Sabachthani: the suffering servant and the aokedha

Introduction

This article is a fuller treatment of the Sabachthani saying on the cross that was discussed in a previous article (See, P Wyns, *Psalm 22, (CE)BJI, Vol. 10, No. 2, April 2016*, 27-48 for background). The material on this subject is extensive and therefore much of the bibliography, etymology, notes and a frequency comparison etc have been placed in a macro enabled Excel workbook that can be accessed here; Access here

History of the Sabek Interpretation

The intertextual linking of *Sabachthani* (Matt 27.46 // Mark 15.34), with *Sabec* in Genesis 22.13 is not a recent innovation by H.A. Whittaker¹; the suggestion that *Sabachthani* is an allusion to the “*plant of Sabec*” in the LXX was recognized by Leo à Castro and appears as early as 1650 in Victorinus Bythner’s² Psalm commentary and although it is a peripheral interpretation it has been revived in Novum Testamentum as recently as 2014.³ Association of the cross with “the plant of Sabek” has an ancient pedigree. Melito (Bishop) of Sardis mentions it in Fragment 11 (ca.155-175 CE). Wilken notes; “Melito uses the term Sabek, which is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew SBK, for bush or thicket. His version of the text follows the Septuagint. The significance he gives to Sabek is not, however, clear from the text. It could be that he takes the bush to refer to the cross because a ram hanging on a branch could signify someone hanging on a cross. In the Neofiti Targum the participle MSBK, “entangled,” occurs in the margin and could have suggested the reference to the cross”.⁴ Two scholia on Gen 22.13 are reproduced in the 1581 edition of the LXX published by Card Caraffe that note the following; “The Syriac and the Hebrew [text] use the word “suspended” (κρεμάμενος), as more clearly typifying the cross. The word Sabek some have rendered “remission” (ἀφεσις), others “upright” (ὀρθιος), as if the meaning, agreeing with the popular belief, were—a goat walking erect up to a bush, and there standing erect caught by his horns, so as to be a plain type of the cross. For this reason it is not translated, because the single Hebrew word signifies in other languages many things. To those,

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² There are 142 editions of the Commentary published between 1650 and 1983 in 4 languages. Victorinus Bythner, The Lyre of David, Or, Analysis of the Psalms,(Cumming and Ferguson, 1847), p.90
³ The article is more of a “suggestion” or proposal without supporting arguments. Berel Dov Lerner, Untangling σαβαχθανι (Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34), Novum Testamentum 56 (2014)196-197.
⁴ Wilken, Melito, the Jewish Community at Sardis, and the Sacrifice of Isaac, (Theological Studies 37, 1976:53-69),67
however, who ask [the meaning] it is proper to give an answer, and to say that Sabek denotes “lifted up” (ἐπηρμένος”).

While the Hebrew and Greek versions read stuck in a bush.” the Peshitta reads stuck in a branch. There is an independent Syriac tradition, following the tradition found in all the Targums, in which this ram is “caught in a tree”. The catena on Genesis preserve extracts from several patristic commentators (Eusebius of Emesa, Diodore of Tarsus, Procopius of Gaza, Severus of Antioch), who interpret Sabek as meaning remission” or “forgiveness,” doubtless deriving this from the root SBQ, which in Aramaic and Syriac means to forgive.

These commentaries span a period from ca. 155 CE (Melito of Sardis) to the mid fourth century (Eusebius of Emesa) and as late as Išo’dad of Merw bishop of Hdatta (ca. 850). Although the catena of Melito of Sardis is sometimes ascribed to Eusebius of Emesa, “the definition is found in the onomastic tradition and so may be older”. It is quite natural that Christian commentators would want to associate the Akedah with Christ. The ram ‘suspended’, kremamenos, rather than caught, katechomenos in the bush “increases the typological potential of the verse”.

However, we cannot blame over-zealous Christian commentators with over active imaginations or fanciful interpretations because as Romeny notes; “Its source may very well be a Jewish exegetical tradition. The Targumim usually read זָרֵנוּ, “tree”; Pseudo-Jonathan even has “branches of a tree”. The word φύτον, used in the Septuagint, is ambiguous. The reading לֵאֵו, “suspended,” may be a Christian interpretation of a reading without verb as found in Targum Neofiti. Note that Ephrem does not cite the verb at first: it is only added in a paraphrase further on”.

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6 Ephrem, (Commentary on Genesis, 84). Yet another Syriac tradition has preserved the fact that the ram was “hanging from the tree” (see Anonymous, Commentary Migana, 95, Išo’dad of Merw, On Genesis, 175, and Anonymous, Commentary Diyarbakir, 88 ) also Eusebius of Emesa knows this as the reading of the Syriac version: (see; Eusebius, Meknut’wink’, 68, which employs an Armenian word with a similar meaning). For an analysis of the different traditions in the commentaries see, Bas Ter Haar Romeny "Quis Sit ὁ Εὐροῦς” Revisited in Origen’s Hexapla and Fragments, (ed., Alison Salvesen, 1994 Mohr Siebeck: 361-397 article available at academia.edu) or his book R. B ter Haar Romeny, A Syrian in Greek Dress. The Use of Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa’s Commentary on Genesis, (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 6.) Louvain: Peeters, 1997.
7 William Horbury, Hebrew study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda, (T&T Clark, 2000), 117-118
9 Ibid, Romeny, Quis Sit, p.390-91
The association of SABEK with the cross is therefore an early tradition possibly going as far back as the primitive church. Speculation is or course encouraged by the fact that the term was left untranslated in the Septuagint. The apostle Paul refers to the curse that is called down on anyone “hanging from a tree” (Gal 3.13) a reference to the Law found in Deut 21.22-23 but Rabbi Paul was most certainly aware of Jewish Targumim (and even earlier oral traditions) that have the ram of Gen 22.13 “hanging (suspended) in a tree (branches).

