

THE ADVANTAGE OF THE ARAMAIC IN SOLVING TEXTUAL DIFFICULTIES

By David Lee Burris



CAMEL GOING THROUGH A "NEEDLE'S EYE."

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."—MATT. XIX. 24.

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



Not knowing the 'Eye of the Needle' was a small fixed door in the city gate, Gus looked rather foolish attempting to put Jesus words to the test. **Mk 10:25, Lk 18:24**





Thanks to Richard Germain (See Mark 10:25)

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YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO FIT A CAMEL THROUGH A NEEDLE

IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL TO GO THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE THAN FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. - JESUS



Aramaic: The Bible's third language

POSTED BY [STEVEN ANDERSON](#) IN [BIBLICAL LANGUAGES](#)

Aramaic has been in some ways a forgotten language in biblical studies, except at a very high academic level. The New Testament is written in Greek; nearly all the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, while the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the LXX) is significant to biblical studies. Yet 268 verses of the Bible were written in a language called Aramaic.

The portions of Scripture that were written in Aramaic include [Ezra 4:8–6:18](#) and [7:12–26](#) (67 verses), [Daniel 2:4b–7:28](#) (200 verses), [Jeremiah 10:11](#), and various proper names and single words and phrases scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. Despite the relatively small percentage of Scripture that is written in this language, the Aramaic portion of the Bible is disproportionately significant because of the importance of the book of Daniel to biblical prophecy. Aramaic is also important for New Testament studies, as several direct quotes from Jesus and others are preserved in the original Aramaic that was spoken by Palestinian Jews of the Second Temple period. New Testament verses which include Aramaic words transliterated by Greek letters are: [Matt 5:22](#); [27:46](#); [Mark 5:41](#); [7:34](#); [10:51](#); [14:36](#); [John 1:42](#); [20:16](#); [Acts 9:36](#), [40](#); [Rom 8:15](#); [1 Cor 16:22](#); [Gal 4:6](#).

In the Old Testament, four verses make a direct reference to the Aramaic language: [2 Kings 18:26](#), [Ezra 4:7](#), [Isaiah 36:11](#), and [Daniel 2:4](#). Each of these verses calls Aramaic “Aramaic” (אַרַמִּית, an adverbial form of אַרַמִּי), though this used to be translated as “Syrian” or “Chaldee” in English. Aramaic is called “Hebrew” (Ἑβραϊκὴ or Ἑβραϊστί) in the New Testament, since it was the tongue of the Hebrews ([John 5:2](#); [19:13](#), [17](#), [20](#); [20:16](#); [Acts 21:40](#); [22:2](#); [26:14](#)). Some newer translations render the Greek word for “Hebrew” in these verses as “Aramaic,” which recognizes that these verses refer to the language we now call Aramaic.

Aramaic was originally the language of the Arameans, who were comprised of tribes that lived along the Euphrates River. Two of the most prominent of these tribes were the Syrians to the northwest, and the Chaldeans to the southeast. The word *Aramaic* is derived from *Aram*, a son of Shem who was the progenitor of the Arameans. In the earliest stages of the history of Aramaic, the language was only spoken in Aramean locales, including the area where Laban lived (cf. [Gen 31:47](#); [Deut 26:5](#)). However, as the Syrians and Chaldeans gained prominence in the ancient Near East, their tongue became established as an international language of commerce and diplomacy, gradually displacing Akkadian.

Akkadian was still the official language of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, although [2 Kings 18:26](#) indicates that Aramaic was already becoming established as a *lingua franca* of the ancient Near East by 700 BC. When the Chaldeans subsequently conquered Assyria, it was natural for them to use their own language of Aramaic as the administrative language of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, rather than adopting Akkadian. This is why [Daniel 2:4](#) says the wise men of Babylon addressed the king in Aramaic, and why the following section of the book of Daniel is written in Aramaic. After the conquest of Babylon by Persia, the Persians also established Aramaic as the official language of their vast empire. This is why the portions of Ezra which record official correspondence are written in Aramaic.

At the time when the books of Daniel and Ezra were written, most Jews could speak and understand both Hebrew and Aramaic. **They understood Hebrew as the language spoken at home, among themselves, and in the reading of the Scriptures, while Aramaic was the language spoken in broader society. Over time, Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the primary language spoken by the Jews who lived in Palestine and regions to the east. The Jews had not learned Aramaic in Palestine (cf. [2 Kgs 18:26](#)), but they had to learn it in exile, since it was the language of their captors.**

Thus, the parts of the Old Testament which were composed in Aramaic were written in that language as a result of the Babylonian captivity.

Because of this, **Aramaic was the native tongue of our Lord**; Hebrew was rarely used as a spoken language by Jews of the first century AD.^[1] There are several places where the Gospel writers preserve quotations from Jesus in the original Aramaic, including His cry from the cross, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* ([Mark 15:34](#)). These words expressed Christ's deepest feelings at a time of great personal anguish and emotion. That He spoke these words from [Psalm 22:1](#) in Aramaic, rather than from the Hebrew original or the Greek Septuagint translation, shows that Aramaic was the language that He knew most intimately. Thus, *the New Testament preserves Aramaic words because Aramaic was the mother tongue of Palestinian Jews* in the first century AD.

The Greek of the New Testament was influenced by Aramaic, and so contains some Aramaic idioms and forms of expression, such as the phrase "answered and said." Although the degree of Aramaic influence on the Greek of the New Testament has been a subject of much debate, it is fair to say that the style of New Testament Greek is Semiticized to one degree or another. But it is not true that parts of the New Testament were originally written in Aramaic, as some have claimed. No manuscript of any part of the New Testament has ever been discovered that is written in the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic dialect known to Jesus and the apostles.

After the resurrection of Jesus, the Syriac dialect of Aramaic became the language of the Syrian church. Aramaic also remained an important language for the Jews. Because of this, there are two major Aramaic translations of the Old Testament, the Jewish Targums and the Syriac Peshitta. There are a number of important Syriac versions of the New Testament. Much of Jewish rabbinic literature, and nearly all Syrian Christian literature, is written in Aramaic. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were also written in Aramaic.

Both Aramaic and Hebrew are West Semitic languages. Thus, Aramaic and Hebrew share many of the same linguistic characteristics and modes of expression. Overall, Hebrew grammar and morphology is somewhat closer to proto-Semitic, especially in its patterns of vocalization, though Aramaic has a fuller complement of distinct verbal stems. Some distinctive characteristics of Aramaic include the frequent use of the participle for a finite verb, the versatile particle ܕ, the use of a determined form instead of a prefixed definite article, and such idioms as "son of man" (for "man") and "answered and said" (for "said"). Because of the importance of Aramaic in the Second Temple period, Hebrew gradually began to be written in Aramaic letters during that time, and Hebrew has used the Aramaic square script ever since.^[2] However, Syriac and other dialects of Aramaic use different scripts, while the Targumim have a system of pointing that differs from the Masoretic pointing of the Old Testament.

One of the peculiarities of biblical Aramaic is that the divine name יהוה (*Yahweh*) is never used. For some reason, this name was only used in Hebrew. However, the term אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיָא (*the God of heaven*) occurs very frequently in Aramaic, much more than in Hebrew. It is also interesting that there are no Old Testament books written entirely in Aramaic. This is apparently to retain the character of the Old Testament as a Hebrew text.

Because of the very long linguistic history of Aramaic, and the diverse number of groups that have spoken it, there are quite a variety of Aramaic dialects, of which Syriac is the most prominent. Some eighty percent of extant Aramaic writing is in Syriac, a language which is still spoken today (in various dialects) and is used in the liturgy of some Eastern churches. There are also distinct differences between different chronological periods of Aramaic. Although liberal scholars have long attempted to deny it, the Aramaic of both Daniel and Ezra is of the Imperial Aramaic dialect that would have been in use in the sixth century BC. It is noticeably different from both the Aramaic of Qumran and from first-century AD Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.

While Hebrew was used sparingly outside of the Bible, Aramaic was used very broadly. There is a huge corpus of Aramaic literature. From about 600 BC until AD 700, Aramaic was the primary trade language of the ancient Near East. It was also the primary spoken language of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia at the time of Christ. **Aramaic was only displaced by Arabic when the Muslims conquered the Middle East**—though the language never died out completely, and is still spoken in pockets of Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. **Aramaic is possibly the language with the longest continuous written record in the world.** Because of the broad use of Aramaic outside of the Bible, there is rarely any doubt about the meaning of words or constructions in biblical Aramaic, as there are many opportunities to research their usage in extrabiblical literature.

Although there is only a limited amount of biblical material composed in Aramaic, the influence of the Aramaic language is felt throughout the Old and New Testaments, as it was present in the background from Genesis until Revelation. Aramaic also had a prominent place in the early church and in postbiblical Judaism. But insofar as it is directly used in the Bible, Aramaic is the language of the captivity and of the Redeemer.

Postscript: For recommended resources for the study of Biblical Aramaic, see [this post](#).

[1] Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there has been a debate over the extent to which Aramaic had displaced Hebrew in Palestine by the first century AD. However, first-century AD inscriptions in Palestine are almost exclusively in Aramaic (or Greek), and Aramaic is consistently used by Jesus, rather than Hebrew. Jesus probably understood Hebrew, but as a literary, rather than spoken, language. He would have known Greek as a second language and spoke it on some occasions (as when dealing with Gentiles), but He would have been more at home in Aramaic.

[2] The Aramaic square script is also called the “Jewish script,” the “square script,” or the “Assyrian script.” Three stages in the development of this script at Qumran are called the “archaic script” (250-150 B.C.), the “Hasmonean script” (150-30 B.C.), and the “Herodian script” (30 B.C. – 70 A.D.). Despite the prevalence of the square script in Hebrew writing, twelve Qumran fragments were found written in a paleo-Hebrew script similar to the original Hebrew script in which most of the Old Testament was written, while several other Qumran manuscripts used the square script for the main body text and the paleo-Hebrew script for *nomina sacra*. See E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), [206](#)-7.

Aramaic as the Language of the Jews

In order to understand the origins of the targums and to grasp the problems involved in a scientific study of extant targumic texts, it is first necessary to consider the evolution of the Aramaic language and its use by the Jews.

1. Stages of the Aramaic Language

The Arameans enter historical records in the late twelfth century BCE as a nomadic people invading the territory of the Assyrian Empire. About the tenth century BCE one branch of these nomads, known as Chaldaeans, settled in southern Mesopotamia. The Arameans penetrated Syria to a much greater extent and founded there a number of city-states, which retained an independent existence until they fell to the advancing Assyrian Empire in the eighth century. After this the Arameans survived as traders and merchants, and groups of them are later found in different parts of the Persian Empire, even as far south as Elephantine in Egypt.

i. Old Aramaic

The earliest recorded Aramaic is found in inscriptions from the Aramean states of northern Syria. This earliest form of the language lasted from about 950 to 700 BCE. The evidence of the inscriptions reveals that during this period there existed no uniform standard Aramaic. What we have are a number of Aramaic dialects, each influenced by the Semitic but non-Aramaic language of the surrounding district.

ii. Official Aramaic (ca. 700–300 BCE)

Being a much easier language to learn and write than Accadian (the language of Assyria and Babylon) and due to the somewhat ubiquitous character of the Arameans, Aramaic in time came to be accepted as the international language of diplomacy and trade. From 2 Kings 18:26 (= Isaiah 36:11) we learn that in 701 BCE it was understood and spoken by the diplomats of Assyria and Judah, but not by the ordinary people of Jerusalem. About a century later a Palestinian king (probably that of Ashkelon) wrote for help to the king of Egypt in Aramaic. During the Persian period Aramaic was the language used by the Persian chancery, and was widely employed for trade purposes and international correspondence. It was used by the Jews in Egypt. Inscriptions and other texts in Aramaic are found from places as far apart as Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because of its use by the chancery of the Persian Empire, the Aramaic of this period is also known as *Imperial Aramaic* (*Reichsaramäisch*). The language of these texts is uniform; there is no evidence of any dialectal differences. From this, however, one would not be justified in concluding that dialects did not exist in the spoken language, as they had in the earlier period. The influence of the Persian chancery is sufficient to explain the uniformity of this literary Aramaic. We can ascribe the Aramaic portions of the biblical book of Ezra to this period.

iii. Middle Aramaic (ca. 300 BCE–200 CE?)

With the advent of the Greek Empire, Greek replaced Aramaic as the official language of the chanceries. When new peoples came to write down Aramaic, dialectal differences are noticeable. The earliest attested form of Middle Aramaic is that of the book of Daniel (ca. 166 BCE). To Middle Aramaic also belongs *Nabatean*, the language used for inscriptions and official acts by the Nabateans, who were Arabs. They probably took this language from Idumea, after their penetration of the region. Arabic, however, has also influenced Nabatean. Our earliest Nabatean texts are from the early mid-second (or possibly from the third) century BCE; the latest from the third century CE. Closely allied to Nabatean in many respects is *Palmyrene*, found in texts from Palmyra and Doura-Europos and elsewhere from the first century BCE to the third century CE. Palmyrene, as Nabatean, while belonging to Official Aramaic, already reveals some features of what will later appear as Eastern Aramaic. This is possibly due to an oriental influence in Palmyra. From the second century CE we have the *Aramaic Hatra inscriptions* where two peculiarities of oriental Aramaic are already visible.

