

A Critical Comparative Scriptural Analysis of Genesis 1:1-5 based on Hebrew, Aramaic,
Syriac, Greek, and Coptic Manuscripts

By
Edens Elveus

Claremont Graduate University
2019

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Abstract

A Critical Comparative Scriptural Analysis of Genesis 1:1-5 based on Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic Manuscripts

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Edens Elveus

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A translation of Gen. 1:1-5 may seem to be both close and far at the same time from the original Hebrew text because of historical, geographical, theological, cultural, philological, and linguistic reasons. **The scribes who translated the biblical narrative of the creation of light from Hebrew to a lingua franca of their time had a translation technique. They knew what they were doing.** They provided a translation that the people of their time (*d'alors*) could understand, depending on a consideration of the milieu where they lived, and the jargon used to express their ideas – straight or in a zigzag manner – derived from the Hebraic text. This dissertation demonstrates that with regards to the translators of Gen. 1:1-5 from Hebrew to Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic, their translations suggest what they were doing as scribes, their ideologies, and their methodology for their word choices. Fascinatingly, Gen. 1:1-5 meant different things for interpreters of the same biblical passage from the Essenes to scholars of modern times. I try to discern what it was for each period.

In this work, a study of both the original text and the translations are provided. I present a critical comparative scriptural analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 based on Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic manuscripts. First, to reach this goal, I deal with the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers, as the worldview and theology of the scribes influenced their translations. Second, I weigh the

significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic texts of the first day of creation (Gen. 1:1-5). Third, my aim is to show how complicated translation work is and to highlight how subtle shifts in translation change meaning. The reader of the Hebrew original text and these five translations has a broader view of the creation of light than the view that is presented just by the Hebrew Bible, because *no one text can claim to have said it all*. Last but not least, I explain, with the help of an historico-philological method of interpretation, the meaning of the Biblical text, to arrive, as nearly as possible, at the sense that the words of Gen. 1:1-5 were intended to have for the reader at the time when they were written.

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I am indebted to my doctoral professors who taught me almost everything about religion at Claremont Graduate University (CGU). Many thanks be given to my main academic advisor Dr. Tammi J. Schneider who accepted me into the PhD program at CGU, and who is also the first reader of this dissertation. She is meticulous to the point of even pointing out where I should have put a comma (,) and where I missed the English definite article (the). In her seminars, I gained an open-eyed approach to women in the Hebrew Bible, Bible and museum, and the politics of translating the Holy Scriptures. I am grateful towards Dr. Marvin A. Sweeney for teaching me the theology and exegesis of the Hebrew Bible for more than 5 years. I am greatly impacted by his scholarship. I owe Dr. Gawdat Gabra Abdel-Sayed a big debt for investing in me not just academically, but also economically. He taught me subjects that I had never studied before: the civilization – the history, culture, religion, and language – of Egypt.

¹ Hebrew for “God,” as it appears in Gen. 1:1-5.

A lot of thanks to my financial supporters who helped me to pay tuition at CGU that was a fortune for just my doctoral degree. Among them are Victor Chou, Mr. & Mrs. Do Won Chang, Rev. Dr. Ken Choe, the faithful members of Ttokamsa Mission Church, and Raymond Lim.

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List of Abbreviations

03	The Codex Vaticanus
1QpHab	The Peshier of Habakkuk
1Q	Cave 1, Qumran
4Q	Cave 4, Qumran
5B1	The oldest Syriac Manuscript extant (British Library Add. 14.425)
7a1	Codex Ambrosianus (MS B. 21 Inf)
Ⲛ	The Codex Sinaiticus
α'	Aquila
A	The Codex Alexandrinus
ABMC	Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center
ACFEB	Association Catholique Française pour l'Étude de la Bible
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> , "in the year of our Lord"
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
B	The Codex Vaticanus
B19a	The Leningrad Codex
BC	Before Christ
BCE	Before Common Era
BDB	Brown-Driver-Briggs (Hebrew Lexicon)
BHK	Biblia Hebraica edited by Rudolf Kittel
BHL	Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia
BHQ	Biblia Hebraica Quinta (fifth edition)
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BibOr	<i>Biblica et Orientalia</i>
BIOSCS	Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
c.	circa
CBQM	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph
CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca</i>
CE	Common Era
CE	Coptic Encyclopedia
CRJ	Christian Research Journal
Copt	The Coptic version of the Old Testament
CTA	Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques (Andrée Herdner, Paris, 1963)
DBSuppl	Supplément Vigoureux: Dictionnaire de la Bible, Paris
Ed	Editor
Ep Arist	Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates
ERV	English Revised Version
IOMS	International Organization for Masoretic Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review

JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
KJV	King James Version
KTU	Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit
LXX	The Septuagint
Meg	Megillah
Mm	Masora Magna
Mp	Masora parva
MS	Manuscript
MT	The Masoretic Text
N	The Codex Neophyti 1
NIV	New International Version
NOV	<i>Nova Vulgata</i>
NT	New Testament
O	Targum of Onqelos
OT	Old Testament
P	the Peshitta
PJ	Pseudo-Jonathan
PBN	Paris Bibliothèque Nationale
S	The Codex Sinaiticus
SC	Source Chétienne
SJ	Society of Jesus [Jesuit]
SL	Source Language
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
SR	Sciences Religieuses
Syr	Syriac
Tg	The Targum
TJ1	Targum <i>Yerushami</i> I
TL	Target Language
VUL	Old Vulgate

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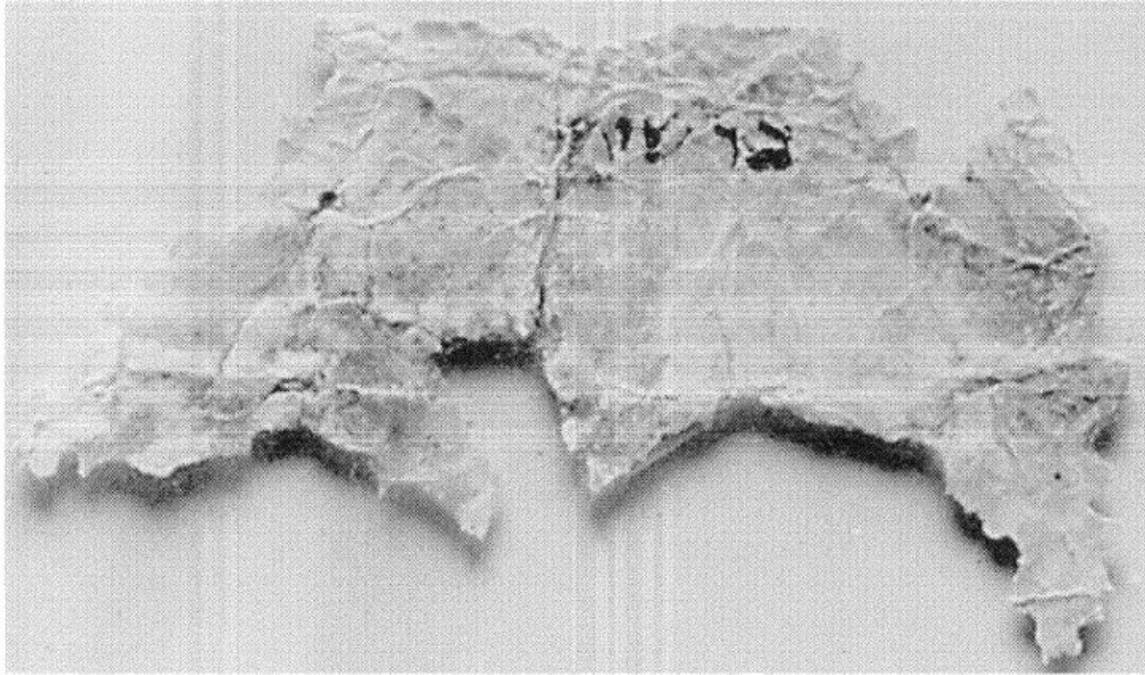


Image 1.

ברשית

4QGenh(title)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Digital image provided by the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormom Studies.

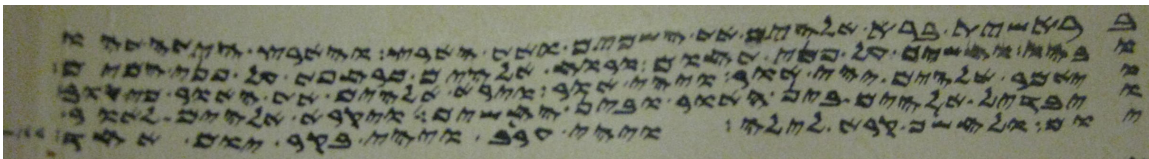


Figure 2. From the Samaritan Pentateuch Scroll found at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center (ABMC), Claremont, CA

Introduction (1:1-2) “Heavens” and “Earth” “created” by God “darkness” / “waters” as unformed, chaotic elements	
I. Day One (1:3-5) “Light” spoken into existence (i.e., by <i>fiat</i>). Separation of light from darkness; darkness delimited. “Day” and “Night.”	IV. Day Four (1:14-19) “Lights/Luminaries” “made” in the firmament. “Greater” to rule “Day,” “Lesser” to rule “Night,” plus stars.

