רָגַשׁ , 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

- رجس (*rajusa*) “it was unclean, dirty or filthy,”
- رجس (*rajasa*) “he did a bad, an evil, an abominable, or a foul action,”
- رجس (*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 רגש. If so, Hebrew בני רגש could have meant not only “sons of thunder” but also “sons of filth.” For this reason Mark 3:17 does *not* read βενηργές, (= בני 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 βοανηργές, which rightly transliterates בועני רגש “the shouters of thunder.” However, instead of *translating* it, Mark simply *paraphrased* it as Υἱοὶ Βροντῆς, “Sons of Thunder.” Were בני used in the construct with רגש in a Hebrew consonantal text there would be ambiguity about the meaning of רגש; but when the construct בועני (= βοανη) “the shouters of” appears with the unvocalized רגש, the רגש must certainly mean “thunder” rather than “filth.” The verbs בוע and its by-forms בעי and בען, 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*” (= bās) when used along with *sonorous*, or the *BS* could mean “*base*” (= bās) when used along with *onerous*.)

Mark 9:48/49

Greek Text

πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται.

MSS **Ξ** B L W Δ, etc.

+ καὶ πᾶσα θυσία ἀλλὶ ἀλισθήσεται

MSS A C Θ L W, etc.

+ πᾶσα γὰρ θυσία ἀλλὶ ἀλισθήσεται

MSS D a b c d, etc.

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 γέενναν, “Gehenna,” found in Mark 9:43, 45, and 47 refers to *Hell*,⁸ rather than to the literal *earthly* הַנֵּם הַיְיָ “the Valley of Hinnom,” which was accessible through Jerusalem’s Dung Gate (שַׁעַר הָאִשָּׁפֶת) 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.⁹

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.¹⁰ *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 $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \gamma\grave{\alpha}\rho \pi\upsilon\rho\iota \acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\sigma\theta\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ into Hebrew as **כִּי הַכֹּל יִמְלַח בְּבַעַר**, 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 מִלַּח

The first Hebrew word requiring comment is מִלַּח, which must lie behind the Greek $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\iota$ "salt" and the $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\sigma\theta\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha$ "shall be salted." As cited in the standard lexicons of Biblical

Hebrew (like BDB 571), מִלַּח had three meanings, namely

(1) מִלַּח “salt,” which is the cognate of Arabic ملح (*milḥ*), Syriac ܡܠܚܐ (*melḥā*), Aramaic ܡܠܚܐ. Its derivatives were [a] the verb מָלַח “to salt, to season,” [b] the noun מִלְחָה “saltiness” or “the barren salt plain which was the habitat of the wild ass,” and [c] the noun מְלוּחַ “a mallow plant which grows in a salt-marsh.”

(2) מַלְיָח “mariner,” which is the cognate of the Akkadian *malāḥu*, Arabic ملاح (*mallāḥ*), and Syriac ܡܠܚܐ (*malāḥā*), all meaning “sailor.”

(3) מָלַח “to tear away, to dissipate, to vanish” the cognate of Arabic مَلَحَ (*malāḥa*) “he pulled, or drew a thing, he drew it forth quickly, vehemently.” This מִלַּח appears only in Isa 51:6, וְהָאָרֶץ וְהַמְּלָחוֹת כֶּעָשָׁן נִמְלָחוּ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם כֶּעָפָר תִּבְלֶה “for the heavens will *vanish* like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment.”¹¹

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, מִלַּח 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 ملح (*mlḥ* = מִלַּח) and ملح (*mlḥ*, which also = מִלַּח).

- (4) ملح (*malaha*) “he suckled” and *milh* “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 مליح (*malih*) “goodly, beautiful, pretty”;
- (7) ملح (*milh*) “knowledge, science, learning” or “men of science, learned men”;
- (8) ملح (*milh*) and ملحَة (*milhat*) “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) مליح (*malih*) “tasteless, insipid, applied to flesh-meat . . . that has no taste.”

Definitions 4–6 have no Hebrew cognates. However, definition (7) serves as a commentary on the ἄλατι in Col 4:6, ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἄλατι ἡρτυμένος, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with *salt*, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.” The verb ἄρτύω 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 9:50^b, ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε 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 (מֶלֶךְ הַיְיָ הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ) 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 (בְּרִית מֶלֶךְ)?”

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 *salem* [‘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 *salem* (not the nominative *sal*), which led him to conclude that “the writer, whoever he was, of this verse contrasted [Latin *salem*] *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 ἄλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε “salt and peace” were so formally linked, making automatically a “covenant of salt” (בְּרִית מֶלֶךְ) into a “covenant of peace” (שְׁלוֹם בְּרִית).

Definitions (1) and (9) serve as a commentary on Mark 9:50a, εἰ δὲ τὸ ἄλας ἀναλον γένηται ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ

ἄρτύσετε, “but if the salt has become insipid, how will you season it.” The Hebrew *Vorlage* could have read וְאִם יִמְלַח וְאִתּוֹ הַמֶּלַח בְּמַה תִּמְלַחוּ אֹתוֹ, wherein the noun מֶלַח “salt” is definition (1); the verb יִמְלַח “were to become insipid” is definition (9); and the verb תִּמְלַחוּ “you will season” is definition (1 [a]). The saying involved more than simple repetition of one lexeme. A verb and noun from one lexeme (*mlḥ*) and another verb from a second lexeme (*mlḥ*) provided paronomasia enhanced by assonance. But the lexemes *mlḥ* and *mlḥ* became homographs in Hebrew which created confusion.

Homographs and Cognates of בַּעַר

The second Hebrew word requiring comment in support of my reconstruction of the Hebrew text behind Mark 9:49 as כִּי הַכֹּל יִמְלַח בְּבַעַר, “for everyone will be dragged through the muck” is בַּעַר, stem III, meaning “dung, muck.” This בַּעַר is the cognate of Arabic بَعَرَ (*ba^cara*) “he voided dung”; بَعْر (*ba^cr*) “dung”; and مَبْعَر (*mab^car*) “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 בַּעַר “to burn, to ignite” and the name בְּעוֹר “Torch / Burning” and the noun בְּעֵרָה “torch, fire” (BDB 128–129; Jastrow (1903) 183; KBS 1: 145–146). Other Semitic homographs could easily be confused with בַּעַר, stem I “to burn” or stem III “dung”—like בַּעַר stem II “cattle” and its Arabic cognate بَعِير (*ba^cir*) “ass, camel,” and Ugaritic *b^cr* “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 אֵשׁ, נֹר, אֹר, and

בַּעֲרָה.) The homographs בער “fire” and בער “dung,” along with the homographs מלח “salt” and מלח “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 γέενναν “into the valley of Hinnom” of Mark 9:43, 45, 47 as a metaphor for *Hell* has been counterproductive. Certainly in Mark 9, τὴν γέενναν meant literally “the valley of [the sons of] Hinnom,” i.e., the place just beyond Jerusalem’s Dung Gate where more than 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!¹⁴ 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 σκανδαλίση ἓνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ). Therefore, instead of being stoned and then dragged through filth, a clean watery drowning could be seen as a better option for an offender.¹⁵

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,¹⁶ 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).¹⁷ 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 בָּעַן “to shout, to rejoice” which survives in the Βοανη in the surname Βοανηργές of Mark 3:17; (2) the רָגַשׁ “thunder” which survives in the -ργές ending of Βοανηργές; and (3) the בָּעַר “dung,” hidden behind the πῦρ “fire” in Mark 9:49. The בָּעַר / בערה 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 ἀλισθήσεται “shall be salted” and ἀλλὶ “salt” translated a Hebrew text having מִלַּח. That original מִלַּח in Mark’s Hebrew source—even though it was the מִלַּח which meant “to drag, to pull”—attracted to itself a number of other מִלַּח sayings which contained the מִלַּח meaning “salt.”¹⁸ 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 מִלַּח “to drag” was misread as מִלַּח “to season,” secondary misreadings were inevitable, such as reading the rare בָּעַר “dung” as the more common בָּעַר “torch, fire”—which produced the problematic “for everyone will be salted with fire.” Mark’s Hebrew *Vorlage* probably read כִּי הַכֹּל יִמְלַח בְּבָעַר, 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 رَدَجِس (*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 رَدَجِس (*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 رَجِس (*rajis*) “thunder,” and the erroneous quadri-literal رَدَجِس (*radjis*) took on a life of its own.

2. Parker’s question (in 1983) about βοανηργές meaning “the quaking of the heavens” may have been inspired by Rook’s proposal (in 1981) that βοανηργές comes from an original בני רעש, meaning “Sons of (the) quaking (heavens),” which is discussed below.

3. See GKC 85^u and 86^s for a discussion of the affixed ך. The place name בְּעֹן (Beon) appears in Num 32:3 and in Jubilees 29:10; and the name Βαιάν (Baeon) appears in 1 Macc 5:4. Because בְּעֹן of Num 32:3 appears in Num 32:38 as בְּעַל מְעֹן, it is commonly assumed that the name בְּעֹן is an abbreviation of בְּעַל מְעֹן (Moabite Stone, line 9), or בֵּית בְּעַל מְעֹן (Josh 13:17 and the

Moabite Stone, line 30), or **בֵּית מְעוֹן** (Jer 48:23). However, it seems best to recognize the stem **בָּעַן** as a by-form of the root **בוע**, rather than a rare abbreviation for three different designators (see KBS 1: 145). If the place name **בָּעַן** is related to the verb **בוע** “to shout,” it would be analogous to the place name **הַמְוֹנָה** (in Ezek 39:16) which is derived from the stem **הָמָה** “to roar, to be boistrous.”