Methodology

Interpretation of Matt 27.46 // Mark 15.34 is usually achieved by subjecting different textual variants to comparative studies employing etymological, philological, semantic and linguistic techniques that require specialized interdisciplinary skills in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic-Syriac and Arabic. While such an analysis is necessary the results can often be incongruous, especially when a holistic methodological approach is neglected. There is no consensus in scholarship on Mark 15.34 prompting Carey to remark, “Each group stands at an opposite end of the spectrum [...] and their reactions are as extreme as the positions they hold”11 and Webb; “The degree of variation among scholarly opinion is indicative of the opacity of the text”.12 Cappellen et al commenting on the polysemy of the text remarks; “Exegetes have the ambition of explaining the text in a “scientific” way and still they differ in a profound manner about the meaning of the same verse”.13 The complexity of Mark’s text caused by the double layer of communication – on the one hand, between the characters in the story that do not understand and, on the other, between the narrator and his readers/audience who knows Jesus is calling God – is, according to R.M. Fowler, an instance of opacity in the text.14

A holistic approach should place the saying in its wider intertextual context. It has been demonstrated that Psalm 22 has an intertextual connection with Genesis 22 (the binding of Isaac

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10 The fruits of linguistic scholarship will be discussed anon, suffice to say that multiple solutions are proposed by the “experts” (one can hardly speak of consensus in this area).

11 H.J. Carey, Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Inter-textual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark’s Gospel (LNTS [JSNTS].398), London – New York, T&T Clark, 2009, pp.1-26 (n. 4), p. 156; The “groups” referred to here are those that regard the cry as one of dereliction or one of victory (but other possibilities exist).


or akedah); ipso facto the Sabec derivation has contextual and intertextual merit. Moreover, a holistic approach should also be theologically satisfying. Did Jesus accuse his father of dereliction? This runs counter to what Jesus told his disciples. According to John 16.32 15 he knew he would never be forsaken by his Father; “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”. One could well say that “they went both of them together” (Gen 22.6).

Moreover, on multiple occasions Jesus explained to his disciples that he must suffer and die (cf. Matt 16.21) and even during the transfiguration he discussed his decease (Luke 9.31) which precludes a simplistic reading of “abandonment” as this contradicts the comprehension of his own mission and his appreciation of his unique relationship with his Father. If one thing is certain it is that Jesus knew he would not be alone and he knew that he would suffer and die (and be resurrected). Any interpretation that does an injustice to Jesus’ teachings and his self-awareness falls at the first hurdle regardless of ingenious semantic or philological analysis.

A holistic approach

The dual thematic of covenant sacrifice and undeserved punishment (national rejection of the suffering servant) are found in the echoes and allusions to Genesis 22 and Psalm 22 that are unified in the passion narratives of Matthew and Mark. This is supported by the reading offered in a previous article where Hezekiah was identified as the subject of Psalm 22 and where continuities were found between Psalm 22 and Genesis 22.

First century Judaism (and modern Judaism) does not regard Genesis 22 (or Psalm 22) as messianic.16 For the rabbis, the self-offering of Isaac was sufficient to provide benefit (zeḳut

15 It cannot be maintained that John was unaware of Psalm 22 as he quotes Ps 22.18 (LXX 21.19) exactly (even the tenses match) in his passion narrative.
16 Rabbinic commentary of a later era may have been influenced by Christianity; “And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, and put it on his son Isaac (Genesis 22.6) – like one bearing his own cross” Genesis Rabba 56.3. cf. Pesikta Rabati ch. 31, 143b. Davies and Chilton (cf. Geiger) propose that the rabbi’s exaggerated elements of the akedah by using the passion narratives in order to deny the uniqueness of Jesus’ offering contra this thesis see Hayward. P.R. Davies and B. Chilton, “The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History”, CBQ 40 (1978) 514-546A. Geiger, “Erbsünde und Versöhnungstod: Deren Versuch in das Judenthums einzudringen”, Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben 10(1872) 166-171. R. Hayward, “The Present State of Research into the Targumic Account of the Sacrifice of Isaac”, JJS 32 (1981) 127-150. There is no doubt that the account of the akedah has undergone development in the extra biblical literature (even before the first century) both in the Qumran writings and in Josephus. For example, Isaac is portrayed as an adult and as giving consent. See the “Synoptic Table” by Vermes
avot) to Isaac's children, the Jewish People, for future generations. The akedah is foundational for Judaism as it became associated with worship at the Jerusalem Temple. In 2 Chron. 3.1, the mountain of the Temple is called “Mount Moriah,” which is the mountain of the akedah (in fact, “Moriah” appears in the Bible only in these two passages). Hence, the sacrifice of the ram in place of Isaac becomes the foundational act for all the Temple sacrifices that follow. Thus for Judaism the akedah points to the temple cult and the “merit” earned by Isaac (and Abraham) from which the Jewish people would vicariously benefit.17

Similarly, Psalm 22 was not regarded as messianic, although portions of Psalm 22 are quoted a few times in the Hodayot (and in 1QH 12.3; 2.28),18 the cry of Ps. 22.2 is not cited or alluded to at all in the Hodayot of the Qumran community.19 The scholarly consensus is that Psalm 22 was not regarded as messianic in first century Judaism.20 However, in later rabbinic writings the account of the akedah is connected with Psalm 22 through association of the phrase “my only one” (יָחִיד) that occurs in Genesis 22.12 and Psalm 22.21.21 Ulmer (a professor of Jewish studies) states; “In another midrash, Numbers Rabbah 17.2, a lemma from Genesis Your only son, referring to Isaac, is changed to “your soul,” proof-text is Psalm 22.21. The ram sacrificed saves not only Isaac, but also Abraham. These passages show a nexus between Psalm 22.21 and Isaac, the “only son” of Abraham”.22

Even more intriguing is the argument that the akedah (Genesis 22) used to be read during the Passover23 and this was changed to a Day of Atonement reading to avoid any association with


17 When you appear on trial before Me on Rosh ha-Shanah, come with the shofar [the horn of the shofar representing the horn of Isaac's substituory ram]. Then even if there are many accusers against you, I shall recall Isaac's Akedah and acquit you. Spiegel op.cit. p.92; Peskta Rabbati, 167a

18 The Thanksgiving Scroll or Hodayot was one of the first seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947 by the Bedouin. The scroll gets its name from the recurring use of the phrase “I thank you” in many of the poems, thus ‘Thanksgiving Scroll’ or Hodayot (the Hebrew word referring to ‘thanks’ or ‘thanksgiving’).

