

**JESUS' LAST WORD IN BIBLICAL
AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL TRADITIONS**

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GOSPEL OF PETER 5:19

και ο κυριος ανεβοησε λεγων,
Η δυναμις μου, η δυν αμις, κατελειψας με,
και ειπων ανεληφθη.

And the Lord cried out aloud saying:
My power, power, thou hast forsaken me.
And when he had so said, he was taken up.

MATTHEW 27:46

περι δὲ τὴν ἐνάτην ὥραν ἀνεβόησεν
ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων,
Ἡλι ἡλι λεμα σαβαχθανι;
τοῦτ' ἔστιν, Θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἵνατί με ἐγκατέλιπες;

KJV

And about the ninth hour
Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying,
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?
that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken
me?

VULGATE

et circa horam nonam
clamavit Iesus voce magna dicens
Heli Heli lema sabachthani
hoc est Deus meus Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me.

JESUS' LAST WORDS

SHEM TOB

ישׁוֹר צַעֲקָ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל אוֹמֵר בְּלִשׁוֹן הַקִּדּוּשׁ
אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה עָזַבְתָּנִי:

Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying in the holy language
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

PESHITTA

ܘܠܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܣܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ
ܕܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܥܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܒܐ

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a
raised voice and said, “My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me”¹

OLD SYRIAC

ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܣܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ
ܕܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܥܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܒܐ

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a
great voice and said, “O helper, O helper,
why have you forsaken me”²

The Greek alphabet does not permit an accurate transliteration of the *sh/š* sound (the ش / ش / ش). Consequently, the Syriac ܥܒܘܢܐ (*šēbaq*) with the initial *š* sound, rather than the

σ of σαβαχθάνι, must control the selection of the Aramaic/Hebrew verb in Jesus' cry from the cross. The χ in the Greek σαβαχθάνι could reflect a פ or כ or ק in the Hebrew/Aramaic *Vorlage* (Hatch and Redpath, *Supplement* 156-160), but the Syriac ܫܒܩܐ (*šēbaq*) is decisive for identifying σαβαχθάνι as the Hebrew/Aramaic שבקתני “thou hast forsaken me” (Jastrow 1516; Payne Smith 557).

The σαβαχθάνι cannot be a transliteration of an affirmation in Aramaic which was composed of cognates of the Arabic صباح ثاني (*ṣabâḥ ṭânî*) “a second morning”—interpreted as Jesus' affirmation of his resurrection on the third day. Two factors preclude such an interpretation. First, the -θάνι of the Greek σαβαχθάνι is a composite of the 2ms verbal suffix (ת = “thou”) followed by the direct object suffix (ני = “me”). The verbal suffixes cannot be related to the Arabic adjective ثاني (*ṭânî*) “second,” which is the cognate of Hebrew שני “second” and Aramaic ܫܢܝܝܢܝܢ “second” (Jastrow 1606 and 1682). The *a* vowel of the -θάνι would have to be changed to an *ê* or an *i* vowel to reflect the initial *ê* vowel of the Hebrew שני or the *i* vowel of the Aramaic ܫܢܝܝܢܝܢ. Had Jesus spoken Arabic, the *a* vowel in -θάνι could suggest that the word was ثاني (*ṭânî*) “second,” but not in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Secondly, the Arabic صباح (*ṣabâḥ*) “morning” has no known cognates in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Syriac. There is only an aural similarity in the Anglicized pronunciation of Semitic sounds where the פ is confused with the ק and the ז is confused with the כ or the ש. The Arabic صباح (*ṣabâḥ*)

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would have appeared in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac as ܫܒܚܐ / ܫܒܚܐ (šabāḥ)—not as ܫܒܚܐ / ܫܒܚܐ (šēbaq).

MARK 15:34

καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ ὥρᾳ ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ,
 Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον
 Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;

RSV

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

VULGATE

et hora nona exclamavit Iesus voce magna dicens Heloi Heloi lama sabachthani quod est interpretatum Deus meus Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me.