4. For the different ways in which the Hebrew **ע** 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 **בוע** having the by-form **בוֹעַן** with an affixed **ן** is the verb **בוש** “to be ashamed” having the by-forms **בִּשְׁנָה**, **בוּשָׁה**, and **בִּשְׁתָּה** — 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 “**רגש** 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 σκώληξ 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, כִּי תוֹלְעֵתָם לֹא תִכְבֵּה לֹא תִמּוּת וְאִשָּׁם לֹא תִכְבֵּה, “their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched,” which became in the LXX σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτήσει καὶ τὸ πῦρ αὐτῶν οὐ σβεσθήσεται. 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 worshipped in gardens and tombs. But they themselves would never be buried or entombed. The very same idea is found in Jeremiah 8:2, וְלֹא יִקְבְּרוּ לְדָמֶן עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה יְהִיוּ, “and they shall not be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground,” and in 9:22, וְנִפְלָה נִבְלַת הָאָדָם כְּדָמֶן עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה, “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, וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁם בְּלוּי הַסְּחָבוֹת וּבְלוּי מְלָחִים, “and [Ebedmelek] took from there old rags and worn-out clothes.” The stem סחב “to pull, to drag about” is the cognate of Arabic سحب (*sahaba*) “to drag” (Lane 1872: 1314); and a synonym of מלח “to tear away, to fragment,” the cognate of Arabic ملخ (*malaha*) “to pull, drag, to break off” (Lane 1885: 2734a; Dozy 1927: II: 611).

12. Nauck (1953: 166–168) proposed reading the זרין וממולח “industrious and salted” at the beginning of the Talmudic Tractate *Derek Eretz Zuta* as “industrious and bright,” arguing that ממולח —meaning literally “having been salted oneself”—was a metaphor meaning “to be sagacious.” But, in light of definition (7) the Hebrew מלח was actually a homograph which was totally unrelated to the מלח meaning “salt.” Far from being a metaphor, it was an independent lexeme meaning “knowledge, science, learning.” But Nauck took the phrase ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα in Mark 9:50^b to be a very literal translation of the Hebrew ממולח. The quotation of Rabbi Yehuda (Nauck 167), ולא יהא כקדרה שאין בה מלח, could have two interpretations. Nauck read it as meaning, “he should not be like a cooking pot in which is no salt.” But, in light of the fact that קדרה “cooking pot” was also used for “skull” (Jastrow 1903: 1318) and מלח could be the cognate of ملح (*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 numbskull 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 ἀλί ἀλισθήσεται, “and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,” which is clearly a reference to Lev 2:13,

וְכָל-קָרְבָּן מִנְחָתְךָ בַּמֶּלַח תִּמְלַח
 וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחָתְךָ
 עַל כָּל-קָרְבָּנְךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח:

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 adulteress. 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 difficult to understand why Jesus said that death by drowning (9:42) was the *better way* (καλόν) 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.

18. See notes 12 and 13.

XXIV

HOW DID “RUST” GET INTO MATT 6:19–20 AND “PURSES” GET INTO LUKE 12:33?

Matthew 6:19

Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει
καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλέπτουσιν·

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 3e tresoure to 3ou tresours in erthe, wher rust and mou3the distruyeth, and wher theues deluen out and stelen. But tresoure 3ee to 3ou tresouris in heuene. Wher neither rust ne mou3the 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 אכל “to eat/ food”—which is comparable to the thirty-nine times the synonym βρῶμα “food” was used to translate אכל 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

*Nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra
ubi erugo et tineae demolitur
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 ἰὸς “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 אכל (°akla°) “eaters/worms” and the Old Syriac’s ܡܫܒܠ (*mḥabel*) “worm”—can be accounted for by postulating a Hebrew *Vorlage* which read אֲשֶׁר שָׂם סָם וְאָכַל יֹאכְלוּ. 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 אכל appears in Mal 3:11, which reads וְנִעַרְתִּי לָכֶם בְּאֵכֶל וְלֹא־יִשְׁחָת לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה 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 אכל as “devourer, insects, pests.” But the Septuagint reads, καὶ διαστειλώ 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.”⁴ The אכל 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 σκώληξ “maggot, worm.”⁵

Support for the above reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* comes from the Peshitta, which reads as follows in Matt 6:19,

לֹא תִסְמְּוּן לְכֻן שִׁמְאָתָא בָּרָעָא
 אַתָּר דְּסָסָא וָאֵ כְלָא מְחַבְלִין
 וָאֵ יָכָא דְגַנָּבָא בְּפָלְסִין וְגַנְבִין⁶

lā° tsîmûn lkûn sîmātā° bār°a
°atar dsāsā° wā°klā° mḥablîn
wa°yka° dganābe° pālsîn wgānbîn

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 ܐܟܠܐ (*a°klā°* = ܐܟܠܐ) “eater/worm/maggot” (Payne Smith 1903: 15; Jennings 1926: 21) Although it could be a contextually meaningless translation of the Greek βρώσις “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 Peshiṭta. It reads

ܠܐ ܩܘܡܝܢ ܕܢܒܠܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܢܒܠܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܢܒܠܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
lā° tsîmûn lkûn sîmātā° ba°r°a
°atar dnkl sāsā° wamḥablîn
w°atar dpālsîn ganābe° wgānbîn

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth
 where the maggot and destroyer⁷ devour,
 and where thieves are breaking in and stealing.

The verb ܢܒܠܐ (*nekul*) is a defective spelling for the 3ms imperfect ܢܐܟܠܐ (*ne°kûl*) “it will devour” (= ܐܟܠܐ). It provides the clue for reconstructing the verb in the *Vorlage* as ܐܟܠܐ “they will devour.”

The Peshiṭta of Matt 6:20^b has ܐܟܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ (*°aykā° dlā° sāsā° wlā° °aklā° mḥablîn*) “where neither the maggot nor the worm are destroyers”—which matches the words in 6:19^b. But the Old Syriac varies a little, reading ܐܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ (*°atar dlā° sāsā° maḥbil. wa°klā°*) “where there are not devouring maggots [...] and eaters/worms.”

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The various words attested in the versions of Matt 6:19–20, along with cognates, permit the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{סָּ} &= \sigma\eta\varsigma = \text{سوس} (sāsā?) = \text{سوس} (sūs) \\ &= erugo = \text{תול־עָה} = \text{רָמָה} = \text{רָקָב} \\ &= \text{“moth, maggot, worm, eater, borer} \\ &+ \text{decay, rottenness, and rot.”}^{8} \end{aligned}$$

All of the words in this equation could well translated the Semitic אכל and/or one of its derivative forms.⁹ 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,

your riches have rotted (σέσηπεν),
and your garments are moth-eaten (σητόβρωτα),
your gold and silver have rusted (κατίωτα),

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.¹⁰

Bearé (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*,¹¹ 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.

The parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16–21 and the parallel commands in Luke 12:33 provide clues for interpreting Matt 6:19–20. But Luke 12:33 has its own problem which must be addressed first. According to Luke 10:4, Jesus prohibited his disciples from carrying a purse, stating

μη βαστάζετε βαλλάντιον, μη πήραν, μη ὑποδήματα,
καὶ μηδένα κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν 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,

Ὅτε ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς ἄτερ βαλλαντίου
καὶ πήρας καὶ ὑποδημάτων,
μή τινος ὑστερήσατε; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν, Οὐθενός

When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals,
did you lack anything? They said, “Nothing.”¹²

Thus, it is surprising to learn in Luke 12:33 that Jesus instructed not just his disciples but his entire “little flock” (τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον) 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 זָרוּר in Job 14:17 and the כִּיס in Prov 1:14. If Luke’s Hebrew source read עֲשׂוּ לָכֶם כִּסִּים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבְלוּ, it could mean either (1) “make for yourselves *purses* (βαλλάντια) which do not wear out,” or (2) “make for yourselves *clothes* (ἱμάτια) which do not wear out.” The Hebrew כִּסִּים (*scriptio defectiva*) is unintentionally ambiguous. It can be read as כִּסִּים, the plural of כִּיס “purse,” or as כְּסוּיִם, the plural of כִּסוּי “clothing, cover” (Jastrow 1903: 633, 652).¹³

In light of the promise in Luke 12:28, “if God so clothes the grass . . . how much more will he clothe you,” the כִּסִּים in Luke’s Hebrew source should have been read as כְּסוּיִם “clothes” (*scriptio plene* = כְּסוּיִם) rather than as כִּסִּים “purses” (*scriptio plene* = כִּסִּים).¹⁴ 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 καρπός “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, כֶּפֶר נַפְשׁ-אִישׁ עֶשְׂרוֹ, “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.”¹⁵

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;¹⁶ 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 סס ואכל “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 כסיים, noted above, which could mean either “purses” or “clothes.” Compounding the problem was the semantic range of some Semitic stems like אכל, 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 ‘*treasurers*’—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 βρῶσις, 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 βρῶσις: (1) meat, (2) pasture, (3) eating, (4) taste, flavor, (5)

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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 אִוְכְלָא “excrement,” cited by Jastrow 1903: 25]. Definition (6) above for βρωσις 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 (ἀπὸ τοῦ καὶ βρωμάτων).” They noted that a few manuscripts of the epistle have βρωσις instead of βρώματα being used along with the ῥός “rust.” These variant readings led them to conclude rightly that this combination of ῥός and βρωσις argues against the identification of βρωσις in Matt 6:19–20 with ῥός. (For ῥός “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 רָקַב “decay” (but not רָקַבָא ‘rust’) rather than סָס, and תּוֹלְעָה “grub” rather than אָכַל. The full verse reads

עוד אמר להם אל תרבו
לצבור אוצרות בארץ
כדי שיאכלנו רקב ותולעה
או יחפרו הגנבים ויגנבום.

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 רִים “worm” rather than סָס, and again תּוֹלְעָה “grub” rather than אָכַל. The full verse reads:

עשו לכם אוצרות בשמים
 במקום שרימה ותולעה לא יאכלם
 ובמקום שהגנבים לא יחפרו ויגנבו
 Make for yourselves treasures in heaven
 where the worm and the grub do not devour them
 and where thieves do not dig through and steal.
 (Howard 1995: 24–25.)

4. Davies and Allison (1988: 629) are incorrect in their statement that, “In Mal 3.11 LXX A, the word [βρωσις] means ‘grass-hopper’.” Hebrew אכל could be used for a grasshopper, as well as for food; but βρωσις did not mean “rust,” nor did it mean “grass-hopper.”

