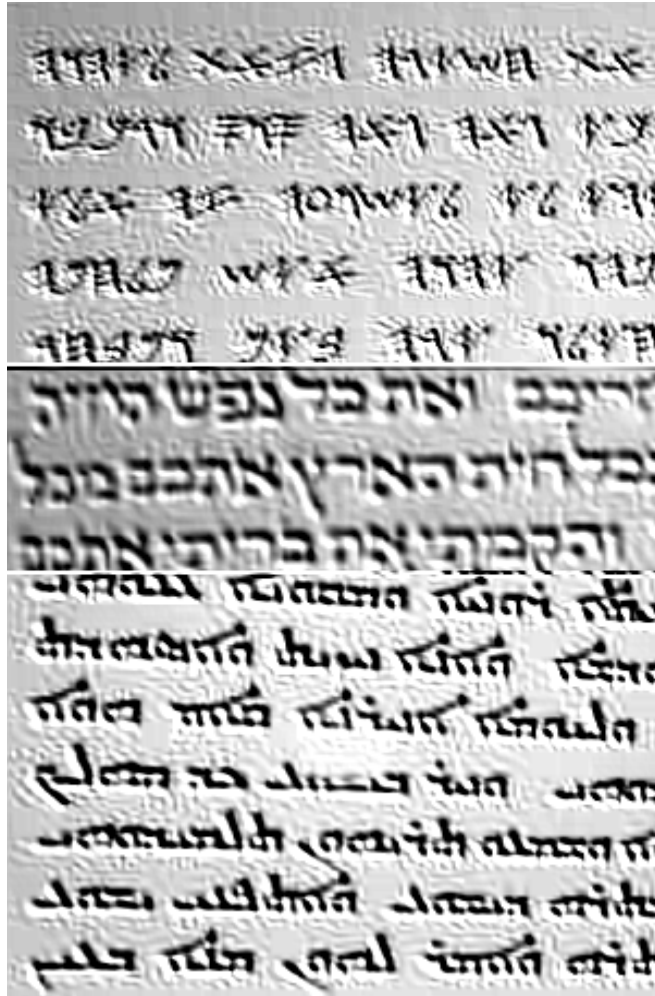


A RUACH QADIM EXCERPT:

**PROOFS OF PESHITTA ORIGINALITY IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW & THE GOWRA
SCENARIO: EXPLODING THE MYTH OF A FLAWED GENEALOGY**



[Standard Electronic Edition]

By Andrew Gabriel Roth

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Today rabbah (thank you very much) in advance for your sensitivity and spiritual discernment in this matter, so that His Great Name may be known and revered in all the earth.

Andrew Gabriel Roth
August 30, 2003

The Gospel of Matthew (בגותא מתיא)

Singular/Plural confusions	5
A Preview: Showing up the Semitic Follies	7
Word Pairs Spelled the Same but with Different Meanings	10
Cognate Accusatives (the Double Shot) of Matthew 6:19	13
The "Mirror Phrase" of Matthew 13:31-32	14
"Beyt" and Switch	16
Kol v'khomer	17
The roots of Jewish prayer, light and Torah	20
The "Idiom Trap" of Matthew 23:8 and others	23
Generation, Race or Neither?	25
My God, My God, why is this always mistranslated?	26
Spotlight Feature: The GOWRA Scenario (Exploding the Myth of a Flawed Genealogy)	29
Endnotes	51

ਮੱਥਾਜ ਫ਼ੈਲਾਨ, ਗੰਠ | The Preaching of

Matthew

Singular/Plural confusions

Our first kind of Aramaic primacy proof in Matthew has to do with the problem of determining if a word is singular or plural. In most cases, Aramaic words have clear singular and plural endings. However, as with any language, a significant amount of irregular words also exist, and when these happen there is no way to distinguish between the two. The problem in fact became so pronounced that even various Aramaic scribes adopted a convention of marking the plural versions of these words with two dots above the middle letter. Called a *syame*, these markings solved a lot of problems, but not before the Greek redactors would have already done their work. In other words, for the time frame that we are discussing, which would be the first four centuries of the Common Era, no such markings existed on the Aramaic manuscripts. As a result, anyone who tried to translate these Aramaic terms into Greek might have to guess in cases where the context did not definitively convey singularity or plurality of the noun in question.

For example the Greek reads:

"And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the **prophets**: He will be called a Nazarene."

Matthew 2:23

This of course presents a major problem. First of all, Nazareth the city did not exist during the time of any of the Old Testament prophets. While there is some debate among archaeologists as to when it was built, no one thinks it could have been done any earlier than about 100 BCE. So, from a historical perspective, that is at least 300 years from when the last prophet Malachi would have died.

Therefore, the answer to this problem comes from both Torah and Aramaic understanding. Several times in the Hebrew text, the Messiah is prophetically referred to as a "righteous branch". In almost all cases, such as with Jeremiah 23:5-6, the word for "branch" used in these prophecies is *tzemach* (צִמְחָה). However, in Isaiah 11:1-2, a very rare alternate word is used, *netzer* (נֵצֶר). This word only appears three other times in the entire Hebrew Bible, twice more in Isaiah (14:19, 60:21) and once in Daniel 11:7. Although, in Daniel's case *netzer* is not pointing to a righteous Messiah, but to an evil idolater known as the "king of the south". Therefore, as this term relates to Messianic prophecy, Matthew would surely have known that only the *prophet* Isaiah used the word in that manner. Then, about five centuries after Isaiah's time, a small village would take the name NETZER-ET(Nazareth), or "City of the Branch." It is this usage, which only appears in Isaiah 11:1, that Matthew is clearly referencing.

Finally then, since the rendering of *prophets* in the Greek versions of Matthew 2:23 is clearly in error, it cannot be the original reading, but could only result in seeing an early Aramaic written document devoid of plural markings.

Interestingly enough though, it also works the other way as well. In Matthew 10:5, the Greek reads, "Do not go into the *city* of the Samaritans," whereas the Peshitta 's correct usage of the plural *cities* is confirmed by archaeology and history that tell us the Samaritans had many such dwelling centers throughout their country.

In fact, the reading in Greek is so awkward that many English translations force the word *any* into the text just to cover up the mistake so that the Greek will make more sense. NASB, for example, is more than fair in reflecting this aspect accurately by placing the words as follows:

"These twelve Y'shua sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans"

Matthew 10:5 (NASB)

Furthermore, the NASB's own introductory notes admit this critical fact:

"*Italics* are used in the text to indicate words which are not found in the original Greek but are implied by it."

Ryrie NASB Study Bible, p. ix.

How interesting then that their "original Greek" needs help two millennia later to find the correct "implications" in English! Otherwise, it might put them in the embarrassing position of admitting that what they view as original is in fact very poorly written. Another explanation though is even worse for their cause, and that would be to simply assert that the apostles writing in "original Greek" really thought there was only one Samaritan city in all the world.

In addition, the ironic fact of the matter is that I have too much respect for the Greek language to impose this sort of ambiguity on it, since it operates at a level of amazing precision and clarity, with discrete meanings for each individual word. These qualities, as I have said before, make Greek the ideal language for medicine and science, as it is throughout the Western world. It is therefore ignorant in the extreme to talk about implied meanings as a subterfuge against an error that could not be more clearly stated in the actual text.

The final point on this matter though is perhaps the most devastating and the easiest to detect. Put simply, the very fact that the NASB editors took the time to put this explanatory note in the preface, as well as highlight all the "implied" words in italics, speaks volumes as to the ubiquitous problems in the Greek text more than I ever could.¹

A Preview: Showing up the Semitic Follies

Dutillet

One of the issues we will be delving into later is how the Peshitta stacks up against three late medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew. Here is a preview of the kind of errors that mark the vanguard of that group, Dutillet, as a "Yochanan come lately". First however we should look at the Peshitta text:

בְּהֵמָּהּ יָמֵי יוֹחָנָן בֵּן זְבוּדִי, וְהוּא יָצֵאתָ לְבַרְיָהּ יְהוּדָה וְהוּא יָצֵאתָ לְבַרְיָהּ יְהוּדָה

In them, in those days², **came** John the Baptist, and (he) would preach in the desert of Judah.

Matthew 3:1 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

In this case, the key word is *atha* ("came"), and the reading is well attested to in the Greek traditions that read "came near", putting this version at least back to the second century.

However, Dutillet here really shows its age, or rather the lack thereof, with the reading "and he was called", because of these two similar looking Hebrew words:

קרא (called)

קרב (came near)

And so, the fraud is easily exposed. The redactor of Dutillet then could not have been looking at the Aramaic Peshitta text and made this mistake by rendering *atha* as *karav*. Reason being, if he had consulted the Peshitta, then the quickest glance at that source would have corrected the reading in an instant. Instead, it is far more likely that the writer of Dutillet availed himself of the copious numbers of Greek texts that were available in Rome at the time, saw the wording there, and then just mis-wrote a *beyt* where an *alap* should have been.³ From there it would simply have been a matter of sending the Hebrew manuscript out to its intended audience without checking it for this particular error, which is found in no other New Testament manuscript or fragment.

Siniaticus

By the same token, we can also show an early error of one of the Old Syriac manuscripts known as Siniaticus. Let's take a quick look at its mangling of a passage just a few lines down from the one Dutillet just got wrong, by first looking at the Peshitta text:

וְהוּא יָצֵאתָ לְבַרְיָהּ יְהוּדָה וְהוּא יָצֵאתָ לְבַרְיָהּ יְהוּדָה

And **behold**, the axe is placed on the root of the trees. All trees therefore (that) have fruit that (is) not good, bring forth (and they) will be cut and will fall into the fire.

Matthew 3:10 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

The Old Syriac though has misread the verse this way:

ܗܐ (ha) = behold

ܗܫܐ (hasha) = and now also

Since the Greek texts read "and now also" as well, the confusion of the Old Syriac scribe most likely appears to be rooted in a memory of the Peshitta text reading *something like hasha* combined with a Greek version that is clearly in front of him which he emulates. The only difference is, the Greek redactors made their error from the Peshitta at least two centuries prior to when the Old Syriac scribe crafted an even worse reading by lifting it from that same Greek text! All that aside though, the fact is that to say "behold!" at the beginning of a sentence is pure Aramaic speech, and this is in sharp contrast to the neutral sounding "and now also".

Shem-Tob

The show continues with Shem-Tob, another medieval Hebrew manuscript that even its proponents admit has many flawed readings. Again, we start with the Peshitta text:

ܘܥܝܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ ܫܪܝܕܐ ܕܝܗܘܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ ܕܝܫܘܐ

And when Y'shua heard that John was **arrested**, he departed to Galilee.

Matthew 4:12 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

The interesting thing about this passage is that the proponents of "Hebrew Matthew" never look at this reading in the Peshitta! Instead, they propose that there is an underlying confusion in the Greek manuscripts that "misread" the Hebrew אסור (imprisoned) for נוסר (delivered up). Not only does such an alleged confusion strain credulity that both an א and a נ were overlooked from the "Hebrew original" and then mangled into Greek, but the Peshitta is completely absent from their "learned analysis".

Although, as the reader can easily discern here, the Peshitta has neither אסור nor נוסר (nor their cognates) in its text, but *ashtelem*, which can mean "arrested" *and* "delivered up"! Therefore, in this case the Greek almost can't make a mistake, since either reading is accurate from the Aramaic side.

Then, more than a thousand years later, Shem-Tob comes along and, reading that same Greek text, sloppily writes down the wrong Hebrew word.

Monster...oh, I mean "Munster"

We now come to a passage whose meaning has been greatly debated from the Greek camp but which is crystal clear in the Aramaic text:

ܐܢܬܘܢ ܕܢܫܝܢ ܕܢܫܝܢ ܠܚܘܒܐ ܕܚܝܒܐ ܕܠܚܘܒܐ ܕܠܚܘܒܐ ܕܠܚܘܒܐ ܕܠܚܘܒܐ

ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ ܕܠܘܩܡܐ

But I say to you that anyone who provokes to anger his brother in vain is condemned to judgment, and anyone who would say "I spit on you" (*raca*) is condemned to the assembly, and anyone who would say "You are a coward" is condemned to the fires of hell.

Matthew 5:22 (Yunan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

What an inconvenient situation this is! An original Aramaic phrase is most impolitely transliterated into Greek without a word as to its true meaning. As a result, scholars like Charles Ryrie (Ryrie Study Bible, p. 14) guess that it means "empty-headed". James Trimm too renders it "you are nothing". In both cases, these men are assuming the word is *raka* (ܪܩܐ), which in Hebrew and Aramaic does mean "nothing".

