Abstract

The relationship between the creation of biblical lexicons and the users of such lexicons need not be seen as one directional. Biblical exegetes can contribute research towards identifying and clarifying the meanings of biblical words, thus contributing to biblical lexicography. One particular area where exegetes may contribute concerns the matter of discerning the contextual meanings of words of very low frequency, since the exegete may have reason to question whether the meanings given for such low-frequency words in current New Testament lexicons are sufficiently contextually based.

The thesis proposes that contextual meanings might be ascertained (and based primarily on the textual context) for low-frequency lexemes in the New Testament, with particular focus on the Peshitta Gospels. The hypothesis grows out of an analysis on a difficult Syriac lexeme in Peshitta Mark, where the allegedly contextual meanings currently given in lexicons are examined and found to be unduly affected by other contexts—contexts not so similar after all. The resulting exegetical methodology is then employed on twelve low-frequency lexemes from the Peshitta Gospels. The proposal is principally corpus-focused and 'intratextual'. It is hoped that this kind of approach may contribute toward lexical research of both the Greek and Syriac New Testaments. By implication, it may also be used as a basis for examining low-frequency lexemes in other corpora.

The catalyst came from an attempt to adjudicate between the meanings given in Falla’s, *Key to the Peshitta Gospels* (KPG) for the Peal of ܡܳܚܫ (Mk 9:18, 20). The investigation demanded an exegetical approach that paid attention to certain narrative characteristics in Greek Mark, in distinction to the parallel Gospel accounts, in Matthew and Luke, in Greek and Syriac. This process is relayed in chapter 2 where two alleged contextual meanings for two Greek verbs are deconstructed (both allegedly designating 'epilepsy' in the Greek lexicons: σεληνίζομαι 'be an epileptic', Mt 17:15; and σπαράσσω ‘throw into convulsions', Mk 1:26; 9:20, 26). The exegetical methodology evolves from taking stock of the eight principles employed in chapter 2.

Chapters 3–9 implement the resultant methodology on twelve low-frequency lexemes in the Peshitta Gospels, namely: ܢܳܪܓܳܐ (Mt 3:10//Lk 3:9); ܝܘܽܕ (Mt 5:18); ܣܶܪ (Mt 5:18); ܩܰܛܺܝܢܳܐ (Mt 7:14); ܢܶܩܥܳܐ (Mt 8:20//Lk 9:58); ܡܶܕܪܳܐ (Mt 13:5); Peal of ܫܘܚ (Mt 13:5); Peal of ܥܨܒ (Lk 10:34); Peal of
The exegetical methodology is particularly needed in the Gospels for the analysis of lexemes that occur in passages with parallels in another Gospel.

Several examples demonstrate that the methodology can (1) lead to a confirmation of, and greater specification of, meanings attested in older lexicons; (2) enable one to decide between the two meanings offered for the Peal of حذف in Falla’s A Key to the Pesbitta Gospels (KPG); and (3) lead to the overturning of previous lexical results, such as certain given meanings suggestive of epilepsy in the Greek lexicons.

Ultimately, the thesis hopes that other exegetes may recognise that the role of biblical exegesis need not always be secondary to lexical research and so need not depend entirely on available lexicons. Such recognition will further facilitate a healthy conversation between biblical exegesis and biblical lexicography.
Declaration

This is to certify that the content of the thesis comprises only my original work except where indicated in the Acknowledgments.
Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge Dr James Aitken (Cambridge University) for prompting me to reconsider certain issues during an important stage of developing the methodology, with the result that Peshitta OT occurrences were no longer excluded from my analysis. I am grateful to Professor Terry Falla, series editor of Perspectives on Linguistics and Ancient Languages for permitting the dual usage of chapter 2, of which an earlier version has recently been published.1 I wish also to thank Terry as my supervisor for keeping me informed of current research in Syriac lexicography and for his comments on the thesis, particularly in chapter 2. I need to thank Professor Keith Dyer for spotting various errors and oddities in a couple of drafts (and for going through a draft of the thesis back when I started on it many years ago!) and for encouraging me to finish the thesis! I am very thankful also to Professor Mark Brett for his helpful feedback on the introduction, particularly on the significance of linguistic theory and use of various terms along with several helpful suggestions for tying up loose ends and especially for support with navigating the final stages. I wish also to thank Julia Fullerton for her assistance in articulating my thoughts in the introduction and for helpful suggestions to improve my English grammar. I am thankful to my mum, Maree Lewis, for reading through (and proofreading) the whole thesis and to my dad, Gary Lewis, for kindling an early affection for Bible stories and to my sister, Melinda Hynes, for being a lifeline of support in recent years. I am also dearly appreciative of support from my wife, Crystal-Amelie, for the many discussions about all things thesis-related, in particular for her helpful ideas on the arrangement and structure of chapters 1, 2, and 10.

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adj.</td>
<td>adjective</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Curetonian manuscript of the ‘Old Syriac’ translation/version</td>
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<tr>
<td>CESG</td>
<td>George Anton Kiraz, <em>Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîṭṭa and Harklean Versions</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGELNT</td>
<td>Frederick W. Danker, <em>The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>compl.</td>
<td>complement</td>
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<tr>
<td>conj.</td>
<td>conjunct/conjunction</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSD</td>
<td>Jessie Payne Smith, <em>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyril</td>
<td>The Syriac translation/version of Cyril’s commentary on Luke</td>
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<td>Daniel</td>
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<td>Deuteronomy</td>
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<td>The Didache</td>
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<td>et al.</td>
<td>and others</td>
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<td>etc.</td>
<td>and so on, and so forth</td>
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<td>Ecclesiastes</td>
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<td>GELS</td>
<td>T. Muraoka, <em>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</em></td>
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<td>Gen</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Harklean translation</td>
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<td>HALOT</td>
<td><em>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<td>Hebrews</td>
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<td>Hos</td>
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<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>(found in) the same reference (as previous)</td>
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<td>i.e.</td>
<td>that is, namely</td>
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<td>Terry C. Falla, <em>A Key to the Peshitta Gospels</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lam</td>
<td>Lamentations</td>
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<td>Let Jer</td>
<td>Letter of Jeremiah</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Book in the Bible</td>
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<td>Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, Rondal B. Smith, and Karen A. Munson, eds., <em>Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains</em></td>
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<td>Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)</td>
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<td>Mark</td>
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<td>Mt</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
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<td>neg.</td>
<td>negator</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>Natural Semantic Metalanguage</td>
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<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>Old Syriac (namely S and C)</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Peshitta translation/version (New Testament)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ptcpl.</td>
<td>participle</td>
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<td>prep.</td>
<td>preposition</td>
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<td>pronoun</td>
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<td>Psalms</td>
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<td>Rev</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
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<td>Rom</td>
<td>Romans</td>
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<tr>
<td>sic</td>
<td>found this way (in the original or quotation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Sinaitic manuscript of the ‘Old Syriac’ translation/version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir</td>
<td>Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>Song of Solomon</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Michael Sokoloff, <em>A Syriac Lexicon</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Robert Payne Smith, <em>Thesaurus Syriacus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>s.v.</td>
<td>under the (head)word</td>
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<td>Wis</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction: Tools, Concerns, and Approach

The present thesis is not lexicographical in a strict sense. The thesis flows from an interest in the meanings of Greek and Syriac words found in the Greek and Syriac New Testaments, including how such words may be defined, explained, and translated. Another interest is the integration of exegetical perspectives within biblical studies.

Seeing as the exegetical concerns of biblical commentary overlap with various aspects of biblical lexicography, the relationship between biblical lexicography and exegesis can be perceived as a ‘conversation’ (either between lexicographers and exegetes directly or, more abstractly, between biblical lexicons and biblical commentaries). Both disciplines overlap especially when it comes to considering the contextual applications of low-frequency words. Therefore, in the thesis, the intersection between lexicography and exegesis is viewed as a conversation—one in which exegesis need not be shy of speaking up and being heard.

An important, though largely undiagnosed, issue for users of biblical lexicons is whether or not they understand what is intended by a given dictionary meaning. For example, when is a given meaning meant to be considered ‘contextual’ (based on a particular context) and when is it ‘lexical’ (based on various contexts)? In particular, when New Testament readers consult a dictionary for the meaning of a low-frequency word do they expect to be given its contextual meaning or to be given a general meaning based on its usage in various other contexts? Readers could be forgiven for presuming one or the other.

Dictionaries are useful insofar as they can assist the user to find, among the various meanings given, the meaning of a particular example that the user has in mind. If the user cannot find (or easily ascertain) his or her particular example of word usage in the dictionary then that dictionary is rendered much less useful. Readers of the Syriac New Testament are occasionally faced with this very problem. Since the Syriac-English lexicons do not indicate, for their users, the meaning of every occurrence of every New Testament word, lexicon users will not always be able to decipher whether or not a given meaning is meant to apply specifically to their passage under consideration, or whether or not it is meant even to apply to the New Testament corpus at all. This is especially so within the larger Syriac-English lexicons, such as the recent lexicon by
Michael Sokoloff (SL), such lexicons are not specifically aimed at elucidating New Testament vocabulary but are designed to cover wider Syriac literature (so New Testament references are not always provided). Even the New Testament lexicons do not provide every reference for every occurrence of every word.

On the other hand, a user of a Syriac New Testament lexicon may occasionally be given more than one meaning for a word that occurs in only one New Testament passage. Such multiple meanings might be expected when consulting a dictionary of contemporary English word usage which has to cope with a very large corpus. But for a small corpus, such as the Syriac New Testament, beginning readers may expect that a New Testament lexicon does, or should, provide meanings for every use of every word—particularly infrequently occurring words.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, John Lee proposed what New Testament lexicography should next set out to achieve. Lee’s proposal looks similar to what has previously been accomplished in English lexicography by the Collins COBUILD project (utilizing the ‘Collins Birmingham University International Language Database’ founded by John Sinclair) and

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3 See, for example, the Peal of ᵅ郾 (see chapter 2).  
4 They may not, however, expect to be given meanings for every occurrence of the top 17 most frequent words (which occur between 1085 and 4234 times)—namely the 4234 occurrences of the particle ᵄ and the 1085 occurrences of the 17th ranking word ܕܝ. The frequency of word occurrences continues to descend thereafter at a rate roughly inversely proportional to word rank (thus there are less lexemes that occur 11 times than those occurring 10 times, or 9 times etc.). See the word frequency lists in George Anton Kiraz, *Lexical Tools to the Syriac New Testament* (2nd ed.; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2002). For practical reasons Kiraz does not include words that occur less than 10 times. By contrast, Terry C. Falla, *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels* (vol. 1: ḄAlephem–Ḍilhaḥ; Leiden: Brill, 1991; vol. 2: Ḫe–Yodh; Leiden: Brill, 2000) aims to categorise every occurrence of every Syriac word in the Gospels.  
5 John Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), see 182–87. Lee’s agenda for Greek lexicography entails ‘starting from scratch’ in order to produce an ongoing collaborative compilation of an electronic database that will utilize definitions carefully constructed from reliable data, that is, from evidence (a fresh examination of all material) and opinion (including ancient translations and interpretations) along with any “lexical-structural data and everything else of relevance to determining meaning.” Lee’s desiderata apply to Greek New Testament lexicography where electronic databases and resources are voluminous, e.g. the database of *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (‘TLG’, University of California, Irvine) available by online subscription since April 2001 and “searchable by lemma since December 2006” with over 3,700 authors and 12,000 works, approximately 95 million words and is “updated quarterly with new authors and works,” accessed June 11, 2007, [http://ptolemy.tlg.uci.edu/](http://ptolemy.tlg.uci.edu/).  
for a short time by the *Encarta World English Dictionary* (utilizing the Bloomsbury world English database). These English projects were thoroughly collaborative efforts to take full advantage of the world’s largest English corpora in order to evaluate afresh how English words have continued to be used since the late-twentieth century. The story of twenty-first century English lexicography has continued by taking advantage of the internet, as an even larger corpus, with its unlimited storage space and flexibility of access. The users of today’s large repositories of electronic text are assisted by new search tools—search facilities that enable users to find occurrences of words and word combinations at the touch of a button. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias are thus transformed from old cumbersome tools on a bookshelf, that were costly for users to update, into electronic tools that are easy to keep up-to-date, faster to search, and available anywhere on one’s laptop, tablet computer, or phone. Electronic advantages often outweigh the need to maintain a print presence. Such is the case for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which has outgrown the bounds of manageable print space and ceased print publications since the size of its digital database was becoming unmanageable to print and because it was much simpler for the publishers to update it online.  

The Syriac Bible and its lexicons present a different story. The journey from print space to cyberspace has been slow. The Syriac Bible has begun the transformation and its New Testament corpus is now available both online and in several Bible software modules. A reader of the

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Syriac New Testament can now search and find other occurrences of a particular Syriac word if he or she knows the form of its headword or its root. However, readers of the Syriac New Testament also require Syriac-English lexicons, but there is none that gives word meanings for every New Testament context.\(^{11}\) Presently, if a reader wants to look up the meaning of a Syriac word, he or she must currently depend on one of the few Syriac-English lexicons available and will consequently be left with some questions unanswered (such as the problem indicated above concerning a given meaning’s contextual applicability). It is important to consider how future Syriac-English lexicons might proceed in providing meanings applicable to particular contexts, namely meanings for every occurrence of every ‘lexeme’.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) ‘Lexemes’ can be thought of as “the units which are conventionally listed in dictionaries as separate entries.” David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (6th ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 276. In other words a ‘lexeme’ is the identifiable headword of a lexical entry used to represent a word in its simplest form, that is, without any other morphemes suffixed or prefixed. A lexeme is thus an abstracted form (usually identical to one of its used forms) e.g., to find the word ‘lived’ in an English dictionary, the user looks up the lexeme ‘live’. Similarly, in Syriac we may take the final word in Peshitta Lk 1:47 ܡܰܚܝܳܢܳܐ and by dropping the pronominal suffix, we can label the lexeme as a masculine noun ܚܝܳܐ (‘life-giver’). The abstracted lexeme in this case happens to be identical to the masculine singular emphatic form given as the headword (ܚܹܰܝܳܢܳܐ). When we find the feminine singular emphatic form ܚܹܰܝܳܢܳܐ in 1 Cor 15:45 we might not consider it (depending on one’s lexicographical approach) to be a different lexeme but simply a feminine form of the ‘same lexeme’ (‘headword’). More abstract is the notion of ‘root’. The masculine noun ܚܰܝܳܐ, the adjective ܚܹܰܝܳܐ (‘alive’), the plural noun ܚܹܰܳܝܳܐ (‘life’, ‘salvation’), and the feminine noun ܚܹܰܝܳܳܐ (‘resurrection’) may all be identified as sharing the same three-letter root of ܚܰܝܶܐ since they all appear as though they have been constructed from these three consonantal letters. Not all Syriac lexicons list lexemes by root. In KPG, lexemes are listed according to root (the only exceptions are proper nouns and pronouns). Thus under the root ܚܰܝܶܐ will be found the above mentioned lexemes listed after the verbal conjugations where verbs having a ‘Peal’ conjugation are listed first. In this thesis roots are only ever mentioned in combination with a conjugation of the verb (such as the Peal of ܚܰܝܶܐ, that is, the Peal conjugation with the supposed root ܚܰܝܶܐ).
If we define a ‘contextual meaning’ as one that is specific to a particular context (i.e. one that is not necessarily designed to fit more than one context but may fit other similar contexts), we can see that many given meanings in the Greek and Syriac New Testament lexicons reveal themselves to be ‘contextual meanings’. That is, they will specify or imply a given context and may cite a particular New Testament reference (or group of references). In this way New Testament lexicons already include a degree of concern for providing contextual meanings. However, New Testament lexicons tend not to label their given meanings as being either ‘contextual’ or ‘general’. Nor do they necessarily clarify all the intended contexts where the given meanings are meant to apply. The lower the frequency of the word, the more acute the issue becomes for the user who wants to know how applicable a given meaning is for a particular biblical context. That is, knowing whether a given meaning is based on its New Testament context(s), or whether it is primarily based on an analysis of various contexts beyond the New Testament. Some users may presume, incorrectly, that a corpus-based lexicon always provides contextual, corpus-based meanings for its low-frequency lexemes.

The present thesis can be identified by the following: (i) it proposes that exegesis may provide adequate results for determining contextual meanings for several words of low frequency in the Peshitta Gospels; (ii) it develops an exegetical approach based on an examination of a word whose contextual meaning was ambiguous in previous lexicons (see chapter 2)—an approach then used to examine several other words of low-frequency in the Peshitta Gospels; (iii) it uses exegetical methods usually applied on the Greek Gospels; and (iv) it is corpus-focused, being informed by intratextual principles employed in narrative approaches to the Gospels.

The thesis applies exegesis indebted to that employed in modern commentaries on the Greek Gospels. The explanation and justification for the approach is provided by implication in chapter two, from which the present approach originates.

In all, the thesis intends to promote interaction between Gospel exegesis, Gospel poetics, Greek lexicography, and Syriac lexicography. Therefore it is situated within the interdisciplinary bounds of exegesis (biblical commentary), Gospel studies (particularly studies in the ‘synoptic Gospels’
i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke), New Testament lexicography, and translation lexicography (Syriac New Testament lexicography). Chapter 1 does not provide a detailed history of any one of these disciplines, but instead introduces the present approach.

Whilst it may here seem that the principle of ‘what is good for Greek is good for Syriac’ is operating throughout chapters 3–9, not everything in the Greek exegesis proves relevant to our exegesis of the Syriac text. The analysis in chapters 3–9 intends to be sensitive to identifying what is common to both Greek and Syriac and applicable to the Syriac text. The analysis does not magnify any minor differences so as not to ‘make a mountain out of a molehill’. This principle of similarity is further discussed below (see §1.3.4; see also §1.5 on not overstating similarity). In chapter 10 the issue of what methodological modifications might be needed for ascertaining and highlighting differences in the Syriac text is followed up.

The methodology proposed here was not spurious or sudden. Its slow development is relayed in chapter 2, where the present exegetical approach begins to grow out of a critique of certain given ‘contextual meanings’ in the Greek lexicons for σεληνιάζομαι (allegedly ‘be an epileptic’, Mt 17:15) and σπαράσσω (allegedly ‘throw into convulsions’ Mk 1:26; 9:20, 26). The analysis in chapter 2 progresses exegetically, but how the methodological principles might be replicated only begins to arise at the end of chapter 2. From its beginnings, the core proposal has remained consistent, namely that intratextual exegesis can supplement lexical research for Syriac New Testament lexemes as well as Greek New Testament lexemes. It is especially pertinent for determining contextual meanings for low-frequency Gospel lexemes.13

There is more than one way to undertake lexical research and some of these will involve collaborative efforts between lexicographers, editors, and other scholars from various disciplines.

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13 Terry Falla’s lexical work on lexemes in the Peshitta Gospels (the first ten alphabetical letters of ‘KPG’ have been completed) is here acknowledged as a point of reference. Falla’s methodology differs from the present one in that his is not explicitly exegetical or designed specifically for low-frequency lexemes. Neither is his methodology designed to critique meanings in the Greek lexicons. Nevertheless, his methodology is admirable in being generations ahead of other available Syriac lexicons.
However, as an exegetical dissertation, the proposal here has to begin small, as a solo project.\textsuperscript{14} For the purposes of the current study, it is of some benefit that I am not an expert in any one of the distinct fields of study utilized. The kind of exegesis employed here suitably balances several kinds of analysis without specialising in any one kind, as could be expected to be employed by exegetes and other New Testament scholars.

There is much within the field of Gospel studies that can benefit the study of Syriac words. Even Greek New Testament lexicography has yet to take full advantage of the wealth of resources and research in Gospel studies. Gospel studies, in many ways the ‘wealthier’ discipline, has much it can contribute to the study of the Peshitta Gospels.

Underlying the present proposal is the acknowledgement that a relationship already exists between the disciplines of lexicography, exegesis, and biblical translation. Rather than downplay the relationships, or be embarrassed by their unhealthy relationship history,\textsuperscript{15} we can instead acknowledge the relationships and facilitate healthier ones. The relationship between Gospel studies and lexicons (i.e. between Gospel commentary and New Testament lexicons) is mutual. Just as Bible translators and Gospel commentators are dependent on what lexicons have to say about the meanings of words, so too lexicons depend on scholarly exegesis for the contextual meanings of particular words occurring in the Gospels. These influences can, and already do, flow in both directions. The directional flow from exegetical commentary to meanings in lexicons already plays a minor role but there is much room for an improved methodological articulation of that role. Hence, the following exegetical approach for examining several low-frequency words in the Syriac Gospels that depends on a critical utilization of exegetical approaches already developed, and studies undertaken, on the Greek Gospels. Whilst the kind of exegesis within biblical commentary is traditionally perceived to be dependent upon lexicography, the thesis hopes to demonstrate that exegesis can be indispensable for lexical research of low-frequency lexemes, and need not always be secondary to lexicography.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. John Chadwick, \textit{Lexicographica Graeca: Contributions to the Lexicography of Ancient Greek} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996; 2003), 29: “Lexicography is not, or should not be, a solo effort. It needs the co-operation of a team which can work together following the same principles and methods.”

\textsuperscript{15} Lee, \textit{History}, exposes the dependence of lexicons on translation glosses as something problematic.
1.1 Lexicography

According to many linguists, lexicography is simply applied linguistics. That is, lexicography, as the lexicological “art and science of dictionary-making”, is the application of linguistic theories and methods to “a language’s vocabulary” and “could be seen as a branch of ‘applied lexicology’.” However, lexicography can, and should, be considered a discipline in its own right—the discipline of making lexicons. Reinhard Hartmann summarises it well:

Lexicography (and its meta-field, dictionary research) is … a discipline in its own right, standing between linguistic description, on the one hand, and the treatment of language deficits, on the other … it takes from linguistics and any other discipline those elements that are needed to solve its own problems, problems which no other field can solve.

We can consider New Testament lexicography as having its own special problems to solve, namely: determining, and providing meanings for, word items (lexemes) found within a corpus of biblical texts (the ‘New Testament’) by utilizing research in other relevant disciplines (particularly within Biblical studies). In both Greek and Syriac New Testament lexicography, the aim is to provide a reference work for a heterogeneous mix of beginners and scholars.

Lexicography itself is interdisciplinary. There are various kinds of Greek New Testament lexicons produced by a variety of lexicographers. The extent to which different lexicographers use various kinds of exegesis (or will find various kinds of exegesis appealing) will naturally vary according to the kind of lexicography undertaken and the kind of lexicon being produced (and the kind of users in mind). Exegetes are, in theory, welcome into the conversation to suggest contextual meanings of biblical words. Such suggestions, if solid, will eventually be picked up by lexicographers.

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17 Crystal, *Dictionary*, 278.
19 Cf. Alison Salvesen, “The User Versus the Lexicographer: Practical and Scientific Issues In Creating Entries,” in *Foundations for Syriac Lexicography I: Colloquia of the International Syriac Language Project*, ed. A. Dean Forbes, David G. K. Taylor, and Beryl Turner (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2005), 82: “these days the typical Syriac beginner at Oxford is much more rarely an undergraduate in Hebrew, Arabic, or Egyptology. Instead, most of those new to Syriac at the Oriental Institute tend to be studying for research degrees in Byzantine history, patristics, rabbinics, early Islamic history, or Muslim theology.”
The stance taken toward two primary issues within (Greek) New Testament lexicography is noteworthy. First is the stance taken in a lexicon toward other literature (e.g., are given meanings for low-frequency lexemes meant to be considered within the confined context of the New Testament, or to be considered dependent on other available contexts?). The second key issue concerns lexicography’s precise relationship to linguistics and other disciplines relevant to the New Testament and exegesis. Furthermore, in the case of Syriac New Testament lexicography there is an additional issue of how word meanings are determined and given for a corpus translated from Greek (but see §1.3.4 below, where even Greek lexemes in the Gospels are not ‘pure’ Greek).

In terms of methodology, a two-fold concern, within New Testament lexicography, can be stated as a methodological necessity—the need to spell out its precise relationship with (1) ‘other (extra-biblical) literature’ and (2) ‘other disciplines’ (particularly other disciplines within biblical studies). The present methodology will be introduced in relation to these two matters, namely how the thesis intends to approach and engage with ‘other literature’ and ‘other disciplines’.

As a springboard to begin this discussion, we can observe how the two most important Greek New Testament lexicons of the twentieth century approached both matters methodologically.

1.1.1 Two Matters in Methodology

A succinct definition of methodology is that it is “a system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity.”21 Unfortunately, there is a tendency for lexicons of the New Testament not to outline their underlying methodologies. Greek New Testament lexicons have rarely made clear their ‘system of methods’ employed. Moisés Silva comments on the problem:

Most dictionaries are accompanied by brief introductions that, ironically (considering the very reason for a dictionary’s existence), pay only minimal attention to the difficulties of, and chosen method for, describing words’ meanings.22

Furthermore, much of what can be discerned of the methods used, as has been revealed by John Lee, is not admirable. Lee summarises the “long and rich history” as an “undue reliance on predecessors, an unsatisfactory method of indicating meaning, interference from translations, and inadequate means of gathering evidence and opinion.”

Lee points out that when Deissmann set out his objectives for a new lexicon he had nothing to say concerning methodology. However, a new era began in 1988 when linguists Louw and Nida published their lexicon arranged by semantic domains (hereafter ‘LN’) which rejected ‘the gloss method’ and adopted “definitions as a means of describing meaning.” From a methodological perspective, LN differed from other New Testament lexicons in that it actually had something to say concerning its methodological underpinnings, especially concerning its theoretical basis, with a linguistic bibliography to accompany it.

We can discern some shared methodological assumptions held between LN and the third English edition of the Bauer lexicon (BDAG) in relation to the two key concerns raised above (namely ‘other literature’ and ‘other disciplines’). As the two major New Testament lexicons, LN and BDAG have had the greatest impact and influence on Greek-English commentaries and Greek-English Bible translations. Together they represent a culmination of twentieth-century scholarship. Both presuppose a methodological stance toward the two matters identified above with which we will now discuss.

1.1.2 Other Literature and Other Disciplines in LN and BDAG

The explicated methodology for how word meanings have been established in LN is minimal, as most of what it discusses is (linguistic) theory. However, the LN lexicon, in principle, recognises: (1) the importance of a lexeme’s wider use (beyond the New Testament) and (2) the importance

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24 Ibid., 179. Lee, however, affirms Deissman’s primary goal “to ensure that we study the New Testament vocabulary in the light of all possible information about how the language was used at the time.”


26 Ibid., 180.

of utilizing other disciplines when analysing New Testament contexts. These two concerns correspond reasonably well to LN’s first two semantic ‘principles’.

When LN discusses its ‘first principle’ of lexical semantics, it becomes evident that an analysis of a lexeme’s various applications beyond the New Testament is theoretically important. However, the entries in LN do not especially reflect this belief as they do not provide references to word uses beyond the New Testament (LN’s first principle will be discussed below in §1.2 ‘Linguistic Theory versus Data Interpretation’).28

LN’s second principle of lexical semantics corresponds somewhat to the second methodological concern identified above, namely that differences in meaning are marked by the individual “textual” and “extratextual” contexts, whereby “the extratextual contexts are essentially historical and may shed light upon the referents, either from historical documentation or from archaeology.”29 Again, LN does not demonstrate precisely how in practice such extra-textual contexts have been, or might be, utilized by the lexicographer.

Both methodological concerns are also briefly alluded to, and advocated, in BDAG’s foreword. In BDAG a lexeme’s use outside the New Testament is considered to have some bearing on its New Testament meaning (a recognition of the importance of ‘other literature’). Therefore, Danker’s foreword highlights the importance, in the Bauer tradition, of the background of New Testament words (“language parallels”) “in Hebrew, the LXX, and general Greek literature” and especially papyri.30 In regard to our second methodological concern, Danker’s foreword also acknowledges the importance of Greek grammars,31 along with the need to include references to

28 In fact the issue of ‘other contexts’ (in literature beyond the New Testament) stands theoretically unresolved in LN’s introduction, perceptible as a tension between LN’s ‘first’ and ‘second’ principles. LN’s second principle credits the individual textual (and extratextual) context whilst LN’s first principle effectively devalues the role of the individual context by giving to other contexts a higher theoretical priority according to the observation that no two lexemes share an identical range of contexts elsewhere (see further §1.2 below).

29 Louw et. al., eds., Lexicon, 1:xvi, and, “the correct meaning of any given term is that which fits the context best.”


published word studies, as well as an intention to reflect developments in “anthropological and sociological studies.” Yet the specifics of how BDAG has employed either of these two principles (analysing language parallels in other literature and utilizing biblical studies and other disciplines) is not made explicit and can only be estimated by reading the lexical entries themselves.

In a superficial reading through BDAG’s lexical entries, one can observe an uneven employment of the two principles. The utilization of language parallels (in ancient literature and including M-M and DELG) is not entirely inconsistent. But the use of modern studies displays a very uneven utilization of journal articles and of the theological dictionaries (TW, EDNT, and Spicq). Whilst many of BDAG’s entries do not provide any references to journal articles or to the theological dictionaries, some entries have an abnormally large number of references. For example, there are twenty-six references to studies (including the theological dictionaries) given at the end of the entry on εὐαγγέλιον and over sixty studies referenced for the expression δοξή τοῦ ἀνθρώπου at the end of the entry on δοξή (following 2γ). There is no clear methodological reasoning provided for why some lexemes witness a rich engagement with other studies and some do not. The use to which journal articles are employed to varying degrees may be the result of some systematic reasoning but this is not made explicit for the reader. Each reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions concerning the unevenness of treatment. This highlights the need for a more consistent approach to every lexeme.

An additional problem is that the referencing system is somewhat haphazard. In many entries, the reader is left unclear as to why some

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32 Danker, “Foreword,” in BDAG, xiii.
36 Presumably, the unevenness in the citation of reference material is largely due to a decision to include material that is already mentioned in previous editions and/or finding further material during later revisions. In other words, if there are many studies already published (or easily obtainable) on a particular lexeme or phrase, then that lexical entry will tend to receive many more references to such studies.
a study is being cited bibliographically (that is, when its conclusions are dependent on the cited material) or when it is simply being pointed out for further reference, or for additional viewpoints. 37

To summarise, there are essentially two methodological concerns that both LN and BDAG recognise, namely that (1) the lexicographer is obliged to study the meaning of a lexeme in other literature beyond the New Testament, and (2) other disciplines should impact on the lexicographer’s analysis of New Testament lexemes. However, neither BDAG nor LN has made it apparent how either of these matters has been, or might be, systematically addressed. This is not to deny that many lexemes in BDAG or LN have been investigated according to both concerns, it is simply to say that it remains unknown to readers what, if any, controls might have been in place to ensure a methodological treatment of every lexeme according to the kinds of analysis that both concerns would entail. Apparently neither concern has been systematically employed.

1.1.3 Withholding Other Literature
The present approach (to engage to some degree with other disciples but refrain from analysing other literature) might seem, initially counterintuitive. Would it not, instead, be more logical to focus attention on addressing the first concern when examining lexemes of low frequency, namely to analyse language parallels in extra-biblical literature? The present thesis has not chosen this path, however. The concern to stay within one’s corpus, and not stray from one’s corpus, can be partly justified by the archaeological principle of in situ.

In the same way that an archaeologist requires the context of an artefact in observing material in situ, the exegete examining any lexeme requires detailed knowledge about its textual context. Neither the archaeologist nor the exegete can proceed adequately without a sufficient knowledge of the (textual) artefact and its provenance. Without such context, the interpreter risks utilizing the material unsatisfactorily. For example, the Thesaurus Syriacus (TS) still remains the largest

37 Occasionally this is made more explicit as in, “For other perspectives see . . .” but often the precise relation to the cited material remains unspecified.
depository of references to Syriac lexemes in wider Syriac literature. However, in order to properly make use of such material, the interpreter would need to verify the citations in TS, both for accuracy and for obtaining more context. Ideally, the interpreter of TS should be just as familiar with the cited works, as they are with material in the New Testament, in order to justify their utilization and proper comparison. This severely restricts the opportunity to engage with or comment on such ‘other’ literature if not done by researchers specialising in such (otherwise casual commentary would be wholly presumptuous). Such knowledge will include a critical awareness of genre, translational issues, rhetorical purposes, dialectical influences, probable dates of composition, and intended readership. Whilst these things have been much studied and debated in relation to the first-century Koine Gospels, they are relatively undeveloped (and/or specialised fields) in Syriac.

Therefore, for the Syriac exegete working on Gospel lexemes, an alternative approach is pursued here, a somewhat micro version of how Falla has begun, in the Peshitta Gospels (Falla aims ultimately to extend to the entire New Testament and then gradually building up, corpus-by-corpus, a whole new lexicon of classical Syriac). Falla’s methodology does not preclude an observation of language parallels in extra-biblical literature, but does, as a rule, deal only with his Gospel corpus. Similarly, the present decision to stay within one’s (biblical) corpus is also partly inspired by Falla’s detailed lexical work in the Peshitta Gospels namely, A Key to the Peshitta Gospels (KPG).

KPG is primarily context-focused, giving “a detailed analysis of every word in the Peshitta Gospels, including exhaustive meanings, syntactic information pertinent to the meanings of a word, Syriac words of similar meaning, the Greek word behind each occurrence of every Syriac...

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38 Theodore Kwasman, “‘Look it up in…?’,” Aramaic Studies 1, no. 2 (2003): 197: “the Thesaurus Syriacus is the most comprehensive of all Aramaic dictionaries from the point of the scope of material used and the quotation of the attestations in context.”

39 Now users can supplement citations in TS with SL’s citations (Sokoloff having thoroughly checked all Brockelmann’s citations).

word, and a complete analytical concordance of references.” KPG also recognises the importance of consistency and transparency in methodology. In KPG’s introduction, there is a refreshing willingness to describe multiple aspects of its methodology as well as its layout. In regard to KPG’s treatment of high-frequency lexemes, the entries include a guide to analytical categories and are impressively filled with exhaustive Gospel references.

There remains, however, a need to clarify a methodology for dealing with lexemes of low frequency, especially for words that occur only once (ἅπαξ λεγόμενα, hapax legomena) or twice (δίς λεγόμενα, dis legomena). Yet even a high-frequency word can throw up a low-frequency meaning, such as in the case of the Syriac use of the Peal of יְדָעְךָ in Mt 27:4 where its particular meaning does not appear elsewhere in the Syriac New Testament (and in this case its textual context contained the clues to its ‘low-frequency contextual meaning’). Due to a severe lack of contemporaneous Hebrew texts beyond the biblical corpus, the problem is considered most acute within biblical Hebrew for “the exegete, who normally interprets words by their usage in various contexts” which is “a procedure not available in the case of hapax legomena.” An exegete encountering a Hebrew word of rare occurrence is faced with either: (a) analysing the given word’s biblical context, or (b) investigating cognate words in other languages (utilizing foreign contexts). The two options are less extreme in other biblical corpora such as Greek and Syriac where attested contemporaneous uses are more abundant and/or the immediate context is much less ambiguous. Still, option ‘a’ remains relatively undervalued within biblical lexicography (for both Testaments) where the temptation to look beyond the corpus is generally strong. Arguably there is still much to be learned about the use of low-frequency lexemes from their immediate textual contexts, especially contextual applications that are relatively unambiguous as in the Greek and Syriac Gospels. It will be here argued that such textual contexts be given first

41 Ibid., 8.
43 Frederick E. Greenspahn, Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and Its Treatment Since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms (Chico: Scholars, 1984), 8.
priority when treating words of very low frequency. In other words, methodologically, one might consider foreign contexts (‘option b’) only after having exhausted the given/immediate context (‘option a’) or only when ‘option a’ proves insufficient. Hence the thesis here only pursues ‘option a’. This is a more extreme version of the principle advocated by James Barr, who saw that ‘option b’ needed to be pursued carefully where the immediate corpus (‘option a’) proved deficient thus ‘option a’ being “the essential check against all such suggestions, against which they have to be measured.”

The principle is, however, less straightforward when dealing with New Testament lexemes from different Gospels, as they might accidentally be treated as though sharing the same context and as though being from the same author and/or of the same genre (see further chapter 2).

1.1.4 Working with Limited Data

Although there are fewer contexts available in the case of low-frequency lexemes, contextual analysis need not be severely limited—context is only limited by the amount of (and kinds of) investigation employed on it. As Dean Forbes has commented about dealing with limited data, “we can implement ways of handling the data whereby more of it is exploited by our analyses.”

Regardless of low word frequency, we should be able, in theory, to generate an abundance of contextual data by employing multiple kinds of exegetical analyses (introduced below in §1.5).

1.2 Linguistic Theory versus Data Interpretation

The present proposal is exegetically-based. It is not based on a particular linguistic theory or linguistic model. Exegetical approaches begin with data to interpret whilst linguistic approaches

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begin explicitly with a theory or model of language. The theory of language that underlies the lexicographical work of LN can be distinguished from the present thesis in that the former is linguistically-based. Hence the assertion in LN that: “The first principle of semantic analysis of lexical items is that there are ‘no synonyms’.47 Markedly different, from the present approach, is the implication in LN that for the investigator faced with two lexemes that do not distinguish any differences in the range of referents or connotative or associative features, such data will not lead the linguist to accept complete synonymy. Thus LN can be seen to opt for theory over data—whenever synonymy appears to be the case, it is to be understood as a deficiency in the available data in the New Testament or in the supplementary Greek literature,48 rather than lead one to question the theory of ‘no synonyms’.49

This observation is similar to what Robert Holmstedt has commented on in comparing those who are more content to investigate a finite corpus and those who are primarily interested in generating a theory of language. Thus “philologists often claim that linguists impose theory on the data”.

Whereas philologists study specific texts, linguists study linguistic systems and even the internal (mental) grammars of native speakers. Whereas philologists privilege the finite corpus and are reticent to hypothesize beyond the extant data (in good Bloomfieldian fashion), linguists recognize that no corpus represents the infinite set of sentences available to the native speaker. That is, linguists recognize that data from a corpus-bound study will “always underdetermine grammar.”51

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46 It is tempting to state the differences in terms of ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ approaches. However, many exegetical approaches could also be called ‘top-down’ due to their theological framework. Conversely, some linguistic approaches intend to be relatively ‘bottom-up’ so the distinction would be overstated.

47 Louw et al., *Lexicon*, 1:xvi.

48 Ibid., xvi.

49 Louw and Nida did not continue to push the principle of ‘no synonyms’ in their subsequent more detailed analysis of lexicological principles given in Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament: A Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), vii, this being “a more complete statement about the principles and procedures employed [in LN]” where, ibid. 5, it is stated simply that: “The meanings of many words tend to overlap and these are generally called "synonyms," since in some contexts they may represent or stand for the same referent.”


Linguists have an additional range of methods that they can usually employ to research the meaning of words. Along with the utilization of lexicons and of corpus methods (concordances of attested word uses and patterns of use) linguists have traditionally supplemented these with native speaker intuition as well as psycholinguistic experimentation. A complete linguistic analysis of one’s corpus, in the case of a biblical corpus such as the New Testament, cannot ideally be achieved since we do not have access to any native speakers of Koine Greek and cannot employ psycholinguist experimentation on such speakers. An exegetical approach remains a necessity as the data is ancient, limited, and theological.

This does not excuse the exegete from outlining his or her own theory of ‘meaning in language’ (or ‘semantics’ in a broad sense, see further below). Although the exegete may presume to proceed, or claim to proceed, without an underlying theory of language, this does not mean that the exegete, in practice, is making meaning of biblical language without any theory of language. It is more accurate to say that for the exegete it is usually the presupposed textual context and social contexts (or particular literary theories) that are generated from, and imposed on, the data so as to provide a more complete knowledge about the language and discourse under consideration.

Since it is ultimately impossible to begin without any theory of language (even if not consciously articulated) it means that lexicographers have traditionally managed somehow to proceed

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53 Some linguists working on the New Testament have sought to overcome its limitations by compensating with detailed micro-contextual analyses, that is, analysis of the word group, clause, and discourse levels of the text. “Micro-analysis allows for close scrutiny of a finite set of elements, but each is seen to function within a variety of levels of discourse. The definition and classification of these levels enables each element to provide maximal data for interpretation.” Matthew Brook O. Donnell, Stanley E. Porter, and Jeffrey T. Reed, “OpenText.org and the Problems and Prospects of Working with Ancient Discourse,” in *A Rainbow of Corpora: Corpus Linguistics and the Languages of the World*, ed. Andrew Wilson, Paul Rayson, and Tony McEnery (Munich: Lincom, 2003), 17.
54 Linguists too have not always specified the reasons underlying their own preferred use of a particular theory or what might justify such a use of the theory for the purposes employed—when this is given it is often difficult for the non-linguist to follow.
without identifying their own theories of meaning in language. Epistemologically the stalemate of the chicken-or-egg scenario—beginning either with theory or with data observation/data collection—is not overcome until both elements are prioritised and clearly articulated. Thus the first question(s) should be: *What is the kind of data being analysed, what is the kind of resources employed, in what kind of way (method), with what kind of theory, and why (justification)?*

### 1.3 Data, Resources, Method, Theory, and Justification

The following subsection (§1.3.1) introduces and justifies the present use of, and kind of, data, resources, and theory so that the proposed exegetical methodology can then be introduced.

#### 1.3.1 Data: The Peshitta Gospels

Here, we are interested primarily in the textual contexts of lexemes found in the Peshitta Gospels, being Greek-to-Syriac translations.

The Peshitta Gospels stand approximately third (some overlap is conceded) in a succession of five Greek-to-Syriac translations made between the second and the seventh centuries. The five, respectively, are: the Diatessaron, the ‘Old Syriac’, the Peshitta, the Philoxenian, and the Harklean.

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56 One can find, on the internet, claims for Syriac priority as though the Greek New Testament represents a translation made from the Peshitta. Thus the book length article by Raphael Lataster, “Was the New Testament Really Written in Greek? A Concise Compendium of the Many Internal and External Evidences of Aramaic,” edition 1c, March 2006, accessed February 22, 2007, http://www.aramaicpeshitta.com/. The only comment I will make here concerns Lataster’s “undeniable evidence” that numerous Greek manuscript variants exist on account of the polysemy of Peshitta ‘source’ words (Peshitta words are alleged to be inherently more polysemous and so responsible for producing variants in Greek manuscripts). However, one cannot assume that Greek words are always less polysemous. To use one of Lataster’s examples, certain Greek manuscripts have πύλη which can mean either ‘gate’ or ‘gate’. But this assumes that in Greek πύλη only means ‘gate’ and θύρα only means ‘door’. BDAG, however, indicates that θύρα means either ‘door,’ ‘doorway,’ ‘entrance,’ or ‘gate,’ and that πύλη similarly can mean either ‘gate’ or ‘door’. 

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The earliest known version produced, in the second century, was a Syriac version of Tatian’s Gospel ‘harmony’ that combined the four Gospels into a single ‘mixed Gospel’. It was known by its Greek title ‘Diatessaron’ (διὰ τεσσάρων) and by its Syriac title اوماIDES, owa initialValue (‘Gospel of the Mixed [Ones/Evangelists]’). Soon after came the اوماIDES, owa initialValue (‘Gospel of the Separated [Evangelists/Ones]’) which is likely represented by the two surviving, incomplete ‘Old Syriac’ manuscripts, namely the Sinaiitic manuscript (‘S’, late fourth-century) and the Curetonian manuscript (‘C’, fifth-century). The titles of these two versions (اربلى اوماIDES, owa initialValue the Mixed Gospels and اوماIDES, owa initialValue the Separated Gospels) indicate that the ‘Separated Gospels’ were so named to distinguish them from the ‘Mixed’ Gospel version (or possibly vice-versa) and at least indicate that both mixed and separate versions were in use at the same time. The Separated Gospels (hereafter ‘Old Syriac’) probably enjoyed an official status given that Ephraem (who died 373 CE) appears to have considered the Old Syriac version to be the normative text at Edessa. It is not clear as to how long it had already enjoyed this status.

The Peshitta version was probably the end result of revising an Old Syriac text at the turn of the fifth century. Eventually the Peshitta came to dominate at the expense of the earlier two Syriac translations, especially the Diatessaron: “Once the Peshitta New Testament had come into existence, early fifth century, the Diatessaron fell out of favour, and as result no complete manuscript of it in Syriac survives.”


The early twentieth-century scholar F. C. Burkitt had hypothesised that bishop Rabbula of Edessa, in the early-fifth century, was responsible for producing the Peshitta version by revising the Old Syriac (supposedly prepared by bishop Palut in the year 200 under the auspices of Serapion, bishop of Syriac Antioch) and was at the same time suppressing the Diatessaron version. The hypothesis that only one translator (bishop Rabbula) was responsible for the Peshitta version has not proved accurate given the linguistic evidence from the Peshitta itself, which indicates the hand of several different translators.

The intended readership (and background) of the Peshitta Gospels is not clear. Whilst later educated Syriac readers in the seventh century Umayyad administration were completely bilingual, we cannot presume that the majority of earlier readers of the Peshitta Gospels were completely uneducated or monolingual. Presumably, some were completely uneducated in reading and writing in either Syriac or Greek and so the Greek-Syriac translators in the early fifth century (perhaps even more so than in the later ‘bilingual centuries’) would have had an audience in mind with widely varying degrees of education and bilingualism.

The growth of philhellenism in the sixth century saw a new interest in translating Greek sources, with stricter techniques, including the revision of the Peshitta Gospels. The process of...

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61 Such differences may be noted by comparing the different Greek-Syriac correspondences in KPG. The different Greek correspondences with ܐܫܘܪ are summarised by Wido van Peursen and Terry C. Falla, “The Particles ܟܠ and ܐܫܘܪ in Classical Syriac: Syntactic and Semantic Aspects,” in *Foundations for Syriac Lexicography II*, ed. Williams and Turner, 92: “The Peshitta Gospel ܐܫܘܪ frequently translates ܐܬ. But with only two exceptions, never in John and Matthew, only in Mark and Luke, which together use ܐܬ to translate ܐܬ in thirty-one to forty-two places. In the Peshitta text of John, ܐܬ is the principal equivalent of ܟܠ.”


63 Daniel King, *The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria: A Study in Translation Technique* (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 361, 369. King dates a division of translation technique (of Cyril’s writings) to pre and post 484 CE (namely, relative to the time of Philoxenus’ *Dissertationes Decem contra Habib* and based on evidence of an increasing methodical translation technique that aimed to replicate the source Greek more consistently). Cf. Brock, “An Introduction,” 8: “The fifth and sixth centuries witnessed a remarkable hellenization of much Syriac literature, both in style and in thought patterns.”
revision/translation thus continued with the Philoxenian version (sixth century, not extant) and finally the Harklean version—both revisions based probably on the Peshitta, both respectively intended, increasingly, to implement a more consistent application of translation aimed at reflecting the underlying Greek text. The Harklean is thus most helpful in exposing its corresponding seventh-century Greek, often at the expense of meaningful Syriac. The Harklean revision was made by Thomas of Ḥarqel, bishop of Mabbûg in 615 or 616 (of which several manuscripts survive, such as V268 dating from the eighth- or ninth-century).

The present approach, which relies on Gospel studies on the Greek Gospels, would be less appropriate to apply to the Old Syriac and the Harklean. Even for the Peshitta it would not seem wise to assume that the field of Gospel Studies would offer answers appropriate to all things Syriac (see below §1.3.4). However, the Peshitta Gospels display a relationship to the Greek Gospels at both a formal level (of paragraphs, sentences, words and phrases) as well as a wider semantic level (discourse meaning). This is largely because its predominant method of translation stands in a median position between the earlier ‘freer’ Syriac translations (second century to fourth century) and the later ‘literal’ translations made in the sixth and seventh centuries. Brock actually places the Peshitta within the first of three identifiable periods (namely 4/5th century; 6th century; 7th century) which he characterises as an ‘expositional’ period of translation even though the Peshitta itself is much less ‘expositional’ than the Old Syriac. Brock’s three periods roughly correspond to the decreasing size of the Greek units translated (over time the size of the unit of

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64 The Philoxenian version of the Gospels has not survived but the Philoxenian version of other NT books is used to fill out the Peshitta canon (the Peshitta NT originally excluded 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation from its corpus and so these are now included in modern Peshitta editions, taken from so-called Philoxenian manuscripts). See Massimo Pazzini, “The Syriac New Testament: Text and Method,” in Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2007), 349: “The Peshitta of the New Testament Consists of 22 books, not 27; the canon does not include the "minor" catholic epistles (2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude) and the Apocalypse, and the following passages: Jn 7:53–8:11 (the woman taken in adultery), Lk 22:17-18 (and he took the cup...), Ac 8:37; 15:34; 28:29 and Ap 1:1-8. These missing passages were borrowed from the Philoxenian and Harklean (Ap 1:14).”

65 Thomas in his own preface to the four Gospels “declares his work to be a revision of the Philoxenian version (sponsored and supervised by Philoxenos of Mabbûg in 508/09) and carried out with the help of two (or three) accurate Greek manuscripts.” Andreas Juckel, “Introduction to the Harklean Text,” in Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîṭṭa and Ḥarklean Versions, ed. George Anton Kiraz (3rd ed.; Piscataway: Gorgias: 2004), 1:xxxiii.
The Peshitta translators have produced Syriac that pays attention to the meaning of the source Greek at the level of the phrase, the sentence, and at the level of discourse. For the Peshitta translators, the meaning of both the source Greek and target Syriac apparently remained equally important to balance (this point makes them even more outstanding if undertaken within an era of predominantly free ‘expository’ translation and may suggest that the translators deliberately avoided an expositional approach).

The Peshitta text presently employed is that of Pusey-Gwilliam’s ‘majority text’ as published in CESG which corrects several printing errors (of vowels and of punctuation). There are very few variants to note in this text due to it being a majority text and due to the consistency of Syriac manuscript copying. This text is based on only forty-two manuscripts. However, Andreas Juckel has recently been working on a new critical edition of the Peshitta New Testament.


67 Ibid., 10–11.


An initial list of Syriac New Testament lexemes of very low frequency (occurring 3 times or less) was manually compiled from Kiraz’s concordance,\footnote{George Anton Kiraz, A Computer-Generated Concordance to the Syriac New Testament according to the British and Foreign Bible Society’s Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1993).} excluding all proper nouns and loan words. From this list, lexemes beginning with letters ܐ–ܝ were excluded as these had already been published in Falla’s KPG. The remaining list generated a total of 104 New Testament lexemes, with the majority occurring in Matthew (23 lexemes). Investigation of Gospel lexemes was postponed whilst reinvestigating the Peal of ḫbd (Mk 9:18, 20). The focus on this one ambiguous lexeme was hoped to be advantageous for developing a methodology for examining other Gospel lexemes. The 12 lexemes eventually analysed included seven lexemes taken from the beginning of the Matthean list, supplemented by four lexemes from chapter 2 related Mk 9:18–26, and one low-frequency lexeme of interest from Luke.

### 1.3.2 Limitation of Syriac Resources by Comparison with Greek

The exegete of the Peshitta Gospels may initially feel disadvantaged when comparing the rich tools and resources available for those studying the Greek Gospels.
There is nothing yet comparable in Syriac to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG). Whilst the twentieth century saw a proliferation of Greek New Testament lexicons there are still very few Syriac lexicons dealing specifically with the New Testament. Only four complete Syriac-English lexicons of the New Testament were published in the twentieth century (the small lexicon of Jennings, 1926; the Syriac-English index published by The Way International Research Team, 1985; the electronic database compiled by George Kiraz as an ‘analytical lexicon’; and a lexicon by Michael Williams derived solely from other Syriac-English lexicons). The other, more comprehensive lexicons are either Syriac-Latin (thereby putting English readers at severe disadvantage for accessing them) or they are not specifically lexicons to the New Testament and so do not necessarily provide meanings of words found in the New Testament. Of the “three great dictionaries”, none of them gives the reader of the Syriac New Testament a great advantage. Carl Brockelmann’s *Lexicon Syriacum* (1895; 1928) has recently been translated into English by Sokoloff (SL, 2009). Prior to 2009 the most widely used lexicon in English was that of Jessie Payne Smith (CSD, 1903), a condensation of the more comprehensive Latin work...
Thesaurus Syriacus (TS) produced by her father (1879–1901). Toma Audo’s Simta (1897), as the third lexicon among the ‘three greats’ remains even less accessible to English readers as it is Syriac-to-Syriac.

Similarly, there are many New Testament Greek grammars but there are no grammars of the Syriac New Testament. Furthermore, Greek lexicography has begun the difficult task of abandoning glosses in favour of providing full definitions (in LN and BDAG) but no Syriac lexicon has attempted this.

By comparison with the field of Greek lexicography, there is, in the Syriac field, a lack of searchable electronic versions of Syriac literature, a lack of New Testament grammars, a lack of textual critical tools, a lack of Syriac New Testament lexicons, and no use of definitions. Whilst this may appear to disadvantage the Syriac exegete and lexicographer, the Greek resources may afford potential advantages for beginning exegetical study on the Peshitta Gospels.

It would be advantageous, therefore, if the Syriac lexicographer could utilize the riches available within Gospel studies and benefit from them, especially if those elements that are applicable could be incorporated into an exegetical methodology.

1.3.3 What Kind of Theory?

Here, strict linguistic terminology is not always assumed for vocabulary. For example ‘semantic’, or ‘semantics’, used here, simply means ‘pertaining to meaning’ rather than in its strict linguistic

82 Thomas Audo, Dictionnaire de la langue chaldeenne (Mosul: Dominicains, 1897). Audo’s more recent offspring is E. Thelly, Syriac-English-Malayalam Lexicon (Kottayam: Deepika, 1999). Thelly offers English glosses but is not intended to be a lexicon to the New Testament and does not cite sources for its meanings.
84 Definitions in BDAG are not fully developed. BDAG provides so-called ‘extended definitions’ for about three quarters of head-words, achieved primarily by selecting certain glosses and phrases from the previous edition. See Vern S. Poythress, “Extended Definitions in the Third Edition of Bauer’s Greek-English Lexicon,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 45, no. 1 (2001). BDAG’s definitions for verbs begin, as a rule, with ‘to …’ and this practice seems to imply that certain emboldened glosses for verbs that do not begin with ‘to …’ are not meant to be taken as definitions.
usage where semantics can refer to a linguistic theory or a linguistic discipline (generally it is the “linguistic study of meaning in language”). Traditionally, ‘semantics’ is broader for the exegete than for the linguist. The linguistic usage appears, from an exegetical perspective, to have become rather constrained to the point where it excludes various context-bound ‘semantic’ features such as connotations, discourse meanings, and ‘implicatures’ with which ‘pragmatics’ is now concerned. Pragmatic theories also seem, from the present exegetical perspective, to be too narrow in their concern for distinguishing between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implied’ (as though what a sentence ‘means’ can, or should, be distinguished from what the speaker means to imply within a given context. Thus pragmatics not only diminishes ‘semantics’ but, effectively, replaces one dichotomy (a syntax-semantic dichotomy) with another (a semantic-pragmatic dichotomy). Sperber and Wilson’s contribution is no less promising for the current thesis (their ‘relevance theory’ supposes that meaning is as recovered by the addressee according to whatever requires the least effort in processing by automatically selecting whatever is most relevant). Relevance theory is less applicable for the modern interpreter trying to ascertain what ancient hearers of a parable or readers of a poetic text might be meaning. Interpretation might now require more than the minimal amount of processing to recover the intended meaning. So we require (not a principle of ‘minimum processing effort’ for ‘maximum contextual implications’) rather an assumption of ‘speaker/text redundancy’ whereby a text or discourse is assumed to contain more information than is necessary in order to ensure that meaning is transmitted. More effort given to processing would, then, generate clearer indications of intended meaning for passages of a text that appear initially ambiguous or unclear. Such a perspective is not necessarily at odds with

85 Crystal, Dictionary, 428.
86 Primarily, it was the philosopher Paul Grice who displaced the once popular ‘referential theory’ (that words and sentences refer to, or map onto, things in the real world) by introducing the complexities of pragmatic ‘implicatures’. However, ‘semantics’, in Gricean terms, is (still) relegated to ‘truth-conditions’ or ‘propositions’ (the ‘truth-conditional semantics’ of philosophy is beyond the scope of the present thesis).
87 The hearer stops processing when the resulting interpretation meets his or her expectations of relevance. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, Relevance: Communication and Cognition (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
88 Peter J. Leithart, Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 82–83, finds Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989) insufficient for the exegete for a similar reason, namely that for the exegete words often have poetic effects whereby attention to contextual features should not be minimised but maximised.
‘relevance theory’ with its shared emphasis on context as determining meaning, according to what is determined to be most relevant (but see also ‘cognitive linguistics’ below).

The thesis does not attempt to use any one of the thirty-two kinds of linguistic analysis presented in the *Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis* despite its optimistic blurb claim that: “By showing their current and potential applications it provides the means by which linguists and others can judge what are the most useful models for the task in hand.” Unfortunately, it is not easy to know which model would be most useful to the task of analysing a portion of a Gospel text. Even the editors admit that: “Current linguistic analysis has turned into an extremely complex field and imposing a rigid classification of theoretical concepts and orientations has become increasingly difficult and controversial.”

Linguistic theory within exegesis and New Testament studies has remained somewhat isolated from contemporary theories in linguistics. One finds no discussion whatsoever of linguistic theory in exegetical introductions such as Fee; Gorman (besides the mention of “Lexical, Grammatical and Syntactical [sic] Analysis” and the unusually grouped “Semantic or Discourse Analysis”); none in Bock and Fanning (besides two footnotes mentioning ‘semantics’ all pre-1980’s); and none in the recent third edition of Hayes and Holladay (besides the discussion and bibliography on ‘grammatical criticism’, where five authors are given, none recent). Instead,

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90 Ibid.
92 Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 235, speaks of the latter’s ‘goal’ to: “Use modern tools of linguistics to analyze the deep structure and other semantic features of discourse units.” Many linguists would not speak of ‘discourse units’ as having ‘semantic features’ but rather ‘pragmatic’ or ‘discourse’ features (but see further below). The point is that Gorman’s view appears ignorant of recent linguistic theories.
what one finds in such introductions are things to avoid, namely warnings about what not to do (to avoid exegetical pitfalls) such as “we should not conclude that an expression found in one historical context necessarily denotes the same thing in another time and place.” James Barr stands as the heroic figure in campaigning for such warnings and exposing the methodological flaws of a previous generation who ‘found’ meanings in words illegitimately. Barr denounced the theological importation of religious concepts into individual biblical words blaming the biblical theology of his day, which he rightly believed should not be allowed to masquerade as philology. Kittel’s ‘theological lexicography’ bore much of the brunt of Barr’s criticisms. This does not mean that Barr developed a clear positive counterpart (of do’s) that might replace the given negatives (don’ts) of the pseudo-philological approach to be ‘undone’ (avoided).

Even when one does find a more linguistically oriented introduction to exegesis, such as that by David Black (1988; 1995) which intends to help acquaint budding biblical scholars with the field of general linguistics, it does not advocate an allegiance to, or discussion of, particular linguistic theories or approaches that are employed outside the New Testament (it does introduce ‘discourse analysis’ or ‘textlinguistics’ for New Testament Greek). Black’s ‘discourse

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Hayes and Holladay, Biblical Exegesis, 81.

Barr, Semantics. Barr emphasised that the primary meaning of words was to be found within their context. Barr’s condemnations included ‘illegitimate totality transfer’ and the erroneous assumption of a ‘basic meaning’ continuing over time. In the former case Barr was referring to the assumption that a ‘total’ meaning of a lexeme (derived from a variety of contexts) can be legitimately imported into one occurrence of the lexeme. In the latter case a ‘basic’ meaning is presumed, without evidence, to have persisted over time and to have unduly affected its later use.

Ibid., 231: “the great weakness is a failure to get to grips with the semantic value of words in their contexts, and a strong tendency to assume that this value will on its own agree with and illuminate the contours of a theological structure which is felt to be characteristic of the NT and distinctively contrasting with its environment. The belief that the distribution of the lexical stock of the NT may be directly correlated with the theological realities of God and his acts is both assumed in the method and fostered in the product.” The result of Barr’s critique of Kittel’s methodology is that Kittel’s lexicon is now less often considered ‘lexical’. E.g. in Lee, History, 369, it is listed under: “Works Not Included As Lexicons.”


Ibid., “Foreword,” ix, (foreword by Moises Silva) indicates such, i.e.: “A quarter of a century ago, James Barr’s publications were unique in calling biblical scholars to become familiar with the field of general linguistics and to integrate its results with the work of exegesis…. The vast majority of publications in the areas of exegesis and biblical theology [still] reflect only a superficial acquaintance (if any) with modern linguistics.”
analysis’ derives solely from biblical scholarship (namely those from the Summer Institute of Linguistics and “other researchers … Olsson, Louw, Silva, and Cotterell and Turner”).100 We can compare this situation with the various essays on ‘discourse analysis’ edited by Black in 1992 where what can be said about the essays is that they are written by New Testament linguists, that is, “experts in Greek [New Testament] linguistics” who “attempt to study the organization of language above the sentence level … also … as it is used in social contexts.”101 Such a broadly defined basis allows for a broad range of approaches (any that look further than the sentence and/or relate the text to a supposed social situation). Therefore, the linguistic approaches of Black et al. are not much different from, or beyond, the grammatical enquiry promoted by Hayes and Holladay:

the language of the text consists not only of words, but also of words arranged in meaningful combinations. Consequently, grammatical criticism also includes questions of syntax and grammar. Here the exegete deals with the words of the text as they are combined with each other to form phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as the special problems this creates.102

Such enquiry would naturally include ‘discourse analysis’ since it includes both ‘syntax’ and ‘how paragraphs are formed’. The inclusion of multiple approaches within one approach (here ‘discourse analysis’ within ‘grammatical criticism’) is not uncommon of exegetical approaches. Similarly, the present approach accepts that grammatical analysis can subsume both semantic analysis and discourse analysis (neither having to be kept completely distinct, see §1.5.6 below).103

When Black introduces the hierarchical units of language that linguists study, he does not mention pragmatics.104 This is not necessarily an oversight, it probably suggests that his

100 Ibid., 170. The three other groups are summarised in Mark E. Taylor, A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James (London: T & T Clark International, 2006), 37, who follows Porter’s grouping of four schools or models (namely: North American/SIL; UK-Australian/Halliday-Hasan; the Scandinavian school e.g. Beaugrande, Dressler, and van Dijk; and the South African school headed by Louw).


102 Hayes and Holladay, Biblical Exegesis, 81.

103 Semantics is not completely distinct from syntax. Cf. Edward Kako and Laura Wagner, “The Semantics of Syntactic Structures,” Trends in Cognitive Sciences 5, no. 3 (2001). Likewise, it seems counterintuitive to me, when applying exegesis, to attempt to separate semantics from pragmatics.

104 Black, Linguistics, 9: “Phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics form the nucleus of linguistics, the central core of language study. Together they constitute the grammar of a language.”
perspective of ‘semantics’, somewhat like the present proposal, would already include pragmatic senses.

If we acknowledge that context is the most potent determiner of meaning, it must also be acknowledged that how context is delimited and analysed remains paramount, hence the need for exegesis. Exegesis is charged with making sense of the text.

Whatever is considered most relevant and useful to the exegete is not entirely inseparable from his or her own ‘world’ (hence the three ‘worlds’ of interpretation: that ‘behind’ the text; that ‘in’ the text; and that ‘in front of’ the text).

One’s linguistic theory is not necessarily the greatest determiner for analysing the meaning of words in context. Results are mostly determined by the kind of context one includes within one’s approach. A case in point is the ‘Natural Semantic Metalanguage’ (NSM) developed by Anna Wierzbicka which “is concerned with reducing the semantics of all vocabulary down to a very restricted set of semantic primitives, or primes.”

The notion of simplified meanings has long been employed by lexicographers who wish to provide users with definitions that use simpler terms than the terms being defined (otherwise an equally complex definition would only lead the dictionary user to another difficult definition and may lead to circular definitions). If words must be explained using other words then the semantically simpler words can be used to define more complex words. For this reason NSM may seem initially appealing to the lexicographer. Also an advantage of NSM “is its cross-linguistic application…. NSM theorists use the universal primitives found in every language in order to explicate the meanings of words that are not universal.” Furthermore ‘explications’ in NSM are free to incorporate ‘folk theories’ since NSM does not attempt any sharp distinctions “between definitional and encyclopedic aspects of meaning.”

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105 Murphy, *Lexical Meaning*, 69.
106 Likewise, for linguists, the linguistic production of a ‘metalanguage’ by componential approaches (hence NSM) is also appealing (since a metalanguage is supposedly less dependent on language in describing language). Ibid., 45.
107 Ibid., 72–73. Here Murphy is not clear if she thinks that weakened boundaries between the definitional and encyclopaedic in NSM is a strength or a weakness. Later Murphy compliments NSM in that the approach “is very thorough in its taxonomy of different types of countable and non-countable noun.” Ibid., 167.
Wierzbicka has recently written a commentary on Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of NSM\(^{108}\) which might initially seem opportune for the present thesis which examines several lexemes in Matthew’s sermon. Unfortunately very little of her conclusions can be fitted into the present exegetical approach and this is not due to a lack of engagement, on Wierzbicka’s part, with previous commentators (which is relatively adequate). Neither is its incompatibility necessarily due to NSM’s ‘translation’ into the semantic primitive metalanguage. Rather it is the supposed background context used to generate the resulting metalanguage. For example Mt 7:13–14 (‘Enter by the narrow gate’) finds a close parallel in Lk 13:24 and both are ‘explicated’ by Wierzbicka as:

(a) many people think: "I want to live with God"
(b) at the same time, they think:
(c) "if I want to do something I will do it
(d) if I don’t do it I will feel something bad
(e) I don’t want to feel bad things
(f) if I don’t want to do something I will not do it
(g) if I do it I will feel something bad
(h) I don’t want to feel bad things"
(i) when someone thinks like this this someone can’t live with God
(j) it will be good if you don’t think like this
(k) it will be good if you think:
(l) "I want to live with God
(m) because of this if I think that God wants me to do something I will do it
(n) if I think that God doesn’t want me to do something I will not do it"
(o) it will be good for you if you think like this
(p) God wants you to think like this
(q) if you always think like this you can always live with God

It is not that NSM itself is too challenging for the lexicographer to engage. Wierzbicka’s commentary on Mt 7:13–14 should be relatively easy for an untrained person to follow. It also offers a clear overlap of material with the present study (see especially chapter 6 below). But what is most important to note from this example is Wierzbicka’s supposed background context (for Mt 7:13–14 and Lk 13:24) which means that both texts are taken together as one and then treated as though they go directly back to the one saying of Jesus. She supposes that the saying is an appeal to living “the narrow road of sainthood” since:

Most people are not saints; … Most people take (at least part of the time) "the wide and smooth road that leads to destruction"…. But this does not mean that Jesus was predicting destructing as the final outcome of most people’s lives. To interpret the gate and road sayings in this way is to misunderstand their genre: they are exhortations, not predictions.\(^\text{109}\)

It is Wierzbicka’s supposed contextual inclusions that have contributed most to determining how the approach generates its results. Combining the Matthew and Luke parallels together and bypassing how the speech is utilized by the authors of Matthew and Luke are two exegetical procedures which stand at odds with the present methodology. The contextual suppositions (as inputted data) concerning the subject matter most shape the semantic outcomes of the application of NSM, as it would with any linguistic approach, whether componential, generativist, structural, neo-structural, or cognitive.

This is not to suggest that linguists applying linguistic approaches will make any less important contributions to exegesis of Gospel texts. It is simply to point out the necessity of contextual delimitation. The ‘encyclopaedic’ view in NSM is taken further in cognitive linguistics (namely inputting the relevant or salient ‘background’ knowledge of the ‘world’).\(^\text{110}\) But this may potentially give the most potent role to alleged background knowledge derived from other ‘foreign’ texts and/or conjectured social backgrounds. For an ancient text, what we need, first of all, is to begin with what is already salient ‘in the text’. Rather than appealing to an encyclopaedic view, the proposed methodology proceeds initially as though the individual text is the only known context. Consequently, it finds literary theory more attractive than linguistic theory, especially when analysing Gospel narratives.

Since we are interested in contextual meanings of words from a textual corpus (Peshitta Gospels) a corpus-based analysis would seem relevant. The present thesis does share several suppositions with corpus linguistics, for example, the supposition that “the acceptance of naturally occurring

\(^\text{109}\) Ibid., 205.

\(^\text{110}\) Cognitive linguistics (which intends to depend on psychological theories generated from studies that have been widely accepted and critiqued, after peer review in the field of psychology) will probably become more relevant to Gospel studies when it inputs data that is most relevant, and when it becomes less removed from new psychological studies in semantics. Cf. Geeraerts, *Theories*, 286: “In the longer run, however, a further convergence between corpus-based cognitive semantics and psycholinguistic research … may also be envisaged.”
texts as the appropriate object for analysis.”¹¹¹ The ‘usage-based approach’ of a corpus analysis is congenial since “it considers the analysis of actual linguistic behaviour to be the ultimate methodological foundation of linguistics.”¹¹² The notion of ‘actual language use’ that emerges from real-life contexts includes text production since texts are composed in real world contexts by real people (with real audiences in mind). However, such contexts are only indirectly accessible via the text’s own artificial world (thus the relevance of literary theory).

The linguistic suppositions underlying corpus-based approaches are worth mentioning. Such are generally opposed to systems-based approaches that would try to isolate semantics from pragmatics. This is something corpus linguistics (including Hallidayan linguistics) shares with certain strands of cognitive linguistics (also such a ‘maximalist’ perspective is something shared with ‘historical-philological’ semantics).¹¹³ Corpus linguistics is influenced by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski’s notion of ‘context of situation’ and Wittgenstein’s view that meaning is use.¹¹⁴ It is also inspired by Rupert Firth’s dictum: “You shall know a word by the company it keeps”¹¹⁵ as well as the Hallidayan conception of the inseparability of lexemes and grammar (hence ‘lexicogrammar’).¹¹⁶ Thus a corpus-based semantics, like the present underlying theory, sees that word and syntax are interdependent:

syntactic structures and lexical items (or strings of lexical items) are co-selected, and […] it is impossible to look at one independently of the other. Particular syntactic structures tend to co-occur with particular lexical items, and—on the other side of the coin—lexical items seem to occur in a limited range of structures. The interdependence of syntax and lexis is such that they are ultimately inseparable.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Geeraerts, Theories, 168.
¹¹³ Ibid., 229–30.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 168. See Grzegorz Malinowski, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), §43: “For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.”
¹¹⁵ Geeraerts, Theories, 59.
The interest in real textual examples (as opposed to conjectured ‘ideal’ examples of writing and speech) is not new:

the idea itself of using a large repository of real language data as the empirical basis for semantic descriptions is a continuation of the finest traditions of philological and lexicographical work rather than a radical break with the past.\footnote{Geeraerts, \textit{Theories}, 169.}

But not even corpus linguists have managed to live up to these ideals. Even “Firth and Halliday do not escape criticism on this count, as they also make considerable use of invented sentences.”\footnote{O’Donnell, \textit{Corpus Linguistics}, 19.}

The field of ‘pragmatics’ also tends to discuss examples without any clear spoken or written contexts (thus bordering on invented examples). If ‘context determines meaning’ then the kind of, and method of, delimiting said context must be articulated. Otherwise ‘context’ remains a slippery term (see §1.4 below).

