

MISCELLANEOUS
BIBLICAL
STUDIES

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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
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

ABBREVIATIONS

<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
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Storytelling</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JPSTC</i>	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
<i>KJV</i>	King James Version of the Bible (same as the AV, 1611)
<i>LTSB</i>	<i>Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin</i>
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>MBC</i>	Mellon Biblical Commentary
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>NITGTC</i>	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, New York, 1992
<i>NTL</i>	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTL</i>	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
<i>RSV</i>	Revised Standard Version of the Bible, London and New York, 1952
<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
<i>VTSup</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i> , Leiden
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i> , Philadelphia
<i>ZAH</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> , Gießen and Berlin
<i>ZNT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für neuen testamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

I

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN BIBLICAL TRADITION

For the Israelites “salvation” did not mean entering heaven for eternity but was understood as experiencing God’s special gifts—here on earth—of (1) *land*, (2) *liberty*, (3) *longevity*, (4) *prosperity*, and (5) *progeny*. These five nouns summarize all of the blessings spelled out in Deut 28:1–14. They are an inverse summary of all the curses cited in Deut 27:9–26 and 28:15–68. Isaiah’s promise about the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:10) that he will be given *longevity*, *progeny*, and *prosperity* is noteworthy, along with

- Prov 8:35, “For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD”;
- Prov 9:11, “For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.”
- Prov 10:2, “Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.”

Salvation through progeny controlled many of Israel’s sexual mores. Thus, the ongoing “eternal life” of one’s ancestors (“those of-blessed-memory”) was available only through the progeny of the successive generations. Without progeny the “eternal life” of all of one’s deceased kin would be terminated. Barrenness (רָקִי, יָרִירָה, ~xṛ" rēqō l wkv) was experienced as a curse—a curse attributable to someone’s sinning (Lev 20:20–21). In the minds of biblical Israelites sterility and infertility were due to moral imperfections rather than the result of physiological aberrations. Also, the waste of semen (Gen 38:2–10) became an abomination because such waste threatened the successful perpetuation of one’s blood line through which the male and all of his ancestors would live forever in blessed memory.¹

STATEMENTS ON GENDER IN GENESIS

Gender equality was clearly articulated in the Hebrew creation accounts of the Genesis 1–3, along with Gen 5:1–3. In a culture where it was customary for “first come first served”—and Adam was created before Eve—the female Eve might be expected to serve the male Adam.² But there was an offsetting balance in that the feminine *‘adamah* “earth” was created before the masculine *‘adam* “earthling.” Therefore, “first come first served” was balanced: the feminine preceded the masculine and the male preceded the female.³ Far from being Adam’s servant, Eve was to be Adam’s *savior* by doing for him what he was unable to do for himself. She would save him from his aloneness—not just by her presence but by their progeny. So *being* and so *doing* the woman would be the man’s *savior* (רזלְ^c*ezer*) and his *front-one* (ADgḡk.ḱenegdô).

The following verses as annotated are those relevant for recovering the gender equality articulated in the creation stories:

- Gen 1:26–27, “Let us⁴ make *‘adam* (~d’ā’) in our image, in our likeness, and let them⁵ have dominion . . . over all . . . So God created *‘adam* (~d’ā’) in his own image . . . male and female he created them.”
- Gen 2:7, “then Yahweh God formed *‘adam* (~d’ā’) of dust from the *earth* (hmd’ā)^c*‘adamah*.”
- Gen 2:18, “it is not good for *‘Adam* to be alone; I will make a *savior* (רזלְ^c*ezer*)⁶ as his *front one* (ADgḡk.ḱenegdô).”⁷
- Gen 2:20, “*the ‘adam* (~d’āh’) gave names to all . . . there was not found for *‘Adam* (~d’ā’) a *savior* (רזלְ^c*ezer*) as his *front one*” (ADgḡk.ḱenegdô).
- Gen 2:23, “this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my

flesh . . . she shall be called woman (hV'ai 'iššah) because she was taken out of man (Vyai 'iš).”

- Gen 2:24, “Therefore shall a *man* (Vyai 'iš)) leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife (hV'ai 'iššah) and they shall be one flesh.”
- Gen 3:16a, “I will increase your [Eve] *sorrow* (!AbC' [i'is-šabôn) and your conception; and in *sorrow* (bc, [i'eseb) you will birth sons.”
- Gen 3:16b, “Your *desire* (hqWV. tešûqāh) shall be for your husband and he shall be just like you.” The qWV “desire” is the cognate of the Arabic ج NH (šûq) and the lvm' “to be like” is the cognate of the Arabic Q,S (matāla) (Lane 1872:1620 and 1893: 3073).⁸
- Gen 3:17b “In *sorrow* (!AbC' [i'isšabôn) you [Adam] shall eat of it all the days of your life.”
- Gen 5:1–2, “This is the book of the generations of 'ādam. When God created 'ādam, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them 'ādam when they were created.” The threefold use of the noun 'ādam in the Hebrew text is lost in the Septuagint which has the noun only once and the proper name Adam twice:

au[th h' bibl oj genesewj anqrwpwn (= 'ādam)
 h[hmeraj epoihsen o' qeoj ton Adam (= 'ādam)
 katl' eikona qeou/epoihsen auton (= A[tao
 arsen kai. qhl' u epoihsen autouj
 kai. eul' oghsen autouj

kai. epwnomasen to. onoma autwh Adam (= *Ādam*)
 h| hmeral| epoihsen autouj.

Here it is sufficient to note that the masculine singular *auton* (= **Ata0**) which ends 5:1 is singular because *Ādam* in Hebrew is a masculine singular *collective* noun including both the male and the female. The plural masculine *autwh* in 5:2 reflects the fact that although *Ādam* is morphologically a singular collective noun, it is grammatically plural because both male and female were named *Ādam*. The plural verb in 1:26, “let *them* have dominion” matches the ending of Gen 1:27, “male and female created he *them*.” (The *Ādam* in Gen 5:3 is the name of the male character introduced in Gen 2:19.)

Unfortunately interpreters demoted the “savior/rescuer” in Gen 2:18 to a mere “help/helper,” which was then understood as an “assistant”; and the superior status of being “his front-one” was reduced to “one meet for him” (KJV, ASV) or “suitable for him” (NIB, NIV, NAU, NAS) or “fit for him” (RSV). In this manner the woman’s being the *savior/rescuer* (**רזף**, *ezer*) as *his front one* (**ADgqK**, *kēnegdô*) became simply her being a man’s “helper” (Septiagint, *bohqon katl auton*).

This male gender bias was confirmed for many because the verb **lVm** (*māšal*) of Gen 3:16 was a homograph of two different verbs, one meaning “to rule, to reign” and the other meaning “to be like, to be similar” (BDB 605). With true poetic balance Eve was told in 3:16 that she will bear the fruit of the womb with *sorrow* (**!AbC**[i] *iššabôn*); and in 3:17, exactly like Eve, Adam was told that he will produce the fruit of the field with *sorrow* (**!AbC**[i] *iššabôn*). As a result of their sin they would be punished similarly and *sorrow* and heart-break would be a reality for each of them in their gender

specific roles. Infant mortality would result in the woman's unbearable sorrow (!AbC' [i^ciṣṣabôn); and the sterility of the fields and the infertility of the flocks and would preclude the father's ability to feed his family, which would result in the man's equally intense heartbreak (!AbC' [i^ciṣṣabôn). This was the shared curse in Gen 3:16, %B'-l vmyl aWw> and he shall be just like you." Both would experience unbearable grief.⁹

However, most babies survived after birth, and when there was a famine food was imported (as when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt) or people migrated (as when Elimelech and Ruth moved to Moab). Consequently, the !AbC' [i^ciṣṣabôn "heart-break" of the woman was reinterpreted as the physical pain of childbirth, and the !AbC' [i^ciṣṣabôn "heartbreak" of the man was taken to be the physical pain after hard work. Thus, the alternative interpretation of %B'-l vmyl aWw> meaning "and he shall rule over you" became paramount and permanent.

SAMPLE STATEMENTS ON GENDER IN NON-CANONICAL TEXTS

Although gender equality was clearly articulated in the Hebrew creation accounts of the Genesis 1–3, along with Gen 5:1–3, it did not flourish in the dominant post-exilic Jewish culture. To be sure, the canonical literature contains positive statements which are highly appreciative of good women, such as the words of Lemuel in Prov 31:10–31 about his wonderful mother, the l yk; tva, "the woman of power," a title which was translated in the Septuagint as gunaika andreia "a manly woman."¹⁰ This chapter of praise for a particular woman is matched by a chapter in the deuterocanonical text of I Esdras

4:13–32, where, a Jewish palace guard name Zerubbabel proclaimed approvingly to King Darius that all women must be recognized as the “masters” of kings and men because:

- women gave them birth and rear them (v. 15),
- women bring them glory (v. 17),
- without women men cannot exist (v. 17),
- men will forsake father, mother, and their country for a woman (v. 20),
- men prefer women above gold or silver (v. 19),
- men give their spoils of war to women they love (v. 24),
- men have lost their minds over women (v. 26),
- some have become slaves because of women (v. 26),
- even kings will submit to a woman’s charm (vss. 28–32).

A positive recognition of women is also found in Sirach 36:24, “He who acquires a wife gets his best possession, a helper fit for him and a pillar of support.” But in Sirach 7:19 the positive affirmation is narrowed to just some women, “Do not deprive yourself of a wise and good wife, for her charm is worth more than gold”; and Sirach 25:8 states similarly, “Happy is he who lives with an intelligent wife.”¹¹

However, the statements in Sirach 42:9–14 probably reflect the prevailing sentiment of the day. Verses 42:9–11 read as a lament of sorts about the birth of a daughter because of all the worry a daughter causes her father,

A daughter keeps her father secretly wakeful, and worry over her robs him of sleep; when she is young, lest she do not marry, or if married, lest she be hated; while a virgin, lest she be defiled or become pregnant in her father’s house; or having a husband, lest she prove unfaithful, or, though married, lest she be barren. Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter,

lest she make you a laughingstock to your enemies, a byword in the city and notorious among the people, and put you to shame before the great multitude.

But the most negative words written in the deuterocanonical texts against women are those in Sirach 42:12–14,

Do not look upon any one for beauty, and do not sit in the midst of women; for from garments comes the moth, and from a woman comes woman's wickedness. Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace.¹²

An equally negative gender bias against women appears in the later extra-canonical text of the *Gospel of Thomas*, Logia 114 (Guillaumont 1959: 56–57), which ends with Peter saying,

Let Mary go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life," to which Jesus replied: "See, I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

This can only mean that according to the Coptic text there was no place for women in the Kingdom of God. However, behind the Coptic HOOUT (*hooit*) "male," which occurs here three times, was a *Vorlage* with either the Hebrew רכז or the Aramaic רכד, both of which are cognates of the Arabic ʔk> (*ḍakara*). All three occurrences of רכז/רכד in the *Vorlage* could mean either (1) "male, the male organ" or (2) "remembrance, memory" (BDB 269–271). But the Arabic cognate ʔk> (*ḍakara*) also means "repentance" and "obedience" (Lane 1867: 969, 971), as in the *Qurʿan Sura* 89:23.¹³ With this Arabic cognate in focus, the רכז/רכד in the *Vorlage* of Logia 114 could have meant that Jesus would lead Mary to "repen-

tance/obedience,” promising that any repentant woman could enter the kingdom as readily as a male penitent, thereby dismissing Peter’s male chauvinist request. Given the ambiguity of *rkl/rkd*, it is easy to see how the *Vorlage* was interpreted to promote a widely attested gender agenda which deprecated the feminine and females.¹⁴

However, over against this deprecation of females in general was the celebration in I Esdras 4:34–41 of the *feminine* reality identified as “Truth” (with the *feminine* nature requiring the title “Lady Truth” in English for the Greek *al hqei a* and the Hebrew *ṭma*). Zerubbabel, the palace guard of King Darius who proclaimed the superior strength of women (as noted above), concluded that “Lady Truth” was even stronger than women because,

- Lady Truth endures and is strong for ever, and lives and prevails for ever and ever (v. 38),
- Lady Truth shows no partiality or preference (v. 39),
- Lady Truth does what is righteous instead of anything that is unrighteous or wicked (v. 39),
- all men approve of Lady Truth’s deeds (v. 39),
- to Lady Truth belongs the strength and the kingship and the power and the majesty of all the ages (v. 40).

When Zerubbabel concluded his speech King Darius and all of his courtly guests shouted, “Great is Lady Truth! She is the strongest of all!” (4:41).

This prose praise of Lady Truth is outdone by the paean of praise for the heavenly “Lady Wisdom” in the Wisdom of Solomon 6:12–20 and 7:21–8:4, noting especially 7:25–26 and 28–29:

For [Lady Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing

defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. . . . for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior.

But praise of Lady Truth and Lady Wisdom was not to the liking of everyone. Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.–40 A.D.) in *De fuga et inventione*¹⁵ wrote:

While Wisdom's name is feminine, her nature is manly. As indeed all the virtues have women's titles, but powers and activities of consummate men (*andrwñ teleiōtātwn*). Let us, then, pay no heed to the gender of the words, and let us say that the daughter of God, even Wisdom, is not only masculine but father, sowing and begetting (*speironta kai. gennwhta*) in souls, knowledge, good action," and other virtues.

Consequently, Philo shifted his interest from *hmkx'*/Sofia "wisdom" to the masculine *Logoj*/Logos "Word."¹⁶

GENDER EQUALITY IN NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

The equality of male and female found in the Genesis creation account is reaffirmed in the New Testament accounts of the new creation, most notably in Gal 3:28 where Paul declared, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This inclusiveness and equality reflects Jesus' teaching in Matt 12:48–50, where he asked the question, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" and then pointing to his disciples answered the question saying, ". . .

whoever does the will of my Father in heaven *he* (autoj) is my brother and sister and mother.” The pronoun *he* (autoj) is here gender inclusive, embracing “my brother, my sister, and my mother”—evidence that women were among Jesus disciples. With these definitions in focus the Twelve male disciples (maqhtai) would all be “brothers” and the unnumbered female disciples (maqhtria), like Tabitha (also known as Dorcas who is named in Acts 9:36), would have been “sisters.” Mary Magdalene,¹⁷ Joanna, Susanna, and the other women who, out of their personal resources, provided for Jesus and his twelve men (Luke 8:1–3) would no doubt be identified also as *sisters* and *disciples* (maqhtriai).

However, this gender equality reflected in Jesus’ having both maqhtai, “male disciples” and maqhtria “female disciples” and Paul’s affirmation in Gal 3:29 of the unity of male and female never became normative in the early church. This was due in part to Paul’s own (unconscious) gender bias reflected, for example, in Gal 3:26 where he tells the church members, “in Christ Jesus you are all *sons* (ui’oi) of God through faith” and in Gal 4:7, “you are no longer a slave but a son (ui’oj).” Ten times in the letter to the Galatians Paul called the church members “brothers” (adel foi), as if there were no women in the church. On the other hand, Paul recognized Phebe as a deacon (diakonoj) at the church of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1) and Junia as a kinswoman and an apostle (apostol oj) in Rom 16:7.¹⁸

Paul consciously offered an alternative interpretation to the literal meaning of the Hebrew texts from Genesis cited above. Moreover, he made no mention of Gen 1:27b and 5:2,

~t’ao arB’ hbqew rkz’

male and female he created them [in his image]

~dā' ~m̄v:ta, arq̄ȳh: ~tāo%rb̄lȳw: ~arB. hb̄q̄eW rkz"
 male and female he created them and he blessed them
 and he named them ADAM / Adam.

Paul surely recognized the ~dā' / ADAM / Adam in Gen 1:27b and 5:2 as the collective noun which included the male Adam and the female Eve. This ~dā' / ADAM / Adam was the equivalent of the gender inclusive Greek ἀνθρωποι / *anthrōpos*. But Paul made no reference to Gen 1:27b and 5:2, and interpreted the ~dā' *ādām* in Gen 1:27a as the proper name Adam, and thus the male Adam alone was in the image the God.

In I Cor 11:3–10 Paul stated his belief in a hierarchy: at the top was God, then Christ, then man (ὁ ἀνὴρ) who is in the image of God, and at the bottom was the woman who is not in the image of God. Here is his statement:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man (androj) is Christ, the head of a woman (gunai koj) is her husband (anhr), and the head of Christ is God¹⁹. . . . For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God (eikwn kai. doxa qeou/uparcwn); but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a “veil” (ε̄κουσίαν = “authority”) on her head, because of the angels.²⁰

There is no hint here that in Gen 2:18–23 Eve was the savior (רזק, *ezer*) for Adam and *his front one* (ADgā-negdô).” In I Tim 2:11–15 Paul changed the *active* (implied in Genesis with Eve’s *saving* Adam from his aloneness by providing him with progeny) into the *passive* wherein the woman will be *saved* by childbearing. Far from being the man’s *front one* (ADgā-negdô) she was to be *his underling*, with his becoming her *head/head one* (kefalh). Here is his statement:

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

The submissiveness required of women reflects the alternative interpretation of %B'-l vmyl aww meaning “and he shall rule over you” rather than its meaning “he shall be like you.” This is spelled out quite clearly in I Cor 14:33–35,

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate (upotassesqwsan), as even the Law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

In the Septuagint nomoj “law” appears 196 times as the translation of hrAT “Torah,” so there is good reason to identify the nomoj “law” in I Cor 14:34 as the *Torah* and, in particular, the unambiguous Greek version of Gen 3:16, kai. proj ton andra sou h' apostrofñ, sou kai. autoj sou kurieusei, “and your turning shall be to your husband, *and he shall rule over you.*” (the Greek sou kurieusei *cannot* mean “he will be like you.”) In Col 3:18, Paul gives the same commandment, but for a different reason, “Wives, be subject (upotassesq) to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

In Eph 5:21 Paul commanded the Gentile saints (using a *masculine plural* participle with the force of an imperative and a *masculine plural* pronoun): “submit yourselves to one another out of fear of Christ” (-Upotassomenoi al l h| oij en fopw| Cristou). Possibly this mutual submission included the

female saints, with this masculine participle and pronoun being here as gender inclusive²¹ as the masculine noun ~dā'/ADAM was in Hebrew. Support for this interpretation is the absence in one manuscript tradition of any verb in 5:22.²² The masculine ὑποτάσσομενοι in 5:21 could possibly do double duty as the verb which addressed the wives in 5:22, as well as the saints in 5:21. But once the *masculine plural* participle and pronoun were interpreted as referring solely to the male saints who were to submit themselves to one another, a separate verb was required for 5:22, and a disjunction was created between 5:21 and 5:22. This interpretation, reflected in the majority of the Greek manuscripts and versions,¹⁹ receives support from I Tim 2:11 and I Cor 14:34 which required women to be silent in the church. Obviously women and men could not be mutually “submitting themselves to one another” if the women were not free to speak.

As a result a gender neutral mutual submission of all saints to each other in the *household of God* never became a reality. Rather a hierarchy in the *household of each saint* was to manifest itself in the following manner:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church . . . let wives also [be subject] in everything to their husbands (oultwj kai. ai' gunaikej toij andrasin en panti) . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, . . . Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (Eph 5:22–27).

A similar call for the submission of the wives appears in I Pet 3:1, 5–6,²³

Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without

a word by the behavior of their wives So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.²⁴

In summary, it appears that on the issue of gender equality Jesus would have interpreted the $\%B'-I \text{ vmyl } a\text{llhws}$ in Gen 3:16 as “he shall be just like you,” thereby dismissing all claims for the supremacy of men over women based upon the Torah. He welcomed male disciples (*maqhtai*) as his “brothers” and female disciples (*maqhtria*) as his “sisters.” But Peter and Paul obviously interpreted the $\%B'-I \text{ vmyl } a\text{llhws}$ in Gen 3:16 as “he shall rule over you,” even though they recognized that in the household of God “there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).²⁵

Many commentators argue that Paul and Peter were addressing problems of disruptive conduct in specific local churches, and their demands for silence and submission should not be made into universal and timeless absolutes. On the issue of men ruling over women (à la Gen 3:16) and wives being submissive to husbands, Paul was as inconsistent as he was with his advise about marriage in I Cor 7:29. He stated,

I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, *let those who have wives live as though they had none* (*iþa kai. oi econtej gunaikaj wj mh. econtej wsin*).

This was at least a call for celibacy in marriage, which is inconsistent with his subsequent advice in 7:36, “if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.” But once the man married to honorably fulfill his sexual passions, the man was then expected to live as though he had no wife.

Over the past nineteen hundred years about ninety successive generations of married Christians have disagreed with Paul’s advice to live as if they had no spouse. They recognized that Paul’s anticipation of an imminent Parousia was off schedule and that the commandment in the Torah, “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28), remained an option for Christian saints. Although marriage and family would not provide a pathway to heaven, they do address the reality that “it is not good for Adam to be alone.”

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR:²⁶
OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS²⁷

If Adam’s loneliness had been simply a matter of his having no one with whom he could fellowship, God could have provided him with a brother. But instead of a brother God provided a spouse. Adam’s being a lone male with sexual and reproductive potential needed a sexual partner. He needed much more than a *fellow*, he needed a *family*—a multi-generational progeny through which he would live forever in family memories. Thus, God gave Adam a *savior* (רזע *ezer*) as his *front-one* (אדגאק *kēnegdô*), a woman endowed with הַגִּילּוּת “sexual desire” (Gen 3:16). Adam named his *savior* הַוַּיָּה (Hawwah), the feminine name meaning “Life,” for she would be the mother of all יָחַד (*ḥay*), the masculine noun meaning “life.”²⁸ She would not simply *converse* with him she would *copulate* with him and *conceive* for him.

The first three commandments in Gen 1:28 were וּבְרַבְרָב וּבְרַבְרָב. #רַחֲ-טָא, וַאֲלִמְוּ “Be fruitful! Multiply! Fill the earth!” Obedience to these imperatives would require a lot of sexual

activity. The types of sexual unions would stretch all the way from the monogamous Adam and Eve to the polygamous Solomon, with his three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines (I Kings 11:3).²⁹

The parameters for properly complying with the commands in Gen 1:28, which emerged over time, were controlled (as noted above on page 1) by the belief that an “eternal life” was available through one’s progeny. All of one’s ancestors lived on in the memories of their offspring, generation after generation. Every birth perpetuated a particular line of ancestral memory. Without progeny there would be no memory; and without memory the last vestige of life would vanish into oblivion, taking with it the newly deceased and all those in the ancestral family. Thus, progeny provided a degree of life after death.³⁰

Complementing this belief was the matter on paternal inheritance rights. It was easy enough to determine who was the mother of a child, but impossible to determine who was the father—unless the sexual activity of the woman was strictly controlled. Consequently, male sexual promiscuity was tolerated,³¹ but the woman’s sexual activity was, upon penalty of death, restricted to her husband (or master in the case of a concubine). Thus, Solomon could have had a thousand sexual partners, but those in his harem could mate only with him.

This need to control the sexual activity of women, so that the paternity of the newborn could be guaranteed, lies behind the seventh of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18). Adultery is sexual intercourse between a betrothed or married woman and any man who is not her betrothed or husband. This sin heads the list in Lev 20:10–16, and the penalty for adultery appears in

Lev 20:10, 11–16,

“If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor,
both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. If
a man lies with his father’s wife . . . daughter-in-law . . .
with a male . . . both shall be put to death.

According to Exod 22:16–17 the seduction (rape) of a virgin was not a capital crime. The penalty for that was to forced the seducer to marry the violated virgin by providing the marriage money (**hnrhmyl rhm'**) or, if the woman’s father objected to the marriage, a monetary settlement equivalent to the marriage present (50 shekels according to Deut 22:29) was required. But if the raped virgin was betrothed it was a different matter, it became a matter of adultery and the death penalty applied to the male and possibly to the female (Deut 22:23–27) However, not all of the texts dealing with sexual activities were stated as clearly as were the commandments in Lev 20:10, 11–16 and Exod 22:16–17. A more detailed study of other texts dealing with sexual activities is required.

In the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26), the verb **bkv'** “to lie” is as ambiguous as is the English verb “to lie.” Clarity comes only when the preposition after the verb comes into focus: “Do not lie to me!” and “Do not lie on me!” These are homophones and homographs—different verbs with different etymologies. Similar to this is the Hebrew **bkv'**, which is a homograph for three different verbs with distinctly different etymologies. Hebrew lexicons cite only **bkv'**, stem I, “to lie down,” giving it a broad semantic range—going from “lying with the fathers” (in death) to “lying with a male” (in sex).

However, Arabic cognates suggest that there were two other verbs spelled as **bkv'**, namely, **bkv'**, stem II, “to penetrate,”

the cognate of Arabic %h^a+(*taqaba*) “to bore, to penetrate” (Lane 1863: 342)³² and bkv', stem III, “to ejaculate,” the cognate of Arabic %ID (*sakaba*) “to pour out/forth, to gush forth” (Lane 1872: 1388).³³ In Hebrew the nouns tbkw, hbkv, and hbykv, all mean “the effusion of semen”; but the verb bkv', stem III, “to ejaculate” was not cited by Jastrow (1903: 1571, 1573) and needs to be added to the lexicon.³⁴

With all three of these verbs now in focus, the prohibition Hb-ham.j l. [rʔl. ^Tbkv. !Tɛial { \$tymil] tvael aᵛ in Lev18:20, can be translated literally, “unto your kinsman’s wife you shall not give your effusion to impregnate³⁵ and defile yourself with her.” Other translations paraphrase the verse as, “Do not have sexual relations” (NIV, NIB), “thou shalt not lie carnally” (KJV, ASV, RSV), “you shall not have intercourse” (NAS, NAU).

Similarly, the prohibition against male homosexuality in Lev 18:22, awhi hb[AT hv'ai ybkv.mi bkv.ti al { rke"tav can—in light of bkv' stem II “to penetrate”—be translated literally as “Do not penetrate a male in preference to the penetratings of a woman.” But the Septuagint translators understood the verb to be bkv' stem I “to lie, to sleep.” It reads, kai. meta. arsenoj ouv koimhqhsh| koithn gunaikoj bdeJugma gar estin, “and with a man you shall not lie (as in) a bed of a woman, for it is an abomination.” By way of contrast the Vulgate has *cum masculo non commisceberis coitu femineo quia abominatio est*, “with a male you shall not join sexually in coitus (as) with a female, for it is an abomination.” The English translations have: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination (RSV, NRS), or as “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman” (NIV,

NIB). All the translations treat the MT - *ta*, as the preposition “with,” rather than as the direct object sign.³⁶

The closing phrase, *awhi hb'AT*, can mean not only “it is an abomination,” but also (1) “it is destructive” or (2) “it is vile” or (3) “it is stupid.” These meanings become available once *hb'AT* “abomination” (BDB 1072–1073) is derived from the root *bW*, the cognate of either the Arabic *wāʿaba* (*waʿaba*), which in Form 4 means “he eradicated, cut off, uprooted,” or the Arabic *wāḡaba* (*wagaba*) “vile, stupid, weak in intellect” (Lane 1893: 2951, 2954).³⁷ The idea of a destructive “eradication” associated with male-to-male sex would refer to the termination of one’s own bloodline, resulting in the end of the “eternal life” of all of one’s ancestors. Exod 22:16–19 and Lev 21:13, stipulate the death penalty (*tAm WtmWy*) for male homosexuality, which was the same penalty in the Holiness Code for adultery, bestiality, incest, blasphemy, murder, offering a child to Molech, cursing a parent, or being a sorceress or a wizard.³⁸

There are two more verses where *bKV'*, stem II, “to penetrate sexually” appears. The first is in II Sam 13:14, where it tells of Ammon’s rape of Tamar in these words: *hNmMi qzxWt Ht'ao bKV'Wt. hNfjWt. hNmMi qzxWt*, which was rightly translated in the NIV and NIB as “and since he was stronger than she, he raped her,” and in the NJB as “he overpowered her and raped her.”³⁹ But, as will become clear in the following paragraphs, the NJB, NIV and NIB translations here are based on context rather than being philologically grounded. The translators were not aware of *bKV'*, stem II, “to penetrate.”⁴⁰

The remaining verse with *bKV'*, stem II, appears in Ezek 23:8,

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

hbzē' aI { ~yrcMini hytWhzT; taꞤꞤ
 hyrW[nbi Wbk.v' HtAa yKi
 hyl Wt.b. yDØ; WF [i hMhꞤꞤ
 `hyl ,[' ~tWhzT; WkP.v/Wh:

And her fornications from Egypt she did not forsake,
 Indeed, they *penetrated* her in her youth,
 and they caressed⁴¹ the breasts of her virginity,
 and they poured out their fornication upon her.

Surprisingly, in light of the translation of II Sam 13:14, the NIV, NIB, and NJB translated the Wbk.v' HtAa here as “they slept with her,” even though contextually the HtAa “her” is unmistakably the direct object *not* the prepositional HTai “with her,” which accommodates the verb “to sleep.”

The term tWhzT; “fornication” repeated in the above verse requires clarification; and this will serve as an introduction for a brief look at the biblical texts dealing with prostitution. Just as there are three different lexemes spelled bk.v', so there are at least three different roots spelled hnz. First is hnz", stem I, the well recognized word meaning “to commit fornication, to play the harlot.” Its Arabic cognate is زانی (zanay) “to commit fornication” (BDB 275) This is the lexeme appearing in the first tWhzT; of Ezek 23:8, a feminine abstract noun which appears with a feminine suffix and is the direct object of a feminine verb. The second hnz is the feminine participle of the stem !Wz “to support, to nourish, to feed” (Jastrow 1903: 387). Properly vocalized as hnWz it means “inkeeper,” which was the occupation of Rahab according to the Targums and Josephus.⁴² This lexeme has no Arabic cognate. The third hnz is the cognate of the Arabic Z> (danna) “it (semen or mucus)

flowed” and the corresponding noun yān^{b} (*danîn*) “thin mucus [of the eyes, nose, or mouth], semen, seminal fluid” (Lane 1867: 979).⁴³ This is the stem behind the second $\text{t}^{\text{h}}\text{z}^{\text{t}}$; in Ezek 23:8, which can be repointed as the suffixed plural noun $\sim \text{t}^{\text{h}}\text{z}^{\text{t}}$; “their seminal fluids,” the direct object of the masculine plural verb $\text{V}^{\text{h}}\text{P}^{\text{h}}\text{V}^{\text{h}}$. Thus the last three words of Ezek 23:8 can mean “and they poured out their seminal fluids upon her” (i.e., they ejaculated) rather than “they poured out their fornication upon her,” as traditionally translated.⁴⁴

Two types of fornication can be recognized in Israelite literature: *commercial* ($\text{h}^{\text{h}}\text{z}^{\text{t}}$) and *cultic* ($\text{V}^{\text{d}}\text{q}^{\text{t}}$). According to Lev 19:29 one type of commercial fornication was prohibited,

$\text{H}^{\text{t}}\text{A}^{\text{h}}\text{z}^{\text{t}}\text{h}^{\text{t}}$. $\text{^A}\text{T}^{\text{b}}\text{t}^{\text{a}}$, $\text{I}^{\text{L}}\text{x}^{\text{t}}\text{I}^{\text{a}}$;
 $\text{^h}\text{M}^{\text{z}}$ $\#$ rah' ha'l m W $\#$ rah' $\text{h}^{\text{h}}\text{z}^{\text{t}}\text{I}^{\text{a}}$ P^{h}

*Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot,
 that the land not become prostituted and full of depravity.*

Aspects of commercial fornication appear in Gen 38:12–26, when Judah agreed to pay a harlot (his daughter-in-law Tamar in disguise) “a kid from the flock” for her services and offered his signet, cord, and staff as a pledge until the goat was delivered. Although Tamar acted as a harlot to have her leverite right to be impregnated by a member of her deceased husband’s family, the commercial transaction made Tamar’s scheme appear as an authentic act of prostitution.

Just as the daughter of any priest who acted as a harlot was to be burned alive (Lev 21:14), Tamar’s deception almost cost her her life, for Judah was ready to burn the pregnant Tamar alive (Gen 38:24) until he recognized the signet, cord, and staff that she displayed in her defense where his own—proving that he was the father of her child. As a result Judah

declared, *yMmi hq'de'*, “She is more righteous than I am!” In time Tamar gave birth to twins and lived happily ever after.

Judah’s affair with a harlot, as such, created no moral, ethical, or religious problems. But had he out of sexual desire “uncovered the nakedness of his daughter-in-law” it would have been adultery, and both Judah and Tamar could have been stoned to death. They were saved by Tamar’s daring application of the law of the leverite (Deut 25:5–10).

By contrast deception by a prostitute could prove to be fatal. According to Deut 22:13–21, if a prostitute presented herself as a virgin when she married and was unable to produce her “tokens of virginity,”

then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has wrought folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father’s house; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. (22:21)

It is important to note that in Gen 38:15 the prostitute was called a *hnAz* “harlot,” but in Gen 38:21–22 she was identified as a *hv'de'*, “holy (woman),” which is generally translated as a “cult prostitute.” The masculine *vdeq' / ~yv'de'*, “holy (man/men),” found in II Kings 23:7, is variously translated as

- *sodomites* KJV, ASV
- male cult prostitutes NAS, NAU, RSV
- male shrine prostitutes NIV, NIB
- *male temple prostitutes* NRS
- *sacred male prostitutes* NJB
- *male prostitutes* NAB
- *perverted persons* NKJ
- *whoremongers* YLT
- *effeminate* DRA.

A more literal translation, reflecting the religious overtones of *vdq*, is *sacralist*, which appears below in my translations.

In Deut 23:17–18 (MT 23:18–19) the nouns *hnAz* “harlot” and *hvdeq* “sacralist” appear together, but they are not interchangeable:

I ae'fyl tAnBmi hvdeq. hyl.ti-al {
 `I ae'fyl ynBmi vdeq' hyl.ti-al {
 ^yh,l a/ hwlhy> tyBe bl K, ryximW hnAz !n.ta, aybit'-al {
 ~hynV:~G: ^yh,l a/ hwlhy> tb[At yKi rdh<l k'l.

There shall be no *scaralist* of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a *sacralist* of the sons of Israel.

You shall not bring the hire of a *harlot*, or the wages of a *pimp*,⁴⁵ into the house of Yahweh your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God.⁴⁶

Nothing in the literature suggests that the “sacralist” (*vdeq'* and/or *hvdeq*) required the services of a pimp.

In Hos 4:10–14 seven times the lexeme *hnz'* appears along with one occurrence of the plural *tAvdeq*, namely,

- *Whzi* “they have play the harlot” 4:10
- *tWhz* “fornication” 4:11
- *~ynWhz>* “fornications” 4:12
- *WhzAr:* “the have played the harlot” 4:12
- *hnynzTi* “they play the harlot” 4:12
- *hnynzTi* “they play adultery” 4:14
- *tAnZn* “the harlots” 4:14
- *WxBey> tAvdeqh;~ [i>Wdrpy> tAnZn;~ [i ~he4:14*

“they [men] go aside with harlots and sacrifice
with the [women] sacralists.”

The male “sacralists” (~yvideq) were no doubt related to the I [Bh; yaqbi] “the prophets of Baal” (I Kings 18:19), and the tAvdeq, the female “sacralists” would have been related to the hr'vah' tAaybi “the prophetesses of Asherah.”⁴⁷

In the fertility cult the ~yvideq and tAvdeq, “the holy ones” of Baal and Asherah were not involved simply with sexual intercourse. In the vision of Ezekiel (8:3–18) there was rampant idolatry, with rooms of images of men, of beasts and idols, especially “the image of the Creatress,”⁴⁸ with women weeping for Tammuz, and men worshipping the sun. Some images were erotic, as Ezekiel noted, rKz" ymd C; %I '-yfi[ITw: ~b'ynzTiw: “you made for yourself phallic images and played the harlot with them” (16:17).⁴⁹ The harlotry even included child sacrifice, as Ezekiel conveyed the words of Yahweh in 16: 20–21,

And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? (Compare 16:36–37.)

Jeremiah also conveyed these words of Yahweh in 32:35,

They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. (Compare II Kings 23:10.)

On the other hand Jeremiah’s condemnation of Judah for adultery (3:9, 5:7, 7:9, 23: 14, 29:23) and harlotry (3:1–8, 5:7,

13:27) included one practice that was family oriented. In Jer 7:18 Yahweh declared: “The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods.” This asexual harlotry appears again in Jer 44:15–25, where Judah’s women, as refugees in Egypt, insist on fulfilling their vows to burn incense to other gods, to pour out libations to the queen of heaven, and to make cakes for the queen of heaven which bear her image. As Jeremiah pointed out, they would do so at their own expense.

In II Kings 23:7 another type of asexual harlotry was noted in the listing of Josiah’s religious reforms:

hw̄hy> tybB. rva] ~yvidQh; yTB'-ta, #T̄Vh:
hrv̄aj] ' ~yTB' ~v' tAgra ~yv̄lh; rva

And he [Josiah] broke down the houses of the (male)
sacralists which were in the house of Yahweh,
where the women wove garments for the Asherah.

kai. kaqeilen ton oikon twh kadhsim
twh en tw/oikw/ kuripu
ou- ai' gunaikej ufainon ekei/ cettiin tw/ a] sei

And he pulled down the house of the KADESIM
that were by the house of the Lord,
where the women wove KETTIM for the grove.

Although the Septuagint translators transliterated the MT ~yvidQh; and ~yTB'; (which they read as ~ytk), Montgomery (1951: 539) rightly concurred with Šanda (1911) and Driver (1912) that the ~yTB'; was the cognate of the Arabic)#(batt) “woven garment” (Lane 1863: 148). There is nothing obviously sexual about weaving clothes. But the participle tAgraom may not be from gra', stem I, “to weave” but from gra', stem II,

“to perfume,” which would be the cognate of the Arabic **ḥāḍ** (*‘arija*) “to perfume, to make perfume to have a strong, odor” (Lane 1863: 46). Women perfuming clothes calls to mind Prov 7:10–23, where a woman in a harlot’s dress (**ḥnāz tyvi**) seduces a young man by saying,

I have decked my couch with coverings, colored spreads of Egyptian linen; have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. (7:16–17)

Jerusalem’s being castigated for her erotic behavior which involved phallic images, oil, incense, and food, with Yahweh saying in Ezek 16:17–19,

you took your embroidered clothes to put on them [the images], and you offered my oil and incense before them . . . I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey which you set before them for a pleasing odor, says the Lord Yahweh.

In conclusion for this section on sexual behavior in Old Testament texts, it is important to note the Arabic noun **zûb** (*zûn*) “an idol, and anything taken as a deity and worshiped beside God . . . a place in which idols are collected and set up,” which is a synonym of **zûr** (*zûr*) “anything that is worshiped in place of God” (Lane 1867: 1268, 1273). This **zûb** (*zûn*) may well be the cognate and by-form of the **ḥnāz** found in prophetic literature when Israel and Judah are castigated for their idolatry and worship of other gods. Instead of understanding an expression like **ḥnāz ḥnāz** in Hosea 1:2 strictly as a metaphorical use of **ḥnāz** “to fornicate,” it may be better understood as a verb meaning literally “to worship other gods or idols.” A *double entendre* may well have been intended.

**SEXUAL BEHAVIOR:
NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS**

New Testament texts dealing with sexual behavior span just a century, whereas the much larger Old Testament corpus covers more than a millennium. In the Greek texts homographs are not a problem, but whether a text is to be interpreted metaphorically or literally can be an issue. In the Gospels the references to sexual activities are rather straightforward. One can infer from the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) that harlotry was tolerated and did not carry the death penalty as did adultery (John 8:3–4). Jesus forgiveness of the adulteress and his redefinition of adultery in Matt 5:27–32 were truly surprising,

But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart . . . But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

These statements were but preliminaries to his telling the chief priests and elders in Matt 21:31–32, “Truly, I say to you, . . . the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.”

The references to sexual behavior in the Epistles have been a bit problematic given the semantic range of the Greek terms. Before citing annotated texts from Romans, I Corinthians, Galatians, and I Timothy which deal with morality the following Greek words need to come into focus:

- *arsenokoīthj*/*arrenokoīthj* “coitus with a man” and *arsenomixia* “sodomy” (Liddell Scott: 246). Wold (1998: 190) noted that *arsenokoīthj* designates the active partner in a homosexual act, whereas *malakoj* designates the passive partner.

- *asebeia* “ungodliness, impiety, disloyal,” *asebew* “to be impious, act profanely, commit sacrilege” and *asebhj* “ungodly, unholy, profane sacrilegious (Liddell Scott: 255).
- *ase|geia* “licentiousness, wanton violence, brutal, lewd, vulgar, outrageous” (Liddell Scott: 255). Wold (1998: 167–168) conjectured that “it is possible that Jesus had homosexuality in mind when he used it [*ase|geia* in Mark 7:21–23] . . . (and) it would appear that Peter thought of *ase|geia* [in 2 Peter 2:6–10a] as a term for homosexuality.”
- *aschmosuh* “indecorum, obscene or disgraceful conduct” (Liddell Scott: 267).
- *genesewj* “origin, source, generation, beginning, manner of birth, coming into being” (Liddell Scott: 343).
- *koi,th* “bed, marriage bed, to become pregnant by a man” (Liddell Scott: 970).
- *mal akoj* “fainthearted, cowardly, morally weak, lacking in self-control, soft, effeminate”—the opposite of *karteria* “strong, staunch, mighty, potent, in control of” (Liddell Scott: 880,1077). In BAG *mal akoj* is defined as “soft, effeminate, especially of catamites, i.e., of men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually,” citing I Corinthians 6:9 and Polycarp to the Philippians 5:3.”
- *moice|ai* “adultery” and *moicoj* “adulterer, paramour, paramour of a sodomite” and a metaphor for an “idolatrous person,” as in James 4:4 (Liddell and Scott: 1141).
- *pornej|a|* “fornication, prostitution, unchastity,” metaphorically “idolatry” (Hosea 4:11); *pornoj* “fornicator, catamite, sodomite, idolater”; *pornh* “harlot, prostitute” (Liddell Scott: 1450).

TEXTS FROM THE EPISTLES

Rom 1:26–27 address homosexual behavior, with verse 1:32 referring to Lev 18:22 and 20:13. In Leviticus there is no reference to lesbian sex since lesbians are unable “to penetrate” (בִּקְוֹ, stem II) each other or to willfully “spill their seed.” Paul knew that his eternal life would be in heaven, thanks to God’s grace through Jesus Christ, *not* through a progeny in whose memory he would live forever (which was the faith in early Israel when male homosexuality was an abomination because it robbed one’s ancestors of the progeny to which they were entitled and on which their eternal life depended). Nevertheless, Paul perpetuates the law against homosexuality. According to Paul to ignore the Torah of Leviticus 20 makes one “a hater of God” and “worthy of death.” When Paul wrote “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom13:8), he did not include homosexual love. For Paul “*homosexual love*” would have been an oxymoron. The texts from Romans, I Corinthians, Galatians, and I Timothy reads as follows and speaks for themselves.

Romans 1:26–32

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions (paqh atimiāj); for their women exchanged the natural function (fusikhn crhšin) for that which is unnatural (para. fusin), and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function (fusikhn crhšin) of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent (aschmosunhn) acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind (adokimon nouh), to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil;

full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

I Corinthians 6:9–11, 18

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the

- fornicators pornoi,
- nor idolaters eidwloi a- nor adulterers moicoi,
- nor effeminate malakoi,
- nor sodomites arsenokoitai
- nor thieves kleptai,
- nor the greedy pleonektai,
- nor drunkards mequsoι,
- nor slanderers loidoroi,
- nor extortioners aʃpagej

will inherit the kingdom of God . . . Shun immorality (porneian). Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the fornicator (porneuw) sins against his own body.

Galatians 5:19–21

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication (porneia), impurity (akaqarsiā), licentiousness (aʃelgeia), idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing (kw/moi), and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

I Timothy 1:9–10

. . . the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, fornicators (pornoij), sodomites (arsenokoi,taij), kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”

CELIBACY

According to the first book in the canon, in Genesis 1–3, there was no room for celibacy in the Garden of Eden. As clearly stated, “It was not good for *the man* (~dah' = ton anqrwpon) to be alone.” Thus, God created out of *the man* (~dah') “a savior as his front one” (AdgnK. rzE). The man (vyai) recognized this savior as his own flesh and bone; and named her woman (hv'ai), the feminine counterpart of the masculine man (vyai). They were of one flesh (dx'a, rfb'). And when “the man forsakes his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, they [again] become one flesh” (WjhW dx'a, rfb'l.) (Gen 2:24). As one flesh the male and female were commanded: “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth!”

In Genesis families were in; celibacy was out. But in Revelation celibate virgin males were in and marriage and families were out. John’s vision of the Lamb of God standing on Mount Zion, with 144,000 celibate virgin males who had the Lamb’s name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads, appears in Rev 14:1–5,⁵⁰

And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I

heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. *No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins* (outoi, eisin oi] meta. gunaikwh ouk emolunqhsan(parqenoi gar eisin); *it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb . . .*

Although Elijah never married and the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah was “You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place” (Jer. 16:1–2), male celibacy was not prized in Israel. Ginzburg (1968: IV: 273) tells of the Jewish tradition in which the prophet Isaiah declared to King Hezekiah that his sickness unto death was “incurred because he had failed to take unto himself a wife and bring forth posterity.” Hezekiah’s defense “that he preferred a celibate’s life because he had seen in the holy spirit that he was destined to have impious children,” was rebutted by Isaiah with the words, “Thou hast but to do thy duty [to bear children].”

Israelite men were commanded by Moses not to approach a woman for three days (hVai-l a, WGT-l a; -ymij" tvl (vl j) while he ascended Mount Sinai (Exod 19:15); and Jewish tradition attests that Moses remained celibate thereafter for life. Sexual abstinence for short periods of time—as when David and his men went out on an expedition (I Sam 21:3–7) and when the priests were serving in the temple—was often required, but lifelong celibacy was different matter in Israel and in Rabbinic Judaism. Schneider (1971: 767) noted that

For the Rabbis marriage was an unconditional duty. There is only one known instance of a celibate Rabbi. In T. Jeb.,

8, 4 we are told that Ben ^cAzzai remained unmarried. He justified his attitude in the words: “My soul cleaves to the Torah; there is no time for marriage; may the world be maintained by others. . . .The same Ben ^cAzzai did, of course, proclaim the duty of marriage as a command . . . In T. Jeb 8, 4 he says “He who does not see to the continuation and propagation of the race (as commanded in Gen. 1:28), may he be accounted by Scripture as if he diminished the (divine) image.”

However, Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Apostle Paul were celibate—even though in recent fiction Jesus became the husband of Mary Magdalene and Paul became a widower in the writings of Luther (*Works* 41: 161, n. 410; 54: 271). In Matt 19:10–12 Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees concerning divorce led his disciples to conclude, “It is not expedient to marry,” and Jesus concurred, acknowledging that “not all men can receive this precept, but only to those to whom it is given.” He followed this remark with his identifying three types of eunuchs:

- there are eunuchs who have been so from birth,⁵¹
 - there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men,
 - there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs⁵² for the sake of the kingdom of heaven;
- and concluded, “He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (o` dunamenoj cwreih cwreitw).⁵³

The key for interpreting the last phrase in Matt 19:12b is found in the *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew*, which adds to the parable of the sower this interpretation in Matt 13:23b,

As for the hundred, this is the one purified (trhj m) of heart and sanctified (tXwdq) of body. As for the sixty, this is the one separated from women. As for the thirty, this is the one sanctified in matrimony, in body, and in heart.

Thus, there was for Jesus a hierarchy of good works: the hundred fold speaks of the fruit of *the ascetic life*, the sixty fold recognizes the fruit of *the celibate life*, and the thirty fold acknowledges the fruit of *sacred matrimony*. For Jesus, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and others—like Origen of Alexandria who actually castrated himself—the command to be fruitful, to multiply and fill the earth with progeny (Gen 1:28) was superceded by their personal preference for celibacy and continency for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

The two variants in the *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew* in 19:12 are noteworthy:

Manuscripts CHL

hl wdg hl (mb Mymkx Mh wl)

these are the wise ones in great prominence

Manuscripts ABDEFG

hl wdg hl (mb My) bh Mh wl)

these are those coming into great prominence

These two variants, ~ymkx “wise ones” and ~yabh “those coming,” when conflated, present a tradition in which Jesus taught that those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven are the *wise ones* who, having rightly understood the ways of God, would *come into great prominence* (hl wdg hl [m]). Whereas in Israelite and later Jewish tradition a father would be *first* and the childless male would be *last*, this was reversed in Matt 19:28–30,

Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

This matches the text of Luke 14:26, once the verb *mi sew* (= hnX/anX “to hate” is corrected to *egkatal eipw* (= hnX/anX) “to forsake.”⁵⁴ Jesus’ original statement as recorded in Luke’s Hebrew source no doubt meant,

If any one comes to me and does not *forsake* (hnX/anX) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

If Jesus really required his followers to *forsake* ($afihmi$) or to *abandon* (*egkatal eipw*), or even to *hate* (*mi sew*) all of one’s family members, was it then permissible for a man to divorce (*apoluw*) his wife? According to Luke 16:18 the answer was a flat-out “No!” with Jesus saying, “Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.” In Mark 10:11–12 Jesus’ reply to his disciples is the same, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” But in Matt 19:3–6 when the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” Jesus answered,

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Dissatisfied with this answer, the Pharisee appealed to the Torah and asked, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” (19:7). They

were referring specifically to Deut 24:1–4, which reads,

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency (rbD' twwr) in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce (t tyrk. rps) and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled (hamJh); for that is an abomination (hb'At) before Yahweh, and you shall not bring guilt (ayj kjt) upon the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees' appeal to Torah was his clarification that "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." He concluded (Matt 19:9) in agreement with the Torah:

*Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity,
and marries another, commits adultery.*

This statement basically repeats what appears in Matt 5: 31–32. In the *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew* this passage reads as follows (with italics added):

Again Jesus said to his disciples: You have heard what was said to those of long ago that everyone who leaves his wife and divorces is to give a bill of divorce, that is, *libela repudio*. And I say to you that everyone who leaves his wife is to give her a bill of divorce *except for matter of adultery. He is the one who commits adultery and he who takes her commits adultery.*

The nineteen words in italics translate the last ten words of the Hebrew text, which appear to have lost three letters.

The Hebrew text reads,

@wan rbd l [~a yk
 @any htwa xqwl hw @awh awh

*except for the matter of adultery,
 he is the adulterer, and the one taking her commits adultery.*

The text needs to be corrected by adding *before* the awh the three letters wah and changing a W into a Y. With this restoration the text becomes

wa hpwan rbd l [~a yk
 @any htwa xqwl hw @yanh awh

*except for the matter of her adultery, otherwise
 he causes adultery and the one taking her commits adultery.*

This correction brings the @yanh awh into agreement with the Greek text's poiei/ authn moiceuqhhai "he makes her an adulteress." Consequently, in light of the Greek text tradition and the Hebrew tradition, Jesus' statement in Matt 5: 31–32 had these three points:

- a divorce due to (allegations or suspicions of) adultery on the part of the wife does not require a certificate of divorce,
- all other divorces require the disgruntled husband to issue a certificate of divorce which liberates the former wife to legally marry again,
- and failure to issue the certificate of divorce would mean that the former wife and her next spouse would technically be living in an adulterous relationship.

It goes without saying that a woman *caught* in an act of adultery was to be stoned (Lev 20:10; John 8:3–4).

CONCLUSIONS

Credit goes to Trito-Isaiah for initially initiating the elevation of the eunuch with this statement in Isa 56:4–5,

And let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says Yahweh: “To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.

According to Lev 21:17–21 and Deut 23:1–2 the eunuch (along with the blind, the lame, the hunchback, the dwarf, and the diseased) was excluded from the assembly of Yahweh. But by the time the Wisdom of Solomon was written things had changed, for “Blessed also is the eunuch . . . for special favor will be shown him for his faithfulness, and a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord” (3:14). According to Acts 8:27–39, in the account of Philip’s baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch upon his profession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the early Christian community was in full accord with Isaiah 56:4–5 and Wisdom of Solomon 3:14.

Similarly, in Isa 54:1 the female counterpart to the male eunuch was told,

Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says Yahweh.

This blessing is quoted in Gal 4:27 and alluded to in the Wis Sol 3:13, “For blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, who has not entered into a sinful union; she will have fruit when God examines souls.”

As the definition of “salvation” changed for the Pharisees—though not for the Sadducees—and for the first Christians

- *from* living a long life in the land of Israel and having an “eternal life” through one’s progeny
- *to* living eternally in the heavenly kingdom through God’s gracious gift to the righteous and/or upon one’s profession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God

there was also a shift away from disdain and contempt for sterile males and infertile women. Thus, eunuchs and barren women who were once religious outcasts were welcomed into the communities of faith.

However there has been no corresponding reversal of attitudes toward homosexual males. The idea that they were an “abomination” because they wasted their seed and thereby threatened the eternal life of all of their ancestors had become irrelevant. Eternal life was more than a survival in the memory of one’s progeny. It was a resurrection into a heavenly kingdom upon a profession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It was available to repentant harlots and tax collectors (Matt 21:31–32), but not to practicing sodomites (I Cor 6:9 and I Tim 1:9–10).

The biblical texts on gender equality and sexual morality are applied quite differently and subjectively in the various faith communities. Many texts are ignored while others are deemed to be absolute and enforceable. Like hundreds of my ancestors over the centuries I disagreed with Paul’s advise: “to the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do” (I Cor 7:8). Once I became married Paul’s further admonition, “let those who have wives live as though they had none” (I Cor 7:29), i.e., be celibate, seemed senseless. To the contrary, I Cor 7:2–3 made sense:

But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

Other Christians disagree with Paul not only on the matters pertaining to marriage but also with his prohibition of divorce as recorded in I Cor 7:10–11,

To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband)—and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

Paul’s charge reflects the words of Jesus in Mark 10:9, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder,” which Mark quotes as an absolute. But Christians seeking a divorce make Matt 19:9 (as discussed above, 34–36) the absolute and dutifully provide a document of divorce as required in the Torah and ignore what the apostle wrote in the epistle.

In an effort to fulfill the commandment “Be fruitful and multiply!” many in ancient Israel and in the early churches participated in *fertility cults*. Nowadays fertility cults have been replaced by *fertility clinics*, and for some believers this too is anathema because Paul said, “*Every one should remain in the state in which he was called*” (I Cor 7:20), echoing the sentiment of predestination found in Sirach 33:10–14,

All men are from the ground, and Adam was created of the dust. In the fulness of his knowledge the Lord distinguished them and appointed their different ways; some of them he blessed and exalted, and some of them he made holy and brought near to himself; but some of them he cursed and brought low, and he turned them out of their place. As clay in the hand of the

potter—for all his ways are as he pleases—so men are in the hand of him who made them, to give them as he decides.

Thus, some argued that sterility and infertility are divinely determined, rather than being the consequence of sin. On the other hand, homosexuals are not “*to remain in the state in which they were called*” because their sexual propensities are deemed to be self-inflicted expressions of freewill, as spelled out in Sirach 15:11–20,

Do not say, “It was [the Lord] who led me astray”; for he had no need of a sinful man. The Lord hates all abominations, and they are not loved by those who fear him. It was he who created man in the beginning, and he left him in the power of his own inclination. If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.

Advocates of celibacy can appeal not only (1) to the role model provided by Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, and Jesus, (2) to Jesus’ statements in Matt 19:12 and the expanded text of Matt 13:23 in the *Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel*, wherein the ascetic and celibate life-styles are elevated, but also (3) to the advice in Sirach, 16:1–3,

Do not desire a multitude of useless children, nor rejoice in ungodly sons. If they multiply, do not rejoice in them, unless the fear of the Lord is in them. Do not trust in their life, and do not rely on their multitude; for one is better than a thousand, and to die childless is better than to have ungodly children.

This diversity of biblical texts dealing with gender and sexuality, with all of their complexities and ambiguities, stands in sharp contrast to the simplicity of the moral and the ethical statements in which Paul—using what I prefer to interpret as a gender inclusive “brethren”—advises,

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Phil 4:8).

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, *he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness*, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3–6).

NOTES

1. Compare the *Qur'an Sura 29:28*, “Lot said to his people, ‘You commit such an abomination, no one in the world has ever done it before you. Do you indeed approach men justfully and cut off *the way of the offspring* (قَدْ أَفْسَدْنَا مَنَافِعَهُمْ [wataqta‘ûna ‘ssabîla]) and you allow all kinds of vice in your society.’” (Lane, 1872: 1302 and 1893: 2990.) Note also *قَدْ أَفْسَدْنَا مَنَافِعَهُمْ* [qatâ‘a ‘alrahim] “to forsake *kindred* [or *womb*]” (Wehr, 1979: 906–909) and note *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ* “betrothal gift.”

2. Compare the *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1–16:3 in the Pseudo-epigrapha (Charles, 1913: II: 137) for the account of Satan’s refusal to worship Adam and Eve because they should have worshiped him because he was created before they were.

3. Compare Leonard Swidler’s letter to Josef Ratzinger (Sept. 12, 2004), which is also available online. It reads:

But Josef, in your section six you really shock me with your misreading of the second chapter of Genesis. It is almost as if you didn't read Hebrew! You write, God placed in the garden which he was to cultivate, the man, who is still referred to with the generic expression Adam. You know perfectly well that in chapter one the text states that God took some earth (Hebrew; *adamah*), breathed his spirit into the earth (*adamah*) and created *ha adam* (The Earthling). In chapter two of Genesis it is not the man (I wonder, did you in German write *der Mann* (the male) or *der Mensch* (the human being), and surely it is not that guy Adam who is spoken of. It is *ha adam*, the earthling (ungendered, as the rabbis recognized and discussed at length later). . . .

To view the document which Swidler refers to check out <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Ratzinger on Women.pdf>.

4. For the role of Wisdom and Word in creation, note Prov 3:19; 8:22–30; Sir 43:33; Wis Sol 9:1–2, 9.

5. The *adam* “man” is a singular collective noun which includes the male and the female, thus the plural verb stating that *they* will have authority over all.

6. The name Azariah (𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁𐤁) “Yahweh is savior/rescuer” is sufficient evidence that 𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁 did not connote an “assistant” or “helpmate.” (Were I drowning and yelled “Help! Help!” I would not be calling for an assistant to help me drown, but for a savior to rescue me.) The following texts illustrate the fact that 𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁/𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁 function as a synonym for 𐤁𐤏𐤏𐤁 “to rescue, to deliver” and 𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁 “to save.”

Psa 37:40

~y [iv]r me ~j 𐤏𐤏𐤁 > ~j 𐤏𐤏𐤁 hwhy > ~r𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁
 Ab 𐤆𐤁𐤅𐤁~yKi ~ [v]𐤀𐤆𐤅𐤁 >

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Yahweh rescues them and delivers them;
 he delivers them from the wicked,
 and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Psa 30:12 (MT)

yl i rz[əhyh/ hw̄hy>ynl<hw̄hy>[my'

Yahweh heard, and had compassion upon me;
 Yahweh has become a rescuer for me.

Psa 54:6

yv̄pn: ykənsB. yn̄d̄ə] yl i rz[ə ~yhil ə/ hN̄hi

Behold, God is a rescuer for me;
 the Lord is with those upholding my soul.

