

🔮 | Revelation

EARLY EVIDENCE

Of all the books in the Western 5, Revelation has by far the strongest lines of evidence in terms of both antiquity and linguistics.²¹ Dealing with the former, the reader will recall that when Rabbi Tarfon had debated Justin Martyr in the year 130, Revelation was well known to both men. Other early evidence is found here:

Now the Apostle John, in the Apocalypse, describes a sword which proceeded from the mouth of Elohim as "a doubly sharp, two-edged one." This may be understood to be the Divine Word, who is doubly edged with the two testaments of the law and the gospel-sharpened with wisdom, hostile to the devil, arming us against the spiritual enemies of all wickedness and concupiscence, and cutting us off from the dearest objects for the sake of Elohim's holy name. If, however, you will not acknowledge John, you have our common master Paul, who "girds our loins about with truth, and puts on us the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes us with the preparation of the gospel of peace, not of war; who bids us take the shield of faith, wherewith we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which (he says) is the word of Elohim...

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, "let down from heaven," which the apostle also calls "our mother from above"; and, while declaring that our πολιτευμα, or citizenship, is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and the Apostle John beheld.

- Tertullian (ca. 155-225 CE), Bk.3 Ag.Marc., 3.14,25

Such, then, being the state of the case, and this number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the Apocalypse], and those men who saw John face to face bearing their testimony [to it]; while reason also leads us to conclude that

²¹ The author freely acknowledges that James Trimm has also written about many of the examples used here. However, Trimm and myself do have a disagreement on the evidence that emerges from two areas. First, Trimm uses many more of these examples than I do, because at least half of his evidence I have found to be of little probative value in the question at hand, such as the Crawford variant on Revelation 4:8, which appears little more than an extremely minor restatement of the Greek. However, other examples Trimm gives are clearly important, and these I have carefully checked myself before including them here. Second, Trimm comes awfully close to proclaiming Crawford either an original Aramaic composition or, in other cases, the original Aramaic Revelation from which all others are derived, which I am not prepared to do. Instead, I believe that both Crawford and Peshitto Revelation, while being translated from the Greek, nevertheless have within them recensions and echoes of a lost Aramaic Nazarene Revelation. As a result, in my view, no version of Revelation, including the Greek, is the original composition.

the number of the name of the beast, [if reckoned] according to the Greek mode of calculation by the [value of] the letters contained in it, will amount to six hundred and sixty and six; that is, the number of tens shall be equal to that of the hundreds, and the number of hundreds equal to that of the units (for that number which [expresses] the digit six being adhered to throughout, indicates the recapitulations of that apostasy, taken in its full extent, which occurred at the beginning, during the intermediate periods, and which shall take place at the end), I do not know how it is that some have erred following the ordinary mode of speech, and have vitiated the middle number in the name, deducting the amount of fifty from it, so that instead of six decads they will have it that there is but one.

- Irenaeus (ca. 120-202 CE), *Against Heresies*, 5.30

Finally, according to Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4.26), by the end of the second century one of the successors to an ancient assembly written to in Revelation, acknowledged that they had received that epistle and wrote a commentary on the entire book.

More than any other book in the Western 5, Revelation contains evidence that strongly suggests that at least some portions of it were of Hebrew or Aramaic origin. However, the road to understanding that evidence is far from easy, as there are two different Aramaic versions of Revelation to look at. The first one, begun by Philoxenus of Madbug in 508 and revised later by Thomas of Harkel in 616, is simply a translation from Greek sources. The second version, the Crawford Manuscript, appears to come from about five centuries later.²² While it has many indicators of being translated from the Greek, in other ways it appears to also have Aramaic recensions that precede the Greek. And then of course, with the Greek Revelation itself, we see possible evidences that it bows down to a lost Semitic master that I term "*Nazarene Revelation*".

Now I realize that such assertions can frequently stray into tenuous and speculative country, this being admitted up front. However, it should also be pointed out that just because an original may be lost, does not necessarily mean that there is no evidence it existed. For example, we know the Septuagint was translated from a Hebrew source even though we cannot find that precise Semitic variant all these centuries later. And yet, from both a historical and linguistic perspective, the Septuagint also bows down to its Semitic master. In much the same way then, we can look at the Greek as well as the other two versions, and find that in their own ways they are doing the same thing.

²² According to the [Bulletin John Rylands Library: The Syriac Manuscripts](#), p. 118: "On the date of the manuscript, see Gwynn, *Apocalypse*, cxii-cxix, where it is argued to be the end of the 12th century."