The nature of ‘lexical meaning’ is “still the subject of much debate, both in linguistics and in philosophy.”\footnote{Murphy, \textit{Lexical Meaning}, 73. Murphy provides an overview of various theories of ‘lexical semantics’ but is admittedly “biased toward componential theories that are compatible with generative approaches to grammar.” Ibid., xiii.}

Opinions differ as to whether or not ‘lexical meaning’ can be said to be affected by pragmatic contexts.\footnote{Susan Anne Groom, \textit{Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew} (Glasgow: Paternoster, 2003), 30: “Discussion about literary language, the existence of an Official Hebrew style and diglossa all impinge on lexical semantics as the meaning of a word is dependent on both its pragmatic and linguistic context.” Cf. also Gene L. Green, “Lexical Pragmatics and Biblical Interpretation,” \textit{Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society} 50, no. 4 (December, 2007), 800: “the contextual influences upon the meaning of words are substantially more significant than the standard lexicons would suggest.” Cf. also Louis de Saussure “Pragmatic Issues in Discourse Analysis,” \textit{Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines} 1, no. 1 (2007): 187: “The kind of enrichment that goes on at the lexical level in the increasingly interesting domain of ‘lexical pragmatics’ (which addresses the conceptual specification of lexical items depending on contextual features and collocations, such as in \textit{red apple} as opposed to \textit{pink grapefruit}, or as \textit{open a door} and \textit{open a restaurant}, is also currently much debated.”}

In the case of low-frequency lexemes we may not always need to distinguish between a contextual meaning and a lexical meaning. Understandably, linguists who study and develop theories of ‘lexical meaning’ are more likely to believe in the existence of

\footnote{1993), 147, cited in Alan John Partington, \textit{Patterns and Meanings: Using Corpora for English Language Research and Teaching} (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998), 79.}
'lexical meaning', traditionally defined as “The meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it, and regardless of its grammatical context.”122

Unfortunately, the practice of lexicography may perpetuate the idea that words can be isolated from their contextual applications and be treated as though they inherently may mean something 'acontextually' (as ‘context-independent’ entities). The notion that lexical meaning exists (and may be sought and given in a lexicon) does not depend on a particular linguistic theory but may be a somewhat circular supposition about language that would appear to stem logically from the goal of ‘doing lexicography’ by treating one word at a time. Such independence from linguistics is partly due to the fact that the discipline of lexicography is much older than linguistics (modern linguistics was born in the 1830s whilst the roots of lexicography go back over a millennium with the production of bilingual glossaries).123 Here we agree with the point made by Nida (influenced by Joos’ theory of maximisation of context and minimisation of individual elements) that: “Without a context, lexical units have only a potentiality to occur in various contexts, but in combination with contexts, words have meaning.”124 Or more clearly, the meaning of a word “crucially depends on the specific context in which the word is used … words do not have strict meanings associated with them, but instead they "evolve" meaning (Paradis 2008) or "provide clues to meaning" (Elman 2004:301).”125

Perhaps then, neither ‘lexical meaning’ nor lexicography should be considered primary over exegesis, especially if ‘lexical meaning’ is really only a theoretical abstraction based on actual contextual examples. Hence the question raised at the beginning of the thesis concerning how


124 Eugene A. Nida, “The Role of Context in the Understanding of Discourse,” in Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 20. ‘Joos’ Law’ is helpful in that it at least provides a theoretical starting point for that which is usually lacking in theories of lexical semantics, namely analysing low-frequency lexemes (by beginning with their minimal contribution). See Martin Joos, “Semantic Axiom Number One” Language 48, no. 2 (1972). That words require a context is also be illustrated by figure 3 (§1.4 below).

dictionary meanings are derived—it is essential for users to know: Which particular contextual applications have given rise to the (abstracted) lexical meanings?

In a similar exegetical vein, it is here supposed that the smallest meaningful units of language are not primarily lexical units but phrasal units. The most meaningful units of language are predominantly those greater than the individual lexeme, that is, lexemes employed in meaningful combinations. Hence a ‘lexical semantics’ should, ultimately, be subsumed by a phrasal semantics (‘phraseology’). In this regard, the present perspective overlaps with the theory of language that underlies the research of those, like Mel’čuk, interested in the study of phraseology along with the notion in corpus linguistics of ‘collocation’ (words commonly found together or in close proximity and the meaningful associations ensued by such).

1.3.4 Exegesis of the Gospels in Greek and Syriac: Both Can Inform Each Other

As no two languages neatly correspond with regards to how they ‘map’ the world, we should not presume to be able to find a Syriac lexeme that would neatly correspond to a Greek lexeme (except perhaps numerals which have relatively transparent form-meaning relations). Generally, different languages divide up the world differently. Even for what might initially be thought to be a relatively universal matter like colour terminology, we find that certain languages have more than one lexeme for the colour ‘blue’ and yet many languages do not distinguish lexically between blue and green.

We might illustrate the expected lexical correspondence between a given Greek lexeme with its corresponding Syriac lexeme diagrammatically as:

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126 “For Mel’čuk, phrasemes – or (semi-)prefabricated word combinations of various types – represent ‘the numerically predominant lexical unit’ in any language.” Atkins and Rundel, *Oxford Guide*, 151.

In other words, there will be many applications (contexts) where the respective lexemes do not correspond at all in their respective functions and meanings. The overlap represents the shared context of a particular usage (or group of similar usages).

Therefore it is merely coincidental if we happen to find any Greek and Syriac lexemes that overlap closely. We happen to encounter this very phenomenon when we pursue the contextual meanings for several low-frequency lexemes, as we are primarily dealing with the point of overlap (for one particular context) rather than with the entire lexical possibilities. Consequently, when dealing with the overlap, some of our contextual meanings may appear almost entirely subsumed within one or the other, either as (the Syriac being slightly narrower than the Greek):

Or (slightly broader than the Greek):
In the small sample of lexemes we will investigate, examples of the former seem to abound (where the contextual meaning of the Greek is narrowed down and corresponds to a more specific Syriac lexeme, e.g. the word for ‘(garden) soil’ ܐܲܡܳܕܪܳܐ corresponding to γῆ, see chapter 7). Examples of the latter appear less in our sample (e.g. ‘cave, den’ نܳܩܥܐ corresponding to φωλεός, where both lexemes present little detectable differences in their wider lexical uses, and the corresponding lexemes are nevertheless both shaped contextually to mean ‘place of retreat’ or ‘home’, see chapter 6).

That other contextual usages are removed from view does not mean that the correspondences will be completely perfect for any given reader. A Syriac reader (or a Greek reader) will not manage to have eliminated every connotation or implication that a Syriac lexeme (or a Greek lexeme) potentially holds for them (see further below). Some examples present more complex language correspondences, such as lexemes 2 and 3 where Jesus, in the Greek is apparently speaking about letters in Hebrew which is then being translated from ‘Greek’ into Syriac (see chapter 4).

The Greek Gospels reside within a major intersection of interdisciplinary junction points. Their interpretation is complex (including ‘what’ they are and ‘how they are composed’) and has been debated unceasingly. As such, the field of Gospel studies is rich with discussion and has had to learn to live with a lack of consensus in many areas. One such area concerns opinion on the kind of, and composition of, the overlapping sources used in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (‘source
criticism’ and, more narrowly, the ‘synoptic problem’).  

Similarly complex is the matter of the Graeco-Semitic dimension of the Greek Gospels. The Gospel exegete must come to terms with having to deal with a kind of Hellenistic Greek that displays influence from ‘translation Greek’ (Hebrew-Greek translation in the LXX that not only forged numerous Hebrew-Greek correspondences but also new syntactic expressions) and is further complicated by interference from Aramaic and Hebrew. Consequently, Joosten suggests that Gospel scholars should be familiar with Aramaic and Hebrew. He also suggests studying the Koine Greek used in the Alexandrian OT, and that readers of the Gospels consult Moulton and Milligan for the meaning of New Testament words.

Exegeting the Greek text of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, means dealing not only with different text types (textual criticism) but grappling with different writing styles and different registers of Koine. The attraction, for all four Gospel authors, for writing the Gospels in Koine was likely using a language that could reach the widest possible audience (by utilizing the dominant dialect). Certain language peculiarities are due to a Jewish background and/or topic of discussion, some are due to the bilingualism of the authors and their source material, and others are due to a mixture of the above. The ‘Greek’ Gospels narrate a story, apparently based on earlier source material, about a Jew who speaks Aramaic (and who can also read Hebrew in the

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128 The synoptic problem has traditionally been conceived as the textual interrelationships (compositional) between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, whereas source criticism allows a broader role for the study of oral sources (including the study of sources in John).


131 For a recent English NT translation that attempts to be guided by a similar principle, namely being guided primarily by the papyri and inscriptions for translating Greek, see Ann Nyland, *The Source New Testament: With Extensive Notes on Greek Word Meaning* (Parramatta: Smith and Stirling, 2004).

synagogue, in Luke). Consequently, the Greek Gospels (and/or their source material) apparently suppose audiences somewhat familiar with Semitic speech patterns and thought (i.e. a mixed language audience).

But when the Gospels are translated (back) into a Semitic language, as they are in the Peshitta version, certain complexities are simplified. The Peshitta Gospels reflect a dialect displaying much less unevenness (than in the Koine Gospels). Similarly, in comparison to the Greek Gospel’s variant-prolific nature, the Peshitta’s relatively lack of variants makes exegesis easier. By contrast it would be difficult to judge whether or not any apparent divergences witnessed in ‘S’ or ‘C’ (from their alleged source Greek) should actually be regarded as intentional divergences, given their being translated within an expository era, and especially as virtually no Greek

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133 However, in Lk 4:16–19 Jesus actually reads about ‘recovery of sight for the blind’ which is “nowhere in the Hebrew version of Isaiah 61:1 and instead comes as a direct citation from the Septuagint.” Timothy Michael Law, When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102. That the Gospels depict Jesus engaging in halachic arguments with Pharisees and scribes would also presuppose Hebrew knowledge. See M. O. Wise, “Languages of Palestine,” in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 441–44. The language(s) Jesus spoke may differ somewhat to the language(s) that the Gospel writers supposed that Jesus spoke. There is also the issue of whether authors intend Ἐβραικά (In 19:20, cf. Acts 21:40 Ἐβραικά διαλέκτῳ) to refer to Aramaic or to Hebrew. Recent studies suggest the latter (despite BDAG’s entry). See John C. Poirier, “The Narrative Role of Semitic Languages in the Book of Acts,” Filologia Neotestamentaria 16 (2003): 107–16, where philology and the ‘narrative logic’ of Acts both suggest ‘Hebrew’. Furthermore there is the peculiarity of Latin words appearing in the New Testament that “do not occur in any Greek texts earlier than the first century C.E., and some of them occur only in the Gospels” which “is unexpected; it is all the more surprising to find that the words are distributed across the four Gospels and to find that two Gospels use the same word in different passages.” Alan Millard, “Latin in First-Century Palestine,” in Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield, ed. Zioni Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 456.

134 For example, Jesus’ self-used ‘title’ stands awkwardly in Greek, apparently meant to be seen as an Aramaic (or Hebrew?) translation as it preserves both noun elements (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ‘the son of (the) man’) producing a more mysterious-sounding title by obscuring its usual meaning (‘the person’; ‘the man’; ‘the human’) for anyone unfamiliar with a Semitic language (cf. Hebrew הבן and Aramaic בֶן אָדָם). Putting aside historical conjectures concerning Jesus’ actual Aramaic (probably here a non-allusion-based indefinite usage) we find that depending on context, the Semitic expression can function as definite, indefinite and/or generic. Since Greek does not handle definiteness in the same way, the expression is less well defined. In Mk 2:27–28, for example, the generic use is given one noun (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) whereas the more definite/particular use is translated into Greek with two noun elements. The Peshitta’s Syriac has less trouble than its ‘Greek’ source here. Jesus’ self-references (‘the human’), in Syriac, use the definite אָדָם, then ‘the human one’, ‘the man’ using the proleptic pronoun suffix) whilst the non-particular use (a person, cf. ‘people’ אִדָּמִים) avoids the proleptic suffix, namely אָדָם. Hence the neat and clear paralleled expression in Peshitta Mk 2:27–28 ‘a man … the man’ (or ‘humankind … the human one’).
manuscripts survive from the second century. In theory, it should be much easier to note any ‘divergences’ in the Peshitta version (given their less free method of translation and given the abundance of Greek manuscripts from the fourth century on). However, there are not as yet any clear criteria for determining when and how any such divergences might exist. What one exegete regards as a divergence in meaning another may regard as a satisfactory approach to translational equivalence (see also the examples in §2.4.2 and §2.4.4).

One might expect that, as translation literature, the Syriac Gospels would raise differences worth noting as works of literature in their own right.

We will not just compare the number of morphemes present in the original and translated text but inquire about the way the narrator has shaped our experience with the story. We will not just measure the translator’s consistency in replicating the paratactic clause structure of the parent text but also examine the paralleling of syntactic elements and replicating of gaps in the poetic structure. … When we measure their product with both linguistic and literary sensitivity, we will have a sharper sense of the way they understood the text they were translating.

The Peshitta Gospels, however, do not evidence nearly enough clear divergences from the Greek to justify taking up Barnstone’s and Beck’s proposal to highlight the resulting literary differences between source and target texts. More fruitful (for making literary comparisons) would be a study of the ‘Old Syriac’ Gospels as literature in their own right, as these are apparently more ‘independent’ translations (when compared to our fourth century Greek-base text).

Nevertheless, the apparent ‘independence’ witnessed by S and C (from our extant Greek manuscripts) would make them prime candidates for exegesis, as literary works in their own right. Rhetorical and narrative analyses on these texts should reveal interesting and unique features.

Indeed, a fellow student was forced to abandon such a thesis, largely due to the difficulty of developing any criteria for clearly distinguishing between close and divergent correspondences.

“Because literary translation is a work of literature, its existence and formation can be studied only within a theory of literature.” Willis Barnstone, The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 7–8.


For example: “One of the most striking things about the Old Syriac as a translation is the way its word order so often varies from that in Greek witnesses,” namely ‘reversal of paired items’ is quite common in the Old Syriac: “This is attested most regularly in S and, broadly speaking, P seems to correct a number of pair reversals in OS [Old Syriac]… reversals in P represent preserved reversals from an earlier source… further research needs to establish exactly how widespread the practice of pair reversal was amongst translators.” P. J. Williams, Early Syriac Translation Technique and the Textual Criticism of the Greek Gospels (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2004), 203, 209, 221. Initial research
The Peshitta Gospels are, however, relatively easy to comment on in accordance with studies already undertaken on the Greek Gospels. Not only has the Peshitta text provided a Syriac text in closer agreement with the Greek than the earlier Syriac translations, its quality of translation means that an exegesis of the Peshitta often helps with exegesis of the Greek (and vice versa). Much of what can be said about the meaning of the Gospels in Greek applies also to the Peshitta translation.

In making use of exegetical work already employed on the Greek Gospels, it may at times seem that our exegesis is naturally better suited to the source Greek, or that we are indirectly attempting to exegese only the Greek. This is to be expected to some degree when exegeting a translation that is relatively conservative. It may even be that the Peshitta translators were not intending to interpret (exegete) the Greek text so much as to simply translate it into Syriac. So the approach here does not warrant seeing ‘divergences’ merely for the sake of assuming that the meaning of the Syriac must differ by default.

The advantages for utilizing and engaging with Greek exegesis have been asserted for our study of low-frequency Peshitta lexemes. However, as a principle it is generally hazardous to assume that whatever appears to be held in common between the Greek and Syriac would necessarily indicate that no significant changes have occurred between the two languages. On the contrary,


140 Cf. James Barr, The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 18: “far from it being the case that every translation is also necessarily an interpretation, there could be points in some ancient translations of the bible where one of the main motives was, if we may put it paradoxically, to avoid interpreting. This was often the case with literal renderings. The concern of the translator was not to take the exegetical decisions but to pass on to his readers, in Greek, in Latin … [or Syriac] the semantic raw material upon which a decision might later be built. The more the complications of possible interpretation, the more numerous the layers of meaning that might be discerned, and the more obscure the language of the original, the more a translator might withdraw from the task of interpreting.” Source texts can often appear initially ambiguous to modern readers who are separated so much further in time than the early translators. Cf. also Craig Morrison, review of Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-critical and Exegetical Studies, ed. J. W. Childers and D. C. Parker, Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies 13, no. 1 (2010), 87: “Because the ancient versions are first and foremost translations, they are conservative in their interpretations, which are often the result of an ambiguous Greek text…. When the meaning of the Greek is obscure, the ancient versions often witness to that obscurity by offering a lucid translation,” accessed June 13, 2013, http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol13No1/HV13N1PRMorrison.pdf.
whether or not immediately detectable, there are always inevitable differences that will have shifted the text away from its origin, producing a new linguistic and semantic continent with its own intrinsic exegesis, history, and semantics. Such transformations cannot be controlled by any translator no matter how conservatively or ‘closely’ he or she attempts to translate a source text.

Therefore, when presently the thesis assumes and asserts that exegesis on one text can inform the other, it is only a tentative position undertaken with the view to making an initial assessment of the text whilst suspending the extended investigations (in language, culture, time, and circumstance) that a translated text necessarily requires.

Whilst the thesis does not offer a detailed critique of the principle of similarity which underlies the present approach (see chapter 10) it does not hold to it uncritically nor does it presume to represent a comprehensive methodology. For the small number of lexemes under examination it just so happens that one can be reasonably successful at examining the Syriac based largely on what’s good for examining the Greek (i.e. observing what is common to both), but this is due to a degree of coincidence that cannot be assumed across the board.

The core reason for engaging in discussion with modern commentary on the Greek Gospels (besides there being no modern commentaries on the Syriac text) is due to the results of examining one problematic Syriac lexeme (see chapter 2) whereby the issue (in both Greek and Syriac texts) could be traced to an under-appreciation of the meaning of one Greek lexeme in its Gospel context(s). Whilst only negligible differences between Greek and Syriac have been encountered in the thesis (see §9.13), chapter 10 considers how the present methodology could be modified to better detect and deal with other differences.

1.3.5 From Semitic Stories to Greek-Semitic Literature

When reading the Peshitta Gospels, we have something to judge our reading against. By contrast, we cannot compare the Greek Gospels with their earlier sources (though, depending on our Gospel source theory, we can conjecturally compare a ‘secondary’ Gospel with an ‘earlier’ one
that served as a source). The act of composing the Greek Gospels was already a twofold act of ‘translation’—putting oral sources and ideological concerns into written form. Therefore, the Greek Gospels are already translated texts in their ‘original’ state: “Not only have Hebrew and Aramaic words been translated into Greek, but speech has been translated into writing.”

Elliott adds: “In the Gospels, Jesus himself is translated into a character, a literary figure, as he is discoursed through narrative.” The original ‘story’, or history, is not directly accessible. We cannot expect to penetrate the history behind a narrative without dealing first with the text, on its own terms, as narrative.

This essential point is being increasingly appreciated within Gospel studies. It is only beginning to be recognised within Josephus studies. The significance of this point will be a guiding principle in the present interdisciplinary approach to exegesis of Gospel lexemes. A satisfactory exegesis (and lexicography) of narrative texts must take into account their literary nature. This is reason enough for the present thesis to prioritise intratextual exegesis over other ‘background’ studies (i.e. studies which look to other texts and look to reconstruct social factors of composition, see further §1.4 below).

Greek lexicographers have already been, for some time, caught up in the task of exegesis. Danker went as far as to assert that a distinction between lexicography and exegesis cannot be maintained:

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A strict distinction cannot be maintained, inasmuch as both terms relate to interpretation of words ordinarily appearing in a composed text…. In short, separate works of exegesis expand on ideas expressed in a lexicon. In the last analysis, the alleged distinction between lexicography and exegesis is a non-issue, for definition of a word in context is, for all practical purposes, exegesis.\textsuperscript{144}

This is an agreeable reference point for beginning the present exegetical proposal. Lexicography of the Gospels must listen to Gospel studies and other exegetical studies. An awareness that lexicography overlaps with the task of exegesis thus leads us to consider what and how exegetical analyses might impact on lexical research.

1.4 Exegesis

Exegesis as a whole is “a complex and multifaceted collection of disciplines.”\textsuperscript{145} The kind of exegesis conducted is largely determined by the kind of questions an interpreter ‘asks’. Whilst there may be no limit to the questions that may be asked of the text there are severe limitations on how much the text can provide definite answers. There are further limitations on the kind of questions relevant to ask when doing lexical research.

Obviously, not all exegetical approaches are equally relevant to the present task. There are elements that are more relevant and less relevant among both the newer kinds of exegesis and the more traditional kinds. Source criticism of the Gospels, for example, is widely employed in Gospel studies (as an ‘historical-critical’ kind of analysis) but its pertinence to lexical research is severely reduced by its conjectural nature. The same could be said regarding any analysis not paying close attention to the text in its ‘final form’.

Traditional exegetical questions have focused on the writer/author/translator and their earliest audiences (i.e. who is writing to whom; why; where; and when?) and on how the text reached its final form. Lexical research would probably be situated within the traditional ‘historical-critical’ paradigm, namely employing exegesis as “the articulation or discovery of a text’s meaning based


on the understanding of the original author’s intentions and goals” and “to articulate the
meaning of a passage as the original writer intended it to be understood by his or her
contemporary audience.” However, the nature of answers to traditional exegetical questions
has been increasingly recognised over the past few decades as unsatisfactory and conjectural.
Hence, the recent development of other approaches (with different goals/questions) since
‘historical-critical’ exegesis (like textual criticism) cannot ultimately reach back to the writer or to
the first audience (or the first text). Newer approaches have different concerns, such as how a
modern reader engages a text and his or her responses to reading a text, or how the text relates
to cultural issues (e.g. reader-response theories; feminist and postcolonial concerns). However,
lexicographers have not yet taken up the challenge of integrating these newer approaches.

Not even all biblical exegetes have embraced narrative analysis, perhaps the oldest of the ‘newer’
approaches. This omission contributes to ambiguous and confusing uses of ‘context’ by
exegetes.147

Arguably, the main problem with any exegesis that relies too heavily on ‘historical-critical’
approaches is their conjectural and circular nature of constructing ‘background’ with which to
read the text. Any (re)constructions determine how we continue to read an ancient text even
though our answers are derived, tautologically, from the same text, as is noted by Tuckett:

For the most part, we are dependent on the interpretation of individual passages, or
groups of passages, to make decisions about introductory [background] issues; and in
turn any decisions we make may well have an important bearing on our understanding of
the passages concerned. We are thus frequently drawn into a form of circular argument
from which it is not easy to escape.

146 Exegesis might also be defined more broadly under heuristics as “the study and developments of methods or
principles that aid one in discovery the sense and meaning of a text.” Ibid., 6.

147 Dean B. Deppe, All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011),
198–203. That Deppe can speak of the “normal supremacy of context” being “trumped” by a textual/literary
context reveals this. Therefore, for some, like Deppe, ‘context’ does not always mean textual context. Whilst Deppe
can pit the results of ‘grammatical exegesis’ against ‘context’ (“while the context supports another position”)
suggesting that ‘context’ here means ‘context in Matthew’, at other times his ‘context’ refers to ‘historical
background’ by which he apparently means ‘other texts’ (which is what governs his conclusion concerning the
meaning of the phrase “the least of these my brothers” in Matthew). By contrast, a beginner’s introduction to
exegesis that does attempt to utilize narrative analysis is Jonathon T. Pennington, Reading the Gospels Wisely: A
The circularity of conjecturing the background of a text (i.e. date and place of composition; methods of composition; social factors which gave rise to it, e.g. its ‘community’) can be likened to traversing the ‘impossible stairs’ portrayed by Escher in his art where the stairways, being geometrically distorted, give the impression of an unending loop of stairs (figure 1).

**Figure 1: Escher illustration, Ascending and Descending**

A similar ‘impossible’ hermeneutical problem concerns the paradoxical nature of a text. Any given text depends both on its readers’ knowledge of other texts and yet stands independently of all other texts—it is new yet unoriginal. Every element of a narrative text is derivative (its words, its syntax, its themes, and many aspects of its plot) and so it is bound to be intertextual at the outset. This is especially true of the Gospels. They quote from and allude to Old Testament texts, commenting on and filling out God’s previous dealings with Israel in line with particular interpretations of the Jewish scriptures. Consequently, some scholars, like Rikki Watts, find the key to interpreting the Gospel of Mark in reading Isaiah. On the other hand, just how much one can presuppose is relevant to be taken from other texts remains problematic and can differ widely to what other interpreters see is implied by the text (or what was meant to be envisaged


149 Rikki Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997). Others have argued for various eclectic OT backgrounds to Mark.
by the author, its earliest readers and/or translators of the text). A useful exegetical methodology is one that can deal with the presence of biblical quotations (and allusions) as elements that come from other texts but at the same time belong to a new text.

Consequently, we might deal with the double nature of biblical quotations by acknowledging them both in terms of their being a writer’s quotations taken from an outside text (within rhetorical analysis) and in terms of how they belong to the Gospel narrative (within narrative analysis). This accords with Moyise’s conclusion that:

rather than starting with either an exclusively author-centred or exclusively reader-centred approach … it would be better to develop an approach that takes into account both author and reader perspectives from the outset…

Judging how one text is related (intentionally or unintentionally) to other texts can thus be assisted by including a narrative approach, which helps to ‘rein in’ never-ending conjectural textual ‘backgrounds’. Without such limits, reading a Gospel text may differ according to whatever texts are placed beside it (or behind it). How it ‘fits’ with other texts will always remain an ambiguous exercise, like that of identifying the middle element in figure 2 (below) which depends on which series the interpreter sees that it fits with.

Figure 2: Ambiguous element - number ‘13’ or letter ‘B’?¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London: Continuum, 2008), 48. We do not need to resolve the debate concerning how to identify and interpret all scriptural allusions in the NT. Here we ‘play it safe’ by letting the Gospel narrative dominate the interpretation as much as possible without being distracted by other texts. Explicit OT quotations can be judged both within the narrative role played by such biblical quotations in line with the bare assumption of a narrative approach (that begins only with the narrative world) and can also be judged according to the rhetorical effect intended by the writer on an implied audience in line with Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: the Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Continuum International, 2004).

One way to deal with intertextual ambiguity is by letting the individual text dominate our reading as much as possible so that it constrains other texts rather than being constrained by other texts. In doing so, the proposed methodology deals (somewhat provisionally) with both tensions, namely with conjectural circularity and the text-(in)dependence paradox by including an intratextual focus of a narrative approach. Left unaddressed these tensions can mislead the researcher to find meanings in a text that are not derived from the text. That is, meanings that are foreign to the text can begin to take control of the exegetical process. Textual domination by another text means that the two texts can become more difficult to tell apart as they become entangled and confused. Where possible, both exegetes and lexicographers can work to resist both kinds of interferences (i.e. resisting falling prey to the latest, or favoured, ‘background’ conjectures, and interpretations that undermine the differences between texts). The solution proposed here is that including a narrative analysis will militate against potential textual distortions or foreign elements being imported into the text under consideration.152

1.5 Components of Analysis

The components of the proposed methodology are partly inspired by a ‘discourse’ approach that observes a text in layers. Here the Gospel text is observed from small units to increasingly larger units, beginning with the lexeme and moving outwards (or ‘upwards’) towards the wider narrative.153 That is, beyond the lexeme is syntax and grammar; beyond syntax and grammar: rhetoric: beyond rhetoric: an entire narrative.154 Each larger unit incorporates and encompasses the one before (see figure 3 below). The translation analysis is the most arbitrarily positioned (see below §1.5.7) since it might be performed within any ‘layer’.

The process begins with the lexemes and phrases within a sentence and comments on basic syntax and semantics then extends through to larger structural analysis of the whole Gospel in

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152 In this way, the cautionary voice of Thomas Hatina’s call for the narrative as the primary meaning-making frame (for reading a Gospel’s quotations of biblical texts), is heeded. Thomas Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark’s Narrative* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002).
153 Actually, discourse approaches generally view themselves as ‘top down’ as they begin with discourse (as the richer, more meaningful set of elements).
154 And beyond the narrative are complex (inter)textual ‘backgrounds’ and complex social ‘backgrounds’ which arguably can, and should, only be (re)constructed once the previous textual ‘realms’ of context are fully appreciated.
which our passage is found. Thus it involves two main stages: components 1–6 focus on grammatical aspects of our verse and what can be said about meaning at the ‘lower’ levels; components 7–13, according to larger exegetical questions, focus on engaging the analyses found in commentaries, published articles, and eventually other given meanings in lexical entries (component 14 contains the results of analysis in the form of a suggested/mock lexical entry).
Figure 3: Analysis by expanding degrees

Comparing results with other lexicons

Old Testament Occurrences

New Testament Occurrences & Parallels

Narrative Analysis

Rhetorical Analysis

Genre Analysis

Translation Analysis

Comments on Table

Discourse Grammar

Clause Labels

Word class labels

Syriac text in 'lexical bundles' (with glosses)
The fourteen components are: (1) obtaining a ‘critical text’ of the Peshitta verse; (2) creating a ‘table of grammar’ and aligning the Syriac text within pre-existing segments (‘lexical bundles’); (3) adding ‘word class’ labels; (4) adding clause labels; (5) adding ‘discourse grammar’ labels; (6) commenting on semantics, grammar, and discourse grammar; (7) translation analysis (observing the corresponding Greek and sister Syriac); (8) genre analysis; (9) rhetorical analysis (including quotation, parallelism, and chiasm); (10) narrative analysis; (11) other occurrences: New Testament passages; (12) other occurrences: Old Testament passages; (13) summary and reflections on writing a Syriac-English entry; and (14) the results in the form of a suggested lexical entry for KPG.

Each component is not very complex by itself. The methodology is designed for any Syriac or Greek exegete (or any graduate student) to be able to implement. More advanced scholars may wish to develop any one of these components further in line with their expertise. Here the components are kept relatively simple because their effectiveness lies in the combination of their application. A simple step-by-step methodology is needed which might be understood and employed by scholars and advanced students of the Gospels (whenever they feel that the lexicons are not sufficient in providing a contextual meaning for a particular low-frequency lexeme). Therefore, the ordering, purpose, and variety of exegetical components are different from those introduced to students of the New Testament at undergraduate levels.

It is not uncommon to begin exegesis with wider ‘background’ studies. The current methodology, however, aims to begin ‘close-up’ and gradually move outwardly in concentric ‘circles’ (drawn as ellipses in figure 3). Moving in this fashion in no way denies the importance of understanding the text against a wider contextual background (social background). In fact, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of such background analysis—it is precisely because it is so potently influential that it is best to step gradually outwards. This helps to avoid any distracting elements that may not be the ideal background for understanding our text. This procedure also avoids confusing Gospel parallels of the ‘same’ episode.
The boundaries between levels of examination are fluid. Strictly speaking it is impossible to separate the variety of analyses performed on the text at any level because every element intersects every level of context. This is no less so in the initial stages of examination. For this reason, the Peshitta text, lexical bundles, clauses, and discourse grammar labels are held together in a table which will help to ground all the following analyses which flow into and out of each other. The order of analyses performs the function of not only defining what should be in each section but what should be left out by the investigator. As well as providing these boundaries, it is a series of iterative gateways allowing for an input of adjustments between different sections at any time, with each section continually informing the other in both directions.

1.5.1 Syriac Text

The beginning point of our analysis is the Syriac text. We want to allow the Syriac the chance to be considered independently of the Greek so we begin with the verse in Syriac. A failure to recognise this principle is probably the reason why Septuagint lexicography took so long to get off the ground (namely being ‘grounded’ by the supposition that Septuagint Greek words will have meant what their source Hebrew words meant). Greek lexicography of the Old Testament has grappled with this issue for some time. It is perhaps because of this that the point is now sensitively recognised by Syriac lexicographers:

Both lexically and text-critically there is good reason to begin with the target text. It is a means of appraising literary, semantic, and linguistic subtleties without the potentially blinding influence of the text that underlies it.

The point is to avoid presupposing that the target text derives everything from its source text. We should also be wary of the other extreme of always treating the Syriac as though it were not a translation (but see §1.5.9 and §1.5.10 below, which both treat the text as though it were not a translation). The Greek is not off limits to consult during the initial examination of the Syriac. It

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155 Cf. Claude E. Cox, ed., IV Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Jerusalem, 1986 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987). Cf. also Chadwick, Lexigraphica Graeca, 16: “The 1968 Supplement [of LSJ] suffered badly at the hands of an expert on the Septuagint, who seems to have assumed that the Greek word selected by the translators of iii BC must have the meaning which modern scholarship attributes to the corresponding Hebrew expression.”

is a natural way to proceed. The meaning of the Syriac can often be clarified by consulting the Greek (and vice versa). The balance between source and target text is important to maintain and is something that must be grappled with case-by-case rather than permanently biased in one direction.

The first step in the proposed methodology is to obtain a critical Peshitta text for our verse and to note any Peshitta variants. Presently the text in CESG is used (being a correction of Pusey-Gwilliam’s text). In future, Juckel’s forthcoming critical edition may be used.

1.5.2 Creating a Table for Text and Grammatical Annotations

The exegete hopes to select a kind of diagramming method with which he or she is competent and which is most applicable and relevant to the kinds of analyses being undertaken. The thesis does not here employ any kind of sentence diagramming for the initial segmentation of our Syriac text. Whilst sentence diagramming and/or tree diagrams can aid in making observations about usual and unusual linguistic features in a text with recurring lexemes, such diagramming seems less directly relevant to examining rare lexemes. Furthermore, most diagramming tends to separate or displace the relation of lexemes, and may even rearrange them. The syntactic relationships that we wish to display and comment on may depend on word order, or on keeping other orthographical features intact. If we can initially avoid the rearrangement or re-segmentation of our text we can hope to avoid imposing certain theoretical constructs onto our verse from the very beginning.157

A table is all that is required for labelling our text. Our table of labels can of course be revised as we further analyse other grammatical and semantic features of the verse. The purpose of the table (which is read from right-to-left) is to help enable our initial focus to be on the immediate

157 The present methodology aims to avoid linguistic abbreviations, unnecessary linguistic jargon, and imposing a particular theory of syntax. There are perhaps “as many syntactic theories as there are syntacticians.” Andrew Carnie, Modern Syntax: A Coursebook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xii. Andersen and Forbes, Grammar Visualized, are to be congratulated for being linguistically eclectic. Also, their phrase marker diagrams, by maintaining the original word order, avoid the usual diagramming pitfalls. However, their phrase trees do split orthographical word-bundles into smaller segments, making it difficult to read fluently (being designed for computation analysis). Their approach employs a high degree of linguistic abbreviations and requires one to master a large glossary of technical terms.
textual context of our low-frequency lexeme. Our table enables us to have, in one compact place, three layers of structural analysis that will assist us through several stages of exegesis (clause labels and the discourse grammar labels use initial capital letters).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Grammar Labels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic Labels (Clausal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syntactic labels (word class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriac lexical bundles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English glosses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Syriac text can now be divided into word groups, which we call ‘lexical bundles’, by following the natural orthographical divisions of the items already divided by spaces in the Syriac text. In some cases, however, certain segmented lexemes separated orthographically in Syriac are not meant to be treated as separate lexical bundles because they function as single units. For example, ܘܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܳܗ is orthographically two items/bundles which could be further decomposed into four elements: ܐ plus ܒ plus ܫ plus ܗ (“and-[one of]-hour-his”). But it is naturally one phrase (‘and immediately’) and basically two lexical items: ܐ plus ܒܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܳܗ (‘and’ + ‘immediately’). The inseparable particle ܐ can be treated as belonging to its attached lexical bundle (which it is in our method) but a more complex approach would treat the two separately. There is no need to consider the second, third, and/or fourth morphemes separately from the perspective of its bundle. Thus we do not treat ܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܳܗ (or ܒܰܳܫܳܥܬܶܳܗ) as separate items (‘one of’/‘son of’ + ‘hour/its hour’) because of the close relationship between the noun in genitive construct with the item following it. For this reason ܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܳܗ is here treated as a single lexical bundle. The same approach is applied to all genitive constructs.

Enclitics fall into the same category. Thus, for example, ܠܘܰܬ in (Mt 1:18), even though orthographically separated from its preceding lexeme by a space, is meant to be taken together with its preceding word so that the two form a single lexical bundle. It is less clear whether or not ܠ should always be taken as separate to its following participle (or adjective) for the purpose of making lexical divisions. In this case we could treat ܠܘܰܬ ܠܳܠܫܳܪܳܫܸܬܶܳܗ as either a single lexical bundle or two bundles. ܠܘܰܬ ܠܳܠܫܳܪܳܫܸܬܶܳܗ (‘whilst-betrothed-she’, ‘while-she-was-engaged’) can,
as a single clause, be labelled as an adjectival clause but this is two steps ahead of the present step, so at this stage the phrase would presently be treated as consisting of two lexical bundles, namely ܟܰܳܕ plus ܡܟܺܝܪܳܘܳܬܐ (conjunction ‘while’ + past state adjective ‘she-was-betrothed’) in this way our table can differentiate somewhat between syntactic word-classes (preposition + adjective + copular verb) and clause labels (‘Predicate’)—see below (§1.5.4).

Glosses, corresponding to our Syriac lexical bundles, can also be added to our table but are not compulsory. The present method adds them below the Syriac at the bottom (fifth) row of the table as part of the second step (putting in the Syriac text/lexical bundles). The addition of glosses provides provisional correspondences to the Syriac lexical bundles and can help speed up the addition of all the other annotations for the text. Our low-frequency lexeme is deliberately left unglossed in order to resist prejudging its meaning. Ideally (for the Syriac expert) no glosses would be used at all so that one neither depends on them nor only sees the Syriac through the lens of English. Our corresponding glosses do not necessarily read well in English (in our table we are reading along with the Syriac from right to left) and hence they can assist to make obvious the differences between Syriac grammar and English grammar.

1.5.3 Syntactic Labels: Word Class

A presupposition for syntactic analysis is that every component of any sentence can be labelled syntactically based on what is usual and commonly expected by the syntactician. The thesis supposes that understanding of language components is more complex. Whilst labelling is a useful tool, we must always keep in mind that the most applicable label may remain elusive. Thus we should not overburden the role of syntactic labels with definitive resolution.

Word classes were already known and used by ancient Syriac grammarians and these were taken more or less from Greek grammars (traditionally the Aristotelian three word-classes).¹⁵⁸

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We are already halfway to completing the syntactic analysis as we have already segmented our text into lexical bundles (and given them provisional glosses). Now we can attach syntactic labels directly to each bundle keeping in mind that the syntactic categories can be reductionistic. The word-classes employed here do not go much beyond the traditional categories (noun; pronoun; pronoun suffix; adverb; verb; copular verb; preposition; conjunction; participle; enclitic; particle; and negator). Abbreviations are avoided where possible, that is, they are only used when space in the Table does not permit writing the label in full (e.g. ‘neg.’ for ‘negative particle’, and ‘Conjunct.’ for a ‘Conjunctive’ clause).

The label ‘particle’ is relatively uninformative at this level (row three of our table) but becomes more informative in combination with the next two levels (clause; and discourse grammar). Particles may be called by other slightly ‘higher’ features (such as ‘adverbial particle’) when the next level of annotation is included (§1.5.4).

Syntactic analysis can assist us in understanding the behaviour of our low-frequency lexeme by identifying its relation to other components of the sentence to which it belongs, particularly the phrasal components. However, our syntactic labels may not be particularly informative and they do not necessarily specify how the sentence as a whole is composed, hence the need to combine these with a clausal analysis. The labels adverb and conjunction are actually clausal functions, showing that our syntactic labelling of lexical bundles flows naturally into clausal analysis.

1.5.4 Syntactic Labels: Clause
The fourth step for our table is to add clause labels. A clausal analysis deals with slightly larger units of text, that is, the components that fit together to complete a sentence. In our table

indicate a “strong influence of Greek grammar in his classification of ‘schemes’ of participles.” Sylvain Auroux, ed. History of the Language Sciences (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 1:337. For a citation from Ahudemmeh see, A. Merx, Historia artis grammaticae apud Syros (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1889), 33. Huzâyā’s grammar, based on the famous Greek grammar of Dionysius Thrax (Technē Grammarikē), attempted to adapt the grammar to the Syriac language by imitating Greek elements. King “Elements,” 191–92. It was not until the late seventh century that Jacob of Edessa wrote the first Syriac grammar not translated from a Greek source, yet his Syriac grammar is still noticeably influenced by Greek grammars. R. B. ter Haar Rominy, Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 170. This is largely due to the fact that at this time “Syriac grammar did not really conceive of itself as a grammar of the Syriac language so much as a universal grammar adapted for specific use among Syriac-speaking students.” King, “Elements,” 194.
clauses are labelled as: Subject, Predicate, Complement, or Adjunct (namely adverbial, adjectival, or conjunctive as can be gathered by viewing the adjunct in combination with the lower syntactic labels).

This thesis follows the system of clause labels employed by OpenText on the Greek New Testament.\textsuperscript{159}

Our low-frequency lexemes are thus now observably located within the function of their clauses. We can peruse how the categories for clauses are employed by OpenText. But the clause labels used for the Greek New Testament text cannot be transferred wholesale because of the differences in Syriac grammar.

The Syriac sentence structure is still not properly understood without recognition of features that protrude beyond the level of the sentence, hence the need to identify features of discourse grammar.

1.5.5 Discourse Grammar Labels

Discourse, as communication, can be analysed on various levels and so ‘discourse analysis’ encompasses a broad range of disciplines. The ‘discourse grammar labels’ presently employed are not related to ‘critical discourse analysis’ (concerning the relationships between language and power: “text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimating inequality, injustice, and oppression in society”).\textsuperscript{160} Identifying agendas and ideologies in the text (and propagated by the text) is mostly beyond the outer limits of the present interests (though the ninth component, ‘rhetorical analysis’, picks up some of these elements).

The questions posed by discourse grammar simply concern how cohesive communication is achieved by our text at a level slightly above the ‘sentence’, by labelling units of text overlooked by the previous two structural systems (‘higher up’ than syntactic and clausal). Discourse


\textsuperscript{160} T. van Leeuwen “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics, ed. Jacob I. Mey (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 166.
grammar thus concerns how these ‘higher’ linguistic structures function above the level of the sentence.\(^{161}\) It is an approach employed on the Greek New Testament by linguists such as Robert Dooley, Stephen H. Levinsohn, Stanley Porter, and Steven Runge. Steven Runge’s *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* is indebted to ‘discourse analysis’ but is called ‘discourse grammar’ (or a ‘discourse grammatical approach’). More specifically, Runge’s approach is considered a ‘function-based approach’ interested in ‘discourse-functional descriptions’ and ‘pragmatic effects’ not aligned entirely with one particular ‘pragmatics’ or ‘cognitive’ theory and is concerned with ‘pragmatic effects’ depending on ‘discourse context’. Thus Runge’s approach, as is Levinsohn and Dooley’s (for whom Runge is indebted) is eclectic by utilizing insights from various linguistic theories and ‘functional’ (it concerns how linguistic structures function with three key presuppositions: “[1] choice implies meaning… [2] Semantic or inherent meaning should be differentiated from pragmatic effect … [3] Default patterns of usage should be distinguished from marked ones”).\(^{162}\)

The final annotation of our table involves adding appropriate discourse labels to our table. We can identify any elements that help make the text meaningful above the clausal level, as has already been identified in the Greek by Runge in his annotated Greek New Testament.\(^{163}\) A ‘main clause’ is labelled ‘Sentence’ in accordance with Runge’s practice (‘Sentence 1’, ‘Sentence 2’ etc.). Since Syriac grammar is not completely identical to that of the Greek, not all elements functioning on the level of discourse in the Greek will correspond neatly to the Syriac. Nevertheless, at this level there is much we can observe in common between the Syriac Peshitta and the analysis done by Runge on the Greek New Testament. Of course, any differences need to be observed by our table.

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\(^{162}\) Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 5.

1.5.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

So far we have employed five steps: (1) obtaining a verse of Syriac text; (2) placing text into a table, keeping lexical bundles intact whilst adding glosses to bundles; (3) adding word class labels; (4) adding clause labels; and (5) adding discourse grammar labels.

The sixth step involves commenting on the grammar and semantics in order to articulate what is in our table and to draw out what else is now evident about the semantics of the verse. We can make any observations about the syntax, clause, or discourse grammar features of our text (particularly any comments that do not fit neatly in the table) that emerge from studying the table.

Commenting on the ‘table of grammar’ is in keeping in line with the present theoretical perspective of language, namely that grammatical analysis can subsume semantics and pragmatics. That a ‘discourse grammar’ distinguishes between semantic meanings and pragmatic effects is not at odds with our approach. In fact, it encourages our semantics to differentiate between layers of meaning and from becoming too narrow-minded (and discourages us from collapsing everything together). ‘Meaning’ is not exhausted by being spliced neatly into ‘one’ or ‘two’ layers, as there are arguably multiple layers that can be discussed (hence the wider field of critical discourse analysis). As semantic analysis cannot entirely (or easily) be separated from discourse analysis, we include discourse grammar labels in our table to facilitate a more holistic analysis, by noting features both at and beyond the level of the sentence.

We wish to observe the meaning of our verse in terms of the observed grammatical relations (subject; direct object) and any words or phrases of similar meaning within the immediate sentences of our table. Any issues arising can be flagged for later comment and conjectural hypotheses can be noted in the appropriate components below.

As much as possible, grammatical subjects and objects should not be paraphrased. If the object of the verb is ܐܠܗ (‘him’), ܒܪܝ (‘my son’), or ܒܪܳܐ (‘the son’) then we should avoid paraphrasing it as ‘the boy’ if such an identification is not used in the text for that person. This practice assists in
preventing the introduction of presumed elements that may not actually be there (eisegesis)—the practice is not fully adhered to until §3 (i.e. chapter 2 below is ‘pre-methodology’).

Ultimately it is impossible to restrict ourselves to the boundaries of our verse and such arbitrary divisions need not be maintained. A discourse will naturally anticipate future textual elements or echo previous ones. This forces us to extend our view beyond the present verse.

But before going beyond our verse we will observe the text as a translation along with its sister Syriac translations and any variant Greek lexemes potentially underlying our low-frequency lexeme.

1.5.7 Translation Analysis (Corresponding Greek and Sister Syriac)

This is the only component that explicitly deals with the text as a translation. The placement of translation analysis at this point is deliberate. If we postpone this step, we will have to compare larger amounts of Greek and Syriac variants spread across several pericopes or even several chapters. For the present purposes, translation analysis takes account of any variants in relation to our study so far, namely semantic features (including discourse features) applied at the level of the verse. This is done so that other variants can be treated as though they represent ‘other texts’ to compare on a similar collegial level with our Peshitta verse.164 Ideally, a more involved approach would be that these other textual variants would be compared as whole texts in their own right as though each were a ‘manuscript edition’ for comparison. Thus our ‘translation analysis’ could be employed at any stage (by comparing larger portions of text, such as pericopes or entire chapters).165

Here we observe whether the corresponding Greek contains any significant manuscript variations that may underlie the Peshitta (P) and how the Sinaitic (S), Curetonian (C) and Harklean (H) texts have in turn translated their (presumed) Greek sources.

164 This is somewhat similar to the volumes aligning variant readings line by line produced by Swanson’s, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts.*

165 The most involved version of the present methodology would be to expand all the components to the level of the narrative i.e. apply each to the whole Gospel: semantic and grammatical study of the entire Gospel; textual comparison of the whole Gospel in translation; rhetorical analysis of the whole Gospel—a massive task!
There are thus two steps: identify any Greek variations potentially underlying our Peshitta lexeme under consideration (or other significant verse variants) by consulting the critical Greek editions; and identify any Syriac translation variations in the extant sister versions, primarily S and C but also H (which post-dates P). Also, where appropriate, the Syriac translation of Cyril’s Commentary on Luke (CyrL)\textsuperscript{166} is included since it quotes each verse of Luke and its Syriac translation (and hence underlying Greek) is almost as old as Peshitta Luke (chronologically it should be placed before the Harklean but is cited here after the Harklean). It is possible that the translation in CyrL\textsuperscript{5} is actually that of the lost Philoxenian (a text mid-way between the Peshitta and the Harklean) implanted into several Greek-Syriac works to save the Syriac translator having to translate the Greek of Luke afresh.\textsuperscript{167}

A complete critical analysis of the sister Syriac versions is not offered here. They are included because they may be translating the same Greek source as in the Peshitta (most likely in cases where no Greek variants are attested). Also it is likely that S and C represent the Syriac text that is being revised by the Peshitta translators whose aim it is to provide a text more closely aligned to the Peshitta’s source Greek (probably a late fourth-century text). The later Harklean text is less useful for our exegesis of the Peshitta, but it is useful, text-critically, for making its early-seventh century source Greek more visible.

There are other structural features still to analyse in our verse. We still wish to know where the ‘boundaries’ of our text lie and what its structure may be communicating about its meaning.

\textbf{1.5.8 Genre Analysis (Literary Form)}

In this component, ‘genre analysis’ does not mean commenting on the literary nature of an entire Gospel (neither is it concerned with hypothesising a text’s social location). Rather, we are only


interested in identifying and commenting on the ‘literary form’ of a portion of text. This is not to imply that genre studies of the entire Gospels are irrelevant, only that this thesis is not occupied with the genre debates, partly because ‘narrative’ can suffice generally for the Gospel genre for our purposes.

The form critics of the early twentieth century made genre analysis a priority. They asked: “What is typical of this text that situates it within a particular class of texts?” and “What is it about the way this text is shaped and structured that communicates its meaning?” We can apply these questions to determine the ‘literary form’ of a small passage of text and to discuss how we might define its boundaries. We may also ask: How does its structure contribute to its meaning? These questions take us beyond the elements of inter-sentential discourse features and enable us to comment on larger kinds of ‘structures’ to which our sentence belongs within the recognition that the meaning of a text is not completely inseparable from its form/structure(s).

In this component, we may note the following interrelated aspects: (i) the likely boundaries of what constitutes our passage of text (ii) what ‘genre’ (literary form) our text ‘belongs to’ (and why

168 ‘Genre analysis’ is traditionally much broader and/or has been employed to determine the ‘life setting’ of particular passages: “Genre has been one of the most widely used literary critical concepts in biblical scholarship. Generic analysis in biblical interpretation has generally been confined, however, to historical judgments or social-critical analysis of the Sitz-im-Leben of the text.” Mary Gerhart, “Generic Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics,” Semites 43 (1988): 29.


170 “For the Newer Testament, the names and dates are Martin Dibelius (1919), Karl Ludwig Schmidt (1919), and Rudolph Bultmann (1921) – all three sat at Gunkel’s feet in Berlin (1894–1907).” Anthony F. Campbell, S.J. “Form Criticism’s Future,” in The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 17.

171 Campbell, “Form Criticism’s Future,” 23–24.
so classify it?); and (iii) how this might impact on the meaning of our passage. But we should not presume that our verse fits perfectly into any one literary form since: “the critic will look at not only the ways in which a passage is similar to others, but also the way that it is unique, the way that it deviates from the ‘form’.” After the form has been determined, “there still remains the task of discerning the actuality of the particular text.”

Our genre analysis of the text does not tell us everything we want to know about the chiastic structures or parallel structures to which our text may belong. It does not tell us how it functions within its textual context. Hence the need for a ‘rhetorical analysis’. Certain commentators have already identified parallel structures in Greek Matthew, and the majority of these are maintained in the Syriac. Such structures can further illuminate words or phrases of similar meaning under investigation.

1.5.9 Rhetorical Analysis (Use of Similar, Repeated, or Elided Words, Parallelism, Chiasm, and Biblical Quotation)

Rhetorical analysis, as undertaken here, approaches the text by supposing it to be a composition put together by a writer for the purpose(s) of persuading an audience. Here, we will think and speak of the text in terms of its ‘writer’ and his (or her) ‘audience’ (so the Peshitta translators, in this step, are not thought of, or discussed, as translators).

We are not interested in identifying the rhetorical stratagems discussed in ancient handbooks of Greek and Latin rhetoric (like the Progymnasmata). Rather, we are primarily interested in identifying basic writing strategies that the early audiences would have been able to recognise: repeated words, elided words (ellipsis), use of synonyms, chiasms (intercalation being one form

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173 There are alternative rhetorical approaches that one might research, such as native Syriac methods of literary (and/or spoken) techniques employed in original compositions of the early Christian centuries, or concentrating on identifying any differences between (Greek) source and (Syriac) target texts then comparing similar practices in other Greek-Syriac translations.

of chiasmus), parallelisms and the use of biblical quotation. The writers who composed the Gospels in Greek (and those able to translate the Gospels from Greek into Syriac) would be familiar with the above six writing techniques.

The study of rhetoric, of course, reaches further than this (in both its ancient and modern incarnations). We, however, simply intend to observe the basics: identifying the boundaries of the ‘rhetorical unit’ (some units being more arbitrary than others) and observing the most obvious rhetorical techniques. We can be assisted in this by observing any previous rhetorical analyses on our passage. We can also consider the kinds of questions that rhetorical analysts usually ask.

There would be little point limiting our analysis to features discussed in ancient Greek rhetoric handbooks. Not only is there still little consensus concerning the usefulness of ancient rhetorical handbooks in enlightening the rhetorical strategies employed by the writers of the Greek Gospels but we might risk neglecting to observe the most common rhetorical devices used in biblical writing. The Greek handbooks omit several important, and widespread, rhetorical techniques (like chiasm and parallelism particularly favoured in Semitic rhetoric). They also fail to mention the widespread Greek practice of quoting Homer. Christopher Stanley argues that quoting Homer is comparable to biblical quotation. “Greco-Roman literature of the first century CE affords significant parallels to the normal citation practices of the apostle Paul.” Christopher D. Stanley, “Paul and Homer: Greco-Roman Citation Practice in the First Century CE,” *Novum Testamentum* 32, no. 1 (January, 1990): 78.

Rhetorical criticism is concerned with “the kinds of effects which discourses produce, and how they produce them … this is, in fact, probably the oldest form of "literary criticism" in the world, known as rhetoric.” T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 205.


The most thorough and succinct guide for a rhetorical analysis (broadly inclined, not limited to Greek rhetoric) is provided in Morrison, “Rhetorical Criticism,” namely: 1) Determine the rhetorical unit: What is the text? 2) Determine the question: What is the text trying to communicate? i.e. what problem is the author addressing? How is it attempting to influence the audience? 3) Determine the situation: What were the circumstances that might have prompted the author to write the text? How might the original setting aid or hinder the message? Where did the author and audience agree and disagree? 4) Determine the strategy a) Invention: What arguments are used, and what assumptions do they make? b) Arrangement: What is the structure, and the species of rhetoric? c) Style: What literary devices are used, and how do they contribute to the purpose of the text? 5) Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy for the situation.
The nature of rhetorical analysis lends itself to incorporating a large degree of social ‘background’. Here we intend to constrain such analysis by using principles internal to the text, thus it is methodologically ‘reined in’ by the following component.

A more complex employment of the present methodology will allow a broader rhetorical analysis which might better illuminate features in relation to expected patterns of composition or reception within its (researched) social environment (including particular word usages). Presently, we only incorporate certain anthropological opinions presumed to be relevant to our text, many of which should be recognised as hypothetical, and awaiting further research.

The results of our approach can serve to consolidate and expand on what we have observed about the genre (literary form) of our passage. There are still larger structural patterns to which our text belongs; these require a narrative analysis.

1.5.10 Narrative Analysis

The kind of narrative analysis undertaken here treats the Gospel text as presenting a ‘story-created world’. It is still an underappreciated component of the ‘three worlds’ of textual study (the world ‘behind’ the text and, to a lesser degree, that ‘in front of’ the text, have both traditionally dominated exegesis). It is not here asserted that narrative criticism should now dominate Gospel studies—it cannot expect to bear the full weight of what a framework for Gospel poetics requires, as shown well by Merenlahti. Nevertheless, any study of words, phrases, or themes present in a narrative, cannot afford to ignore narrative analysis.

In a narrative analysis, we can think and speak of the text in terms of a ‘narrative’ and its ‘(implied) readers’. Such an approach is not interested in equating the ‘author implied by the text’ or ‘readers implied by the text’ with any historical author(s) or historical reader(s). It is primarily concerned with matters ‘internal’ to the narrative (e.g. ‘characters’, ‘viewpoints’, ‘scenes’, and ‘plot’/‘storyline’).

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179 Petri Merenlahti, Poetics for the Gospels? Rethinking Narrative Criticism (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002). The three worlds of interpretation must intersect which means any narrative criticism that excludes ideological and historical approaches is deficient.
At first blush, a narrative approach may seem somewhat anachronistic for examining an ancient text. However, narrative analysis holds several advantages over other approaches.

Though, presumably, there was no critical discourse of ‘narrative analysis’ in the early Christian centuries, the key elements of story-telling were, nevertheless, familiar. Therefore, it is not entirely anachronistic to discuss how different ‘characters’ relate to other characters within a ‘plot’ and within different ‘scenes’ narrated by a ‘narrator’.

Secondly, since the narrative exegete is much less interested in the ‘author’ than in the ‘story’, narrative analysis can just as effectively be employed on a translated text as on an original composition. When the same characters, plot, dialogue, themes, and scenes appear, there will be little that does not apply to both Greek and Peshitta Gospels (conversely, if any of these elements do differ then such differences should be observed so that only what is relevant to the Peshitta is included in our narrative analysis).

Thirdly, a successful contextual meaning arises through familiarity with a lexeme’s narrative context. The narrative affects how words and phrases should be interpreted and suggests which phrases and themes the reader should be comparing or contrasting. For instance, the Gospel of Matthew provides its readers with numerous recurring themes that help to inform its lexemes, such as the interplay between the application of lexemes meaning ‘great’ and ‘small’ throughout the narrative within the theme of ‘greater righteousness’ (see §5.10 cf. §3.10 and §4.10). What readers can discern about the narrative’s use of lexemes can (it is presently supposed) be derived from the narrative itself, which provides a context that is ‘wide enough’ for examining the application of lexemes whilst also being ‘narrow enough’ to exclude potentially foreign contexts from intruding.

Fourthly, narrative analysis provides textual insights that other approaches tend to miss. For example, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, by comparing (in Mark’s Gospel) different expressed
opinions (‘views’) concerning Jesus, recognises several important elements inherent to ‘Mark’s story’ that other kinds of analysis have failed to observe.\textsuperscript{180}

Fifthly, including a narrative analysis helps provide a corrective against given meanings that are overly dependent on tentative ‘background’ suppositions (including supposed social settings as well as other texts presumed to be relevant ‘background’). Narrative analysis of the New Testament began largely as a reaction against the dominance of historically-based questions (such as, ‘What did the text mean?’ ‘What can the text tell us about history?’).\textsuperscript{181}

A. J. Greimas and Claude Levi-Strauss, two early French structuralists were influential in highlighting how a narrative works to communicate and how important are the interrelated parts of a narrative, by focusing on ‘the text’. Daniel Patte’s commentary on Matthew (from a ‘structural’ perspective, indebted to the theoretical work of Greimas) is relevant to several of our lexemes in Matthew.\textsuperscript{182}

Taken together, the above points three, four, and five assert that narrative analysis can serve to function like a custom’s ‘border security’ system whose priority is to check any ‘foreign organic matter’ from being inadvertently transplanted. It can therefore assist us in preserving the

\textsuperscript{180} Malbon, Mark’s Jesus. See, for example, her point that certain expressed opinions (such as the title ‘Son of David’) are not in agreement with what Jesus or the narrator opines. Also, what some (including the demons) say about Jesus is ‘half-knowledge’ that does not fully agree with what Jesus says (thus Jesus ‘deflects’ certain views from himself). That Jesus’ opinion of himself is purposefully not identical to that of the narrator’s is not something that other kinds of analysis would have been able to observe so clearly.


\textsuperscript{182} Daniel Patte, The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew’s Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). There are also newer ‘point of view’ studies, see the blog “Perspective Criticism,” accessed February 6, 2014, http://perspectivecriticism.com/. Perspective criticism likens a narrative’s intended effects to modern film directing. The present proposal would identify its literary leanings more as ‘text-oriented’ than ‘audience-oriented’. However, the boundary between the two should not be overstated. Whilst certain readers of the thesis may experience the present approach as basically ‘reader-response’ (or one reader’s response, as it does not delve into theoretical categories) the proposal simply seeks to be exegetical by looking for ‘intended effects’ (inherent to the narrative) whilst at the same time recognising that a narrative effects \textit{a reader} through the experience of \textit{reading}. 

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narrative as a sensitive context before carefully introducing other biblical passages that may otherwise (without such an analysis) threaten to spoil, or overrun, the exegesis of our verse.

1.5.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels
The eleventh component involves an observation of any other occurrences of our lexeme in the New Testament and an observation of any ‘parallel’ passages. If there is a parallel passage that contains our low-frequency lexeme then that passage can either be treated according to a full analysis (the previous ten components) or alternatively the differences between the two passages can be highlighted. Due to limitations of space, the thesis proceeds by simply acknowledging the differences between the two passages, thereby reducing the amount of overlapping analysis.

1.5.12 Old Testament Occurrences
In this component, any other biblical occurrences are observed from the Peshitta Old Testament according to the Leiden edition and including the critical apparatus. The analysis and comments need only be very brief, unless there is a particular example that is very similar to our New Testament passage.

1.5.13 Summary and Reflections on the Creation of a Syriac-English Lexical Entry
This penultimate component allows the exegete to take stock of the various analyses. It is at this stage that other lexicons can be compared before attempting to condense the analytical results into a user-friendly form. The most common form for such results is in the form of a lexical entry.

New translation projects, such as the Antioch Bible (Syriac-English translation of the Peshitta Old Testament and New Testament)\(^{183}\) depend on available Syriac-English lexicons. Ideally lexical entries should attempt to provide contextual meanings for every New Testament occurrence rather than to leave gaps for the translator (or other users) to have to guess which meaning properly applies to which instance. In the case of low-frequency lexemes the task appears to be

\(^{183}\) George Kiraz, ed., The Antioch Bible: The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Translation (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2012–).
easier (than it is for high-frequency lexemes) since every occurrence can be fully examined within
a manageable amount of time.

1.5.14 Lexical Results: A Contextual ‘Lexical Entry’ by an Exegete (based on KPG format)
In this section the resulting analysis is given in succinct form, resembling the form traditionally
employed by lexicographers for a lexical entry. Here the format is based on KPG (vol. 2) but
also includes a provisional definition in boldface type. Putting the results into the form of a
lexical entry forces the exegete to filter and condense everything of importance into a very small
‘essay’ or ‘article’, hopefully one that is user-friendly. It is also hoped to be of use to future
researchers.

1.6 Summary of Chapter 1
The introduction has asserted that a lexicon’s usefulness is determined by how well its users can
find the meaning of a particular example they have in mind; yet New Testament lexicons do not
always deliver well with such a feature. Whilst some users might expect that lexicons provide
contextual meanings for low-frequency lexemes, this is not necessarily the case. A methodology
is needed for determining contextual meanings (for individual New Testament contexts). Low-
frequency lexemes, in particular, require greater clarity in regard to their given meanings (whether
they are meant to apply to particular New Testament contexts or are based on various other
contexts). Low-frequency lexemes thus highlight key methodological and exegetical concerns.

Two important matters of methodology were discussed in relation to the two most influential
Greek New Testament lexicons (BDAG and LN), namely how to approach and engage with
‘other literature’ and ‘other disciplines’. A methodology for both concerns (in BDAG and LN)
was apparently important but not readily apparent. A methodology that seeks to deal with these
primary concerns is required.

Based largely on the archaeological principle of in situ, the decision was made to withhold an
examination of ‘other contexts/other literature’ (other than those found in biblical literature) in
favour of focusing on ‘other (exegetical) disciplines’ in the development of a methodology for
determining contextual word-meanings. It was also asserted that context is such a potent factor
that other factors like linguistic approaches (and linguistic theories) should not be considered to be as determinative as exegetical approaches when it comes to determining contextual meanings for low-frequency lexemes in the Peshitta Gospels. It was argued that exegetical studies in the Greek Gospels could be used in order to develop, and test, an exegetical methodology for the examination of several low-frequency lexemes in the Peshitta Gospels. The ‘other disciplines’ of focus are thus the exegetical kinds of analysis familiar to scholars of the Greek Gospels.

Discussing linguistic theory highlighted further the present choice for an exegetical approach by indicating its advantages over and against the use of a particular contemporary linguistic model. The semantics-pragmatics controversy was acknowledged. It was asserted that a division between the two need not be sought here. New Testament linguistics, as partly isolated from contemporary non-biblical linguistics, has traditionally tended not to separate pragmatics from semantics, since exegetical or grammatical analysis can subsume both. The difficulty in determining which of the thirty-two kinds of linguistic analysis might be applicable to a given study of New Testament lexemes in the Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis was further apparent because linguists themselves have been unable to clarify this. It was observed that context is the most potent determiner of meaning which consequently demands consideration of how context is delimited—hence the need for a clear, careful (and self-conscious) exegetical methodology. Utilizing Wierzbicka’s NSM as a case in point, it was argued that one’s linguistic approach is not the greatest determiner of meaning. Rather it is the kind of context one includes in one’s methodology. Cognitive linguistics remains potentially useful with future research, yet a point of difference (from an ‘encyclopaedic’ view) is the present goal to begin with the individual context as though it were the only known context. Similarly, corpus-based linguistics was less relevant because, by its very nature, it demands the examination of words occurring many times in a large corpus (whereas words of very low frequency are presently in view from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke). While corpus linguistics often ‘strays’ from its ideal of using texts taken from ‘real life’ situations, its goal is admirable and, like exegesis, takes seriously the notion that context determines meaning. The subsection on theory concluded with the suggestion that in the case of low-frequency lexemes, we do not always need to distinguish between a contextual
meaning and a lexical meaning since it is in combination with contexts that words have meaning. Similarly, it is presently supposed that the smallest meaningful units of language are predominantly phrasal units, rather than lexical units.

Dealing with words and phrases appearing in narratives means that literary theory is relevant to Gospel lexicography and Gospel exegesis.

Further advantages for utilizing research and techniques employed within Gospel studies were given. One advantage for utilizing Gospel studies for exegeting the Peshitta Gospels, is that exegesis of the Greek Gospels already exists and has explored many areas including having to deal with the Semitic dimension of the ‘Greek’ Gospels (and the complex nature of Gospel-composition). Consequently, ‘Gospel studies’ has already had to deal with many language complexities in the Koine Gospels which are texts composed (and translated) from Semitic source materials. The Peshitta Gospels, which translate back into a Semitic tongue, simplify many of these language peculiarities. As a result, the Peshitta Gospels are often easier to exegete (they employ a less uneven dialect and have significantly less manuscript variants) than the Koine Gospels. Exegesis of one can assist with exegesis of the other.

Whereas dealing with the ‘Old Syriac’ Gospels will have to deal with many differences with the extant Greek Gospel texts, the Peshitta translation is much closer to the Greek Gospels and much of what can be said about the Greek Gospels can be seen to apply also to the Peshitta Gospels.

Danker’s assertion, that lexicographers are exegetes, led into a discussion of the kinds of exegesis relevant to lexical research. Lexemes in the Gospel narratives may benefit from a narrative approach. Finally, the proposed exegetical components were outlined.

The grammatical table (along with the comments on grammar and semantics) grounds all the antecedent analyses and is, by necessity first, because it functions as an anchor for all the analyses that follow. Thus it orients later exegetical analyses, whereby straying is curbed, focus is more easily regained, and the researcher is not lost in the process.
In line with the aim of this thesis to be easily replicable by both scholars and students, translation analysis is next so that even the student researcher can compare the underlying Greek text at the ‘smaller’ level of the verse, before the component of analysis gets unmanageably large. Obtaining whole chapters of Greek manuscripts is something for the advanced scholar who can employ translation comparisons at any of the later stages.

Genre analysis (‘literary form’) follows here because it analyses units that are slightly larger than the verse, helping to inform the exegete about the meaning of words and phrases. It also helps the exegete to consider the importance of the relationship between literary form and meaning.

Rhetorical analysis looks at structural patterns in still larger units (which is why it comes next in the present methodology) by considering the text as a ‘composition made by a writer for a particular audience’. As such, it aims to observe ‘writing techniques’ and the intended effect on an ‘audience’. It is also able to incorporate any relevant anthropological insights (concerning cultural symbols and perspectives).

Narrative analysis follows, taking in the context of the whole book (by observing its characters, scenes, themes and plot/storyline). The advantage of including narrative analysis is that it is wide enough to provide a larger context but narrow enough so that it places a limit on foreign (or conjectured) contexts from impinging on the text in view (like a customs ‘border security’ system).

Following this, New Testament parallels and other occurrences are considered. This form of analysis brings to light the differences between passages so that the exegete can more fully respect differences between each passage.

Finally, at the extremities of the proposed components of analysis (after the individual textual context has already been well established) other biblical contexts (OT) can be considered. This ensures that all possible relevant biblical passages have been explored.

After all these analyses have been undertaken, it is important for the exegete to critically reflect on the data gathered in order to compile the results and draw some conclusions. It is only now
that other lexical entries are consulted and critiqued. This uniquely allows for a comparison between the current results and the existing work of lexicographers.

In the fourteenth component, the researcher can condense the results in the form of a lexical entry (and, where possible, propose a definition).

How the proposed methodology began to develop now follows. Chapter 2 uses an earlier methodology-in-progress to articulate a problem discovered whilst attempting to evaluate certain contextual meanings that become evidently unsatisfactory. This is symptomatic of what the lexicographer may have to confront when beginning with other lexicons. The full methodology (implemented in chapters 3–9) proposes not to begin with previous lexical entries. But this important point was only discovered after a long struggle with a difficult Syriac lexeme, compounded by problematically derived meanings in the Greek lexicons.
Chapter 2. The Problem of Context Delimitation: Deconstructing Previously-Constructed Contextual Meanings

This section relays how the present exegetical proposal developed, thus it is predominantly ‘pre-methodology’. Here we journey to the root cause for the need for an exegetical ‘intratextual’ methodology.

The section begins with the problem of trying to resolve which one of the two suggested meanings in KPG is more contextually appropriate for the Peal of ܐܒܛ (Mk 9:18, 20) with particular attention paid to the meaning of the underlying Greek. The analysis threatens to become unmanageably large when chasing up meanings given in lexicons. The outcome of the analysis led to the development of the methodology proposed above in §1.5.

Without the benefit of a clear ‘map-like’ method to follow, the researcher is left to wander between landmark lexical entries and to ponder how previous researchers have arrived at their conclusions. Therefore, by its very nature, the reading of this section may be experienced as meandering. This experience makes obvious and lays bare the need for what was proposed in §1.5, namely a ‘follow-able’, ‘map-like’ exegetical methodology developed in hindsight as a result of taking stock of the various principles and issues encountered.