Psa 70:1, 6 (MT)

... hv̄llx ytr̄z̄l. hw̄hy>ynl q̄Ch:l. ~yhil ə/
 ~yhil ə/ rxa;T-l a; hw̄hy>hT'a; yj il pm̄w yr̄z̄l, yLihv̄llx

Hasten, O God to deliver me! O Yahweh, to rescue me! . . .
 O God, come quickly to me! You are my rescuer
 and my deliverer; O Yahweh, do not delay!

Psa 146:5

wyh'l ə/ hw̄hy>l [; Arb.fi Arz̄[B. bq̄l̄y: l āw, yr̄w̄a;

Blessed is he whose rescuer is the God of Jacob,
 whose hope is upon Yahwh his God.

Deut 33:7

hyk.Ti wyr̄Cmi rz̄[̄w̄> . . hd̄W̄hy>l Aq hw̄hy>[my.

Hear, O Yahweh, the voice of Judah . . .
 and may you be a rescuer from his enemies.

Deut 33:26

Atw̄ap̄w̄ ^rz̄[B. ~ymv' bkēo!W̄rvy>l ak' !yae
 ~lA [t [̄w̄>tx;Tm̄w̄ ~dq, yhd̄ ə/ hn̄[m. . . .

There is none like the God of Jeshurun, riding (the) heavens
to your rescue

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the
everlasting arms.

7. Note the noun **dygh** “leader, ruler, prince” which was a title used for Saul (I Sam 9:16), David (I Sam 13:14, 25:30), Solomon (I Kings 1:35), Jeroboam (I Kings 14:7), Hezekiah (II Kings 20:5), Abijah (II Chron 11:22), Pashur (Jer 20:1), and the ruler of Tyre (Ezek 28:2).

8. The Septuagint has *kai. proj ton andra sou h' apostrophē, sou kai. autoj sou kurieusei* “Your *turning away* [*apostrophē*] shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” The translators read the MT **%teqWV**T. as either **%tbWV**T (see I Sam 7:17) or as **%tgWV**T, from the root **qWV**S). The Vulgate’s *et sub viri potestate eris* “you shall be under your husband’s power” must have associated the **%teqWV**T. with the stems **rWf**/**rr;f** “to have power,” or it reflects the stem **qWV** which was the cognate of the Arabic **j 0D** (*sawwaq*) “he made such a one to have the ruling of his affair” (Lane, 1872: 1471) A more detailed study of this verse is available online in Chapter II of my book *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available at <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume Two.htm>.

9. Note Schmidt’s article “Like Eve, Like Adam: *mšl* in Genesis 3:16,” in *Biblica* (1991) 72: 1–22.

10. A more detailed study of Proverbs 31 is available online in Chapter XI of my book *Clarifying More Baffling Biblical*

Passages, available at http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_ELEVEN.pdf.

11. Note also Sirach 26:13–17,

A wife's charm delights her husband, and her skill puts fat on his bones. A silent wife is a gift of the Lord, and there is nothing so precious as a disciplined soul. A modest wife adds charm to charm, and no balance can weigh the value of a chaste soul. Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so is the beauty of a good wife in her well-ordered home. Like the shining lamp on the holy lampstand, so is a beautiful face on a stately figure.

12. Were this statement the guideline for evaluating the major twentieth century personalities it would mean that Adolf Hitler was better than Queen Elizabeth and Pol Pot was better than Mother Teresa. See also Sir 7:19; 7: 24–26; 9:1–9; 22:3.

13. *Sura* 89:23 reads, “On that day, Gehenna will be brought forth. On that day, the human being will *repent* (ٱك=ٴ [yata-dakkaru]), but how will that *repentance* (ٱك=د [ʿaddik-ray]) profit him?”

14. Lane (1867: 969) also noted the following Arabic tradition which reflects the supremacy of the masculine over the feminine: ٱك=ك ٱك> ز!hd (ʿalqurʿanu dakr^{un} faḍakkiruhu), “the *Qurʿan* is eminently excellent [lit., masculine]: therefore do ye hold it and know it and describe it as such.”

15. The translation of Philo's *De fuga et inventione* by C. D. Yonge (entitled “A Treatise on Fugitives”) is now online at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book19.html>.

(The text there is Chapter IX, verses 51–52.) Later rabbinic teachings reflect a similar deprecation of the feminine and of women as found in the Talmud *Sotah* 20a,

Rabbi Ben Azzai [said] a man is under the obligation to teach his daughter Torah, so that if she has to drink [the water of bitterness], she may know that the merit suspends its effect. Rabbi Eliezer says: whoever teaches his daughter Torah teaches her obscenity. Rabbi Joshua says: a woman prefers one *kab* (measure) and sexual indulgence to nine *kab* (measures) and continence. He used to say, a foolish pietist, a cunning rogue, a female Pharisee, and the plague of Pharisees bring destruction upon the world.

Noteworthy also is the following paragraph from *Kodashim Menahoth* 43b:

It was taught: R. Judah used to say, A man is bound to say the following three blessings daily: '[Blessed art thou . . .] who hast not made me a heathen . . . who hast not made me a woman'; and ' . . . who hast not made me a brutish man'. R. Aha b. Jacob once overhead his son saying '[Blessed art thou . . .] who hast not made me a brutish man', whereupon he said to him, 'And this too!' Said the other, 'Then what blessing should I say instead?' [He replied,] . . . who hast not made me a slave'. And is not that the same as a woman?

[Click here to view the full texts of the Talmud online.](#)

16. Aristotle and other Greek thinkers contributed to the deprecation of women in the Hellenistic period. The following three lengthy quotations from the study of Richard Smith (1988: 345–360) are relevant:

- Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) opines that the male semen provides the form (εἶδος) of the embryo (κῆμα) and makes it perfect (τελειῶν). The function of the female sex organ is to receive the

sperm and to provide matter (u]h) and nourishment (trofh) for the embryo. There is an extensive series of associations with male semen, all of which Aristotle considers superior (krei,t-twn). Semen has power (dunamij), it has heat (qermo,tjh), it has activity (kinhsij), and has soul (yuch). The female's role is simply cast in contrast to the male's. Instead of his power, she has inability (atunamija) and weakness (asqenhj); while he is hot, she is cold (yucroj); in place of the soul, she has matter; as he is active, she is passive (paqhtikon); and instead of having divine (qeibn) form, femaleness (qhluthj) is a natural (fusikh) deformity (anaphria). All of these associations Aristotle considers inferior (ceiron). [page 346]

- There was widespread disagreement with Aristotle's theories in antiquity, especially from the medical profession. . . . the consensus was that the female also produced semen . . . The theory is found in the medical tradition as early as the Hippocratic text *On the Seed*. "Both the man and the woman have sperm," (460–377 B.C.). . . . "The female semen is extremely weak, formless and imperfect," . . . without the male semen the fetus lack perfection (telio,tjh). [pages 347, 350]
- Galen (129–200 A.D.) says, "Aristotle was right in thinking the female less perfect than the male." Men and women have the same sexual organs, Galen says, except for one important difference. The male organs are on the outside, the female's are on the inside. . . Females, in fact, especially their sexual organs, are imperfect (atelhj) and deformed (anaphron). [page 349]

Theological misogyny—in the past and in the present—has been grounded in this primitive Graeco-Roman medical science and sexology. Many contemporary religionists have abandoned the antiquarian medical science but cling to its derivative deprecation and deprivation of women and its misogyny.

17. In the gnostic text *Pistis Sophia*, thirty-nine of the sixty-four questions addressed to Jesus by his disciples are attributed to Mary Magdalene, who readily admitted to her persistence in questioning Jesus, saying, “I will not tire of asking thee. Be not angry with me for questioning everything,” to which Jesus replied, “Question what thou dost wish.” (I: 24)

18. See Brooten (1977) for a brief but excellent history as to whether the masculine *Ἰουνίας* (Junias) was originally the feminine *Ἰουνία* (Junia). [Click here to view it online.](#)

19. See Arndt and Gingrich (1957: 431) who noted that *κεφαλῆ*, “head” was used “in the case of living beings to denote superior rank” This parallels (1) the Hebrew *ראש* “head” which can mean “chief, magistrate, leader president” (BDB 911; Jastrow 1903: 1437) and (2) the Syriac *רִישׁ* “head,” meaning also “prince, chief, prefect, superior” (Payne Smith 1903: 540). Compare Brauch (1989: 138) who noted,

In only eight out of 180 cases was *kephalē* used to translate *ro'sh* when it designated the leader or ruler of a group. It is very possible that one of the figurative meanings of *kephalē* (namely, “top” or “crown”) allowed the translator to use it in describing a prominent individual.

The eight cases Brauch mentioned (but did not cite) are:

- Deut 28:13, *καταστήσαι σε κυρίου ὀφθαλμοῦ σου εἰς κεφαλὴν καὶ μή εἰς οὐρανὸν* “the Lord thy God make thee the head, and not the tail.”
- Judges 10:18 (A text), *καὶ ἔσται εἰς κεφαλὴν πάντων τῶν κατοικοῦσιν ἐν Γαλαὰδ* “and he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

- Judg 11:11, ʾo laoj epʿl autouj eij kefalhn kai. eij arʿhgon “the people made him head and ruler over them.”
- II Sam 22:44, fulaxej me eij kefalhn eqnwh “you have made me the head of the nations.”
- Isaiah 7:8a, al lV h kefal h. Aram Damaskoj “the head of Aram is Damascus.”
- Isa 7:8b, kai h kefal h. Damaskou rasseim “the head of Damascus is Rezin.”
- Isaiah 7:9, h kefal h. Somorwn uioj tou/Romel iou, “the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.”
- Psalm 18:44, (MT) katasthseij me eij kefalhn eqnwh “you have made me the head of the nations.”

A debate about the translation of kefal h, as “authority” or as “source” by W. Gruden and R. Cervin is available online at <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/cbmw/rbmw/appendix1a.html>.

20. A more detailed study of this verse is available online in Chapter Two of my book *Clarifying New Testament Aramaic Names and Words and Shem Tob’s Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 45–61, which is available online at http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf.

21. The gender inclusive autoj in Matt 12:50, autoj mou adelfoj kai. adel fh. kai. mh,thr estin, “he is my brother, my sister, and my mother,” provides evidence that among Jesus’ *disciples* were women whom he identified as “sister” and “mother.” See above, page 8.

22. See Aland (1968: 676) for a full listing of these variants:

- mss. B and p⁴⁶, Clement, Origin, Jerome, and Theodore have no verb in v. 22.
- mss. K, 181, 326, 614, 629, Chrysostom, and others have upotassesqe (subjunctive present passive 2nd person plural) as the fifth word in the phrase;
- mss. D and G have this same upotassesqe as the second word in the phrase;
- ms. Y, the Sahidic and the Bohairic have upotassesqwsan (present passive imperative 3rd person plural) as the second word in the phrase;
- mss. a, A, I, and P have this same upotassesqwsan as the fifth word in the phrase.
- Peshiṭta has the masculine !ydb [tvm !wtywhw (*wahwaitân mešta^cbědîn*) “submit yourselves” in 5:21 and the feminine !db [tvm !ytywh (*hěwaitēn mešta^cbědan*) “submit yourselves” in 5:22.

23. The present passive nominative feminine participle with the force of the imperative, upotassomenai, appears in I Pet 3:1, “you wives, be submissive” and 3:5 “being submissive”; the accusative upotassomenaj appears in Titus 2:5, “to be submissive to their husbands.”

24. But noteworthy in the story in Gen 21:9–14 is Abraham’s obedience (required by God) to Sarah’s demand for the expulsion of Hagar. God used Sarah to give Abraham a message! It was correctly noted that Sarah called Abraham by the title “Lord,” but the fact that Abraham always call his wife by a title of nobility, hrf^r “Princess,” was not mentioned.

25. Barth (1974: 611, n. 12) defended Paul for his statements on gender equality, stating

Despite all Paul says about the creation of woman out of man, and about her role in the fall (I Cor 11:3, 7–9; II Cor 11:3; cf. I Tim 2:14), his letters surprise the reader by an overwhelming number of passages which treat man and woman on an egalitarian basis. See especially I Cor 7:2–5, 8–16, 28, 32–34; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:21 and the gratitude expressed to women in the greeting list, Rom 16:1–15.

Barth's most helpful comment (618–619) comes when he interprets Eph 5 in the light of Mark 10:42–45, stating,

Even more than an enlightened monarch in his relation to his subjects, he [the Christian husband] is then “the first servant” of his wife. In short, a headship qualified, interpreted, and limited by Christ alone is proclaimed, not an unlimited headship that can be arbitrarily defined and has to be endured. If a colloquialism can help to understand 5:23, then the husband is told always and under all circumstances to “go ahead” by loving his wife and by paying gladly whatever the appropriate price.

26. The Mortuary Text from the 18th Dynasty (1550–950 B.C.E.), cited in Pritchard's *ANET* (34–35), included a list of 78 affirmations by the deceased about his past life. The affirmations include,

*“I have **not** :*
committed evil against men
mistreated cattle
committed sin in the place of truth
blasphemed
done violence to a poor man
made (anyone) sick

made (anyone) weep
killed nor caused terror
defiled myself
had sexual relations with a boy
had sexual relations with the wife of (another) male.”

27. For a comparable code of conduct focused on sexual crimes, see *The Code of the Assura* (c. 1075 B.C.E.) in James Pritchard's *ANET*, 181. The most relevant lines include:

I.2. If a woman, whether the wife of a man or the daughter of a man, utter vulgarity or indulge in low talk, that woman bears her own sin; against her husband, her sons, or her daughter they shall have no claim.

I.7. If a woman bring her hand against a man, they shall prosecute her; 30 *manas* of lead shall she pay, 20 blows shall they inflict on her.

I.8. If a woman in a quarrel injure the testicle of a man, one of her fingers they shall cut off. And if a physician bind it up and the other testicle which is beside it be infected thereby, or take harm; or in a quarrel she injure the other testicle, they shall destroy both of her eyes.

I.9. If a man bring his hand against the wife of a man, treating her like a little child, and they prove it against him, and convict him, one of his fingers they shall cut off. If he kiss her, his lower lip with the blade of an axe they shall draw down and they shall cut off.

I.12. If the wife of a man be walking on the highway, and a man seize her, say to her “I will surely have intercourse with you,” if she be not willing and defend herself, and he seize her by force and rape her, whether they catch him upon the wife of a man, or whether at the word of the

woman whom he has raped, the elders shall prosecute him, they shall put him to death. There is no punishment for the woman.

I.13. If the wife of a man go out from her house and visit a man where he lives, and he have intercourse with her, knowing that she is a man's wife, the man and also the woman they shall put to death.

I.14. If a man have intercourse with the wife of a man either in an inn or on the highway, knowing that she is a man's wife, according as the man, whose wife she is, orders to be done, they shall do to the adulterer. If not knowing that she is a man's wife he rapes her, the adulterer goes free. The man shall prosecute his wife, doing to her as he likes.

I.15. If a man catch a man with his wife, both of them shall they put to death. If the husband of the woman put his wife to death, he shall also put the man to death. If he cut off the nose of his wife, he shall turn the man into a eunuch, and they shall disfigure the whole of his face.

I.16. If a man have relations with the wife of a man at her wish, there is no penalty for that man. The man shall lay upon this wife, the penalty he wishes.

I.18. If a man say to his companion, "They have had intercourse with thy wife; I will prove it," and he be not able to prove it, . . . on that man they shall inflict forty blows, a month of days he shall perform the king's work, they shall castrate him, and one talent of lead he shall pay.

I.19. If a man started a rumor against his neighbor in private saying, "People have had intercourse repeatedly with him" . . . since he is not able to prove it they shall flog him fifty times with staves and for a month of days he shall do the work of the king; they shall castrate him, and one talent of lead he shall pay.

I.20. If a man have intercourse with his brother-in-arms,
they shall turn him into a eunuch [*CAD* N 198 *nâku*.]

[Click here to view the full text online.](#)

28. The English name *Eve* is a defective transliteration of the Hebrew *Hawwah*. The initial *H* (an unvoiced pharyngal fricative) has no corresponding sound in English so it was ignored. The *v* in the name *Eve* reflects the *ww* in the name *Hawwah*; and the bi-syllabic *awwa* in *Hawwah* was reduced to a mono-syllabic *eve*. The Septuagint reads “and Adam called the name of his wife “Life” (*Zwh* = *Zôē*), because she was the mother of all “living” (*zwh̄twn* = *zôntôn*).

29. So many upper class young Israelite males were killed off fighting King David’s wars that thousands of upper class Israelite young women could not find a living male to marry. Solomon provided welfare for these upper class young ladies by bringing them into the royal household—thereby maintaining the support of the upper class Judahites for the Davidic dynasty. It was for political reasons, domestic and international, that he had a thousand women—not for sexual reasons. Solomon taxed the poor so heavily to pay for this welfare for the rich that the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam, Solomon’s son and successor, when Rehoboam followed his father’s tax policies benefitting the rich at the expense of the poor.

30. The levirate marriage (Gen 38:6–11 and Deut 25:5–10) was instituted to provide progeny for the man who died without a male heir so that the deceased and his ancestors might live on in family and tribal memory. It provided for a brother of a man who died without a son to impregnate the widow of

the deceased and “the first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel” (Deu 25:6).

31. According to Exod 22:16–17, the seduction of a virgin was not an act of adultery, nor was it a capital crime. The penalty for such a seduction was a marriage or a monetary settlement equivalent to the marriage present for a virgin.

32. The Arabic **ك** (t) always appears as a **V** (š) in Hebrew; and the Hebrew **ק** and **כ** were often interchanged as with **קדד** and **קדד** “to crush” and **קר** and **קר** “to be tender, weak.” Compare the current use in English of “Kwik Mart” as the equivalent of “Quick Mart.”

33. The Arabic **ع** (s) usually appears as a **V** (š) in Hebrew.

34. When dealing with regulations about ceremonial uncleanness, the male’s **[רז-תבקי]** “seed of emission” (koi,th spermatoj) could balance the female’s **~ד' הבז** “issue of blood” (rēpusa aiḡmati). See Lev 15:16–18, 32; 19:20; 22:4. Moreover, the same words for “emission” or “ejaculation” appear in Num 5:13 **[רז-תבקי חט'אוי בקי]** “and a man penetrate her (with) the seed of emission” (which became kai. koimhgh/ tij metV authj koi,thn spermatoj, “and were someone to have slept with her the seed of emission”) and in Num 5:20 **אתבקי-תא, %B' vjai !T** “and a man give you his emission” (which became kai. edwken tij thn koi,thn autou, “and someone gave you his emission”). The Septuagint translators recognized the noun **חבקי** “emission” but not the verb **בקי** “to ejaculate.”

35. The [rʒl . ^Tbkv, translated as “sexual intercourse” (NLT, NIV, NIB) and “lie carnally” (KJV, ASV, RSV) is unusual in that the l of [rʒl . is a l genitive meaning literally “to a seed.” But the [rʒl . may be better read as the *Hiphʿil* infinitive (*scriptio defectiva* [GKC 53^q] for [yrʒh:l . “to impregnate”) and is so translated here.

36. In Lev 18:23, which deals with bestiality, the verb bkʷ, stem II, “to penetrate” appears in the prohibition addressed to the male, but since women can not penetrate, not surprisingly, in the prohibition addressed to the female the verb shifted from bkʷ “to penetrate” to [brʷ “to lie down.” In post-biblical Hebrew [brʷ came to mean “to copulate in an unnatural way, to commit buggery” (Jastrow, 1903: 1444-1445).

37. In this case, the initial T of hbʷ[AT would be the noun preformative on a wʷp stem—analogous to the noun hrʷT “Torah” which is derived from the root hrw / hry, not hrt (GKC § 85^p). See BDB 582 (6a) for reading the preposition !mi as “in preference to.” Note the use of q}3 (*jahal*) “foolish, ignorant, irrational” in the *Qurʿan Sura 27:54*, when speaking of sodomy: “Lot said to his people, ‘How could you commit such an abomination, publicly, while you see? Would you approach men in your lust rather than women. Indeed, you are ignorant/foolish (q}3 [*jahal*]) people.’”

38. Whereas according to Gen 19:1–11 the sin of Sodom was male homosexual behavior, as when the Sodomites instructed Lot saying, “Bring [the men] out to us, that we may know (h[ʿdʷ] = suggenwmeqa = “have sex with”) them,” Ezekiel

(16:49–50) provided a different definition of sodomy:

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them, when I saw it.

In the the *Qurʿan* the story of Lot and the Sodomites receives much attention, appearing in *Sura* 7:81–85; 11:7–81; 26:160–175; 27:54–58 (see note 33); and 29:28–35 (see note 1).

39. Gen 6:1–4 is another story about rape, although the verb **bkv'** does not appear there. Supra-earthly “sons of God” impregnated earthly women who gave birth to the *Nephilim* “giants,” who became, according to tradition, “the men of renown.” But the ~**veyvba**; (andrej onomastoi) “men of renown” is better read as ~**fh' yvba**; “men of violence.” The Hebrew ~**Kh** in this context is more likely to be the cognate of the Arabic **VG** | (*hašama*) “to destroy, smash, shatter.” The violence initiated by the ~**fh' yvba**; “men of violence” resulted in God’s decision to bring on the flood (Gen 6:11–13). [Click here](#) to view online Chapter 2 in my book *Clarifying More Baffling Biblical Passages* for a more detailed study.

40. Ammon’s penetration of his virgin sister Tamar led to his death at the hands of his brother Absalom (II Sam 13: 28–29), similar to the way that Shechem’s rape of Dinah led to the death of all the males in Hamor’s family (Genesis 34). By contrast, Lot preferred to have his daughters raped rather than have his male guests violated (Gen 19:1–11), and the old man from Ephraim, who resided in Gibeah of Benjamin, preferred to have his virgin daughter and a concubine raped rather than

his male guest. The men of Gibeah raped the concubine, who by dawn was dead. This disgraceful folly (חלבוהו חמזל) led to battles in which all together 90,000 Benjaminites were allegedly slain (Judges 19–20).

41. The MT **WF** [is from **hf'**], stem II, “to compress,” the cognate of the **FG** (*gāšiya*) “to compress (a woman)” (BDB 796). It occurs also in Ezek 28:3.

42. See Chapter 9, “The Rehab of Rahab” in my book *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*. [Click here to view the book online](#), or [here to view just the chapter](#).

43. See Chapter 18, “The Excited Stallions in Jer 5:8” in my book *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*. [Click here to view the book online](#), or [here to view just the chapter](#).

44. Here the verb **%pV'** “to pour out” could be a by-form of **xpV'** “to pour out (semen),” which is the cognate of the Arabic **1dD** (*safaha*) “he poured out (blood, tears, semen),” with form 3 meaning “he committed fornication” and the nouns **1c"Cs** (*musâfiḥ*) and **çOc"Cs** (*musâfiḥat*) meaning a “fornicator” (Lane, 1872: 1369; BDB 1046).

45. The NIV, NIB, and NRS translate the MT **bl K**, “dog” as “male prostitute.” My translation “pimp” is based upon the Arabic cognates **Z"çpk** (*kaltabân*) “pimp” and the verb **%opk** (*kaliba*) “to act as a pimp” (Lane, 1885: 2627 and 2625).

46. For this verse, the Septuagint has the doublet:

(1) ouk estai pornh apo. qugaterwn Israh! kai. ouk estai porneuwyn apo. uiwh Israh! “There shall not be a *harlot* of the daughters of Israel, and there shall not be a *fornicator* of the sons of Israel.”

(2) ouk estai telesforoj apo. qugaterwn Israh! kai. ouk estai teliskomenoj apo. uiwh Israh! “There shall not be a *sorceress* from the daughters of Israel, and there shall not be an *initiate* from the sons of Israel.” (See Liddell and Scott, 1966: 1770¹ bottom and 1772¹ III and 1772¹.) According to this reading the Xdq “holy one” had no sexual overtones.

47. Elijah killed 450 prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:40); but not the 400 prophets of Asherah (I Kings 18:19). I Kings 15:12 states that Asa killed off all of the “sacralists” (~yvdeq) and destroyed all their “idols” (~yl Lqb). Those that survived Asa’s purge (vdeh; rty; “the rest of the *cult*”) were exterminated by Jehosaphat (I King 22:46). Instead of treating the MT tAame [Bra; hrveh’ yaybinw “and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred,” as a gloss to be deleted (as proposed by many), the yaybinw “and the prophets of” can be emended to read tAaybinw “and the prophetesses of.” The prophetesses of Asherah would match the female tAvdeq. “sacralists,” just as the male prophets of Baal match the male ~yvdeq. “sacralists.”

48. The MT has hneMh; hahoh; l mse which is usually translated as “the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.” But the stem anq’/hinq’ can also mean “to create, as well as “to acquire” and “to be zealous” (Gordon, 1965:

479). Thus, the Septuagint has ἡ στήλη του κτωμένου “the pillar of the purchaser” (as if $\eta\iota\kappa\mu\eta$; $\eta\alpha\lambda\theta\eta$; were a doublet). I translate the phrase as “the image of the zealous Creatress.”

49. Note also $\tau\upsilon\rho\kappa\zeta$: “male genitals” (Jastrow, 1903: 400) and the Arabic cognate ?k> (*dakar*^m) “the male organ of generation, the penis” (Lane, 1867: 970). Compare I Kings 15:13 and II Chron 15:16, which speak of Asa’s removing “the abominable image for Asherah” which his mother made ($\text{hr'v\ddot{a}l} \text{' tc, | pmi ht'f. [' . . . hk' [m]$).

50. See Ford (1975: 234–235) for a brief survey of scholarly opinions on the identity of these virgins, whether they were symbolic for all Christians, or they were true “ascetics,” or they were ritually pure soldiers surrounding the military Lamb-Lion. Allen (1920: II, 9) concluded that a “monkish interpolator,” probably John’s editor, identified the 144,000 as male celibates rather than all of them being Christian females and males.

51. The twelfth book in the polemical treatise published between 1380–1400 by Shem-Tob ben-Isaac ben-Shaprut, entitled !xwb !ba (*‘eben bohan* > *Eben Bohan*) meaning “The Touchstone,” contains the entire Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. The critical edition of this Gospel has been published by George Howard, cited in the bibliography. 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

Here in this verse Shem Tob's *Matthew* adds "these are those who have not sinned" (װאָן אַל רַחָא ~חַװלָא).

52. Here Shem Tob's *Matthew* adds "who subdue their desire" (~רַצָּי תָא ~יִחַבְּוֹקֵי).

53. Among those who were able to act as though they were eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom were the Essenes, who were probably related to the community at Qumran. Josephus (*Jewish Wars* II: 8: 2) wrote,

These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

54. See Chapter 31 "The Misreading which Led to Hate in Luke 14:26–27," in *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*.

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ADDENDUM

Katherine Bushnell’s publication *God’s Word to Women: 100 Bible Studies On Woman’s Place in the Divine Economy*, first published in 1923, was republished in 1943 by Raymond Munson and is available in print and online [click [HERE](#)], thanks to the publishers of the *God’s Word to Women* web page [click [HERE](#)]. It was a pioneering work which boldly challenged traditional male chauvinist interpretations of many biblical texts, especially Gen 3:16, which in the MT reads,.

וְיָרַבְתִּי אֶת־כֹּל־בְּעָבְרִי וְיָרַבְתִּי אֶת־כֹּל־בְּעָבְרִי וְיָרַבְתִּי אֶת־כֹּל־בְּעָבְרִי וְיָרַבְתִּי אֶת־כֹּל־בְּעָבְרִי
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KJV

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Septuagint

kai. th| gunaiki. eipen plhqunwn plhqunw/ taj lupaj sou
 kai. ton stenagmon sou en lupaij texh| tekna
 kai. proj ton andra sou h' apostrof|, sou
 kai. autoj sou kurieusei

And to the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy groanings; in pain thou shalt bring forth children, and thy turning shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Appealing in part to the translation of the Septuagint, Bushnell argued that this verse should be translated as, “*Unto the woman He said. ‘A snare hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing. . . . Thou art turning away to thy husband, and he*

shall rule over thee” (italics added). However, Bushnell’s translation of **hBrā; hBrḥ;** as “*A snare hath increased*” requires the deletion of one letter from **hBrā; hBrḥ;**. The first word is an infinitive absolute used as an adverb of intensity for the second word, a verb of the same stem **bbṛ** meaning “to be great.” Both are in the *Hiph’el* (the causative stem) meaning “making great I will make great.” To make **hBrā; hBrḥ;** mean “*a snare made great*” the final **h** of **hBrā;** needs to be deleted. The **h** on the end of this word, if it is read as a noun or participle, makes it a feminine form. But the infinitive absolute, **hBrḥ;** when read as a perfect form of the verb is a masculine singular. The serpent was also a masculine creature and would not be referred to by using a feminine participle. Thus, to make **hbra** refer to the serpent as *a snare* or *one-lying-in-wait* (a masculine participle or noun) the **hbra** would have to be corrected to **bra**. But for Bushnell any such “correction” would violate her view of the inerrancy of the text.

With reference to the word **hbrḥ;** “thy conception” in Gen 3:16, Bushnell stated (§ 121),

This word [“conception”] is spelled in Hebrew HRN—but that is *not* the correct Hebrew way to spell “conception.” The latter occurs, and correctly spelled, in Ruth 4:13 and Hosea 9:11, and nowhere else. The real word, “conception,” as it occurs in the above passages, is spelled HRJWN. This word in Genesis comes two letters short of spelling the word. All Hebrew scholars know this. For instance, Spurrell says: “It is an abnormal formation which occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament.” Our highest lexical authorities (Brown, Briggs

and Driver) call it a “contraction, or erroneous.” Indeed! and is one half the human family to be placed at the mercy of the other half, on such a flimsy claim as this!

However, the MT $\%nrh$ “thy conception” begins with the conjunction $\%$ “and.” It ends with the suffix $\%$ “your / thy.” In between is the noun $!rhe$ (HRN) “conception,” which is from the stem hrh' “to conceive.” There is no error in the text with this word, as suggested in the Hebrew lexicon, for there were two nouns in Hebrew meaning “conception,” not just one. The first, $!rhe$ (HRN), fits the pattern clearly attested in the words

- haq' and $!aq'$ / $!Aaq'$ (BDB 144; Jastrow 202) “to rise up” and “exultation”
- hrx' and $!rx'$ (BDB 354) “to burn with anger” and “burning anger,” with the defective spelling appearing in Exod 15:7, $^nrx'$ “your anger” for the full spelling $^narx'$

In this pattern a $!$ (the *nun* of the syllable *on*) was suffixed to the stem to form a noun and at the same time the third letter of the stem—the consonantal y (*yod*) of the original yaq and yrx —disappeared completely. In the same way the third letter of the original stem yrh “to conceive” disappeared completely, and as a result the noun became $!rh$ “conception,” just like the $!aq$ “exultation” and $!rx$ “burning anger.” The second noun in Hebrew meaning “conception,” based upon the stem yrh/hrh was the $!Ayrhe$ (HRJWN) which is found in the Samaritan Pentateuch of Gen 3:16 and the MT of Job 9:17 and Psalm 139:11. In this “dialect” also a $!$ (the *nun* of the syllable *on*) was suffixed to the stem to form a noun but the

third letter of the stem—the consonantal *y* (*yod*) of the original *yrh*—was retained. Thus, there were the nouns *!rbe*/*!Arhe* “conception” and *!yøhe*/*!Ayrhe* “conception.”

As for translating *%nrhw* “and thy conception” as “and thy sighing,” Bushnell stated (§ 121):

The Septuagint gives the correct reading here, which is, “*thy sighing*,”—the whole sentence meaning, then, “*A snare hath increased thy sorrow and thy sighing*.” Many ancient authorities agree with the Septuagint.

However, the Septuagint’s [kai ton stenagmon sou](#) “and your sighs” is not a translation of *hrh* “to conceive” or its derivative nouns *!Ayrhe* and *!rbe*. Rather, it is a translation of the stem *!nr* (BDB 943), noting especially the spelling *ynr* “my cries (of joy)” in Psalm 32:7 and the *ynrø* “cry out (in anguish)” in Lam 2:19. The Hebrew *Vorlage* used by the Septuagint translators probably read *\$nrw*, but if it matched the MT, they read the *h* of *%nrhw* as a definite article which, as a rule, does not appear on a noun which has a possessive suffix.

The phrase *%teqWT.%vqai la* was translated by Bushnell (§ 130–145) as “thou art turning away to thy husband,” in agreement with twenty-one of twenty-eight ancient versions and translations of *heqWT*. (*tešûqâ*) as “turning” in Gen 3:16, 4:7, and Cant 7:10. However, in Gen 3:16 all of the translations and versions which have “turning” rather than “desire” are probably translating the word *hbWT*. (*tešûbâ*) rather than the word *hqWT*. (*tešûqâ*). This difference reflects a scribal error in the Hebrew text tradition in which there was a mis-

reading of the original Hebrew **q** (*qoph*) in **hq**WVT. (*tešûqâ*) as a **b** (*beth*), which changed the word to **hb**WVT. (*tešûbâ*). This **hb**WVT. is from the root **b**WV “to turn back, to return, to repent.” (The noun **hb**WVT. [*tešûbâ*]) for example appears in I Samuel 7:17.) Thus, the difference between “turning” or “desiring” was not a matter of two different ways in which **hq**WVT. (*tešûqâ*) was translated. Rather it was a matter of a scribal misreading in Hebrew of a **q** as a **b** which spread to various text traditions. (See Jastrow, 1903: [1540](#) and [1703](#).) The Arabic cognates of **hq**WVT. (*tešûqâ*) “desire” are **j** NH (*šawq^{un}*) “desire or longing of the soul,” **ÒòBS** (*šâ^ciq^{un}*) “exciting one’s desire of the soul,” and **i** áH (*šayyiq^{un}*) “desirous long of the soul” (Lane, 1872: [1620](#)).

The graphic similarity of the Aramaic **atb**WVT. (*ti^cubta^c*) “desire” and **ayb**WVT. (*te^cubayya^c*) “returnee” (Jastrow, 1903: [1641](#)) could be responsible for similar variants in the Aramaic Targums. Bushnell’s claim (§133) that the first phrase of the Vulgate’s *et sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tui* (“and you shalt be under your husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over you”) is “mere guesswork; it is no translation of the original words,” cannot be sustained in light of the Arabic cognate **j** ND (*sûq*) “to have the ruling or ordering in an affair” (Lane, 1872: [1471](#)).

Bushnell also had doubts about the KJV text of Gen 3:15,

bql' **Wp**WVT. **hT**'a^vvaro **^p**WV^ya^Wh

It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

autoj sou thrhsei kefal hn
kai. su. thrhseij autou/ pternan
He shall watch against your head,

and you shalt watch against his heel.

Vulgate

ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius

She shall crush your head,
and you shall watch-and-wait for her heel.

Here are her comments from ¶ 115–116,

“Bruise” is an obscure word. . . . The sense “bruise,” so unsuitable for the figure of a biting serpent, has been fixed upon on account of St. Paul’s words, Romans 16:20, “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*” But we have no proof that Paul meant to translate the word *shuph*; he may have meant merely to give the general sense of the phrase, as it relates to man’s part, which is clear to us all, whatever *shuph* means.

Some of the ancient versions translate, here, “lying in wait,” or a kindred idea; and on the strength of this the R.V. gives us this as an alternative meaning in the margin. But this leaves the thought incomplete—to say merely that the “seed” will “lie in wait for his head.” In that case, the seed of woman might in the end be defeated, while the real force of the prophecy is one of victory. No, *shuph* means something else, but we must leave the matter unsettled.

But there is really little obscurity here once it is recognized that the “bruise” in the KJV and ASV meant “crush,” which was the meaning of “bruise” in Old English. The Greek *suntribw*, in Rom 16:20 means “to shatter, to shiver, to crush, to have one’s head broken” (Liddell and Scott 1728–1729).

Moreover, there is now no uncertainty about (A) the meaning of @W, stems I, II, and III, and (B) @aV', stems I and II. The by-forms @W and @aV' are a perfect match for the same

type of variant by-forms with the following stems:

- ~aeq' ~llq "standing, rising" (Jastrow 1306, 1331)
- ~ae' ~llr "to be high" (Jastrow 1437, 1460)
- ~ae' ~yrf "ox" (BDB 910; Jastrow 1437)

The verb @av', stem I, means "to gasp, to pant, to pant after, to long for" and @av', stem II, means "to crush, to trample upon" (BDB 983; Jastrow 1508). This @av', stem II, has the by-form @llw, stem II, "to crush, to grind," as well as the Old English definition "to bruise" (BDB 1003; KBS 4: 1446–1447).

The Hebrew @llw, stem I, "to cover, to adorn," comes in Psalm 139: 11, ynpwly>%vxθ%a; "surely the darkness covers me." This @llw, stem I, is a cognate of the Arabic eñh (šûf) "to cover, to adorn" (Lane 1872: 1619). The Hebrew @llw, stem III, "to look, to see," is the cognate of the Arabic eñh (šûf) "to look down on, to see," with e!ñh (šawwâf) meaning "a sharp sighted man" (Lane 1872: 1619). The Vulgate's *insidiaberis* "to watch-and-wait" and the Septuagint's thrh-sei . . . thrhsej, "he shall watch . . . you shall watch," make sense once the Arabic eñh (šûf) "to see," the cognate of @llw, stem III, comes into focus.

Furthermore, the triyei/triḅw "to bruise, to pound, to knead" in some Greek codices of 3:15 is obviously a translation of @av' stem II and/or @llw, stem II. Also the prostriyei "rubbing" in Aquila and the ql iyei "rubbing" in Symmachus reflect this same meaning of @llw, stem II, much like the @av', stem II, in Amos 2:7,

~yLD; varB. #ra;rp;[]I [; ~ypia]Mh;
 the ones panting after the dust of the earth
 on the head of the poor

Septuagint

ta. patouhta epi. ton couh thj ghj
 kai. ekonduj izon eij kefalaj ptwcwh
 the ones trampling on the dust of the earth,
 and they have smitten upon the heads of the poor

Vulgate

qui conterunt super pulverem terrae capita pauperum
 who crush upon the dust of the earth the heads of the poor.

Bushnell (§ 167) maintained that Genesis 3, “rightly translated and interpreted, reveals to us the fact that lordship of the husband over the wife, which began when man sinned, was Satanic in origin.” But she failed to explain how the *serpent*, which was hwhy>hf[' rva] hdfh; tVx; I Kmi ~Wr [' “the most crafty of all the beasts of the field which Yahweh had made,” was transformed into the supra-earthly Satan. Moreover, Bushnell missed the best translation of two key phrases, namely, the ADgnK. rz[e AL-Hf,[a, “I will make for him a savior as *his-front-one*” in Gen 2:18, and the %B'-I vmyl aVhw> “and he shall be just like you” in Gen 3:16 (see note 9 and pp. 2–15 above).

In commenting on I Cor 11:10, Bushnell (§ 254–259) noted that a Valentinian cited by Clement of Alexandria was teaching that “*the woman ought to wear a power.*” She argued that the reading of “veil” there as “power” was due to a confusion in Coptic of the nouns *ouershishi* (sic) “authority, power” and *ouershoun* (sic) “veil.” She noted that fifteen Coptic manuscripts have the “power,” whereas four or five have “veil.”

However, there is little graphic or aural similarity between the Coptic **erSiSi** (*eršiši*) “power” and **rSwn** (*ršōn*) “veil,” as spelled in Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary*. It is also difficult to concur with her that a Coptic variant was responsible for the **εκουσια** “power” in all of the major Greek manuscripts.

The problems I Cor 11:10 with “veil” versus “authority” disappear once the **S** of **εκουσια** is removed from the word and the remaining six letters are recognized as a transliterated Aramaic loanword. The **εκουσιαν** appearing in all of the major Greek manuscripts needs to be corrected to **εκουιαν** and read as the loanword **awaska**, “a covering,” a variant of the well attested **ywski** (Jastrow 634, 652–653). (The prosthetic **aw** of **ywaska**, is analogous to the variant **[Arza**, in Job 31: 22 for **[Arz** “arm” and is analogous to the Greek prosthetic **ew** with the variants **ετqej** and **εqej** “yesterday.”) Using a loanword for an item of clothing is quite common, like the English *scarf* coming from the Old French *escherpe* and the English *gown* coming from the Late Latin *gunna* “a leather garment.” For a more detailed study of I Cor 11:10, see pp. 55–58 of my book *Clarifying New Testament Aramaic Names & Words and the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* ([click here](#)).

These criticisms of Bushnell’s translations and her exegesis of Genesis 1–3 and Corinthians 11 are not made to undermine her agenda to expose the three millennia of biased male chauvinist interpretations which have erroneously deprecated women. Hopefully, now that her book is [online](#) and again in print, the corrections present in these notes will strengthen her arguments.

II

WHY THE NAME OF GOD WAS INEFFABLE

The name “Yahweh” occurs in Genesis over one hundred twenty-five times, from the time of Cain and Abel down to the death of Joseph. It is therefore surprising to read in Exod 6:2–3, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as *‘ēl šadday* ‘God Almighty,’ but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them.” It is all the more surprising because as *‘ēl šadday* ‘God Almighty’ appears only six times in Genesis (compared to twenty-three times in Job and eleven times elsewhere). However, the disparity disappears once

- the disjunctive “but” in Exod 6:3 is read as the conjunctive “and,”
- and the negative particle *loʿ* “not” in Exod 6:3 is read as the emphatic affirmative particle *luʿ* “indeed.”¹

By simply changing one vowel (an *o* to a *u*) Exod 6:3 can be read as “I appeared . . . as *‘ēl šadday* ‘God Almighty’ and by my name Yahweh I did indeed make myself known.” This reading of Exod 6:3 removes the disparity with Gen 4:26, which states that from the time of Enosh “men began to call upon the name of Yahweh” (*hwhy* > ~vB. *arq.li l xllh za*).

The holy name *hwhy* “Yahweh” occurs over 6,000² times in the Old Testament, but it does not appear even once in the New Testament. There was a good reason for the shift from the pre-exilic Israelites’ freedom of to say the holy name and the post-exilic Jewish prohibition against ever pronouncing the name “Yahweh” in private or in public—which became so pervasive that the meaning of the name *hwhy* and its proper pronunciation and derivation were forgotten.³

In the Old Testament there are references to Israelites “calling upon the name of Yahweh,” which certainly required

them to say the name. In addition to Gen 4:26 are three texts:

- Psalm 116:13 and 17, ar'qa, hwhy>~vBw “and I will call upon the name of Yahweh.”
- Zeph 3:9, I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of Yahweh (hwhy ~vB. ~Lkuarq.lj).

There are far more texts which called for the Israelites “to swear by the name of Yahweh.” The following four texts from Jeremiah and Isaiah are noteworthy:

- Jer 4:2, “And you shall swear (T' [Bvnh], ‘As Yahweh lives!’ (hwhy>yx) in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”
- Jer 5:2, “Though they say, ‘As Yahweh lives,’ yet they swear falsely” (w [bwy/rqvl ;!kd 'lrmeyOhAhy>yx; ~ai]).
- Jer 12:16–17, “And it shall come to pass, if they diligently learn . . . to swear by my name (ymivBi [bwhil), ‘As Yahweh lives!’ (hwhy>yx) . . . then they shall be built up in the midst of my people.”
- Isa 48:1, “Hear this, O house of Jacob, . . . who swear by the name of Yahweh” (hwhy>~vB. ~y [Bvnh]).

The texts and targums of Deut 6:13 and 10:20 are especially important to note for they demonstrate how the holy name hwhy (YHWH) was generally coded in Aramaic as yyy (YYY) or ywy (YWY)—lest the holy name be profaned in writing or in speech. Even the noun ~yhil ʾl/“God” was intentionally misspelled by some as ~yqil ʾl/. The MT and

targums of Deut 6:13 and 10:20 read as follows:

aryTi ^yh,l á/ hw>ta,
 ` [bW'Ti AmvbW [qB'dxi AbW] dbq[!t; Ataw▶

You shall fear Yahweh your God;
 you shall serve him, [and cleave to him],
 and swear by his name.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

!yl xd !wwht !wkql a yyy ~dq-!m
 !wxlpt ywmdqw
 `!mwmt jwvqb hyrmym ~wvbw

Before YYY your God you shall fear,
 and before Him you shall serve,
 and by the name of his word in truth you shall swear.

Targum Onkelos⁴

xlpti yhAmdqW l xdti \$hl a' ywy ty"
 `~yyq;t. hym&bw

YWY your God you shalt fear, and serve before him,
 and by his name you shall swear.

Peshiṭta

ywy hmvbw xwl p hlw lxd \$hla ayrm

Fear the Lord your God,
 and serve him, and swear by his name.

The bracketed phrase [qB'dxi AbW] in the MT and its bracketed translation, [and cleave to him], is found only in Deut 10:20, but the Septuagint has the phrase translated in both Deut 6:13 and 10:20. It reads as follows:

kurion ton qeon sou fobhqhsh| kai. autw| latreuseij
 kai. proj auton kol|hqhsh| kai. tw|onomati autou/ omh|

You shalt fear (the) Lord thy God, and him shalt thou serve;
 and you shall cleave to him, and by his name you shall swear.

These nine texts are sufficient evidence for one to conclude that pre-exilic Israelites were free to say “Yahweh” when they called upon him and swore by his name. But post-exilic Jews and New Testament Jews never pronounced the name “Yahweh.” Instead they substituted *yhAdai* (*‘ădônay*), an honorific plural meaning “my LORD” or they simply said *~Vh;* (*haššēm*) “the Name.” They did this for a good reason.

The good reason for never saying the holy name is found in the Hebrew text of Lev 24:16a and the various ways the verb *bqñ* in this verse was translated into Aramaic and Greek. Before focusing on Lev 24:16 a statement about the verb *bqñ* is in order. The Hebrew/Aramaic *bqñ* had different meanings. The most widely attested meaning of *bqñ* is “to bore, to perforate,” as in 2 Kings 12:10, *ATI dB. r x0 bQñ*: “and he bored a hole in its lid.” The nouns related to this verb are (a) *bqñ* “hole, incision, perforation,” (b) *hb'qñ* “female, female gender, female sex,” and (c) *tVbqñ* “female genitalia,” all of which are cited by Jastrow (1903: 930).

The second meaning of *bqñ* is “to curse,” as in Prov 11:26, *~Aal. VhbQñl rB' [ñm*, “the one withholding grain the people curse him.” This *bqñ* is a by-form of *bbq'* “to curse,” which appears in Num 23:8, *l aehBq; al { bQñ, hm'* “how shall I curse (whom) God has not cursed.”⁵ The third meaning of *bqñ* is “to name, to pronounce, to specify,” as in Gen

30:28, [^]rk'f. h**bcq**"name your wages" (Jastrow 1903, 930). And the fourth meaning of **bcq**"is "to blaspheme," as in Lev 24:11, | ~~Lev~~ ~ ~~Vh~~; taetyl ~~ae~~ fVh; hV'ah'!B, bQ~~th~~, which was abbreviated in the Vulgate (by omitting the three words of the subject) to just

cumque blasphemasset nomen et maledixisset
when he had blasphemed the name and cursed.

However, the Septuagint translated this as

kai. eponomasaj o' uiōj thj gunaikoj
thj Israhli,tidoj to. onoma kathrasato
and the son of the Israelite woman
named the name and cursed.

This Greek translation reflects the third definition of **bcq**", wherein simply saying the holy name was the same as cursing or blaspheming the name—making it a capital offense.

The fifth meaning of **bcq**"is "to scrutinize, to investigate." This **bcq**"is the cognate of the Arabic %h^ā (naqaba) "he examined, he inquired into" (Lane 1893: 2833°). This meaning, (though not cited on Jastrow) is related to the first definition, above, with the idea being "to *penetrate* the mind" or "to *dig up* the facts," or "to *bore into* the details."

With these five meanings of **bcq**"in focus one can appreciate the varied translations of Lev 24:16a in Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Latin.

Masoretic Text

t~~m~~ tAm h~~w~~h~~y~~ > ~ve**bcq**>

And he who curses the name of Yahweh
he shall surely be put to death.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

yyd amv @rxmw vrpmd !am ~rb
ljqty aljqta

But whoever explains and blasphemes the name of YYY,
shall surely be put to death.

Targum Neofiti

!ypdgb yy ~v yyd hymv vrpv yd !mw
ljqty hljqtm

And whoever declares his name of YYY,
the name YYY with blasphemies
shall surely be put to death.

Peshitta

ljqtn wljqtm ayrmd hmv vwrpnd !mw

And whoever explains the name of the Lord
shall surely be put to death.

Septuagint

onomazwn de. to. onoma kuri,ou qanatw| qanatousqw

And he that names the name of (the) Lord,
let him die the death.

Vulgate and Douay Rheims

et qui blasphemaverit nomen Domini morte moriatur

And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord,
dying let him die.

Jastrow's definitions of the Aramaic **VRP** which appears in the targums include (a) "to separate, to divide, to distinguish" and (b) "to define, to explain, to interpret" (1903: 1242–1243). Payne Smith's definitions of the Syriac **VRP** include

similarly (a) “to set apart” and (2) “to write distinctly, to describe clearly, to explain” (1957:465). Lamsa (1967: 145) translated this Syriac phrase as “and he who blasphemes the name of the Lord,” which is an acceptable translation of the **bqñ** in the Hebrew text, but it is not an acceptable translation of the **VRP** in the Syriac text. The name “Pharisee” is derived from this stem, and the Pharisees were distinguished *separatists* and *interpreters* of the Torah, but never *blasphemers*.

The other verb in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, **@rX**, means “to revile, to blaspheme, to shame.” It is a synonym of the Syriac and Aramaic **@dq**, found in the Targum Neofiti (Jastrow, 1903: 214, 505; Payne Smith 1957: 61).

The fifth definition of **bqñ** “to examine, to inquire, to investigate” (cited above on page 5) lies behind those translations of Lev 24:16a which prohibit any and all inquiry into the meaning and etymology of the holy name **hw̄hy**. Here then was the tension in the Torah texts: Israelites were *to call* (**ar̄q̄**) upon the name of Yahweh, and *to swear* (**[bV]**) by the name of Yahweh. But at the same time, according to Lev 24: 16, they were

- not *to name* (**bqñ**) the name,
- not *to pronounce* (**bqñ**) the name,
- not *to examine* (**bqñ**) the name,
- not *to blaspheme* (**bqñ**) the name.

Were anyone to *nāqab* the holy name of Yahweh—by any or all definitions of *nāqab*—they were to be put to death by stoning. To avoid being stoned to death post-exilic Jews did not *pronounce, name* or *explain* the name **hw̄hy**.

Exod 20:7 and Deut 5:11

awV'l ; ^yh,l @/ hwhy>~veta, aFti al {

You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain.

Lev 19:12

^yh,l @/ ~veta, T'l Lxi>rqV'l ; ymivbi W[b.Vti-al {>

And you shall not swear falsely by my name,
profaning the name of your God.

The third commandment of the Decalogue reinforced the words of Lev 24:16. The uncertainty about the third commandment was the precise meaning of awV'l ; “in vain.” The noun awV' “vain, empty” in this commandment could be interpreted as referring to any of the following actions:

- #al' “to blaspheme,” which appears in 2 Sam 12:14, “you [David] have really blasphemed Yahweh”; Isa 52:5, “their masters howl in triumph, declares Yahweh, and my name is blasphemed continually”; Ezek 35:12, “I, Yahweh, have heard all the blasphemies which you have uttered against the mountains of Israel”; Neh 9:18 “even when they made for themselves a molten calf . . . and committed great blasphemies”; Neh 9:26, “. . . they killed your prophets . . . and committed great blasphemies”; and Ps 74:10, “Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?”
- llq' “to curse,” which appears in Exod 22:28, “Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people” (NIB); Lev 24:15, “Those who blaspheme God will suffer the consequences of their guilt and be punished” (NLT); 1 Sam 3:13 “. . . because his [Eli's] sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them” (RSV, NRS).

- **bqñ** “to blaspheme,” which occurs only in Lev 24:10–17, which tells, as noted above, of an Egypto-Israelite young man who blasphemed and cursed the name (~**Vñ**), and as a result was stoned to death.

Just as these three actions (**#an**, **l l q'**, and **bqñ**) carried the death penalty, so also anyone guilty of “taking the name of Yahweh in vain” could expect to receive the same punishment. The only sure precaution against ever taking “the name in vain” was never to utter the name.

Sura 2:224–225 in the *Qur'an* provides both a commentary and a contrast for the third commandment of the Decalogue. It reads,

Use not Allah’s name for your vain oaths, making them an excuse for refraining from doing good and working righteous and promoting public welfare. . . . Allah will not call you to account for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but he will call you to account for the evil to which you have deliberately assented.

In the Jewish community there was great concern even for any unintentional error in any oath made in Yahweh’s name. As a result, out of fear as well as a statement of piety, the name **hwñy** was never pronounced. When the eyes saw the letters **hwñy** the tongue said either **ynAdaj** “my LORD” or ~**Vñ**; “the NAME.”⁶

NOTES

1. The literature on the emphatic **l** and **al** continues to grow. In addition to references cited by Richardson (1966: 89), note McDaniel (1968) 206–208; Blommerde (1969) 31; Dahood (1975) 341–342); Whitley (1975) 202–204; Hueh-

nergard (1983) 569–593; McDaniel (2000) 11, 20, 156, 181–182, 211; and McDaniel (2003) 95–96, 129–130; 144, 148, 203, 224, 230, 324, and 332. For a quick reference see Cyrus Gordon (1965) 76 and 425.

2. Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1906: 217–218) noted that in the MT the name spelled as **hAhy** occurs 6,518 times and the spelling **hAhy?** occurs 305 times.

3. The creative power of God is actually reflected in the name *Yahweh*. Before *Yahweh* became an ineffable name it was pronounced and spelled in a number of different ways. The early church fathers pronounced it as *Taô* or *Tao* or *Yahô*, all of which point to the holy trigrammaton **why** used in personal names like *Yehonatan* / *Yônatan* / *Jonathan*, meaning “Yahweh has given.” In Greek sources it was pronounced as *Iabe* or *Iae* or *Iaoue* or *Iaouai*, all of which reflect the tetragrammaton **hwby** and point to its original pronunciation as the verb *yahweh* “he caused to be, he caused to exist.” The last syllable *-yah* of the liturgical phrase *hallelu-yah* “Praise Yahweh!” indicates that the initial syllable of **hwby** was *Ya*, not *Yi*. This interpretation that **why** and **hwby** are causative forms of the verb—with the meaning “cause to be” rather than the simple form meaning “to be”—has the support of David Freedman (1986: 500, 513) who, in agreement with his mentor William Albright, stated

“*Yahweh* must be causative The name *yahweh* must therefore be a *hiphil* [causative]. Although the causative of *hwy* is otherwise unknown in Northwest Semitic . . . , it seems to be attested in the name of the God of Israel.”

Freedman also suggested (1986: 515–516) that the statement “I am who I am,” in Exod 3:14 could be read as a causative meaning “I create whatever I create,” to be interpreted as “I am the creator par excellence.” (Shifting from “I am” to “I create” requires the verb *hyha* to be read as *‘ahyeh* rather than *‘ehyeh*, with the *a* vowel in the first syllable being needed to make it a causative form.) So as not to profane the holy name of God, the Jewish scribes *deliberately* misspelled the name of Yahweh by combining the consonants *hwhy* with either the vowels of the substitute title *‘Adonai* “my Lords” (an honorific plural) or the vowels of *‘elohîm* “God” (an honorific plural).

4. Targum Neofiti in 6:23 reads:

!wwht !wkhla yyy htnykv rgya ty
 `!ymyyqmww !y[btvm !w[btvm !wl xdt a yyy ty

But in 10:20 Neofiti reads:

!yl xd !wwht !wkhla yyy ~dq-!m
 wqbttht yrwa !plwabw !yylcm !wwht ywmdqw
 `!ymyyqmww !y[btvm !wwht hvjdq hymvbw !wqbdth

5. The by-forms *bqñ* and *bbq'* “to curse” are like the by-forms *~hñ* “to growl, to groan” and *~mñ'* “to make a noise.”

6. *Jehovah* was a hybrid name composed of the consonants JHWH/YHVH and the vowels of *ynAda* (*‘adônay*), the honorific “my Lords” or the vowels of *~yhilca*. The *ā-ô-a* vowels of the *‘adônay* shifted to *e-ô-a* in the name *Jehovah* because the name begins with a *yod* (J = Y/J) instead of the

aleph (א) of יהוה (YHWH) (ʿadōnāy). The first variant spellings of *Jehovah* to appear in Latin and English books and Bibles are as follows:

- 1278 *Jehova/Yohoua* in the book *Pugio fidei Christianae* (*Dagger of Christian Faith*) by the Spanish monk Raymond Martin.
- 1303 *Yohouah* in the book *Victory Against the Ungodly Hebrews* by Porchetus de Salvaticis, a Genoese Carthusian monk.
- 1518 *Iehoua* in *De Arcanis Catholicæ Veritatis*, 1518, folio xliii, by Pope Leo X's confessor, Peter Galatin.
- 1530 *Iehouah* in William Tyndale's Pentateuch.
- 1611 *Jehovah* in the King James Bible of 1611.
- 1671 *Jehovah* in the 1671 edition of the King James Bible.

III

ELIMINATING ‘THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD’ IN II SAMUEL 12:14

II Sam 12:11–14 in the RSV

Thus says Yahweh, “Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” 13 David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “the LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned *the LORD*, the child that is born to you shall die.”

I have added the italics in vs. 14 to highlight the omission in the RSV, NRS and NJB of any translation for the **אֹיְבֵי** in the MT, which at first glance seems to mean “the enemies of.” The full text of 12:14, with the problematic **אֹיְבֵי** underlined, appears in the MT and Septuagint as

אָפֶס כִּי־נֵאֵץ נֹאצָת אֶת־אֹיְבֵי יְהוָה
בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה גַּם הַבֵּן הַיֵּלֹוד לְךָ מֹות יָמוּת

But, because you have utterly scorned *the enemies of Yahweh*, by this deed the child that is born to you shall die.”

πλὴν ὅτι παροξύνων παρώξυνας
τοὺς ἐχθροὺς κυρίου ἐν τῷ ῥήματι τούτῳ
καί γε ὁ υἱός σου ὁ τεχθείς σοι θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖται

But because you have greatly upset
the enemies of the Lord by this thing,
your son also that is born to you shall surely die.

Commentators have failed to recognize that this problematic אֹיְבֵי in II Sam 12:14 is *not* the well attested noun אֹיֵב “enemy,” but the *Hithpa^cel* of the rare verb אִיַּיְבַּ (°*iyyēb*), the cognate of the Arabic أَوَّب (°*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 أَوَّب (°*awwāb*) “frequent in returning to God.”). The MT אֹיֵבֵי is not the sign of the direct object but the prefix of the imperfect *Hithpa^cel* (1cs).