THE “ET” FACTOR

As we have seen throughout this book, Aramaic has certain features unique to itself that not even its closest cousin Hebrew possesses. However, every once in a while, we see evidence that it also works the other way around. Let’s begin with the first line of the Torah:

בראשית ברא אלהים **אֶת** השמים ו**אֶת** הארץ
 Bereshit bara Elohim **et** hashamayim v'**et** ha'aretz

The word *et* (אֶת) cannot be translated from Hebrew into any other language. It simply acts as a direct object pointer, or a word that indicates what object in a sentence receives the action. In this case, the heavens and the earth receive the action of being created by YHWH. In Revelation, this Hebrew oddity manifests itself this way:

<p>אֶת־אֶלֶף־וְאֶת־טָוֹ אֲנִי־וְהָיָה־וְהָיָה וְהָיָה־וְהָיָה־וְהָיָה וְהָיָה־וְהָיָה־וְהָיָה</p>	<p>“I am the Alap and the Taw, the beginning and the end’, says YHWH Elohim, Who is and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty.”</p>
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- Revelation 1:8 (personal translation)

In Hebrew, *et* is literally spelled as “Alap-Taw”, and so the heavens and the earth that were made in the beginning are referenced here. The phrase *MarYah Alaha*, is the direct cognate of YHWH Elohim, leaving little doubt as to the identity of the speaker. Furthermore, “Who is, who was and who is to come” is a clear interpolation of the Hebrew *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*, which Jewish sages have rendered as “the Eternal” because past, present and future are included in the Name (*HaShem*). While the Greek version “Alpha and Omega” connotes the idea of beginning and end, these extra meanings are completely lost in that language. However, another key aspect to this phrase is how it reads in the Greek.

Byzantine	εγω ειμι το αλφα και το ω λεγει κυριος ο θεος
Majority Text:	ο ων και ο ην και ο ερχομενος ο παντοκρατωρ
Westcott-Hort:	εγω ειμι το αλφα και το ω λεγει κυριος ο θεος ο ων και ο ην και ο ερχομενος ο παντοκρατωρ
Textus Receptus:	εγω ειμι το α και το ω λεγει κυριος ο θεος ο ων και ο ην και ο ερχομενος ο παντοκρατωρ
ASV:	“I am the Alpha and the Omega , saith YHWH Elohim, he who is and he who was and he who is to come, the Almighty.”

- Chapter 1 Verse 8

Byzantine Majority Text:	και ειπεν μοι γεγωνα εγω <u>το αλφα και το ω</u> η αρχη και το τελος εγω τω διψωντι δωσω εκ της πηγης του υδατος της ζωης δωρεαν
Westcott-Hort:	και ειπεν μοι γεγωνα εγω <u>το αλφα και το ω</u> η αρχη και το τελος εγω τω διψωντι δωσω εκ της πηγης του υδατος της ζωης δωρεαν
Textus Receptus:	και ειπεν μοι γεγονεν εγω ειμι <u>το α και το ω</u> η αρχη και το τελος εγω τω διψωντι δωσω εκ της πηγης του υδατος της ζωης δωρεαν
ASV:	"And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am <u>the Alpha and the Omega</u> , the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

- Chapter 21 Verse 6

Byzantine Majority Text:	εγω <u>το αλφα και το ω</u> ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος η αρχη και το τελος
Westcott-Hort:	εγω <u>το αλφα και το ω</u> ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος η αρχη και το τελος
Textus Receptus:	εγω ειμι <u>το α και το ω</u> αρχη και τελος ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος
ASV:	"I am <u>the Alpha and the Omega</u> , the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

- Chapter 22 Verse 13

So, in almost all the Greek manuscripts the statement in question reads: **ΤΟ ΑΛΦΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ Ω** - To Alpha kai to O - *The Alpha and the Omega*. The earliest Greek manuscripts were written in all capital letters, but notice mainly that "Alpha" is spelled out, whereas "Omega" is standing alone as one letter. The only divergence is with the Textus Receptus which, upon seeing the "Omega" un-spelled, turned around and did the same thing to "Alpha" for the sake of consistency!

However, both Peshitto and Crawford Revelation read:

ܐܠܦ ܘܘܘܠܦ ܘܘܘܠܦ ܘܘܘܠܦ ܘܘܘܠܦ

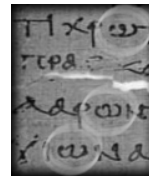
Ena ayti **Alap ap Taw**

spelling out the letters, just as the most ancient Greek manuscripts do. This Greek reading could very well have come from an Aramaic original!

Here's how an Omega looked in an actual manuscript:



How Taw is spelled out in Aramaic:



A close up comparison between them:



Allowing for minor scribal variations in hand copied manuscripts, we can easily see how a hurried up Taw-Waw combination slurred together could have been mistaken for an Omega, and as a result the full spelling of Taw-Waw was transliterated simply as an Omega into the Greek text. My special thanks to Steven Caruso for developing this idea, as well as the graphics used in this section.

COFFIN OR BED?

In the Greek version of Revelation, we have an interesting reading:

<p> ιςδου βαλλω αυτην εις κλιν την και; τους μοιχευοντας μετ αυτη ς εις θλιψιν μεγαλην, εαν μη μετανοησωσιν εκ τω ν εργαων αυτη ς </p>	<p> “Behold, I am throwing her into a bed, and the ones committing adultery with her into great affliction, unless they repent of the works of her. </p>
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- *Rev. 2:22 (Gk-Eng.Intln.NT, UBS 4thEd, N-A 26th Ed.)*

The woman in this instance is named Jezebel, and the apostle John is rebuking a congregation for allowing this woman to seduce righteous men who were previously above reproach. In addition, this woman also made false claims of prophetic utterances and even went so far as to eat meat that was sacrificed to idols.