Coming now to Jewish Aramaic of this period we have the new texts from Qumran, Murabba'at, and the letters of Bar Cochba. Apart from this we have precious little: the *Ta'anith* Scroll (late first century CE), short inscriptions on tombstones and ossuaries, a few Aramaic words in the New Testament and in Josephus, and short sentences and texts in Tannaitic literature. To these we shall return in greater detail later.

iv. Later Aramaic (ca. 200–700 CE)

We now have two clearly defined branches of Aramaic. On the one hand *Western Aramaic*, which included Syro-Palestinian Christian Aramaic, Samaritan Aramaic and Palestinian (or Galilaean and Judaeae?) Jewish Aramaic; on the other hand *Eastern Aramaic*, i.e. Syriac, Babylonian Jewish talmudic Aramaic and Mandaic. We may add that a highly corrupt form of Aramaic is still spoken in three villages of Syria and in some few areas of Iraq.

The reader will excuse this schematic presentation of Middle and Later Aramaic. The dates given are those of Joseph A. Fitzmyer. The question of the evolution of Aramaic and the early presence of dialects is an extremely complicated one. What the evidence for the centuries around the turn of the era reveals is the presence of dialects showing through on various occasions. Our interest here is the language spoken by the people during this period, and the material at our disposal is not the most apt to reveal this to us. Much of the evidence comes from inscriptions or formal contracts. Both of these, the former in particular, tend to be archaic. The Qumran writings, and some at least of the rabbinic texts, are of a literary nature. Neither one nor the other need reproduce the language spoken by the people.

2. Use of Aramaic among the Jews

At the Exile (as in 701 BCE) the language spoken by the Jews was Hebrew. In New Testament Palestine the language generally spoken by them was Aramaic, although in some areas Hebrew, in its later mishnaic form, continued to be used. Greek was also known and used to some extent. When the general change-over from Hebrew to Aramaic took place we cannot say.

It may be that at the return from the Exile or shortly afterwards the Jews, in the main, spoke Aramaic. In the latter half of the fifth century BCE Nehemiah set himself to remedy the problem of mixed marriages in Judah. Many of the Jews had married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. “And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod [Hebrew: *ashdodith*], and they could not speak the language of Judah [Hebrew: *yehudith*], but the language of each people” (Nehemiah 13:24). The “language of Judah” is probably Hebrew which was then being neglected in favor of the surrounding languages or dialects. These were probably, but not certainly, **Aramaic dialects spoken by the neighboring non-Jewish populations of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab.** The Jews of Judah themselves were probably bilingual at this same period. Their co-religionists in Egypt were at this very time corresponding with Jerusalem on religious matters through the medium of Aramaic. The strong Aramaic influence on the later Hebrew books of the Old Testament argues towards a growing use of Aramaic among the Jews of Palestine. The fact that almost half the book of Daniel is written in Aramaic is a strong argument that by 166 BCE this language was commonly spoken among them. This it certainly was by the first century CE.

3. Aramaic in First-Century Palestine

Determination of the precise form of Aramaic used in Palestine in the time of Christ is of capital importance for a study of the Aramaic substratum of the Gospels and other New Testament writings. It is also important to ascertain whether the Aramaic of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch can be taken to represent the spoken language of Palestine, or of some area in Palestine, in Christ’s day. This question being of an extremely delicate nature, it is necessary to move cautiously, not allowing preconceived ideas to color one’s judgment. We must first of all consider the evidence, asking the reader to bear with the introduction of some philological details indispensable to any discussion of the problem.

From the first century BCE to 70 CE, but mainly from about CE 1 to 70, we now have a good number of Aramaic texts from Qumran. As already noted, from the first century we also have the rabbinic text *Megillat Ta’anit* (“Scroll of Fasting”), some Aramaic words or phrases in the New Testament and in the works of Josephus, as well as a few inscriptions on tombstones and ossuaries.

Dating from a later period (70–135 CE), from Wadi Murabba’at and the neighboring area we have Aramaic texts containing contracts and some letters written by Bar Cosba (Bar Cochba), leader of the second Jewish revolt (132–35 CE). From the third century onwards we have a number of Jewish inscriptions and other texts in Aramaic.

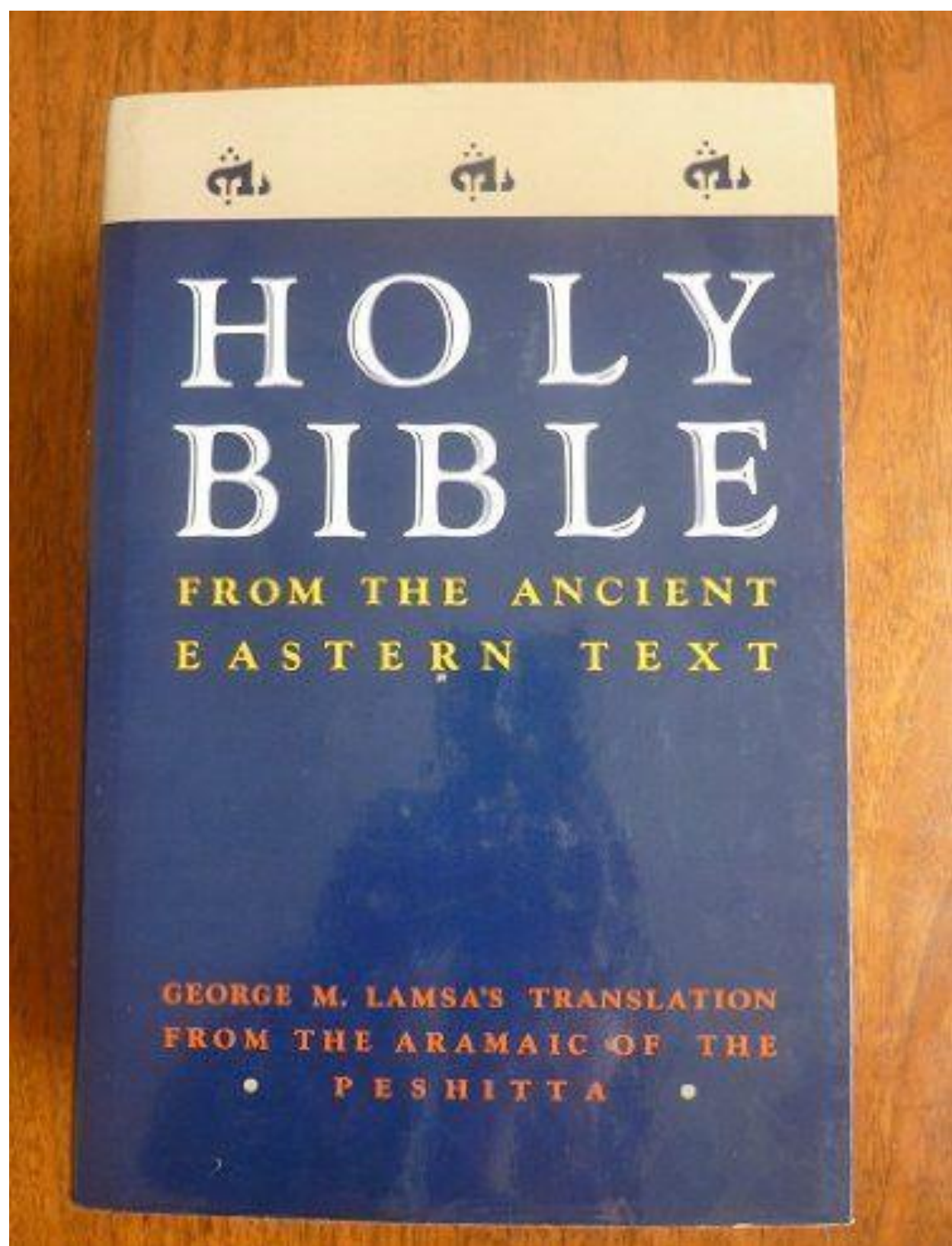
Palestinian Aramaic, as found in the Palestinian Targums, the Palestinian Talmud and the Palestinian midrashim, has certain peculiarities which distinguish it sharply from Old Testament Aramaic, from the Aramaic of Qumran and Murabba’at and from that of the Targum of Onkelos and of the “Babylonian” Targum of the Prophets. Thus, for instance, in Palestinian Aramaic “to see” is expressed by *h^ama*, in the Aramaic of the other texts by *h^aza*; “for” or “because” (= Hebrew *ki*) is expressed by *’arum*, absent from Qumran and expressed in the Targum of Onkelos and in the Targum of the Prophets by *’rê*. In certain cases in Palestinian Aramaic the letter *He* (= h) is elided, whereas in the other texts it is written.

Thus, for instance, “his servants” in Palestinian Aramaic is *’abdoi*, but in the other texts *’abdohi*; “his brother” is *’ahui*, in the other texts, *’ahuhi*; “on him” is *’aloi*, in the other texts *’lohi*. Another distinguishing feature of the Aramaic of the Palestinian Targum is that when it distinguishes the accusative by the use of a special particle (called *signum accusativi*), the particle it uses is regularly *yat*, whereas in Qumran Aramaic the *signum accusativi* is the letter *l* (*lamed*) prefixed to the accusative.

The changed attitude towards the relevance of the Aramaic of the Palestinian Targums did not, and could not, impede the quest for the Aramaic substratum for the Gospel message, for the Gospels in general (particularly the Synoptics). It is agreed that the chief center of Jesus’ ministry and of the Gospel proclamation was Galilee and that the language spoken in Galilee was principally Aramaic. It is also agreed that the chief language used by Jesus in his preaching and in teaching his disciples was Aramaic, even if Greek was also known in Galilee and if Jesus also knew and might have occasionally spoken Greek. The canonical Gospels, however, are in Greek and were composed in that language. The transfer of the message from the Aramaic-speaking stage in Galilee to the community or communities in which the Gospel message was formulated in Greek is not easy to trace. It has in part to do with the history of the earliest Christian mission. Jesus’ public mission began in Galilee. According to Mark 14:28 on his way to Gethsemane Jesus told his disciples that after his resurrection he would go before them into Galilee (reproduced in Matthew 26:32, but not in Luke). After the resurrection the young man at the tomb told the women to remind his disciples and Peter of this promise (Mark 16:7, reproduced in Matthew 28:7, not in Luke). Matthew’s Gospel ends with the appearance of Jesus to the Eleven in Galilee, and with the command to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:16–20). The Fourth Gospel, in an epilogue (John chapter 21), also ends with an account of an appearance of Jesus on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). Luke omits all reference to a command to return to Galilee or to any post-resurrection appearance there. On the contrary Jesus’ final command to his followers before his ascension was to stay in the city (Jerusalem) until they were clothed by the power from on high (at Pentecost) (Luke 24:49). The Acts of the Apostles tells how they carried out this command (Acts 1:12–26).

Whatever of the missionary mandate was given in Galilee, Galilee itself seems to have played little or no role in the early Christian mission. There is only one reference to it for this period in the entire New Testament, in a generalizing comment in the Acts of the Apostles (9:31): “The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were left in peace, building themselves up and living in the fear of the Lord.” All the New Testament evidence, both of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul, points to Jerusalem as the center of the early Christian mission. It is there Paul goes to meet Peter and the other “pillars.” This early Jerusalem church was actively bilingual, composed of “Hebrews,” speaking Aramaic or Hebrew, and Greek-speaking Hellenes. It was in settings such as these that the Gospel message, originating in Aramaic, was transmitted and formulated, probably both in Greek and Aramaic, and possibly partly in Hebrew.¹

¹ McNamara, M. (2010). [*Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*](#) (Second Edition, pp. 85–93). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



In the first century, Jesus and his earliest followers certainly spoke Aramaic for the most part, although they also knew Hebrew. Therefore, the Gospel message was first preached in the Aramaic of the Jews of Palestine. Modern scholarship tells us that the originals of the Four Gospels and of other parts of the New Testament were written in Greek; this is disputed by the Church of the East and by some noted Western scholars. Regardless of which view one may accept, Aramaic speech is an underlying factor and it is unquestionably true that documents written in Aramaic were drawn on by writers of the New Testament, the basic inspired form of the Christian message. Aramaic was the language of the Church that spread east, almost from the beginning of Christianity, from Antioch and Jerusalem, beyond the confines of the Roman Empire. This differed from the language of Palestine in choice of words and grammatical forms rather more extensively than does American English from British English and in written form these differences became regular and standardized. Under any conditions by the fifth century A.D. the Peshitta version in its present form held the field by universal acclaim.