However, what both of these men have forgotten is that Messiah came from Galilee, and there spoke a very particular dialect that has been handed down in pristine condition to the Peshitta text. In that case, the same word pronounced with a slightly different inflection is *raqa* (ܪܩܐ), which is the common invective "I spit on you".

In Y'shua's culture, this was one of the worst acts that one Jewish man could do to another, especially if that person was a relative or close friend. The matter was in fact so serious that it ranked right up there with other Jewish defiant acts of separation, such as shaking off sandals and tearing clothing in front of someone deemed "dead". Furthermore, people who were caught spitting were literally brought before the Sanhedrin, just as Y'shua says!

Therefore, the reason for the confusion clearly rests on the fact that more than a thousand years had again intervened between the Galilean Aramaic culture that the Peshitta records and the Hebrew culture of the Middle Ages reflected in Munster, which would have forgotten the earlier Aramaic reading in favor of the remaining concept in the Hebrew of their day.

Word Pairs Spelled the Same but with Different Meanings

Camel/heavy rope

“It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 19:24 = Mark 10:25⁴

Traditional scholars have been aware of the problematic nature of this verse for many years. They have suggested the “eye of the needle” may be a place name, or more specifically, a part of one of Jerusalem’s gates that allows a man and a camel to pass, but only in single file. Since this gate has been called “Eye of the Needle”, they reason this is what Y’shua meant.

However, this is not the only explanation, and there is no evidence at all that a proper place name was intended either in Aramaic or in Greek. And so, if the “eye of the needle” is literal, then it means no rich people can be saved; bad news for the wealthy followers listed in Luke 8:1-3, as well as two Sanhedrin members, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Fortunately, the Aramaic gives a much clearer image, for while *gamla* does mean “camel”, *gamala* means “heavy rope”, but both words in the actual text would appear exactly the same way as G-M-L-A (ܩܡܠܐ).⁵

Although, in order to understand why “heavy rope” is the right translation, we need to look at the situation that precipitated the comment in the first place:

(Y’shua said) “If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give them to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come; follow me.”

Matthew 19:21 = Mark 10:21

So now we have two images in juxtaposition, a heavy rope (the man’s riches) and the needle’s eye (the narrow door to salvation). Can a heavy rope pass through such a small opening? The answer is *yes, but only if it is undone one small strand at a time*. The rope “unraveling” would then represent the rich man “unraveling his fortune”, so to speak. This is also a great example of Y’shua’s sense of humor, because if the question is “Can a rich man enter the kingdom of God?” the answer is, “Yes, if he is not so rich by the time he dies”!

Leper/jar maker

“While Y'shua was in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, **a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of expensive perfume.**”⁶

Matthew 26:6-7

One detail should leap out at even the casual Bible student: WE HAVE A LEPER LIVING IN A SUBURB OF JERUSALEM ALONG WITH THE REGULAR POPULATION!

Such a situation is clearly impossible:

“The person who has such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.”

Leviticus 13:45-46

It also requires very little effort to point out that lepers cannot:

- 1) Own property.
- 2) Live in or near Jerusalem, except in a leper colony.
- 3) Employ servants.
- 4) Own expensive jars of perfume.
- 5) Have feasts that Jews will legally be able to attend.

Furthermore, it simply goes beyond credulity to suggest that a lifelong Aramaic speaker like Matthew could possibly make this mistake in Greek translation, especially since this goes against well known Torah provisions.

Now to be fair, the Greek School has seen the difficulty here and offered up a scenario in response. They say that perhaps the man was no longer a leper because Y'shua cured him and that, like Lazarus in John 12, he was giving a feast in Y'shua's honor to express gratitude for the miracle. “Simon the Leper” would then have been a name that just kind of stuck with him afterwards due to this occasion. However, there are at least three serious problems with this suggestion.

First, the text does not tell us this is the case, and the only reason John 12 is compared to it is because such a distinction is made there. Second, lepers, as a matter of law, are never called that again once they are

healed. They are always pronounced “clean” by the priests and re-enter society upon recovery, (Leviticus 14:11). Third, consider the ramifications to this man’s personal life if he did as these scholars suggest. To keep being referred to as Simon *the Leper* would no doubt drive away business from him and create confusion when other Israelites from outside of his town came to visit there. It would also be considered a legal slander to refer to someone so cleansed as still possessing that impurity.

Finally, because *garba* and *garaba* have distinctive verbal inflections from each other that reveal their different meanings, the likelihood is extremely high that oral sources were not used. The scribe simply looked at the paper and made the wrong choice.

Do not hang earrings on dogs

"Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again to rend you."

Matthew 7:6 (KJV)

لا تعلق تالون قدسها لكالبه

La tithlon qudesheh l'kalbeh⁷

This verse is particularly instructive because it contains a pair of words that have been misinterpreted in this manner:

- TITHLON **تالون** (hang) was misunderstood as TALON⁸ **تالون** (to lead/give).⁹
- QUDESHAH (earrings) was misunderstood as QUDSHA (holy), with both words spelled as **قدسها**.

The other key aspect to this verse is that is a beautiful piece of Semitic poetry. Certainly the image of hanging earrings on dogs dovetails perfectly with the other half of the line of casting pearls before swine. Furthermore, and as we will see in great detail later, this type of poetry is called a *synthetic parallelism*, which is where two agreeing images are joined together. In this case, both images show that wild animals--used metaphorically as representing ignorant people--should not be given precious things that they will not appreciate or understand.¹⁰

Forgive us our debts/offenses

Now let's look at a few versions of this verse, Matthew 6:12:

"Forgive us our *debts*, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (KJV, NIV, NASB)

"Forgive us our *shortcomings*, as we forgive those who have failed in their duty to us." (Wesley's New Testament)

Forgive us our *sins*, as we forgive those who sinned against us." (New Century Version)

"Forgive us our *offenses*, as we have forgiven our offenders." (Lamsa)

The Greek words for debt (*danion*, *οφειλhma*) and sin/offense (*amartia*) obviously are quite different in appearance. The problem though is even deeper than that. Specifically, it is not so much a matter of which word is used in Greek, but how *οφειλhma*, the word used in this verse, is thought to read in English, since it toggles between these two meanings.¹¹

However, the reason this is the case has nothing to do with the Greek at all, but harks straight back to the Aramaic, where the word *khawbayn* (ܚܘܒܝܢ) means both "sins" and "debts". Once again this brings Papias' statement back to fore that Matthew wrote in Hebrew dialect (of Aramaic) and everyone else translated as best they could.

Cognate Accusatives, (or the Double Shot) of Matthew 6:19

One of the most interesting features of the Aramaic language is its tendency to have one word possess multiple meanings. Such a situation then often presents a wonderful opportunity for clever speakers and writers to repeat the word several times in a sentence, but have each occurrence taking on another meaning from the one before it. Or, to put it another way, consider the words of Benjamin Franklin, who said:

"Gentlemen, we must all **hang** together, or most assuredly we shall all **hang** separately."

Obviously then, the word *hang* is being exploited for its dual meaning of "to cohere" and as a method of execution. Now the same thing happens here:

Do not **store up** for yourself a **storehouse** of your treasure on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and the **thieves** break in and **steal**.

כִּי יִשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶת הַקוֹל
 וְיִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַקוֹל
 וְיִשְׁמַע הַיָּם אֶת הַקוֹל

Just like the word *hang*, the dual meanings of the words *sim* (store, storehouse) and *ganb* (thieves, steal) are also being tapped by Y'shua in his speech.¹²

The "Mirror Phrase" of Matthew 13:31-32¹³

However, an even more startling poetic example is found in Matthew 13:31-32, and the beauty of this example is that it comes from the field of Old Testament research that deals with the aspects of original Hebrew poetry. In 1978, the late Dr. Cyrus Gordon, one of the world's leading experts in ancient Semitic languages, published a remarkable find regarding the Hebrew style in the Song of Songs. He wrote:

"One kind of parallelism is quite ingenious, for it hinges on the use of a single word with two entirely different meanings: one meaning paralleling what precedes, and the other meaning, what follows."¹⁴

To better illustrate the nature of this find, let us first look at one key word, *zemer* (זִמְרָה). In Deuteronomy 14:5, this word means "mountain sheep", but it also can mean "to prune" or "to sing". In fact, one of the Hebrew words for *psalms* is *mizmor* and many Orthodox Jews today affectionately refer to their evening songs of praise as *zemiros*, with both terms being derived from the same root. That being said, when we turn to Song of Songs 2:12, we have a lovely piece of poetry where it says:

"The blossoms have appeared in the land. The time that has come is *of pruning (zemer)*. The *song (zemer)* of the turtledove is heard in our land."

I have arranged the English to reflect the original Hebrew word order, where the same word carries one meaning and context in the portion before it, and another meaning and context for what comes afterwards. Such then is the essence of the *mirror phrase*, where one word acts as a pivot between two meanings, thusly:

Pruning → זִמְרָה ← Song

Obviously this is a wonderful piece of poetry and is a powerful line of evidence for the Hebrew origin of the text. The difference is, of course, that no one questions the Hebrew primacy of the Song of Songs! Nevertheless, since the discovery of the first instance of this kind of poetic pattern, many others have been uncovered throughout the Hebrew Bible, and today no serious scholar doubts their presence or the proof that it represents. Therefore, what was true about Biblical Hebrew should also be true of Aramaic, since it is inconceivable that such evidence could appear in translation. After all, the deeper the poetry, the harder it is to translate it properly. With those thoughts in mind then, let us look at this verse:

מְדִינָהּ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ

מְדִינָהּ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed¹⁵,
which a man took and sowed in his field.

מְדִינָהּ, כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ

And though it is the **smallest** of all the **seeds**,

מְדִינָהּ, כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ

when it has grown, it is greater than all the herbs

מְדִינָהּ, כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ כְּחֵן לְפָנֶיךָ

and becomes a **tree**, so that the **birds** of heaven will come and nest in its branches

Just like the word *zemer* in Song of Songs 2:12, this verse also has word that acts as a pivot between two of its meanings. In this case though, the word is *parakhta* (כְּחֵן), which contextually means seeds, herbs or trees for the portion before it, but then means birds or nesting for what comes after it. Therefore, in terms of all these meanings, the same pattern emerges as:

seeds, herbs, trees → כְּחֵן ← birds, nesting in branches

There is also a secondary poetic feature to this verse as well, since we also have a clear wordplay happening between the words "smallest" (ZEUORYaA- כְּחֵן) and "seeds" (ZaREuONaA-מְדִינָהּ). In fact the linkage of these two words by Y'shua here is far from an isolated occurrence. Understanding that

he has compared *faith* with a *seed* in this instance, it becomes very significant when, in 14:31, Y'shua rebukes Peter's doubt with the phrase *zowray d'haymanutha* (Oh you *little* of faith). Reason being, *zowray* is the same word being used here for "smallest" when there were several other more common Aramaic words with that meaning that Y'shua could have used if he were not trying to make a very specific point!

"Beyt" and Switch

Let's take a look at Matthew 11:8 in Aramaic and Greek:

ܡܶܠܶܟܽܘܢܺܝܳܬܺܝܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ

And if not, what did you go out to see? A man that was wearing soft robes? Behold, those wearing soft things are **among the kings**.

aj l a;tivejhlvqate ipeih;anqrwpon ej mal akoiß hjnfiesmexon;ijlou;oiJta;mal aka;forouhteß **ej toiß oikoiß** twh basil ewn eijsin.

If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are **in the king's palaces**.

The reason for the disparity is a simple one. In Aramaic, four letters stand for "proclitics" or prepositional phrases. One of these is the letter B or *beyt*, which can mean "in, inside or on". While we will go into proclitics in greater detail in the Gospel of Luke, for now the salient point is that such a letter looks like it is part of an Aramaic word, but it really isn't.

As a result, we have this:

Beyt (ܰܢܺܝܳܢ) = house [king's house = palace]

B'eyt (ܰܢܺܝܳܢ) = (**in**) among

Not only does the "among" reading make more sense, but the fact is if the Greek was the original, the Aramaic grammar is deeply flawed in what is an otherwise perfect Aramaic New Testament. Reason being, if Matthew, a native Aramaic speaker, had intended to say "house of the king" he would have had to write ܰܢܺܝܳܢ ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ not ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ, which is missing the key word "of" (ܰܠܶܗܺܝܳܘܳܢ)!