Figure 3

<i>Enuma Elish</i>	The Biblical Genesis
Divine spirit and cosmic matter are coexistent and coeternal	Divine spirit created cosmic matter and exists independently of it
Primeval chaos; Tiamat enveloped in darkness	The earth a desolate waste, with darkness covering the deep (<i>tehôm</i>)
Light emanating from the gods	Light created

Figure 4

The Egyptian Ennead

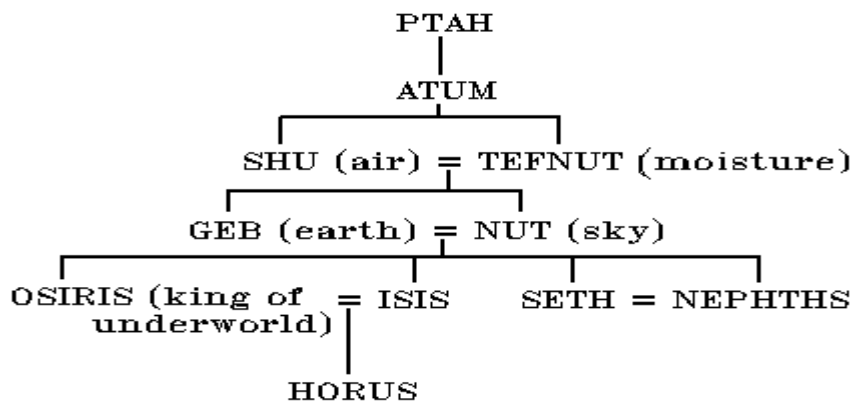


Figure 5

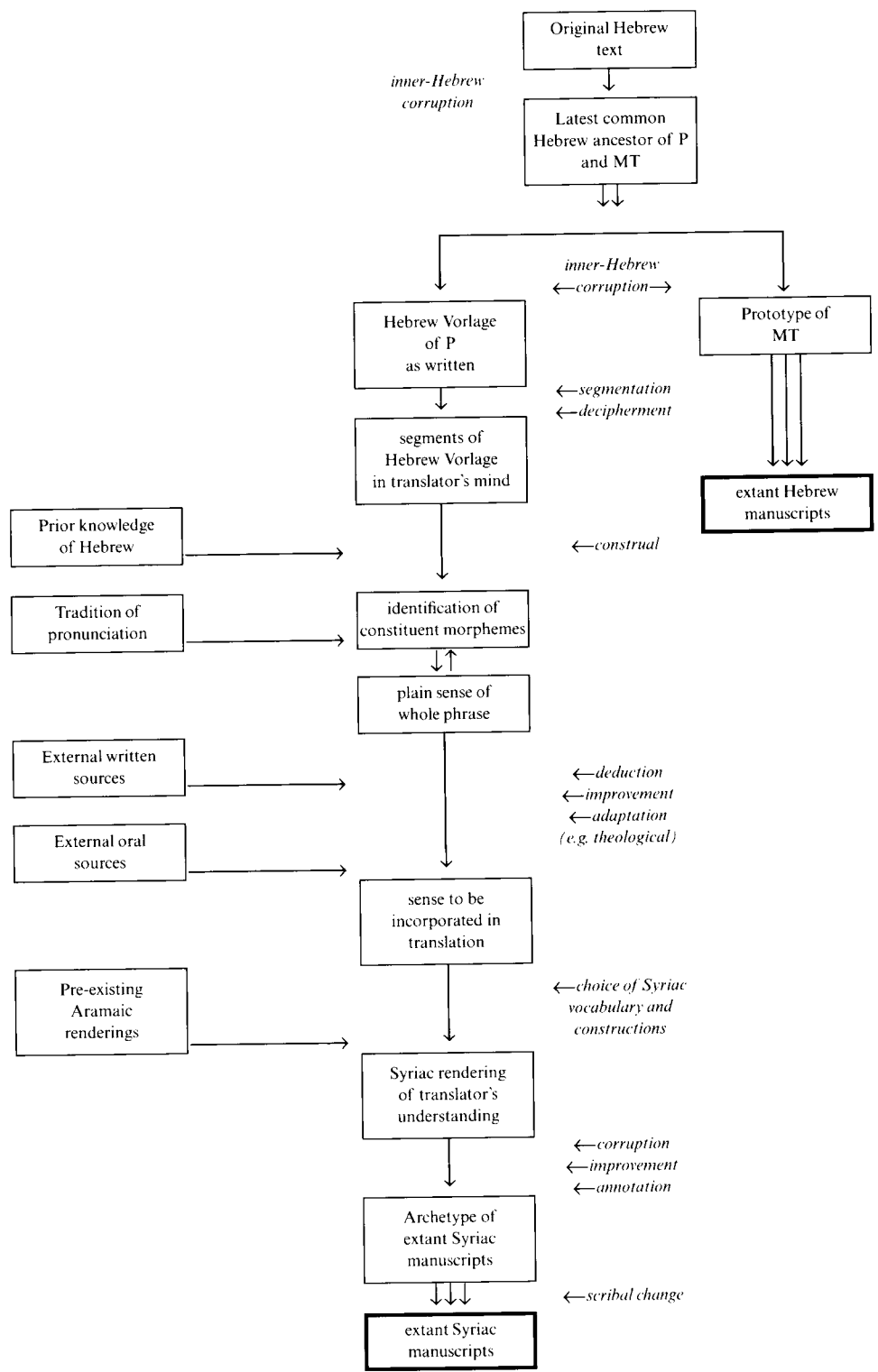


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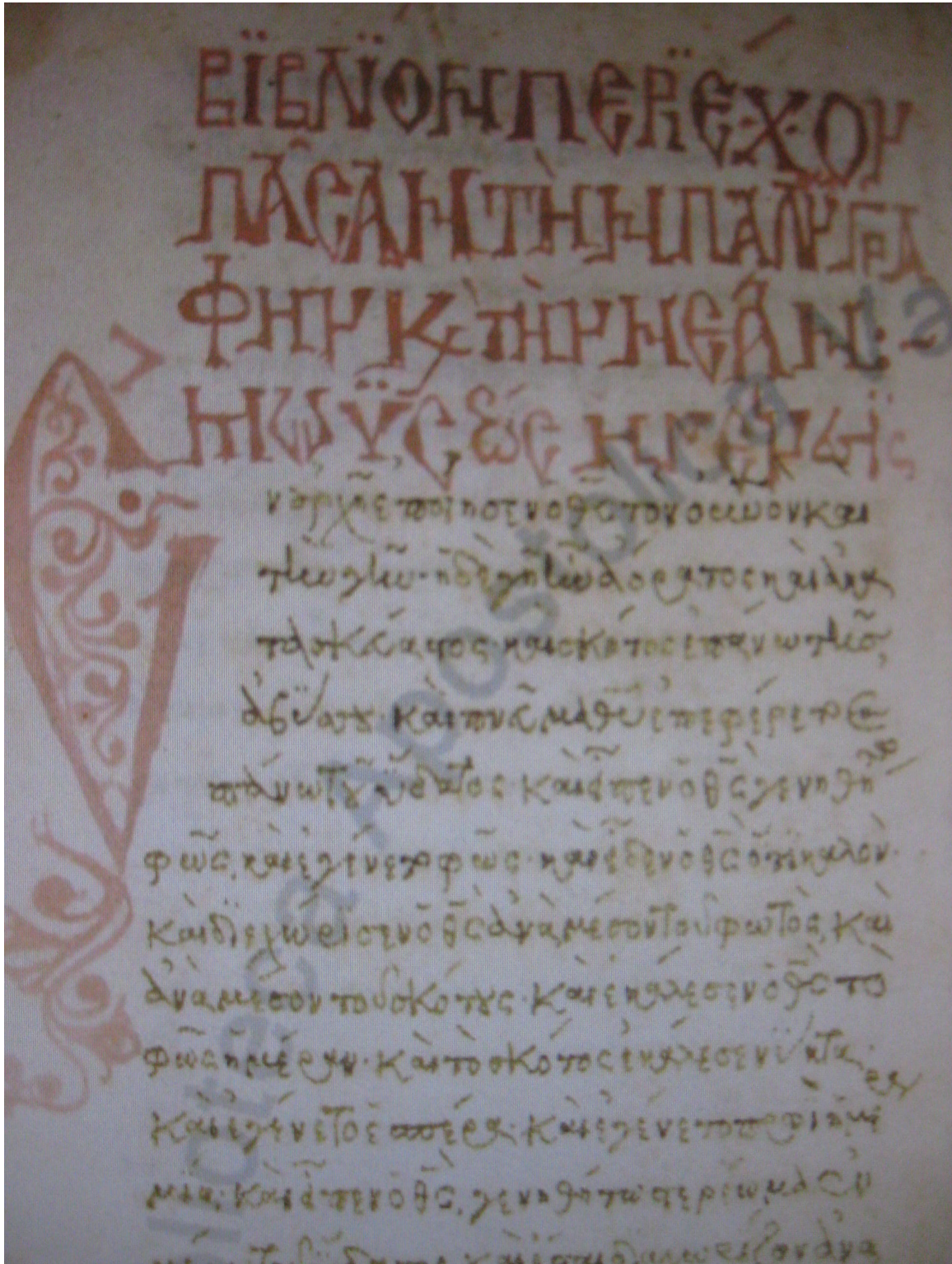