19 See Holly J. Carey, Jesus’ Cry From the Cross Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark’s Gospel,(T & T Clark International,2009):115-125,123

20 The exception being Collins who states that messianic interpretation of Psalm 22 may not have been a Christian innovation. She notes a similar interpretation by a Jewish group in the third century CE, and she believes this interpretation to be uninfluenced by Christianity. However, such a late example does not substantiate early use and cannot be reliably retrojected. A. Collins, Appropriation’, in Tuckett, Scriptures, pp. 231—34, 237—39


23 Jubilees may connect the sacrifice of Isaac with Passover, but only indirectly. It dates the approach of Mastemah to God on the twelfth day of the first month (17.15), and the reader is left to add the three days that the text mentions, when it notes that Abraham and Isaac approach the mountain of their destination 'on the third day' (18.3). That would have been the fifteenth day, when Passover was being celebrated See further J.C. Vanderkam, “The Aqedah, Jubilees, and Pseudo-Jubilees”, The Quest for Context and Meaning. Studies in Biblical Intertextuality
Jesus’ Passover sacrifice. In his article *Torah Reading as a Weapon: Rosh Hashanah and the Akedah*, Rabbi Elie Kaunfer offers the following summary; “I will argue that the selection of Genesis 22 as the reading for the second day of Rosh Hashanah reflected a conscious decision by certain of the Rabbis to move the Akedah away from its original calendrical home: Passover. This transfer was completed in order to distance the story of the Akedah with a time of the year that was increasingly associated with another martyr/sacrifice narrative, that of Jesus. The transfer of the Torah reading to Tishrei represented but one strategy on the part of the Rabbis to combat the Christological associations with the Akedah. The other, equally daring move was to reappropriate the martyrology imagery of the Jesus narrative and read it back into the Isaac story. Taken together, these two moves offered the Rabbis an effective set of tools in battling to distinguish Judaism from Early Christianity.”24 In summary, although connections between the two texts were noted in rabbinic commentaries, first century Judaism did not regard either Genesis 22 or Psalm 22 as presenting messianic typology. The fact that Genesis 22 was initially a Passover reading which was later transferred to the Day of Atonement demonstrates rabbinic discomfort with the association of Genesis 22 with Jesus’ passion which occurred at Passover.

### Christological Interpretation

If scripture has any historical grounding (and we assert that it does) then the connection between these two fundamental texts (Genesis 22 and Psalm 22) was first made by Jesus himself. The gospel writers are merely recording the teachings of Christ who earlier in his ministry alluded to the akedah in his pronouncement recorded by John; “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8.56) which is an allusion to *Yahweh-Jireh* (Yah will be seen) of Genesis 22.14. Allusions and references to Abraham and Isaac occur throughout John 8 which text argues for the legitimacy of Christ as the true Abrahamic heir (contra Ishmael/the Jews, i.e., the bond servant(s) that was sent away).25 Although Rindge26 argues for abandonment theology his findings regarding the use of the akedah in the Markan narrative are pertinent and are reproduced (without footnotes) below;

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Mark uses the voice from heaven (1:11) following Jesus’ baptism to introduce and foreshadow both Jesus’ passion and divine abandonment. Lexical similarities suggest that 1:11 is an allusion to Gen 22:2 [p.762]

Mark 1:11 σὺ ἐὴ ὦ ὡς ἡ ἄγαπητός ἐν σοι εὐδόκησα 27
Gen 22:2 LXX τὸν ὡς σου τὸν ἄγαπητόν σὺν ἡγάπησας 28

Two possible allusions to Gen 22:1–3 occur in the immediate proximity of Mark 1:11. Just as God “tests” (πειράζω) Abraham, so too is Jesus tested (πειράζω) immediately after the divine voice speaks (Gen 22:1; Mark 1:13). Mark uses the same word (σχίζω) to describe the tearing of the heavens that is used to refer to Abraham’s splitting the wood to prepare for the killing of Isaac (Mark 1:10; Gen 22:3) [p.763]

The likelihood that the divine voice in Jesus’ baptism alludes to the Akedah is increased by the four lexical parallels between the baptism and Jesus’ death. Mark’s only two uses of σχίζω occur in these two episodes (1:10; 15:38), and some see the tearing of the heavens and the curtain as two divine acts that form an *inclusio*. The voice (φωνή) from the heavens speaks (1:11), and Jesus later cries out with a great “cry” (φωνή) and lets go a great “cry” (φωνή) (15:34, 37; cf. 15:35). The divine voice calls Jesus ὁ ἡμέρος (1:11), and Jesus is later called ὁυ θεοδ by the centurion (15:39). Many see in Jesus’ expiration (ἐκπνέω) (15:39) an *inclusio* with the Spirit’s descent into (εἰς) Jesus (1:10). Perhaps it is no coincidence that Mark uses βάπτισμα/βαπτίζω as a metaphor for Jesus’ future suffering (10:38; cf. 1:4, 9). Pointing forward to Jesus’ death enhances the baptism’s intertextual connections with the Akedah, a story at whose centre is the possible death of the beloved son. [p.764]

There are nine specific lexical parallels and a few additional similarities between Mark’s transfiguration and the Akedah. Many of these parallels occur in the respective introductions to these texts (Gen 22:2; Mark 9:2). Each account involves a journey to (εἰς) a mountain (ὅρος) (Gen 22:2; cf. 22:14; Mark 9:2). Abraham is told to go to a “high” (ὑψηλή) land; Jesus goes up to a “high” (ὑψηλόν) mountain (Gen 22:2; Mark 9:2). Abraham “took” (παραλαµβάνω) two servants and Isaac (Gen 22:3); Jesus “took” (παραλαµβάνω) Peter, James, and John (Mark9:2). Abraham and Jesus each take three other people with them (Gen 22:3; Mark9:2). Abraham is told to “offer” (ἀναφέρω) his son Isaac; Jesus “brought” (ἀναφέρω) others on the journey

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27 su ei ho huios ho agapEtos en soi eudokEsa
you /you-are-being/this/son/of-me/this/beloved/in/you/I delight
Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (KJV Mark 1.11)