But the winning language was Aramaic, with its handier alphabetic script. The sequel showed that commerce and culture may be more important than politics in making a language's fortune; for the speakers of Aramaic were politically of no account in the Achaemenian Empire..." The Persians used the Aramaic language because this tongue was the language of the two Semitic empires, the empire of Assyria and the empire of Babylon. Aramaic was so firmly established as the lingua franca that no government could dispense with its use as a vehicle of expression in a far-flung empire, especially in the western provinces. Moreover, without schools and other modern facilities, Aramaic could not be replaced by the speech of conquering nations. Conquerors were not interested in imposing their languages and cultures on subjugated peoples. What they wanted was taxes, spoils, and other levies. The transition from Aramaic into Arabic, a sister tongue, took place after the conquest of the Near East by the Moslem armies in the 7th century, A.D.

The Scriptures in the Church of the East, from the inception of Christianity to the present day, are in Aramaic and have never been tampered with or revised, as attested by the present Patriarch of the Church of the East.

The Biblical manuscripts were carefully and zealously handed down from one generation to another and kept in the massive stone walls of the ancient churches and in caves. They were written on parchment and many of them survive to the present day. When these texts were copied by expert scribes, they were carefully examined for accuracy before they were dedicated and permitted to be read in churches. Even one missing letter would render the text void. Easterners still adhere to God's commandment not to add to or omit a word from the Scriptures. The Holy Scripture condemns any addition or subtraction or modification of the Word of God. "You shall not add to the commandment which I command you, neither shall you take from it, but you must keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Deut. 4:2. "Everything that I command you, that you must be careful to do; you shall not add nor take from it." Deut. 12:32. "Do not add to his words; lest he reprove you, and you be found a liar." Prov. 30:6. "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from the tree of life and from the holy city and from the things which are written in this book." Rev. 22:19.

Easterners are afraid that they may incur the curse if they make a change in the Word of God. Some of these ancient manuscripts go back to the 5th century A.D. The oldest dated Biblical manuscript in the world is that of the four Books of Moses, 464 A.D., which now lies in the British Museum. Another one is Codex Ambrosianus. Some of it goes back to the 7th century, some of it to the 5th century, and some of it might be earlier. This Codex is not the work of one man. Apparently, some portions were written before the vowel system was invented & would put it prior to the 5th century. The Pentateuch of the British Museum must have been written before the vowel system was invented. Aramaic documents of the 5th century & later use the vowel system, some of them fully & some in part.

It is interesting to know that this vowel system was adopted by the Jews and was begun about the 5th century, A.D. In some portions of the above texts, the old Aramaic original consonantal spelling without apparatus of vowel points is well preserved. Unfortunately, many ancient and valuable Aramaic texts were lost during World War I. But printed copies of them, carefully made by American missionaries under the help and guidance of competent native scholars, are available. Moreover, a number of ancient New Testament texts, some of them going back to the 5th century A.D. are in various libraries.

The New Testament texts in the Pierpont Morgan Library are among the oldest in existence. The translator of this work has access to the existing texts; he has spent many years comparing them in the course of translating the Bible. Astonishingly enough, all the Peshitta texts in Aramaic agree. There is one thing of which the Eastern scribes can boast: they copied their holy books diligently, faithfully, and meticulously. Sir Frederick Kenyon, Curator of the British Museum, in his book *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, speaks highly of the accuracy of copying and of the antiquity of Peshitta MSS.

The versions translated from Semitic languages into Greek and Latin were subject to constant revisions. Learned men who copied them introduced changes, trying to simplify obscurities and ambiguities which were due to the work of the first translators. Present translators and Bible revisers do the same when translating the Bible, treaties, and documents from one language to another. The American Constitution, written in English, will always remain the same when new copies are made, but **translations into other languages will be subject to revision.**

Translations are always subject to revisions and disputes over exact meaning because words and terms of speech in one language cannot be translated easily into another without loss. This is one reason why we have so many translations and revisions of the King James version. As said before, Aramaic was the language of Semitic culture, the language of the Hebrew patriarchs and, in the older days, the lingua franca of the Fertile Crescent. The term "Hebrew" is derived from the Aramaic word Abar or Habar which means "to cross over." This name was given to the Hebrew people simply because Abraham and the people who were with him crossed the river Euphrates and went to Palestine. Therefore, they were known by those who lived east of the river Euphrates as Hebrews, that is, "the people across the river."

All branches of the great Semitic people had a common speech. **How could the people of Nineveh have understood Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, had the Biblical Hebrew tongue been different from Aramaic?** This small pastoral Hebrew tribe through which God chose to reveal himself to mankind, for several generations continued to keep its paternal and racial relations with the people who lived in Padan-Aram (Mesopotamia), and preserved customs and manners which they brought with them from Padan-Aram, and the language which their fathers spoke.

Jacob changed the name of Luz to Beth-el (Aramaic—the house of God). Abraham instructed his servant not to let his son, Isaac, marry a Palestinian maid but to go to Padan-Aram to his own kindred from whence to bring a maid to his son. Years later, Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, went to Padan-Aram and married his uncle's two daughters and their handmaids and lived in Haran about twenty years. Eleven of his sons were born in Padan-Aram. The first generation of the children of Jacob went to Egypt. Their sojourn in Palestine was so brief that there was no possibility of linguistic change. That is why they spoke the language which they had learned in Padan-Aram. While in Egypt, living by themselves, they continued to use names of Aramaic derivation such as Manasseh, Ephraim, Bar-Nun, Miriam, etc.

After the captivity, **Aramaic became the vernacular of the Jewish people** and is still used by them in their worship. Both of the Jewish Talmuds, namely, the Babylonian and Palestinian, were written in Aramaic. The later findings, especially of Jewish-Aramaic papyri which were found in Egypt in 1900, have produced many passages in Biblical Aramaic. The discovery of the Commentary on the Book of Habakkuk in the caves of Qumran in Jordan proves that Aramaic has been in constant use from early times to the present day.

It is evident that during the exile and post-exile the Hebrew writers used Aramaic. Some of the portions of their works were put into Hebrew. Daniel and Ezra were born during the captivity. Hebrew was no longer spoken and the official language of writing in Babylon was southern Aramaic and the Jewish community had already parted with their Hebrew. Thus, the captivity produced the transition from Hebrew, a sister language, into Aramaic. Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic were very closely related, like American English and English spoken in England. Whether the Hebrew prophets wrote in Hebrew or Aramaic would make little difference. The differences would be like those between several Arabic dialects which are spoken in Arabia. Even though the vernacular speech differs because of local color and idioms, the norm of the written language remains the same. This is true today with written Arabic when compared with spoken Arabic.

The structure of a sentence, in point of grammar and syntax of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, is the same. But this is not the case when translating from Hebrew or Aramaic into a totally alien tongue such as Greek, Latin, or English. Moreover, the alphabet in Hebrew and Aramaic is exactly the same and all letters are pronounced alike. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. II, tells us: "In Palestinian Aramaic the dialect of Galilee was different from that of Judea, and as a result of the religious separation of the Jews and the Samaritans, a special Samaritan dialect was evolved, but its literature cannot be considered Jewish.

To the eastern Aramaic, whose most distinctive point of difference is "n" in place of "y" as the prefix for the third person masculine of the imperfect tense of the verb, belong the idioms of the Babylonian Talmud, which most closely agree with the language of the Mandaean writings." The strongest points in ascertaining the originality of a text are the style of writing, the idioms, and the internal evidence. Words which make sense and are easily understood in one language, when translated literally into another tongue, may lose their meaning.

One can offer many instances where scores of Aramaic words, some with several meanings and others with close resemblance to other words, were confused and mistranslated. This is why in Jeremiah 4:10, we read in the King James: "... Ah, LORD God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people ..." The Aramaic reads: "... Ah, LORD God! I have greatly deceived this people ..." The translator's confusion is due to the position of a dot, for the position of a dot frequently determines the meaning of a word. In Isaiah 43:28, the King James version reads: "Therefore, I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary ..." The Aramaic reads: "... Your princes have profaned my sanctuary ..." This error was caused by misunderstanding of a passive plural verb. The same error occurs in John 12:40, which in the Eastern Text reads: "Their eyes have become blind ..." instead of "... He hath blinded their eyes ..." In Isaiah 14:12, the Aramaic word ailel, to howl, is confused by the Hebrew word helel, light. The reference here is to the king of Babylon and not to Lucifer. In Psalm 22:29, King James version, we read: "All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship...and none can keep alive his own soul." The Aramaic text reads: "All those who are hungry (for truth) shall eat and worship...my soul is alive to him." The error in this instance is due to the confusion of the Aramaic words which have some resemblance. Some of these words when written by hand resemble one another.

THE ARAMAIC PESHITTA TEXT The term Peshitta means straight, simple, sincere and true, that is, the original. This name was given to this ancient & authoritative text to distinguish it from other Bible revisions and translations which were introduced into some of the Churches of the East after the division at Ephesus & Chalcedon in 431 and 451 A.D., respectively. This ancient Peshitta is still the only authoritative text of the Old and New Testament of all Eastern Christians. This is because this text was in use for 400 years before the Christian Church was divided into several sects. The originality of the Peshitta text is strongly supported by early evidence. Aphraates quoted it. St. Ephraim wrote a commentary on it and the doctrine of Addi placed it at the apostolic times. According to the Peshitta text, the Semitic names of people and towns and localities, in both the New and Old Testaments, agree. Names which end with “s” are retained for the western reader. In the Peshitta text, Barnabas is Barnba, Abbas is Abba, Peter is Kepa. Then again, some of the names of localities are different but older than those in other texts. For example, Rakim is used instead of Kadesh, Mathnin instead of Bashan, Amorah for Gomorah; the error in this instance is due to close similarity between gamel and ain. A town near the city of Gomorah is called Amoriah. No doubt, the pre-exile Hebrew texts used these older names. The late Mar-Yacob (Jacob) Eugene Manna, a distinguished Aramaic scholar whose writings are in Aramaic, says that the text which is called Peshitta is without dispute even earlier than the writings which came down from the works of Bar-Dasan, who was living in the latter part of the second century. He also states that the Aramaic speech in Mesopotamia was richer and purer than the Aramaic speech of other regions. It was the richness and the beauty of this language which was used as the lingua franca by the three great empires in the Near East and Middle East which enriched the English language. The Greek and Latin translators made literal translations of the Scriptures, keeping the Semitic rhythm and sentence structure. Indeed, the translation of the Scriptures into the English language facilitated the work of later English writers. The style of Shakespeare, Milton, and Browning could not have been what it is without the beauty of the King James translation which was inherited from Semitic languages. This is true also of all languages into which the Bible has been translated. The Septuagint is based on early Hebrew manuscripts and not on the later ones known as the Massoretic, which were made in the 6th to the 9th centuries.

In other words, **there are many similarities between the Septuagint and the Peshitta text but the former contains inevitable mistranslations which were due to difficulties in transmitting Hebrew or Aramaic thought and mannerisms of speech into a totally alien tongue like Greek.** But as has been said, such was not the case between Biblical Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew which are of the same origin. Josephus used Aramaic and Hebrew words indiscriminately. Thus, the term “translating” from Hebrew into Aramaic or vice versa is incorrect. It would be like one stating as having translated the U.S. Constitution from the Pennsylvania language into the English language or from lower German to higher German. **Even before the first captivity, 721 B.C., Jewish kings, scribes & learned men understood Aramaic. 2 Kings 18:26. The Israelites never wrote their sacred literature in any language but Aramaic & Hebrew, which are sister languages. The Septuagint was made in the 3rd century, B.C., for the Alexandrian Jews. This version was never officially read by the Jews in Palestine who spoke Aramaic and read Hebrew. Instead, the Jewish authorities condemned the work and declared a period of mourning because of the defects in the version.** Evidently Jesus and his disciples used a text which came from an older Hebrew original. This is apparent because **Jesus’ quotations from the Old Testament agree with the Peshitta text but do not agree with the Greek text.** For example, in John 12:40, the Peshitta Old Testament and New Testament agree. This is not all. Jesus and his disciples did not converse in Greek but they never heard it spoken. **We believe that the Scriptures were conceived and inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by Hebrew prophets who spoke and wrote, as the Holy Spirit moved them, to the people in their days, using idioms, similes, parables and metaphors in order to convey their messages.** Moreover, these men of God sacrificed their lives that the Word of God might live. The Jewish race treasured these sacred writings as a priceless possession. Writing was prevalent from the earliest of days. The Israelites made more extensive use of the instrument of writing than neighboring nations such as the Ammonites, Moabites, & other kindred people round about them. Moses wrote the 10 Commandments; Joshua wrote on an altar which he built west of Jordan. The Israelites were admonished to fasten the commandments to their foreheads and necks and to write them on their doorsteps. Everything was written at the time it was revealed.