The origins of the present thesis can be traced back to the time when I began struggling, independently of Falla, with the Peal of ܐܒܛ. Around this time, Falla published “A Conceptual Framework for a New Comprehensive Syriac-English Lexicon” in which he gave two examples where the lexicographer is obliged to pass on to the user any ambiguity that the lexicographer has been unable to resolve, such as in the case where a Syriac word

    can be assigned a range of conceivable meanings, none of which can be ruled out with certainty—at least in the present stage of our research—and therefore require citation if the reader is to have genuine access to the lexicographer’s investigations. 184

In such cases, Falla asserts that glosses remain preferable to definitions “for a gloss can indicate an approximate or possible sense without prejudicing the integrity of the entry.”185 One of Falla’s examples of a Peshitta Gospel word “of uncertain meaning” was the Peal of ܐܒܛ in Mk 9:18, 20

185 Ibid.
where he hoped that its ambiguity “may of course be clarified by further research outside the context of the Syriac New Testament.”\footnote{Ibid.} Whether or not the resolution would be found outside the context of Mark, and whether or not the researcher needs to venture beyond the New Testament, were issues in need of consideration and clarification. Initially I sought to demonstrate that KPG’s second group of glosses \textit{(throw down in convulsions, shake violently in convulsions, throw into convulsions)} were contextually most appropriate but these revealed themselves to be based on meanings given in the Greek lexicons (which were based on harmonising the Gospel parallels to Mk 9:18–20 of the so-called ‘epileptic boy’). Further examination raised several interrelated methodological issues concerning what should, and should not, legitimately be considered contextual. In order to examine the process of, and the construction of, how a contextual meaning has been, and might be, provided for the Peal of \\(\text{ܒܒ̄}\) in Mk 9:18 and 9:20, the Greek text, and Greek lexicons, had also to be examined. Consequently, several ‘foreign influences’ (three suppositions) became apparent in re-examining the Peal of \\(\text{ܒܒ̄}\) in Mark.\footnote{The present chapter does not investigate the various forms of epilepsy identified by ancient physicians, nor is it side-tracked by which forms might coalesce with modern categories of epilepsy. Rather it seeks to examine the methodological issues involved when a dictionary employs ‘convulsive’ terminology for certain Syriac and Greek lexemes. The issue at stake concerns carrying over epilepsy-based terminology inadvertently from certain Greek lexicons.}

\section*{2.1 Approaching an Ambiguous Low-Frequency Lexeme}

A good place to begin when discussing a Syriac lexeme from the Peshitta New Testament is with the most recent Syriac lexicons, in this case with KPG and SL. CSD (based on the Latin TS) should also not be overlooked. However, in some cases, neither CSD nor SL services the New Testament reader’s needs. TS still provides a greater number of references to consult and includes many corresponding Greek lexemes. But TS, besides not being in English, does not provide what the reader of the Peshitta New Testament needs, namely a semantic analysis of every low-frequency lexeme, along with its corresponding Greek. Neither Brun\footnote{J. Brun, \textit{Dictionarium Syriaco-Latinum} (Beirut: PP. Soc. Jesu, 1911).} nor Costaz\footnote{Louis Costaz, \textit{Dictionnaire Syriaque-Français} (2nd ed.; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1986).} fulfils this need, nor does the pocket-sized lexicon of Jennings which does at least address every

\footnote{186}
New Testament lexeme. By contrast readers of the Peshitta New Testament can expect to find both features in KPG (having the most thorough and perspicuous methodology). KPG intends to provide its analysis based on a consultation of the critical editions of the Greek New Testament from Tischendorf to the present \(^{190}\) of the corresponding Greek terms for every occurrence of its Syriac lexemes. \(^{191}\)

### 2.1.1 A Convulsive Meaning \(^{92}\) Shaped by Four Fronts

SL does not address the meaning of the Peal of \(ܚܒܛ\) in Peshitta Mk 9:18 or 9:20. Thus neither of the two main meanings given in SL for the Peal of \(ܚܒܛ\) indicates how a transitive use of the verb might apply when used of a demon afflicting a boy. \(^{193}\) The same deficit pertains to most other Syriac lexicons. Costaz is aware of several meanings for the Peal \(^{194}\) but does not assist the reader to know which one, if any, might be applicable to Mk 9:18 or 9:20. Similarly, there is no reference to the New Testament context in Brun.

By contrast, the reader who consults KPG has the opposite dilemma; the reader is given two distinct meanings for the New Testament context even though the verb occurs in only one passage. KPG gives the more general meaning first, for which TS had already cited *percussit* and *excussit* as applicable to both Isa 27:12 and Mk 9:18, 20 (presumably meaning ‘beat/strike/knock off/knock down’) hence CSD ‘to beat down’ (CSD Supplement: ‘to beat down, batter down’).

Thus KPG: “beat, batter, beat down.”

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\(^{190}\) Falla employs two worthy criteria for the citation of variant Greek readings: “The first is that only extant variant Greek readings are cited as corresponding terms. Presumed retroversions of Peshitta renderings such as we find in the critical apparatus of Hermann von Soden’s *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* are not included.” “The second is that a variant Greek reading is listed for consideration when it can be demonstrated on the basis of an analysis of the relevant data that its Peshitta Syriac parallel is, in the context in which it occurs, conceivable as its translation. Accordingly it is not the nature or extent of Greek manuscript evidence that is used as a criterion, but whether the term in the receptor language is conceivable as a rendering of the variant reading in the source text.” Falla, *Ky*, 1:xxxii.

\(^{191}\) Falla, *Ky*, 1:xx, provides “the corresponding Greek term for each Syriac term—‘term’ is used in its widest sense; namely, ‘a word’, ‘phrase’, or ‘group of words’.”

\(^{192}\) Here and throughout a ‘convulsive meaning’ refers to any of the various meanings given in lexicons that mention ‘convulse’ or ‘convulsions’ (e.g. ‘to convulse’, ‘to throw into convulsions’, ‘to shake violently in convulsions’).

\(^{193}\) In SL, 1a. is ‘general’ and applies to olives (to knock off) and to Isa 27:12; 1b. applies to hail (to pound, break into pieces) and 2. is an intransitive use (to fall).

\(^{194}\) 1a. to beat or cut down; 1b. to strike, break; 2. intransitive to fall (hail).
KPG then offers a convulsive meaning reminiscent of that found in some Greek lexicons (see §2.4–), namely “throw down in convulsions, shake violently in convulsions, throw into convulsions.” Although the entry does not mention epilepsy, there is no way for the reader to know that KPG’s ‘convulsive’ meaning was not intended to suggest medical convulsions or ‘epileptic convulsions’.195

The lexicographer may wish to uncover the origins of the convulsive meaning or to know what justifies its presence in KPG. Apparently the convulsive meaning has been shaped by four sides or ‘fronts’. We will concentrate on the latter three influential fronts, but mention must also be made of an earlier, historical point of influence.

The convulsive meaning does not originate with KPG. It is worth noting that it is absent in the Syriac lexicons that do not address the lexeme’s usage in the Peshitta Gospel of Mark. Thus it is present, as a supposed contextual meaning for its New Testament appearance, in Jennings (‘shook violently, convulsed, Mk. ix 18, 20’) and in the more detailed treatment of Whish (“Shook violently, threw down, convulsed [9:20]”).196

The original influential ‘front’ takes us beyond Whish to Schaaf, thus predating modern Syriac lexicography, and thus no longer germane. It should, however, be acknowledged for influencing Whish to some degree, whose lexical treatment still partially reflects a tradition to suppose the same meaning between various languages. It is difficult to know whether such a variety of languages and contexts are meant to indicate similarity or ambiguity and uncertainty.197 The many

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195 Terry Falla has clarified to me in personal correspondence that a medical meaning was not intended.
196 Henry F. Whish Claris Syriaca (London: Deighton, Bell, 1883).
197 For Mk 9:18, Whish has “dosteth on the ground. So the Vulg. allidit.—E.V. teareth—Gr. ῥήσσει—Compare S. Lk ix. 42, where for ἔῤῥηξεν αὐτόν, the Syriac has ἁλάν, throw him down, and so the E.V. Part. fem. of ἁλά, prop. Beat down fruit from a tree, or, Threshold corn with a flail; whence, Shook violently, threw down, convulsed. Pret. 3. sing. fem. ἁλά, with aff. ver. 20, below, Gr. ἕσπαραξεν αὐτόν.—Occurs in the N.T. only in these places. Heb. ḫal, Beat down fruit, Deut. xxiv. 20; Isa. xxvii. 17 [sic] (object omitted): —Threshold corn, Judg. vi. 11; Ruth ii. 17.”
Latin lexemes in Michaelis’ edition of Castelli could easily have justified Whish’s decision to combine contexts and languages.\(^{198}\)

The original ‘front’ (influence) is that the sense ‘to shake violently, convulse’ developed as an extension of the meaning taken from the Hebrew-Latin lexicons for the Hebrew cognate. Without examining this point of influence in detail, a good example is seen in the entry in Schaaf’s Syriac-Latin lexicon, which makes reference to Mk 9:18, 20 after reproducing word-for-word what had commonly appeared in the Hebrew-Latin lexicons for the Qal of שִׁבַּח. Schaaf’s entry roughly translates as:

beat out, cast down fruit from trees, or grain, or pulse from the husks. Also shake violently, crush, dash in pieces, break in pieces. שִׁבַּח shook him, Mk 9:20. Participle form שִׁבַּח shaking, verse 18.\(^{199}\)

The second part of the entry takes the transitive sense ‘to shake (something)’ as a natural extension of the Latin excussit used for harvesting fruit, grain and nuts and quoted almost verbatim from any number of older Hebrew-Latin lexicons such as Leigh,\(^{200}\) Calascio,\(^{201}\) Guichard,\(^{202}\) or Pagnini\(^{203}\) in relation to the Qal of שִׁבַּח. We shall defer discussion of the Hebrew cognate until later. It is presently sufficient to note that Schaaf accepted the meaning offered for the Hebrew cognate and offered a meaning for Mk 9:18, 20 that took full advantage of the ambiguity of the Latin excussit (‘beat out’, ‘knock out’; or ‘shake out’, ‘shake’) as well as decussit


\(^{202}\)  “excutere fructus ex arbor, vel frumenta aut legumina ex folliculis.” Etienne Guishard, L’harmonie etymologique des langues hebraique, chaldaique, syriaque, grecque, latine, francaise, italienne, espagnole, allemande, flamande, angloise, &c (Paris, 1606).

(‘strike down’; ‘cast down’; or ‘shake’, ‘shake off’). There is little reason to judge Schaaf’s methodology by modern standards but we do need to acknowledge that Schaaf’s meanings live on in Whish, and Whish influences the entries of Jennings and KPG.

However, the primary influence that has shaped the convulsive meaning found in Whish, Jennings, and KPG protrudes from the Greek lexicons (the Greek influence will be examined in §2.4). One way to observe this is to note the resemblance of the meaning given in several Greek lexicons for σπαράσσω. The clearest example is found in LN: “σπαράσσω; συσπαράσσω: to cause a person to shake violently in convulsions – ‘to throw into convulsions, to throw into a fit’.” A fuller explanation of this meaning appears in Bratcher and Nida’s commentary on the Greek of Mk 1:26 and 9:20, namely that σπαράσσω clearly points to a seizure, a convulsion (cf. 9:20, Lk. 9:39). . . . Convulsing him should be translated by a term used to identify such types of seizures as occur in epilepsy. It is not enough to say ‘shook him’.204

The tendency toward a meaning connected to epilepsy is notably more pronounced in the Greek lexicons. It is advocated even more strongly by those, such as John Wilkinson, who consciously seek to find biomedical distinctions lying dormant in the text (in both Mk 1:26//Lk 4:35 and Mk 9:18–26) as though the text offers us an historical ‘case study’.205

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205 John Wilkinson, The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 71: “Mark tells us that the demon cried out with a loud voice and produced a convulsion in the man (Mk 1.26). He uses the verb sparan, ‘to tear or to rend’, to describe the convulsion. Lk describes how the demon threw him to the ground and uses the verb ripto which the Greek physician Hippocrates frequently uses of convulsions (Lk 4.35) … although the evidence is not strong, it is suggestive of the diagnosis of major epilepsy in this case.” Wilkinson’s footnote says: “For the usage of the word [ῥιπτω] in Hippocrates see Hobart, p2.” The reference is given as W. K. Hobart, The Medical Language of St Luke (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1992 [sic 1882]). Two caveats concerning the alleged Hippocratic use of ῥιπτω: (1) the verb’s objects differ there (middle with reflexive pronouns) and (2) the given references are not excerpted from the most relevant treatise on epilepsy which would be περὶ ἱρής νόσου (On the Sacred Disease). Having reviewed the Greek text of Littré, I find no occurrences of ῥιπτω in the treatise. Émile Littré, ed., Oeuvres complètes d’Hippocrate (vol. 6; Paris: 1839–1861); “Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Médecine,” accessed June 22, 2007, http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica.htm. Furthermore, Henry Cadbury exposed the methodological flaws in Hobart and others who, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sought to find Greek medical terminology in Luke. Henry J. Cadbury, “Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts. II. Recent Arguments for Medical Language,” Journal of Biblical Literature 45, nos. 1–2 (1926): 190–209.
2.2 Deconstructing the Convulsive Meaning

The remainder of chapter 2 examines three influential suppositions (see §2.3, §2.4, and §2.5 respectively):

- **Supposition 1 (§2.3):** The textual context of Peshitta Mk 9:18–26 intends to portray someone suffering from a medical condition known as epilepsy (ἐπιληψία), albeit ‘epilepsy caused by a demon’;

- **Supposition 2 (§2.4):** The Greek behind the Syriac in Mk 9:18-26 specifically indicates epileptic convulsions with the verb σπαράσσω (LN: “to throw into convulsions”; CGELNT: “shake to and fro, of a hostile spirit causing a convulsion”);

- **Supposition 3 (§2.5):** The parallel Gospel accounts in Matthew and Luke provide the ‘same’ context of a medical condition (physiological illness) whereby the suffering relays symptoms of a known medical disease, thus the term σεληνιάζομαι in Mt 17:15 (BDAG and LN: “to be an epileptic”).

All three suppositions are widely alleged or presumed in commentaries and lexicons dealing with the Greek text. We would expect to find a degree of such influence on Syriac lexical entries given that the Peshitta Gospels are Greek-to-Syriac translations. Also, the entries in KPG are consciously influenced by the semantic subdomain of σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω in LN.\(^{206}\) In LN σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω, ῥήσσω, and σεληνιάζομαι are included together as indicative of the same physiological disease (in the same semantic subdomain, entry 23.167 under ‘Sickness, Disease, Weakness’) and all three are given definitions related to epilepsy.

The convulsive meaning might, possibly, be justified by its immediate textual context. Therefore, before examining the Greek lexicons (supposition 2) we will consider the supposition that the convulsive meaning in certain Syriac lexicons may well stand on its own (supposition 1).

\(^{206}\) The methodology of KPG makes some use of the semantic subdomains in LN for locating other Syriac words of similar meaning: “The first step in the process [of locating and ascertaining Syriac words of similar meaning] is to locate in Louw and Nida’s work the domain and subdomain of each Greek word underlying a Peshitta catchword.” Falla, Key, 2.xxxv.
2.2.1 The Convulsive Meaning in KPG

The entry in KPG reveals that for the two optional meanings there are actually three semantic categories, made clear by the three groupings of words of similar meaning\(^{207}\) separated by semicolons (i.e. beat; throw; convulse): the Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \), Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \), Pael of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \) (beat, strike, hit, flag); the Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \), Aphel of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \) (throw, cast, throw down); the Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \), and Ethpaal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \) (be convulsed, writhe, roll about). The entry implies that the reader should suppose a hierarchy of groupings for the three semantic categories (such a hierarchy is not made explicit in KPG’s introduction). Thus a level of similarity is supposed in descending order (beat; throw/throw down; convulse). The entry is diplomatic by including meanings for the lexeme found in previous New Testament lexicons, including the two main meanings supplied in Whish (dash on the ground; convulse) and is judicious in placing the older meaning first.

If we observe how KPG justifies its ‘convulsive’ meaning within the entry, we can detect, faintly, a contextual supposition concerning the relevance of convulsions. We see that of the two Syriac words of similar meaning in the third semantic group (the Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \), Ethpaal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \)) the second occurs in Mk 9:20 as a Syriac word of similar meaning (given in KPG as: be convulsed, writhe, roll about) and the first (Peal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \)) appears in Lk 9:42 (an ambiguous lexeme ‘trample’? ‘oppress? ‘shake violently?’ ‘convulse’?). Thus our lexeme in KPG is understandably treated as similar in meaning to the Ethpaal of \( \overset{\text{ฆ��}}{\text{สมา}} \) which is in close proximity to it. But it is also treated as similar in meaning to an ambiguous lexeme in a parallel account (Lk 9:42). In the Greek lexicons, and especially in LN, there is a strong temptation to harmonise the parallel Gospel episodes of Matthew, Mark and Luke, that is, to treat these Gospel parallels (Mt 17:14–18//Mk 9:16–26//Lk 9:39–42) as though sharing the ‘one’ context (‘supposition 3’). KPG is to be congratulated for not being overly influenced by the semantic word groupings in LN, that is, where \( \overset{\text{ὀλην\text{άζωμαι}}}{} \) appears as a word of similar meaning from Mt 17:15 in LN, KPG has not suggested any Syriac lexemes corresponding to \( \overset{\text{ὀλην\text{άζωμαι}}}{} \) as a word of similar meaning for Mk 9:18, 20.

\(^{207}\) In KPG, the expression ‘Syriac words of similar meaning’ is used in place of ‘synonyms’. Falla, Key, 2:xxv n1. I do not share KPG’s aversion to the term ‘synonyms’, but I do prefer using the phrase ‘words of similar meaning’ because it suggests a less strict category of similarity.
The following deconstructs the tendency that the textual context in Mk 9:16–26, in either, or both, Syriac and Greek, intends to relay an epileptic condition by testing three underlying suppositions. We will withhold our analysis of Greek lexemes until §2.4. First, in §2.3, we will look at the context of Mk 9:14–29 with a birds-eye view then zoom in to look more closely at individual Syriac lexemes.

2.3 Testing Supposition 1 (Alleged Medical Context): Mk 9:14–29

Peshitta Mk 9:14–29 (CESG text):

And as he came to the disciples, he saw around them a great crowd, and scribes debating with them. And immediately all the crowd saw him and were amazed and ran to him, and asked him peace. And he asked the scribes, "What are you debating with them?" And one from the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, because he has a spirit without speech. And where it seizes him, it *beats him* [convulses him?], and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. And I told your disciples to cast him out, and they could not." Jesus replied and said to him, "O faithless generation, until when shall I remain with you? And until when shall I minister to you? Bring him to me." And they brought him to him and when the spirit saw him, it immediately *beat him* [convulsed him] and he fell on the ground and *was shaken* [convulsed] and foamed at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How much is the time behold from thus [since] he is?" He told him, "Behold from his childhood, and many times it casts him into fire and into water in order to destroy him. But,

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208 The Peshitta text with translation is offered here to assist the reader. Later texts are broken down verse-by-verse for analysis.
whether you can do, help me and have mercy on me.” Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, everything is possible for whoever believes.” And immediately the boy’s father cried out, weeping, and saying, “I believe, help my lack of faith.” And when Jesus saw that people were running and gathering around him, he rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, “Mute spirit that does not speak, I am commanding you, get out of him and never enter him again.” And the demon cried out much and tore him and went out, and he was as though dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by his hand and raised him. When Jesus entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” He told them, “This type nothing can cast it out, except by fasting and prayer.”

Whether or not readers are meant to perceive epileptic symptoms in the text of Mark may depend not on Mark but other medical accounts. Thus the question: Does the textual context in Mark expect, or intend, the ‘symptoms’ to be viewed in line with symptoms indicative of epilepsy (ἐπιληψία, *epilepsia*, ܐܦܘܠܘܡܦܣܝܐ) 

The evidence within Mark suggests not.

The narrative as it stands in Mark has the spiritual cause of affliction as its focus. This is clarified by treating the narrative in isolation from Matthew and Luke. Mark’s narrative maintains a distinction between Jesus’ healing activities and his exorcisms. Readers in Mk 9:14–29 are meant to perceive the unfolding of a spiritual battle whereby Jesus, as the greater power, forces the retreat of the unclean/unholy spirit who had previously been threatening the life of the boy. Epilepsy does not appear to be relevant, and there is no evidence that the Peshitta translations have introduced any new features related to epilepsy into the text.

The overall contour of the narrative in the Peshitta Gospel of Mark is not dissimilar to Greek Mark, so we can begin discussing the overall narrative with an eye on what applies to both the Greek and the extant Syriac translations (the Sinitic, Peshitta, and Harklean).

### 2.3.1 Significant Themes in Mk 9:14–29

Many of the themes present in Mk 9:14–29 are shared with the remainder of the Gospel, but not all of them are observed in the commentaries at this point. The most significant themes are: kingdom advancement, exorcism, power, violence, death, resurrection, teaching, and faith.

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210 The Curetonian is not extant for Mk 1:1–16:8.

211 Several of the following observations will not be found, for example, in the large commentary of Collins, *Mark*.


The banishment of unholy/unclean spirits represents a ‘clash of kingdoms’. The purpose of the four narrated stories of spirit-banishment in Mark is that they dramatically illustrate the presence of God’s ‘kingdom’ (or ‘reign’, or ‘empire’, βασιλεία). Thus spirit-banishment gives further expression to the ‘message of salvation of Jesus Christ’ by which the overall narrative was named (ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Mk 1:1). So the proclamation concerning the advancement of God’s reign and the banishment of unholy spirits are two sides of the one event made possible through the spiritual ‘warrior’ Jesus (cf. Mk 1:7; cf. also Mk 1:38–39).

The first characteristic of Jesus made explicit is his impressive authority (Mk 1:22, 27, and 39) when his command that an unclean spirit leave a man in the synagogue is successful (for this first banishment account see §2.4.1). Jesus then restores Peter’s mother-in-law and heals many people there before continuing on with his two-fold mission which involves (1) touring Galilee heralding the arrival of God’s βασιλεία and (2) banishing demons (Mk 1:39). Thus the Gospel of Mark demonstrates that the anticipated ‘stronger one’ (ὁ ἰσχυρότερ ὁ Ηλίας, Mk 1:7) had arrived.213 Similarly, Jesus answers the charge that his power to banish demons is demonic by answering in parables (Mk 3:23) concerning the ‘binding of the strong man’ (3:27) which is a “parable of what is involved in each successive exorcism.”214 The restoration of the possessed boy is also parabolic in that it both

teaches about the source and significance of Jesus’ power and foreshadows Jesus’ (and other’s need for) resurrection.215

The two most detailed banishment accounts (Mk 5:1–20 and 9:14–29) may be related intratextually since they share several features in common (references to physical strength; victims who are saved from receiving further physical harm; and the respective family/communities affected). The two accounts might also be related by battle connotations or military overtones—in Mk 5:1–20 Jesus’ power is shown to be greater than the violent unclean spirit named ‘Legion’ (thousands of army troops) whilst in Mk 9:14–29 the confrontation is similarly battle-like, where a demon intends to destroy the boy’s life.216

There is a lot to unpack in Mk 9:14–29. The demonic intruder in Mk 9:16–26 is non-speaking, making it rather difficult to communicate with and all the more difficult to overpower.217 The fact that the intruder threatens the life of the youth and throws him down suddenly is suggestive of an animal-like attack. This is evoked also by the ‘froth’ and the ‘teeth gnashing’. ‘Gnashing one’s teeth’ was commonly seen as a death threat, signifying hate or the desire to see someone

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215 D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of St Mark (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 243–44, was perhaps the first in the modern period to perceive the significance of this pericope for the resurrection of Christians. Cf. James R. Edwards, The Gospel according to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 280, who translates the Greek in verse 27 as “he raised him, and he was resurrected.”

216 See Robert H. Gundry, Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 488–98. Gundry observes the theme of ‘power’ in both banishment episodes. He entitles Mk 9:14-29: “The Superpower of Jesus in a Specially Difficult Exorcism.” The connection with ‘strength’ is more noticeable in Greek, ἰσχύω appears both for those attempting to subdue the tormented Gerasene man (Mk 5:4), and for the nine disciples attempting to expel the unclean spirit afflicting the tormented youth (Mk 9:18). In Greek the lexeme further resonates with the substantive use of ἰσχυρός in Mk 1:7 and 3:27 (the ‘strong’, salvific figure to be found in Jesus).

217 I take the non-speaking characteristic of the demon as a feature of it being particularly animalistic or ferocious. For early readers who had any knowledge of the Roman ‘sport’ of throwing expendable people to wild animals, this particular nasty spirit takes on a further imperialistic dreadfulness. An image of a wild beast attacking helpless victims would be suggestive of the Roman cruelty of throwing persons into the arena to the lions and bears (or wild dogs or boars) and watching them being ‘torn apart’ as public entertainment. Given that Josephus (Jewish War 7.2) mentions that Titus exhibited such ‘shows’ (using prisoners of war) when he stayed in Caesarea Philippi we may have a clue as to the location of the earliest readers of Mark (Caesarea Philippi). In a similar fashion, Sjef van Tilborg reads the death threats in Revelation as written against a similar historical backdrop. Sjef van Tilborg, “The Danger at Midday: Death Threats in the Apocalypse,” Biblica 85 (2004).
destroyed, and naturally linked with verbs for ‘tearing’ or ‘destroying’ (though here it is a response of the son not an action of the unclean spirit).\textsuperscript{218}

The spirit-banishment is performed like a resurrection and narrated as a teaching episode on kingdom advancement in the face of foreign powers within a faithless generation. The desperation of disciples, of crowd and of the boy’s father stands out. The account is significant as Jesus’ final encounter with the unclean spirits, prior to the fulfilment of his ‘death-resurrection mission’ in Jerusalem (the material before and after our episode, Mk 8:31–9:32, deals with Jesus’ determination to complete his mission as the ‘The Human’/‘Son of Man’: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου/ܢܳܫܳܐ ܒܪܶܗܳܕܐ). We also note that in Mk 8:34–35 any would-be disciples are shockingly instructed that to save one’s life one must ‘destroy it’ (Aphel of ἀπόλλυμι) employing the same lexeme that appears in the centre of our episode (Mk 9:22).

The struggle over the implementation of God’s empire in Mk 9:14–29 is ‘fought’ and ‘won’ unconventionally. Jesus succeeds in removing the unclean spirit (where nine disciples failed)\textsuperscript{219} thus rescuing the son from a violent death by supernaturally ‘raising’ him, as it were, from death. The disciples receive private teaching in Mk 9:28–29 concerning how they too might have overcome this ‘type’ of deadly spirit. Later a similar example, in Mk 9:38, suggests an authority to banish unclean spirits, is not simply based on being one of the disciples.

The larger section is bracketed by two ‘books ends’ (\textit{inclusio}) with two accounts of Jesus restoring the sight of a blind man (Mk 8:22–26 and 10:46–52) with the implication of whether or not readers (unlike the disciples) can truly ‘see’ who Jesus is (as the one who suffers and transcends death).\textsuperscript{220}


\textsuperscript{219} The point of contention, in Mk 9:16, between the disciples and the scribes concerned why the disciples could not do what their teacher had taught them to do. Graham H. Twelftree, \textit{Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical & Theological Study} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 86.

\textsuperscript{220} Cf. Richard Bauckham, \textit{Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 230: “There is the use of \textit{inclusio}, such as the correspondence between the two healings of blind men in 8:22–26 and 10:46–52, framing a section within which there are almost no miracles but a development of the theme of suffering.”
With this context in mind, it is now appropriate to examine the series of verbs appearing in Mk 9:18–26.

2.3.2 Zooming In: The Peshitta Verbs in Mk 9:18–26

The episode contains a large number of verbs relating to the unclean spirit and/or the boy. These will assist us with the meaning of the Peal of حبط in vv. 18 and 20. Many of these verbs express violent actions enacted by the spirit on the boy. The first verb concerns the spirit ‘seizing’ or ‘grasping’ the boy (the Aphel of درك // καταλαμβάνω).

The Peal active participle of حبط is found next as an action of the boy (KPG offers two alternatives ‘be paralyzed, stiff, rigid’ and ‘languish, pine’). The corresponding Greek is the middle-passive form of the verb εξηραίνω (‘becomes withered, lifeless, dry, stiff’). The intended meaning of both Greek and Syriac is that the boy’s life force has virtually ‘withered away’, diminishing to a dangerously low state (cf. the same Greek-Syriac correspondence in Mk 11:21 used of the ‘withered’ fig tree). This makes further sense because it follows the Aphel of حبط (losing bodily fluid).

The Aphel of حبط occurs twice (verses 18 and 20, corresponding to ἀφρίζω). In Mk 9:18 it follows immediately the Peal of حبط. It probably indicates the foaming up of saliva ‘at his mouth’ (وميراعش ‘and [results in] him making foam’). If the verb were not intransitive then the meaning might be have been ‘causing him to shake violently’ (Whish). As an action of the boy it could be taken more physiologically (in contrast to an action of assault by the demon). In 9:20 the verb belongs with the ‘writhing’ (Peshitta: ونفلعل // واميراعش // ورماعش // ورماعش ‘and he fell on the ground writhing and foaming’).

We should pause here before looking at the meaning of the Ethpaal of حبط in Mk 9:20. We need to be aware of how contextual factors determine whether or not word meanings are meant to be seen as medical symptoms since we may desire, along with the Greek commentaries, to perceive a similarity here with the Hippocratic medical treatise on epilepsy and thus read Mk 9:18–26 as relaying medical symptoms for several verbs. For example, Eric Sorensen compares the text in
Mark with the Hippocratic treatise on epilepsy because he perceives that both relay epileptic symptoms:

In the New Testament, the story of the possessed boy provides a direct point of comparison with the Hippocratic medical record. Instead of the expressions "the sacred disease" (περὶ ἱερῆς νοσου), and "epilepsy" (ἐπιληψίᾳ) which occur in the medical treatise Mark describes his subject as "having a speechless spirit" (ἤχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλου).... Though the naming of the malady differs in Hippocratic work and the synoptic gospels the Table 5 shows that Mark and The Sacred Disease record essentially the same symptoms.\(^{221}\)

In this case Sorensen has already decided that epileptic symptoms are in view. Presumably, Sorensen would also perceive the same set of symptoms present in the Syriac translations. Such an exegesis does not require that we differentiate between what different ancient persons might have viewed as epilepsy since, as modern readers who are familiar with what ‘epilepsy’ really is (a medical disorder) we can presume that Mk 9:18–26 is, like the medical treatise, relaying epileptic symptoms.

But what each interpreter means by ‘medical’ must be clarified. The Greek medical treatises distinguish their own physiological perspective from the popular supernatural aetiologies. So we should, likewise, distinguish between ‘folk medicine’ and ‘professional medicine’ in this regard. The Greek medical treatises rejected the popular speculation of spirit aggression. Thus the author of the Hippocratic treatise περὶ ἱερῆς νοσου (‘on the sacred/divine disease’) “makes it plain that the name was not given because it was a divine visitation.”\(^{222}\) The author called it the ‘sacred disease’ because that was its most popular name (and ἐπιληψία had not yet become its technical name).\(^{223}\) Moving beyond the Greek world of medical practitioners into the Syriac

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\(^{222}\) Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 161.

\(^{223}\) The reason the Hippocratic treatise referred to the illness as περὶ ἱερῆς νοσου (‘sacred disease’) is not only because that was its popular name. The author of the treatise considered the elements of nature (heat, cold, wind) as ultimately divine (and pure) and thus all illnesses were in a sense ‘divine’. Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness: A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1971), 22, refers to an article unavailable to me, namely Owsei Temkin, “The Doctrine of Epilepsy in the Hippocratic Writings,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 1 (1933). It seems that ἐπιληψία was not a technical term for the disease before the third-century CE. Hence, adjectives usually described the symptoms or persons (ἐπιληπτικά and τὰ ἐπιληπτικὰ ‘pertaining to epileptic seizure/convulsions’). By the third-century ἐπιληψία had passed into Latin (epilepsia) as a technical term for the disease. This coheres with the Hippocratic treatise (*On the Sacred Disease*) where ἐπιληπτικός appears more regularly than ἐπιληψία (occurring only once in the tenth section: “These are the initial
world, the distinction is probably not as sharp due to fewer professional practitioners of medicine and so medical notions will become somewhat diluted with more traditional ones. But this is conjectural. Most of the Hippocratic treatises were already translated into Syriac by about the same time the Peshitta Gospels translations were being completed in the early fifth century. It seems safe to maintain, like that asserted by the Greek medical practitioners, a distinction between folk and professional medicine (folk therapies sought to override the ‘daemonic’ influences at work; professional therapies sought to rebalance the ‘humours’). In this way we can categorise our episode in both Greek and Syriac Mark as ‘medical’ only insofar as we mean ‘folk medical’.

In the epileptic treatise, the symptom of ‘foaming’ during an epileptic fit is understood as fluid struggling to escape from the body. Likewise, any writhing or kicking is considered to be due to an internal struggle as air attempts, unsuccessfully, to escape via the mouth. The only similarity to our text is the notion of a ‘struggle’ of sorts. Within our text, the unfortunate son is suffocating or losing necessary bodily fluid and so the ‘writhing’ (the Ethpaal of ḫēl, Mk 9:20) and ‘foaming’ are to be taken as visible signs of the boy’s struggle against his attacker. The Ethpaal of ḫēl (Mk 9:20, corresponding to middle-passive of χωλίω) does not occur elsewhere in the Peshitta Bible, and is a supposed convulsive verb according to KPG (“be convulsed, writhe, roll about”). In its present context, the meaning is probably ‘writhe around (in pain)’ or ‘struggle around convulsively/torturously by kicking or flailing about on the ground’ (the Ethpaal of ḫēl might be passive, thus more directly implicating the unclean spirit, see §9.6.1). There is no need to enforce a physiological understanding in line with the medical Hippocratic treatise on epilepsy. Although it is possible to take several of the verbal actions as ‘medical symptoms’, whether epileptic symptoms or symptoms of fever, there is little reason to do so within Mark’s

causes of epilepsy in children.” Τότε μὲν παιδίσον αὐτάς αἱ προφάσις τῆς ἐπιλήψεως εἰσὶ τὴν ἀρχήν). Two examples of ἐπιλήπτως in the treatise are: οὐ γὰρ ἐτὶ ἐπιλήπτην γίνεται (‘since he does not still suffer epileptic seizure’); καὶ οὗτος ἐπιλήπτος γίνεται (‘and thus epileptic seizure occurs’).

224 However, the peak of medical/scientific translation occurred in the ninth century. Thomas F. Glick, Steven John Livesey, and Faith Wallis, Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia (New York: Routledge, 2005), 224.

225 The phrase ‘fire and water’ has occasionally been taken to indicate ‘fever’. Thus the fourth century saint Amma Syncletica interpreted the phrase ‘fire and water’ in Ps 66:12 (“If you suffer from fever and cold, remember the text of the Scripture, ‘We went through fire and water,’ and then ‘you brought us out into a place of rest’.”) Quentin F
narrative which provides these actions as an intrusive spirit overpowering its victim in a violent and deadly display.

The Greek commentaries prefer to highlight several of the verbs as convulsive symptoms of epilepsy, but this is largely achieved by venturing beyond Mark’s narrative. From a narrative perspective, readers are not necessarily led to think of epilepsy. If Mark’s early Greek and Syriac readers are thinking ‘medically’ in terms of ‘epilepsy’ it is because something or someone outside the narrative has suggested it, but the narrative itself shows unambiguously that it is a demonic attack. Furthermore, no healing vocabulary appears. It is possible that both (ancient) epilepsy and demon-aggression are intended (see the parallel in Lk 9:37–43a) but the two are usually distinct, due to differing aetiologies.

The Peal of ﬁn (Mk 9:20) is a common verb for ‘fall, fall down’. Here it refers to being caused to fall (rather than falling down accidentally) and so reinforces the intentional aspect of the action. The lexeme is similar in meaning to the Aphel of ﬂa (Mk 9:22) used of the unclean spirit said to ‘throw’ the boy into (or towards) fire and water: ﻰشً冉 ﻲنًن ﻲحًا ﻲجًا ﻲلًا ﻲباً ﻲجًا ﻲبًا ﻲهاً ﻲهًا (‘and many times has thrown him into fire and water in order to destroy him’). The unclean spirit is attempting to take the boy’s life.

The Aphel of ﻫر (Mk 9:22) appears for ‘to cause [him] to perish’ (corresponding to ἀπόλλυμι). The significance of this sentence within the thematic context of Mark is that the demon’s intention (to destroy a life) represents what Jesus is up against in his own mission, an intention Jesus wishes to confront head on in Jerusalem. Such an intention stands in extreme contrast with Jesus’ own non-violent mission to implement God’s reign and to restore life. We see that the same destructive goal is feared by the unclean spirit of Jesus in the earlier episode of spirit-banishment (Mk 1:26)—yet such intentions are never perceptible in Jesus himself, who instead simply commands enemy spirits either to be silent and/or to leave.

The Peal of ܫܚܩ in Mk 9:26 is, similarly, befitting of a battle/conflict of kingdoms (‘shatter,’ ‘break to pieces,’ ‘crush’). The Peal of ܫܚܩ is not usually used with a person as the verb’s object, the closest object used elsewhere would be a person’s heart (Acts 21:13; Prov 17:10) as an application that seems ‘figurative’ (in English only?). It is obviously a Syriac word of similar meaning (corresponding here to σπαράσσω). It is not clear how specific the action is, but it is again visibly harmful, and is followed by the boy looking dead (the Peal of ܡܘܬ).

If we were to draw any conclusions at this point concerning the meaning of the Peal of ܚܒܛ, it would be that its accompanying vocabulary is aggressive. It is the accompanying verbs that should have the most influence on a decision concerning our difficult verb. We see that the son gets suddenly forced to the ground and he is fighting for his life as he struggles for air, having been ‘crushed’ by his attacker who intends to take his life. KPG’s three options for the Peal of ܚܒܛ (beat; throw down; convulse) remain possible. But if we are constrained by the textual context then a ‘convulsive’ sense should only be promoted if we can manage to clarify that a medical sense (epileptic convulsions) appears contextually unlikely in Peshitta Mark (or Greek Mark, see below, supposition 2, §2.4). Therefore, referring to ‘convulsions’ remains potentially ambiguous and misleading.

The distinction between spirit-banishment and healing within Mark has only rarely been observed in a strict way. Most recently the distinction has been asserted by John Pilch. Pilch notes the two-fold division in Mark as: “[1] sickness, and [2] affliction by unclean spirits or demons” that is, (1) events dealing with ‘sickness’ (1:29–31; 1:40–45; 2:1–12; 3:1–6; 5:21–24, 35–43; 25–34; 7:31–37; 8:22–26; 10:46–52) and, (2) events dealing with ‘unclean spirits’ (1:21–28; 226Cf. Rom 16:20 and Rev 2:27. In the Old Testament, the meanings are also destructive in nature, e.g. Eccl. 12:6 (Ethpeel ‘broken, smashed’) and Dan 2:40 (‘break to pieces, crush [a kingdom]’).

227 In Mk 9:26 some Peshitta manuscripts agree with the Sinaitic in attaching the intensifying adverb to the demon’s ‘crushing’ of the victim rather than the demon’s screaming (i.e. after the Peal of ܫܚܩ rather than with the Peal of ܩܥܐ), thus agreeing better with the Greek.

228 For example Graham Twelftree comes reasonably close to observing a strict distinction by speaking of “healing and exorcism.” Whilst he classifies exorcism as a category within healing (“blurring of the distinction between exorcism and other kinds of healing”) he is aware that “the boundaries between healing and exorcism” can be blurred (in Luke). Graham H. Twelftree, In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 133, 86.
The summary statements in Mark further support this two-fold division (thus Mk 1:32–34 maintains the twofold pattern of the sick and the demon-possessed; Mk 3:10–11 refers to diseases and the unclean spirits; Mk 6:7–13 refers to demons and to anointing many sick).²²⁹

So the Gospel of Mark categorizes social deficiencies (community ‘health’ problems tackled by Jesus) into two main groups, distinguishing the banishment of spirits from the healing of sick persons. Spirit-banishment in Mark is only broadly a kind of ‘healing’ within a broader notion of ‘healthcare’. No healing vocabulary appears in Mk 9:14–29 or in any of the other banishment accounts in Mark. In regard to the prominent themes (kingdom advancement, faith, death and resurrection) these are all carried over in Peshitta translation of Mk 9:14–29. As yet, we have no reason to suppose a ‘medicalisation’ of the context in the Peshitta, and especially not a professional medical perspective.

It has now been demonstrated that supposition 1 is unsound. Within the narrative of Mark, Mk 9:14–29 concerns an aggressive and violent spirit attacking a boy and this intruder is then banished by Jesus, without any healing vocabulary used. It is unlikely that the episode intends the boy’s suffering to be considered a ‘medical’ condition unless we specify it as (non-professional) ‘folk medical’ or more broadly as ‘societal health-care’. This observation was achieved by identifying and maintaining cultural categories of illness within the text, that is, vocabulary that is ‘emic’ (of an insider perspective) was not confused with ‘etic’ vocabulary (of a foreign ‘outsider’ perspective) so that words of alleged medical significance can be approached ‘ethnomedically’ (as has been advocated by John Pilch).²³⁰ Therefore, supposition 1 (the tendency to see an epileptic


²³⁰ The distinction between ‘etic’ and ‘emic’ was one originally made by Kenneth Pike in 1967 as a linguistic distinction before being applied by other disciplines such as in anthropology where it indicates a distinction between an outsider’s perspective (etic) compared to an insider’s perspective (emic) on any aspect of culture. I use etic and emic in line with the anthropological usage, following Pilch. Similarly ‘ethnomedical’ is presently used as an ‘emic’ term for identifying something as ‘medical’ (as distinct to an etic ‘biomedical’ perspective). We are obliged to discern whether meanings given for the Greek lexeme σεληνιάζομαι (Mt 4:24, 17:15) would fall within an emic (insider) or etic (outsider) category of meaning (see below §2.5).
condition of the boy in Mk 9:14–29) can no longer be upheld. A convulsive meaning for the Peal of ܚܒܛ will have to be based elsewhere.

2.4 Testing Supposition 2 (Greek Influence): Σπαράσσω as Allegedly Terminology Related to Epilepsy

Since ‘supposition 1’ is unsound, that is, since epileptic convulsions are not necessarily promoted by the context of Mk 9:18–26 (in the Peshitta or generally in the Greek), perhaps such a meaning belongs specifically to certain Greek lexemes underlying the Syriac (‘supposition 2’)? As we saw earlier, such a meaning is advocated in certain Greek lexicons. Perhaps the Greek employs vocabulary explicitly related to epilepsy, and perhaps that justifies allowing some such influence on the Syriac of Mark. Thus supposition 2 can be expressed as: The Greek behind the Syriac in Mk 9:18–26 provides terminology explicitly indicative of epilepsy, indicated by σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω and ρήσω (and the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Syriac). A reader who consults the Greek lexicons in conjunction with KPG would be forgiven for supposing that the meaning in KPG mentions convulsions for the same reason, namely to refer to epileptic convulsions (as it does in LN).

The Greek corresponding to the Peal of ܚܒܛ may potentially have been one of several other verbs besides σπαράσσω but we will begin here with σπαράσσω. BDAG does not suppose its boldface gloss for σπαράσσω is a definition as it lacks an initial ‘to’ (shake to and fro). BDAG has also removed the gloss convulse which had appeared in the previous edition (tear, pull to and fro, convulse BAGD)231 and so BDAG partly resists the definition, evidenced in LN, which might suggest epilepsy. However, BDAG still includes ‘convulse’ in the description (“an unclean spirit convulses the person in whom it dwells”) which is a description not restricted to the New Testament usage. Furthermore, BDAG neglected to remove the gloss ‘convulse’ (from BAGD) under the entry on πολλά when citing πολλά σπαράξας (“π. σπαράσσων”) from Mk 9:26 which both editions gloss as convulse violently. The partial attempt to avoid giving σπαράσσω the gloss ‘convulse’ is therefore ineffective in BDAG. Danker’s more recent CGELNT makes only two minor

changes but these alter the meaning. BDAG’s “shake to and fro” is treated as being a definition in CGELNT (whose definitions always omits the initial ‘to’ in the English infinitive definitions). Everything else prior to the explanation “of a hostile spirit causing a convulsion Mk 1:26; 9:20; v.l. 9:26. Lk 9:39” is omitted. This leaves the user without the benefit to see, as in BDAG, that the explanation (‘causing a convulsion’) was originally derived from other contexts. CGELNT implies that the given meaning simply applies to (or arises from?) the Gospel contexts.

What is more interesting for the Syriac lexicographer is that neither convulse nor shake to and fro is reflected in how the Peshitta translators understood σπαράσσω either in Mk 9:26 or in the first spirit-banishment in Mk 1:26, where the Greek manuscripts display no variants for σπαράσσω (in either Mk 1:26 or Mk 9:26).

2.4.1 The First Episode of Spirit Banishment: Mk 1:21–28

The shorter episode of spirit-banishment in Mk 1:21–28 (see also Lk 4:31–37) is worth observing since it is not only programmatic for the remainder of Mark but it too employs σπαράσσω of an unclean spirit’s attack on someone (a man in the synagogue). There are no extant Greek variants for σπαράσσω in Mk 1:26. Whilst Iwe summarises the widespread opinion that “we can more confidently establish that the man was convulsed by the unclean spirit” the Syriac translators in the Peshitta (and the Sinaitic) may disagree as they employ a verb that is not necessarily indicative of epileptic fits, namely the Peal of šdā (‘throw’, ‘cast’, ‘throw down’) as a translation for σπαράσσω in Mk 1:26. Though the Peal of šdā is, like most verbs, potentially flexible even within a single authored (or translated) work, in its context it need not be related to epilepsy.

We should note, similarly, that the Greek parallel (Lk 4:31–37) contains ῥίπτω at this point in the narrative (which all three extant Syriac versions again translate using the Peal of šdā). We might ignore the parallel in Greek Luke (and ῥίπτω as a foreign distraction) if we did not subscribe to the synoptic source hypothesis that the Greek material common to Greek Mark and Greek Luke.

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233 Ibid., 89–90.
was derived from Greek Mark. If such a source hypothesis is correct, then σπαράσσω has been either modified in Greek Luke by ῥίπτω or has simply been clarified in Luke by ῥίπτω. The latter would seem likely given that ῥίπτω was not too dissimilar in meaning to σπαράσσω when used in a context of a ‘wild animal’ taking down its victim.\textsuperscript{234}

2.4.2 Syriac Divergence in Meaning?

The question of whether or not the Pea of ܫܕܐ may be diverging from the meaning of the Greek confronts the Syriac lexicographer who wishes to accept the meaning for the Greek (σπαράσσω) given in Mk 1:26 in LN and BDAG since the Syriac lexicographer is unlikely, without good reason, to posit a convulsive meaning for the Pea of ܫܕܐ in the Peshitta (or the Sinaitic).

The Harklean ‘translates’ every occurrence of σπαράσσω with the Pael (or Peal?) of ܕܚ (‘tear?’). However, the Harklean version does not provide us with clear meanings due to its tendency for ‘isomorphic’ translation, that is, its tendency to represent the Greek by means of consistent lexical choices in Syriac (also known as ‘formal equivalence’ or ‘mirror translation’).\textsuperscript{235} It is unclear whether the Pael of ܕܚ holds a different meaning to the Peal and so this lemma is worthy of further study.\textsuperscript{236}

2.4.3 The ‘Undead’ Convulsive Meaning

What supports a meaning related to epilepsy for σπαράσσω in the Greek lexicons? There could be some justification for allowing such a meaning to influence corresponding Syriac vocabulary, if we could be sure that the underlying Greek was explicitly terminology related to epilepsy. LN’s meaning has its origin in Barclay Newman’s given contextual meaning for his entry on σπαράσσω

\textsuperscript{234} Thus we find in Dan 8:7 (concerning an enraged goat knocking down a ram) that some Greek manuscripts have ἐπάραξεν αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν whilst others have ἔφεξαν αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν. See the ‘Alternate Texts’ in Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., Septuaginta: SESB Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

\textsuperscript{235} The Harklean simply employs a consistent Greek-Syriac correspondence for every occurrence of σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω in its Greek source, namely we can posit that σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω appeared in the Harklean’s source precisely where it appears in the text of NA\textsuperscript{28} (Mk 1:26, 9:20,26; Lk 9:39,42).

\textsuperscript{236} The Pael of ܕܚ is apparently more ‘convulsive’ than the Peal verb according to CSD. However, if we were to read a Peal in the Harklean (rather than the Pael) this would further support the animalistic connotations of a ‘wild beast’ mauling (‘tearing apart’) its prey in Mk 9:18–26. An unpointed text remains ambiguous here (as either ‘tear with the teeth’ and/or ‘[cause to] shake violently’).
Newman attempted to prioritise the contextual meaning of lexemes (“in this first stage, I attempted to analyze the specific contextual meanings of each entry in the New Testament”) and to give meanings “in present-day English.”

The most influential source for the convulsive meaning in KPG comes from the Greek lexicons, namely directly via LN (and Newman) and indirectly via the treatment in Jennings and Whish (both influenced by the Greek). Although the given meaning is not particularly medical in Whish, the meaning is obviously tied down to the meaning of the underlying Greek and of the Greek parallel in Lk 9:42. Likewise we can see that the meaning in Jennings resembles the meaning given in the Greek lexicons, such as Thayer, for σπαράσσω (to convulse τινὰ and here also Thayer’s cross reference to meaning ‘c’ for ῥήγγυμα). The main difference between Thayer and earlier Greek New Testament lexicons of the nineteenth century is that the entry in Thayer is a little clearer about the lexeme having different senses in other texts, implying that ‘convulse’ is not a sense found outside the New Testament. The meaning given in Thayer (‘to convulse someone’) is a conscious contextual application of a transitive use of the verb with the demon as subject and a person as object (the demon is specified in the entry for the third meaning of ῥήγγυμα “c. i.q. [equivalent to] σπαράσσω, to distort, convulse; of a demon causing convulsions in a man possessed”). Thayer’s meaning at least indicates that it is a suggested contextual meaning.

The nineteenth century saw a buttressing of a meaning apparently indicating epileptic convulsions when the seventh and eighth editions of the Liddell-Scott lexicon (1883; 1897) specified a fourth ‘medical’ sense for σπαράσσω. It is into this fourth sense that the ninth edition (LSJ, 1925–1940) places ‘convulse’ 4b:


Whether or not ‘convulse’ fitted best within the fourth (medical) category was, apparently, not critically evaluated. A more viable option would have been to treat σπαράσσω in Mk 1:26 as a more figurative use of the verb (i.e. meaning 3: “metaph., pull to pieces, attack” or perhaps with meaning 1: “tear, rend, esp. of dogs, carnivorous animals, and the like”).

The medical references given in LSJ (for meaning 4a) align more readily with the ‘middle-passive’ morpho-semantics of the verb’s other uses, as would be expected of bodily ‘disturbances’ and ‘ruptures’, so the verb’s grammatical subject, in such cases, differs to that in Mk 1:26. A similar confusion of grammatical subjects and of forms appears in BDAG where the cited subject is presumably a man and the form is suitably middle, not active. Thus the meaning shake to and fro is immediately explained as “an unclean spirit convulses the person in whom it dwells (ἄνθρωπος σπαραττόμενος of an attack: Cyranides p. 59, 15) Mk 1:26…” We can now see that the convulsive meaning is largely indebted to the Greek lexicons and that such a meaning rests on shaky foundations (the merging of different grammatical subjects and different morphology, and being influenced by medical texts).

2.4.4 Another Coincidental Divergence?

In our main episode under evaluation (Mk 9:18–26) we find that a textually secure Greek-Syriac correspondence exists in Mk 9:26 between σπαράσσω and the Peal of שוחק ‘crush’ (Sinaitic and Peshitta, see further chapter 9). If one accepts the meaning of the Greek σπαράσσω given in the Greek New Testament lexicons, one is again (like in Mk 1:26) faced with an apparent lack of semantic correspondence with what one finds in the Peshitta (and Sinaitic) of Mk 9:26. But it is unlikely that this represents a divergence of meaning (from ‘cause epileptic convulsions’ in Greek to ‘break/crush/tear in Syriac). It is more natural to suppose that the Syriac picks up on

241 The association between ‘wild animals’ and ‘demons’ is commented on again in §9.10.
242 It is noteworthy that σπαράσσω does not appear in the glossary of terms in Richard J. Durling, A Dictionary of Medical Terms in Galen (Leiden: Brill, 1993).
the aspect of ‘assault’ perceived to exist for σπαράσσω therefore leading us to doubt again that the medical meaning given in several Greek lexicons is accurate for Mk 1:26 and/or Mk 9:26.243

Intriguingly, several of the verbs in Mk 9:18–26 have, in either or both the Greek and/or Syriac, some relation to ‘thresh/winnow/tear’. This includes σπαράσσω, ρήσσω (see below), the Peal of דָּחַס, the Peal of יָצַר, and the Harklean’s Pael/Peal of דָּחַס in Mk 9:20. We might also note, in this regard, the noun for ‘teeth’ (in the phrase ‘gnash the teeth’: τρίζει τοὺς ὀδοντας). When taken together, such semantic similarities are attractive in suggesting that the notion of ‘thresh’, ‘winnow’, or ‘tear with the teeth’ appears more than once in Mk 9:18–26 (probably not coincidentally, see further §9.7 and §9.10). It does not lend support, however, to the medical sense (epileptic convulsions) suggested in LSJ, Newman, and I.N.

2.4.5 The Similar Use of Σπαράσσω and Ρήσσω in Mk 9:18, 20

Apparently what σπαράσσω means within the context of Mk 9:18–26 is virtually synonymous to ρήσσω. The entry in BDAG for σπαράσσω acknowledges that the meaning was “orig. tear, pull to and fro, rend.” We find such a meaning in the Septuagint (four appearances): two in the active (in Dan 8:7; 3 Macc 4:6) and two in the passive (‘torn apart’ in 2 Sam 22:8; Jer 4:19). Thus the earlier (more ‘original’) sense of σπαράσσω in the Septuagint also resembles the meaning of ρήσσω in the Septuagint as a Greek word of similar meaning (ῥῆγνυμι in GELS: 1a. transitive to split into two parts [+ acc.]).

A semantic similarity persists between σπαράσσω and ρήσσω in Greek Mark. In NA28, the unclean spirit ρήσσει αὐτῶν (‘tears him’) in Mk 9:18 (the variants are discussed below).244 The manuscript choice in Mk 9:20 between συνεσπάραξεν αὐτῶν and σπαράσσει αὐτῶν is less significant. But even the difference in meaning between σπαράσσω and ρήσσω within Greek Mk 9:18–2 is negligible.

243 When σπαράσσω appears in Luke it may ‘take on’ a more convulsive sense (epileptic convulsions). See below (§2.5.4 and §9.11–).

244 The two main variants are ράσσει αὐτῶν and ρίπτει αὐτῶν. A third potential variant comes from L.26 (a third or fourth century lectionary): σπαράσσει αὐτῶν, though lectionary readings do not count in reconstructing the eclectic text.
The three phrases σπαράσσει αὐτόν, συνεσπάραξεν αὐτόν, and ῥήσσει αὐτόν could be taken as virtually synonymous in Mk 9:18, 20.\(^{245}\)

Unfortunately the meaning of ῥήσσω is no less ambiguous than σπαράσσω. We have already ascertained the overall context in Mk 9:14–29 (a clash of kingdoms and the banishment of an unholy, aggressive spirit, as Jesus advances God’s kingdom). The meaning of both σπαράσσει αὐτόν and ῥήσσει αὐτόν is not yet in full focus, being either an assault in general terms (‘assaulted him’, ‘attacked him’) or a more specific kind of assault (‘beat him, pounded him to the ground’ or, ‘cast him down,’ or ‘tore him’, ‘mangled him, pulled him to and fro’ or perhaps ‘shook him to and fro’ if BDAG’s meaning for σπαράσσω is accurate). We turn now to look at the various Greek lexemes potentially underlying the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:18 and 9:20. These may provide us with other Greek words of similar meaning to σπαράσσω.

2.4.6 Potential Correspondences for the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:20

The Greek corresponding to the second occurrence of the Peal of ܚܒܛ (Mk 9:20) will be discussed first. The Greek variants for Mk 9:20 are σπαράσσω, συσπαράξω or ταράσσω.

Presumably the rare compound form συσπαράξω is merely an intense form of σπαράσσω. Unlike LN, BDAG differentiates the two with separate entries and, unlike σπαράσσω, συσπαράξω is treated more convulsively and is given a definition.\(^{246}\) The variant ταράσσω (agitate, cause turmoil, disturb) in Mk 9:20 provides us with a Greek word of potentially similar meaning to σπαράσσω in this context. In its present context ταράσσω is potentially ‘toss/shake to and fro’ but it does not particularly indicate ‘convulse’ (medically) and so again warns against the supposition that the Greek of Mk 9:18–26 had specific medical vocabulary in view. Yet, ταράσσω is less likely to be the Greek behind our Syriac lexeme because, if it were, we would have expected to find the meaning ‘startled, emotionally upset’ or ‘afraid’ in the Peshitta, given that that is the usual correspondence when ταράσσω is applied to people (compare the Peal of ܕܚܠ in Mk 6:50).

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\(^{246}\) BDAG: “συσπαράξω 1 aor. συνεσπαράξα (Maximus Tyr. 7, 5e ‘tear to pieces’) to agitate violently, pull about, convulse πώς someone, of a hostile spirit, who so treats the person who is in his power Mk 9:20; w. ῥήγῳμι Lk 9:42.”
Perhaps we might dismiss ταράσσω as a less likely source for the Peshitta (the Sinaitic text has no corresponding lexeme here) but we cannot dismiss it entirely as a Greek word of potentially similar meaning (in its present context) to σπαράσσω.

2.4.7 Potential Correspondences for the Peal of ḫḇṭ in Mk 9:18

The Greek-Syriac correspondence for the first occurrence of the Peal of ḫḇṭ (Mk 9:18) may be ρήσσω/ρήγνυμι, ράσσω, or ρίπτω. Whether ρήσσω is simply a secondary form of ρήγνυμι or whether the two should be distinguished lexically remains unclear. Whilst here, we treat ρήγνυμι and ρήσσω as the same lexeme, BDAG lists the two separately thereby providing a total of three meanings for ρήσσω: (1) ρήσσω as a secondary form of the verb ρήγνυμι “to cause to come apart or be in pieces by means of internal or external force, tear in pieces, break, burst”; (2) ρήσσω as “to effect an action or intensify it by initially throwing off restraint, tear/break/let loose, break out in [a cry];” and (3) ρήσσω as “to cause to fall down, throw down.”

BDAG places our ρήσσω (Mk 9:18) as akin to both ράσσω and ρίπτω but, unlike the latter two lexemes, BDAG’s description assigns to ρήσσω a more convulsive interpretation.

2.4.8 A Figurative Meaning

It stands to reason that if BDAG’s understanding of σπαράσσω is non-figurative and (medically) ‘convulsive’ then so would it also be for the verb ρήσσω in Mk 9:18, given the virtual synonymy of these two verbs within Mk 9:18–26. BDAG is not alone in deciding for a ‘literal’ (non-figurative) sense. LSJ was perhaps the first to make this move official by treating σπαράσσω as a...
concrete medical application. We, however, cannot dismiss a figurative sense so easily. Given that both σπαράσσω and ῥήσσω are elsewhere used of wild beasts who ‘tear apart’ their prey (‘mangle’, ‘rip to shreds’, ‘tear to pieces’) and given that the ‘unclean’ intruder behaves as a beast-like intruder, a figurative sense seems apt (‘savage’, ‘maul’, ‘tear apart’).

Apparently, the more figurative usage of ‘tear’, ‘maul’, ‘lacerate’ (‘attack viciously’) has been too speedily equated with the more concrete/physiological notion of ‘convulse, throw into convulsions’. In this case, Falla’s observation concerning the advantage of glosses (as being better preservers of ambiguity in ambiguous cases) proves true. The older English gloss ‘tear’ (or ῥάσσω, or ῥίπτω) could still, theoretically, suffice for one or more verbs within Mk 9:18–26 because ‘convulse’ need not always relay a medical sense. But within the context of a definition explicitly referring to epileptic convulsions (such as in LN) ‘convulse’ takes on unnecessary medical baggage, and remains misleading.

The Greek-Syriac correspondences in Mk 9:18 and 9:20 indicate that the Peshitta translators recognised σπαράσσω/συσπαράσσω in Mk 9:20 was similar to ῥήσσω (or ῥάσσω, or ῥίπτω) in 9:18 by translating both with the Peal of Ὸجموعة.

2.4.9 What Correspondences Do and Do not Suggest

The optional Greek variants presenting possible correspondences to the Peal of ḫrapy (in both Mk 9:18 and 9:20) are: σπαράσσω, ῥήσσω (ῥήγνυμι), ῥάσσω, (ταράσσω), ῥίπτω or συσπαράσσω. We might minimise this large number by hypothesizing σπαράσσω in both verses, which we cannot do with any confidence because σπαράσσω does not occur in any Gospel manuscripts of Mk 9:18 (except a lectionary, L26). The Greek verbs potentially corresponding to the Peal of ḫrapy (counting συσπαράσσω separately and ῥάσσω separately) total five if we eliminate ταράσσω. However, if the Peshitta translation is obscuring the fact that it is a translation then the Syriac

248 Timothy Friberg et al., Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 353, gives the meaning of σπαράσσω, more reasonably, as a figurative use, which at least implies that the given convulsive meaning is a contextual suggestion: “1aor. ἐσπάραξα; tear, pull (apart), pull to and from; figuratively, as designating the effect of demonization of a person convulse, throw into a fit, distort by convulsions.”

will be allowed to produce its own meaning such that Syriac readers/hearers would be unaware that two different Greek lexemes underlie the Peal of ḫḇṭ in verse 18 and 20. But two different lexemes were apparently found in the Peshitta’s source Greek. We might imagine that ῥάσσω appeared in Mk 9:18 and συσπαράσσω in Mk 9:20 and were treated synonymously due not only to their similarity in usage (and sound) but due to both being uncommon lexemes. Another option to consider is that the two appearances are not synonymous: if the Syriac verb is functioning slightly differently in verse 18 and in verse 20 should such differences be based on having two different Greek correspondences? But we do not necessarily need to resolve the issue of correspondences, nor the issue of the precise Greek nuances of σπαράσσω, ῥήσσω, ῥάσσω, and συσπαράσσω. But we do need to beware of what many Greek commentaries and lexicons imply, namely that the earliest Greek manuscripts contained terms which allegedly indicated epileptic convulsions (ῥήσσω and σπαράσσω) and that the ‘later’ variants are less ‘medical’ in their vocabulary.

We might contrast the high number of Greek variants in our passage with how ῥήσσω, for example, appears outside the episode of affliction narrated in Mk 9:18–20 (and Lk 9:39–42). In every other place that ῥήσσω appears in the Greek New Testament we find that the correspondences in the Peshitta are straightforward (no Greek variants). Besides our episode where the Greek is textually variable (Mk 9:18, 20//Lk 9:42) we find the remaining Syriac correspondences to ῥήσσω/ῥήγνυμι in the Peshitta New Testament are: the Pael of  nạ (Mt 7:6); the Ethpaal of ḫﾔ (Mt 9:17); the Pael of ḫ yacc (Mk 2:22); the Pael of ῥάσσω (Lk 5:37); and the Ethpeel of ῥάσσω or Peal of ḫ yacc (Gal 4:27). These are ‘foreign’ contexts. However, Mt 7:6 is potentially relevant to our passage since the subject of the verb is an untamed animal and the object of the verb is a person (paralleled by the Greek καταπατέω and the corresponding Peal of ῥάσσω ‘tread down, trample’).

2.4.10 Evaluation of Supposition 2: The Greek Influence Front

At those points where the Greek manuscripts offer no variants (Mk 1:26; 9:26) it became much clearer that the use of σπαράσσω was not explicitly intended to indicate epileptic convulsions, at least not in the eyes of the Peshitta translator(s), and any strong evidence for an earlier Greek
medical meaning for the active use of σπαράσσω is lacking. The medical meaning for Mk 1:26 appears misplaced in LSJ, particularly since a different subject (and form) of the verb is in view. A more figurative application of the verb appears likely. Thus we encountered several issues with the meaning of σπαράσσω in the lexicons.

Nevertheless the Peshitta translation (of Mk 1:26 and Mk 9:26) does not reflect the meaning given in our Greek lexicons. But this need not lead us to suppose that the Syriac has diverged in meaning. Perhaps Greek New Testament lexicographers might need to re-examine their lexical entries for σπαράσσω and begin to question the medical sense within Greek Mark.

Unfortunately the Curetonian is not extant for Mark (until Mk 16:17b), and the Harklean version revealed more about its underlying Greek than it did its intended Syriac meaning. We saw that ῥήσσω was very similar in meaning to σπαράσσω. Overall the Greek variants could be placed into two main categories: ‘throw down to the ground’ and ‘tear to pieces/break apart’ but a third meaning ‘shake/toss to and fro’ still remains a possibility. Thus we still have not managed to completely dispense with a (non-medical) ‘convulsive’ meaning in Mk 9:18, 20. The main difference between our three potential categories and the three semantic categories in KPG is that ‘beat, batter, beat down’ did not present itself as an optional meaning for the underlying Greek, unless the figurative sense for σπαράσσω lends itself to ‘assault,’ ‘mistreat,’ or ‘injure’ (as it does occasionally in Josephus). A new (figurative?) meaning presents itself for the Greek in Mk 9:18, 20, namely ‘tear to pieces, rip to shreds’, suggestive of a wild animal mauling its prey. Such a sense might be figurative.

250 Cf. some of the occurrences of the lexeme σπαράσσω in the works of Josephus, as consulted in Benedikt Niese, ed., De bello Judaico (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885-1895): 5:526 ‘rip to shreds, tear, mangle’ οἵ γε καὶ νεκρὸν τὸν ἐκπαρκύνες ἐσπάρατον [as dogs do to carcases]; 1:338, 1:381, 3:468 5:280 (‘pull to pieces, demolish, destroy’ [buildings/houses/wicker building/war constructions]); 2:589 (‘irritate, aggravate’) [in parallel with ληίζομαι ‘take as prey, despoil, plunder’]; 2:652 (‘damage, assault, mistreat, harass, injure’ [the houses of the rich paired with torment of their bodies]; 2:521 ‘throw into disorder’ [of attacking the rear of an army]; 2:90 (‘tear to pieces, disembowel’); Antiquitates Judaeae 8:289 (passive ‘torn to pieces, mangled’ [dead bodies by wild dogs and by birds]. Cf. also the verb of the middle morphology which aligns itself with διαφέρω/διαφέρωμι and ῥίπτω ‘maltreat’ in 11:141 (and in 13:233 paralleled to middle-passive of τυπτω ‘beaten, wounded’).
2.5 Testing Supposition 3 (Parallel Gospel Influence): Looking to Matthew for Importation

The following section explores a third option for the source of the medical definition in LN which still threatens to exert its influence over certain Syriac lexemes. Since the textual context of Mk 9:18–26 in neither Greek or Syriac is particularly suggestive of epileptic convulsions, or ‘medical’ (against ‘supposition 1’, see §2.3), and since there is no reference to epilepsy, or any vocabulary that is necessarily indicative of epileptic convulsions in the Greek of Mk 9:18–26 (against ‘supposition 2’ see §2.4), the only supposition remaining that might still influence our decision for suggesting that the Peal of חֲבִט means ‘cause epileptic convulsions’ is that the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke suggest a medical context. ‘Supposition 3’ would single-handedly account for the persistent trend whereby σπαράσσω and φήσσω are suggested to mean ‘cause (epileptic) convulsions’. Matthew and Luke, together, remain the most likely sources of influence.

For practical reasons, our analysis of Lk 9:39–43 is shortened in order to examine the Greek term σεληνιάζομαι in Mt 17:15, which is more obviously responsible for contributing to a diagnosis of epilepsy (and epilepsy related vocabulary) being applied to all three parallel episodes. An epileptic diagnosis for Greek Mark has largely been imported from Greek Matthew. Let us examine the lexeme in Greek Matthew on its own ‘emic’ terms.

2.5.1 Rethinking the Epileptic Diagnosis in Matthew
(Mt 17:14–21 Peshitta, CESG):

And when they came to the crowd a man approached him and kneeled on his knees, and said ‘Lord, have compassion on me, my son has a roof (kind) [of demon] and sorely made, for many times he falls into fire and many times into water.

And I brought him to your disciples but they could not heal him’.

Jesus answered and said, ‘O generation without faith and perverse! Until when will I remain with you? Until when will I bear with you?’ Bring him here to me’.

Jesus rebuked it and the demon went out from him. And the boy was healed from then on.
Afterwards his disciples approached Jesus alone and said to him, ‘Why could we not heal him?’

Because you are without faith. For Truly I say to you if you have faith in you like a grain of mustard you will say to this mountain Move from here! And it will move and nothing will overcome you’.

Now this kind will not go out without fasting and prayer’.

John Christopher Thomas asserts that: “Matthew seems careful to distinguish between infirmities that originate with the demonic and those that do not.”

251 It does appear that the ‘case of the boy’ in Mt 17:14–21 is much more medical (than in Mk 9:18–26). In Mt 17:14–21, the account narrates (unlike in Mark) no outside forces acting upon the boy (except for πίπτω, ‘to fall’, in the Greek, corresponding naturally to the Peal active participle of ḫ الشمال in Syriac, which implicates the demon, indirectly, as responsible for the falling action). In the Greek (and Syriac) there is only a brief description of the youth’s symptoms. He is described as in ‘poor condition’ or ‘suffering much’ corresponding to (depending on the variant chosen) either the Greek construction κακῶς πάσχει (‘he suffers badly’) or κακῶς ἔχει (‘he has bad’, ‘he is ill’). The comparable phrases in the sister Syriac versions are: ܘܒܝܫܬܳܐܝܬܳܚܳܚܳܐ ‘badly suffering’/‘suffers evil’ (Curetonian), ܘܩܫܝܳܐܝܬܳܒܳܥܳܝ ‘harshly formed’/‘in a bad way’ (Sinaitic) and ܘܒܝܫܬܰܳܐܝܬܼܫ ‘badly suffering’ (Harklean).

Σεληνιάζωμαι appears twice in the Greek New Testament (Mt 4:24; 17:15). It is used substantivally (Mt 4:24) as a label for a physiological illness and is probably correctly categorised in LN within the subdomain of ‘Sickness, Disease, Weakness’. But the definitions given for the lexeme in LN and BDAG remain suspicious. The definition and explanation in BDAG reflects the notion that σεληνιάζωμαι referred to someone who was affected by the transcendent powers of the moon. BDAG’s definition actually combines two notions from separate sectors (folk and professional).252 The definition is slightly at odds with the other information in the entry.253


253 σεληνίαζομαι (σελῆν; TestSol 10:35 C; Lucian; Vert. Val. 113, 10; Cat. Cod. Astr. VIII/1 p. 199, 7; Manetho, Apotel. 4, 81; 217, in both cases the act. as v.l. Prim. ‘to be moonstruck’) to experience epileptic seizures, be an epileptic (in the ancient world epileptic seizure was associated with transcendent powers of the moon; cp. Cat. Cod.
BDAG’s entry appears to support its definition by means of two Greek words of alleged similar meaning (δαιμονιζομένους and ἐπιληπτικοῦς). But these are obtained from foreign contexts. The latter lexeme (ἐπιληπτικός) is not found in any Greek manuscripts of Matthew. Nor is any other vocabulary found in the Greek manuscripts that is based on the ἐπιλαμβάνω-stem employed (e.g. ἐπιληψια, ἐπιληπτικός, ἐπιληψις, ἐπιληπτός, ἐπιληπτιζόω, or ἐπιλαμβάνω). This is not to say that the definition in BDAG is illogical. Supporting one’s definition from a foreign context is not unusual. Indeed, Origen’s commentary on this Matthean passage mentions ἐπιληψία along with the noun σεληνιασμός (i.e. ‘the moon-stricken experience of epileptic seizure’ τὸ τῆς ἐπιληψίας πάθος σεληνιασμόν). But note that (a) the label in Origen is not identical; (b) the text remains a ‘foreign’ text; and (c) Origen is here arguing “against a [professional] medical explanation and cure of this disease.” The term ἐπιληπτικός could be used within the professional sector, by physicians, to cover various folk labels for epileptic-like symptoms caused by various divine forces. Hence we can see the logic behind the definition (to experience epileptic seizures, be an epileptic) in BDAG. But we must question the application of this logic to our Matthean text. In all, the episode in Matthew is a good example of a ‘folk medical’ perspective. The ‘illness’ of the boy sits comfortably here with the presence of a demon as its cause. Professional healers attributed causes to an imbalance of ‘substances’ rather than blaming evil spirits as was popular amongst...
non-professionals. The term appearing in Matthew differs to the medical perspective term that eventually produced a technical term for epilepsy in the following centuries (ἐπιληψία/epilepsia).