28 ton huion sou ton agapEton en EgapEsas
your/son/thine/this/beloved/who/thou Lovest
thy son, the beloved one, whom thou hast loved (LXE Gen 22.2)
A divine voice (φωνή) speaks “from” (ἐκ) heaven or a cloud (Gen 22:18; Mark 9:7) and refers to “your son, the beloved” (τὸν υἱὸν σου τὸν ἁγαπητὸν) (Gen 22:2, 12, 16) or “my son, the beloved” (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἁγαπητός) (Mark 9:7). The Lord “appeared” (ὤφθη) to Abraham, and there is an appearance (ὤφθη) of Elijah and Moses (Gen 22:14; Mark 9:4). As Abraham “obeyed” (ὑπακούω) the voice from heaven, so the disciples are told to “listen to” (ἀκούω) Jesus (Gen 22:18; Mark 9:7). Finally, there is a return from the mountain (Gen 22:19; Mark 9:9). In Mark’s narrative context, the transfiguration reiterates Jesus’ status as God’s beloved son (9:7; cf. 1:11). The intertextual parallels between Mark 9:2–9 and Gen 22:1–19 reinforce the portrayal of Jesus as an Isaac figure whose identity as a beloved son involves a journey toward possible death. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mark explicitly refers to Jesus’ death at the conclusion of the transfiguration episode (9:9). [p.766-767]

Intertextual correspondence with the akedah in the Fourth Gospel and the associations discovered in Mark (noted above by Rindge) highlight the use of the akedah by Christ to define his sacrifice. The gospel writers framed their accounts around this tradition in order to emphasize the connection. The crucifixion recitation of Psalm 22 was a deliberate strategy employed by Jesus to associate both texts thus unifying the akedah with suffering servant theology (found in Isaiah 53) by utilizing a psalm that described the sacrificial suffering of the Davidide (Hezekiah).

Therefore, in his dying moments Jesus associates two themes fundamental to Judaism by joining the theme of sacrifice and undeserved suffering; the messianic typology of these texts was largely ignored by Judaism and they reacted to this devastating Christological revelation by reinterpreting their tradition and rearranging their lectionary and liturgy in order to diminish the impact of Jesus powerful last words. Any attempt to explain the cry from the cross (Ps 22.1) must therefore do justice to the relationship between Genesis 22 and Psalm 22 and Jesus’ unique revelation made on the cross. A summary of the most important allusions and echoes to Psalm 22 is offered below:

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29 J. Vernon McGee observes; “If you were to designate the ten greatest chapters of the Bible, you would almost have to include Genesis 22...This chapter compares with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. The first time that I saw in this chapter these great truths which depict the cross of Christ, it was breathtaking. Not only in the birth of Isaac, but now also in the sacrifice of Isaac, there is a strange similarity to the life of our Lord”. J. Vernon McGee, Genesis through Revelation,(Thomas Nelson Inc,1984):Chapter 22.
Psalm 22 has been employed as the framework around which the passion narrative has been constructed. Many scholars contend that the whole psalm was recited by Jesus (this is discussed in the spreadsheet), whether that was the case or not is sometimes debated, however, it is undeniable that Psalm 22 was the “go to psalm” for recasting the passion events, even when other psalms and OT allusions are employed in a supplementary fashion. For example, the motif of “thirst” is more fitting as an allusion to Psalm 69.21 and Luke bases his last exclamation from the cross on the Septuagint version of Psalm 31.5 (Luke 23.46), nevertheless, Psalm 22 is the framework by which it all hangs together.

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31 Wayne Litke observes; “That the LXX is the source here is clear from two points. First of all, as Moo points out, the use of παρατίθημι is very rare for θητος, occurring only twice in the LXX. [Moo, 280] Secondly, as Bock points out, the plural εις χείρας σου for MT singular יְחַיָּה is found in the LXX of Ps. 30:6 and replicated here. [Bock, 147]” Wayne Litke, “Luke’s Knowledge of the Septuagint: A Study of Citations in Luke-Acts” (Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1993), 170. See also; Douglas J. Moo, The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives,
Moreover, the Fourth Gospel and other Johannine writings echo the akedah in subtle ways. When Jesus is exhibited to the crowd in John 19.25 Pilate declares “Behold the man” (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος) echoing Genesis 22.13 LXX; “Behold a ram” (ἰδοὺ κριός), this follows the Baptist’s designation in (John 1.29,36); “Behold, the Lamb of God” (Ἰδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεου), and culminates with the victorious Lamb in Rev 14.1; “Behold, a Lamb” (ἰδοὺ τὸ ἄρνιον), this time standing on Mount Zion (cf. Mount Moriah) thus closing the Johannine circle of references to the akedah on a note of victory.

Therefore, the passion narratives unite the akedah with suffering servant theology. In agreement with Carey’s observation, “[...]...it is not possible to determine which meaning applies to the Markan Jesus from the meaning of the word [σαβαχθανι] alone. The narrative context of the citation from the cross must be used as an interpretive tool [emphasis mine] in uncovering the meaning of the phrase as it is used in its Markan context. What is helpful from this general discussion of the meaning of σαβαχθανι is that it highlights the existence of possible nuances of the term—the meaning of “abandon” in Mark 15:34 may not be as obvious as is often assumed”. 33