Now, according to the Greek, the remedy for her illicit lovers is to “*throw them into affliction*”, which makes perfect sense. Although, isn’t it quite humorous that John’s sentence for Jezebel is to just “*throw her on to a bed*”? This seems less like punishment and more like business as usual! In order to avoid such a salacious reading, the translators have added a word that is not there in the text, as we see here:

“Behold I will throw her on to a bed *of sickness* and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.”

- *Revelation 2:22 (NASB)*

The use of *italics* in the NASB is a way of bolstering bad readings that arise from the Greek alone. The editors of NASB, while saying that italicized words are “*implied*”, are really on very thin ice from a scholarly perspective here. There is no fact, hint or evidence that “*bed of sickness*” is meant here. The Greek simply puts “*bed*” and “*bed*” alone here. Once again though the Aramaic comes to the rescue:

<p> ܘܕܘܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ ܘܕܘܢܘܢ </p>	<p> “Behold I will throw her in to a coffin, and those who commit adultery with her into a great affliction, unless they repent of their deeds.” </p>
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- *Revelation 2:22 (personal translation)*

It turns out that the Aramaic word *arsa* means both “*bed*” and “*coffin*”, with the latter meaning obviously making far more sense! Furthermore, notice the use of the B proclitic at the beginning of the word. As we saw earlier, א can mean *on* as in “*on to a bed*” or *into* as in “*into a coffin*”. The Greek redactor therefore had to have seen this word with its B proclitic in Aramaic and picked the wrong meanings for both of them in his version of the text!

Here is where things get very odd though. This reading is ironically identical in both the Peshitto Revelation and the Crawford Manuscript. In the case of the former, we know that it was a translation from the Greek, and yet this reading becomes very puzzling if the Greek itself is the original text. Crawford as well, while looking translational in many areas, nevertheless is holding on to the kind of Aramaicism that almost never comes into a text from translation!

So if Crawford and Peshitto Revelation were from Greek sources, the only logical conclusion is to assert that all three versions had to come from a lost Aramaic original. The surviving texts are clearly not original, but nevertheless testify, like the Septuagint, to the original’s existence.

SHARP SPIRIT?

On the other hand, here is one case where Crawford appears to show its translational side -or does it? First let’s look at the Greek:

<p>και εχων εν τη δεξια χειρι αυτου αστερς επτα, και εκ του στοματος αυτου ρομφαια δις τομος οξει α εκπορευομενη, και η οψις αυτου ως ο ηλιος φαεινι εν τη δυναμει αυτου.</p>	<p>“And having in the right hand of him seven stars, and out of the mouth of him a sword two-edged sharp going forth and the face of him like sun shining in its power.”</p>
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- Rev. 1:16 (Gk-Eng.Intln.NT, UBS 4thEd, N-A 26th Ed.)

Now let us look at Crawford²³:

<p>ܘܠܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ</p>	<p>“And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp spirit going forth, and the face of him was like the sun, shining in its power.”</p>
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- Crawford Revelation 1:16 (personal translation)

The reason for this odd reading may have been due to a minor confusion by the Crawford scribe. If we assume for the moment that the

²³ The original transliteration of the Crawford Manuscript is found in *The Apocalypse of St. John in a Syriac Version Hitherto Unknown*, by John Gwynn, published in 1897.

Greek version is original, the Aramaic word, *rumkha* (ܪܡܟܗ), means short spear or lance, whereas *sipa* (ܫܦܐ) the counterpart shown in Peshitto Revelation, actually means “sword”. And so, if the Crawford scribe targummed sloppily and thought *rumkha* was a good enough translation, then we can easily see how he could have accidentally wrote *rukha* (ܪܡܟܗ), the Aramaic word for “spirit”, instead by omitting the meem (ܡ). Such a scenario is one that James Trimm clearly suggests in his HRV footnote for this verse. As for myself, the challenge is showing how “spear” came from “sword” in the first place.

Alternatively though, a very interesting suggestion sometimes comes up that perhaps the Greek reading is at fault after all. It is certainly the case that “sharp” can be looked at as an idiom in this way:

ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ
ܪܡܟܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܗ

“For the word of Elohim is living and powerful. And sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the point of division between soul and spirit, and between the joints and marrow and bones, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

- Hebrews 4:12 (Lamsa, cross-referenced by AGR)

This metaphoric precedent raises another possible meaning in Crawford. As Stephen Silver pointed out, the phrase that appears in this passage is *rukha kharipta*²⁴, and the latter word has some very interesting meanings according to the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon: “**sharp, severe, prompt, with a loud voice,**²⁵ **pungent**” In that sense then, it is possible to render the phrase as “*fervent spirit*”, and this may make more sense than the Greek because of the rest of the passage reads:

“...and out of his mouth came a **fervent spirit**, and his countenance was like the sun, shining in its strength.”