God said to Moses. "Now therefore write this song for them, and teach it to the children of Israel; and put it into their mouths; this song will be a witness for me against the children of Israel." Deut. 31:19. "And the LORD answered me and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he who reads it may understand it clearly." Hab. 2:2. Thus, the Old Testament Scriptures were written very early. This is also true of the Gospels. They were written a few years after the resurrection and some of the portions were written by Matthew while Jesus was preaching. **The Gospels, as well as the Epistles, were written in Aramaic, the language of the Jewish people, both in Palestine and in the Greco-Roman Empire. Greek was never the language of Palestine. Josephus' book on the Jewish Wars was written in Aramaic. Josephus states that even though a number of Jews had tried to learn the language of the Greeks, hardly any of them succeeded.** Josephus wrote (42 A.D.): "I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language; although I have so accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness. For our nation does not encourage those that learn the language of many nations. On this account, as there have been many who have done their endeavors, with great patience, to obtain this Greek learning, there have yet hardly been two or three that have succeeded herein, who were immediately rewarded for their pains." Antiquities XX, XI 2. Indeed, **the teaching of Greek was forbidden by Jewish rabbis.** It was said that it was better for a man to give his child meat of swine than to teach him the language of the Greeks. When the King James translation was made, western scholars had no access to the East as we have today. Moreover, the Scriptures in Aramaic were unknown in Europe. The only recourse scholars had was to Latin and to a few portions of Greek manuscripts. This is clearly seen from the works of Erasmus. Besides, the knowledge of Greek was almost lost at this time and Christians were just emerging from the Dark Ages. Many people have asked us why the King James' translators did not use the Peshitta text from Aramaic or the Scriptures used in the East. The answer is: there were no contacts between East and West until after the conquest of India by Great Britain and the rise of the imperial power of Britain in the Near East, Middle East, and the Far East. It is a miracle that the King James' translators were able to produce such a remarkable translation from sources available in this dark period of European history.

Even fifty years ago[from 1933], the knowledge of Western scholars relative to the Eastern Scriptures in Aramaic and the Christian Church in the East was conjectural. What in the 16th and 17th centuries was viewed at a long distance now can be seen face to face. Today, not only scholars, ministers, and Bible teachers walk on Palestinian soil but also thousands of men and women visit Biblical lands every year. For centuries the translations from Semitic languages have been subject to revision. This is why there are so many Bible versions varying each from the other.

Let us just take one instance which I consider very important. In the King James version, we read in Numbers 25:4: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel." The Aramaic reads: "And the LORD said to Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people and expose them before the LORD in the daylight that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from the children of Israel." Some noted Greek scholars in recent translations have changed the word hang to execute, but this is not what the original writer said. God could not have told Moses to behead or execute all Israelites. The Lord was angry at the princes of Israel because of the sin of Baal-peor. They had been lax in enforcing the law and also guilty in joining the sensual Baal worship.

And in 1 Corinthians 7:36 and 38, King James, we read: "But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and needs so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry." "So, then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." The Aramaic reads: "If any man thinks that he is shamed by the behavior of his virgin daughter because she has passed the marriage age and he has not given her in marriage and that he should give her, let him do what he will and he does not sin. Let her be married." "So, then he who gives his virgin daughter in marriage does well; and he who does not give his virgin daughter in marriage does even better." Some of the scholars use "betrothed" instead of "virgin daughter." The American Standard Version of 1901 correctly used the term "virgin daughter." Certainly, the King James' translators would have known the difference between "virgin daughter" and "betrothed." Paul, in this instance, is referring to a virgin's vow. Num. 30:16.

These discrepancies between various versions have been the cause of contentions and divisions among sincere men and women who are earnestly seeking to understand the Word of God. At times, they do not know what to believe and what not to believe. They cannot understand why the Scripture in one place says, "Love your father and mother" and in another place admonishes, "Hate your father and mother."

Moreover, they are bewildered when told that Jesus on the cross cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The King James says in John 16:32, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Jesus was the son of God and entrusted his spirit to God. Jesus could not have contradicted himself. The Peshitta text reads: "My God, my God, for this I was spared!" After all the Bible is an Eastern Book, written primarily for the Israelites, and then for the Gentile world.

The Pauline Epistles were letters written by Paul to small Christian congregations in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. These early Christians were mostly Jews of the dispersion, men and women of Hebrew origin who had been looking for the coming of the promised Messiah whose coming was predicted by the Hebrew prophets who had hailed him as a deliverer. At the outset, the Romans were the masters of the world and the Greeks were not looking for a deliverer to rise up from among a people whom they hated & had crushed. Paul, on his journeys, always spoke in the Jewish synagogues. His first converts were Hebrews. Then came Arameans, the kindred of the Hebrews, as in the case of Timothy and Titus. Their fathers were Aramean and their mothers were Jewish. Jesus & his disciples spoke the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, the language which the early Galileans had brought from the other side of the river Euphrates. 2 Kings 17:22–25. Mark tells us in his Gospel, 14:70 that Peter was exposed by his Galilean Aramaic speech.

According to Expert Aramaic Translators, Jesus Never Said, "My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

The four first Gospels were written in Aramaic, not Greek. Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic and Hebrew, not Greek. Here are the true Words Christ spoke on the cross: Jesus really cried out, "My God, My God for this I was kept" (Matt. 27:46, Orig. Text).

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried [out] with a loud voice, [and said], Eli, Eli, Lemana Shabakthani! Some of the men who were standing by when they heard it, said, this man calleth for Elias" (Matt. 27:45-47, Orig. Text).

All versions of the Gospels have retained these words in the original tongue. They have, however, given them a different meaning. Matthew, according to the Eastern version, does not translate them. This is because he wrote to the people who had seen Jesus and had heard Him preaching. It also seems probable that the later writers did not agree on the exact meaning of these words when they translated them into Greek. Aramaic is a very obscure language, and they didn't know it as well as they should have before they laid their translation into the scriptures. This term, even at present, is only used by the Aramaic-speaking people in Assyria, who speak the same language the Galileans spoke at the time of our Lord. This phrase in Aramaic means, "My God, My God, for this I was kept [this was My destiny-I was born for this]."

David did not quote Psalm 22:1 as a prophecy of the Lord. He spoke those words for himself (because he had many enemies). David was foolishly saying that God had forsaken him. This part of Psalm 22 was not a prophecy of Christ's death. Jesus did not quote this Psalm. If He had, He would have used Hebrew instead of Aramaic, and if He had translated it from Hebrew He would have used the Aramaic word "nashatani," which means "forsaken me," instead of the word "Shabakthani," which in this case means, "kept me." Even the soldiers who stood by the cross did not understand what Jesus said in that hour of agony and suffering. They thought that He was calling on Elijah because the word "Elijah" in Aramaic is "Eli," which is similar to the Word for God, "Eli."

In His last minutes of suffering, Jesus watched the crowd of Roman soldiers, Pharisees, Jewish priests, and the men and women of Jerusalem, who had come to watch Him suffer and die. Some insulted Him. Others spat in His face. Some called Him a sinner, a cult leader, or an evildoer when in reality He was Christ, the only begotten Son of the living God, God Almighty Himself, our Lord and our Savior.

The statement, "My God, My God, for this I was kept" was plainly spoken in Aramaic by Christ to His Father. He spoke loudly enough that His disciples, who understood Aramaic could hear His words, which confirmed the reason for His crucifixion. They would pass the message on to the entire world.

The book of Joel states that the Word of God would be restored to its original meaning in these last days by the true messengers of God. The King James Version of the Bible is the Bible I use most of the time, but this statement, taken from the original Aramaic text, of Christ dying on the cross, is incorrect in the KJV, probably because of the Greek translators. – *Tony Alamo*

The Pauline Epistles were letters written by Paul to small Christian congregations in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. These early Christians were mostly Jews of the dispersion, men and women of Hebrew origin who had been looking for the coming of the promised Messiah whose coming was predicted by the Hebrew prophets who had hailed him as a deliverer. At the outset, the Romans were the masters of the world and the Greeks were not looking for a deliverer to rise up from among a people whom they hated and had crushed. Paul, on his journeys, always spoke in the Jewish synagogues. His first converts were Hebrews. Then came Arameans, the kindred of the Hebrews, as in the case of Timothy and Titus. Their fathers were Aramean and their mothers were Jewish. Jesus and his disciples spoke the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, the language which the early Galileans had brought from the other side of the river Euphrates. 2 Kings 17:22–25. Mark tells us in his Gospel, 14:70 that Peter was exposed by his Galilean Aramaic speech.

Paul preached the Christian gospel written in Aramaic. His Epistles were written years later when Christianity had spread into Syria and parts of the Near East. In other words, the Pauline Epistles were letters addressed to the Christian churches already established. Paul's native language was western Aramaic but he acquired his education through Hebrew and Chaldean or Palestinian Aramaic, the language spoken in Judea. He defended himself when on trial in his own tongue and not in Greek. Acts 22:2.

Paul was converted, healed, and baptized in Damascus in Syria. Acts 9:17,18. The Epistles were translated into Greek for the use of converts who spoke Greek. Later they were translated into Latin and other tongues. I believe that this translation of the Bible based on the Eastern text of the Scriptures, written in a Semitic tongue which for many centuries was the lingua franca of the Near East and Palestine, will throw considerable light on many obscure passages and that it will elucidate many other passages which have lost their meaning because of mistranslations.

GEORGE M. LAMSA WORDS RESEMBLING ONE ANOTHER The following list of Aramaic words further illustrates the difficulties of the early translators from the Aramaic into Greek, at a time when questions of punctuation, accentuation and paragraphing were unknown. This is especially true of Aramaic, which is the richest and most expressive language of the Semitic group, but having a small vocabulary when compared with the Greek and Latin. This limitation of words made necessary the use of the same words with various shades of meanings. This is because Aramaic is one of the world's most ancient languages.

Translators are well aware of these grammatical difficulties, particularly in a language like Aramaic where a single dot above or under a letter radically changes the meaning of a word. These tiny dots are made by scribes, who are not authors but mere copyists, hired for this purpose by rich and by learned men. But owing to the humidity of the climate and the nature of the ink, blots appear on the pages when pressed against each other. Again **because of exposure of a manuscript and its careless handling, flies alight on the pages and leave marks.**

Furthermore, as the lines are crowded for lack of space, a dot placed above one letter may read as though it were placed under a letter in the previous line. For example, the only difference in the words learned man and stupid man is a dot, over or under the word, respectively.

Some Aramaic words are written and pronounced alike, but their meaning differs according to the context. In other cases, differences are indicated by dots which alter the pronunciation. In yet other instances, if the translator does not speak the language from which he translates the meaning and usage of some words must be left to his knowledge and judgment.

Moreover, some Aramaic letters resemble one another especially in manuscripts. For instance, Nun, Aey, Lamed and Yoth are very close to one another when placed in certain positions. Shilometha, a Shilomite, in other translations reads Shunammite. 1 Kings 1:3. 2 Kings 4:12. Gamel is confused with Aey, especially when falling in the beginning of the verse. And Nun and Yoth are hard to distinguish when in the middle of a word.

Some of the most important mistranslations were due to the confusion of letters and words. The confusion of letters, no doubt, was caused when the Israelites, during the time of Ezra, made a new Bible after the ancient Hebrew text was lost. The Peshitta is the only text through which we can ascertain the ancient Bible text.

Lamsa, George Mamishisho. Holy Bible (pp. 6-41). HarperOne. Kindle Edition.

ARAMAIC WAS THE OPERATIVE CHOICE OF THE ORAL CULTURE

If we consider Jesus' words in Aramaic, we can then participate in an important Semitic language tradition: translation and interpretation as personal spiritual practices, rather than as academic pursuits. The practices themselves have many layers and nuances. To begin with, a single word in Aramaic or Hebrew can often mean several seemingly different things. For instance, the Aramaic word *shema* (as well as its Semitic root *ShM*, or *shem*) can mean light, sound, name, or even atmosphere. If we consider the admonition of Jesus to pray “with or in my *shem*” (usually translated “in my name”), which meaning is intended? According to Middle Eastern tradition, in the words of sacred scripture or the words of a prophet all possible meanings may be present. One needs then to look at a given statement several different ways. **Aramaic and Hebrew lend themselves to rich and poetic wordplay, like inner rhyming of vowels, repetition of consonant sounds, and parallel phrasing.** These devices further increase the possible translations and interpretations of a given statement. When a root word like *shem* becomes modified, its meanings may expand further. For instance, the first line of the prayer usually called the Lord's Prayer or “Our Father” contains the word *shem-aya*, usually translated “heaven.” The ending added to *shem* implies its effect extends without limit. The King James version gives us “Our Father which art in heaven.” Three hundred years later, the New Jerusalem Bible improved this only by shortening it slightly to “Our Father in heaven.” In both, the additional nuances and suggestions of the Aramaic, which would have been heard by the Semitic listener, are missing. It's not that these English translations are wrong; they are simply very limited. They can't hold the spiritual possibilities of the original Aramaic—and there are many others, even for this one line of the prayer. **Metaphorically, they are like fruit juice that has been strained through a very fine filter and heated, leaving all of the valuable vitamins, minerals, trace elements, and pulp behind.** Each stanza of my poetic translation above is itself incomplete, yet points toward a unity that is expressed in the Aramaic words *Abwoon d'bashmaya*. Douglas-Klotz, Neil. *The Hidden Gospel*. Quest Books. Kindle Edition.