Again, this is a difference between all the Greek manuscripts of Matthew going back to the second century and the Peshitta text, and here is clear proof that these Greek texts had to be mistranslated from Aramaic! Nor is this incident an isolated one, as these other occurrences of *beyt/b'eyt* show:

Matthew 12:1 ܩܪܝܢ ܕܩܘܡܐ (should read "among crops")

Matthew 13:7 ܩܪܝܢ ܕܩܘܡܐ (should read among thorns")

Matthew 28:15 properly translates ܩܪܝܢ ܕܩܘܡܐ ܕܩܘܡܐ ܕܩܘܡܐ "this word has gone out among the Jews"

The neat thing though about Matthew 28:15 is that it can only read "among", since to say "this word has gone out house of Jews" does not work at all.

Kol v'khomer

“Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary.”

Rabbi Hillel (from b. Shabbat 31 a)

Rabbi Hillel almost stands alone as a towering figure in both Jewish history and sacred interpretation. He is also one of the very few personalities recorded in the Talmud who actually lived before the Messiah was born. Furthermore, and as was documented extensively in my previous book *Signs of the Cross*, Hillel wrote a series of interpretive rules that found resonance in the Gospels as well as in the writings of a student of Hillel's grandson, otherwise known as the Apostle Paul. One of these rules was known as the *kol v'khomer*, or "light and heavy", and this actually ends up being a favorite teaching technique of the Messiah that is amply reflected in the Gospel of Matthew.

The way a *kol v'khomer* works is by a simple comparison between two ideas. The first "light" idea is just a very easy concept linked in thought to an equally basic application:

"Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the wilderness and how they grow without toiling or spinning. I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these."

Matthew 5:28-29 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)¹⁶

Then the comparison begins by making a reinforcing statement about the "light", introduced by a thought switch like "if". The first part of this conditional phrase applies to what just came before, but the second portion (or the "then" aspect), introduces the "heavy" or more important idea:

"**If** the grass of the field that is here today and tomorrow falls into the furnace clothed like this by God, **(then)** will he not clothe you (that) much more?"

Matthew 5:30 (Yunan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

So we then have these steps in the argument:

- 1) Establish the premise (you are worrying needlessly about clothes).
- 2) Begin an example (light)
- 3) Compare it to another example (heavy).
- 4) Then say, "Whatever is true for the light (God takes care of the lilies) must also be true for the heavy (God loves you more than lilies and will take much better care of you).

Another key part of this study can be easily ascertained even in English Bibles. When thumbing through any translation of the Gospels, all a careful reader has to do is look for phrases like *how much more* and chances are great that a *kol v'khomer* comparison is going on. Here is another great example:

He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? **How much more** valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Matthew 12:11-12

Again, here is the thought process:

- 1) Establish the premise (you may suspend Sabbath rules to save a life).
- 2) Begin an example (light)
- 3) Compare it to another example (heavy).
- 4) Then say, "Whatever is true for the light (you will suspend the Sabbath to care for livestock) must also be true of the heavy (I am suspending the Sabbath to care for a human being that is greater than any farm animal).¹⁷

Moving on, Y'shua shows his mastery of this technique by doing something truly unique and reversing the rules into an unprecedented form we can only call a "khomeer v'kol"!

"Do not therefore be anxious or say 'What will we eat' or 'What will we drink' or 'What will we wear' for all these things the peoples of the world require, and your Father who is in heaven knows also that you need them. **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**"

Matthew 5: 31-32 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

In this case, what we see is Y'shua, owing probably both to his goals as a teacher and his sense of humor, completely turning the tables on even the most learned among his listeners. These people, some of who probably had studied Hillel all their lives, were heading straight into a proverbial brick wall. Reason being, Y'shua has, after proving his mastery of the *kol v'khomeer*, basically said subliminally to them, "Now that you know I understand the rules, I am going to the next level to show you why you sometimes need to set them aside". If that is not a case for explaining what teaching "with authority and not as the teachers of the Torah" means (Matthew 7:29), I don't know what is!

In any case the end effect, lost without this key Jewish understanding, is nothing short of devastating. Y'shua has now put the heaviest thing of them all first and said, "Do the whole kingdom and you won't have to worry about all the little things in it!"

Our final example though actually demonstrates two disparate but important ideas at once:

"Is not the **naphshah** (נפשא) more than food and the body more than clothing?"

Matthew 6:25

Once again we see the classic comparison question that marks this style. However, there is an additional pattern beneath this text that only Aramaic can reveal. The key is the word *naphshah*, which usually is rendered as "life". While there is nothing wrong with this translation, and even the Jewish Publication Society uses the same meaning for this word (Hebrew, *nephesh*) in Leviticus 17:14, there is still an important aspect to this verse that has been missed. As it turns out, *naphshah* also means "soul"!

"Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (נפש)." **(נפש)**.

Genesis 2:7 (1955 Jewish Publication Society Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text)

Therefore, the phrase in Aramaic Matthew could also be translated as "is not the *soul* more than food and the body more than clothing?" The food gives life by allowing us to continue, but the soul in this sense is the very force behind life itself. Or, to put it another way, the soul is the breath of life as Genesis describes. The food may prolong that life, but it cannot create it, and therefore the *naphshah* is greater. So, this duality of the word begs another question as to the intended meaning, and the answer is surprising: Use both at the same time.

What we in the West have to understand then is that much of what makes any language work are unconscious assumptions that all speakers of it simply accept as the price for being understood. In English, for example, we say "I am cold", and while everyone understands this, technically this is incorrect. If we say "I am ___" then we are saying that a certain something is in fact ourselves. Therefore, are we really saying "I am cold" in the same sense as I would say "I am a man"? Of course not. Instead, what we are saying is, "I am in possession of a certain attribute (coldness, my gender)." By contrast, Spanish makes this distinction much clearer with the phrase *hace frio* (I have the sensation of coldness), and yet because of these core assumptions in English, no one misunderstands the former rendering of "I am cold".

By the same token, native Hebrew and Aramaic speakers simply know at an intuitive level that *life* and *soul* are concepts wholly married in this word of *naphshah*, and so they would feel free to translate it as either meaning without missing a beat. The difference is though, in the receiving language, only one of those two meanings comes across, whereas in the original both were intended. As we will also see later, these kind of multiple meanings in an Aramaic word will often result in almost comical mis-translations on the Greek side that has two distinct words for each meaning. As such, half of the Greek manuscripts will take a given word and translate it with meaning A, and others will opt to render the same word into meaning B. For now however the main point is that the translation of these multiple meaning Aramaic words into single meaning Greek ones will always result in a key concept being lost in the process.

The roots of Jewish prayer, light and Torah

This particular proof is an excellent tool to preview a topic that will be delved into later. Specifically, Western scholarship holds that the Peshitta was a revision done in the fifth century from another Aramaic manuscript group known as "Old Syriac", and this was done so the Peshitta could align itself with the more popular Byzantine Greek texts of the day. If that scenario is true, we should be able to use what we know about this period in history to make reasonable assumptions about what the text should and should not say. Consider:

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...And all their deeds they do that they might be seen
by the sons of men for they widen their **tefillin**
and lengthen the ends of their robes

Matthew 23:5 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

The Peshitta's use of the word **tefillin** proves that this text could not have been, as is so often alleged, worked on by an Aramaic-competent Christian translating from a Greek source text. By the fifth century, which is when this supposed redaction is believed to have happened, generic Greek terms like *phylacteria* had long displaced the original Jewish words in the Greek New Testament. Similarly, we can also be certain that Jews would never have used Greek terminology for a very simple reason.

In Hebrew, *tefillin* is derived from the root *tfl* (תפל) which means "prayer". In fact, the Aramaic root is exactly the same¹⁸, which is why Y'shua's most famous teaching is called the *Slotha d'Maran* (ܣܠܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܢܐ) or "Lord's Prayer".

Therefore by saying *tefillin*, the Peshitta text is aligning itself with the original Jewish terminology¹⁹, as well as preserving the root of the word "pray".

By contrast, the Greek *phylacteria* means "safeguard, station, or garrison", all of which are completely irrelevant to a sacred task! Furthermore, its final meaning of "amulet" borders on the blasphemous for any pious Jew.

Nor can we hold to the idea that this proof is an isolated instance even when confining our focus just to this Gospel. In Matthew 9:20 for example we find the word *qarna* (ܩܪܢܐ), and this is the cognate of the Hebrew *keren* (קֶרֶן) which has a dual literal meaning of "horn" and "ray".²⁰ Idiomatically though the word is actually more properly rendered "edge of clothing"²¹, and here both components of thought come together to form a kind of compound lexical image. First, the "horn" is representative of David's descendants and is also connected to references like Psalm 18:3 which describes the horn of salvation. It may also be a veiled allusion to the four horned sacrificial altar mentioned in Exodus 38:2.

On the other hand, the "ray" meaning also has similar imagery, describing the way a ray of light spreads out over an area. One can therefore easily picture how a Jew fully clothed for prayer might actually represent a visual metaphor for the sun. Starting from the top, there is a rounded head

crowned by a *kippot*²². Then, working our way down, the prayer shawl--or *tallit*--wraps around the shoulders. At long last, as the *tallit* thins out, we see the rays--or fringes--emanating from the fabric. Interestingly enough also, yet another "edge of clothing" idiom is found in Matthew 14:36 with the word *kampa* (כַּמְפָּא), which is the Aramaic cognate for the Hebrew *kanaph* (כַּנָּף), or "wing", and all these images relate squarely to Hebrew Scripture this way:

"But unto you that fear My name shall the *sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings* (כַּנָּף)."

Malachi 3:20 (1955 Jewish Publication Society Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text)²³

So what we have in Matthew is one direct reference to a *tallit*, along with a second idiomatic reference known as *kanaph*, and clearly inspired by this verse in Malachi. Other verses making similar uses of these terms we have been discussing are listed here:

"Send forth Your light (AUR) and Your truth; they will lead me; they will bring me to Your holy mountain, to Your dwelling place, that I may come to the altar of God, God, my delight, my joy; that I may praise You with the lyre, O God, my God."

Psalms 43:3-4

"Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light (AUR) to my path."

Psalms 119:105

"There I will make a horn (קַרְנֵי) sprout for David. I have prepared a lamp for My anointed one."

Psalms 132:17

"For the commandment is a lamp. The teaching is a light (AUR), and the way to life is the rebuke that disciplines."

Proverbs 6:23

As we can see, another word for "ray" or "light" is AUR (אֹרֶךְ), and here is the final Scriptural destination, from Old to New:

"The LORD bless thee and keep thee. The LORD make His face to shine (AUR) upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

"Y'shua replied (to the Pharisee), 'Love YHWH²⁴ your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it, that you should love your neighbor as you love yourself. On these two commandments hang the Torah (*aurayta*-ܐܘܪܝܬܐ) and the Prophets.'"

Matthew 22:40

In the end then, what we see is one Aramaic root with two very special meanings weaving its way through both the Hebrew Torah and the Aramaic New Testament. The first meaning of *aur*, as I said, was "light", and a synonym also for *keren* (ray/horn). However, the second meaning of *aur*--to shoot straight--is even more revealing to our study. Reason being, this is also the same root meaning of the word *Torah*, with a meaning and dimension well beyond the conventional English word "law" could ever impart. That is also why the Aramaic cognate for *Torah* is this same root in the form of *aurayta*. Therefore, where the Hebrew teaches that God's word is like a light, the Aramaic New Testament teaches that it is a light in actual fact, which is why the Messiah, as the ultimate master of the Torah, is also the light of the world, (John 1:1-14, 8:12, 9:5)! Finally, it is also a significant point that even today pious Jews only put on the *tallit* for morning prayers, as if to have the "rays" of their clothing align with the protective rays given by their Creator.

Surely then we end up right where we started with one undeniable fact. Only a Jew living in the time of Messiah could have possibly plugged in to the Peshitta all these sacred terms, both on the surface and to the bottom of the richest depths of the text itself.

The "Idiom Trap" of Matthew 23:8 and others

Sometimes a Scripture verse becomes so well ingrained and seems to make such good sense, that a person can look at it for decades and never grasp its significance. Then, when evidence emerges that changes that verse's traditional understanding, the after effect of that revision becomes that much more profound. For example, let us look at this interesting passage:

"And call no man Rabbi (ܪܒܝ) because you have one Rabbi and all of you are brothers."

Matthew 23:8

Now of course no one need know Hebrew or Aramaic to understand what "Rabbi" means. After all, even the Greek New Testament interprets "rabbi" repeatedly as "teacher". The problem is though that "teacher"

is only the idiomatic meaning of the word, not the literal one, and our next example shows clearly why the former meaning is incorrect:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I commanded you..."