The text does allow for the idea that it was the spirit coming out of the man’s mouth, as opposed to the man himself, who had the shining countenance. The fact that Crawford has this flexibility and Peshitto Revelation does not I find highly interesting. If a now lost Nazarene Revelation preceded the Greek, this is exactly the kind of reading we would expect the original to have getting misread into Greek. Nor is it an isolated incident. In Revelation 2:12, Crawford has a parallel phrase, *kharva kharipta* (ܟܗܪܒܐ ܟܗܪܝܦܬܐ) where Peshitto reads *sipa kharipta* (ܫܦܐ ܟܗܪܝܦܬܐ), both meaning “sharp sword”. Back in Luke we read:

²⁴ *kharipa* in Hebrews and *kharipta* in Revelation are just conjugated differently for gender.
²⁵ As noted before, *Rukha* can not only mean “spirit” but “wind”. Thus an additional dual meaning possibility here is “loud wind”, similar to the “many waters” referred to in Psalms 93:4 and Ezekiel 43:2, and as appearing in Rev. 1:15, 14:2, and 19:6. The sound of His voice.

וְבָא'נַפְשָׁחִי דֵּן דֵּלְאִי טַבָּר
 רֻמְכָחָ אַיְכְּ ד'נִיִּתְגַּלְעֵן מִיִּכְ-
 שַׁוַּתְתָּה ד'לִבְבַּוַּתְתָּה סַגַּיְתָּה

w'ba'napshaki den deelaki tabar
 rumkha aykh d'nithgaleen mikh-
 shawatha d'libbawatha sagayeh

“and in your **soul** will pass through a **spear** so that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Thus, as Stephen Silver states:

So there is an immediate parallel between “fervent spirit” and “sharp sword”... a beautiful illustration when using the phrases “rukha kharipta” and “kharva kharipta” to describe the work of the Spirit of Elohim in our hearts. Rather than affirming the Greek, which reads “sword”, in Revelation 1:16, the Crawford Aramaic shows originality and affinity with Hebrews 4:12. I think there has to be a fine line drawn between the Harkalean Rescension which includes II Peter, II and III John, and Jude on one hand, and the Gilyana (Revelation) on the other. I’m not convinced that the Book of Revelation is of Greek origin. The link between Hebrews 4:12 and Revelation 1:16 is by design, not a scribal error.

To that point I would add that the situation certainly requires further study, what we see here is not hard proof that the reading in either Crawford or Peshitto Revelation is antecedent to the Greek. Rather, all three versions are looking for their long-lost Semitic father.

Compositional Word Plays?

Alternatively however, both Crawford and Peshitto Revelation have wordplays that we would normally associate with Aramaic originals! While the readings do vary, their meaning is essentially the same and the word plays remain intact, again possibly harking back to the lost Nazarene Revelation. Let’s look at the Peshitto version:

לֵּינָה הִנֵּי אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת-אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי

“I saw when the **Lamb** opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four animals **saying** in a voice as of **thunder**, ‘Come and see’.”

- Revelation 6:1 (Lamsa, cross-ref. by AGR)

Here we see some genuine Aramaic poetic tendencies going on, with *Amra* (lamb), *Amar* (say), and *Reama* (thunder). Also in Crawford:

כַּד אֲפִתְחֵי אֶת-אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי
 אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי אֶתְרֵי

“...when the **lamb** opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four beasts that **spoke** as the voice of **thunder**: ‘Come and see’.”

- Revelation 6:1 (HRV)

Now I suspect that there are some reading this who might be familiar with the disputes that exist between James and myself. Momentarily I will share an area of Crawford Revelation that I feel strongly James gets wrong. In this case though, this observation of his is right on the money in my opinion. This is as clear a word play as exists in the Aramaic New Testament. Where James and I differ is on the application of and conclusions drawn from the evidence. James believes that Crawford Revelation itself is the original version, and in his detailed essay on the subject dismisses Peshitto Revelation as a translated work that he will not compare with the Greek or with Crawford.

While I agree that Peshitto Revelation is a translation from the Greek, its exclusion from the analysis leaves a false impression that Crawford only has these readings, and therefore must precede the Greek. The fact is that, in many of Trimm's examples, Crawford and Peshitto Revelation either read exactly the same or else the word or words responsible for the variant between the Aramaic and the Greek are the same in both. This argues against putting a mantle of originality solely on Crawford. Instead, as I have been saying, all this evidence keeps harking back to an earlier Semitic form of the book.

I can also acknowledge a possibility that Crawford retained certain aspects of Nazarene Revelation that Peshitto did not, although how this process happened, and what the chain of custody was from Nazarene to Greek and to Crawford, is completely unknown based on the state of the evidence. Still, I have to admit that there are places, as Trimm says, where a wordplay exists in Crawford that is not in Peshitto Revelation. For example, a few lines later, in 6:4, we see the beautiful alliteration of *khriba rabta* (ܟܪܒܬܐ ܪܒܬܐ), or "a great sword". By contrast, Peshitto Revelation misses this one, using *sipa raba* instead.