Consolation and Resurrection to Come on the Third Day

An early form of this belief is attested in the book of Daniel (Daniel 12:1–3), from about 165 BCE. In this Jewish tradition as represented by the Aramaic renderings (targumim), Israel looked forward the tranquillity of Eden (*šlwwth d’dn*), the determined time of the blessing and consolation (*brkt’ wnḥymt’*) (Palestinian Targum Genesis 49:1), resurrection of the dead (Hos 6:2). In this text “after two days” and “on the third day” are intended to express a short space of time. The targumist paraphrases the future messianic age of consolation and of the resurrection, rendering thus: “He will give us life in the days of consolations (*neḥemata*) that will come; and on the day of the resurrection of the dead he will raise us up and we shall live before him.” The targumist paraphrases “after two days” as “in the days of consolations that will come,” and “on the third day” as “on the day of the resurrection of the dead.” This eschatological or messianic interpretation of this verse seems to have been current in rabbinic circles. The understanding of “on the third day” of the resurrection and salvation must have been helped by rabbinic reflection on the various occurrences of “third day” in the Bible, all of which are seen to have been salvific. Thus Genesis 22:4; 42:17; Exodus 19:6; Joshua 2:16; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17.²

² McNamara, M. (2010). [*Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*](#) (Second Edition, pp. 200–212). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

“SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT” The notion of an egocentric breath also makes sense of the saying about the “unforgivable sin” in Matthew 12:31,9 where Jesus says (KJV): Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. The Aramaic word translated as “sin” could also mean that which misses the mark or falls into error, as well as a failure or mistake. Its root points figuratively both to frustrated hopes and to threads that have become tangled. The same root can also mean to dig out a well or furrow, or to sew, patch, or mend something. **So, the seeds of restoration are, so to speak, implied in what has been broken.**

The Aramaic word for “blasphemy” can also mean a reviling, or more literally from the word's roots, a cutting off, incision, irruption, or furrow. To blaspheme would be to cut oneself off from the object of blasphemy. “To forgive” can also mean to set free, let go, loosen, leave out, omit, or from the roots, to restore something to its original state. **When we “sin against the Holy Spirit,” we can only be healed by an involuntary action of surrender that places us back in the sacred communion.**

Douglas-Klotz, Neil. The Hidden Gospel . Quest Books. Kindle Edition.

Other Passages

i. “Mammon of Iniquity”

The word *mamōnas* (“mammon”) which occurs in Greek four times in the Gospels (Matthew 6:24, with parallel in Luke 16:13; Luke 16:9, 11) is evidently a loan word from the Aramaic *mamona*, the determinate (emphatic) state (noun with definite article) of *mamôn*. It occurs only on the lips of Jesus and indicates the Aramaic background to the tradition. The Aramaic (and Hebrew) word *mamôn*, as we have already seen, means “wealth, money, fortune.” In the text in Matthew (“Do not become slaves of mammon”) it has a negative connotation. Luke 16:9 speaks of “the mammon of unrighteousness” (*ek tou mamōna tēs adikias*), which suggests a direct translation of a Semitic expression, while Luke’s “unrighteous mammon” (*en tō adikō mamōna*; Luke 16:11) is more in keeping with Greek. The term *mamôn* in the sense of “money, wealth” is frequent in Targum Neofiti. In Neofiti, Exodus 18:21 there is mention of “wealth unjustly gained,” literally “mammon of lies” (*mamôn d-šyqr*), an expression which also occurs in the Targum of Prophets (*mmwn šqr*; Targum of Amos 5:11; Targum Hosea 5:11, 12; Targum 2 Samuel 14:14; Isaiah 5:23; 33:15). We have a much closer Aramaic equivalent to Luke’s “mammon of unrighteousness” in Targum Habakkuk 2:9 *mmwn rš*, “mammon of wickedness.”

ii. Korban—(korban ho estin dōron)

In Mark’s Gospel after rejecting the position of the Pharisees and some scribes from Jerusalem regarding their tradition on hand-washing, Jesus goes on to condemn “them” (Pharisees and some scribes?) on another of their traditions, *qorban*. The text of Mark 7:9–12 reads: “Then he said to them: ‘You have a fine way of rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said: “Honor your father and your mother”; and “Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.” But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, “Whatever support you might have from me is Corban” (that is, an offering to God) (*korban ho estin dōron*—) then you no longer permit him to do anything for a father or mother.’ ”

It is noteworthy that Mark gives both the Hebrew/Aramaic word *qorban* and its Greek rendering: “Anything which I have which might be used for your benefit is Corban, that is a gift” (Mark 7:11; NRSV), where *dōron* is given as a gloss on the Hebrew/Aramaic word *qorban*. The fact that Mark retains the Semitic as well as

the Greek explanation might indicate that the combined Semitic/Greek formula may have been current in first-century Palestine. That this was so seems to have been borne out by Josephus who also gives both (*Antiquities* 4,4,4, § 73): “Such also as dedicate themselves to God as a corban, which denotes what the Greeks call a gift (*dōron*)....” Again in *Against Apion* 1,167 where he mentions that the Greek writer Theophrastus among oaths used by foreign (non-Greek) peoples mentions “*korban*; which oath,” Josephus remarks, “will be found in no other nation except the Jews, and, translated from the Hebrew, one may interpret it as meaning ‘God’s gift’ (*dōron theou*).” (See also Josephus, *Antiquities* 4, 73: “... a korban to God—meaning what Greeks would call ‘a gift’ [*dōron*].”) The Greek Septuagint renders the Hebrew *qorban* as *dōron* without retaining the Hebrew term. It is worth noting that the Greek term *dōron* exists as a loan word in Aramaic (particularly in the Palestinian Targums), sometimes as a rendering of the term *mn̄hh* (*minḥah*) of the Hebrew text, but more often in free paraphrase. It can alternate with the Aramaic *qr̄bnh* as a rendering of the Hebrew *minḥah*, with or without cultic connotations. Thus in a free paraphrase in Tg Pal Genesis 4, both in Targum Neofiti and in the other Palestinian Targum texts.

The term *korban* (*qr̄bn*) is found in an inscription in a first-century Jewish ossuary, which reads: “All that one may find to his profit in this ossuary is an offering (*qr̄bn*) to God from him who is within.” The Gospel text, however, occurring in the context of a rabbinic discussion is to be understood against the background of rabbinic tradition rather than that of a Jewish ossuary, even if this is roughly contemporary with the Gospel texts. With regard to the Jewish practice of *qorban* (Mark 7:11) one may note the related texts in the Mishnah, the date and relevance of which for New Testament studies are to be evaluated. That taking oaths or vows by use of the term *qorban* was part of Jewish piety is clear from the Mishnah tractate *Nedarim* (“Vows”) where the practice is legislated for. Variants of the term were *Konam*, *Konah* or *Konas*. “If a man says to his fellow, *Konam* or *Konah* or *Konas*, these are substitutes for *Korban*, an Offering” (*m. Ned.* 1:2), that is, as a note in Danby’s English translation says: “A thing forbidden to him for common use as a Temple offering.” We have a formula similar to Mark 7:11 in *m. Nedarim* 8:7: “*Konam* (= *Korban*) be the benefit thou hast of me....” The question as to whether a vow could be dispensed by the sages by reason of “the honour due to father and mother” was also discussed in the Mishnah (*m. Nedarim* 9:1)

These Mishnah texts illustrate the Jewish institution of *qorban*, and thus serve as a background to the Gospel texts. However, there is little or no evidence for

the precise form of the practice censured by Jesus. It may be that it was known to characterise at least some groups of Pharisees or scribes.

iii. Zechariah son of Barachiah: Matthew 23:35 (Luke 11:51) and Targum Lamentations 2:20

Matthew and Luke transmit condemnation by Jesus of the scribes (lawyers) and Pharisees, but in different contexts. Both, however, end with a warning that on the current generation would come punishment for their sins and for the infidelity of their forefathers. Matthew's text runs: "Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify ... (35) so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (36) Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation." Luke's text (Luke 11:49–52) lacks "son of Barachiah." The Zechariah in question seems clearly to be the Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada of 2 Chronicles 24:21–22. During the apostasy of king Joash God sent prophets among the people to bring them back to the Lord, but they would not listen (2 Chronicles 24:19). "Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of Jehoida the priest who stood above the people and said to them: 'Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you.' But they conspired against him and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord.... As he was dying, he said: 'May the Lord see and avenge' " (24:20–22).

Two differences between the texts of Luke and Matthew and that of 2 Chronicles are to be noted. One is the place of the murder in the Temple (house of the Lord): between the sanctuary and the altar (Matthew), in Luke "between the altar and the house" (*oikou*), the term "house" being variously understood and rendered: "sanctuary" (NRSV), "Temple" (NJB), "temple building" (NAB), while 2 Chronicles simply has "in the court of the house of the Lord." Another difference is in the connection in the New Testament between the shedding of the blood of Abel and Zechariah and the punishment for these crimes to come "on this generation" of the scribes (lawyers) and Pharisees.

There is a further difference in Matthew's text in that Zechariah is called the son of Barachiah. There are three Zechariahs mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures: Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah (Isaiah 8:2), rendered in the Septuagint as "son of Barachias"; the person already mentioned in 2 Chronicles

24:20–22; and the third the eleventh of the Twelve Minor Prophets, in the Book of Zechariah bearing the full title: “Zechariah the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo” (Zechariah 1:1). He is nowhere called by the short form “Zechariah son of Berechiah.” He is mentioned three times in the Old Testament, and identified through his grandfather’s name; “Zechariah the son of Iddo.” Matthew’s text is most probably to be explained by the identification of the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles with the Minor Prophet.

A text in the Targum of Lamentations (Tg Lamentations 2:20) throws light on Matthew’s text, and on the Jewish setting of both Matthew and Luke. In the targum Zechariah of Chronicles is identified with the Minor Prophet, but under his usual name “Zechariah son of Iddo.” When situated in the broader rabbinic context a fuller meaning of both Targum and New Testament texts is revealed. The Hebrew Text of Lamentations 2:20c says: “Should the priest and the prophet be slain in the temple of the Lord?” This is part of the author of Lamentation’s complaint against the Lord on account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the profanation of the Temple. In the preceding portion of the verse the poet complains: “Look, O Lord, and consider! To whom have you done this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have borne?” The targumist lets the first part of the people’s complaint stand. In the paraphrase of v. 20c he has the Lord (under the designation “The Attribute of Justice”) answer the complaint (italics designate additional paraphrase to the Hebrew Text): *“The Attribute of Justice answered, and thus said: ‘Is it fitting to murder in the House of the Sanctuary of the Lord the priest and the prophet, as you murdered Zechariah the son of Iddo, the high priest and faithful prophet, in the House of the Sanctuary of the Lord on the Day of Atonement, because he admonished you not to do that which was evil before the Lord?’ ”*

The central point of the Targum’s paraphrase is that the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan (2 Kings 25:8–12) is linked with the earlier murder of Zechariah (son of Barachiah) son of Iddo, and the blame for this laid on the generation of the destruction. There are some differences between the Targum and the account of this in 2 Chronicles. Zechariah is explicitly called “prophet,” implicit in Chronicles. He is also called “high priest,” which need not surprise as “priests” of the earlier biblical texts are often described as “high priests” in the targums (Melchizedek in Gen 14:18 and others), and in any event Josephus (*Antiquities* 9,8,3) so designates Zechariah’s father.

The murder is also said to have taken place on the Day of Atonement, which adds to the gravity of the crime. The Targum’s link of the Temple’s destruction

with the much earlier (252 years earlier!) of Zechariah of Chronicles is best understood when set in the context of rabbinic tradition, within which our present text of this Targum originated. As Philip S. Alexander puts it in his note to the English translation of this targum: “The idea that the murder of Zechariah was a major cause of the destruction of the first Temple is an old and deeply embedded element in the tradition. According to a widespread rabbinic aggadah, the murdered Zechariah’s blood never dried, but continued to seethe until Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar’s general, slaughtered young priests to appease it.” The apocryphal *Lives of the Prophets* (chapter 23, “Zechariah son of Jehoiada”), probably of the first century CE, of Palestinian origin, and contemporary with Matthew and Luke, does not have the rabbinic legend on this Zechariah, but records the belief in the disastrous consequences of his murder: “From that time visible portents occurred in the Temple, and the priests were not able to see a vision of angels of God or to give oracles from the *Debeir*, or to inquire by the Ephod, or to answer the people through Urim as formerly.”