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, [ַ]*t yhw*, is reflected only in a single Greek cursive MS (c = 376). MT (cf. LXX, OL. Syr., Targ.) has [ַ]*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[ַ]ēṣ ni[ַ]aṣtā*) as a causative *Pi^cel* (GK² §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 on the grounds that *ni[ַ]ēṣ* 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 אֹיֵבֵי as a euphemistic addition in this verse falters in light of the 5,930 other occurrences of

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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 ם of the MT אַתְּ-אֵיבִי can be transposed to become an initial ן and the reconstructed וַאֲתֵאִיב can be pointed as וַאֲתֵאִיב, the *Hithpa^cel* (GKC §54^o) 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 22:14, but fits perfectly in 22:13. The two verses can be restored as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-נָתָן
חָטָאתִי לַיהוָה וַאֲתֵאִיב
וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל-דָּוִד
גַּם-יְהוָה הֶעֱבִיר חָטָאתְךָ לֹא תָמוּת:
אֲפֹס כִּי-נִאֲצַח יְהוָה בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה
גַּם הַבֵּן הַיֵּלֹד 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 אֵיב (°*iyēb*) “to repent, to return” (a synonym of שׁוּב “to return”) appears also in I Sam 25:22. However, it has yet to be recognized by translators and commentators. About half of the translations follow the Septuagint and ignore the MT אֵיבִי, while others follow the Vulgate and translate it

traditionally as “enemies.” Here is a sampling:

- unto the enemies of David, KJV, ASV, NAS, NAU, NKJ
- to the foes of David DRA
- *inimicis David* Vulgate
- τῶ Δαυιδ LXX
- with David NIV, NIB,
- to David RSV, NRS, NAB
- on David NJB

In this verse the verb carries a nuance which survived in its Arabic cognate **أَوْب** (*ʾawwâb*) “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 (**עַרְ-הַבֶּקֶר**), 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 τῶ 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:

וַיִּשָׁב־לִי רָעָה תַחַת טוֹבָה:
כֹּה־יַעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים לְאִיבִי וְכֹה יִסְיֶף

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

And [Nabal] returned to me evil for good.

Thus may God do upon my *returning-for-the-night*
and do even more,

if by morning I leave(alive) from all who belong to him
(anyone) 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.”

Just as the Arabic cognate **أوب** (*awwâb*) “to repent, to return” makes it possible to eliminate the **אֶת־אֹיְבֵי יְהוָה** “the enemies of Yahweh” in II Sam 12:14, the same cognate makes it possible to eliminate the **אֹיְבֵי דָוִד** “the enemies of David” in I Sam 25:22.

IV

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

PSALM 40:7 (MT)

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

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

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require.

LXX Psalm 39:7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The commentators and translators, like Lamsa, who paraphrased אָזְנִים פָּרִיתָ לִי and אֲדָנָא דִּנְהָ נִמְבַּח לִי, to mean “you opened my ears” or “you gave me understanding,” have appealed directly or indirectly to Isaiah 50:4–5.⁴

אֲדָנִי יְהוָה נָתַן לִי לְשׁוֹן לְמוֹדִים . . .
 יַעִיר בְּבִקְרִי בְּבִקְרִי

יְעִיר לִי אָזֶן לְשִׁמְעַת פְּלִמּוּרִים:
 אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה פָּתַח־לִי אָזֶן
 וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא מָרִיתִי

My Lord Yahweh gave me the tongue of a teacher

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

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

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

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ

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

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

I Sam 15:22

Isa 66:3–4

Hos 6:6

Jer 7:21–23

Amos 5:15–21

Psa 50:8–16, 23⁶

Mic 6:6–8

Psa 51:16–17

Isa 1:11–17

Psa 69:30–31,

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

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

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire.

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

Burnt offering and sin offering you did not request!

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

NOTES

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

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

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

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

ADDENDUM

I Samuel 15:22

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

Hosea 6:6

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

Amos 5:21–25

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

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

Micah 6:6–8

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

Isaiah 1:11–17

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

Isaiah 66:3–4

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

Jeremiah 7:21–23

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

Psalm 50:8-16, 23

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

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

Psalm 51:16–17

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

Psalm 69:30–31

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

V

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF PROV 25:21–22 AND ROM 12:17–21

In the imprecatory lament of Psalm 140:10 is this wish, יְמִיטוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גְּחָלִים בָּאֵשׁ יִפְּלוּ בְּמַהְמָרוֹת בְּלִי-קוּמוֹ
“Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into pits, no more to rise!” It is obvious that the psalmist wanted the *burning coals* to be used as a weapon of death against his enemies. As Briggs (1907: 504–505) noted,

The author is thinking of divine retribution through a theophanic storm coming upon the enemies; possibly such as that upon Sodom, but more probably such as decided the battles of Beth-horon and the Kishon, Jos. 10^{11sq.} Ju. 5, cf. also Ps. 18^{17–16}.

By contrast, in Prov 25:21–22 a similar reference to *burning coals* to be used against an enemy had a redemptive purpose for the good of the enemy. These verses read

אִם-רָעִיב שָׁנְאָךָ הֵאֱכִלְהוּ לֶחֶם וְאִם-צָמָא הִשְׁקֵהוּ מַיִם:
כִּי גְחָלִים אֶתָּה חֹתֵה עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיְהִיָּה יִשְׁלֵם-לָךְ:

ἐὰν πεινᾷ ὁ ἐχθρὸς σου τρέφε αὐτόν ἐὰν διψᾷ πότιζε αὐτό
τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν
κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ κύριος ἀνταποδώσει σοι ἀγαθὰ

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
for so doing you will heap coals of fire upon his head,
and the Lord will reward you [*with good*].

The proper interpretation of verse 25:22a has baffled scholars over the centuries, down to the present time. In the last century, for example, R. B. Y. Scott (1965: 156) recognized that heaping coals of fire upon someone’s head was a form of torture. Scott called attention to Exod 23:4–5, as a

more effective model for returning good for evil to overcome an enemy:

If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up.

Surprisingly, the apostle Paul quoted Prov 25:21–22 in Rom 12:17–21, which reads as follows (with the quotation in italics and the Greek text in brackets):

Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, *“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head”* [τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ]. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

William Sandy and Arthur Headlam (1902: 365) raised the following questions and came to an Augustinian conclusion:

But with what purpose are we to “heap coals of fire on his head”? Is it (1) that we may be consoled for our kind act by knowing that he will be punished for his misdeeds? This is impossible, for it attributes a malicious motive, which is quite inconsistent with the context both here and in the O. T. In the latter the passage proceeds, “And the Lord shall reward thee,” implying that the deed is a good one; here we are immediately told that we are not to be “overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,” which clearly implies that we are

to do what is for our enemies' benefit. (2) Coals of fire must, therefore, mean, as most commentators since Augustine have said, the burning pangs of shame, which a man will feel when good is returned for evil, and which may produce remorse and penitence and contrition.

More recently Joseph Fitzmyer (1993: 657–658) in his commentary on Romans also acknowledged, “The meaning of Prov 25:22a, however, is quite obscure” and demonstrated this point by providing an excellent summary of the varied interpretations of Prov 25:22 and Rom 12:20 in *the following six paragraphs*, which are cited here in full (with his references and abbreviations found at the end of this chapter):

(1) T. K. Cheyne [1883], Dahood (“Two Pauline Quotations”), and Ramarosan (“‘Charbons ardents’”) understand the prep. *‘al* to mean “from” instead of “upon,” as it can in Ugaritic. Moreover, the ptc. *ḥōteh* means “remove” (see HALAT, 349: “wegnehmen”); hence, “remove coals from his head.” This meaning might suit the Hebrew text of the MT, but the LXX and Paul’s text clearly read *sōreusēs epi*, “heap upon” (BAGD, 800; B–A, 1595; LSJ, 1750). Hence the Greek text of 25:22a cannot tolerate such a meaning. Various explanations have been proposed for the Greek form of the verse.

(2) Origen (In *ep. ad Romanos* 9.23 [PG 14.1225]), Pelagius, Ambrosiaster (In *ep. ad Romanos* 12.20 [CSEL 81.416–17]), Augustine (*Expositio quarundam propositionum ex ep. ad Romanos* 63.3–4 [CSEL 84.44]; *De doctrina christiana* 3.56 [CSEL 80.94]), Jerome (*Ep.* 120.1 [CSEL 55.475–76]), and many who follow them (e.g., Käsemann, *Commentary*, 349) have understood the coals as a symbol of burning pangs of shame. The enemy would be moved by kindness to shame, remorse, and humiliation, which would burn like coals of fire upon his head. But such a symbolic use of burning coals is otherwise unattested, except perhaps in the fifth-century *Tg. Prov* 25:21–22: “If your enemy is famished, give him bread

to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will bring coals of fire upon his head, and God will deliver him to you.”

(3) Morenz (“Feurige Kohlen”) calls attention to a third-century Demotic text describing an Egyptian ritual in which a penitent carries on his head a dish of burning charcoal as an expression of repentance for offenses committed. Hence kindness to an enemy would make him express his repentance in this way before God. See Klassen, “Coals of Fire,” for a nuanced use of Morenz’s explanation.

(4) Some Greek patristic writers (e.g., Chrysostom, *In ep. ad Romanos* hom. 22.3 [PG 60.612]; Theophylact, *Expositio ep. ad Romanos* 12.20 [PG 124.512]) understood the coals to be a symbol of a more noble type of revenge: if one feeds an enemy and he remains hostile, one makes him liable to more serious punishment from God, i.e., one heaps coals of divine punishment on his head. But again, such a symbolic use is not otherwise attested, unless this is the sense meant by 4 Ezra 16:54: *Non dicat peccator non se peccasse, quoniam carbones ignis comburet super caput eius qui dicit: Non peccavi coram Deo et gloria ipsius*, “Let not the sinner say that he has not sinned, for (God) will burn coals of fire upon the head of him who says, ‘I have not sinned before God and his glory.’” Cf. Ps 140:11 [MT].

(5) Stendahl (“Hate”) modifies interpretation (4) by comparing Paul’s general principle with statements in QL advocating the non-retaliation against evil done by enemies and the deferring of retribution to God’s day of vengeance, a covert way of expressing one’s “hatred” for one’s enemies (see 1QS 10:17–20; 9:21–22; 1:9–11). Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 32 and Proverbs 25 would, then, be a qualified way of adding to the measure of an enemy’s sins and guilt in God’s sight.

(6) Whatever be the real meaning of this mysterious verse, it is clear that Paul is recommending not Stoic passive resistance to hostility, but instead the OT treatment of an enemy

in order to overcome evil with positive charitable action, as the next verse suggests.

Fitzmyer's closing note on Rom 12:20 calls attention to 2 Kings 6:22, which exemplifies how charity and hospitality to an enemy led to peace. In context it reads,

6:20 As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and lo, they were in the midst of Samaria. 21 When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I slay them? Shall I slay them?" 22 *He answered, "You shall not slay them. Would you slay those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."* 23 So he prepared for them a great feast; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel.

Elisha's showing hospitality to the Syrian prisoners was an act of enlightenment for his fellow Israelites, as well as for the Syrians. Although not stated as such, in my opinion, Elisha actually *cast burning coals upon the heads* of these Syrian captives, i.e., the Syrians learned from their Israelite enemy a lesson which led to peace.

This interpretation that "to cast burning coals upon the head" was a metaphor for "teaching someone a good lesson" is based upon the different meanings of قَبَس (qabasa) in Arabic, which is the cognate of the Hebrew כֶּפֶס (kēpaš), which is a synonym of the נִחְלִים "glowing coals" in Prov 25:22.

In Jastrow's lexicon (1903: 611) the Hebrew/Aramaic כֶּפֶשׁ has these varied definitions:

- כָּבַשׁ “to press, to squeeze, to subdue, to conquer”
- כָּבַשׁ “to grade, to make a path”
- כָּבַשׁ “to put on the head” (which is a variant of חָבַשׁ)
- כָּבַשׁ “hot ashes, coals”
- כַּבְּשָׁן “kiln, furnace.”

The last two words are cognates of the Arabic قبس (*qabasun*) “fire, a live coal” (Lane 1885: 2480–81). The variant כ/ק with the *kēbaš* and the *qabas* is like the variants כָּבַשׁ/קָבַשׁ “to crush,” and קָבַשׁ/כָּבַשׁ “to be weak”; and the Hebrew שׁ (š) for the Arabic س (s) is a standard variation.

The Arabic قبس ناراً (*qabasa nâran*) means “he took fire” and قبس النار (*qabasa 'alnâran*) means “he lighted the fire”; but قبس علماً (*qabasa 'ilman*) means “he acquired knowledge, he sought knowledge.” In the causative form أقبسه ناراً (*'aqbasahu nâr^{am}*) means “he gave him fire”; and أقبسه علماً (*'aqbasahu 'ilman*) means “he taught him knowledge.” The plural noun القوابس (*'alqawâbisu*) means “those who teach what is good”; and قابس (*qâbasu*) also has a dual meaning:

- “taking fire, a taker of fire,”
- “seeking fire, a seeker of fire”
- “acquiring knowledge, an acquirer of knowledge,”
- “seeking knowledge, a seeker of knowledge.”¹

If the *firey coals* have to do with *heat*, then crowning someone with *coals* would be an act of torture. However, if the *firey coals* have to do with *light*, then crowning someone with *glowing coals* would be an act of illumination with the recipient’s becoming enlightened. An English analogy is the

verb “to electrify,” which when done to a person for punishment means “to electrocute,” but when done for entertainment means “to enliven, to thrill with a shock of excitement.”

Exegetes have rightly interpreted the גְּתָלִים בַּאֵשׁ ($\alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\alpha\kappa\epsilon\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\nu \pi\upsilon\rho\iota$) “coals of fire” in Psalm 140:10 as referring to *intense heat*. But they failed to recognize that the גְּתָלִים “glowing coals” in Prov 25:22 (and its quotation in Rom 12:20 as $\alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\alpha\kappa\alpha\varsigma \pi\upsilon\rho\delta\varsigma$) refers to the *light* that emanates from the coals, which *enlightens*, rather than to the *heat* emitted from the coals that *burns*. Thanks to the lexical data on the Arabic قبس (*qabasa*) it is possible to recover the semantic range of its Hebrew cognate כַּפֵּשׁ “hot ashes, coals” and to recognize the Semitic metaphor in which the plural גְּתָלִים “coals” and the collective כַּפֵּשׁ “coals” refer to “learning, teaching, and being enlightened,” i.e., when cognitively “the lights go on” thanks to “brilliant ideas and insights.”

Adapting this metaphor into English, this interpretation of Prov 25:21–22 and Rom 12:17–21, as presented here, is my *casting out glowing coals*, i.e. (a) *shedding of light* on a long standing crux, (b) *firing up* students to study Aramaic, Arabic, and Hebrew to better interpret some Greek New Testament texts, and (c) my having more *heated* discussions with colleagues about baffling biblical passages.

NOTE

1. Wehr (1979: 865) cited Modern Arabic قيس (*qabasa*) “to acquire, to loan, to borrow” and قابوس (*qâbûs*) “nightmare,” as well as the classical definitions “to take fire, to acquire knowledge.”

FITZMYER’S ABBREVIATIONS

BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1979)
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
HALAT	W. Baumgartner et al (eds.) <i>Hebräisches und aräisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament</i> , 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill 1967–)
PG	Patrologia graeca (ed. J Migne)
QL	Qumran Literature
1QS	<i>Serek hayyahad</i> (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)

VI
ARABIC COGNATES HELP TO
CLARIFY JEREMIAH 2:34b

The first clue for the correct interpretation of Jer 2:34b comes from the textual variants in Isa 61:3, which reads in the MT and the Septuagint as follows:

וְקָרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק מִטַּע יְהוָה לְהַתְפַּאֵר

that they might be called *oaks* of righteousness,
the planting of Yahweh that he may be glorified

καὶ κληθήσονται γενεὰ δικαιοσύνης
φύτευμα κυρίου εἰς δόξαν

and they shall be called *generations* of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord for glory.

The MT אֵילֵי (rendered “trees” or “oaks” or “terebinths” in standard translations) became in Greek the plural of γενεά “family, race, generation, clan, offspring” (Liddell and Scott 342; Arndt and Gingrich 153). The Greek translators were obviously aware of that אלה/איל which was the cognate of Arabic آل (°al/°ill) and ايلة (°ilat) meaning “a man’s family, i.e., his relations or kinfolk; or nearer, or nearest, relations by descent from the same father or ancestor; . . . household, followers; those who bear a relation, as members to a head” (Lane 1863: 127–128).¹

Although آل/ايلة (= אלה/איל) was cited in Castell’s *Lexicon Heptaglotton* (1669: 58, 115) as “*populus, asseclae, affines, familia, domestici*”) the Arabic cognate آل/ايلة (= אלה/איל) 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 אֱלֹהִים (Ελιαβ) in II Sam 11:3 and the עֲמִיאל (Αμιηλ) in I Chron 3:5—all meaning “God is my kinsman”—which are much like רְעוּיָאֵל (Ραγουηλ) “God is my kinsman” and אַחִיָּה / אָבִיָּה “Yahweh is my brother/ father.”²

Although rare, this אֵלֶּה in Isa 61:3 is not a *hapax legomenon*, for it appears in Jer 2:34, עַל-כָּל-אֵלֶּה “against every family-member” (contra MT עַל-כָּל-אֵלֶּה). Also, it was most likely used by Jesus when he asked Peter, “Do you love me more than kith-and-kin?” (John 21:15), which when translated into Greek became mistakenly ἀγαπᾷς με πλεον τούτων; “do you love me more than these?”³

The second clue for the correct interpretation of Jer 2:34b comes from the Arabic verb ختر (*ḥatarā*) “he acted, or behaved, towards him with the foulest perfidy, treachery, or unfaithfulness; or with deceit, guile, or circumvention in a bad or corrupt manner”; and the noun خاتر (*ḥātir^{un}*) “one who acts, or behaves, with perfidy, treachery, or unfaithfulness, deceit, guile, or circumvention” (Lane (1865: 701). The Hebrew cognate of this word is חָתַר, stem II, found in the noun מְחַתְּרֵת in Jer 2:34b, which has been interpreted up until now as a noun from חָתַר, stem I, “to dig (into houses),” which appears in Exodus 22:2, אִם-בְּמַחְתְּרֵת יִמְצָא הַגֵּנֵב, וְהָכָה וּמָת אִין לוֹ דָּמַיִם, “If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood-guiltiness on his account” (NAS, NAU).

The text and varied translations of Jer 2:34 are as follows:

Jeremiah 2:34

גַּם בְּכַנְפֵיךָ נִמְצְאוּ דַם נַפְשֹׁת אֲבִיּוֹנִים נְקִיִּים
 לֹא־בַמְּחִתָּת מִצְאָתִים כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים:

JPS

Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls
 of the innocent poor;
 thou didst not find them breaking in; yet for all these things

KJV

Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls
 of the poor innocents:
 I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

Septuagint

καὶ ἐν ταῖς χερσίν σου εὐρέθησαν αἵματα ψυχῶν ἀθώων
 οὐκ ἐν διορύγμασιν εὗρον αὐτούς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσῃ δρυί

and in thine hands has been found the blood
 of innocent souls;
 I have not found them in holes, but on every oak.

John Bright

Yes, there on the skirts of your robe
 Is the lifeblood of innocent men
 No burglars these, whom you caught red-handed, []⁴

William Holladay

Indeed ((on your palms)) is found
 ((blood)) of lives of the innocent [the poor;]
 not in burglary did you find them —
 (your yoke) certainly (becomes a curse).

William McKane

There is blood on your skirts
 the blood of the innocent poor.
 You did not catch them in the act of housebreaking.

One hundred years ago Julius Bewer published an article entitled “Critical Notes on Old Testament Passages,”⁵ which dealt with seven texts, including Jer 2:34. His first words about this passage were, “The second half of this verse is difficult.” (Decades later D. R. Jones (1992: 94), echoed the same sentiment about Jer 2:34b with his initial words: “This is a *crux*.”) Bewer summarized the conclusions of Carl H. Cornill (1905), who did not translate the verse, and Bernard Duhm (1901) who understood the MT **בַּחֲתָרֹת** concretely as “burglars” instead of abstractly as “burglary” and translated the half-verse as “Not with burglars have I found it, but upon all these,” i.e., all these well known people involved in “human sacrifices which were offered in connection with the nature-worship which the people practiced so zealously.” For Bewer, Duhm was “in the main on the right track” because “the reference cannot be to judicial murders,” but to sacrificial killings.⁶

Bewer’s own solution was to emend the MT **בַּחֲתָרֹת** “to the burglary” to **בַּמְסֻתָּרִים** “in hidden places” and translated the half-verse as “Not in hidden places have I found it (the blood), but upon all these.” He offered this interpretation:

The murders have not been committed in secret, but openly; and the people declare in addition that they have brought no guilt on themselves thereby. Openly they carry the very traces of their crimes, of the sacrifices of children and slaves; they are not ashamed of them or afraid because of them; they think, on the contrary, that they deserve mercy and forgiveness on account of them.

D. R. Jones (1992: 94–95), as noted, found this verse to be a *crux*. For him the 2:24a seemed overloaded and he thought it plausible that **אֲבִיּוֹנִים** “poor ones” was a gloss, “which has the effect of interpreting the bloodshed in terms of judicial

murder.”

As for Jer 2:34b, Jones was equally uncertain, stating, “But it seems right to translate [בְּמִחָתְרָת] ‘find them breaking in’ in light of the similar vocabulary in Exod 22:2.” He interpreted the MT מְצֹאתִים . . . לֹא as “I (Yahweh) did not find it (the blood).” Following the Septuagint, which read the MT אֱלֹה “these” as אֱלֹה “oak/terebinth,” Jones concluded that the verse as a whole can mean:

You have taken part in your illegitimate sacrifices and the evidence of the sacrificial blood is on your very clothes. It wasn’t as though I caught you housebreaking, when the law excuses violence in self-defence and the stains of blood would be understood. The blood you shed is to be seen on every oak where you practiced your profane cult.

W. L. Holladay (1986: 56, 110) followed the Septuagint’s ἐν ταῖς χερσί σου and the Peshitta’s כַּרְתִּיב (b^{idaky}) “on your hands” by reading בְּכַפֵּיךָ for the MT בְּכַנְפֵיךָ “on your skirts.” He also followed the Septuagint by omitting the MT אֲבִיוֹנִים “poor people,” and concurred with the Peshitta by reading the MT מְצֹאתִים as a second feminine singular rather than as a first singular as found in the Greek and Latin texts. The MT עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹה “on (or against) all these” was for Holladay an impossible phrase so he revocalized the text to read עֲלֶיךָ לְאֱלֹה “your yoke to a curse.” He noted that

The expression “your yoke” is found in v 20 to denote the yoke imposed upon you by Yahweh: and that yoke has to you become a curse. However, “your yoke” may also mean “the yoke you impose on others” (1 Kgs 12:4 offers both this subjective genitive, “his yoke [which he imposed on us],” and

an objective genitive, “our yoke [which we have endured]”) and that nuance is appropriate in the present context of social oppression.

But Holladay’s emendation and explanation is no more compelling than that of Bewer’s; and, as McKane (1986: 54) noted, Holladay’s earlier rendition (1975: 225) “indeed your yoke has become execrable” is unlikely to find much support.

McKane (1986: 49, 54) was content to comment in a note that the MT **עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים** “is unintelligible” and conjectured that “it appears to be a fragment which was part of a description or condemnation of Israel’s devotion to the fertility rites.” McKane followed Rashi and Kimchi in reading the **מְצֹאתִים** as “she found them,” contra the Septuagint and Peshitta which read it as “I found them”—preceded by the negative particle.

Once **אֱלֹהִים** “kith-and-kin, family relatives” and **חָתַר**, stem II, “to act treacherously” come into focus better options emerge for emending the text. Here is my restoration, with the changes highlighted in red:

גַּם בְּכַנְפֵיךָ נִמְצְאוּ דָם נַפְשׁוֹת אֲבִיוֹנִים
 נִקְיִים **לְאִים** בַּחֲתָרְתָּ
 מְצֹאתִי **מִכִּים** עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:

Also in your skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor
 —innocent ones exhausted by treachery—

I found those striking out against every family-member.

The MT **לֹא-בַמְחַתְרָתָּ** “innocent ones not in the burglary” becomes meaningful when the **בַּמְ** of **בַּמְחַתְרָתָּ** are inverted and the consonant cluster **לֹאמבַּחַתְרָתָּ** is divided to read **לֹאם בַּחַתְרָתָּ**. The plural participle **לֹאם** (= **לְאִים**)

“exhausted ones” modifies the נְקִיִּים “innocent ones,” which initiates its own three word clause. The בַּחֲתָרֶת is obviously the preposition בַּ attached to the noun חֲתָרֶת “treachery.”

Similarly, the rather senseless MT מְצַאֲתִים כִּי, “I/she found them that,” makes sense when a final ם of מְצַאֲתִים is attached to the כִּי as an initial מִ and a final ם is added to the restored מְכִי (restoring the *Hiph'el* plural participle מְכִים [of נָכַח “to smite”]). The words then become מְצַאֲתִי מְכִים “I found smiters / attackers.” The violence addressed in Jer 2:34 was all in the family. Despite the commandments in

- Deut 15:7, “If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren (אֶחָיו), in any of your towns within your land which Yahweh your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother (אֶחָיו הָאֲבִיּוֹן),” and
- Zech 7:9–10, “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy each to his brother (אֶחָיו), do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother (אֶחָיו),”

violent bloodshed, perfidy, and treachery were found among the *brethren* (אֶחָיו), the *relatives* (רְעִים), in every *family* (עֲמִית), and among the *kith-and-kin* (אֵלֶּה).

The Septuagint’s rendering of אֵילֵי Isa 61:3 as γενεαὶ “generations” was wrong but informative; and this translation in Isa 61:3 was the clue for identifying the אֵלֶּה in Jer 2:34 as the cognate of the Arabic ايلة (*ilat*) “kith-and-kin.” With the recovery of verb חָתַר, stem II, “to act treacherously,” the statements become contextually meaningful. Minor emendations, restoring לְאִים and מְכִים, complete the recovery.

NOTES

1. It was a synonym of **أهل** (*ahl*) “the people of a house or dwelling, and of a town or village . . . and the family of a man, fellow members of one family or race, and of one religion” (Lane 1863: 121). Lane (127) noted that “By the **ال** (*al/ill*) of the Prophet are meant, according to some persons, His followers, whether relations or others: and his relations, whether followers or not” The noun appears in the *Qurʾan* (*Sura* 3:9, 8:54, 56) in reference to “the family of Pharaoh” (**أل فرعون** [*alu firʿawnu*]). The word survives in modern literary Arabic for “blood relationship, consanguinity, pact, covenant” (Wehr 1979: 27).

2. Compare the rare **עֲמִית** “relative, fellow, associate,” which occurs only in Zech 13:7 and eleven times in Leviticus (5:21, 18:20, 19:11, 19:15, 19:17, 24:19, 25:14, 25:15, 25:17).

3. See *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, Chapter 33 entitled, “Do you Love Me More than Kith-and-Kin?” (Click here to view online.)

4. Bright (1965: 13) translated the **כִּי עַל-כָּל-אֵלֶּה** as “But upon [or: “because of”] all these,” but concluded that “The colon cannot be translated.”

5. In *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, Volume 2: 207–226. R. F. Harper, F. Brown, and G. F. Moore, editors. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.

6. Note the sacrificial killings referred to in Jer 19:4–5,

Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind.

Note also the warnings against judicial murder in

- Jer 26:15, “Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”
- Jer 22:3 “Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.”
- Jer 22:17, “But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.”

VII
NOTES ON MATTHEW 6:34,
“SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY
IS THE EVIL THEREOF”

Matthew 6:34

μὴ οὖν μεριμνήσητε εἰς τὴν αὔριον,
ἢ γὰρ αὔριον μεριμνήσει ἑαυτῆς·
ἄρκετον τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἡ κακία αὐτῆς.

KJV

Take therefore no thought for the morrow:
for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.
Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

William Albright and F. C. S. Mann (1971: 80–82) accepted Matt 6:34 as the words of Jesus which concluded the pericope of Matt 6:25–34. They translated the words of Jesus in 6:34 as, “Do not be overconcerned about tomorrow, for tomorrow will do its own worrying. Today’s misfortune is enough for today.” They offered only this two sentence commentary on 6:34:

Unhappily it needs to be said here that all these lessons in detachment are *not* here summed up by an injunction to assume that discipleship will *ipso facto* produce the necessities of life. This verse, like its predecessors, calls for a searching examination of the disciples’ priorities.

By way of contrast, other commentators have suggested that Matt 6:33 was Jesus’ concluding statement in this discourse and 6:34 was a redactional addition. Matt 6:25–33 parallels closely Luke 12:22–31; but the question “and why are you anxious about clothing” in Matt 6:28 does not have a parallel at Luke 12:27. Similarly, the question in Luke 12:26, “if then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?” is lacking at Matt 6:28. But the most significant difference is that at Luke 12:32 there is not a

verse equivalent to Matt 6:34. Consequently, Francis Beare (1987: 188) concluded,

The closing verse [Matt 6:34] is a Matthaean addition, and owes its place here to the verbal link in the charge ‘do not be anxious.’ But it may be that Matthew sees something more here than a mere verbal association. Perhaps he wants to remind us that Jesus does not offer any assurance that life will be better tomorrow than it is today. There is no resort to a facile optimism. We must face today’s problems with no faint dream that they will disappear overnight; but there is no point in anticipating them. For tomorrow, as for today, we pray, ‘Thy will be done.’

Similarly, for W. D. Davies and Dale Allison (1988: 662–663) Matt 6:34 was probably a redactional addition “linked to its context more by catchword than by theme.” They suggested that the repetition of the verb *μη μεριμνήσητε* “be not anxious” appearing in 6:31 and twice in the redactional conclusion in 6:34, “leave no doubt as to what is the key subject of 6.25–34 and how important it is for Matthew. The mental vice of anxiety is to be exorcized at all costs.” They concluded,

Whether unwittingly or not, Matthew does what the tradition did before him in 6.26–30, namely, take up a proverbial notion and use it to make a point contrary to the received sense. Both gnomic statements in 6.34, if taken in themselves, sound pessimistic or stoical (cf *b. Ber.* 9b). But embedded in their present, evangelical context, they gain a new sense: anxiety for the morrow is foolish because the all-powerful, all-knowing, compassionate Father in heaven is Lord of the future. If sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, God is more than sufficient in the midst of that evil.¹

Ulrich Luz (2007: 346) rightly noted that Matt 6:34 is linguistically and contextually very difficult. In a footnote (#68) Luz asked if there was an Aramaic construction behind the unusual Greek *μεριμνήσει ἑαυτῆς*, “it will be anxious of it-

self.” This question was answered many years ago by W. C. Allen (1912: 65) who, citing Julius Wellhausen (1904 *in loc.*), noted that “the harsh construction” μεριμνήσει ἑαυτῆς reflects a translation from the Aramaic.²

Luz’s observations included the following:

In a Semitic milieu αὔριον can mean not only tomorrow but *pars pro toto* the future in general. While the neutral predicate “sufficient” (ἄρκετον) at the beginning of a clause is possible in Greek, the genitive formulation “will be anxious of itself (μεριμνήσει ἑαυτῆς) is very unusual. “Evil” (κακία) does not have the usual meaning of moral wickedness; it has the more general meaning of hardship or trouble. The content is equally difficult. One can choose between a more optimistic and a more pessimistic interpretation. (a) Understood optimistically, this verse can speak of the possibility of living fully in the present. (b) The pessimistic interpretation is more probable, however, because with v. 34c the verse ends on a pessimistic note: all planning is futile; it is enough for a person to bear the burden of each day. . . . Eschatological hope and pessimistic realism could coexist.

As did Luz, so have many other commentators addressed the tension between Jesus’ optimistic teaching in Matt 6:25–33 (especially “all these things shall be added unto you”) and the more realistic and pessimistic conclusion in 6:34c, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

The word κακία “evil” in 6:34c has been somewhat problematic. Davies and Allison (1988: 662) noted that κακία is a *hapax legomenon* in the synoptics. But it is well attested in the Septuagint where it translates רַעַע / רַע “evil” over ninety times and translates once, twice, or thrice each of the following: אִוְלָה “folly,” אָוֶן “trouble, wickedness,” חַטָּאת “sin,” כְּזָב “falsehood,” עֲוֹן “iniquity, guilt,” עֲנִי “affliction, poverty,” and עֲרֹוּהָ “nakedness, indecency.”³ Thus, κακία must be recognized as a very negative term.

Recently the tendency has been for commentators to reduce the tension between the optimism found in 6:25–33 and the pessimism in 6:34 by softening the meaning of this κακία from “evil” to “trouble” or “problem.” For example, John Nolland (2005: 316) commented:

It is likely that v. 34 does not have a comprehensive concern with evil, but that . . . the focus is on that aspect of evil which underlies the anxiety people feel about their daily needs. If one had to worry only about planting enough grain or working enough hours, then the human situation would be less worrisome. Anxiety is created primarily by the very real possibility that such arrangements will let us down (there will be a drought; our supplies will be destroyed; we will be robbed; etc.). The promise of God’s provision involves a promise to deliver us (from the consequences of) such eventualities as they press on us on a daily basis. If God looks after today, that will be enough. God does not abstractly guarantee the future; he deals with the needs of each today. This is the one-day-at-a-time perspective of the Lord’s Prayer which keeps so firmly in focus the immediacy of receiving from the hand of God. There is no need to worry about tomorrow because God will deal with it as the ‘today’ of that day.

Similarly, R. T. France (2007: 272) stated:

This additional saying [in 6:34] has the ring of popular proverbial wisdom. The thrust of its first clause is fully consonant both with the summons not to worry about provisions in vv. 25–33 and with the preceding petition, for “bread for the coming day” in 6:11; once you have asked God for tomorrow’s needs there is no need to worry about them. But the following clauses speak not of God’s fatherly concern but, in a quite pragmatic way, of the pointlessness of anticipating tomorrow’s problems. Taken out of its current context, this could, then, be read as simply a piece of cynical advice to live only for the present—the attitude condemned by Paul in 1 Cor 15:32 (following Isa 22:13; cf. 56:12), and indeed also by Jesus in Luke 12:19–20. In speaking of “tomorrow worrying”

and of “troubles” as the likely experience of each day v. 34 strikes a more pessimistic (or at least realistic) note than the preceding verses. By including it along with vv. 25–33 Matthew has perhaps deliberately put a sobering question mark against an unthinkingly euphoric attitude which vv. 25–33 might evoke in some hearers. God’s care and provision are assured, but that does not mean that the disciple’s life is to be one long picnic. Each day will still have its “troubles”; the preceding verses simply provide the assurance that by the grace of God they can be survived.

Although France did not specify here what the “troubles” (κακία) mentioned in 6:34 might be, Frederick Bruner (2009: 334–335) easily identified them. He translated 6:34 as “*So don’t ever be anxious about tomorrow; you see, tomorrow will worry for itself enough for today are today’s own problems*” and noted that “These three punchy sentences seem anticlimactic after the preceding noble promise [in 6:33].” Bruner justified his translation of κακία “evil” simply as “problems” with the following arguments and examples.

The *kakia*, “evil” or “trouble” (RSV, NRSV, NJB), that will be disciples’ daily lot is not the *objective* evil of the satanic against which the Lord’s Prayer warned us (*ho ponēros*, “the evil one” at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, is a power from whom disciples rightly prayed to be *delivered*); *kakia*. the “evil” here, is that *subjective* “evil” or “trouble” from which disciples can never be delivered; the word has the less ultimate sense of the “inconvenient” the daily “troubles” of distractions that keep us, we think, from devoting our time to God’s work . . . Few things bother serious disciples as much as the distractions that keep them from the matters that really count. It is these daily “troubles” that Jesus here calls evil in the subjective sense. Discipleship learns sooner or later, however, that it can pursue God’s kingdom and righteousness right in the middle of these daily “evils.” Brushing the children’s hair, grading students’ papers, going to committee meetings, entertaining unexpected visitors, and doing the

thousands of other earthly things that seem to distract us from more important things and from the one thing needful, can all be forms of kingdom-seeking and righteousness-doing when seen in faith. Thus when Jesus tells us (in the old English) that “sufficient unto the day are the evils thereof” or (in modern English) that “*enough for today are today’s own problems,*” he means that it will be by mastering these daily gremlins that we learn to be disciples. For grading students’ papers thoughtfully, while it takes teachers away from writing and reading, helps students considerably. Parents’ brushing children’s hair, though it takes them from more elevated tasks for the moment, may be one of the few chances parents and children have to touch each other that day. These “evils” then, may be “sufficient” in unexpected ways.

Though well argued the attempts by Nolland, France, Bruner, and others, to soften the meaning of *κακία* “evil” so as to reduce the tension between the optimism in Matt 6:33 and the pessimism in 6:34, are far from convincing, especially the suggestion that simply brushing a child’s hair can be a kind of *κακία* “evil.” But with the Greek text of 6:34 being what it is these interpretations are among the best that can be made.⁴

But an alternative and better interpretation of Matt 6:33–34 becomes available by recognizing (as did Wellhausen, Allen, and Luz, as noted above) that the Greek text is probably a translation from an Aramaic/Hebrew source. Of the different Hebrew words (listed above) which were translated by *κακία* the *עָנִי*/*κακία* “affliction, poverty” in Neh 9:9 in Sinaiticus² (in contrast to the *ταπεινωσις* “affliction” in Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus¹) provides the best clue for recovering the *Vorlage* of Matt 6:34.³

This Aramaic/Hebrew *עָנִי* is a homograph of two distinctly antithetical words. There is the well attested *עָנִי*/*עָנִי* “poor” (pronounced *a-knee*) and the rare *עָנִי*/*עָנִי* “rich” (pronounced a bit like *an-eye*).⁵ This *עָנִי* “rich” is the cognate of the Arabic

غنى (*ḡaniya*) “he was free from want . . . he became rich, wealthy,” and the nouns غِنَى (*ḡinan*) and غِنَاء (*ḡanaʿ*) “wealth, affluence, riches” (Lane 1877:2301–2304; Wehr 1979: 803; Hava 1915:537).⁶

The word עָנִי / עָנִי “rich” appears in I Chron 22:14, where, contrary to the Masoretic pointing of עָנִי as עָנִי, David declared וְהִנֵּה בְעֵינַי הִכִּינֹתִי לְבֵית־יְהוָה “Behold, *with my riches/resources* have I provided for the temple of Yahweh!”⁷ Most translations have avoided making David into a billion dollar “pauper” by paraphrasing בְּעֵינַי 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 בְּעֵינַי 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, עָנִי means oppressive toil. . . . The parallel כָּחִי בְּכָל כֹּחִי [“with all my power”] in 29² favours *by my hard* (or *painful*) labor.”⁸ But once the עָנִי is repointed—in light of the cognate غِنَاء (*ḡanaʿ*) “wealth, resources”—as עָנִי a literal reading of the text makes sense for David had become wealthy.

Moreover, the name of the Levite singer Unni (עָנִי = LXX Ωνι), mentioned in I Chron 15:18, 20 and the *Qere* of Neh 12:9, was probably a *Pu^cal* perfect (*unnay* > *unnê*) meaning either “he was afflicted” (עָנָה stem III) or “he was enriched” (עָנָה stem V). 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 posi-

tion. Thus, the rare lexeme עָנִי “free from want, rich” was no doubt in use in the days of the Levite Unni.

This rare עָנִי “rich” may also appear in Prov 31:5, 9 in reference to Lemuel’s need to adjudicate on behalf of the rich as well as the poor. The MT דִּין כָּל-בְּנֵי עָנִי “the judgment of all the needy” can be repointed as דִּין כָּל-בְּנֵי-עָנִי “the judgment of all the sons of wealth,” i.e., the rich. If Lemuel obeyed his mother he rightly judged the poor (אֶבְיֹן), the needy (בְּנֵי-עָנִי), and the wealthy (בְּנֵי-עָנִי).

Once the words עָנִי “poor” and עָנִי “rich” are in focus one can appreciate the ambiguity of what may have been in the *Vorlage* of Matt 6:34c, be it the Hebrew לֹא לְיוֹם עָנִיּוֹ or the Aramaic מִסְתָּא לְיוֹמָא עֲנִיָּיה לָהּ. Thus, the Aramaic/Hebrew עָנִי meant either χρημα “money/assets” or πλοῦτος “resources/wealth” or κακία “evil/trouble. Consequently, Matt 6:34 as spoken by Jesus may well have meant, “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Sufficient for the day will be its *resources/riches*. Because the cognate غني (*ganiya*) meant “he was free from want,” the עָנִי in the *Vorlage* of 6:34 could have been translated as “welfare” —“sufficient unto the day is the *welfare* thereof.” (Jesus was speaking out of experience, for, according to Luke 8:3, Joanna, Susanna, and many others provided out of their *resources* for the *welfare* of Jesus and his disciples.) If this interpretation is correct there was no tension between the optimistic verses 6:25–33 and a pessimistic verse 6:34. To the contrary, the optimism in 6:34, as interpreted here, matches the optimism in 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

NOTES

1. The following partial paragraph (with bullets added) from Davies and Allison (1988: 662) is noteworthy:

Both 6.34a and 34b appear to have been drawn from the well of common wisdom and probably go back ultimately to Egyptian proverbs Compare the following [the bullets have been added]:

- The Eloquent Peasant 183: ‘do not prepare for tomorrow before it is come. One knows not what evil may be in it’;
- Instruction of Amen-em-Opet 19.11–13: ‘Do not spend the night in fear of the morrow. At dawn what is the morrow like? One knows not what the morrow is like’;
- Proverbs 27:1: ‘Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth’;
- *b. Sanh.* 100b / *b. Yeb.* 63b: ‘Do not fret over tomorrow’s troubles, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Tomorrow may come and you will be no more and so you will have grieved over a world that is not yours’;
- *b. Ber.* 9b: ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, Go and say to Israel, I was with you in this servitude, and I shall be with you in the servitude of other kingdoms. He said to Him, Lord of the universe, sufficient is the evil in the time thereof.’

2. Neither Allen nor Luz offered a reconstruction of the Aramaic *Vorlage*, although Davies and Allison identified $\kappa\alpha\kappa\lambda\alpha$ with the הַרְעָה “trouble” and the $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\eta\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\iota\omicron\nu$ with לְמָחָר “for tomorrow.”

3. See Hatch and Redpath, 1954: 708.

4. Note Keener’s comments (1999: 238) on Matt 6:34^{ab}:

Yet when Jesus graphically forbids his disciples to worry about tomorrow (6:34; cf. “worries” also in 10:19; 13:22; Phil 4:6) this does not suggest that he expects them to ignore whatever concerns arise. Rather he expects them to express dependence on God in each of these concerns, praying for their genuine needs (6:11), provided they pray for God’s Kingdom most of all (6:9–10; most of Paul’s “concerns” fit this category—2 Cor 11:28; 1 Thess 3:1–5).

Keener did not comment on the phrase “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” in Matt 6:34^c.

5. Compare the consonantal spelling of the English words *better* (= *bttr*) and *bitter* (= *bttr*). How will one interpret my assertion: “Now that Barak Obama is President the relationship of the Democrats and Republicans in Congress will be *bttr*”? The political bias of the interpreter will no doubt control the meaning given to the *bttr* in this written quotation. The Aramaic/Hebrew עני “poor” and עני “rich” present a similar ambiguity for translators.

6. The Arabic cognate of עָנָה “to sing” is غنى (*gānaya*). It has been recognized in the lexicons of Biblical Hebrew, along with عَنُو (*anawa*) “to be humble, submissive,” the cognate of עָנָה “poor, meek.”

7. 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 Vulgate’s *paupertatula* “poverty” and the Septuagint’s πτωχεία “poverty” the MT עָנָה “my poverty” needs to be read as עָנָה “my wealth.”

Given the frequent interchange of א and א in Hebrew roots, the graphic similarity of א and א in certain scripts, and the coalescence in Hebrew of the *gayin* (ג) with the *ayin* (ע), it 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 loss of many words from the active vocabulary.

8. In BDB (777) בְּעֵינַי was paraphrased as “in spite of my frustration.”

VIII
WHAT DID JESUS WRITE
ACCORDING TO JOHN 8:6b–8?

John 8:6b–8

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας τῷ δακτύλῳ
κατέγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.
ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν,
ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,
‘Ὁ ἀναμάρτητος¹ ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ’ αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον.
καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.

And Jesus, having bent down, with the finger
was writing on the ground,
and when they continued asking him,
having straighten up said to them,
“The sinless¹ of you – first let him cast the stone at her.”
And again having stooped down,
he was writing on the ground.

J. H. Bernard (1928: 715) begins his commentary on the “Pericope de Adultera” in John 7:53–8:11 by stating that

THE section (περικοπή) of the Fourth Gospel which contains this incident is contained in many late manuscripts and versions, but it cannot be regarded as Johannine or as part of the Gospel text. It is not found in any of the early Greek uncials, with the single exception of Codex Bezae (D), . . . The section is omitted also in important cursives, *e.g.* 22, 33, 565 (in which minuscule there is a note that the scribe knew of its existence).

Years later Raymond Brown (1966: 335) agreed, affirming that the pericope was clearly a later insertion into the Fourth Gospel.

This passage is not found in any of the important early Greek textual witnesses of Eastern provenance (*e.g.*, in neither

Bodmer papyrus); nor is it found in the Old Syriac or the Coptic. There are no comments on this passage by the Greek writers on John of the 1st Christian millennium, and it is only from ca. 900 that it begins to appear in the standard Greek text. . . . The 3rd-century *Didascalia Apostolorum* II 24:6; Funk ed., I, 93) gives a clear reference to the story of the adulteress and uses it as a presumably well-known example of our Lord's gentleness; this work is of Syrian origin, and the reference means that this story was known (but not necessarily as Scripture) in 2nd-century Syria.²

Tregelles (1854: 240) noted, "the peculiarities of the language [in Jn 7:53–8:11] are indeed remarkable, and very unlike anything else in St. John's Gospel; but to this it might be said, that the copies differ so much that it is almost impossible to judge what the true phraseology is."³ For example, though John 7:53–8:11 does not appear at all in the Old Syriac versions, in the later Peshitta texts (as in the London Polyglott of 1657)⁴ there is no word in John 8:6b for the Greek τῷ δακτύλῳ "with the finger." It simply reads,

ישוע דין כד לתחת אתגהן מכתב הוא על ארעא

"While Jesus was bent down he was writing on the ground."⁵ (By way of contrast, most English translations add a word by rendering the τῷ δακτύλῳ as "with *his* finger," as though a possessive αὐτοῦ were in the Greek text.)

The fact that κατέγραφεν "he was writing/registering/drawing" appears in 8:6, in contrast to the ἔγραφεν "he was writing," in 8:8, led Bernard (1928: 719) to conclude that

. . . on this occasion He was only scribbling with His finger on the ground, a mechanical action which would suggest only an unwillingness to speak on the subject brought before Him, and preoccupation with His own thoughts.

Brown (1966: 334) came to a similar conclusion, stating, ". . . Jesus was simply tracing lines on the ground while he was

thinking, or wished to show imperturbability, or to contain his feeling of disgust for the violent zeal shown by the accusers.” He called attention to Power’s article in *Biblica* (1921: 54–57) with examples from Arabic literature of people doodling on the ground when distraught.⁶

However, the parallel of Jesus’ writing before he spoke and the Roman legal practice of having a judge write his sentence before reading it aloud (as noted by T. W. Manson [1952–53: 255–256] and cited by Brown) is significant. It matches the authority of the *written* word found in biblical tradition (the phrase “as it is written” appears forty-five times in the KJV and forty-six times in the RSV). In this context Darrett’s words (1964: 17) are noteworthy:

Everything points to Jesus’ concerns for the woman’s position, though not in any particular sympathy for her. It points in any case serious reflexion. He was concerned, to judge from the oral reply, that whatever was to be done should be done in righteousness. *The two acts of writing therefore ought to have formed a piece with the oral reply, and can be most easily and naturally explained as acts directed towards the establishment of law* [my italics]. If this is so the possibilities are very few, and our choice is greatly limited.⁷

Whereas Darrett’s choice involved the unpointed רשע of Exod 23:1b as the clue for identifying what Jesus may have written, a better choice is to consider what may have been the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the two verses dealing with Jesus’ writing. A literal back translation into a consonantal Hebrew text—with the deliberate underlined dittography of three letters in 8:6b—produces the following text and translation which includes two rare Hebrew lexemes:

ושחה ישוע כתב בצבע
צבעו על העפר
וכאשר הוסיפו לשאל אתו

קם ואמר אליהם
האיש מכם בלי עון
ראשון יסקל עליה אבן
ושחה שנית כתב על העפר:

Bending over Jesus wrote with the finger
his *religious-decision* in the dust;
and when they continued to ask him
he rose up and said to them,
“The man from you without sin,
first let him cast a stone upon her.”

And stooping over again he wrote about *forgiveness*.⁸

The first **צבע** in this reconstructed *Vorlage* is a variant of **אָצְבֵּעַ/צְבָּעָא**, “finger” from **צבע**, stem II, the cognate of Arabic **صَبَاع** (*ṣubāʿ*) and **أَصْبَع** (*ʾiṣbaʿ*) “finger”—spelled with an **ع** (*ʿayin*) as the third letter of the stem.⁹

The underlined second **צבע** “religious decision/opinion” is the cognate of the Arabic **صِبْغَة** (*ṣibġat*)—spelled with an **غ** (*ġayin*) as the last letter of the stem—meaning “religion, religious law.” It is a synonym of (1) **دين** (*dīn*) “religious judgment,” (2) **ملة** (*millat*) “religious practice,” and (3) **شريعة** (*ṣarīʿat*) “religious law and anything whereby one advances himself in the order of God” (Lane 1872: 1648).¹⁰

Because the Hebrew **ע** appears for the cognate **ع** (*ʿayin*) and **غ** (*ġayin*), homographs of distinctly different words may appear. Such is the case for the **בצבע צבעו** in the reconstructed *Vorlage* above. Once written the two words appeared as though they were a dittography of one word, resulting in a scribal pseudo-correction of eliminating one of the words, or, in the case of the *Vorlage* of the Peshiṭta, both words.

In the above reconstructed *Vorlage* the על העפר “upon the dust” in John 8:6b is not the same as the על העפר in John 8:8. The Hebrew עפר is a homograph for four lexemes: (1) עָפָר “dry earth, dust,” (2) עֵפָר “young hart, stag,” (3) עִפָּר “small creeping beast, insect, reptile rodent,” which appears in Gen 3:14,¹¹ and (4) עִפָּר “forgiveness” which appears here in the *Vorlage* of John 8:8. This עִפָּר, stem IV, is the cognate of the Arabic غفرا (*ḡafara*) “he (God) covered, his sin, crime, offence; he forgave it; pardoned it; . . . [with] غفران (*ḡufrān*) and مغفرة (*maḡfirat*), on the part of God, signifying the preserving a man from being touched by punishment.” The nouns غافر (*ḡāfir*) and غفور (*ḡafūr*) are epithets of God meaning, “covering and forgiving the sins, crimes, and offences, of his people” (Lane 1877: 2273–2274). Wehr (1979: 794) noted that عيد الغفران (*‘id alḡufrān*) is the “Day of Atonement,” *Yom Kippur*. This עִפָּר is a synonym of מַחֵל and סָלַח.

With the recovery of these two lost words, יִצְבֵּעַ “religious decision/opinion” and עִפָּר “forgiveness” Darrett’s statement (1964: 17) that “the two acts of writing therefore ought to have formed a piece with the oral reply, and can be most easily and naturally explained as acts directed towards the establishment of law,” are right on target. Jesus was writing in the dust (1) his answer to the scribes and Pharisees, and (2) his word of forgiveness for the woman. There was no doodling or scribbling.¹² He was focused and careful, for a woman’s life was at stake. Once he had written out his יִצְבֵּעַ “religious decision/opinion” in response to the question addressed to him (8:6b), he stood and recited—no doubt with rabbinic authority—his new *halakah* when applying Mosaic law:

הָאִישׁ מִכֶּם בְּלִי עֵזוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן יִסְקַל עָלֶיהָ אָבֶן

“The sinless man of you – first let him cast a stone at her.”

‘Ο ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ’ αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον.

Jesus’ second act of writing in 8:8 follows naturally as he shifted his attention away from the accusers to the accused woman and wrote something for her. This time it was probably **עַל-עַפֶּר**, “concerning forgiveness.” (The *Vorlage* here may have had the phrase **כתב על עפר על עפר**, to be read as **כָּתַב עַל-עַפֶּר עַל-עַפֶּר**, “he wrote upon the dust about forgiveness.” If so the second **עַל עַפֶּר** appeared to be a scribal dittography and was subsequently dropped.) Having written **עַל עַפֶּר / עַל-עַפֶּר** “concerning forgiveness,” Jesus stood and addressed the accused woman and told her of his forgiving her: “Nor do I condemn you.”

Jesus’ focus on forgiveness here reflects his agenda and priorities. In Matt 6:9, 12, 14–15 are these familiar words:

This, then, is how you should pray, . . . Forgive us our sins,
just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us
. . . . If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly
Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others,
your Father will not forgive your sins.

According to Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed: “Father, forgive them [his executioners]; for they know not what they do”; and in Luke 23:43 Jesus said to a forgiven malefactor, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.”

CONCLUSION

The question “What did Jesus write according to John 8: 6b–8?” can be answered only through speculation. The Greek texts offer few clues, but once a Hebrew *Vorlage* is created from the Greek texts, with all the ambiguous homographs of an unpointed Hebrew text, new clues present themselves. The

options are further enhanced when efforts are made to recover lost Hebrew lexemes by looking at Arabic cognates, a technique which has been practiced for centuries. The recovery of עֲפָרָה “forgiveness” and צִבְעָה “a religious decision / judgment,” as proposed in this study, has provided two lexemes that are contextually a perfect match. Thus, Jesus appears to have first written in the dust the words he spoke to the adulteress’ accusers in 8:6b, “Let him who is without sin” His second writing, focused on the adulteress herself, and dealt with forgiveness (עֲפָרָה) and her being forgiven. Once written Jesus verbalized his judgment: “Nor do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” He gave the adulteress’ accusers a new *halakah* “rule” for applying the Law,” and he gave the adulteress a new *halakah* “pathway” for living out her life.

NOTES

1. K. H. Rengstorf (1964: 334–335) noted,

In the NT the only occurrence [of ἀναμάρτητος] is in the challenge of Jesus in the story of the woman taken in adultery: ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ’ αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον (Jn. 8:7). What is meant is very generally the one who is not burdened by any guilt; reference to God is the self evident presupposition. The history of the word gives us no grounds for taking it to mean those who are not guilty of sexual sin, i.e., adultery, after the pattern of a specific interpretation of ἀμαρτωλός in Lk. 7:37 and ἐπὶ ἀμαρτίᾳ in Jn 8:3 D (instead of ἐν μοιχείᾳ). Indeed, the context forbids this, for Jesus is dealing with the scribes and Pharisees, against whom the charge of adultery could hardly be leveled, and no other sexual sin seems to be in question. The best explanation of ἀναμάρτητος in this passage is thus the general but concrete ἄνευ ἀνομιᾶς of Ψ 58:4 [MT 59:5, בְּלִי־עוֹן].

2. Edward F. Hills (1984: 154) argued that the *Pericope de Adultera* was originally in the Fourth Gospel but was set aside out of moral prudery.

The facts of history indicate that during the early Christian centuries throughout the Church adultery was commonly regarded as such a serious sin that it could be forgiven, if at all, only after severe penance. For example, Cyprian (c. 250) says that certain bishops who preceded him in the province of North Africa "thought that reconciliation ought not to be given to adulterers and allowed to conjugal infidelity no place at all for repentance." Hence offence was taken at the story of the adulterous woman brought to Christ, because she seemed to have received pardon too easily. Such being the case, it is surely more reasonable to believe that this story was deleted from John's Gospel by over-zealous disciplinarians than to suppose that a narrative so contrary to the ascetic outlook of the early Christian Church was added to John's Gospel from some extra-canonical source. There would be a strong motive for deleting it but no motive at all for adding it, and the prejudice against it would make its insertion into the Gospel text very difficult.

Marlowe (2004) provided online a lengthy extract of Hills' defense of this pericope as being Johannine, which is available by clicking [here](#).

3. Brown (1966: 336) made the same point, noting that "the style is not Johannine either in vocabulary or grammar. Stylistically, the story is more Lucan than Johannine."

4. Click [here](#) to view the Peshitta of John 8:1-11 in the London Polyglot.

5. Note Num 19:4, where the Septuagint also lacks a word for the MT באֶצְבְּעוֹ "with his finger."

6. Others associate Jesus' writing with the handwriting on the wall in Daniel 5:24, or the "you shall be written on earth" in Jer 17:13," or the injunction in Exod 23:1b not to join hands with a wicked man. For other proposals, see Darrett, 1964: 16, note 3.

7. Darrett's choice focused on Exod 23:1b, אֲלֹתֶשֶׁת יָדְךָ, "do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness." Because the written רָשָׁע could be either רָשָׁע "a wicked person" or רָשָׁע "wickedness" (in the abstract), "[Jesus'] refusal to be a party to what may be an unrighteous decision merges imperceptibly with a warning to the questioners that their own activities must be justifiable, and that it is not sufficient that they or some of them saw her in the act of adultery" (1964: 21).

8. Compare the translation of John 8:6b–8 Isaac Salkinson and Christian D. Ginsburg:

וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲחַ יֵשׁוּעַ וַיִּתֵּן בְּאַצְבָּעוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
 וְכַאֲשֶׁר הוֹסִיפוּ לִשְׁאֹל אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְּמוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיֶהֶם
 מִי־בְכֶם נָקִי מֵעוֹן יַד־הַבָּיִת אֲבָן רֵאשׁוּנָה:
 וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲחַ שְׁנֵית וַיִּתֵּן עוֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

and the translation of Franz Delitzsch:

וַיִּכְפֹּף יֵשׁוּעַ לְמַטֵּה וַיִּתֵּן בְּאַצְבָּעוֹ עַל־הַקֶּרֶקֶע:
 וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר הוֹסִיפוּ לִשְׁאֹל אֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׂא אֶת־עֵינָיו
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיֶהֶם מִי בְכֶם חָף מִפְּשָׁע הוּא יַד־הַבָּיִת
 אֲבָן בְּרֵאשׁוּנָה: וַיִּכְפֹּף שְׁנֵית לְמַטֵּה וַיִּתֵּן עַל־הַקֶּרֶקֶע:

(Click here for the complete Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament; and here for the complete Franz Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament.)

9. See Jastrow 1259; KBS 998–999. **צבַע**, stem II, should not be confused with **צַבַע**, stem I, “to dye, to dip, to immerse,” the cognate of **صَبَغ** (*ṣabaġa*), which is spelled with an **غ** (*ġayin*). Hava (1915: 388) and Wehr (1979: 586) noted that **صَبَغ** (*ṣabaġa*) “he dyed, dipped, immersed” appears in the name of John the Baptist, **יוחנא הצבַע** (*yuhannā ʿalṣābiġ*).

10. Lane (1867: 944–945) noted that the synonym **דין** (*dīn*), the cognate of **דִּין** “to judge/judgment,” means “obedience without any restriction . . . obedience to, and the service of, God”; and the noun **דיאַן** (*dayyān*) (= **דִּין**) means “a judge or governor . . . a manager, a conductor, or an orderer of [the] affairs of another.” Similarly, the synonym **מַלְאָה** (*millat*), the cognate of **מִלָּה** “word, utterance” means “a way of belief and practice in respect of religion” (Lane 1893: 3023). Hava (1915: 388) cited also **תַּשְׁבִּיג** (*taṣabbig*) “to profess” and **שְׁבִיעָה** (*ṣabġat*) “a [religious] opinion.” The synonym **שַׁרְיַעָה** (*ṣarīʿat*) has become the loanword *shariah* “(Islamic) religious law.”