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 *qērēb*, ‘moth’ could be *rūqbā*, ‘destroy’ could be *rēqāb*, and ‘worm’ could be *raqqābā*. [Does one interpretation of *rqb* = ‘worm’ or ‘rust’ stand behind Jas 5.2–3, another behind the synoptics?]

The answer to their closing question is a “No!” The attested mis-interpretation of אכל in Mal 3:11 tilts the scales in favor of reconstructing the *Vorlage* with אכל rather than רקב — for there is no attested confusion between the Hebrew רקב “decay” and the Aramaic רִקְבָּא “wood-worm” or רִקְבָּא “rust.” For the combination of “moth” and “worm,” note the addition in the Septuagint to Prov 25:20, ὡς περ σῆς ἱματίῳ καὶ σκώληξ ξύλω οὕτως λύπη

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ἀνδρὸς 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 Peshitta’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 **חבל** (*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 σής “moth” is no doubt a loanword from Semitic. In the Septuagint σής “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 **שׁוּץ** in Isa 50:9 was rightly translated by σής “moth,” the **שׁוּץ** in Isa 51:8 became χρόνος “time,” as though the *Vorlage* had **עַתָּה** instead of **עַשׂוּ**. But the **סָפָה** in this verse was rightly rendered as σής. In Hosea 5:12 the **עַשׂוּ** “moth” was translated as παραγή “trouble,” and the **רָקַב** “decay, wood-worm, or rust” became κέντρον “goad.”

9. The following Arabic cognates of Hebrew **אכל** provide evidence that the Hebrew root could also have been used for “rust” and “corrosion,” as understood by the Saint Jerome.

- **أكل** (*ʿakala*) “to eat, eat away, corrode, to rust,”
- **آكلت** (*ʿakilat*) “corrosion, rust,”

- אָקאַל (*ʿukâl*) “corrosion,”
- אָקאַל (*ʿukâl*) “corroded, cankered, decayed,”
- מְטָאָקַל (*mutaʿakkil*) “corroded, rusty, rust-eaten,”
- מְטָאָקַל (*mutaʿakil*) “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

אֵף כִּי־אֲנוֹשׁ רָמָה וּבֶן־אָדָם תּוֹלְעָה
 “How much less man, who is a maggot,
 and the son of man, who is a worm!”

Isaiah 51:12

מִי־אַתָּה וַתִּירָאִי מֵאֲנוֹשׁ
 יָמוּת וּמִבֶּן־אָדָם חֲצִיר יִנְתֵּן:

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 ἀνθρώποις
 ὅτι οὐκ ἀθάνατος 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

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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 כַּפִּיִם, the plural of כּוּס “cup” or כּוֹס “thorn.”

14. Hebrew כֶּיִס “bag, purse,” is the cognate of Arabic كَيْس (*kīs*) “purse,” which is perhaps a loanword from the Persian کِيسَة (*kīst*). Hebrew כִּפָּה “to clothe, to cover” is the cognate of the Arabic كَسُو (*kasa/kasw*) “to clothe, to dress” and كِسَاءٌ (*kisāʾ*) “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 ἵδς . . . 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 Nazereth. Barrett (1989: 15) provides bibliography and the following translation:

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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 $\text{p}^{66,75}$ N B D W read τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the son of the man,” but manuscripts $\text{A K L X } \Delta \Theta \Psi$ read τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ “the Son of the God.” The Peshitta reads here ܡܝܫܝܚܐ ܕܒܢܝ ܕܘܫܝܚܐ “in the Son of the God,” but the Old Syriac reads ܕܘܫܝܚܐ ܡܝܫܝܚܐ “in the Son of the Man.” Bernard (1923: 338) opted for the reading ἀνθρώπου, arguing “if the ‘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 υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου 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 **בן אנוש**, **בן אדם**, and **בר אנוש** 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 **בן אדם** 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,

ואני אדם חוטא ויש לי ממשלת
תחת ידי פירושים ופרשים ורוכבים
ואומר אני לא מהם לך וילך בא ויבא
ולעבדי עשו זה ויעשו.

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 accountable 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 **אדם** 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 of Howard’s translation and has been the basis for all studies to date on the meaning of **בן אדם** (υἱοῖς ἀνθρώπου) “Son of Man” or **בן האדם** (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) “the Son of the Man.”

But other definitions of **אדם**, attested in Arabic cognates, need to be added to the Hebrew lexicons. In addition to the Arabic **أدمي** (*ʿadamî*) “relating to Adam” = “human”³ are the following Arabic words for which there were certainly Hebrew cognates in use in Biblical times:

- **ادم** (*ʿidāmu*) and **ادمة** (*ʿadamat*) “the chief, and provost, of his people, the aider, the manager of the affairs,” which would be the cognate of the **אָדָם** in Gen 1:26, “let us make ADAM . . . and let them rule.”
- **أدم** (*ʿadama*) “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 **אָדָם** in Hebrew;
- **ادمة** (*ʿudmat*) “agreement, familiarity, sociableness, companionship, a means of access,” which would be **אָדָם** in Hebrew;
- **مؤدم** (*mūʿdam*) “beloved, an object of love,” which is from the root **אדם** and would appear as **מוֹאָדָם**.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 קָרָא “a provost.” This interpretation is reenforced by the second word from the centurion’s lips, שׂוֹטָר , which is not the very common participle שׂוֹטֵר “sinner,” where the ו is the vowel letter for ו . This שׂוֹטָר is the cognate of the Arabic حواط (*ḥuwwāʿt*) “superintendent, manager, the one in charge.” Thus, the ו of שׂוֹטָר here is a consonant; and the ק of this קָרָא is an Aramaism in the dialect of the centurion (for the קָרָא one would expect in Hebrew).⁵ Consequently, a more accurate translation of $\text{אֲנִי קָרָא שׂוֹטָר}$ 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 לִי מְנַשְׁלָת “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 ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν,
 ἔχων ὑπ’ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας,
 καὶ λέγω τούτῳ, Πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται,
 καὶ ἄλλῳ, Ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται,
 καὶ τῷ δούλῳ 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.

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 “having authority” is the Old Syriac text which reads

ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ
°ap °enā° ger gabrā° °enā° d°īt liy šûlṭānā°
“for I am also a man having authority.”

However, the Peshiṭta here has ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ
(°enā° dithêṭ šûlṭānā°), “I am under authority.” In the parallel account in Luke 7:8, both the Peshiṭta and Old Syriac have

ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ ܐܢܝ
(°enā° damša°badnā° [damša°bad °nā°] thût šûlṭānā°)
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

Hebrew textual tradition. The words **חוטא ויש לי ממשלת** “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 **חוטא אדם** “a provost, the-one-in-charge.” Thus the rare **אדם** “a provost” and **חוטא** “the-one-in-charge” definitely need to be added to the Hebrew lexicons.⁸

EZEKIEL AS A **בן אדם**

Just as the Arabic cognate **إدم** (*idâmu*) “provost” clarifies the meaning of the **אדם** (= **אָדָם**) spoken by the Roman centurion, the Arabic **ادم** (*adama*) “he effected a reconciliation” clarifies the **בן אדם** (**υἱοῦ ἀνθρώπου**) “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 **בן אדם** in Ezekiel may not have been the generic “Son of Man” but the title **בן אדם** “Conciliator/Reconciler.” The **אדם** 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 **יְהוָה** (**אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה**), there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them (**אֲרָצָם**). . . . As a soothing aroma I will accept you (**אֲרָצָה אֶתְכֶם**) 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, **בן אדם**, ‘*Reconciler*,’ 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 **בן אדם** 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 **בן אנוש** AND **בר אנוש**

Just as **אדם** had all the different meanings noted above (man, red, blood, Adam, Edom, Rome, provost, and reconciler), so also **אנוש** had multiple meanings. Psa 144:3 provides one clear definition:

יְהוָה מַה-אָדָם וַתִּדְעֵהוּ בֶן-אָנוּשׁ וַתַּחֲשְׁבֵהוּ
 Yahweh, what is man that you acknowledge him,
 or the son of man that you take thought of him?

The **אָדָם** and **בֶּן-אָנוּשׁ** are synonymous, meaning “man” (i.e., gender inclusive humanbeings). The Arabic cognate of **אנוש** is **أنس** (*ʿanisa*) “to be friendly, to be social” (Lane 1863: 113). Hebrew lexicons list several other meanings:

- **אנוש** “to be weak, to be sick,” with **أنيث** (*ʿaniṭa*) being its Arabic cognate,

- אַנֶּשׁ “to be soft, to be delicate,” with *أنث* (*ʿanut*) being its Arabic cognate.
- אֲנוּשׁ “to be strong, severe, overwhelming.”¹⁰

These meanings are of no help in clarifying the *title* “Son of Man,” whether it be the Hebrew בֶּר־אֲנוּשׁ and בֶּן־אֲנוּשׁ or the Aramaic בֶּר־אַנְשׁ.

Hebrew בֶּן־אֲנוּשׁ and Aramaic בֶּר־אַנְשׁ (unlike בֶּן־אָדָם) 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.”¹¹ Given the occasional interchange of שׁ/שׁ/ס, the אֲנֶשׁ could equal אֲנָס “a violent man” (Jastrow 1903: 86), and בֶּר אֲנֶשׁ could mean “son of violence, a felon.” Also, given the occasional interchange of the א and the ע, the בֶּר אֲנֶשׁ could be a variant of בֶּר־עֲנֶשׁ, meaning “convict” (derived from עֲנֶשׁ “punishment, fine, mulct”) (Jastrow 1903: 1055).¹² And given the interchange of א and ע the אֲנֶשׁ could be the cognate of the Arabic عانس (*ʿânis*) “a man who is far advanced in age and has not married” or “a virgin woman” (Lane 1874: 2173). Thus, בֶּן אֲנֶשׁ (as a by-form בֶּן עֲנֶשׁ) could mean a “mature bachelor” or “the son of a virgin.”