32 See also, John 19:14; “Behold your King!” (Ἰδε ὁ βασιλεύς)
Survey of Old Testament Occurrences of s-b-k

The distribution of s-b-k (including derivatives and morphological forms) is as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT/LXX</th>
<th>Heb\textsuperscript{34}/Grk\textsuperscript{35}</th>
<th>Transliteration\textsuperscript{36}</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 22:13</td>
<td>בֵּסְבָּק</td>
<td>bassēbak</td>
<td>thicket (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 22:13</td>
<td>σαβέκ</td>
<td>sabek</td>
<td>Sabec (LXE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 13:6</td>
<td>יֵבְהוֹלֶים</td>
<td>ûbahawôhym</td>
<td>and in thickets (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 13:6</td>
<td>μάνδραις</td>
<td>mandrais</td>
<td>[inclosed space LXE – ditches?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 18:9</td>
<td>שֹׂבֶק</td>
<td>šôbek\textsuperscript{37}</td>
<td>thick boughs (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 18:9</td>
<td>δάσος</td>
<td>dasos</td>
<td>thick boughs (LXE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job 8:17</td>
<td>יֶסֻבַּבְּקֵ</td>
<td>yĕsubbâkû</td>
<td>are wrapped about (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 8:17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Different Vorlage?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalm 74:5</td>
<td>בִּסְבוֹכֵ-ֶָּּ֑ס</td>
<td>bīsăbokĕ-êš</td>
<td>thick trees (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 73:4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Different Vorlage?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 9:17</td>
<td>בָּסָיבּי</td>
<td>basibky</td>
<td>thickets (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 9:18</td>
<td>δάσεσָ</td>
<td>dasesi</td>
<td>thickets (LXE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 10:34</td>
<td>סְבֶכֶ</td>
<td>sibkê</td>
<td>thickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 10:34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>thickets (of Lebanon) paraphrased as “lofty ones”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer. 4:7</td>
<td>מִסְבַּכִּ</td>
<td>missubbakô</td>
<td>[from his] thicket (KJV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 4:7</td>
<td>μάνδρας</td>
<td>mandras</td>
<td>[from his] lair (LXE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nah 1:10</td>
<td>סְבַּקּ</td>
<td>sabûkim</td>
<td>entangled (RSV) tangled (NKJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX 1:10</td>
<td>περιπλεκομένη</td>
<td>periplekomenE</td>
<td>twisted, entangled [LXE] * different context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{34} BHS Hebrew Old Testament (4th ed) in Unicode (SBL)
\textsuperscript{35} LXX Septuaginta Rahlfs' in Unicode (SBL/Cardo)
\textsuperscript{36} Transliteration of Hebrew and Greek Unicode (either SBL/or BHT translit adjusted)
\textsuperscript{37} Compare שֹׂק (bough) Judges 9.49
The textual problem (simplified)

*Ps 22.1:* Hebrew: ʾēlî ʾēlî lāmâ ʿażabtānî
*Ps 22.1:* Aramaic (Syriac): ʾlhy ʾlhy lmn ʾshbqtny
*Matt 27:26:* ʾēlî lāmâ sabächthâni (Hebrew?)
*Mark 27:34:* Elōī Elōî, lāmā sabächthâni? (Aramaic?)

Does sabächthâni (in Mark) = ʾshbqtny (Aramaic)?
Does sabächthâni (in Matthew) = ʿzbtny (Hebrew)?

Which saying, what language?

The problem has been stated in simplified form above, but the premise that Matthew is transliterating Hebrew and Mark is transliterating Aramaic-Syriac is probably wrong. It seems likely that Jesus’ was speaking in Hebrew and that both sayings are transliterations of the Hebrew. Comprehensive arguments have been put forward that demonstrate that the original language of both sayings was Hebrew and that any differences can be attributed to the way that they were transliterated into Greek.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, it makes little difference to the proposal put forward in this article as the Hebrew has a cognate in Aramaic-Syriac with the same meaning, so even if Mark was not originally in Hebrew it would not alter the interpretation of the saying.

Septuagintal influences on the Greek passion narratives

One might ask why there is any problem at all. After all, Mark (and Matthew probably following Mark) gives us a Greek translation; all we are required to do is accept the translation at face value.

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\(^{38}\) McDaniel [p.37] says, “...there is good reason to conclude that some of Jesus’ last words were spoken in Hebrew. (The transliteration in the NIV and NIB of the Ηλι Ηλι in Matt 27:46 as Eloi, Eloi follows the reading Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus”). See also Doug Hamp, Discovering the Language of Jesus, (Calvary Chapel Publishing, 2005), pp.48-55(note in particular the dropping of the “h” by the LXX translators (“There is, in fact, no way to transliterate the words other than by transliterating them without the rough breathing sound, which would yield three different options: Elōai, Elōi,and Elai”[p.51]). See also, Buth Randall, The Riddle of Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: The Meaning of ηλι ηλι λαμα σαβαχθανι (Matthew 27:46) and the Literary Function of ελωι ελωι λειμα σαβαχθανι (Mark 15:34) in, *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea: Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels,* (Vol 2, eds., Randall Buth and R. Steven Notley, Brill, 2014):395-421,pp.404-407 and E. A. Knapp, Did the Messiah Speak Aramaic or Hebrew? Available here: (1) http://www.christadelphian-eibi.org/Sabek/randall.pdf (2)http://www.christadelphian-eibi.org/Sabek/knapp.pdf(3) http://www.christadelphian-eibi.org/Sabek/hamp.pdf. [Retrieved Nov 2017].
and let scripture speak for itself. However, such a straightforward solution is ruled out because Mark is not translating the phrase as the phrase itself is a transliteration. The phrase in the Greek is not Greek, it is an approximation of the phonetics (what the phrase “sounds like”) when expressed with the Greek alphabet; therefore, Mark is not offering a translation. Where did Mark acquire the Greek for the explanation, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Obviously, from Psalm 22 and this leads to a number of possibilities; (1) He used the LXX translation (2); he used another Greek translation (3); he translated the Hebrew himself.

Carey [p.187] remarks that “the relatively close adherence of the translation to the LXX that we now have does not necessarily suggest that Mark was using this as his intertext, as some have assumed”. Speaking of scholars who base their analysis solely on the LXX she says; “Their argument rests on a problematic oversimplification of the state of scriptural texts at the time of Mark’s gospel. Contrary to the assumptions of these scholars, in the first century the total number of options for a scriptural intertext used by a Jew or Christian was not simply the LXX or the MT. These are anachronistic terms. The final forms of the LXX and MT did not appear until the second century CE and the ninth-twelfth century CE, respectively, well after the writing of Mark’s gospel. The discoveries at Qumran of variant Hebrew and Greek texts confirmed what many scholars had already suspected: there was a variety of versions of the scriptures during the first century, some of which eventually became what we would now consider the MT (proto-Masoretic) and the LXX (Old Greek). The textual evidence points to the fact that the MT does not reflect the “original” text of the scriptures, and to simply speak of the MT before the Middle Ages is not accurate, as it is made up of many textual witnesses which belong to an even larger group of texts which are pre-Masoretic” [p.166-167].