Our other occurrence of σεληνιάζομαι occurs in Mt 4:24 (σεληνιαζόμενος ‘moonstricken persons’). The Curetonian and Peshitta follow the lead provided by Greek Matthew to ‘label’ the phenomenon and so in Mt 4:24 the plural ܐܒܪܐܓܪܐܳܐ identifies the afflicted persons by means of the type of demon the translators perceive responsible (‘the ones [afflicted by] the roof-demon’). This choice, made initially by the Curetonian text and followed in the Peshitta, follows the general Mesopotamian awareness of roof demons. Thus in Syriac ܒܰܪܳܐܶܓܳܪܳܳܳܐ could function for ‘a roof demon’ or, in the plural, ‘persons vexed by a roof demon’ (so KPG). The latter usage for identifying sick persons is similar to the Greek (Matthean) usage of σεληνιάζομαι (to be moonstricken) and σεληνιαζόμενος (moonstricken persons). In Mt 17:15 a demon is held directly responsible for the illness (and exits at the command of Jesus, Mt 17:18). The various attempts to label the condition in the Syriac versions in Mt 17:15 are: ܪܘܚܳܦܠܓܐ ‘a spirit of paralysis/apoplexy’ (Sinaitic); ܠܳܓܳܪܳܐ ‘a roof demon’ (Curetonian & Peshitta); and ܡܛܠܳܕܡܣܬܗܪܢ ‘on account of [him] being moonstricken’ (Harklean). The Peshitta is further justified in identifying a ‘kind’ of demon in Mt 17:15 since its Greek source also included verse 21 whereby Jesus refers to the demon as ‘this kind’ (τοῦτο τὸ γένος, ܗܳܢܳܳܓܶܢܣܳܐ).

258 Marten Stol, Epilepsy in Babylonia (Groningen: Styx, 1993), 16–19. According to Stol, the Akkadian bel āri (or simply āri) translates the Sumerian Lugal-irra ‘lord of the roof’ and lī ēgar da šubba (fallen by the roof/wall) and this roof demon is sometimes identified as Lugal-girra. He also notes that the roof demon appears in the Babylonian Talmud as Ḳῆписыва (Firestore). Cf. more recently T. Kwasman, “The Demon of the Roof” in Disease in Babylonia, ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller (Leiden: Brill, 2007). Kwasman affirms the association between the Syriac ܠܳܓܳܪܳܐ and the Akkadian īgāru (meaning wall) and notes, 174: “Besides the Akkadian sources, the ܒܰܪܳܐܶܓܳܪܳܳܳܐ occur frequently in incantations and related texts of late antiquity such as magic bowls and metal amulets composed in Mandaic, Syriac and various Babylonian Aramaic idioms.”

259 Cf. Kwasman “Roof,” 181, who asserts that “the construction with ܒܰܪܳܐ is well attested for demons and is used to designate a type, species, or an association (even a resident of a place).”

260 According to Kwasman, “Roof,” 169, the Palga “paralysis” is the disease caused by a roof demon.

261 The Greek of Mt 17:21 is usually considered to be an intrusion from the parallel account in Mk 9:29.
If we follow the methodology advocated by Pilch for not imposing foreign categories of illness onto Matthew’s terminology, we might obtain an ethnomedical meaning of the lexeme σεληνιάζωμαι in Matthew.  

2.5.2 Speaking Ethnomedically: Ὅτι Σεληνιάζεται According to Matthew

At minimum, the phrase Ὅτι Σεληνιάζεται indicates a ‘periodical’ or ‘episodic’ kind of affliction (i.e. ‘because he is [one who is] periodically-affected’). Contextually, there is little reason to move beyond this meaning, for two reasons.

First, the phrase ‘because frequently he falls…’ (πολλάκις γὰρ πίπτει [εἰς τὸ πῦρ…]) indicates that the reference to ‘frequently’ can be taken as clarifying the doubly phrased ‘diagnosis’ immediately preceding, namely: Ὅτι σεληνιάζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει (or κακῶς ἔχει).

Second, its use in Mt 4:24 suggests that the lexeme σεληνιάζωμαι reflects an intermittent category of illness. In Mt 4:24 the term is distinguished from two other categories of persons in need of healing (δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους καὶ παραλυτικούς). The first category refers to the persons chronically afflicted by demons, and the third category refers to those chronically deficient in their bodies, whilst the middle group of persons are those who are affected

Recently, Pilch’s approach has been critiqued by P. F. Craffert, “Medical Anthropology as an Antidote for Ethnocentrism in Jesus Research? Putting the Illness-Disease Distinction into Perspective,” HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 67, no. 1, accessed October 18, 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i1.970. Craffert treats Pilch’s work, incorrectly, as though it falls under ‘historical Jesus research’ and so Craffert asks whether or not “moonstruck excludes epilepsy?” But whether or not moonstruck ‘could have been’ (medical) epilepsy is outside the purview of Pilch’s aims. Pilch is not wanting to make any claims about someone’s ‘biomedical’ condition (indeed, Pilch’s intention, as I see it, is to avoid this kind of historical reconstruction). This is not to say that Pilch’s work is without its flaws. But since his aim is to advocate the avoidance of modern biomedical impositions, we can extrapolate from this to imply we should also avoid imposing any other ‘foreign’ categories, including professional labels. Thus, if we acknowledge that ‘epileptic’ in English is merely a transliteration of an ancient Greek word, namely ἐπιληπτικός (not acknowledged by Pilch, who implies that ‘epileptic’ represents a ‘biomedical’ diagnosis) and that ἐπιληπτικός is alleged in BDAG to be an ancient word of similar meaning to σεληνιάζωμαι then we can see that BDAG’s definition has not simply imposed a modern (etic) label onto Matthew’s term (as assumed by Pilch). Yet the entry in BDAG has imposed a foreign professional label onto Matthew’s account and so remains potentially misleading. Mt 17:15 differs to professional notions of ἐπιληψία because Ὅτι σεληνιάζεται is more informal as a ‘popular’ or ‘folk’ label. So Pilch’s main argument, that the term ‘epileptic’ is not emic, still stands.

This is what the medieval translation ‘lunatic’ intended, as a term not solely ‘epileptic’ “but comprised all such abnormal states as manifested themselves in more or less periodical attacks.” Temkin, Falling, 93–95.
intermittently (as a subcategory of demonic possession). The three categories together are apparently meant to encompass the variety of illnesses being healed by Jesus. The list differs in the Syriac of S and C (in pairs following the structure of v. 23c: torments and infirmities; stubborn infirmities and hateful torments; the Curetonian parallels the ‘roof-top’ ones with "חָרָשׁ הַר") ‘hateful torments’). Still, the intention in the older Syriac is to relay the full range of desperately ill people Jesus has healed. The final three types in the Peshitta Mt 4:24 correspond to the three kinds in Greek, the middle group being those of the ‘roof-top type’ of demonic possession (δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους καὶ παραλυτικούς (i.e. those of the permanent demonic affliction, periodic demonic affliction, and permanent physical infirmities). Following an anthropological approach (avoiding foreign imposition of medical categories), we obtained an improved ‘ethnomedical’ understanding of the Greek lexeme σεληνιάζομαι in Mt 17:15 (i.e. intermittently affected/frequently afflicted [by a demon]). BDAG’s definition was correct only insofar as the explanation ὅτι σεληνιάζεται was intended to be a label of illness. We did not find the label to be a professional label. The professional perspective of epilepsy remains foreign to our text (for both Greek and Syriac accounts).

If the label ‘be an epileptic’, as more befitting for a professional diagnosis, is foreign to Matthew, then why impose it on Mark? Perhaps there is, however, something to justify a professional label of epilepsy in Luke? Yes, there is some evidence in Luke that suggests a multifaceted perspective of the affliction. Lk 9:37–43 allows for, and encourages, not only a folk-medical perspective (similar to that of Mt 17:15) and something of a conflict-of-kingsdoms approach toward spirit-
aggression (similar to that of Mk 9:14–29), but also presents a somewhat semi-professional-medical perspective in closer agreement with other professional medical accounts of depicting only the ‘expressive’ symptoms related to epileptic phenomena (e.g., omitting the aspect of paralysis and any cry of the boy mid-seizure). 264

2.5.4 Brief Comparison with Lk 9:37–43a

In Lk 9:37–43a the focus falls on the ‘apocalyptic’ relief or ‘salvation’ that Jesus brings to the boy and his family. Luke’s context suggests that the boy’s family had barely any relief from the affliction prior to Jesus’ intervention. Jesus is explicitly said to have then healed the boy (Lk 9:42 ἠάωμαι; Aphel of ἀσά). 265

Annette Weissenrieder is quite persuasive in reading the healing account here (and those elsewhere in Luke) against a medical background, cognizant of the fact that the πνεῦμα is the afflicter of the action in a non-medical way (i.e. not as the boy’s ‘breath’ nor as an element of the ‘wind’). She acknowledges that the episode in Luke does not completely follow the medical model:

In Luke 9:39, πνεῦμα is the subject of the action, whereas in the medical sources the term is always used as an object (in accusative form). Therefore we cannot draw solely on the medical sources as an argument against a “folk” interpretation of the story – even if we consider that πνεῦμα is used together with various forms of λαμβάνειν to describe the phenomenon of an epileptic seizure in the Corpus Hippocraticum. 266

Nevertheless, the fact that physicians of antiquity categorized epileptic phenomena into two main types explains why the ‘repressive’ category of symptoms is not recounted within Luke. 267

Weissenrieder has only encountered one example where both types of epileptic phenomena

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265 For the Peshitta text of Lk 9:37–43a, see §9.11.

266 Ibid., 278.

267 Ibid., 275 (cf. also 282, 295), where the two types are summarised: “1. Decrease in body: Motionlessness with the mouth open, pallor, slowed breathing, "great pulse," affliction with a condition similar to deep sleep” and “2. Increase in body: Fit of suffocation, a loud cry followed by loss of voice or speech, foam emitting from the mouth, grinding of the teeth, cramping of the hands, rolling of the eyes, striking out with hands and feet.”
(expressive seizure with paralysis) occur together.\textsuperscript{268} So if the author of Luke was familiar with such categories, we would expect that he narrate either one set of symptoms or the other but not both—which is exactly what we find. Weissenrieder supports our suspicions that “the author of the Gospel of Luke intensifies the medical implications in the texts.”\textsuperscript{269} Consequently there is symmetry between the “hystera phenomenon” exhibited in Jairus’ daughter (Lk 8:40–42, 40–56) and that of the ‘epileptic’ youth (Lk 9:37–43):

The Hippocrates mention the illness ascribed to the daughter of Jairus only in relation to women, whereas they attribute the “epileptic phenomena” almost exclusively to young men. The coherency becomes even more pronounced when we consider that both of these illnesses can be associated with distinctive, outwardly directed seizure or with paralysis. Unlike the author of the Gospel of Mark, the Lucan author includes only the “expressive” seizure in his portrayal of the boy, but in the case of the daughter of Jairus he refers—as does the author of Mark—to the form associated with paralysis. This symmetry is further supported by the fact that the boy is healed in public while the daughter’s healing takes place at home.\textsuperscript{270}

It is reasonable to follow Weissenrieder in concluding that the symptoms of the illness in Lk 9:37-43 are presented more coherently with medical understandings of the time so as to make the narrative more plausible for an audience which has at its disposal a varied system of interpretative categories:

The portrayal of the illnesses in the context of the medical knowledge of his time is just one of several criteria the author employs in order to lend credibility to the events he reports.\textsuperscript{271}

Further analysis of Lk 9:39–42 has been omitted and is superseded by the intratextual analysis that appears in §9.11.

To summarise, we cannot hastily merge different contexts. We cannot continue to presume that the context in Mark is the same that we find in Matthew and/or Luke (against ‘supposition 3’ that the various contexts are exactly the same, or that they can or should be harmonised). Our


\textsuperscript{269} Weissenrieder, \textit{Images of Healing}, 228. Cf., 358: “We can understand the discrepancies from the Gospel of Mark as an intensification of indicators of illness in the Lucan text.”

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 304.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 358–59.
analysis of the individual textual context can now guide any analysis further afield. We are now in
a position to examine other biblical occurrences of the Peal of حبّة.

2.6 Other Biblical References: Hebrew-Syriac Correspondences

When we observe the few biblical references of the Peal of حبّة we discover its Hebrew
cognate, the Qal of حبّ. In the Hebrew OT, the cognate appears five times and corresponds
with our Syriac lexeme in all five places (Deut 24:20; Judg 6:11; Ruth 2:17; Isa 27:12; and 28:27
[Ethpeel in Peshitta]). There are a total of seven appearances of our lexeme in the Peshitta OT,
but let us begin with the five Hebrew-Syriac correspondences. Its meanings are misleadingly
simple in HALOT: “1. to beat off (olives)”; “2. “to beat out (the grain that has been cut off).”

These meanings suffice until we meet with a figurative application, or an application without an
object, or an application with a peculiar object. In our five corresponding Hebrew-Syriac
occurrences, we find four different applications.

2.6.1 Olive Harvesting (Deut 24:20)

Harvesting olive trees is one application. The object of the verb is the tree, not the olives
themselves (any olives that were within reach could simply be picked off by hand). For obtaining
the large proportion of olives the branches of the tree were jolted with a suitable instrument to
dislodge the olives. The action is repetitious and purposeful. To obtain the olives required more
than one jolt of the branches. The force is not particularly violent, so as not to damage the
branches. Whether the precise nature of the force should be considered ‘hitting/beating’ or
‘shaking’ remains unclear since the point of the action is to force the tree to release its olives.

272 Ludwig Koehler et al., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Logos electronic ed.; Leiden: Brill,
1999).

273 See Keil and Delitzsch’s commentary on Isa 27:12: “Such fruits, as the prophet himself affirms in Isaiah 28:27,
were knocked out carefully with a stick, and would have been injured by the violence of ordinary threshing.” Carl
Clark, 1864–77).

274 Cf. the definition for the Hebrew verb in the Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew: “to strike another object
repeatedly; + with a stick or a similar wooden instrument; ► so that items attached to this object will be released -
to beat; to thresh.” Reinier de Blois, ed., “A Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew,” accessed July 1, 2011,
http://www.sdbh.org/.
2.6.2 Wheat Threshing (Ruth 2:17; Judg 6:11)

Another application is the threshing of wheat by hand. Wheat was usually threshed on a hard floor (threshing floor) with metal-toothed threshing logs dragged over the sheaves of wheat by cattle or carts. Our verb is not used for such threshing. But one could thresh a few sheaves with a stick (by hand). This resembles the method of threshing used for extracting cumin.\textsuperscript{275}

2.6.3 Cumin Extraction (Isa 28:27)

The use here is said to be unlike heavy harvest ‘threshing’. Harvesting cumin and fennel (caraway seed, black cumin, or dill) is mentioned in Isa 28:27, where both are distinguished from wheat threshing: ‘Because fennel is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is the wheel of a threshing cart rolled over cumin; because fennel is beaten out [Ethpaal حبط] with a stick, and cumin with a rod’.

2.6.4 Figurative Use in Isaiah (Isa 27:12)

A fourth application is a figurative use based on either olive harvesting or wheat threshing—its object and goal is ‘people collection’ throughout Israel (‘on that day the Lord will thresh’). The precise kind of ‘threshing’ envisaged in Isa 27:12 is ambiguous (does the following ‘picked up one by one,’ mean none are left on the ground? or picked off the branches?). The imagery is likely of olive pickings, or (unless a mixed threshing metaphor is intended) it might refer to sheaves of wheat gathered by hand as every last sheaf is ‘gleaned’. Either way it is the Lord himself who personally ‘collects’ the children of Israel.

Our Syriac lexeme corresponds in all five places with the Hebrew cognate and this suggests an obvious semantic correspondence (the calculated force determined to extricate a handful of grain or cumin or to bring down olives from the tree). But there are two extra occurrences of our verb that correspond to different Hebrew lexemes. In Isa 17:6 the word simply belongs in our first category (olive harvesting) though it is the form of the Peal passive participle ‘beating’

\textsuperscript{275} Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary, on Judg 6:11 “חבט does not mean to thresh, but to knock with a stick. The wheat was threshed upon open floors, or in places in the open field that were rolled hard for the purpose, with threshing carriages or threshing shoes, or else with oxen, which they drove about over the scattered sheaves to tread out the grains with their hoofs. Only poor people knocked out the little corn that they had gleaned with a stick.”
(as a predicative adjective in the absolute state in a verbless clause). So אָיֳכֶזַܐ ַד חַבֶּײִطو (‘as [in the
time of] the olive [tree] of beating’) corresponds to הַכְּנֶקוּף זַּיְיִיתַא (‘as [in the time of] the olive [tree] of beaten’ [the beaten olive tree]). So חַבֶּײִطو corresponds to the noun נֹקֶף for the ‘striking off’ (the beating/harvesting/extrication) of olives.276

2.6.5 A Fifth Application: Torrential Rain and Hail

Another application appears in Isa 28:17 where the Syriac verb corresponds to the rare Hebrew verb יִעָהֶשׁ, ‘to shovel’ (HALOT: “to sweep away”). Here the figurative ‘shelters of lies’ (‘deceptive shelters’) in Hebrew will be shown to be defective shelters when they are ‘swept away’ by a hail storm (and accompanied by a flood). It is possible that the Syriac perceived that the shelters were ‘threshed away’ by hail, as though the shelters of lies were simply ‘husks’ to be removed, releasing their contents. But such an application of our verb is apparently not considered in the lexicons. To follow CSD, for example, we will have to choose between the action achieved by hail (“to beat down like hail”) or by a flood or stream (“to snatch away as a torrent”). Thus Isa 28:17 is not regarded figuratively to reflect a harvesting sense. But we should question whether the hail/rain/torrent application has fallen into the trap of supposing that the Syriac verb in Isa 28:17 means ‘sweep away’ because of the corresponding Hebrew (and as in the Peshitta translation of Lamsa).277 Another potential ‘foreign’ influence here is the noun used for violent rainstorms, חַבֶּײִطو. Likewise, we find a similar meaning given for the use of the participle in Isa 30:30 חַבֶּײִطو ְסֶחָרַא (‘a threshing storm’, literally ‘a storm of threshing’) corresponding to נֶפֶץ וָזֶרֶם (‘a blast and a storm’). But being a participle, our ‘verb’ here appears more like the noun חַבֶּײִطو (or like the adjective for ‘severe’, ‘violent’). These multiple associations with the underlying Hebrew and with the noun for violent rainstorms (and with the adjective ‘violent’) make it

276 Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907; corr. reprint, 1972). נֹקֶף, in HALOT, is “what has fallen, been knocked down (olives from the tree).” In Isa 24:13, the same Hebrew noun נֹקֶף is translated by the Syriac noun חַבֶּײִطو.

277 At the time of writing of (from 2006 until 2011), Lamsa’s translation was the only available translation in English for the Peshitta OT. George M. Lamša, The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts, Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East (Nashville: Holman Bible, 1933; 1957; 1961; 1985). More recently, I have been able to consult the translation of Gillian Greenberg and Donald M. Walter, trans., The Syriac Peshitta Bible With English Translation: Isaiah (ed. George A. Kiraz and Andreas Juckel; Antioch Bible. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2012). Greenberg and Walter translate here as “hail will beat down false hope.”
difficult to ascertain whether or not ‘(hail-)storming’ should have any connection with thresh/harvest/extricate. Both Isa 30:30 and Isa 28:17 remain ambiguous.

2.6.6 Determining the Application: The Integration of Other Meanings in Mk 9:18, 20

If it is the verb’s kind of object that is most helpful for determining the sense of the application then we are left with hardly any precedents for distinguishing between different applications of the verb. There are only four other biblical contexts with a clear subject and object: Deut 24:20 (subject = you, object = olive tree); Judg 6:11 (subject = Gideon’s son, object = wheat); Ruth 2:17 (subject = Ruth, object = them [wheat gleanings]); Isa 28:17 (subject = hail, object = shelter of lies). What, if anything, is paradigmatically useful here in these four contexts? In each of these cases the goal of the verb was to remove something from the object by repetitively pelting it or knocking it with something else that is less flexible (until the contents are released).

Our guiding context\textsuperscript{278} has provided us with a clear subject and object. So we know that the subject is the unclean spirit and the one with the goal of achieving an outcome on the object, the boy. Our guiding context clarified what this aim is in Mk 9:22 (ܐܰܪܹܡܝܬܰܶܗܳܒܽܢܳܘܪܰܳܐܳܘܰܒܵܡܰܝܳܐ to ‘cast him into fire and water’) and reiterated it with the Aphel ܐܒܕ corresponding to ἀπόλλυμι (‘to cause [him] to perish’) and confirmed with the Peal of ܫܚܩ (Mk 9:26) ‘crush’, ‘break apart’ (corresponding to σπαράσσω) and finally with the Peal of ܡܘܬ (Mk 9:26).

We saw a hard surface involved in the action of our other biblical contexts. The beating out of a small seed such as cumin, or caraway seed, is done with a stick against a hard surface. The beating out of a small amount of grain also required a hard surface. The harvesting of olives required a long rod to knock olives onto the ground. In our guiding context we see that the boy is being knocked down to the ground and the spirit is probably knocking him against it (the boy’s arms, legs and head being knocked against the ground) and we know that the unclean spirit was attempting to take the boy’s life.

\textsuperscript{278} The label ‘guiding context,’ used to describe the textual context of our lexeme under examination, was helpfully suggested to me by my wife, Crystal-Amelie Lewis.
Yet the situation with the boy in Mark is unlike the OT contexts. He is not an olive tree full of olives (though he does become ‘withered’ in Mk 9:18), he is not a handful of wheat, nor is he a plant full of cumin seeds (though he is crushed/broken apart in Mk 9:26). We will have to admit that the application appears figurative, but the boy is nevertheless real and the outcome of his sudden afflictions is visible. Early Syriac readers of our text would probably have understood that the intrusive spirit was trying to ‘get at’ the boy and remove his life with a repetitive assault (and intermittently so) that would remind them of how someone would crack open a small seed with a hand-held implement, or knock all the olives down from olive tree branches (these harvesting actions having a goal of obtaining essential ‘life-giving’ food). It is further logical that we saw phlegm foaming out of his mouth during the assault, and his life begin to wither away, as signs that the unclean spirit is succeeding in its goal to take away the boy’s life.

2.7 Summary of Chapter 2

The inherent difficulties in the case of an ambiguous lexeme, the Peal of ܚܒܛ, cried out for the identification of a more secure methodology. Such a methodology has not previously been available.

Chapter 2 proceeded by beginning with meanings given in previous Greek and Syriac lexicons. It sought to find a way to explore and critique certain alleged contextual meanings. Before the investigation done in chapter 2, the intention had originally been to argue in favour of the ‘contextual’ (‘convulsive’) meaning found in several Syriac and Greek lexicons (given for several lexemes in the Gospel episode(s) of the so-called epileptic boy). Further examination led to a decision that the convulsive meaning for both the Syriac and corresponding Greek needed to be re-evaluated in order to reveal what it was based on.

The ‘contextual’ meaning was composed of four ‘fronts’ of influence. The oldest front had almost entirely faded in influence so only the latter three were examined. Each of the three remaining fronts (‘3 suppositions’) was articulated, tested, and found to be methodologically flawed.
Supposition 1 was that the context portrays a medical condition (‘epilepsy’ that Jesus healed). Two points illuminated a flaw in this supposition: the narrative of Mk 9:14–29 portrays a spiritual battle and has no mention of healing.

Supposition 2, that the Greek underlying the Syriac uses a verb that was explicitly medical or indicative of epilepsy, was found to be flawed in the variety of Greek words present (potentially underlying Mk 9:18, 20). Also the medical meaning of the term σπαράσσω was not demonstrably accurate, apparently based on a middle-passive morphology of the verb and having a different grammatical subject.

Supposition 3 was that the context in Mk 9:18–26 is the same as in the parallel accounts of Matthew and Luke. This was also found to be flawed as the contexts are so identifiably different.

2.8 Taking Stock of Employed Methodological Principles: Evolution of Methodology

Chapter 2 has shown how one particular low-frequency lexeme remained at a high risk of being infected with foreign contexts, particularly lexemes that share parallel contexts such as the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:18, 20. Gospel parallels can interfere with the perception of what is contextually relevant, leading to an inadequate recognition of foreign elements. Several methodological principles were employed thereby overcoming non-contextual interferences. This exposed several prematurely-made contextual meanings in important Greek and Syriac lexicons of the New Testament—primarily the convulsive meaning for the Peal of ܚܒܛ (but also the Ethpaal of ܒܥܩ) and for the Greek lexemes σπαράσσω, ῥήσσω, and σεληνίζομαι. The following principles were employed, and can be developed towards a more complete methodology:

(1) Meanings and definitions from Syriac lexicons were re-evaluated. However, this principle might be more efficiently achieved by postponing the engagement of lexicons until after undertaking an independent analysis. In so doing, two things might be achieved. First, it will provide more opportunity for new exploration and increasingly accurate meanings to be discovered and promoted. Second, it will provide independent results with which to compare other lexical entries.
Greek lexicons are important to the Syriac lexicographer because the Peshitta Gospels are Greek-Syriac translations. Meanings and definitions from Greek lexicons were re-evaluated in order to avoid reproducing any dubiously-constructed contextual meanings. This, again, will be more easily achieved after an independent textual analysis (of the Greek) has been performed.

Categories of meaning were recognised in order to differentiate native and foreign labels of vocabulary related to illness. That is, cultural categories of illness within the text were maintained, namely vocabulary that was ‘emic’ (of an insider perspective) was not confused with ‘etic’ vocabulary (of an outsider perspective) so that words of alleged medical significance can be approached ‘ethnomedically’ (as advocated by John Pilch). This principle was somewhat aided by an ‘intratextual’ analysis. However, ‘narrative analysis’ might offer a more explicit and rigorous ‘intratextual’ application of this principle because of its acute awareness of the text providing its own meaning (the ‘world in the text’).

The sister Syriac versions (where extant) were consulted since they potentially provide Syriac words of similar meaning. In the Harklean’s case, we were informed more about its underlying Greek than about its Syriac meaning. The Sinaitic text did not reinforce the medical meaning supposed in several Greek lexicons for σπαράσσω. The sister Syriac versions should have a place in a full methodology when examining other low-frequency Peshitta lexemes.

Figurative applications were recognised because they cannot easily be converted into a literal ‘medical’ sense without unnecessary modification of meaning. Keeping this in mind served to avoid hastily equating figurative and literal.

Greek variants were observed as they can assist with Greek words of similar meaning and prevent prejudicing correspondences (the precise Greek underlying the Syriac versions, including the Peshitta, is not always known). Observing Greek variants will remain essential to a mature methodology and will curb the instinct to presuppose that the eclectic text in NA28 gives access to the earliest text (or to the Peshitta’s source text).
(7) Parallel Gospel contexts were not merged or harmonised. This is in line with a narrative approach and allows independence to be maintained and avoids (or reduces) imposition of foreign contexts. A fuller methodology might also benefit from ‘rhetorical analysis’, which pays attention to the individual composition in terms of what literary procedures a writer is employing in order to influence the intended audience. Rhetorical analysis would thus provide another avenue for observing how different textual contexts remain unique.

(8) Other biblical contexts (in the Peshitta OT) were examined. Meanings from contexts further afield might be considered and integrated into our NT context only if the integrity of the guiding context is maintained. A complete methodology is required that can prioritise a lexeme’s immediate textual context and then eventually bring other contexts into consideration by a gradual ‘widening of horizons’.

The methodology introduced in chapter 1 (outlined in §1.5) is the end result of taking into account, and seeking to apply, the above eight principles (and their extended ideals). Whilst principles emerged, Chapter 2 remained relatively vague about the steps that ‘contextual analysis’ should entail for examining other low-frequency lexemes in the Peshitta Gospels. A consideration of these questions is what led to a fresh exegetical proposal, namely a series of steps intended to reduce the reliance on (and the need for following up potentially distracting suggestions in) other lexicons. It removes other lexicons from view until the penultimate step, just prior to writing the results in the form of a Syriac-English entry.

Now follows the full methodology applied to several Peshitta Gospel lexemes (chapter 9 revisits four Syriac lexemes from Mk 9:18–26 and Lk 9:37–43a).
Chapter 3. First Employment of Proposed Methodology on \(ܢܰܓܰܐ\): Lexeme 1

3.1-5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mt 3:10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 (3:10a)</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} Main Clause Emphasis</th>
<th>Topical Frame 1</th>
<th>Logical Connector</th>
<th>Attention-Getter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct 1</td>
<td>Predicate 1</td>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>Conjunction 1</td>
<td>(Predicate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle + noun</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>prep.</td>
<td>passive participle as predicate (verb implied)</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the trees</td>
<td>the root</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>(is) put</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2 (3:10b)</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} Main Clause Emphasis</th>
<th>Topical Frame 2</th>
<th>Logical Inferential</th>
<th>Topical Frame 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct 2</td>
<td>Predicate 2</td>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>Conjunct. 2</td>
<td>Subject 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle + noun</td>
<td>particle + active</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>neg.</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>into fire.</td>
<td>and thrown/fall</td>
<td>is cut down</td>
<td>is not</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

There are two main clauses in Mt 3:10, here called ‘Sentence 1’ and ‘Sentence 2’. We can thus split our table in two. Our lexeme, \(ܢܰܓܰܐ\), appears early in Sentence 1, immediately after the two separate (‘free’, ‘unbound’) particles: \(ܗܳܐܳܕܶܝܳܢ\). The early placement of our noun is due to it being the subject (and ‘Topical Frame’) of the first clause (‘Sentence 1’) and the subject of the attention-getter \(ܗܳܐ\). The verse provides/relays direct speech.

The inference is drawn in the second sentence \(ܪܳܫ̇ܐ\) from the first sentence. The first sentence is either stating a fact (declarative) and/or demanding attention (imperative) concerning \(ܰܓܰܐ\) which is a noun functioning as the subject of the first predicate \(ܣܺܝܡ\) ‘[is] placed against’,
‘set to’ (or ‘put onto’) ‘the root of the trees’ (3:10a). The ‘verb’ here itself is implied (شَمَّتُ نُبَيِّحًا) taken as ‘set/appointed’ or ‘ready/poised’ as a predicated adjective).

The intensity of the second main clause (chopped down and thrown/put into fire) matches the implied intensity of the first. The use of the present tense means that نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا is the subject of ‘Predicate 1’ (نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا ‘put onto the tree root’) it is indirectly responsible for ‘Predicate 2’ (نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا ‘cut down’. Although the verb is passive, نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا can be implied as the means by which the cut will be made. The logical continuation of the action from 3:10a into 3:10b is that our noun is that which will be used to cut down every non-fruit-bearing tree (present tense for نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا ‘not bearing’ and نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا ‘is thrown’ giving a future sense ‘is about to’, see below). So نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا is that which may be used to cut down trees. The passive voice likely implies God as actor for ‘Predicate 2’ (‘cut down’).

The logical inference maintained in Mt 3:10 is based on the use of the present passive voice as it relates to a potential event—every unfruitful tree is about to be chopped down and thus ‘it is [will be] thrown into fire’ (the present participle can relay a future action).  

Since ‘be cut down and fall into fire’ is not fluent in English, the gloss is usually given as ‘thrown’ (for نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا). However, the sense appears to be ‘it is destined for the fire’ concerning what is expected to happen to trees that fail to bear fruit. ‘Thrown’ overemphasises the action. The predication of the participle reflects the matter-of-fact situation that fruit trees without good fruit simply ‘go’ to the fire (because the ‘time comes’ as is ‘customary’).

Based on the minimal contribution that is made by نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا (it is in place ready so that every tree that bears no good fruit ‘be chopped down’) we can conclude that نَزَازُ نُبَيِّحًا is ‘an implement for


cutting down trees’, which in English is an ‘axe’, or more specifically a tree-felling axe (‘tree axe’). However, the semantics change a little when we consider more textual context (namely who is speaking to whom and who the trees represent). Also, is نُرَسَّ (‘axe’) the ‘usual’ implement associated with the object ایل (‘tree’)? And is the connection between نُرَسَّ and نورا (‘fire’) unique or expected? At this stage we can only presume that such vocabulary is not strange, that is, that the combination of these items is natural. Based only on the present context we can only presume that نُرَسَّ naturally goes with: the verb مَتَفَسَّق (‘cut down’), the object ایل (‘tree’), and/or نمردا (‘root/trunk’), and even the destination نُحَّ (‘thrown/put/goes’) and نورا (‘fire’).

3.7 Translation Analysis

There are no Peshitta variations to note concerning our Syriac lexeme. But we can compare the Sinaitic, Curetonian, Peshitta and Harklean (CESG text):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>وا نُرَسَّ ایل</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
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<tr>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>وا نُرَسَّ ایل</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
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<tr>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>وا نُرَسَّ ایل</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
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<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>وا نُرَسَّ ایل</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
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<tr>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>مَتَفَسَّق</td>
<td>وا نُرَسَّ ایل</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first ‘verb’ is implied in P by ضَمَّ (‘set’, ‘placed’, ‘appointed’) and is present in the verbal phrase مَتَفَسَّق in C and S (‘it came’, ‘it happened’). Both correspond to κεῖται (‘it sits’). We can observe that C has نُحَّ (‘to the fire it goes’). We have already noted that the English ‘it is thrown into the fire’ unnecessary emphasises the participle ‘thrown’ (as verb) which is not necessarily the case in the Syriac versions or the underlying Greek.

Greek variants potentially underlying the Peshitta are not significant. For ἡ ἄξινη there are no Greek variant lexemes (merely that the definite article is omitted in Δ and there is some manuscript variation in having one, two, or no preceding conjunctions at the beginning of the verse). As for the final phrase, the underlying Greek can be read (as in C) as ‘and (in)to the fire it goes’ which may be καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται (or, one manuscript, P. Oxy 4401 καὶ πρὸς πῦρ βάλλεται).

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282 Pursuing such questions in depth would be the purview of ‘frame semantics’, see Stephen L. Shead, Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew: Exploring Lexical Semantics (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
Only P reverses the order of the final words (‘fire’ and ‘goes’). But this does not result in an emphasis of the verb but merely reverts to the most common Syriac word order by having the verb precede the direct object. So P here follows the more usual Verb-Object.\textsuperscript{283} This is not to say that the fate of such ‘trees’ is any less significant in P.\textsuperscript{284}

\subsection*{3.8 Genre Analysis}

Our passage belongs to the first speech attributed to John the Baptist after he is introduced (in Mt 3:1–6) whereby John is portrayed as a prophet in the wilderness calling for repentance (and as one prophesied by Isaiah). John’s speech extends from Mt 3:7b–12. The speech is characterised as a warning directed against the Pharisees and Sadducees. We might label it ‘(John’s) prophecy of judgment (against the Pharisees and Sadducees)’. It is similar, in several respects, to Isaiah’s heralded day of the Lord’s ‘wrath’ which is ‘coming’ (Isa 13:9) with ‘an axe’ and his intervention as a ‘burning fire’ (Isa 10:15–19, 33–34). Anticipating God’s proposed vengeance or destruction accords with a prophetic speech-form concerning divine judgement (and somewhat with apocalyptic imagery).

Given that John addresses the Pharisees and Sadducees directly as, ‘Offspring of vipers!’ (Mt 3:7) and given that vipers are poisonous snakes, such an address is, anthropologically speaking, an ‘antagonistic label’ which further indicates that Mt 3:7b–12 be regarded as a ‘warning speech’ (or ‘invective’) against the Pharisees and Sadducees (but see also §3.9). According to the speech’s content, such a group (or groups) should not expect to escape ‘the coming wrath’ (and claiming Abraham as ancestor will not save them) unless they repent and ‘bear fruit’ worthy of repentance. The implication is perhaps that God will send judgement (an axe) upon the unrepentant or, more likely, that it is the ‘coming one’ (3:11, cf. ‘he will burn’ 3:12) who will (on God’s behalf). In other words, the speaker claims to be addressing them as though they stand opposed to God—perhaps even as enemies of God.


\textsuperscript{284} S, however, deserves its own analysis. The next time the phrase ‘(in)to the fire it/he goes’ (ܒܢܘܪܐܢܦܠ) appears is in the episode of the son afflicted intermittently by a demon (Mt 17:15), the intended aspect of the son’s ‘destruction’ is thus further highlighted in S by this phrase.
Mt 3:7b–12 presupposes only two kinds of people (from John’s perspective); one ‘fruitful’ who performs good deeds and so worthy of remaining; the other unfruitful/rejected/worthy of the fire. The use of such binary oppositions is a feature of the ‘prophetic-eschatological’ genre (concerning the ‘end times’) and ‘apocalyptic’ genres (God’s impending catastrophic intervention evoked by symbols of judgement e.g. ‘fire’). Therefore, ﻤﺎ ﻢ is an ‘axe’ used not merely against trees but against people (as a symbol of God’s judgement). The tree-chopping metaphor is thus more violent when considering its significance as a threat against people, as it functions as a weapon.

3.9 Rhetorical Analysis

John’s speech stretches from Mt 3:7b–12 and we should extend our rhetorical analysis to include his introduction (3:1–7a) and his baptism of Jesus (3:13–17). Mt 3:1–12 introduces John’s preaching repentance in the wilderness and clothed in camel hair (like Elijah in 2 Kgs 1:8) and quotes Isa 40:3 (one who heralds the Lord’s coming).

The unit twice alludes to Isa 10:34 (verse 10 and verse 11). Verse 12 paraphrases Mal 3:19 (the day ‘comes’ burning like a ‘furnace’). Verse 11 may be taking a messianic interpretation of the Hebrew of Isa 10:34 (where ﺮﺎ ﺭﺎ ‘by the strong one’ = ‘powerful status’ or ‘military leader’). Verse 10 shares several commonalities with Isa 10:32–34 concerning a judgment of the Judean leadership (‘daughter of Zion’, ‘hills of Jerusalem’) with several words in common (ܒ ﻪ ‘behold’, ﺖ ﺕ ‘cut down’, ﻪ ﻪ ‘will fall’).

Verses 8–10 form a slight chiasm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>produce fruit of repentance …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>do not say ‘we are of Abraham’ …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A'</td>
<td>that does not produce fruit is to be chopped down and burned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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287 Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 203. Peshitta Isa 10:34 has ‘by his glory’ (ܒ ﻪ ﺖ).
If the chiasm is deliberate then we have reason to read Mt 3:8 and 3:10 in ‘contra-balance’ surrounding the ‘stubborn’ opinion given in B (the refusal to see the need for repentance, evoking the haughtiness of Isa 10:32–34, and the cause for inverting A to A’). Verses 8–10 section relay what the speaker means by ‘producing fruit’. Producing fruit means ‘repentance’ (3:8); producing fruit stands in contrast to ‘claiming Abrahamic heritage’, namely doing nothing (3:9); producing fruit means producing ‘good fruit’ (3:10) and producing such fruit is the only way to avoid getting ‘the axe’ (3:10).

‘Producing fruit’ is a common metaphor for doing good deeds in biblical literature (Ps 1:3; Prov 1:31; Isa 3:10; Hos 10:1; Sir 23:25) and in Rabbinic works.289 Trees, here, are not literal tress but are metaphors for the Pharisees and Sadducees who will be brought to an end as though they were (unfruitful) trees. Trees are elsewhere used of leaders, of scholars, and of reputedly righteous persons (Jdg 9:7–16; Ps 1:3; Jer 17:7–8; Dan 4:20–2; 2 Bar 39:1–8; m. ‘Abot 3:18 Pesiq. R. 60b).290

Our verse 10 parallels John’s predicted judgment in verse 12. In between is John’s predicted greater ‘baptiser’ (3:11) who will perform the more dramatic distinction of judgment (and salvation?) between the same two groups of people identified previously by John in Mt 3:7–10. Fire binds the three sayings together (mentioned at the end of each of 3:10, 3:11, and 3:12). This repeated use is striking but the second use is slightly different—the first (3:10) is destructive (punishment); the second (3:11) is more likely purifying (salvific?); the third (3:12) is destructive (disposal). All three references to fire may be eschatological imagery of judgment; salvation can naturally play a role within such imagery.

Anthropologically speaking, Mt 3:10 is intended to insult the honour of the Sadducees and Pharisees. But Keener suggests that John’s frankness could have been perceived more positively:


rhetoricians would view John’s denunciation of elite Judeans in 3:7 as displaying parrhēsia, frankness, a widely appreciated virtue; some observers warned, however, that insulting frankness could generate unnecessary hostility. Nevertheless, ancient writers admired such truthful boldness in contrast to flattery.\footnote{Keener, The Gospel of Matthew, xxxi.}

It is possible that here ‘good fruit’ is specifically ‘honourable deeds’.\footnote{Jerome H. Neyrey, “The "Noble Shepherd" in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background,” Journal of Biblical Literature 120, no. 2 (2001): 267–68 argues that the Greek καλός should usually be considered ‘honour’ since “the opposite of καλός is shame (αἰχμηρός), while the opposite of ἁγαθός is evil (πονηρός).”} The noun ‘fruit’ limits the kind of goodness (namely ‘deeds’). We might take the adjective ‘good’ to mean ‘honourable’ given the preceding insult of ‘name calling’ (brood of vipers). It depends on how the fruit metaphor is perceived to work. If the insult is targeted against the Pharisees and Sadducees (who lack ‘good fruit’) primarily as a ‘prophetic oracle’ about their inability to do good (and hence their wickedness which will not go unpunished because they have not repented) then there is less reason to see it as friendly banter to shame or dishonour them. The threat of judgment (prophecy of destruction) sufficiently explains the unit’s main purpose.

Talbert observes a larger chiastic unit stretching from Mt 3:1–4:17 whereby the verses in 3:11–12 form the “center point of the chiastic pattern, section E” which “is an evaluative comparison (a synkrisis) of John and the Mightier One.”\footnote{Charles H. Talbert, Matthew, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 53.} In Talbert’s scheme our verse falls into 3:5–10 (section D) paralleling Jesus’ own response to John (3:13–17). This we can accept based on the following analyses.

A parallel (within Matthew) of 3:10 appears when Jesus recites 3:10 almost verbatim near the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:19), namely:

\[
ܟܽܠ ܐܺܝܠ ܢܳܕܠܳܥܳܒܶܪܳܦܶܐ ܪ̈ܶܳܐ ܛܳܒ ܐܘܫܦܣܶܩܳܘܳܒܢܽܳ ܘܪܳܐܳܢܳܦܶܠ.
\]

Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and to the fire it goes.

Here, \(ܢ݁ܪܓ݁ܐ\) (‘axe’) does not appear but can be implied. In the Curetonian text of Mt 7:19 the logical connector \(ܗܟܝܠ\) is inserted making it even closer to Mt 3:10. The final two words in all the Syriac versions reflect the Greek word order (Object-Verb): καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται which in Syriac will serve to emphasise either the participle (‘goes’) or, more likely, the object/destination
Jesus’ own imagery of casting out unfruitful ‘trees’ in 7:19 is thus as intense as John’s emphasis on ‘the fire’—and even more so in later sections (13:36–43 angels will throw the evil weeds into the furnace of fire; 18:8–9 sinful limbs lead to ‘the Gehenna of fire’; and 25:41 ‘accursed ones’ going ‘into the eternal fire’). Fire (ܢܘܪܐ) makes several appearances in Jesus’ invective against the Pharisees (and Sadducees, and scribes and Pharisees). John’s interest in ‘fire’ (in Mt 3:10, 11, 12) will remind the audience of the prophet Elijah (see 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10; 2:11; Sir 48:1).

We can see that the entire speech in Mt 3:7b–12 is a judgment speech referencing common (and horrific) ‘biblical’ images of judgement against enemies: a ‘wrath’ soon ‘to come’ and the separation between useful ‘wheat’ and useless ‘chaff’ (disposed of or burnt).

Within John’s initial speech it is possible that John’s name-calling of the Pharisees and Sadducees (as ‘viperous ones’) is given as intra-group banter within a debate over whether or not John’s baptisms were necessary or about the sincerity of certain group participation such that John may effectively be pointing out that the scribes and Pharisees provide bad publicity for what his baptisms are meant to be about. They should not be taken as true followers of his message since they do not display true ‘repentance’ (turning toward God). This is only likely, however, in a broad sense—both groups belong to Israelite religion with varying interpretations on what it means to be, and act like, God’s people. Within John’s speech, the scribes and Pharisees are not given a real voice which suggests we should not imagine real dialogue—their silence befits the ‘fact’ that they are soon to be taken out of the picture. John only anticipates their response (3:9a, b) as if to read their stubborn minds. Thus the speech is designed to be a prophetic monologue of a coming judgement for these groups who lack ‘the fruit of repentance’, which, from the perspective of hindsight, means that Matthew’s audience are told that neither of these groups repented. The unit thus promotes and/or perpetuates bias against these groups (as enemies of God).

The speaker’s (John’s) rhetoric works to bind his message to that proclaimed by Jesus and to set up the same oppositions between active and false believers in the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ (3:2). He identifies the Pharisees and Sadducees (those in leadership, positions of power) as those who are in danger of the coming judgment. John’s urgency for repentance is given the reason ‘for the kingdom of heaven has arrived!’ (3:2) John’s preaching thus resembles Jesus’ upcoming preaching and works to introduce Jesus as one even greater than John. The writer provides a brief portrait of John the Baptist as the ‘Elijah prophet’ who comes to prepare the way for an even greater ‘baptiser’—Jesus.

What John does not do is fulfil—there is no mention of fulfilment in the quotation of scripture to introduce him. Neither is there any mention of forgiveness for the people coming from Jerusalem, Judea and regions around the Jordan for repentance and confession of sins. Forgiveness and fulfilment are features reserved for Jesus: “In Matthew’s eyes, John only brought people to repentance in order to make them ready for the Messiah.”

The unit is not necessarily intended to persuade an audience that John the Baptist should be recognised as a true prophet (which it does by demonstrating John’s consistency with Jesus’ own message and by supposing that an audience knows that John’s prophecy had already proven true (Pharisees and Sadducees had not escaped destruction). Primarily it justifies a relationship between John and Jesus by using John to introduce Jesus. The first act of the adult Jesus narrated in Matthew is his coming to John for baptism. This means Jesus becomes a follower of John’s theology. He recognises that what John is doing for the Jewish people is godly and is worth supporting. Effectively, both leaders lend support to the other. When John refuses to baptise Jesus and Jesus explains that it will ‘fulfil all righteousness’ this partly addresses an audience’s uncertainty of why Jesus should need John’s baptism (surely not for repentance and confession?). The unit thus ‘works out’ the relationship between the two leaders.

The quotation of scripture (in this case Isa 40:3) is an important rhetorical device. In this case it recognises that what John is doing is in line with scripture and serves to introduce two figures of

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salvation whereby the latter, in Mt 3:17, is honoured to be called God’s beloved son (in Isa. 40:3
the reference to the Lord was a reference to God but Matthew uses the ambiguity of Lord to
apply it Jesus). 3:10 and 3:17 contain the units only two ‘attention-getters’ namely ἰδοῦ / ἰδοὺ
(‘behold’) to point out something “surprising or important.” The former points out coming
judgement the latter points out salvation/the saviour.

Jesus and John are thus similar in their presentation in Matthew. Both have the same message of
repentance to proclaim (3:2//4:17). Both are opposed to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both
address the Pharisees as ‘offspring of vipers’ (12:34; also 23:33). Hare correctly observes that this
is how Matthew presents John as a witness to Jesus. France observes that elements from every
part of John’s speech from Mt 3:7b–12 are found also on Jesus’ lips later in Matthew such that
“his [John’s] call for repentance in the light of imminent judgment sets the context for which
Jesus’ work of both judgement and salvation will be carried out” and thus “Jesus will take up
where John leaves off.” And ultimately, “like Jesus he [John] was refused belief and was killed
[Mt 14:1–12]. John’s fate prepared the fate of Jesus.”

The writer employs John not only to highlight parallels with Jesus but to highlight important
Matthean themes: repentance and good deeds (‘fruit’); judgment; John as Elijah; baptism; the
Kingdom; the Coming One; fulfilment; and righteousness.

3.10 Narrative Analysis

Both John and Jesus fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (Mt 3:3; 4:14) and that:

both are associated with crowds of people from "Jerusalem" and "Judea" (3:5; 4:25 note
also that "Jordan" is mentioned in both verses). Thus, John’s ministry includes promises,
potentialities that are fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry, as is expressed by the differences
between 3:1–12 and 4:12–25.

296 Runge, Discourse Grammar, 122.
The opposition here also falls between Galilee and Judea—it was not safe for Jesus to grow up in Judea because of the ruler (Herod’s son) Archelaus. Immediately after coming to Judea to John, Jesus is then tested in the wilderness and then retreats to Galilee to begin his ministry (4:1, 9, 23).

The metaphor of good fruit in 3:10 appears again in 7:17 where ‘fruit’ represents the nature of false prophets of whom readers are to beware as dangerous. It is also used in Mt 12:33 in relation to judgment, namely in a reference to speaking righteous words or condemnable words (it also appears in Mt 21:43 where ‘the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to people who produce fruit’ where ‘tree destruction’ may be implied). The intended role for those who claim to follow Jesus’ teaching is that they, like trees, produce its fruit as the sign of the true people of God.

Furthermore, Patte observes three ‘narrative oppositions’ at work in Mt 3:5–7; 3:7–8; and 3:9. Firstly the common people of Jerusalem and Judea and from around the Jordan are cast in a positive light: “there is nothing wrong with Jerusalem and Judea in themselves… The problem is with the Jewish [Judean] religious leaders.” Secondly the act of ‘fleeing’ is to be contrasted with the act of repenting. Thirdly the leaders’ belief in worthiness is based on ancestry whereas God can choose stones to be the inheritors of Abraham.

Our noun for axe is not a neutral word in the mouth of John of the Baptist (as a ‘threat of judgment’). Zooming out to a narrative analysis, we never completely lose sight of similar threats of judgment.

Pharisees play an important oppositional role in Matthew. Jesus’ proclamation of judgment is, like John’s, reserved primarily for the hypocritical Pharisees (and scribes and Sadducees)—those whose deeds are only for show when in reality they presume they have no need to turn to God (repentance) and worse still they prevent others from doing so (Mt 23:1–5).

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The only other reference to both Pharisees and Sadducees as a single group is in 16:1–12 where, together, they try to test Jesus by asking for a sign (readers already know that good ‘fruit’ is the best sign, and that Jesus has just miraculously fed a hungry crowd!). Jesus warns that only an ‘evil and adulterous generation’ asks such a thing and then warns his disciples against ‘the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (chapter 23 is full of Jesus’ invective against the ‘scribes and Pharisees’).

Similar to Mt 3:10 is Jesus’ reply concerning the offended Pharisees in 15:13b where people are referred to as ‘plants’:

 olduk بالله ترثی اور لا ترثی اور

Every plant that is not planted by my father of heaven is uprooted.

An eschatological concern permeates the larger narrative, with judgment looming on the horizon. Matthew is largely concerned with the full arrival of an end time event—the Kingdom of Heaven. Who does, and does not, finally belong to the Kingdom is a recurring narrative feature.

We do not get to hear what either the Pharisees or Sadducees might have had to say in response to John’s insults against them as unfruitful trees facing destruction (or as vipers running from a fire). One reason that we hear no response (only an anticipated response ‘but we have Abraham as our ancestor’) is that these two groups, according to the narrative, have put themselves in a position to hear what the outspoken John has to offer them. Their own ‘opinion’ is spoken for them by John and thus the implied author places them, as ‘speechless’, in this role. In Matthew, the Pharisees and Sadducees represent those religious leaders who are unwilling to put their alleged faith into practice. Readers do not expect any Pharisees or Sadducees to repent. Both groups are relatively ‘flat’ characters that do not evolve and as such serve as caricatures, warned and shamed by John, as negative examples to be judged by God. The fate of the Pharisees and Sadducees is put into the mouth of John. The implication may be that John’s prophecy has already been proven true for the early readers.
Readers can see in John’s message that the boundary lines for God’s holy people are being redrawn along new lines—not based solely on ethnicity. This would be a controversial point essentially claiming that all Israelites (like Gentiles!) required baptism as the Kingdom of Heaven draws nearer and nearer. The binary polarities see two kinds of people in Matthew—the religious and political leaders offering false leadership and the ‘lost people’ who need to be served by faithful leadership (offered now by Jesus who comes to do biblical deeds and serve his brothers and sisters and raise up disciples).

3.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels: Lk 3:9

The one other occurrence of our lexeme appears in the parallel episode of John the Baptist’s speech in Lk 3:9. The parallel is very close in wording and many of the surrounding verses are also present in Luke. At the level of the verse the only difference between Peshitta Lk 3:9 and Mt 3:10 is that Lk 3:9 places ‘into fire’ before ‘it goes’ in line with the Greek of Lk 3:9 (and the Greek of Mat 3:10 and Greek and Syriac of Mt 7:19):

And behold the axe is placed against the root of the trees, every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and to the fire it goes.

Our first five steps of analysis remain identical with our table for Mt 3:10 except for the word order of ‘it goes into fire’. The grammar and semantics of Lk 3:9 will not entail a different analysis to Mt 3:10. Similarly the translation and genre analysis of the Lukan passage will offer only minimal differences since there are no significant variants (besides Greek singular or plurals for ‘tree’ or singulars for ‘good fruits’ and Syriac word order for good fruits, absence/presence of some conjunctive particles and presence of $ܠܘܬ$ instead of $ܣܡܐ$).

It is at the level of rhetorical analysis that large differences begin to emerge. Luke’s Gospel has an extended account of ethical teaching given to the crowds who ask John what they should do. The unit is also introduced differently. We could isolate Lk 3:1–22 as the rhetorical unit which has a somewhat historical interest in John’s placement against a backdrop of both civil and

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302 Deppe, All Roads, 211, paraphrases Mt 3:9 as “we don’t need to be baptised, since we have Abraham as our father.”
religious leadership and the reason for John’s imprisonment by the tetrarch Herod. The most immediate rhetorical difference is that John’s invective is not aimed at Pharisees or Sadducees, who are missing from Luke’s account of John’s preaching and baptising. The warning is directed to the crowds coming for baptism which then elicits from the crowds the question of how to avoid the coming judgment. John’s answer concerns social reform to the three main groups who have come for baptism: general population of Jews, tax collectors, and soldiers (John’s suggested response entails: sharing with the poor; not extorting nor blackmailing; and being content with one’s pay). Jesus’ baptism by John is given briefly (‘… he also baptised Jesus’, Lk 3:21) and some awkwardness remains in that it is given after John is imprisoned (Lk 3:20, by Herod the tetrarch on account of Herodias). Luke includes heaven opening when Jesus is baptised and immediately gives Joseph’s genealogy after ‘You are my beloved son, in you I am pleased. Jesus was about thirty years and thought the son of Joseph, son of Heli …’ (etc.).

In the wider narrative of Luke John has already been introduced as Jesus’ second cousin, son of the priest Zechariah, with his own detailed nativity account (parallel to Jesus) and parallel prophecies concerning his life. In Luke Jesus and John are both shown to be like Elijah but neither is identified as Elijah (unlike John’s identification as such in Mt 17:12//Mk 9:13). We can try to pinpoint a limited number of concerns operating in Lk 3:1–22 from the detailed narrative background to John’s life and teaching which are embedded in the wider narrative.

John’s birth to a previously barren woman recalls both Sarah’s story (Gen 11:30; 18:11; 24:1) thus: “Luke in the beginning of his Gospel magnificently recalls that Abraham’s children are those miraculously raised by God’s power”, and Hannah’s story (1 Sam 1:5; 2:5) thus: “in both cases a future prophet will supply what is expected of the official religious leaders, when they fail to do God’s will.” Both of these points inform Lk 3:9 so that even though the religious leaders are missing from Luke’s account their impotency to save is implied and rectified by God’s intervention for salvation as prophesied in both John’s and Jesus’ nativity accounts. Also the quotation in Lk 3:6 (of Isa 40:3–5) is extended to include “and all flesh will see the salvation of God” (extended even further in other

304 Rindoš, He of Whom, 44.
Syriac text types, thus S: ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed’ and C: ‘for the mouth of the Lord has spoken’.

Within the narrative of Luke, Lk 13:6–9 further illustrates the same point as John’s prophetic judgment (against trees not producing good fruit) where sooner or later ‘time is up’ for such a tree.

Lk 22:31 evokes again the proverbial nature of tree types and judgment (this time in terms of moist/living wood versus dry/dead wood). But this time the point probably concerns the destroyer of the tree more than the tree itself. That is, if a green tree is being destroyed then even worse can be expected of such destroyers when they find a dead tree (implication: beware the kind of person who would destroy a healthy tree!). The assumption being that most people do not usually destroy healthy trees (or good people). Comparing an (innocent) person to a (living) tree is taken for granted. The point is that the kind of people who destroy ‘healthy trees’ are to be feared even more by persons who are unrighteous/guilty (cf. the logic in Prov 11:31).305

The absence of Pharisees and Sadducees in John’s speech (Lk 3:7–9) is the biggest point of immediate difference with Mt 3:10 because of who it is in each case that our two parallel verses are directed at (Mt 3:7–12 // Lk 3:7–9). Such differences demonstrate that in Luke there is not the same level of concern for superficial binary oppositions such that all Pharisees (or Sadducees) must be portrayed as wholly unrepentant. Instead Pharisees eventually disappear in Luke and play no role in his arrest (in fact they warn Jesus to flee when Herod is after him, Lk 13:31, and one invites Jesus for a meal, Lk 7:36) and in Luke there is no harsh condemnation of the Sadducees. The opposition to Pharisees and warnings against the Pharisees are reduced almost entirely to Lk 11:37–12:3.

3.12 Old Testament Occurrences:

There are eight occurrences of نزالة in the Leiden (Logos) edition, namely: Deut 19:5; 20:19 [according to 5b1, 6h6, 9a1]; Judg 9:48; 2 Sam 23:7; Ps 74:5; Isa 10:15; Jer 22:7; and Let Jer 14.

Deut 19:5:

“and when a man goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he lifts up his hand with the axe to cut down a tree, the iron head slips from the helve and strikes his neighbor so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities, and live” (Lamsa).

Deut 20:19

“When you besiege a city many days to overcome it, do not destroy the trees, do not cast an axe against them, because from them you may eat but you shall not cut them down, because a tree is not of the field of humans that it can flee from your besiegement.”

306 The three exceptions are three places where the Syriac does not follow the Hebrew exactly. In 2 Chr 26:9 the Hebrew has ‘and he fortified them’ and the Syriac ‘and he fortified them with bars of iron’. In 2 Sam 12:31 rather than setting the people to work with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, the Syriac has ‘he put them in collars of iron and in chains’. And in Jer 23:29 whilst the Hebrew has ‘a hammer’ the Syriac has ‘iron’.
The use is as a ‘weapon’ against trees. Again some Syriac manuscripts have ܡݤܪݤܠܳܳ whilst some have ܢܳܪ因地制 (manuscripts 5b1, 6h6, 9a1). We might compare 2 Kgs 3:25 where as part of the siege against Moab the soldiers do not keep the trees intact: ‘and they felled all the good trees’:

And Abimeleck went up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimeleck took an axe in his hand and cut down a branch from the trees, and took it and laid it on his shoulder, and said to the people that were with him, What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done (Lamsa).

In Judg 9:48, it seems that the army soldiers, again, each have a ܢܳܪ방송 on hand to chop down branches from trees (to set fire to the temple/tower) as part of Abimeleck’s battle against Shechem. So although tree-felling is in view, it is within the larger context of weaponry/warfare (chopping down trees as an act of warfare).

But when a man comes near them, he gathers them with the handle of an axe and with an iron (axe head?) and they are burned in the fire then and there.

What appears at first not to be a weaponry context in 2 Sam 23:7 (both ܢܳܪ방송 and ܦܰܳܪܙܠܳܳ occur together as though both were tools used for picking up thorns in 2 Sam 23:6) is actually a context of destroying wicked people (David a warrior of the Lord discusses wicked people being like thorns which ‘cannot be gathered by hand’). It amounts to dealing with such people violently as though the plural noun was also a weapon (ܠܡܳܐ ܡܫܬܒܚ) (‘and they are burned in the fire then and there’). Like Mt 3:10, we find ‘fire’ (ܢܽܘܪܳܐ).

The corresponding Hebrew lexeme for ܢܳܪ방송 is גַּרְּזֶן. The corresponding Hebrew lexeme is קַּרְּדֹם (the plural קַּרְּדֻּמֹּ֜ות).
Should the axe be glorified over the one who chops with it?

In Isa 10:15 Assyria is merely the Lord’s axe (the corresponding Hebrew lexeme is גַּרְּזֶן) and, again, the wider context concerns coming judgement/destruction. We might compare verses 17–18 concerning the fire that consumes the thorns, namely the wicked, ‘and the remainder of the trees in the forest will be so few that a child could write them down’.

In Jer 22:7, נַעֲרָה appears in Jeremiah’s message to the king of Judah in the context of the Lord’s threatened punishment/destruction against the city’s neglect of justice. It is the enemy soldiers who each wield ‘his weapon’ (ניָרָה) in order to make the city a desert by chopping down all the best cedar trees which are then cast into the fire ( vej חמה). The verse is very similar to Mt 3:10 and confirms our original supposition that נַעֲרָה may naturally be found with words for ‘cut down’ (here the Peal of חמה), and words for trees, tree trunks, or stems/roots (though not אָסָקָה or חָמָה in this case but ‘cedars’ מים) along with ‘fire’ מים and ‘put/cast’ (rather than פַּלָּה in this case it is the Aphel of חמה).

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Let Jer 14

He has a dagger in his right hand, and an axe in his left hand, but it cannot save itself from war and robbers.

In the Letter of Jeremiah the subject of verse 14 is a god/idol and the context is of weaponry/warfare without tree-felling.

Ps 74:5b

אַֽמְּיָם וַמְּעֹמָּם

309 The corresponding Hebrew is כְּלִי (utensil/tool/equipment).
Ps 74 laments the destruction of the temple by enemies who hacked their way through the precious temple artefacts as though through a forest of trees with axes.

In all, the eight OT appearances of ḋala provide us with two consistent usages: weaponry and tree-felling, with uses often overlapping. Even when used as a tool for tree-felling, the implementation almost always supposes this to be a destructive act associated with warfare and weaponry. We did not find any OT contexts where ḋala did not appear as a potential weapon.

However, we do not have enough data to know precisely how ḋala compared to other Syriac words for axe (or axe types). Another Syriac word for axe is found in Jer 46:22, namely ḫakal (the corresponding Hebrew lexeme is קַרְדֹּם (namely קַרְדֻּמֹת:)

Jer 46:22

And with hatchets come against them like those who cut down trees.

is also found in 1 Sam 13:20–21 (same Hebrew correspondence: קַרְדֹּם) where such axes are listed with both weapons and farming implements (ploughshares, sickles, swords, and spears) as potential weapons to fight the Philistines (all unavailable to the Hebrews at the time). ḫakal appears also in Ps 74:6 (in parallel with ḋala). Our Peshitta OT references are not enough to develop a taxonomy of axe types (ḥakal and ḋala). However, ḋala seems to be both a tree-felling axe (made with an iron head, פְּרֵז and used as a weapon (apparently on hand for soldiers to use).

3.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing a Syriac-English Entry for ḋala

The semantic and grammatical analyses indicated that ḋala was the noun (‘axe’) to be employed for cutting down (unfruitful) trees in a threatening statement of prophetic judgment. We supposed that there was a natural connection between ‘axe’, the judgment of ‘fire’, ‘tree(s)’ and ‘cut down’ and this was eventually affirmed by component 12. Both the Greek and sister Syriac versions affirmed that the destination (‘fire’) was not necessarily violently enforced with a verb (‘thrown’) but simply predicated as a consequence of becoming wood for the fire (‘it goes
[in/on] to the fire’) following the ominous λογος ‘awaiting’ (to bring destruction). The ‘genre’ analysis of Mt 3:10 looked at who is speaking to whom and the kind of prophetic speech it was, namely John the Baptist predicting judgment against the Pharisees and Sadducees (prophecy of divine judgement and somewhat ‘apocalyptic’). The speech implies that it is God’s wrath (or on God’s behalf by a messianic figure soon ‘coming’) in the symbolic form of an ‘axe’ for destroying ‘the unfruitful’ (those opposed to God, as though there were only two categories of people—the ‘fruitful’ who produce good fruit and the ‘unfruitful’ who do not produce good fruit). It also supposes that people may be thought of as ‘trees’ considered ‘worthy’ or ‘unworthy’ to remain.

In the rhetorical analysis, John’s proclamation for the need to produce fruit (doing good deeds) is apparently contrasted by Abrahamic ancestry (doing nothing). The writer identifies the greater judgment (implied of God) as about to be undertaken by Jesus who is associated with the greater bringer of ‘fire’ according to John the Baptist. The rhetorical unit included the introduction of John and his interaction with Jesus who comes to be baptised (as a follower of John’s eschatological theology). In the three prophetic sayings, each one finished with ‘fire’. Jesus’ mission is shown to be bound up with John’s mission. Jesus carries on in the same vein as John and proclaims the same saying about fire (as 3:10) in Mt 7:19 (and mentions fire several times throughout Matthew, targeting Sadducees, scribes, and Pharisees). But Jesus also elaborates how to find salvation and brings forgiveness. John’s saying in 3:1, relating to Jesus, appears more ‘salvific’ than 3:10 and 3:12. Jesus carries the themes of both salvation and judgment forward throughout the Gospel. The unit alludes to Isa 10:34 and quotes Isa 40:3 (depicting John in line with the scriptures of prophecy by associating him with Elijah) and serves to introduce two figures of salvation whereby Jesus, in Mt 3:17, is honoured to be called God’s beloved son. Mt 3:10 and 3:17 contain the units only two ‘attention-getters’ namely λογος / ἰδοὺ (‘behold’) to point out something ‘surprising’ or ‘important’. The former points out the coming judgement, the latter points out the coming salvation/saviour.

The narrative analysis showed how the role played by Pharisees in Matthew was ‘negative’ (along with Herod and his son Archelaus). Matthew’s binary polarities of characterisation tend to allow only for two kinds of people—religious and political leaders offering false leadership (and no
‘fruit’) and the lost ‘little people’ who desperately need true leadership. Distinctions, concerning the identification of God’s people, are being redrawn, with Jesus offering new (biblical) leadership.

The close parallel saying and occurrence in Lk 3:9 saw another use of لَحَن. The differences only appear beyond the level of the verse. John is paralleled in Luke to Jesus in much more detail and John does not target the Pharisees but his speech is aimed generally at everyone who comes to be baptised. The ‘prophecy’ in Lk 3:9 is therefore ethical counsel for the crowd. The binary opposition are much weaker in Luke but the association between ‘tree’ and judgement is stronger (given Lk 22:31).

The analysis of OT occurrences revealed لَحَن to be simultaneously a tool for chopping down trees and a weapon of destruction (in warfare). Such contexts serve to affirm what was already observed in Mt 3:10, namely the blended associations between tree-felling and weaponry (destructive war practices against an enemy). Our other biblical contexts have made more explicit what we have already observed in our exegesis of Mt 3:10. The initial ‘and behold the لَحَن’ would likely have been immediately recognised by an early audience as a weapon associated with war (‘judgement’) against enemies. The لَحَن is befitting of John’s oracle of coming judgment against the unrepentant who are pictured as trees to be chopped down completely (all the way to the ground) as in a dramatic war against a forest of enemy trees. Deut 20:19 already suggests that some armies were treating trees like enemies.

Turning to the Syriac lexicons confirms our study of Mt 3:10//Lk 3:9. Extending our analysis to include the corresponding Hebrew for Old Testament occurrences was not really necessary. The Syriac variant of لَحَن (‘iron’) for an axe (axe head) already shows that it was made of iron.

There is no real dilemma in using the English term ‘axe’ since an axe can also be an ‘axe of war’ or ‘battle axe’—OED gives for ‘axe’ (meaning ‘2’): “olden warfare: a battle-axe.”\(^{310}\) The gloss ‘hatchet’ is additionally helpful in that it is apparently small enough to be used (and carried) with one hand.

\(^{310}\) Oxford English Dictionary (2nd ed.; CD-ROM; version 4.0.0.3; Oxford University Press, 2009).
We are now ready to offer a suggested lexical entry for KPG that includes a definition. ‘Tree axe’ is also a possible gloss, so long as the dual usage is made known.

3.14 Lexical Results for a Contextual Meaning

A suggested lexical entry for KPG:

ܢܪܓܐ n.m. a sharp hand-held tool with an iron head used for cutting down trees and/or as a weapon (battle-axe), axe, hatchet, poised ready to cut down the ‘trees’ in the warning speech of John the Baptist “Now behold the axe is placed at the root of the tree” ﻥܳܪܓܳܐ ﻃﺎ ﻢł ܒܳܐ Mt 3:10//Lk 3:9, cf. ﻃﺎ ﻬܐ (Deut 19:5); cf. also ﻃﺎ ﻢł (Jer 46:22).

Mt 3:10. Lk 3:9
Chapter 4. Lexemes 2 and 3: يُعَطِّلُ وَيُعَطِّلُ

4.1-5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mt 5:18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1b (5:18a)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predicate 1 + Complement 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>participle + enclitic</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ preposition + pronoun suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>أَعْطَنِي إِيَّاكُمْ</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sentence 1c (5:18b)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topical Frame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>particle</td>
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<td>أُوْمَ</td>
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<td>or</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sentence 1d (5:18c)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Counter Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjunct</td>
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<tr>
<td>noun</td>
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<td>the law</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sentence 1e (5:18d)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predicate 4</td>
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<td>أَعْطِي</td>
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<tr>
<td>will be.</td>
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4.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

Our verse appears as a sentence composed of five parts beginning in Mt 5:17b. Our verse relays direct speech. It begins with the attention-getter أَعْطَنِي which interrupts the discourse to point out something important or surprising. 311 أَعْطَنِي is also the answer to an implied oath. 312 The attention-

311 Runge, Discourse, 122. Attention-getters “have the effect of creating a break in the flow of the discourse.”
getter ܐܳܳܡܺܝܳܢ is here used together with the meta-comment אܳܳܐܳܒܳܕܳܐ (Ibid., 127) which has the sense of “I swear to you.”313 Both are ‘forward pointing devices’.314 The verse consists of direct speech.

The number of named subjects here is relatively large and ‘Subject 2’ contains a double subject. ‘Subject 1’ and ‘Subject 2’ are compared in terms of when each may ‘pass’ (intransitive Peal of ܚܳܕ as the verb which appears twice—once before each subject) namely ‘end’ such that ‘Subject 2’ extends until ܘܳܐܳܠ ܟܽܳܒܽܳܢ (‘everything happens’, ‘all takes place’). It is thus acknowledged by the speaker that he is making a grand statement dealing with a grand theme which probably explains the kind of, and number of, subjects expressed (rather than being merely implied subjects).

Our nouns stand in the ‘Topical Frame’ (as the new topic) but a topic which is introduced with ܓܶܳܕܳܐ (γάρ) so our verse provides the reasoning behind what was said previously (Mt 5:17).

The meaning of our sentence does not necessarily help us identify the specific ‘referents’ of our two nouns (in Subject 2) other than that Subject 1 is very large ܚܳܕܳܐܳܡܳܐ ܡܳܚܳܫܳܐ ܒܳܢ (‘heaven and earth’) so that Subject 2 appears in contradistinction to Subject 1 as comparably of being even ‘greater’ (endurance-wise) despite its comparatively ‘minor’ size (our nouns are thus presumed to be ‘very small’).