Moreover, the בֶּר of בֶּר אֲנֶשׁ need not be the Aramaic for “son” but the Hebrew/Aramaic בֶּר “pure” (BDB 141; Jastrow 1903: 189), with some if not all of the overtones of its Arabic cognate *بر* (*barr*). Lane (1863: 176) cited *بر* (*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, **בר אנש** need not be the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew **בן אדם**, but a Hebrew phrase in its own right expressing a superlative by means of the *nomen rectum* **אנש** being modified by the *nomen regens* **בר**. 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 132°). Consequently, the Hebrew **בר אנש** “the most pure man / the man of purity” or “the Perfect Person”¹³ would have been a homograph of the Aramaic **בר אנש** “the son of man,” but not a homophone. Like the unvocalized **בן אדם**, the unvocalized **אנש בן** and the **בר אנש** 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 **בר אנש** and **בן אדם** may have been in the original parable. Verses 46:1–3 point to a **בר אנש** “*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.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 בן אדם as interpreted above, “*the Son of Authority*” who is in full control—like the centurion who told Jesus he was the provost (אדם) in full control (חוט). 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.¹⁵

NEW TESTAMENT USAGE

Johnson (1962: 418), along with many other commentators, rightly recognized that the Greek ὁ υἱὸς 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 **בן אדם** is minimal¹⁶ compared to the \acute{o} υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου 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 \acute{o} υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is translated back into Hebrew and Aramaic—and written without vowels—at least fifteen meanings become possible (as noted above, seven for **בן אדם** and eight for **בן אנוש**). 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 *bar ʿēnašaʿ* used in 1st century Palestine?” But the *bar ʿēnašaʿ* in his question should have been written without vowels, for his vowels reflect but one of many interpretations. The real question is, “What did **בן אדם** and **בן אנוש** mean in 1st century Palestine?” The *ʿēnašaʿ* “man” is just one of eight possible meanings, as noted above.

The five most likely meanings of **בן אדם**, **בן אנוש**, and **בן אנוש** which became the anarthrous \acute{o} υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου “the son of man” and the arthrous \acute{o} υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the son of the man” can be summarized as follows:

- the son of man = a human being, a mortal
(*ben* + *ʿādām*, or *ben* + *ʿenōš*, or Aram. *bar* + *ʿenāš*);

- the man of purity = the purest person (Heb. *bār* ‘pure’ + *’ēnōš* ‘man’).
- the son of the reconciler = conciliator (*ben* + *’ōdēm*);
- the son of authority = one in authority (*ben* + *’ēdām*);
- the Son of “the-One-In-Charge,” i.e., THE SON OF THE SOVEREIGN (*ben* + *hā’ēdām*).

Early on Jesus was recognized as υἱὸς θεοῦ “the Son of God” (בן אלוה) and as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ “the Son of the God” (בן האלים). The designation of Jesus as ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, “my Beloved Son,”¹⁷ 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 by¹⁸

- 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

question, “Who is he, sir?” by saying, “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.” (John 9:35).

Therefore, it is unlikely that **בר אנש**—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 **בן אדם** “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 **בן הַאֲדָמָה** “the Son of the Sovereign,” with the **הַאֲדָמָה** “the Sovereign” being Yahweh. **בְּנֵי-הַאֲדָמָה** was the equivalent of **בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים** “the Son of God.” This is what lies behind the arthrous $\delta\ \sigma\iota\delta\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\upsilon$. The title **בן אָדָם** (without the definite article on the **אָדָם**) means “One-in-Authority” (as **בְּנֵי-חַיִל** means “mighty man”) and refers to Jesus who said, $\text{Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῶ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς}$ “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” This **בן אָדָם** is the title behind the anarthrous $\delta\ \sigma\iota\delta\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\upsilon$ “the Son of Man.”

Support for this interpretation that **הַאֲדָמָה** “the Sovereign” is an epithet for Yahweh, and the **בן אָדָם** is a title for Jesus finds support from three sources. First is the use of the epithet **הַצֵּוֹר** “the Rock” for Yahweh in Deut 32:4, which was translated as $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ “God” in the LXX. The epithet **צֵוֹר** “Rock,” without the **ה**, appears again in Deut 32:18, where it is again translated as $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\nu$ “God.” The epithet comes a third time in Deut 32:31. **כְּצֵוֹרֵנוּ צֵוֹרָם** “like our Rock, their Rock.” This became in Greek $\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \delta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma\ \eta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu\ \omicron\iota\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ “like our God, their god.” The same epithet found in Hab 1:12 is also

noteworthy:

... יהוה אלהי קדשי... וצור

Yahweh, my God, my Holy One . . . and, O Rock, . . .

κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἅγιός . . . καὶ ἔπλασέν με

O Lord, God, my Holy One . . . you formed me.

Here the Greek translator read the MT וְצוֹר as the verb “to form, fashion,” and Jastrow (1903: 1270) noted that “in the *Agadah* צוֹר “Rock” was used for *the Lord* and for *the Creator*, as though צוֹר was derived from יָצַר “to fashion, to create.” In the Psalms צוֹר “Rock” was translated by θεός “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: הַאֲדָרָם “*The Sovereign*” = *God* = *Yahweh*.²¹

The second source supporting the interpretation that הַאֲדָרָם is an epithet for Yahweh comes from parallels in Arabic usage of epithets for Allah. Among the epithets for Allah in Arabic are:

- الرحيم (*alrahîmu*) “the Merciful” (= رَحِيم);
- الرحمن (*alrahmanu*) “the Compassionate” (= رَحْمَنِي);
- الإحد (*alâhadu*) “the One” (= اَلْأَحَدُ), with the definite article;
- أحد (*ahad^{un}*) “(the) One” (= أَحَدٌ), without the definite article);
- واحد (*wa^hid^{un}*) “(the) One” (= وَاحِدٌ a by-form of اَلْأَحَدُ), without the definite article).

Lane (1863: 27) noted that “الإحد [ʿalāḥadu], 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 *Qurʾan* Sura 112:1, قل هو الله أحد (*qul huwa ʿlālahu ʿahad*“), “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 הַאֲדָרַם “*The Sovereign*” parallels the Arabic and Hebrew הַאֲדָרַם “*The One*.”

The third source supporting the interpretation that הַאֲדָרַם is an epithet for Yahweh is a variant in the Shem Tob Text of Matt 19:17, where the phrase לִבְדוֹ הוּא טוֹב “for God alone is good” appears in Greek as εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθός “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 θεός “one the God” in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19, where the ὁ θεός “the God” is the appositional modifier of the *indefinite* εἷς (= הַאֲדָרַם). The הַאֲדָרַם in the *Vorlage* became in the Shem Tob text a doublet, wherein the הַאֲדָרַם became both הַאֲדָרַם “the God” and לִבְדוֹ “alone.” There is no way to relate the εἷς “one” in Matthew and the ὁ θεός “God” in Mark and Luke until the Hebrew הַאֲדָרַם “the One = God” comes into focus.

As a matter of fact, in Matt 16:27 the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου appears in the Shem Tob Text as בֶּן הַאֲדָרַם “the son of the God.” and the τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Matt 16:28 also appears as בֶּן הַאֲדָרַם “the Son of the God.”

CONCLUSIONS

In speech the vowels precluded most ambiguities. The $\text{ʔ}ādām$ “man,” the $\text{ʔ}ōdēm$ “reconcilor,” and the $\text{ʔ}ēdām$ “pro-
vost” were as distinctly different as the English ‘a dam,’ ‘a
dame,’ and ‘a dome.’ The Aramaic *bar* + $\text{ʔ}ēnāš$ has to mean
“son of man” and the Hebrew *bar* + $\text{ʔ}ēnōš$ has to mean “the
most pure person.” The \bar{a} vowel of $\text{ʔ}ēnāš$ and the \bar{o} vowel of
 $\text{ʔ}ēnōš$ make all the difference. The Hebrew $\text{ʔ}ēnōš$ “man”
requires the *bar* to be read as the Hebrew word for “pure,”
whereas the Aramaic $\text{ʔ}ēnāš$ “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 הַאֲדָם “the Sovereign” as a title
for Yahweh as it is to recognize הַצֵּיִר “the Rock” and הַאֶחָד
“the One.” Reverence for the holy name, whereby every
reading of יְהוָה became אֲדָנִי , was no doubt a contributing
factor for using epithets—and even they may have been
reverentially changed, as אלהים became אלקים and as
“God” became “G-d.”²² Reverence for the name may well
have been extended to הַאֲדָם itself so that the בֶּן הַאֲדָם “the
Son of the Sovereign” was intentionally mispronounced as
 בֶּן הַאֲדָם “the Son of the Man” which, in turn, produced the
baffling $\acute{o} \upsilon \iota \delta \acute{s} \tau \omicron \upsilon \acute{\alpha} \nu \theta \rho \acute{\omega} \pi \omicron \upsilon$. 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 ἀνθρώπου. 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 ἀνθρώπου in the question as the Hebrew בֶּר אֱנוֹשׁ “the Most Pure Man” (the superlative of הַבְּרָאֵנִישׁ הַבְּרָאֵנִישׁ). 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.²³

More ambiguity can be removed when it is recognized that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου could translate not only the Aramaic בֶּר אֱנוֹשׁ “the Son of the Man” and the Hebrew בֶּר אֱנוֹשׁ “the Purist Person” but also the Hebrew בֶּן אֲדָם “Son of Man” and the Hebrew בֶּן אֲדָם “Son of the Reconciler,” i.e., “the Concilator,” which was probably the title given to Ezekiel (contra the MT vocalization and the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in the Septuagint). It may have been the inspiration for Paul’s affirmation in II Cor 5:19, θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ, “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 ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, “the Son of the Man,” could be the בֶּן אֲדָם where the אֲדָם was אֲדָם “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 **מַלְאָכִים** “the-one-in-charge/the Sovereign” and **מְשַׁלְמֵי** “the Reconciler” provides a reasonable explanation of the enigmatic ἀνθρώπου “man” in the title used by and about Jesus. Every occurrence of ὁ υἱὸς 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 υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the Son of the Man,” *the holy name appears in reverent disguise*. Behind the Greek is the Hebrew **בֶּן־אָדָם** “the Son of the Man,” and behind this is the epithet **בֶּן־מַלְאָכִים** “the Son of the Sovereign”—and “the Sovereign” is none other than Yahweh, God the Father.