The Worthy Root

In this next example, both Crawford and Peshitto Revelation read almost exactly the same way. This is another instance showing that the Greek they derived from itself comes from a lost Aramaic original:

ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ
 ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ
 ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ
 ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ ܩܘܡܐܢܐ

"Then I saw a mighty angel
 proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who
 is worthy to open the book and
 loose the seals thereof?'"

- Peshitto Revelation 5:2 (Lamsa, cross-ref. by AGR)

Crawford has only one extra word, and it does not effect the meaning of the passage at all. Notice here that the word for "worthy" is highlighted, because this will show exactly how the Greek redactor was thrown off in his translation just a few lines later:

και; εις εκ των πρεσβυτερων
λεγει μοι, Μη κλαιε· ιδου;
ενικησεν ο λεων ο εκ της φυ
λης Ιουδα, η ριζα Δαυιδ, αν
οι ξαι το βιβλιον και; τας επ
τα; σφραγι δας αυτου

“And one of the elders says to
me, ‘Do not weep. Look (has
conquered), the Lion of the tribe
of Judah, the root of David (he is
able) to open the scroll and the
seven seals of it.’”

- *Revelation 5:5 (Gk-Eng.Intln.NT, UBS 4thEd, N-A 26th Ed.)*

Now, there are at least two problems with this reading. First, it makes no sense contextually. In 5:2, John is wondering who is *worthy* to open the seals. Then, three lines later, he is consoled by the fact that the Lion of Judah has *conquered*, but this was not his original question! Second, John would have been familiar with the prophecy regarding Judah - that the scepter would never depart from that tribe (*Genesis 49:10*) - and so this information would hardly be surprising to him.

However, in both Peshitto and Crawford Revelation, the key divergence from the Greek is the phrase **ܙܟܐ**, which can mean “conquer”, but is better translated as “worthy”! In other words, the Greek redactor clearly took the wrong meaning of *zeka*, which in Nazarene Revelation must have been intended to answer John’s question directly. Then, some time later, when the Greek was translated back into Aramaic, the cognate used for “conquered” just happened to also be *zeka*.

Incidentally, the exact same situation happens again in Revelation 15:1, where the Greek version of “those who were victorious over the beast” was misread from the Aramaic which reads “those who were innocent of the beast”. Once again the key comes from the dual meaning of **ܙܟܐ**, (*zeka*) being rendered in Greek as *ενικησεν*.

Feet or Legs?

Και ειδον αλλον αγγελον ισχυρον
καταβαινοντα εκ του ουρανου,
περιβεβλημενον νεφελην, και η
ιρις επι της κεφαλης αυτου, και το
προσωπον αυτου ως ο ηλιος, και οι
ποδες αυτου ως στυλοι πυρος

“And I saw another strong angel
coming down out of heaven having
been wrapped in a cloud. And a
rainbow (was) on his head of him
and the face of him (was) as the
sun, and the feet of him as pillars
of fire.”

- *Rev. 10:1 (Gk-Eng.Intln.NT, UBS 4thEd, N-A 26th Ed.)*

This is a tough one though, and can be argued either way. On the one hand, to have one’s “feet as pillars of fire” appears not to make sense. However, in Aramaic, the same word for “feet” also means “legs”. As a result, both Peshitto and Crawford Revelation contain the word *regel* (**ܙܟܐ**), but legs can be argued as a clearer reading.

On the other hand, the opposite side also has a good argument. We could say, for example, that the base of these fiery pillars actually does look like feet, as opposed to looking up at the whole structure, which could resemble legs. The fact that the shape is outlined by fire would tend to support the Greek reading, with jets of flame resembling extremities in the feet. If the Greek were the original text, we could easily see how “feet” would get translated into רגליהי.

Permit or Leave Alone?

Sometimes it seems that Peshitto Revelation, while being translational Aramaic in the main, also harks back to a possible lost Aramaic original. For example, in Revelation 2:20, we have an odd variant reading between two Greek textual families. The 1550 and 1894 Textus Receptus have the word *eas* (εας), or “you permit”.²⁶ By contrast the Byzantine and Alexandrian texts have *afeis* (αφεις), or “you leave alone”.

It then becomes most interesting when we consider that the Peshitto Version uses the word *shbak* (שבק), which the reader may recall has various meanings, including: *to leave (& depart), to leave, left over, to abandon, to permit, to divorce, to send out, to shed blood, to admit, to condone, to forgive, to reserve, to make fire, and to let alone*.