Matthew 28:19-20

So, if Y'shua is really saying that the disciples should not be called teachers, why does he seem to reverse himself here by commanding these same disciples to teach? The answer, I believe, is the *literal* meaning of "rabbi", which is:

RAB = great

I= my

All told, and taking into account the comparison between this word and the people in the sentence, the final literal meaning for רַבִּי becomes "MY GREAT ONE", and definitely *not* "teacher". Furthermore this context fully emerges if we take a look at the Scripture just a few lines earlier:

"The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses...and they love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats at the assembly and to be greeted in the streets by men as RABBI."

Matthew 23:1,6-7

Certainly then men who expect preferential treatment would also want to have their "greatness" acknowledged!

This type of lexical confusion then I have termed a *bad idiom transfer*, or when a word that was meant literally was mistakenly rendered as its idiom into the receiving the language. Of course, native Aramaic speakers have no problems with this kind of double meaning, and can understand it almost unconsciously and instantly, without the need for separate elucidation.

However, bad idiom transfers are not just a one way phenomenon. Rather, sometimes the problem is the reverse, where an idiom is mistakenly taken literally. Consider:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

Matthew 5:29

So, if our right eye sins we should gouge it out? Is that *really* the teaching here? Granted, the second part of the statement is well understood as written since, given the choice, it is absolutely better to have one eye in life than two in hell. However, it is the first portion of the verse that has created problems in the West, since we have records of people needlessly mutilating themselves for a perceived sin. By contrast, no believer conversant in Aramaic has ever lost an eye due to this reading. The question is then, assuming that both eastern and western believers are capable of equal levels of piety, why is it only the latter group that has some of their number wearing eye patches?

Well, obviously the translation of any idiom into another language can create a wide variety of problems. In some cases, the results can even be quite humorous. For example, consider the plight of a person just learning English when he encounters the phrase, "And the governor gave John Smith the green light for the project." Can you imagine then our student thinking that Mr. Smith is now the proud owner of a brand new green light? Or how about the expression, "the drinks are on the house"? Should I now go and climb the roof just because I'm thirsty? Obviously then, our experience with the English language will dictate the intended meaning, but what about a completely foreign language that has a much greater propensity for wholly figurative speech?

This is precisely the case with Aramaic that, unlike Indo-European languages²⁵, does not make clear distinctions between physical, emotional and spiritual states, which is why there are frequent allusions to God having "a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm", and so on.

Therefore, the idea that a person should pluck one's sinful eye out must be understood in this context. Reason being, if the eye is removed, then it cannot see evil things, and so turning this verse back into literal prose would have it read, "eliminate bad visions from your eyes". Similarly, Y'shua's other statements about good and bad eyes (Matthew 6:22-23) are symbolic of mental states of generosity and stinginess, respectively.

Generation, Race, or Neither?

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things [signs], you know that it

[the Apocalypse] is near, right at the door, I tell you the truth, this **generation** will not pass away until all these things have happened.

Matthew 24:32-34

Certainly sounds like the end was supposed to come rather quickly, within about 40 years, doesn't it? However, the footnote to the NIV says, "or race", and Charles Ryrie adds that the Greek *genea*, "can mean 'race', or 'family', which makes good sense here; i.e., the Jewish race will be preserved in spite of the terrible persecution, until the Lord comes."

In this assertion Dr. Ryrie is 100% correct, and yet NASB, NIV and even the venerable Greek-English Interlinear New Testament, still read "generation". And so, while I believe Ryrie has hit upon the right definition amongst those available for that Greek word, the Aramaic makes it even clearer with the word *sharbata* (ܫܪܒܬܐ), which in this context definitely means "tribe". Furthermore, while it can be argued that members of the same tribe are also of the same "race", it must also be acknowledged that "tribe" is more specific. Also, in spite of Ryrie's judgment, there is no translation from the Greek that reads with the best meaning available from *genea*, which is "family". The ten tribes of Israel were after all the same race as Judah, and yet they have intermixed with the nations and from that standpoint not stayed fully intact.

However, this is not to say that the ten tribes are not still around today and don't have a prophetic future, only that they have become inextricably linked with the nations around them. For our purposes here though, the main point is that Judah was clearly marked for survival, making the persecution born from false accusations of "Christ killer" unscriptural.

My God, my God, why is this always mistranslated?

Perhaps no Scripture evokes more emotion than the "cry from the cross" in Matthew 27:46. However, is it possible that these powerful words have been misunderstood for two millennia? For almost 2 billion people, Y'shua's last utterance at the crucifixion was a despairing cry from Psalm 22:1 or, *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*

Now the Greek version of this text attempts to transliterate the Psalm from Hebrew as *Eli, Eli lama sabachthani*. However, both the Peshitta NT and Psalm read a little differently as:

Eli, Eli lama azbatani (Psalm)

Eli, Eli lemana shabakthani (Peshitta)

The Greek transliteration is reflecting the same Aramaic word that the Peshitta uses. However, there is a key difference between *azbatani*, which only means "to forsake", and its Aramaic counterpart *shabakthani* which has multiple meanings that include the same concept. Even so, does that mean Y'shua is quoting the Psalm? To answer that question, we need to look at some other verses as well:

"From that time on Y'shua began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and said, 'Never Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'

Y'shua turned to him and said, 'Out of my sight Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'"

Matthew 17:21-23

Now as Y'shua was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him and turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

Matthew 20:17-19

Then the men stepped forward and arrested him. With that, one of Y'shua's companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its place," Y'shua said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you not think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? **But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?"**

Matthew 26:50-54

So, not only does Y'shua know that his death has to happen, he recognizes that if it does not happen the Scriptures will not be fulfilled. Furthermore, anyone who prevents this destiny, even a loyal disciple like Peter, he calls Satan! The bottom line is that Y'shua is laying down his life as a voluntary offering (John 10:11-18) that he can take back at any time. However, if he does so, the Scripture is broken. Furthermore, the very reason he is called the lamb of God is because the lamb does submissively pour out his life out unto death, which is also a key requirement of Messiah (Isaiah 53:7). Therefore, when Y'shua is suffering

on the cross, he is fulfilling nothing less than the very reason he came into the world in the first place, and the suffering is one that he can end in the blink of an eye. In that context then, with the full power in him and the blessings of the Father and the angels behind him, why on earth would he ever, even for an instant, feel forsaken?

That being the case, we must look for another explanation for the final words that come out of Messiah's mouth, and that answer comes straight from the Aramaic word *shbakthani* (ܫܒܚܬܢܝ). As mentioned above, it does share the "forsake" meaning with the Hebrew word used in Psalm 22. However, the root of the word, *shbak*²⁶ has several other meanings including:

- 1) reserve
- 2) keep
- 3) spare
- 4) forgive

In fact, in Luke 23:34, Y'shua uses the exact same word to say, "Father, **forgive (shbak)** them for they know not what they do." So, this multiplicity of meaning has to do with a natural tendency in Aramaic to group related concepts under the umbrella of the same word. In this case, *reserve*, *keep* and *spare* all are variations from the same concept of setting aside. The same can be said idiomatically of *forgive*, where offenses are metaphorically also "set aside". Conversely, the rabbis throughout the centuries have always translated the Hebrew *azbatani* in Psalm 22 exclusively as "forsaken". That is not to say the other meanings of *shbak* do not exist also in its Hebrew equivalent, because they do in other verses of Scripture. Rather, *no sage has ever interpreted azbatani's usage in that Psalm as meaning anything other than "forsake"*.

In the end then, only one solution remains, and that is that another meaning of *shbakthani* is intended. Context can therefore safely eliminate *forgive* as a possibility since it makes no sense. That leaves the highly similar concepts of *reserve*, *keep* or *spare*.

Now some scholars have suggested that *lemanana* could be interpreted as a statement, and that would allow the first two definitions as possibilities with readings like "My God, my God, for this you have reserved/kept me." However, traditional understanding of this verse has always affirmed *lemanana* only as a question. Therefore, what remains as a viable reading is to say "My God, my God, why have you reserved/kept/spared me." While all these possibilities will clearly work, I lean towards the choice of my colleague Paul Younan who went with "why have you *spared* me", because *reserve* or *kept* has a connotation of a wider question that Y'shua is clearly not asking.

Furthermore, and in concordance with the other Scriptures mentioned, Y'shua is clearly aware of the reasons for his martyrdom, and therefore to use the other options would allow for inadequate choices like "why have you kept me around" or "why have you reserved me for this purpose". Since he knows those reasons already, the better choice must be "why have you spared me", or rather, "I've been here for six hours and will die for the cause, but why has this taken so long to finish?" In response to this question, Scripture tells us that shortly afterwards Y'shua dies, thus validating this particular context.

Finally, there is also a very good reason why tradition has been so strong on linking this utterance to the Psalm. The fact is, while Y'shua himself is not quoting the Psalm, the rest of the narrative is clearly referencing it. Or, to put it another way, this section of Matthew is a *Midrash*, or dramatic story rendering, of Psalm 22.

For example the very rebukes of the Psalm are put in the Pharisees' mouths taunting Messiah (Psalm 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-40). Also there are references in the Psalm to having the hands and feet pierced, as well as having enemies gamble for the victim's clothing (Psalm 22:16, 18; Matthew 27:34). Even the probable condition of Y'shua hanging on the cross is described with phrases like *"I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax and has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death."*

With all this Psalmic imagery being put into story form, is it any wonder that many scholars would conclude with apparent logic that when Y'shua utters a statement that is almost identical to what 22:1 says that it must be a direct quote from that same source?

Then we must take into account other factors as well. First and foremost, there is Y'shua's physical trauma which was known to cause many such victims to slur their speech. Second, Y'shua also was speaking a different dialect that even under the best circumstances sometimes resulted in miscommunication. In this case, the Hebrew speaking witnesses at the crucifixion mistakenly thought he was calling on Elijah (Eliyah) as opposed to "My God" followed by an exhalation of pain (Eli-ah). Taken together, all these aspects present a compelling case for seeing how two similar phrases got transposed.

In the end though what we have is a chapter of Matthew that *represents*, rather than quotes, from that Scripture.

Spotlight Feature

The *GOWRA* Scenario: Exploding the Myth of a Flawed Genealogy

Introduction: Overcoming General Objections

The famous archaeologist William Dever is reported to have said that the only new insights from the Bible that we know of today are coming out of the ground. This view is both commonplace and understandable, since we have had the Scriptures for millennia, so the question naturally emerges as, literally, *so what else is new?*

As it turns out, the answer for the West, is plenty.

However, linguistic difficulties such as we have been discussing aside, there are some very deep-rooted objections to the Greek text that are seldom spoken aloud in Jewish-Christian debate, and yet these have a huge impact in the way the former group sees the New Testament. Put simply, the genealogy in Matthew is an absolute mess in the Greek. Other variants, such as the so-called "Old Syriac" and medieval Hebrew manuscripts, also throw their individual problems into this textual soup, creating an even more nebulous mixture than the Greek traditions alone did.

Our task then is to sort through all these ancient witnesses and see which one, if any, can be designated as the original text of Matthew's first chapter. First however, let us look at overcoming a few general objections that have arisen to all these versions regardless of language.

Matthew Come Lately

The first major objection that should be dealt with is the idea that the genealogies in both Matthew and Luke were late additions to the official record. Furthermore, this school asserts, the entire issue of lineage would not have been important early on, since during the first decades of the faith the only types of literature that were supposedly around were "narrative Gospels" that simply listed the sayings of Messiah. While the issue of Gospel formation can be exceedingly complex in the liberal school, it should come as little surprise that the traditional religious viewpoint is that the Gospels came directly from the pen of the apostles or their associates. That being said, the fact that three of the four Gospels call Y'shua the Son of David is highly significant.²⁷ With most scholars assigning the time of Mark's Gospel to around the year 70, this fact alone proves that the lineage of Messiah was an important issue within a generation of his death.

Additionally, we have even stronger proof in the letters of Paul:

"Paul, a servant of Messiah Y'shua, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of God, the Gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets and Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who was born of a descendant of David, according to the flesh."

Romans 1:1-3 (NASB)

In this case, even the most liberal scholars acknowledge that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, which by itself proves absolutely that the verse had to be composed no later than the common year 67, when the apostle died. Therefore, once again we see the lineage of Messiah as having both an early and important emphasis.

Nathan versus Solomon

Moving on, the second allegation against Matthew's genealogy has to do with the majority opinion that it reflects the line of Joseph and therefore Luke's list would relate then to Mary's descendants. If that is true, then a problem arises from the fact that Matthew traces the ancestral line through Solomon, whereas Luke lists another son of David, Nathan (2 Samuel 5:14). Here is why:

"The king took an oath: 'As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.'"