ADDENDUM

THE אָדָם 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

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶקְוֶה אֶת־סֹכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֹתָ
 וְנִדְרָתִי אֶת־פְּרִצִיָּהֶן וְהִרְסֹתִיו אֶקְוֶה
 וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם:

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

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀναστήσω
 τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυιδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν
 καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς
 καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀναστήσω
 καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτὴν καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ
 αἰῶνος.

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.

ACTS 15:16

Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω
καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυίδ
τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν
καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς ἀνοικοδομήσω
καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν.

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

לְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי־אֶדְוֹם
וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי
עֲלֵיהֶם נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה זֹאת:

“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

ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων
καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ’ οὓς ἐπικέκληται
τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς
λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα.

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

ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι
τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον

καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ’ οὗς ἐπικέκληται
τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτούς,
λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα.

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 שׁוֹרֵךְ “to seek” over seventy times, but only here in Amos 9:12 does it appear as a questionable translation of שׁוֹרֵךְ “to possess.” Therefore, it is most likely that in the Masoretic tradition the ך of שׁוֹרֵךְ was misread as a ך. Consequently, the verb became יִרְשׁוּ “they may possess” when it was originally יִרְשׁוּ “they may seek.”

A second misreading in the MT was the reading of אֲדָם in 9:12 as אֲדוֹם “Edom.” The Septuagint translators read it as אָדָם “man,” which was followed by Luke in Acts 15: 17. But there is a third option for interpreting the אֲדָם in Amos 9:12. As discussed above (pp. 360-364) אֲדָם can be read as the cognate of the Arabic اَدَم (°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, אֲדָם (or אֲדוֹם, with full spelling) could be read as the sequential infinitive construct אֲדָם/אָדָם “to reconcile.” By inverting the אֲדָם/אָדָם to read as אֲדוֹם אֶת־שְׂאֲרֵית, 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 a ך as a ך, adding the ך to םדן 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 כְּבִן אֱנוֹשׁ, “like the son of a man” (in Dan 7:13) forty-six times; but the בֵּן אֶדְוִם, which appears *ninety-three* times in Ezekiel, is mentioned only *three* times (in just two sentences in the whole excursus).

2. The twelfth book in the polemical treatise published between 1380–1400 by Shem-Tob ben-Isaac ben-Shaprut, entitled אֶבֶן בּוֹחַן (*eben bôhan* > *Eben Bohan*) meaning “The Touchstone,” contains the entire Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. A critical edition of this Gospel has been published

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 بشر (*bašar*); and أبو البشر (*ʿabû ʿalbasar*) 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, redintegavit amorem, concordia & consensum conciliavit, firmavit, . . . dux & antistes est.*”

5. Compare Hebrew חַוֵּט “thread, cord line” and its Arabic cognate حوط (*ḥawṭ*) “a twisted string” and خيط (*ḥayṭ*) “string, “thread” (Lane 1865: 671, 831; BDB 296). The Arabic حَيْط (*ḥayyīṭ*) “a man who guards, protects, defends” is also noteworthy.

6. Note also the by-form חַוֵּטָא cited by Jastrow (1903: 448–449) meaning “to live in luxury as a nobleman, to be imperious, to lord it.” For the cognate حَوَاط (*ḥuwwāʿṭ*), 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^a, which reads, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίας 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 פירושים ורוכבים 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 פירושים reflects the confusion in distinguishing between the ו and the י, so that the פירושים should be corrected to פורישים, the latter being the Hebrew cognate of Arabic فارس (*fâriš*) “(mounted) horseman.” The three Hebrew nouns correspond to the Latin *celerēs*, *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 בן אדם “son of man” comes nine times as the parallel synonym of אדם “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 אדם בן אדם appears without the synonymous אדם

“man,” and Psa 144:3 has בֶּן־אָנוֹשׁ.

10. Given the interchange of the א and the ע (as with אָנוֹשׁ and עָנוֹשׁ, both meaning “to suck”), אָנוֹשׁ 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* 104^b, 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 בֶּר אָנוֹשׁ “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

translation of the term “son of Man,” see Charles’ *Introduction*, pages 174–177.

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 כְּבַר אֲנָשׁ “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 counter part 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” (כְּמַרְאֵה־נֹבֵר) who had the “the voice of a man” (קוֹל־אָדָם). His name was Gabriel (= נֹבֵר “warrior/man” + אֱל “God),” and he called Daniel in Hebrew בֶּן־אָדָם “the son of a man.

17. See Aland (1968: 246) for Luke 9:35 which has ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλεκτός, “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.”

20. Compare the אַבִּיר “the Strong,” an old name of God found in Gen 49:24; Psalm 132:2,5; Isa 1:24, 49:26, 60:16. The לְאֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב in Psa 132:2 and 5 became in the Septuagint τῷ θεῷ Ἰακωβ “to the God of Jacob.”

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 τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (= הָאָדָם) refer to Jesus. But in reality the הָאָדָם (≠ ἀνθρώπου) in the title בֶּן הָאָדָם “Son of the Sovereign” referred to Yahweh.

22. It is analogous to Jastrow’s citation (1903: 73) on אֱלֹהִים, which is nothing but a cross reference to אֱלֹהֵי, where it is

simply noted that אלקים and אלקא were “adopted in order to avoid uttering the divine name.” It goes without explanation; but questions loom as to why the ה became a ק. Was the ק randomly selected or was אלקים an indirect reference to the Shekinah since אלק (the cognate of Arabic *الق* [*alaqa*]) means “to shine, glow, glean” and the plural אלקים 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 με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι; “who do men say that I am?” (Mark 8:27) or τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ὄχλοι εἶναι; “who do crowds say that I am?” (Luke 9:18); and the *third* being, Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με 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 MISCELLENEA

A.

TEXTUAL VARIANTS AND AMBIGUITIES IN MATTHEW 1:23 AND ISAIAH 7:14

Matthew 1:23

Ἴδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν,
καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ,

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel

הנה העלמה הרה ותלד בן
וקראת שמו עמנואל

Behold the young woman is pregnant and will bear a son;
and you shall call his name Emmanuel.¹

Isaiah 7:14

הנה העלמה הרה וילדת בן
וקראת שמו עמנואל

Behold the young woman is pregnant and is bearing a son;
and she will call his name Emmanuel.

Septuagint

Ἴδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν
καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ

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 **וְקָרְאָתָּהּ** 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 **תִּקְרָאָתְּ** (see GKC 74^s) in lieu of the normal **וְקָרְאָתָּהּ** could (1) be repointed as the participle **תִּקְרָאָתְּ**, indicating that the pregnant woman had already named her unborn son, or (2) **תִּקְרָאָתְּ** could be emended to read with the Dead Sea Scrolls which have **וְקָרְאָתָּהּ**, “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 **וְקָרְאָוּ** rather than the MT **וְקָרְאָתָּהּ**. The Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel read the **וְקָרְאָתָּהּ** of Isaiah as the 2ms **וְקָרְאָתְּ** “and you shall call,” following the Greek singular of Isaiah rather than the Greek plural of Matthew.

The Hebrew adjective **הַרְרָה** “is pregnant” was translated into Greek as a future active verb (**ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει**); and the participle **וַיִּלְדֶּת** “and is birthing” became a future middle verb (**τέξειται**)—as though the Hebrew were **וַתִּהְרָה וַתִּלְדֶּת** “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 (**הַרְרָה**), one participle (**וַיִּלְדֶּת**), and one finite verb—a *waw-consecutive perfect* coming after the imperfect **יִתֵּן** “he will give,” which introduced the “sign.” That one verb (**וְקָרְאָתָּהּ** “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 עַלְמָה “young woman” and בְּתוּלָה “virgin,” the following texts in Hebrew and Greek illustrate the fact that עַלְמָה was not always translated by παρθένος “virgin.”³ When עַלְמָה was used for a “virgin” it required the use of בְּתוּלָה as a modifier, which in turn required a modifying phrase like “whom no man had not known.”

- Gen 24:43 הַיְצֵאתָ הָעַלְמָה הַיְצֵאתָ “the young woman (*almah*) going forth”; and αἱ θυγατέρες . . . ἐξελεύσονται “the daughters going forth.”
- Proverbs 30:19 בְּעַלְמָה בְּנֶבֶר וְדֶרֶךְ וְדֶרֶךְ “an the way of a man with a young woman (*almah*)”; and καὶ ὁδοῦς ἀνδρὸς ἐν νεότητι “an the way of a man in youth.”
- Exod 2:8 הָעַלְמָה וַתֵּלֶךְ “and the young woman (*almah*) went”; and ἐλθοῦσα δὲ ἡ νεανίς “and the young woman (*neanis*) went.”
- Deu 22:23 נַעֲרָה בְּתוּלָה מְאָרְשָׁה לְאִישׁ “young woman, a virgin (*bethulah*) espoused to a man”; and παῖς παρθένος μεμνηστυμένη ἀνδρὶ “a young virgin (*parthenos*) espoused to a man.”
- Gen 24:16 וְהַנְּעֶרָה טֹבַת מְרֹאֶה מְאֹד בְּתוּלָה וְאִישׁ לֹא יִדְעֶהָ “The maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin

(*bethulah*), whom no man had not known”; and παρθένος ἦν καλὴ τῆ ὄψει σφόδρα παρθένος 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” (בְּתוּלָה / *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 בְּתוּלָתָא “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 בְּתוּלָה and נְעָרָה 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 אִשָּׁר בְּתוּלָה / נְעָרָה לֹא יָדָעָה “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.