The targumic and rabbinic traditions seem to illustrate the connection made by Jesus between the murder of Zechariah (and others) and the impending punishment to come on “this generation.” The New Testament, and Matthew’s text, can be taken as indicating an early date for this particular tradition, preserved in rabbinic literature and in the Targum of Lamentations, itself probably to be dated towards the end of the fifth century CE. The relevance of this text for an understanding of a New Testament passage would be an instance of the continuum of which we spoke earlier—the continuation of a tradition through the centuries.

iv. Ephesians 4:8 and Targum Psalms 67(68):19

In Ephesians 4:1–8 the author explains to the Christian church in Asia how the unity of the Church is the gift of Christ. Reigning in heaven after his ascension the Risen Saviour grants to the Church the gifts that are necessary for unity in diversity. The author of the letter first cites a text from an unidentified source (“he/it says,” *legei*) and then proceeds to gloss and to explain it as referring to Christ.

⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

⁸Therefore it is said (literally: it/he says, *legei*): “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself captive; he gave gifts to men” (*edōken domata tois*

anthrōpois). ⁹When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but (literally “what is this but”) that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. The gifts he gave were that some might be apostles, some prophets ... (etc.).

It is clear that the text cited and commented on in this passage is a form of Ps 67(68):19, one, however, which is not that of the Hebrew text or of the Septuagint. The Hebrew has a very obscure text in verse 17(18)c: literally “The Lord among them Sinai in the holy (place)” (NRSV: “The Lord came from Sinai into the holy place”), rendered in the Greek as: “The Lord is among them, in Sinai in the holy place.” This is followed by words addressed to an unnamed person: “You ascended on high; you took captivity captive; you received (from the root *lqh*) gifts for men” (with the singular/collective “man,” *b-’adam*; or “among men”). The ending is rendered more or less literally in the Septuagint: “... you have received gifts for (or: among) man’ (*elabes domata en anthrōpō*). The text in Ephesians understands the psalm passage as “giving, distributing” rather than “receiving,” probably reading a Hebrew root *hlq* (“divide, distribute”) instead of *lqh*. This is the understanding and rendering of the passage we find in the Targum of Psalms, which is also that of the rabbinic commentary on this book. Several of the midrashic and haggadic additions in Targum Psalms have parallels in *Midrash Tehillim*. They may draw on a common body of haggadic reflections. In the text that interests us both of these seem influenced by the reference to Sinai immediately preceding. The unnamed person addressed is Moses. The verse is rendered in Targum Psalms (italics indicate additional paraphrase): “19. You ascended to *the firmament*, *O prophet Moses*, you took captives, *you taught the words of the Law*, you gave them as gifts to the sons of man; even among the rebellious *who are converted and repent* does the Shekinah of the glory of the *LORD God dwell*.” As David Stec has noted: for the tradition represented by this text of Targum Psalms we can confer the rabbinic commentary on Psalms *Midrash Tehillim* 68.11: “*Thou hast gone up on high, thou hast led the captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men* (Ps. 68:19).

v. Jannes and Jambres: 2 Timothy 3:8–9 and Pseudo-Jonathan Ex 7:11; 1:15

Forewarning Timothy of the distressing times to come “in the last days” the author of 2 Timothy says: “As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these

people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth.” Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, and it alone of the Palestinian Targum texts, makes express mention of these two, and precisely under these names, in its paraphrase of Exodus 7:11 (italics denote added paraphrase): “Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and sorcerers; *and Jannes and Jambres*, the sorcerers *who were in Egypt*, also did the same with the spells *of their divination*.” Explicit mention has already been made of these two in Pseudo-Jonathan at Exodus 1:15, in an inserted haggadah on Pharaoh’s dream on the birth of a lamb (Aramaic *ṭalya*; “lamb, kid” or “young boy”), interpreted by Jannes and Jambres chief magicians of Egypt as referring to the birth of a son among the Israelites, one destined to destroy Egypt.

The coincidence of the names of the two sorcerers and their opposition to Moses in both the New Testament text and Pseudo-Jonathan is impressive. Nevertheless, there are serious arguments against dependence of the Pauline text on a Palestinian Targum tradition as represented by Pseudo-Jonathan. There are first of all the problems regarding the composition and dating of this particular targum. Then there is the fact that the legend of a Jewish sorcerer, or sorcerers, in Egypt in Moses’ time was widely known. Josephus makes mention of one such, but assigns no name. In other forms of the Jewish tradition there are two, one of which is Johani (and similar forms), the other in Rabbinic and Latin texts called Mamre. The New Testament form of the names (Jannes and Jambres) is found in Greek texts, for instance in a text of the neo-Pythagorean philosopher Numenius (second century CE) preserved by Eusebius (in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9,8,1). Given all this, while the similarities between the text of 2 Timothy and Pseudo-Jonathan are to be borne in mind, hardly any firm conclusion with regard to the age of Pseudo-Jonathan and the age or origin of this text can be drawn from it.

vi. Numerous Multitudes

In the Gospels we read of great multitudes (*ochlos polys, ochloi polloi*) following Christ. The Greek word *ochlos* has passed over into Aramaic as a loan-word and is encountered in the plural form occasionally in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch and in other targums also. God says to Cain that the blood of the just multitudes (*’ochlôšîn*) that were to arise from Abel was crying out against him from the earth (Genesis 4:10). Otherwise it is used with the adjective “many,” “numerous” (seven times in Neofiti and Neofiti margins). God tells Moses to keep the people away from Mount Sinai lest his anger be enkindled against them and numerous multitudes (*’ochlôšîn sagyan*) of them should fall (Exodus 19:21).

vii. *bar nash(a)*

We may remark that in the Palestinian Targum, particularly in Neofiti, *bar nash*, *bar nasha*—"a son of man," "the son of man"—is very often found in the sense of "man," "anyone," "whoever." The use of *bar nash(a)* in Aramaic (in both targums and midrashim) has been treated extensively by Geza Vermes in an appendix to the third edition of Matthew Black's *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*. From the evidence for the use of the expression in extra-targumic texts he concludes that, like the other Aramaic expression *hahu gabra* (literally: "that man"; cf. English "yours truly"), *bar nash(a)* is also used as a circumlocution for the first person singular pronoun: "I." Black considers the evidence put forward by Vermes for the use of *bar nash* as a surrogate for the first person pronoun clear and convincing. In a review of the work Joseph Fitzmyer admits that some of the examples Vermes cites in evidence for *bar nash(a)* used as a circumlocution for "I" seem convincing, but naturally objects to the use of "later" Aramaic in this discussion of New Testament texts. Here we may note that there is basic agreement in Fitzmyer's and Le Déaut's criticism of the third edition of Black's *Aramaic Approach*, apart from the use of targumic material in New Testament studies, of course. It is evidence to be borne in mind in any discussion of the New Testament Son of Man problem.

viii. "*Blessed is the womb ...*" (cf. *Luke 11:27*)

In the Palestinian Targum on Genesis 49:25 we find the very words used by the Palestinian woman when addressing Christ, but in reverse order, as indicated by the underlying Hebrew text ("blessings of the breasts and of the womb"): "Blessed are the breasts from which you have sucked and the womb in which you lay," i.e. the womb that bore you.

ix. "*Be merciful ...*" *Luke 6:36* (*Matthew 5:48*) and *Pseudo-Jonathan Lev 22:28*

We have treated of this in some detail above. It is listed here to add to the list of targumic similarities with the New Testament.

x. "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*" (*Luke 6:36*)

In Luke's Sermon on the Plain the section on love of enemies ends with Jesus' admonition: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36; the corresponding text in Matthew has: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly

Father is perfect"). Luke's text is paralleled perfectly in an ancient targumic rendering censured in the fourth century by Rabbi Jose Ben Bun, in a text cited twice in the Palestinian Talmud (*j. Berakoth* 5,3,9v and *j. Megillah* 4,9,75c) as an unacceptable paraphrase of Leviticus 22:28: "Rabbi J. Ben Bun said: 'Those do not act correctly who make the injunctions of the Holy One Blessed Be He (mere axioms of) mercy. And those who translated (Leviticus 22:28 into Aramaic as): "My people, children of Israel, as I am merciful in heaven so shall you be merciful on earth. You shall not slaughter a cow and its young on the same day." They do not act properly as they make the injunctions of the Holy One Blessed Be He (to be mere axioms of) mercy.' " This rendering of the text is preserved only in Pseudo-Jonathan, verbatim ("as I am merciful in heaven") in the London (British Library) manuscript of Pseudo-Jonathan, while the *editio princeps* has a slight variant ("as your Father is merciful ..."). The other texts of the Palestinian Targums have the opening phrase "My people, children of Israel" followed by a literal translation of the Hebrew text. The presence of the homiletic opening may be an indication that all texts of the Palestinian Targums once had the paraphrase objected to by R. Jose, but it was later omitted by reason of the censure. This however, is not quite certain, since some literal translations of these targums also have such an introduction ("My people ..."). The preservation of the old paraphrase in Pseudo-Jonathan alone is a further indication of the difficulty of assigning a precise date to this work.

xi. "With what measure you mete ..." (Matthew 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38 and Palestinian Targum Genesis 38:26)

The Palestinian Targums paraphrase of Genesis 38:26 is one that has a good many phrases and concepts reminiscent of New Testament texts. One of these is related to the New Testament text being here considered. It occurs in Judah's confession of his sin against Tamar. In the opening section he says: "And listen to me, my brothers and house of my father. In the measure in which a man measures it shall be measured to him whether it be good measure or bad measure. And blessed is every man who reveals his works" (in the translation of Neofiti).

xii. "Remit and pardon"

We have considered this above in chapter 13. We need only list it here to add to the list of targumic similarities with the New Testament.

xiii. “Debts” = “sins”

The equation is clearest in the form of the “Our Father” as given in Matthew 6:12: “And forgive us our debts (*opheilēmata*) as we have forgiven our debtors (*opheiletais*).” Luke’s form replaces “debts” with “sins”: “Forgive us our sins (*hamartias*) as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted (*opheilonti*) to us” (Luke 11:4). Similarly in Luke 13:2, 4 the equation is again natural. Concerning the Galileans reportedly killed by Pilate, Jesus asks: “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse *sinner*s (*hamartōloi*) than all other Galileans ...? Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think they were worse *offenders* (*opheiletai*) than all the others living in Jerusalem?” The use of “debt, debtors” for “sin, sinners” is proper to Aramaic usage; it is not found in Hebrew, and with it the term “pardon ... the debt” for “to forgive the sin.”

xiv. “dogs” = “pagans” “gentiles” (Mark 7:27; Matthew 15:26 and Palestinian Targum Exodus 22:30[31])

The accounts of both Mark and Matthew make it clear that the Syrophoenician woman who begged Jesus to cure her daughter was a non-Jew. She was a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:22), a Hellene (Mark 7:26; NRSV “a Gentile”). Jesus’ reply to her request was: “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs” (Mark 7:27), with a clear contrast of Jews and gentiles, here referred to as dogs. The New Testament itself uses this disparaging designation, apparently of fellow Jews in Philippians 3:2, and those outside the gates of the New Jerusalem in Apocalypse 22:15.

The designation was rather commonly used in rabbinic literature of gentiles (and Samaritans). Paul Billerbeck cites many examples from this literature, but none from the Targums! The usage occurs in the Palestinian Targum Exodus 22:30(31), to render the Hebrew text: **“You shall be a people consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any meat that is mangled by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.”** The ending is rendered in Neofiti (and the Fragment Targums mss P and V; the margins of Neofiti) as: **“You shall throw it to the dog, or you shall throw it to the gentile stranger, who is comparable to the dog.”**

xv. “to taste the cup of death”

Roger Le Déaut has shown the significance of the expression “to taste the cup of death” (a phrase found only in the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch) for Christ’s reference to his passion.

xvi. “answered and said”

Gustav Dalman maintained that the phrase “answered and said,” found so frequently in the Gospels, was due to the Greek authors of our canonical Gospels who in this were dependent on the translation Greek of the Septuagint. Taking Onqelos and some other texts as his criterion for the Aramaic of Christ’s day, and ignoring or rejecting the evidence of the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch, he concluded that the phrase did not exist in the Aramaic of first-century Palestine. “Answered and said” is of frequent occurrence in the Palestinian paraphrases of the Pentateuch, *especially in free paraphrase and midrashic passages where no influence from the Hebrew text can be suspected*, for instance, Genesis 4:8 (a number of times); 22:10; 50:1.

xvii. “He (etc.) opened his mouth and said” (Matthew 5:2)

This is another good idiom of the same paraphrase as the preceding (only in Fragment Targums and Neofiti margin of Deuteronomy 27:15). So are such other New Testament expressions as “he thought in his heart and said” (e.g. Genesis 15:1).

xviii. “at that hour”

We often read in the Gospels of things happening “*at that hour*.” This is the manner in which “at that time” (cf. Irish: *an uair sin*) is expressed in Palestinian Aramaic, where š’h/š’t^h, ša’ah/ša’ta’, has the meaning “hour” or “moment of time.” It is extremely frequent in the Palestinian Targums and is the invariable targumic rendering of “at that time” of the Hebrew text.³

³ McNamara, M. (2010). [*Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*](#) (Second Edition, pp. 228–242). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Response to specific verses

There are also alternative explanations for the cases where Aramaic primacists claim that the Aramaic seems to read better.