Carey’s observations are pertinent; however, the Greek Pentateuch was an established text in sections of the Diaspora (at least to some degree) from the first century BCE onwards and therefore the transliteration σαβεκ (sabek) of Gen 22.13 would have been well known.39 Although we cannot therefore per se speak of a Septuagint “version” in the first century (strictly only the Pentateuch can be called the Septuagint) nevertheless as early as ca. 132 BCE reference is made to a Greek translation of “the law, the prophets, and the rest of the books”. However

39 The Pentateuch was translated ca. 3c BCE and Synagogue readings are attested from the first century BCE onwards. Among other things, Philo refers to such a custom in Alexandria. For additional sources, among them 4 Mace 18:10-18 and the Theodotos inscription from Jerusalem, see chapter 12*, § II*. Emmanuel Tov, The Evaluation of the Greek Scripture Translations in Rabbinic Sources, pp.4-5 http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/24.rabbis-2008.pdf?101.1 [Accessed Oct 2017]
Origen (ca 240 CE) is aware of a number of additional Greek translations of the Psalms but their antiquity and provenance is unknown and they appear to be revisions of the Septuagint towards the Hebrew. The problem was exacerbated by the “text wars” that followed the Christ event with the Greek translations corrected in favour of Christian usage or biased by the Jews towards the proto-MT (such as the literal Greek translation of Aquila a disciple of Akiva/Akiba in 128 CE) for all intents and purposes the final stages of proto-MT textual stability occurred under the supervision of rabbi Akiva who desired Hebrew and Greek texts that could counter the rising influence of Christianity (Akiva acknowledged Bar Kochba as the messiah). The necessity for “new translations” into Greek and standardisation of the Hebrew text was a reaction to the LXX falling out of favour and this was exacerbated by successful Christian use of the extant Greek translations (which for want of a better term we shall call the LXX) as proof texts. The Ralph’s edition (1935) of the LXX is an eclectic text based on Vaticanus (4th c), Alexandrinus (4th c) and Sinaiticus (5th c) which (in Ralph’s opinion) are the three most important LXX manuscripts and which appear to have a common Egyptian origin. Although it has a less complete apparatus and although other critical LXX editions are available Ralph’s is easily accessible and widespread so is often employed by scholars. Therefore, Early on (the first century) the “LXX” that we now have did not exist as a “book” but instead as separate scrolls for the Pentateuch or for the Prophets and Psalms etc and the LXX “bible” that we now have did not exist as such but is based on “late” texts. It would seem then that nothing can be said about the origin of Greek references to the OT Psalms in the NT but that is an overreaction as it can be demonstrated that when John refers to Psalm 22 his text is an exact match with the LXX (as we now know it). The synoptics demonstrate varying degrees of LXX convergence (if not exact lexical correspondence) at the very least root-level agreement – divergences can be accounted for either by individual authorial styling or perhaps due to a slightly different Hebrew Vorlage. It is likely then that the apostles did use the LXX or some variant thereof that was recognizable to their audience.

Mark would need to provide an explanation to his Greek readers from a readily identifiable source text and the LXX and its variants were widely distributed. Many Diaspora readers were not familiar with the Hebrew or Aramaic-Syriac languages. Any major alteration of his Greek explanation would risk confusing and alienating his Greek audience and Mark obviously wanted his readers to identify Psalm 22 as the source of the saying. However, multilingual readers would immediately note that the saying diverged from the Hebrew. Mark (or should I say Jesus?) is

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40 For a more in depth discussion of the LXX and further references including an analysis of the Greek see the (macro enabled) spreadsheet.
practicing a midrashic technique known as word substitution. The “explanation” is therefore incidental – it does not “interpret” or “translate” it merely points the reader (acting as a reference marker) to the source. Mark does not wish the reader to take on board the full implications of LXX 21.2 as he neglects the appeal “attend to me” in the first half of the verse and does not mention the latter half (“the account of my transgressions is far from my salvation”) which points to the transgressions of the psalmist (in some translations the “folly”). The LXX is here either corrupt or misunderstood by the translators. Briggs (1906:201) noted that the Septuagint’s παραπτωμάτων μον “my errors” reflects a Vorlage with רָתִכְנָא for the MT יָרָה “my roar/my cry of distress”. By way of contrast with the Septuagint, the Vorlagen of the Targum and the Peshitta reflect the MT, whatever the case may be both John and Luke avoid any problems altogether by omitting any direct reference to Ps 22.1 (LXX 21.2) probably because they were aware how easily the opening cry of the Psalm could be misinterpreted or misappropriated. In this they were entirely correct because (as Erhman has noted very early on the cry “why have you forsaken (literally left me behind) was used by Gnostics to support their theology. In their view Jesus was human and the Christ was divine. He was two beings brought together in one man and the human Jesus was left behind/forsaken (on the cross) while “the Christ” joined the Plemora. This “separationist” view of Jesus’ nature was obviously rejected by the early church. According to Erhman this reason accounts for corruptions such as found in the fifth century codex Bezae (Why have you mocked me?) where the scribes deliberately steer the reader away from the option of “left behind/forsaken” and it also stands behind the extra-canonical Gospel of Peter (My Power, O Power, you have left me). It is easy then to understand why John and Luke would avoid reporting such a difficult phrase as it lent itself either to misunderstanding or to outright abuse.

41 Teeter explains the technique thus; “Changes or exchanges of the latter kind for purposes of scriptural interpretation are, of course, extensively attested within rabbinic literature, but they are presented differently. .....Among the most typical ways that this is expressed is by means of Word substitution as an explicative strategy serves a variety of nuanced functions; but its basic purpose is to resolve difficulties that arise in understanding a word, whether those difficulties are primarily linguistic, or whether they are primarily text-interpretive (co-textual, inter-textual, or even theological) in nature”. David Andrew Teeter, Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period, Forschungen Zum Alten Testament, (Mohr Siebeck, 2014),191

42 Literally, “The word of my fall (παραπτωμάτων) is far from my saving” which resembles the fall of Adam as described in Wisdom 10:1; “She (i.e., wisdom personified cf. “the word-logos”) preserved the first formed father of the world (Adam) that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall (παραπτωμάτος)”. Note Mark’s familiarity with Wisdom 10:13-14 which he alludes to in his passion narrative.