1 Kings 1:29-30

Put simply, if the throne must go through Solomon's line, how can someone descended from another son of David lay claim to it? The answer is, according to all the rules of Jewish kingship, that they cannot. Therefore, if Luke is reflecting Mary's ancestors, then we have a big problem. Since a virgin birth scenario effectively sets Joseph's lineage aside in matters of royal power, Mary *must* therefore be a direct descendant of Solomon in order for her son to rule. Joseph's descent from David's son Nathan only entitles him to his property in his ancestral home of Bethlehem, but confers no other status upon him, (Luke 2:4).²⁸

Fortunately however, the Aramaic clearly shows that the "conventional wisdom" has got it backwards. Matthew is recording Mary's lineage, which does come from Solomon, and Luke is recording Joseph's.²⁹ The actual proof of that scenario though will be revealed later on.

However, a variation on this attack is also derived from the fact that Mary's cousin Elizabeth is not descended from Judah at all, but from Levi, (Luke 1:5). The thinking then goes that if Elizabeth is from another tribe, then so must Mary be. However, that is not necessarily the case. The fact is, inter-tribal marriage was quite common, and when it did happen the woman was simply counted as being part of the husband's tribe. Furthermore, all children from that marriage have full inheritance from their father's tribe. A good example of this concept is with Ruth, who although born a Moabite is listed specifically by

Matthew as being counted as part of her husband Boaz's tribe. So even in a worst case and extremely unlikely scenario, if Mary was somehow descended from Levi like her cousin was, her offspring would still be credited to Joseph's tribe, which is once again from Judah.³⁰

Will the Real Zerubabel son of Shealtiel Please Stand Up?

Our next problem is a bit more complex, because it requires us to cross-reference alleged lineage groups in both Matthew and Luke and contrast each with what Tanakh records. The following chart should prove instructive on the matter:

1 Chronicles 3:15-19 & 2 Chronicles 36:1-10 / 2 Kings 23:1-24:17³¹	Haggai 1:1	Matthew 1:11-13	Luke 3: 27-28 (in reverse order)
1) Josiah	1) Not listed.	1) Josiah	1) Addi
2) Jehoiakim & Jehoaz (a.k.a. Shallum).	2) Not listed.	2) Jeconiah and his brothers	2) Malki
3) Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah, Jehoicin).	3) Not listed.	3) Shealtiel	3) Neri
4) Shealtiel & Pediah	4) Shealtiel (father of)	4) Zerubabel	4) Shealtiel
5) Zerubabel	5) Zerubabel		5) Zerubabel

The reason the 1 and 2 Chronicles citations are combined is for the sake of clarity. The former lists the descendants in birth order, whereas the latter lists them in the order they ruled as kings. As a result, the lists at first glance look to be out of order from one another. I have also summarized each name with its concordant aliases for the same reason. However, there are still some other facets that need to be accounted for.

First of all, Jehoiakim and Jehoaz were brothers, but they ruled in opposite order from their birth. After them come Jeconiah and his brothers, followed by Shealtiel. However, it is at this point that we come to what appears to be a major discrepancy. 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 lists Zerubabel as the son of Pediah; Haggai 1:1 and Matthew 1:11-13 though both call Zerubabel the son of Shealtiel!

The resolution however is found in the levirate rules, which we will detail extensively towards the end of this section. For now though, the salient point is that Shealtiel must have died and his brother Pediah married his widow, who in due course bore Zerubabel. According to this tradition, even though Zerubabel is the biological son of Pediah, the lineal records of Israel technically credit him to the deceased Shealtiel. As a result, 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 records the family biological list, while Haggai references the legal one.

Since the levirate procedure keeps the same family line intact, it makes good sense for Matthew to record the generations in this manner, not to mention the fact that Matthew is literally giving credit where the Torah says it is clearly due! Finally, when counter-missionaries attack the so-called difference between Matthew and 1 Chronicles, we can see clearly that this tactic is in fact a "straw man", since the duality of the actual list is reflected in Tanakh itself.

The other aspect is that Shealtiel and Zerubabel were very common names. However, when we look at the full lists of generations in Chronicles and Kings, we come to an interesting conclusion: None of Luke's names before or after the famous pair line up at all! Here is an expanded list:

1 Chronicles 3:15-24	Luke 3: 26-28 (in reverse order)
1) Josiah	1) Cossam
2) Jehoiakim & Jehoaz (a.k.a. Shallum)	2) Addi
3) Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah, Jehoicin)	3) Malki
4) Shealtiel & Pediah	4) Neri
5) Zerubabel	5) Shealtiel
6) Meshullam, Hananiah (sons), and Shelomith (daughter) ³²	6) Zerubabel
7) Hananiah	7) Rhesa
8) Shecaniah	8) Joanan
9) Neariah	9) Joda
10) Elionai	10) Jesech
11) Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pellaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven in all. ³³	11) Semein

Therefore, there is no conflict between the two Gospels as has sometimes been supposed. Instead, Luke is simply recording the same names for another father and son pair.

Jeconiah's Curse

The final general problem that critics love to pounce on has to do with one of Y'shua's ancestors, the last king of Judah:

"As surely as I live', declares the LORD, 'even if you Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will

hurl you and the mother who gave birth to you into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to. ' Is this man Jeconiah a despised, broken pot, and object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the LORD says: 'Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring shall prosper, none will sit on the throne of David, or ever rule anymore in Judah."

Jeremiah 22:24-30

So, in theory at least, anyone who is descended from Jeconiah cannot sit on David's throne, which of course is a problem when we get to here:

"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name of Y'shua. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The LORD YAH³⁴ will give him the throne of his father David."

Luke 1:31-32 (NIV with cross-reference to the Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version)

Many Greek textual defenders have tried to suggest that Matthew's lineage is of Messiah's father Joseph, and therefore does not carry the curse. However, while the Talmud says that Jews are counted as such ethnically if their mothers are Jewish, royal inheritances were always passed down from father to son, and this is definitely a royal genealogy that Matthew is trying to relate here. Therefore, Messiah must be descended from David on both sides of his family tree, and this curse would hold either way if it were not for one fact:

It was lifted!

If the rabbis of the Talmud have any weight in the matter, they ruled unanimously that Jeconiah was forgiven for his many transgressions by the end of his life. The reason for this belief arose from Scripture itself, as each component of this curse was turned back. Let's look at these facts which prove the case.

- The curse says, "record this man as if childless", and yet in the same section admits that Jeconiah has children, and in fact continues to do so during his punishment.
- The curse says that Jeconiah would never prosper, but even Jeremiah, who wrote the words of that original admonition, reports the following:

"In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jeconiah, king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jeconiah from king of Judah and freed him from prison on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a great seat of honor higher than those of other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jeconiah put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jeconiah a regular allowance as long as he lived, till the day of his death."

Jeremiah 52:31-34

- The curse even goes so far as to proclaim that "for none of his offspring shall prosper, none will sit on the throne of David, or ever rule anymore in Judah." Granted the days of the kings of Judah were gone for two generations. However, notice the verse even covers *any kind of ruler in Judah*? If the curse were still enforced, how does anyone explain this passage?

"The word of the LORD came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month. 'Tell **Zerubabel the governor of Judah** that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day,' declared the LORD Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant, Zerubabel son of Shealtiel', declares the LORD, 'and I will **make you like my signet ring**, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD Almighty."

Haggai 2:20-23

Zerubabel, as it turns out, is the grandson of Jeconiah (1 Chronicles 3:17-19, Matthew 1:12), so not bad for a guy who was neither supposed to prosper nor rule. Also the imagery Haggai uses could not be stronger, for just as Jeremiah said that Jeconiah was the signet ring the LORD would remove, so now this same man's grandson is the signet ring God wishes to put on! In the Middle East, a king's signet ring bore the royal seal. The king, when he wished to authenticate a command, would take his ring and impress the insignia into clay, which would later harden and be attached to the royal document. Therefore, in both cases, the signet ring is a very visible sign of regal power, very much akin to a scepter or crown. When the ring is removed, the power goes, and vice versa when in it is put back on.

Now that we have successfully defended all versions of the genealogy in Matthew, let us turn our focus to the Greek traditions.

Beware Greeks bearing texts

While the previous scenarios can be easily explained away with a little extra effort, the biggest problem of them all has to do with the way the generations are recorded in *all Greek manuscripts* of Matthew's first chapter. Put simply, there are two rules that the apostle insists be followed. The first one is recorded almost universally here:³⁵

"Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to the Messiah."

Matthew 1:17

So we have here 3 sets of 14 generations each. The question then comes up if that means we can only have 14 names per set? To find out, let's look at the actual list:

Set 1:

- 1) Abraham
- 2) Isaac
- 3) Jacob
- 4) Judah
- 5) Perez
- 6) Hezron
- 7) Ram
- 8) Amminadab
- 9) Nahshon
- 10) Salmon
- 11) Boaz
- 12) Obed
- 13) Jesse
- 14) David

So far so good right? 14 generations = 14 names. Now let's look at the next set:

Set 2:

- 1) Solomon
- 2) Rehoboam

- 3) Abijah
- 4) Asa
- 5) Jeshosophat
- 6) Jehoram
- 7) Uzziah
- 8) Jotham
- 9) Ahaz
- 10) Hezekiah
- 11) Manasseh
- 12) Amon
- 13) Josiah
- 14) Jeconiah

Another clean set of 14 generations equaling 14 names, or is it? In the actual text of Matthew, David is also mentioned in this set as well, and this is where the second rule comes into play: **Names that are mentioned twice are only counted once, and belong to the first place they are recorded.** In other words, if David were counted in set 2 only, that would mean it would have 15 names and set 1 only 13, which clearly contradicts the statement of Matthew 1:17. After all, why go to all the trouble of summarizing "14, 14 and 14" when, only one line after the last name, it is clear that at least two sets don't add up to that number? The only way to have these two sets come out right therefore is if David belongs only to set 1, and then start set 2's list with his son Solomon.

The reason this second rule is so important also has to do with the next group of names, which starts by mentioning the last generation of set 2: Jeconiah. Therefore, if we cannot count David twice in sets 1 and 2, neither can we break the rule and count Jeconiah twice in sets 2 and 3. That clear analysis grates against the skin of Greek NT adherents because, as set 3 will show, they need all the names they can get! Here is what I mean:

- 1) Shealtiel
- 2) Zerubabel
- 3) Abiud
- 4) Eliakhim
- 5) Azor
- 6) Zadok
- 7) Akim
- 8) Eliud
- 9) Eleazar

- 10) Matthan
- 11) Jacob
- 12) Joseph the "husband" of Mary, of whom was born
- 13) Y'shua the Messiah

In a word: OOPS, did someone forget a generation? So now, if the Greek reading of Matthew's first chapter is the original, we have set 3 only having 13 names. If we then agree to count Jeconiah twice to "make it work" then we are faced with an even greater problem. Counting Jeconiah twice, again means we have to count David twice, so now the sets will consist of 14, 15 and 13 names respectively. On the other hand, if we don't count Jeconiah twice, the numbers become 14, 14 and 13. Therefore, no matter what we do with this text, it will always come up short and contradict its author.³⁶

Please keep this central problem in mind, as we will get back to it in a detailed relationship to the Aramaic later on. For now, let us look at how some lesser-known manuscript families dealt with this problem.

Other Semitic Witnesses

There are five other manuscripts of Matthew that are quite obscure and rarely discussed in Gentile-Christian circles. Of these, three were written in Hebrew and two in Aramaic. The Hebrew group is perhaps best represented by the Dutillet manuscript, and its two more fragmentary cousins, known as Shem Tob and Munster, follow its lead. On the Aramaic side we have the so-called "Old Syriac" group of manuscripts known separately as "Cureton" and "Siniaticus". In this portion however, we will only deal with the first four. I will devote special attention to Siniaticus later on.

Starting with the Hebrew, the first aspect to factor in is their very late dates, as not a single one of them is older than the year 1300. Now granted, document age should not by itself be used to discredit the entire group. A manuscript can be very late, but if it has a clear line of attestation in its readings going back further it can be considered reliable. A good example of this principle has to do with the book of Isaiah. Up until 1947, the earliest extant manuscripts of Isaiah were dated to the eleventh century. Then, with the advent of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a nearly identical copy of Isaiah was unearthed that was at least 1,000 years older, and so the Leningrad Codex's readings of Isaiah were completely validated. However, with the Hebrew group of Matthew, their readings do *not* find attestation elsewhere in the manuscript record.

The second strike against this manuscript group is the places they were found. We might have anticipated these "treasures" to be unearthed in Israel, the only place where Hebrew was spoken in great numbers. Failing that, perhaps elsewhere in the Middle East, where Hebrew's sister language of Aramaic dominated. The fact is, neither was the case. All these manuscripts were from Europe, and two were from Rome itself.