11. See Chapter I, “Reptile Rations in Genesis 3:14 and Isaiah 65:25,” in my book *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, available online by clicking [HERE](#). There it is noted that **עַפְרָה**, stem III, is the cognate with Arabic **غَفْر** (*ġfr*), which Lane (1867: 842; 1877: 2274) defined as “[the **غَفْر** (*ġifr*) is] a certain **دَوَيْبَة** (*duwaybbat*) [by which may be meant a small beast or creeping thing, or an insect]” i.e., a synonym of **دَابَّة** (*dābbat*) about which Lane noted “The dim. [signifying *Any small animal that walks or creeps or crawls upon the earth, a small beast, a small reptile or creeping thing, a creeping insect, and any insect, and also a mollusk, . . .*] is **دَوَيْبَة** (*duwaybbat*).”

12. This is in disagreement with Power (1921:54) who stated:

A number from examples from various Arabic authors . . . will show more clearly the signification of the action of Our Divine Lord. It should be noted that in all cases the writing is the mechanical action of tracing figures or letters on the ground, not the intellectual one of expressing thought by written words

Quite to the contrary, Lane (1865: 759) included in his definition of *خط* (*ḥaṭṭa*) “he made a marks/lines (on the ground or in the sand)” —which was used in divination and geomancy— the following: “You say also, when a man is meditating upon his affair, and considering what may be its issue, or result, *فلان يخطى في الارض* (*fulānu taḥuṭṭu fî ʿlʿarṣi*) ‘such a one makes lines, or marks, upon the ground’. . . see St. John’s Gospel, ch. viii. verses 6 and 8.]”

Lane referred the reader to the synonym *نكت* (*nakata*) (1893: 2846) where he noted,

نكت الارض بقضيب (*nakata ʿlʿarṣi biqaḍībi*) “he struck the ground with a stick, or with his finger, so that it made a mark, or marks, upon it, with its extremity; an action of one reflecting, or meditating, and anxious.” [Thus our Saviour seems to have done in the case of the woman taken in adultery: see S. John viii. 6 and 8.]

IX

NOTES ON JOHN 19:39, 20:15 AND MATT 3:7

Raymond Brown (1966: cxxix) noted that the presence of Aramaisms or Hebraisms in the Greek text of the Gospels

is not sufficient to prove that a Gospel was first written in one of the two languages; at most it may prove that certain sayings once existed in Aramaic or Hebrew, or that the native language of the evangelist was not Greek.

A case in point are the three accounts in the Gospel of John dealing with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21, 7:37–52, and 19:38–42). There is good reason to conclude that at least the third account was initially written in Hebrew. The primary clues are hidden in Greek variants of John 19:39, which reads as follows in most manuscripts and in the Peshiṭta:

ἦλθεν δὲ καὶ Νικόδημος,
ὁ ἐλθὼν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς τὸ πρῶτον,
φέρων μίγμα σμύρνης καὶ ἀλόης
ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν.

And there came also Nicodemus,
he who at the first came to him by night,
bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes,
about a hundred pounds.

Peshiṭta

בָּרְבִּיבָא רִבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא
בָּרְבִּיבָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא
בָּרְבִּיבָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא
בָּרְבִּיבָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא אִתְּרַבִּינִימָא

ואתא אף ניקדמוס הו דאתא הווא
 מן קדים לות ישוע בלליא
 ואיתי עמה¹ חונטתא דמורא ודעלוי
 איך מאא ליטריין:

And there came also Nicodemus,
 who at first had come to Jesus by night;
 and he brought with him a mixture¹ of myrrh and aloes,
 about a hundred pints.²

The list of the major textual variants in John 19:39, as cited
 by Aland (1968: 406–407), is as follows:

- μίγμα p^{66vid} N^c A D^{supp} K L X Δ Θ Π 054 f¹ f¹³ 28
 33 565 700 1009 1010 1071 1195 1216 1239 1241 1242^c
 1365 1546 1646 2148 Byz Lect it^{a, aur, b, c, f, ff², n, q, r¹} vg
 syr^{p, h} cop^{sa, bo} arm geo
- ἔλιγμα N* B W cop^{bo^{ms}}
- σμίγμα Ψ 892 2174 l⁴⁷ (a variant of σμῆγμα)
- σμηγμα 1242* l¹⁸¹ syr^{pal} (a variant of σμῆγμα)
- *malagmani* it^e (= μάλαγμα, *malagmam*).³

These variants can be translated (in sequence) as: “mixture,”
 “packet,” “ungent,” “ointment,” and “emollient.”⁴

J. H. Bernard (1928: 653) called attention to the μεῖγμα
 “mixture” in Sirach 38:7; and for the variants σμίγμα and
 σμηγμα he suggested, “Probably the original was CMIΓMA
 which could easily be corrupted to EΛIΓMA.” Brown (1970:
 940) acknowledged Bernard’s suggestion but accepted the
 μίγμα in the majority of manuscripts as original, noting that
 the ἔλιγμα in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus* “is the more difficult
 reading and might well be favored if it were really mean-

ingful.” The fact is that all the Greek variants cited here are contextually meaningful. Thus, there is no reason to conclude that scribal corruptions were involved in producing these Greek variants. Rather the variants reflect differences in the Hebrew *Vorlage* involving (1) סַק / סֶק “sack, bag, package,”⁵ (2) סוּף “ointment, ungent”⁶ (3) אֶסוּף “flask,”⁷ and (4) מִסְךָ “mixture, mix.”⁸

Assuming a Hebrew *Vorlage* the following identifications can easily be made:

- μίγμα “mixture” (p^{66vid} א^c A D^{supp} K L X Δ Θ Π etc.) translated מִסְךָ,
- ἔλιγμα “packet” (א* B W cop^{bo^{ms}}) translated סֶק,⁹
- σμίγμα “ointment” (Ψ 892 2174 I⁴⁷) translated סוּף,
- σμηγμα “ointment” (1242* I⁸¹ syr^{pal}) translated סוּף,
- *malagmani* [= *malagam*] “ointment” (it^e) translated סוּף.

These identifications suggest the following reconstruction of the Hebrew *Vorlage* of this verse:

וְבָא נִקְדִּימוֹן אֲשֶׁר לְפָנִים בָּא אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ בְּלֵילָה
 מְבִיא אֶסוּף סוּף
 מִסְךָ מֵר־וַאֲהָלוֹת כְּלִיטְרָא
 מְאָהָה:¹⁰

And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night,
 came bringing a flask¹¹ of ointment,
 —a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a liter—
 moaning/wailing.

The following haplographies (highlighted in red underline) in the phrase מִסְךָ סוּף אֶסוּף “flask ointment mixture”

produced the variants found in the Greek texts noted above:

מִבִּיא אֶסוּד סוּךְ מִסַּךְ “bringing a mixture”

מִבִּיא אֶסוּד סוּךְ מִסַּךְ “bringing a packet”

מִבִּיא אֶסוּד סוּךְ מִסַּךְ “bringing ointment.”

Recognition of another haplography or a defective spelling of the last word of the verse, (מִזְאָדָה) “bemoaning,” which mistakenly became מִזְאָה “one hundred”), clarifies a second crux about the actual volume or weight of the spices Nicodemus brought.

Raymond Brown (1970: 941, 960) noted,

The Roman pound was about twelve ounces, so that this would be the equivalent of about seventy-five of our pounds; but the amount is still extraordinary. . . . This Johannine penchant for extravagant numbers is explained in the other instances [2:6, 21:11] in terms of symbolism, and that may be true here as well.

He suggested that “the large outlay of spices may be meant to suggest that Jesus was given a royal burial, for we know of such outlay on behalf of kings,” as in the case of Herod the Great as told by Josephus¹² and in the case of Rabbi Gamaliel as found in the Talmud, *Tractate Ebel Rabbathi*.¹³

Leon Morris (1971: 825) called attention to II Chron 16: 14, “they laid him [Asa] in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the perfumers’ art.” He recognized that the lavish amount of myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus to the grave site was unusual and if taken literally it suggests that the wealthy Nicodemus was “trying to make some reparation for his failure to do more in Jesus’ life.”

Barnabas Lindars (1972: 592) interpreted the “mixture of myrrh and aloes” to be in a liquid form (as in John 12:3) and

calculated one hundred liters to equal eight gallons, which he noted, “is obviously an exaggeration.”

More recently Craig Keener (2003: 1163) commented on Nicodemus’s “one hundred pounds” of myrrh and aloes:

But the amount of the spices mentioned in 19:39 is extraordinary. The Roman pound was about twelve ounces by modern standards, and hence the figure probably presents about seventy–five pounds; some have proposed that if one takes the amount as a measure of volume equivalent to the biblical *log*, one might find an abundant but hardly impossible amount close to seventy fluid ounces. . . . the lavish amount of spices here, however, are “as befits a king”. . . . Nicodemus honored Jesus lavishly, as had the woman in 12:3; but, if her gift had been worth 300 denarii (12:5), Nicodemus’s was worth 30,000, a gift befitting “a ruler of the Jews” (3:1).

Whereas the Greek ἑκατόν must mean “one hundred,” the Hebrew מאה can be the noun “one hundred” or the *Pi^cel* participle מֵאֵהָ/מֵאֵהָ from the root אָהָה, a denominative verb from the interjection אָהָה “Alas” and a by-form of אָהָה, the denominative verb from אָוִי “Woe!”¹⁴ Both אָהָה and אָוִי have Arabic cognates. Lane (1863: 120) cited أھ (°ahha) and أھھ (°ahhaha) “he expressed pain or grief or sorrow, or he lamented, or complained, or moaned as one broken in spirit by grief or by mourning, and said آھ (°āhi) or هآھ (hāh).”¹⁵

Had the participle “bemoaning” in the Hebrew *Vorlage* been the *Qal* אָהָה, rather than the *Pi^cel* מֵאֵהָ, there would have been no confusion with מאה “one hundred.” But this מֵאֵהָ which followed the noun לִיטְרָא “liter” was understandably—though mistakenly—misread as a number. The simple loss of a ה increased “a liter” into “a hundred liters.”

The fact that Nicodemus came to the grave *bewailing loudly* disappeared in the Greek texts. In Greek the focus shifted to Nicodemus's wealth which permitted him to contribute so extravagantly and implied that servants carried the 75-100 pound container of myrrh and aloes—not Nicodemus himself with a more modest gift of a liter of perfumed unguent.

If the Hebrew *Vorlage* presented here approximates what was original, the אֶסֶדֶךָ “flask”⁶ is especially noteworthy. It appears only in II Kings 4:2–7, when Elisha asked the prophet's widow who was being threatened by a creditor what she had of worth in her house, she replied, אֵין לִּשְׂפַחְתֶּךָ, כֹּל בַּבַּיִת כִּי אֶם-אֶסֶדֶךָ שֶׁמֶן “Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.” Miraculously, thanks to Elisha, many vessels were filled from that single אֶסֶדֶךָ שֶׁמֶן “pot of oil,” and when all the oil was sold the income was sufficient to pay off the widow's creditor. The אֶסֶדֶךָ, in and of itself, spoke of the miraculous. Moreover, this אֶסֶדֶךָ triggers one's recalling other miracles of Elisha and Elijah—including Elijah's raising the dead (I Kings 17:17–24) and his assumption into heaven in a whirlwind (II Kings 2:1–15).

These intimations in John 19:39 (that death is *not* final and that heaven *is* open for occupancy) appear only in this hypothetical Hebrew *Vorlage*. There are no such hints here in the Greek text itself. The variants in the Greek of John 19:39 cannot be accounted for fully by assuming that scribes confused reading/ writing the syllables μί, ἔλι, σμί, and σμη when prefixed to the syllable μα. Haplography in the consonant cluster אֶסֶדֶךָ, as demonstrated, seems much more likely. Just as the אֶסֶדֶךָ שֶׁמֶן “flask of oil” paid off richly for

the widow (I Kings 17), the **סִנְדוֹן סוּךְ סַמָּךְ** (as reconstructed) “a flask of ointment, a mixture of . . .” pays off nicely in ascertaining what Nicodemus actually brought to the grave. Moreover, the **מֵאָה** “one hundred,” when read as **מֵאָהָה** “bewailing,” pays off well in ascertaining the actual depth of Nicodemus’s grief after the death of Jesus.

Just as the **أه** (*ʿahha*) and **أهه** (*ʿahhaha*) “he expressed pain or grief,” cited above,¹⁵ provides clarity for the interpretation of the **מֵאָהָה / מֵאָהָה** in the *Vorlage* of John 19: 39, the Arabic **جان** (*jan*), the cognate of the Hebrew **גַּנֵּן** “gardener,” provides insight into the function of the “gardener” mentioned in John 20:15,

λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς,
 Γύναι, τί κλαίεις; τίνα ζητεῖς;
 ἐκείνη δοκοῦσα ὅτι ὁ κηπουρός ἐστίν λέγει αὐτῶ,
 Κύριε, εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας αὐτόν,
 εἰπέ μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας αὐτόν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀρῶ.

Jesus saith unto her,
 Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?
 She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him,
 Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me
 where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Lane (1865: 462) included in his definition of **جان** (*jan*) the following: “it/he veiled, concealed, hid, covered, or protected, him; it veiled him, concealed him, or covered him, with its darkness; . . . He concealed it; namely, a dead body; he wrapped it in grave clothing: and he buried it.” This definitely suggests that the Hebrew **גַּנֵּן** “gardener” could in some contexts be better translated as “mortician.”

Moreover, there are also the following derivatives:

- جنن (*janan*) “grave” (= 𐤍𐤍),
- جنن (*janan*) “dead body” (= 𐤍𐤍),
- جنين (*janîn*) “grave clothes” (= 𐤍𐤍𐤍),
- جنين (*janîn*) “buried, placed in the grave” (= 𐤍𐤍𐤍).

These are not related to the words جنة (*jannat*) “garden,” جنان (*jannān*) “gardener,” or جن (*jinn*) “invisible demons,” even though they appear on the same page in the Arabic lexicons (Lane 1865: 463; Wehr 1979: 164).

Whereas the Greek κηπουρός “gardener” took care of the flowers, plants, and trees, the Hebrew 𐤍𐤍 “gardener” may also have handled dead bodies. Thus, Mary Magdalene assumed that the man she saw outside the tomb was the “gardener / mortician” responsible for having removed Jesus’ body.

In support of this appeal to Arabic cognates, haplographies, or dittographies in the Hebrew *Vorlagen* to explain variants in the Greek texts of John 19:39 (or a puzzling piece in John 20:15), an example from the Ethiopic text of Matt 3:7 can be cited as a fitting conclusion to my arguments. In the Ethiopic text of the London Polyglot (1667) of Matt 3:7 it states that the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John’s baptism *secretly* (the Latin *clàm* translates the Ethiopic *ṣamamita*).¹⁶

The Greek text of Matt 3:7a reads,

Ἴδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων
ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς . . .

But seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees
coming for his baptism, he said to them . . .

The Hebrew *Vorlage* for this could well have been (minus the vowels),”

וְרָאָה רַבִּים מִן־הַפְּרוּשִׁים
 וּמִן־הַצְּדוּקִים בָּאִים לְטַבִּילָתוֹ אָמַר לָהֶם

If so, the Hebrew text behind the Ethiopic variant must have read טל לטבילתו “*secretly to his baptism*” rather than לטבילתו “*to his baptism.*” Thus, there was a dittography of the initial ל and ט of the לטבילתו (or a haplography in the *Vorlagen* of the majority texts). (This ך ך “*secrecy*” [BDB 532], was an adverbial accusative, and would not have required a preposition.) The *private* visit of the Pharisee Nicodemus to Jesus at night (John 3:2), provides a striking parallel to this Ethiopic variant which has Pharisees and Sadducees going out to John *secretly* in the daytime. Whereas in Luke 3:7 John *publicly* called the multitude (ὄχλος) “a generation of vipers,” in Matt 3:7, according to the Ethiopic text, only many (πολλοὺς) *Pharisees and Saducees* were *privately* declared to be “a generation of vipers.” Jesus issued this same charge only against the Pharisees (Matt 12:24–34) and against the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt 23:29–33).

NOTES

1. See J. Payne Smith (1957:132) for חונטתא “a mixture of spices to bury the dead.”
2. “Pint” is Lamsa’s translation (1967: 1079).
3. This phrase in Codex Palatinus, reads “*ferens malagmam murrae et aloen quasi libras centum.*” The *malagmani* was an obvious error for the original *malagmam*. See Liddell Scott (1966: 1076) for the μάλαγμα “emollient.”

4. See Liddell Scott 1132, 533, 1619, 1619, 1076, respectively, for these definitions.
5. See BDB 974; Jastrow 1019, 1620; and Payne Smith 387.
6. A cognate of the Arabic *سك* (*suk*), “a sort of perfume prepared from *رامك* (*ra²mak*) or from musk and *رامك* (*ra²-mak*),” the *رامك* (*ra²mak*) being a Persian loanword for a certain astringent medicine (Lane 1867: 1159; 1872: 1387). Hava (1915: 345) cited *ساک* (*sāk*) “to rub.”
7. See BDB 691–692; Jastrow 963 “to pour oil, to be oiled, to be perfumed.” Montgomery (1951: 370) noted that the *סִנְיָ* in II Kings 4:2 was translated in Codex *Vaticanus* and in Origen’s *Hexapla* as the verb *ἀλείψομαι* “I anoint myself; but in the Lucianic texts it appears as the noun *ἀγγεῖον* “vessel, receptacle, sack.” The initial *ס* of *סִנְיָ* is a prosthetic *ס* (GKC 19^m), the root being *סִנְיָ*, as noted by Montgomery, who stated, “for the unusual development from the root *סוּךְ*, ‘to anoint,’ cf. *אִזּוּב* (Akk. *zupū*), *אִגּוּז* (Syr. *gūz*) But it doubtless means an ointment pot.” Montgomery called attention to Honeyman’s study of *סִנְיָ* in *PEQ* 1939, 70.
8. See BDB 587; Jastrow 807, “to mix wine.”
9. The *סך* here is a variant spelling of *סק* “a sack,” like the variants *דקק* / *דכך* “to crush” and *רקק* / *רכך* “to be thin, weak.”

10. In light of the syntax in 2 Sam 24:2,4 שְׁקָלִים חֲמִשִּׁים “fifty shekels,” and Neh 5:15, שְׁקָלִים אַרְבָּעִים “forty shekels,” the retroversion of λίτρας ἑκατόν to לִיטְרִין מֵאָה maintains the Greek word order rather than the anticipated מֵאָה לִיטְרִין.

11. Another option would be to retrovert the μίγμα to בְּחִיטָה “mixture” (Jastrow, 155–156; Payne Smith 41) which was confused with חֲפִיטָה “packet” (Jastrow, 491–492), the cognate of the Arabic cognate حَفْش (*hifš^{um}*) “receptacle, vessel, sack” (Hava 132). But this would not account for the variants σμηγμα and σμίγμα “ointment.”

12. Josephus, *Antiquities* VXII: 196ff.:

After this was over, they prepared for his funeral, it being Archelaus' care that the procession to his father's sepulcher should be very sumptuous. Accordingly, he brought out all his ornaments to adorn the pomp of the funeral. The body was carried upon a golden bier, embroidered with very precious stones of great variety, and it was covered over with purple, as well as the body itself; he had a diadem upon his head, and above it a crown of gold: he also had a scepter in his right hand. About the bier were his sons and his numerous relations; next to these was the soldiery, distinguished according to their several countries and denominations; and they were put into the following order: First of all went his guards, then the band of Thracians, and after them the Germans; and next the band of Galatians, every one in their habiliments of war; and behind these marched the whole army in the same manner as they used to go out to war, and as they used to be put in array by their muster-masters and centurions; these were followed by five hundred of his domestics carrying spices.

So they went eight furlongs to Herodium; for there by his own command he was to be buried. And thus did Herod end his life.

Josephus *War* I: 673ff.:

They betook themselves to prepare for the king's funeral; and Archelaus omitted nothing of magnificence therein, but brought out all the royal ornaments to augment the pomp of the deceased. There was a bier all of gold, embroidered with precious stones, and a purple bed of various contexture, with the dead body upon it, covered with purple; and a diadem was put upon his head, and a crown of gold above it, and a sceptre in his right hand; and near to the bier were Herod's sons, and a multitude of his kindred; next to which came his guards, and the regiment of Thracians, the Germans. also and Gauls, all accounted as if they were going to war; but the rest of the army went foremost, armed, and following their captains and officers in a regular manner; after whom five hundred of his domestic servants and freed-men followed, with sweet spices in their hands: and the body was carried two hundred furlongs, to Herodium, where he had given order to be buried. And this shall suffice for the conclusion of the life of Herod.

13. *Tractate Ebel Rabbathi* 8:6

The bodies of kings, and their clothes may be burned, their cattle ham-stringed, without fear that it is after the usages of the Amorites. The ceremony of burning clothes and other things is performed for the corpses of kings only, but not for princes. When Rabban Gamaliel died, **Aquila the proselyte, however, burned in his honor clothes of the value of eight thousand Zuz,** and when he was asked why he did so, he answered: It is written [Jer. 34:5]: "In peace shalt thou die; and as burnings were made for thy father," etc. Was not Rabban Gamaliel more worthy than a hundred kings, for whom we have no use?

The text highlighted in red appears in Brown's commentary (1970: 960) as "the proselyte Onkelos burned more than eighty pounds of spices." But in *Abodah Zarah*, 11a, it is stated that burning of clothes was also done for princes, and Aquilas' deed was used as a support without any explanation. (The 𐤒𐤒 was one fourth of a shekel [Jastrow, 385]).

14. See BDB 13, 17 and GKC 38^c. Compare the English denominatives "wail/ *bewail*" and "moan/*bemoan*."

15. Lane (129–130) cited the by-form ٲوہ (°*awwaha*) in form 5, ٲأوہ (°*awwah*), meaning "He said ٲآ (°*āhi*) or ٲأ (°*awhi*) [i.e. *Ah!* or *Alas!*]; he moaned; or uttered a moan, or moaning, or prolonged voice of complaint." He also cited under this root about twenty-five variant pronunciations of the Arabic equivalents of "Ah!" and "Alas!" including ٲآ (°*ahi*) and ٲآہ (°*aha*). Wehr (1979: 46) also cited the verb ٲآہ (°*āha*) and its by-form ٲوہ (°*awwaha*), in forms II and V meaning "to moan, to sigh." Hava (1915: 16–17) cited verbs ٲآ (°*ah*), ٲآہ (°*ahha*), ٲوہ (°*awha*), ٲوہ (°*awwah*), ٲأوہ (°*awwah*), and ٲأوہ (°*awwah*), all meaning "to groan, to sigh," and the exclamatory particles ٲآہ (°*āha*) "Aha!" ٲآہ (°*āha*) "Alas!" ٲوہ (°*awwah*) "Alas!" and ٲوہ (°*ūhi*) "Woe!"

16. This variant was not noted by Allen (1912: 24), nor by Davies and Allison (1988: 301). It was noticed by Adam Clarke (1850: 52) and was called to my attention by my friend and colleague, Dr. Parker Thompson. Also, thanks to Rev. Preston Bush who called my attention to the Arabic جن (*jan*), the cognate of the Hebrew 𐤒𐤒 "gardener."

X

RECOVERING JESUS' WORDS BY WHICH HE INITIATED THE EUCHARIST

The accounts of Jesus' instituting the Eucharist appear in Matt 26:26–27, Mark 14:22–24, Luke 22:19–20, and I Corinthians 11:23–24. In Greek the number of words in the direct quotations of Jesus' instructions vary widely. In Matthew 26, seven words were used for the bread and four for the cup; and in Mark 14, seven words were used for the bread and possibly five words for the cup. By contrast, in Luke 22 (including the variant readings) fifteen words were used for the bread and fourteen for the cup; whereas in I Cor 11, seventeen words were used for the bread and twenty words for the cup. With Matthew's eleven words total versus Corinthians' thirty-seven words total, it is not surprising that there is wide disagreement among scholars as to what Jesus actually said when he commanded the disciples "to eat . . . and drink in remembrance of me."

Not only are the direct quotations of Jesus' Eucharistic commands of varied length in the Synoptics and in I Corinthians, but the precise wording in the individual Gospel accounts—as well as in Paul's epistle—vary widely in the manuscripts, translations, and text traditions. The four passages mentioned are cited in full in the paragraphs below. The variant reading are highlighted in red font, with the four variants in I Corinthians 11 highlighted (in red) as four bullets.

Matthew 26:26–27

Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν, λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς [τὸν]¹ ἄρτον,
καὶ εὐχαριστήσας, ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς,
καὶ εἶπεν, Λάβετε, φάγετε· **τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.**

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καὶ λαβὼν [τὸν]² ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· πίνετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.

And as they were eating, Jesus took [the]¹ bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; **this is my body.**”

Then he took [the]² cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.”

Mark 14:22–24

Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν, λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν, καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ εἶπεν, Λάβετε, φάγετε· **τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.**

Καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς· καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες. Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἱμά μου, τῆς [καλυῆς]³ διαθήκης, τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, “Take, eat; **this is my body.**”

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it.

And he said to them, “This is my blood of the [new]³ covenant, which is shed for many.”

Luke 22:19–20⁴

καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων,
Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον·
τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.

καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι, λέγων,
 Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου
 τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it,
 and gave it to them, saying,
 “This is my body given for you;
 do this in remembrance of me.”

And likewise the cup after supper, saying,
 “This cup is the new covenant in My blood,
 which is shed for you.

I Cor 11:23–24

Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου,
 ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν,
 ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο
 ἔλαβεν ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν
 καὶ εἶπεν, Τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα

- τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν⁵
- τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κλώμενον⁶
- τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον⁷
- τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν θρυπτόμενον⁸

τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.
 ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι λέγων·
 τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη
 ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι·
 τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε,
 εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.

For I received from the Lord
 what I also passed on to you:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed,
 took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it

and said, “This is my body,

- which is for you⁵
- which is broken for you⁶
- which is given for you⁷
- which is broken-in-pieces for you⁸

do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it,

in remembrance of me.”

The variants κλώμενον “broken,” διδόμενον “given,” and θρυπτόμενον “broken-in-pieces” are obviously not the result of Greek scribal misreadings or misspellings. The synonyms κλώμενον and θρυπτόμενον are most certainly two independent translations of a word in the Hebrew or Aramaic source which Paul had received.

The clue for identifying the Hebrew word which could be translated *correctly* as κλώμενον or διδόμενον or θρυπτόμενον is found in the Peshitta of Luke 22:19,

ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ
 ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ

“and he said this is my body which is given for you.”

The Syriac ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ (*pēgar*) means “body, flesh, corpse, carcass” and is the cognate of the Jewish Aramaic/Hebrew פָּגַר/פָּגַר, stem III (BDB 803; Jastrow 1136).⁹ The derivative noun ܩܘܿܪܒܢܐ (*pāgranûta*) means “being in the flesh,” and it is the term of choice for “the Incarnation” (Payne Smith 434). Once פָּגַר/פָּגַר, stem III, is in focus one’s attention naturally

shifts to the other lexemes spelled פִּגַּר, including

- פִּגַּר/פִּגְרָ, stem I, “to split, to break up, to destroy,” which in the *ʿAph^{el}* means “to wound, to bruise” (Jastrow 1135, where he also noted the phrase מִפְּגָרֵי לֵבָא “those crushed at heart”). This פִּגַּר is a cognate of the Arabic فجر (*fajara*) “to cleave, to brake open, to pour forth, to gush out . . . to make water, blood, or a fluid to flow” (Lane 2340; Wehr 816). This פִּגַּר could well be translated by κλάω “to break” or θρύπτω “to break-into-pieces.”
- פִּגַּר/פִּגְרָ, stem II, “to be exhausted, to be faint” (BDB 803); and Aramaic “to be lax, to faint” (Jastrow 1135).
- פִּגַּר/פִּגְרָ stem IV, “to give,” the cognate of the Arabic فجر (*fajara*) “he made it to well forth, he made his gift large” (and in form 7, “he was profuse [in generosity, liberality, or beneficence]; “to show generosity, to act bountifully). The derivatives of فجر (*fajara*) include (a) فاجر (*fajar^{um}*) “donation, generosity, munificence, bounty beneficence”, and (b) فاجر (*fâjir*) “one having much wealth or property” (Lane 2341–2342; Hava 547). This פִּגַּר could well be translated by δίδωμι “to give.”¹⁰
- פִּגַּר stem V, “wicked, immoral,” which is the cognate of the Arabic فجر (*fajara*) “he committed a foul deed, he acted vitiously, immorally,” and فجرة (*fajrat*) “vice, immorality, wickedness” (Lane 2340–2341).

The פגָר (*pěgar*) in the Peshitta of Luke 22:19 undoubtedly retains the word from the original Aramaic/ Hebrew source, which became σῶμα in the Greek text tradition.¹¹ If so, the statement about the bread could have appeared in Hebrew as follows (with the lexemes spelled פגָר highlighted in red):¹²

לקח לחם ויברך ויפגָר ויאמר קחו אכלו
 זה פגָרי הפגָר הנפגָר בעדכם
 זאת עשו לזכרני

He took bread and blessed and **broke** [it] and said
 “Take and eat; this [is] **my body, the-broken-one**,¹³
the-one-given¹⁴ for your sake.
 This do in my remembrance.”

This reconstruction accommodates the variants κλώμενον “broken,” θρυπτόμενον “broken-in-pieces,” and διδόμενον “given.” The shortened form of the saying in Matt 26:26 and Mark 14:22 (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου) reflects a simple haplography of the הפגָר הנפגָר which followed the פגָרי in the Hebrew narrative. Similarly, in the Hebrew behind Luke 22:19, a haplography changed הפגָר הנפגָר to simply פגָרי הפגָר “my body broken.” And the variants in I Cor 11:23 (listed at notes 5–8) come from a haplography of

- the הפגָר הנפגָר, with only the τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in Greek,
- the הפגָר, with only the τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κλώμενον or τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν θρυπτόμενον in Greek,
- the הפגָר, with only the τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον in Greek.

Were the original source in Aramaic the haplographies involved the phrase פגָרי פגָרא מתפגָרא.

The reconstructed text, **זֶה פְּגִרִי הַפָּגוּר / הַנִּפְגָּר בְּעֲדֵיכֶם**, “this is my broken body / given for you” (a composite of the variants in the Greek texts) recovers a pithy phrase marked by paranomasia and assonance—features which are unlikely the result of random editorial or liturgical interpolations. But the wordplay could well have been coined to emphasize the point being made. Moreover, the five words have the 3 + 2 *qinah* accent pattern characteristic of a lament. This 3 + 2 matches that in Mark 14:24, **זֶה דָּמִי דַם-הַבְּרִית / הַנִּגָּר לְרַבִּים**, “this is my blood, the blood of the covenant / shed for many.”¹⁵

This is not to suggest that Jesus was waxing poetic at the Last Supper. Rather it is to recognize that Jesus’ mood at that table was somber enough to affect unconscious speech patterns which can be recovered by a careful philological analysis of variants in the Greek texts and their probable Semitic origin.

Many scholars have argued for the primacy of the shorter texts in Matt 26:26–27 and Mark 14:22–24.¹⁶ For example Frédéric Godet (1881: 290–291) argued

No doubt, in Paul [I Cor 11:24] this participle [κλώμενον ‘broken’] might be a gloss. But an interpolation would have been taken from Luke [22:19]; they would not have invented this *Hapax-legomenon* κλώμενον. . . . I think, therefore, that this participle of Paul, as well as the *given* of Luke, are in the Greek text the necessary paraphrase of the literal Aramaic form, *This is my body for you*, a form which the Greek ear could as little bear as ours. . . . As to the word *is* which has been so much insisted upon, it was not uttered by Jesus who must have said in Aramaic *Haggouschmi*, “*This here* [behold] *my body!*”¹⁷

Similarly, Alfred Plummer (1953: 497) concluded that “the κλώμενον, which many texts add to τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in I Cor

xi. 24, is not genuine.”

Norval Geldenhuys (1979: 554, 559) concluded that Luke 22:19b and 19:20 did not belong to the original text of Luke. He stated:

If the supposition which is endorsed by the majority of expositors of the Bible (liberals as well as conservatives), namely, that 19b and 20 are later interpolations, is right, then Luke in verse 19 merely mentioned the fact in quite general terms that the Lord also broke bread and distributed it and taught the disciples that the broken bread is the symbol of his body (which for their sakes will be broken in his sacrificial death). . . . So nothing is lost by admitting that everything points to the fact that these words [in Luke 22:19b-20] are an interpolation of the words from 1 Corinthians xi in Luke’s original text.”

However, I. H. Marshall (1978: 800) preferred the longer text of Luke 22:19–20, arguing that “the external evidence for the longer text is overwhelming” and that the origin of the shorter text “may be due simply to some scribal idiosyncrasy.” That “idiosyncrasy” can now be identified as a haplography involving the consonant cluster פגרי הפגור נפגר.

Although פגר, stem V, the cognate of the Arabic فجر (*fajra*), “he acted immorally,” and فجرة (*fajrat*) “vice, immorality wickedness” (noted above) appears at first glance to be contextually irrelevant, it may actually be the missing link which can account for the shorter text (τοῦτὸ ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμά μου, “this is my body”) in Matt 26:26 and Mark 14:22. The phrase זה פגרי הפגר (with defective spelling of the *Qal* passive participle) could be interpreted as either “this is my broken body” or as “this is my immoral body.” Given that ambiguity—whether to read the הפגר as הפגור or הפגר—the decision was made to drop the modifier(s) and retain only the

unambiguous subject-predicate **זה פגרי** “this is my body.”

A similar dynamic may well account for the absence of the participle ἐκχυσόμενος “poured out” in Matt 26:27 and in I Cor 11:24. If the verb in the Semitic source was **נָגַר** “to pour” (as in Psalm 75:9, **כִּי כֹס בְּיַד־יְהוָה . . . וַיִּזֶר מִזֶּה**, “for a cup is in the hand of Yahweh . . . and he pours from this”), the *Niph^cal* participle **נֹגֵר** (= **נָגַר**) “poured out” would match the *Niph^cal* participle **נֹגֵר** (= **נָגַר**) of **נָגַר**, stem II “to seduce, to have illegitimate intercourse” (Jastrow 226). In speech there is no similarity between **נָגַר** and **נֹגֵר**, but in writing **נֹגֵר** could be either. Once the oral tradition was written down in Aramaic or Hebrew someone decided it was better to remove the ambiguous modifier than to keep it and possibly distort the truth being affirmed. Thus, the shorter texts originated in the written Hebrew and Aramaic sources prior to their being translated into Greek, Latin, or other languages.

If the phrase “this is my body broken for you,” in I Cor 11:23 goes back to an original **זה פגרי הפגור** or **דנא פגרי פגירא**, there was no tension between Jesus’ speaking of his “broken body” and the narrative in John 19:34–36 (which alludes to restrictions dealing with the sacrificial paschal lamb),¹⁸

[the soldiers] came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. . . . For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, “*Not a bone of him shall be broken.*” . . . And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

When used with reference to the human body the verb פָּנַר / פָּנַר, stem I, “to break,” need not be read as a synonym of שָׁבַר “to fracture (bones).” As noted above, פָּנַר / פָּנַר can mean “to wound, to bruise, to brake open, to pour forth, to make water, blood, or a fluid to flow.” Thus, the פָּנַר could also reference the piercing (νύσσω) of Jesus’ side.

One variant in the Eucharist texts which has not been clarified by the פָּנַר lexemes and the נָגַר lexemes is the absence of the modifier καὶ νῆς “new” in manuscripts א B C D^b L Θ Ψ in Mark 14:24 (see note 3). Most scholars think Jesus referenced the בְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה “new covenant” in Jer 31:31. If so, and if he spoke in Aramaic, the τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης “the new covenant” would have been קַיִמָּא חֲרֵתָא, two graphically dissimilar words unlikely to suffer a haplography. But if he spoke in Hebrew the “new covenant” may have been הַבְּרִית הַבְּרִיאָה (with the adjective בְּרִיאָה being attested in Num 16:30, אִם־בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא יְהוָה, “if Yahweh does something utterly new” [NJB]). The graphic similarity of the words הַבְּרִית הַבְּרִיאָה “the new covenant” apparently contributed to a haplography of the הַבְּרִיאָה in the א B C D^b L Θ Ψ textual tradition.¹⁹

Marshall (1978: 801) cited Hermann Patsch (1972: 87–89) who “confirms the view of Jeremias [that the Marcan form stands closest to the original form] but stresses that there can be no possibility of reconstructing ‘the oldest form’ and hence of regarding the sayings as *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.” To the contrary, the reconstructions based upon the variants in the Greek presented in this study support Marshall’s opinion that:

the basic motifs expressed in the [Eucharistic] sayings can be shown to be in agreement with what we otherwise know of the teaching of Jesus . . . and hence in our opinion a line can be drawn from the historical Last Supper to the sayings recorded here [in Luke], even if it is impossible to be sure precisely what Jesus said. It is in our view less likely that the sayings represent the early church's interpretation of the meaning of the Supper. There is certainly nothing in the sayings that cannot go back to Jesus who viewed his ministry in terms of the suffering Servant and who expected to die as a martyr.

Once the τὸ ἐκχυσνόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, “which is shed for many,” of Mark 14:24 (rather than the τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυσνόμενον, “which is shed for you,” of Luke 22:20) is inserted into I Cor 11:23–27, the original Eucharistic text comes into focus. It can be reconstructed in Hebrew as follows (with vowels added to remove any ambiguity, and highlight in red what could be Jesus' *ipsissima verba*):

...הָאֲדוֹן יִשׁוּעַ בְּלֵילָהּ אֲשֶׁר־סָנַר בּוֹ
 לָקַח לֶחֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ וַיִּפְגַּר וַיֹּאמֶר
 קְחוּ אֲכֹלוּ זֶה פָּנֵי הַפָּגוּר הַנִּפְגַּר בְּעַדְכֶם
 זֹאת עֲשׂוּ לְזִכְרָנִי:²⁰
 וְכִמוֹכֵן אַחֲרֵי אֲכֹלֶם לָקַח אֶת־הַכּוֹס וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַכּוֹס הַזֹּאת הַבְּרִית הַבְּרִיאָה בְּדַמִּי הַנִּגָּר לְרַבִּים
 זֹאת עֲשׂוּ בְכָל־עֵת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁתּוּ לְזִכְרָנִי:²⁰
 כִּי בְכָל־עֵת אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת־הַלֶּחֶם הַזֶּה
 וְשָׂתוּ אֶת־הַכּוֹס הַזֹּאת
 תִּסְפְּרוּ מוֹת אֲדֹנָינוּ עַד כִּי יָבוֹא:

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. . . The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and blessed and broke it, and said,
“Take, eat, this is my broken body, given for you sakes.
Do this in remembrance of me.”²⁰

In the same way after their eating,
he took the cup and said,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many.
Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me.”²⁰

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The twenty-four Hebrew words (or forty English words) highlighted in red—which can be quoted in less than thirty seconds—do not include all of Jesus' conversation at the Last Supper. But they may well reflect all that was recorded in the Hebrew source which Paul received. As long as there was an active oral tradition available to help interpret the inadvertently ambiguous consonantal Hebrew/Aramaic records, textual variants in Greek translations would be minimal. When the oral tradition became unavailable the variants multiplied and became inexplicable. As a result, the most frequent explanation for the Greek, Latin, and other textual variants was to identify them as puzzling interpolations. But, as demonstrated in this study and others, by reconstructing hypothetically the Aramaic/Hebrew *Vorlage* of a variant, a host of possible explanations appear. Such was the case with the phrase τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου, “this is my body,” which led to the contextually relevant lexeme פֶּגֶר “body, corpse,” and this in turn led to all of the other פֶּגֶר lexemes which were a perfect match for the other variants cited in notes 2–8. The full quotations of Jesus, with variants included as evaluated above, appear to retain Jesus' own words, not later liturgical or editorial interpolations.

NOTES

1. Tischendorf (1877: 104) noted that the definite article τὸν is attested in mss A Γ Δ H.
2. Tischendorf (1877: 104) noted that the definite article τὸν is attested in mss ACDHKMSUVΓΠ. Aland (1968:102) noted in addition $\mathfrak{p}^{37 \text{ vid}, 43} f^{13}$ 565 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 *Byz Lect* Justin Diatessaron^{i, n}.
3. Aland (1968: 184) noted that the τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης appears in manuscripts AKPΔ $f^1 f^{13}$ 28 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 12161230 1241 1253 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 *Byz Lect* it^{b, i, r1}. But τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης (without the τὸ) appears in X 1242 1344 it^{a, aur, c, f, l, q} vg syr^{s, p, h} cop^{sa, bo^{mss}} arm eth geo² Diatessaron. The τῆς διαθήκης without a modifier appears in \aleph B CD^b LΘ Ψ 565 it^k cop^{sa^{ms}, bo}.
4. Aland (1968: 302–303) cited the variant order of verses in Luke 22: 17–20 as follows:
 - {B} verses 17, 18, 19a (omitting 19b–20: τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν...ἐκχυννόμενον) D it^{a, d, ff2 i, l}
 - verses 17, 18, 19 20 \mathfrak{p}^{75} \aleph A B C K L T^{vid} W X Δ Θ Π Ψ 063 $f^1 f^{13}$ 565 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 1274 *Byz Lect* it^{aur, c, f, q, r1} vg syr^{h, pal} cop^{sa, bo} arm geo
 - verses 19a (καὶ λαβῶν...σῶμά μου), 17, 18 it^{b, c}
 - verses 19, 17, 18 syr^c
 - verses 19, 20 l^{32} syr^p cop^{bo^{ms}}.

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5. The pronoun ὑμῶν alone appears in $\text{p}^{46} \mathfrak{N}^* \text{A B C}^* 33 1739^*$ arm Origen Cyprian Athanasius^{acc.} to Theodoret Pelagius Cyril Fulgentius (Aland, 1968: 604).
6. The pronoun ὑμῶν plus the participle κλώμενον appears in $\mathfrak{N}^c \text{C}^3 \text{D}^{b,c} \text{G K P } \Psi 81 88 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 630 1241 1739^{\text{mg}} 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 2492 2495 \text{ Byz Lect}$ it^{d, e, g.} syr^{p, h.} goth Ambrosiasterr Basil Chrysostom Euthalius Theodoret John-Damascus (see Aland, 1968: 604).
7. Aland (1968: 604) cited the pronoun ὑμῶν plus the participle διδόμενον, with the following notation: “(see Lk 22:19) (it^{c, dem, f, t, x, xc} vg *tradetur* it^{ar} *quod tradidi pro vobis*, it^{z*} *quod pro vobis traditur*) cop^{sa, bo} eth Euthalius.”
8. The pronoun ὑμῶν plus the participle θρυπτόμενον appears in D^{gr*} (see Aland, 1968: 604).
9. In the Septuagint פָּנֶה was translated by σῶμα in Gen 15: 11, II Kings 19:35, and Isa 37:36.
10. Note Castell’s (1669: 2959) detailed citations of the varied פָּנֶה lexemes, especially the Arabic فاجر (*fajr*) for the *dos* and *dotale*, the giving of the dowry.
11. I. H. Marshall (1978: 802) cited Dalman, Behm, Cranfield, Kümmel, and Schweizer among those who thought that Jesus used גּוּפָא “body, person, self, substance” (Jastrow 225). But J. Jeremias (1966: 198–199) argued for בְּשָׂרָא “flesh,” as did R. Brown in his comments on John 6:51 (1966: 284–285,

291) and J. Fitzmyer (1985: 1400).

12. With vocalization this reconstruction would read

לָקַח לֶחֶם וַיְבָרֵךְ וַיִּפְגַּר
וַיֹּאמֶר קְחוּ אֲכֹלוּ זֶה פִּגְרֵי הַפָּגוּר
הַנִּפְגָּר בְּעֵדְכֶם זֹאת עָשׂוּ לְזִכְרָנִי:

13. This appositional modifier reflects a *Qal* passive participle.

14. This translates the definite *Niph^cal* participle. It should be noted that the *Niph^cal* form was used “too express actions which the subject allows to happen to himself, or to have an effect upon himself” (GKC 51^c).

15. The parallel text in Luke 22:20 would yield a 2 + 3 + 2:
הַפֹּסֵם הַזֹּאת / הַבְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה בְּדָמַי / הַשְּׂפוּךְ בְּעֵדְכֶם.
The first five words in I Cor 11:25a would match the first five words here, but the reconstruction of 11:26b has no metrical pattern.

16. See I. H. Marshall (1978: 799–802) for a good summary of the varied scholarly arguments about the primacy of the shorter or longer texts.

17. See Jastrow 228, 274 for the Aramaic גּוּשְׁמָא, גּוּשְׁמָא, and the Hebrew גּוּשָׁם “body, self.” Godet’s retroversion of σῶμα to the Aramaic *Haggouschmi* can be faulted because the initial *Hag* reflects the *Hebrew* definite article הַ and a noun would not have the definite article *and* a possessive suffix.

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18. The relevant texts include Exod 12:10 (LXX), 46; Num 9:1, **לֹא תִשְׁבְּרוּ בוֹ, וְעַצְמוֹ** (καὶ ὅστοῦν οὐ συντριψετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) “and a bone of it ye shall not break”; Psalm 34:20 (MT 21) **שָׁמַר כָּל-עַצְמוֹתָיו אַחַת מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִשְׁבְּרָהּ** (κύριος φυλάσσει πάντα τὰ ὀστά αὐτῶν ἐν ἑξ αὐτῶν οὐ συντριβήσεται) “He [the Lord] keeps all their bones: not one of them shall be broken”; and Zech 12:10, **וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֲשֶׁר-דָּקְרוּ**, “and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” The LXX of Zech 12:10 reads, καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς με ἀνθ’ ὧν κατωρχήσαντό, “they shall look upon me, because they have mocked,” which reflects a misreading of the **דָּקְרוּ** as **דָּקְרוּ** “they danced insultingly [= mocked]” (Brown, 1970: 938).

19. The difference between the τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον “which is shed for you” (= **נָגַר בְּעַדְכֶם**) (Luke 22:20) and the τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (= **נָגַר בְּעַד רַבִּים**) (Mark 14:24) “which is shed for many,” can be recognized as a case of a defective spelling of the **רַבִּים** “many” as **רַבִּם**, which when joined with **בְּעַד** became **בְּעַדְרַבִּים**—the **רַ** of which was reduced to just a single **ר** and the **בִּם** was misread as the plural suffix **כִּם**. For other examples of the confusion of the **ר** and **רַ**, see Delitzsch (1920: 105–107, §104^{a-c}) and note 18 above with the misreading of the **דָּקְרוּ** as **דָּקְרוּ**

20. The **τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν** (= **זֵאת עֲשׂוּ לְזִכְרוֹנִי**) became in the *NJB* “do this in remembrance of me” (11:24) and as “do this as a memorial of me” (11:25).

**UNDERSTANDING SARAH'S
LAUGHTER AND LYING:
NOTES ON GENESIS 18:9–15**

As demonstrated in my study “The Meaning of Abram/ Abraham: Gen 17:5,”¹ Arabic cognates can provide clues for the proper interpretation of many Hebrew texts and the recovery of long lost Hebrew lexemes. The *raham* in the name *Abraham* is the word רַחֵם, meaning “prolific,” the cognate of the Arabic رهام (*ruhâm*) “*numerus copiosus*” (Castell 1669: 3537) and أرهم (*irham*) “fruitful, abundant” (Lane 1867: 1172). Similarly, the change from *Sarai* to *Sarah* is best understood in light of the Arabic ثرى / ثرى (*tarrâ / tarî*) “he became great in number or quantity, many, numerous” (Lane 1863: 335), which is confirmed by Gen. 17:16b, וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם, “and she will become nations.”²

Difficult readings in Gen 17:17–18 and 18:9–15, dealing with God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah that within the year they will become the parents of a son named “Isaac,” can also be clarified when the lexical options available to the interpreter include several lost lexemes which can be recovered in light of Arabic cognates.

As traditionally interpreted there appears to be a definite gender bias favoring Abraham when it comes to his laughing at these words of God:

As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

Hearing this Abraham laughed (וַיִּצְחַק) so hard he fell on his face, asking himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear

a child?” The answers were in the affirmative and in recognition of his joyous laughter—so he would never forget—this son was to be named Isaac (יִצְחָק). Although the verb לָצַח could be used for all kinds of laughter, including “to jest, to sport, to ridicule, to deride, to be frightened,” the context permits the meaning attested from the Arabic cognate ضحك (*ḍahaka*) “to expand the face and show the teeth by reason of joy, happiness, gladness and a sense of wonder” (Lane 1874: 1771). Abraham’s laughter was hilarious joy.

By contrast, according to Gen 18:10–15, when Sarah discreetly laughed to herself (וַתִּצְחַק בְּקִרְבָּהּ) upon over-hearing Yahweh tell Abraham, “I will surely return to you according to the time of life (כְּעֵת חַיֶּיהָ), and Sarah your wife shall have a son,” her laughter was perceived as ridicule and derision. Yahweh became perturbed and—unable on his own to figure out Sarah’s behavior and disbelief—sought from Abraham the reason for his wife’s laughter. After

- reassuring Abraham that, “at the time promised (לְמוֹעֵד)³ I will return unto thee, according to the time of life (כְּעֵת חַיֶּיהָ), and Sarah shall have a son,” and after
- Sarah denied that she laughed upon hearing about her upcoming pregnancy

Yahweh spoke directly to Sarah and assured her that he knew that she had laughed/jested/ridiculed/derided the idea of her becoming pregnant. Thus, whereas Abraham’s laughter was a positive, Sarah’s laughter was a negative—assuming that the לָצַח in Gen 17:17 and 18:12–15 is the same word.

The initial difference to note is that *Isaac* appears 108 times in Biblical Hebrew as יִצְחָק, from the stem לָצַח “he laughed.” But four times (Psa 105:9, Jer 33:26, Amos 7:9, 15)

it appears as שָׂחַק , as though it was derived from the synonym שָׂחַק “he laughed” (BDB 850, 965). In the *Qurʾan* the name *Isaac* appears as إسحاق (*ʿishāq*) which, aside from the shift of the initial ʾ to an ع , equals שָׂחַק .⁴ This Arabic spelling is surprising because the Arabic root سحق (*sahāqa*) has nothing to do with *laughter* but means “(God) removed/estranged him from his mercy,” with the imprecation سحقا له (*suhqan lahu*) meaning “may God curse him!” This سحق (*sahāqa*) is a synonym of بعد (*baʿada*) “he perished, he died,” with its similar imprecation بعد له (*buʿdan lahu*) “may God curse him” (Lane 1863: 264; 1872: 1319). With the שָׂחַק / שָׂחַק “he laughed/he cursed” variants in focus, it is easy to see how *Isaac* (שָׂחַק = “Cheers”) was at the same time *Isaac* (שָׂחַק = “Accursed”), the one who was to be slain as a sacrifice by his father in obedience to God’s command (Gen 22: 1–14). This double spelling and meaning of *Isaac* mitigates against the Islamic expositors who argue that Ishmael was the son whom God commanded Abraham to sacrifice.⁵ Thanks to *Isaac*, the lexeme سحق (*sahāqa*), stem II, “he laughed” (= שָׂחַק) should be noted in Arabic lexicons; and שָׂחַק , stem II, “he was alienated, cursed” (= سحق [*sahāqa*], stem I) should be noted in our Hebrew lexicons.

The next item of note is the Arabic cognate حوى (*hawīya*) which clarifies the meaning of כַּעַת חַיָּה in Gen 18:10, 14 and II Kings 4:16, 17. Montgomery (1951: 371) rightly called this כַּעַת חַיָּה a *crux interpretum*. The phrase in Gen 18:10 and

18:14 has been translated as

- ἀτὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον εἰς ὥρας (LXX),
- “according to this period seasonably” (Brenton),
- “*ad te tempore isto vita comite*” (Vulgate),
- “at this time, life accompanying” (DRA),
- “according to the time of life” (KJV, NKJ),
- “when the season cometh round” (ASV, JPS),
- “about this time next year” (NIV, NIB),
- “at this time next year” (NAS, NAU, Lamsa),
- “next year” (NJB)
- “in the spring” (RSV),
- Targum Neophyte: בְּשַׁעֲתָא הַדִּין בְּעִידְנָה הַדִּין “ at this time, at this set time”
- Targum Pseudo Johnathon: בְּעִידְנָה הַדִּין וְאַתּוֹן קִיִּימִין “at this set time and you are reviving.”

Montgomery concurred with Skinner (1951: 301) that the phrase has to do with the period of pregnancy (base upon New Hebrew חַיִּיהָ “a woman in child-birth”). Skinner translated כְּעֵת חַיִּיהָ as “according to the time of a pregnant woman,” or “9 months hence.” Jastrow (1903: 452) noted the חַיִּיהָ meaning “a lying-in woman” and “a midwife.” The point missed by Skinner, Montgomery, and others is that כְּעֵת חַיִּיהָ has to do with the *termination* of a pregnancy, not its *duration*. It has to do with *birthing*, not with *conception*.

All of these translations interpret the חַיִּיהָ in this phrase as if it were the cognate of Arabic حَيٌّ (*ḥayy*) “he was alive” (Lane 1865: 679–681). However, the חַיִּיהָ in Gen 18:10, 14 and II Kings 4:16, 17 is the cognate of Arabic حَيِّیَّة (*ḥayyiya*)

—with a $\dot{\text{h}}$ (h), not a h (h)—meaning “she became empty in her belly on the occasion of childbirth” (Lane 1865: 827). This is the correct derivation of the חַיִּיה meaning “a woman in child-birth,” over against the חַיִּיה meaning “an animal.” Far from being a “Late” Hebrew word, חַיִּיה “a woman in labor, in child-birth” is well attested here in Gen 18:10, 14 and in II Kings 4:16, 17. The חַיִּיה homographs/homophones have distinctly different etymologies.

Another phrase of interest is the $\text{בְּלֹתִי הִיתָה־לִּי עֵרְנָה}$. in Gen 18:12, which became $\sigma\upsilon\pi\omega \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \mu\omicron\iota \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\sigma\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon \acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \nu\omicron\upsilon$ in the Septuagint, which Brenton (1851) translated as “the thing has not as yet happened to me, even until now.” The בְּלֹתִי was read as the negative particle rather than as the suffixed infinitive of בלה “to become old.” The עֵרְנָה was read as the equivalent of עַד עַתָּה “until now.” Most English translations follow the Vulgate’s *voluptati operam dabo*. The DRA has “shall I give myself to pleasure?” In agreement with a parenthetical note in BDB (726) the NAB is a bit more explicit, having here the question, “am I still to have sexual pleasure?” By way of contrast, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has $\text{הוּי לִי עֵרְוִיין}$ “(shall) pregnancies happen to me?” Targum Neophyte has “is it possible for me to return to the days of my youth, and for my having pregnancies [and] periods (וְלִמְזֵהוּיין לִי עֵרְוִיין .)” The parallel passage in the *Qur’an Sura* 11:72) reads, “She said, ‘Ah, woe is me! shall I bear a son when I am old, and when this my husband is an old man?’”⁶ This focus on *pregnancy* rather than *pleasure* supports the interpretations found in the Targums rather than the Vulgate.

The phrase **וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ** in Gen 18:12 is also of interest. It became in the Septuagint *ἐγέλασεν δὲ Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ* “Sarah laughed to herself,” and in the Vulgate it appears as *quae risit occulte*, “she laughed secretly.” But Targum Neophyte and Pseud-Jonathan have here the verb **וַתִּמְוָה** “to wonder, to be astonished,” although the verbs **וַתִּצְחַק** “to laugh” and **וַתִּשְׂחַק** “to laugh” appear in 18:12 and 18:15 in both Targums.

The real eye-catcher is the footnote in J. M. Rodwell’s translation (dated 1861) of *Sura* 11:71–73 in the *Qur’an*.³ Here are the initial words of 11:71, with an asterisk marking Rodwell’s footnote and my parentheses citing the Arabic with its Hebrew equivalent:

*His wife was standing by and laughed**

(**וַתִּצְחַק** = ضحكت) *

and we announced Isaac

(**וַאֲנִי** = إسحق) *to her.*

* Or, *menstrua passa est*, in token of the possibility of her bearing a child.

Rodwell recognized that **וַתִּצְחַק** and **וַתִּשְׂחַק** were equivalent, with just the interchange of a K and a Q (analogous to our use of *Koran* and *Quran*). He also recognized a ضحك (*ṣaḥaka* = **וַתִּצְחַק**), stem I, “to laugh, to jest” and a ضحك (*ṣaḥaka* = **וַתִּשְׂחַק**), stem II, “to menstruate.” Lane (1872: 1771–72) has an extended note on the verb ضحكت (*ṣaḥikakat*) “she menstruated,” highlighting the different interpretations of *Sura* 11:74 among early Islamic expositors like El-Farrā (786 C.E.) and Ez-Zejjāj (890 C.E.) — some of whom inserted the unam-

biguous *ضحت* (*ḥâdat*) “she menstruated” after the *ضحكت* (*ṣaḥikakat*) in *Sura* 11:74 as an explanatory gloss.⁷

In Gen 18:11 the statement was made, *חָרַל לְהַיּוֹת לְשָׂרָה*, which is well translated as “Sarah had stopped having her womanly periods” (NAB). The ninety year old Sarah had been in menopause for decades. But according to Gen 18:12, Sarah made the *declarative* statement—not a question—*הֲיִתָּה לִי עֲדָנָה* “a menses has happened to me.” She was at that moment having her period.⁸

The *וַתִּצְחַק* in 18:12 is from *צַחַק*, stem I, “to laugh, to wonder,” but in 18:13 and 18:15 the *צַחֲקָה* and *צַחֲקֹתַי* are best read as *צַחֶק*, stem II, “to menstruate.” Thus, Gen 18:13 reads

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה
צַחֲקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הֲאֵף אֲמַנָּם אֵלֶּךְ וַאֲנִי זָקֵנָתִי:

Yahweh said to Abraham, “Verily, this is the situation:

Sarah has menstruated, saying,

‘Oh! Wow! Truly I will give birth though I am old!’

And similarly Gen 18:15 reads

וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צַחֲקֹתַי כִּי יִרְאֶה
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא כִּי צַחֲקָתִי:

But Sarah denied [it] saying: “I did not menstruate!”

—for she was afraid—

and he said, “Not so! You did indeed menstruate!”