As nouns our lexemes can be transliterated: ‘yud’ and ‘serto’. Both nouns form the subject of the second ‘pass (by)’ (Peal ܚܳܕ, plus its adjunct ܒܳܒܳܪܳܐ ܠܳܬܳܢܳܒܳܐ) and each is qualified by the numeral ܚܳܕ, thus ‘(not) one yud or one serto (will pass away)’. The ܚܳܕ precedes the numeral ܚܳܕ and appears in the absolute state. The second noun, ܒܳܒܳܪܳܐ, follows the numeral ܚܳܕ and appears in the emphatic state. Both are reversals of the expected noun state-forms either for reasons of assonance or as a poetic use (further highlighting the ‘degree’ of smallness).

Even the Syriac beginner may find it difficult to suspend ignorance of both nouns—the latter being the name given to the West Syriac script and the former being the name of the tenth letter of the Aramaic/Hebrew alphabet. Here each is qualified by ܒܳܒܳܪܳܐ possibly because both together are items on a similar scale (‘even just a yud or a serto’) and both are specifically ܒܳܒܳܪܳܐ ܐܳܡܳܐ ܠܳܬܳܢܳܒܳܐ ‘from the

313 Ibid., 127.
314 Runge, Discourse, 107.
law’. Their import is further clarified by the following verse (5:19): ‘therefore anyone who annuls the littlest one of these commandments’. So our pair of nouns is meant to signify the ‘smallest commandments’.

A ‘serto’ could here be smaller than a yud if decreasing size is implied (‘a yud [letter] or even a serto [of a letter]’). It might be reasonable to suppose that here is ‘a yud letter’ and that is even smaller as a portion of a letter (or a vowel dot?).

In Mt 5:18 yud and serto might together be any kind of small markings/lines/shapes that make up letters (or portions of letters) in a Torah scroll, namely small lines/markings of whole or partial letters (differentiating different letters and/or spelling of words). The present context leaves various options for the pair of nouns: (1) a yud/yod letter and another (similar) small marking such as a dot of a vowel or dot of punctuation; (2) a curved line and a straight line; or (3) any combination of the above. The simplest sense is to take yud to be the alphabetical letter and to take serto to be something similar in size (or shape) to a yud (and perhaps smaller still).

4.7 Translation Analysis

There are no Greek variants for: (unless we count of codex 1071 as is transcribed in Swanson or of transcribed in Lake).

The only other significant Greek variant in Mt 5:18 is the omission in some manuscripts of . Also some manuscripts add to . None of these Greek variations is reflected in .

That the Greek uses the name of the letter iota further supports the supposition that in ‘a yud’ means the letter yud/yod (since both letters correspond, more or less, as letters of their respective alphabets).

P’s ‘one serto’ corresponds to ‘one xeraiia’. The corresponding Greek also suggests that the saying was originally uttered not in Greek but is meant to be presumed to have been spoken in a

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Semitic language for three reasons: (1) a first century saying concerning a Greek iota would have concerned the Greek uncial script where the Greek ‘I’ is barely any smaller than other Greek letters (e.g. Ι, Τ, and Υ); (2) ‘of the law’ would indicate the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically the Torah; and (3) if the Syriac versions had wanted to indicate that Jesus is speaking of a Greek iota they could easily use the word ܝܘܛܰܐ (or ܝܘܛܰܐ) which is not here used. So the corresponding Greek ‘as Greek’ can be a distraction here since the expression in Syriac does not entirely ‘depend’ on the Greek. In other words Jesus is not really speaking about Greek iotas or tips of Greek letters (even when reading about him in the Peshitta’s ‘Greek’ source) but is seen to be referring to the yods and serifs used in Hebrew (Aramaic square script).\(^{316}\)

A comparison of Syriac Text-Types (Mt 5:18)

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<tr>
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<th>S</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>H</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ אִדּוֹן קִצֵּת</td>
<td>योधाल सेया</td>
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The significant variations are:

1. S and C have ‘one yud letter’;
2. S omits ‘अो सेम सेया’ (‘or a/one serto’);
3. C has ‘a horn’ (instead of ‘अो सेम सेया’).

Less significant is the point that H uses a singular verb for ‘pass’ (corresponding to the Greek singular) thus treating ‘Subject 1’ (corresponding to ‘Subject 1’) as a singular subject (feminine with two subjects of mixed genders). Also H has a slight variation for rendering ‘all will be/everything happens’.

Here we can observe that 'ܐܘܳܩܪܢܳܚܕܐ (‘or a horn’) is not completely necessary since it is omitted in S. It also appears to be the same as saying ܐܬܘܬܐܳܚܕܐ ‘or a serto’ (a hook or corner) both corresponding to the same Greek (μία κεραία). S and C make the association with the letter yud more explicit (‘one yud letter’, يوֹדָא אַחַת).  

4.8 Genre Analysis

Mt 5:17–20 contains four verses containing four sayings that present Jesus expressing a high view of ‘the law’ (and of the prophets, see §4.9). The unit appears to be a justification for, and a leading up to, the giving of commandments and the more specific teaching concerning the ‘kingdom of heaven’. In the four sayings, the speaker, Jesus, is apparently indicating that he is not an apostate leader about to overthrow the Torah. In Basser’s words “he is not some kind of unfettered apocalyptic preacher who sees that the law is about to be annulled because the final days have come.”

The unit does not appear to be a typical genre. It is not clear that the four sayings together provide a clear literary form. Nevertheless the unit expresses the importance of the law for those entering the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ by using several contrastive elements (one, littlest, greatest, greater than, kingdom of heaven, outlasting, passing away) which is a common feature of proverbial/wisdom literature—thus Jesus speaks like a sage. He also speaks like a rabbi commenting on scripture. The topic (entering the Kingdom of Heaven) is an eschatological topic so we might classify the unit, cumbersomely, as ‘(Jesus’) Four Wisdom-Eschatological Sayings About The Law’.

The unit is phrased negatively (see §4.9) concerning the speaker’s acceptance of the law—the law remains strong in every way—at least not before ‘all happens’, that is, until the end of the world (or until the end of some fulfilment?). Jesus is not proclaiming that the end has come. So the speech is somewhat ‘anti-apocalyptic’. The four verses each make slightly different points. France calls it, “Fulfilling the law: general principles.” Keener calls it a “thesis statement” for what follows. Kennedy calls it “the proposition of the sermon” in that “it enunciates … the two

principles … that the law is to be observed … and that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.”319

Being ‘anti-apocalyptic’, the four sayings are ‘defensive statements’ or ‘endorsements of orthodoxy’ where Jesus responds to, or anticipates, charges against him of overthrowing the Scriptures:

Jesus rejects the charge that he is a law-breaker who is lowering standards by asserting his endorsement of the Old Testament and by claiming that his standards are actually higher, not lower, than those of the supposedly pious defenders of the law, the scribes and Pharisees.320

4.9 Rhetorical Analysis

The entire Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) could be treated as the rhetorical unit,321 but we will focus on Mt 5:17–20. The writer shows the speaker contrasting negative suppositions by negating them almost as if replying to an invisible debating partner. Thus: ‘do not suppose that I…I have not come to annul but to fill . . .’, ‘for I say that until heaven and earth cease, not one yud or one serto from the law will cease . . .’, ‘whoever annuls . . . will be called least . . . (but whoever preserves will be called great)’, ‘except for your righteousness surpassing . . . you will not enter . . .’.

The unit addresses a large audience—those just previously identified are the poor, mourning, meek, and those hungry for righteousness in 5:3–6, namely “all Jews who will pray.”322 But the oratory features of chapters 5–7 will also have appealed to a broader Gentile audience.323 In terms of the writer’s rhetoric, his audience are Christian readers.

The writer depicts Jesus as taking a pre-emptive stance against the notion that he is opposed to the Scriptures and anticipating what his opponents would say to undermine him. The rhetoric is

319 Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 54. This classification is accepted in Bailey and Brock, Literary Forms, 134.
321 Broadly, the ‘species’ of the Sermon could be classified as deliberative, that is, it attempts to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action. Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 192.
322 Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 40.
what Kennedy calls ‘radical’ (‘radical Christian rhetoric’, that is, relying on authority rather than logical argument)—more specifically it belongs to ‘prophetic rhetoric’. 324

A rhetorical analysis highlights the emphasis on ‘standards of righteous living’:

In Matthew 5 the preceding context in v. 16 is a call to good works, and the subsequent context in v. 20 and the verses that follow is a comparison of Jesus’ standards of righteousness with those of the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew’s concern then in this section of his gospel, and indeed elsewhere, is for righteous living. It is not unlikely that Matthew is answering a Jewish accusation that Jesus’ way represented a departure from Jewish moral standards and a destruction of the law; so Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ righteousness and his condemnation of anomia (e.g. Matt. 13: 41; 25: 31 ff., etc.).” 325

Wenham asserts that the scope and frame of reference of Mt 5:17–20 is limited in its purpose, namely “the purpose of these verses is to answer the accusation that Jesus is an antinomian who favoured a lowering of moral standards.” 326 However, 5:17–20 achieves more than this.

The writer not only shows Jesus as upholding allegiance to what Torah teaches (or should be interpreted as teaching). Jesus defends his orthodoxy regrading his faith and his intentions to teach others in that faith and is concerned that others teach others in that faith. In speaking abstractly about ‘commandments’, there is a sense that these verses are meant to provide a framework for interpreting Jesus’ upcoming commandments. Thus the unit (Mt 5:17–20) articulates a thesis (developed in 5:21–48). 327 It attempts to show both how non-radical Jesus’ stance is concerning the law and also how those presumed to be most righteous (scribes and Pharisees) will be excluded from the kingdom (as something prophetic and ‘radical’, and as a continuation of John’s proclamation). Thus Jesus comes across as both ‘conservative teacher’ and ‘radical prophet’; as anti-apocalyptic yet determining ultimate ‘eschatological’ distinctions concerning the (nearing) kingdom of heaven; as assertive yet defensive. There is much tension contained in the unit since it strives to attempt to cover (too?) much. A major reason for this is

324 Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco: Baylor University Press), 91. This is what Kennedy calls the ‘sacred rhetoric of authority’ where many enthymemes, are “forms of logical argument, but the validity of their arguments is entirely dependent on their assumptions, which cannot be logically and objectively proved.” Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 17–18.

325 Ibid., 94.

326 Ibid.

probably the awareness that what follows (the so-called ‘antitheses’ 5:21–48) needs to be given a frame of reference so that the audience does not perceive a complete break with the traditional biblical commandments. Jesus must claim first to be upholding allegiance to what Torah teaches. Anthropologically speaking, Jesus’ ‘Amen I say to you’ may be intended to head off shame. Jesus is likely displaying his compliance for his culture’s demand for conformity given that God’s commands were considered immutable. The cultural concepts presupposed here are: effective (pure) communication of God’s will, compliance to conform, dramatic orientation (maintaining honour, diverting shame), Torah orientation and wholeness (of tradition).

The speaker considers the old as not something to pull down but as a foundation to build upon. Verse 17 parallels ܐܠܟܢܐ ܬܝܬܐ ܘܢܕܐ ܐܬܝܬܐ ܝܬܬܐ ܐܫܪܐ with ܠܐܬܘܬܝܬ ܫܪܐ and introduces the issue of law abidance by contrasting the Peal of ܫܪܐ (‘pull down’) with the Pael of ܡܠ (‘fill up’), that is, to confirm God’s law “by obedience and demonstrating that one’s teaching accorded with it.”

Verse 18 has an ABA’ structure, such that ‘until everything happens’ parallels ‘until heaven and earth pass away’:

The B section stands in opposition to both A and A’ as something that does not pass away.

The meaning of ܝܘܕܚܕܐܐܘܚܕܬܣܪܛܐܠܢܘܒܪܡܢܢܡܘܣܐ is the ܚܕܡܢܦܘܩܕܢܗܠܝܢܙܥܘܪܐ (in verse 19), namely the smallest commandments of the law as enduring longer than heaven and earth. The point is graphic and hyperbolic. The hyperbole is to point out that the little commandments are just as important as the large ones. This differs to the idea that some commandments can be considered ‘greater’ or ‘weightier’ than others (cf. Mt 22:34–37 and 23:23) so the author expects his audience to recognise the hyperbole.

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329 Ibid., 177. One might paraphrase Mt 5:17b as ‘I have not come to tear down but to build up’.
330 Ibid., 178.
Verse 19 employs hyperbolic rhetoric “characteristic of the sages.”331 Speaking of the ‘least’ and ‘greatest’ commandments “reflects Jewish legal language.”332 Paralleling the double מָנָה (‘and who teaches’) and:

חֲמִשָּׁה נָמָה חֲמִיסָה (‘will be called least in the kingdom of heaven’) with:

חֲמִשָּׁה נָמָה חֲמִיסָה (‘will be called great in the kingdom of heaven’).333

There is possibly an ellipsis in verse 19 where yud is implied (‘whoever removes one [yud] from these small commandments’).334

The final verse (20) states, ironically, that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must have a righteousness that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees otherwise לֹא תְחַלְלוֹת (‘you shall not enter’). Neither the scribes nor the Pharisees are usually esteemed in Matthew (Pharisees are Jesus’ usual ‘opponents’ and the ones ‘unfruitful’ and ‘unworthy’ at John’s baptism of repentance 3:8–10). The statement appears both difficult to achieve (the standard is high) yet easy to achieve (if the scribes and the Pharisees are merely hypocrites then they are not so righteous after all!). In one breath the writer manages to have Jesus compliment and undermine the scribes and Pharisees.

The Sermon scene begins with the crowds in 4:25. The news about Jesus has spread from Galilee to Syria and huge crowds followed Jesus (from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan, 4:24–25). Thus the portrayed situation for the sermon is that many people have come to hear what he has to say and probably to see if he will heal them.335 Jesus goes up the mountain to teach so that the crowds can hear him (his disciples get closest position). Based on Mt 7:28 (indicating the whole crowd has heard) the crowds are meant to be

331 Ibid.
332 Ibid., 179.
333 Such repetition is either ‘antistrophe’ (repeating the last part of a phrase), or ‘epiphora’ (repeating a phrase at the end of successive clauses). Ibid., xxxiv.
334 Magiera, Aramaic Peshitta, translates Mt 5:19 as “whoever changes one [jot] of these small commandments.”
335 Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 40.
included in the teaching. The disciples’ location (5:1) “helps to sustain his message” since “it was customary for a public speaker to be escorted and thus supported by his friends.”

The unit raises the credibility of Jesus by his claiming allegiance to the scriptures and also has the effect of simultaneously demoting his (ongoing and future) opponents (scribes and Pharisees) as not being righteous enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore Jesus’ reading audience can in future recall Jesus’ stance toward Torah against any ‘charges’ that their leader was an apostate. Therefore, a key concern for the writer is for his reading audience who need instruction on what Jesus taught concerning entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some interpreters highlight the parallels here between the exegetical ‘jots and tittles movement’ of both Origen and Akiba in the third century. Both traditions (Church and Synagogue) appealed (independently) to ‘jots and tittles’. The Christian source derives from Jesus in Mt 5:18; the Jewish source is from a story about Moses, God, and Akiba concerning a pun on Song 5:11 about changing even a tittle (qats veqots). The rabbinic parallels with Mt 5:18 are interesting since some rabbis mention the end of the world being caused by changing even a qots (קוץ) of a letter and others mention nullifying the Torah by abolishing merely a small part—Solomon is pictured as having changed a yud in Deut 17:17 (thereby changing the command against multiplying wives). The parallels probably only assist our interpretation of Mt 5:18 in that they provide us with a Hebrew word which might ‘correspond’ to serto in Mt 5:18, namely qots (קוץ the points/thorns/hooks of a Hebrew letter), and which probably corresponds well to the Syriac ܩܰܳܪܢܳܳ (‘horn’) found in Mt 5:18 (Curetonian). However, the notion of changing a yud in order to change a command of God’s may actually resemble Jesus’ utterance in Mt 5:18 if the Greek writer expected one χεραία to be (in his Semitic Greek or ‘pre-Greek’ source) a Hebrew ו (vav).

In line with this thought, we might compare a Hebrew saying from the Babylonian Talmud:

R. Simeon b. Eleazar says in the name of R. Eleazar b. Parta, who spoke in the name of R. Eleazar of Modi’in, “In the present kind of writing [the Torah] never changed in any

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336 Ibid.
337 Ibid., 43.
way, it says, ‘The hooks (vavs) of the pillars’ (Ex. 27:10)—‘vavs’ that are written like pillars. Just as pillars do not change, so ‘vavs’ do not change.’

Davies and Allison mention the possibility that the κεραία in Mt 5:18 may be “the Semitic equivalent of ‘and’, the ubiquitous waw (w)” making reference to a grammatical discussion in Philo. The idea is perhaps worthy to follow up in relation to Greek Matthew. It is less clear in the Syriac versions that Jesus is being portrayed in Mt 5:18 as speaking a language other than Syriac; and in the Syriac the translators have not taken the Greek κεραία to be the letter ܘ (waw/vav) which, spelled as a word, would be ܘܘ or ܘܐ։

An alternative interpretation of Mt 5:17–18 should be mentioned. Siam Bhayro takes Mt 5:17–18 as a reference to “the five books of Moses, Isaiah and the Minor Prophets”, namely that these verses provide an injunction that “relates to the actual text of the corpus, rather than the contents of the texts in general, and secondly, it forbids the removal of any element that is already present in the text.” In other words our verse concerns the prohibition of removing anything from the canon of texts (the Psalms are not included within the injunction): “The Matthaean injunction prohibits the removal of existing elements, but does not prohibit the addition of new ones.” Matthew’s Jesus is thus more concerned that the scriptural tradition be expanded rather than diminished.

Bhayro’s approach is interested in what 5:17–18 can inform us concerning the scribal practice around ‘canon’ and is not really concerned with the rhetorical meaning within its present context. But it does remind us that in 5:17 Matthew’s Jesus declares he is not opposed to the law or the prophets whereas 5:18 mentions only ‘the law’ (Bhayro may be correct that originally 5:18’s ‘the law’ did not include ‘the prophets’). Thus 5:17 effectively widens an ‘older’ known injunction from 5:18 (inherited by the writer) so that it now includes the Prophets, thereby making Jesus

342 Ibid., 45.
take a stand for abiding not only by the books of Moses but also by the Prophets which are, by contextual implication, subsumed by Jesus into 5:18’s ‘the Law’. Even if Bhayro’s source analysis is inaccurate, the rhetorical effect does present a Jesus who proclaims the orthodoxy of maintaining everything written in the Law or the Prophets and who draws negative conclusions concerning those leaders who will find themselves least in the kingdom of heaven (5:19–20) who ignore at their peril matters even in the Prophets (cf. again Mt 23:23 the ‘weightier’ matters of the law mentioned there, namely justice, mercy and faith—primary matters in the Prophets).

4.10 Narrative Analysis

We do not entirely lose sight of our lexemes in a narrative analysis. Mt 5:17–20 develops thematic interests in contrasts and comparisons between apparently ‘small’ and (unexpectedly) ‘great’ stretching back to the genealogy. Also, ‘to fulfil’ is an important theme (found in Mt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 13:35, 48; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54, 56; 27:9). The majority of these references concern events that correspond to the scriptures that are now being ‘fulfilled’, that is, they are filled with new significance in the life of Jesus by being in line with God’s way of doing things—past, present, and future begin to converge in Jesus’ vocation to bring the reign of heaven closer. The very ‘largeness’ of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is an important narrative component that usually contrasts with the other kingly realms in Matthew’s story-world, namely the human kingdoms of the earth (Mt 4:8). In Mt 5:18 (and 11:25 and 24:35) the word pair ‘heaven and earth’ depicts ‘everything’ within God’s domain. The use is ‘merismatic’, that is, it is not contrastive but speaks of the entire cosmos.343

Mt 5:17–20 also develops further the theme of the ‘greater righteousness’ from in 5:6, 10 (cf. also the good deeds of 5:16). ‘Greater righteousness’ was already a theme in 3:15 and 1:19.

Carter sees that Jesus’ statement in 5:17 concerns his mission articulated in 1:21–23 to save from sins and manifest God’s presence. The implied audience can use “several verbal and thematic

343 Jonathon T. Pennington, Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 200: “In the category of copulative pairs there are three instances in Matthew: 5:18, 11:25, and 24:35. It is also interesting to note that these two of the three copulative pairs occur in the first and last of Matthew’s five major discourses, serving in effect as bookends.”
clues to understand Jesus’ statement in relation to the central statements of 1:21–23.”  

In other words, they can locate Jesus’ mission in relation to the Scriptures “just as 1:21–23 articulated God’s commission of Jesus in terms of the Scriptures.” The audience “is able to connect 5:17 with the foundational statements of 1:21–23 both through the thematic concern with Jesus’ life as one conforming to the Scriptures, and through the words ‘prophet’ and ‘fulfill’.”

The narrative portrays Jesus to be a teacher of authority concerning God’s eternal will. Several important Matthean phrases (and word pairs) make an appearance in Mt 5:17–20, namely ‘the law’ and ‘the prophets’ νόμος + οἱ προφητές; ‘to fulfill’ πληρῶσαι; ‘heaven and earth’ οὐρανός καὶ ἡ γῆ; ‘kingdom of heaven’ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν; ‘righteousness’ δικαιοσύνη; ‘scribes and Pharisees’ ὁι ἡγραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι).

By chapter 5 Jesus has now been introduced as an authority who teaches concerning how to live as God’s people by his Godly teaching and healing activity. A pivotal plot development occurs at 4:17, namely Jesus begins his ministry in Roman-governed Galilee—his first utterance (identical to John the Baptist’s request ‘repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near’) is of programmatic significance. Carter interprets the proclamation of “the reign of the heavens now at hand” within the context of empire evoked in part by Matthew’s genealogy and infancy narratives (e.g.: king David; the Babylonian exile; king Manasseh; and Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fleeing king Herod). The citation of Isa 9:1–2 in Mt 4:15–16 “identifies a previous time of national political distress in which God’s saving presence was evident in the life of God’s people (Isa. 7.14; 8:8, 10). But now Jesus is the light, an image of God’s presence (cf. Ps. 27.1).” Jesus’ proclamation is thus connected with the salvific nature of God acting through Jesus (Mt 1:21)

344 Warren Carter, “Jesus’ "I Have Come",” 51.
345 Ibid.
346 Ibid., 54.
347 Jesus is the only person who teaches in the entire narrative.
349 Ibid., 20.
and the manifestation of God’s presence (1:23). Jesus’ teaching on a mountain (chapters 5–7) “recalls other significant encounters with God’s will on mountains, notably that of Moses.” Jesus speaks authoritatively to proclaim eschatological blessings, heavenly rewards, fulfilling the law and the prophets, and declaring the basis for status in the kingdom. The crowds recognise Jesus’ authority at the conclusion of the sermon (7:27–29).

4.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels: Lk 16:17

There is one other occurrence of פנייה (פניע) found in Lk 16:17 in the Harklean and in CyrL5 (the Syriac translation of Cyril’s commentary on Luke) which corresponds to the Greek μίαν κεραίαν. Neither serto nor yud occurs in P, S, or C, all of which haveきました (‘one letter of the law’).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lk 16:17</th>
<th>NA28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Εὐχοπώτερον δὲ ἐστιν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν παρελθεῖν ἢ τοῦ νόμου μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν</td>
<td>S/C/P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H and CyrL5 of Lk 16:17 both have ‘from the law one serto’ where ‘one serto’ corresponds with μίαν κεραίαν. Whilst H and CyrL5 here demonstrate a more formal lexical correspondence, S, C and P potentially provide evidence that the Greek (μίαν κεραίαν) might be taken to mean ‘one letter’ (of a word). But this could be a case where the Syriac shows influence from the saying known from Mt 5:18 (and/or a possible known expression ‘a letter of the law?’). Whilst פניע is the stricter correspondence (to μίαν κεραίαν) μία κεραία also corresponds to אֵּּ֣חָדֵּּ֣אֵּּא here in S, C and P. We might not otherwise have supposed μία κεραία to mean ‘a letter’ (but cf. §4.9 above concerning the idea that the letter waw/vav could theoretically be thought to ‘correspond’ to κεραία).

350 Ibid.
351 Ibid., 24.
The larger unit of text in Luke contains three verses (16:16–18) and differs from that in Matthew. In Luke the three verses are given in reaction to conflict with the Pharisees who have just ridiculed Jesus’ perspective of wealth. Lk 16:17 is preceded by a saying about the Pharisees as superficial lovers of money who only seek human approval, and followed by a saying about divorce producing adultery. Both sayings expose those who are living in loopholes with distorted notions of what the kingdom of God is. Luke’s context is more explicitly oppositional than Matthew’s.

The unit in Luke is concerned with the current era as a time of upheaval as various people want to bring about the kingdom’s arrival (ever since John the Baptist came). It is as though order prevailed until John (who presumably stands at the beginning of a new era) but Jesus is not one to espouse a complete upheaval—the law still remains valid in Jesus’ view. So the unit is more explicitly in dialogue with the expectation of the day that the law was being threatened somehow by kingdom expectations (as though law and kingdom were at odds). The unit thus ends by saying that divorce for a man or a woman means adultery as an example of the ongoing validity of the law—indeed an intensification of Mosaic Law. Thus verse 18 achieves a similar goal as Mt 5:21–48 by following an assertion of the permanence of the law with a call for an intensification of the law. Also both immediate textual contexts (of Lk 16:17 and of Mt 5:17–20) contrast the annulment of the smallest matters of the law with the passing of ‘heaven and ear’. In Harklean Lk 16:27 (and CyrL) it is not immediately clear what ‘one serto of the law’ might literally be but it is clear that it means a small matter of the law.

4.12: Old Testament Occurrences

Neither noun appears in the Peshitta OT. However, James Kugel draws attention to similar sentiments already expressed in Deut 4:2; 17:20, and Josh 23:6, whereby the expression ‘(depart not) to the right or to the left’ means “in the slightest way”—several ancient writers (including the author of Mt 5:18 and also of Jas 2:10) took their cue from such verses in order to assert the notion that every small commandment was “crucial to the integrity of the whole”—compare 4.
Macc 5:20: “To transgress the law in matters either small or great is quite the same [to us], for in either case the law is being treated with disdain.”

4.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing Syriac-English Entries for يوُد and سِرُتو

The semantic and grammatical analysis revealed a large number of named grammatical subjects being contrasted in terms of their ‘greatness’ and ‘longevity’. The low-frequency nouns ‘yud’ and ‘serto’ apparently indicate small things being contrasted with ‘everything’ and ‘heaven and earth’. The statements were apparently recognised by the speaker as ‘grand’ declarations and implied a reply to negative suppositions. The direct speech employed double negatives ‘for truly I say that (not) until heaven and earth ceases (will) one yud or one serto from the law cease’. The translational analysis suggested an issue of language to consider, whereby the original pair of nouns do not necessarily refer to Greek nouns (iota and keraia) even when in Greek. This is partly because the Greek letter iota is not particularly much smaller to other Greek letters in the first century uncial script, and partly because ‘in the law’ supposes the ‘law’ (Torah) is in Hebrew where the pair of nouns refer to an alphabetical letter ‘yud’ and a ‘serif’ (hook or corner of a letter of Hebrew square script). The literary form belonged to a group of four sayings given by Jesus where each saying negated negatives and concerned an ‘anti-apocalyptic’ sentiment by proclaiming the ongoing principle of ‘the law’ which functions as a thesis statement for the commandments that follows. The rhetorical unit was identified as ‘sacred’ or ‘prophetic’ rhetoric whereby Jesus defends his orthodoxy to his contemporaries prior to developing the thesis (5:21–48) that the ‘status quo’ interpretation of what counts as scriptural righteousness does not go far enough; the standards of adherents to the law must be raised (ultimately for people to be ‘perfect’, ‘like your heavenly Father’). It was also identified as ‘deliberative’ rhetoric that was both radical yet orthodox. Jesus’ rhetoric manages to praise the scribes and Pharisees while simultaneously undermining them. The rabbinic parallels about abolishing a yud or even a qots gave us further reason to accept that serto = κεραία (= וּפֶת) (= מְסַיֶּה) = a hook of a letter. But a

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353 James, L. Kugel, Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997; 1998), 842. Kugel translates Josh 23:6 as, “Be exceedingly strong to keep and perform all that is written in the book of Moses’ Torah without departing from it to the right or the left.”
further possibility arose that θεραία might also be the letter waw/vav which seems more likely in the Luke ‘parallel’ (Lk 16:17) where θεραία is translated by ܐܴܬ ܾܘܬܴܐ ܚܕܳܐ (‘a letter’ in S, C and P).

An association made between ‘the law’ and ‘the law and the prophets’ meant that ‘the prophets’ begins to be implied by the phrase ‘the law’ where the ‘weightier’ matters of the law (Mt 23:23) are highlighted as elements important from the prophets (namely justice, mercy, and faith).

The narrative analysis highlighted the themes of (greater) righteousness and scriptural ‘fulfilment’ in the life of Jesus whereby key elements evident throughout the Matthean narrative (Jesus acting with authority and leadership, ‘fulfilling all righteousness’) are evident in several words and phrases (and word pairs) appearing in Mt 5:17–20. Past, present and future converge in Jesus’ vocation to bring the ‘kingdom of heaven’ to earth.

The one other biblical occurrence of ορντο (in Lk 16:7, in H and CyrL) is within a context which portrays Jesus as reacting within a more explicitly oppositional setting (the time of John bringing an era of uncertainty in relation to the validity of the law). Jesus’ statement likewise concerns the permanence of the law even in small matters.

A similar sentiment (adhering to even minor matters of the law) appears in Deut 4:2; 17:20; Josh 23:6; 4 Macc 5:20, and Jas 2:10 in relation to not departing from the law in even the slightest way.

The Syriac-English lexicons add nothing further to what we already have learned in the above analyses. Robert Payne-Smith’s English translation of the Greek-Syriac translation of Cyril’s quotation of Lk 16:17 (“one point of the law”) supports our main exegesis (in a footnote: “By ܠܶܫܳܝ, apex, Greek θεραία is meant the smallest portion of a Hebrew letter, namely the * in ܐ ܒ ܬ, &c”).

We might forgo offering English glosses for yud and simply use yud or yod as transliterations given that the OED has an entry for yod (also with the spelling yodh): “1.1 Name of the tenth

(the smallest) letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is no entry for serto/serta in the OED so it is probably best to avoid ‘serto’ transliterated as a gloss.

The common conclusion can be upheld concerning the pair of nouns in Mt 5:18, namely a yud letter and an apex/protrusion/serif of a letter. The formal similarity (in length, spelling, and syllables) between the Syriac noun serto and the English noun ‘serif’ is appealing.

4.14 Lexical Results for a Contextual Meaning

ܢܘܕ ܕ n.f. ܢܘܕ ܬ abs. fs. the tenth letter of the alphabet (in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac) and the smallest in size in the square script; yud, yod, yodh, “not one yud or one serif will pass from the law”, cf. ل١٦:١٧; cf. also م١٨:١٨; cf. also م١٨:١٨ (Curetonian).

■ ܐܘܬ.

Mt 5:18

ܣܪܛܐ ܢ.м. An apex or small extension of an alphabetical letter, serif, “not one yud or one serif will pass from the law”, cf. م١٨:١٨ (Curetonian); cf. also م١٨:١٨; cf. also ل١٦:١٧.

■ ܟܝܒܐ.

Mt 5:18

355 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.
## Chapter 5. Lexeme 4: كَطَنَّا

### 5.1-5 Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mt 7:14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 (7:14a, 14b)</th>
<th>Prominent Position/Main Clause Emphasis</th>
<th>Prominent Position/Main Clause Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject 2 (and Predicate)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conjunction + Complement 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subject 1</strong> (and Predicate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle (preposition) + noun 3</td>
<td>particle + noun 2</td>
<td>particle + adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لَاحْتَا كُتْنَانَا ۇ۱ُوٰنُنا ۇلکُنَنَا</td>
<td>ماٰلکُنَنَا ٝ</td>
<td>ٝأًمَٰ٤ا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to life</td>
<td>that leads</td>
<td>(the) path</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2 (7:14c)</th>
<th>Prominent Position/Main Clause Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complement 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conjunction + Predicate 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle + prep. + pronoun suffix</td>
<td>particle + verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لَحُ٣حَا</td>
<td>ٝ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her (it).</td>
<td>find</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>And (the) few</th>
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</table>

### 5.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

For nouns 1 and 2 an unexpressed ‘copular verb’ (that is, ‘is’) is implicit by predication. Both nouns are predicated with adjectives in the absolute form. Both adjectives precede their subject nouns and so can be said to appear in prominent position as indicating ‘main clause emphasis’. Similarly, in ‘Sentence 2’, the complement (of ‘Subject 3’) moves to prominent position.

The two adjectival clauses in ‘Sentence 1’ are connected by the inseparable particle ْ (as a conjunction) which further indicates that subjects 1 and 2 are paralleled. The particle ٝ probably modifies the entire sentence. The second subject includes ٝ (‘leading to life’) which might also be implied for ٝ (‘gate’), even though the verb ‘leading’ is feminine, if we take the first subject ٝ (‘leading to life’) as having an elliptic extension (as though ٝ ... ٝ ٝ or as...
though both subjects are meant to work together as one subject. Perhaps the gateway leads to the pathway that leads to life (see §5.7 below)? The precise semantic relation between the first two grammatical subjects is not clear.

Our lexeme is an adjective predicating something about the first noun (ܬܰܪܥܳܐ) where the semantics involve both items together as a phrasal unit and this has a parallel relation to the second phrasal unit. Another reason to see a parallel sense betweenܩܰܛܺܝنانܰܬܰܪܥܳܐ and ܘܰܐܠܺܝܨܳܐܐܽܘܪܚܳܐ is because in the previous verse (7:13) the same nounܬܰܪܥܳܐ is paired withܐܰܳܠܺܝܨܳܪܬܰܪܥܳܐܘܩܛܺܝܢܐܰܳܐܘܪܚܳܐܕܡܘܒܠܳܠܚܝ and in 7:14 the adjectiveܬܰܪܥܳܐܪܘܺܝܚܳܐܐܽܘܪܚܳܐ is paired withܐܰܳܠܺܝܨܳܪܬܰܪܥܳܐܘܩܛܺܝܢܐܰܳܐܘܪܚܳܐܕܡܘܒܠܳܠܚܝ and in 7:13. ܩܰܛܺܝܢ is thus semantically similar to the adjectiveܐܰܳܠܺܝܨܳܐ‘constricted’, ‘narrow’ in 7:14b which has first been attributed to the nounܬܰܪܥܳܐ in 7:13a and then to the nounܐܰܳܠܺܝܨܳܐ in 7:14b. 7:13 provides both synonyms and antonyms (and 7:14 provides synonyms) for our adjective. Our two sentences are linked withܘsuch thatܘܙܥܘܪ̈ܐܐܢܘܢ somewhat correlates toܡܳܳܐܩܰܛܺܝܢܬܰܪܥܳܐܢܘܢܐܝܠܝܢܰܕܡܫܟܚܺܝܢܠܗ ܓ ܀ Мы can infer from this that bothܐܰܳܠܺܝܨܳܐ andܫܰܚܺܝܩܬܳܳܐ in Mt 7:14 are Syriac words of similar meaning to ourܩܰܛܺܝܢ when applied to an entranceway. We can acceptܬܰܪܥܳܐ as the most obvious synonym because it occurs twice within the Peshitta of Mt 7:13–14 (and corresponds toστενός in 7:13a see below).

ܫܰܚܺܝܩܬܳܳܐ here probably means ‘difficult’ or ‘wearisome’ (that is, the opposite sense to a wide roadway which is easy and comfortable).

The corresponding Greek isτίστενὴἡπύλη but some manuscripts omit theἡπύλη from either 7:13 or 7:14 perhaps being “a deliberate excision made by copyists who failed to understand that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>H</th>
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the intended picture is that of a roadway leading to a gate.”

It is not impossible that it is the other way around (the narrow gateway opens out to a narrow road) or, more likely, that the double references are meant to work independently of one another. The initial conjunction τί also shows manuscript variation in Greek (τί, ὅτι, δὲ, καὶ) but this is not reflected in any extant differences in Syriac (ܠܳܳܐ in all three versions). The Greek shows that it is not necessary to use two different adjectives for the ‘narrow’ entrance since the Greek employs the same adjective (στενὸς) for the entrance in both 7:13a (τῆς στενῆς πύλης) and 7:14a (στενῇ ἡ πύλη).

5.8 Genre Analysis

Our unit is Mt 7:13–14. Its genre is a wisdom ‘proverb’. The imperativeܥܽܘܠܘ (‘enter’) in 7:13a makes it a proverb of exhortation. The proverb concerns how to enter ‘the kingdom of heaven’ (‘find life’ = find salvation). The ‘way’ that leads ‘to life’ is structurally (and semantically) contrasted with ‘the way’ that leads ‘to destruction’. The adjectives are placed, poetically, before the nouns. Similarly verse 14 begins with the particleܡܳܐ. The unit contrasts two ‘ways of living’. The proverb is comparable to other proverbs on the theme of the ‘two ways’ (see Prov 1; 4; Ps 1; Did 1:1; and §5.12). Proverbs, Psalms, and the Didache begin their works with the ‘two ways’ theme. Similarly, our unit (7:13–14) begins a new section immediately after the golden rule as summary of the ‘law and the prophets’ (7:12). Interestingly, Did 1:2 continues with something akin to Mt 7:12, that is, a negative form of the golden rule (following on from the first commandment: ‘Love God who made you’) and is an exhortation for religious living (Love God; Love others) within a framework of future consequences (way of life; way of death). The proverbial ‘two ways’ reveals an eschatological concern prominent in Matthew (the ‘salvation of the few’ is what Keener calls “soteriological pessimism”).


As a proverb, Mt 7:13–14 is reassuring for those in a minority group or those not well known or not powerful (see further adjectives for ‘little’ in §5.10). The notion that only a minority will be saved is a feature common to groups interested in eschatology and the apocalyptic. We can also see that the pairing of salvation with a small path and small entrance (and the pairing of a large path and entrance with destruction) is a non-traditional pairing (see §5.12). The point is not unlike Prov 20:34 where four ‘small’ creatures are ‘wise’ because the two characteristics are unusually paired. The wisdom of the creatures in Prov 20:34 is despite their size—the creatures themselves do not draw much attention to their intelligence since they are not initially obvious in size and/or renown (for more on Prov 20:34 see footnote in §5.10). Similarly in Mt 7:13–14 there is a novel pairing between what is small (and easily overlooked by those who are not small). This is partly what makes Mt 7:13–14 a noteworthy and ‘wise’ saying, in line with an eschatological interest in ‘how to find salvation’ (and avoid the destruction facing ‘the many who take the easy path’).

5.9 Rhetorical Analysis

There are no chiastic structures within verses 13–14. The verses naturally arrange as: title line + three lines + three (paralleled) lines (7:13a, b, c, d, 7:14a, b, c) segmented thus:

(Caption/title/exhortation) 

Verse 14 contains two clauses (or sentences) which along with verse 13 make four sentences that belong together as a unit (displayed above as seven lines of text, 7:13a,b,c,d,7:14a,b,c or 1+3+3 lines versified). Our lexeme appears in 7:14a which is line 5 above (versified) or the third sentence of the unit.

The Peshitta closely aligns to the structure in the Greek. Verse 14 contains two clauses (or sentences) which along with verse 13 make four sentences that belong together as a unit (displayed above as seven lines of text, 7:13a,b,c,d,7:14a,b,c or 1+3+3 lines versified). Our lexeme appears in 7:14a which is line 5 above (versified) or the third sentence of the unit.
In Mt 7:13–14, the writer draws a dichotomy between two kinds of paths and two kinds of entranceways which also correspond to the two kinds of people who do and who do not succeed in ‘entering life’. Mt 7:13–14 belongs to the final group of (four) sayings within the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (7:13–27) which we may take our rhetorical unit. Following Talbert, 7:13–27 is structured as ABB'A' whereby verses 13–14 parallel the two kinds of people in 7:24–27, namely those wise and foolish who do or do not build their houses on the rock and their resultant fates (which either survive or do not survive the sudden floods). These four sayings concern who will be saved, namely who belongs and does not belong to the kingdom of heaven ‘on that day’ (of judgement). The material sandwiched between concerns false prophets, but it also mentions the ‘many’ who claim to have performed powerful deeds in Jesus’ name but who will be turned away ‘on that day’.

As a figurative doorway and pathway, the ‘gate’ and ‘path’ in Mt 7:13–14 relay more than just physical dimensions—they both indicate ethical dimensions, namely upholding the high standards of practice espoused throughout the Sermon (particularly chapter 5). This is contrasted with the lax practices of those whose deeds are not consistent with their claims (such as the Pharisees in 3:7–12, and 5:20, and those exposed as doers of unrighteousness in 7:15–23) or with not being ‘wise’ but ‘foolish’ (7:13–27) by refusing to take heed of Jesus’ great Sermon after hearing it.

Talbert notes that both 7:13–14 and 7:24–27 concern ‘everyone’ whereas the two sayings in between (7:15–23) concern false prophets ‘dressed the part’ (yet dangerous: ‘wolves dressed in clothing of sheep’, Mt 7:15, cf. 10:16). In 7:19 Jesus repeats John’s diatribe (Mt 3:10b) against the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism (‘axe’ implied) (אִם כָּלָה בִּגְדָּיו תַּיּוֹם) (‘Every tree not bearing good fruits, is cut down and goes to the fire!’). In this contextual setting, there are ‘many’ (7:22) who have actually performed powerful deeds in Jesus name (but exposed as doers of שָׁמַע in 7:23). Given that 7:24–27 supposes people who have heard Jesus’ teaching (at least his first great sermon) it seems that the few and the many in 7:13–14 are more specific than Talbert imagines. The contrasts made between the two pathways and

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358 Talbert, Matthew, 94.
two doorways are not so much as between wise and foolish people in general but between those who take close heed of Jesus’ specific teaching (Mt 5:21–48) and those who are not inclined to do so but are instead content to ignore it at their own peril (taking comfort in being with the majority as if their future were not in jeopardy). Both wise and foolish people are familiar with Jesus’ teaching, as stated more explicitly in 7:24a and 7:26a. Jesus’ sermon not only picks up John the Baptist’s condemnation of those who believed that they will be saved by virtue of their Abrahamic descent (i.e. doing nothing and displaying no real repentance) but addresses those who have specific knowledge of Jesus’ teaching and choose to ignore it.359 One’s belonging to the privileged group who will find life/salvation is based on one’s finding the ‘path less trodden’ (the obscure way of the few). As such it is a warning against turning one’s back on Jesus’ teaching by returning to follow the majority.

Anthropologically speaking, the Matthean theme of living a (greater) righteousness through actions is a necessary feature of love (group attachment) since ‘loving and doing’ are important to keep together. Mediterranean persons often needed to be motivated to action.360

5.10 Narrative Analysis

The dichotomous notion of ‘many yet few’ appears in several other places in the narrative (even more for the Syriac than the Greek), for example: Mt 9:37 (harvest abundant but labourers few); Mt 20:16b (many called but few chosen — not present in the Alexandrian/critical Greek); Mt 22:14 (many called but few chosen); Mt 25:23 (faithful with few things so be in charge of many/much). Similar examples would include: feeding many with a few loaves and fish (Mt 15:34–39); many turned away ‘on that day’ (Mt 7:21–22); many crowds but few disciples (Mt 8:18–22); speaking many things in parables with few who understand (Mt 13).

359 Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 250, heads in this direction. Keener titles 7:13–23 as ‘Present Claims versus Future Judgment’ (but treats it as 7:13–27) and asserts it is designed to address the assumption that future salvation was to be based on one’s descent from Abraham (3:9) thus 7:13–27 is intended “not only to challenge his community’s opponents but to prevent his community of becoming like that of those opponents.”

The immediate text (7:13–14) supplies helpful semantic opposites for our adjective. Thus in 7:14
for אֹחֲלָה (used for a narrow gateway and narrow roadway respectively) we have פַשׂטָה and פַשׂטָה ‘wide’, ‘spacious’ (used respectively for a gateway and a pathway). A previously unrecognised semantic similarity is between the ‘little’ (מָעוֹן) entrance and the ‘few’ (plural of מַעֲמִיךָ). Whilst the subject מַעֲמִיךָ (‘few’) functions as the opposite to the מַעֲמִיךָ (‘many’) travelling on the wide path, it also parallels מַעֲמִיךָ and מַעֲמִיךָ. The ‘few’ or the ‘little ones’ are logically those most suited to ‘finding’ and ‘fitting’ through a small passageway. Those who ‘find’ it demonstrate themselves to be the select sagacious ‘few’ (compare 7:24, also 20:16; 22:14).361

The plural מַעֲמִיךָ is a favourite adjective and substantive used throughout Matthew for the ‘little ones’ as a reference to the vulnerable and struggling ‘little’ community of believers who require godly leadership (applicable both to the disciples of Jesus and the early readers of Matthew). Such ‘little ones’ need desperately to rely on Jesus’ wisdom and guidance (see Mt 6:30; 8:26; 10:42; 16:8; 18:6, 14, 10; 14:31; 25:40, 45). The corresponding Greek in such cases also includes other lexemes for ‘little’ (including μικρός, ἐλάχιστος, plurals of ὁ λίγος and ὁ λίγοπιστος). Peshitta Matthew thus further consolidates the theme by using מַעֲמִיךָ more consistently for a variety of functions, including ‘the little’ of faith and the ‘littlest’ of seeds and it is noteworthy that the מַעֲמִיךָ of 11:11 are said to be even greater than John the Baptist and are identified as Jesus’ ‘siblings’ in 25:40 (also the Father’s desire, in 18:6, is to see not one of the young מַעֲמִיךָ to perish who believe in Jesus).

361 The Hebrew cognate for מָעוֹן which appears throughout the Hebrew Old Testament is not translated with מָעוֹן in the Peshitta OT. For example Prov 20:34: אַרְב ָּע ה הֵֵּ֭ם קְּטַּנֵּי־א ָ֑רֶץ וְָּ֝הֵָּ֗מ ה חֲכ מִִ֥ים מְּחֻּכ מִִֽים (‘there are four [creatures] that are little on the earth, yet they are wise of wise [most wise]’). At a formal level we see that there are several Hebrew cognates that use corresponding Syriac cognates, but rather than מָעוֹן we find מַעֲמִיךָ. This is because in Hebrew-Syriac translation the stereotypical corresponding Syriac lexeme for מָעוֹן is, as a rule, מְאֵסַח. Thus wherever the Hebrew cognate is used either as an adjective (or as a substantive) pertaining to being small in size, age, significance, strength, or statue then it is translated by מְאֵסַח (over 100 occurrences). The exceptions are few (Song 2:15 where the adjective is מְאֵסַח and other places where the Syriac maintains no direct correspondence with the Hebrew, namely Ezek 43:44; 1 Chr 12:15; and a few places where Hebrew idioms do not pass over into Syriac: 1 Sam 25:36; 2 Sam 7:19; 1 Kings 12:10; 2 Chr 10:10). Although we cannot presume that the Peshitta translators of Matthew are familiar with the stereotypical correspondence (between the Hebrew cognate of מָעוֹן and Syriac מְאֵסַח) we might suppose that they were at least somewhat familiar with the Syriac meaning and function of מְאֵסַח in the Peshitta OT and further suppose that מָעוֹן at the beginning of Mt 7:14a is not accidentally paralleled to the plural of מְאֵסַח at the beginning of 7:14c.
The beginning of the Sermon (Mt 5:2–48) assists in identifying to whom the narrow and wide ways most likely refer since it is there that the lines between true and false adherents of Jesus’ teachings are initially drawn by Jesus. The scribes and the Pharisees are named in 5:20, whom Matthew elsewhere styles as imposters (the ‘facaders’, ‘face takers’, cf. 6:2)—later riled against in chapter 23. It is the Pharisees in particular who fit Matthew’s description of counterfeit religion perfectly: 

‘Woe to you scribes and Pharisees—Masqueraders who cleanse the outside of the cup and dish but inside are full of extortion and unrighteousness’ Mt 23:25) Through several parables, chapter 25 further attempts to explain how the dichotomy will fall in the future (‘apocalyptic’) time of judgment—sometimes unexpectedly yet always concerning those who claim to be familiar with who Jesus is or what he taught. But readers of Matthew must be willing to admit that exactly who are the travellers of the wide and narrow (and entrants of the wide and narrow gates) remains to be seen until a later time, when hearts and deeds are eventually exposed for what they truly are (25:31–46, cf. also the true and false wheat in 13:24–30).

The lexeme that occurs twice in describing both narrow gateway and narrow pathway in 7:13–14 (‘constricted’) is related to the word appearing in the phrase, in 13:21, ‘affliction or persecution’) experienced by those who initially attempt to adhere to Jesus’ teaching (the same can be noted concerning the corresponding Greek passive participle of ἀλλόθριον and the noun ἀλλόθριος, namely τεθλιμμένη and τεθλιμμένος ή διωγμοῦ. Probably the Harklean translator meant something similar when he translated καὶ τεθλιμμένη ή ὄνος with ܕܬܠܐܢ in 7:14.

Another point of reference would be the ‘difficult’ entry into ‘the kingdom of heaven’ for the rich man (in 19:25 his salvation is described using the Peal of ḫЛЬ) mentioned in Mt 19:23. This gives us ܐܚܠܐ as another potential Syriac word of similar meaning although here it is which does not modify a gate or pathway but rather modifies the phrase ܛܠܐ for the rich to enter: ܝܫܘܥ ܕܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܠܬܠܡܕܘܗ ܝܐܡܢ ܐܡܪ ܠܟܘܢ ܕܥܬܠܐ .

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362 Noted by Gundry, 127; also Osbourne, 270. Keener similarly, 251, says “The difficulty of Jesus’ way is that it includes persecution (5:10–12).”
The pathway and gateway in Mt 7:14 are both suited to the ‘little people’ in Matthew. Our adjective relays a positive sense by reversing its negative connotations. It is not unlike howinson functions throughout Matthew. We might also compare the paradoxically dignified yet undignified title‘��’‘��’ (‘the Human One’) with which Jesus uses to identify himself, or the fact that he offers an ‘easy yoke’ mentioned immediately after another ‘inversion of wisdom motif’ in 11:25 (where the ‘wise’ and ‘learned’ miss out and the ‘young’ receive revelation).

5.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels: Lk 13:24

There are no other NT occurrences of‘��’ but there is a close textual parallel found in Lk 13:24 (paralleling Mt 7:13–14).‘��’ does not appear in Lk 13:24. The adjective used there is‘��’‘��’. The adjective, unlike Mt 7:14, has not been moved to prominent position but follows the noun and so feels less poetic. Lk 13:24 emphasises the difficulty of entering through the narrow gateway/doorway by employing the Ethpeel of‘��’ (the verb ‘struggle’) which is appropriate for a gateway so‘��’‘��’ (narrow/constricted):


And Jesus said to them: Strive to enter the narrow gate: for I say to you, many will seek to enter, and will not be able’.

The Greek (and Syriac) for ‘narrow entrance’ is the same in Luke 13:24 as in Mt 7:13. Some commentaries see a distinction in referents as though in Matthew it must refer to a gate while in Luke it must refer to a door. Indeed Lk 13:25 next speaks of the master of the house (ὁ ικοδεσπότης, μαρτυρίων) who is asked to open the ‘door’ (θύρα, λοιμώλοις). Gundry sees Matthew as having modified the more original door of a banquet hall to a gate in the wall of a city “presumably the city of God.”364 The distinction seems reasonable but the entranceway remains unspecified in Matthew. So ‘door’ cannot be entirely excluded in either Mt 7:13 or Mt 7:14,

363 Note the poetic sound of the phrase “it's difficult for the rich”:

364 Gundry, Matthew, 126.
especially if the images of entrances and paths are meant to stand independently as well as work together.

### 5.12 Old Testament Occurrences

We find thirteen occurrences of ܢܳܐ (or ܰܐ) in the Leiden Peshitta in seven places (Gen 41:6, 7, 23, 24, 27; Lev 13:30; Ezek 40:16; Jdt 4:7; Wis 7:22, 23; 2 Esd 11:3; and Zech 11:4, 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:6</td>
<td>And, behold, seven thin ears blasted by the east wind, sprang up after them (Lamsa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:7</td>
<td>And the seven thin ears swallowed up the seven healthy and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:23</td>
<td>The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads of grain. I told it to the magicians, but there was no one to interpret it for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 41:24</td>
<td>And the seven lean and ill-favored cows that came up after them are seven years; and the seven thin ears blasted by the east wind shall be seven years of famine (Lamsa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev 13:30</td>
<td>then the priest shall see the disease; and, if it appears deeper than the skin, and there be in it yellow thin hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; because it is the disease of leprosy of the head or beard (Lamsa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 40:16</td>
<td>And there were windows to the small rooms which were wide from within and narrow from without, and to their posts within the gate, and likewise to the arches; and windows were round about from within (Lamsa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jdt 4:7</td>
<td>And there were windows to the small rooms which were wide from within and narrow from without, and to their posts within the gate, and likewise to the arches; and windows were round about from within (Lamsa).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ordering them to seize the mountain passes, since from there they could invade Judea; and it would be easy to stop any who tried to enter, because it was a narrow ascent even for two men together.

For wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her is a spirit that is knowledgeable, holy, unique, subtle, manifold, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible,

beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle (RSV).

And I saw from out of his wings there grew opposing wings; but they were small and insignificant.

Thus says the Lord my God, Feed the lean flock.

And I fed the lean flock, for there was a crowd of a flock and I took two staffs, one I called Pleasant and the other I called Rope, and I fed the flock.

In Genesis 41 the adjectives מָטִילָה and מָטִילָה appear for the seven ‘thin’ or ‘empty’ ears of grain in Pharaoh’s dream (their opposites here are מָטִילָה and מָטִילָה ‘fat’, ‘full’). Lev 13:30 concerns examination of scaly infected skin to check for any מָטִילָה (‘thin red hair’).

Ezek 40:16 concerns the size of the windows on the east gate of the temple.

Jdt 4:7 helps illuminate for us the English translation for Mt 7:13–14 in the King James Version which gives ‘strait’ for στενός (“Enter ye in at the strait gate…because strait is the gate”). Like the Greek of Mt 7:13–14, the Greek of Jdt 4:7 contains στενός translated in KJV as “strait” (στενός τῆς προσβάσεως οὐσίας, “because the passage was strait”) since the word ‘strait’ when applied to “a way, passage, or channel” meant: “So narrow as to make transit difficult” from Old French “estreit tight, close, narrow.”

Jdt 4:7, like Mt 7:14, concerns a narrow passageway through which

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365 *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.
it is difficult to travel. Jdt 4:7 concerns protecting the mountain passes that are barely wide enough for two men to travel through at a time. It is these paths leading from the mountains that the people are urged to ‘hold firm’. Thus Jdt 4:7 is similar to our verse in terms of the adjective corresponding to στενος and in being used for the narrow ‘entrances’ or ‘access paths’ (מַחְסֶת). Wis 7:22–23, 2 Esd 11:3, and Zech 11:4, 7 (a dignified spirit; a pair of small wings; an undernourished flock) are not very similar to Mt 7:14. Nevertheless, we see that the adjective could be used in a range of ways: negatively or positively (meagre/lean/insignificant; small; subtle/dignified) and that the majority of cases were used in a negative (deficient) sense.

The most apt background and context for analysing the narrow doorway and pathway in Mt 7:14 is not found beyond Matthew but within Matthew. The OT usage can potentially be a distraction for another reason. The widespread motif of the ‘path that leads to life’ or the ‘straight path’ of the righteous mentioned (particularly Proverbs, cf. Prov 5:6, 12:28, 15:24, 21:16; cf. also Ps 16:11; Gen 18:19; Jdg 2:22; Jer 5:4-5) is unlike the negatively described path in Matthew. The most comparable OT reference to a path (one not what it seems) would be Prov 14:12: ‘אֶמָּה אָמְנָא/אָמְנָא עַל עַמָּה וֹאָמְנָא לָא מַחְסֶה אָמְנָא כְּשָׁלַע (‘Compare the pathway that seems to humans to be straight but its paths are paths of death’). Usually in Proverbs the desirable path is most commonly the one less difficult. The dissimilarly is noteworthy. Compare Isa 26:7: ‘חֵלֶחַ מָאָרָא/עַמָּה/עַמָּא עַמָּא לַעֵשֶׁה (‘The way of the poor is level and the way of the righteous is clear’); Prov 4:26: ‘אֶמָּה מַחְסֶה/עַמָּה/עַמָּא מַחְסֶה אָמָּא מַחְסֶה/עַמָּה לָא מַחְסֶה (‘Keep your feet away from evil paths and all your ways will be secure’); Prov 15:19: ‘אָמָּא/עַמָּה/עַמָּא/עַמָּה/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא (‘The path of the lazy is filled with thorns but the path of the upright is clear’); 2 Sam 22:33: ‘אֶמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּא/עַמָּא (‘God has girded me with strength and given me a path without defect’).

The better path in the OT is predominantly easy to find and clear of difficulty. A common adjective employed with such a path is מַחְסֶה (or the Peal or Pael of מַחְסֶה). Thus Prov 3:6: ‘אֶמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא/עַמָּא (‘in all your ways acknowledge him and he will straighten your paths’) and in Ps 27:11: ‘אֶמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּה/עַמָּא (‘Teach me Lord your way and lead
me in your straight paths’). The collocation of מִתּוּלְוָה (and/or) מָתֹל (‘Make straight paths for your feet so that the leg that is lame will not stumble, but be healed’). But עָמְרָא (or the Peal or Pael of עָמְרָא) also has the sense ‘upright’ (or made upright) so that the difference with the narrow pathway in Mt 7:13–14 is not directly comparable nor directly opposite (uprightness is still the choice path, whether the OT’s ‘easy’ way or Matthew’s ‘difficult’ way). OT texts are less concerned about a ‘destination’ after life (and more with a better present life before death). Several OT passages connect the desired path with the notion of finding ‘life’ somewhat like Mt 7:14.

5.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing a Syriac-English Entry for פְּחָטָא

The adjective for the אַקֶּרֶּא (‘constricted’) path functioned as a parallel to our פְּחָטָא (‘constricted’) entrance. But the semantic and grammatical analysis could not clarify the precise relation between the first two grammatical subjects—whether or not the gateway and the pathway work independently as well as together (or only one or the other) remained unclear. This same uncertainty (of dual grammatical subjects) partly explained why some Greek manuscripts omit the superfluous ‘gate’ (and is also partly explained by the more common ‘path’ motif). The Greek variants were not reflected in the Syriac versions. The Greek applied the same ‘narrow’ adjective twice (to gate and path) and the Syriac has heightened the poetics by offering two different adjectives. Apparently the choice was not based on which adjective applied best to gate (and to path) since both C and H employ אַקֶּרֶּא אָקְרָא (‘gate’). H provided another Syriac word of similar meaning פְּחָטָא (‘difficult’ (or ‘wearisome’)). The literary form extends from 7:13–14 and was identified as a wisdom proverb of exhortation, concerning who is it that (does and does not) ‘find life’ (find salvation) as a topic seen elsewhere in Proverbs, Psalms, and the Didache concerning ‘the two ways’ (the way of/to life and the way of/to death). It is only ‘salvation for the few’ which seems designed to comfort only a small (or marginal) group of people where fortunes are reversed (those content to go along with the majority are condemned to destruction). Talbert’s structure was followed whereby 7:13–27 (four sayings concerning who will be saved and who belongs and does not belong to the kingdom of heaven ‘on that day’ of judgement) parallel the two kinds of people in 7:24–27, namely those wise and foolish who do or
do not build their houses on the rock and their resultant fates. The gate and path indicate ethical dimensions (the high standards of the greater righteousness espoused throughout the Sermon).

The ‘foolish’ (7:13–27) may be those who refuse to take heed of Jesus’ words (after having heard Jesus’ teachings). The audience may find comfort in knowing how it is that ‘many’ (known to the early audience of Matthew) have not heeded Jesus’ words (perhaps words that are wise words extending upon known proverbs of the day that ‘many’ know but choose to ignore).

The narrative analysis highlighted several binary oppositions but also denied readers from making immediate judgments concerning who will find salvation ‘on that day’ (it remains somewhat unknown until ‘that day’). The narrative tends to subvert the usual obvious distinctions between great and small. ‘The few’ is a repeated feature within Matthew, such as the notion of ‘many yet few’ in Mt 9:37; Mt 20:16; Mt 22:14; and Mt 25:23. Based on how מַרְאֶה is used elsewhere in Matthew (as well as in Mt 7:14) it can inform our adjective. It is these ‘little ones’ who suitably find salvation via the little gate, along the obscure (little known) path.

With no other occurrences, we noted the NT parallel which has Jesus exhort people to ‘struggle through the narrow gate, many will seek (to) and not be able’. Of the thirteen OT occurrences of כְּפַר only Jdt 4:7 was similar to Mt 7:14. As for OT parallels, the majority of proverbs about the ‘narrow’ or ‘difficult’ path in the OT referred to the way of the unrighteous (since the path of the righteous was, predominantly, supposed to be smooth and easy!) A reversal of desired paths still belongs within a wisdom tradition of turning common wisdom up-side-down. The widespread notion of a path of life (and a path of death) may further explain why some Greek manuscripts failed to mention the (superfluous) narrow gate.

Our exegesis did not suppose that the lexicographer or exegete should pursue a meaning for the lexeme in Mt 7:14 that attempts to separate the adjective from the noun it qualifies, especially given that the noun is relatively figurative. We were interested in the contextual meaning of the entire phrasal element.

For Mt 7:14, Jennings gives: “כִּפַר verbal adj. כְּפַר be thin, narrow; small, narrow. Mt. vii 14.” The ambivalence there is between glossing the word as ‘be thin, be narrow’ or simply ‘small,
narrow’ as a reflection of Jennings’ own ambivalent classification of the word as a ‘verbal adjective’. Jennings probably intends for the user to understand the meaning of the word in Mt 7:14 in terms of ‘physical size’. However, it is difficult to be sure since Jennings gives glosses rather than a definition. A noun described as being either ‘small,’ ‘thin’, or ‘narrow’ is not necessarily restricted to one degree of ‘physical size’. Such is the imprecise nature of a gloss. Both ‘narrow’ and ‘small’ can signify any kind of limitation in terms of size, significance, or scope. Either ‘small,’ ‘limited,’ ‘little,’ ‘insignificant,’ ‘narrow,’ or ‘constricted,’ as glosses may adequately represent the Syriac adjective in Mt 7:14. For the reader of Mt 7:14 who consults CSD he or she can choose from: (1) thin, lean, meagre as ears of corn, food cattle; (2) straight, narrow as windows, paths, doors &c.; (3) fine, sharp, delicate; (4) subtle, ethereal; (5) high, shrill as sounds; (6) keen, subtle, acute. A reader can easily identify meaning (2) for Mt 7:14. A lexicon-user who is influenced by the semantic domain placement in LN for the corresponding Greek may conclude the same way, given that στενός is placed under ‘Spacial Dimensions’ in sub-domain ‘Narrow, Wide (81.15-81.19)’ and given the definition “pertaining to being narrow or restricted – ‘narrow’.” BDAG’s meaning does not expand much on the gloss narrow (“in ref. to dimension”) but does imply cramped with its other citations. Pursuing a definition without the above exegetical analyses would favour LN’s Greek definition.

However, a contextual analysis recognises that the noun which it qualifies is figurative, namely an ‘entranceway’ into ‘salvation’. So the ‘dimensions’ are actually ‘religious’ (ways of living ethically according to God’s will, apparently not being widely or strictly observed). Thus a contextual meaning observes the implications of the ‘size dimension’ according to the perspective of those who attempt to enter, namely a ‘difficult’ entrance that not everyone can (or may want to) find or pass through. The ‘dimension’ is thus contrasted with a ‘comfortable passageway’, ‘easy-to-find’ and taken by ‘many people’. The complete ‘degree(s) of limitedness’ of كَانَ صَمَّرُ is not simply:

(1) limited in size spatially, having restricted dimensions, of a narrow size, small, little (as opposed to spacious);

But also:
(2) limited in ease of access, difficult-to-enter, not easily accessible, restrictive;

(3) limited in terms of attractiveness, unattractive, unimpressive, a crude, humble structure, unwelcoming, unassuming, visually deterring (as opposed to grand or presumptuous);

(4) limited in terms of its visibility, difficult-to-see, small, obscure, out of sight (as opposed to obvious, in plain sight);

(5) limited in terms of its perceived value, insignificant, of seemingly limited value, meagre, lowly (not worthwhile, not for a powerful person, not fit-for-a-king);

(6) limited in terms of who can enter, humbling (only for the unassuming ‘little believers’);

(7) limited in terms of choice or quality of decision, a truly sagacious choice, an acute, astute, discerning choice, indicative of the judicious choice of the truly wise or ‘select few’ (as discriminating the elect from the masses);

(8) limited in terms of moral standards, stringent, restrictive, strict, of high moral standard, ethically difficult and deterring, discriminating the select ‘insiders’ from the many ‘outsiders’.

The above eight kinds of ‘limits’ do not all need to be included in an entry for ﻋُﻤِّدَ في in Mt 7:14 because they represent an expanded exegetical perspective of the meaning of a ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ أَنَا (‘narrow entrance … leading to salvation’) within Matthew. Conversely, it is not necessary for the lexicographer to pursue a meaning for the lexeme in Mt 7:14 that attempts to separate the adjective from the noun it qualifies. The meaning of the adjective depends on the kind of noun it qualifies.

5.14 Lexical Results for a Contextual Meaning

single adj. m., single abs. ms. limited or restricted in size or degree (literally or figuratively), narrow, little, small, insignificant. ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ أَنَا the “narrow gate” through which entry is difficult to find but leads to salvation, “Oh how the gateway is little and the pathway is narrow which leads to life and they are (the) few who find it.” Mt 7:14, cf. adj. أَكَثَرَا (cf. also adj. ﺛُﺤُبَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ Mt 7:14 Harklean); cf. also adj. ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ cf. also mp. noun ﻋُﻤِّدَ ﻋُﻤِّدَ in Mt 7:14.

στενός.

Mt 7:14
Chapter 6. Lexeme 5: 

6.1–5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mt 8:20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 (8:20a)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>Complement 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>preposition + pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>to him</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2 (8:20b)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>Predicate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition + pronoun</td>
<td>particle (of existence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to them</td>
<td>be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sentence 3) (8:20c)</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Subject 4</td>
</tr>
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<td>noun</td>
<td>particle + noun</td>
</tr>
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<td>nests</td>
<td>of heaven</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 4 (8:20d)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicate 4</td>
<td>Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun + pronoun suffix</td>
<td>particle + verb + pronoun suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his head</td>
<td>to recline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

Mt 8:20 is labelled as four ‘Sentences’. ‘Sentences 2–4’ are given as a saying of Jesus. ‘Sentence 1’ identifies the speaker (Jesus) and the listener (‘him’, identified in 8:19 as ‘a scribe’). Our
lexeme نمقا is a noun that appears in ‘Sentence 2’ in prominent position. The particle of existence is functioning as a copula verb (‘is’ followed by نمقا of possession’) linking the complement نمقا with the subject (and topical frame) نمقا ‘foxes’, that is, ‘they [foxes] have نمقا’. Our lexeme is a plural noun referring to the places foxes ‘have’, that is, ‘live’ (‘places where they live,’ cf. نمقا ‘where’ in Sentence 4 and including ‘sleep’ given the Peal of صمر ‘recline’ there). ‘Sentence 3’ has either an implied or elliptic copula verb (‘have’) or simply shares the same copula (‘has’) of ‘Sentence 2’ as an extension of the same clause (hence ‘Sentence 3’ has been placed in round brackets). The verse relays direct speech.

Here نمقا parallel the shelters/nests that birds do have (singular in Syriac “[the] bird of [the] heaven”) and contrasted with the/a place where ‘the Human’ does not have. The three inform each other. The typical English name for the abodes of foxes is ‘dens’ which are ‘holes in the ground’ or ‘caves’.

6.7 Translation Analysis

For نمقا the extant Greek manuscripts attest only to the plural form for the lexeme φωλεός (‘hole for animals’, ‘caves’). The only differences to note for Mt 8:20 (besides some Greek spelling variants) are: (1) the final lexeme as a subjunctive χλίη ‘he (might) recline’ or an infinitive χλῖναι ‘to recline’; and (2) ‘the head’ or ‘with one’s head’ (την κεφαλην or τινι κεφαλην).

Besides ‘Lord’ in place of ‘Jesus’ (in S) and ‘houses’ for ‘shelter’ (in H) none of the extant Syriac versions provide any other noteworthy variations:
6.8 Genre Analysis

Mt 8:20 can be taken as a unit by itself, consisting of a three-part aphorism spoken by Jesus. We could label it a proverb (Osbourne calls it a vivid metaphor “perhaps even a proverb”). Each part is very short and to the point—it can be classified as a ‘chreia’ (it is “like a Cynic chreia that thwarts intentions, overturns presuppositions, and at least temporarily stymies actions”). The speaker (Jesus) refers to himself in the third person which contributes to the contemplative proverbial character of the saying.

6.9 Rhetorical Analysis

The rhetorical unit will consist of Mt 8:18–22, namely two sayings of Jesus to two would-be disciples during a crowded and busy time. According to Malina and Rohrbaugh, Jesus’ first response in 8:20 is to be considered a “numbered parable: two concrete images are used to clarify a third moral requirement” which is “well known from the book of Proverbs, for example Prov 30:18–19; 30–33” and is “not meant as a concrete image of Jesus’ situation or lifestyle” but “points to a quality of Jesus’ fictive kin group, detached from biological family and its demands” while the second response “totally downplays family obligations in favour of the task of proclaiming the forthcoming theocracy.”

We will mainly focus on the first saying which is meant to deter an eager would-be disciple by implying that ‘the human one’ is an itinerant teacher worse off than the wild animals, since they at least have more permanent abodes in which to dwell (and perhaps a ‘[place of] retreat’).

‘Sentence 4’ is the conclusion and is the negative counterpart of Sentences 2 and 3. We can segment the three-part response as AA'B:

366 Osbourne, Matthew, 305.
368 Malina and Rohrbaugh, Commentary, 56.
In its current position in Matthew, the three-part aphorism is a reply by Jesus to an unidentified scribe (אֲנָא) who emerges, to question Jesus, from the large crowds (אֲנָא) which have prompted Jesus and his disciples to cross over (probably to retreat) to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (8:18–19). The effect of Jesus’ reply is a presentation of “a scribe being told he will not be able to do what he thinks he can do.” When we include the scribe’s statement of intention to follow Jesus (8:19) our unit is considered a ‘Call to Discipleship Story’ followed by a second example (8:21–22) whereby someone described as already being a disciple is also confronted with the high cost of continuing to be a disciple (challenged by Jesus to neglect his father’s funeral with a clever rearrangement of his own words).

The writer portrays Jesus as now a very popular teacher and healer (Mt 8:18) who consequently attracts an enthusiastic scribe who intends to join the adventure and become a disciple (Mt 8:19). Robbins shows how the logic of the scribe’s proposal is countered in Jesus’ final statement in 8:20 (I have replaced Robbin’s ‘Son of man’ with ‘the Human’):

**Proposal:** Teacher where you go I will follow.

**Rejoinder:** The Human has nowhere to lay his head.

By calling himself ‘the Human’ / ‘the Man’ Jesus corrects the scribe’s perception of Jesus as his ‘teacher’ (S, P: אֲנָא; C, H: אֲנָא). The second element of Jesus’ final statement thwarts the scribes intended ‘wherever/places’ with ‘nowhere/no place’ whilst the third element intensifies the scribe’s expected ‘going/following’ with the challenging ‘no rest for his head’.