With no textual linkage to the past, there could hardly have been a more unlikely place for an "original Hebrew Gospel" to be found.

In addition, Shem Tob and Munster are, even by their most ardent supporters, widely acknowledged to be in horrible condition both textually and physically. All attempts to show more ancient renderings in any of these documents have therefore failed miserably.

However, the greatest problem with the Hebrew Group is that the evidence that someone tried to "correct" the text is all over the place. This is the third, and most devastating, strike of them all.

In all three cases, it seems the various Hebrew redactors were aware of the problems in set 3 lacking a name, so they came up with an ingenious solution: Just *add* one! That's right, when they could not explain this problem in the Greek they just penciled some guy named "Avner" into their Hebrew version. How this name somehow was missed by Greek and Aramaic writers whose versions are a thousand years older and whose attestation is hundreds of times more numerous than Dutillet and Company is never adequately explained.

What is very explainable though is the motive behind the alteration. Persecution of Jews during this time in Rome was pandemic, and Church documents clearly show that "completed Jews" or those who had converted to Roman Catholicism, were encouraged to witness their faith to their brethren who had not yet "seen the light". These completed Jews knew that they could not witness to their fellow Jews with a Greek text, since the only sacred language for them was Hebrew, with a smattering of Aramaic in Hebrew script. The other problem was that, just as in apostolic times, genealogy was seen as a critical aspect of proving who the Messiah was. The completed Jews knew all too well then that to show any text with an inherent contradiction of a missing name was tantamount to hanging a sign up that read, "This is a forgery, please do not treat it with any respect."

However, the most serious challenge to the Greek traditions comes from a very unlikely source, and this is the topic of our next section.

Cureton's folly

In the early decades of the 19th century a very rare Aramaic manuscript of the Gospels was discovered on the grounds of Saint Catherine's Monastery, located at the site of the traditional Mount Sinai in Israel. This manuscript and its supposedly older counterpart known as "Siniaticus" formed the so-called "Old Syriac" family and New Testament scholarship has never been the same since.

Over the last hundred years or so, many scholars looked to Cureton Gospels (named after its eventual owner, the Earl of Cureton) and its sister manuscript, as a way of explaining the vast differences between the Peshitta Aramaic and Greek versions of the New Testament. As evidence mounted that showed extensive divergences which could not be accounted for in a Greek to Aramaic translation, eager western scholars seized on what for them was the next best thing. The Peshitta, they claimed, was not translated from the Greek, but revised from these other Aramaic versions instead. However, as we will see with both of these documents, they have deep problems of their own. Starting with the Cureton, it has a very unique rendering of set 2:

- 1) Solomon
- 2) Rehoboam
- 3) Abijah
- 4) Asa
- 5) Jeshosophat
- 6) **Ahaziah**
- 7) **Joash**
- 8) **Amaziah**
- 9) Jehoram
- 10) Uzziah
- 11) Jotham
- 12) Ahaz
- 13) Hezekiah
- 14) Manasseh
- 15) Amon
- 16) Josiah
- 17) Jeconiah

Now what in the world is going on here? First we lose generations and now we are practically tripping over some extra ones? Well, as it turns out, the scribe who did this had the best of intentions. As a matter of fact, 2 Kings 14-15 faithfully records these same three generations that the Peshitta version omits. So, on the surface, it appears that Cureton is Torah-accurate, whereas Peshitta dropped the three names on the floor somewhere and never picked them up.

However, before everyone goes down that *Peshitta revised from Old Syriac* road again, they would do well to ask this question: Why does every Greek New Testament manuscript, *regardless of family or text type and going as far back as the second century*, also miss these same three names? Is this one scrappy little

Aramaic version right and standing as a lone witness against thousands of contrary textual witnesses? And, how can that be, when the oldest Greek versions predate Cureton by at least 200 years?

Well, as we are about to discover, appearances can be quite deceiving. One of these scribal traditions is clearly reflecting a deep understanding of Jewish culture and Scriptural interpretation, while the other only appears to do so. Which is the fraud and which the original?

In order to find out, let us first realize that Matthew is doing far more than giving a list of generations. Rather, he is showing Messiah to have a *royal lineage* as a direct descendant of David. However, David was not the first king of Israel. That honor was given to Saul, and it is his example that showcases the first of two rules in recording the progeny of kings:

"Samuel said, 'Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors--to David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today.'"

1 Samuel 28:16-18

From this point on, no descendant of Saul can ever lay claim to the throne of Israel. This rule, I believe, is easily understood by most scholars and lay people.

However, there is a corollary to this rule that is less well known but equally binding. It states that within a lineage certain generations can be invalidated, but the inheritance can still stay within that group. Or, to put it another way, the house of Judah can keep ruling, but certain rulers of Judah are not counted as genuine kings. Now the question is though, just how did this contingency get triggered?

The answer, ironically, comes not from Judah, but from the house of Israel:

"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him...He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke to LORD to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him."

1 Kings 16:30, 33

This idolatrous act, and many other grievous sins, led to the inevitable warning and rebuke of the prophets:

"Then the prophet quickly removed his headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, 'This is what the LORD says: You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'"³⁷

1 Kings 20:41-42

"Then Micaiah answered, 'I saw all Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said these people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

1 Kings 22:17

Then when judgment does come, it is horrific:

"This what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel. You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants and the prophets and the blood of all the LORD's servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slave or free.'"

2 Kings 9:6-9

So Ahab's house is cut off, but what does that have to do with the house of Judah, which Messiah is descended from? The answer lies here:

"Now Jehosaphat had great wealth and honor, and he had allied himself with Ahab by marriage... Then Jehosaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king... He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he had married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, because of the covenant the LORD had made with the house of David, the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain the lamp for him and his descendants forever."

2 Chronicles 18:1, 21:1, 4-7

Therefore, we have a bit of a contradiction here. On the one hand, Ahab's sin was so great that God had no problem permanently taking his house away. On the other, Judah, although perpetually blessed because of

David, also had Ahab's tainted blood flowing through its heirs! Since the Scripture cannot be broken, the only solution could come from the most sacred place of them all, the Ten Commandments:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, **for I, the LORD God am a jealous God, punishing the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those that hate me.**"

Exodus 20:4-5

So that was the bottom line as far as Matthew was concerned. He knew that these generations were cursed and, even though they are counted physically, to refer to them as ancestors was tantamount to invalidating Y'shua's claim to be Messiah!

However, some critics will no doubt point to the fact that Manasseh, who is a direct ancestor of Y'shua, sinned far worse than Ahab did and for far longer, 55 versus Ahab's 22 years. Although this is clearly true, at least two factors spared this evil king from sharing Ahab's fate. First is the perpetual covenant with David's house just mentioned, which God clearly did not want to break. Second, Manasseh got lucky in a way Ahab did not. Reason being, Ahab was both preceded and followed by very evil men who sat on his throne. By contrast, Manasseh, evil as he was, had the good fortune of being sandwiched between Hezekiah and Josiah, two of the most righteous rulers Judah ever produced. As for Manasseh himself, there is even a record of this very epitome of evil actually repenting of his sins and making some restitution in the last years of his life (2 Chronicles 33:12-17)! Therefore, taken together, the punishment of Judah was less severe than that of Israel. Ahab's line was wiped out forever, whereas Judah was allowed eventually to return to the land and rule after only two generations of captivity in Babylon.

In the end then, only the Peshitta version shows the advanced understanding of Torah that would have been the hallmark of a first century pious Jew in Israel like Matthew. The Cureton, on the other hand, also shows the marks of its redactor: A Greek Orthodox monk writing more than 400 years after the fact.

Enter the GOWRA (ܘܘܪܐ)

Now a question needs to be asked: If this proof that I am about to discuss is so revolutionary, how is it that no one else picked up on it before?

The answer, as I hope to show, has more to do with the way the Aramaic word is understood rather than how the Greek was translated from it. Here is what I mean: a western language like Greek--and also

English--operates under an organizing principle of having one word each for almost every nuance and shade of meaning. For example, I could walk to work, or I could amble, stride, stroll, and so on. Because this is how our native language is structured, we take such diversity of discrete terminology for granted. In fact, its very precision is one of the reasons why Greek is the predominant language for scientific and medical terminology. As an example, take the word *orthodontist*, break it down to its components of *ortho* (straight) and *dontia* (teeth), and even with no knowledge of what that person does, the Greek can reveal it all without effort.

On the other hand, Hebrew and Aramaic have the exact opposite trend. They have relatively few words, and each word can have as many as half a dozen unrelated meanings, which goes a long way to explaining why the truth had not been discovered centuries ago. First though, let's look at the actual verse where it occurs:

"And Jacob fathered Joseph, the *gowra* of Mary, from whom was born Y'shua, who was called Messiah."

Matthew 1:16 (Yunan Peshitta Interlinear Version, cross referenced to NIV)

The word *gowra* is derived from the root **GBR** (גבר) which means "strength", or sometimes "judgment". In Semitic culture, a male is given the responsibility of using his strength to protect other members of his family who are either too weak or too old. The idea is that, with regards to females in particular, that a *gowra* must be present at all stages of her life. When she is born, her *gowra*, or protector-guardian, is her father, (Psalm 127:4-5). When she marries, the term then applies to her husband (Joshua 1:14, Daniel 6:24)³⁸. Finally, when she is elderly and her husband is gone, *gowra* can even technically refer to an infant male, if he is the oldest male left in the family line or if other males are not directly mentioned, (Job 3:3).

Another way to look at the same diversity of meaning is this:

ܓܘܪܐ (**Gawra**) "Elder/Father/Head-of-Household"

ܓܘܪܐ (**Gura**) "Husband"

Before the advent of vowel markings, these words would have been indistinguishable from one another, leaving the reader to judge solely based on context and experience. Furthermore, the timeframe of the Aramaic being in this unmarked state coincides exactly with when the Greeks would have been circulating their earliest versions of Matthew.

Furthermore, in the Aramaic New Testament as well, there are places that clearly point to a father-based meaning:

"Which of you *gowra* , if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?"

Matthew 7:9 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version, cross referenced to NIV)

"When they came to the crowd, a *gowra* approached Y'shua and kneeled before him. 'Lord, have mercy on my son,' he said."

Matthew 17:14-15 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version, cross-referenced to NIV)

What emerges then is a fluid and dynamic term. In almost 80 instances, *gowra* is best translated as "man" when no other relationship clues are present. However, as we have been seeing, the moment a clarification is given, *gowra* will automatically take on the more specific meaning.

So, if I were to say "I saw a *gowra* walking down the street", the best translation would be *man*. But if I said instead, "I saw a *gowra* walking down the street with his wife", then *husband* is the right term. The same holds true with "his mother", which would make the subject of the sentence a "son", and so on down the line. The Greek New Testament, as can be guessed, typically has translated the *gowra* Joseph as "husband", and in this the entire corpus of Greek manuscripts unanimously agree, going back to the second century. This choice was also quite understandable, since that is how *gowra* is rendered in the New Testament a majority of the time. Unfortunately, the result of that choice made *this Joseph* of the same generation-strata of Mary, and this is exactly why it seemed a generation in set 3 disappeared completely from the official record.

However, before explaining this idea in greater detail, let us look at *another Joseph* listed just three lines later:

"Because Joseph her **BAALAH**³⁹ (**בַּאֲלָהָ**) was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."

Matthew 1:19 (Younan Peshitta Interlinear Version, cross-referenced to NIV)

Unlike *gowra* , this new word *baal* has much less flexibility. Originally meant as the Hebrew and Aramaic word for "lord", *baal* also became known as a popular pagan deity that frequently enticed the Israelites into

idolatry. However, by the time of Y'shua this word had only one meaning with regards to human relationships: husband.

So, within three lines, two Josephs are mentioned, and in each case they are described by a word that has a majority reading of "husband". The question is, why would Matthew use two different terms so close together when all it would do is create confusion if he was talking about the same man? Why use one word that specifically only means "husband", only to use another word that can mean the same thing, plus three or four other things, practically side by side?