B.
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 Ἰσκαριώτης⁴ “Judas Iscariot”;
- Mark 3:19, 14:10, Luke 6:16. Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ¹ “Judas Iscarioth” or Ἰούδαν ὁ Ἰσκαριώθ “Judas the Iscarioth”;
- Matt 10:4, John 12:4, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, “Judas the Iscariot”; Mss. A X Δ Θ Π Ψ read Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτης “Judas Simon Iscariot”;⁵
- John 14:22, Ἰούδας οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης,⁶ “Judas, not the Iscariot.” Ms. D reads Ἰούδας οὐχ ὁ ἀπὸ καρυώτου, “Judas, not the one from Karuot”;
- John 13:2, Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου “Judas Simon of Iscariot.” Ms. D reads Ἰούδα Σίμωνος ἀπὸ καρυώτου, “Judas Simon from Karuot”;
- John 6:71, 13:26, Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου “Judas Simon of Iscariot”;
- Luke 22:3, Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Ἰσκαριώτην “Judas, the one called Iscariot.”
- Σκαριώτης, Σκαριώθ, 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 **שׂאִי טוֹב** in 2 Sam 10:6, 8 (which became *Ιστωβ* in the Septuagint)⁷ provides a clue for those who, by analogy, read *Ἰσκαριώτης* as the noun **שׂאִי** and the place name **קְרִיּוֹת**, meaning “the man of Kerioth.”⁸ 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 **שׂאִי יְרִיחוֹ**, “man of Jericho.”

Others take their cue from the *Σκαριώτης*, *Σκαριώθ*, *Scarioth*, and *Scariota* variants, and identify ‘Iscariot’ as the Greek *σικάριος* and Latin *sicarius*, both meaning bandit, assassin.” If this were the case, the initial *Ἰ* of *Ἰσκαριώτης* would reflect the prosthetic **שׂ**, which in Hebrew is prefixed to some words to facilitate pronunciation, as opposed to taking the initial *Ἰ* of *Ἰσκαριώτης* as the Hebrew **שׂאִי** “man.” This identification of the *Ἰ* of *Ἰσκαριώτης* as a prosthetic **שׂ** also works for those who read the *σκαριώ* of *Ἰσκαριώτης* as being

- the Aramaic **שׂאִי קְרִיּוֹת** “the false one, a liar, a traitor”;
- the Aramaic **שׂאִי קְרִיּוֹת** “red paint,” making Judas a “dyer” or a “red head”;
- the Hebrew **שׂאִי קְרִיּוֹת** 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 *καρυωτὸς* “one who is (from a town of) date palms.”

A NEW DERIVATION OF "ISCARIOT"

Jastrow (1903: 1413, 1417) cited the Hebrew masculine plural noun קְרוֹיֹת "persons called up to read from the Scriptures" and the Hebrew קְרוֹאִים / קְרוֹאוֹת "those called up to read from the Torah," i.e., lectors. This קְרוֹיֹת is a cognate of the Arabic قارئ (*qâ'rīy^{un}*) "a reader/reciter of the *Qur'an*," and similar to the Arabic قراء (*qurrâ^o*) "a devotee, one who devotes himself/herself" to religious exercise . . ." (Lane 1885:2504, from the verb قرأ (*qara^o*) "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 Ἰουδαῖος ὁ Ἰσκαριώθ or as Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. This definite article in Greek requires the name to be reconstructed as אִישׁ קְרוֹיֹת, with the ὁ Ἰσ of the ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης reflecting an אִישׁ in the construct state ("the man of") followed by the קְרוֹיֹת 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

᾿Ωδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν. ὁ ἔχων νοῦν
ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου,
ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν,
καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ.

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 anti-theoretical meanings depending on whether the *sôter* was a

Greek word or a Hebrew word. The Greek σωτηρ “savior” (as in Luke 2:11 σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστὸς κύριος “a savior who is Christ, the Lord”) would be transliterated in Hebrew and Aramaic as סוֹתֵר (= *swtr* = *sôtēr*). In Hebrew the ס (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 סוֹתֵר (= *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 شتر (*šatar*) “to offend, abuse, revile” and شتير (*šatîr*) “knave, rogue” (Lane 1872: 1503; Hava 1915: 351). Therefore, 666 can be a numeric code for “savior”—when based upon the Greek loanword σωτηρ (*sôtēr*)—or 666 can be a numeric code for “destroyer” when based upon the Hebrew/Aramaic סוֹתֵר (= *swtr* = *sôtēr*).

The phrase “it is the number of a man” (ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν) would have been מִסְפַּר אִישׁ הוּא (mispar ^{ʾiš hû}) or מִסְפַּר אָדָם הוּא (mispar ^{ʾādām hû}). Were it the latter phrase with אָדָם (^{ʾādām}/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, exemplar.”

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 סוֹתֵר/σωτηρ/*swtr* “Savior”—being one way to indicate 666—was transformed to become also the Aramaic/Hebrew name and mark of the beast called סוֹתֵר/σωτηρ/*swtr* “Destroyer.”

NOTES

1. The וקראת could be read as וקראת! “she will call” as in the MT of Isa 7:14; but in light of the 3ms ויקרא 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 Ἰσκαριώτης is the *nomen actoris* suffix and the -ώθ ending of Ἰσκαριώθ is the spirantized Hebrew ת, 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, οὐχ Σκαριότα.
7. Josephus (Antiquities. 7:121) refers to it as Ἰστοβος.
8. In Josh 15:25 the city named קריית חצר הַיָּא חַצֹּר— which became “Hazorhadattah, Keriothhezron (that is, Hazor)” in the RSV—was among the cities belonging to the tribe of Judah. The Septuagint reads here καὶ αἱ πόλεις Ἀσερων αὕτη Ἀσωρ, the initial קריית read as the plural noun “cities.” In Amos 2:2, הַקְרִיּוֹת became also in the Septuagint 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 קְרִיּוֹת became Καριωθ, and the noun הַקְּרִיבֹת became τὰς πόλεις “the cities,” but in Jer 48:41 the name appears also as הַקְּרִיּוֹת, 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.¹ It is widely acknowledged that the author of this epistle was not interested in an exegetical inquiry to discover the literal meaning of the Hebrew texts or the earlier Israelite authors' intended messages. The Hebrew scriptures were assumed to have been written by God—or to be the utterances of the Holy Spirit or the pre-incarnate Christ—and were used by the author of the epistle to give authority to his faith affirmations about the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heb 1:6 and Deut 32:43

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

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

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

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

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

Deut 32:43

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

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

Heb 1:6

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

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

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

וַיִּקַּח אֶת־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר
וְאֶת־קֹזְיֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרִקָּנִים
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 preferred reading.⁶ A similar error occurred in the MT of Deut 32:43, where the הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עִמּוֹ “Praise, O Gentiles, his people,” was—in light of the Septuagintal variant—originally הַרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עִמּוֹ “Praise, O heavens, his people” or “Praise, O heavens, with him” This phrase became corrupted when the ש of שָׁמַיִם was read as an ע, and it became הַרְנִינוּ עִמֵּם

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

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

Heb 1:8–9 and Psa 45:6–8

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heb 2:7, 9 and Psa 8:5

וַתִּקְּסָרְהוּ מְעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֹרְהוּ׃

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

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

You diminished him a little less than angels.

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

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

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

Heb 8:9b and Jer 31:32b

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

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

Jeremiah 31:32

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

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

or

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

Jeremiah 38:31 (LXX)

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

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

Hebrews 8:9b

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

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

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

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

Heb 10:37–38 and Hab 2:3–4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 10: 37–38

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heb 10:5–7 and Psa 40:7–9

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heb 10:5–7

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

2. A good example of minor variations having no theological significance is found in Heb 1:11–12 where Psa 102:25–26 is quoted, which reads וְיִחַלְפוּ וְיִחַלְפוּם וְיִחַלְפוּם וְיִחַלְפוּם וְיִחַלְפוּם וְיִחַלְפוּם “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 בגד “garment” and περιβόλαιον translated לבוש “raiment,” with the repeated use of חָלַף “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 ἐλίσσω “to roll up” in the epistle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ADDENDUM

Matt 21:16–17 and Psa 8:2

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

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

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

The NIV, NIB, NLT and the DRA follow the Greek and Latin texts of Psa 8:2 and the Greek text of Matt 21:17 by translating the יִסְדַּת עֹז 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 עֹז “bulwark” or עָן “praise,” the problem remains of explaining how or when infantile voices ever destroyed (הַשְׁבִּיתָ) an enemy or an avenger. Thus, the cluster of words as *they stand* in Psa 8:2 remain an enigma.

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

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

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

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

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

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* (רֵעִי = 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 שָׂנֵא /

נָשַׁן, meaning “to forsake” was misread as the word “to hate.” In Matt 10:34, שָׁלוֹם “end” was misread as “Shalom”; and the word חֶלֶךְ “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 money² 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 ἀδικίας
ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν·
ὅτι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ
τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς
εἰς τὴν γενεάν 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*

Peshitta Transliterated

ושבח מרן לרביתא דעולא דחכימאית
עבד בנוהי גיר דעלמא הנא חכימין אנון
מן בנוהי דנוהרא בשרבתהון הדא:

Peshitta

השבח מרן לרביתא דעולא דחכימאית
גיר בנוהי גיר דעלמא הנא חכימין אנון
מן בנוהי דנוהרא בשרבתהון הדא:

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. . . .”³ 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 (φρόνιμος) in suggesting indirectly that we take our text (γράμματα) of 16:8 and change the negative ἀδικίας to the affirmative δικαίας “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 ΑΔΙΚΙΑΣ “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, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους
ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπη
δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς.

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 iniquitatis 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.