Jesus’ popularity depicts him as authoritative. The chreia presents the authoritative character embodied in the speaker’s words. Jesus’ response to the first question is proverbial. That Jesus is without a place to dwell may seem at odds with his having a place to stay in Capernaum (Mt 4:13). The absence of a ‘place for the Human to recline his head’ is possibly hyperbolic “for Jesus made his home in Capernaum.” However, Mt 8:20 may suggest that Jesus is unlike

370 Ibid., 71–73.
371 Ibid., 71.
372 Ibid., 74.
settled teachers in that he did not have his own house or teaching studio from which to teach. Therefore, a more consistent place for sleeping/resting may still be implied (as something Jesus is lacking) as either a more permanent home (to settle and live in) or simply a chance to stay somewhere relatively long-term.

Contrasting himself with insignificant creatures (foxes and a bird) is striking. Whilst birds are relatively neutral (some are clean, some unclean) foxes are wild and unclean. Jesus claims not even to have what a wild unclean animal has (a place to dwell).

Jesus is not seeking out ever-larger crowds but crowds are seeking him out increasingly (8:18). In verses 20–22, the writer intends to place a question mark over the motivations of the would-be disciples. What they suppose about Jesus (what he offers, and who he is) is apparently incorrect. What kind of person does it take to be a disciple of this kind of teacher? Whilst the first man is too eager and must be dissuaded with a reality check, the second (8:21–22) is encouraged to come follow but is not eager enough to begin straight away. Jesus, again, modifies each element of the second would-be disciple’s statement (‘permit me first to go to bury my father’ to ‘come follow me, allow the dead to bury the dead’). Together the two sayings provide the beginnings of an elaborated chreia.  

6.10 Narrative Analysis

Since our noun, for a dwelling place for foxes, is not the focus of 8:20—which merely informs Jesus’ point about his own situation, namely he lacks a secure place as an unusual itinerant teacher—a narrative analysis shifts our attention to Jesus’ lack of place as ‘the human one’.

Recently, Robert Myles has warned against the temptation, with many narrative readings of Matthew, to romanticise Jesus’ homeless state (as being an individual’s voluntary ‘lifestyle’ choice) and has instead called attention to Jesus’ forced displacement notable here and elsewhere

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374 Ibid., 73–74: “When these two units follow one another in sequence, the first unit stands as an initial exhibition of the authoritative ἔθος ("ethos") of Jesus in a pointed statement that destroys the presuppositions of the one who approaches him.” The second unit “sets a deliberative thesis before the reader” thus the sequence of both units “has the qualities of the first steps in a chreia elaboration” and establish an appropriate relationship between the speaker and the audience before the speaker launches his particular thesis about the demands of life and death.”
in Matthew. Jesus’ place of dwelling has been dislocated since the beginning of the narrative (the theme is also found in the genealogy).

Jesus’ self reference (ܢܲܫܳܐ ܒܰܪܲܢܳܫܳܐ) makes its first appearance here in Matthew and adds a perspective which is perhaps ‘Christological’ but which remains relatively undefined at this stage. The ‘title’ is not directly related to Jesus’ death nor to his resurrection (nor to his pre-existence), nor is it explicitly related to his future role as judge of the earth. Rather, ‘the Human’ is Jesus’ preferred title of either lesser or greater magnitude than that used by the scribe (‘Teacher’). It seems paradoxically both a lowly title and a significant title. The Syriac phrase ܠܹܒܰܪܳܢܳܫܳܐ ܕܲܐܲܢܳܫܳܐ is a fixed expression used by Jesus (made definite by the proleptic pronoun suffix which differentiates it from the construct ܢܲܫܳܐ ܒܰܪܲܐ ‘a person’ written also as ܠܹܒܰܢܳܫܳܐ and never used in the Peshitta New Testament to refer to Jesus). As the term’s first appearance in Matthew, “we need to consider it as an unknown term” where ‘the man’ is “simply defined as "one who has nowhere to lay his head," in contrast to a "teacher".” This is also the first appearance in Matthew of the title ‘teacher’. The contrast between the scribe’s label for Jesus and Jesus’ own label is noteworthy since:

what is wrong in the scribe’s statement is that he conceives Jesus as a "teacher"—a view which could be that of the readers after reading the Sermon on the Mount—and that wherever Jesus is will be a secure place of teaching.

Therefore, the narrative at this point challenges readers’ view of Jesus as ‘teacher’ by redefining the kind of ‘teacher’ Jesus is. More specifically, it questions who would use the title ‘teacher’ for Jesus. The scribe should not call Jesus teacher, either because it is not what Jesus wants to be called generally or more probably because Jesus cannot be ‘teacher’ (of the expected kind) to this scribe. Readers cannot rule out the first option. The only people who call Jesus ‘teacher’ in Matthew are those not fit to be called disciples (because they are opposed to Jesus in some way).


378 Ibid.
So defining Jesus as ‘teacher’ (according to the usual understanding of the term) is not something that the narrative seeks to advocate. Indeed, Mt 23:8–12 presents Jesus teaching against using the titles: ‘teacher’ (ܡܲܪܒܲܝ, ῥαββί), ‘master’ (𬘬ܥܕܩܢܓܣ̄, ῥαββίηγης), and ‘father’ (ܝܐ, πατήρ) because the first and third titles belong to God and the second belongs to God’s anointed (ܡܫܥܝܚܕ, ὁ Χριστός) because only ‘the one who humbles himself will be exalted’ (23:12b). Perhaps Jesus is shown to refuse the title of teacher so that God can exalt Jesus as teacher.

We might note other places where the term ‘scribes’ appears in Matthew (2:4; 5:20; 7:29; 9:3 etc.) and that their opinion seems not wholly reliable or trustworthy. Talbert suggests we compare “13:20–21” (uneasy discipleship; affliction or persecution deterring would-be believers).³⁷⁹ According to Talbert, the units Mt 8:18–22 and 9:9–17 together frame a triad of miracles (the frame is “the cost of discipleship”) thus our episode “poses the question, Have you counted the cost?”³⁸⁰ According to Gundry Mt 8:18–22 “presents not one scribe but two, both of them professing disciples, the first one true, the second one false” since: “In Matthew, "scribes" frequently stands for non-disciples.”³⁸¹ However, it is not made explicit in either Mt 8:18–22 or the immediate context that both are scribes nor that the first is any more a ‘true’ disciple than the second. It is better to compare the two would-be disciples with other call-to-discipleship passages, such as 4:18–22, where we find Jesus calling two sets of two fishermen. Nevertheless, there are narrative contrasts between the two would-be disciples. Kingsbury helpfully highlights three antithetical points in 8:20–22:

(a) in the one sub-unit, it is, again, a "scribe" who speaks to Jesus (8:19); in the other, it is a "disciple" (8:21); (b) in the one, Jesus is addressed as "teacher" (8:19); in the other, he is addressed as "Lord" (8:21); and (c) in the one, the scribe makes the offer to follow Jesus (8:19); in the other, Jesus himself extends the summons to follow him (8:22).³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Talbert, Matthew, 115.
³⁸⁰ Ibid., 111.
We should also follow Talbert in seeing 8:18–22 and 9:9–17 as an inclusio around the three intervening miracles. Mt 9:9–13 (the tax collector named Matthew) is the closest other call story to Mt 8:18–22 in the narrative whilst the first call stories in 4:18–22 have the added similarity of presenting a pair of callings. The main difference between both these passages (4:18–22; 9:9–13) and ours (8:18–20) is that in our unit the first would-be disciple is not called by Jesus but is volunteering to follow. The second disciple (8:21–22) had already been following Jesus for an unknown time—whether voluntarily or ‘called’ is not made explicit (probably the former). Neither would-be disciple in Mt 8:18–22 makes the full-time commitment to follow Jesus—thus highlighting the cost for readers who will likely recognise that such high cost will also entail high reward (Mt 19:27–29).

It is possible that the ‘place’ Jesus lacks is a place to hide from those who ‘hunt’ him. But it is not for another two chapters that we hear that the Pharisees are out to accuse him and plot to destroy him (Mt 12:10–14) so the ‘place’ in Mt 8:20 is not really a hiding place from danger. However, Jesus has recently been busy healing and expelling demons, even after sunset (8:16), so it appears that Jesus cannot easily find respite from the crowds and from people constantly needing his help. Therefore, narratively speaking, Jesus’ comment in 8:20 may also refer to a place (of shelter) for Jesus to stay where no crowds would be harassing him for further help, namely a place of peace and quiet so he could rest properly. Indeed, within two verses, Jesus is sleeping in the boat, in the middle of a storm.

The theme of ‘following Jesus’ (perhaps ‘following an unusual teacher through uneasy situations’) ties not only both sub-units on discipleship but also the following story concerning the stilling of the storm (Mt 8:23–27) where Jesus’ disciples immediately follow Jesus into the boat. In the Syriac, only the Sinaitic maintains the same verb throughout (the Curetonian is not extant for verse 23 and the Peshitta simply repeats the verb ‘went up’ in 8:23). The link with the following boat scene is thematically maintained by portraying Jesus resting his head (sleeping) in a temporary ‘shelter’ which is not properly able to shelter him and the disciples from the storm.

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6.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels: Lk 9:58

The only other occurrence is found in Lk 9:58 being a direct parallel, word for word with what we found in Mt 8:20 and in the four sister versions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>H</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אֵלֵהוּ מְעַטָּה</td>
<td>כָּאָלָה יִתְּ נֵעָה</td>
<td>אֵלֵהוּ מְעַטָּה</td>
<td>כָּאָלָה יִתְּ נֵעָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>הָאֶלֶּה הָאֶלֶּה</td>
<td>הָאֶלֶּה הָאֶלֶּה</td>
<td>הָאֶלֶּה הָאֶלֶּה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אוּ בַּנַּעְטָּתָה</td>
<td>אוּ בַּנַּעְטָּתָה</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only new element in the verse is that Sinaiticus translates κατασκηνώσεις with לִזְּנִ ‘nests’.

Rather than attempt to analyse the verse according to every exegetical component, only a few observations will be made concerning the key differences in Lk 9:57 (to that of Mt 8:20).

In Lk 9:57 the person is not identified as a scribe, but simply מְנִ ‘someone’/’a person’, whose question only differs in addressing Jesus as ‘my Lord’ (many Greek manuscripts omit κύριε here) at the end of the verse. The introduction to the two proposals for following Jesus is longer in Luke, extending back to Lk 9:51. The Syriac Peshitta and Curetonian versions also include Lk 9:56a (“for the Human did not come to destroy lives but to save” בָּרֵה גַּיְרֵד אֶלֶּה לֵא אֵלֵהוּ מְעַטָּתָה לֵא מָעַט יִתְּ נֵעָה making it similar in form to Mt 9:13b (and similar in meaning to Jn 3:17). The second example of the would-be disciple in 9:59–60 is almost identical to Mt 8:21–22 but begins not as a proposal to Jesus (but vice versa) and ends with an injunction to proclaim the kingdom of God. Also there follows a third example (Lk 9:61–62) where Jesus is portrayed like Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs 19:19–20).384 The third example seems to summarise all three inadequate would-be disciples by saying that no one looking back will be ‘of use to the Kingdom of God’ מִנְעֶה לִזְּנִ מִנְעֶה לִזְּנִ. In Luke these three inadequate discipleship stories are sandwiched between an account of an inhospitable Samaritan village where Jesus’ disciples ask to send down fire like Elijah did (Lk 9:51–56) and a more intense mission of an appointed seventy (‘and two’ in the

Sinaitic and Curetonian) to go out ahead of him (as Jesus begins to move toward Jerusalem) with a three-fold mission: to bring peace; minister healing; and proclaim that the kingdom of God has drawn near (Lk 10:1–16). All three components (inhospitable Samaritans, Jesus’ reply to would-be disciples’ notions of joining Jesus, mission of the seventy/seventy-two) portray the itinerant life of Jesus and his disciples that reflect ‘no-settled-place’.

The point of the proverb and the meaning of ܢܶܩܥܳܳܐ remains basically the same in Luke, namely that whilst even wild animals have somewhere to settle (a place to rest and a more permanent abode) Jesus (and his disciples) enjoy no such luxury—time is of the essence to proclaim the kingdom of God—would-be disciples have various misguided notions about joining Jesus’ endeavour that Jesus puts into stark perspective for them and the narrator’s audience. In Luke the theme of ‘family home’ or ‘household’ is explicitly brought out in the third saying to a would-be disciple who wants to delay joining Jesus just long enough to say farewell to those with whom he lives ܠܰܒ ܳܢܰܝܒܰܝܬܝ (‘to those of my house’).

6.12 Old Testament Occurrences: Jer 16:16

There is only one other Peshitta occurrence of our lexeme ܢܶܩܥܳܳܐ (Jer 16:16):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jer 16:16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ܗܐܳܡܫܕܪܳܐܢܳܠ ܨ ܐܕܡܰܓ ܐܝܳܐܘܢܨܘܕܘܢܳܐܢܘܢܳܡܢܳܟܠܰܛܘܪܳܘܡܳܢܳܟܠܰܪܡܳܐܳܘܲܢܳܢܩ ܥܲܐܳܕܫܩ ܝܳܦܐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they will fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and from every high place and from the holes of the rocks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no real relationship here with the successful calling of fishermen to fish out people in Mt 4:18–22. But the lexeme does nevertheless concern a safe place for humans and/or animals to hide (and/or reside) and the Syriac word for hunt/catch ܘܢܨܘܕܘܢ is the same verb for hunt/catch (Peal of ܢܨ) used of the Pharisees of Jesus (in Mt 22:15 ܳۂܘܢܨܘܕܘܢܝܗ ܝ) which may strengthen our narrative suggestion that the ‘place’ lacking for Jesus in Mt 8:20 may also be ‘a hiding place’. A place of shelter implies shelter from something. A ‘retreat’ is more neutral.

We might presume that ‘fox’ or ‘foxes’ will usually co-occur with our lexeme ܢܶܩܥܳܳܐ. Unfortunately Jer 16:16 is the only Old Testament occurrence of ܢܶܩܥܳܳܐ and here it appears within the phrase ‘caves of rocks’ presumably related to hiding places for humans and/or animals. It is easier to
extend the synonyms for a different word for caves, namely ܡܥܪܬܐ (tombs/caves) because these are mentioned several times in the Peshitta OT (note the Syriac words of similar meaning with which ܡܥܪܬܐ appears in Judg 6:5; 1 Sam 13:2; 1 Sam 20:20). It is worth noting that ܐܒܕܘܠܗܘܢ ܒܢܝܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܒܬܐܒܛܘܪܐ ܘܡܥܪܐ ܘܛܝܪܐ ‘foxes’ are depicted as wild animals that roam the Temple ruins (Lam 5:18; Ezek 13:4) and apparently make their home there (cf. Isa 13:21 ܐܠܢܪܒܥܢܝܬܡܢܚܝ ܘܬܐܘܢܬܡܠܘܢ ܒܬܝܗܘܢ ܒܢܬܩܠ ܠ). In this vein we can note Isa 34:13 ܬܗܘܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܠܝܪ ܘܪܐ ܐ (‘owls cry in their palaces and jackals in their fine temples’; also Isa 35:7 which mentions the ܒܕܝܪܐ ܕܝܪ ܘܪܐ ‘abode of jackals’ transformed into a lush waterhole and similarly the expression appearing four times in Jeremiah concerning the ܡܥܡܪܐ ܠܝܪ ܘܪܐ ‘haunt for jackals’ (Jer 9:10; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37). There is no reason to reject the idea that our ܢܩܥܐ is the animal equivalent to a ‘home’, ‘house’, namely ‘a dwelling place for animals that live in holes or caves’ (or ruins?).

**6.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing a Syriac-English Entry for ܢܩܥܐ**

We analysed the four ‘Sentences’ in Mt 8:20 where Jesus speaks of three dwelling places that three creatures might naturally ‘have’ yet the third (‘the human one’) does not, by contrast, ‘have’. The third (human) creature lacks such a dwelling place (nowhere to rest his head) in contrast to the first two creatures (wild animals: birds and foxes, who are presumed to have places to rest and sleep). The translation analysis showed very consistent Greek-Syriac correspondences. Each of our analyses shifted attention from the place of foxes to the ‘no place’ of Jesus. The genre analysis noted that Jesus is speaking in a proverbial way where he speaks of himself in the third person, answering his questioner with a three-part aphorism that expects some contemplation (rethinking Jesus as ‘teacher’). Jesus undercuts each component of the scribe’s idealistic proposal—no teacher title; no place; no rest. There is a pair of would-be
disciples—the first is over-excited to begin, the second unready to begin straight away—Jesus’ answer to the first is intended to dampen his excitement and deter him. Jesus’ answer to the second is to expect more than the follower is willing to offer. There is a mismatch between what Jesus offers and what each would-be disciple expects. There is also a mismatch between calling Jesus ‘teacher’ and Jesus’ declining this honourable title (not simply because Jesus does not want to be his ‘teacher’ but because the use of titles is a sensitive issue). Although ‘teacher’ may have seemed an apt title for Jesus, it seems that: (1) Mt 8:20 expects readers to appraise who can legitimately call Jesus teacher, and (2) Jesus is too humble to encourage venerable titles (titles are thereby left for God to receive and/or to endow titles). The narrative also implied that Jesus could not find respite from the crowds and that his displacement (homelessness) is not necessarily by choice. Jesus’ own title ‘the human one’ (used as Jesus’ self-reference, ‘this human’) replaces the scribe’s title yet was not particularly informative as it had not previously occurred in the narrative (it functions negatively). The title fits, unexpectedly, in the development from ‘birds’ (neutral animal), ‘foxes’ (unclean animals), and then ‘the human one’.

The parallel in Lk 9:58 included a third example of a would-be disciple who was not entirely ready, and his reason concerned the need to first farewell those of his ‘house(hold)’. There was only one other Peshitta occurrence of our lexeme نُقُعَاء (Jer 16:16) which referred to places of hiding in rock cavities where presumably animals hide from hunters but people could also hide (or shelter, or live) there.

From the context in Matthew and Luke we can say that the ‘holes’ for foxes are ‘shelters’ (for rest or retreat). As we widened our contextual analyses, it was easy to lose focus on the dwelling place for foxes and talk instead about Jesus’ ‘place’ that he lacks (as ‘the human one’).

Nevertheless, the three given ‘places’ work exegetically to inform one another. There are multiple aspects to the three ‘places’ (place to hide, place of retreat, place of rest, place of sleep, place to live, place to eat, place to raise young). The word ‘home’ captures all these aspects (as does ‘place to settle’). What Jesus might require ‘shelter from’ in Matthew is the overwhelming masses of needy crowds. He has no place to escape from the high demands of his ministry, and no settled place from which to teach, and no regular place to sleep. The noun in Mt 8:20 and Lk 9:57 thus
refers to the stability and security of foxes having their own ‘places of dwelling’. Here a نما is unlikely to mean anything different from a φωλεός (‘hole for animals’, ‘place of shelter for animals’) given the similarity between the verses in Syriac and Greek. What we have not discerned is whether or not نما must be ‘foxes’ (or can a similar species be in view?).

6.14 A Suggested Lexical Entry

نما n.m. place of habitation for foxes, dwelling, cave, hole, den, shelter, home, retreat, نما نما نما نما "foxes have (their) holes." Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58. Cf. n. ملك (of birds) Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58, cf. also n. ملك

- φωλεός. Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58
Chapter 7. Lexemes 6 and 7: ܡܕܪܐ and the Peal of ܫܘܚ

7.1–5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mt 13:5–6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 (13:5a, 5b)</th>
<th>Topical Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>Predicate 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܚܝܬܩܐ</td>
<td>ܕܳܫܠܳܐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rock</td>
<td>fell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And another (portion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 continued (13:5b)</th>
<th>Sub-Point (dependent clause)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complement</td>
<td>Adjunct + Predicate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܡܕܪܐ</td>
<td>ܕܠܝܬܗܐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there was not</td>
<td>where</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2 (13:5c)</th>
<th>Complement</th>
<th>Adjunct + Predicate 4</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Predicate 3</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>particle + noun</td>
<td>noun (as adjective)</td>
<td>particle + negative particle of existence + copular verb (as possessor)</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>adverb (adverbial phrase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܕܳܫܠܳܐ</td>
<td>ܫܘܚܝܐ</td>
<td>ܚܬܩܳܐ</td>
<td>ܕܳܪܐ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of earth.</td>
<td>depth</td>
<td>there was not</td>
<td>because of</td>
<td></td>
<td>And immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 3 (13:6a, 6b)</th>
<th>Predicate 6</th>
<th>Subject 2</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Predicate 5</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܫܘܚܝܐ</td>
<td>ܕܳܪܐ</td>
<td>ܫܡܫܳܐ</td>
<td>ܕܳܝܢ</td>
<td>ܕܢܰܚ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it burnt</td>
<td>(the) sun</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>rose</td>
<td>when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 4 (13:6c, 6d)</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Complement</th>
<th>Adjunct + Predicate</th>
<th>Conjunction + Conjunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>particle + negative particle of existence + copular verb</td>
<td>particle + particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܫܘܚܝܐ</td>
<td>ܕܳܪܐ</td>
<td>ܚܬܩܳܐ</td>
<td>ܒܒܪܳܫܬܶܗ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it withered</td>
<td>root</td>
<td>(to) its</td>
<td>there was not</td>
<td>and because</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

Mt 13:5–6 contains four ‘Sentences’ and eight clauses. Verses 5–6 relay the ‘second point’ (which Osborne labels ‘Circumstance #2’). Sentence 1 adds a second ‘point’ to the discourse in a total series of four points concerning four portions of the seed sown (beginning in 13:3b). Sentence 2 comments on the initial outcome of said point. The portion of seed in Sentence 1 is identified here as the ‘Topical Frame’ (fronting of thematic element, here the grammatical subject). The noun unction functions as Complement of a negative possession in Sentence 1 (paralleled by the Complement in Sentence 2). unch (3rd masculine singular Peal of unction) is a verb which continues the same grammatical subject (the Topical Frame) from Sentence 1, namely ‘another’ (portion of the seed sown, 13:3b) modified by the adverbial unction ‘and immediately’. The verse relays direct speech.

We can segment verses 5–6 according to Osborne’s eight-part clause structure as it corresponds to the Syriac punctuation given in both Pusey-Gwilliam and CESG:

5a Circumstance #2
5b Description
5c Result of 5a
5d Basis of 5c
6a Basis of 6b & 6d
6b Result of 6a and 6c
6c Basis of 6b & 6d
6d Result of 6a & 6c

385 Osborne, Matthew, 499.
Whilst 5c relays initially positive growth 5b, 5d and 6c each relay information concerning how 5a was inadequate to sustain growth. Thus there are five phrases directly relevant to the semantics of our lexemes in 5a and 5b.

The structure of verses 5–6 shows that 6d (‘it withered’) is placed after its basis is given in 6c and that 6b (‘it got hot’) semantically and structurally parallels the outcome in 6d (‘it withered’).

Runge explains the position of 6c as the ‘Reason-Result Frame’ being stated up front (before the proposition) so as to keep the focus on the seed and on its withering rather than on the sun:

In Matthew’s account of the parable of the sower, the reason that the plant withered provides the basis for relating the preceding action to what follows. The implication is that if there had been roots, the withering would not have taken place. If the reason had been placed in the expected position at the end of the clause, it could have been understood to be focal (i.e., most important). In the canonical form, placing reason information in a frame ensures that the focus of the main clause is clearly on withering.386

Our noun ܡܶܕܪܳܐ has an opposite in its immediate context, namely ܫܘܽܥܳܐ (‘rock/hard ground’) which is here said to constitute an absence of ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ. A similar deficiency (‘where there was not [much] …’) is mentioned three times in verses 5–6. The adjective ܥܶܩܳܪܳܐ (‘much’) does not reappear the second and third times because it is the phrase ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ that is negated—the kind of ground known as ܠܹܗܳܐܳܛܳܐܳܪܳܥܳܐ is therefore not completely devoid of any ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ but has not ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܨܳܓܺܝܳܐܐ. The other two almost identical phrases are 13:5b: ܘܳܐܳܠܶܗܳܥܶܩܳܪܳܐ ܕܠܰܝܳܬܳܗ (‘where there was not root’) and 13:6b ܘܳܐܳܝܳܠܶܗܳܥܶܩܳܪܳܐ ܕܠܰܝܳܬܳܗ (‘where there was not root’). In all: (1) ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ appears as a semantic opposite to ܗܳܐܳܛܳܐܳܪܳܥܳܐ (‘hard ground’, ‘rock’); (2) ‘deep soil’/‘depth of earth’ (ܐܳܕܰܐܳܪܥܳܐ) appears as a phrase of similar meaning to ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ; and (3) the insufficient ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ has led to insufficient ܥܶܩܳܪܳܐ (‘rootage’). There is enough contextual information in verses 5–6 to define ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ as: ground that is not too hard nor too shallow for growing seedlings, namely thick soil, sufficient soil, soft soil, topsoil, planting soil, arable soil, cultivated soil. Without ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ the ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ is unspecified and we would need evidence that ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ might also be used without an adjective before providing it with an isolated definition (see §7.13 below).

The portion of seed lacking ܡܶܕܳܪܳܐ ܣܰܓܺܝܳܐܐ (‘sufficient soil’) and having an underdeveloped ܥܶܩܳܪܳܐ.
(‘root’) initially ܫܘܰܚ (before it ‘withered’ in the sun, ܝܺܒܶܫ 6d). Before withering/dying the seed has obviously ‘grown/sprouted’, but in a way modified by the adverbial adjunct ܘܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܗ. Thus ܘܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܗ probably adds promptness to the verb (‘it sprouted immediately/quickly’). Alternatively, the adverbial adds brevity to the action—it sprouted at first/initially/briefly. However, the latter is really only a consequence of the overall context whereby the positive growth does not last for any of the three unsuccessful portions of seed. If the adverbial means quickly, then we would ask: Is there any lexical redundancy (overlap in meaning) between our verb in 13:5 and the adverbial, that is, between ܘܒܰܪܳܫܳܥܬܶܗ (‘quickly’) and ܫܘܰܚ (‘sprout’)? The present theory of language (that the most meaningful ‘unit’ of language is not lexical but phrasal) hinders a definite answer. But if we had to give an isolated meaning for the Peal ܫܘܚ we would suppose that it does not include the notion of speediness, otherwise the adverb would contribute nothing new to the phrase.

The adverbial phrase detracts from the positive action of growth. The initial growth is paradoxically expected to be something good (‘it promptly sprouted’) yet the reason for positive growth is due to soil deficiency (‘it promptly sprouted because the soil was not deep’). It assumes that quick spouting seeds are naturally more problematic. Granted, seedlings may appear to sprout ‘earlier’ when planted in shallow soil, as such seedlings are sooner visible. Perhaps seeds that germinates sooner than others are sooner vulnerable if the necessary amounts of moisture and light are not also soon enough present. So the sequence appears logical enough.

7.7 Translation Analysis

There are no variants for the Greek lexeme corresponding to ܢܶܡܪܳܐ, namely ܓܲܗ. There is a variant for the Greek adjective for ‘much’, so rather than ܓܲܗ ܦܲܘܠܲܠܲܗ (‘quantity of soil’) it is ܓܲܗ ܟܲܠܲܗ (‘quality soil’) which anticipates the name given to the ideal patch of ground described in verse 8. In either case, it is precisely the lack of quantity that makes for a lack of quality.

The Greek lexeme ܓܲܗ is not infrequent and has numerous applications (earth, world, humanity, region, country, estate, land, ground, base, or soil). The Peshitta translators have identified the most
appropriate application of γῆ. P offers a more specific lexeme than the corresponding Greek, which results in, for us, a low-frequency Syriac lexeme.

In the corresponding Greek to ἐξανατέλλω, there are no variants for an underlying ἐξανατέλλω. The same question remains relevant for the meaning of ἐξανατέλλω as either ‘sprout’ or ‘sprout quickly’, depending on whether or not the meaning of the verb overlaps with the meaning of the adverb. The four extant Syriac versions for Mt 13:5 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>עפָרָא</td>
<td>עפָרָא</td>
<td>השָחֵה</td>
<td>השָחֵה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עפָרָא</td>
<td>עפָרָא</td>
<td>השָחֵה</td>
<td>השָחֵה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see that a Syriac word of similar meaning to השָחֵה is found in S and C, that is, both have translated γῆ with עפָרָא, namely γῆ πολλήν with עפָרָא. The lexeme עפָרָא occurs again in 13:5d in C (corresponding to P’s עוֹמַקָא אֶרֶךְ ‘depth of soil’) namely עוֹמַקָא אֶרֶךְ אֶלֶךְ אֵדֶרֶךְ (‘depth of much soil’) which appears redundant—perhaps to be read ‘deep layer of thick soil’.

The structure of 13:5 differs in S whereby the phrase עַדְּחַלְתְּא (‘and on account of having rocky ground/shallow ground…’) immediately follows 13:5a (according to CESG).387 All sister Syriac texts have some form of the Peal of השָחֵה, varying according to whether the seed is considered plural or singular, masculine or feminine. Less significant is the minor differences in the adverbial phrases used for ‘immediately’ (H: וַחֲדֵהו; P: וַבְּרֶשֶׁא; C: וַבְּהָשֶׁא; S: וַחֲדַו). In Mt 13:5, S and C apparently employ a slightly more specific lexeme than the Greek γῆ by using השָחֵה (loose powdery ground, dirt). In P, השָחֵה is replaced with מְדַרְּא where P’s noun is even more specific (מְדַרְּא, and maintained in H).

7.8 Genre Analysis

We can label the unit as a parable stretching from 13:3b–9, namely: ‘The Parable of the Seed and the Soils’. This is the first time in Matthew that a word for parable occurs (פָּרָבֵל ‘parable’). It is the

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387 Burkitt finds S difficult to read, namely סד וַחֲדַו וַחֲדַו וַחֲדַו [because it was spitting?] with סד published as, סד וַחֲדַו וַחֲדַו ‘because it was sunrise’.

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plural form in 13:3a (corresponding to the plural of παραβολή) just before Jesus speaks the parable (ὡς the term ‘parables’ is thus ‘spoken’ by the narrator). The more commonly used word for ‘parable’ in the New Testament Peshitta is לַחֲכָה (see §7.9 below). The explanation of the parable several verses later (13:18–23) is not included in the delimited literary form because it is kept distinct in Matthew (separated by two pericopes). The parable is evidently a metaphor for the kinds of responses to Jesus’ ‘word’ (his teaching about, and proclamation of, the ‘kingdom of heaven’). The metaphor’s referents are explained in 13:18–23 after a discussion concerning the purpose of parables, an Isaiah quotation (13:10–17), and a pronouncement of the disciples’ blessed state (13:16–17). The beginning and ending of the parable is marked with two parenthetical elements. It begins in 13:3b with the ‘attention-getter’ ἰδοὺ and ends in 13:9 with the ‘meta-comment’ ὁ ἔχων ἄτα ἀκουέτω. Thus it is enclosed by an appeal to listen well. The appeal to ‘really listen’ matches the content of the parable (people being ‘receptive’ as soil conditions being ‘receptive’) thus the appeal is to listen beyond the literal to hear what the metaphor stands for (receptivity).

7.9 Rhetorical Analysis

Whether or not our verb overlaps in meaning with its adverb remains unknown. Both options for the phrase (either ‘quickly sprouted’; or ‘temporarily sprouted’) are supported by the interpretation given in Mt 13:20–21 for this kind of soil, which represents initial acceptance of the word with joy (ὡς ἄνατα καὶ ἀκούεται) yet not lasting (ἅπαξ ἄναται ἐφάνεται ἐκ διδασκαλίας) and this kind quickly becomes ensnared (δύο ἄναται ἐφάνεται).

If we consider that the rhetorical unit includes the parable’s explanation in 13:18–23, it will also mean that the unit includes the two pericopes in between (13:10–17 and 13:16–17) thus giving us the unit Mt 13:1–23. The appeal to listen seems somewhat ironic considering that the crowds to whom Jesus addresses are not expected to understand (confirmed by the pericope following). So the appeal is more exasperation-like (‘O that you would listen’). The parable is not quite intended for Jesus’ audience (the crowds) to understand. It is for the rhetorical audience (the audience of believers). It is as a judgment against the crowds that Jesus’ mode of teaching now shifts into a more obscure mode (by effectively saying ‘Most of you are soils who will not receive the seed;
you are not conducive for producing growth!). Ultimately here it is Matthew’s audience who are being warned about the kind of soil they should and should not be and simultaneously offers believers a reason for why many people have not understood and accepted Jesus’ preaching. Therefore, the rhetorical situation is that there is a need to address why more people have not responded to the ‘word of the kingdom of heaven’ preached by Jesus and his disciples.

The unit begins a new setting but one that shifts from the old setting thereby still connected with it (13:1). The metaphor of four kinds of sowed ground is an obvious choice for commenting on a variety of ‘sown places’ to people familiar with agricultural work (path, rock, thorns, and arable soil—only the latter is productive in the long term). This is perhaps why the four-part metaphor is not initially expanded upon and concludes suddenly with a short ending (‘and another fell on good ground and gave fruit, some a hundred and some sixty and some thirtyfold’) and followed by an appeal for eared persons to hear. Giving such an obvious and short conclusion provides very little, if any, information that is new. The brevity seems also to be part of a strategy to employ the appeal to ‘listen well’ where the speaker suggests that he is not merely talking about sowing or growing seeds.

The agricultural nature of the parable is befitting of Jesus’ rural Galilean hearers. However, the parable’s brevity and lack of explanation would, upon first hearing, appear relatively opaque to Jesus’ large audience. This is meant to raise the question (which it does from his disciples): Why, Jesus, are you suddenly speaking in this cryptic way? This is probably why the Syriac chooses the less common lexeme ܐܠܠܐ for ‘parable’—it is not merely another ‘story’ or ‘simile’ it is a ‘metaphor’ or ‘allegory’ (as it lacks an interpretation). Matthew’s own audience requires a clear reason for this shift in speaking and so Jesus responds to his disciple’s logical question with an elaborate justified four-part response that educates the reading audience:

(1) The large crowds have not been given the knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven like you have;

(2) Those who have will be given abundantly more but those without will be deprived of what even they have;
(3) They are fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy by looking and not seeing and hearing but not understanding;

(4) (nine lines of text quoted from Isa 6:9–10 extended to a positive note for the disciples)

All this defensive response for shutting out the crowds gives the impression that Jesus is very frustrated and very determined that this is the hard reality of facing a hard hearted people. Jesus’ bleak attitude is here being justified by a list of reasons that are given in an escalating order (in the sense that each is more involved argumentatively, building upon the previous point), namely:

(1) the undeserving crowds are not befitting of holding the precious knowledge;

(2) knowledge begets knowledge (like the good soil where seed begets more seed) and, like the poor soils, unreceptivity means a loss of whatever was sown;

(3) what is taking place here is precisely what Isaiah was talking about when he was obliged to proclaim to the people;

(4) [the quotation from Isa 6:9–10]: In hearing you will hear but not understand - Seeing you will see but not know - For hard is the heart of this people with difficulty their ears hear - They have shut their eyes - Lest they see with their eyes - And hear with their ears - And understand with their heart and repent - And I would heal them.

Jesus further extends the poetic repetitions of words about eyes seeing to describe those eyes of the disciples who fortunately do see: ‘Blessed are your eyes that see and your ears that hear for amen I tell you that many prophets and righteous desired to see the things you see and hear the things you hear but did not hear’ (13:16–17). Finishing the Isaiah quote on a positive note achieves three goals. Firstly it relieves some of the negativity of the unit. Secondly it concludes with the preciousness of what the disciples have—with the implication that they should hold on to it dearly and cherish it since it is their responsibility to pass on, and guard, the knowledge with which they have been privileged. Thirdly the extending of the quotation to a blessing of the disciples produces a chiastic structure extending from verses 13–17.

388 Unfortunately the Greek commentaries tend to overlook making the connection between Mt 13:12 and the parable itself (loss of seed sown).

The parable’s explanation (13:18–23) is somewhat less interesting in its emotional impact and limited rhetorical technique: The sown seed refers to hearing the ‘word of the kingdom’; the birds represent the evil one snatching away the word; the ground of rock is the hearer without sufficient root who falls down because of trials and persecutions; the seed sown among thorns is the hearer with care for ‘this world’ and the ‘deception of wealth’ which chokes the word preventing fruit; finally the seed sown on good soil is the hearer who understands and bears fruit in various large quantities. The moral of the story is not very intriguing (for failed growth the kind of ground is to blame; only the word ‘sown’ on good ‘ground’ successfully produces ‘fruit’). Nevertheless the parable’s metaphorical referents are explained such that the audience can comprehend the different kinds of short-term believers they may know who have rejected the ‘word of the kingdom of heaven’. The audience can ‘place’ people within their own story of failed evangelism and take this as a warning for themselves (the writer “uses the rejection of Jesus by his contemporaries as a warning to the disciples that they too can reject Jesus”).

The high productivity that good soil can yield is noteworthy—thus it ends with a note of hope—a small amount can grow exponentially large (yet this fact is hardly new to agricultural farmers). The final referent of the good soil bringing good successful crops stands in stark contrast to the three failed crops (failed or poor crops would not be anything new to the audience). The three failed portions are given in increasing degrees of success (the good crops are given inversely, in descending degree as one would expect in a thematic chiastic parallelism). The parable explains why it is that only a small amount of the ‘word’ that is ‘sown’ ‘grows’—the outcome depends on the kind of ‘soils’ in which it is sown.

There are four kinds of soil in the soils metaphor. This equates to three failed portions/crops and three good portions/crops (groups of three being traditional and memorable) within the binary oppositions of failed and successful crops. The whole of chapter 13 groups things into twos, threes, and fours which is not only structurally neat for the composer of the text but easier

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391 By verse 7 we note that “the lifetime of the various seeds becomes greater as one moves toward the parable’s climax.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew: VIII–XVII*, 384. However, the motive for Matthew’s descending order of successful crops “cannot be discerned” for Davies and Allison, 385.
for the reading audience to follow and remember: there are two sections of four parables each with a setting and an excursus; four parables spoken outside beside the sea; four parables spoken inside the house; there are four soils in the first parable (with three failed crops and three successful crops); there are fourteen subunits altogether. 392

7.10 Narrative Analysis

Our lexemes do not entirely fade from view when zooming out since the wider narrative concerns following/interpreting Jesus and his words. A true disciple is like quality soil (شَبَالًا and though some seedlings initially sprout energetically (حُشَّة that this is no indication of their sustained growth (persistence). Jesus and his words become riddles only to those who do not understand him.

In Mt 13, the disciples are explicitly shown to be the insiders and the crowds are outsiders who do not, and cannot, accept the word of the kingdom of heaven. The consequence of the parable (and the use of parable) is that there are really only two kinds of people in the (story)-world—those who reject Jesus’ word of the kingdom and those who accept it and persevere with it. The explanation of the parable (13:18–23) gives a name to the parable (‘the Parable of the Sower’) which gives significance to the action of sowing or to the person who sows and it goes on to name most of the ‘real’ actors (the evil one is the one who comes to seize the word; the seeds on various soils represent those who hear the word of the kingdom; the good soil is the hearer who accepts the word and bears fruit of one hundred, sixty and thirtyfold) but ‘the sower’ is not identified.

Keeping the sower unnamed is probably a deliberate way to avoid restricting the sower to having to be Jesus, given that it is not only Jesus who sows the word of the kingdom in Matthew.

Chapter 10 relayed several instructions to his disciples who he sends out to proclaim the word of the kingdom of heaven (10:1–15) with persecutions to be expected—like teacher like disciple (10:16–25). The mission is always to those ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (apparently

392 Bailey, “Sower and the Soils,” 173. Bailey also notes that after chapter 13, Jesus no longer is portrayed as proclaiming the kingdom of heaven (the next time proclamation is mentioned is in 24:24 which concerns a prediction after Jesus’ own time).
Nazareth, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum) but the missions were continually unsuccessful (Mt 11:20–24). Mark Bailey summarises the narrative progression by asserting that chapter 13:

is a great turning point in Matthew’s presentation. Jesus was preaching and teaching the kingdom to the Jews (4:17, 23; 9:35; 11:1), but they rejected Him. In reaction to this rejection Jesus presented the parables to show them they were no longer the privileged people to whom God would impart His revelation. 393

Bailey also notes that the temporal setting of the parable in 13:1 (‘on that day’) links it with the preceding controversial discussion with leaders and that 12:46–50 appropriately leads into the parable chapter by having Jesus challenge religious and familial identities being biologically based (when it should be based on doing the will of Jesus’ ‘heavenly father’). 394 It appears that the crowds want to be healed by Jesus but are as interested in heeding him as a teacher and herald of the kingdom given that the response to Jesus is predominantly one of spreading his fame as a healer. This is despite the fact that Jesus’ attempted mission is actually three-fold (teaching; proclaiming the news of the kingdom; and healing, 4:23; 9:35). The healings performed by Jesus between Mt 8:28–9:34 actually create more difficulties for Jesus achieving his first two goals.

The point that Jesus’ healings are overshadowing him in his other two roles (as teacher and herald of the kingdom) is aptly combined with another extensive Isaiah quotation in chapter 12 concerning his overall mission (a quotation of fulfilment from Isa 42:1–4). The quote is given immediately after Jesus withdraws from opposition from Pharisees who want him dead (for healing on the Sabbath) where despite his caring mission of justice (with the spirit of God upon him) ‘no one will take heed of his voice in the street’.

The tension between a message intended for all to hear and an intention to obscure the message to outsiders is not satisfactorily resolved at this stage. The tension is partly created by trying to narrate Jesus’ mission in terms of Isaiah quotations. A related tension is that between choice and fate—between the kind of soils as human responsibility of receptivity and that of God’s providential right as judge. The tension is also created by having the narrative addressed to

394 Ibid., 177.
readers (needing to be taught about discipleship) whilst the story is set during the time of Jesus and his contemporaries (whose relationships/issues to Jesus are not identical).

Mt 13:11 depicts the disciples’ insider knowledge as a gift from God (13:12 could be taken similarly). Therefore, the context of the metaphor of the soils in Matthew stands as a metaphor of judgment against an unfruitful people (we can compare John’s message in Mt 3:7–12). In Matthew, it is the disciples who have heeded the message (and by extension the readers/hearers also identifying themselves as ‘disciples’) who are reassured and encouraged to be the successful fruit of ‘the word’.

We should probably not overlook Mt 13:35 which again justifies why Jesus speaks in parables, namely it fulfils Ps 78:2, which mentioned ‘parables’. In Mt 13:35 the Aphel of אֶפֶל appears (‘pour forth speech’) which only occurs here in the New Testament. We will not analyse this lexeme here. One might paraphrase the verse as ‘I will talk in stories; I will speak of eternal things’. The quotation in Peshitta Matthew opts not to agree word for word with the Peshitta OT rendering of Ps 78:2 but instead remains closer to the Hebrew text (cf. the cognate here, namely the Hiphil imperfect of נבע (“allow to gush forth” HALOT). The Hebrew verse apparently concerns dark sayings/riddles. Mt 13:35 concerns Jesus fulfilling the scripture by speaking about mysterious things in mysterious ways. Indeed many parables are now flowing out of his mouth in this chapter, some less transparent than others. 13:35 is thus an important passage for understanding the purpose of parables in Matthew (and Matthew as a whole). Parables benefit the disciples (and the reading audience) more than they benefit the crowds. They seem intended not to enlighten the crowds concerning the mysteries of the kingdom (contra France). Given the similarity of language to Ps 19:1–4 (cf. Wisdom 13:5; Rom 1:20) it is more likely they are spoken as judgment against those who are unreceptive to the kingdom, namely those without understanding, by leaving people without excuse, as a way of differentiating among who should be called the true people of God. They also stand as a warning to future disciples.

395 Vorster, Speaking of Jesus, 139–48.
396 France, Gospel of Matthew, 530.
We may also note an intratextual connection between the theme of Wisdom withdrawing or ‘retreating’ to another place according to the pattern identified by Deirdre Good (related to scriptural fulfilment in Matthew)\textsuperscript{397} given also that the intervening section between the parable and the explanation concerns the disciples as divine recipients of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. In other words if Jesus is identified with Wisdom (Mt 11:19) and Wisdom retreats to an appropriate home in order to fulfil scripture then Wisdom can be seen to have found a home with a small band of disciples (11:25–27; 13:16–17).

7.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels: Mk 4:1–9; Lk 8:4–8

The Gospel of Mark contains virtually the ‘same’ parable of the soils, with the ‘same’ explanation for the use of parables and the ‘same’ parable interpretation (Mk 4:1–9; 10–12; 13–20). Likewise does Luke in a more abbreviated way (Lk 8:4–8; 9–10; 11–15). In Mark 4:5 both the Greek and Syriac texts use the common lexeme for ‘earth’ twice (أشياء, أرائك) (‘where there was not much earth…because there was no depth of earth’). Lk 8 does not mention any soil/earth until verse 8 (‘another fell on good earth’ ܳܘܚܪܢܐ ܘܚܪܢܐ ܘܥܘܡܩܐ ܕܰܐܪܥܐ). The extant Syriac verses for both are:

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<th>Mk 4:5</th>
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<td>אֶתְנַּסְנָ נְבָנָ נְבָנָ</td>
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There are alternative Greek and Syriac verbs for ‘sprout’ which appear in the parallels, namely the Peal of הִשְׁפָּח (Mk 4:5), and the Peal of מַם (Lk 8:6). It is difficult to see what differs semantically between the three verbs in their present contexts. Presumably the Peal of הִשְׁפָּח and the Peal of מַם are both words of similar meaning to the Peal of מַם (but see §7.13 below).

The potential Greek behind Mk 4:5 varies. Besides ἐξανατέλλω (NA\textsuperscript{38}), we find ἀνατέλλω, στέλλω, ἐκβλαστάνω, and βλαστάνω. It is possible that ἐξανατέλλω and ἐκβλαστάνω might include the

notion of ‘fast’ growth. But no known Greek variants omit the adverb thus suggesting that each Greek verb requires the adverb in order to add the notion of speediness. However, in the Syriac versions of Luke the matter is somewhat different. S and C attach the adverbial to the withering (instead of the sprouting) and so there are no equivalent phrases to Mt 13:5 in the Sinaitic or Curetonian of Luke. In the Harklean of Lk 8:6 the withering is brought forward to be simultaneous to the sprouting: ܡܳܦܫܘܚܳܝܒ (‘when it rose it withered’) Only in P of Lk 8:6 is there a corresponding phrase for ‘immediately it sprouted’ and there the adverbial could modify the whole sentence since the withering action is also implicated as immediate (due to the deficiency of moisture in the ground). The sequence seems more logical in the S, C, and H of Lk 8:6 whereby the withering happens immediately (it is the growth itself which is explicitly short-lived rather than the sprouting being sudden).

7.12 Old Testament Occurrences

In the Peshitta OT ܡܳܕܪܳܐ makes only two appearances, namely Ezek 17:7, 10.

And, behold, there was also another great eagle with large wings and many claws: and, this vine bent its roots toward him, and shot forth its tendrils toward him, that he might water the soil where it was planted (Lamsa).

Yea, behold, being planted, it shall not prosper; when the east wind strikes it, it shall wither in the soil where it grew (Lamsa).

In both places ܡܳܕܪܳܐ indicates the cultivated ground where a vine was planted (garden beds?). The soil is qualified respectively by the phrases ܕܢܨܒܬܗ (‘of its planting’) and ܕܡܘܥܝܬܗ (‘of its growth’) which suggests soil cultivated/prepared for planting. The corresponding Hebrew is more ambiguous (possibly ‘furrows’ or ‘trenches’). Coincidentally both biblical contexts (Ezekiel and Matthew) are agricultural as well as being parables.

I find fourteen occurrences of the Peal of ܫܘܚ in the Leiden Peshitta OT (Ps 28:7; 72:7; 92:8; Isa 45:8; Prov 12:12; 27:25; Ezek 31:10; 31:14; 47:12; Hos 14:7; 1 Macc 9:23; 4 Macc 13:19,21; 4 Esd 6:28).

398 in the CAL Leiden, but incorrectly ܒܢܓܫܵܐ in the Logos text.
The Lord is my helper and my protector; my heart trusted in him, and I am happy; [my flesh exults]; I will praise him with glorious song.

In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.

When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.

Be refreshed, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness; let the earth be opened and let salvation be multiplied and let righteousness spring up together; I am the Lord who created these things.

The wicked desire to do evil; but the root of the righteous shall sprout (Lamsa).

The grass springs up, the tender growth shows itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered (Lamsa).

Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because it has exalted itself and has risen up its shoots among the thick boughs and its heart is haughty because of its height to the end that none of all the trees by the waters may exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their tops among the thick boughs, nor shall any of them stand up in their height like it, all that are planted by the water (Lamsa).

And by the stream, on the banks thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all kinds of trees for food, their leaves shall not fall off, neither shall their fruit fail; but in the beginning of every month they shall bring forth new fruit, because the water with which they are irrigated flows from the sanctuary; and their fruit shall be for food and their leaves for healing (Lamsa).

His high branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be like the adorned olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.

After the death of Judas, the lawless emerged in all parts of Israel; all the doers of injustice appeared (RSV) [cf. Ps 28:7
Psa 72:7
Ps 92:8
Isa 45:8
Prov 12:12
Prov 27:25
Ezek 31:10
Ezek 31:14a
Ezek 47:12
Hos 14:7
1 Macc 9:23

The grass springs up, the tender growth shows itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered (Lamsa).
There each of the brothers dwelt the same length of time and was shaped during the same period of time; and growing from the same blood and through the same life, they were brought to the light of day (RSV).

4 Macc 13:21

and they grew stronger from this common nurture and daily companionship, and from both general education and our discipline in the law of God (RSV).

4 Esd 6:28

faithfulness shall flourish, and corruption shall be overcome, and the truth, which has been so long without fruit, shall be revealed (RSV).

We find the verb used of things which grow or appear but primarily of plant growth and metaphorically of good deeds and evil deeds (as though deeds were plants/fruit). In 1 Macc 9:23 it means ‘emerge’, ‘came about’, ‘appeared’. The majority of biblical contexts concern plants or tree branches that ‘grow upwards’ but several contexts also suggest ‘rise up’, ‘appear’, or ‘emerge’.

‘My flesh rejoices’ in Ps 28:7 is either an extension of the growing meaning (joy? jump for joy?) or a homonym for rejoice (or possibly a homonym for the opposite sense for the verb ‘melt’ as in ‘my heart is weak’, ‘my heart faints’), and is probably influenced by the LXX ‘my flesh thrived’. 4 Macc 13:19, 21 are metaphorical references to spiritual growth (of brothers). 1 Macc 9:23 (ܘܫܘܚܘܳܟܠܳܦ ܠܚܝܳܥܘܠ) could mean ‘began’ or ‘flourished’ (or ‘began to flourish?’) or simply ‘emerge’, ‘came about’, ‘appeared’.

7.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing Syriac-English Entries for ܡܕܪܐ and the Peal of ܫܘܚ

We looked at two lexemes, the noun ܡܕܪܐ and the Peal of ܫܘܚ in Mt 13:5. The noun was modified by an adjective and together the phrase (‘there was not much ܡܕܪܐ) was well informed by 13:5–6, which provided several phrases of similar and opposite meaning. The verb was not clearly defined by the immediate textual context. Whether or not the sense ‘quickly’ overlapped with the sense ‘sprout’ required deciphering. The verb appeared as part of a process of failed
growth. The translational analysis noted that the noun was provided with more specific Syriac nouns over time. The Greek noun (γῆ ‘earth’) was non-specific, the noun ܐܲܟܫ in S and C was more specific, but apparently modified again in P to a more contextually appropriate noun for indicating ‘garden soil’. The literary form was framed by parenthetical appeals to ‘listen up’ (in 13:3b and 13:9). It was identified as a ‘parable’ (and specifically as a ‘metaphor’). The ‘listen up’ frame (form) shows agreement with the content (meaning) of the metaphor by appealing to listening beyond the surface form (‘seeds’ and ‘soils’ = ‘receptivity’). The rhetorical analysis noted the tension between the appeal to listen and the intention not to inform the crowds of the meaning of the metaphor. The strategy is aimed at the audience of believers—to their task of understanding and of not rejecting Jesus. In line with this observation the Peshitta translators chose the less common lexeme ܦܠܬܐ for ‘parable’ which seems more appropriate for a metaphor or allegory lacking an interpretation. The writer has Jesus justify this with a five-part response: (1) the crowds are undeserving crowds of the precious knowledge; (2) knowledge begets knowledge (like the good soil where seed begets more seed) and, like the poor soils, non-receptivity means a loss of whatever was sown; (3) what is taking place here is explained by quoting Isa 6:9–10; (4) quoting Isa 6:9–10; (5) an extension of the poetic repetitions of Isaiah into positive affirmations of Jesus’s disciples, thereby producing a chiastic structure extending from verses 13–17. The entire chapter is based on units of fours, threes, and twos (fourteen subunits altogether). The seed and soils metaphor has four soils with two outcomes (successful/unsuccessful) in three failed crops and three successful crops.

The narrative analysis observed an increasing distinction between crowds and disciples. The parables are intended not to enlighten the crowds concerning the mysteries of the kingdom. The seed and soils metaphor/parable is given a name and all the ‘actors’ are identified with their ‘real-world’ counterparts except for the ‘sower’ who remains unidentified. This opens up the role of sower so that it is not restricted to Jesus (his disciples will need to learn how to continue that role themselves). The narrative seems to identify Jesus with Wisdom or imparting wisdom (Mt 11:19) and to depict Wisdom as retreating (to fulfil scripture), and to have found a home with a small band of disciples (11:25–27; 13:16–17).
There were no other occurrences to observe (for either our noun or verb) but there were two parallel passages: Mk 4:1–9 and Lk 8:4–8, which offer Syriac words of similar meaning for our verb (the Syriac words of similar meaning for our noun were no different from those already seen in Mt 13:5). The Luke parallel applies brevity to the overall growth (short-lived) rather than to the speed of initial sprouting. The Mark parallel is even less clear about whether or not the corresponding verbs in Greek and Syriac include the sense ‘quick’. It seems more likely these verbs require an adverb to add the sense ‘quickly’ to ‘sprout’.

The observation of the two OT occurrences of מָדַר affirmed that the noun was, again, modified by an adjective or adjectival phrase. We can now say this is always the case (in its biblical use). The fourteen appearances of the Peal of שֶׁחָה provided several examples where it was difficult to distinguish between ‘grow’ and ‘emerge/appear/arise’. This served also to curb being influenced by the definitions given in LN for our verb (as though it must mean ‘grow’). The sense ‘emerge’ better fits Mt 13:5 in both Greek and Syriac.

The difficulty in distinguishing between the main two categories for the Peal of שֶׁחָה (grow; or, emerge/appear/arise) assists our understanding of why Mt 13:5b reads: and immediately it grew/arose because there was no depth of earth (ܘܒܪܫܳܥܬܶܗܫܘܚܡܶܛܽܠܕܠܰܝܬܗܘܳܐܥܘܡܩܳܐܕܪܥܳܐ). In other words, the seedlings ‘grew visible’, ‘arose’, or ‘came into view’ quickly because the topsoil was thin. This means we have been incorrectly supposing that the verb must mean sprout/grow at the neglect of arise/appear/emerge. We almost recognised the latter (emerge/appear) when we began to analyse the logic in §7.1–6 concerning why/how in Mt 13:5b the seed growing rather quickly was considered something negative. Had we followed the logic of Mt 13:5b more carefully we could have noticed that the growth appeared sooner. But two reasons prevented this observation becoming clear. We were still being overly influenced by the sense ‘to begin vegetative growth’ and ‘to sprout, to sprout leaves’ given in LN (§23.195) for the underlying Greek ἔξανατέλλω. Also, at that stage, we were busy trying to distinguish the verb from the adverb which has not been properly achieved for the Greek (underlying the Peal of שֶׁחָה in
BDAG.\textsuperscript{400} We should best avoid the gloss provided in BDAG for \(\epsilon\xi\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\) \textit{“spring up} of a quick growing plant” (no definition is provided)\textsuperscript{401} since ‘spring up’ suggests that it is the verb that indicates a quickness of growth whereas the quickness more likely is achieved by the phrase as a whole \(ܘܒܪ\ ܫܬܚ\ ܫܘܚ\) (‘and immediately it grew/arose’) with the adverb present.

The disadvantages of the gloss ‘spring up’ concern both its ambiguity (there are multiple senses for ‘spring’) and the difficulty a dictionary user will have in securing a clear definition for the phrasal verb ‘spring up’.\textsuperscript{402} The user of BDAG may manage to find a definition for ‘spring up’ as “suddenly develop or appear” (OED online has such a definition under sense 2 of ‘spring’ listed together with “spring from”). Ignoring the redundancy of ‘suddenly’ (already present in the phrase due to the adverb), this definition helps to provide a logical reading for Mt 13:5b, namely ‘it quickly appeared because it had no depth of earth’. So BDAG’s phrasal verb \textit{(spring up)} for \(\epsilon\xi\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\) probably understands that the seed’s growth soon ‘became visible’ because the topsoil was so thin. A possible advantage to ‘spring up’ is that for some users the ‘up’ may seem to indicate the growth aspect of sprouting the first shoots (like ‘rise up’ from the ground).

However, the verb ‘spring’ is ambiguous. ‘Spring up’ is not easily distinguishable as a distinct meaning from ‘spring’ in many dictionaries. For many readers who do not consult an English dictionary, the meaning of ‘spring up’ may evoke an image of a sudden upward movement of leaping or springing up suddenly. Whether or not BDAG’s and Danker’s CGELNT intend the gloss ‘spring up’ to include ‘suddenly’ is unclear (I have concluded not).

Similar issues must be resolved for giving a definition for the Peal of \(ܘܒܪ\ CSD\) has rearranged the four senses in TS \((\textit{floruit}; \textit{germinavit}; \textit{pullulavit}; \textit{originem duxit}; \textit{ortus est}; \textit{flourish/thrive}; \textit{sprout/begin to grow}; \textit{originate}; \textit{arise/emerge})\) effectively prioritising ‘begin growth’ and ‘spring up’/‘emerge from the ground’. SL does not include ‘appear/emerge/arise’ or ‘originate’ but gives

\textsuperscript{400} We could go back and correct all the previous analysis based on our new conclusions but it is more illuminating and helpful for present purposes (in developing and testing our methodology) to leave it be.

\textsuperscript{401} See footnote to part 6 in §1.3.2 on the lack of ‘to’ in BDAG. Cf. CGELNT: \textit{“spring up Mt 13:5; Mk 4:5.”}

\textsuperscript{402} Of the seventeen different meanings given in the Encarta World English Dictionary for the verb ‘spring’, only the fourth sense concerns the phrasal ‘spring up’ (‘\textit{emerge rapidly intransitive verb to appear or come into existence quickly.’})
only two senses for the Syriac Peal of ܫܘܚ #1 (#2 to be bold, to oppose, to scorn; #3 to melt), namely ‘to sprout [growth]’ and ‘to flourish’ (probably to grow vigorously/prosper).

An English definition for the Peal of ܫܘܚ in Mt 13:5b may have to favour ‘appear/emerge’ over ‘grow’ since a compromise in English is difficult to make. The insufficient topsoil in Mt 13:5 implies that the action must be taken as ‘become visible’ or ‘appear/emerge’ but without completely neglecting the sense ‘to grow/to sprout’. If the Syriac does not properly distinguish between ‘appear/emerge’ and ‘grow’ then ‘arise into view’ or ‘grow visible’ or ‘grow visibly’ might be helpful to the lexicon user.

As for the noun ܡܶܕܪܳܐ, Jennings is the only Syriac-English lexicon to give reference to NT occurrence (“soil, earth, Mt 13:5”). However, TS does offer, albeit not in relation to Mt 13:5, a gloss in English (“mould”) by which is apparently meant “loose earth; upper soil of cultivated land.” This can complement TS’s earlier reference to Mt 13:5 which is cited as though the corresponding Greek is thought sufficient to explain it (“ባܒܠܝܢ ܡܶܕܪܳܐNaz. xiii. 5”). TS begins with three Latin glosses: terra, humus, gleba (“earth, ground/soil, mound/pile of earth”) and other similar senses are mentioned as for example the pile of earth in Joshua the Stylite (actually Joshua the Stylite has our exact phrase ܡܶܕܪܳܐܣܰܳܓܺܳܝܳܐܐ which there means ‘large mound of earth’ but this is not contradictory to ܡܶܕܪܳܐܣܰܳܓܺܳܝܳܐܚܶܘܳܪܳܐ in Mt 13:5 meaning ‘thick [layer of] soil’ or, ‘sufficient soil’). A careful reader will note that the Syriac phrase for ‘potter’s clay’ in TS is a kind of ܡܶܕܪܳܐ (ܡܶܕܪܳܐܕܩܘܽܩܰܝܰܐ) and that the meaning terra culta (‘cultivated earth/soil’) is similarly found in combination with ܦܠܺܝܚܳܐ (namely ܡܶܕܪܳܐܕܰܦܰܚܳܪܳܐ). Thus it is not indicated by ܡܶܕܪܳܐ alone.

In CSD all three citations for ܡܶܕܪܳܐ indicate a mouldable clay-like mass of material/pliable earth (“the earth whence Adam was formed”; “white clay” and “potter’s clay”). Understandably then ܡܶܕܪܳܐ is another kind of ܡܶܕܪܳܐ used by the potter. But ‘white clay’ here is really ܡܶܕܪܳܐܚܶܘܳܪܳܐ, that is, ‘white ܡܶܕܪܳܐ’. So again we are not justified in defining ܡܶܕܪܳܐ by itself (contra CSD’s ‘white clay’ or

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‘potter’s clay’). A similar problem is seen in SL where ‘soil’ is the first of four glosses (the other three are: earth; mud; and dust) but the second reference to dust is only dust because it is ‘dry’ not simply itself.

The Syriac lexicons might be a distraction for the exegete seeking the contextual meaning of MBEDRA and the Peal of ܡܫܘܚ in Mt 13:5b. Yet a careful reading of the lexicons can complement what we have already observed in our analysis of the noun MBEDRA in Mt 13:5, namely that the kind of MBEDRA is indicated in combination with another noun or adjective. MBEDRA itself does not appear on its own. Hence the role played by the adjective ܣܓܪܝܐ in Mt 13:5 so as to mean ‘sufficient soil’ or ‘thick [layer of] soil’ (as good malleable planting soil).

7.14 Suggested Lexical Entries

MBEDRA

n.m. a kind of soil specified by an adjective, in Mt 13:5 it is MBEDRA ܣܓܪܝܐ, ‘much soil’, cultivated soil suitable for planting and growing seeds, malleable soil, planting soil.

“And other [seed] fell on hard ground where there was not sufficient soil” (Sinaitic Mt 13:5, vowels added); cf. also (the phrase MBEDRA ܣܓܪܝܐ with the phrase ܥܘܡܩܳܳܐܕܥܰܳܦܪܳܳܐ Mt 13:5; cf. also ܥܘܡܩܳܳܐܕܥܰܳܦܪܳܳܐ Mt 13:5, cf. Curetonian Mt 13:5 vowels added).

Mt 13:5

MBEDRA

PEAL ܡܫܘܚ pf. 3ms., to begin visible growth by emerging from the ground, sprout visible growth, arise, appear, emerge, “And immediately it emerged because there was not much soil”, Mt 13:5; cf. the Peal ܡܚܪ Mt 4:5; cf. also the Peal ܡܠ Lk 8:6.

Mt 13:5
Chapter 8. Lexeme 8: Peal of حَبٓ

8.1-5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Lk 10:34)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1 (10:34a)</th>
<th>Circumstantial Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction + Complement 3</td>
<td>Complement 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle + noun</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and oil</td>
<td>wine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2 (10:34b)</th>
<th>Circumstantial Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compl.6</td>
<td>Subject 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prep.+ pronoun suffix</td>
<td>pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for him.</td>
<td>be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

The verse consists of direct speech functioning as narrator speech. There are, at minimum, two ‘Sentences’ in Lk 10:34. These could be broken up further into potentially four to total six main clauses. We maintain the minimum here. The preposition حَبٓ which here occurs three times belongs to both its preceding verb and the following object/complement (although some may prefer to treat حَبٓ separately as Adjunct to the previous verb).

There are several verbs (six total) which all apply to the same subject (the last is an impersonal form but still relates to the same subject). The subject is not named in verse 34 and what appears separately as حَبٓ is not emphatic as it is the required subject for the preceding ‘impersonal’ verb.

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400 One Peshitta manuscript omits حَبٓ حَبٓ حَبٓ حَبٓ (‘and put him on his donkey’).
(literally 'it-was-of-care he'). There are possibly two ‘Circumstantial Frames’ which begin both sentences but these are less notable in the Syriac (almost nonexistent but for the punctuation). Every phrase is connected with the conjunction ܘ and every event progresses logically regardless of whether these Circumstantial Frames are accurate to identify in the Syriac (they are identified in Greek by nominative participles). In our Peshitta text, the narrative flow is thus determined completely by parataxis which gives a sense of a ‘biblical’ like narrative (or ‘Hebraic’ feel, cf. the narratives in Gen 24 and 29 in Hebrew or Greek or Syriac).

Our lexeme is a third masculine singular Peal of ܥܨܒ and occurs alongside several other verbs with the same grammatical subject. Our verb takes the noun ܡܰܚ ܘܳܬܳܐ ‘wounds’ as its direct object (with the third singular masculine suffix, thus ‘his wounds’). Based on the present context we would note the subject (identified as a Samaritan in verse 33) has ‘helped’ the man’s wounds in some way given that the following verb shares the same grammatical object ‘he poured on them [his wounds] wine and oil’. This action (pouring on wine and oil) will be the most significant comparable action for us to consider. The other actions are also informative and involve larger actions upon the same person, namely ‘brought him to an inn’ and the Ethpeel of ܕܠܪܐ + ܕܠܪܐ + ܕܠܪܐ (‘to take care of’). These four actions (used on the same person) all appear to fit a ‘nursing topic’ (or ‘frame’) so it is reasonable to suppose here that the Peal of ܥܨܒ means ‘to apply bandages to (wounds)’. We will want to know whether we should label our verb as a medicinal/medical verb, or whether the medical sense is a result only of its present context. We may ask the same of the corresponding Greek verb.

8.7 Translation Analysis

There are no significant Greek variants in Lk 10:34 and no variants for the corresponding Greek underlying our verb for which the Greek is ܟܬܰܕܘܽܵܐ.
There is variation in the four Syriac text-types in rendering the final Greek phrase καὶ ἐπεμελήθη αὐτοῦ phrase ‘and took care of him’ which nevertheless remains semantically similar.

The Harklean limits the parataxis (はありません seven times in the Peshitta verse) so as to use 5 only three times (undoubtedly to reflect the thrice use of καὶ in its Greek source).

8.8 Genre Analysis

Lk 10:34 belongs to the direct speech attributed to Jesus in verse 30 given as a ‘story about a (hypothetical?) traveller who becomes victim to robbery and violence’ in order to make a point about mercy to a scribe/scholar (ܡܳܫܳܥܳܐ) identified in verse 25. Our unit will be Lk 10:30–35, namely the story narrated by Jesus (just before Jesus asks the scribe a question about the story). Traditionally the unit is known as a ‘parable’ since the story presumably concerns hypothetical characters, and because it is meant for hearers to ponder its moral (by comparing the actions of three characters toward an injured man). But here there is no analogy pointing to another reality. The story might then be more strictly classified as an ‘example story’ (or ‘exemplary story”) “because the actors play themselves.”406 We can still consider it, generally, as a parable since ‘parable’ covers a broad area (and here it is “used in the same way as are parables”).407 We have already noted (§8.7) the heavy use of parataxis which adds to its ‘biblical’ tone; the parataxis is increased in the Peshitta version.

8.9 Rhetorical Analysis

The rhetorical unit will include the scribe’s question to Jesus in verse 25, thus Lk 10:25–37. Green points out that the portrayal here in Luke of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples in 10:20–24 “is abruptly interrupted by a lawyer … he pictures the lawyer breaking in on what had become a private conversation between Jesus and the seventy-two.”408 The unit is thus driven by the need to avoid seeing Jesus drawn unwillingly (and suddenly) into a technical debate

407 Ibid.
concerning the law and its commandments, namely which ones will lead to eternal life and the definition of neighbour.

Anthropologically speaking, the unit portrays a scribe attempting to test Jesus, perhaps to make him ‘lose face’. Rhetorically, it is given to demonstrate how Jesus can quash a potential debate. The scribe intends to force Jesus to give an opinion on who would, according to the law, count as a neighbour. Instead, Jesus comes out looking very wise (he ‘wins’) by answering the scribe’s technical question with a story and a question (which forces the scribe to give an obvious answer) and then Jesus turns the scribe’s answer into a command. The writer has Jesus elicit, from the scribe’s mouth, an important thematic question that Luke’s Gospel seeks to answer. Also from the scribe’s mouth comes a summary of the whole law from Lev 19:18 and Deut 6:5.

Thus Jesus is shown as avoiding being forced into taking sides about who is, or should be, counted as a neighbour. Jesus controls the interaction peaceably or amicably (as a wise teacher would be expected to do) and shows how the foreigner in the story provides the model of neighbourly love to which one should aspire in order to find ‘life’ (a point made so obvious that the scribe can only agree). Thus the beginning topic that the scribe wanted to debate (finding eternal life) is suitably transformed into a more suitable direction—living life in a generous fashion to help those in need—one does not find ‘life’ in the definitions of words, but in living and giving life. Devotion to God and to others is the scribe’s original opinion on the essence of the law which began the unit when Jesus posed the scribe’s original question (about inheriting eternal life) back to the scribe—so the unit returns full circle whilst avoiding debate. The two subunits (the scribe’s question and Jesus’ parable) have likely been joined together by the writer.409

The unit draws attention to Jesus’ rhetorical abilities thereby diverting our attention from the Gospel writer’s rhetorical technique (portrayed as Jesus’ rhetorical technique). It is the writer who shows Jesus narrating a story about an anonymous victim beaten and left for dead—the compassion that an audience feels for the victim is thus partly due to the writer’s technique—

409 “Julicher and Bultmann may be right that it was Luke who skilfully connected Jesus’ story to the lawyer’s question.” Riemer Roukema, “The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity,” Vigiliae Christianae 58, no. 1 (2004): 57.
the writer uses compassion for a victim (who desperately needs demonstrable love) to trump potentially endless debates about commandments of the law.

The story may also critique the system that would prevent priests and Levites from touching a man looking as dead—the fault lies with the system rather than with the two men who ‘saw and passed by’ (because under the law they were not obliged to help such a person) by providing an example of an unexpected ‘model Jew’ who achieves what those under the law could not achieve.

The issue in Lk 10:25–37 is diverted from being about a debate to being about compassion and what living faithfully looks like. Perry sees that the scribe’s question (“what must I do to inherit eternal life”) “underscores the identifying mark of the people of God as "those who hear the word of God and do it" (cf. Luke 8:21 → 10:25-42 → Acts 2:37; 16:30), and the continuity of that word with the old covenant.”

The rhetorical unit presupposes an audience who are willing to question those whose agenda do not allow compassion for being the guiding principle (where legalities do not override compassion) or at least an audience who can be persuaded by such appeals for compassion or can point to Jesus’ use of such compassion in a quest to discern how to inherit eternal life.