We will return and answer that question a little later on. For now though we need to look at how Semitic story structure plays into this situation. Here is a handy comparison:

Section	Matthew 1:1-18	Genesis 5:1-18
Introduction to the Lineage	1 The historical record of Y'shua the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham	1 This is the history of the descendants of Adam.
List of Generations	2 Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram, 4 Aram fathered Aminadab, Aminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, 5 Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse, 6 and Jesse fathered King David. Then David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife, 7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, 8 Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah, 9 Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah, 11 and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. 12 Then after the exile to Babylon Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, 14 Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, 15 Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob, 16 and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of	When God created people, he made them in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them "human." 3 When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born, and Seth was the very image of his father. 4 After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 5 He died at the age of 930. 6 When Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born. 7 After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 8 He died at the age of 912. 9 When Enosh was 90 years old, his son Kenan was born. 10 After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 11 He died at the age of 905. 12 When Kenan was 70 years old, his son Mahalalel was born. 13 After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 14 He died at the age of 910. 15 When Mahalalel was 65 years old, his son Jared was born. 16 After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 17 He died at the age of 895. 18 When Jared was 162 years old, his son

	Mary, who gave birth to Y'shua who is called Messiah.	Enoch was born...
Summary of the Lineage	17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations.	1 When the human population began to grow rapidly on the earth
Change the Subject	18 The birth of Y'shua the Messiah came about this way	2 the sons of God saw the beautiful women of the human race and took any they wanted as their wives. 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years."

So Matthew is following the same story pattern in Genesis 5.⁴⁰ First there is an introduction to the fact that a genealogy is about to be imparted, followed of course by the actual list of names, a summary of what just occurred, and then, finally, the subject moves from the past to the present.

Therefore, here is one powerful reason why we have a *gowra*-Joseph in 1:16 and *baal*-Joseph in 1:19. Put simply, these are two different men, with the former being associated with the past and the latter in the now-shifted present. However, the fact that *gowra* can also mean "husband"--as well as "father/guardian"--is at least incisive in dealing with the reason why confusion could exist on proper rendering of this verse for almost 2,000 years.

The Final Pieces

Therefore, in the end, we only have two authentic and genuinely ancient traditions to compare: The Greek and the Peshitta.

However, now we come to what may be the most challenging question of them all: Why would Matthew do it this way in the first place? Why not simply call the first Joseph *awa* (אב), which can only mean father, and be done with the ambiguity?

There are four possibilities that more than account for this unusual choice on Matthew's part.

First, there is the issue of avoiding further scandal through a confusion of words and names. The problem, I believe, lies in the close proximity of the two Josephs. If Matthew had called the first Joseph *awa*, he would have a bit of snickering going on behind his back by the time he got to verse 19. Reason being, he simply introduces the next Joseph as her husband, so it could be interpreted as if she married her father and

was pregnant out of wedlock at the same time! Explaining one facet of this situation (virgin birth and so on) is hard enough without having this additional problem to deal with.

So, by calling the first Joseph *gowra*, Matthew is telling his native Aramaic speaking Jewish audience, "Look, this is her protector-guardian, and this other guy is the one she married that just happens to have the same name."

The second scenario has to do with communicating Joseph the father's status as an important man within his family line. The fact is, *gowra* is a title of honor that a man earns by being a consistently responsible protector for both his wife and children, (Psalm 128:1-3). Additionally, most early traditions depict Joseph as an elderly or middle-aged man at the time of the Nativity. In later books of Tanakh though, we have a very interesting trend with regards to this word:

"The Levites, from the age of thirty and upward, were counted; the head count of their *gowrim* was 38,000."

1 Chronicles 23:2

So if the Levites aged 30 and over are *gowrim*-the plural of *gowra* --what about younger men? Well, Torah demands that every man who reaches the age of 20 register in the Temple, and from that point on must pay a tax for his life due on the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30:11-16, 38:25-26). If such a man happens to be between 20 and 29, then Scripture gives him another designation:

"None of the *anashim* from twenty years up who came out of Egypt shall see the land that I promised..."

Numbers 32:11

In this case the word, expressed in its plural form above, is rendered as *anash* (אָנָשׁ) in the singular. Now the way Hebrew works, there are many occasions when two words may share a general meaning, but only one has a specific application from that meaning. A good way to think of this is with the generic English term *male*, which can be father, son, brother, or child. Needless to say, all fathers are males but not all males are fathers. It is the same situation here. All *gowrim* (those who are 30 years or older) are also by definition *anashim* (those older than 20), but it is not the case that all *anashim* are also *gowrim*. The specific definition is an inclusion therefore of the general one, but not vice versa.

Another aspect to this lexical soup is that *gowra* can also be translated as "mighty man" or "warrior", implying that instead of just protecting his family, such a man could be charged with performing the same service for his entire town, or even his country, (Joshua 7:14,17,18). Therefore, if both of these definitions applied to Joseph, calling him a *gowra* may have been Matthew's way of saying that the man was more than just a husband and father but was also a powerful and important man in his own right, and one worthy of respect.

Still another very strong theory centers on what is implied rather than what is overtly stated in official dictionaries. The fact is, female genealogies are extremely rare in the Middle East. Inheritance, as a matter of law both inside Israel and throughout the region, passes from father to son. However, the virgin birth presents a rather unique spin to this official tradition.

Now at this point let me just say that, whether anyone reading this believes in such an event or not is irrelevant to this discussion. Certainly the evidence regarding such an important aspect of the New Testament deserves to be explored fully, but not here. Instead, the proper thing to do is to focus on the fact that Matthew himself certainly believed this happened, and therefore we need to see how this belief would be reflected in his writing.

So, assuming that the listing of females in a lineage and the virgin birth are a rather uncommon combination of events, we can then look at the use of the word *gowra* to see why it may not have been picked up previously by scholars over the centuries. In other words, if we look in other sources for every single relevant aspect of the birth of the Messiah and try to apply it to non-immaculate conceptions, it should not be surprising if we don't find a corresponding "dictionary entry". Instead, what we do find comes in the form of Semitic cultural idioms passed down in both Jewish and Assyrian circles.

The usage of the word *awelid* (אָויליד) strongly points to a clear passing of lineage from father to son. In those cases then, it is expected that the father would be called an *awa*. However, if a man has only daughters, he has not produced an heir to carry on the family line. Instead, the female children are more of a burden to him until such a male heir comes along. Therefore, the daughters he has would think of him more as a *parent*, but not a *father* per se. His job is to be their protector only, not to pass on his possessions, and hence he is a *gowra* to them.

In that case, if Mary was either an only child or simply one of several female children, then the Joseph in Matthew 1:16, even if he were technically her father, would be more properly called her *gowra*. So finally, and once again, Matthew would not have even listed this lineage at all were it not for the fact that he felt compelled to do so. Reason being, his belief in the virgin birth made Joseph's lineage invalid in terms of

kingship, so if he does not list Mary's as a descendant of Solomon, he has no chance of successfully witnessing to his Jewish audience.

The fourth and final possibility is that a levirate marriage happened, along the lines of this Torah regulation:

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, the widow must not marry outside of the family. Her *ga'al* (husband's brother) shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother in law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out of Israel."

Deuteronomy 25:5-6

Is this what happened? If it had, then the brother (Joseph) who took the deceased father's place would have been a *protector-gowra* to both Mary and her mother. Also, because of this rule, whoever married Mary's mother the second time would have to, by definition, share the exact same lineage as the man who died. Now in terms of following the "rules" of royal descent, there would have been no actual change in bloodline, because it would have happened right *before* Y'shua was conceived, as opposed to many generations previously where different sons could spawn "tributary generations". However, perhaps Matthew here wished to provide a little extra careful language, since an opponent to Y'shua might uncover this fact and stir up a lot of trouble about it. Instead, Matthew admits it openly, and thus diffuses any potential controversy by bringing the facts to the table at the earliest possible moment.

Finally, there is also another linguistic development with this last possibility to consider. According to the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, the Targum for Ruth 2:20 lists Boaz as *gowra*, replacing *ga'al* (גא'ל) in the Masoretic Text. The reason the substitution is significant is because Boaz is engaged in a variation of levirate procedure and is acting as both Ruth's *levir* while the text anticipates his role as her future husband!⁴¹ It is also no accident that *ga'al* is the exact same word used in the "classic levirate" law as mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-6.

Any of these possibilities then, or even a combination of them, are strong potential answers to this mystery. Although, if an ultimate answer is to be found, many more years of research will clearly be required. What we can say though with absolute certainty is the effect that this proof has even in its current state on modern New Testament scholarship. Put simply, the seismic ramifications of *gowra* manifest themselves in two ways:

First, it completely solves the problem of the missing generation in the second century Greek manuscripts and all others going forward, because regardless as to whether Joseph is Mary's father or uncle, he is not on the same "generation line" as she is. Therefore, only now does that missing generation reveal itself as having been in front of everyone all along as: Joseph (12) the *guardian* of Mary (13) who gave birth to Y'shua (14).

Second, it also points to the early origin of the only text that preserved it, the Peshitta. Put simply, if the earliest Greek versions of Matthew 1 go back to the second century, then the Peshitta, which it clearly was mistranslated from, must be earlier still.

¹ And actually my hat is off to the NASB translators for having the courage do this in the first place. Another favorite Greek based translation of mine, the NIV, lists the phrase *any town* without further explanation, and this I feel is misleading.

² "In them, in those days" is yet another instance of an original Aramaic narrative speech pattern in Matthew. As we will see later, Aramaic speakers tend to be more redundant in their natural voice than their western-Greek counterparts. As a result phrases like "and speaking, he said to them" are very common in compositional Aramaic. If the Peshitta were translated however, this extra redundancy would not have been retained.

³ James Trimm however does make an interesting point in his HRV about a word in the next line, Matthew 3:2. When the text reads, "for the kingdom of God is near", the word translated as *near* is *qorbat* (ܩܪܒܐ), derived from *qorban*, "to offer". Trimm then goes on to state that the reading in both the Peshitta and Dutillet refers to the kingdom of God's "nearness" by way of idiom, since the literal reading indicates the sense of proximity by calling it "a thing about to offered" or "soon to be made available". In this analysis, I agree to the extent that Trimm has uncovered a double meaning in Aramaic and Hebrew that the Greek is clearly missing. However, Trimm's implication that such a reading has any bearing whatsoever in proving that Dutillet precedes either the Peshitta or the Greek is preposterous.

⁴ The reader will observe that when verbatim or near-verbatim quotes are shared by more than one Gospel writer, the source that lists the quote first will be given the credit. In this case, that means that we will not be exploring this exact same quotation in Mark 10:25.

⁵ The confusion is of course made possible again by the fact that Aramaic has no full vowels, and translators into Greek would have had let context and experience be their guide as to which word or meaning was intended. A good example of this same idea in English is the word "lead", which can either be a noun or a verb, and each with completely different meanings. In such a case, the word surrounding "lead" in a sentence will determine will transmit the proper meaning. However, if the sentence somehow were made so that both meanings were possible, then a guess will have to be made, and sometimes that guess can be wrong.

⁶ Throughout this book I will be employing substitution in favor of the original sacred names, especially with regard to "Y'shua" instead of "Jesus" and "Messiah" rather than "Christ". In cases of more familiar translations like KJV, NIV and NASB this is intended to point to the original Jewish culture of the Messiah which has often been downplayed or overlooked in centuries past. The same substitution also happens in Lamsa's translation from the Aramaic, since in that case to terms are even closer (Messiah/Meshikha, Eshoa/Y'shua) but for very slight dialectical differences. While I suspect some will feel this action to be a bit disingenuous and even officious on my part to alter their Bibles in this manner, they need to understand

that a great injustice was done in order to get those versions to "read Gentile" in the first place. I am therefore only attempting to level a playing field that should never have been tilted away from Jewish understanding almost 2000 years ago. Also it is hoped that a sincere declaration such as this, acknowledging openly that the alteration has happened will go a long way to muting these accusations. In any case, this is kinder treatment than my people first received when the Gentiles did their redaction without any such acknowledgment that the originals read differently.

In terms of the sacred name for Deity, such as YHWH, Elohim, and so on, I have also gone to great lengths to insert those terms where appropriate in English renderings. However, because the Jewish Publication Society is comfortable also in using "God" and "LORD" in its text, and because there is no confusion on the Hebrew side regarding what those words refer to, I have not been as exhaustive in separating the English terms out. However, having said that, I have also made a major effort to clarify these names by putting the appropriate Hebrew terms in close proximity to the English when it is needed. Finally, the same substitution of Messiah's name and title is done is also done in various scholarly quotations for the sake of consistency.

⁷ Keeping in mind that, of course, Aramaic reads right to left. Therefore, the English characters actually are appearing backwards.

⁸ Idiomatically, "leading" dogs to something is tantamount to giving that object to them. For example, I might lead a dog to a raw steak, but unless I also explain that I took that meat away from him, the assumption is that I have given the dog the meat.