PESHITTA

ܘܟܝܢ ܩܪܝܢ ܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܝܫܘܥ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ
 ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ
 ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܝܢ

And in the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a raised voice and said,

“*ʿil, ʿil lēmanaʿ šabaqtanī*”

which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

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OLD SYRIAC

ܠܘܝ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܝܘ ܥܘܒܘܘܢܐ
ܥܘܒܘܘܢܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ

And in the ninth hour Jesus called out in a
great voice and said,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

LUKE 23:46

καὶ φωνήσας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Πάτερ, εἰς
χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου. τοῦτο δὲ εἰπὼν
ἔξῃ πνευσεν.

RSV

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into thy
hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed
his last.

VULGATE

et clamans voce magna Iesus ait Pater in manus tuas com-
mendo spiritum meum et haec dicens exspiravit

PESHITTA

ܘܥܒܘܢܐ ܠܘܝ ܠܗܘܐ ܥܘܒܘܢܐ
ܥܘܒܘܢܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܥܘܒܘܢܐ ܥܘܒܘܢܐ
ܥܘܒܘܢܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܥܘܒܘܢܐ

Jesus cried out in a loud voice and said,
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”;
he said this and it was finished.

JESUS' LAST WORDS**OLD SYRIAC**

ܝܫܘܥܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܠܗܘܐ ܕܘܘܠܐ ܕܝܫܘܥܐ
 ܡܘܨܝܕܐ ܡܢ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

and Jesus called out in a loud voice and said,
 “Father, into your hands I commend it, my spirit”
 and it was finished.

JOHN 19:28–30

ὁ Ἰησοῦς . . . λέγει, Διψῶ . . .
 [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Τετέλεσται,
 καὶ κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα.

Jesus . . . saith, “I thirst,”
 Jesus said, “It is finished,”
 and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

VULGATE

Iesus . . . dicit sitio
 Iesus . . . dixit consummatum est
 et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum.

PESHITTA

ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
 ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

JESUS' LAST WORDS

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Jesus . . . said, “I thirst,”

Jesus . . . said, “It is finished,”

and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

OLD SYRIAC

The text containing John 18:31b–19:40a have been lost.

NOTES

1. George Lamsa (1933) translated Matt 27:46b as, “Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, Eli, Eli, lemana shabakthani! My God, my God for this I was spared,”¹ with his footnote¹ reading, “This was my destiny.” His translation of *shabakthani* and his footnote gloss are theological interpretations lacking any lexical support. Syriac ܫܒܩܐ (*šěbaq*) is the cognate of Jewish Aramaic ܫܒܩ (*šěbaq*) “to leave, to let alone” (BDB 1114; Jastrow 1516; J. Payne Smith, 557) The Arabic سبق (*sabaqa*) meaning “to precede, to outstrip” (Lane 4: 1299–1300)—with the regular *s*/*š* variant—is unrelated to the Hebrew/Aramaic/Syriac ܫܒܩ/ܫܒܩܐ.

Contrary to Lamsa’s statement in *Idioms in the Bible Explained* (1985, 102–103), that *nashatani*—not *shabacktani*—meant “to forsake” and it would have been Jesus’ word of choice had he quoted Psa 22:1 in Aramaic, *nashatani* really means “you forgot me” and *shabacktani*/*shabachtani* actually means “to forsake.” This is the word found in the Syriac translation of Psalm 22:1 (Payne-Smith, 1902: 353, 557). (Lamsa transliterated ܫܒܩܐܢܐ on page 103, line 11, as *shabacktani* and σαβαχθαυη, on line 36, as *sabachtani*.)

2. Payne Smith (1902: 13) defined אֱלֹהִים (*ʿil*) “help, succor, aid, assistance, helper, defender (generally used of God)” and the repetitious אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים (*ʿil ʿil*) as “the help of God.”

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