Tannehill has acknowledged that the three-fold pattern “so common in popular story-telling” means that our attention “is focused on the third traveler before he arrives, and this heightens the shock when we discover that he neither fits the pattern of cultural expectation nor the pattern of expectation by the series priest, Levite” (the logical sequence would be priest, Levite, lay Israelite). According to Robbins, Lk 10:25–37 “reconfigures the topos of love for God in Jewish culture into the topos of enacting mercy for a wounded person” and “the semantic space” for this reconfiguration “emerges from written Torah” being a “conventional resource for


Inheriting eternal life (cf. Lev 18:5) created by the lawyer’s recitation. In rhetorical terminology the redefinition of the issue (definitio) is achieved by the use of ‘inquiries’ (they are not simple yes/no questions) but searching into difficult issues. Thus “the vehicle of persuasion is dominantly pictorial narration (rhetography) rather than argumentative reasoning (rhetology)” since a remarkable feature of the overall story is the absence of explicitly rhetorical constituents of argumentative discourse, such as rationales, contraries or opposites, analogies, conditional constructions, pronouncements of authoritative testimony, and conclusions (cf. Luke 11:1–13, 14–36; 15:1–32).

8.10 Narrative Analysis

In terms of the oppositional roles played out in the story, according to Patte, the role of ‘opponents’ is played by the bandits; the role of ‘helpers’ is played by the Samaritan and the hotel keeper; and the priest and Levite play ‘non-opponents’, ‘non-helpers’. Unfortunately Patte’s ‘actantial diagram’ has no role for the main character, the victim. Perhaps this reflects the victim’s very passive role.

Within the story the issue immediately becomes about whether the anonymous victim is about to die (‘they left him with little life remaining’) or whether someone will save his life by having compassion. The two false hopes (‘he saw him and passed by … he saw him and passed by’) serve to intensify the dwindling hope for the man’s life until an unlikely saviour appears—a Samaritan who ‘saw him and had compassion for him’ (متعمد داينلاا Organic). Being moved with compassion (Ethpaal of متعمد) is the key word which disrupts the repeated ‘and passed by’ with a contrasting action. So, according to the narrative, it is not that the priest and Levite were unable to help (unlike the supposition made by our rhetorical analysis). Rather, it is that they did not have compassion. This verb occurs several other times in Luke—it was what motivated Jesus to raise a widow’s son back to life (Lk 7:13) and is what the father feels for his prodigal son (in 15:20); it is what ten lepers from a village somewhere near Galilee and Samaria

413 Ibid., 252–53.
call out to Jesus (Lk 17:13); it is what Lazarus calls out for in the story about a poor man and a rich man (16:24); and what a blind man calls out to Jesus for outside Jericho (Lk 18:38, 39).

These uses of the verb for compassion relate, like our verb for bandage, to ‘restore’ (‘bringing restoration’ and ‘healing’). The Samaritan who takes compassion (Lk 10:33) is thus shown to act like Jesus acts elsewhere (to bring restoration) in Luke. Both characters take action to save the lives of those desperately in need. The theme ‘outsider as model’ is something found elsewhere in Luke (e.g. the healed Samaritan in Lk 17:11–19). In Lk 10:34 the foreigner as ‘other’ acts like God who reaches out in compassion to offer hospitality and healing to a dying person. It is no wonder that many early interpreters identified the Samaritan as ‘Jesus’.  

**8.11 New Testament Occurrences and Parallels**

There are no other New Testament occurrences of the Peal verb and no parallel passages.

**8.12 Old Testament Occurrences**

We find a total of 11 occurrences of the Peal ofخرب in the Leiden Peshitta Old Testament, namely: Ps 60:4; 69:21; 147:3; Isa 30:26; 61:1; Job 5:18; Ezek 30:21; 34:16; Hos 6:1; Zech 11:16; Sir 27:21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ps 60:4</td>
<td>Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof, for it hath weakened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 69:21</td>
<td>Heal my broken heart and bind it; I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 147:3</td>
<td>He heals the broken of heart, and binds up their wounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


416 There are two occurrences of the Pael (participle) ofخرب functioning as an adjective ‘wrapped’ in S (Jn 11:44). The context is of burial preparations where Lazarus exits the tomb still ‘wrapped’ in burial cloths. This lexeme is preceded byByUsernameerah and is followed by the preposition ‘by the object [grave] cloths’: خرب مهرابا ... خمسَّا. P here has مهرابا ... خمسَّا ‘bound with cloths’.
Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people and heals the pain of their wound.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me and sent me to preach good tidings to the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to prisoners;

The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, and that which was injured you have not bound up, and that which had gone astray you have not brought back, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with violence and with cruelty you have ruled them.

For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land who shall not search for those that are lost, neither shall seek those that have gone astray nor bind those that are broken nor heal those that stand still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat and break off their shanks.

Looking at the 11 occurrences of our Syriac verb in the Peshitta OT reveals that it only once occurs with a non-human object (Ps 60:4) and even here it is actually the imagery of an earthquake that is used to describe the pain and brokenness of the people’s defeat in battle. As a rule, the verb’s object is breach (breach); pains/sickness; broken-hearted; broken/injured; sick;...
(fracture/wound). Our verb tends to be used in parallel with the Pael of אָּשָּׁא (‘to heal’) and thus their objects sometimes overlap.

There are also 10 occurrences of הָּשָּׁא in the Greek Old Testament. However, there are only two places where the Greek and Syriac lexemes correspond (in Ezek 34:4 and 34:16). Thus הָּשָּׁא is not apparently as restricted in use as the Peal of בָּשָּׁא.

We could then assert three things that we have already suspected, namely that the biblical usage of the Peal of בָּשָּׁא throughout the Leiden Peshitta OT is consistent with what we find in Lk 10:34 in being used of injured, wounded or ‘broken’ people (including persons physically distressed or afflicted or in need of forgiveness, physical support or restoration); also that our verb is much more similar to the Pael of אָּשָּׁא than it is to other Syriac words used that might be used for ‘wrapping’ different objects (thus we find that our verb is interchangeable with the Pael of אָּשָּׁא in Ps 147:3 ‘healing the broken, binding their ailments’); a strong medical pedigree in the Peshitta OT means we can confirm our suspicions that the Peal of בָּשָּׁא fits a medical category in Lk 10:34.

8.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing a Syriac-English Entry for the Peal of בָּשָּׁא

Lk 10:34 could be broken up several ways. The בָּשָּׁא appears three times and probably belongs, in each case, to both its preceding verb and its following object/complement. The Peal of בָּשָּׁא shares the same grammatical object as the following verb מָחַתָּהוֹ (‘he poured on them [his wounds] wine and oil’). Thus the ‘pouring on wine and oil [on wounds]’ colours the meaning of our verb as though both actions were medicinal actions. The high degree of parataxis gives a ‘biblical’ (Hebraic or Septuagintal) ‘feel’ to the verse. The biggest difference to note in the comparison of Greek and Syriac translations was that H reduces the amount of parataxis to three to correspond to the Greek whilst S, C, and P increase it. It was not yet clear whether the underlying Greek, καταδέω, is ‘medicinal’ (LN and BDAG do not give medical definitions).

The literary form was classified as a ‘story’ or ‘parable’, one where the ‘actors play themselves’.
The rhetorical analysis observed the clever use of the parable attributed to Jesus by the writer whose skill in using a story to head off a debate was applied to Jesus to make him appear as a wise and skilful teacher who uses a scribe’s query, and his present knowledge, to instruct him—the redefinition of the issue (definitio) is achieved by the use of ‘inquiries’ (they are not simple yes/no questions) but searching into difficult issues. The parable appears to fault a system which would produce two religious men who ‘saw and passed by’ since under the law they were not obliged to help.

The Narrative analysis, however, had the blame fall on the lack of compassion felt by the first two men. Compassion was found in a person from a foreign place. The Samaritan acts like Jesus acts elsewhere in Luke.

The eleven OT occurrences showed an overlap with the verb for ‘heal’, the Pael of וַעַל. Ezek 34:4 and 34:16 being the only places where the Syriac lexeme corresponded to καταδέω in the Greek OT. The Greek verb was less restricted in use than the Syriac verb.

The definition given in LN and BDAG for the corresponding Greek lexeme in Lk 10:34 (καταδέω) is not contextual but general (“bind up someth.”). This might give the impression that one could chain up a prisoner, tie up a horse, or bundle up some food using καταδέω. However, the ‘something’ in Greek Lk 10:34 is more specific and BDAG’s extrabiblical examples of applied objects are much more helpful: ὀφθαλμοὺς (‘eyes’) and τραύματα (‘wounds’). BDAG’s definition is not followed immediately with a gloss but the entry includes ‘bandage the wounds’ as a translation example which thus provides a gloss (bandage). Also, BDAG makes reference to Sir 27:21 (which concerns binding up a wound). So despite the vagueness of the definition and its unspecified object (“something”) the entry overall encourages the meaning ‘to wrap bandages around (wounds)’. The move toward a medical definition for Lk 10:34 is more decisive in CGELNT’s definition “to bandage.”

A similar incomplete progress to a medical meaning is found in LN. Unfortunately the entry has been placed in the sub-domain, ‘Wrapped (79.118-79.119)’ along with ἐνειλέω, ἐντυλίσσω and συστέλλω and so the given definition applies to all three Greek verbs (“to enclose an object by
winding something about or around it – ‘to wrap, to bandage’). Like in BDAG, we find that it is the glosses (‘to wrap’ ‘to bandage’) that are more helpful and more appropriate for the meaning in Lk 10:34.

So far no Syriac-English lexicons have offered definitions for the Peal of ܥܨܒ. They do favour a more medical meaning than the Greek lexicons because they recognise ‘to heal’ or ‘to cure’ as a second or third meaning. But even so, previous Syriac lexicons would not have users suppose that the occurrence in Lk 10:34 fits the sense ‘heal’ because they imply that Lk 10:34 would belong within their primary category of ‘to bind up/to bandage (a wound or fracture)’. We can afford to make the medical sense more explicit and can probably offer the verb ‘to heal’ (Pael of ܐܣܐ) as the most similar verb. The Ethpeel phrasal verb of ܒܛܠ + ܠ + ܥܠ qualifies as similar and we could perhaps offer the verb for ‘to support/sustain’ as another similar word (namely the transitive use of Peal ܡܕܪܝܐ ܣܡܟܢܝ ‘because the Lord supports/sustains me’ cf. Ps 41:4; 51:14).

8.14 Lexical Results for a Contextual Meaning

ܐܣܐ ܡܕܪܝܐ ܣܡܟܢܝ ‘because the Lord supports/sustains me’ cf. Ps 41:4; 51:14).

Lk 10:34
Chapter 9. Lexemes 9, 10, 11, 12: Peal of ձեք, Ethpaal of ձեք, Peal of ձեք and Pael of ձեք

9.1–5: Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mk 9:18)

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<tr>
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<td>ܒܘܠܐܒܠܐ</td>
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<td>they could.</td>
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</table>

9.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

The grammatical subject and object (ܐܘܢܐ and ܒܪܝ) are both named in verse 17 (not in verse 18).

Verse 18 contains four ‘Sentences’ and begins with a ‘Spatial Frame’ which sets the scene for

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417 One manuscript has, in the margin, ܚܒܛ (‘comprehends’? ‘plots’? ‘schemes’).
Sentences 1 and 2, namely the ܐܳܕܳܒܳܐ (the description of how and when) concerning a spirit (ܪܽܘܚܳܐ) first mentioned in 9:17 (hence the feminine verbal forms in Sentence 1) which takes control of ‘him’ (that is, ܒܶܪܝ ‘my son’ of the speaker in 9:17). The clause ܘܰܐܝܟܳܐܕܡܰܳܕܪܟܳܐܠܶܗ may possibly be understood here as ‘whenever it seizes him’ but is more literally ‘where[ever] it seizes him’. The addition of ܗܓܝ in the margin of one manuscript presumably clarifies this (perhaps ܘܰܐܝܟܳܐܕܰܳܗܓܳܬܠܶܗ ‘where she [it] plots [to take] him?’). Predicates 1 and 2 are in feminine participle form because the grammatical subject is ܪܽܘܚܳܐ (the spirit, 9:17) and predicates 3, 4 and 5 are masculine, implying these are ensuing actions of ‘him’ (the son). The verse relays direct speech.

Our ninth verb occurs here, namely the Peal (active participle) of ܚܒܛ. It is that which fits as the first visible action involved, either concurrently or as a second action (immediately after this spirit’s ܗܓܝ ‘taking control of him’). More likely it is the first and primary physical sign that the spirit had ‘taken control of him’ (visibly overpowered him). It is an action that precedes that of ‘making (him) foam’ and the victim’s teeth gnashing and then his withering/becoming lifeless.

Sentences 3 and 4 describe the failure of the disciples, on behalf of the speaker (the father), to force the spirit to leave his son (this failure is commented on in verse 19). Mk 9:18 alone is not enough to delimit a specific meaning of our verb other than (a) it must be depicting whatever action it is that the ‘seizing him’ first presents as the specific action to be observed of the spirit against ‘him’ and (b) it precedes the ensuing foaming and teeth gnashing and withering, that is, it precedes actions of the victim while on the ground (since he withers/becomes as dead). We could postulate that ܚܒܛܳܐܠܶܗ means to do something to him that causes him to fall down, perhaps a sudden ‘wallop’, or several hits (‘beat him’). But we need to see if more information can be obtained about our verb from its appearance in verse 20.
### 9.6.1–5 Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mk 9:20)

| Sentence 1 |  
|---|---|
| **Adjunct** | Conjunct + Predicate 1 + Complement |
| preposition + pronoun | particle + verb + pronoun suffix |

*to him: And they brought him*

| Sentence 2 |  
|---|---|
| **Circumstantial Frame** |  
| **Adjunct** | **Subject** | **Predicate 2 + Complement** | **Conjunction + Adjunct** |
| adverb | noun | verb + pronoun suffix | particle + particle |
| immediately | (the) spirit | she [it] saw him | and when |

| Sentence 3 |  
|---|---|
| **Conjunction + Predicate 6** | **Conjunction + Predicate 5** | **Adjunct** | **Conjunction + Predicate 4** | **Predicate 3 + Complement** |
| particle + active participle (as verb) | particle + verb + copular verb | prep. + noun | particle + verb | verb + pronoun suffix |
| and foaming | and was | on the ground | and he fell | beat him |

### 9.6.6 Comment on Table: Grammar and Semantics

The verse is not relaying direct speech, it is the narrator’s speech. There are three ‘sentences’ in Mk 9:20. In ‘Sentence 3’ we can tentatively gloss Predicate 3 (the Peal of ܚܒܛ) as ‘beat’ or ‘knock down’ since ܡܚܒܛܶܗ happens ‘to him’ (the 3\textsuperscript{rd} masculine singular object suffix) as though it were the cause of Predicate 4 (‘and he fell’). We may suppose that the action was not simply ‘cause to fall’ (being redundant with ‘and he fell’) but some kind of assault such as it ‘struck (him)’; ‘beat (him)’; ‘jumped on (him)’; ‘kicked (him)’; ‘pushed (him)’; ‘wrestled (him) down’, etc. However, the supposed redundancy of ‘it beat him to the ground’ (or against the ground) with the following ‘and he fell to the ground’ need not be a real concern especially given that a large
proportion of verses in Greek Mark begin with και and are translated with ܘ without always implying a sequence of time, or entirely separate actions.\textsuperscript{418}

Since ‘teeth grinding’ is not mentioned this time we might choose to suppose that the Peal of ܚܒܟܬ implies that ‘teeth grinding’ is included in the verb here or perhaps, more likely, that ‘teeth grinding’ may be implied at the end of the clause with ܠܟܐ ‘and foaming’.

Sentences 2 and 3 narrate the process of demonic attack very similarly to Sentences 1 and 2 of verse 18, but in verse 20 it is relayed by the narrator (rather than the father). Instead of the direct speech ‘whenever she (it) takes hold of him’ (the Spatial Frame in 9:18) the process here is begun ‘when she (it) saw him [Jesus]’ (a Circumstantial Frame) given by the narrator. Then follows the same initial action as in verse 18 (Peal of ܚܒܟܬ) this time with object/pronominal suffix ‘him’ attached directly to the verb (rather than separate ܠܟܐ) and which immediately sees, as spoken about by the father, the grammatical object (the son) fall down onto the ground where the other two actions occur: the Ethpaal participle of ܒܥܩ and Aphel active participle of ܪܥܬ. The latter two actions happen at a point that appears to correspond somewhat to the ensuing actions of the son described in verse 18 by the victim’s father (as ‘he gnashes his teeth and foams and withers’) as naming the result of the son’s struggle against his attacker but in this verse it is only the Aphel active participle of ܪܥܬ (‘foaming’) that remains the same as verse 18b (Sentence 2). So it is not yet clear how new the information is in verse 20c (in comparison to 9:18’s foaming, teeth gnashing and withering).

Predicate 4 (Peal of ܫܚܩ) means that predicates 5 and 6 occur on the ground. Predicate 5 (Ethpaal of ܚܕܡ) appears to be reflexive in a way that apparently belongs with ‘and foaming’. Both verbs (Ethpaal of ܚܕܡ and Aphel of ܠܡܕܐ) are effects, that is, belong to the son as a result of the spirit-caused affliction. A tentative gloss might indicate a resistant movement that happens whilst on the ground (‘and he fell down on the ground struggling’).

We must also examine 9:26 (Peal of ܚܣܡ).

\textsuperscript{418} There are thus many ‘double expressions’ in Greek Mark, see Frans Neirynck, \textit{Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction} (Leuven: Leuven University, 1988). Many of these transfer directly over to the Syriac.
9.6.1.1-5 Table of Grammar (Peshitta Mk 9:26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 1</th>
<th>Circumstantial Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunct. + Predicate 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Predicate 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particle + verb</td>
<td>particle + verb + pron. suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܘܰܢܦܰܩ ܘܫܰܚܩܶܗ ܣܰܓܺܝ ܗܰܘ ܫܺܐܕܳܐ ܘܰܩܥܳܐ</td>
<td>and he [it] came out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܐܰܝܟ ܡܺܝܬܳܐ ܐܰܝܟ ܘܰܗܘܳܐ</td>
<td>And cried out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence 2</th>
<th>Topical Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
<td><strong>Predicate 6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>particle + verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܬܳܳܠܐ</td>
<td>(that) be is dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܐܰܝܟ ܡܺܝܬܳܐ ܐܰܐ</td>
<td>and be was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.6.1.6 Comments on Table: Grammar and Semantics

The verse relays the narrator’s speech. Mk 9:26 contains two sentences. The successful result (the saving of the victim from the ‘demon’ now described as ܫܺܐܕܳܐ rather than ܪܽܘܚܳܐ as in 9:17) is stalled and undermined in Sentence 1. Placed prior to a seemingly successful result (‘it came out’) is a Circumstantial Frame that intensifies the wait for the result. The anticipated result is then further put into doubt with Sentence 2 (‘but he was as though dead’) thereby implying that the result may perhaps have left an unwanted side-effect (death) at least in the minds of observers. Furthermore the scene is then commented on (in a sub-point, by the ‘many people’). The resolution appears in verse 27. Thus verse 26 stalls the resolution three times (by the Circumstantial Frame; by the unintended side-effect; and by the conclusion of ‘many’ who are saying ‘he is dead’).

Lexeme 11 is a 3rd masculine singular of the Peal of ܫܚܩ with a pronominal object suffix ‘him’, as an action that the demon does to the son after much screaming and thus follows screaming but precedes a death-like state. Therefore, it is likely an action that causes someone immediately to look dead, such as a sudden or severe blow to the head or suffocation or smothering (something...
which reduces his life-force dangerously low). Alternatively, the action is a summary of all previous mentioned actions (as in ‘after doing its damage it came out’). As a tentative compromise between these options we might gloss it here as ‘impact (him)’. We will investigate this lexeme further in regard to its one other Peshitta New Testament occurrence (Lk 9:39) in §9.11.

9.7 Translation Analysis

First, the extant sister Syriac for Mk 9:18:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
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<th>H</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ܐܬܪܳܕܡܕܪܟܐܠܗܳܘܡܪܥܬܳܘܡܪܚܩܳܫܢܘܗܝܳܘܝܒܫܳܘܐܡܪܬܳܠܬܠܡܝܕܝܟܳܕܢܦܩܘܢܝܗܳܘܠܳܐܫܟܚܘ</td>
<td>ܐܬܪܳܘܗܳܘܡܪܥܬܳܘܡܪܚܩܳܫܢܘܗܳܝܳܒܫܳܘܐܡܪܬܳܠܬܠܡܝܕܰܝܟܳܕܢܦܩܘܢܝܗܳܘܠܳܐܫܟܚܘ</td>
<td>ܐܬܪܳܘܗܳܘܡܪܥܬܳܘܡܪܚܩܳܫܢܘܗܳܝܳܒܫܳܘܐܡܪܬܳܠܬܠܡܝܰܕܰܝܟܳܕܢܦܩܘܢܝܗܰܝܳܘܠܐܫܟܚܘ</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

S has א‎:‎

which it does in the text given in CESG. In place of our verb is ܪܡܝܐ (‘cast down’)—actually it is the other way around if the Peshitta postdates S—thus, in S, ܪܡܝܐ (‘cast (him) down’) is replaced by ܚܒܛܐ (‘knocks him down’) in P (and retained in H). It is not yet clear whether the shift between ܪܡܝܐ and ܚܒاطܐ is based on any intended shift in meaning or a on more accurate rendering of the corresponding Greek or a different underlying Greek (or all of the above or some combination of the above). There are no more noteworthy Syriac variations in Mk 9:18.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ܐܝܬܝܗܳܠܘܬܗܳܘܟܕܳܚܙܝܗܳܝܳܐܪܡܝܬܗܰܪܘܚܐܳܒܗܳܒܫܥܬܳܐܳܘܢܦܠܰܥܠ</td>
<td>ܐ ישראל</td>
<td>ܐܝܬܝܘܗܰܠܘܬܗܳܘܟܕܳܚܙܝܗܰܝܰܐܪܡܝܬܗܰܪܘܚܐܰܒܗܰܒܫܥܬܰܐܰܳܘܢܦܠܰܥܠ</td>
<td>ܐIsrael</td>
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S begins with the masculine singular ‘he brought him’ but the second variation is more significant because it takes the actor as the son, namely ‘when he [the son] saw him [Jesus]’ (rather than P’s ‘when she [the spirit] saw him [Jesus]’).
As in verse 18, in verse 20, S employs the Aphel of ܢܹܳܫܲܬܶܗ for the spirit’s assault (neither verse 18 nor 20 employs the Peal of ܫܲܬܶܗ in S). S’s ܐܳܪܡܝܬܗܳܪܘܚܐܳܒܗܳܒܫܥܬܐ belongs to the following noun such that ܐܪܡܝܬܗܳܪܘܚܐܳܒܗܳܒܫܥܬܐ ܒܗܳܒܫܥܬܐ ܚܒܰܛܬܶܗ corresponds to P’s ܒܪ ܫܳܥܬܶܗ ܚܒܰܛܬܶܗ.

In place of the Peal of ܩܴܥ in verse 20, H has what is likely a Pael of ܒܥܩ, thus using an active and transitive form of the root here and then replacing the P’s employment of the Ethpaal of ܚܒܛ (that is, ܡܶܬܒܰܥܰܩ ܗܘܐ) (CSD calls it Ethparal), that is, ‘he was rolling around’ which corresponds closer to the underlying Greek (ἐκυλίετο) which displays no variants (besides spelling variations). Therefore, it is the middle-passive form of κυλίω that underlies both P’s Ethpaal of ܚܘܦܩ and H’s Ethparal (quadriliteral) of ܩܥܐ. In P, the Ethpaal of ܚܘܦܩ corresponds to the middle-passive form of κυλίω. Corresponding to the Peal of ܫܚܩ (Mk 9:26) is σπαράσσω.

Unfortunately the Greek manuscripts provide an abnormally large number of variants for the Greek verb corresponding to the Peal of ܚܒܛ (for both Mk 9:18 & 20). We will observe these after looking at the sister Syriac translations of Mk 9:26:

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
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<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
<td>ܒܚܐܒܬܐ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are only two notable differences from P: (1) in S, the adverb ‘much’ is attached to the second verb (‘impact him’); and (2) rather than P’s Peal of ܫܚܩ, H employs the Pael (or Peal?) of ܒܥܩ for a second time (see Mk 9:20) thus assisting us with its underlying Greek (as likely being the same here as for its Greek-Syriac correspondence in verse 20). The corresponding Greek offers no extant variants and thus the only likely correspondence in verse 26 for both (H’s Pael (or Peal?) of ܚܘܦܩ and P’s Peal of ܫܚܩ) is with σπαράσσω.

For verse 18, the first verb corresponding to the Peal of ܚܒܛ is either ῥὴσσει, ῥάσσει or ῥίπτει (or ῥίσσει as a misspelling for ῥήσσει), and in verse 20 it is either συνεσπάραξεν, ἑσπάραξεν, or ἑτάραξεν. Altogether, there are at least six verbs potentially underlying the Peal of ܚܒܛ (ῥήσσω/ῥήγνυμι, ῥάσσω, ῥίπτω in Mk 9:18 and σπαράσσω, συσπαράσσω and ταράσσω in 9:20).

BDAG differentiates ῥήσσω from ῥήγνυμι and so provides seven different meanings.

The Greek variants raise a new methodological issue for us to consider. Namely we will have to manage, in our current methodology, without having resolved the meaning of the Peshitta’s Greek correspondences in either verse (verse 18 or 20) for the Peal of ܚܒܛ.

We can see that the first and second correspondences for the Peal of ܗܰܒܰܛ lie with two different Greek lexemes. We might have been able to postulate a correspondence with some form of σπαράσσω in both verses (and if we could also eliminate ταράσσω as an unlikely correspondence in Mk 9:20) only if σπαράσσω had been found as a variant in Mk 9:18 in a manuscript (other than lectionary 26).

As observed in chapter 2, there are several lexemes (in both the Greek and Syriac) within Mk 9:18–26 that display a potential connection with ‘thresh/winnow/tear’, including σπαράσσω, ῥήσσω, the Peal of ܚܒܛ, the Peal of ܚܣܪ, the Harklean’s Pael/Peal of ܚܣܪ (Mk 9:20) and the noun for ‘teeth’ (in the phrase ‘gnash the teeth’: τρίζει τοὺς ὀδόντας, ܡܰܚܶܪܶܩ ܫܶܢܰܘܗ ܝ). Evidently this suggests a ‘tearing’ theme which would be wise to keep in mind as we explore Mk 9:18–26 in relation to the larger units of analysis.

9.8 Genre Analysis

The literary form of Mk 9:14–29 (see §2.3 for Peshitta text) is not ‘pure’. It narrates an encounter between a powerful teacher-prophet and a demon too difficult for his disciples to expel which includes debating and discussion about faith and demon expulsion. The appended conclusion fits a new scene (verses 28–29) and makes a link with prayer (and fasting, in the Peshitta) by asserting that such spirits will only come out with prayer (though no prayer is made by Jesus himself to remove the spirit on this occasion).
Broadly speaking it is a ‘miracle story’, ‘wonder story’ or ‘power story’. Given verses 26–27 where despite the son looking to be dead: ܗܽܘܕܶܝܽܢܝܶܫܽܘܥܐܰܚܕܶܗܒܺܐܝܕܶܗܘܰܐܩܺܝܡܶܗ (‘Jesus took hold of his hand and raised him up’) we should probably see it as primarily about ‘the power to raise up someone harassed by a deadly spirit’. But this is not the usual way to categorise the unit.

According to Boring, the exorcism here is really “part of a controversy dialogue in which the focus is not on the exorcism itself” “but on discipleship, faith, and prayer.” This is a reasonably accurate assessment given the recurrence of debate and discussion. Yet if we remove everything before and after the scene of the exorcism (thus leaving verses 17b–27) the conclusion of the story is ‘they began saying "he is dead" but Jesus raised him’ which makes it a story of ‘(Jesus’) power over death’ similar to the raising of Jairus’ daughter from recent death in Mk 5:22–43 which, similarly, may not have been a ‘resurrection account’ if not for Jesus’ delayed visit (in both cases).

We can probably accept, with some modification, the identification made by Bailey and Broek of Mk 9:14–29 as ‘an exorcism’ where Jesus is the ‘miracle worker’ who expels a demon: “Thus the literary pattern is one of confrontation, expulsion, and reaction.” In Mk 9:14–29 we find all three components but the reaction component is unusual since it initially seems absent. But on closer inspection, it appears thrice: the crowd reacts with surprise when Jesus first arrives (verse 15, prior to the exorcism); people in the crowd react by supposing that Jesus’ exorcism has unfortunately left the youth dead (verse 26); and later when the disciples’ discuss with Jesus the difficult case (verse 28) Jesus’ reply (verse 29) adds to inform/answer their implied perplexity of failure. The label ‘exorcism’ is more satisfactory than ‘healing story’ given that no mention is made of healing in the episode. Nevertheless the unit has often been categorised as a subtype of the healing type of miracle story. In its current literary form (verses 14–29) we can group it with other stories of ‘exorcism’ as a basic type (the most similar kind of account is Mk 5:1–20 being the longest narrated exorcism in the Gospels). However, ‘exorcism’ requires some qualification.

421 Bailey and Broek, *Literary Forms*, 137.
422 For example, Collins, *Mark*, 434.
In English the term ‘exorcism’ is inadequate since it merely refers to an event without necessarily implying authority or power, that is, ‘exorcism’ does not necessarily indicate the authority/power to take command over a demon but only a particular practice or attempt (OED online: “the expulsion or attempted expulsion of a supposed evil spirit from a person or place”). However, Mark’s own terminology to describe such events suggests ‘authority to make spirits leave’ or ‘power over unclean spirits’. Thus the first related comment made in Mark is that ‘he [Jesus] commands unclean spirits and they obey him’ (Mk 1:27 θεὸς πνεῦμα τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις ἐπιτάσσει, καὶ ὑπακούοσιν αὐτῷ τὸν θεὸν ἐκείνον ὑπακούοντος, then Jesus is immediately said to be ‘expelling demons’ (Mk 1:39 τὰ δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλειν, καὶ ὑπακούοντος)—and in our unit it concerns ‘having ability/potential to expel it’ (Mk 9:28 ἡδυνηθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτὸ, οὐκ ἐκβάλλειν αὐτὸ). Therefore, Mk 9:14–29 is an account concerning power over a powerful spirit, and a better label for ‘exorcisms’ generally throughout Mark (and probably throughout Matthew and Luke) is: ‘power to control unclean spirits’; ‘power to banish demons’; or ‘spirit banishment’.

9.9 Rhetorical Analysis

It appears to serve an audience who were familiar with Jesus’ power over demons but who were debating certain practical aspects about replicating his results and/or who were familiar with some past (or recent) failed spirit-banishments. The rhetorical purpose for relaying such a story at this point is based around the desire to contrast the disciples’ incomprehension of Jesus’ person and power by showing the disciples’ failure (inadequacy of faith in God’s power). Its purpose is rhetorically-based (not source based). Effectively, the writer seeks to educate the audience by failing to educate the disciples (concerning Jesus; the kind of people the disciples need to become; how spirit-banishments are really achieved; and the kind of kingdom Jesus is

423 “Oxford Dictionaries,” accessed November 6, 2012,
advancing). Mk 9:14–29 may function as a *What would Jesus have done if he suddenly appeared on the scene?* Or, *Why did the disciples fail? Or, What enables Jesus?* 244

Though Mk 9:14–29 is already long enough (sixteen verses), we could choose to analyse a more extended portion, namely Mk 8:27–10:45. A good reason for choosing to begin with such an extended ‘unit’ is that Mk 9:14–29 occurs in the middle of the three self-made predictions of Jesus’ death and resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34) and these three predictions are meant to bind the larger unit together (they function as ‘pillars’ for the section). In fact we would then need to include the two accounts of Jesus restoring the sight of a blind man as two stories which frame the entire unit (8:22–26 and 10:46–52) since these provide the unit with the theme of the ‘blindness of the disciples to perceive Jesus identity and mission’ reiterated by the three pillars of Jesus’ death-resurrection mission. 245

Mk 8:22–10:52 is perhaps unmanageably large as a single rhetorical unit and grows even larger as its beginning (Mk 8:22–26) looks not only forwards but is a culmination of a series of questions from Jesus beginning in Mk 8:17–21 concerning whether the disciples can really perceive that which is right before their eyes, namely the kind of person Jesus is.

Within the material of Mk 8:22–10:52, the writer does not employ any intercalated stories (‘Markan sandwiches’) 426 with the possible exception of Mk 9:36–7 (Jesus holds a child in his arms) and Mk 10:13–16 (Jesus holds a child in his arms) which function more like brackets enclosing various teaching material (namely: a different exorcist is not against us; removing one’s

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425 Boring, *Mark*, 231: “The unit is bracketed with two stories … In the opening scene the man is healed only gradually and does not see clearly at first, while the concluding scene portrays a blind man truly healed who follows Jesus ‘on the way’.” Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 230: “There is the use of inclusio, such as the correspondence between the two healings of blind men in 8:22–26 and 10:46–52, framing a section within which there are almost no miracles but a development of the theme of suffering.”

temptations to sin; salt similes; marriage and divorce) rather than a story spliced into another story. The absence of intercalation means that material within 8:22–10:52 is linked by means of dialogue interchange and recurring vocabulary and motifs, such as: ‘summon’ (προσκαλέω, Peal of ܟܪܐ + ܠ; ‘ask’ (ἐπερωτάω, Pael of ܫܐܠ; ‘lose (life)’ (ἀπόλλυμι, Aphel of ܐܒܕ; ‘rise up’ (ἀνίστημι, Peal of ܩܡ; ‘death’ (νεκρός, ܡܺܳܝܬܳܳܐ; and faith (πίστις, ܗܳܳܝܡܳܳܢܘܬܳܳܐ).

The writer’s method in Mk 8:27–10:45 is identified by Faw as:

what Jesus is depicted as doing for his disciples, Mark in turn does for his readers, interpreting for them the tragic yet victorious significance of the death and the resurrection of Jesus before they happen so that when the reader comes to the stark, swift-moving events of the end, he will understand their true meaning and go on to the resurrection account in that knowledge.427

In other words, by presenting Jesus as educating his disciples more intensely in Mk 8:27–10:45, it serves to inform the audience about what they likewise need to know about Jesus’ identity and mission. The audience can thus be several steps ahead of the portrayed disciples’ level of understanding and thus do not need to be insulted directly by the writer. In this section Jesus “changes his method” by teaching his disciples the specifics of his identity and mission and by doing so he is “revealed to the reader as the Christ” (Mk 1:1).428 Faw also notes that running throughout Mk 8:27–10:45 is the juxtaposition of positive and negative binary features (Mk 8:35 losing one’s life/saving one’s life; Mk 10:29–30 losing family and lands/reward of eternal life) thus Peter’s error in seeing Jesus’ suffering without the glorification at the beginning of the unit “is balanced at the close of the section by James’ and John’s presumptuous error of seeing the glorification without the suffering, and that both extremes called forth a rebuke from Jesus.”429

Robbins has examined Mark according to three rhetorical forms: progressive form (logic of promise-fulfilment and qualitative progression/initially unexpected developments); repetitive form (restating a point in different ways); and conventional form (larger forms extending to incorporate the whole of Mark). In terms of Robbins’ largest form (“a biography that depicts a

428 Ibid., 81, 78.
429 Ibid., 80. Cf. also a hand/eye/foot chopped off to avoid Gehenna to enter the kingdom of God (9:43, 45, 47).
disciple-gathering teacher—from the highpoint of his career to his death”\(^{430}\). Mk 8:27–10:45 is the third stage within the intermediate phase that is structured around an obvious repetitive form (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). Robbins notes that each prediction of Jesus’ death-resurrection mission contains a further three-step progression\(^{431}\) which provides an opportunity for Jesus’ to instruct on discipleship:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus went out with his</td>
<td>He went from there…</td>
<td>They were going up to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disciples…</td>
<td>he began to teach them</td>
<td>Jerusalem…they were</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following afraid…</td>
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<tr>
<td>He began to teach them…</td>
<td></td>
<td>James and John came to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>him… and said to him…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus summoned…</td>
<td>Jesus summoned…</td>
<td>And Jesus summoned…</td>
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</table>

Thus Mk 8:27–10:45 “portrays a full-scale interaction between Jesus and his disciple-companions.”\(^{432}\) In this stage there is more vigorous dialogue between Jesus and his disciples: Jesus asks more direct questions and gives more extensive positive teaching. He also gives more direct negative teaching: 9:1; 9:41; 10:15; 10:29–31 (with the formula “truly I say to you”); 9:37; 10:18; 10:27; 10:42–45 (antithetical parallelism); 9:42; 9:43; 9:45; 9:47–49 (comparison).\(^{433}\) 8:27–10:45 presents a transition for the twelve disciples who had been learning “how to do many of the things Jesus does”, “how to preach, cast out demons, anoint with oil, and heal (6:12–13)” but after 8:27 the time has come for the disciples to learn “through a long process of action and interchange, attempt and evaluation” that “the mode of thought and action in which Jesus and they have been involved brings suffering, rejection and death.”\(^{434}\)

By narrowing our focus to cover the twelve verses before and after Mk 9:14–29, we can study Mk 9:2–41 as a more manageable rhetorical unit (forty verses). However, this unit is still embedded within the larger structure. To study the transfiguration scene is to be brought back to Jesus’ question in Caesarea Philippi. Mk 9:2 begins the transfiguration scene which reveals secret

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\(^{431}\) Ibid., 23–25.

\(^{432}\) Ibid., 125.

\(^{433}\) Ibid., 141, 160–62.

\(^{434}\) Ibid., 162.
The secrecy motif throughout Mark is a rhetorical strategy to show that Jesus is more than any human in the narrative perceives, at times bordering on apocalyptic. The transfiguration begins “after six days” (equivalent to “on the seventh day”\textsuperscript{435}) and introduces the entire Transfiguration event as the climax to some continuing and previous action. That prior action in Mark is the discussion about the identity of Jesus which begins in 8:27 with Jesus asking his disciples "who do men say that I am?\textsuperscript{436}

The disciple’s response (a prophet) is inadequate, so Jesus asks another question, “Who do you say that I am?”, and to Peter’s response (the Messiah) Jesus commands secrecy then “immediately proceeds to deal with the question: Who do I say that I am?” which Peter rejects given that “there was no tradition in the OT that the Messiah would suffer.”\textsuperscript{437}

Thus as a climax to this entire discussion, the Transfiguration story answers the assumed question: Who does God say that he is? The answer to that question comes "after six days" when God announces, "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him."\textsuperscript{438}

The transfiguration scene enables the writer to employ God as the ultimate authority to state who Jesus is (‘my son, the beloved’). The transfiguration not only points back to Jesus’ baptism and the wilderness testing (and the revelation at Caesarea Philippi), but also points forward to the cross, resurrection, ascension and parousia.\textsuperscript{439} The writer achieves this complex move without complex language which is not only appropriate to his rural characters but also means he can communicate to a wide illiterate audience, in line with the rhetorical technique of accommodation and adaptability.\textsuperscript{440} The strange mountaintop events are given as an epiphany for

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{438} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{440} “Composing his gospel using simple vocabulary enabled his message to reach the largest possible audience, including many illiterates who could listen to the gospel being read aloud, but could not read it themselves. Furthermore, if we assume that Mark was writing for an audience whose circumstances varied widely this must have caused considerable difficulties and perhaps the evangelist avoided using terms which were technical or associated with polytheistic religions in order to avoid confusion and conflict.” Candida R. Moss, “The Transfiguration: An Exercise in Markan Accommodation,” Biblical Interpretation 12, no. 4 (2004): 76.
pondering (the technical term for epiphany is not used). Again the events are made secret and not yet open to tell others about (9:9). The composition includes Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis “but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany at Sinai.” The reason Mark avoids the technical term for epiphany is either to exclude it as a foundation for beginning a cult (in line with Mk 9:5–6) or “in order to avoid evoking these traditions directly and possibly offending some of his audience.”

The writer achieves much with God’s brief address (“This is my son the beloved”). The expression ‘beloved son’ in Mk 9:7 is meant not only to recall Mk 1:11 (and the Gospel’s title in 1:1) but is meant to recall the story about the sacrifice (and salvation) of Isaac (Gen 22) since, according to McCurley, the expression ‘beloved son’ appears in the Old Testament only in Gen 22:2, 12, 16. Elijah and Moses appear (9:4) because God had spoken to these two similarly on a ‘high mountain’ and it suggests they have something in common with Jesus’ life (and death?). The link between these three persons is also relayed by having them chat together. The three disciples (note the pairings of three persons: three this-worldly; three otherworldly) are appropriately afraid (which demonstrates the importance and otherworldliness of the moment which is worthy of readers pondering). If the audience ponders the otherworldly scene, it confirms the success of the writer’s rhetorical strategy.

Unlike at the baptism, God addresses Jesus (as beloved son) in the hearing of others (this raises the audience’s hope that the disciples will indeed begin to understand Jesus’ true identity and vocation). Also different this time (to Mk 1:11) is the command to ‘listen to him’. Having had Elijah appear enables a segue into a debate concerning the coming of Elijah as they descend the mountain. Jesus tries to explain that just as ‘Elijah’ suffered (John the Baptist?) so too will Jesus

441 Collins, Mark, 419.
442 This view is close to Collins who sees a criticism of Peter’s proposal for this very reason. Ibid., 419.
443 Moss, “Transfiguration,” 86.
444 Λαβὲ τὸν υἱὸν σου τὸν ἄγαπητόν, δὴ ἡγάτερας, τὸν Ἰσαακ...τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἄγαπητος...τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἄγαπητος (Gen 22:2, 12, 16). The Syriac has ‘only son’ (חָיִם לְאִישֶׁךָ כְּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָיוֹתָם...חָיִם לְאִישֶׁךָ כְּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָיוֹתָם...חָיִם לְאִישֶׁךָ כְּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָיוֹתָם...חָיִם לְאִישֶׁךָ כְּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הָיוֹתָם...). McCurley has overlooked Jer 38:20 υἱὸς ἡγαπημένων Ἐφραίμ ἐμῶν (‘Is not Ephraim my beloved son?’) and Jdt 9:4 υἱῶν ἡγαπημένων // υἱῶν ἀγαπημένων (‘favoured children’).
as ‘the Human’ (ܢܳܫܳܐ ܒܪܶܗܳܕܐ //ὁ υἱος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), again tying the discussion into the refrain of Jesus’ suffering predicted before vindication. Every response of the disciples in our rhetorical unit is demonstrably confused, lacking an ability to grasp concepts that are still too new for them to comprehend (Peter offering to build three tents; why the scribes predict Elijah first; what kind of rising from the dead is Jesus talking about?) Such questions portray the three disciples as trying to ‘listen to him’ albeit un成功fully. This again goes to show the magnitude of the revelation that must occur.

Debating signifies misunderstanding or confusion. The strategy of having the four descend the mountain debating, ties it in with the following scene where they arrive back to the other disciples who, likewise, are debating (about why they cannot expel an unclean spirit that threatens a child’s life).

The rhetoric in Mk 9:2–41 appears, on the surface, for the benefit of the disciples and for their (hoped for) education/comprehension but, as already noted, everything really happens for the benefit of the audience—to persuade them over and over again about the kind of ‘human’ or ‘Messiah’ Jesus really is and the kind of kingdom he is inaugurating. Such ‘Christological’ instruction combined with instruction on discipleship in the kingdom permeates Mk 9:2–41 whereby the writer encapsulates significant themes of his Gospel into this subunit of his narrative. This is no less so in Mk 9:14–29 where vocabulary links are made with power, death, loosing life, a (beloved) son, and having faith amidst a misguided, faithless generation.

The latter theme (faith/faithlessness) is discussed by Rikki Watts who shows that Mk 9:14–29 is written such that the desperate state of the helpless crowd (and the victim and his father) is seen to resemble the fate of the wandering people of Israel in the wilderness who constantly fell into a faithless state. Thus there is a resemblance with Moses’ experience on Sinai (Ex 24) “intimately linked with his descent to encounter a faithless people (Ex 32). Here in 9:14–29, Jesus’ confrontation is with his faithless disciples who are then rebuked for being a γενεὰ ἀπιστος”445 (חֲדָשׁי לִפְעָל מְשֻׁנָּא).

At the centre of Mark’s arrangement of Mk 9:14–29 is Jesus’ conversation with the victim’s father. Robbins describes the discussion as “syllogistic reasoning about healing on the basis of faith: Since all things are possible for him who believes (major premise) and the father believes (minor premise), the father’s son can be healed on the basis of the father’s belief (conclusion)”:

This sequence of attributed speech creates repetitive texture in the story that features four occurrences of a term for faith or lack of faith, and five occurrences of a term discussing "what is possible":

Jesus: "You faithless generation!" (9:19).
Father: "If it is possible for you to do anything …" (9:22).
Jesus: "If it is possible for you! All things are possible for one who has faith (9:23).
Father: "I have faith; help my lack of faith" (9:24).
Disciples: "Why was it not possible for us to cast it out?" (9:28).
Jesus: "It is not possible for this kind to go out except by prayer" (9:29).

In our unit incorrect ‘powers’ are at work so ‘faith’ is not only connected with ‘what is possible’ but situated in relation to ‘strength’. The disciples are depicted as presuming they simply need more strength—the nine disciples tried but could not enforce the spirit to leave: Peshitta (and Sinaitic): ܐܘܠܳܳܐܶܫܟܰܚܘ (Harklean: ܕܢܦܩܘܢܗܳܘܠܳܐܬܡܨܝܘ, καὶ οὐκ ἠχυσαν). That is, the father declares ‘they were not strong enough [to overpower it]’, 9:18). The writer judges this opinion as misguided. Jesus is expressing exasperation over such a ‘generation’ which lacks faith (not strength) and the father’s opinion epitomises the widespread lack of faith.

The writer had previously shown Jesus bemoaning this ‘generation’ ܠܟܣܝܐ/ γενεᾶ (Mk 8:38) and challenging presuppositions concerning true power (i.e. the dynamics of leadership and discipleship) by questioning glory over suffering and of saving one’s life over facing death. The question (Mk 9:15) put to Jesus by the victim’s father is inadequate not only because it contains doubt (‘help if you can’) but because it may suggest misplaced trust in human strength (as though ‘your disciples were not strong enough … help if you are strong enough’). Hence Jesus may be explaining that it is not about having enough strength of one’s own it is about trusting in God’s power to act (‘for the believer everything will happen by faith’). The subunit again ends with Jesus

446 Minor, Spirituality, 77.
448 Alternatively καὶ οὐκ ἠχυσαν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό.
reiterating to the disciples what one really needs in order to cast out a powerful and deadly ‘kind’ of spirit like this—it is trust in God (faith), identified here as ‘prayer’ (‘and fasting’ in the extant Syriac versions). But Jesus does not demonstrate the use of prayer here (he does elsewhere in Mk 1:35; 6:46; 14:32–39; he fasts in Mk 1:12–13). Perhaps Jesus is shown to be the only one who has inherited strength/ability over such powerful demons (does Jesus already possess God’s strength?).

Following verses 14–29, the writer places the second statement of Jesus’ ‘death-resurrection mission’ and then the writer employs a dialogue interchange that contributes again to reveal the disciples’ failure to understand Jesus’ mission and how to be a disciple in his kind of kingdom.

The alternating pattern, as observed by Morrison, is: 449

FRAME: PASSION PREDICTION—Galilee (9:30–32)
(A) Jesus questions the disciples about what they were discussing (9:33–37)
   Teaching focus: receptivity of Jesus (and God) like a child
(B) Disciples question Jesus about another man casting out demons (9:38–41)
   Teaching focus: bearing the name of Jesus
(A) Jesus teaching the disciples (9:42–50)
   Teaching focus: temptations and sin
(B) Pharisees question Jesus (10:1–12)
   Teaching focus: divorce
(A) Jesus rebukes disciples (10:13–16)
   Teaching focus: receptivity of the kingdom of God
(B) Rich man questions Jesus (10:17–22)
   Teaching focus: possessions
(A) Jesus teaches disciples (10:23–31)
   Teaching focus: entrance into the kingdom of God

FRAME: PASSION PREDICTION—on the way to Jerusalem (10:32–34)
(B) James and John’s request to sit at either side of Jesus (10:35–45)
   Teaching focus: servant hood

In Mk 9:38–39 Jesus answers questions about how to view someone who similarly performs ‘powerful deeds’ (แพทย์, /ποίησι τάναμον) in Jesus’ name but who comes from outside the group. The disciples’ assumption had been that they had a privileged position by virtue of their being disciples thereby disqualifying others from the role of spirit-banishment as though Jesus was the kind of teacher who only entrusted his own kingdom-expansion trade to his own disciples. However, according to Mk 9:38–40 (as also it is in 9:14–29), an authority to banish

unclean spirits is not simply based on being one of the disciples and does not entitle the disciples to oppose the other ‘power worker’.

The writer embeds several motifs in the unit 9:14–29, where a father introduces his son (‘my son’) (เถfixtures/τὸν υἱὸν μου) who is going to be killed (אָפַלֵּ֑ס עֲוֹנָֽהוּ) by a malicious spirit. The theme of ‘my (beloved) son’ facing death connects the subunit not only to the transfiguration (9:8) and to the discussion on the way about Jesus facing death (9:12 and his mysterious ‘resurrection potential’, 8:31) but also connects it to the point that Jesus’ death entails disciples to likewise bear their own cross by ‘losing one’s life’ (כָל דָּנְו נְפָח). The writer shows Jesus making a difficult statement—who would really want to be a disciple of this man, who goes to confront a violent death in Jerusalem (and then rise again)?

Notable, within Mk 9:18–26, is the number of aggressive verbs used for either the spirit’s affliction on the son or the son’s responses: the Aphel of καταλαμβάνω, 9:18, used of the spirit); the Peal of δρ鼢 ‘beat down/assault?’ (ῥήσω, ῥήγνυμι, ῥάσσω, ῥίπτω, 9:18, σπαράσσω, συσπαράσσω and ταράσσω, 9:20 of the spirit); the Peal of ἄπολεσαι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ). The writer shows Jesus making a difficult statement—who would really want to be a disciple of this man, who goes to confront a violent death in Jerusalem (and then rise again)?

Anthropologically speaking, the condition of the son is not to be diagnosed with a professional medical label or collapse the condition as it appears in parallel accounts (in Matthew and Luke).

A variant is ἵνα ἀποκτείην αὐτὸν.
9.10 Narrative Analysis

A narrative analysis confirms the hostile nature of the spiritual force responsible for our three narrated lexemes (Peal ofܫܚܩ, Ethpaal ofܚܒܛ, and Peal ofܫܚܩ) and that Jesus is, by contrast, able to overcome and remove such hostile forces by his word (non-violently).

There is a narrative resemblance (noted in §9.6) with Mk 5:22–43 which (like Mk 9:14–29) would not necessarily have been a ‘resurrection account’ if not for Jesus’ delayed visit.

The first powerful deed enacted by Jesus in Mark is an unplanned banishment of an ‘unclean spirit’ interrupting his first teaching session (Mk 1:21–28). Similarly his second powerful deed is an unplanned healing while at Simon and Andrew’s house (1:29–30). Both episodes demonstrate:
(a) that the theme of secrecy (suppressed opinions) is an important narrative feature right from the beginning of Mark—here (in Mk 1:21–28) Jesus immediately stops the unclean spirit from opining who Jesus is and his potential to ‘destroy’ them (ܝܬܐܬܠܡܘܒܕܘܬܢ, ἥλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς);
(b) that Jesus did not come simply to perform mighty deeds (‘powers’) but they are a natural result of his authority (1:22, 27ܡܫܠܛܐ andܫܘܠܛܢܐ both correspond toἐξουσία,);
(c) that, although both stories evince ‘power over the unholy’, the implied author keeps exorcism and healing distinct (the distinction, asserted by John Pilch, has been discussed in §2.3.2).

After Jesus’ first exorcism and first healing, Jesus travels around: heralding the arrival of God’sܡܠܟܘܬܐ/βασιλεία and banishing demons (.BorderStyle) [Aphel ofאֶחָד, τὰ δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλων, 1:39] showing him to be the anticipated ‘more powerful one’ (ὁ ἱσχυρότερός, חָיֶל typedef: 장 1:7) and that banishing demons is bound up with heralding the coming of the kingdom.

‘Withered’ and ‘destroy/kill’ play an important role also in Mk 3:1–6 (ܝܰܒܺܝܫ, ξηραίνω/ξηρός; Aphel ofאֶחָד) where Jesus implies that not healing the man’s withered hand would amount to ‘destroying life’ (ψυχ…ἀποκτεῖναι, דַּחַד…נָּפֶשׁ) and then the narrator relays that the Pharisees immediately (and ironically) plot with the Herodians to ‘destroy him’ (אַחַד, αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν). Also we find ‘faith’, ‘prayer’ and ‘withered’ (death) together in Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–24).
Mk 9:14–29 is the second longest ‘power story’ in Mark (second to Mk 5:1–20). The most important connections are thus with other accounts of demon expulsions in Mark.\(^\text{451}\)

In Mark (as elsewhere in the New Testament) demons are always considered as negative/unholy entities that are in opposition to Jesus who is animated by the holy spirit (Mk 1:10, compare the slanderous charge, to the contrary, made against him in Mk 3:22–30). We can also note the association between wild animals and unclean spirits in Mark as both being unclean, hostile and demonic.\(^\text{452}\) In Mk 1:13, Jesus’ being with wild animals (1:13b) is paralleled with Jesus’ being tested by Satan in the wilderness for forty days (1:13a).\(^\text{453}\)

Despite the disciples already being given authority over demons (6:7) and despite Jesus having already explained that the amount of powerful deeds he can do is limited by a lack of faith (6:4–6) the disciples need, in 9:14–29, to re-learn how spirit-banishment actually works in the kingdom when they confront a difficult case in the absence of Jesus. Faith has been misplaced in strength/capability of humans rather than in God.

An unsuccessful attempt by the disciples to overpower a physically terrifying spirit while Jesus was not present has consequently led many people to doubt that anyone could overpower it. The disciples do not (yet) understand that Jesus can overcome death. When Jesus suddenly shows up in the midst of debate, he pinpoints the real issue, namely faith in God’s power. Readers might wonder how the disciples will fare when Jesus is no longer present unless they can grasp these points. Jesus knows that his time with this ‘generation’, who lacks faith, is getting shorter (9:19 cf. 8:31). The ‘disciples’ (‘learners’) had better soon learn how to have faith:

> The irony in the father’s calling Jesus "Teacher" while simultaneously reporting the failure of the disciples Jesus has been trying to teach seems to be picked up by the

\(^{451}\) “The background conflict underlying Mark’s Gospel is that between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The "kingdom of God has come near" (1:15), and for Satan’s kingdom the "end has come" (3:26). Everything else that happens in Mark is to be understood against this transcendent background … God struggles with Satan through the main character Jesus.” Malbon, *Mark’s Jesus*, 43–44.

\(^{452}\) Jesus’ being among the wild animals in Mk 1:13 denotes the dangerous hostile nature of such. John Paul Heil, “Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68 (2006).

\(^{453}\) Ibid., 65.
Markan Jesus in his generalized response to the father: "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?" (9:19). Narratively speaking, the father’s role is to highlight the disciples’ inadequacy. The father informs Jesus that his disciples ‘were not able’ (to expel the spirit). The father’s description of his son’s condition is affirmed by the narrator’s description which agrees closely (and even more closely in the Peshitta which carries over the father’s use of the Peal of ḫḇṭ). The father is ready to change his opinion as soon as Jesus directs attention to having the necessary faith in God. The discussion between Jesus and the victim’s father is the centre-piece of the pericope and at the centre of this conversation is “I believe; Help my unbelief.”

The three other banishment-accounts in Mark (1:21–28; 5:1–20; and 7:24–30) inform our understanding of 9:14–29. For example, both 5:1–20 and 9:14–29 mention physical strength and saving victims from further physical harm. Both mention the respective families or communities and both may have battle connotations as already noted (in §2.3). What has not previously been noted is the possibility that both accounts (Mk 5:1–20 and 9:14–29) have animal associations—the former ‘legion’ enters and destroys a herd of unclean animals; the latter spirit is described as ‘unclean’ and behaves like a wild animal attacking and attempting to destroy its victim (involving ‘teeth-gnashing’). The first asks, and is allowed, to enter a herd of pigs and the other behaves like a wild animal, without speech. Also just as the man with the ‘legion’ had been strong enough to ‘tear’ his chains apart (Mk 5:4) Mk 9:18–26 sees an unclean spirit ‘tearing’ a helpless youth.

One could argue that a study of verbs and themes related to ‘tearing’ in Mark (in both Greek and Syriac) could easily be related to many of the narrative topics, not only within Mk 9:2–41, but also the entire narrative. In this regard, we would note the ‘split/divided’ nature of demon possession. Both the man in the synagogue and the man among the tombs speak and act

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454 Malbon, Mark’s Jesus, 86.
455 Minor, Spirituality of Mark, 77.
456 Probably, the general association between unclean demons and unclean animals is more secure to invoke than the commonality of ‘tearing’. However, the notion of ‘tearing’ is present in Mark at two pivotal points in the narrative (the beginning and end): at Jesus’ baptism (Mk 1:10) heaven is torn’ (by God) and at Jesus’ death (Mk 15:38) the Temple veil ‘is torn’ (by God). See David Ulansey, “The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark’s Cosmic Inclusio,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 1 (1991): 123–25. Cf. James T. Dennison Jr. “The Gospel of Mark from Beginning to End,” *Kerygma* 9 no. 3 (1994): 3–10.
'doubly', namely as singular and plural entities and with divided intentions (wanting/not wanting to be near Jesus). Similarly in Mk 9:18–20 there is some ambiguity concerning who is the actor of the ‘foaming’ due to the layer of forced actions upon the lad whose afflicter has goals at odds with his own and produces several actions related to ‘tearing’. Demon possession can be seen as a microcosm of the larger story-world, conflicted/torn between God’s plan for people and Satan’s plan.457

One of the links between 7:24–30 and 9:14–29 concerns the victims being children (of likely similar age) thus the Syrophoenician mother has a daughter afflicted by a demon and the girl is described as θυγάτηρ and τὸ παιδίον (Ἡ νήπιος, Ἡ νήπιος) and the boy in 9:14–29 is described as νικός and τὸ παιδίον (Ἱανάς, Ἱανάς). Both mother-daughter and father-son accounts are very impressive since in one Jesus’ word works to banish a demon from afar (where communication cannot easily be achieved) and in the other Jesus’ word works on a non-speaking spirit (where communication cannot easily be achieved).458

When we compare 1:21–28 with 9:14–29 we find the Aphel of ἀπόλλυμι (9:22 in the three extant versions) corresponding to ἀπόλλυμι (to cause [him] to perish’) occurs in both accounts. In 9:22 it shows that the spirit’s intention (to destroy a life) represents what Jesus is confronting in his own death-resurrection mission, an intention Jesus wishes to confront head on in Jerusalem. Such an intention stands in contrast with Jesus’ own non-violent mission. And we find the same destructive goal is feared by the unclean spirit of Jesus in the first spirit-banishment (1:24 ἡλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς, Ἰησοῦς Ἰησοῦς)—yet such destructive intentions are not perceptible in Jesus himself in either account, who instead simply commands obedience to either silence and/or to leave (the ‘battle’ is won without a display of violence or destruction on Jesus’ part).

457 This develops the insight of Morna D. Hooker, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (London: Continuum, 1991), 143, who speaks of “the divided nature of the man himself” concerning the man among the tombs.

458 Whilst several similarities presently noted are novel (made independently of other studies) the notion of comparing similarities and differences between the four spirit-banishment accounts in Mark is not new. William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 335, notes that the demonic resistance is heightened in the series of demon expulsions but only mentions three accounts (“1:23–27> 5:1–20> 9:14-29”).
Verses 1:21–28 are further enlightening for understanding other terminology related to spirit-banishment (amazing authority/power demonstrated by Jesus) that is, the power to both teach impressively and to control demons with his word.


There are no other New Testament occurrences of Peal of حبّ or the Ethpaal of حبّ but the Peal of حبّ occurs in Lk 9:39 (a ‘parallel’ account of the ‘same’ episode as Mk 9:14–29).

The parallel account in Mt 17:14–21 is notably different from Mark and has already been discussed (for text, analysis, and discussion of Matthew’s ‘label’ for the boy’s ‘illness’ see §2.5.1).

The other Gospel parallel occurs in Lk 9:37–43a (Peshitta):

And it was the next day when they came down from the mountain [that] a large crowd met them and a man from the crowd cried out and said ‘I seek of you to turn to me concerning my only son and a spirit takes him and suddenly he calls out and gnashes his teeth and foams and hardly leaves him when it impacts him and I sought from your disciples to expel it but they could not’.

Jesus answered and said ‘O generation without faith and perverse, until when will I remain with you and endure you? Bring your son here’.

And while he was bringing him the demon threw him down and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and he healed the boy and gave him to his father.

And they all marvelled at God’s greatness.

The glosses ‘impacts’ and ‘convulsed’ are given in ‘strikethrough’ font because we will try to suspend judgment on the meanings of these verbs. The latter lexeme is probably a Pael of حبّ (Lk 9:42 ‘lexeme 12’) which now deserves it own contextual study together with the Peal of حبّ in Lk 9:39 (‘lexeme 11’).
9.11.1–5 Table of Grammar (Peshitta Lk 9:39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complement 1</th>
<th>Predicate 1</th>
<th>Conjunction + Subject 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>particle + noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܚܡܐ</td>
<td>ܕܒܢܐ</td>
<td>ܗܕܡܐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>him</td>
<td>takes</td>
<td>And the spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentence 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction + Predicate 4</th>
<th>Subject 2</th>
<th>Conjunction + Predicate 3</th>
<th>Predicate 2</th>
<th>Conjunction + Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>particle + verb</td>
<td>noun + pronoun suffix</td>
<td>particle + verb</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>particle + preposition + noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܕܫܚܩܬܗ</td>
<td>ܫܢܘܗ ܝ܂ ܘܡܚܶܩܢܳܐ</td>
<td>ܩܥܐ ܘܡܪܥܬܶܬ</td>
<td>ܒܠ ܡܚܣܶܢ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and foams</td>
<td>his teeth</td>
<td>and gnashes</td>
<td>be calls out</td>
<td>and suddenly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentence 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction + Predicate 6 + Complement 2</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Predicate 5</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>particle + verb + pronoun</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td>preposition + pronoun</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>particle + adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܫܐ (it) has ____ him.</td>
<td>when</td>
<td>from him</td>
<td>departs</td>
<td>And hardly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.11.6 Comment on Grammar and Semantics

The verse relays direct speech. In Lk 9:39 there are three main clauses. Of the six predicates used three are used of the spirit. The Peal of ܠܒܐ ‘takes (him)’ can be taken is numerous ways (‘happens upon’, ‘befalls’ or perhaps ‘comes across’, ‘encounters’, or even ‘finds’) and the second verb concerns the spirit ‘leaving (him)’. The predicates in ‘Sentence 2’ are actions of the son—ܩܥܐ ‘he calls out’ (Predicate 2) is an action of the son. Predicate 3 ‘he foams’ is also the son’s action.

The final verb (Predicate 6) is a summary action of the entire affliction hence we could simply gloss it here as ‘afflicted (him)’. Sentence 3 is composed of two phrases both ending with the object ‘him’ (hardly departs from him, when it has afflicted him’). These phrases either indicate that the spirit does not leave ‘him’ alone for very long (between assaults) or that ‘it leaves him’
only after much ‘difficulty’ (it is a difficult spirit to ward off or it spends a long time afflicting him). The final clause describes the lad’s serious condition with two short phrases:

Phrase A: ܘܠܡܚܣܢܳܦܪܩܐܳܡܢܗ (‘and hardly leaves him [long]’)

Phrase B: ܡܐܳܕܫܚܩܬܗ (‘when it has afflicted him’)

‘Phrase A’ states the short duration as a negative time frame (spirit’s absence) and phrase B describes the general state of affliction (spirit’s presence just prior to absence) indicating that one can be taken as the inverse of the other. In this case Lk 9:39 is simply a less elaborate kind of parallel to Mk 9:21–22 which had relayed the youth’s serious condition in terms of a long-term intermittent affliction, whereas the emphasis in Lk 9:39 is on the almost unrelenting aspect of the affliction. Thus the spirit hardly ever leaves him for long between torments (i.e. virtually unrelenting). As it does not leave him long between attacks, the son’s affliction is to be considered ‘severe’ and virtually ‘chronic’. Alternatively, the expression means ‘and with difficulty does it go out of him’ suggesting that so far it had been too difficult for anyone to completely banish the unclean spirit in line with similar information to Lk 9:40 (the father asked the disciples ܕܢܰܦܩܽܘܢܳܝܗ ܝܘܠܳܳܐܫܟܰܚ to banish it but they could not). In this case the spirit could only be temporarily warded off after much difficulty.

Moving on to the Peshitta Lk 9:42 and the Pael of ܡܥܣ (lexeme 12) which can be treated within our current section (§9.11.6):
The verse relays the narrator’s speech. In Lk 9:42 there are four main clauses: the first has the father as subject of the verb (obeying the command by Jesus in 9:41 to bring him’), the second has the demon as subject (dūyōʿ), and the third and fourth have Jesus as subject. Thus the story moves swiftly at this point through the range of actors to a resolution.
The demon is not said to have ‘gone out’ rather Jesus has ‘healed the boy’. The Pael of ܡܥܣ occurs as an action immediately following the ‘hurling him down’ as an assault that occurs either: when the boy is on the ground (thus in relation to teeth gnashing and foaming at the mouth); or, as a parallel action to ‘throw down’ (hit/beat/attack). Either way it appears to be the ‘greater’ action (the most expressive action) which identifies the end result (perhaps ‘severely battered’ or ‘beat the life out of’?). We can safely gloss it for now as ‘assault (him)’.

9.11.7 Translation Analysis (Syriac Lk 9:39 and Lk 9:42, S, C, P, H, CyrL\(^5\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syriac Version</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>ܘܪܘܚܐ ܗܘܝܐ ܠܗܡܢ ܬܚܝܬܫܠܝܐ ܘܡܪܥܬܐ ܠܠܗܘܡܥܣܐ ܠܗܘܡܥܐ ܕܫܚܩܬܗ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>ܘܪܘܚܐ ܥܕܝܐ ܠܗܘܡܕܫܚܩܬܗ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>ܒܥܩܐ ܠܗܡܢܫܠܝܐ ܩܥܐܝܘܡܢܗܡܐ ܕܫܚܩܬܗ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>ܘܪܘܚܐ ܫܩܠ ܠܗܝܘܡܢܛܫܠܝܐ ܪܥܬܝܘܠܡܚܣܢܦܪܩܐ ܡܢܗܡܐ ܕܫܚܩܬܗ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CyrL(^5)</td>
<td>ܕܫܚܩܬܗ ܠܗܘܡܥܣܐ ܠܗܘܡܥܐ ܐܘܡܪܥܬܐ ܠܠܗܘܡܥܣܐ ܠܠܗܘܡܥܐ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H and CyrL\(^5\) both begin ܐܒܘ (‘and behold’) and are remarkably similar. The initial verb for the spirit ‘coming against (him)’ differs in P from the other three but the meaning appears overall similar. P also differs in having the phrase ܡܫܢܐ ܩܥܐ (‘and gnashing his teeth’) which does not correspond to a similar phrase in the other Syriac versions nor to the Greek. H’s (and CyrL\(^5\)’s) employment of ܝܘܡܢ would appear to be (as in Mk 1:26 and Mk 9:26) translating the Greek  σπαράσσει αὐτόν (the only extant variants for the corresponding Greek, besides spelling differences, are the addition of καὶ βῆσει or καὶ βάσει before  σπαράσσει αὐτόν) thus H’s proclivity is again seen for employing the Pael (or Peal?) of ܕܫܚܩܬ for every occurrence in its source for  σπαράσσω. Unless ‘gnashing his teeth’, in P, is meant to correspond to something in the extant Greek  (σπαράσσει αὐτόν or καὶ βῆσει καὶ σπαράσσει αὐτόν) it is tempting to see this as a divergence in P. Or perhaps P’s ‘gnashing his teeth’ corresponds to S’s ܐܒܘ (as though both meant ‘and makes him grind [shake?] his teeth’ or ‘and tears him’).

The Syriac versions are divided between their renderings of the final verb as either the Pael of ܕܫܚܩܬ or Peal of ܕܫܚܩܬ. It is not clear how, or if, the semantics are meant to differ, particularly when
we cannot be certain of how figurative the translators took the meaning—the corresponding Greek is invariably some form of the polysemous συντρίβω (shatter, beat severely, crush). These Syriac verbs (and the underlying Greek) are relatively destructive.

Lk 9:42

CyrL⁵, again, resembles H (or H resembles CyrL⁵). H, again, employs the Pael (Peal?) of ḫḥū where its source presumably has some form σταράσσω, namely συνταράσσω (the only other extant Greek variant here is συντράσσω).

The Greek corresponding to P’s ṣḏḥē is either with ṭḥσω/ṭḥγνμι (ἐρρήξας αὐτόν) or διαρήγνυμι (διάρρηξαν αὐτὸν). Interestingly we see a similar pattern of choice between the earliest and latest renderings, namely at the point where S employs the Pael of ḫḥū (in Lk 9:39 and 9:42) both H and CyrL⁵ employ the Pael (or Peal) of ḫḥū (in both Lk 9:39 and Lk 9:42). (P follows S only in S’s second use). This ‘disagreement coincidence’ likely indicates a similarity of meaning between the two lexemes (between the Pael of ḫḥū and the Pael (or Peal) of ḫḥū).

Since the corresponding Greek is unknown for Lk 9:39 (see above), we cannot confidently conjecture what caused the manuscript split in both cases.

For the verb beginning the second phrase the Syriac translations are fairly consistent: the Aphel of ṭḥē (S, P, C, H) or Peal of ḫḥē (CyrL⁵) (thus ‘throw down’ or ‘throw/cast’) for presumably rendering the extant Greek which is either: ṭḥσω, διαρήσσω, or ṭπτω (ἐρρήξας αὐτόν in most manuscripts).
9.11.8 Genre Analysis

The literary form of Lk 9:37–43a is not identical to the mixed form seen in Mk 9:14–29. So neither ‘debate’ nor ‘power over a deadly kind of spirit’ or ‘resurrection’ seems particularly prominent and the scene does not shift indoors to discuss the reason why Jesus succeeded where the disciples failed. Rather Jesus’ power to restore wholeness remains the focus and the conclusion (Lk 9:43a) relays the account as all witnessing to the power/majesty of God (‘they all marvelled at the greatness of God’). Lk 9:43b continues by referring to it as among the ‘deeds of Jesus’. We will take Lk 9:37–43a as the genre unit to comment on.

The story is a ‘power story’ about both Jesus’ ‘power/dominion over a spirit’ and about him ‘healing a sick child and restoring him to his father’; healing and sickness are often combined in Luke.459 We can label Lk 9:37–43a as a ‘healing account’ (specifically a manifestation of God’s power to save a boy from a demonic affliction).