Contributing to the traditional mistranslation of these two verses are two more homographs (but not homophones). The

emphatic adverb לְמָה (= לְמָה־) “verily, indeed” was always read as the interrogative לְמָה־ “why.” But as Frank Cross noted (1973: 235) with reference to the לְמָה־ in Judges 5:17, the emphatic לְ / לוֹ— well known from Ugaritic—was often extended with the syllable -מָה. This emphatic לְמָה־ / לְמָה־ “surely, verily, boldly, indeed” appears in

- Judges 5:17, “*Boldly* (לְמָה־) Dan attacked the ships!”⁹
- II Chron 25:16, “Stop! You will *surely* (לְמָה־) be struck down!”
- Ps 2:1, “*Indeed* (לְמָה־), the nations rage!”
- Ps 22:2 “My God, my God, you have *surely* (לְמָה־) made me suffer!”¹⁰

By shifting the initial vowel of לְמָה־ from an accented \bar{a} to an unaccented u , and by changing this interrogative adverb into a declarative, the very nature of God depicted in Gen 18:13 is transformed *from* a perturbed deity who seeks information from the mortal Abraham *to* a God who knows all the facts and informs Abraham about the present situation as follows:

- Sarah is menstruating!
- Her reproductive organs are working just fine!
- She will soon become pregnant!
- She will be the mother of your son Isaac!

Sarah’s words הֲאֵין אִמְנָם אֵלֶּד וְאֲנִי זָקֵנָתִי in Gen 18:13 have similarly been misread as the question, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” But the initial הֲאֵין is a compound interjection composed of הֵא “Oh! Behold!”

and **אָן** “Yea!” (implying something surprising and unexpected).¹¹ But the haplography of an **אָ** changed Sarah’s emphatic affirmation, “Oh! Wow! (**אָן אָן**) I will truly bear a child!” into a question of doubt, “Indeed shall I (**אָן**) bear a child?”

Sarah’s instantly believing what she overheard from behind the door, and her being aware at that moment of having some vaginal bleeding, gave way to some scary second thoughts. Was the bleeding a *menses* or a *malady* (such as that of the woman mentioned in Matt 9:20, who was cured of her twelve year long “issue of blood” by touching the hem of Jesus garment)? Her fear was enough to induce a denial of her new reality. Therefore, according to Gen 18:15, she denied that she was having her period, saying simply **לֹא צִחַקְתִּי** “I have not menstruated.” Sensing her fear, Yahweh himself¹² addressed Sarah directly to allay her fear and bring her back to the marvelous reality with just these three words:

- the negative particle **לֹא** “Not so!” by which Yahweh refuted her statement **לֹא צִחַקְתִּי** “I did not menstruate,”
- the emphatic particle **כִּי** “surely, verily,” and
- the verb **צִחַקְתִּי** “you did menstruate!”

According to the traditional translations of Gen 18:12–15 Yahweh reproached Sarah for her inappropriate laughter. But the Hebrew text itself permits—if not requires—this alternative interpretation wherein Yahweh addressed Sarah’s fear with affirming words about (1) her period, (2) her pregnancy, and (3) her progeny, so as to assure her that his words to Abraham (in Gen 17:16) would indeed become her reality:

וּבִרְכָתִי אֶתָּה וְגַם נָתַתִּי מִמְּנָה לְךָ בֵּן
 וּבִרְכָתֶיהָ וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם מְלֻכֵי עַמִּים מִמְּנָה יֵהְיוּ

I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her;

I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations;
 kings of peoples shall come from her.

Yahweh’s promise, “I will return to you, at the time of the birthing” (Gen 18:14) was fulfilled (Gen 21:1–7), at which time there was much laughter *by* Sarah, *for* Sarah, and *with* Sarah—thanks to *Isaac* (יִצְחָק):

“*And Sarah said,*

‘*God has made laughter (צִחָק) for me;*

everyone who hears will laugh (יִצְחָק) with me.’”

However, when Sarah saw Ishmael laughing that was a different matter. Gen 21:9 reads וַתֵּרָא שָׂרָה אֶת־בֶּן־הַגֵּר וַתִּצְחַק, “Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing.” This מִצְחָק became

- “mocking” in the KJV, NAS, YLT,
- “scoffing” in the NKJ,
- “playing” in the TNK, NJB, RSV,
- “making fun of” in the NLT.

But the Septuagint ends the verse with the additional phrase μετὰ Ἰσαακ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς, “with Isaac her son”; and this addition has been adopted by the the NJB, RSV, and NLT.

The Targums, on the other hand, are much more expansive in seeking to legitimate Sarah’s call for the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. The Cairo Geniza Targum has the accusation:

ם[ג]חיד עם ברה בעי למקטול יתה

“[Ishmael’s] jesting with her son, seeking to kill him.”

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan expanded the מִצְחָק to mean:

מגחך לפולחנא נוכראה וגחין ליי

“mocking with a strange worship, and bowing to the Lord.”

The Targum Neophyte interpreted the מִצְחָק to mean

עבר עובדין די לא כשרין

“[Ishmael’s] “doing deeds which were not *kosher*.”

CONCLUSION

Biblical translators and exegetes have interpreted Abraham’s raucous laughter (upon his hearing that Sarah would bear him a son) to have been very pleasing to God, so much so the baby boy would be named “Laughter/Cheers.” But Sarah’s silent laughter (upon overhearing about her upcoming change-of-life, was said to be disturbing to God. The translators and exegetes can be faulted, in words taken from James Barr (1968: 268), “for a strong tendency towards leveling the vocabulary and the interpretation of that which is rare as if it was that which was more normal.” Such is the case with the following seven words for which the rare meaning was missed by many (with the rare meanings cited here in *italics*):

- שָׂרָה = “*prolific*,” not “princess,”
- חַיָּה = “*giving birth*,” not “life” or “animal,”
- שָׂחָק = “*accursed to death*” as well as “laughter,”
- עֲדָנָה = “*menses*,” not “pleasure,”
- צָחַק = “*to menstruate*” as well as “to laugh,”

- למה = “*verily/indeed*” as well as “*why?*”
- הֲאֵיךָ = “*Oh! Wow!*” as well as “*is it really?*”

Thanks to Arabic cognates the first five of these seven rare Hebrew words have been recovered and can be included in the new lexicons of Biblical Hebrew. If Ishmael were alive he could well get in the last laugh, knowing that his descendants compiled the Arabic lexicons used by students of Biblical Hebrew who study the texts which tell about the birth of stepbrother Isaac. The language of Ishmael clarifies many of the ambiguous homographs found in the stories Isaac. So, with enough smiles to go around to make everyone happy, Gen 18:12–15, which tells about Sarah’s laughing and lying is best translated as follows:

So Sarah laughed to herself saying, “After I have grown old, a menses has happened to me—but my husband is old.” Yahweh said to Abraham, “Verily, this is the situation: Sarah has menstruated, saying, ‘Oh! Wow! truly I will give birth though I am old!’ Is any thing too hard for the Yahweh? At the time promised I will return to you, at the time of the birthing, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied [it] saying: “I did not menstruate!”—for she was afraid—and he said, “Not so! You did indeed menstruate!”

NOTES

1. This study is now available on line at http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_4.pdf.
2. Because the Arabic ث (*t*) is routinely equated with the Hebrew שׁ, the new name שרה should have been pointed as

שרה rather than שרה, for the name change was from *Sarai* to *Sharah*. Because the unpointed ש is ambiguous there was no way for well over a thousand years to distinguish between שרה (*Sarah*) and שרה (*Sharah*). The popular name שרה “Princess” prevailed, and the rare שרַי (*Sarai*) and שרַה (*Sharah*) dropped out of use.

3. Note that the Arabic cognate of *מוֹעֵד* “appointed time” carries the idea of a “promise.” See Lane 1893: 2953.

4. Note J. M. Rodwell’s translation of the *Qur’an* (London: 1861, second ed 1876) *Sura* 11:71–73 (with the parenthetical Hebrew/Arabic notations being added by this writer):

His wife was standing by and she laughed (ضحكت = צַחֲכָהּ);* and we announced Isaac (إِسْحَاقُ = אִשְׁחָק) to her; and after Isaac (إِسْحَاقُ = אִשְׁחָק), Jacob (يَعْقُوبُ = יַעֲקֹב). She said, “Ah, woe is me! shall I bear a son when I am old, and when this my husband is an old man? This truly would be a marvellous thing.” They said, “Marvellest thou at the command of God? God’s mercy and blessing be upon you, O people of this house; praise and glory are His due!”

* Or, *menstrua passa est*, in token of the possibility of her bearing a child.

5. See the *Qur’an Sura* 37:98–109. An online study presenting the evidence for recognizing Isaac as the son to be sacrificed can be found by clicking [HERE](#); and a study presenting the evidence for recognizing Ishmael as the son to be sacrifice can be found by clicking [HERE](#).

6. For the plural עֲרִיִּים and עֲרִיִּים “pregnancies” see Jastrow 1903: 1067; and for the singular עֲרִיָּה “period, menses” see Jastrow 1903: 1045. Note the עֲרִיָּה in Ezk 16:7.

7. For the unambiguous حاضت (*ḥâḍat*) “she menstruated” see Lane 1865: 686–687.

8. The Septuagint reads, ἐγέλασεν δὲ Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα οὐπω μὲν μοι γέγονεν ἕως τοῦ νῦν ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος, “And Sarah laughed in herself, saying, ‘The thing has not as yet happened to me, even until now, and my lord is old.’” All other translations read the declarative הִיִּתְהָ, as if it were an interrogative הִיִּתְהָ which suffered a haplography of the initial ה.

9. For this translation see my book *The Song of Deborah: Poetry in Dialect*, pp. 181–182, available online by clicking [HERE](#).

10. For this translation see my book *Clarifying New Testament Aramaic Words and Names and the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 31–42, available online by clicking [HERE](#).

11. Jastrow 1903: 328 and BDB 64–65.

12. Yahweh is mentioned by name in 18:1 and 18:13, in preference to the unnamed three men who appear as his messengers.

DVD AND ONLINE SOURCES

The Biblical texts and the Targums have been copied from *BibleWorks 7*, P.O. Box 6158, Norfolk, VA 23508.

The Etheridge translation of the Targum is available at http://targum.info/?page_id=8.

The Arabic text of the *Qurʾan* is available online at <http://www.2muslims.com/images/downloads/arabic-quran.pdf>.

The English text of the Qurʾan is available at <http://www.muslimaccess.com/quraan/arabic/001.asp>.

The Rodwell translation of the Qurʾan is available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/qr/011.htm>.

XII

REDEFINING THE εἰκη/, ῥακά, AND μωρέ IN MATTHEW 5:22

MATTHEW 5:22

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ [εἰκη/]* ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ, Ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ, Μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.¹

But I say unto you that whoever is angry with his brother [without a cause]* will be in danger of the judgment: and whoever will say to his brother “Raka” shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin: but whoever will say “Fool” will be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.²

The manuscript evidence for the textual variant in Matt 5:22 (marked above with asterisks) as cited by Aland (1968: 13) and Davies and Allison (1988: 512, n. 4) is as follows:

- ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ (“his brother”): B C μ^{67vid} \aleph^* vg eth Gospel of the Nazarenes Ptolemy Justin Irenaeus^{lat1/3} Tertullian^{vid} Origen Eusebius Basil mss^{acc. to Jerome} Augustine Greek mss^{acc to Augustine} Cassian Ps-Athanasius;
- ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ εἰκη/ (“his brother without cause”): \aleph^c D K L W Δ Θ Π f^1 f^{13} 28 33 565 700 892 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1365 1546 1646 2148 *Byz Lect* *it*^a, aur, b, c, f, ff¹, g¹ h, k, l, q syr^{c, s, p, h, pal} cop^{sa, bo} goth arm geo

Diatessaron Irenaeus^{gr, lat2/3} Origen Cyprian Eusebius Lucifer
Ps-Justin Chrysostum Cyril.

The English translations which have a word for the variant $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$ —which appears in the *Peshitta* and Old Syriac as ܩܘܩܐ (^ʿ*īqaʿ*) (Lewis 1910: 11)—include Murdoch’s *Peshitta* (“rashly”),³ Lamsa’s *Peshitta* (“for no reason”), the Bishops Bible of 1599 (“unadvisedly”), the Geneva Bible of 1595 (“unadvisedly”), and the KJV and NKJ (“without a cause”). The Hebrew translations made by Delitzsch (1877, 1937) and Salkinson (1885) have בְּיָדֵי “for nothing, gratuitously, gratis” for the Greek $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$.

However, the $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$ /is not reflected in the early translations of Wycliffe (1389) and Tyndale (1534), who followed the Vulgate and the shorter Greek text without the $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$.⁴ Subsequent English translations which followed the shorter text include (in alphabetic order) the ASV, DRA, NAB, NAS, NAU, NET, NIB, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRS, and the RSV. The Shem Tob *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Howard 1995: 18–19) lacks any word equivalent to the Greek $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$, although it reads פחזות “inferior” for the Greek Ῥακά and שוטה “madman, fool” for the Greek Μωρέ .

Aside from citing the texts which have the $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$, Davies and Allison (1988: 512, n. 4) simply asserted that the $\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$ was inserted “after $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$, no doubt to allow room for righteous indignation (cf. Eph 4.26 [$\text{ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε}$ ‘Be angry and sin not’]).” This assertion followed that of Allen (1951: 49) who conjectured,

The word [$\epsilon\iota\kappa\eta$] has strong second century attestation, but may perhaps more probably have been added as a limitation of a wide generalisation, than omitted as unnecessary.

Keener (1999: 183, n.70) noted that the εἰκη/“may, however, represent a legitimate interpretation of Jesus’ more graphic statement, which may have circulated orally in both forms.” By contrast, Albright and Mann (1971: 60–61) made no reference to the variant εἰκη/and translated 5:22 (with two parenthetical glosses) as,

But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of (divine) judgment. Whoever insults his brother will answer to the Sanhedrin, while whoever says ‘Rebel! (against God)’ merits a fiery death.

Contrary to the prevailing preference of New Testament scholars, translators, and Bible publishers for the shorter Greek texts of Matt 5:22, which lack the adverbial εἰκη/(as listed above), a challenge to that preference is in order once it is acknowledged

- that Jesus’ statements in Matt 5:21–26 were spoken in Aramaic or Hebrew rather than Greek, and
- that the translator(s) may have misunderstood a word in the Aramaic or Hebrew text of 5:22a, similar to the uncertain meaning of the μωρέ in 5:22b, which became “traitor” in the NJB, “curse” in the NLT, “rebel” in the YLT, and “fool” in most other English translations.

As noted above, Salkinson and Delitzsch translated the Greek εἰκη/“without a cause” into Hebrew as לְבַיִת “for no reason,” which is equivalent to the Aramaic בְּזִנְיָ “for nothing, undeserved, gratis” (Jastrow, 1903: 729). Had Jesus spoken in Aramaic one can assume that the written record would have had an unambiguous בְּזִנְיָ (בְּזִנְיָ), with the homographs בְּזִנְיָ [= בְּזִנְיָ] “he delivered” and בְּזִנְיָ [= בְּזִנְיָ] “shield” being contextually irrelevant.

However, if Jesus spoke in Hebrew one can readily assume that the Hebrew text behind the Greek $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\eta$ /contained the adverb חַנַּם . The Hebrew חַנַּם , like the Aramaic ܡܢܢ , had three possible derivations—but with חַנַּם all three derivations could be contextually relevant. First is the widely attested חַנַּן “for no reason, without a cause” from חָנַן , stem I, “to show favor, to be gracious,” with its Arabic cognate being حَن (*ḥanna*) “he was merciful, compassionate, he longed for.” Second is the rare חָנַן , stem II, “to be loathsome,” attested in Job 19:16–17 (along with חָנַן , stem I). This text reads in part: $\text{אֶתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ . . . וְחַנְתִּי לְבָנַי בְּטָנִי}$, “I entreated him . . . And I am loathsome to my own brothers.”⁵ The standard Hebrew lexicons cite the Arabic حَن (*ḥanna*) “it emitted a stench” as the cognate of חָנַן , stem II (BDB 337). (This accounts for the translation of Job 19:17 in the NJB as “My breath is unbearable to my wife, my stench (וְחַנְתִּי) to my own brothers.”)

The third derivation of the חַנַּם in the hypothetical Hebrew *Vorlage* of 5:22a is חָנַן , stem III. This would be the cognate of the Arabic حَنَى (*ḥanaya*) “he uttered foul, abominable, unseemly, or obscene speech,” with the noun $\text{حَنَا} / \text{حَنَى}$ (*ḥannâ / ḥannay*) meaning “foul, abominable, unseemly, or obscene speech” (Lane 1865: 819; Wehr 1979: 305).⁶

This third חַנַּם [= חָנַן] in the *Vorlage* of Matt 5:22 was—understandably but mistakenly—misread as the חַנַּם from stem I; and in the Greek translations it became $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\eta$ “without cause.” The חָנַן of חָנַן , stem III, is a contextually perfect match for 5:22a. Consequently, simply by repointing the חַנַּם

“without a reason” to חָנַן “obscenely” the translations of Delitzsch (כָּל-אִשָּׁר יִקְצַף עַל-אָחִיו חָנַן) and Salkinson (הַיְמוֹתֵי עִבְר בְּאָחִיו חָנַן) could be read as “the one / everyone who is *obscenely* angry with his brother.” Once the חָנַן is modified to חָנַן, either translation could well approximate what Jesus said. There was no ambiguity when he *said* “whoever becomes *obscenely* (חָנַן) angry with his brother.” However, once his spoken words were written down, the חָנַן (without vowels) was for no apparent reason read as חָנַן “for no reason”—even though Jesus immediately identified in 5:22b the words which he considered vile and obscene.⁷

The two obscene words identified by Jesus are ῥακά⁸ and Μωρέ. The former, ῥακά, is simply transliterated as *Raca* or *Raqa* in most English texts, although “Fool” appears in the NJB, “You fool” in the RSV, “idiot” in the NLT, and “You good-for-nothing” in the NAU. The latter, Μωρέ, appears as “Fool” in the KJV, ASV, NIV, NIB, NAS, NAV, NKJ, NAB, as “Rebel!” in the YLT, and as “Traitor” in the NJB.

According to Allen (1951: 49) and many other commentators the ῥακά seems to be equivalent to the Aramaic רִיקָא “empty”—even though it is spelled as ῥακά rather than as ῥηκά—which was evidently a term of contemptuous address.⁹ (Allen compared this ῥακά to the κενέ in James 2:20, ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ “O foolish fellow.”) Davies and Allison (1988: 513) agreed with Allen and cited not only the κενέ in James 2:20 but also the κενός in Neh 5:13. They suggested that ῥακά could be translated as “empty-head,” “good for nothing,” or “fool,” and conjectured that,

Matthew's failure to translate the term might suggest an audience familiar with an oriental word of abuse, although it is also

possible that the evangelist could leave *raka* untranslated because its field of meaning was roughly indicated by the *mōre* in 5:22c.

But the equation $\text{Ῥηκά} = \text{רִיקָא} = \text{“empty”} = \text{“empty-head”} = \text{“Fool”}$ is seriously flawed. It is a no-brainer because in the Hebrew and Aramaic mind-set it was the *heart*, not the *brain*, which was the seat of reason and intelligence. The *mindless* fool was one who “lacked heart” (לִבְּךָ חָסֵר)¹⁰ and the intelligent, smart person was one with an “understanding heart” (לִבְּךָ נְבוֹן) or a “wise heart” (לִבְּךָ חָכָם). Being a fool had nothing to do with the head, empty or otherwise, or the brain. Hatch and Redpath (1954: 306–307) cited thirty seven texts in which the Hebrew $\text{לֵב} / \text{לֵבָב}$ “heart” was translated in the Septuagint as διάνοια “mind, intelligence.” This is why in Luke 10:27 and Mark 12:30 the commandment from Deut 6:5 to “love the LORD your God with all your *heart*, and with all your *soul*, and with all your *might*,” was expanded to include $\text{ὅλη τῆ διανοίᾳ σου}$ “all of your *mind*.” The διανοίᾳ “intelligence” in Luke 10:27 and Mark 12:30 is an explanatory gloss on the Hebrew לֵב “heart,” for in Greek καρδία “heart” was used “especially as the seat of feeling and passion, as rage or anger, . . . of sorrow or joy” (Liddell Scott (1940: 877). Consequently, there must be a better derivation of this Ῥηκά than that based upon רִיקָא “empty.”

Philologically, there are five Arabic lexemes which come into focus for clarifying the meaning of the Hebrew /Aramaic $\text{רִיקָא} / \text{רִיקָא} / \text{רִיקָא} / \text{רִיקָא} / \text{רִיקָא}$ —none of which support the idea that $\text{רִיקָא} / \text{רִיקָא}$ “empty” meant “empty-headed,” which could then be paraphrased as “fool.” These Arabic cognates are:

1. راق/ريق (*raʿqa/rayq*) “it poured out, he poured forth,” with the nouns ريق (*riq^m*) “strength” and ريق (*riq^m*) “saliva,” noting that the phrase “he swallowed his saliva” means “he restrained his anger” (Lane 1867: 1203; BDB 937). This is the basis for Lamsa’s (197: 955) parenthetical gloss in Matt 5:22, “Raca (which means, I spit on you).” This lexeme does not mean “empty,” “empty-head,” or “fool.”
2. روق/راق (*raʿqa/rawq*) “he exceeded in excellence,” and in form 4, أروق (*ʿarwaqa*) “he poured out, he poured forth,” with the noun روق (*rawq^m*) “pure or sincere love” and the adjective ريق (*rayyiq^m*) “most excellent, goodly, or beautiful” (Lane 1867: 1190–1192). Likewise, this lexeme has nothing to do with being “empty,” “empty-head,” or a “fool.”
3. رقيق (*raqiq*) “weak, abject, mean, paltry contemptible,” with the feminine رقة (*riqqat*) meaning “weakness (of religion), abjectness, meanness, paltriness, contemptibility” (Lane 1867: 1131–1132). This lexeme has nothing to do with being “empty” or “empty-head,” but were it translated as “fool” the translation would be on target.
4. رقيق (*raqiq*) “a slave,” with مرق (*muraqq^m*) meaning “made a slave, possessed as a slave, kept as a slave” (Lane 1867: 1131–1132). This lexeme has nothing to do with being “empty” or “empty-head,” but the pejorative “Slave!” might well be on target (see below).
5. ركيك (*rakik*) “low, ignoble, vile, mean, sordid, possessing no manly qualities, weak in his intellect, and in his judgment or opinion” (Lane 1867: 1141). This is a by-form of رقيق

(*raqîq*), number (3) above. There is nothing with this lexeme meaning “empty” or “empty-head,” but its being translated as “fool” would be on target.

Cognates (1) and (2) are obviously contextually irrelevant; but cognates (3) and (5) are most relevant. They permit—if not require—the *Ῥακά* to be translated as a “Vile Fool!”¹¹ Cognate (4) is especially noteworthy in light of the statement in *Kiddushin* 28^a, “He who calls his neighbor a slave (עבד), let him be excommunicated;¹² he who calls him a bastard, let him be punished with forty stripes; if he calls him a malefactor, this is to cost him his life.”¹³ With definitions 3–5 in focus it is reasonable to conclude that *Ῥακά* had three layers of meaning: “vile, fool, slave,” which can be paraphrased in English by the compound pejorative “Vile-Foolish-Slave!”¹⁴

The second obscene word pinpointed by Jesus in Matt 5:22 is *Μωρέ*, which, as noted, appears as “Fool” in most English translation, but as “Traitor” in the NJB and as “Rebel!” in the YLT. *Μωρέ* could be a transliteration of מורה or מורא, which could be read as מורה “authority,” מורה “teacher,” or מורה “reverence.” But these do not fit the context of obscene anger. Bertram (1968: 840) suggested that *Μωρέ* “may be regarded as the rendering of a Heb-Aram term from the stem מרר (מורה) [sic] מרה or מרא, to be bitter, recalcitrant.” He called attention to Psalm 78:8, ודור סורר וּבמרה, “a stubborn and rebellious generation.” Allen (1951: 48) noted that *Μωρέ* “has quite unnecessarily been identified with the Hebrew מורה, Nu 20¹⁰ [“Please listen, O rebels”].”¹⁵ Nevertheless, Albright and Mann (1971: 60–61) opted for “Rebel!”

Allen suggested that *Μωρέ*, a vocative of *μωρός* “fool,” may be a translation of *Ῥακά*, and this idea is duly noted by

Arndt and Gingrich (1957: 533).¹⁶ Bertram (1967: 841) came to the same conclusion, arguing as follows:

It is in fact difficult to distinguish between these two [ῥακά and μωρέ], or to differentiate them from anger. Hence these sayings may be regarded as an explanatory addition [by Jesus] to the saying about anger, and this gives us a saying we might well expect from Jesus, in which all such things as anger and terms of abuse are characterised as equally reprehensible and culpable.

. . . This implies that there can hardly be a crescendo in the three sayings. Terms of abuse are not a heightened form of anger; they are its most obvious and common expression. It is also hard to make any basic distinction between the two terms of abuse, namely, ῥακά and μωρέ. They both belong to the category of sins of the tongue, and are both subject to judgment.¹⁷

The translations of Μωρέ in the Peshitta as ܠܠܐ (*lela*²) “fool,” in the Old Syriac as ܫܬܝܬܐ (*šāṭyā*²) “fool,” in the Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew as שׂוֹטֵה “fool,” provides sufficient reason to conclude that μωρός “moron” had become in pre-Christian times the loanword מוֹרוֹס “fool.”

With reference to Μωρέ Davis and Allison (1988: 514–515) concluded,

. . . it follows that Μωρέ = ‘you fool’, and it presumably translates either *mrš* [sic]¹⁸ or—more probably—the Aramaic *šty*². This conclusion means in turn that *raka* and *mōre* are practically indistinguishable; both could be translated by ‘fool’ or by ‘idiot’.

Were that the case the question arises, “Why is it that the one who says ῥακά “Vile Fool!” will only be in danger of the Sanhedrin, while the one who says Μωρέ “Moron!” will be in danger of Gehenna? The Aramaic/Hebrew words for “fool, moron, numskull, nitwit, dunce” include ܠܠܐ, ܫܬܝܬܐ, ܐܘܝܝܠ, ܠܝܠܐ, ܦܫܝܠ, ܐܘܝܝܠ, ܢܒܠ, ܫܘܬܐ, ܫܬܝܬܐ, ܫܫܝܬܐ. Were these words on Jesus’

proscription list, or did Μωρέ and Πακά only make up the list? How is one to account for the fact that μωρός “fool,” which appears twenty-six times in Sirach, still appears nine times in I Corinthians, and in Matt 7:26; 25:2, 3, 8, 17; plus II Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9; and Eph 5:4? Did the proscription involve only the *vocative* when an argument became personal, whereas, if the μωρός was applied to oneself or to others in general, it was not considered an obscene pejorative?

Similar questions were raised and answered by Davies and Allison (1988:515), which I present in the following lengthy quotation (with the bullets added by this writer).

Because there is an ascending order of punishments in 5:22—local court, sanhedrin, Gehenna—one expects a corresponding ascent in the severity of the crimes listed. It does not attain. Anger, rebuking a fellow with *raka*, and insulting another by calling him *more* [Μωρέ]—one is not more obviously heinous than the others. The difficulty thus created has been solved in several ways—

- by arguing that *more* [Μωρέ] is more odious than *raka* [Πακά] and that the uttering of either is worse than anger (cf. Augustine, *De serm. mont.* 1.9.24, and Schweitzer, *Matthew*, p. 119);
- or that by claiming κρίσις, συνέδριον, and γέεννα are functionally similar, each being three different ways of referring to the death penalty (J. Jeremias, TWNT 6, p. 975);¹⁸
- or by emending or rearranging the text;
- or by seeing 22a as a general statement which is then illustrated by two concrete examples (so Luz I, p. 253);
- or by inferring that the incongruity is intentional and serves as an ironic commentary on a parody of scribal exegesis: as all wrongs against one’s neighbour are equally wrong, it is foolish to make casuistic distinctions with regard to degrees of punishment.

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We [Davies and Allison] should like to add another possibility. As spoken by Jesus, the saying consisted only of 5:21–2b and affirmed, in hyperbolic fashion, that anger and insulting words were deserving of punishment as murder; and, originally, the Aramaic or Hebrew words behind κρίσις and συνέδριον were roughly synonymous or of similar import, both referring to judicial trials. Problems arose only when Matthew, in order to clarify *raka* [ῥακά] and to create a triad, tacked on the final clause. His choice of *more* [Μωρέ] created no difficulty; but ‘into the Gehenna of fire’ (cf. 18.9 diff Mk 9.47), which he no doubt felt justified in adding to underline the severity of the named offences, created the possibility of apprehending an ascending order of punishments.

None of these speculations cited and offered by Davies and Allison are convincing. Better answers to the questions raised above are available once the focus of attention shifts to this one sentence above from Davies and Allison: “*the Aramaic or Hebrew words behind κρίσις and συνέδριον were roughly synonymous or of similar import, both referring to judicial trials* (italics added). However, Davies and Allison did not speculate as to what were the Aramaic or Hebrew words behind κρίσις and συνέδριον. But this is the direction in which the speculation must go.

Speculation about the Hebrew *Vorlage* of ῥακά was very productive once the lexemes רַקַּק and רַקַּה came into focus and produced the layered pejorative “*Vile! / Fool! / Slave!*” Speculation about the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Μωρέ will prove to be equally rewarding.

As noted above, the Hebrew words for “fool” include אִוִּיל, כִּסִּיל, סִכַּל, and נָבֵל. Of these four only נָבֵל is ambiguous. The consonantal נָבֵל has four different meanings: (a) נָבֵל

“skin-bottle, jar, pitcher”; (b) נְבֵל “a musical instrument”; (c) נְבֵל “be foolish,” נָבֵל “a fool”; and (d) נָבַל “to wither, to die,” with the noun נְבֵלָה “carcass, corpse.”¹⁹ The Arabic cognate of this נבל is نبال (*nabala*) which, in forms 5 and 8, also means “to die” (BDB 614–615).

Once lexemes (c) and (d) are in focus the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Matt 5:22b could well approximate these translations:

וְאִם נָבֵל יִקְרָא לּוֹ יִפְלֵ לְאִשׁ גִּיהֵנָם: (Salkinson)
 אֲשֶׁר נָבֵל יִקְרָא לּוֹ הוּא מְחַיֵּב לְאִשׁ גִּיהֵנָם: (Delitzsch).

The vocalization of the נבל in both translations has intentionally been omitted. To approximate more closely what Jesus said, should this נבל be vocalized as the *vocative* נְבֵל (= Μωρέ) “Fool!” or as the intensive *imperative* נְבֵל (= Ἀποθνήσκει) “Die! / Drop Dead!”²⁰ One can further speculate that a Greek μωρέ “death!” was changed to μωρέ “fool,” on the assumption that this נבל was a synonym of the רַקָּה / רַכָּה / Ρακά “Vile Fool.” But the introductory component of Jesus’ statement in 5:21 alludes to Exod 20:13 and Deut 5:17, “. . . whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.” Jesus’ *halakah* in Matt 5:22 expands the law to include any brother who becomes angry enough to use vitriolic pejoratives so as to humiliate or “verbally assassinate” his kinsman.²¹

Thus, the last phrase in Matt 5:22 needs to be translated as “whoever says ‘Die! / Drop Dead!’ will be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.” This was indeed a more offensive pejorative than calling someone a “Vile-Fool-Slave”—for which the Sanhedrin²² might well apply the penalty of “forty stripes” as stipulated in Deut 25:1–3.²³ To tell a brother to ‘Drop Dead!’

would be an expression of hate, and as spelled out in I John 3:15, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”²⁴ Anyone uttering the imperative נָבֵל ‘*Drop Dead!*’ was himself a נָבֵל “fool,” for in so speaking he would open the gates to Gehenna—not for his brother but for himself.

Bertram (1967: 841) and France (2007: 199) called attention to *Meṣia* 58b which indicates how seriously evil epithets were taken in Jewish tradition.²⁵ Here is an abbreviate text of *Meṣia* 55b:

Our Rabbis taught: Ye shall not therefore wrong one another [Lev 25:17]. Scripture refers to verbal wrongs Then to what can I refer, ye shall not therefore wrong each other? To verbal wrongs. E.g., If a man is a penitent, one must not say to him, ‘Remember your former deeds.’ If he is the son of proselytes he must not be taunted with, ‘Remember the deeds of your ancestors.’ If he is a proselyte and comes to study the Torah, one must not say to him, ‘Shall the mouth that ate unclean and forbidden food, abominable and creeping things, come to study the Torah which was uttered by the mouth of Omnipotence!’ If he is visited by suffering, afflicted with disease, or has buried his children, one must not speak to him as his companions spoke to Job

Abaye asked R. Dimi: What do people [most] carefully avoid in the West [sc. Palestine]? — He replied: putting others to shame. For R. Hanina said: All descend into Gehenna, excepting three. ‘All’ — can you really think so! But say thus: All who descend into Gehenna [subsequently] reascend, excepting three, who descend but do not reascend, viz., He who commits adultery with a married woman, publicly shames his neighbour, or fastens an evil epithet [nickname] upon his neighbour. ‘Fastens an epithet’ — but that is putting to shame! — [It means], Even when he is accustomed to the name.

The ῥακά “*Vile / Fool / Slave!*” would certainly qualify as an “evil epithet,” and saying נָבֵל “*Die! / Drop Dead!*” to a brother would surely cause public shame for the person so addressed.

CONCLUSION

Wernberg-Møller (1956–57: 72)⁶ wisely argued that the εἰκη/in Matt 5:22a was original and that the Greek translator followed his Semitic *Vorlage* word by word. But he was wrong in assuming that the εἰκη/“went back to some Aramaic phrase (the equivalent of לֹא בַמִּשְׁפָּט in Classical Hebrew).” The case has been made in this study for a Hebrew *Vorlage* which was misunderstood because of the ambiguities involved when reading a consoantal Hebrew text.

It has been argued that εἰκη/“without cause” was in the original Greek translation for the הַנֵּם that was in the original Hebrew *Vorlage*. This הַנֵּם should have been read as הַנְּחָ “obscenely,” an adverb derived from הַנְּחָ “foul, obscene speech,” rather than being read as הַנֵּם “without cause.”

While disagreeing with Davies and Allison that the best solution for understanding the meaning of ῥακά is the equation “*Empty = Empty-head = Fool,*” they were on target with their suggestion that “Matthew’s failure to translate the term [ῥακά] might suggest an audience familiar with an oriental word of abuse.” That Jewish audience, no doubt, understood the layered meaning of this Hebrew ῥακά / Ραχά (“*Vile / Fool / Slave!*”) which is why the רַכָּה / רַקָּה) in the Hebrew *Vorlage* was transliterated rather than translated. What Greek word was there that could match the layered meanings of “*Vile / Fool / Slave!*”?

It has also been shown that the μωρέ “moron/fool” in Matt 5:22b is a translation of an ambiguous נבל in the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Jesus, using an intensive imperative, spoke of the abusive expression נבל “Drop Dead! / Die!” But the consonantal נבל was mistakenly read as נבל “fool.”

Once the חנם, רקיה, and נבל in the *Vorlage* became in Greek εἰκη/, ῥακά, and μωρέ Jesus’ statement was given a new meaning. As interpreted in this study Jesus no doubt said,

Whoever is *obscenely* angry with his brother
shall be in danger of the court:
and he who says to his brother “*Vile Fool Slave!*”
shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin:
and he who says “*Drop Dead!*”
will be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.

Though not prurient, רקיה and נבל were definitely obscene expressions.

Although Black (1988: 7) accepted the εἰκη/ as original, with no hint of there being a mistranslation, he rightly noted:

There is anger that is both legitimate and justified. Jesus himself looked on the hypocritical Pharisees “with anger” (μετ’ ὀργῆς, Mark 3:5). This anger, or indignation against sin, is not what Jesus speaks of here. What he condemns is anger without cause, anger that erupts where no offense has been given . . . it is a feeling which would lead one to commit murder if it were fully acted out.

Following the *halakah* of Jesus, when anger is legitimate and justified it must also be civil—free from profanities and obscene expressions like “*Vile/Fool/Slave!*” and free from the violence insinuated in the death threat, “*Drop Dead!*” Otherwise, the gates to Gehenna will open and the stench (חַנְדָּה) of the obscene (רָקִיָּה) offender will fill the air.

Noland (2005: 230) stated, “interpreters have struggled to find some ascending sequence in being angry, saying ‘Raka’, and saying ‘Fool’. But such efforts are probably misplaced.” This echoes the earlier sentiments of Hendrickson (1973: 298) who cited four objections for finding in Matt 5:22 three gradations of offenses (anger, saying “Raka!” or “Fool!”) and three gradations of punishments (danger of the judgment, danger of the Sanhedrin, and danger of a fiery Gehenna).

But if my reconstruction of the Hebrew *Vorlage* and its interpretation are on target there is (1) a therapeutic *anger* and (2) a pathological *obscene anger*. The first imperative in Eph 4:26 “Be angry!” involves therapeutic *anger*; and the second imperative “do not sin!” involves the pathological *obscene anger* that manifests itself in (a) vitriolic speech “*Vile/Fool/Slave*” (רָקָא / ‘Ρακά) and in (b) explicit death threats, “*Drop Dead!*” (Jesus’ anger in Mark 3:5 (μετ’ ὀργῆς) and in 10:14 (ἠγανάκτησεν) was a therapeutic anger revealing his passion for the eternal salvation of friend and foe. But the hateful obscene anger of his adversaries was pathological, revealing their desire for his damnation and death: “*Die! Drop Dead!* then finally, *Crucify him!*”

France (2007: 199) duly noted the statement of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (circa. A.D. 100): “One who hates his neighbor is among those who shed blood” (*Der Er. Rab*, 576 [11:13]). Had Jesus’ enemies been content with simply shouting at him רָקָא / ‘Ρακά, “*Vile/Fool/Slave*,” he may well have responded with an Aramaic or Hebrew saying comparable to “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but nasty words will never hurt me.” But when they said נָבֵל “*Die! / Drop Dead*” he knew his days were numbered and his execution would amount to legalized murder, with his murders doomed to Gehenna along with his accusers.

Obscene words may not always hurt those to whom they are addressed, *but the speaker will pay*—sooner (with the lashes ordered by a Sanhedrin) or later (with the stench and fires on the dung heaps of γέενναν “Gehenna.” Most English translations render γέενναν in 5:22 as “hell,” but the simple transliteration, “Gehenna,” in the NAB is the most accurate. The Valley of Hinnom (גֵּי הַחַיְהִים = Gehenna) was accessible through Jerusalem’s Dung Gate (שַׁעַר הָאֲשָׁפֶת) 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 and dung produced endless fires and hot spots ready to reignite. Criminals executed by stoning were more likely to be cremated in the גֵּי הַחַיְהִים /Gehenna than to be buried in the tombs of their fathers. Verbal assassins who in anger order someone to “Drop Dead” are en route to this Gehenna along with the actual assassins who carry out the murders.

Though in disagreement with Bertram (1967: 842) that ῥακά and μωρέ may be equivalent, there is agreement with his conclusion that “All material arguments against the authenticity of Mt. 5:22 are thus dispelled *at once*” (italics added). I would change Bertram’s “*at once*” to just “*once*,” and complete his sentence this way: “. . . *once* it is recognized that behind the words εἰκη/, ῥακά, and μωρέ was a Hebrew *Vorlage* with the ambiguous words חַנַּם, חַנְּקָה, and נִבְלָה.” The interpretations presented above for εἰκη/, ῥακά, and μωρέ provide examples of how Arabic cognates provide the requisite clues for recovering lost Hebrew words which can clarify enigmas found in the Greek text of the Gospels.

NOTES

1. The Peshitta reads,

אנא דין אמר אנא לכוּן
 דכל מן דנרנז על אחוהי איקא
 מחיב הו לדינא
 וכל דנאמר לאחוהי רקא
 מחיב הו לכנושתא
 ומן דנאמר ללא
 מחיב הו לגהנא דנורא:

See below, note 3, for Murdock's translation of this verse.

2. Note the statement in the *Manual of Discipline* "One shall not speak to his brother in anger, or in complaint, or with a [stiff] neck, or a callous heart, or a wicked spirit." See Brownlee 1951: 22.

3. Murdock translated this verse as "But I say to you, That every one who is angry with his brother rashly, is obnoxious to judgment: and every one that saith to his brother, Raka! is obnoxious to the council: and every one that shall say, Fool is obnoxious to hell-fire." Murdock's translation of the **ܠܚܫܒܐ** (*mēḥaya*²) as "obnoxious" should not be misunderstood as meaning "objectionable, offensive, unpleasant." In this context *obnoxious* means "to be liable (for punishment), to be censurable." (Click [HERE](#) to view James P. Murdock's *The New Testament: Translated from the Syriac Peshito Version*, published in 1852.)

4. Black (1988:2) noted that Jerome, Erasmus, Mill, Bengel, Lachman, Tischendorf, Westcott, Hort, Metzger, and Carson

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thought the εἰκη/ was suprious, with only Whitney, Hodges, Farstand, and Wernberg-Møller finding the εἰκη/ to be original.

5. Note here the Septuagint which did not recognize נָּנָּ , stem II, “to be loathsome,” but read the נָּנָּ and the נָּנָּ as if both were from נָּנָּ , stem I. It reads, ἐδέετο . . . προσεκα-
λούμην δὲ κολακεύων υἱοὺς παλλακίδων μου, “I supplicated . . . I earnestly entreated the sons of my concubines.”

6. On the by-forms נָּנָּ and נָּנָּ see GKC 77^e where eight examples of the interchange of ע"ע and ל"ל verbs are cited, including נָּנָּ / נָּנָּ . For the use of the adverbial נָּ see GKC 100^g.

7. Wernberg-Møller (1956–57: 71–73) argued that the εἰκη/ was original and

that the Greek translator followed his Semitic *Vorlage* word by word, and that consequently the word [εἰκη/] is not a later addition, intended to make allowance for ‘just’ anger in certain circumstances.

Wernberg-Møller cited the phrase **וְאִשֶּׁר יִטּוֹר לְרַעְהוּ אִשֶּׁר לֹא בְמִשְׁפָּט** “and the one who bears a grudge against his neighbour without reason” in the *Manual of Discipline*, VII, 8 —noting that the **לֹא בְמִשְׁפָּט** “without reason” appears also in Jer 17:11 and Ezek 22:29. He cited the Arabic **بغير حق** (*big ayri haqqi*) “without right” in the Qur’an (3:20) as a close parallel. However, Wernberg-Møller did not assume that the **לֹא בְמִשְׁפָּט** was in the Semitic *Vorlage* of 5:22; rather “some Aramaic phrase (the equivalent of **לֹא בְמִשְׁפָּט**)”

8. The variant 'Ραχα appears in mss **S*** D W lat Tert Cypr.
9. Jastrow 1903: 1476.
10. See BDB 524 §3, where the **לֵב הַסֹּרֵס** “fool” in Prov 6:32, 7:7, 9:4, 9:16, 10:13, 10:21, 11:12, 12:11, 15:21, 17:18, and 24:30 is noted.
11. On the by-forms **רִיק** and **רִיקָ**, see GKC 77^b where other examples of the interchange of **ע"ע** and **ע"י** stems are noted. This interchange of an **ע"ע** and an **ע"י** stem is analogous. On the interchange of **ק** and **כ** compare **רִיקָ / רִיקָ** “to crush,” and **רִיקָ / רִיקָ** “to be thin, weak.”
12. On the issue of slavery note especially Exod 21:1–11, Deut 15:12–17, and Lev 25:39–55.
13. Jeremias (1968: 974) called attention to the use of **𐤓𐤀𐤒** (*raqa*^o) as a Syriac term for addressing servants, and suggested that the *a* vowels of the Syriac *raqa*^o may be the basis for the *a* vowels in 'Ραχα. He made no mention of the Arabic **رقيق** (*raqiq*) “slave.”
14. For quotations in which *Raca* appears in the Talmud, see Lightfoot 1859: 109. Click [HERE](#) for an online edition of Lightfoot or [HERE](#) for just his Matthew Commentary.
15. The **הַמְרִים** of Num 20:10 was interpreted by Jastrow (1903: 749, 842) as (a) “rebellious” (the plural participle of **מָרָה** “to rebel”), noting that in the *Hiph'il* of post-biblical

מִרְהָ meant “to disregard the authority of the Supreme Court” or (b) “fools” (“for in the sea towns they call fools *morim*,” with the מִרְהָ being the Greek vocative μωρέ of μωρός (= מורוס) “fool”—with the adjective μωρά “foolish” having been transliterated as מוֹרָא / מוֹרָה. For an entirely different interpretation of Num 20:10, see McDaniel, “Moses Said ‘Please! Behold!’ (Exodus 17 & Numbers 20),” available online by clicking [HERE](#).

16. Davies and Allison (1988: 514) rightly noted that μωρός was “a word beloved by Sirach.” It was also well loved by Paul for it appears in I Cor 1:18, 21, 23, 25, 2:14; 3:18, 19; and 4:10.

17. Surprisingly, Lamsa (1967: 955) translated Μωρέ as “effeminate,” with only a footnote citing “Aramaic, *brutish, abnormal*.”

18. The words *môrôš* and *mrš* in the middle of page 514 appear to be typographical errors for *môrôs* (= מורוס “fool”) and *mrš* (= מרס). The Hebrew *mrš* (מִרְיָ) means “to be sick” or “to flow rapidly” (BDB 599; Jastrow 1903: 749, 846).

19. Note the phrase וּכְיֶרֶק הַשָּׂא יִבּוֹלוּן in Psalm 37:2, which appears as “like green plants they will soon die away” in the NIV and NIB. Compare Gen 25:18, עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-אָחָיו, which appears as “he died in the presence of all his brethren” in the KJV, DRA, and NKJ.

20. The *Pi^cel* imperative here would match the Arabic cognate نَبَلَ (*nabala*), which means “to die” in forms 5 and 8. The nouns מַפְלֵת “carcass” and נִבְלָה “carcass” indicate that נָפַל “to fall down in a violent death” (Jud 5:27) and נָבַל “to die” were by-forms.

21. For the Mosaic law dealing with anger, killing someone, and then the slayer being sentenced to death, note Deut 19:4–13.

22. Contra Jeremias (1968: 975), who stated that “the three phrases which follow in 5:22a-c do not refer to three different courts, the local, the supreme, and the divine (hell), but are simply three expressions for the death penalty in a kind of crescendo.” Jeremias suggested the following translation of 5:22, which lacks a word for the disputed εἰκη/.

Any man who is angry with his brother
deserves to be punished (with death).
He who says to his brother ‘Thou blockhead!’
deserves to be condemned (to death) by the supreme court
He who says: ‘Thou idiot!’
deserves to suffer (death) in hell.”

23. Deut 25:1–3 reads:

If there is a dispute between men, and they come into court, and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense. Forty stripes may be given him, but not more; lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight.

24. For the enigmatic statement of Jesus in Luke 14:26, “If any one comes to me and does not hate (οὐ μισεῖ) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple ,” see McDaniel “The Misreading which Led to the ‘Hate’ in Luke 14:26–27,” available online by clicking [HERE](#) .

25. Daiche, Salis and H. Freedman. 1937. *Baba Mazia Translated into English with Notes, Glossary, and Indices*. London: Soncino Press. Click [HERE](#) to view the full text of *Baba Mazia*; or click [HERE](#) to view other texts in the Talmud.

XIII

LUKE'S MISINTERPRETATION OF THE HEBREW QUOTATION IN ACTS 26:14

In a previous study on the contradiction between Luke 10:27, “Love (ἀγαπήσεις) your neighbor/kin as yourself,”¹ and Luke 14:26, “If any one comes to me and does not hate (μισεῖ) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple,” I concluded that Luke misunderstood the verb **אָשַׁן** / **הִשָּׁן** in his Hebrew source for Jesus’ statement which appears now in Luke 14:26. Luke read the unvocalized **אָשַׁן** / **הִשָּׁן** as **אָשַׁן** / **הִשָּׁן**: “he hates,” but it should have been read as **אָשַׁן** / **הִשָּׁן**: “he forsakes.”²

A similar misinterpretation probably occurred in Acts 26:14, where Luke reports that Paul told King Agrippa that Jesus had spoken to him in Hebrew, which included what most scholars recognize as a well known Greek aphorism. The verse which ends with the aphorism reads:

πάντων δὲ καταπεσόντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν,
ἤκουσα φωνὴν λαλοῦσαν πρὸς με
καὶ λέγουσαν τῇ Ἑβραϊδί διαλέκτῳ,
Σαούλ, Σαούλ, τί με διώκεις;
σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν.

KJV

And when we were all fallen to the earth,
I heard a voice speaking unto me,
and saying in the Hebrew tongue,
Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

This last phrase in the Greek text of 26:14 was translated quite literally by Robert Young (1862) as “hard for thee

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against pricks to kick,” whereby he read (a) σκληρόν as a singular nominative neuter adjective, (b) κέντρα as an accusative plural noun, and (c) λακτίζειν as a present active infinitive.

The Hebrew phrase spoken by Jesus and quoted by Paul—which Luke translated as σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν, “hard for thee against goads to kick”—was probably קשה לך בעט בפרשים. If so, Luke read the phrase as קשה לך בעט בפרשים, “it is hard for you to kick against goads.” However, what Jesus said may well have been קשה לך בעט בפרשים, “it is hard for you to resist/reject the Pharisees.”

Marcus Jastrow (1903: 180) cited the *Qal* בעט, stem II, to mean not only “to trample, to strike, to kick,” but also “to resist, to reject”; and the *Pi^cel* בעט to mean “to rebel, to kick against, to be contumacious.” Jastrow (1903: 1243) also cited the Aramaic פּרשא “goad,” which appears in the Targum of Judges 3:31 for the מוֹלְמֹד “goad” in the MT.³ The verb פּרשׁ “to sting” appears in Prov 23:32, וּכְצַפְעֹנִי וּכְנַחַשׁ יִשָּׁךְ, “it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.” One can assume that the noun פּרשׁ “goad” and participle פּרשׁ “stinger” were used in Hebrew as well as in Aramaic and in Syriac (J. Payne Smith, 1903: 466).

After Paul recited before King Agrippa the Hebrew words of Jesus there must have been a written record which had the word פרשים (= פּרוּשִׁים / פּרְשִׁים) “Pharisees,” which Luke read as פּרְשִׁים “goads,” even though Paul had bragged about his being a zealous Pharisee, as in

- Acts 22:3, Ἐγὼ εἶμι . . . παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ πεπαιδευμένος κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου,

ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ, “I am . . . brought up at the feet of [the famed Pharisee] Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers”;

- Acts 23:6, ἐγὼ Φαρισαῖός εἰμι, υἱὸς Φαρισαίων, “I am a Pharisee and the son of Pharisees”; and
- Acts 26:5, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας ἔζησα Φαρισαῖος, “I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.”

The πρὸς κέντρα in the Greek text lacks the definite article. Were its Hebrew *Vorlage* בפרשׂים this בפרשׂים could be read

- as the *indefinite* בַּפְּרָשִׁים “against goads” or as בַּפְּרָשִׁים “against Pharisees,” or
- as the *definite* בַּפְּרָשִׁים “against *the* goads” or as בַּפְּרָשִׁים “against *the* Pharisees.”

But in Aramaic there would have been no ambiguity. The *indefinite* “against goads” or “against Pharisees” would have been בפרשׂין, and the *definite* “against *the* goads” or “against *the* Pharisees” would have been בפרשׂיא, with the conspicuous shift from the final ך with the *indefinite* to a final א with the emphatic *definite*. Although most commentators interpret the Greek τῆ Ἑβραϊδι διαλέκτῳ “in the Hebrew dialect” in 26:14 to mean “in the Aramaic dialect,” the absence of a definite article before κέντρα is more easily explained as being due to the ambiguity created when the ה of the Hebrew definite article is elided when a preposition is prefixed to the definite noun.

Before surveying some of the exegetical gymnastics required to explain Luke’s reporting that Paul cited Jesus’ using a Greek aphorism, a comment on the adjective σκληρόν “hard” is in order. Martin Culy (2003: 495) noted that there

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was an *implicit* verb used with the predicate adjective σκληρόν. He cited Stanley Porter (1994: 85) who argued that the nominative by itself can be used to form a nominal clause, like the ἄφωνος “is silent” in Acts 8:32. (In 26:14 the infinitive λακτίζειν “to kick” is also subject to an *implicit* verb.) The *implicit* verb would be one in the present tense, not a future tense. If the σκληρόν referred to a future situation one would expect to find σκληρόν ἔσται, the same phrase which appears in Deut 15:18 as the translation of the verb הַשְׁקֵי! “it will be hard,” not the adjective הַשְׁקֵי “(it is) hard.”

Although σκληρόν means “difficult, hard, harsh, unpleasant” (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957: 763; Liddell and Scott, 1966: 1612) the RSV (1952) and the NRS (1989) translated σκληρόν σοι as a verbal phrase “It hurts you,” and similarly the NET (1996) has “You are hurting yourself.” Surprisingly, the NLT (1996, 2004) paraphrased the five Greek words as “It is useless for you to fight against my will,” and Pervo’s paraphrase (2009: 623), “you can’t swim against the flow,” is even more surprising and well off target.

However, it is not surprising that the vulgarism in English slang which uses “prick” for the penis resulted in the termination of translating κέντρα as “pricks,” which had been the customary translation of κέντρα in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—appearing in these well known Bibles:

- Tyndale Bible (1534) “It is harde for the to kicke agaynste the pricke,”
- Bishops Bible (1595) “It is harde for thee to kicke agaynste the prickes,”
- Geneva Bible (1599) It is hard for thee to kicke against pricks,”
- King James Bible (1611) “*it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Contemporary translations now have the plural “goads” for the plural κέντρα. The Vulgate’s singular *stimulum* “goad” may account for Tyndale’s singular “pricke,” and it definitely accounts for the singular “goad” in the DRA (1899), as well as the singular “goad” in the ERV (1885), the NJB (1985) and the NAB (1986). Other English translations rightly render κέντρα as a plural, but take the liberty to make the indefinite κέντρα into a definite by translating it as “the goads.”

The proverbial phrase “kicking against the goad” is cited by Liddell and Scott (1966: 429, 1025) in their definitions of κέντρον “goad” and λακτίζω “to kick,” including its appearance in Acts 26:14.⁴ The classical Greek texts of the sixth to fifth centuries B.C. in which this proverb appears include:

- Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 2.95:⁵
One must not fight against a god, [89] who raises up some men's fortunes at one time, and at another gives great glory to others. But even this [90] does not comfort the minds of the envious; they pull the line too tight and plant a painful wound in their own heart before they get what they are scheming for. It is best to take the yoke on one's neck and bear it lightly; **kicking against the goad** [95] makes the path treacherous. I hope that I may associate with noble men and please them.
- Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1624:⁶
You speak like that, you who sit at the lower oar when those upon the higher bench control the ship? Old as you are, you shall learn how bitter it is [1620] at your age to be schooled when prudence is the lesson set before you. Bonds and the pangs of hunger are far the best doctors of the spirit when it comes to instructing the old. Do you have eyes and lack understanding? **Do not kick against the goads lest you strike to your own hurt.**
- Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 795:⁷
Pentheus, though you hear my words, you obey not at all. Though I suffer ill at your hands, still I say that it is not right

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for you to raise arms against a god, [790] but to remain calm. Bromius will not allow you to remove the Bacchae from the joyful mountains. . . . I'd sooner make an offering to that god than in some angry fit *kick at his goad*—a mortal going to battle with a god.⁸

Lothar Schmidt (1966: 666) in his comments on the use of κέντρον in the New Testament concluded,

It thus seems that Christ's warning to Paul not to attempt futile and harmful resistance takes the form of a suitable Greek proverb. *To be quite blunt, Paul or Luke puts a Greek proverb on the lips of Jesus. . . .* There is little point in labouring the minor flaw that a Greek proverb is put on the lips of one who speaks Hebrew or Aramaic. (italics added)

Schmidt rightly challenged the opinion of the scholars who argued that the plural κέντρα “goads”—which was required by the meter in *The Bacchae* but optional for Luke's prose—pointed to a direct quotation from *The Bacchae*.⁹ He surmised,

It might well be, then, that there is at least an allusion to the famous play. But this cannot be proved, since . . . the proverb had passed into the common stock of quotations of the educated Greek.

Because this proverb “does not occur at all in the Jewish sphere,” Schmidt, as noted above, attributed its quotation to Paul or Luke, rather than to Jesus himself.

Johannes Munck (1967: 242) translated, “It hurts you when you kick against the goad,” and stated

. . . the sentence is a very common Greek proverb which means: “from now on it will be difficult for you to kick against the goad,” or in other words: “the call of Christ will from now on constrain you.”

In this interpretation the plural κέντρα “goads” was translated unnecessarily as a singular and the adjective σκληρόν “hard”

became a verb in the future tense (*will be difficult / will constrain*) rather than being in the present tense.

William Neil (1981: 243) was of the opinion that the aphorism “kicking against the goad”

expresses vividly Paul’s growing doubts before his conversion as to the justice of his course of action in persecuting the Nazarenes, his increasing conviction that Stephen may have been right and himself wrong, and his redoubled fury against Christians in an attempt to kill his conscience.

Similar to the way that Schmidt challenged the opinion of the commentators who argued that the proverb was a direct quotation from *The Bacchae*, F. F. Bruce (1988: 466) challenged the scholarly opinions, like those of Lewis, that this proverb addressed the “prickings” of Paul’s uneasy conscience. His interpretation of Acts 28:14 was as follows:

This homely proverb from agricultural life has been thought to suggest that Paul had already begun to suffer from pricks of an uneasy conscience, from a half-conscious conviction that there was more in the disciples’ case than he was willing to admit. But there is no hint . . . he was subject to any such inward conflict. . . . The “goads” against which he was told it was now fruitless for him to kick were not the prickings of a disturbed conscience but the new forces which were now impelling him in the opposite direction to that which he hitherto pursued, the new “necessity” which was henceforth laid upon him (I Cor 9:16, [“. . . Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!]).¹⁰

Following the translations of the RSV, NRS, and NET, which refer to *σκληρόν* as “hurts/hurting,” some commentators have made the aphorism “it is hard to kick against the goads” speak to Saul’s experience of physical pain as a result of his persecution of Christians—despite the fact that Saul was untouched or oblivious to any goading directed at him by Christ or by Christians. As Ajith Fernando (1998: 296) rightly

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noted, “. . . while Saul was hitting the church, Jesus was actually feeling the pain.” Pharisees like Saul actually had an *easy* time hurting others, and it was easy for Saul to goad Christians into prisons and pits for execution by stoning. The goaded Christians (פְּרוֹשִׁים) did not kick at their goaders (פּוֹרְשִׁים). The Pharisees (פְּרוֹשִׁים) had convinced themselves they were on a godly mission to kill infidels—as required in the Torah (Exod 22:20, Deut 13: 1–20, and Deut 18:20) and exemplified by Moses and the Levites (Exod 32:25–29).

A glimpse, in chronological order, at some of the comments from over the past twenty years will suffice to show how varied have been the interpretations the aphorism “hard for thee against pricks to kick.” The first comment to be noted is that of Luke Johnson (1992: 435) who stated,

The idea is that God has been pushing Paul to become a Messianist and he has resisted. The phrase *sklēron soi* should not be read in the sense of “difficult,” however, but as pointing to Paul’s stubbornness in resisting the goad,¹¹ echoing the theme of “hardness” (*sklēros*) in Torah.