⁹ In this case the words are not spelled identically, but the error ends up being just as instructive. The only difference between TITHLON and TALON is that the former has an extra TAW (ܐ) at the beginning. Another reason this error was not noticed before is probably due to the word's location in the text. After all, TITHLON in 7:6 is clearly reminiscent of TALON as rendered in the Lord's Prayer in 6:13, or the 'Do not **lead** us into temptation' phrase. However, from the perspective of Aramaic idiom, to lead someone to an object is the same thing as giving that object to them. Also, since the Greek words for "give" (δωτε το) and "lead" (ειsenegknz) are completely different, there is no way that the error could have come into the Peshitta text via translation from the Greek. Finally, evidence from the Greek texts that have this error also clearly indicates that the mis-translation was completed and widespread by end of the second century.

¹⁰ This is not to say that these "dogs and pigs" will never see the light. Rather, dogs and pigs represent non observant Jews and pagans, respectively. Furthermore, this theme of Y'shua is one that will be greatly expanded on by Peter and Paul in Acts 15, where the idea of doing circumcision solely for the sake of ritual or because it is trendy is clearly eschewed. Instead, both Y'shua and his apostles suggest that first the "dogs and pigs" must study so that they can then become "sheep" (true followers of Torah and Messiah). Then, the sheep can heed the voice of the Good Shepherd (Messiah) and live a fulfilled life in harmony with the will of God.

¹¹ Even Catholic scholars admit this is the case. According to John Meier, for example: "Some sayings and expressions of Y'shua contain expressions that are idiomatic in Aramaic but alien to both Hebrew and Greek (Aramaisms); there may even be Greek versions of sayings of Y'shua that are the result of mistakes in translating the Aramaic original. One famous example of an Aramaism is found in Matthew's version of the Our Father (6:12): 'Forgive us our debts [opheilemata].' *Debt* is not the usual image for sin or guilt in Hebrew or Greek, but the Aramaic noun for debt, *hoba*, is often used metaphorically in this sense." ([A Marginal Jew Volume 1](#), p. 265)

¹² Interestingly enough, the Greek and Latin redactors also seem to consciously be looking for equivalent "double duty" words in their own language to convey the same effect. Their word choices for *store/storehouse* (Qhsaurizetem, qhsaurouy theaurizare, thesaurus) and *thieves/steal* (κλεπται, kleptousi; fures, furantur) also make for very interesting reading.

However, that usage only makes the same original context in the native language of Messiah all the more impressive.

¹³ Dr. Gordon does not use the term "mirror phrase" for his discovery, but has instead named it after a famous two-faced Greek deity. However, if as I said before I had a real problem with the word used for one Greek god, *kurios*, appearing in the Greek NT to describe Almighty God, I will surely not give glory to another Greek god here.

¹⁴ See Gordon, Cyrus H., "New Directions", *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyriologists*, vol. 15 (1978), p. 59 .

¹⁵ See also Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:18-19. Also Old Syriac manuscripts Cureton and Siniaticus use ܩܘܪܝܘܨ, which can only mean birds and has none of the secondary meanings we have been discussing. Therefore, that means the redactor of these manuscripts must have been using only Greek texts to translate into Aramaic, and only the Peshitta preserves this original poetic element.

¹⁶ When I quote from the YPIV it should be noted that the words are re-arranged to reflect better syntactical flow in English since Paul Younan has retained the original Semitic word order.

¹⁷ The ironic thing about this scenario is that while Y'shua is being chided by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath, the direct spiritual descendants of these same detractors took the opposite viewpoint!

R. Jonathan b. Joseph said: . . .[the Sabbath] is committed to your hands, not you to its hands.
Yoma 85b

The Sabbath is given over to you, and not you to the Sabbath
Mekilta on Exodus 31:13 (109b), cited in *The New Testament Background*, C.K. Barrett

R. Ishmael, R. Akiba and R. Eleazar b. Azariah were once on a journey, with Levi ha-Saddar and R. Ishmael son of R. Eleazar b. Azariah following them. Then this question was asked of them: Whence do we know that in the case of danger to human life the laws of the Sabbath are suspended? — R. Ishmael answered and said: If a thief be found breaking in. Now if in the case of this one it is doubtful whether he has come to take money or life; and although the shedding of blood pollutes the land, so that the Shechinah departs from Israel, yet it is lawful to save oneself at the cost of his life — how much more may one suspend the laws of the Sabbath to save human life! R. Akiba answered and said: If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor etc. thou shalt take him from My altar, that he may die.²² I.e., only off the altar, but not down from the altar.²³ And in connection therewith Rabbah b. Bar Hana said in the name of R. Johanan: That was taught only when one's life is to be forfeited, but to save life one may take one down even from the altar. Now if in the case of this one, where it is doubtful whether there is any substance in his words or not, yet [he interrupts] the service in the Temple [which is important enough to] suspend the Sabbath, how much more should the saving of human life suspend the Sabbath laws!
Talmud - Mas. Yoma 85a-b

¹⁸ Identical, except for a dialectical difference in spelling where the TAW in Hebrew is replaced with TZADEE in Aramaic.

¹⁹ The Old Syriac has an interesting reading as well, "straps of tefilla" (ܥܪܩܬܦܠܐ), as opposed to "their tefillin" in the Peshitta. While both of these readings are clearly better than the Greek, the Peshitta version is clearly the more ancient. Reason being, first century Jews in Israel would surely have known that *tefillin* was, by definition, a strap. Therefore, the Old Syriac reading's redundancy clearly points to a time when this knowledge was less common, hence the reasoning for that redactor to take an extra explanatory step.

²⁰ In fact, this confusion sometimes leads to comical results. For example, when Michelangelo did his famous statue of Moses, he depicted the Lawgiver with horns on his head due to this dual meaning of *keren*. Later sculptures and paintings of Moses of course corrected this error, showing rays of light coming from his head instead.

²¹ Incidentally, the phrase *tzi-tzit* (צִיִצִית) is also commonly used to refer to the entire prayer shawl also. However, technically speaking, the tzi-tzit are only designated as the fringes themselves, not the whole garment (Numbers 15:38). Many Jews in fact sometimes wear the fringes/tassels attached directly to a belt loop on their pants without the rest of the *tallit* itself. It comes down to then a matter of how one interprets the verse as to which method is employed. See also Deuteronomy 22:12 where another word is used in place of tzi-tzit, *ghedeel* (גִּדְלוֹ). The late medieval Hebrew manuscript known as Dutillet Matthew also show its intent, adding credence to the idea that its purpose was for Jews who had converted to Catholicism to witness to their conventional brethren, by firming up this reading with a more popular term, *frontlets* (פְּרוֹנְטֵלֵתִים), so that it would match the Masoretic standardization of Exodus 13:1-16 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21.

²² This is not the same headgear as described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:7 as bringing "dishonor to a man's head". We will be discussing that aspect however at a later time.

²³ It is readings like this that make me favor the 1955 translation over more recent ones. The 1999 JPS edition really leaches out the poetry in this passage and puts the muted phrase "to bring healing" in place of the literal reading presented here.

²⁴ Once again Peshitta uses the Aramaic cognate for YHWH, MARYAH (ܡܪܝܬܗ).

²⁵ The Indo-European language group includes Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and most European languages like Spanish, French, German and English. Aramaic, by contrast, is part of the Semitic language group, which includes Hebrew and Arabic.

²⁶ *Shbakthani* is simply the conjugated version of the word *shbak*, since *ani* means "I".

²⁷ Matthew 20:30, Mark 12:35, Luke 1:32.

²⁸ Admittedly though, this is where certain aspects can get rather complicated. Royalty does pass from father to son, and does so right up until Mary's birth. However, a fair question to ask is how does her son have the right to rule coming straight from her? The answer is that Joseph's seed does not count because it did not impregnate Mary in the first place. Therefore, the royalty that runs straight down to Mary maintains the line. However, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit holds the Divine Seed, and it is from this last part that the chain is completed and Y'shua is given full royal rights that he would not have from his adopted father alone. Granted today's Orthodox Jews would never agree to this scenario, because from their view the virgin birth could not have happened at all. However, if we assume the virgin birth as a genuine historical event, then this scenario is the only way to keep all the rules of royal lineage in this particular circumstance.

²⁹ The idea that Matthew is Mary's lineage and Luke's Joseph may be revolutionary in the West, but it has powerful ancient testimony in the East. Mar Aphrahat, a fourth century Syrian saint, wrote the following:

Joseph was called the father of Y'shua (even though he was not born from his seed), but the name of fatherhood was transmitted from Adam to Joseph, through sixty-three generations.

(Demonstrations, 23:20, c.f., Women in Aphrahat: Some Observations, Adam Lehto, HUGOYE: JOURNAL OF SYRIAC STUDIES, Vol. 4, No. 2 July 2001 found here: <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol4No2/HV4N2Lehto.html>)

Since only Luke's genealogy starts with Adam, this has to be what the saint is referring to.

³⁰ The exception to this is when priestly lines became polluted with foreign marriages, in which case those lines were considered unfit for holy service, (Ezra 7:10-12, 10:18), and other returnees were required to separate also from their foreign wives as well. However, that has nothing to do with the scope of our study, which deals exclusively with marriage between the tribes of Israel itself. Therefore, a Levite marrying a Judahite woman could continue in service if he was also a priest, but a Levite who married a Babylonian woman could not. Ruth's case however is even more revealing because it appears that her righteousness was so strong as to allow herself, a pagan woman, to be counted as one of Judah, probably due to her willingness to abandon her gods and embrace YHWH (Ruth 1:16-18). This is in sharp contrast to Ezra's situation, where priests were commanded not to inter-marry upon going into the Captivity, and did what they wanted to anyway. They had in effect become like Ruth's people, while Ruth showed herself worthy to be considered part of their inheritance. At any rate, the final proof with regards to the application of Ruth is in the first rule of Hillel, or *kol v'khomer* (light and heavy), which states that what is true for the heavy must also be true for the light. In this case, the heavy aspect is that Ruth the Moabite woman is considered worthy to become part of Judah because she no longer worships idols. If that is true for someone in her (heavy) situation, how much more true is it for an Israelite who has not broken their covenant with the LORD (light)?

³¹ Of course, the listing in 2 Kings only goes as far as Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin), since the generations that followed were after the Exile and out of the scope of that particular book.

³² Listing females in Middle Eastern genealogies is rare, but as we see here, not unheard of.

³³ For the sake of clarity, I have confined this portion of the list to those children who themselves are recorded as having offspring. In the case of the last seven names, they are included for the sake of completeness since none of their descendants are recorded in that biblical book.

³⁴ The Aramaic word for YHWH (יהוה) is MARYAH (ܡܪܝܬܐ) which literally translated as LORD YAH, or the singular form of the Tetragrammaton. In the Aramaic Old Testament, MARYAH replaces YHWH almost 7000 times. Additionally, and unlike other words for God such as ELOHIM, MARYAH can only mean YHWH.

³⁵ The lone exception to the "14, 14 and 14" formula in Matthew 1:17 is in the Old Syriac Cureton manuscript, which lists 18 generations. This oddity however will be discussed in detail later on.

³⁶ There is also a mystical element that demands 14 names in each set. In Jewish thought, the numbers 3 and 7 both represent perfection. The list also represents a Jubilee pattern, for after six sevens, the last set would emerge and usher in the Messianic Age (Daniel 9:24-27). Additionally, in Hebrew the letters also stand for numbers, and David's name just happens to have a numerical value of 14, meaning 3 sets of the value 14 that harks back to David also indicates perfection in the Messiah.

³⁷ Notice also that this particular sin of Ahab, letting a man live that God consigned to destruction, is also nearly identical to the sin that also got Saul's line permanently disqualified in 1 Samuel 28:16-18.

³⁸ In both of these verses, and also in Psalm 128:1-4, the word **GOWRA** applies to both the man's role as father and husband. The fact that no "father exclusive" rendering of **GOWRA** exists in the Old Testament at all, either by direct reference or else translation into a cognate of Aramaic (AWA) or Greek (PATER), explains how the confusion arose very well. The reason is, a man can simultaneously hold both roles, and without it necessarily being clear as to which role is intended.

³⁹ **BAALAH** (בַּאֲלָהּ) is the same word as **BAAL**, but conjugated in the construct (possessive) state. This rendering then actually reads HER HUSBAND.

⁴⁰ Another great example of this process is found in Genesis 10, which breaks down this way: Stage 1(v. 1), stage 2 (v.2-4), stage 3(v. 5) and stage 4 (v. 6). The process also repeats two more times in this chapter.

⁴¹ Granted Boaz is not a younger brother replacing his elder sibling as a husband. However, it is clear from the text of Ruth that the "kinsmen-redeemer" procedure is intended to accomplish the same thing under slightly different circumstances.