Advocates of Aramaic primacy note that the best evidence of Aramaic being the original would be mistranslations in the Greek translation but go on to claim that accurate translations of the original Aramaic remove several mistranslations present in Greek manuscripts:

- mistranslation at Mt 1:16

Greek manuscripts of Matthew's genealogy list 14, 14, and 13 generations. In Aramaic mss. of Matthew's genealogy, with Mt 1:16's "gbra" correctly translated as father/guardian, Matthew's genealogy lists 14, 14, and 14 generations. Mary had a father/guardian named Joseph (plus a husband also called Joseph). Native Aramaic speaker Paul Younan detected this mistranslation.

- mistranslation at Mt 26:6 and Mk 14:3

Greek mss. have Jesus and his disciples visiting the house of a leper. The Greek translation from Aramaic has leper at Mt 26:6 and Mk 14:3, while the Aramaic allows for potter. Lepers were unclean and weren't allowed to have guests over. It's actually Simon the *potter*. To continue to call someone a leper even after he'd been healed of leprosy would have constituted slander.

- mistranslations at Mt 7:6

For Mt 7:6, it's actually 'hang earrings on dogs,' not 'give a holy thing to dogs.' Native Aramaic speaker Paul Younan noticed the two mistranslations in this verse.

- mistranslation at Mark 9:49

Mark 9:49 ([HCSB](#)) "For everyone will be salted with fire. [a: Other mss add *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*]" The complete text was present as of A.D. 175. Arabic [Diatessaron](#) 25:23: "Everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

The original Aramaic has the complete text; when translated well Mk 9:49 (based on Younan) reads: "For with fire everything will be *vaporized*, and with salt every sacrifice will be *seasoned*." Vaporized and seasoned, the root MLKh can mean 'to salt, season' or 'to destroy, vaporize, scatter.' The intended meaning shifted between the first and second lines—the Messiah plays on the dual meaning of MLKh. See Mk 9 PDF of Paul Younan at <http://dukhrana.com>

- mistranslation at Lk 14:26

The Greek manuscripts have a mistranslation for Lk 14:26, which when translated well reads: "He who comes to me [Jesus] and does not *sena* [**put aside**; contextually improper here: hate, have an aversion to] his father and his mother and his brothers and his sisters and his wife and his children and even himself, is not able to be a talmida [student] to me."

- mistranslation at John 13:13

Jesus spoke in Aramaic what became John 13:13a. Greek mss. have Jesus say, "ὁμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με Ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ Ὁ κύριος" (W&H, NA28 variants). "φωνεῖτέ" ('to call out') was an incorrect word choice for the Greek rendition of his remark: "Ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με Ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ Ὁ κύριος [you call me, Teacher and Lord] is bad Greek, just about as astonishing as if one should say in English: "you cry me teacher and lord." The right word, which John knew quite well, would have been καλεῖτε. Why did he ever write φωνεῖν?"^[28]

- mistranslation for Acts 2:24

When translated well it reads: "But Allaha [God] loosed the cords of Sheol [the Grave/Death] and raised him [Yeshua/Jesus] because it was not possible that he be held in it, in Sheol." The Greek versions mistranslated the word "cords" as 'pain.' (cf. Jn 2:15 & 2 Samuel 22:6)
—Paul Younan

- mistranslation for Acts 5:13

The Greek manuscripts have a mistranslation for Acts 5:13: "And there was a great fear in all the eidta [congregation], and in all those who heard. And many mighty deeds and signs occurred by the hands of the Shelikha [Apostles] among the people. And they were all assembled together in the Porch of Shlemon [Soloman].
13. And of other men, not one dared to *touch* them, rather the people magnified them. The word translated by "touch" can mean "join/commune" but also "touch," the latter undoubtedly being the correct reading. The Greek versions mistranslated this word as "join".—PY

- mistranslation for Acts 8:23

The Greek manuscripts have a mistranslation for Acts 8:23: "But repent of this your evil and beseech Allaha [God]. Perhaps you [Simon the sorcerer] will be forgiven the guile of your heart. 23. For I [Shimon Keepa/ Simon Peter] see that you are in bitter *anger* and in the bonds of iniquity." The Aramaic word kabda can mean gall/liver/anger. The Greek versions mistranslate "bitter kabda" as "gall of bitterness" instead of the more contextually proper "bitter anger".—PY

- mistranslation for Acts 8:27

The Greek manuscripts have a mistranslation for Acts 8:27, which when translated well reads: "And he [Pileepos/ Philip] arose (and) went and met a certain *mahaymina* [believer] who had come from Cush, an official of Qandeq, the malkta [queen] of the Cushites, and he was an authority over all her treasures.

And he had come to worship in Urishlim." Re: MHYMNA, it can mean either 'believer' or 'eunuch'—or many similar things. **The Greek versions mistranslate this as 'eunuch' instead of the more contextually correct 'believer'.—PY. The Ethiopian *believer* was intending to worship in Jerusalem, presumably in the temple there—which eunuchs were prohibited from doing by Deut 23:2. Cf. Mt 19:12.**

- mistranslation at Rev 1:13

The mistranslation says Jesus has female breasts: Rev 1:13, [Common English Bible](#): "In the middle of the lampstands I saw someone who looked like the Human One. He wore a robe that stretched down to his feet, and he had a gold sash around his chest.[aj]" The Greek word used here is *mastos* and is used exclusively for a woman's breasts.

- mistranslation at Rev 2:22

The Greek mistranslation rendered a word as "bed," thereby having an adulterous woman being thrown into a bed. (It should have used "bier.>"). The KJV translators translated Rev 2:21–22: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."

The [NASB](#) added "of sickness" in italics, thereby indicating to the reader that they had added it beyond what the Greek has: "I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed *of sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds."

It would make more sense if she'd been said to have been thrown onto a mortuary couch i.e. a bier—and doing such is possible translating from the Aramaic Revelation.

- mistranslation at Rev 10:1

The mistranslation says "feet" were like 'columns/pillars of fire,' while the Aramaic better allows for the correct rendition, "legs like columns/pillars of fire."

Revelation 10:1 (KJV) And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet [Greek: podes/πόδες/feet] as pillars of fire:

- mistranslations at Mt 5:13 and Lk 14:34 (but not at Mk 9:50)

Matthew 5:13 and Luke 14:34 in Greek mss. have an erroneous translation of the original Aramaic th-p-k-h by rendering it as μωρανθη/ foolish. In contrast, Mark 9:50 in Greek mss. correctly render Jesus' remarks about salt that becomes ἄναλον/ unsalty. [\[29\]](#)

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ARAMAIC LANGUAGE ALTERNATE INTERPRETATIONS

“Strait” Gate: Thin – Frail – Delicate – Ethereal

“Narrow” Path: Afflicted – Constrained – Pressured

“Neighbor” Definition: One Close Who Draws Near

Main Point of Parable of the Mustard Seed: Mustard Seed In Middle East Is Considered a **Weed** Not Edible Spice. It is Rumored to Cause Insanity. Yet, its secondary benefits are great green composting fields fallowed for the future.

Main Point of Parable of the Laborers: Not About Fairness But About Timing; Ripeness of the Harvest, Ripening Hour, and Ripened Availability of Labor.

Main Points Matthew 13:3ff Parable of the Sower

WHAT THE AUDIENCE WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD HEARING/LISTENING & PROCESSING THROUGH THEIR ARAMAIC LANGUAGE FILTER FIRST BEFORE JESUS’ FOLLOWUP EXPLANATION VERSES 18-23:

Verse Four @ “Birds” – Here, it refers to a quality of mind reluctant to concentrate or focus.

Verse Five @ “Stony” – Metaphorically, Obstructively to Stop Up the Senses and/or to Close Off the Heart.

Verse Seven @ “Thorns” – Refers to Life’s Sorrows; Specifically, here it refers to a level of emotional pain too great for the person to grow beyond it.

MATTHEW 19: 24

Matthew Poole's Commentary

Ver. 23,24. Mark saith, [Mark 10:23-25](#), *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* Luke saith, [Luke 18:24,25](#), *And when Jesus saw that he was sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

A rich man shall hardly enter, & c. The sense is the same, only the interrogation seems to aggravate the difficulty, and to fortify, the affirmation, as much as to say, A rich man shall very hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The disciples were astonished at this, (saith Mark), which made our Savior say it over again, with a little exposition, *How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* Which exposition is so far from a correction or abatement of the severity of his former speech, that some judge it rather a confirmation of it, for he goes on with saying,

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. But why should this astonish the disciples, who had no reason upon this account to fear for themselves, who had forsaken all to follow Christ? Possibly, because it was so contrary to the common opinion of the world, who did not only, as in Malachi's time, *call the proud happy*, but thought God had scarce any favor for any but the rich; in opposition to which Christ, [Luke 6:20,24](#), blesseth the poor, and pronounces woes to the rich, as having received their consolation. As to the words themselves, the design of our Savior in them was not to condemn riches, as in themselves damnable; nor yet to deny salvation to all rich persons: our Lord knew that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, were all rich persons, and yet in heaven; so was David and Solomon, &c. He also knew that riches are the gifts of God, good things, not in themselves pernicious. His design was only to show that they are dangerous temptations, soliciting and enticing our hearts into so great a love of them, and affection to them, as is not consistent with our duty with reference to God; and giving the heart of man such advantages for the lusts of pride, covetousness, ambition, oppression, luxury, (some or other of which are predominant in all souls), that it is very hard for a rich man so far to deny himself, as to do what he must do if ever he will be saved. For those words in Mark, *them that trust in riches*, I take them rather to give the reason of the difficulty, than to be an abatement of what he had before said; for to trust in riches, is to place a happiness in them, to promise ourselves a security from them, so as to be careless of a further happiness, [Psalm 49:6](#) [52:7](#) [1 Timothy 6:17](#). That which makes it so hard for a rich man to be saved, is the difficulty of having riches and not placing our felicity in them, being secure because of them, and having our hearts cleave unto them, so as we cannot deny ourselves in them to obey any command of God & the suffering them to be temptations to us to pride, luxury ambition, oppression, contempt and despising of others, covetousness, &c. Upon these accounts our Savior goeth on and saith, *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*. Which doubtless was a proverbial expression, in use then amongst the Jews, to signify a thing of great difficulty, by terms importing impossibility: or else the phrase may signify an impossibility without the extraordinary influence of Divine grace, as our Savior seemeth to expound it in the next verses.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

It is easier for a camel ... - This was a proverb in common use among the Jews, and is still common among the Arabians.

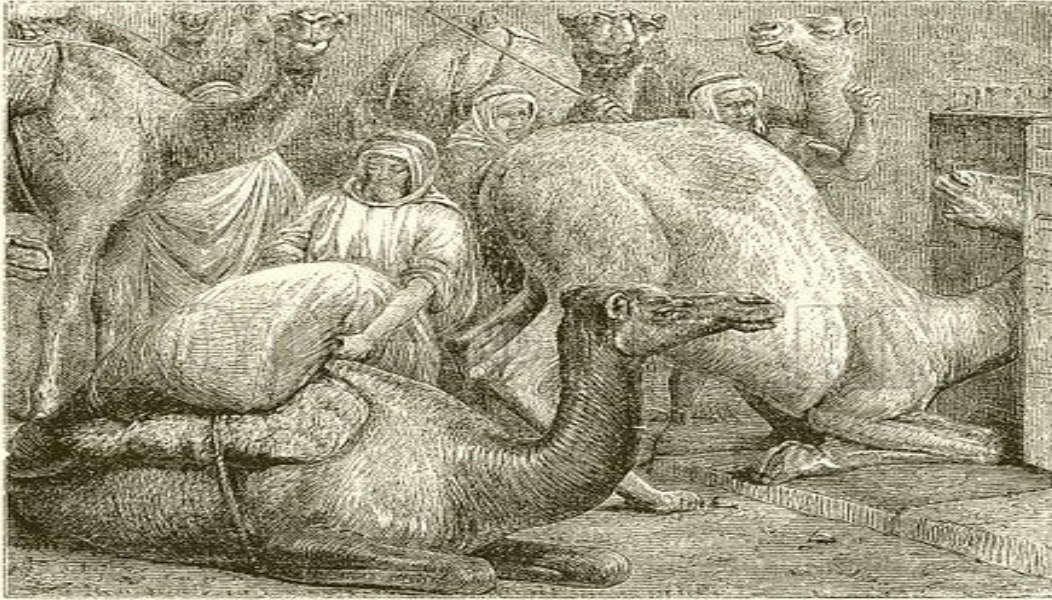
To denote that a thing was impossible or exceedingly difficult, they said that a camel or an elephant might as soon walk through a needle's eye. In the use of such proverbs it is not necessary to understand them literally. They merely denote the extreme difficulty of the case.