When it comes to interpreting σκληρόν as “hurt,” the comments of Ronald Witherup (1992: 82–83) are noteworthy:

In vv. 9–11 Paul describes his activities as opposing the name of Jesus, shutting up in prison many of the 'saints' (αγιών), participating in their condemnation to death, punishing them in synagogues, trying to make them blaspheme, raging in fury against them, and even persecuting them abroad. Thus, by this description the irony of Paul’s situation is even more prominent. He, who now identifies with ‘the saints’, is undergoing the very persecution which he himself had perpetrated prior to the Lord’s call on the road to Damascus. This also helps to explain the expansion of Jesus’ words to Paul in the form of a proverb. The saying, ‘It hurts you to

kick against the goads' (26.14), not only means that Paul cannot escape the power of God calling him to a mission, but that he will also suffer for the sake of that mission.

In the same year John Pohill (1992: 502–503) discounted any idea that Paul's "kicking against the goads" referred to his having a guilty conscience for persecuting Christians. He succinctly stated, "He was fighting the will of God (cf. Acts 5:39) . . . It as a futile, senseless task." A few years later Ben Witherington (1998: 743) also discounted the idea of Paul's having a guilty conscience and simply stated similarly, "It was fruitless for Paul to resist God."

Ajith Fernando (1998: 296, 595) again discounted any idea that Paul's "kicking against the goads" referred to his having a guilty conscience for persecuting Christians. He stated, as noted above, ". . . while Saul was hitting the church, Jesus was actually feeling the pain." and "it is now futile for him to try any longer to work against Christ as it would be for an ox to kick against the plowman's goad."

Joseph Fitzmyer (1998: 758), in agreement with F. F. Bruce, commented:

Though the risen Christ addresses Paul in Aramaic, he quotes a common Greek proverb, which is otherwise not found in Jewish literature. . . . So that from that moment on Paul is being pressed into the service of the risen Christ. It does not express a reflection on Paul's past life or conduct, or indicate a crisis of conscience.

Five years later Beverly Gaventa (2003: 343) noted that "The aphorism ["kicking against the goads"] reveals the crisis: Paul has been acting upon his *own* perception of God's will, all the time resisting God's will." Darell Bock (2007: 716) simply stated, "Saul is kicking against God's discipline and direction." J. Bradley Chance (2007: 489), in a slightly longer statement, concluded,

The implication is that God had other plans for Paul and Paul was only hurting himself to be resisting these by persecuting the very ones whose ranks God fully intended Paul to join. Commentators regularly point out that the expression was proverbial and it always has the meaning of resisting ones destiny or fighting the will of the gods. . . . [Paul] was fighting the will of God. . . It was a futile, senseless task.

Most recently David Peterson (2009: 666) commented,

This is not a reference to Paul's guilty conscience, but a way of speaking about the Lord's prodding him in another direction which he had no choice but to follow—the path of proclaiming this same Jesus he had been attacking.

CONCLUSION

None of the commentators cited in the above paragraphs ventured to speculate about what Jesus actually said to Saul in Hebrew. Most were content to assert that, although the Greek text has τῆ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ “in the Hebrew dialect,” Jesus spoke to Saul in Aramaic.¹² Some were convinced that Paul or Luke added the Greek proverb to the words of Jesus to impress their respective audience, rather than Jesus' having used the aphorism in a reprimand or warning to Paul.

An Aramaic text underlying the Greek σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν “hard for you against pricks to kick” could have approximated the Peshitta which reads קשא הו לך למבעטו לעוקסא and can only mean “it is hard for you to kick against a crook” (though the English “crook” has two meanings). The Hebrew translations of Isaac Salkinson (1886), קִשָּׂה לְךָ לְהַכּוֹת הַדֶּרֶבֶן אָחֹר, ¹³ and Franz Delitzsch (1937), קִשָּׂה לְךָ לְבַעַט בַּדֶּרֶבֶנוֹת, ¹⁴ can only mean, respectively, “it is hard for you to strike the goad backwards,” and “it is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

Once the דרבנות / דרבן “goad/goads” is replaced by the synonymous פרש / פרשים, ambiguity is instantaneous for an unpointed פרש (*scriptio defectiva* and *plene*) could be interpreted as פֶּרֶשׁ “excrement,” פָּרֶשׁ “horse,” פָּרָשׁ “horseman,” פֶּרֶשׁ “ploughshare,” פָּרָשׁ “goad,” פִּירוּשׁ “commentary,” פָּרוּשׁ “seceder,” פָּרוּשׁ “Pharisee”—not to mention the verbs פֶּרַשׁ “to spread” and פָּרַשׁ “to declare.”

In Acts 26:14, when Jesus addressed the zealous Pharisee Saul, whom he was about to convert and to commission, he made a simple statement of fact: “*It is hard for you to reject the Pharisees.*” It was not an aphorism about kicking goads. The aphorism was created when the ambiguous פרשים was misread by Luke as פֶּרֶשִׁים rather than the intended פָּרֶשִׁים. The move from his being a Pharisee to being a Christian required Saul to *reject* his “Pharisee families” (Acts 23:6, οὐδὲς Φαρισαίου) in the same manner in which Jesus required all of his disciples to “*forsake* father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and his own life” (Luke 14:26).¹⁵

This stipulation in Luke 14:26 is the basis for my adding the parenthetical gloss “[*but you must*]” to my translation of Acts 24:16 once the Greek κέντρα “goads” is translated back into Hebrew as פרשים and this פרשים is then read as פֶּרֶשִׁים (= פָּרוּשִׁים) “Pharisees.”

“*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*
It is hard for you to reject the Pharisees [but you must].”
 And I [Saul] said, “*Who are you, Lord?*”
 And the Lord said, “*I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*
But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to
you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear
witness to the things in which you have seen me
and to those in which I will appear to you.”

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NOTES

1. The quotation of Lev 19:18 appears also in Matthew 19:19, 22:39, Mark 12:31, Romans 13:9, and James 2:8.
2. Click [HERE](#) to view online the full volume entitled *Clarifying Baffling Biblical Passages*, or click [HERE](#) to view only Chapter 31, “The Misreading which Led to the ‘Hate’ in Luke 14:26–27,” where other possible readings of ישנה / ישנא are recognized.
3. Schmidt (1966: 666) noted four Hebrew / Aramaic terms for a goad or the point of a goad: מַרְדֵּעַ (Jastrow 837), מִסָּא (Jastrow 803), דֵּרְבֹן (Jastrow 320), and זִקְתָא (Jastrow 411). But Schmidt overlooked the מַלְמֵד in Judges 3:31 and the פִּרְשָׁא in its Targum. The Hebrew *verb* פָּרַשׁ “to pierce, to sting” appears in Prov 23:32, and it is reasonable to assume that the *noun* פִּרְשׁ “goad, stinger” was also used in Hebrew.
4. This proverb is also noted by Arndt and Gingrich (429, 464) and interpreted as a figure of speech for the unreasonable resistance of one who resists the divine call, as in the Greek text of Acts 26:14 (and in the Latin manuscripts *ar, c, h, l, p, ph*, of Acts 9:5, as well as in Georgian, Slavonic, and Ethiopic translations of Acts 9:5).
5. Click [HERE](#) to view online the full text of Pindar’s *Phythian Odes* edited by Steven J. Willett.
6. Click [HERE](#) to view online the full text of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, translated and edited by Herbert Weir Smyth.

7. Click [HERE](#) to view online the full text of Euripides' *Bacchae*, edited by T. A. Buckley.

8. See Lothar Schmidt (1966: 665) for a list of the most important examples of this proverb in early Greek literature.

9. Note that Arndt and Gingrich (1957: 429) called attention to the plural κέντρον in *The Bacchae*, line 795.

10. Note also Bruce's statement (1988: 491),

But the goad kept on pricking his conscience, until at last the truth that Jesus was risen indeed burst forth into full realization and acknowledgment as He appeared to Paul in person and spoke to him by name outside the walls of Damascus.

11. On God's use of a goad, note *Psalms of Solomon* 16:4, "He jabbed me as a horse is goaded to keep it awake; my savior and protector at all times saved me" (Wright 1985: 665). Philo, *On the Decalogue*, 87, spoke of the goading done by one's conscience:

"for the conscience . . . being itself at the same time an accuser and a judge; . . . as a judge it teaches, admonishes, and recommends the accused to change his ways, . . . but if he be not able to do so, then he wages an endless and implacable war against him, never quitting him neither by day, nor by night, but pricking him, and inflicting incurable wounds on him, until he destroys his miserable and accursed life."

Click [HERE](#) and then select Book 26 to view Charles. D. Yonge's complete translation of Philo's *The Decalogue*.

12. Click [HERE](#) to view online a brief article focused of mistakes made when identifying Hebrew and Aramaic words or speech.

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13. Click [HERE](#) to view Salkinson's translation online (PDF page 197).

14. Click [HERE](#) to view Delitzsch's translation online (*Acts* PDF page 57).

15. See the initial paragraph of this chapter and note 1, above.

XIV

THE ORIGIN OF JESUS' “MESSIANIC SECRET”

Joseph Fitzmyer (1979: 29, 30, 45) writing about “The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.” noted that Hebrew did not wholly disappear from Palestine, either when Aramaic had become the more common language or when Palestinian Jews gradually began to use Greek. . . . There were areas or pockets in Palestine, and perhaps even strata of society, where Hebrew continued as a spoken language too. . . . Since, however, the majority of sectarian literature was composed in Hebrew, this seems to mean that it was being spoken.¹

In response to Birkeland’s assertion (1954: 16) that Hebrew was the language of Jesus because it remained the language of the common people, Fitzmyer stated, “That Hebrew was being used in first-century Palestine is beyond doubt, as we have been saying; but this fact is scarcely sufficient evidence for maintaining that Jesus therefore made use of it. We would have to look for further indications of this fact.”²

This study on “The Origin of Jesus’ ‘Messianic Secret’” provides some of the “further indications” which Fitzmyer wanted to see. When relevant texts from the Gospels are translated back into Hebrew, ambiguities appear as to whether a ש should be read as a שׁ or a שׂ, or whether a אָל should be read as אֵל “not” or אִל “indeed,” or if פֶּן equals פֶּן “lest” or פֶּן “would that.” It will be shown that the ‘Messianic Secret,’ no doubt, stemmed from mis-readings of consonantal Hebrew texts, coupled with consistent mistranslations into Greek of several words in Jesus’ Hebrew vocabulary—one of which never made it into any standard Hebrew-English lexicon until the publication of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (1993–1998). As Grintz (1960: 32–47) argued that Hebrew was the language of the first edition of Josephus’ *Bellum Judaicum*

and the original language of the *Gospel according Matthew*, the arguments which follows support Grintz's conclusion about the *Gospel of Matthew*, as well as Birkeland's assertion (1954: 16) that Hebrew was the language of Jesus.

THE EMPHATIC *LAMED*

As early as 1894, when Paul Haupt made the following statement, the emphatic *lamed* was recognized as occurring in biblical Hebrew,

A comprehensive study of the use of the ל *praefixum* in the Old Testament will no doubt reveal a considerable number of cases where the ל is not the preposition but the emphatic particle ל = Arabic *la* and Assyrian *lû* 'verily'³

Since this statement was made the emphatic *lamed* has been detected in most Northwest Semitic dialects⁴ and a host of scholars have added to Haupt's original list of the particle's appearance in Hebrew.⁵

Although the Arabic cognate ل (*la*) "indeed" appeared in E. W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* (1893: 3006),⁶ the emphatic ל/לָ/לָהּ/לָהֶן "indeed" were not cited in the widely used lexicons of Brown, Driver, and Briggs (BDB, 1906) and Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm (KBS, 1969-1990). The Aramaic cognate of the emphatic ל/לָ/לָהּ/לָהֶן does not appear in Jastrow's *Dictionary of the Targumin and Talmud* (1903) nor in Payne Smith's *Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903). However, David Clines and his fellow lexicographers wisely included the emphatic ל/לָ in *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, which was published in five volumes in 1993-1998.⁷

The unpointed emphatic ל/לָ "verily" is a homograph of the preposition ל "to" and the negative particle לָ "not." In speech there would have been no ambiguity between לָ

“verily, indeed” and לֹא “no, not.” But once the particles were written without vowels there was instant ambiguity. As a consequence, the emphatics לְ/לֹא/לְמָה dropped out of usage in post-Biblical Hebrew and disappeared from the memory of the scribes who vocalized and standardized the text of the Hebrew Bible. From the Septuagint translations of the 3rd–1st centuries B.C. until the 20th century A.D. every emphatic לְ/לֹא/לְמָה in the Hebrew text was vocalized and interpreted as the preposition לְ, or as the negative particle לֹא, or as the interrogative לְמָה “why?” But, as will become evident in this study, the emphatics לְ/לֹא/לְמָה appeared also in Shem Tob’s *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*—although they were not recognized as such in George Howard’s translation—and were spoken by Jesus and understood by his hearers.⁸

Twenty-seven occurrences of the emphatic לְ and לֹא are cited in *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Over the years I have identified the emphatics לְ/לֹא/לְמָה in twenty-one more verses in the Hebrew scriptures and in six verses in Shem Tob’s *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*.⁹ These twenty seven occurrences are cited in the following list—with an endnote for each directing one to the publication where the new translation was first proposed. The emphatics לְ/לֹא/לְמָה in these verses are cited as found in the MT with a traditional translation—which read the לְ/לֹא/לְמָה as a preposition, a negative particle, and an interrogative—followed then by the new translation with the emphatic element cited in italics.

GENESIS 18:13

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה צָחֻקָה שָׂרָה

Yahweh said to Abraham, “Why this? Sarah laughed.”

Yahweh said to Abraham, “*Indeed* this (happened).

Sarah had (her) period.”¹⁰

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GENESIS 39:6

וְלֹא־יָדַע אִתּוֹ מֵאוּמָה

And he knew not with him anything.

And he would *indeed* entrust to him anything.¹¹

EXODUS 6:3

וּשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִוְדַעְתִּי לָהֶם

By my name Yahweh I did not make myself known.

By my name Yahweh I did *indeed* make myself known.¹²

NUMBERS 21:15

וַנִּשְׁעַן לְגְבוּל מוֹאָב

It leans to the border of Moab.

We easily entered the *very* borders of Moab.¹³

JOSHUA 10:13

וְלֹא־אָץ לָבוֹא כִּיּוֹם תָּמִים

It did not hurry to set for about a whole day.

Indeed it hasten to set as though it were a whole day.¹⁴

JOSHUA 24:10

וְלֹא אָבִיתִי לְשָׁמַעַ לְבַלְעָם

I was not willing to listen to Balaam.

I was *indeed* willing to listen to Balaam.¹⁵

JUDGES 5:11

אִז יִרְדּוּ לְשָׁעָרִים עִם־יְהוָה

Down to the gates marched the people of Yahweh.

When *indeed* the storms would descend from Yahweh.¹⁶

JUDGES 5:17

וְדָן לָמָּה יָגוּר אֲנִיּוֹת

And Dan, why did he abide with the ships?

Then Dan *indeed* attacked ships.¹⁷

JUDGES 5:25

(MT) בְּסַפְּלֵי אֲדִירִים הִקְרִיבָה חֲמֹאָה

(McDaniel) בְּסַף לְאֲדִירִים הִקְרִיבָה חֲמֹאָה

She brought him curds in a lordly bowl.
In a *truly* magnificent goblet she brought cream.¹⁸

II CHRONICLES 25:16

חַדְל־לָךְ לָמָּה יִכּוּדָךְ

Stop! Why should you be struck down?
Stop! You will *surely* be struck down!¹⁹

PSALM 2:1

לָמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גּוֹיִם

Why do the nations rage?
Indeed the nations rage!²⁰

PSALM 22:1

אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
My God, my God, you have *surely* forsaken me!²¹

PSALM 19:4

לְשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם־אָהָל בָּהֶם

In them he has set a tent for the sun.
Verily the scorching sun shines in them.²²

PROVERBS 30:1

נֹאם הַגִּבּוֹר לְאִיתִיאל לְאִיתִיאל וְאָכַל

The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal.
The oracle of the man: *Surely* there is a God!
Surely there is a God! I will be safeguarded.²³

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:3

לְרִיחַ שְׁמֹנֶיךָ טוֹבִים

Your anointing oils are fragrant.
Truly, the scent of your perfume is very delightful.²⁴

LAMENTATIONS 3:37–38

אֲדָנִי לֹא צָנָה

מִפִּי עֲלִיוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב

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The Lord has not commanded it.
Out of the mouth of the Most High
there shall not come forth evil and good.

Verily the Lord has ordained it!
Verily from the mouth of the Most High
there shall come forth evil and good.²⁵

LAMENTATIONS 4:3

בַּת־עַמִּי לְאֶכְזָר

The daughter of my people is cruel.
The daughter of my people is *truly* cruel.²⁶

EZEKIEL 20:25

נָתַתִּי לָהֶם חֻקִּים לֹא טוֹבִים
וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לֹא יָחִיו בָּהֶם

I gave them statutes that were not good,
and ordinances wherein they should not live.
I gave them statutes that were *indeed* good,
and ordinances wherein they could *indeed* live.²⁷

EZEKIEL 32:27

וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּבוּ אֶת־גְּבוּרִים נִפְלִים

Nor do they lie beside the fallen heroes.
They are *indeed* buried with the fallen heroes.²⁸

AMOS 7:14

לֹא־נָבִיא אֲנִי וְלֹא בֶן־נְבִיא אֲנִי

I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet.
Indeed I am a prophet, but not of the corps of prophets.²⁹

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 10:17

לֹא יִמְסְרוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּקְּהָלוֹתָם

They will not deliver you up in their congregations.
They will *surely* deliver you up in their congregations.³⁰

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 12:16

ויצום לאמר לא יגלוהו (mss G)

ויצום לאמר שלא יגלוהו (mss H)

He commanded them saying
that they should not reveal him.

He commanded them saying
they should *indeed* reveal him.”³¹

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 18:10

למלאכיהם הם רואים תמיד בני אני שבשמים

Their angels always see the sons of my father in heaven.
Verily their angels are reporting to my father in heaven.³²

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 19:4

הלא קראתם לעושיהם מקדם

Have you not read that he who made them of old . . .
Have you not read that *indeed* he who made them of old . . .³³

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 19:14

שלא יכנס במלכות שמים אם לא כאלה

One will not enter the kingdom of heaven
except (he shall be) like these.

Indeed one will enter the kingdom of heaven
if one (is) *indeed* like these.³⁴

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 19:22

הלך זעף לפי שלא היה לו קרקעות רבות

He went away angry because he did not have much property.
He went away angry because he *indeed* had much property.³⁵

SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW 27:46

אלי אלי למה עזבתני

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
My God! my God! *Oh how* you made me suffer!³⁶

**THE EMPHATIC LAMED
NEGATES THE MESSIANIC SECRET**

As noted above, in speech לֹא and לְּ would never be easily confused. But once written לֹא was always read as a negative, the לְ was always read as a preposition, and the לְמַה was always read as an interrogative.³⁷ This ambiguity of the consonantal לֹא—which according to Howard’s translation of Matt 19:22 in Shem Tob’s *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* turned the *very rich* (πλούσιος σφόδρα) young ruler of Luke 18: 18–25 into a man *without much* property—contributed no doubt to the inconsistencies in what Jesus said to those whom he healed. According to the Greek texts he commanded some to keep their healing a secret—a command which was immediately disobeyed—whereas others who were healed received no such strict instruction. Indeed, Jesus’ “messianic secret” may well be the by-product of a misreading of all of the לֹא’s in the Hebrew *Vorlagen* of Jesus’ sayings as “not” rather than reading some of them as לְּ “verily/indeed.” Thus, a survey of the core texts contributing to the claim that Jesus called for his messianic ministry to be kept a secret is in order.

The first text tells of the healing of a leper, found in Matt 8:1–4, Mark 1:40–44, and Luke 5:12–15. The Greek text of Matt 8:4 has the phrase Ὁρα μηδενι εἰπης³⁸ “Behold, you may tell no one,” which can be translated back into Hebrew as ראה לא תגד לאיש. If this approximates what Jesus said, the translator read this as ראה לא תגד לאיש “See! You must not tell anyone.” But what Jesus probably said was ראה לא תגד לאיש “See! *Indeed* you must tell everyone!”³⁹

The synoptic account in Mark 1:44 has a double negative, reading Ὁρα μηδενι μηδεν εἰπης, “Behold you may say nothing to no one.” This can be translated back into Hebrew as ראה לא תגד לאיש הרבר. If so, this was read by Mark

as **רִאֵה לֹא תִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ הַדָּבָר** “See! You may not tell anyone a thing!” But Jesus probably said **רִאֵה לֹא תִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ הַדָּבָר** “See! *Indeed* you must tell everyone the matter!” The command in the synoptic account in Luke 5:14 has only two words, μηδενι ειπεν (meaning literally “to no one to tell”), which can be translated back into Hebrew as **לֹא תִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ**. Luke obviously read this as **לֹא תִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ** “Tell not to anyone,” whereas Jesus probably said **לֹא תִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ** “*Indeed*, you must tell everyone.”

The story in Matt 9:27–31 of the healing of the two blind men ends with Jesus commanding the men, Ὁρατε μηδεις γινωσκατω “See, to no one be it known.” But in the similar story in Matt 20:29–34 of Jesus healing two blind men, and in the story in Mark 10:46–52 and Luke 18:35–43 of blind Bartimaeus’ being healed, Jesus does not command those healed to tell no one. This inconsistency can, no doubt, be credited to the ambiguity of the particle **לֹא**. Jesus probably said **רְאוּ לֹא יִדְעֵ לְאִישׁ**, which when properly interpreted would have been vocalized as **רְאוּ לֹא יִדְעֵ לְאִישׁ** “See! *Indeed*, let it be known to everyone.” But the command was misread as **רְאוּ לֹא יִדְעֵ לְאִישׁ** “See! Let it not be known to anyone.”

According to Matt 12:9–14, the man with the withered hand whom Jesus healed on a Sabbath day was *not* commanded to tell no one. But the “many” whom Jesus healed after this (Matt 12:15) were told, μη φανερον αυτον ποιησωσω “they should not make him known.” In the synoptic account in Mark 3:7–12, the unclean spirits were ordered not to cry out and announce “You are the Son of God.” But there was no such silence required by those who had been healed.

Again, the differences may be due to the ambiguity of the particle **לֹא**. The phrase μη φανερον αυτον ποιησωσω, “they must not make him known,” in Matt 12:15 could well be

a translation of the phrase **לֹא יַגְלוּ אֹתוֹ** if it was read as **לֹא יִגְלוּ אֹתוֹ**. But what was said was probably **לֹא יִגְלוּ אֹתוֹ**, “*Indeed they should make him known!*” Otherwise it is very difficult to reconcile Matthew’s quotation of Isaiah 42:1–4, which announced that God’s Servant will proclaim justice to the Gentiles, if the Servant himself actually forbade everybody from making him known to the Gentiles.

According to Mark 1:34 Jesus did not allow the outcast demons to speak” (οὐκ ἤφιεν λαλεῖν τὰ δαιμόνια); and according to Mark 3:12 the unclean spirits who proclaimed “You are the Son of God!” were “strictly ordered not to make him known” (μὴ αὐτὸν φανερὸν ποιήσωσιν). These prohibitions are quite understandable in light of the Pharisees’ charge that “it is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons” (Matt 12:24). Pro-Jesus testimonials by demons or demoniacs would only have added fuel to the fire of the Pharisees. Jesus’ silencing the demons had nothing to do with trying to maintain an alleged “messianic secret.”

The closing verses in the Greek synoptic accounts of the healing of Jarius’ daughter differ with reference to (a) the healing being kept a secret, or (b) its being widely publicized. The account in Matt 9:18–26, ends as follows:

וַתֵּצֵא שְׂמוּעָהּ בְּכָל הָאֶרֶץ הַהִיא

καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἡ φήμη αὐτή εἰς ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἐκείνην

And the report of this went through all that land.

By contrast the account in Mark 5:21–43 ends this way:

καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς πολλὰ

ἵνα μηδεὶς γνοῖ τοῦτο

But he commanded them strictly
that no one should know it.

The account in Luke 8:40–56 ends with a similar prohibition:

ὁ δὲ παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς μηδενὶ εἰπεῖν τὸ γεγονός

But he ordered them to tell
no one what had happened.

The prohibitions in Mark 5:43 and Luke 8:56 could well go back to a Hebrew text which read וַיִּצַו אוֹתָם זֶהִיר לֹא יוֹדַע and was interpreted to mean וַיִּצַו אוֹתָם זֶהִיר לֹא יוֹדַע הַדְּבָר לְאִישׁ “But he commanded them strictly: the matter must not be made known to anyone.” But the text should have been read and interpreted as

וַיִּצַו אוֹתָם זֶהִיר לֹא יוֹדַע הַדְּבָר לְאִישׁ

And he commanded them strictly:

“*Verily!* Let the matter be known to everybody!”

The account in Matt 9:26, “And the report of this went through all that land,” indicates just how obedient Jarius and his wife were in obeying Jesus’ command *to publicize the healing of their daughter*. This interpretation removes the inconsistency in the Greek texts of Jesus’ commanding Jarius and his wife to tell no one about their daughter’s being healed, but the woman who was healed just moments earlier of her hemorrhaging and the large crowd that witnessed her being healed were free to tell what happened to anyone and everyone. If Jesus had wanted to keep his messianic ministry a secret he surely would have required a vow of silence from everyone. Instead of attracting crowds he could have withdrawn into the privacy he enjoyed between the ages of twelve to thirty.

The account in Mark 7:32–37 of the healing of the man who was deaf and dumb ends with this prohibition:

καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν

Then he ordered them that they should tell no one.

The *Vorlage* was probably וַיִּצַו אוֹתָם שְׁלֹא יִגִּידוּ לְאִישׁ, in which case the שְׁלֹא was misread as שְׁלֹא “that not,” rather than being read as intended as שְׁלֵא “that *indeed*.” Once this change is recognized, verse 7:36a (“he ordered them that they

should *indeed* tell everyone”) and verse 7:36b (“and the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it”) are in complete harmony. There was no disobedience by those who “were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak’” (7:37).

In the account of this healing in Matt 15:29–31 there is no hint of any secrecy to be maintained or any disobedience to be tolerated. The crowds testified to what they saw and praised God:

And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. (15:30–31)

After Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man in Decapolis (Mark 7:32–37), which was well publicized, he went on to Bethsaida where he healed a blind man (Mark 8:22–26). In the Greek text⁴⁰ this healing story ends with a compound command:

μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθης
καὶ μηδενὶ εἴπησ εἰς τὴν κώμην
Do not go into the village;
and do not tell anyone in the village.

The Hebrew *Vorlage* behind these commands was probably

לֹא תִבֵּא בְכַפֵּר וְלֹא תִגִּיד לְאִישׁ בְּכַפֵּר

which was read and interpreted by Mark as if Jesus said

לֹא תִבֵּא בְכַפֵּר וְלֹא תִגִּיד לְאִישׁ בְּכַפֵּר.

But what Jesus meant required the text to be interpreted as

לֹא תִבֵּא בְכַפֵּר וְלֹא תִגִּיד לְאִישׁ בְּכַפֵּר

Indeed, you must go into the village;
and you must *indeed* tell everyone in the village.

The account in John 9:1–43, telling of Jesus' healing near

the pool of Siloam the man who was blind from birth, contains no hint that the healing was to be kept a secret. Quite the contrary, the healing occurred at the public pool without Jesus’ being present. But the man announced to all that Jesus was his healer (9:11). Shortly thereafter, when Jesus again met the healed man after the man’s being challenged by the Pharisees because his healing occurred on the Sabbath, Jesus announced to the healed man—within earshot of some Pharisees—that he was “the Son of Man” (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου).⁴¹ This led the healed man to worship Jesus publicly before those Pharisees. For John Jesus’ healing ministry was not subject to any “messianic secret.”

But the Greek synoptic accounts which tell of Peter’s declaring “You are the Christ” end with a clear call for secrecy:

- Matt 16:20, μηδενὶ εἴπωσιν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός “they should tell no one that he was the Christ”;
- Mark 8:30, μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ “to no one may they tell about him”;
- Luke 9:21, παρήγγειλεν μηδενὶ λέγειν τοῦτο “he commanded they should tell this to no man.”

Matt 16:20 in Shem Tob’s *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* reads

אז צוה לתלמידיו לבל יאמרו שהוא משיח

which Howard translated as “Then he commanded his disciples not to say that he is the Messiah.” But the לבל יאמרו, meaning literally “to not they should say,” is awkward. One expects an infinitive after the adverb בל “not,” rather than a verb in the imperfect. Idiomatic Hebrew appears once this לבל is emended to לכל, which changes the meaning completely:

אז צוה לתלמידיו לכל יאמרו שהוא משיח

“then he commanded his disciples (that)
to all they should tell that he is Messiah.”

In John 11:27 Martha made her confession of faith (before her brother Lazarus was raised from the dead) saying,

Ναὶ κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς
ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ,
the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Jesus was satisfied upon hearing Martha’s confession of faith and proceeded to prove *publicly* that he was the resurrection and the life: “he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” Martha was *not* admonished to keep her confession of faith a secret.⁴²

The change of the כּ to a כ in the Shem Tob text of Matt 16:20, whereby Jesus ordered the disciples *to tell all that he is the Messiah*, brings uniformity to Jesus’ response to Peter’s affirmation, “You are the Christ!” and to Martha’s affirmation, “You are the Christ!” The uniform response can be expanded to include Mark 8:30 once it is recognized that the Greek μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ, “to no one may they tell about him,” reflects a misreading of לא יגידו עליו in the Hebrew *Vorlage* as לא יגידו עליו “and he commanded them not to tell about him,” which should have been read as לא יגידו עליו “and he commanded them to *indeed* tell about him.” Similarly, Jesus’ uniform response can be expanded to include Luke 9:21 once it is recognized that the Greek παρήγγειλεν μηδενὶ λέγειν τοῦτο “he commanded they should tell this to no man” reflects a misreading of לא יגידו הדבר לאיש in the Hebrew *Vorlage* as לא יגידו הדבר לאיש, which should have been read as לא יגידו הדבר לאיש, “he commanded they should *indeed* tell the matter to everyone.”

AN ARAMAIC PARTICLE AND ARABIC COGNATE
NEGATE THE MESSIANIC SECRET

Jesus’ warnings in Matt 8:4, השמרו לך פן תגיד לאדם, “Beware lest you tell a man,” and in 9:30 השמרו פן יודע הרבר, “Beware lest the matter be made known,” may also have been misread and mistranslated.. The פן was read by the Greek translators and by George Howard as the conjunction פן “lest.” But it can also be read as the defectively spelled particle פון “would that,” which introduces a subjunctive, as in Targum Onkelos Num 11:29, פון דיהון קל עמיה דיי, נביין “*Would that* all of the people of the Lord were prophets” (Jastrow 1903: 1143).⁴³ Recognizing this Aramaism in Jesus’ Hebrew speech helps to negate the idea that he was trying to maintain a “messianic secret”—but this Aramaism does not negate the conclusion that Jesus spoke in Hebrew.

A second misreading in these verses involves the ambiguous ש, which could be either the ש (sh/š) or the ש (s). The imperative השמר in Matt 8:4 and 9:30 can be read as either השמר “Be on guard!” or as השמר “Strive vigorously!” The stem שמר is the cognate of the Arabic شمر (*šamara*) which Lane (1872: 1595–1596) defined as follows:⁴⁴

- שמר (*šamara*) “*he strove, or labored, exerted himself vigorously or his power or ability, employed himself vigorously or laboriously or with energy or took extraordinary pains and was quick in [the affair or the religious service]*”;
- the noun שמר (*šimr^{un}*) “*one who acts with a penetrative energy, or who is sharp, vigorous, or effective*”;
- the noun שמרי (*šammariy^{un}*) “*a man penetrating, or acting with a penetrative energy, or sharp, vigorous, and effective,*

in the performing of affairs, and expert, or experienced”;

- the noun שמיר (*šimir*^m) “one who strives, labors, or exerts himself; who employs himself vigorously, or laboriously, or with energy in the performance of affairs.” (Lane’s italics)

Thus, the הַשְׁמִירוֹ פֶּן יִדְעַ הַדָּבָר in Matt 9:30 can be translated as “Strive vigorously! Would that the matter become known.” Thus, in *obedience* to this command, Matt 9:31 states, “As for them, they went out and made him known in all that land.” The same command and response fits the narrative about the leper who was healed (Matt 8:2–4, Mark 1:40–45, and Luke 5:12–16). In *obedience* to the command, הַשְׁמִיר הַלְּאָדָם [לְךָ] פֶּן תִּגִּיד, “Strive vigorously! Would that you declare to the people,” the leper “went out and began to talk freely about it” (Mark 1:45), and “so much the more the report went abroad concerning Him” (Luke 5:15).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Without knowing that the archaic English word *prevent* meant “to precede” (*pre*+*venire*), expositors of Psalm 119:147, “I prevented the dawning of the morning” (KJV) and “I prevented the dawning of the day” (DRA), could misinterpret this verse to mean that the psalmist claimed *to have stopped the sun from rising*. Similarly, without knowing that the archaic Hebrew particle לֹא meant “indeed” (לֹא) as well as “not” (לֹא), exegetes past and present have turned Hebrew emphatic affirmatives into highly problematic negatives—such as (1) Yahweh’s allegedly telling Ezekiel (20:25), “I gave them [the Israelites] statutes that were *not* (לֹא) good and ordinances by which they could not (לֹא) have life,” and (2) Jesus’ telling Jarius “that no one should know this (Mark 5:

43), nevertheless the report of Jesus’s healing of Jarius’s daughter ends up in Holy Scripture! Simply by reading אֵל as אֵל rather than אֵל most verses in the Hebrew *Vorlagen* of the Gospels which call for secrecy can be transformed into a call for publicity. The emphatic אֵל may have been more widely used in the Galilean dialect of Hebrew, the dialect of Jesus and Peter (Matt 3:13, Mark 14: 70). Thus, Mark and Luke—as well as the translators of Matthew’s Hebrew Gospel into Greek⁴⁵—were apparently more familiar with the Judean dialect which very rarely used the emphatic אֵל. (This would account for the absence of the emphatic אֵל in the Mishnaic and Rabbinic dialects which grew out of the Judean dialect.)

The defective spelling of פֶּן (=פֶּן) “would that” as פֶּן (which was misread as פֶּן “lest”) in the Hebrew *Vorlage* utilized by the Gospel writers, along with the misreading of a כ as a כ, and a ש as ש rather than ש, contributed to the creation of the alleged “messianic secret.”

The Hebrew texts of Jesus’ sayings, as reconstructed above, called for those healed to give great publicity to their being healed. This interpretation restores a consistency of the healing texts with the accounts in Matt 11:2–6 and Luke 7:18–23, which tell of John the Baptist who having learned of Jesus’ performing “the work of the Christ” (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ) sent to inquire, “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?” Jesus’ responded, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.” Jesus did not command John the Baptist to keep this report on the “work of the Christ” a secret.

Rather Jesus gave a blessing: και μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῆ ἐν ἐμοί, “And blessed is he who keeps

from stumbling over Me” (NAS Matt 11:6, Luke 7:23)—which recognizes that many knew of “the work of the Christ.” Keeping it a secret was impossible. Moreover, if the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the blessing was **אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִהְיֶה כִּשְׁל בִּי**, it could mean, “*Blessed is he who truly has trust in me!*” The **לֹא** was the emphatic **לֹא**, and the **כִּשְׁל** was not **כָּשַׁל** “to stumble,” but **כְּשָׁל** “confidence, trust” a variant spelling of the **כָּסַל** in Psalm 78:7, **וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ בֵּאלֹהִים כָּסָלָם**, “that they might put their trust in God.”⁴⁶ Jesus’ Hebrew benediction, which lay behind the Greek benediction in Matt 11:6 and Luke 7:23, was an indirect invitation for John the Baptist to trust him as did the crowds who “were astounded beyond measure” (Mark 7:37).

It was the ambiguities found in un-vocalized Hebrew texts (in the Galilean dialect) which caused some understandable mis-readings to come from those who translated the Hebrew into Greek. While the consonantal Hebrew text called for those healed to publicize Jesus’ healing power, a simple error in vocalization (opting for an *o* vowel rather than a *u* vowel) produced Greek texts with inconsistent prohibitions against publicity. The inconsistency finds no easy explanation when working only with the Greek texts and the Greek language.

However, speculation about the Hebrew wording which lay behind the Greek translations has been quite productive and leads to my conclusion that Jesus had nothing to do with any “Messianic Secret.” This “Messianic Secret” was the gift of translators—including Mark, Luke, and whoever translated Matthew’s Hebrew Gospel.⁴⁵ As noted initially, Fitzmyer (1979: 45) thought Jesus spoke in Aramaic and stated, “We would have to look for further indications of this fact [that Jesus made use of Hebrew].” Presented above are the “further indications” Fitzmyer was looking for. The retroversion of

Jesus’ prohibitions into Hebrew produced fourteen verses having an unrecognized emphatic לְ/אֵל/לְמַהֵל. These fourteen emphatics in the Synoptic Gospels can be added to the twenty-seven emphatic אֵל and לְ cited in *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* and to the twenty-one I found over the years and have listed above.⁴⁷

NOTES

1. In response to J. T. Milik’s assertion “that Mishnaic [Hebrew] was the normal language of the Judean population in the Roman period” (1959: 31, 139), Fitzmyer stated,

While it seems apparent that certain pockets, or perhaps strata, of the population in the early Roman period were using Hebrew and that this language became enshrined in the Mishnah in a still more developed form, as of its codification ca. 200, I find it difficult to think of Hebrew as “the normal language of the Judaeian population” in the *whole* Roman period. (1979: 45, Fitzmyer’s italics.)

2. Fitzmyer (1979: 7–8) favored Aramaic as the language most commonly used by Jesus. He provided (page 22, notes 36 and 37) a bibliography of some of the authors debating whether Jesus used primarily Aramaic or Hebrew.

3. “A New Hebrew Particle,” *Johns Hopkins University Circulars* 13, No. 104 (1894) 107–108.

4. See for AKKADIAN: W. von Sodon, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome 1952) §81f, 121c; for AMORITE: Herbert Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts: A Structural and Lexical Study* (Baltimore 1965) 223; Moran, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 60, 69; William Albright, *JBL* 69 (1950) 389; for ARAMAIC: H. Ingholt,

Rapport préliminaire sur sept campagnes de fouilles à Hama en Syrie (1932–1938) (København 1940) 117, n.4; Donner-Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden 1964), II, 211; for PHOENICIAN: Johannes Friedrich, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik* (AnOr 32; Pome, 1951) § 257^c; G. A. Cooke, *A Text-Book of Northwest Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford 1903) 47; for PUNIC: H. Berthier – R. Charlier, *Le Sanctuaire punique d'El Hofra à Constantine* (Paris 1955) 33–34, 139; for UGARITIC: Cyrus Gordon *Ugaritic Textbook* (1965: 76, 425 #1339); Albrecht Goetze, "The Tenses of Ugaritic," *JAOS* 58 (1938) 292.

5. See I. M. Casanowicz, "The Emphatic Particle 𐤀 in the OT," *JAOS* 16 (1896) CLXVI–CLXXI; Henry P. Smith, "Old Testament Notes," *JBL* 24 (1905) 30; Israel Eitan, "Le particule emphatique 'la' dans la Bible," *Revue des Études Juives Historia Judaica* 74 (1922) 1–16; *idem*, "Hebrew and Semitic Particles," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 45 (1928) 202; William Albright, "The Old Testament and Canaanite Language and Literature," *CBQ* 7 (1945) 24; Mitchell Dahood, "Canaanite and Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth," *Biblica* 33 (1952) 192–194; F. Nötscher, "Zum emphatischen Lamed," *VT* 3 (1953) 372–380; Dahood, "Two Pauline Quotations from the Old Testament," *CBQ* 17 (1955) 24; *idem*, "Enclitic Mem and Emphatic Lamedh in Psalm 85," *Biblica* 37 (1956) 338–340; *idem*, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology* (Rome 1963) 19; *idem*, *Psalms I* (Anchor Bible 17A, New York 1966) 143, 158, 188; John Bright, *Jeremiah* (Anchor Bible 21, New York 1965) 333; and H. Neil Richardson, "A Critical Note on Amos 7:14," *JBL* 85 (1966) 89; A. C. M. Blommerde, *Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job*. (BibOr 22, Rome 1969) 31; Thomas McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations, I and II." *Biblica* 49

(1968) 27–53, 199–220; Dahood, “The Emphatic *Lamedh* in Jer 14:21 and Ezek 34:29,” *CBQ* 37 (1975) 341–342; C. F. Whitley, “Some Remarks on *lû* and *lo*,” *ZAW* 87 (1975) 202–204; and John Huehnergard, “Asseverative **la* and Hypothetical **lu* and *law*,” *JAOS* 103 (1983) 569–593.

6. Click [HERE](#) to view the citation on Lane, p. 3006, col. B.

7. Clines, David J. A. Editor. 1993–1998. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 5 Volumes. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. Click [HERE](#) to view [Clines_495_lu_indeed.pdf](#).

8. On April 25, 2007, Bart Ehrman, author of the *New York Times* best seller *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (Harper Collins, 2005), was the guest lecturer at Stanford University for the Heyns Lecture Series (available online at <http://video.google.com/videoplay/?docid=397006836098752165> [[click here](#)]). The question and answer period which followed the lecture is also online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TffAToyoJg&feature=related> [[click here](#)]). Ehrman stated, “They didn’t speak Hebrew in Jesus’ day; they were reading Hebrew. Jesus could probably read Hebrew, I think, but it wasn’t a spoken language in Palestine in his time.” But this opinion has been challenged (see note 2, above). Many were able to speak Hebrew but were illiterate, unable to read texts which were written without vowels. For a glimpse of the ongoing debate about Hebrew in Jesus day, check out the web page of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research [[click HERE](#)] and the Hebraic Roots Movement [[click HERE](#)].

9. Howard, George. 1987. *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. Revised and retitled in 1995 as *The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press). 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 ByzantineGreek, or any other known edition of the Gospel of Matthew. He received it from previous generations of Jewish scribes and tradents."

10. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/MBS_11_Sarah_Laugh.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/MBS_11_Sarah_Laugh.pdf. See page 173, which is page 8 in the PDF file.

11. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_ONE.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_ONE.pdf. See page 7, which is page 8 in the PDF file.

12. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/MSB_2_Ineffable.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/MSB_2_Ineffable.pdf. See page 72, which is page 2 in the PDF file.

13. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Deborah_Chapter_1.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Deborah_Chapter_1.pdf. See page 11, which is page 4 in the PDF file.

14. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_10.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_10.pdf. See page 86, which is page 7 in the PDF file.

15. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIX.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIX.pdf. See pages 64–65, which are pages 4–5 in the PDF file.

16. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf) to open <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf>. See page 156, which is page 52 in the PDF file.

17. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf) to open <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf>. See page 181, which is page 77 in the PDF file.

18. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf) to open <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf>. See page 210, which is page 106 in the PDF file.

19. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf) to open <http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/6Chapter.pdf>. See page 182, which is page 78 in the PDF file.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_EIGHT.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_EIGHT.pdf. See page 114, which is page 6 in the PDF file.

23. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_15.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_15.pdf. See page 129, which is page 6 in the PDF file.

24. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_17.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_17.pdf. See pages 147–148, which are pages 6–7 in the PDF file.

25. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Biblica1968_199-220.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Biblica1968_199-220.pdf. See pages 206–208, which are pages 8–10 in the PDF file.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIXTEEN.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIXTEEN.pdf. See pages 262–264, which are pages 7–9 in the PDF file.

28. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIXTEEN.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CMBBP_SIXTEEN.pdf. See page 265, which is pages 10 in the PDF file.

29. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_24.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/CBBP_Chapter_24.pdf. See pages 224–225, which are pages 5–6 in the PDF file.

30. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See pages 128–129, which are pages 135–136 in the PDF file.

31. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See pages 114–115, which are pages 121–122 in the PDF file. Manuscript Add. 26964 reads לבל יגלוהו ויצום לאמר לבל יגלוהו and mss E and F read לבלתי instead of לבל.

32. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See pages 9 and 185, which are pages 16 and 192 in the PDF file.

33. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See page 190, which is page 197 in the PDF file.

34. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See page 197, which is page 204 in the PDF file.

35. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See pages 200–201, which are pages 207–208 in the PDF file.

36. Click [HERE](http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf) to open http://tmcdaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob+.pdf. See pages 31–41, which are pages 38–48 in the PDF file, noting especially pages 40–41.

37. An analogy would be the English “Woe!” and “Wow!” when transliterated in Hebrew as וו “Woe!” and a וו “Wow!” The וו without a vowel is ambiguous.

38. Ὅρα appears in Matt 8:4, Mark 1:41, Heb 8:5, and Rev 19:10 and 22:9.

39. For אִישׁ “everyone,” note Gen 10:5, Exo 12:3, Job 42:11, and I Chron 16:3, אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה, לְכָל־לְכָל, which is gender inclusive.

40. For the textual variants in this verse click [HERE](#) to view p. 155 in *The Greek New Testament*, edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren (New York: American Bible Society).

41. Click [HERE](#) to view online an in depth study entitled “Adam, Enosh, and ‘The Son of Man,’” which is Chapter 25 in my online Volume III, entitled *Clarifying More Baffling Passages*, for which click [HERE](#).

42. The resurrection of Lazarus was reported to the Pharisees and to the high priest Caiphas. They responded not with a profession of faith but with a desire to to put Jesus to death (John 11:45–53).

43. The MT reads וּמִי יִתֵּן כָּל־עַם יְהוָה נְבִיאִים, which was translated in the Septuagint as καὶ τίς δώη πάντα τὸν λαὸν κυρίου προφήτας.

44. Note that the sibilants usually shift with Hebrew-Arabic cognates: the שׁ = Arabic ش (š) and the שׂ = Arabic س (s). The Arabic ث (t) appears as a שׁ in Hebrew and as a ת in Aramaic.

45. See Howard (1987/1995: 155–160) for a summary of the debate concerning Papias' statement that "Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each interpreted them as best he could."

46. For the interchange of ס and שׁ, note Ezra 4:5 where סָכַר appears for שָׂכַר "to hire," and Ecc 1:17 where שְׂכָלוֹת appears for סְכָלוֹת "folly."

47. The only Aramaic emphatic ל that I am aware of is the one cited by Donner and Röllig (1964: 211) which appears in the name אֲדֻנְלָרֵם "the Lord is truly elevated," found on a graffiti at Ḥama, in Syria, dated to the 9th–8th century B.C.

XV

LOST LEXEMES CLARIFY MARK 1:41 AND JOHN 3:3–4

As early as 1894, when Paul Haupt made the following statement, the emphatic *lamedh*, a lost lexeme, was initially recognized in biblical Hebrew,

A comprehensive study of the use of the ל *prae*fixum in the Old Testament will no doubt reveal a considerable number of cases where the ל is not the preposition but the emphatic particle ל = Arabic *la* and Assyrian *lû* ‘verily’¹

A hundred years later the Hebrew emphatic *lamedh* was finally cited in a standard Hebrew-English lexicon, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, edited by David Clines.² As demonstrated in Chapter 14, the Hebrew emphatic ל/א/ל/מזה ל was used by Jesus but was misread as the *negative* particle or an interrogative by those who—past and present—translated his Hebrew into Greek, thereby creating the alleged “Messianic Secret.” Without the recovery of the lost lexeme ל/א/ל/מזה ל, coupled with the recognition that Jesus used Hebrew as well as Aramaic, the enigma of Jesus’ telling only a *few* out of *all* those whom he had healed to keep their healing a secret would remain a mystery.

Semitic cognates provided the clues for the recovery of the forgotten emphatic *lamedh*; and thanks to Arabic cognates other lost Hebrew lexemes have been recovered which clarify what Jesus actually said and what was said about him. Some words in Jesus’ Galilean dialect were forgotten by those who spoke and perpetuated the Judean dialect. Perhaps within the next hundred years the lost Galilean words will find their rightful place in the Hebrew lexicons of tomorrow.

The two lost Hebrew lexemes introduced here are הַמַּל “to be angry” and עָלַל “to do again, to do a second time.” The

former addresses the Greek textual variants which report that Jesus *became angry* with the leper whom he healed (Mark 1:41, but the anger is not mentioned in Matt 8:3 or Luke 5:13). The latter focuses on John 3:3, where Jesus tells Nicodemus that *he must be born again*.

MARK 1:41

Bart Ehrman, in his *New York Times* best seller entitled *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*,³ chose the textual variant in Mark 1:41 as his initial example for illustrating how “most English translators have chosen the wrong reading and so presented a translation not of the original text but of the text that scribes created when they altered the original” (2005: 132). In Mark 1:41 fifty-three manuscripts and codices have $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\chi\chi\nu\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, “having compassion” to describe Jesus’ response to the leper’s request, “If you will, you can make me clean”. But Ephraem (fourth century), five manuscripts (Codex Bezae from the sixth century [= D], and the Old Latin manuscripts *a*, *d*, *ff*², and *r*¹), have $\acute{o}\rho\gamma\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ “becoming angry” as Jesus’ initial response to the leper’s request (Aland 1968: 123, noting that the Old Latin mss. *b* omits the $\acute{o}\rho\gamma\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$). Ehrman (2005: 133–135) was convinced that $\acute{o}\rho\gamma\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ “becoming angry” was the original reading which was changed by unknown scribes long ago to $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\chi\chi\nu\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, “having compassion.” His reasoning was as follows:

The question to be asked is this: which is more likely, that a scribe copying this text would change it to say that Jesus became wrathful instead of compassionate, or to say that Jesus became compassionate instead of wrathful? Which reading better explains the existence of the other? When seen from this perspective, the latter is obviously more likely. The

reading that indicates Jesus became angry is the “more difficult” reading and therefore more likely to be “original” . . . What is striking in the stories [of Mark 9] is that Jesus’s evident anger erupts when someone doubts his willingness, ability, or divine authority to heal. Maybe this is what is involved in the story of the leper [in Mark 1] as well. As in the story of Mark 9, someone approaches Jesus gingerly to ask: “If you are *willing* you are able to heal me.” Jesus becomes angry. *Of course* he’s willing, just as he is able and authorized. He heals the man and, still somewhat miffed, rebukes him sharply and throws him out. [¶] There’s a completely different feel to the story, given this way of construing it, a construal based on the text as Mark appears to have written it. Mark, in places, portrays an angry Jesus.

A year later, in his *Studies in th Textual Criticism of the New Testament*⁴ (2006: 95, 120–141, 330) Ehrman suggested that the scribes may well have changed Jesus’ ὀργισθεῖς “becoming angry” to σπλαγχνισθεῖς “having compassion” due to a fear “that the pagan opponents of Christianity like Celsus, who were known to be pursuing the Gospels for incriminating evidence against the divine founder of the faith, might find here ammunition for their charges.”

Ehrman noted that Jesus did not know Greek or Latin but spoke in Aramaic, with “the probability that he was able to read Hebrew.”⁵ That being the case, Jesus’ being “misquoted” probably occurred when his statements were first translated from Aramaic—and I would insist from Hebrew also—into Greek. The misquotations would be the gifts of early translators, not later scribes or copyists. But Ehrman, with few exceptions, refrained from speculating about the early oral traditions and written texts of what Jesus said. The lost Aramaic/Hebrew texts of Jesus’ sayings would have had an abundance of ambiguous homographs because all of Jesus’

words would have been written without vowels, and possibly there were no spaces between the words.

As noted, fifty-three Greek manuscripts of Mark 1:41 read
καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο
καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρῶσθαι

which can be translated back into Hebrew to read

וישליח ידו נגע בו ואמר רוצה אני טהר. I mxyw

If the first word, ויחמל, is read as the *Qal* imperfect ויחמל the Greek text and this Hebrew text are correctly translated as

*“And moved with compassion,
He stretched out His hand, and touched him,
and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed!’”*

Moreover, the ὀργισθεὶς “being angry”—found in codex D, in four Old Latin manuscripts, and in Ephraem—is also a *perfectly correct* translation of the Hebrew text as reconstructed here once the initial ויחמל is read as ויחמל, a *Niph^cal* imperfect. The Hebrew חמל is a homograph of two different verbs. There is חמל, stem I, “to have compassion,” which appears in Jer 21:7, לֹא-יָחֹס עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחְמֹל וְלֹא יִרְחַם, “he shall not spare them, neither have compassion, nor have mercy.”⁶ This חמל is the cognate of the Arabic حمل (*ḥamala*) “to accept responsibility, to accept the trust” (Lane 1865: 647; BDB 328). But there was also חמל, stem II, “to be angry,” the cognate of Arabic حمل (*ḥamala*), stem II, which in forms 1 and 8 means “he became angry” (Lane 1865: 647; Hava 1915: 144).⁷ In speech the *Qal* ויחמל “he had compassion” could not be confused with the *Niph^cal* ויחמל “he became angry.” But the ambiguous consonantal ויחמל could mean either, which is probably why, in the parallel texts in

Matt 8:3 and Luke 5:13, there is no mention of either anger or compassion. This ambiguity about the meaning of **לַחַמַּל** in the Hebrew source used by Matthew and Luke caused them simply to ignore the word—another example of “when in doubt leave it out.”

Working strictly with the Greek textual variants, Ehrman (2006: 126, 313) concluded, “Thus it is hard to understand why Matthew and Luke would have removed *σπλαγχνισθεῖς* from the account of Jesus healing the leper but easy to see why they might have removed *ὀργισθεῖς*.”

Writing in reference to the Gospel of John, Ehrman (2005: 61) conjectured,

John no doubt had sources for his account—possibly a source that narrated Jesus’ signs, for example, and a source that describes his discourses It is possible, though,” that John actually produced several different versions of his Gospel.

The same would hold true for Mark. In one version Mark translated the **לַחַמַּל** as *καὶ ὀργισθεῖς* “being angry” and in another version he opted for *καὶ σπλαγχνισθεῖς* “and moved with compassion.” Either way he honestly translated what he saw at a particular moment, but there is no way of telling which version came first.⁸

Thus, there is no need to speculate as did Ehrman (2006: 138, 141) that,

Mark described Jesus as angry, and, at least in this instance, *scribes took offense*. This comes as no surprise: apart from a fuller understanding of Mark’s portrayal, Jesus’ anger is difficult to understand. . . . Jesus’ anger in this instance did not seem to fit, and *so the text was altered*. It had been changed previously by the prescribal copyists, Matthew and Luke, who omitted his anger; and *it was changed by the scribes themselves*, who transformed his anger into compas-

sion. . . . My point is that Christian scribes who wanted to defend Jesus's character against the assaults of hostile pagan critics may have had real-life motivations *for changing the texts of the Gospels* in places where Jesus did not appear . . . to be portrayed as one who merited the appellation "Son of God."⁹ (McDaniel's italics)

Too the contrary, the differences in the manuscripts in this case go back to the author, not to scribes or copyists. It is analogous to my changing my mind about the meaning of the phrase **לְאֹדֵי יָרִיד וְיָרֵד שְׂרִיד** in Judges 5:13. In the LXX this became τότε κατέβη κατάλειμμα τοῖς ἰσχυροῖς, "then went down the remnant to the strong." But I first translated the Hebrew phrase as "when the truly noble ones went down to assist" (1983: 130, 200–202). Then I changed my mind and translated it as "when the *caravan-leader* went forth against the nobles" (2003: 161–164). Both translations are in circulation. When it came to the ambiguous **לְיַחֲזָק** in Mark's Hebrew source, Mark simply changed his mind without appreciating the problem he was creating for his readers once two versions of his work were copied and in circulation.

JOHN 3:3

Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν,
οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Verily, verily, I say unto you,
except one be born from above,
he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Friedrich Büchsel (1964: 378)¹⁰ listed four different meanings of the Greek ἄνωθεν: (a) "from above," as in the Septuagint of Job 3:4 and James 1:17, 3:15, 3:17; (b) "from an earlier period," as in Acts 26:5; (c) "from the first," as in Luke

1:2; and “anew, a second time,” as in Gal 4:9. For Büchsel recourse to an underlying Hebrew suggested definition (a) because מְלִמְעָלָה has this meaning. For him the suggestion that both (a) and (d) were meant “is both superfluous and unprovable”—thereby disagreeing with C.K. Barrett (1955: 171), who noted that the ἄνωθεν “is capable of two meanings and here [in John 3:3] it probably means both.”

Raymond Brown (1966: 130) noted in his commentary on John that

The Gr. *anōthen* means both “again” and “from above” and the double meaning is used here as part of a technique of misunderstanding. Although in vs. 4 Nicodemus takes Jesus to have meant “again,” Jesus’ primary meaning in vs. 3 was “from above.” This is indicated from the parallel in iii 31, as well as from the two other Johannine uses of *anōthen* (xix 11, 23). *Such a misunderstanding is possible only in Greek; we know of no Hebrew or Aramaic word of similar meaning which would have had this spatial and temporal ambiguity.* Once again, it is not impossible that the second meaning “again” is intended by John on a secondary, sacramental level. (McDaniel’s italics)

Thus, for Brown, the author of the Gospel must receive credit for using the *double entendre*, ἄνωθεν, not Jesus.

According to Ehrman,¹¹ also, Jesus probably did not say what is recorded on John 3:3 as his initial answer to Nicodemus. In response to a question addressed to him in a discussion period following a lecture at Stanford University, in 2007, Ehrman stated,

There are sayings which cannot be retroverted back into Aramaic—which means Jesus probably didn’t say them . . . The word ἄνωθεν is interesting because it actually has two meanings. It can actually mean “from above” or it can mean

“a second time” . . . You cannot reproduce this *double entendre* in Aramaic (nor in Hebrew).

Since Jesus did not speak in Greek credit for the use of the *double entendre* ἄνωθεν—in agreement with Brown—must be given to John rather than to Jesus.

However, in disagreement with Brown, Ehrman, and a number of their colleagues, the Greek phrase ἐὰν μή τις γενηθήναι ἄνωθεν, in John 3:3, can be translated back into Hebrew with an ambiguity which approximates that of a *double entendre*. The second lost Hebrew word introduced on the first page of this chapter is עָלַל, stem IV, “to do again, to do a second time,”¹² and its by-form עָלָה, stem II.¹³ The Arabic cognate of עָלַל, stem IV, is *عل* (*‘alla*) “a second time” (Lane 1874: 2123).¹⁴

One of the noun formations for ע"ע lexemes (i.e., stems in which the second and third letters are the same, like עָלַל) comes with a prefixed מ and an affixed ה, with a doubling of the stem’s middle letter and the loss of the stem’s third letter. A good example is the מִשְׁכָּוָה “desolation” in Ezek 6:14, which appears along with שְׂמִימָה “waste.” Both are from the same stem, שָׁמַם “to be desolate” (BDB 1030–1031). When the ע"ע stem עָלַל appears in the same noun formation as מִשְׁכָּוָה “devastation” it would become מִעָלָה and would mean “a second time” and could be used adverbially. Without vowels this “adverb” would appear in a text as מַעְלָה, which is a homograph of the adverb מִעָלָה “above.” In this case the ambiguity was not in Nicodemus’ misreading of מַעְלָה, but it was a problem with his hearing correctly what Jesus said—was it מִעָלָה “above” or מַעְלָה “again?”