Peshitta

אנא אנה אמר אנה לכו דעברו לכו רחמא
מן ממונא הנא דעולא
דמא דגמר נקבלונכו במטליהון דלעלם:

Peshitta Transliterated and Translated

ואף אנא אמר אנא לכו דעברו לכו רחמא
מן ממונא הנא דעולא
דמא דגמר נקבלונכו במטליהון דלעלם:

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 Gätcher (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 μαμωνᾶς τῆς ἀδικίας “the mammon of unrighteousness” as a “scornful Semitism,” other authors when commenting on Luke 16:9 interpreted the text as if the τῆς 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 μαμωνᾶς τῆς 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 τῆς 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 τῆς 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 *ἑαυτοῖς 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 **מַמּוֹנָא** (*mammōnā* = 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 τῆς 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,⁴ Delitzsch,⁵ and others—as well as the Aramaic Peshiṭta cited above—are readily available. Certainly Jesus, as an itinerant teacher (διδάσκαλος), may have taught the multitudes in Aramaic or Greek. But as an honored Rabbi / Rabban (‘Ραββί / Ραββου = רַבִּי / רַבָּן) 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:

וַאֲנִי אוֹמֵר לְכֶם הִתְרַעוּ מִן הַמָּמוֹן הָעוֹלָם
 וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲזֹב אִזּוּ יִקְבְּלוּ אֶתְכֶם אֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת עוֹלָם
 וַאֲנִי אוֹמֵר לְכֶם הִתְרַעוּ מִן הַמָּמוֹן הָעוֹלָם
 וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲזֹב אִזּוּ יִקְבְּלוּ אֶתְכֶם אֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת עוֹלָם:

The intensive reflexive *Hithpa^cel* הִתְרַעוּ matches the ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους “make friends for yourselves,” the

same form found in Prov 22:24, where the negative imperative אַל-תִּתְּרַע “do not make companionship” (BDB 945) was translated as μὴ ἴσθι ἑταῖρος “be not a friend.” But the הִתְּרַעו (spelled with a *qames* under the ר over against הִתְּרַעו spelled with a *pataḥ* under the ר) may have had another meaning.⁶ Standard lexicons of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic list three stems spelled רָעָה :

- Stem I, רָעָה “to pasture, to tend, to graze.” Its Arabic cognate is رعى (*ra^caya*).
- Stem II, רָעָה “to associate with, to cherish, to make a friend.” Its Arabic cognates are راعى (*ra^ci*) “master, owner” and مرياع (*miryā^c*) “companion,” which equals the Hebrew רֵעַ “friend, companion.”
- Stem III, the Aramaic רָעָה “to desire.” Its Arabic cognate is رضى (*raṣaya*) and its Hebrew cognate is רָצָה (BDB 945–946; Jastrow 1903: 1486).⁷

A fourth רָעָה needs to be added to the lexicons of Aramaic and Hebrew. It is the רָעָה which is the cognate of the Arabic رعا / رعو [*ra^cwa / ra^cā*] meaning “he refrained from things or affairs, he forebore, or he abstained from bad or foul conduct” (Lane 1867: 1108; Wehr 1979: 401).⁸ This cognate was cited by Castell (1669: 3613) as meaning “*abstinuit ab aliqua re*”). This verb, רָעָה stem IV “to abstain from, to refrain from” (not רָעָה 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, וּאֲנִי אוֹמֵר לָכֶם הִתְּרַעוּ מִן הַמְּמוֹן הָעוֹל, actually meant:

“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 הִתְרַעוּ in the *Vorlage* of 16:9a is recognized as הִתְרַעַה stem IV everything in the parable fits together perfectly, even down to the ἐκ in the phrase ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, “[abstain] from unrighteous mammon.”

Luke’s misunderstanding of the proper derivation of the imperative הִתְרַעוּ in the Hebrew source he was using is understandable in light of the fact that הִתְרַעַה stem IV “to abstain from” was as rare as הִרְעַה 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 רָעָה stem IV “to abstain” in Jesus’ vocabulary receives indirect support from the way in which the Arabic *صدقة* (*ṣadaqat*) “alms, charity” (Lane 1872 1668) matches the use of צַדָקָה “alms, charity” in Hebrew (Jastrow 1903: 1264). In the Shem Tob *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* צַדָקָה translates the $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\sigma\acute{o}\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$ “alms” in Matt 6:1–4, which matches the Arabic *صدقة* (*ṣadaqat*) “alms.”⁹ The opposite of מִמּוֹן עוֹל “unrighteous wealth” would be מִמּוֹן צַדָק “honest wealth.” Changing the masculine צַדָק into the feminine changes the phrase into מִמּוֹן צַדָקָה “mammon of charity,” with the צַדָקָה meaning “liberality,” especially with reference to alms and almsgiving.¹⁰

Luke’s second misreading involved Jesus’ use of עִזַּב stem I “to forsake, to abandon” which was a homograph עִזַּב stem II “to restore, to renew.”¹¹ The translators of the Septuagint and Vulgate were unaware of עִזַּב stem II—just as Luke was unaware of רָעָה stem IV, “to abstain.” In the MT of Neh 3:8 is the phrase $\text{וַיַּעֲזְבוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם}$ 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 $\kappa\alpha\lambda\ \kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\pi\omicron\nu\ \text{I}\epsilon\rho\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu$ “and they abandoned Jerusalem.” Similarly, the Vulgate reads *et dimiserunt Hierusalem*, which became “and they left Jerusalem” in the Douay Rheims. Jastrow (1903: 1060–1061) does not cite this *hapax legomenon* עִזַּב stem II in Neh 3:8, although it was cited by Castell (1669: 2714) and defined by him as *erexerunt, instaurarunt, roborarunt* (erect, restore, reinforce).

But Luke's second misreading had nothing to do with עִזַּב stem I and עִזַּב stem II. Rather it was his misreading in the *Vorlage* the *Niph^cal* passive יֵעֲזָב (= יֵעֲזָב) "it will be forsaken" as the *Qal* active יֵעֲזָב "it will fail" (= ἐκλίπη). 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*,

וּכְאֲשֶׁר יֵעֲזָב אִזּ יִקְבְּלוּ אֶתְכֶם
אֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת עוֹלָם¹³

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 רָעָה stem II "to make a friend"—has Jesus repudiating this admonition of I Enoch; whereas the *Vorlage* with its רָעָה stem IV "to abstain, refrain" has Jesus confirming the stated prohibitions.

Those who would *welcome* (δέξονται = קָבַל) 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 יֵעָזֵב “it will be forsaken” as the active verb יֵעָזֵב “it will fail” he compounded the problem of his having also misread in the same verse the verb הִתְרַעַו as if it were from the well attested stem רָעָה “to be a friend” rather than the *hapax legomenon* of the verb רָעָה “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

וְאֲנִי אֹמֵר לָכֶם הִתְרַעְוּ מִן הַמָּוֶן הָעוֹלָם
וּכְאֲשֶׁר יֵעָזֵב אִזּוּ יִקְבְּלוּ אֶתְכֶם אֶל מְשָׁכְנוֹת עוֹלָם:

“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 δουλεῖν καὶ μαμωνᾶ), read as an injunction, means

“Serve God! Master mammon!” The disciples as children of light are to *repudiate* the ממון עול “mammon of unrighteousness.” They are to control their ממון צדק “legitimate wealth, their honest assets” so that their mammon becomes צדקה “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

1. See Chapter 30 and Chapter 31 in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages* at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/tmcdaniel/>.
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

summary of the varied interpretation in his book entitled *Stewardship and the Kingdom of God: An Historical, Exegetical, and Contextual Study of the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-13* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* v. 70; Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1992.) He reviewed one hundred fifty studies in preparation for his publication.

4. The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation reads:

וַיִּשְׁבַּח הָאֲדוֹן אֶת-בֶּן-הָעוֹלָה אֶת-הַסֵּכֵן
 אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַל אֶת-מַעֲשָׂהוּ
 כִּי בָנֵי הָעוֹלָם הֵזָה מִשְׂכִּילִים הֵם
 מֵעַל בְּנֵי הָאֹר בְּדַרְתָּם:

Full text is available online at <http://www.dvar-adonai.org/>.

5. The Delitzsch translation has:

וַיִּשְׁבַּח הָאֲדוֹן אֶת-סֵכֵן הָעוֹלָה
 עַל-אֲשֶׁר הָעָרִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
 כִּי בָנֵי הָעוֹלָם הֵזָה עָרוּמִים הֵם בְּדוֹרָם
 מִבְּנֵי הָאֹר:

Full text online at <http://www.kirjasilta.net/ha-berit/Luq.16.html>.

6. The imperative הַתְּרַעו can be vocalized in two different ways:

- as הַתְּרַעוּ, with the short *pataḥ* under the ר because the following ע cannot take the *dagesh* which doubles the middle letter of the stem in the *Hithpa^cel*. The ע of this

הַתְּרַעֲוִי would have what the Hebrew grammarians call an “implicit *dagesh*,” with the *pataḥ* theoretically being in a closed syllable;

- as הַתְּרַעֲוִי, with the long *qames* under the ר for *compensatory lengthening* of the vowel because the following ע cannot take the *dagesh* and the vowel under the ר is in an open syllable.

The quantitative length of the vowel in speech (*ǎ*, *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 רָעַע stem I “to be evil, bad,” was confused with the verb רָעָה stem II, as in Prov 18:24, where the MT לְהַתְּרַעֵעַ רְעִים אִישׁ רְעִים became in the KJV “A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly” (as though the text were the *Hithpa^cel* infinitive הַתְּרַעֲוִי of רָעָה stem II). But by identifying the לְהַתְּרַעֵעַ as the *Hithpa^cel* infinitive of רָעַע 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"ו verbs to the ל"ה verbs, see GKC §75^a.

9. Howard 1995: 22–23.

10. Note that in Arabic *صداقة* (*ṣadâqat*) means “love, affection” and *صديق* (*ṣadîq*) 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 *ἐκλείπειν* translated forty-seven different Hebrew words, and *ἐγκαταλείπειν* translated fifteen different words. Given these options for constructing the *Vorlage*, the root **עזב** became the verb of choice in light of the **עֲזַבְתָּ** “was abandoned” (= *ἐγκατελείφθη*) in Jer 4:29 and the **יֵעֻזֵב** “it will cease” (= *ἐκλείψουσιν*) in Jer 18:14.

13. The Delitzsch translation of Luke 16:9b reads

וְגַם־אֲנִי אֹמֵר לָכֶם קְנוּ לָכֶם אֲהָבִים
בְּמִמּוֹנָה שֶׁל־עוֹלָה
לְמַעַן יֶאֱסְפוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּעֵת כְּלִתּוֹ אֶל־מִשְׁכַּנּוֹת עוֹלָם:

The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation of the same text has

וְאֵף־אֲנִי אֹמֵר לָכֶם קְנוּ לָכֶם אֲהָבִים
בְּכֶסֶף מִקּוֹר הָעוֹלָה
וְכִאֲשֶׁר יִבֵּא עַד־קִצּוֹ אִזּוֹ יֶאֱסְפוּ אֶתְכֶם
אֶל־מִשְׁכַּנּוֹת עוֹלָם:

See notes 4 and 5 for the internet addresses for the full text of these translations online.