In conclusion then, the LXX was a likely source for the Greek but probably not the only source. It may have been supplemented by other Greek translations (of the Psalms) or by free translations from other Hebrew Vorlagen but the “LXX” was in all likelihood the “go to” source for Greek speakers (a bit like the KJV for English speakers a hundred years ago) and these texts were probably employed as a touchstone when preparing Greek renderings in order to ensure that any Greek translation did not diverge too far from accepted norms. Whatever the case may be, Mark was not offering a translation as it is not possible to translate a transliteration. It is also pertinent that sabec and sabachthani are both transliterations and in the Pentateuch (the “real” LXX) Greek readers would have noted the correspondence with sabec.

Philological and etymological analysis

The Hebrew root form sbk conveys entanglement or intertwining. The word šēbak is rare, a different form occurs in 2 Sam 18.9,44 but it is there written with a ship and not with a samec, and is translated thick boughs; but in Syriac it is written with a semkath. Of interest to us is the change of the prepositional (ב) employed with the common noun in Gen 22.3 bsbk (in-the-thicket) to a pual verb isbku in Job 8.17. The verb is conjugated having the Yud (י) prefixed to the stem which usually indicates third person, future tense (they will) and suffixed with a Shuruk (ו) also indicating third person masculine plural (they) the imperfect aspect giving the sense “they-are-being”, translated as “they-are-being tangled” (ISA),45 “entwines” (NIB). Similarly in Nahum 1.10 (sbkim) where the Qual is suffixed by Yud together with a final Mem (מ) denoting the masculine plural which together with the passive particle aspect of the verb is literally translated as “ones-being-tangled” (ISA), “tangled like thorns” (NKJ). This demonstrates that the semantic range of the lema sbk in the Hebrew includes both nominative and verbal usages.

McDaniel observes that; “The Greek alphabet does not permit an accurate transliteration of the -sh/š sound [found in Syriac/Hebrew/Arabic] (the  ש). Consequently, the Syriac ܫܒܩ (šēBaq/ shbq) with the initial š sound, rather than the σ of σαβαχθανι must control the selection of the Aramaic verb in Jesus’ cry from the cross. The χ in the Greek σαβαχθανι could reflect a ה (ר) or ב (k) or כ (q) in the Hebrew/ Aramaic Vorlage (Hatch and Redpath, Supplement 156—160), but the Syriac ܫܒܩ (šēBaq/ shbq) is decisive for identifying σαβαχθανι as the Aramaic שׁבקתני (shbqtny) “thou hast forsaken me” (Jastrow 1516; Payne Smith 557)”. [p. 36]
However, the initial ש(s) sound of the Hebrew word for “thicket”, סבך (sbk with a “final” k) is transliterated with the Greek “s” (σ) by the Septuagint translators of Gen 22.13; σαβεκ. The word σαβεκ (sabek) in the Greek LXX is itself a transliteration. Tov says, “When words were left untranslated, the translator may have hoped that the transliterations would be replaced by translations. The transmitted evidence gives us some reason to believe that such translations were indeed added for in several cases an original transliteration is transmitted together with a subsequent translation: Gen 22:13 סבך - ἐν φυτῶ σαβεκ. Often it is unclear whether a word was transliterated because it was unknown to the translator or because of other reasons. However, it stands to reason that the former was the case when the Hebrew word is either a hapax legomenon or very rare…”

Allowing for the fact that the χ in the Greek σαβαχθανι could reflect a ש(k) in the original language σαβαχθανι can represent the Hebrew סבכתני (sbktny) without the sh sound of the shin (שׁ) which would consequently be transliterated as σαβαχθανι in Greek and sabachthani in English. This has the advantage of making the phrase in Matthew a transliteration of the Hebrew (not of the Aramaic/Syriac).

The Syriac Peshitta of Gen 22:13 has - : שܒܩܬܢܝ (shbqtny) with the Syriac translators choosing to transliterate the /s/ sound of the Greek σ in sabachthani with the initial Sin of the Syriac (ש) reflecting the /sh/ sound of the Hebrew shin (שׁ) thus associating sabachthani with “forsake” rather than the corresponding phonological [s /ʃ] sound.

However, the Hebrew ‘Samekh (ש), is better reflected by the Aramaic Semkath and Syriac Semkaš (ש) representing the /s/. The Syriac does have cognates such as the Syriac root שܒܟ (sbk), which means to adhere, be interwoven with or attached [Hebrew דסביך (dsbyk) in BT Ḥul 48a(28)] which is used to denote something sticky or viscous (cf. sticking to something) שܒܟ (sbk) [Payne, 357] or metaphorically “attached” as in “the shamelessness that adhered to their

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46 In Hellenistic Koine pronounced like the (s) in sister (in Classical Greek like (s) in sister, but like (z) in zoo before beta (β), gamma (γ), delta (δ), and mu (μ))
47 The translation/interpretation here is “a plant of” ἐν φυτῶ (en phutO)
49 See the spreadsheet for references, bibliography and derivatives
men and women” - ܕܣܒܟܬ ܘܒܢ. The Syriac is also employed in Judith 10.4 to describe an “interwoven” hair-net or net-curtain -; ܡܫܚܡܐ (sbk’). Of particular interest is the occurrence of plant names that begin with the sb (ܣܒ) combination such as the Persian plant *atropa mandagora* (mandrake)\(^{50}\) rendered by Payne [p.357] as ܡܫܚܡܐ (sbysq) and especially the tangled *Juniperus sabina* (savin juniper or savin)\(^{51}\) which Payne [p.357] renders as ܡܫܚܡܐ (sbyn)\(^{52}\) to which he adds the Greek definition ܣܒܝવܐ (sabina) which bears similarity with the ܣܒܒܟ of Gen 22.13.

In Biblical Hebrew סָבַךְ (sābak) is defined by Jastrow [p.950] as to *interweave, interlace*, who provides the נִסְבָּךְ, as; to be caught, entangled נִסְבָּךְ (nisbak) with examples from Gen. R. s.56 entangled in troubles מִסְתַּבְכִין (mistabbèkin) and as (Yalk. Num 782) נִסְבָּכִין (nisbākîn). Although the morphological verbal forms (prefixes, suffixes, gender etc) in this (and other examples) differ the s-b-k root is consistently present.