George Lamsa (1967: 1054), commenting on the translation of the $\alpha\nu\omega\theta\epsilon\nu$ in the Peshiṭta as ܡܢ ܕܝܪܝܫ (*men dēriš*), stated, “Born again in Northern Aramaic means to change one’s thoughts and habits. Nicodemus spoke Southern Aramaic and hence did not understand Jesus.” I doubt, however, that the problem was caused by different Aramaic dialects. The similarity in sound of ܡܢ ܥܠܐ (*mē^callâ*) “again” and ܡܢ ܥܠܐ (*ma^calâ*) “above” was close enough for anyone to mishear. The real dialect problem was apparently in Hebrew with the word עָלַל “to do a second time,” which was used by Jesus in his Galilean dialect.” It did not survive, however, in the Judean dialect which developed into Rabbinic Hebrew.

Consequently, עָלַל “to do again,” became a lost lexeme. But the word has been recovered thanks to cognates. ܡܢ ܥܠܐ has two meanings because it comes from two different stems. There is not a *double entendre* here. But the unvocalized ܡܢ ܥܠܐ —without the benefit of cognates—could easily be mistaken for a *double entendre*: “above” and “again.”

The ܡܢ ܥܠܐ used by Jesus was undoubtedly ܡܢ ܥܠܐ “above.” Nicodemus simply misunderstood this one word of Jesus. Subsequently, so also have the exegetes who interpreted the $\alpha\nu\omega\theta\epsilon\nu$ in John 3:3 as John’s editorial addition to the story or translated the $\alpha\nu\omega\theta\epsilon\nu$ into Hebrew as ܡܢ ܡܢ ܥܠܐ “from above” rather than ܡܢ ܥܠܐ “above,” which only coincidentally is a homograph of ܡܢ ܥܠܐ “again.”¹⁵

NOTES

1. “A New Hebrew Particle,” *Johns Hopkins University Circulars* 13, No. 104 (1894) 107–108.
2. Clines, David J. A. Editor. 1993–1998. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 5 Volumes. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. Click [HERE](#) to view the citation of the emphatic *lamedh* on page 495.
3. New York: Harper Collins, 2005.
4. Boston: Brill, 2006.
5. On April 25, 2007, Bart Ehrman was the guest lecturer at Stanford University for the Heyns Lecture Series. This lecture is available online: <http://video.google.com/videoplay/?docid=397006836098752165> [[click HERE](#)]. The question and answer period which followed the lecture is online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TffAToyojg&feature=related> [[click HERE](#)].
6. See also Gen 19:16, Exo 2:6, I Sam 23:21, and Isa 63:9.
7. Click [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 647b “anger” and [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 648c “anger.”
8. The harsh words of Jesus appearing in the Greek text of Mark 1:43–44 led Ehrman to comment (2005: 136),
 They are harsh terms used elsewhere in Mark always in contexts of violent conflict and aggression (e.g., when Jesus casts out demons). It is difficult to see why Jesus would harshly upbraid this person and cast him out if he feels compassion for him; but if he is angry, perhaps it makes better sense.

But in Chapter 14, pp. 233–234, it was argued that the harsh words were due to mistranslations of Hebrew words. Note also pp. 113–117 in Volume IV, *Clarifying New Testament Aramaic Words and Names and the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, available on line by clicking [HERE](#).

9. See also Ehrman 2005: 200–2001.

10. Büchsel, Friedrich. 1964. ἄνωθεν. In *TDNT*, I: 378.

11. See above, note 5.

12. עָלַל, stem I, means “to act severely, wantonly” with a by-form עָוַל “to act wrongfully”; stem II means “to act or play the child,” with a by-form עוּל “to give suck”; and stem III means “to insert, to thrust in.”

13. The by-forms are comparable to כָּלַה “to complete” and כָּלַל “to complete” (BDB 477, 480).

14. Click [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 2123a “second time.”

Click [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 2123b “second time.”

Click [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 2124a “second draught.”

Click [HERE](#) to view Lane, page 2124c “second drink.”

15. Jastrow (1903: 817) translated לְמַעְלָה as “on high, in heaven,” which parallels the use of عَلِيَيْنَ (*‘illayyîna*) in the *Qurʾan* (*Sura* 83:18–19), which is a place in the Seventh Heaven to which ascend the souls of the believers (Lane 1874: 2125).

XVI

LOST LEXEMES CLARIFY

JOHN 11:33 AND 11:38

In Chapter XII two lost Hebrew lexemes were identified. First of the two was the textual variant εἰκη “without cause” in Matt 5:22 which originated when the word אָנִים in Matthew’s Hebrew text was mistakenly read as אָנִים “for no reason” when it should have been read as אָנִים “obscenely,” which comes from אָנִים, stem III, the cognate of the Arabic خنى (*ḥanaya*) “he uttered foul, abominable, unseemly, or obscene speech” (Lane 1865: 819). Second, the untranslated Πηκά (= אָנִים) in 5:22 was recognized as the cognate of the Arabic رقيه (*raqiq*) “a slave” (Lane 1867: 1131). Thus, the relevant lines in Matt 5:22 state, “Whoever is *obscenely* angry with his brother shall be in danger of the court: and he who says to his brother “*Vile-Fool-Slave*” shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin.”

The focus in Chapter XIV was on the recovery in the 20th century of the lost lexeme אָל “verily, indeed,” which over the centuries was always read as the negative particle אָל “no, not.” Once אָל “indeed” is in focus, Jesus’ commanding some whom he healed *not* to tell anyone (as if they could hide their healing) can be interpreted as commands to *indeed* tell everyone (which was obediently followed). Thus, Jesus’ alleged desire for a “messianic secret” can be recognized as his desire for “messianic publicity”—which is exactly what happened.

The two lost Hebrew lexemes introduced in Chapter XV were אָמֵל “to be angry” and אָלֵל “to do a second time, to do again.” The former involved the Greek textual variants which report that Jesus *became angry* with the leper whom he

healed (Mark1:41). The Hebrew לַחַמַּל “to be angry” is the cognate of Arabic حمل (*ḥamala*), stem II, “he became angry” (forms 1 and 8) (Lane 1865: 647), which was easily confused with חַמַּל, stem I, “to have compassion.” The lost lexeme לַעֲלַל “to do again” involved John 3:3, where Nicodemus understood Jesus to have said that *he must be born again*.

In this chapter the focus of attention shifts to John 11:33 and 11:38, where the lost lexemes (a) אָעַץ “to become assertive, to assume responsibility,” and (b) פָּרַץ “to act promptly” clarify the Greek texts which report that Jesus became angry just before he raised Lazarus from the dead.

The Greek text of John 11:33 and the literal translation of Ramsey Michaels (1989: 206) read:

ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν
He became angry in his spirit, and shook himself.

Michaels commented briefly,

. . . the Greek verbs used unmistakably denote anger and agitation. Whether the agitation (or “shaking”) is physical as well as emotional is difficult to say. The active voice (“he shook himself”) suggests that it is. The anger seems to be on the inside, while the shaking or trembling is the outward expression of it.¹

Most translation have soften the statement that Jesus became angry with Mary and Martha. Here are five examples,

- KJV: he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled
- NAS: he was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled
- NAB: he became perturbed and deeply troubled
- NRS: he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved
- NLT: he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled.

The Peshitta reads אַתְּעִזּוּ בְרוּחָהּ וְאַזְיַע נַפְשָׁהּ, which George Lamsa (1933, 1967) translated as “he was moved in his spirit and greatly disturbed.” The Vulgate reads *plorantes fremuit spiritu et turbavit se ipsum*, which became in the DRA, “he groaned in the spirit and troubled himself.”

The verb *ταράσσω* (aorist active indicative *ἐτάραξεν*) “to shake, stir up, disturb, throw into confusion, agitate” (Arndt and Gingrich 1957: 812) appears in the Septuagint as the translator’s choice for forty-six different Hebrew words in more than ninety verses (Hatch and Redpath 1954: 1336). By contrast, the *ἐμβριμάομαι* (aorist middle indicative of *ἐνεβριμήσατο*) “to admonish urgently, to rebuke” (which is related to *βριμάομαι* “to snort with anger, to be indignant”)² appears only twice in the Septuagint, namely in

- Dan 11:30, where the *ἐμβριμήσονται αὐτῶ* translates נִכְאָה “he had been disheartened”; and in
- Lam 2:6, וַיִּנְאֵץ בְּזַעַם־אָפוֹ מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן, which became καὶ παρώξυνεν ἐμβριμήματι ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλέα καὶ ἱερέα καὶ ἄρχοντα, “and he vexed with the *indignation* of his anger king and priest and chief.”

C. C. Torrey (1936: 41–43) suggested that in John 11:33 and 38 the translator selected the wrong meaning of the ambiguous Aramaic ܢܘܩܝܢ, which can mean “to be angry” or “to be deeply moved” (Jastrow 1903: 1447). But, as noted by C. K. Barrett (1955: 333), Matthew Black (1946: 174–177) rejected this proposal, asking the question, “If ܢܘܩܝܢ was the original, why did a translator go out of his way to select so unusual an expression in Greek?”

Barrett concurred with the interpretation of Matthew Black, whose conclusion he quoted at length:

The assumption of an Aramaic source of which the two expressions [ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι and ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν] are ‘translation-variants’ can account for the Johannine Greek. The Aramaic equivalent of ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν is a reflexive form of the verb *za^c*; in Esther 4:4, . . . the verb here [לָחַלְחַלְתָּתָּ] is a very strong one in Hebrew; it means literally ‘she writhed with anxiety’; it is rendered in the Targum by the equally strong and expressive verb *za^c*; the LXX renders ἐταράχθη. The latter was selected by the Greek translator of the Aramaic of John 11:33, but he set alongside it the Syriac expression ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι, an even more expressive equivalent of the Aramaic, and rendered the same verb *za^c* in v. 38 by the Greek equivalent of the corresponding Syriac *ʿth^cazaz*.

Barrett’s conclusion was, “This [interpretation of Black] though somewhat complicated by the introduction of Syriac as well as Aramaic, is probably the best solution of the problem, if any linguistic problem really exists. Barrett (1955: 332–333) suggested that John 11:33 contributed to John’s version of the desire of Jesus for a “messianic secret.”

Jesus perceives that the presence and grief of the sisters and the Jews are almost forcing a miracle upon him, and as in 2.4 the request for miraculous activity evokes a firm, almost tough, answer, here, in circumstances of increased tension it arouses his wrath. The miracle will be impossible to hide (cf. vv 28, 30); and this miracle, Jesus perceives, will be the immediate occasion of his death (vv. 49–53).

Raymond Brown (1966: 425) translated the ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι in 11:33 as “shuddered, moved with deepest emotions,” noting that this word and the ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ in John 11:38

are Semitisms for expressing the internal impact of emotions.

The basic meaning of *embrimasthai* seems to imply an articulate expression of anger. In LXX, the verb, along with its cognates, is used to describe a display of indignation (e.g., Dan xi 30), and this usage is also found in Mark xiv 5. The verb also describes Jesus’s reaction to the afflicted (Mark I 43; Matt ix 30). In these latter instances does the verb express anger? While it does not seem that Jesus would have been angry at the afflicted, he may very well have been angry at their illness and handicaps which were looked on as manifestations of Satan’s kingdom of evil.

Similarly Leon Morris (1971: 557) noted, “It is moreover completely out of character for Jesus to give way to anger against friends who, even if misguided, sought him no harm.”

To the question asked by Raymond Brown in the quotation above, “In these latter instances does the verb [ἐνεβριμήσατο] express anger?” my reply would be “Yes” if speaking strictly of the Greek verb. But, if the question was about the verb in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, my answer would be an emphatic “No!”

Taking a clue from Lam 2:6, where the MT בְּזַעַם־אָפוֹ was translated in the Septuagint as ἐμβριμήματι ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ, “the indignation of his anger,” the phrase in John 11:33, ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν, “he became angry in his spirit, and shook himself,” can be retroverted into Hebrew as זַעַם זַעַם זַעַם רוח and vocalized as זַעַם רוח (rather than זַעַם רוח). Obviously, when the phrase was translated into Greek the reader saw here the well attested

זַעַף, stem I, “to be indignant, to be angry,” and the widely attested רִיחַ, stem I, “wind, breath, spirit” (BDB 276, 924; Jastrow 408, 1458). But there was also זַעַף, stem II, “to be assertive” and רִיחַ, stem II, “to act quickly, promptly.” Unfortunately, both זַעַף, stem II, and רִיחַ, stem II, became lost lexemes. But, thanks to Arabic cognates, they have been recovered and permit a very reasonable reinterpretation of John 11:33 and 11:38.

The Arabic cognate of Hebrew זַעַף, stem II, is زعم (*za^cama*) “he asserted” and “he became responsible, answerable, amenable, surety, or guarantee for it”—with the noun زعمة (*za^cmat*) “an assertion,” the adjective زعيم (*za^cim*) “responsible” (Lane 1867: 1232–1233). Two phrases cited by Lane are of particular interest, namely, تزاعم القوم (*taza^cam °alqawmu*) “the people became responsible for one another,” and زعم زعما (*za^cama za^cman*) “he related a piece of information respecting which there is doubt.”

The Arabic cognate of Hebrew רִיחַ, stem II, is راح / روح (*rwh / râḥa*) “he was active, prompt, quick,” with the adjectives رواح (*rawâḥ*) and رواحة (*rawâḥat*) meaning,

- “experiencing relief from grief or sorrow, after suffering therefrom;
- experiencing the joy, or happiness, rising from certainty;
- quick or prompt to do acts of kindness;
- very brisk, prompt, or quick.

The phrase ارياح له (*°aryâḥa lah*) means “he was prompt to do what was kind or beneficent” or “he inclined to, and loved, kindness or beneficence” (Lane 1867: 1177–1182).

With these definitions in focus, the **זעם זעם**, which was very likely to have been the last phrase in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of John 11:33, can be translated as

- **זעם** “*being assertive*” (an infinitive absolute [GKC § 113] which was mistranslated as ἐνεβριμήσατο “he became angry”);
- **זעם** “*he took responsibility upon himself*” (which was mistranslated as ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν “he troubled himself”);
- **רַחֵם** “*promptly*” (which was mistranslated as ὦ πνεύματι “in the spirit).”

Thus, John 11:33–34 initially must have meant,

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, becoming assertive he immediately took full responsibility upon himself and asked, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”

Similarly, the statement in John 11:38, Ἰησοῦς οὖν πάλιν ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔρχεται εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, traditionally translated as “then Jesus, again groaning in himself, came to the tomb,” initially must have meant, “*then Jesus, again asserting himself, came to the tomb.*”

Tucked between the two statements about Jesus’ asserting himself are the words ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, “Jesus wept.” Lane (1867: 913) noted that **دمع** (*dam^c*) “tears” could be from grief or joy—“if from joy, it is cool; or if from grief, hot.” When Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41) he shed the hot tears of grief as he foretold of the upcoming death and destruction of the city and her inhabitants. When he stood before Lazarus’ tomb he shed the cool tears of joy as he was about to bring his beloved friend Lazarus back from the dead.

Once informed of Lazarus' death, Jesus made some assertions, including,

- “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” (John 11:4)
- “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.” (John 11:11)
- “Your brother shall rise again.” (John 11:23)
- “I am the resurrection, and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” (John 11:25–26)
- “Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” (John 11:40)

Some, like Martha (John 11:27), in faith took Jesus *assertions* as *truths*—no doubt recalling Jesus' raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:12ff). For Jesus, standing before dead Lazarus' tomb, the moment of *truth* and *proof* was again imminent. The resuscitation of Jairus' daughter was quite different, for according to Matt 9:24, Mark 5:39, and Luke 8:52, Jesus asserted, “the child is not dead but sleeping,” and he revived her from her coma. But with Lazarus, Jesus asserted, “Lazarus is dead!” (John 11:14); and he was probably dead longer than was the young man from Nain.

Jesus' delay in going to the Lazarus' home was deliberate. The delay meant that Lazarus would be in his tomb at least for four days, longer than the three days Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature (Matt 12:40). Once the tomb of Lazarus was opened his stench would prove that he was indeed dead. Thus, while Mary, Martha, and their friends were shedding their hot tears of grief, Jesus wept, shedding cool tears of joy—knowing that “this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (John 11:4). It was an exhilarating and euphoric moment, for in that

very moment Jesus' assertions would be validated. Thus, Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" (John 11:41)

In that very moment Jesus' *assertions* became proven *truths*:

The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him. (John 11:44–45)

For many the hot tears of grief promptly became the cool tears of joy—Lazarus was alive again and the Son of God was glorified! But there were others who valued *tradition* more than *truth*, and plans were initiated by Caiaphas and his council that Jesus, who had demonstrated his power over death, must now die because "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John 11:50).

CONCLUSION

The recovery of lost Hebrew lexemes, though speculative, can be very productive. In plain conversation with his disciples (John 11:13) and with Nicodemus (John 3:4) Jesus was clearly misunderstood. The possibility for misunderstanding increased significantly once Jesus' words were written in consonantal Aramaic / Hebrew with their multiple homographs. Moreover, while the current Aramaic / Hebrew lexicons are excellent, they are not inerrant. The lexemes אַעַם, stem II, and אַרַר, stem II, which are attested in Arabic, do not appear in any Aramaic

or Hebrew lexicon because they have not been recognized in the available literature. But once the assumption is made that these two lexemes were used in Hebrew, new interpretations spring forth which better fit the broader contexts of the text.

Thus, Jesus' alleged anger at Mary and Martha after the death of Lazarus evaporates once אָעַזְ, stem II, "he asserted, he became responsible" comes into focus. So also Jesus' reported depression disappears once פָּרַחְ, stem II, "to act promptly" becomes a lexical option. The literal meaning of the Greek texts of John 11:33, 38 has led to much speculation—none of which is convincing unless the texts are *paraphrased* to mean "disturbed in spirit and deeply moved," or the like, which softens the plain meaning of Greek. The recovery in this study of three lost lexemes (אָעַזְ stem II, פָּרַחְ stem II, and עוֹרַ stem II [see note 1]) permits one to clarify some of the problems that persist when working only with the Greek text.

NOTES

1. According to the Greek text of Matt 9:30 Jesus became angry (καὶ ἐνεβριμήθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς) with the two blind men whom he had just healed. The Hebrew *Vorlage* may have read יִשְׁוֵעַ בָּם וַיַּעַרְבָם, just as Salkinson (1894) translated it. If so, the early Greek translators of Matthew were aware of עוֹרַ, stem II, the cognate of the Arabic غَد (form 4) "to be angry" (Lane 1877: 2231a). This would explain why he used ἐνεβριμήθη "he became angry" rather than παρεκάλει "he exhorted," which would have translated עוֹרַ, stem I, "to exhort" (Jastrow 1903: 1048). In Chapter 14, above, pp. 233–234, it was argued that the harsh words were due to

mistranslations of Hebrew words. Note also pp. 113–117 in Volume IV, *Clarifying New Testament Aramaic Words and Names and the Shem Tob Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, available on line by clicking [HERE](#) and going to PDF pages 120–124. For Chapter 14, pp. 233–234 (= PDF pages 15–17), click [HERE](#).

2. See Liddell and Scott 1940: 330, 540 and Hatch and Redpath 1954: 455–456.

XVII
A NEW INTERPRETATION OF
JESUS' CURSING THE FIG TREE

Matthew 21:18–22*

18 In the morning, when he returned to the city, he was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once. 20 When the disciples saw it, they were amazed, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” 21 Jesus answered them, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to *this boundary stone*, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.”

[vv. 23–28: Jesus’ debate
with chief priests and elders]

* The texts in *bold italics* are translations based upon what was most likely in the original Hebrew text of Matthew and the Hebrew source used by Mark.

Mark 11:12–14, 18–22*

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves—*though it was indeed the season for figs*. 14 *He cursed* and said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

[vv. 15–19: Jesus’
cleansing of the Temple]

20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 Then Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” 22 Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to *this boundary stone*, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

The Passover in 30 A.D. came on Nisan 14–15th, which corresponds to April 6–7th. Thus, the first Palm Sunday can be dated to April 2, 30 A.D. and Jesus' cursing the fig tree can be dated to April 3, 30 A.D. But, according to Mark 11:13b, this day in early April “was not a time of figs” (ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων'.) However, there are eyewitness accounts and now photographic evidence that early April was “indeed a time of figs.” For example, Eric F. F. Bishop (1955: 217) wrote,

On April 16, 1936, Good Friday, . . . we walked around the walls of the City. We came unexpectedly on a fig tree sheltered by an angle in the wall not far from the Church of St. Anne and opposite Olivet. It had figs quite large enough to warrant picking. They were unripe, and they were hot “*duffür*”. The owner kindly gave us a specimen which was photographed next day. The fruit had not been artificially stimulated, ripened for example with the application of olive oil. Hungry Palestinians will eat unripe fruit—grapes, as we know from Jeremiah [49:9], figs and almonds. This was a coincidence of time and place. Thereafter for ten years whenever we were in Jerusalem this special fig tree was visited on the Tuesday in Holy week—western or eastern. There was always foliage, and fruit, but not ripe.

Eric Bishop's photograph was not published, but seventy years later David Q. Hall (2006) published online two photograph albums, entitled *Israel Photos II* and *Israel Photos III*, which included photographs taken on April 12–13, 2005, of very fruitful fig trees on the Mount of Olives and in the Tisch Zoo in Jerusalem (see Addendum). David Hall commented,

During April 13, 2005, I was on the west slope of the Mount of Olives and photographed a fig tree with figs on a branch hanging over the road over a garden wall of someone's yard. This was ten days before the Passover of the 23rd and 24th of 2005. While it was not time for the fig harvest, it was

time for the tree to be growing the figs. These were starchy and used as food by the poor. As Jesus approached Jerusalem close to the time of the Passover celebration, he arrived in a town called Bethany. He continued towards Jerusalem and arrived at Bethphage. Bethphage meant “house of the unripe figs”. It was in this area where Jesus cursed a barren fig tree. The unripe figs were not considered proper as food to be served in a Sabbath meal (Babylonian Talmud - *Erubin*), but were considered to be acceptable as an offering to the poor. While one would not normally eat unripe figs, a grower might curse a tree not fruiting in season.

The discrepancy between Mark’s stating ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων, “for it was not a time of figs,” when in fact “it was indeed the time of figs,” can easily be resolved once the Hebrew emphatic particle **ל** “indeed” comes into focus. In Chapter 14, “The Origin of Jesus’ Messianic Secret,” (pp. 226–232) I called attention to Mark’s misreading five times (1:44, 5:43, 7:37, 8:26, 8:30) the emphatic **ל** (= **ל**/*lu*) “indeed, verily” in his Hebrew source as the negative particle **ל** (= **ל**/*lo*) “no, not”—which contributed to the erroneous notion that Jesus wanted to keep his messianic role a secret. The οὐκ “not” in Mark 11:13b—rather than ὄντως “really” or ἀληθῶς “actually”—marks Mark’s sixth misreading of the emphatic **ל** in his Hebrew source.

But, in all fairness to Saint Mark, it needs to be noted that the emphatic **ל** “indeed, verily” in Hebrew was not recognized by scholars until 1894, when Paul Haupt stated,

A comprehensive study of the use of the **ל** *praefixum* in the Old Testament will no doubt reveal a considerable number of cases where the **ל** is not the preposition but the emphatic particle **ל** = Arabic *la* and Assyrian *lû* ‘verily.’¹

Over the past century the study Paul Haupt envisioned was extended to include the particles לָא and לְמַה. Of the 3,323 occurrences of the לָא in the Hebrew Scriptures about 50 have now been identified by various scholars as being the emphatic לָא (= לָאִ / *lu*²), with twenty-seven occurrences being cited now in David Clines' *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. It also appears in Shem Tob's *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*; and, as I have argued in Chapter 14, לָא (לָאִ / *lu*²) "indeed" was, without a doubt, found in the Hebrew sources used by the Gospel writers.²

The Hebrew phrase behind the Greek ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων, "for it was not the time of figs" was probably כִּי לָא הִיְתָה עֵת תְּאֲנִים and read as כִּי לָא הִיְתָה עֵת תְּאֲנִים. But Mark should have read this as כִּי לָא הִיְתָה עֵת תְּאֲנִים "though indeed it was the time of figs."

The Hebrew כִּי "because" corresponds to the Greek ὅτι and γὰρ; but כִּי can also mean "though, although, even though," as in Exodus 13:17, כִּי קָרֹב הוּא "even though it was near" (NAS)³ Similarly, the כִּי in Mark's Hebrew source of 11:13b should have been translated as εἰ καὶ "although, even though" as in Mark 14:29,

ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἔφη αὐτῷ· εἰ καὶ πάντες
 σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ
 But Peter said unto him, Although all
 shall be offended, yet *will* not I. (KJV)

Thus, "although indeed it was the time of figs," i.e., the פְּנִים "early *unripe* figs, it was not the time of the הַבְּכָרוֹת הַתְּאֲנִי "the first *ripe* figs," mentioned in Jer 24:2, which were regarded as a delicacy (BDB 114).

Jesus, being in the vicinity of Bethphage (Βηθφαγή / בֵּית פְּנֵה פְּנֵה “House-of-Unripe-Fig”), hoped to find there some of the פְּנֵה “early *unripe* figs.” Once it became obvious that the fig tree which caught his attention was leafy but fruitless, Jesus responded by cursing that particular tree—*swearing*

- according to Mark 11:14, Μηκέτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐκ σοῦ μηδεὶς καρπὸν φάγοι, “No one no longer in the future may eat your fruit,” and
- according to Matthew 19:21b, Μηκέτι ἐκ σοῦ καρπὸς γένηται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, “No longer in the future may fruit come from you.”

According to Matthew the fig tree withered immediately (καὶ ἐξηράνθη παραχρῆμα ἢ συκῆ); but for Mark it withered overnight, for “in the morning they saw the fig tree withered to its roots” (πρωτὶ εἶδον τὴν συκῆν ἐξηραμμένην ἐκ ῥιζῶν).

At first glance the initial phrase in Mark 11:14 is a bit surprising. It reads, καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτῇ “and answering he [Jesus] said to it [the fig tree]”—as if the fig tree had said something to Jesus which required a reply. In Jotham’s parable told to the men of Shechem (Judges 9:8–15) there were many talking trees, including the fig tree (9:11),

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַתְּאֵנָה הַחֲדָלְתִּי אֶת־מִתְקִי
וְאֶת־תְּנוּבָתִי הַטּוֹבָה וְהִלַּכְתִּי לְנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:

But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over the trees?’

But Mark 11:14 is not a verse in a parable. Consequently, the participle ἀποκριθεὶς, “answering,” was ignored in the translations of the RSV, NRS, NAU, NIV, NIB, NJB, and NLT, where the καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτῇ was translated simply

as “and he said to it,” or “he addressed the fig tree.”

The surprising ἀποκριθεὶς though need not be translated as “answering,” It may well translate the *Niph^cal* participle נִשְׁבַּע “swearing” in Mark’s Hebrew source. A similar phrase comes in I Sam 20:3, וַיִּשָּׁבַע עֹדֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר, “then David took an oath again and said.” This phrase was translated into Greek as καὶ ἀπεκρίθη Δαυιδ τῷ Ἰωναθαν καὶ εἶπεν “and David swore to Jonathan, and said.” Thus, the participle ἀποκριθεὶς can mean either “answering” or “swearing.” Support for identifying this ἀποκριθεὶς of Mark 11:14 with שָׁבַע “to swear” comes from Mark 11:21 where Peter is reported to have said, Παββί, ἴδε ἡ συκῆ ἣν κατηράσω ἐξή ρανται, “Master, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered.”

Jesus’ cursing the fig tree calls to mind the parable in Luke 13:6–9 about a barren fig tree.

And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Let it alone, Sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Given Jesus’ compassion for the sick, lame, blind, and the hungry, one might well expect Jesus to have had comparable compassion on the fruitless fig tree near Bethany/Bethphage as had the vine dresser in this parable. But Jesus acted more like the “Sir” who commanded “Cut it down!” Ironically, though Jesus happily fed 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish, his own hunger led to some anger.

Jesus’ anger is not identified as such in this passage, but there are other texts where his anger is explicitly mentioned—as well as some texts where there is a misreading of homo-

graphs found in the Hebrew sources being used.⁴ Earlier in Mark 3:5 there was this reference to Jesus' anger.

And he [Jesus] said to them [Pharisees], "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Had Jesus found buds or figs on the tree he would have *happily* destroyed them by eating them; but since there were no buds or figs he *angrily* destroyed the fig tree itself. Whereas the vine dresser in the parable thought that his master's fig tree might become fertile next year, Jesus knew otherwise in the case of this real tree and pronounced his curse, precluding others from having a vain hope that next year this tree's fertility would be a reality.

The important point to note is that while Jesus' anger led him to terminate a tree, his anger never led him to terminate a human being, even when his religious colleagues were seeking to terminate him. This was an important point for Mark. Matthew (21: 12–14) placed Jesus' cleansing the Temple on Palm Sunday (when "the blind and the lame came to him and he healed them"). Luke (19:45–48) also placed the cleansing of the Temple on Palm Sunday. But Mark assigned Jesus' cleansing the Temple to the following day and placed the story right in the middle of the text of Jesus' cursing the fig tree (11:15–19). In this account Jesus was hungry and angry when he entered the Temple. His disciples were no doubt asking themselves, "What will the angry Jesus do once in the Temple? What will he curse? Will he 'terminate' anyone" to fulfill what Isaiah predicted, "he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked" (Isaiah 11:4)—as easily as he killed the fig tree? The four Gospel accounts (cited next) are in agreement that there was turbulence in the Temple but there were no terminations.

Matt 21:12–13. He drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you make it a den of robbers.”

Mark 11:15–18. He began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. And he taught, and said to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him.

Luke 19:45–47. He began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.”

... The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him.

John 2:13–17. “In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

The following comments of C. S. Mann (1986: 447) are noteworthy with reference to the above verses.

True, Jesus could have denounced publicly the authorities responsible for the commercial enterprises in the temple, but this would in all probability have only been heard by those around him, who were probably sympathetic to his convictions. What Jesus chose to do was to make clear his denunci-

ation by a brief attack on a small scale, momentarily disrupting business, and at the same time giving his reasons for his actions. The disruption would have been slight, but the point had been made, and judging by Mark 11:28 the reason Jesus gave is precisely that he was acting as a prophet. . . The traders themselves were there only because the true offenders—the temple clergy—allowed them to be there. . . But seen as a symbolic prophetic action, protesting the judgment of God against the use being made of the temple, the whole episode falls into place in the ministry of Jesus.

When Peter and the disciples questioned Jesus about his cursing the fig tree, Jesus responded with several statements about the power of faith and prayer, including,

- Matt 21:21a, “even if you say to this mountain (ὄρει), ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done.”
- Mark 11:23a, “if you say to this mountain (ὄρει), ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.”

Similar statements appear in

- Matt 17:20, “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain (ὄρει), ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”
- Luke 17:6, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree (συκαμίνω), ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”⁵

Thanks to I Sam 20:3 (discussed on p. (272), the equation ἀποκριθή = אָפְרִיָה = “he swore” made it easy to translate the ἀποκριθεὶς in Mark 11:14 back into Hebrew as אָפְרִיָה “swearing.” But translating back into Hebrew the ἀλλὰ κἀν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ εἶπητε “even if you say to this mountain”

(Matt 21:21) or the ὅτι ὃς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ “whoever says to this mountain” (Mark 11:23) is problematic because the ὄρει itself has these three possible meanings.

- As traditionally read ὄρει is the dative singular of ὄρος “mountain, hill,” appearing here proverbially as something that seems impossible (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957: 586). It usually translated the Hebrew הַר/הַרְרָה, “mountain, hill.”
- Ὄρει read as ὄρει could be a Semitic loanword equal to the Arabic هِرَاء (*hirâ^c*) “a young shoot of a palm tree when first plucked from the mother-tree” (Lane 1893: 2889). Castell (1669: 881, under the stem הַר/הַרְרָה) also cited the Arabic هِرَاء (*hara^c*) and هِرَاء (*harâ^c/hurâ^c*) all meaning “*surculus palmae*.” Because Matt 21:21 and Mark 11:21 report what happened the day after the first Palm Sunday there were plenty of discarded palm shoots and branches lying around which needed be picked up and tossed away.⁶
- Ὄρει could also reflect an equation or interchange of ὄρος “mountain” with ὄρος “boundary stone.” This option is suggested by Psa 78:54 (LXX 77:54), where the MT reads, וַיְבִיֵאֵם אֶל-גְּבוּל קְדֹשׁוֹ הַר-זֶה קְנָתָהּ יְמִינוֹ, “and he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to this mountain, which his right hand had gotten.” The LXX has here καὶ εἰσήγαγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρμον ἁγιάσματος αὐτοῦ ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ ἐκτήσατο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ.⁷

And he brought them in to the mountain of his sanctuary, this mountain which his right hand had purchased.

(Lancelot Brenton, 1851, underline added)

and he brought them to the mount of His holiness— to this mountain which his right hand purchased.

(Charles Thomson, 1808, underline added)⁸

The Vulgate reads *et induxit eos in montem sanctificationis suae montem quem adquisivit dextera eius*, which became in the DRA, “And he brought them into the mountain of his sanctuary: the mountain which his right hand had purchased.” These translation were followed by the NRS which has “And he brought them to his holy hill, to the mountain that his right hand had won.” Other translations of the גְּבוּל / ὄριον include “border” (KJV, ASV, NKJ, NIV, NIB) and “land” (NAU, RSV, NAB, NJB, NLT) (underline added).

These varied translations (land, mountain, hill, border) point to a Hebrew *Vorlage* of Matt 21:21 and Mark 11:23 having the same גְּבוּל as found in Psalm 78:54.

- גְּבוּל can mean ὄρος “mountain,” as readily as גְּבוּל has been recognized as the cognate of the Arabic جبل (*jabal*) “mountain” (Lane, 1865: 376). This גְּבוּל was probably in Paul’s mind when he wrote in I Cor 13:2 of a “faith so as to remove mountains” (ὄρη μεθιστάνα).
- גְּבוּל and גְּבוּלָה “boundary, border” (BDB 147–148; Jastrow 204–205) equal ὄρος / ὄριον “border, boundary” (Liddell and Scott, 1966: 1252, 1255).
- גְּבוּל means “boundary stone, landmark” in Deut 19:14, לֹא תִסֵּיג גְּבוּל רֵעֶךָ, οὐ μετακινήσεις ὄρια τοῦ πλησίον σου, “You shall not remove your neighbor’s boundary stone,” and 27:17, אֲרֹר מְסִיג גְּבוּל רֵעֵהוּ, ἐπικατάρατος ὁ μετατιθεὶς ὄρια τοῦ πλησίον, “cursed is he who moves his neighbor’s boundary stone.”
- גְּבֵל, as the cognate of the Arabic جبل (*jibill*) “dry tree” (Lane, 1865: 376) may also be the basis for the “tree” (συκαμίνω) in Luke 17:6, cited above.

In light of this data the following reconstructions are proposed for these three text. The passive Greek verbs have been translated back into Hebrew as *Niph^cal* forms, which can be either passive or reflexive. I translate them as reflexive verbs.

Matt 17:20b

ἐρεῖτε τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ,
 Μετάβα ἔνθεν ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται
 תאמרו לגבול הזה¹⁰

העתק מזה ונעתק ממקומו

You will say to this *boundary stone*,

“Move yourself from here to there” then it will move.

Matt 21:21b

ἀλλὰ κὰν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ εἴπητε,
 Ἐπιθήσεται καὶ βλήσεται εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, . . .

אף תאמרו אל הגבול הזה

הנשא ונעתקת אל הים . . .

But even if you say to this *boundary stone*,

“Pick yourself up and cast yourself into the sea,” . . .

Mark 11:23

ὅς ἂν εἴπη τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ,
 Ἐπιθήσεται καὶ βλήσεται εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν . . .

כל אשר יאמר אל הגבול הזה

הנשא ונעתקת אל הים . . .

all who will say to this *boundary stone*,

“Pick yourself up and cast yourself into the sea,” . . .

Once the imperatives become reflexives human physical strength is not required to lift and throw a boundary stone. But great faith is required so as to initiate nature's affirmative response to what was requested in the prayerful commands.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Richard Hiers (1968, 394), in the initial paragraph of his article entitled “Not the Season for Figs,” stated,¹¹

Certainly one of Jesus’ most enigmatic, and to many readers, offensive actions was his cursing of a fig tree on the outskirts of Jerusalem (Mark 11:12–14). The tree happened to have no figs on it at the time. Why should Jesus have behaved so outrageously? The incident is all the more problematic because, as Mark points out, “It was not the season for figs.”

However, in this study the evidence has been presented that, contra the Greek text of Mark 11:14 but in accord with what must have been in Mark’s Hebrew source, “*it was indeed the season of figs.*” By reading the Hebrew לֹא as לוֹא (luʿ) “indeed” rather than לוֹ (loʿ) “not” the statement in Mark’s Hebrew source was dendrologically correct. In the areas around Bethany and Bethphage fig trees have unripe but edible fruit by the first of April.

Moreover, simply by changing an ὄ into an ὄ an unaccented ὄρος can be changed from a ὄρος “boundary stone” into an ὄρος “mountain” (Liddell and Scott, 1966: 1252, 1255). Consequently, a simple scribal error in Matt 17:20b, 21:21b, and Mark 11:23 could be responsible for the extreme hyperbole of “casting a ὄρος into the sea,” rather than the more modest hyperbole of “casting a ὄρος into the sea,” or compelling the ὄρος to relocate itself.

However, instead of being a scribal error in Greek which transformed a *boundary stone* into a *mountain*, the problem apparently—like the problem with לוֹא (luʿ) “indeed” and לוֹ (loʿ) “not”—goes back to the Hebrew source(s) used by the Gospel writers which contained the noun גְּבוּל, which can mean ὄριον/ὄριος “boundary/boundary stone” as well as

ὄρος “mountain.” It was not a matter of scribal misspellings but one of a translator’s (mis)interpretation of a Hebrew word having multiple meanings.

Francis Beare (1987: 419), noting that this is the only cursing miracle in the Gospels, expressed his opinion that “It will not be supposed that it is a report of an actual incident.” In agreement with numerous commentators of the past, Beare considered this story to be a sign of the coming destruction of Israel. John Noland (2005: 850–852) also noted such skepticism,

The original unity of the Markan materials has been widely doubted: the withering of the fig tree, the casting of the mountain into the sea, the promise of answered prayer, and the need to forgive may each have circulated separately. Not surprisingly the historicity of the withering of the fig tree has been questioned.

Citing the prophetic texts of Micah 7:1, Jer 8:13, Hosea 9:16, Noland shared the opinions of Beare and many others, stating “Though the fig tree is no cipher for Israel, what is imaged can hardly be anything else than the prospect of judgment on unfruitful Israel.”

However, once the interpretations offered above come into focus, the unity of Mark in 11:12–26 becomes transparent. The euphoria of the first Palm Sunday precluded Jesus’ paying any attention to his need for daily bread. But next day, a mundane Monday, Jesus became aware of his hungry. Because “*it was indeed the season of figs,*” Jesus followed the socially acceptable practice of helping himself to a fig tree on someone else’s property. But the leafy fig tree he went to had no edible unripe figs. Disappointed and irritated Jesus rightly recognized that the leafy tree was infertile, so he committed an act of public service, cursing the tree and causing it to wither immediately. Never again would anyone seeking nourishment be

misled by the leaves of that tree. There was no need to wait for another season or two; uproot it now and plant anew.

Disappointed and irritated Jesus entered the Temple and became all the more agitated. Again he took matters into his own hands; but this time it was not an act of public service but acts of prophetic zeal. He cleansed the Temple from being a “den of robbers” back into its becoming “a house of prayer for all the nations.” With his mission accomplished—but for a season—Jesus and the disciples left Jerusalem.

Once the withered tree was in view, Peter exclaimed, “Master, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered!” (Mark 11:21), and the disciples then asked, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?” (Matt 21:20). Jesus’ response to Peter’s exclamation and the disciple’s question had nothing to do with equating that fig tree with Israel and the tree’s becoming withered as a sign of the immanent destruction of Israel, as argued by many commentators. Quite to the contrary, Jesus teaching at that moment focused on the power of faith and prayer. That teaching included a hyperbole which contained the word ὄρος and has traditionally been read as,

Whoever says to this mountain,
“Be taken up and cast into the sea,”
and does not doubt in his heart,
but believes that what he says will come to pass,
it will be done for him.

But as argued above the original ορος is better read as ὄρος:

Whoever says to this *boundary stone*,
“Pick yourself up and cast yourself into the sea,”
and does not doubt in his heart,
but believes that what he says will come to pass,
it will be done for him.

NOTES

1. "A New Hebrew Particle," *Johns Hopkins University Circulars* 13, No. 104 (1894) 107–108. See Chapter 14, above, pp. 220–221.

2. See above Chapter 14, "The Origin of Jesus' Messianic Secret," pp. 220–225.

3. See BDB 473 (2. c.).

4. In Mark 1:41 fifty-three manuscripts and codices have σπλαγχνις θεις, "having compassion" to describe Jesus' response to the leper's request, "If you will, you can make me clean." But Ephraem (fourth century), five manuscripts (Codex Bezae from the sixth century [= D], and the Old Latin manuscripts *a*, *d*, *ff* 2, and *r*1), have ὀργισθεὶς "becoming angry" as Jesus' initial response to the leper's request (Aland 1968: 123, noting that the Old Latin mss. *b* omits the ὀργισθεὶς). Bart Ehrman (2005: 133–135) argued unconvincingly that ὀργισθεὶς "becoming angry" was the original reading which was changed by scribes long ago to σπλαγχνις θεις, "having compassion." See above, Chapter 15, "Lost Lexemes Clarify Mark 1:41 and John 3:3," pp. 246–250.

Contrary to the Greek text, Jesus did not become angry when he went to raise Lazarus from death. The Greek text of John 11:33 and the literal translation of Ramsey Michaels (1989: 206) read: ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν *He became angry in his spirit, and shook himself*. However, the Hebrew source behind this text apparently had **עָרַץ**, stem I, "to be indignant, to be angry," and the widely attested **רָחַץ**, stem I, "wind, breath, spirit" (BDB 276, 924; Jastrow 408, 1458). But there was also **עָרַץ**, stem II, "to be

assertive” and הָרַץ , stem II, “to act quickly, promptly.” Unfortunately, עָצָה , stem II, and הָרַץ , stem II, became lost lexemes. But, thanks to Arabic cognates, they have been recovered and permit this reinterpretation of John 11:33 and 11:38.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, becoming assertive he immediately took full responsibility upon himself and asked, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see. . . . then Jesus, again asserting himself, came to the tomb.”

See above, Chapter 16, “Lost Lexemes Clarify John 11:33 and 11:38,” pp. 257–262.

5. In Greek there is no graphic similarity between συκαμῖνος “mulberry tree” and ὄρος “mountain” or ὄρος “boundary-stone (Liddell and Scott: 1966: 1255).

6. For a list of Semitic loanwords appearing in Greek texts, see T. F. R. G. Braun, “The Greek in the Near East,” pp. 25–26,” which is Chapter 36a in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, III, Part 3.

7. Rahlfs (1950, II: 85) noted “ ὄριον Gra.] ὄρος mss.”

8. Thomson, Charles. 1808. *The Septuagint Bible: The Oldest Text of the Old Testament*. Edited, revised and enlarged by C. A. Muses. Second Edition 1960. Indian Hills, Colorado: The Falcon’s Wing Press. Brenton, Sir L. C. F. 1900. *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament: with an English Translation, and with Various Readings and Critical Notes*. London: Bagster.

9. For ὄρος “boundary stone” see Liddell and Scott, 1966: 1256, 2c.

10. . The Shem Tob *Hebrew Gospel Matthew* reads here: **אם תאמינו תאמרו להר הזה סורו ויסור** (see G. Howard, 1995, 86).

11. Richard Hiers “Not the Season for Figs,” *JBL* 87, 1968: 394–400.

ADDENDUM

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Mount of Olives fig tree April 13, 2005



Mount of Olives Fig Tree April 13, 2005



Jerusalem Tisch Zoo Fig Tree April 12, 2005



Sycomore Fig Tree in Jericho April, 2005

XVIII

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Matthew 22:1–14*

*And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a **marriage feast** (γάμους) for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the **marriage feast** (γάμους); but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.’ 5 But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The **wedding** (γάμος) is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the **marriage feast** (γάμους) as many as you find.’ 10 And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the **wedding hall** (γάμος) was filled with guests. 11 But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no **wedding garment** (ἔνδυμα γάμου). 12 and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a **wedding garment** (ἔνδυμα γάμου)?’ And he was **silent** (ἔφικώθη). 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.’ 14 **Indeed many have been invited, but few have been chosen.**”*

* The focus of this study is on the words highlighted in **bold italic**.

This *Parable of the Wedding Banquet* has been considered by many to be quite a complex narrative. Craig Blomberg (1990: 152)¹ summarized the major problems some scholars find with this parable.

The four main objections to seeing Matthew 22:1–14 as a coherent unity are the following: (1) The guests' action and king's response seem extraordinarily violent for the context of invitations to a wedding feast. (2) The destruction and burning of the city read like a "prophecy after the event" of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. (3) Rejecting a man who appears without a wedding garment makes no sense if he has just been pulled off the street as a last-minute replacement; he could hardly be expected to be dressed for the occasion. (4) Verse 14 is much too general to be the point of the detailed narrative which precedes it. . . .

But for Bloomberg the parable is not as complex and some scholars make it. He concluded,

Given that Matthew 22:1–14 can stand on its own as a united whole The three main points which derive from this structure follow: (1) *God invites many people of different kinds into his kingdom; (2) overt rejection of God's invitation leads to eventual retribution; and (3) failure to prepare adequately even when apparently accepted by God proves no less culpable or liable to eternal punishment.* . . . The first group of guests stands for the Jews who are hostile to Jesus and the second group symbolizes the would-be disciples who fail to "count the cost" is perfectly intelligible and consistent with the setting Matthew gives of Jesus' teaching in the temple during the last week of his life.

Richard Bauckham (1996: 482)² noted how the parable in Matt 22:1–14 has suffered from misinterpretations:

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The Matthean parable of the royal wedding feast has suffered both from its interpreters' preoccupation with its relationship with another parable (Luke 14:16–24), which is held to have preserved more faithfully the original parable on which both are based, and from their failure to appreciate the Matthean parable's own narrative integrity. . . . It is often explained as a conflation of two parables (vv. 3–10 and vv. 11–14, with v. 2 perhaps originally the introduction to the second parable.

In disagreement with those who argued for a conflation of two parables, Bauckham argued for the narrative integrity of the parable, noting the “political resonances” in the parable and lamenting the fact that “few interpreters have done justice to the political nature of the story.”

By way of contrast, Daniel C. Olson (2005: 453)³ confessed, “I have simply accepted the common view that the Gospel of Matthew was written in Greek by a Jewish Christian in the latter third of the first century C.E.” From this perspective Olson concluded,

Matthew's parable of the Great Feast is a complex composition. In Matthew's hands, exegetical readings of Zephaniah [1:9–10] and *I Enoch* [45:3–6; 51:3–5; 62:1–14] were combined with a traditional parable of Jesus to create a new form of this parable, a king-*mashal* functioning as a midrash on Zephaniah/*I Enoch*. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. apparently struck Matthew and his community as fulfillment of Zephaniah's oracle, . . . I still feel that the most economical accounting of the evidence is to see in Matt 22:7 an *ex eventu* reference to the events of 70 CE., as most critics do.

Disagreeing with Olson, I will now make the case that this parable is not at all complex once it is recognized that several mistranslations were made when the original Hebrew parable was written down and subsequently translated into Greek.

Matthew 22:2

᾿Ωμοιωθή ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ
 βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ.

Young (1898)

The reign of the heavens was likened to a man,
 a king, who made marriage-feasts for his son.

McDaniel (2010)

דְּמִתָּה מַלְכוּת הַשָּׁמַיִם לְגֵבֶר מֶלֶךְ
 אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה חֲתָנָה / חֲתָנָה לְבָנוֹ:

The kingdom of the heavens was likened to a lord,
 a king, who made for his son.
 marriage-feasts / a circumcision feast.

The Greek ἀνθρώπῳ “man” is omitted in the NIB, NIV, NAS, NAU, RSV, NRS, DRA, NAB, and NLT, and is translated as “certain” in the KJV, ASV, NKJ, and WEB. But once ἀνθρώπῳ is translated back into Hebrew as גֵּבֶר it can be vocalized as גֵּבֶר “man” or as גִּבּוֹר “lord” (Gen 27:29, 37), with the מֶלֶךְ “king” being in apposition. The γάμος “wedding, wedding feast” can be translated back into Hebrew as חֲתָנָה / חֲתָנָה, which can be vocalized as חֲתָנָה “marriage, marriage banquet,” or as חֲתָנָה “circumcision, feast of circumcision.” The noun חֲתָן can mean “the infant fit for circumcision, a circumcised child” as well as “a bridegroom, a son-in-law” (Jastrow, 1903: 514). Castell (1669: 1451) translated this חֲתָן as *convivium instruxit ob circumcisionem infantis vel nuptiale.* Lane (1865: 703–704) cited ختن (*ḥatana*) “he circumcised” and ختان (*ḥitân^{un}*) “circumcision” and “a feast,

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or banquet, to which people are invited on account of a circumcision . . . or on account of a wedding.”⁴

Given the fact that a *son* is mention in the parable but no mention is made of a *bride* or *bridegroom*, and given the fact that, like the masculine ختان (*hitân^m*), the feminine חתנת / חתנה might well designate a feast of circumcision⁵ as well as a wedding banquet, the seven occurrences of γάμος / γάμους “wedding” in the parable may not reflect what was intended in the original Hebrew source. But whether read as a wedding banquet or as a feast following a son’s circumcision, the teaching found in ths parable remains the same, i.e., many have been invited to the enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but few have accepted God’s invitation.

Chan-Hie Kim (1975: 397, n. 6) in his study of twenty-five Greek invitations on papyri found in Egypt—including wedding invitations—noted that, “The similarities between the papyrus invitation and our own contemporary invitation is striking, but it should not be taken for granted.” As much as there is a continuity from antiquity to modernity when it comes to wedding invitations there is also a continuity when it comes to wedding gifts. Not only was there the נְדָוּנָה / נְדָוָה “gift, dowry” (= Assyrian *nudnu* “dowry”) which went from the bride to the groom (cf. Ezek 16:33), there was also the נְדָוָה (Arabic مهر [*mahr^m*], Syriac مَهْر [mahrā]), “a nuptial present, dowry” which the groom offered the father of the bride (Gen 34:12; Exod 22:17; I Sam 18:25). Following the etiquette of biblical times which has perpetuated itself over the ages—comparable to inviting guests to the wedding banquet—guests gave gifts to the bride and groom, as well as the bride and groom giving gifts to the guests.

In Jesus' parable in Matt 22:1–14, when first spoken in Hebrew, a “wedding gift” was probably mentioned. For that reason a fresh look at the ἔνδυμα “garment” in Matt 22:12 is in order, for behind the “garment” (מִןְיָרְדָּה) there may well be a “gift” (מִתְּרָתָה).

Many scholars, including T. W. Manson (1935: 226), J. Jeremias (1963: 188) W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann (1971: 270),⁶ have used the parable of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai (c. 30–90 A.D.) as the key for interpreting Jesus' parable because of its focus on “adorning oneself” for a wedding.⁷

It is like a king who summoned his servants to a banquet without appointing a time. The wise ones adorned themselves and sat at the door of the palace; they said, ‘Is anything lacking in a royal palace?’ The fools went about their work, saying, ‘Can there be a banquet without preparations?’ Suddenly the king desired the presence of his servants. The wise entered adorned, while the fools entered soiled. The king rejoiced at the wise but was angry with the fools. He said, ‘Those who adorned themselves for the banquet, let them sit, eat and drink. But those who did not adorn themselves for the banquet, let them stand and watch.’

Jesus' parable recorded in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* (64) provides additional commentary, although the dinner may not have been a king's wedding banquet where proper attire was expected.

Jesus said, A person was receiving guests. When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests. The slave went to the first and said to that one, “My master invites you.” That one said, “Some merchants owe me money; they are coming to me tonight. I have to go and give them instructions. Please excuse me from dinner.” The slave

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went to another and said to that one, “My master has invited you.” That one said to the slave, “I have bought a house, and I have been called away for a day. I shall have no time.” The slave went to another and said to that one, “My master invites you.” That one said to the slave, “My friend is to be married, and I am to arrange the banquet. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me from dinner.” The slave went to another and said to that one, “My master invites you.” That one said to the slave, “I have bought an estate, and I am going to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me.” The slave returned and said to his master, “Those whom you invited to dinner have asked to be excused.” The master said to his slave, “Go out on the streets and bring back whomever you find to have dinner.” Buyers and merchants [will] not enter the places of my Father.

The parable in Luke 14:15–24—like the parable in the *Gospel of Thomas*—the one hosting the banquet was just a “man” (ἄνθρωπος / ῥΩΜΕ) not a “king.” Appearing only in the parable in Matt 22:6–7 are there references to the murder of the king’s messengers, the king’s subsequent killing the murderers, and the king’s torching the city of the murderers.

Francis Beare (1981: 432–433) identified the Matthean parable as a full-blown allegory having these incongruities:

- it is hardly conceivable that a king would wait until the meal was ready to invite his guests,
- it is barely conceivable that a royal invitation would be bluntly refused,
- it is unlikely that prospective guests would have murdered the king’s messengers,
- it is absurd to have the king murdering the murders and then burning down his own city in retaliation,
- it is hard to believe that the king was so offended by one guest in informal attire that he has him bound and cast into

the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.

But as an allegory the servant messengers in 22:3 could allude to the prophets from Moses to Samuel; the messengers in 22:4–7 could be the prophets from Nathan to Jeremiah; and the messengers in 22:8–10 could be the prophets from Ezra to John the Baptist. The city burned by the king in retaliation for the murdering the king's messengers could be Samaria (which fell to the Shalmaneser V in 722 or to Sargon II in 721 B.C.) or to Jerusalem (which fell to Nebuchadnesser in 586 B.C.). The messengers who were slain would include Urijah the son of Shemaiah (Jer 26:20–24), who was killed by the sword of King Jehoiakim, and Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (II Chron 24:20–22) who was stoned to death by the command of King Joash—not to mention Jezebel's killing Israel's prophets in retaliation for Elijah's killing the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18: 4; 19:1–2).

This interpretation of the allegory has Jesus addressing Israel's past. But when the beheading of John the Baptist and Jesus' own impending crucifixion come into focus, Jesus was also addressing his own moment in history.

However, many scholars interpret the allegory in terms of the eschatological future. For example D. C. Sim (1992: 14)⁸ argued that

This Matthaean tradition describes in allegorical form the notion of exclusion from the eschatological kingdom (cf. Mt. 8.11–12; 25.30). . . . This reading of the text entails that the garment motif in the parable represents the eschatological garment, a theme which is common in both contemporary Jewish and Christian texts and which is found elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel. It is not to be identified directly with the conditions of entry, but is awarded on the basis of fulfilling those conditions.⁹

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Similarly, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison (1997: 197) came to this conclusion:

Obviously [Matt] 22.1–10 is an allegory very much influenced by 21.33ff. The king is God. His son is Jesus (cf. 21.37–8). The royal wedding feast is the eschatological banquet. The dual sending of the servants is, as in the preceding parable, the sending of God’s messengers. The murder of the servants represents the murder of the prophets and Jesus (cf. 21.35–9). And the third sending of servants is the mission of the church, in which good and evil stand side by side until the end. All this has been evident throughout the history of exegesis. Here the traditional allegorical interpretation . . . has been correct.

However, this interpretation requires the king’s burning the city in retaliation for the murder of his messengers (Matt 22:7) to refer to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which precludes Jesus’ having made the statement—requiring this part of the parable to be a Matthean addition.

If Jesus taught this parable in Hebrew there may well be a *double entendre* in Matt 22:11–12, for the noun מִדָּה can mean “garment” as well as “tribute, contribution, gift.”¹⁰ The מִדָּה “garment” appears in Psalm 133:2,

כִּשְׁמֵן הַטּוֹב עַל־הָרֹאשׁ יֵרֵד עַל־הַזָּקֵן
זָקֵן־אַהֲרֹן שִׁירֵד עַל־פִּי מִדּוֹתָיו:

ὡς μύρον ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς τὸ καταβαῖνον ἐπὶ πώγωνα
τὸν πώγωνα τὸν Ααρων τὸκαταβαῖνον
ἐπὶ τῆν ὤαν τοῦ ἐνδύματος αὐτοῦ

It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard:
that went down to the skirts of his garments.

The מְדָה “tribute, contribution” appears in Neh 5:4,

וַיִּנּוּ כֶסֶף לְמַדָּת הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׂדֵתֵינוּ וְכַרְמֵינוּ:
 ἔδανεισάμεθα ἀργύριον εἰς φόρους τοῦ βασιλέως
 ἄγροὶ ἡμῶν καὶ ἀμπελῶνες ἡμῶν καὶ οἰκίαι ἡμῶν

We have borrowed money for the king's tribute
 upon our fields and our vineyards.

With Psalm 133:2 and Neh 5:4 in focus, translating the Greek of Matt 22:12 (Ἐταῖρε, πῶς εἰσηλθες ὧδε μὴ ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου; “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?”) permits this back translation:

רְעִי אֵיךְ בָּאתָ הֵלֶם בְּלִתי נִתַּן מַדָּת חַתָּנָה¹¹

Friend, how did you come in here without

- *putting on a wedding garment?*¹²
- *giving a wedding gift?*¹³

This “friend” without proper attire and without even a small gift—which could have been as simple as some honey for the honeymooners—became belligerent and rancorous once confronted by the king. The Greek text has it that he became “speechless” (ὁ δὲ ἐφίμωθη “he was put to silence”). This “silence” in the Greek text points to a Hebrew source which had אֵלֶם that was read as אֵלֶם, stem I (אֵלֶם or אֵלֶם “silence, dumb, speechless.” This stem appears in Delitzsch’s translation of ἐφίμωθη as וַיִּאָּלֶם “and he was silent.”¹⁴ But the אֵלֶם in the original Matt 22:12 should have been read as אֵלֶם / אֵלֶם / or אֵלֶם, stem II, which is the cognate of:

- the Syriac ܐܠܡܐ (= אֵלֶם) “to keep anger” and ܐܠܡܐ (= אֵלֶם) “lasting anger, ill-will” (cited by Payne Smith,

1903: 18), and

- the Arabic *ألومة* (*°alûmat* / אֲלוֹמַת) “lowness, ignobleness, baseness, vileness, or meanness” (cited by Lane, 1863: 82) and *أليم* (*°alîm* / אֲלִים) “rancorous” and *تألم* (*ta'allam* / תִּאֲלֵם) “to be irritated” (cited by Hava, 1915: 12).