Here Comes the Sun

While it is certainly the case that James Trimm has made an extensive study with regards to Crawford Revelation, I cannot let my analysis of the same document pass without mentioning one place that I have a serious disagreement with him on. This is what he writes in Chapter 6 of his textual criticism book, regarding Revelation 19:17:

Crawford: *And I saw an angel who was standing in the service (בשמשא דקא) Greek: And I saw an angel standing in the sun (!?!?!?!?) In the unpointed Hebrew and Aramaic, there is no distinction between “Sun” and “service” (both being שמש). Thus the Aramaic phrase בשמשא may be understood either as “in the Sun” (as the Greek translator mistook it) or “in the service”. A similar phrase appears throughout the Aramaic Targums: למקם לשמשא “to stand [on duty], for the service” (Targum Onkelos Deut. 18:5; Targum Jonathan 1 Kings 8:11; Targum to 2 Chron. 5:14).*

The reason I strongly oppose this interpretation has nothing to do with the double meaning of an Aramaic word or the targums that Trimm

²⁶ George Ricker Berry translates this term as “you suffer”, but this is meant in the archaic English sense of allowing, i.e., “Suffer the little children to come unto me”.

mentions. Rather, it is a problem that arises from not including the quote of the full verse for proper context. Let's read the full passage then and see if his interpretation holds water:

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, **and he cried out to with a loud voice to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven**, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of Elohim...’”
- **Revelation 19:17 (NASB)**

Obviously the angel could not be “*in the service*” as Trimm says, but was in the air, and therefore, “*in the sun*”. The tragic thing here is that his ‘proof’ shows nothing with regard to either Crawford or the Greek being an original reading. Reason being, Peshitto Aramaic Revelation, which we know is a translation from the Greek also has **בשמשא**! And so, with “*standing in the sun*” clearly making more sense when the full verse is quoted, this attempt by Trimm becomes a non-issue. Either some Aramaic form of Revelation that had **בשמשא** got properly translated into Greek or, in the alternative, the Greek gave birth to Peshitto and Crawford’s reading of **בשמשא**, and I have to say it is the latter that I find far more probable. I have also found it very troubling that many ‘original readings’ proffered by Trimm in Crawford Revelation are in fact verbatim echoes of Peshitto Revelation or a key word that changes the meaning to Trimm’s liking in Crawford is in the other version as well.

This is not to say that I disagree with the entirety of what Trimm says about other parts of Crawford. The examples he gave in that essay which I could verify have been included here. However, more than half of Trimm’s proofs did not meet the challenge and were excised.

Character References

Other aspects of Revelation speak more to its Jewishness as opposed to linguistic primacy, excepting one case that we will see shortly.

The Power of Seven and Twelve

The first observation, and probably the most obvious, is the ubiquitous use of the number seven. In rabbinic, mystical, and ancient Jewish thought, seven is a special number. It primarily stands for cycles of perfection as in seven days of creation, since the Shabbat is included, and *Shabbat* is tied to the concept of ‘seven’.

We have also seen how *Shabbat* is closely tied to *Shalom* (*peace*), because both share the idea of completeness and perfection. In the New Testament, Y’shua uttered the Aramaic phrase *m’shalam*, or “It is accomplished!” Most Christians also don’t grasp the significance of six hours on the cross, one for each day of the week, followed by a time of

rest! However, focusing in on Revelation, this concept is used quite often to describe the time of the end:

- Letters to seven assemblies (1:4-3:22).
- Seven stars (1:16).
- Seven golden menorahs (1:20).
- Seven lamps of fire (4:5).
- Seven spirits of Elohim (4:6).²⁷
- A book with seven seals (5:1).
- A lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (5:6).²⁸
- Seven angels with seven trumpets (8:2).²⁹
- A beast with seven heads (13:1).
- Seven angels with seven plagues (15:1).
- Seven angels with seven bowls of wrath (16:1).
- A woman on the Beast, traveling over seven mountains (17:9).
- Seven kings (17:10-12).

The other key Jewish numbers in Revelation though, derive from twelve:

- Twelve tribes of Israel; 12,000 from each (7:4-8).
- Two beasts, with a total of 12 horns (13:1,11).
- Twenty-four elders, representing the courses of the Levitical priests (19:4).
- New Jerusalem's twelve gates, with twelve angels bearing twelve names of twelve tribes of the sons of Israel (21:12).
- Twelve foundation stones of New Jerusalem bearing twelve names of the apostles (21:14,19-20).
- New Jerusalem's length, breadth and height are equal: 12,000 stadia (21:16).
- New Jerusalem's wall measures 144 cubits (21:17).
- Twelve pearls, one for each gate (21:21).
- A tree bearing twelve kinds of fruit (22:1-2).

²⁷ Possibly, the seven lower sefirot mentioned in mystical sources, which John is obviously familiar with and writes about in other places.

²⁸ This is clearly drawn from Zechariah. Noting that the high priest Joshua ben Yehozadak had the same name as the righteous branch or Messiah (*Zechariah 6:12, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Isaiah 11:1-2*), he also stands in front of a stone with seven eyes (*Zechariah 3:9*). Further, Joshua, his men and that stone are all symbolic of men and times to come (*Zechariah 3:8*). Joshua, by virtue of his name, is symbolic of Messiah. However, what is often overlooked is that the stone in front of him also is, because of it in 3:9 we are told, "and I will engrave an inscription on it, says YHWH Almighty, and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day." This stone is identified as Messiah also (*Mark 12:10*). Also, note the parallel of the four horsemen in both works (*comp. Zechariah 6:1-8, Revelation 6:1-8, 9:17-19*).