What then of the alternative Greek Translations? Hayward (on Jerome) notes; “The meaning of sēbak is ‘thicker’, the sense given to it by Aquila, by Jerome in Vg (vepres), and by R. Levi in *Gen., Rab. 56: 9*. Symmachus translated as *en diktuiō*, ‘in a net’: both he and Aquila most probably took sēbak as being related to šibkāh, ‘lattice-work’\(^{53}\”).

Proposed reading of Matthew 27.46//Mark 15.34

The Hebrew סבכתני (sbktny) and the Aramaic סבכתי (sb’k’ny) form the basis of the saying from the cross. However, we need not refer to the Aramaic cognate as both sayings (Mark/Matthew) are in Hebrew.

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\(^{50}\) The sb combination is also found in Mishnaic Hebrew for describing plant species [Jastrow p.949] - סְבִיסְקֵי [sĕbisqê] m.pl. (v. Löw Pl. p.188 sq) *mandrake flowers* Snh.\(^{96}\) (expl. of Gen 30.14) (Var. סְבִיסְקַל [sybswk] Ms.M סביסקיל [sbisqil]; v.Rab. D.S.a.1note).

\(^{51}\) The shrub *savin* is a kind of juniper. *Juniperus sabina* (savin juniper or savin) is a species of juniper native to the mountains of central and southern Europe and western and central Asia (including Palestine), from Spain to eastern Siberia, typically growing at altitudes of 1,000-3,300 m above sea level. Wikipedia contributors, 'Juniperus sabina', Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Juniperus_sabina&oldid=786416553](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Juniperus_sabina&oldid=786416553) in the Free Encyclopedia, 19 June 2017, 10:06 UTC, [accessed 2 October 2017]

\(^{52}\) Here the Syriac Serto Batnan font is employed but it is rendered by Payne [p.357] as ܡܫܚܡܐ. At the turn of the millennium there were about a dozen Aramaic languages/dialects spoken, and Old Syriac was one of them (in the North near Edessa and Osroene). It was very distinct from the other dialects spoken south of it, and was written in a unique alphabet (Old Estrangela) starting around 50-100 AD. Syriac is Aramaic, but not all Aramaic is Syriac.

The original MT Hebrew verb of Psalm 22.1 (עֲזַבְתִּי) is in the Qal form (azab) meaning to leave or forsake. It is inflected with the 2ms suffix to yield azabta, meaning you have left or forsook. However, the first construct singular (1cs) pronoun ending is added to this inflected form to yield azabtani, you have forsaken me. (Note that the ending for first construct singular includes a Nun before the characteristic Yod of the 1cs.)

This resolves the *crux interpretum* facing exegetes as it confirms that the saying in Matthew is in Hebrew and the saying in Mark is also in Hebrew. The sayings do not therefore change referent language midway, they are not a mixture of Hebrew/Aramaic; each remains within the parameters of the chosen language and each is phonetically faithfully reproduced when transliterated into Greek thus giving the correct “sound” of the word.

Combining the Hebrew noun for “thicket” (סִבַּךְ) with the suffix /תָּנִי results in; סַבְכתָּנִי /You-entangled-me. It should be remembered that sabachtani (σαβαχθανι) is itself a transliteration into Greek; the argument is further reinforced by the fact that the root in the LXX of Gen 22.13 is also a transliteration (σαβεκ) and the Hebrew is itself similar to the Syriac derivatives. The reading presented here is:

God, My God! Oh, how you have entangled (ensnared) me!

This directs the reader simultaneously to the akedah in Genesis 22 and to Psalm 22 bringing together two of the most important OT texts. The new reading interprets the words of Jesus as a declaration rather than an interrogative. Adey objects to an emphatic reading of *lama* /lema,* however, McDaniel does not regard such a reading as outside the semantic scope of the word;

The transliterated λέμα and *לֻּמַּה* in the Greek and Syriac texts could have just as readily have been translated as an emphatic "surely" or "indeed," or the like.

[Page 38] And… "verily, indeed," a variant of the emphatic אִיל found in Matt 19:22, רַבָּה, “he went away angry because there was indeed to

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him much property” (contra Howard [1995: 95] who read this לא as “not”). In light of Jesus’ repeated prediction of the passion (Matt 16:21–23; 17:22–23; 20:17–19; Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34; Luke 9:22, 43–45; 18:31–34) it is difficult to account for Jesus’ surprise about his suffering as suggested when לא is read as the widely attested interrogative rather than the rare emphatic particle. [Page 40]

Elsewhere 56 McDaniel states; “But as Frank Cross noted (1973: 235) with reference to the לָמ ָה in Judges 5:17, the emphatic לֻ - well known from Ugaritic—was often extended with the syllable מ - . This emphatic “surely, verily, boldly, indeed” appears in

- Judges 5:17, “Boldly (לָמ) Dan attacked the ships!”
- 2 Chron 25:16, “Stop! You will surely (לָמ) be struck down!”
- Ps2:1, “Indeed (לָמ) the nations rage!”

McDaniel uses the shift from emphatic to declarative to offer a different reading of Isaac’s annunciation story in Genesis 18. “By shifting the initial vowel of לָמ from an accented a to an unaccented ā, and by changing this interrogative adverb into a declarative, the very nature of God depicted in Gen 18:13 is transformed from a perturbed deity who seeks information from the mortal Abraham to a God who knows all the facts and informs Abraham about the present situation….”

Conclusion

Jesus was not abandoned, forsaken, divorced, or left behind by his Father. While he was alive his Father was always with him and at the moment of death he committed his spirit into the care of the Father who kept Jesus’ life safely in reserve until it was “taken up” at the resurrection (John 10.17-18). With his last breath he still taught his disciples (and those willing to listen) demonstrating that he was both the sacrifice and the suffering servant because in him all scripture is fulfilled and all promises are yea and amen. His was not an accusation of dereliction or a cry of despair – it was a simple statement of fact – his Father had entangled him – in fact he had been “entangled” in the Sabek and offered from the foundation of the world (the Jewish world) – but the Father did not ask of another as He offered of his own (his only) as did Jesus (my darling/life)

56 Thomas F. McDaniel, Did Sarah Really Laugh? in Miscellaneous biblical Studies (2010),174
and the two of them went together until death (temporarily) separated them – but even death (the last enemy) could not defeat the Father’s love.