A camel - A beast of burden much used in Eastern countries. It is about the size of the largest ox, with one or two bunches on his back, with long neck and legs, no horns, and with feet adapted to the hot and dry sand. They are capable of carrying heavy burdens, will travel sometimes faster than the fleetest horse, and are provided with a stomach which they fill with water, by means of which they can live four or five days without drink. They are very mild and tame, and kneel down to receive and unload their burden. They are chiefly used in deserts and hot climates, where other beasts of burden are with difficulty kept alive.

A rich man - This rather means one who loves his riches and makes an idol of them, or one who supremely desires to be rich. Mark says [Mark 10:24](#) "How hard is it for them that trust in riches." While a man has this feeling - relying on his wealth alone - it is literally impossible that he should be a Christian; for religion is a love of God rather than the world - the love of Jesus and his cause more than gold. Still a man may have much property, and not have this feeling. He may have great wealth, and love God more; as a poor man may have little, and love that little more than God. The difficulties in the way of the salvation of a rich man are:

1. that riches engross the affections.
2. that people consider wealth as the chief good, and when this is obtained they think they have gained all.
3. that they are proud of their wealth, and unwilling to be numbered with the poor and despised followers of Jesus.
4. that riches engross the time, and fill the mind with cares and anxieties, and leave little for God.
5. that they often produce luxury, dissipation, and vice. that it is difficult to obtain wealth without sin, without avarice, without covetousness, fraud, and oppression, [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#), [1 Timothy 6:17](#); [James 5:1-5](#); [Luke 12:16-21](#); [Luke 16:19-31](#).

Still, Jesus says [Matthew 19:26](#), all these may be overcome. God can give grace to do it. Though to people it may appear impossible, yet it is easy for God.

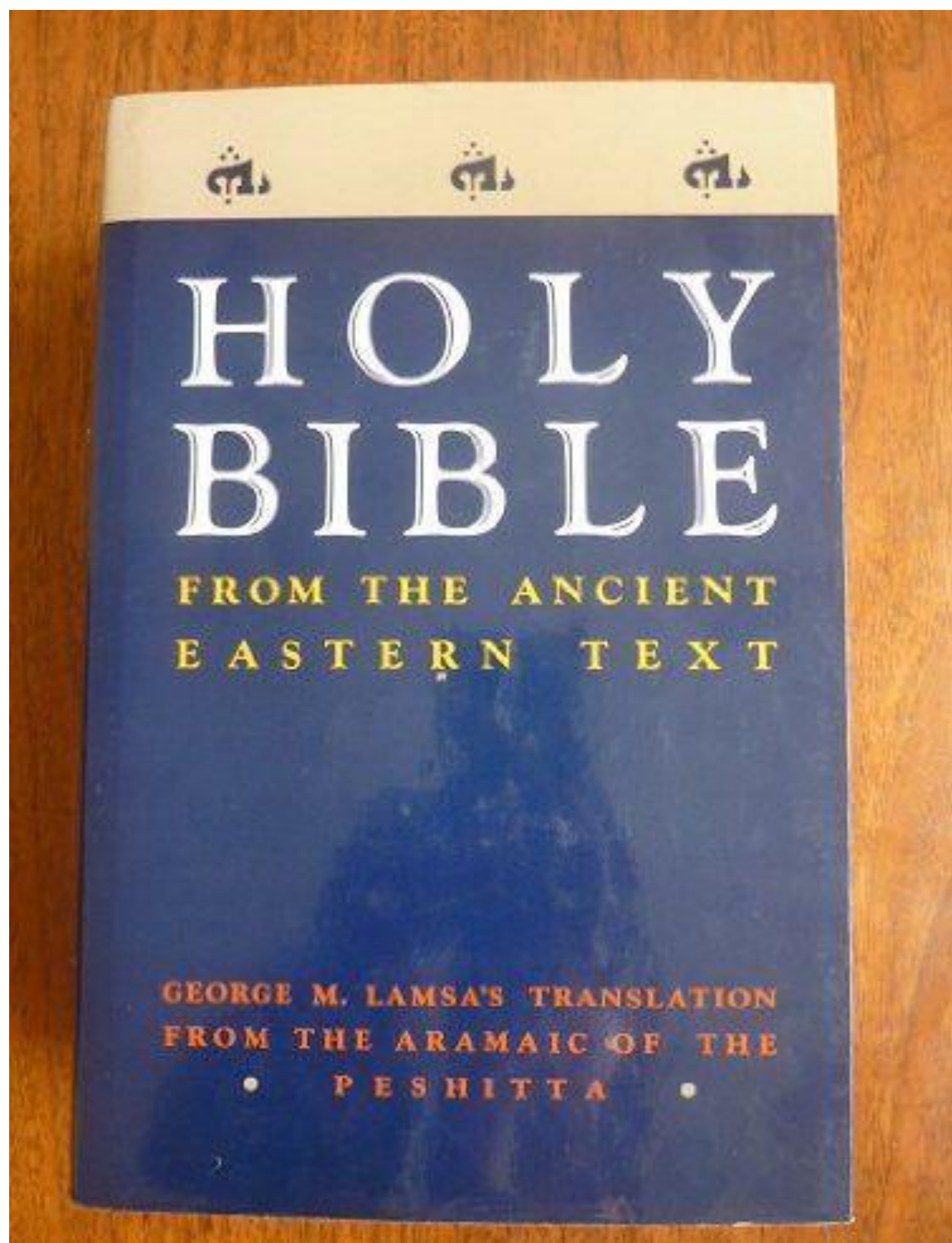


CAMEL GOING THROUGH A "NEEDLE'S EYE."

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."—MATT. XIX. 24.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(24) **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.**—Two explanations have been given of the apparent hyperbole of the words. (1.) It has been conjectured that the Evangelists wrote not κάμηλος (a camel), but κάμιλος (a cable). Not a single MS., however, gives that reading, and the latter word, which is not found in any classical Greek author, is supposed by the best scholars (*e.g.*, Liddell and Scott) to have been invented for the sake of explaining this passage. (2.) **The fact that in some modern Syrian cities the narrow gate for foot-passengers, at the side of the larger gate, by which wagons, camels, and other beasts of burden enter the city, is known as the "needle's eye," has been assumed to have come down from a remote antiquity, and our Lord's words are explained as alluding to it.** The fact—to which attention was first called in Lord Nugent's *Lands, Classical and Sacred*—is certainly interesting, and could the earlier use of the term in this sense be proved, would give a certain vividness to our Lord's imagery. It is not, however, necessary. The Talmud gives the parallel phrase of an *elephant* passing through a needle's eye. The Koran reproduces the very words of the Gospel. There is no reason to think that the comparison, even if it was not already proverbial, would present the slightest difficulty to the minds of the disciples. Like all such comparisons, it states a general fact, the hindrance which wealth presents to the higher growths of holiness, in the boldest possible form, in order to emphasize its force, and leaves out of sight the limits and modifications with which it has to be received, and which in this instance (according to the text on which the English version is based) were supplied immediately by our Lord Himself ([Mark 10:24](#)).



"This is the Bible translation from the language Jesus spoke. It is unique. Again and again the sacred writings have been enriched and made luminous by Dr. Lamsa's faithful translation of the idioms from his own native tongue. Not a new Bible but a new translation of distinction."—Dr. Daniel A. Poling

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Lamsa labored to eliminate errors that crept in through intermediary translations of the testaments into Latin and Greek. He corrected crucial mistranslations due to the confusion of letters and words by translators who approached the complexities of Aramaic grammar without the abilities of a native speaker. Thus Matthew 6:13, which the King James Version translates

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . .
is rendered in the Lamsa translation

And do not let us enter into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . .

Again, Matthew 19:24, which the King James Version translates as

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,

Lamsa corrects to

Again I say to you, It is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

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Cover design by Charles Fuhrman

MATTHEW

Chapter 19

16 ¶ Then a man came up and said to him, O good * Teacher, what is the best that I should do to have life eternal?

17 He said to him, Why do you call me good? There is no one who is good except the one God; but if you want to enter into life, obey the commandments.

18 He said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said to him, You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;

19 Honor your father and your mother; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.

20 The young man said to him, I have obeyed all these from my boyhood, what do I lack?

21 Jesus said to him. If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give them to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; then follow me.

22 When the young man heard this word, he went away sad, for he had great possessions.

23 ¶ Jesus then said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, It is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 Again I say to you, It is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When the disciples heard it, they were exceedingly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 Jesus looked at them and said, For men this is impossible, but for God everything is possible.

HEBREW NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

MORE NT STUDIES

'The camel and the eye of the needle', Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25

Just where is that gate in Jerusalem?

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24)

For the last two centuries it has been common teaching in Sunday School that there is a gate in Jerusalem called the eye of the needle through which a camel could not pass unless it stooped and first had all its baggage first removed. After dark, when the main gates were shut, travellers or merchants would have to use this smaller gate, through which the camel could only enter unencumbered and crawling on its knees! Great sermon material, with the parallels of coming to God on our knees without all our baggage. A lovely story and an excellent parable for preaching but unfortunately unfounded! From at least the 15th century, and possibly as early as the 9th but not earlier, this story has been put forth, however, there is no evidence for such a gate, nor record of reprimand of the architect who may have forgotten to make a gate big enough for the camel and rider to pass through unhindered.

Variations on this theme include that of ancient inns having small entrances to thwart thieves, or the story of an old mountain pass known as the "eye of the needle", so narrow that merchants would have to dismount from their camels and were thus easier prey for brigands lying in wait.

Mangled Greek maybe?

There are some differences in the transmitted Greek. The needle in Matthew and Mark is a *rafic*. In Luke it is a *belone*. But both are synonyms for needles used in sewing, but Luke's is more likely to be used by a surgeon than a seamstress.

Another possible solution comes from the possibility of a Greek misprint. The suggestion is that the Greek word *kamilos* ('camel') should really be *kamêlos*, meaning 'cable, rope', as some late New Testament manuscripts¹ actually have here. Hence it is easier to thread a needle with a rope rather than a strand of cotton than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. A neat but unnecessary solution!

A variation on all of the above is that the needle was a 6 inch carpet needle and the rope was made of camel hair- but this is again clutching at straws or camel hair, and is an unnecessary emendation.

Makes sense in Aramaic

An alternative linguistic explanation is taken from George M Lamsa's Syriac-Aramaic Peshitta translation² which has the word 'rope' in the main text but a footnote on Matthew 19:24 which states that the Aramaic word *gamla* means rope and camel, possibly because the ropes were made from camel hair. Evidence for this also comes from the 10th century Aramaic lexicographer Mar Bahlul who gives the meaning as a "a large rope used to bind ships".

A brief survey of sermons or search on the Internet reveals how many perpetuate the myth of the small gate in Jerusalem. Victorian travellers to the Holy Land even claim to have been shown it. The inaccuracy may appear harmless but it is neither good scholarship nor good exposition. The exaggerated and contrasted size is deliberate and is not an overt judgement on riches or poverty. Jesus reflects on how hard it often is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The riches are a distraction and hard to share if one is too attached to them. The disciples' incredulity is that if even the rich cannot be saved, who can? But the verdict is that even the rich, not only the rich, will find it impossible to save themselves – but with God all things are possible.

"The meaning of the word is determined by it's context. If the word 'riding' or 'burden' occurs then gamla means a camel, but when 'eye of a needle' is mentioned gamla more correctly means a rope. There's no connection anywhere in Aramaic speech or literature between camel & needle, but there is a definite connection between rope & needle." PESHITTA

**CONTEXTUALLY,
WHAT MAKES
MORE SENSE TO
YOU THE READER
CAMEL'S
GATE OR
CABLE
ROPE?**

In the original Aramaic text, the word to which the Greeks obtained "camel" is "Gamala". "Gamala" does not mean camel, that is "Gimel". "Gamala" is a heavy rope. Thus, Yeshua was saying, "It is easier to get a heavy rope thru the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to Heaven."

To get a heavy rope through a needle, it must be unwoven, broken down, it's strength of itself loosened; like that broken vessel. Everything we are, every strength which we think we have, and everything which we own must be unraveled & passed through.

SUDDENNESS PREPARED **THREE LEVEL MORTIFY**

- **Molecular Level:**
- **Death-In-Life by Daily Starvation**
- **{Lord's Supper}**
- **Cellular Level:**
- **Death-In-Life Program Apoptosis**
- **{Buried in Baptism}**
- **Tissue Level:**
- **Death-In-Life by Healing Process**
- **{Life of Continual Prayer}**

SUDDENNESS PREPARED **FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS**

Five States of the Soul:

- **EXEMPTION:**
- Ezekiel 18: 20; Matthew 18: 1 – 3
- **CONDEMNATION:**
- Galatians 3: 22
- **JUSTIFICATION:**
- Romans 5: 1, 2; 8: 1, 2
- **DAMNATION:**
- Matthew 23: 3; Mark 16: 16
- **GLORIFICATION:**
- Romans 8: 17, 30; II Thess. 1: 7 - 12

SUDDENNESS PREPARED **FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS**

Five Steps For Saving:

- **HEARING:**
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- **BELIEVING:**
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- **REPENTING:**
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- **CONFESSING:**
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- **BAPTISM:**
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 - 38