XXIX 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 ו and a י, a ו and a ו, or a ב and a כ. There was just one example of haplography involving the loss of a ה. 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 וַיְכַלּוּ “they were *perfected*”
- Gen 2:2 וַיִּכַּל אֱלֹהִים “and God was *fatigued*”
- Gen 2:23 לְעִשׂוֹת “to sustain life”
- Gen 6:3 בְּשָׁנִים הוּא בָשָׂר “humans are into skull bashing”
- Gen 6:4 אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם “men of violence”
- Gen 8:11 עֲלֵה-זֵית טָרֵף “fresh olive leaf”
- Gen 16:10 פְּרָא אָדָם “peacemaker, reconciler”
- Gen 39:6 וְלֹא-יָדַע אֹתוֹ מֵאִמְוָה “he would *indeed entrust* to him whatever”
- Deut 26:5 אֲרַמִּי אֲבִד אָבִי “a prolific Aramean was my father”

- Num 20:7 וְדַבְּרֶתֶם אֶל-הַסֶּלַע לְעוֹנֵיהֶם “make channels up to the rock with their help”
- Num 20:10 שְׁמַעוּ-נָא הַמְּרִים “Please listen! Behold, O water carriers!”
- Num 24:7 יִזַּל מִן זָרְעוֹ וַיְדוּל בְּאִמִּים רַבִּים LXX (*Vorlage*) “there shall come a man from his seed and he shall rule over many nations”
- Num 24:17 וְקָם שִׁבְט “a comet [i.e., a star having lank hair”] shall arise”
- Josh 24:10 וְלֹא אָבִיתִי לְשָׁמֹעַ לְבַלְעָם “I was indeed willing to listen to Balaam”
- II Sam 12:13 חָטָאתִי לַיהוָה וְאֶת־אֵיב “I have sinned against Yahweh, but I have shown myself to be repentant”
- I Chr 4:9 וַיְהִי יַעֲבִץ נִכְבָּד מֵאֲחָיו “and Jabez was more *afflicted* than his brethren”
- I Chr 4:9 קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יַעֲבִץ “she call his name *Preemie*”
- I Chr 4:10 אִם-בָּרַךְ תְּבָרַכְנִי “*Ah, Please! Would that you truly bless me*”
- I Chr 4:10 וְהִרְבִּית אֶת-גְּבוּלִי “increase my *people*”
- Psa 8:2 יִסְדַּת עֹז “you ordained strength” read as יִסְדַּת עֵן in the LXX *Vorlage* = κατηρτίσω αἶνον “you have perfected praise”
- Psa 19:5 לְשִׁמּוֹשׁ שָׁם-אֱהָל בָּהֶם “verily, in the skies

the scorching sun shines!”

- Psa 19:6 יֵצֵא מִחֶפְתּוֹ וְהוּא כְּחֹתֵן יֵצֵא מִחֶפְתּוֹ “he comes out like a fire-carrier from his canopy”
- Psa 40:2 וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שְׂאוֹן “he drew me up from the burial plot”
- Psa 40:2 וְלֹא־פָנָה אֶל־רְהָבִים וְשֹׁטֵי כָזָב “who does not turn to skeptics nor misleading myth”
- Psa 40:6 אָזְנִים כָּרִיתָ לִּי “ears you dug for me” became אָזְנִים בְּרִית לִי “you have freed me of faults”
- Psa 40:7 אָז אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאתִי “then he said ‘Behold I confessed [sin]”
- Psa 109:23 כָּצֵל־כִּנְטוֹתוֹ נִהְלַכְתִּי “like a fading shadow I became worn out”
- Psa 109:31 מִשְׁפָּטֵי נַפְשִׁי (LXX *Vorlage* = נַפְשִׁי) “to save from the ones pursuing my soul”
- Pro 30:31 וּמֶלֶךְ אֶל קוֹם עַמּוֹ “and a king governing / demagoguing a tribe of his people”
- Pro 31:1 מַה־בָּרִי וּמַה־בְּרִבְטָנִי וּמַה־בְּרִנְדָּרָי “*Prosper, my son! Flourish, son of my womb! Thrive, son of my vows!*”
- Pro 31:3 אַל־תִּתֵּן לְנָשִׁים חֵיֶלֶד “give not your strength to women”
- Pro 31:3 וְדַרְכֵיֶיךָ לְמַחֹת מְלָכִין “nor your acquisitions to (women) who deceive kings”

- Pro 31:8 אֱלִים = אֵלִים “kith-and-kin”
- Pro 31:8 כָּל-בְּנֵי חֶלְוָה “all the sons of the covenant”
- Pro 31:8 כָּל-בְּנֵי-עֲנִי דִין “judge all of the sons of the rich”
- Pro 31:10 אִשְׁת־חַיִל “a woman of power” or “a woman of intellect” or “a generous woman”
- Pro 31:11 לֹא יִחָסֵר “he will not lack a son”
- Pro 31:15 וַתִּתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ “she gave quality food to her household”
- Pro 31:30 שֶׁקֶר הַחַן “infidelity is deceitful”
- Isa 8:6 וּמִשּׁוֹשׁ (וּמִשּׁוֹשׁ or וּמִשּׁוֹשׁ) “barely visible”
- Isa 8:8 וְהָיָה מִטּוֹת כְּנָפָיו מְלֵא רֹחַב-אֲרָצְךָ “and his camp shall thus fill the breadth of thy land” (LXX)
- Isa 8:9 רַעוּ עַמִּים וַחֲתוּ “tremble with fear, O nations, and be terrified”
- Isa 8:14 מְקַדָּשׁ corrected to מְקַדָּשׁ “oppressor, grief-maker”
- Isa 53:9 עֲשָׂר / עֲשִׂיר “vile, ignoble”
- Jer 20:7 פָּתִיתַנִּי יְהוָה וְאָפַת “O Yahweh, you told me of the fiat (*fatwa*) and I was informed of the decree (*fatwa*)”
- Jer 20:7 חִזַּקְתַּנִּי “you made me eloquent”
- Jer 20:7 וַתִּוְכַל “and you entrusted”

- Jer 20:10 כָּל אֲנוּשׁ שְׁלוּמֵי שְׁמֵרֵי צַלְעֵי corrected to כָּל אֲנוּשׁ שְׁלוּמֵי שְׁמֵרֵי צַלְעֵי “an incurable weariness is my recompense; my being on guard is my undoing”
- Jer 38:31 וְאֲנֹכִי בַעֲלֹתֵי בָם “I was disgusted with them”
- Ezekiel (*passim*) בֶּן אָדָם “son of reconciliation” = “the reconciler” or “the son of authority” = “the One with Authority,” and בֶּן הָאָדָם = “the Son of the Sovereign”
- Eze 20:25 וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם חֻקִּים לֵאמֹר טוֹבִים “I gave them statutes that were indeed good”
- Eze 20:25 וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לֵאמֹר יְחִיּוּ בָהֶם “and ordinances by which they could *indeed* have life.”
- Eze 38:21 וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָלֵה הָרִי חֶרֶב “and against him I have called for annihilation, demolition, desolation”
- Micah 5:1 בֵּית־לְחֶם אֶפְרָתָה “insignificant Bethlehem” or “preminent Bethlehem”
- Hab 2:3 כִּי יַעֲוֹד חֲזוֹן כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד becomes כִּי יַעֲוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד “for a vision was promised to the protestant”
- Hab 2:3 וְיִפְתַּח לְקִי “its intent would be understood by the preacher”
- Hab 2:3 לְמַעַן יְרוּץ קוֹרְא בּוֹ “so that the one reading it may be disciplined!”

- Hab 2:4 עֲפֹלָה לֹא־יִשָּׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ corrected to
 עֲפֹלָה לֹא־יִשָּׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ “his unrighteous
 soul was cut off [from life]”
- Hab 2:5 גְּבוֹר יְהִיר corrected to יְהִיר גְּבוֹר “the strong
 man demolishes”
- Hab 2:5 וְלֹא יִרְוֶה corrected to וְלֹא יִנּוּה “and cannot
 be sated”
- Gospels (*passim*) ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the son of Man” =
 (1) בֶּר אַנְשׁ = “the son of man” or “the Most
 Pure person” or (2) בֶּן אָדָם = “son of man”
 or “the Concilator” or “One with Authority,”
 and בֶּן הָאָדָם = “the Son of the Sovereign”
- Matt 2:23 נִזְרֵת Nazaret / Nazareth = “Hamlet”
 נִזְרֵי Nazarene = “Helper/Victor”
- Matt 6:19 ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρωσὶς ἀφανίσει =
 אֲשֶׁר שָׂם סָם וְאָכַל יֵאָכְלוּ
 “where the maggot and lice devour”
- Matt 8:9 וְאֲנִי אָדָם חֹטֵא (Shem Tob Text) “and I am
 a provost, a commander”
- Matt 21:9 הוֹשַׁעְנָא מוֹשִׁיעַ הָעוֹלָם (Shem Tob Text)
 (1) “Please save, O Savior of the poor,”
 (2) whereas the הוֹשַׁע־נָא of Succoth means
 “wave/mix branches,” and (3) the Aramaic
 הַשָּׂנָא means “Cheers! Hooray! Hurrah!”
- Matt 26:14 Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης = יְהוּדָה אִישׁ קָרוּיֹת
 “Judas the Lector”

- Mark 3:17 Βοαηρηγές “shouters of thunder”
- Mark 9:49 πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἀλισθήσεται = כִּי הַכֹּל
 יִלְמָה בַּבַּעַר “for everyone *will be dragged*
 through the muck”
- Luke 19:9 ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους “make friends for
 yourselves” translates הִתְרַעַו in the *Vorlage*,
 as if it were from רַעַה, stem II, but it was a
hapax legomenon from רַעַה, stem IV, mean-
 ing “abstain yourselves.”
- Rev 13:18 ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ = (1) σωτηρ “savior”
 or (2) סוֹתֵר = “knave, rogue.”

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