Thus, the *וַיֵּאָלֵם* in the Hebrew source was misread as the *Niph^cal* passive *וַיֵּאָלֵם*, meaning ἐφλυώθη “he was silenced”; but it should have been read as the active *Qal* *וַיֵּאָלֵם*, meaning ὀργισθεὶς “he became angry/rancorous.”¹⁵

This restoration and interpretation resolves the incongruity noted by many commentators and succinctly stated by Beare (quoted above), “it is hard to believe that the king was so offended by one guest in informal attire that he has him bound and cast into the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.” But this man, whom the king call “friend,” was obviously one of the “bad ones” (Matt 22:10) who were invited to the banquet. Once the guest became *אֵלֵם* “rancorous” the king returned the *אֵלֵם* “anger,” commanding his servants to “*אֵלֵם*” the man. In the original Hebrew parable there was surely a wordplay involving *אֵלֵם*, stem II, “to be rancorous, angry” and *אָלַם*, stem I, which in the *Pi^cel* means “to bind,” as with the *מֵאֲלָמִים אֲלָמִים* “binding sheaves” in Gen 37:7.

Once it is recognized that the person in the parable who was bound and cast into the darkness had *not* been “silent” (*אֵלֵם*) but had become “rancorous” (*אֵלֵם*), the king’s response in having him bound (*אֵלֵם*) and expelled ceases to be problematic. Using a very powerful wordplay the point was

made that those who accept the invitation to the banquet (i.e., to enter the Kingdom of Heaven) are expected to make a contribution to the Kingdom with their gifts, tithes, mites, and talents (monetary and otherwise). Moreover, in the Kingdom anger and rancor will not be tolerated, especially when it is directed toward the King of the Kingdom. Israel's history provides the proof of the accuracy of this allegory, for the 'Ten Lost Tribes' were bound and carried into the darkness of Assyria, and the tribes of Levi and Judah were bound and carried into the darkness of Babylon—with all twelve tribes “weeping and the gnashing of teeth.”

Once the parable is recognized as an allegory on Israel's past and her new “generation of vipers” (Matt 3:7, 12:34, 23:33, Luke 3:7), the meaning of Matt 22:14 becomes transparent—the analogy was historical, not eschatological.

Matthew 22:14

πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί
for many are called, but few are chosen.

This Greek can be translated literally back into Hebrew as¹⁶

כִּי רַבִּים הֵם מְזַמְּנִים וְהַבֹּחֲרִים מְעַשִּׂים

and this Hebrew text can be vocalized and translated as

כִּי רַבִּים הֵם מְזַמְּנִים וְהַבֹּחֲרִים מְעַשִּׂים

Indeed, many have been invited,
but the ones accepting are few.

The initial כִּי, translated as γάρ “for,” was actually an asseverative כִּי “yea, indeed” (GKC 118^x), whereby this closing verse of the parable refers back to those who rejected the king's invitations (22:3–9).¹⁷ The passive adjective

ἐκλεκτοί can only mean “chosen,” which in Hebrew would have been בַּחֲרִים. But בַּחֲרִים can be the *scriptio defectiva* for the *Qal* active participle בּוֹחֲרִים “the ones choosing/accepting” or the *Qal* passive בְּחֻרִים “the ones being chosen.” The translator who read the בַּחֲרִים in light of the predestination spelled out in Sirach 33:10–13 would understandably have opted for the passive ἐκλεκτοί “chosen,” whereas the translator who read the בַּחֲרִים in light of the freewill in Sir 15:11–20 would understandably have opted for the active ἐλόμενος “choosing, accepting.”

CONCLUSION

The Greek text of the *Parable of the Wedding Feast* is a translation of what Jesus said in Hebrew or Aramaic. Once his words were written down with consonants only there was immediate ambiguity, permitting diverse *correct* translations. An English analogy would be my making the statement “*that is the person who speaks weakly in church.*” In speech there is no ambiguity, but once the statement appears in print without vowels as “*tht s th prsn wh spks wkly n chrch*” it can rightly be interpreted to mean “*that is the parson who speaks weekly in church.*” Interpreting the *prsn* as “parson” rather than “person” and the *wkly* as “weekly” rather than “weakly” can transform a soft-spoken *layman* into a *clergyman* who preaches every week. Both interpretations of “*tht s th prsn wh spks wkly n chrch*” are valid but only one of them actually reports what I said.

In this study I have identified several words in the Greek text of the parable which reflect a similar misinterpretations of Jesus’ original words. The parable can be restored to read as follows.

Matthew 22:1–14 Revised

*And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a **feast of circumcision** (חַתּוּנָה) for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the **feast of circumcision** (חַתּוּנָה); but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.’ 5 But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The **feast of circumcision** (חַתּוּנָה) is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the **feast of circumcision** (חַתּוּנָה) as many as you find.’ 10 And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the **feast of circumcision** (חַתּוּנָה) was filled with guests. 11 But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no **banquet gift** (מִזְבֵּית חַתּוּנָה). 12 and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a **banquet gift** (מִזְבֵּית חַתּוּנָה)?’ And he was rancorous (אָלִים). 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind (אָלִים) him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.’ 14 **Indeed** (כִּי) many have been invited, but the **ones accepting** (הַבּוֹחֲרִים) are few.*

Following Jesus’ telling this parable, the Pharisees in their attempt to entangle him focused on the word מִזְבֵּית “**tribute, gift**” (22:11–12) and asked him, “Is it lawful to give tribute

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(κῆνσος) unto Caesar, or not?” The Greek κῆνσος would equal the מִדָּה “tribute, gift” in the original parable. Consequently, Matt 22:1–22 can be read as a literary unit composed of the parable and an audience response. The question posed by the Pharisees focused on their present situation—not on eschatological implications hidden in the parable. Once the מִדָּת הַתְּנָה “*banquet gift*” in 22:11 was read as a “*wedding garment*” the natural transition to the Pharisees’ question was lost.

Finally, 22:14, “Indeed many have been invited, but few are the ones accepting [the invitation],” provides a verifiable notice that freewill had been at work. In disagreement with many commentators—including Francis Beare (1981: 437) who stated with reference to 22:14 that “This line is a tag, inappropriately attached to this parable”—22:14 is a fitting conclusion to the parable once the בְּחַרְיִים in the reconstructed Hebrew is read as the active בְּחַרְיִים “choosing” (ἐλόμενος) rather than the passive בְּחַרְיִים “chosen” (ἐκλεκτοί). Many in Judah thought of themselves as having been בְּחַרְיִים “chosen” (ἐκλεκτοί) for the Kingdom of Heaven, but Jesus’ parable made it clear that too many in Israel had been בְּחַרְיִים “choosing” (ἐλόμενος) not to accept the repeated invitations to enter the Kingdom and to bring their contributions and talents with them. The invitation was then extended to anyone who would accept it, be they Israelite, Judean, or Gentile.

NOTES

1. Blomberg, Craig L. 1990. *Interpreting the Parables*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. Now available online at <http://www.evangelibrary.info/members/nt/blom/itp.pdf>.

2. Bauckham, Richard. 1996. "The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (Apocryphon of Ezekiel)." *JBL* 115: 471–488.
3. Olson, Daniel C. 2005. "Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash." *CBQ* 67: 436–453.
4. The cognates of נֵשׂוּת (nēšūt) "marriage" are ختونة (*ḥutūnat^{um}*) "marriage," נִשְׂאוּ (nīš'aw) "to marry" and נֵשׂוּתִים (nēšūtīm) "nuptials." See BDB 38; Lane, 1865: 704; and Payne-Smith 1903: 164).
5. Click [HERE](#) for an online account of the Feast of Circumcision which was observed over the centuries by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Coptic Churches.
6. Cited by Francis Beare (1981: 436).
7. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 153a,
8. Sim, David C. 1992. "Matthew 22.13a and 1 Enoch 10.4a: A Case of Literary Dependence?" *JSNT* 47: 3–19.
9. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:14, Azazel tries to convince Abraham not to complete a sacrifice to God. The angel Iaoel intervenes and commands Azazel to depart, concluding with these words, "For behold, the garment which in heaven was formerly yours has been set aside for him (Abraham) and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you." See the translation by R. Rubinkiewicz in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Vol. I,

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695, which is also cited by D. C. Sim (1992: 14). The heavenly garment in this apocalypse was not a wedding garment.

10. See BDB 551, Jastrow , 1903: 733. Payne Smith (1903: 251) cited מַדְאָתָא (*madâtā*) “tribute, tax.”

11. Compare the translations of Franz Delitzsch (1877),
רְעִי אֵיךְ בָּאֵת הַנֶּהָה וְאֵין עֲלֶיךָ בְּגָדֵי חַתָּנָה:
and that of Isaac Salkinson and Christian Ginsburg (1894),
רְעִי אֵיךְ בָּאֵת הַלֵּם בְּלִבִּי מְלֻבָּשׁ לְבוּשׁ חַתָּנָה:

12. For the verb נָתַן “to give, to put on” used with לָבַשׁ “to wear” and חָגַר “to gird ” note Lev 8:7,

וַיִּתֵּן עָלָיו אֶת־הַכֹּתֶנֶת וַיַּחְגֹּר . . .
וַיִּלְבֹּשׁ . . . וַיִּתֵּן . . . וַיַּחְגֹּר . . .
καὶ ἐνέδυσεν αὐτὸν τὸν χιτῶνα καὶ . . .
ἔζωσεν . . . καὶ ἐνέδυσεν . . . ἐπέθηκεν . . .
He put the tunic on him and girded him . . .
and clothed . . . and put on . . . and girded . . .

13. For the traditional importance of gift giving at a circumcision banquet, see David Gollaher, *Circumcision: A History of the World’s Most Controversial Surgery* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) p. 49.

14. See BDB 48 and Jastrow, 1903: 71. Compare Salkinson and Ginsburg who translated the ἐφιμώθη as כְּמוֹחֲרִישׁ “as one being silent.”

15. Compare Luke 14:21 and 15:28.

16. Delitzsch translated the verse as **פִּי רַבִּים הֵם הַקְּרוֹאִים** **וְנִמְעָטִים הַנִּבְחָרִים**, and Salkinson translated it as **פִּי רַבִּים הֵם הַנִּקְרָאִים** **וְהַנִּבְחָרִים מִעֲטִים**, both translating the adjective κλητοι as passive.

17. For the *Pu^cal* **זָמַן** “to invite” see BDB 273 and Jastrow, 1903: 404.

XIX

RESTORING THE ORIGINAL VERSIFICATION OF ISAIAH 8

Isaiah 8:1

... קַח-לְךָ גְּלִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל וּכְתַב עָלָיו בְּחָרָט אֲנוֹשׁ

NAS, NAU

Take for yourself a large tablet
and write on it in ordinary letters

Septuagint

λαβὲ σεαυτῷ τόμον καινοῦ μεγάλου
καὶ γράψον εἰς αὐτὸν γραφίδι ἀνθρώπου . . .

Brenton (1844)

Take to thyself a volume of a great new book,
and write in it with a man's pen. . . .

Vulgate

sume tibi librum grandem et scribe in eo stilo hominis

Douay Rheims

Take thee a great book, and write in it with a man's pen.

Although the Septuagint (τόμον) and Vulgate (*librum*) translated גְּלִיּוֹן as a “book,” the Hebrew גְּלִיּוֹן, like the Syriac ܠܗܡܢܐ (*gilyûnâ*), meant a “writing tablet.” The singular אֲנוֹשׁ בְּחָרָט traditionally read as “with a man’s pen” has more recently been translated as a plural “in ordinary letters” (NAS, NAU, NAB) or “in common characters” (RSV, NRS). But the singular can be maintained by translating the חָרָט as “script,” with the modifier אֲנוֹשׁ “man” being translated as “familiar” in light of the Arabic cognate أنوس / أنيس (*anûs / anûs*) “familiar, friendly,” used with reference to a person or a thing (Lane

1863: 115; Wehr 1979: 38–39; Hava 1915: 15). The “writing tablet” and “familiar script” mentioned in 8:1 provide the clue for reestablishing the original versification of all of Isaiah 8.

The abrupt transitions from paragraph to paragraph in the contemporary translations of Isaiah 8 suggests that the original Hebrew text was first written on three small tablets rather than on a single scroll. On the face of tablet ONE the scribe wrote what are now vv. 1–4, and turning it over he wrote on the reverse side what followed sequentially in his source—texts which are now vv. 14–15. Then on the face of tablet TWO he wrote what came next in his source, which are now vv. 5–8. Then on the reverse side of tablet TWO he wrote what was next in his source—texts which are now verses 16–18. Similarly, on the face of tablet THREE he wrote what followed next in his source, which are now vv. 9–13. Then on the reverse side of tablet THREE he wrote what are now verses 19–22.

However, when the tablets were copied by a later scribe the verses were copied in a different sequence. After the text on the front of tablet ONE (vv. 1–4) was copied the scribe then copied the text on the front of tablet TWO (vv. 5–8), followed by the text on the front of tablet THREE (vv. 9–13). The three tablets were then turned over and in sequence the reverse of tablet ONE became vv. 14–15, the reverse of tablet TWO became vv. 16–18, and the reverse of tablet THREE became vv. 19–22. (The “O Immanuel” of 8:8 is definitely out of place and should be move to the end of 8:13.) If the conjectures presented here are on target, the original sequence of verses (cited below as verses A to V) in Isaiah 8 was probably as follows. (The three phrases cited in bold italics will be addressed in the remainder of this study.)¹

TABLET ONE

[A] 8:1 Then Yahweh said to me, “Take a large tablet and write upon it in common characters, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalalhashbaz.’” [B] 2 And I got reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. [C] 3 And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, “Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz; [D] 4 for before the child knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

TABLET ONE REVERSE

[E] 14 And *he will become a sanctuary* 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. [F] 15 And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.

TABLET TWO

[G] 5 Yahweh spoke to me again: [H] 6 “Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah; [I] 7 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; [J] 8 and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck; and its *outspread wings* will fill the breadth of your land.

TABLET TWO REVERSE

[K] 16 Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. [L] 17 I will wait for Yahweh, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. [M] 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me

are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

TABLET THREE

[N] 9 *Be broken, you peoples*, and be dismayed; give ear, all you far countries; gird yourselves and be dismayed; gird yourselves and be dismayed. [O] 10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nought; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us. [P] 11 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: [Q] 12 “Do not call an alliance all that this people call an alliance, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. [R] 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” (8:8 God is with us!)

TABLET THREE REVERSE

[S] 19 And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? [T] 20 To the teaching and to the testimony! Surely for this word which they speak there is no dawn. [U] 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry; and when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their God, and turn their faces upward; [V] 22 and they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.

Isaiah 8:14 [E]

וְהָיָה לְמִקְדָּשׁ וּלְאֶבֶן נִגְנָה וּלְצוּר מְכֻשָׁל
 לְשָׁנֵי בְתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָח וּלְמוֹקֵשׁ לְיוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

And he shall be for a sanctuary and for a stone of stumbling
 and for a rock of falling to both the houses of Israel,
 for a trap and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

According to the traditional sequence of verses Yahweh, who is mentioned 8:13, becomes in 8:14 “a sanctuary, a stumbling-stone, a rock to trip up the two Houses of Israel” (NJB). But with the revised versification it is *the king of Assyria*, mentioned in 8:4[D] who will become according to 8:14 [E], “a sanctuary, a stumbling-stone, a rock to trip up the two Houses of Israel.”

Either way 8:14 [E] is problematic in that Yahweh would be both a *sanctuary* (מִקְדָּשׁ) and a *stumbling-stone* (אֶבֶן נִגְנֵה) for Israel. On the other hand it is very unlikely that Isaiah predicted that the king of Assyria would become a *sanctuary* (מִקְדָּשׁ) for both houses of Israel. But once the MT לְמִקְדָּשׁ “for a sanctuary” is emended to לְמִקְרָשׁ (the preposition plus the *Hiph^cil* participle of קָרַשׁ) “for an oppressor,” this problem disappears. The lost lexeme קָרַשׁ is the cognate of the Arabic كَرَاث (*karāṭa*) “he oppressed, he afflicted” (Lane 1885: 2604).² The misreading of a ק as a ק³ appears also in

- 8:9 [J] where the MT רָעוּ was read by the Septuagint translators as רָעוּ meaning γνῶτε “know ye!” and
- 8:20 [T] where the MT שָׁחַר “dawn” appears in the Septuagint as δῶρα “gift, bribe” (= שָׁחַר “gift, bribe”) and in the Peshittta as שְׁחָדָא (*šūḥada*³) “bribe.”⁴

Isaiah 8:8 [J]

וְהָיָה מִשׁוֹת פְּנֵפוּי מְלֵא רֶחַב־אַרְצְךָ:

And its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land.

Septuagint

καὶ ἔσται ἡ παρεμβολὴ αὐτοῦ ὥστε πληρῶσαι τὸ πλάτος τῆς χώρας σου

and his camp shall fill the breadth of your land.

McDaniel

And it shall come to pass that the flooding
on both sides of (the river)
will fill the breadth of your land.⁵

R. E. Clements (1980: 97) noted 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.” However, the original statement in 8:8 [J] probably made no mention of “wings.” The Hebrew כַּנְף has three different meanings. In addition to the well attested כַּנְף, stem I, “wing, extremity” (BDB 489; Jastrow 1903: 651) there is also כַּנְף, stem II, the cognate of כנף (*kanafa*), “to enclose, to fence in” and כנף (*kanif^{um}*) “enclosure, shelter” (Hava 1915: 667), and כַּנְף, stem III, the cognate of the Arabic كنف (*kanafa*) “on both sides, on the right and the left” (Lane 1893: 3004). The Vulgate’s *alarum* “wing” reflects כַּנְף, stem I, whereas the Septuagint’s παραβολη “encampment” reflects כַּנְף, stem II. In the context of Isaiah 8:7–8 [I–J], which speaks of an overflowing river, the best reading is, without a doubt, כַּנְף, stem III, “on both sides /on the right and left” of the river.

Isaiah 8:9 [N]

רְעוּ עַמִּים וְחַתּוּ וְהִאָּזְינוּ כָּל מְרַחֲקֵי-אָרֶץ
הִתְאָזְרוּ וְחַתּוּ הִתְאָזְרוּ וְחַתּוּ:

KJV

Associate yourselves, O ye people,
and ye shall be broken in pieces;
and give ear, all ye of far countries:

gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces;
gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

NIV, NIB

Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered!

Listen, all you distant lands.

Prepare for battle, and be shattered!

Prepare for battle, and be shattered!

Septuagint

γνῶτε ἔθνη καὶ ἠττᾶσθε

ἐπακούσατε ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς

ἰσχυρότερος ἠττᾶσθε

ἐὰν γὰρ πάλιν ἰσχύσητε πάλιν ἠττηθήσεσθε

Brenton

Know, ye Gentiles, and be conquered;

hearken ye, even to the extremity of the earth:

be conquered, after ye strengthened yourselves;

for even if ye should again strengthen yourselves,

ye shall again be conquered.

McDaniel

Band together, O peoples, and be dismayed!

Everyone from the ends of the earth listen!

Help each other—but be dismayed!

Help each other—but be dismayed!

The initial verb in 8:9 [J], רָעוּ, has been interpreted in five different ways:⁶

- רָעוּ here was read by the Septuagint translators as γῶνῶν: “γνῶτε/know ye,” which was followed by the NAB (“know”) and NJB (“realise”).⁷

- רוע “shout,” including the ASV (“make an uproar”), NIB and NIV (“raise the war cry”).
- רָעָה, stem II, “associate,” including the KJV and WEB (“associate yourselves”), NRS (“band together”), DRA (“gather yourselves together”), YLT (“be friends”), and Targum Jonathan (אַתְּחַבְּרוּ).⁴
- רָעַע, stem II, “break,” including the NAS, NAU, RSV (“be broken”) and NKJ (“be shattered”).
- וּזְחַח (zû^cû) “tremble!” in the Peshittā reflects a *Vorlage* having רעדו for the MT רעו.

Once the imperative רעו in 8:9a is identified with רָעָה, stem II, “to associate with,” the repeated imperative הִתְאַזְרוּ, which follows in 8:9b, can be identified as a synonym coming from אָזַר, stem II, “to unite, to join forces,” rather than אָזַר, stem I, “to surround, to clothe, to gird.” The lexeme אָזַר, stem II, is the cognate of the Arabic أزر (*ʿazara*), which in form VI means “to help each other, to rally, to unite, to join forces” (Wehr 1979: 17). This is the basis of my translation given above. The רָעו “band together” and הִתְאַזְרוּ “join together” in 8:9 [N] are balanced by the עָצוּ עֵצָה “take counsel” in 8:10 [O] and the קָשְׂרָה “alliance” in 8:12 [Q]. The four words fit very well the context of the Syro-Ephramite coalition of Rezin and Remaliah and Ahaz’ alliance with Tiglath-Pileser (II Kings 16).⁸

The emendation of the MT לְמִקְדָּשׁ “for a sanctuary” in 8:14 [E] to לְמִקְרָשׁ “for an oppressor,” coupled with making “the king of Assyria” in 8:4 [D] the subject of the verb וְהָיָה

in 8:14 [E], removes any possibility that when Isaiah said

וְהָיָה לְאֶבֶן נִגְף וּלְצוּר מְכֻשׁוּל לְשְׁנֵי בְתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

“he will become a stone of stumbling
and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel”

that he was speaking about Yahweh. Quite to the contrary he was speaking about Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria.

NOTES

1. Note my study entitled “Seven Problems in Isaiah 8:1–15,” which is Chapter XIII in *Clarifying More Baffling Biblical Passages*. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the full volume, or [HERE](#) to view only Chapter XIII. Isaiah’s pronouncements in chapters 8–12 are marked by haphazard transitions. In “A Reordering of the Verses in Isaiah 8:16–12:6 and 14:24–27 according the Themes of Divine Judgment and Restoration” I propose the following sequence of verses: 8:16–23; 9: 16–21; 10:5–11; 10:27b–32; 11:14–15; 14:24–27; 10: 12–27a; 10:33–34; 11: 16; 9:1–7; 11:1–13; 12:1–6. Click [HERE](#) to view the texts in this sequence.

2. For the interchange of the כ and ק note the following stems: בָּקַר/בָּכַר “to rise early, morning,” רָקַק/רָכַק “to crush,” רָקַק/רָכַק “to be weak,” and תָּקַן/תָּכַן “to adjust, to arrange.”

3. Click [HERE](#) to view Friedrich Delitzsch, *Lese- und Schreibfehler im alten Testament*, 105–107, where numerous examples of the confusion of ר and ר are cited.

4. See Jastrow 1920: 1530 and Payne-Smith 1903: 570. Lamsa's translation (1957: 706) reads, "As for the law and the testimony, if they do not speak according to this word, it is because they do not receive a bribe for it."

5. Compare the text of *Targum Jonathan ben Uziel* and the translation of C. W. H. Pauli (1871):

וַיַּעֲרִי בְּאַרְעָא דְּבֵית יְהוּדָה
 כְּנַחַל מְגַבֵּר עַד יְרוּשָׁלַם יִמְטִי
 וַיְהִי עִם מְשַׁרְיָתִיָּה
 מְלִי פְתָאֵי אַרְעָךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And he shall pass through the land of the house of Judah
 as an overflowing torrent, unto Jerusalem shall he come;
 and the people of his army
 shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Israel.

Click [HERE](#) to view the Aramaic text in Walton's London Polyglott.

6. Note the statement of G. B. Gray (1912: 159) that the form of רעו cannot be satisfactorily explained. If the word meant "associate yourselves" it would require a reflexive conjugation. (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.)

7. Note in 8:12 the Septuagint's σκληρόν "difficult, hard," which reflects a misreading of the MT קשה as קשר.

8. Click [HERE](#) to view my study on the prophet Oded, who was a Samaritan hero and benefactor for the captured Judeans in the Syro-Ephraimite war.

XX

A BETTER INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH 9:5b–6a

Isaiah 9:5b

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלְא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גְּבוּר אָבִיעַד שֶׁר־שָׁלוֹם

NKJ (9:6b)

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The seven Hebrew words which make up the name of the messianic child are variously transmitted and translated. The Septuagint has only one name based upon the initial words אֵל יוֹעֵץ פֶּלְא, which were apparently read in reverse order as אֵל יוֹעֵץ פֶּלְא. The *Vorlage* used by the Septuagint translators in 9:6b does not match the MT. It apparently read

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אֵל יוֹעֵץ פֶּלְא
אָבִיעַד עַל שְׁרִים שָׁלוֹם וְשָׁלוֹם לְמוֹ

which became in the Septuagint (9:5b)

καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ
μεγάλης¹ βουλής ἄγγελος²
ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄξω εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας
εἰρήνην καὶ ὑγίειαν αὐτῷ³

and his name is called

“Messenger² of Great¹ Counsel,”

for I will bring peace upon the princes,
peace and health to him.

There is nothing in Septuagint for the MT גְּבוּר “mighty,” and the εἰρήνην καὶ ὑγίειαν “peace and health” is a doublet for the single שָׁלוֹם in the MT. The MT אָבִיעַד “everlasting

Father” was read as **על אביא**, “I will bring upon,” followed by a plural **שָׂרִים** “princes” for the MT singular **שָׂר**.

In contrast to the Septuagint, the Targum has four names:

- **מִפְּלִי עֵיִצָּא** “Wonderful Counselor,”
- **אֱלֹהֵא גִבְרָא** “Mighty God,”
- **קַיָּים עֶלְמֵיָא** “One Living Forever,” and
- **מְשִׁיחָא** “Messiah,” followed by the modifying clause, **דְּשְׁלָמָא יִסְגִי עֵלְנָא בְּיוֹמוֹהִי** “whose peace shall be great upon us in his days.”

The Vulgate also has four names: *Admirabilis consiliarius*, *Deus fortis*, *Pater futuri saeculi*, and *Princeps pacis*. Similarly, the RSV, NAS, NAB, NIV, NIB, NLT, and NJB have four names: “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*,” or the like. These translations read the **פְּלָא** “wonderful” as an adjective which precedes the noun **יוֹעֵץ** “counselor.” Normally in Hebrew an adjective follows the noun it is modifying, although there are exceptions with the adjective preceding the noun, as in Isa 28:21, **זָר מַעֲשָׂהוּ**, “his strange work” and **נִכְרִיהָ עֲבֹדָתוֹ** “his strange deed.”⁴ Consequently, other translations (including the NKJ, ASV, WEB, YLT) read the **פְּלָא** as the initial noun/ name and have five names: “*Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (KJV) or “*Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace*” (DRA).

Instead of the traditional four or five names—composed of one or two words each—the original Hebrew text of Isaiah 9:5b–6a probably had only three names composed of three

words each, namely,

- פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ אֱל “Wonderful Counselor of God,”
- גְּבוּר אֲבִי עֶד “Mighty One of the Eternal Father,”
- שֵׁר שְׁלוֹם לָם “Reconciling Prince of Peace.”

There are two reasons for reading the names in this way. First, there is the Septuagint’s αὐτῶ at the end of the verse (coming after the ὑγίειαν “health”). It is a translation of the לָם (read as לָמוֹ “to him”) of the לְמַרְבֵּה in 9:6a (MT). Older commentators (cited in BDB, 916) considered this unusual לְמַרְבֵּה—having a final ם rather than the normal medial ם—to be a dittography of the לָם on the preceding שְׁלוֹם “peace.” The Septuagint translator obviously read the לָם as a separate word which concluded the verse.

The second reason for reading three names with three words each in 9:5b–6a is the Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll’s reading of the verse compared to that of the Aleppo Codex.

ALEPPO CODEX

שֵׁר-שְׁלוֹם: לְמַרְבֵּה

QUMRAN SCROLL

שֵׁר חֲשׁוֹנֵי לְבַרְכָּה

The Qumran text has a definite article which is lacking on the MT שְׁלוֹם. The final ך and the initial/medial ך are quite distinct. The space between the לְבַר and the חֲשׁוֹנֵי matches the space between separate words, indicating that the Qumran scribe read two words here but wrote an initial/medial ך rather than a final ך. This לְמוֹ/לָם is not the defective spelling

of the well attested preposition לָּ “to him/to them” (which lay behind the Septuagint’s αὐτῶ). Rather it is a long lost lexeme meaning “to reconcile,” a cognate of the Arabic verb لَام (lām), which in Form 3 means “to reconcile,” and the noun لِيْم (liʿm) “peace, concord, agreement, unity” (Lane 1893: 3007; Wehr 1979: 1001).

Isaiah did not envision a messianic war lord, but a reconciling prince of peace. The best commentary on this translation comes in Isaiah 11:1–9. There the reason for the messianic name, “Wonderful Counselor of God,” is spelled out: “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” This counselor would be hailed as a hero, “the Mighty One of the Everlasting Father.” The language here hints of the military model, “he shall smite the earth.” But the heroic imagery was immediately redefined. This hero’s weapons would not be those of violence or war, but would be those of diplomacy and judicial power. He would smite the earth with “the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips.” His defense would be the garments of righteousness and faithfulness.

His third title, “the reconciling Prince of Peace” speaks of his political agenda, the full reconciliation of all human and earthly relationships. All too often the imagery of the “Peaceable Kingdom” (spelled out in 11:6–9, “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb. . . and a little child shall lead them. . . they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain”) is taken so literally its fulfillment must be projected into the end of time.

Such literalism would have the Messiah be of no earthly or historical benefit. But when read as poetic hyperbole, the vision remains earthly and sets the new political and social agenda. The peace of the Messiah would not be built by war. All violence will come to an end by the dynamics of reconciliation, with the poor being treated rightly and the meek being judged with equity. The messianic titles in Isaiah 9:5b–6a, and their commentary in 11:2–9, were the poetic prophetic precedent for Paul’s affirmation, “in Christ God was reconciling the world . . . and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:19).

NOTES

1. The lexeme פִּלְאִי “wonderful/great” appears as a *Niph^cal* plural participle in Job 42:3 (נִפְלְאוֹת), which was translated in the Septuagint as the doublet μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά “great and wonderful.”
2. The translation of אֵל as ἄγγελος “messenger” appears also in Job 20:15, where חִיל בָּלַע וַיִּקְאֲנוּ מִבֶּטְנוֹ יוֹרְשָׁנוּ אֵל “he swallows riches but will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly,” became in the Septuagint πλοῦτος ἀδίκως συναγόμενος ἐξεμεσθήσεται ἐξ οἰκίας αὐτοῦ ἐξελκύσει αὐτὸν ἄγγελος, “wealth unjustly collected shall be vomited up; a messenger will drag him out of his house.” (The οἰκίας “house” for the MT בֶּטֶן “belly” reflects a confusion of בֶּטֶן and בָּטֵן [Est 1:5], like the variants הִטָּן / הִתָּן “to seize” and הִטָּן / הִתָּן “to err.”) Note also Psalm 8:5 and 97:7 where

אלהים was translated as ἄγγελος “messenger, angel.”

3. The αὐτῶ coming after the ὑγίειαν “health” is a translation of the לם of the next word, לַמְרִבָּה “to the increase of,” in 9:6a (see below). The לָמוֹ in Psalm 28:8 (LXX 27:8) was translated as τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ “to his people,” and in Psalm 49:14 (LXX 48:14) simply as αὐτοῖς “to them.”

4. See GKC §132^b.

XXI

THE SEPTUAGINT HAS THE CORRECT TRANSLATION OF EXODUS 21:22–23

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

EXODUS 21:22–23 (MT)

וְכִי־יִנְצוּ אַנְשִׁים וְנִגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה
וַיֵּצְאוּ יִלְדֶיהָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסוֹן
עָנוּשׁ יַעֲנֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשִׁית עָלָיו בְּעַל הָאִשָּׁה
וְנָתַן בַּפְּלָלִים:
וְאִם־אֶסוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנָתַתָּה נַפְשׁ תַּחַת נַפְשׁ:

KJV

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

Targum Onkelos¹

וְאִרְי יִצוֹן גְּבָרִין וַיִּמְחוּן אִיתָתָא מְעַדְיָא
וַיִּפְקוּן וְלִדְתָא וְלֹא יְהִי מוֹתָא אִיתְגַּבְאָה יְתַגְבִּי
כְּמָא דִישׁוּי עֲלוּהִי בְעֵלָה דְאִיתָתָא וַיִּתִּין מִמֵּימַר
דִּינִיָּא וְאִם מוֹתָא יְתִי וְתִיתִין נַפְשָׁא חֶלְף נַפְשָׁא:

Etheridge's Targum Paraphrase²

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

Once upon a time there were two distinctly different Hebrew words which were spelled consonantly as אָסוֹן. There was the well recognized אָסוֹן־אָ, cited in all the standard Hebrew lexicons, which was related to the Arabic *أسى* (*asaya*) “he grieved or mourned” (Lane, 1863: 61).³ There was also another אָסוֹן in the old Israelite and Alexandrian dialects of Hebrew which became lost in the later Judean and Samaritan Hebrew dialects. This lost אָסוֹן was related to the Arabic *سوى* (*sawaya*) “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body” and “of regular build and growth” (Lane, 1872: 1478.) This lost אָסוֹן which was in the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Septuagint has yet to be recognized by the Hebrew lexicographers.

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

In the Targum, cited above, the MT אָסוֹן יְהִיָּה לָא was translated as אָסוֹן יְהִיָּה לָא מוֹתָא “and there is no death” [of the woman]. A similar interpretation appears in the Vulgate and DRA, which read: *Si rixati fuerint viri et percusserit quis mulierem praegnantem et abortivum quidem fecerit sed ipsa vixerit subiacebit damno quantum expetierit maritus mulieris et arbitri iudicarint. Sin autem mors eius fuerit subsecuta*

reddet animam pro anima..

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

Josephus, in *Antiquities* 4: 278,⁴ also made the MT לֹא יְהִיָּה אָסוֹן apply to the mother, stating:

“He that kicks a pregnant woman, if the woman miscarry, shall be fined by the judges for having, by the destruction of the fruit of her womb, diminished the population, and a further sum shall be presented by him to the woman’s husband. If she die by the blow, he shall also die, the law claiming sacrifice of life for life.”⁵

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

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא-יֵרֵד בְּנֵי עִמְכֶם כִּי-אֲחִיו מֵת
וְהוּא לְבֶדוֹ נִשְׂאָר וּקְרָאָהוּ אָסוֹן בְּדֶרֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכוּ-בָהּ וְהוֹרְדֶתֶם אֶת-שִׁיבְתִי בִּיגוֹן שְׂאוּלָה:

KJV

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

Targum Onkelos

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

Septuagint

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

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

All of the above translations which read the אָסוֹן as אִסוֹן “mischief, harm, injury, death” can be recognized as extensions of the basic meaning of the Hebrew lexeme which was related to the Arabic *أسى* (*asaya*) “he grieved, mourned.” Even the μαλακισθῆναι “to be afflicted” in the Septuagint of Gen 42:38 can be so identified—as well as the אִסוֹן in Gen 42:4, אִסוֹן אִסוֹן אִסוֹן אִסוֹן אִסוֹן, γάρ μήποτε συμβῆ αὐτῷ μαλακία, “lest disease befall him,” and in Gen 44:29, אִסוֹן אִסוֹן אִסוֹן, καὶ συμβῆ αὐτῷ μαλακία, “lest disease befall him.” Even the אָסוֹן in the Hebrew text of Sirach 41:9 (which was published by Cowley and Neubauer⁶ can be related to the Arabic *أسى* (*asaya*) “he grieved, mourned.” It reads as follows:

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

If [ye increase, it shall be into]

the hands of bodily mishaps,

and [if ye] begat, it will be for sighing”

If ye stumble it will for perpetual joy;

and if ye die it shall be for a curse.⁷

However, the translation of the **וְיִסֹן** in the Septuagint of Exodus 21:22–23 cannot be related to this **וְיִסֹן** which is related to the Arabic **أسى** (*ʿasaya*) “he grieved, he mourned.”⁸ The Septuagint translation of Exodus 21:22–23 reads:

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

Brenton’s Translation

“And if two men strive and smite a woman with child, and her child be born imperfectly formed, he shall be forced to pay a penalty: as the woman's husband may lay upon him, he shall pay with a valuation. But if it be perfectly formed, he shall give life for life.”

In addition to the well recognized **וְיִסֹן** which was related to the Arabic **أسى** (*ʿasaya*) “he grieved, mourned,” there was, as noted above, also the word **וְיִסֹן** which was related to the Arabic **سوى** (*sawaya*) “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body” and “of regular build and growth.”⁹ This **וְיִסֹן** is a perfect match for the Septuagint’s ἐξεικονισμένον, “to make like, to be perfectly/fully formed.”¹⁰ Thus the **וְיִסֹן** in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint could have been read as **וְיִסֹן** (*ʿaswon*) or **וְיִסֹן** (*ʿaswan*) from the stem **וְיִסֹן** — with (a) a prosthetic **ס**,¹¹ (b) an affixed **י**,¹² and (c) the **ו** of the **וְיִסֹן** being a consonant rather than a vowel letter.¹³

Contra the MT plural **וְיִצְאוּ יְלָדֶיהָ** “and her children come out,” the Septuagint has the singular **καὶ ἐξέλθῃ τὸ παιδίον αὐτῆς**, “and her child came out,” which is in agreement with the Samaritan

Pentateuch which has the singular **וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדְהָ**. Once the singular **וַיֵּצֵא וְלִדְהָ** “and her child came out” is in focus it becomes obvious that the subject of the masculine singular verb **יְהִיָּה** in the phrase **וְלֹא יְהִיָּה אֶסּוֹן** (v. 22) and **וְאִם אֶסּוֹן יְהִיָּה** (v. 23) is the singular **וְלִדְהָ** “her child,” permitting the following translation of these phrases: “. . . her child come out but he is not fully formed, . . . but if he is fully formed. . . .” The masculine **יֶלֶד/וֹלֵד** “child” is obviously gender inclusive like the **אָדָם** “man” in Gen 1:27 and 5:2.

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

“And if two men strive and smite a woman with child, and her *child be not fully formed*, he shall be forced to pay a penalty as the woman's husband may lay upon him, he shall pay what seems fitting. But if the *child be fully formed*, he shall give life for life.”

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

The penalty paid is assessed on the basis of the stage of the development of the dead fetus. The rationale for this view is that the later the stage of pregnancy, the more time has been lost to the woman, the greater the grief for the loss of a child, and the more difficult. This may have been the view of the LXX, which paraphrases **וְלֹא יְהִיָּה אֶסּוֹן** as “imperfectly formed child” and translates **בְּפִלְלִים** “with valuation.” Furthermore, Speiser’s¹⁴ view gains credibility in that penalties for miscarriage actually do vary with the age of the dead fetus in the parallel ancient Hittite Law §17, which states, “If anyone causes a free woman to miscarry—if (it is) the 10th month, he shall give ten shekels of silver, if (it is) the 5th month, he shall give five shekels of silver and pledge his state as security.”¹⁵

A fetus aborted in an accidental miscarriage which is not fully formed—nor equal to an infant born prematurely—was to be treated as *property*.¹⁶ However, if the aborted fetus was fully formed—and equal to an infant born prematurely—it was to be treated as a *person*. A *property* which is accidentally destroyed called for a fine to be paid by the destroyer. But the *lex talionis* became applicable when a *person*—including a fully developed fetus—was accidentally injured or killed. Accordingly, in Mosaic law a woman’s fertilized egg or an imperfectly formed fetus was not considered to be a נֶפֶשׁ, a *person*.¹⁷ Only a fetus that was אֶסְוֹן / אֶסְוָן (^o*aswon* / ^o*aswan*) “fully formed” was recognized as a נֶפֶשׁ, a *person*.¹⁸

Unfortunately the Septuagint translators were the only ones who recognized the rare *hapax legomenon* אֶסְוֹן (= אֶסְוֹן / אֶסְוָן) “fully formed.” They did not confuse it with the well attested אֶסְוָן. But the rare אֶסְוֹן / אֶסְוָן never made it into the Masoretic or rabbinic texts nor the Hebrew lexicons. Instead every אֶסְוֹן in Hebrew became אֶסְוָן, with its various translations cited above: “mischief, injury, harm, death, etc.”

However, Philo followed the Septuagint’s translation of אֶסְוֹן as ἐξεικονισμένον, “fully formed.” In his *Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*, xxiv 137,¹⁹ he wrote:

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

Similarly in *De Specialibus Legibus*, iii 108–109,²⁰ Philo wrote:

But if any one has a contest with a woman who is pregnant, and strike her a blow on her belly, and she miscarry, if the child which was conceived within her is still unfashioned and unformed, he shall be punished by a fine, both for the assault which he committed and also because he has prevented nature, who was fashioning and preparing that most excellent of all creatures, a human being, from bringing him into existence. But if the child which was conceived had assumed a distinct shape in all its parts, having received all its proper connective and distinctive qualities, he shall die; for such a creature as that is a man, whom he has slain while still in the workshop of nature, who had not thought it as yet a proper time to produce him to the light, but had kept him like a statue lying in a sculptor's workshop, requiring nothing more than to be released and sent out into the world.²¹

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

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

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

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

The Septuagint though is unambiguous: aborted the fetus may or may not be fully formed. Once its form was decided (be it אֶסוֹן or לֹא אֶסוֹן) a penalty was fixed. If it was אֶסוֹן “fully formed” the penalty was death (נָפֶשׁ נָפֶשׁ תַּחַת). If it was לֹא אֶסוֹן “not fully formed” the penalty was a fine.²³

CONCLUSION

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

Thanks to Septuagint translation of Exo 21:22–23 and the Arabic cognate *سوى* (*sawaya*), “he made it equal, he became full-grown in body,” the lost lexeme אֶסוֹן / אֶסוֹן has been recovered. Exo 21: 22–25 can be properly interpreted once the accuracy of the Septuagint translation is duly recognized. This old lost lexeme אֶסוֹן / אֶסוֹן, “fully formed / full-grown,” needs to be included in all the new commentaries of today and the Hebrew lexicons of tomorrow.²⁴

NOTES

1. A. Berliner, *Targum Onkelos: Herausgegeben und Erläutert*. (Berlin: Gorzrlanczyk, 1884).

2. J. W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel On the Pentateuch With The Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum From the Chaldee*. (2 vols. London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862-1865. Reprinted in one volume by KTAV Publishing House, New York, 1968). The **וְלֹא יְהִי מוֹתָא** “and there not be death” is paraphrased as “but not to lose her life,” and the **וְאִם יְהִי מוֹתָא** became “if death befall her.”

3. See *sub voce*: (a) Francis. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 2nd ed., 1906; reprint 1962, Oxford: Clarendon Press). (b) David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), and (c) Ludwig. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill). (Click here to view Lane, 1863: 61).

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

5. In light of all these varied translations it is not surprising that scholars like Nina Collins (1993: 290), as noted above, would conclude “Yet the verse [21:22] as a whole fails to make sense.” Note the statement of Bernard Jackson (1973: 292), “Exod. xxi 22 refers not to a miscarriage, but rather to a pre-

mature birth, a *Frühgeburt*, not a *Fehlgeburt* In fact, *aswn* did not originally refer to the mother, but to the child.” Compare the following opinion of Joe Sprinkle (1993: 253):

On the other hand, the case of the pregnant woman cannot be used to prove the humanity of the fetus either. Contrary to the exegesis common among certain anti-abortion Christian theologians, the most likely view is that the death of the fetus is to be assumed throughout the entire case. It cannot be proven whether the formula "life for life" applies to the fetus since it occurs in the instance with יָדוֹשׁ (“serious injury”), which deals exclusively with injuries to the mother. The wording of the case does not rule out the possibility that the fetus was considered subhuman

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

7. The Greek text Sirach 41:9 is $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha\nu\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\tau\epsilon\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha\nu\ \mu\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}$, “when you were born, you were born to be accursed, and when you die, that curse will be your portion.”

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

Either the translators worked from a Hebrew text that differed from MT, i.e., it had a different word in the place of ’\u00e1s\u00f4n , or the translation represents an interpretation of ’\u00e1s\u00f4n , whose original meaning may have been unclear to the translators. In any case LXX relates ’\u00e1s\u00f4n not to the mother but to the fetus—whether it be formed or unformed—and *w\u00e9n\u00e1tan bip\u00e9lil\u00edlm* to a determination of the value of the unformed fetus. Thus there were two separate legal traditions concerning the law of Exod 21:22–23, one based on damage to the woman, and one based on the stage or age of the embryo.

9. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1872: 1478 and H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1979: 519. The Arabic *سوى* (*sawaya*) “he became full-grown in body, of full vigour, or mature in body and intellect” is a synonym of *بلغ* (*balāġa*) “he attained his manly vigor or full maturity,” which appears in the Qur’an in 12: 22, “When Joseph attained his full manhood (*بلغ أشده*) ([*balāġa ʿašuddahu*]), We gave him power and knowledge” (Lane 1863: 250). (Click here to view Lane 1863: 250 or here to view Lane 1872: 1478).

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

11. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, E. Kautsch, editor, A. E. Cowley, translator. 1974: §19^m.

12. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, E. Kautsch, editor, A. E. Cowley, translator. 1974: §85^u.

13. Stanley Isser (1990: 42, 45) considered the possibility of emending the *אִסּוֹן*, stating:

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

14. E. A. Speiser, “The Stem פֶּלֶל in Hebrew,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 536-541.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew adult or child.” Likewise it is not possible to concur with Meredith Klien (1997: 200) who stated:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Only the LXX and PHILO (*DSL*. iii 108–9) took the view that the death of a foetus could be homicide, by interpreting Exod. xxi 23 to mean that if a viable foetus was miscarried, the penalty was death. The view of the interpolator of vv. 24–5 was reaffirmed by the Rabbis, who gave damages, whether the

foetus was viable or not.

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

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

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XXII

RECOVERING THE WORDPLAY IN
ZECHARIAH 2:4–9 [MT 2:8–13]

ZECH 2:8–13 [MT]

8 רץ דבר אל-הנער הלז לאמר פְּרָזוֹת תֵּשֵׁב
ירוּשָׁלַם מְרֹב אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה בְּתוֹכָהּ:
9 וְאָנֹכִי אֶתִּיהֶלָה נְאֻם־יְהוָה חוֹמַת אִשׁ סָבִיב
וְלְכָבוֹד אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ:
10 הוּי הוּי וְנָסוּ מֵאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן נְאֻם־יְהוָה
כִּי פָאֲרַבַּע רוּחוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם
פָּרַשְׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:
11 הוּי צִיּוֹן הַמְּלֹטִי יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּתַבְּבָל:
12 כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם הַשְּׁלָלִים אֶתְכֶם
כִּי הִנֵּנִי בְּכֶם נֹגַע בְּבִבְת עֵינָיו:
13 כִּי הִנְנִי מְנִיף אֶת־יָדַי עֲלֵיהֶם וְהָיוּ שְׁלָל
לְעַבְדֵיהֶם וַיִּדְעֹתֶם כִּי־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁלַחְנִי:

KING JAMES VERSION 2:5–9

4 Run, speak to this young man [Zechariah], saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited *as* towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: 5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. 6 Ho, ho, *come forth*, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon. 8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. 9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and

ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

Originally the phrase in the MT of 2:9, **וְלִכְבוֹד אֱהִיָּהּ** and for glory I will be in her midst.” would have been written without vowels and vowel letters as **ולכבד אהיה** בתוכה. The phrase **אֶחָר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי** “after glory he sent me,” in 2:12 would have been written as **אחר כבד שלחני**. When these texts were vocalized with vowel letters the **כבד** in 2:12 was equated with the **כבד** in 2:9. Both nouns became **כבוד** “glory” and the wordplay between **כבד**, stem I “glory, honor, and **כבד**, stem II “difficulty, distress, struggle,” disappeared.¹

Hebrew **כבד**, stem II, is the cognate of the Arabic **كَبَد** (*kabad^{un}*) “difficulty, distress”; **كَبَد** (*kabada*) III, “to struggle with difficulties, to suffer” (Lane 1885: 2584; Wehr 1979: 947).² This **כבד**, stem II, appears in Isaiah 21:15³

כִּי־מִפְּנֵי חַרְבוֹת נִדְדוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב נְטוּשָׁה
וּמִפְּנֵי קִשְׁתֵּי דְרוּכָה וּמִפְּנֵי כְּבֵד מִלְחָמָה:

For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword,
and from the bent bow, and from the distress of war.⁴

If the MT **כָּבֵד** “distress, struggling” were spelled with vowel letters it would appear as **כוֹבֵד**, which could easily have been misread as **כְּבוֹד**. Once the wordplay involving **כָּבֵד** / **כְּבוֹד** “glory” and **כָּבֵד** / **כוֹבֵד** “struggle” disappeared the three words **אֶחָר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי** in 2:8 (MT 2:12) became a stumbling block for translators and commentators.

One hundred years ago H. G. T. Mitchell (1912: 141–142) noted with reference to Zech 2: 8 (MT 2:12) that:

The speaker next proceeds, as if about to give a reason for the summons he has issued, but interrupts himself, or is interrupted, by a parenthetical statement that has never been satisfactorily explained. It reads, literally, *after glory he sent me*. The subject is evidently Yahweh. The object, who is undoubtedly the same as in vv. 13/9 and 15/11, must be the prophet. There is great difficulty with the phrase *after glory*.

Mitchell translated the אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי as “*After the glory (vision) he sent me.*”

Decades later Ralph Smith (1984: 196) noted that the phrase אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי, “after glory he sent me” is still the “most puzzling clause in the book [of Zechariah],” and David Petersen (1984: 173) agreed noting that this phrase “is extremely difficult.” Here are other translations and paraphrases of the two puzzling words אַחַר כְּבוֹד.

- ὀπίσω δόξης (LXX)
- *post gloriam* (VUL)
- after glory (ASV, NKJ, JPS, NAS, NAU)
- after honour (NLT)
- after the glory (KJV, WEB, DRA)
- after his glory (RSV, NRS)
- after this glory (GNV)
- since the Glory (NJB)
- after he has honored me (NIV, NIB)
- that for his own glory (NET)
- after a period of glory (NLT)
- after he had already (NAB)
- on a glorious mission (way) [אַחַר to אַרְחָ] (NEB).

Some commentators focused their attention on the אַחַר, hoping to find a more contextually suitable definition than “after” or “since.” Herbert Leupold (1956) and Thomas Mc Comiskey (1998) translated the אַחַר as “in pursuit of,” a

translation which is followed by Phillips (2007: 53).⁵ Joyce Baldwin (1972) translated אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחֲנִי “with insistence he sent me”; and D. W. Thomas (IB 1066) emended the אַחַר to אֲשֶׁר and translated “whose glory sent me.”⁶ Carola Kloos (1975: 734) argued that אַחַר meaning “behind” can be extended to include the meaning “in order to reach, to obtain, to bring about.” She concluded that “as far as Zech. ii 12 is concerned the consequence must be that ‘*kabod*’ is the purpose of the mission,” i.e., “for the sake of [his] honour, Yahweh sent me among the nations.”

Other commentators focused their attention on the כְּבוֹד “glory,” trying to find a logical basis for כְּבוֹד to be the subject of the verb שְׁלַחֲנִי “it sent me.” Carol and Eric Meyers (1987: 166) concluded that “Glory” is probably elliptical for “Glory of Yahweh,” therefore “Glory” and “Yahweh of Hosts” can be equated.

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer (2004: 361) proposed to regard כְּבוֹד as an abstract quality, referring to God’s glory, but nevertheless not to be identified with God on a grammatical level. As such, it ‘sends’ or rather ‘commissions’ God אֵל הַגּוֹיִם.”

For Tiemeyer the כְּבוֹד is the subject of the verb שְׁלַח and the object suffix נִי- “me” of the שְׁלַחֲנִי is God. She concluded:

The idea that “honour” commissioned God against the nations (אֵל הַגּוֹיִם) concerns the issue of God’s reputation being at stake after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. . . . My proposition is to see the whole clause as a metaphorical expression where God is sent by (His) honour to proclaim punishment for the nations. (2004: 370–371)

She offered the following translation of Zech.2: 11–15, which reflects her reading the MT עֵינּוֹ “his eye” as עֵינִי “my eye”

and reading the MT אֶל- “to” as if were עַל- “against.”

Up, oh Zion, flee, you who dwell in fair Babylon! Because thus says the Lord of Hosts: “Afterwards, honour will send me against the nations who are spoiling you, because whoever touches you touches the pupil of my eye.”

Michael Stead (2009: 115) followed Tiemeyer’s approach and offered his slightly different translation of Zech 2:12–13,

Because thus says Yahweh of Hosts: “Afterwards, [my] honour will send me against the nations who are spoiling you, because whoever touches you touches the pupil of my eye. And behold I am stretching out my arm against them, and they will become spoil to their servants” [and you will know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me].

It is of interest that the commentators who focused their attention on the noun כְּבוֹד considered only כָּבֹד, stem I, “glory,” seemingly unaware of כָּבַד, stem II, “distress, struggle” and the כָּבַד in Isaiah 21:15, noted above.

A misplaced phrase in the Hebrew text may have contributed to this oversight. The phrase כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת, “thus says Yahweh of Hosts,” found now in 2:8a (MT 2:12a) needs to be moved to 2:9a (MT 2:13a). Once this phrase is moved the oracles and words of Yahweh in 2:5–9 (which contain the wordplay on כְּבוֹד and כָּבַד) can be accurately identified as follows (with Yahweh’s words in italics, the transposed phrase in small caps, and the ambiguous pronouns clarified by bracketed nouns):

For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, THE ORACLE OF YAHWEH, and I will be the GLORY within her. 6 Ho! Ho! Flee from the land of the north, THE ORACLE OF YAHWEH; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, THE ORACLE OF YAHWEH. 7 Ho! Escape to

Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. 8 Indeed [. . .] after a STRUGGLE he [Yahweh] commissioned me [Zechariah] to the nations who plundered you [Zion], for he [anyone] who touches you [Zion] touches the apple of his [Yahweh's] eye. 9a THUS SAID YAHWEH OF HOSTS, “Behold, I will shake my hand over them [Babylonians], and they shall become plunder for those who served them.” 9b Then you [Zion] will know that Yahweh of Hosts commissioned me [Zechariah].

The devouring fires which destroyed Jerusalem will be replaced by fires which will protect Zion. Zechariah's *struggling* (כָּבַד / כּוֹבֵד) will be replaced by Yahweh's *glory* (כְּבוֹד).

The clue to the nature of Zechariah's *struggling* can be found in the universalism attested in Zech 2:11a (MT 2:15a):

וְנִלְווּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים אֶל־יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם

And many nations shall join themselves to Yahweh
in that day, and shall be my people;
and I will dwell in the midst of you.

If Zechariah's mission had been simply to proclaim Yahweh's promise to destroy Babylon (as stated in 2:9 [MT 2:13], “Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them”) there would have been no struggle for him. But Zechariah's struggle was profoundly theological. It involved the ethnocentric versus the universalistic components which he was commissioned to deliver. He struggled with his options: should he become a disobedient ethnic purist defending the the *הַקֹּדֶשׁ*, “holy race” (Ezra 9:2) or an obedient universalist? The struggle ended when he became the obedient universalist who would prophesy:

Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahweh of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Yahweh.

Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” (Zech 8:22–23)

CONCLUSION

The phrase **אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי**, “after glory he sent me,” in Zech 2:8 (MT2:12) has been consistently identified as the most difficult phrase to understand in the book of Zechariah. Simply by changing two vowels and transposing the **א** vowel letter so that **כְּבוֹד** “glory” became **כוֹבֵד** “struggle, distress, difficulty” the phrase is readily translated as “after a struggle he sent me.” This **כוֹבֵד** is *scriptio plene* for the **כָּבֵד** attested in Isaiah 21:15, where the **כָּבֵד מִלְחָמָה** can be translated as “the struggle/distress of war.” Once Yahweh restored Zion it would be filled with his **כְּבוֹד** “glory.” This promise of God’s *glory* (**כְּבוֹד**) being restored in Zion surely influenced Zechariah who was *struggling* (**כוֹבֵד**) with the idea that **גוֹיִם רַבִּים** “many nations” would become “the people of Yahweh.” In English *glory* and *struggle* can never produce a wordplay; but in the original Hebrew of Zech 2:5 and 2:8 the **כְּבוֹד** “glory” and the **כוֹבֵד** “struggle” were an obvious wordplay. Once the original **כוֹבֵד** “struggle” was misread as **כְּבוֹד** “glory” it mistakenly attracted to itself the phrase in 2:9 (MT 2:13) **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת** “thus said Yahweh of Host.”

With all of the evidence presented above the MT phrase **אַחַר כְּבוֹד שְׁלַחְנִי**, “after glory he sent me,” when vocalized as **אַחַר כּוֹבֵד שְׁלַחְנִי** becomes one of the easiest phrases in the book of Zechariah to translate. It means “After a struggle he

[Yahweh] sent me [Zechariah].

NOTES

1. T. J. Finley (1988: 337–338) recognized in Zechariah’s **בַּת עֵינוֹ** “gate of his eye” an ironic pun that highlighted the pride of Babylon which call herself (*bābilt*) “gateway to god.” When Babylon (**בַּת אֵל**) laid her finger on Judah she should have realized that she had poked at the pupil (**בַּה**) of Yahweh’s very own eye. Finley concluded “the prophet alludes to both the arrogance of Babylon as well as to Yahweh’s abiding presence with his people.”

2. The Arabic **كَبَد** (*kabad^{um}*) “difficulty, distress” and **كَبَد** (*kabada*) III, “to struggle with difficulties” are noted in BDB (457) and KBS (II: 455) but are not designated as being the cognate of a Hebrew **כָּבַד** stem II. There is no Arabic cognate for **כְּבוֹד**, stem I, “glory, honor.” The Arabic word for “glory/glorious” is **مَجِيد / مَجْد** (*majd^{um} / majîd*) (click here), and for “honorable” it is **كَرِيم** (*karîm*) (click here).

3. Other translations of the **כָּבַד מִלְחָמָה** include the Septuagint’s **πεπτωκότων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ** “the ones fallen-to-ruin in the battle,” and the following English translations:

- the grievousness of war (KJV, ASV, WEB, YLT)
- the heat of battle (NIB, NIV)
- the press of battle (NAS, NAU, RSV, NJB)
- the stress of battle (NRS)
- the distress of battle (NKJ)
- the terrors of war (NLT).

4. A. A. van Hoonacker (1908: 602–603) appealed to this verse to justify his translation of Zech 2:11–12 as

“Sion! Sauve-toi, qui habites chez la fille de babel! Car ainsi parle Jahvé des Armées: Après [*le temps de*] souffrance, il m’a envoyé vers les nations qui vous ont dépouillés; car qui vous touche, touche la pupille de son œil!”

His commentary included this statement:

Nous proposons de comprendre כבוד non pas au sens de *gloire*, mais à celui de *charge*, au moral *malheur*, en lisant si l’on veut כָּבֹד (*Is. xxi, 15*; — comp. l’emploi du verbe כָּבַד, *qal* et *hiph.*): *après la tribulation*, il m’a envoyé. . . ; c’est-à-dire : vos tribulations ayant pris fin, il m’a envoyé aux nations qui vous ont dépouillés; savoir, comme le contexte l’explique aussitôt, pour tirer vengeance des mauvais traitements qu’elles vous ont infligés.

5. Cited by Richard Phillips (2007: 53).

6. Cited by Ralph Smith (1984: 196).

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