²⁹ Or, more accurately from the Aramaic, *shyforah* (ܫܝܦܪܐ), Hebrew cognate, *shoferot* (שׁוֹפְרוֹת) ram's horns, like those used in Jewish New Year celebrations as well as by angels to announce great events. More generic words for "trumpet" exist in Aramaic and Hebrew, but the writer of Revelation goes out of his way to provide this specific imagery.

The Tree of Life

It is this last reference which is particularly significant, with a powerful Jewish image that most do not grasp. Let's take a look:

“And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

- **Revelation 22:1-2 (NASB)**

The reader will most likely recall that we dealt with Jewish mysticism before, in the writings of Paul. I would therefore encourage the reader to, if these concepts are not fully in mind at the moment, to revisit the sections of *“Ruach Qadim - Aramaic Origins”* pertaining to 1 Corinthians and Colossians that specifically deal with the ten sefirot.

What I did not get into at that previous juncture however was the fact that these sefirot form an image, known as the *“tree of life”*. Furthermore, that tree of life actually has twelve aspects, since from above Keter is Ein Sof and below Shekinah is the physical world, and thus a map of the cosmos is achieved with this design. Also, the verse in Revelation speaks of the river of life coming from the throne of Elohim, and the tree of life is from the middle pillar. In Jewish mysticism we are taught that Messiah comes from that same middle pillar!

Rabbi Eliezar ben Shammua says (it rests) on one pillar, and its name is Tzadik (the Righteous One). For it is said that Tzadik is the foundation of the world, (Proverbs 10:25).

- **b. Hagigah 12b**

One look at the tree of life diagram in any Kabbalah book easily shows that the foundation of the world, or *yesod*, is from the Middle Pillar that Messiah rests on. Furthermore, we have this other interesting citation from the Rabbinic Mystical School:

A pillar goes from the earth to heaven, and its name is Tzadik.

- **Bahir S 71; M 102**

Therefore, the author of Revelation, if nothing else, shows himself to be a formidable mystical teacher. His final point here, that the leaves are for the healing of nations, also speaks to the powerful image in John's Gospel, where Y'shua declared he had living water and food that most did not know of, which was to follow the commands of his Father.

666

However the most intriguing number of them all, is of course that of the Beast. For this portion, I will just once again quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia, because it really speaks to this issue so well:

80 ~ Ruach Qadim

The Seer has marked the beast with the number 666. His purpose was that by this number people may know it. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. A human number, i.e. intelligible by the common rules of investigation. We have here an instance of Jewish gematria. Its object is to conceal a name by substituting for it a cipher of equal numerical value to the letters composing it. For a long time interpreters tried to decipher the number 666 by means of the Greek alphabet, e.g. Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.", V, 33. Their efforts have yielded no satisfactory result. Better success has been obtained by using the Hebrew alphabet. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that Nero is meant. For when the name "Nero Caesar" is spelled with Hebrew letters, it yields the cipher 666.

To my mind then, this piece of evidence, more than any other, speaks to the reality of a Nazarene Revelation that existed at one time. It was written, just like the rest of the Nazarene autographs, with Hebrew style letters but in the Aramaic language, similar to archaeological inscriptions shown at the beginning of this book.

Yet of course what the Catholic Encyclopedia won't tell the reader is that an ancient, and now distanced title of the papacy - VICARIVS FILII DEI - (vicar of the Son of God) adds up to 666. In fact, today, due to this association, the Catholic Church will deny that this title ever existed.

So where is Nazarene Revelation now? The answer is not pretty.

The shocking conclusion...

...is that Nazarene Revelation, if it did exist, is no longer with us. Furthermore, everything I have been explaining, while intriguing and plausible historically, nevertheless does not constitute hard evidence beyond all scholarly doubt with regards to both Revelation and the rest of the Western 5. Here is what we can say:

- 1) The Nazarenes did originally write their New Testament in Hebrew style letters but in the Aramaic language. (*Evidence: Mas Shabbath 116a, quotes from Early Church Fathers, and archaeological finds in Israel of many such "Hebrew style" Aramaic inscriptions.*)
- 2) A collection of these books, Matthew to Hebrews, most likely did circulate out of the Middle East and was last seen in the direction of Rome. (*Evidence: Writings of and/or about Origen, Hegisippus, Pantaenus and Epiphanius of Salamis.*)
- 3) Beginning in the second century, quotes *possibly* mention the Western 5, Revelation and Jude having the strongest attestations. (*Evidence: Epistles of Polycarp, Clement of Rome, and writings of Justin Martyr.*)

- 4) By the end of the fourth century, the Western Church had largely decided on 27-book canon, and may have simply given an official stamp to books that had strong influence over the previous 200 years. (*Evidence: Lists by Origen and Eusebius, and the Muratorian Canon Fragment.*)
- 5) That one possible explanation for the adoption of the Western 5 is the memory of the Nazarenes keeping these books which stayed in the mind of the Church Fathers even as other authorities decried many of these same books due to their Jewish character. (*Evidence: Writings of Origen and Eusebius, and rejection of the Philoxenian version of the Western 5 by the Syrian Orthodox Church. Also early eastern traditions within the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church, such as the "Marganitha".*)
- 6) This possible Nazarene memory includes a list of at least 27 books, if not two or three more, depending on how one chooses to harmonize the lists of Eusebius and Origen.