The most detailed discourse analysis of Lk 9:37–43a to date is provided by Klutz,460 who observes that all actors in the unit presuppose that the healed illness was spirit-caused (Jesus, the narrator, the father and disciples) and appeals to the lexical paralleling of ‘he rebuked [the unclean spirit]’ and ‘he healed [the boy]’ in Lk 9:42b which relays the result as twofold: ܘܰܟܐܳܐܐ ܝܶܫܽܘܥ ܒܪܽܘܚܳܐ ܗܳܝ ܛܰܢܦܬܳܐܝܘܰܐܣܝܗܠ ܠ ܛܰܠ ܝܳܐ܂ (‘Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy’).461 The

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459 We find a similar combination of ‘healing’ applied to ‘demonic afflictions’ elsewhere in Luke, such as Lk 13:10–17 whereby the woman who is healed by Jesus is described as being crippled for eighteen years because of a ‘spirit of sickness’ (ܐܠܚܢܐ ܒܪܽܘܚܳܐ ܚܫܡܳܐ ܕܦܨܳܨܘܚܚܳܐ ܠܳܗܳܪܝܐ ܕܟܽܘܪܗܳܢܳܳ [cf. verse 16 ‘the Accuser bound her’]). Thus also Lk 6:18: ܒܘܰܙܒܒܳܗ ܒܫܶܬܳܐ܂ אܲܨܒܡܿܚܝܳܐ ܕܒܪܽܘܚܳܐ (‘they … had come to hear the word and to be healed of sicknesses, even those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were healed’); also Lk 7:21a: ܒܘܰܙܒܒܳܗ ܒܫܶܬܳܐ܂ אܲܨܒܡܿܚܝܳܐ ܕܒܪܽܘܚܳܐ (‘and at that hour he healed many from sicknesses and from afflictions and from bad spirits’); also the Gerasene man who had demons come out of him (Lk 8:26–39) is described as ‘healed’ in 8:36 (Ethpaal of ܐܣܐ). 460 Todd Klutz, Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Klutz provides an analysis he terms ‘sociostylistics’ (also ‘cultural analysis’) by integrating ‘critical theory’ and ‘systematic functional linguistics’.

461 Ibid., 176, 188. Klutz also asserts that the demon expulsions in Luke and Acts play “an integral role in Luke’s macrostructural development” and that “the exorcism narratives are sufficiently prominent to give us insight into the general type of situation Luke–Acts as a whole was designed to address.” Ibid., 269.
relationship between healing and demon-caused illness in Luke could always benefit from further study.\textsuperscript{462}

\textbf{9.11.9 Rhetorical Analysis}

We could delimit Lk 9:37–50 as the rhetorical unit since what follows Lk 9:37–43a has no shift in either topic or place and is tied together by 9:43b “while they were marvelling” (9:43b).\textsuperscript{463} Thus the writer “wants to keep his readers’ attention fixed on Jesus and the disciples as the new leadership being prepared for the people” and so “creates a single long scene in which all the dialogue between Jesus and his followers (9:43b–50) follows immediately on the healing of the epileptic boy.”\textsuperscript{464}

We might also treat Lk 9:18–50 as our rhetorical unit since Lk 37–43a is also connected to what precedes (verse 37 begins ‘when they had descended the mountain…’) and so connects at least with the preceding transfiguration scene in terms of the continued setting (9:37) but also in a similar ‘biblical flavour’ that is, its ‘Septuagintal narrative syntax’ (‘and it was…’; ‘and behold’ Lk 9:28, 37).\textsuperscript{465} Also, Lk 9:1–50 might be taken as the rhetorical unit since it is enclosed at both ends by references to demon-expulsion (9:1–2 and 9:49–50).\textsuperscript{466}

Showing the incomprehension the disciples have in removing a difficult demonic affliction affords an opportunity for the writer to show how unsuccessful the disciples are at listening to Jesus—Lk 9:26 shows Jesus telling them they need to be unashamed of Jesus’ words and then God reiterates this at the transfiguration (‘listen to him’) and immediately after the healing episode Jesus reiterates ‘put these words in your ears’ (9:44), namely that the poetic prediction that ‘the human one’ will soon be betrayed into ‘human hands’. The writer shows Jesus giving his second passion prediction to the disciples while they were still marvelling at the freeing of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{462}Lee, \textit{Luke’s Stories}, 317, intends to see a “distinction between the power of the demon and the sickness” by appealing to Lk 6:18 whereby ἰάομαι applies to non-demonic afflictions and διαστέλειμαι applies to demonic influences. But the alleged distinction is not found in the Syriac, where the three extant versions use Ethpaal of \textit{laš} for both.
\item \textsuperscript{463}Joel B. Green, \textit{The Gospel of Luke} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 386.
\item \textsuperscript{464}Johnson, \textit{The Gospel of Luke}, 160.
\item \textsuperscript{465}Klutz, \textit{Exorcism Stories}, 178–79.
\item \textsuperscript{466}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
son and his father from the fate of the tyrannical spirit (9:43b–44). The disciples, ironically, immediately begin arguing about which of them was greater (9:46). Jesus, who has just proved greater than the difficult spirit, is saying he (as ‘the human’) is soon to become passive and helpless by being given over to powerful men which makes no sense to the disciples and they immediately start thinking about their own greatness.\textsuperscript{467}

The writer “formulates the disciples’ argument over greatness (vv 46–49) in relation to their reluctance to query Jesus about his suffering (v 45)” and “John’s concern with the exorcism practices of an outsider (vv 49-50) is cast as an "answer" to Jesus’ teaching about relative greatness (vv 47–48)” also there are “numerous catchwords and concepts that hold these subunits together” such as “the shift from "son" (vv 38, 41) to "child" (vv 42, 48),\textsuperscript{115} amazement (vv 43a, 43b), and especially the focus on the disciples (vv 40, 43, 45, 46–50).”\textsuperscript{468}

Eduard Schweizer labels 9:37–50 as: “The Incomprehension of the Disciples” and asserts that, unlike Mk 9:14–29, a new unit (namely the journey to Jerusalem, 9:51–19:27) only begins after the healing of the boy and the incomprehension of the disciples to understand “the way of the Son of Man.”\textsuperscript{469}

The writer links a deed done ‘in the name of Jesus’ (Lk 9:49) to 9:48 (receiving a child ‘in Jesus’ name’). This shows how John had not yet understood Jesus’ point. That John brings up the outsider’s exorcisms in response to Jesus’ words (in 9:48) perhaps shows a degree of new doubt in his mind about whether he had acted correctly by stopping the man but the rhetorical positioning denigrates his earlier named actions (of stopping the one ‘not following us’ 9:49).

The writer shows an awareness of human relationships and power differentials. By specifying the son as the father’s ‘only son’ (compare the similar adjectives used in Lk 7:12 and 8:42) and then explicitly returning the healed son back to his father the writer “humanizes” the story.\textsuperscript{470}

\textsuperscript{467} Jesus putting a child before them “is more directly derogatory of the disciples’ pretensions” since greatness “derives not from themselves but from the mission of representation.” Johnson, Luke, 160.

\textsuperscript{468} Green, Luke, 386.


writer appeals to the audience’s need to know more about the father’s situation and to empathise with him and to see it fully resolved. The father’s plea (‘Teacher, I beg you, turn your gaze upon me because he is my only son’) thus generates ‘implicatures’, namely “by describing the request he addresses to Jesus as an instance of begging, the father not only wraps himself in appealing humility but also implicitly presents himself as Jesus’ social inferior.”\textsuperscript{471} Also “the illocutionary force of this disclosure”, as his only child is significant

in view of the value attached in this culture to child-bearing as a source of honour and a means of preserving the family name” such that “the status and preservation of the father’s family line are threatened far more gravely … Jesus saves a whole family line from the dust of death and restores its current generation of members to their appropriate honour.”\textsuperscript{472}

The second passion prediction brings the impending loss of Jesus into closer reality such that the responsibility for the divine mission will eventually fall to the disciples … their response … betrays an inauspicious combination of fear and lack of insight … Viewed together, therefore, the story of 9.37–43a (esp. 9.40) and the passion prediction in 9.43b–45 put worrisome clouds of doubt over the sunny picture of the disciples provided back in 9.1–10a.\textsuperscript{473}

Lk 9:45 explains that the disciples cannot comprehend Jesus’ second passion prediction ‘because it was concealed from them’. What exactly is missing may be related to a full understanding of hospitality from a position of humility not greatness. Klutz sees the following chiasm:

\begin{itemize}
\item A. Exorcism, mission and (in)hospitality (9:1–6)
\item B. Jesus and the fate of John the Baptist (9:7–9)
\item C. Disciples’ success and Jesus’ ministry of healing (9:10–11)
\item D. Supramundane provision that echoes the great prophets (9:12–17)
\item E. Christological confession, passion prediction, and discipleship (9:18–27)
\item D’. Supramundane manifestation with the great prophets (9:28–36)
\item C’. Disciples’ exorcistic failure and Jesus’ success (9:37–43a)
\item B’. The fate of Jesus himself (9:43b–45)
\item A’. Exorcism, mission and hospitality (9:46–50)
\end{itemize}

Based on this chiasm, Herod’s perplexity may parallel that of the disciples in Lk 9:43b–45 and John’s martyrdom to that of Jesus’ (Lk 9:43b–45). More importantly, for Lk 9:37–43a, the disciples’ success in Lk 9:10–11 may have been based on their obedient role as simple heralds

\textsuperscript{471} Klutz, \textit{Exorcism Stories}, 177.
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid., 178–79.
\textsuperscript{473} Ibid., 181.
and healers operating from humility and having the ability to offer forgiveness (9:1–6). Their failure in 9:37–43a is not made explicit but the above chiasm suggests a reason, namely “they never received the boy and his father hospitably in the first place.” This assertion can be supported by the conversational pragmatics involved in Jesus’ allusion to Deut 32 (‘O generation without faith and perverse, until when will I remain with you and endure you?’) along with the implied connection between sin and misfortune. That is,

since Jesus’ allusion to Deuteronomy 32 both directly follows an implicit challenge to Jesus’ honour in 9.40 and directly proceeds Jesus’ highly direct command that the father bring his son into Jesus’ immediate presence, the allusion looks very much like a part of a counter-challenge that serves both to defend the collective honour of Jesus’ group and to keep alive the possibility of a mutual beneficial relationship with the man… [thus] religious infidelity of one kind or another should probably be understood as the cause of this particular instance of spirit-illness.

The disciples’ intended healing ability implied a gracious hospitality of human acceptance that was essential to the task, namely:

to enter into reciprocal contracts of exchange with strangers (including those of relatively lower status) [given that] … becoming a demoniac was seen to involve the patient and their local community in an agonistic dialectic of mutual rejection.

9.11.10 Narrative Analysis

Jesus’ healing relays Jesus’ power to restore people in terms of the physical, social, and spiritual deficits. This is why, in Luke, healing naturally subsumes the variety of human conditions that is does (since, in Luke, all problems, to some degree, are spiritually based).

The disciples are still learning about how to offer healing to the same extent as Jesus. They still lack an understanding of how to graciously offer full hospitality in the name of Jesus. The

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474 Ibid., 185.
475 Lee, Luke’s Stories, 316: “The focalization of the remarks of Jesus is from God’s perspective. Jesus speaks of Ὄ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη (9.41) which evokes the LXX of Deut. 32.5 in which Moses as God’s prophet speaks of the people as γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη.”
477 Klutz does not appeal to the incident of the Samaritan town rejection where a similar theme of (in)hospitality is continued (Lk 9:51–56).
disciples must learn that their future prospects are connected to the status and fate of Jesus as the great one whose greatness derives from humility (Lk 9:23–27).\textsuperscript{478} 

The struggle between Jesus and the demon fails to fulfil the reader’s expectation, as there is no genuine struggle and “Jesus wins masterfully” since “the removal of the demon, the healing of the boy, and the reunion with the father are all accomplished in one mighty stroke.”\textsuperscript{479} Indeed Jesus’ actions seem to indicate the actions of God since the reader identifies ‘the majesty of God’ “with the activity of Jesus that has just been narrated and, especially with the exorcistic climax of 9.42.”\textsuperscript{480} 

We might add to Klutz’s insights by comparing Lk 9:37–43a with Lk 4:31–37. In Luke’s first episode of Jesus’ encounter with a man controlled by an unclean spirit, we see that Jesus banishes the spirit (Lk 9:35c) ‘and it came out without doing him any harm’ (ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ μηδὲν βλάψαν αὐτόν) which in the three extant Syriac versions is rendered slightly different but with the same intended sense (‘it came out without causing him harm’):

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</tbody>
</table>

So by comparison (with Lk 4:31–37) this spirit had been causing harm to the child.

The reference to the power and authority given to the disciples in 9:1 “echoes the testimony of the bystanders in Luke’s first exorcism story (Lk 4.36)” and are fulfilled in verses 6 and 10, where the kerygmatic and therapeutic successes of the disciples are summarised in a style that recalls some of Jesus’ accomplishments in earlier segments of the narrative (e.g. 8.1, 39).\textsuperscript{481} 

There is a connection to be found between the ‘child’ healed in 9:42 and the welcoming of the child in 9:47–8 which further strengthens the case for a lack of hospitality in the former case.

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid., 184–85.  
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid., 188, 161.  
\textsuperscript{480} Ibid., 178.  
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid., 180.
The actors in our unit have the following roles: the large crowd meet Jesus and play no further role until the end of the story when ‘they marvel at the greatness of God’ which is still a relatively passive role (and with passive morphology). The disciples form two subgroups (those having just come from the mountain and those already with the crowd); their role is to be the background for Jesus to stand out against. The father and Jesus play the most active roles until the father functions as the beneficiary or recipient “to whom goods (in this case, his son) are given.” The child plays the most passive role. The second most active role belongs to the unclean spirit who exerts power to influence the child, the father and their relationship to other townsfolk. In Lk 9:40 the father wishes that the demon could be controlled and “in the elliptical καὶ σῶν θάνατον (i.e., to expel the demon, Lk 9:40), the clause’s negative polarity only underscores in yet another way the superiority of the demon’s might.”

Midway through 9:42 the unclean spirit changes from actor to object and Jesus’ greater power is made known as he is given three roles of transitive actions (‘Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and he healed the boy and he gave him to his father’). Then the demon is no longer ‘in’ but ‘out’, the boy is no longer ill but well, and the status of the father is no longer threatened by the extinction of his family line.”

In the context of Luke as a whole Lk 9:37–43a provides an example where Jesus is depicted as fulfilling his mission to help the poor, the captives, the blind, and in Peshitta Luke the ‘broken-of-heart’ (4:18) during his time spent in and around Galilee (4:14–9:50). The ‘broken of heart’ usually means ‘lawless’, ‘broken-of-will’, ‘wayward’ those, who in biblical tradition, were failing the law/wayward (omitted in most Greek manuscripts) and is paralleled here in Peshitta Luke with (‘strengthen the broken with forgiveness’). The victim of the constant demon attacks in Lk 9:37–43a is both ‘broken’ and in need of being ‘set free’ (and the family may be thought also to need forgiveness).

482 Ibid., 169.
483 Ibid., 170 n58.
484 Ibid., 161.
This is the final healing prior to Jesus’ journey towards Jerusalem (the place of his death and resurrection). The nine disciples who failed to help the boy and his father become examples of ignorance about the kingdom and how to promote healing and hospitality. Even the three privileged to witness Jesus’ transfiguration on the mountain do not yet understand how to recognise whom to oppose and whom to accept (who is ‘on their side’, Lk 9:49–50) and how not to seek after high positions of rank (Lk 9:46–48). The meaning of Jesus as the human betrayed into human hands remained hidden from the disciples (Lk 9:45) and understanding only begins at the close of the narrative (in Lk 24:13–35).

Lk 9:37–43a is primarily about the disciples’ insufficient understanding of how to heal and whom to accept (hospitality in a broken/lost world still dominated by power hungry individuals and spirits). There is still much for the disciples to learn, especially Jesus’ identity and mission (who he really is, and why he is going to Jerusalem). Nevertheless, the disciples will eventually understand, and they do continue to follow him on the way to Jerusalem. Thus the disciples in Luke are meant to be “exemplary figures for the church” who do eventually fulfil their potential in the sequel to Luke (Acts) where they embody Jesus’ vision of the kingdom of God and enact powerful healings in the power of the risen Jesus who works with them. However, despite Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8, they are portrayed as witnessing to Jesus’ power only within Jerusalem. The role beyond Jerusalem is fulfilled by the appointed seven.

9.11.11 Other New Testament Occurrences for the Peal of ܫܚܩ

The parallels have now been examined. The only remaining New Testament occurrences to observe are the other appearances of Peal of ܫܚܩ, namely: Acts 15:19 [adjective?], 21:13; Rom 16:20; Rev 2:27.

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Because of this I say, ‘Let them not harass they who from the Gentiles who are turning to God.’

Acts 21:13

Then Paul answered and said, ‘What are you doing that you are weeping and breaking my heart. For not only am I prepared to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of our Lord Jesus’.

Rom 16:20

The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Rev 2:27

To rule them with a rod of iron rod. And like vessels of clay you will smash [them] for thus I received from my father.

The latter three applications appear reasonably straightforward: ‘breaking’ (someone’s heart, as a more figurative sense of ‘break’ probably in terms of undermining Paul’s willpower/intent to do what he believed was right in his heart); God will soon ‘crush’ Satan (a somewhat figurative use related to breaking Satan’s power); and the victor who will rule the nations and ‘smash’ them ‘like clay jars’ (a figurative use/simile used for ‘breaking’ the enemies power). Interestingly the latter three all seem figurative by involving ‘breaking a power’ of some sort (but whether or not early Syriac speakers would have labelled the use as figurative is unknown).

Acts 15:19 therefore appears to be the odd one out not only for its participial form but because it concerns ‘(not) troubling’ Gentiles (who have turned to God) with unnecessary regulations. However, perhaps future study of this verse might be able to demonstrate whether or not the sense ‘break’ is also relevant (as though the excessive regulations might completely break the Gentiles’ resolve/ability to continue).

These other New Testament uses of the Peal of ܫܚܩ lend further credence and clarity to our temporarily conjectured meanings in Mk 9:26 and Lk 9:39.

It now makes further sense why, in Mk 9:26, the malicious spirit’s action (upon the son) preceded the son looking as dead since it ‘breaks’ his life-force (it takes away all his power/strength) leaving him without any clear signs of life. Similarly in Lk 9:39 ‘it hardly departs from him after it has broken him’ relays the havoc wreaked upon the child (who is physically devastated and visibly worn out, or injured) after each episode of affliction.
Before we take stock of our above analyses and suggest some lexical entries for lexemes 9, 10, 11 and 12 we have two more steps to pursue (an observation of OT passages and a critical perspective on writing Syriac-English entries).

### 9.12 Old Testament Occurrences

Of lexemes 9, 10, 11, and 12 only lexemes 9 and 11 appear in the Peshitta Old Testament, namely the Peal of ḫḇṭ and the Pael/Peal of ܫܚܩ.

If, along with the Peal of ḫḇṭ, we include, for now, other related forms such as noun forms, participial forms and Ethpeel forms we find a total of eleven occurrences, mostly found in Isaiah (six appearances): Deut 24:20; Judg 6:11; Isa 17:6 [participial form/adjectival function]; 24:13 [participial form/adjectival function]; 27:12; 28:17 [Ethpeel]; 28:27; 30:30 [adjectival function]; Prov 28:3 [adjective]; Ruth 2:7; and Sir 46:6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deut 24:20</th>
<th>When you beat/harvest your olive trees, you shall not pick over your leftovers; it shall be for the foreigner, for the orphan, and for the widow.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges 6:11</td>
<td>And the angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak at Ophrah, the town of Joash the father of Azri; and Gideon his son was beating wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 17:6</td>
<td>And gleaning shall be left in it, as an olive beaten, as two or three olives in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five on the outermost branches, says the Lord God of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 24:13</td>
<td>Thus it shall be in the land among the peoples, as the beating of an olive tree, and as the gleaning of grapes when the mature wine is gathered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 27:12</td>
<td>And it shall be in that day that the Lord shall harvest from the channel of the river Euphrates to the river of Egypt, and you shall be gathered up one to another, O children of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 28:27</td>
<td>And I will make justice the measurement, and righteousness the scales; and the hail shall penetrate the hope of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For dill is not threshed under the feet of oxen, nor is a threshing instrument turned about upon cumin, but dill is beaten out with a staff, and cumin with a rod (Lamsa).

Isa 30:30:

And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the striking of his arm with the indignation of his anger and with the flame of a devouring fire, with the rainstorm and tempest [storm of threshing?] and hailstones (Lamsa).

Prov 28:3:

A poor man who oppresses the poor is like a sweeping rain which is of no benefit (Lamsa).

Ruth 2:17:

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley (Lamsa).

Sir 46:6:

And [hailstones] beat down on the enemy people and it destroyed them all and all the cursed nations knew that God was battling for his people and that he [Joshua] was wholly after God.

The subject of the passive verb (Ethpeel) in Isa 28:27 is ‘dill’ which is ‘knocked out using a stick’.

As a verb we can see that the Peal is used either for the act of obtaining olives from high branches (using a long stick) or for beating out wheat with a stick (Judg 6:11; Ruth 2:17).

However, Isa 27:12 has no object (an implied ‘you people’ since it appears to be paralleled with ‘be gathered up’) and so remains somewhat ambiguous (to gather up [with a stick?] to round up? to personally collect one by one?).

The adjectival uses appear either with ‘olive tree’ (as ‘olive-tree beating’ ܙܝܬܐ ܕܚܒܝܛ, Isa 17:6, and ‘the beating of the olive-tree’ ܕܙܝܬܐ ܚܒܐ, Isa 24:23) or in regard to ‘pelting hailstorms’ (as a ‘threshing storm?’ Isa 30:30) and ‘rain pelting/storming’ (Prov 28:3). The latter use (‘rain/hail storming/pelting’) is worthy of future study and may turn out to be an extension of ‘threshing’ (perhaps in regard to penetrating everything/turning inside out?) or there may be no association with ‘threshing’.

In Sir 46:6 the verb is used of hailstones which ‘pelted down’ upon Joshua’s enemies. We can see that the nature of such severe hail appears as an unnecessarily harsh version of ‘rain’ as an action
that is undesirable for those receiving it because it is an overly excessive and damaging (or it may be the ‘repetitive nature’ inherent in the verb that is effective).

Isa 28:17 is interesting since it is employed with ‘hail’ as its subject which ‘will penetrate’ the hiding place of lies (thus the hail ‘gets’ them or ‘gets to’ them). So it is tempting to suppose that both meanings ‘hail-storming’ and ‘knocking out something inside (repetitively with a stick)’ may overlap to some degree (here it is not wheat grain that is ‘obtained’ nor difficult-to-reach olives but rather a ‘hiding place of lies’).

Prov 28:3 may also link both senses since it is about the futility of excessive force. It implies that such an action (an oppressive rain) does not obtain any beneficial outcome since it is too heavy to be of benefit (it only causes damage rather than assist with growth) and thus it is not too dissimilar in meaning to Isa 28:27 (dill is beaten out using a stick). That is, the instrument of threshing corresponds in sensitivity of degree to the kind of object enacted upon such as will give a beneficial outcome—thus the futility of both ‘a poor man oppressing the poor’ and ‘threshing dill using oxen’ (rather than a stick).

So altogether we have observed several different applications of the verb in the Peshitta Old Testament, namely for:

- 1a. someone using a stick to knock high olive tree branches (to obtain olives);
- 1b. someone using a stick to thresh wheat stalks to obtain the wheat grain;
- 1c. God gathering up people (object implied; means unknown); and
- 2. storms of hail or heavy rain that destroys crops and/or people.

It remains unclear whether the latter use is related to threshing/harvesting. It is safest to say that the verb is used also of hail as a separate sense. As for the adjectival applications (Isa 30:30; Prov 28:3) these can probably be seen as separate to the verbal uses both due to their participial forms and subject matter (but Isa 28:17 may repay further analysis for a potential mixed semantic use).

There are nine verses where the Peal of šḥqiq (or Ethpeel) is found in the Peshitta Old Testament, namely: Ex 30:36; 2 Sam 22:43; Ps 18:43; Isa 41:15; Jer 48:12; Job 14:9; Prov 17:10; Eccl 12:6 [Ethpeel]; and Dan 2:40.
and you shall beat some of it very fine, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you; it shall be to you most holy (Lamsa)

I shall beat them as small as the dust which is carried by the wind; I shall tread upon them as the mire of the streets (Lamsa)

Then I will beat them small as the dust before the wind; I will tread over them as the mire of the streets (Lamsa)

Behold, I have made you as a new threshing instrument having teeth; a thing which tears and crushes to pieces; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff (Lamsa)

Therefore, Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will send robbers against them, and they shall plunder them and empty their vessels and destroy their wine containers (Lamsa)

The waters erode away the stone and the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of man (Lamsa)

A threat breaks the heart of a wise man; but the fool instead of a rebuke receives a scourging, and yet he is not conscious of it (Lamsa).

Remember him before the silver cord is cut off and the golden bowl is broken and the pitcher is broken at the fountain or the wheel is broken at the cistern (Lamsa)

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; for just as iron hammers and breaks everything in pieces, so shall it break and conquer every kingdom (Lamsa)

A brief look at the Peshitta OT uses shows some variety of grammatical subjects and objects used of the verb, namely a person (Moses) grinding together a fragrant scent made of spices; a person (David) victoriously grinding enemy people as dust; people of Israel (metaphorically as a sharp threshing instrument) crushing everything; robbers ruining containers of wine; waters eroding stone and soil; a threat breaking the desire/heart of a wise man; a golden bowl getting old and broken (Ethpeel); and iron breaking every kingdom. Whatever is ‘broken’ becomes small pieces and inert.
The uses involving persons as grammatical object should be more relevant to Mk 9:26 and/or Lk 9:39. All such uses appear to be relatively figurative. Also we find the use with the object ܐܢܘ ܓܠܐ ܪܳܒܳܛܳܐܳܠܶܗ ܕܳܚܳܒܳܛܳܐܳܠܶܗ ‘a heart’ (Prov 17:10). Also interesting is that the verb occurs along with the Aphel of ܒܥܩ (Job 14:19) where both undermine or ‘erode’ hope for new life. However, we do not find anything like the demonic affliction of a spirit on a boy.

9.13 Summary and Reflections on Writing Syriac-English Entries for the Peal of ܚܒܛ, Ethpaal of ܚܒܛ, Peal of ܫܚܩ, and Pael of ܡܥܣ

We revisited the difficult episode that provoked the development of an exegetical methodology in chapter 2. Four verbs according to the proposed methodology were analysed (three of the verbs appeared in Mk 9:18–26 and two of them appeared in Lk 9:39–42). The semantic and grammatical analysis of Mk 9:18, 20, & 26 observed the Peal of ܚܒܛ as the action that first evidences the malicious spirit’s ܕܳܚܳܒܳܛܳܐܳܠܶܗ ‘taking control of him’, either concurrently or as a second action or, more likely, as the first and primary physical evidence that the spirit had ‘taken control of him’ (overpowered him). It precedes that which makes him foam and gnash his teeth and then to wither/become lifeless. In Mk 9:20, the Ethpaaal of ܚܒܛ (together with the ‘foaming’, Ethpaaal of ܒܥܩ, Aphel of ܪܥܬ), was identified as a physical effect belonging to the son as a consequence of the spirit-induced affliction (observed by everybody at the scene) that occurs while the son is on the ground (‘and he fell down on the ground struggling about and foaming’). The translation analysis of verses 18 and 20 noted that ܒܳܚܳܫܳܡܳܐ ܕܳܚܳܒܳܛܳܐܳܠܶܗ ܠܳܒܳܒܳܪܳܝܳܐ ‘cast down’ in S was replaced by ܘܲܫܳܚܳܩܳܐ ܕܳܚܳܒܳܛܳܐܳܠܶܗ in P (and retained in H). It also acknowledged six verbs potentially underlying the Peal of ܚܒܛ in 9:18, 20. Two of our Greek-Syriac correspondences were more obvious (the Ethpaaal of ܚܒܛ with the middle-passive form of ܟܘܠܐ and the Peal of ܫܚܩ with ܣܨܪܨܘ in Mk 9:26). The Peal of ܚܒܛ suggested a partial redundancy in Mk 9:20 between the child being beaten to the ground (or against the ground) and then him falling to the ground. The meaning of Ethpaaal of ܚܒܛ either indicates the movement the victim makes (as a ‘middle voice’ verb) ‘struggling’ (on the ground) and ‘flailing about’ (in a desperate attempt to shake off the unclean spirit, and to breath properly) before he loses the battle for his life. Alternatively, it may be taken as a ‘passive voice’ (as ‘being thrown
about/tossed to and fro’). Both options are attractive since the youth is both a ‘passive victim’ and also ‘responds’ by ‘making foam’ and ‘withering’ (possibly ‘middle-voice’ actions).

If the Syriac lexicographer were to trust the meanings offered in LN and BDAG for σπαράσσω then he or she might have to conclude that the Peshitta has diverged from the meaning of the Greek in 1:26 since καὶ σπαράξαν αὐτόν (no Greek variants) is translated as ܐܪܡܫܬܶܗ and it cast him down’ (Peal of ܗܒܛ) whereas the lexical entry in LN (and to a lesser degree in BDAG) suggests that the corresponding Greek verb clearly indicates ‘causing convulsions’ (of an epileptic seizure). In making conclusions about the meaning of the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:18 and 9:20 we must consider the role we will give to the meaning of the corresponding Greek lexemes.

What was particularly noteworthy about the number and kind of Greek variants for the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:18 and 9:20 is that the interpretation of the Greek passage in most modern commentaries by-passes a discussion of the variants (both number and kind) besides some limited discussion about the meaning of the verb in Mk 9:18. For example Collins says: “Almost all the manuscripts read ῥῆσσει, "throws him down (to the ground)"

then ῥῆσσω is often taken as the Ionic form of ῥάσσω but this overlooks the difficulty of the other Greek variants (both in Mk 9:18 and 9:20). The problem is exacerbated by the tendency for interpretation to proceed predominantly from an eclectic text (where ῥῆσσει appears in Mk 9:18 and ἐσπάραξεν appears in Mk 9:20). This leaves much work to do for the Syriac lexicographer who wishes to compare the meaning of the corresponding Greek.

The literary form of Mk 9:14–29 was not ‘pure’. Overall, it is a ‘power account’ and mixture of a teaching episode about reliance on God’s power over unclean spirits, a debate about faith, and resurrection (God’s power over over death). The rhetorical analysis suggested a writer addressing a scenario where his audience were familiar with Jesus as an exorcist but also required more knowledge about preventing failed exorcisms. The writer intends the story to educate its audience both about Jesus’ identity and his mission to confront death (a violent death) and the need to ponder one’s basis of ‘power’ (faith in God rather than physical ‘strength’). Without the

489 Collins, Mark, 433.
use of intercalation in the wider rhetorical unit (Mk 8:22–10:52), the material is linked by means of dialogue interchange and recurring vocabulary and motifs (such as: ‘summon’, ‘ask’, ‘lose (life)’, ‘rise up’, ‘death’, and ‘faith’). Each prediction of Jesus’ death-resurrection mission contains a further three-step progression which provides an opportunity for Jesus to instruct on discipleship. Jesus’ question about his supposed identity (in 8:27) is answered by God in 9:1–9 (‘This is my son the beloved’). The expression ‘beloved son’ in Mk 9:7 is meant not only to recall Mk 1:11 but also to recall the infrequent expression in the OT concerning the sacrifice (and salvation) of Isaac (Gen 22). Elijah and Moses appear (9:4) because God had spoken to these two similarly on a ‘high mountain’ and it suggests they have something in common with Jesus’ life (and perhaps death). The theme of ‘my (beloved) son’ facing death connects the subunit not only to the transfiguration (9:8) and to the discussion on the way about Jesus facing death (9:12 and his mysterious ‘resurrection potential’, 8:31) but also connects it to the point that Jesus’ death entails disciples to likewise bear their own cross (by ‘losing one’s life’). Readers may be expected to ponder how the disciples will fare in future when Jesus is no longer present unless they can grasp God’s power, acting in and through Jesus, over death. The amazing authority/power of Jesus to both teach impressively and to control demons with his word is seen from the outset (Mk 1:22–27). Mk 9:14 – 29 can also be compared to 7:24–30 (both concern victims who are children each afflicted by a demon. Both mother-daughter and father-son accounts are impressive displays of Jesus’ word which works to banish a demon (one from afar, where communication cannot easily be achieved) and on a non-speaking spirit (another where communication cannot easily be achieved).

The remaining analysis looked at Lk 9:37–43a. The semantic and grammatical analysis of Lk 9:39 observed three verbs used of the spirit and three verbs used of the victim, with our low-frequency lexeme appearing as the final verb functioning as a summary action of the affliction. The negative time frame (spirit’s absence) balances the general state of affliction (spirit’s presence just prior to its absence). Lk 9:42 contains another low-frequency lexeme. Here the events move swiftly from the affliction through to the resolution of healing. Our verb appears early in the verse, as the most expressive and ‘distressing’ action. The translation analysis
revealed an unclear correspondence with a possible semantic divergence in P (from the Greek), unless ‘gnashing his teeth’ is meant to correspond to something in the extant Greek (σπαράσσει αὐτὸν or καὶ ρήσσει καὶ σπαράσσει αὐτὸν). Or perhaps P’s ‘gnashing his teeth’ corresponds to the S’s ἀνῃρεῖ ἀπ’ αὐτόν as though both meant ‘and makes him grind [shake?] his teeth’ or ‘and tears him’. At the point where S employs the Pael of ἀνῃρεῖ, H and Cyrl employ the Pael of ἀνῃρεῖ (in both Lk 9:39 and Lk 9:42 where H’s source presumably has some form σπαράσσω). Jesus’ power to ‘restore wholeness’ remains the focus. Given that the conclusion relays that ‘they all marvelled at the greatness of God’ (Lk 9:43a), the literary form was identified as a ‘powerful deed of God’, namely as interested in witnessing God’s powerful act of ‘making whole’ (salvation). Lk 9:1–50 was taken as the rhetorical unit as it is bookended by references to demon-expulsion. By specifying the son as the father’s ‘only son’ (cf. Lk 7:12 and 8:42) and then explicitly returning the healed son back to his father the writer appeals to the audience’s need to hear about the father’s desperate situation and to empathise with him and to see the issue resolved. The father’s plea (‘because he is my only son’) not only shows his humility, presenting himself as Jesus’ social inferior, but shows that the preservation of his family line is threatened (thus Jesus saves a whole family line). The disciples’ earlier success in demon expulsion may have been based on their obedient role as simple heralds and healers operating from humility and having the ability to offer forgiveness (9:1–6). Their failure in 9:37–43a suggests they had not received the boy and his father hospitably. Hospitality/inhospitality continues as a theme in the following unit (Lk 9:51–56). The narrative analysis observed that the father and Jesus play the most active roles but that God is acting through Jesus. The earlier expulsion (Lk 4:31–37) suggests, by comparison, that the spirit has been causing harm to the child in Lk 9:35c. Lk 9:37–43a is primarily about the disciples’ insufficient understanding of how to heal and whom to accept (and how not to seek after high positions of rank). Nevertheless the disciples will eventually understand (in Acts), and they do continue to follow him on the way to Jerusalem.

The NT occurrences for the Peal of ἀνῃρεῖ were observed (being mainly figurative). These indicated a ‘breaking a power’ of some sort. This illuminated Mk 9:26 where it ‘breaks’ the child’s life-force (it takes away all his power/strength) leaving him without any clear signs of life.
Similarly in Lk 9:39 ‘it hardly departs from him after it has broken him’ relays how the son is seriously weakened after each episode of affliction.

The only lexemes appearing in the Peshitta OT were the Peal of حبط and the Pael/Peal of stretching. In all, we observed several applications of the Peal of حبط: (1a) someone using a stick to ‘beat’ or ‘knock’ high olive tree branches (to obtain olives); (1b) someone using a stick to ‘thresh’ wheat stalks (to obtain the wheat grain); (1c) God ‘gathering up’ people (object implied; means unknown); and (2) storms of hail or heavy rain ‘destroying’ crops and/or people.

We observed that the Pael/Peal of ضق in the Peshitta OT had a variety of grammatical subjects and objects. Although we did not find any subjects or objects like the demonic affliction of spirit upon a boy, apparently whatever is ‘broken’ either ‘becomes inert’ or is ‘crushed’ into small pieces. The OT references display a similarity in that a force is able to reduce its object to insignificance, inactivity, ruin or dust. In all, this affirms what we found in our exegetical analysis. The fact that the demon, in both Mk 9:26 and Lk 9:39, reduces the son to ground level is enough to say, figuratively, that it ‘has crushed (him)’, ‘reduced (him) to nothing’ or ‘broken (his power)’.

In the case of Mk 9:26 it leaves him on the ground looking dead (used by the narrator), in the case of Lk 9:39 it is the summary action for the whole affliction (used by the child’s desperate father) so ‘broken (him)’ or ‘reduced (him) down to nothing’ fits both NT contexts.

Without any secure Greek correspondences for the Peal of حبط, our analysis did not rest heavily on any particular correspondence. Instead we observed the variety of Greek variants as generally hostile/violent actions of a spirit upon a child and acknowledged that some were more figurative than others (‘tear’ or ‘maul’ in Greek). A contextual meaning for the Peal of حبط (in Mk 9:18, 20) does not necessitate more than one sense for the two appearances, which indicate an action of assault that causes the victim to lose his balance. The supposed redundancy of ‘it beat him to the ground’ (or against the ground) with ‘and he fell to the ground’ (Mk 9:20) need not be avoided given a large proportion of verses in Greek Mark begin with και and are translated with ܘ without always implying a sequence of time, or entirely separate actions.
The Pael of ܡܥܣܗ had to be considered only from the perspective of its one NT context, according to the present methodology, as there are no other biblical contexts with which to compare its use. We can, therefore, only suppose a meaning generated by the context which is concerned with human relationships, power differentials, a harmful spirit and the need for hospitality.

Brockelmann struggled with our verb; in the first edition he gives the lexeme in Lk 9:42 as a Pael with a single gloss divellit (‘tear apart’) whilst in the second edition is indecisive between classifying it as Pael or Peal and gives a single gloss vexavit (‘shake, jolt’) thereby evidencing a shift from seeing that the demon is simply ‘tearing apart’ the boy (unspecific, open to ‘figurative’ interpretation) to ‘shaking him about’ (more concrete, less figurative). SL has decided on the Pael for Lk 9:42 and gives the gloss ‘to torment’. Our conjectured sense is based on whatever appears to be the most apt action, from the narrator’s viewpoint, for what the unclean spirit enacts upon the child that has already made more specific in Lk 9:39, namely it begins by coming upon him suddenly and ends by having broken all his strength, and apparently functions like the summary action in Lk 9:39 (crushed him/broken his strength) or the complete set of actions visible in Lk 9:39. Gwilliam also struggled here and translated ܡܰܥܣܶܗ as “et frendero fecit eum” (‘caused him to gnash his teeth’). Given that the narrative, in Luke, encourages a medical perspective (both folk and medical) of the illness which Jesus heals, it is possible that ‘convulse (him)’ is appropriate (more likely for the underlying Greek). Interestingly since it is connected with the Peal of ܫܚܩ in Lk 9:39 it may be worth keeping SL’s suggested gloss in mind since the morpho-phonology of the Peal of ܫܚܩ does resemble the verb ‘torment’ (that is, the Pael of ܫܢܩ, c.f. Mk 5:7//Lk 8:28).

9.14 Suggested Lexical Entries

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PEAL. ܡݲܚݲܐ PEAL. ܡݲܚݲܐ pf. 3fs. with sf. 3ms., ܡݲܚݲܐ act. pt. fs. to beat or knock (someone) down to the ground or toward the ground or against the ground, beat, knock down, beat (the life) out; wrestle down; throw down, of a non-speaking spirit’s frequent and sudden attacks upon a boy intended to take his life, “whenever it seizes him, beating him down” Mk 9:18 “when
the spirit saw him it immediately beat him down” Mk 9:20 cf. Peal مهذا، Pael مذا، cf. also Peal مذي، Ethpa مذي، Aph مذي، cf. also Peal مذي، Pael مذ، مذ، Pael مذ، مذ، Aph مذ، مذ، cf. also Ethpa مذ، مذ.

■ φήσσω/φήγωμι Mk 9:18(or φάσσω, or φίπτω). ■ συσπαράσσω Mk 9:20(or σπαράσσω, or ταράσσω).

Mk 9:18,20

ETHPA ܐܠܗܐ ܡܬܒܰܥܰܩ ܡܚܪܶܩܐ ܫܢܘܗܝ to struggle around on the ground (probably with limbs flailing about), writhe around, struggle convulsively, used of the son, afflicted by an unclean spirit, who finds it difficult to move or breathe “and he was writhing around and foaming” cf. Aphel مذ، and the phrase مذ، مذ، مذ، cf. also Ethpa مذ.

■ κυλίω/κυλιομαι

Mk 9:20.

PEAL مهذا, pf. 3ms. with sf. 3ms., مهذا, pf. 3fs. with sf. 3ms., to break the power (of someone) (literally or figuratively), break, break down, crush; tear, oppress, used of a spirit’s afflictions upon the child, “the demon cried out much and tore him, then went out” cf. Peal مذ، مذ، Pael مذ، مذ، Pael pass. pt. as adj. ماذ، Ethpa ماذ، cf. also Peal ماذ، Ethpa ماذ، Ethpe ماذ، cf. also Pael ماذ، Ethpe ماذ، Ethpe ماذ، cf. also Peal ماذ، Pael ماذ، ماذ، Ethpe ماذ، Ethpe ماذ، Ethpe ماذ.

PEAL or PAEL. ܡܰܥܣܶܗ pf. 3ms. with sf. 3ms (Peal in Jennings, Kiraz, CSD, TS; Pael in first edition Brockelmann, Peal or Pael in second edition Brockelmann; Aphel ئא in ‘many’ according to TS, Aphel pt. in Whish ئא to torment (someone) tyrannize, oppress, harass, crush; send into convulsions, of an unclean spirit afflicting a child “And as they were bringing him, the demon threw him down and tormented him” is translated by Gwilliam as “et frenderi fecit eum,” (“caused him to gnash his teeth”) cf. Peal ئא, Peal pass. pt. as adj. ئא, Pael ئא, Peal pass. pt. as adj. ئא, Ethpaal ئא, Ethpeal ئא pt., cf. also Peal ئא, Pael ئא, Pael pass. pt. as adj. ئא, adj. ئא, Aphel ئא, Ethpeel ئא, Ethpaal ئא pt., cf. also Pael ئא; cf. also Peal ئא, Peal ئא, Ethpeel ئא, Ethpaal ئא pt., Ethpaal ئא}

■ συσπαράσσω Lk 9:42 (or συνταράσσω).

Lk 9:42
Chapter 10. Conclusion: Summary, Critical Reflections, and Further Research

10.1 Summary of Results

In summary, the examination of lexeme 1, the noun لَخَنُي in Mt 3:10 (//Lk 3:9), determined a meaning in agreement with other lexicons but was slightly more contextually satisfactory because it recognised that لَخَنُي appears as a dreadful symbol of judgment/destruction (this dual use was confirmed by other OT contexts where it appeared simultaneously as a hand-held iron instrument for tree-felling and as a potential weapon).

The contextual meanings suggested for lexemes 2 and 3, the nouns لَخَنُي and لَخَنُي in Mt 5:18, were the same as already given in the lexicons. However, the suggestion of Davies and Allison that the underlying Greek κεραία might correspond to Hebrew ي (vav) is worth pursuing.

For lexeme 4, لَخَنُي in Mt 7:14, the methodology generated a meaning for the adjective which could not easily be separated from the meaning of its use in the phrase ‘a narrow entrance (to salvation)’. As the ‘narrowness’ in Mt 7:14 modifies a figurative (eschatological) entity its religious characteristics could be defined according to ethical and spiritual dimensions. At the narrative level of analysis, the adjective’s significance was seen to be related to the adjective and substantive زَعَرُ (the word most often used for the ‘little people’ in Matthew) since the kind of entrance is related rhetorically to the kind of people best suited to finding it and entering it.

Lexeme 5, the plural version of the noun لَخَنُي in Mt 8:20 (//Lk 9:58), was seen to indicate a fox’s home (a ‘place of dwelling’ for foxes). The elements most associated with a home were those contextually suggested by the absence of what Jesus as ‘the Human One’ at that time ‘did not have’, but even foxes ‘had’ namely a regular place to sleep, a place of retreat, and a place to settle down (or raise offspring). The lexicons recognise the same meaning but are not as narrow since they also include the ‘homes’ (shelters) of other animals.

The analysis of lexemes 6, the noun لَخَنُي (cf. lexeme 4), revealed that the noun لَخَنُي could not easily be separated from its adjective. In fact, it was not clear whether لَخَنُي should be given a meaning without its adjective (or even if it may be used without an adjective). This is partly due to the presently supposed theory of phraseology (i.e. the smallest meaningful unit is the phrase)
but deserves further consideration. The observation is something that, previously, only the careful lexicon-user would have noted.

As for lexeme 7, the Peal of ܚܫܐ, the meaning of the corresponding Greek given in LN was a distraction that was not fully avoided until the OT occurrences were examined. This demonstrated that it is not always easy to feign ignorance and suspend judgement when the given meanings in lexicons are already known (they were consulted prior to the development and implementation of the proposed methodology). The concluding result managed somewhat to combat the ambiguous phrasal verb given in CGELNT (‘spring up’) where it remained unknown to users whether or not the verb itself was meant to include ‘quickness’ of movement.

The result of examining lexeme 8, the Peal of ܥܨܒܐ, revealed the medical nature of the verb’s application in Lk 10:34 (‘to bandage’) which the Syriac lexicons were at risk of overlooking. The contextual application was closer to the meaning ‘to heal’ than the definition given in BDAG and LN for the corresponding Greek lexeme (καταδέω ‘to bind up [something]’). However, BDAG and LN both gave translation glosses that were much more helpful and specific than their given definitions. This suggests that these lexicons were more comfortable giving corpus-based meanings for glosses than for definitions.

The methodology employed on lexeme 9 revisited the Peal of ܫܚܐ in Mk 9:18, 20. The analysis observed that a threshing verb (beating with a downward motion and/or tearing effect) was being used transitively and excessively on an already vulnerable person in order to take his life (as an example of ‘spirit aggression’). The result, as in chapter 2, destabilized the tendency, witnessed in KPG, to offer ‘convulsive’ meanings suggestive of ‘medical’ symptoms, preferring instead to focus on the nature of the violence of the assault.

Similarly, the examination of lexeme 10, the Ethpaal of ܒܥܩ, did not require a medical ‘convulsive’ sense for the verb (in its application in Mk 9:20) so the first suggested gloss in KPG’s entry (be convulsed, writhe, roll about) could be downgraded. The suggested contextual meaning offered ‘to struggle around on the ground (probably with limbs flailing about)’ or ‘writhe around, struggle convulsively’.
The examination of Lexeme 11, the Peal of ܫܫܩ, revealed that other NT contexts were consistent in indicating the sense of ‘break (someone or something)’. But whether or not English can tolerate the gloss ‘break’ for an action used against a person (in a non-psychological sense) is less certain. Consequently ‘figurative’ may be an unhelpful and ambiguous label in a bilingual lexicon because what is figurative in one language might not be considered figurative in another. Researchers (biblical commentators and lexicographers) should probably specify for which language their uses of ‘figurative’ is best meant to apply.

The methodology employed on lexeme 12, the Pael of ܡܥܣ, was unable to compare any other contextual uses as no other biblical contexts were found. But this is where the methodology of multiple intratextual analyses proved able to deliver results. Whilst the earlier ‘background’ analysis (in chapter 2) could only draw attention to the variety of features apparent in Luke (where at least two perspectives were held in view: spirit-aggression and professional medical symptoms), and so the meaning might possibly be taken as either ‘to convulse (someone)’ or ‘to harass’, the later methodological analysis (prioritising the narrative context), however, called repeated attention to themes of hospitality, healing/restoration, and power differentials. Also the narrative analysis suggested a comparison with the episode in Lk 4:31–37 (where the spirit had not caused any harm, Lk 4:35c) whereas the spirit in Lk 9:42 was observably causing visible harm/distress to its victim (hence ‘harass’, ‘oppress’, ‘tyrannize’, or ‘torment’).

Chapter 2 (“The Problem of Context Delimitation: Deconstructing Previously-Constructed Contextual Meanings”) provided the impetus for developing a context-driven, intratextual, corpus-based methodology, initially setting out to resolve the ambiguity present in the Syriac lexicons for the meaning of the Peal of ܚܒܛ in Mk 9:18, 20. The source of the ambiguity was found to stem from the Greek lexicons and commentaries, based on a harmonised interpretation of the Gospel episodes. The chapter, accordingly, resolved to avoid being affected by such exegesis and instead sought to differentiate between the three Gospel accounts in Greek. Doing so required paying attention to narrative features of the text.

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490 Therefore, the context (as ambiguous/multifaceted) could not determine an unambiguous meaning.
The result of having to decide between the meanings offered in KPG for the Peal of ܚܒܛ revealed that what initially seemed to be the most contextual suggestion (the ‘convulsive’ meaning found in Jennings and KPG) was actually the least contextual. KPG’s first given meaning (“beat, batter, beat down”) had initially seemed to indicate a semantic divergence from the Greek. In fact, it was the Greek meaning that required re-examination. Similarly, in §2.4.2 and §2.4.4 supposing a Greek-Syriac divergence was found to be rather unsatisfactory in each case (despite the initial dissimilarity between Greek and Syriac lexical entries).

Given that the Syriac translation in the Peshitta Gospels closely followed the meaning of the Greek, it was only logical that the interpretation of the Greek would find its way into the Syriac lexicons—but such suggestions need not be replicated uncritically in the Syriac if it is known that they represent prematurely-made contextual meanings influenced by foreign intrusions.

Previously, Gospel commentaries and lexicons seemed not to have been paid sufficient attention to narrative aspects of the respective Gospel texts. Nor have they properly differentiated between parallel Gospel accounts.

From the outset, the focus on the Greek has remained relevant. Whether so much focus would be given to other lexical examples in the Peshitta’s source is unlikely. The results initially gained through the re-examination of several Greek and Syriac lexemes in chapter 2 seemed promising. However, the methodology arising from these results, when employed on other low-frequency lexemes, did not produce any startling results. Rather, the results of chapters 3–8 basically re-affirmed meanings already found in existing Syriac lexicons. Whilst the exegetical analyses were useful for the task of exegesis, they failed to contribute much ‘new’ in respect to lexical semantics. Still, such analyses remain valuable for testing already suggested meanings in the lexicons. As such the methodology offers another voice within the conversation of lexical semantics, where results may be found independently of the lexicons.

The thesis has not pursued strict ‘lexical meanings’ thought to apply across various contexts. Rather it only pursued ‘contextual meanings’ for several low-frequency lexemes. The thesis has proposed that the exegete need not be a lexicographer in order to offer contextual meanings for
low-frequency lexemes. In fact, the generalist exegete may be better placed to determine the meaning-in-context of a lexeme when he or she begins not with the lexical meanings given in lexicons but with the context under consideration. This is especially the case when lexicons (i.e. lexicographers) have inadvertently mingled contexts, since the exegete is better placed to address this issue by investing more time integrating analyses for a single contextual application).

10.2 Summary of Methodology
The lack of clarity concerning what NT lexicons are presently providing for their users when it comes to given meanings for low-frequency lexemes has remained an undiagnosed problem, redressed to some degree in the thesis. The resultant confusion for lexicon users concerning whether or not given meanings are contextual or lexical has not previously been well acknowledge, understood, or articulated. Consequently, there was little to engage with in published research, as the issues themselves first needed to be deciphered (see chapter 2). An extensive exploration of the issues involved in distinguishing between lexical and contextual meanings requires and deserves more research. Clarification is required for readers of lexicons concerning how low-frequency lexemes in the NT are treated and examined and on what contexts given meanings are based, including an articulation of the relationship between suggested definitions for low-frequency lexemes and given glosses.

As context is the most potent factor for determining meanings, so it must be delimited. The notion that the individual textual context should not be allowed to serve the interests of foreign contexts even when another context appears very similar (including a parallel in another Gospel) is difficult to achieve whilst evaluating meanings given in lexicons without prior independent exegesis—hence the need for the present contextual, corpus-focused approach.

The thesis asserted that the delimitation (and articulation) of context is more important than one’s linguistic theory. Indeed, it is the contextual suppositions at work within a given linguistic approach that most determine one’s results.

The present corpus-based proposal was accompanied by the supposed potential for the textual context to reveal enough useful data for a low-frequency lexeme. Textual contexts were
prioritised over other kinds of (conjectured) contexts. Therefore, the proposed methodology takes its cue from the anthropological distinction between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspectives, and extends this to apply to all texts so that ‘other’ texts are considered ‘foreign’ texts. This comports well with a narrative approach that prioritises a text’s own boundaries (by beginning with only the ‘final form’ of a text) by supposing that the text may offer its own answers to questions concerning its own vocabulary.

For Gospel lexemes, a narrative analysis was asserted as ‘primary’ to other ‘secondary’ concerns of conjectured ‘contextual backgrounds’ (including other Gospel parallels). A narrative analysis may compete with, or constrain, the results of a rhetorical analysis. That is, whilst rhetorical analysis can draw attention to unique elements of a textual composition, with an interest in how writers employ writing strategies to influence audiences (who were familiar with other texts, which is why the Gospel writers quote from, and allude to, OT texts), it has been argued here that influences from other texts must still be constrained methodologically. New Testament exegesis (including lexicography, both Greek and Syriac) stands to benefit from including narrative exegesis. The point has been long underestimated and/or overlooked. A satisfactory exegesis and lexicography of narrative texts, such as the Gospels, must take into account their literary nature. The proposal to include a narrative analysis presents a useful counterbalance to the tendency for making uncontrolled textual comparisons.

The proposed methodology resembled a ‘discourse analysis’ (or ‘text-linguistic’) approach that was text-focused, beginning ‘close up’ and increasing the horizons of analysis until eventually observing and comparing other NT parallels and other biblical texts. This from-the-ground-up approach examines the text from ‘close up’ then outwards in ever-widening units of analysis. The relationship between exegetical commentary and lexical entry has here been opened up to discussion. Potential remains for further exploration of the intersection between lexicographical enquiry and exegetical analysis.
The proposed methodology provides a means for the exegete to judge the results against the lexicons. In this way, it may be seen as one response to John Lee’s call for new lexical research to ‘start from scratch’.

The thesis has thus contributed to an improved articulation of the role of exegesis within the ‘conversation’ of lexical research, particularly in relation to contextual meanings for low-frequency lexemes. Greek lexicographers, such as Danker, have already seen themselves caught up in the task of biblical exegesis. Syriac exegetes also stand to benefit from an exegetical approach. Syriac NT exegesis is already interconnected with Greek NT exegesis and so it cannot afford to neglect a clear articulation of this relationship. The thesis has supposed and demonstrated that exegesis of the Peshitta Gospels can be informed by exegesis of the Koine Gospels, and vice versa.

The issue of application has been considered in regard to what can be expected of NT exegetes to be able to undertake. The proposed methodology offers an accessible analysis using only minimal linguistic suppositions (rather than specialised linguistic analyses that the average NT scholar is not trained to do). It has proposed and employed a methodology that does not specialise in any one kind of exegesis, but generally employs the kinds of exegesis widely used on the Greek Gospels by utilizing whatever seemed applicable to the Peshitta text (but see below §10.3).

In all, the need for an explicit replicable methodology for the exegete who encounters a low-frequency lexeme has been here addressed in a novel way. Whilst New Testament exegetes (including lexicographers) ostensibly have utilized biblical disciplines and non-biblical literature, it was here advised that the exegete defer examining lexemes in other literature according to a need to employ an archaeological principle of examining (textual) artefacts in situ. This frees the exegete from the obligation to analyse texts beyond his or her expertise and allows the exegete to prioritise his or her immediate corpus before venturing (tentatively, or allowing others to do so) into other literature from other corpora (the latter process was not presently undertaken).
The proposed methodology can be applied in cases where the investigator faces a lack of analysis by previous scholars since he or she can still proceed with the enquiry of the text according to the components introduced in §1.5 where the basic purposes and questions to ask of the text have been outlined. In all, the proposal is intended to be accessible to various scholars and beginning exegetes. It is designed to be advanced enough for professional use while also being accessible to non-professional exegetes and graduate students. Students may wish to use this methodology within their graduate studies for any textual components of analysis, particularly Gospel analysis. Lexicographers may wish to use this methodology for obtaining contextual meanings for low-frequency lexemes (for those who find multiple sorts of exegesis appealing but it may also intrigue those whose methods would not normally consider such forms of exegesis). Professional exegetes may use this methodology when researching a biblical verse. Bible translators may use this methodology for assisting with the translation of ambiguous passages. It thus stands against the tide of overspecialisation within New Testament Studies by asserting that the generalist exegete can still play a critical role within lexical research.

The thesis has affirmed the interdependence between lexemes and the phrases to which they belong. As such it somewhat contradicted the lexicographical tendency to pursue ‘acontextual’ lexical meanings. The thesis should be seen as complementary and supplementary to other lexical research.

10.3 Critical Reflections on the Principles of Similarity and Dissimilarly: How Semantic Divergences might be Pursued

An inherent weakness in the present approach is that it paid attention to what was commonly applicable to both Greek and Syriac texts, in order to avoid what was only applicable to the Greek. This was partly because the present interest was with Greek-based modern exegesis and partly because of a perception of the Syriac text as primarily a translated text which indirectly emphasised the meaning of the Greek (as source text). Consequently, it was often difficult to resist the urge to view the Peshitta as little more than an assistant for helping to interpret the source Greek. Thus unfortunately, the resultant methodology, like the methodology behind the
given meanings for the Peal of حط in Jennings and KPG, still remains at risk of overestimating the value of the Greek for exegeting the Syriac.

In retrospect it was unwise to develop a methodology based primarily on one difficult lexeme as the particular issues involved (re-evaluation of Greek exegesis) may not be representative of the kind of recurring issues involved in interpreting other low-frequency lexemes. Indeed, the number of potential Greek-Syriac correspondences dealt with in that particular case (Mk 9:18, 20) was disproportionately much higher than normal.

Due to the nature of the resultant methodology, the issue of ‘Greek-Syriac divergences in meaning’ was not properly explored. Presumably, an alternative methodology being developed from an alternative example (based on a Greek-Syriac divergence) would be better able to assume (and detect) divergence within and throughout its entire approach.

The present approach allowed for, and encouraged, observing differences between Gospel parallels but not so much between source text (Greek) and translated text (Syriac). A high degree of similarity was (pre)supposed between the Peshitta Gospels and Greek source texts. The thesis did not critique this ‘principle of similarity’ but neither did it hold to it uncritically. By accepting the consensus view on the origin of the Peshitta text, it was supposed that the older freer textform (‘Old Syriac’) had become to be seen as somewhat unsatisfactory, leading to a revision that provided a more conservative translation closer in line with an early-fifth century Greek textform (so by nature the Peshitta Gospels were meant to be similar to their corresponding Greek textform). But by upholding such a perspective, the methodology failed to pursue or exploit minor differences between the Greek and Syriac texts. Therefore, the present approach was relatively effective at observing what was similar (between the Greek and Syriac) and exegeting based on what was similar, but less effective at commenting on (or magnifying) what was dissimilar.

So a question remains: What about low-frequency lexemes which might benefit not from a supposed working principle of ‘similarity’ but instead from a supposed ‘principle of dissimilarity’? That is, one in which difference is assumed and exploited—one that is willing to completely set aside the meaning of the source text in favour of potential meanings generated by
the readers of the translated text. Though a working principle of dissimilarity has its own
problems and complexities\(^ {491} \) it has its own advantages too. Ultimately, it is the reader of a text
that gives meaning to the text, and so exegetes must ultimately attempt to study the full range of
readers (ancient and modern) and how they perceive to construct meaning on various levels
(lexical and rhetorical) determined of course by their immediate culture. So the supposition that
translation is always interpretation (and therefore as interpretation is by nature ethnocentric)
should not be withheld.\(^ {492} \)

The present working principle, that the Peshitta text closely resembles the meaning of the Greek
source, seems to hold well for the low-frequency lexemes presently studied as there was very
little indication of dissimilarity between our lexemes in Syriac and the underlying Greek. No
notable semantic divergences appeared between the Syriac and the corresponding contextual
meanings of low-frequency Greek lexemes (ᾰξίη; ἱώτα; κεραία; στενός; φαλέδς; ἔξανατέλλω;
καταδέω; ῥήσσω/ ῥάσσει/ ῥέπτει; σπαράσσω/ ἰσπαράσσω; even the label [ܩ] [ܩ] corresponding to
σεληνιάζομαι was not necessarily a clear semantic divergence, despite what a cursory reading of
the corresponding lexical entries might suggest). The Greek-Syriac similarities apparently
extended beyond the level of the lexeme and beyond the level of the sentence to the ‘larger’
components of rhetorical and narrative analyses.

The majority of Syriac lexical divergences in the Peshitta Gospels are far from contextually
inappropriate. It is not easy to find low-frequency Syriac lexemes that represent clear semantic
divergences (where the Syriac semantics cannot at all be implied from exegesis of the Greek).
But, presumably, potential remains for identifying and exploiting differences within the

\(^ {491} \) Williams, *Early Syriac Translation Technique*, is a study in relation to the pursuit of Greek textual criticism, i.e.
ascertaining the earliest Greek textform. Williams warns against the overuse of the Syriac versions for supporting
particular Greek readings. He provides 21 ‘rules’ to heed. Identifying a clear Greek-Syriac divergence is hardly ever
simple, especially if more than one Greek reading could potentially underlie the Syriac. Williams observes, for
example, that the addition of possessives is contextually dependent. Thus the translation for someone ‘calling out
with a loud voice’ depends on whether the reference is considered to be the “quality of sound produced (and the
quality is not inherently possessed)” or whether it is taken as “the individual’s voice (which *is* inherently possessed).”
The result in Lk 11:27 is that the Peshitta is “in general more literal than OS, but in its use of the possessive it is less
close to the Greek, which, ironically, is caused by its generally more literal rendering.”

\(^ {492} \) David Couzens Hoy, “Is Hermeneutics Ethnocentric?” in *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science Culture*, ed. David

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component of rhetorical analysis. This is to be expected as it is this component that requires attention be paid to other texts and other historical situations (i.e. studies in ‘background’). The narrative component also offers further potential for exploiting other differences. For example, chapter 6 did not comment on the Syriac use of the grammatically singular ‘[the] bird’ (_flight_ as against the Greek plural ‘birds’ (πετεινόν) supposing that the Syriac singular is simply the equivalent of a plural in the collective (cf. ‘the fowl of heaven’ in Mt 13:32) and hence the Syriac always maintains the singular in every NT correspondence. Nonetheless, there may be room to exploit such a ‘divergence’ by making an argument for a different rhetorical effect (and narrative effect) in the Syriac’s comparison of the singular ‘the man’ with a singular ‘bird’ (especially in terms of the potential representative/collective sense).

Future studies would do well to find and exploit differences between the Greek and Syriac texts, particularly, if possible, any studies focused on the historical situation of Syriac readers in the early fifth century (not the easiest or best attested period to study—the sixth century boasts the greater wealth of grammatical and theoretical activity). However, the implications for the thesis not researching such matters means a deficiency of incorporating any potentially important points of an early fifth-century Syriac worldview, such as ascertaining which biblical imagery might have sparked new relevance for its earliest readers within the then current political climate.

Identifying Syriac divergences would first require establishing the absence of Greek variants and then establishing that the given Syriac is not the ‘expected’ translation or that an alternative Syriac better fits with the era and method of Greek-Syriac translation. Whilst lexical divergences abound in the Old Syriac, divergences in the Peshitta are of more conservative types, as has been observed by Williams. The fact that textual critics in the twentieth century were too quick to (mis)take various Syriac words and phrases as evidence for a particular Greek reading (thinking that some patterns indicated literal ‘imitation’ of Greek syntagms) indicated a lack of knowledge about Syriac translation technique.

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493 An example noted by Williams, *Early Syriac Translation Technique*, 175, is that the Peshitta translators “employ the singular of لحم ‘bread’ irrespective of whether ἄρτος in its Vorlage is singular or plural” (…“[except] when a numeral or the word كم ‘how many’ occurs with لحم”).}
A divergence to note (Williams here suggests an apologetic motive) is found in Mt 27:60 where the Syriac diverges from the Greek singular ‘he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away’ to the plural (‘they rolled . . . and went away’): “According to P the stone required several people to roll it.” 494 Whilst the Greek does not explicitly indicate that Joseph of Arimathea was accompanied by others to do these things (i.e. to obtain Pilate’s permission for the body, to take the body, to wrap it, to put it in the tomb, and to roll a large stone in front) presumably he was assisted by others. Nevertheless, rhetorically, in the Peshitta, the greatness of covering the tomb (and therefore of uncovering the tomb) receives more emphasis as a deliberate modification (albeit not at odds with the overall semantics of the underlying Greek). 495

It is to be expected that the many ‘additions’ of proper nouns in the Syriac versions will alter the effect of the reading/listening experience on both a rhetorical level and a narrative level (narrative analysis being likely to reveal effects less deliberate than that of rhetorical analysis).

Interesting ‘divergences’ may arise by examining wordplays in the Peshitta Gospels. Some are perhaps less deliberate than others, occurring between words having the same root letters such as, “seek” (Peal of حم) and “need” (Ethpeel of حا) in Mt 6:32. More deliberate wordplays in Peshitta Matthew are probably: “wide” ( אָמוֹן) and “road” ( אִדּּוֹן) (Mt 7:13); “hairs” ( אִזְנְיָה) and “numbered” (Peal of חָדָד) (Mt 10:30); “dance” (Pael of רְכַד) and “mourn” (Aphel of רְכַד) (Mt 11:17); “refresh” (Aphel of נְחֶם) and “rest” ( אָשָּׁכְכָם) (Mt 11:28–29); and “small” ( אֶמְנָה) and “seed” ( אֶמְנָה) (Mt 13:32). 496

An example of a lexical divergence of a relatively low-frequency lexeme is found in the Greek-Syriac correspondence for “donkey” in Lk 10:34. Again the divergence is not particularly semantic (the divergence was left uncommented on in chapter 8 above). The noun in the Greek

494 Ibid., 181.
495 The addition of proper nouns in Syriac make the subject of a verb explicit for an implied Greek subject. This accounts for many of the lexical divergences asserted by Williams as readily explained by the desire to make the translation less ambiguous. Ibid., 23–37.
496 These examples are from footnotes in Magiera, Aramaic Peshitta.
is less specific than the Syriac. The Greek corresponding to the Syriac noun "_donkey, ass" is the neuter noun θηνος which, lexically, is probably just a "four-legged beast," (or “livestock” as it is usually used in the plural for flocks and herds). In the singular it would indicate a “beast, as an ox or sheep” (LS). It occurs only four times in the NT. So the ‘expected’ lexical correspondence might be for the Syriac translator to have used the corresponding "beast, cattle" in Lk 10:34 (just as it is in the later Harklean text). But it is not "beast but that is found here in both the Old Syriac and the Peshitta. This Syriac ‘divergence’ is only ‘lexical’ since the contextual meaning of the Greek noun is clearly more specific—its semantics is considered readily identifiable by Greek lexicographers. Compare Friberg et al.:

Indian, or ὖνος

The contextual meaning of the Greek θηνος in Lk 10:34 (τὸ ἵδιον θηνος “his own [pack] beast”) is thus “a [domesticated] beast used for riding or for transportation of goods,” hence a donkey or ass (cf. also LS a “horse or mule for riding”). So the Syriac can hardly be said to have ‘diverged’ semantically (it has correctly identified the semantics). However, as Falla has noted, the translator has preferred the more specific noun "beast, cattle" for poetic reasons, that is, it alliterates with the preceding ‘wine’ (طاحم). Thus wordplay is created between the two nouns of the same consonants (for ‘wine’ and ‘donkey’; حمط and حمط).

Elsewhere (seven other NT occurrences: Mt 21:2, 5, 7; Mk 9:42; Lk 13:15; 17:2; Jn 12:14) "usually translates ὅνος (ὅναριον once and the adjective ὅνικος once). Therefore a similar opportunity for wordplay was already present in Greek (but not used), where the Gospel author (or any copyist) could easily have opted to use ὅνος along with ὅνος (i.e. to produce ὅνον and ὅνον in the objective case). It is also possible that ὅνος might already have been prompted to mind (to

497 The same pattern from less specific to more specific was, however, observed for the corresponding nouns for ‘soil’ in Mt 13:5 in chapter 7.

498 Friberg et al., *Analytical Lexicon*, 4:239.

the translators of the Old Syriac) by ܢܘ and in turn have helped suggest a similar Syriac
wordplay (ܓܕ and ܫܐ).

Thus the first, and most likely, place for identifying and exploiting Greek-Syriac dissimilarities is
to be found within rhetorical analysis. It would be well worth expanding the rhetorical analysis
component so as to focus more attention on Syriac poetics. It might also be expanded to identify
readers’ early fifth-century background. This would mean expanding the comparison of lexical
usage elsewhere (in both biblical and non-biblical texts) as rhetorical analysis can take other texts
into consideration (intertextuality). Lexical usage elsewhere might then be compared whilst
commenting on the given Gospel context. Such comparisons would also suit those who prefer a
more lexicographical approach (which intends to take into account a variety of contexts at once).

Similarly, narrative analysis holds further potential for highlighting the effect of various lexical
divergences (or alleged divergences) found in the Peshitta Gospels. Taken together the amassed
differences will undoubtedly make for a different reading experience over an entire Gospel
narrative.

Ideally, one would need to make more space within each component to focus on any kinds of
differences that might be detected along the way—explicitly noting any missing and/or
additional elements in the Syriac for each exegetical component. Within the penultimate step (the
thirteenth component of the present methodology) the exegete would then need to take stock of
any amassed differences so that the results can be adjusted accordingly.

In all, to control the issue of semantic divergences would require a modified methodology
designed with an eye for observing, and magnifying, difference (rather than an eye for seeing
what is similar). Ideally, the mind behind such a modified methodology would have a tendency
to detect and exploit difference(s) between source text and translated text. Such a modified
methodology could then be useful to others (like the present author) who might less naturally
tend to observe potential translational difference(s).
10.4 Further Research

As already discussed concerning the pursuit of Greek-Syriac divergences (§10.3), further research by others will build on that proposed here by determining how to include further historical background analysis. Hopefully this will still remain within a framework that promotes and includes narrative analysis. Eventually one’s exegetical analysis must extend into the world of early readers and their supposed background knowledge. The thesis only included very minimal ‘background’ concerns within the components of genre analysis and rhetorical analysis. Further work is still required for integrating historical background work at various levels of analysis.

Some scholars have already attempted to integrate narrative criticism with socio-historical enquiry of the Greek Gospels. For example, Warren Carter and John Heil have employed an audience-oriented approach that “seeks to locate the interaction of text and reader in a particular socio-historical context.”

Also advantageous for future research will be studies that have a stronger connection with theory, namely literary theory, linguistic theory, and lexicographical theory. There is plenty of room for more lexicographical theory to be found within biblical lexicography. Work based on a particular linguistic theory will undoubtedly present further syntactic and discourse grammatical insights for future researchers with particular linguistic training. Literary modes of analysis that promote intratextual principles of analysis may offer further avenues impacting on lexical research. The kind of literary theory underpinning the present work was admittedly very basic, but was still able to generate results.

Ultimately, the methodology should be expanded so as to employ scholars of different fields who are specialists in their fields of study, and who consult each other in a more meaningful way to utilize solutions in one field by finding out what is transferable into another field (in this way, the ‘wheel isn’t being re-invented’ indefinitely). Very broadly, the present methodology is already a prototype for how the different fields might engage in discussion and how various branches of research might work together towards integration of analyses.

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It is hoped that other research will be used alongside the proposed methodology so that more precise categories of meanings for words of low frequency might be continued to be explored and refined. Ideally, future research will be interdisciplinary and collaborative rather than isolated solo projects.
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