By contrast, what we *cannot* prove is the following:

- 1) That the Nazarenes held *all 27 books* in a form which witnesses verified in their entirety, with everything from Matthew to Revelation.
- 2) That Rabbi Tarfon knew Revelation in any form other than the Greek version that Justin Martyr would have been familiar with or, that Rabbi Tarfon would have included Revelation and the other disputed books in his Talmudic debate regarding books of the minnim.
- 3) That any Aramaic collection of the disputed 5 books is extant to earlier than the sixth century.
- 4) That, even allowing for the memory of the Nazarenes keeping a full 27-book canon, that we would know anything certain of their content or the way they read in Aramaic or, that any credible Aramaic document today is a bona fide representation of how those Nazarene versions of 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation actually read.
- 5) That the surviving manuscripts of the Western 5 were written originally in any language other than Greek. Granted, intriguing facets of the Greek text may in fact point to an earlier Aramaic or Hebrew version, but if it does that Semitic predecessor has not survived. Further, the Greek versions of the Western 5 that we do have are so far removed from when the possible Nazarene versions of those books could have existed as to make any such textual evidence tantalizing, but far from decisive.

In the end then, the research that I put into this book took me into a rather unexpected direction. Reason being, while I still maintain that these books contain no doctrinal errors due to them having been inspired by the Holy Spirit, this has become purely a matter of faith as opposed to an ironclad historical and linguistic process. In essence, there is now a gap between what I believe and what I can clearly prove.

I have, in a few strategic places, referred to the “*Elohim has preserved His Word*” argument as weighing against the overall case for a full Aramaic-Nazarene canon identical to that maintained by the Western Church. What I found out for myself however was that YHWH clearly *has preserved His Word, and has used the Eastern Peshitta Canon as the best mechanism for 22 of these books*. With this collection then, we can be absolutely certain of the original words the Messiah and his followers actually spoke and wrote down, lovingly preserved and passed down intact from that distant epoch. The fact that such a reality is unknown to almost 2 billion people, coupled with the urgency of keeping the actual language of Y’shua from perishing from the earth, only adds more incentive for me to get the word out.

In the meantime, while the issues about the Western 5 are unresolved, I will continue to assert that there is a clear distinction between *inspiration* and *canonicity*. To my mind, reaching out purely from a faith-based perspective, the Western 5, excepting clear instances of later addition/corruption in the textual record, are infallible, faithful and complete records of the eternal words of YHWH. They have absolutely no doctrinal problems with Tanakh or the rest of the New Testament, and the reason for their preservation solely in the West must surely be for reasons that YHWH has yet to reveal to me, but I know His will when I see it. That is what “*inspiration*” means to me.

But what is “*canonicity*”? My answer here is that this term was one coined by the Roman Catholic Church to talk about a legal process instituted by them, for them, and for putting their stamp of approval on a corpus of works that was in substitution of the process of the Ruach Ha Kodesh. That does not mean they were wrong in choosing their list. However, what it does mean is that ‘canonicity’ was something that they thought empowered them to change the *contents* of the books they were now venerating. This included altering the content of the Ten Commandments itself, as well as changing lines in 1 John to include a stronger Trinitarian statement which was the direct result of the deliberations of the Council of Carthage in CE 397.³⁰ Then those changes are put forward as the original words of the apostles who, as good Jews, would never have touched such an unclean thing. It is the Catholic insistence that such changes should pass as original because of ‘canon’ that I am opposed to, not the original readings of the books themselves, or the more ancient readings even in the Greek side, and so on.

There are about a half a dozen places in the Greek record also that show Gentile-pagan incursion and redaction of the Aramaic or

³⁰ The note in the New International Version with respect to 1 John 5:6-7 is particularly instructive and accurate: “*Late manuscripts of the Vulgate testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. 8 And there are three that testify on earth; (not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century)*”.

insertion of new material that was not even in the earliest Greek mss or the Aramaic, but I don't feel the need to enumerate all of these here. I simply refer to them to make the point that I am not dismissing any portion of the original 22 Eastern Canon nor of the most reliable (*and suppressed*) readings on the Western side. It is one thing to say that a book in the NT is not inspired; it is quite another to say that I wish to separate the real readings within those books from the fakes, even if the fakes are popular with Christendom.

Finally, while I respect the Church of the East, my canonical position is a bit more robust here, as I encourage that the Western 5 continue to be quoted in actual liturgical services, taking their place in hand written Torah scrolls next to their stronger 22 brothers. Such is the best we can do until Messiah comes back, and brings the best of both eastern and western traditions about him into clearer focus. Or, to put at another way, as the apostle Paul says rightly:

“Now we see as a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face.
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

- *1 Corinthians 13:12*

If we are fortunate, YHWH will allow us all to see that blessed day.