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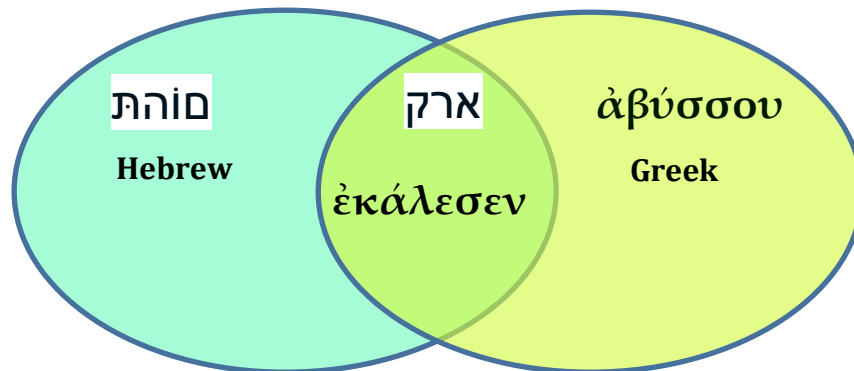


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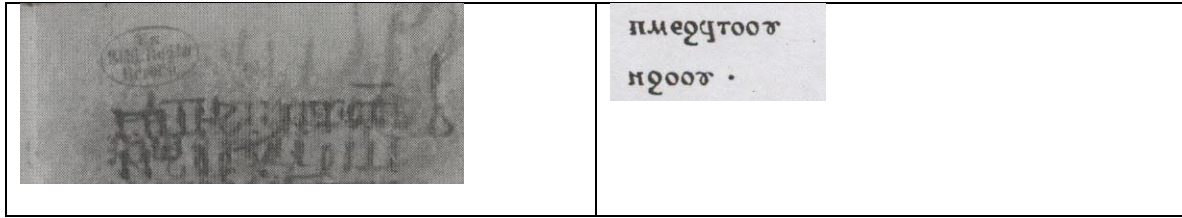


Image 11. (Gen. 1:19c. Cod. orient. Berolin. in fol. 1605, fol. 1).

Dialect / Book	Sahidic	Bohairic	Fayyumic	Akhmimic	Mesokemic	Other
Genesis	71%	100%	1%	1%	1%	17: <1%

Image 12. State of Preservation of Genesis

Introduction

The Bible is the most translated book in the world.¹ Bible translation has been the subject of many publications. A great number of academic disciplines and interests in recent decades have been attracted by the history of Bible translation. Scholars are trying to explain why the Bible was translated in a particular place at a given time. Manuel Jinbachian is right to declare that: “by studying the history of Bible translation, we also come to learn about the translators themselves, who they were, the text they produced, and the linguistic features of their translations.”² The politics of translating the scripture from the original texts to a vernacular has been trending upward in biblical studies.

The first traces of translation of texts date from 3000 BC, during the Egyptian Old Kingdom, in the area of the First Cataract, Elephantine, where inscriptions in two languages have been found. It became a significant factor in the West in 300 BC, when the Romans took over wholesale many elements of Greek culture, including the whole religious apparatus.³ Wigtil writes,

Ancient translations of religious texts are a valuable source of information about the religious attitudes and ideas of the translators of these texts. Careful comparison of an ancient version with its source text can reveal much about the translator who produced that version, and the version can prove to be of much more use than that of being merely another textual witness to the original work. The close comparison of a version with its source requires the delineation of several categories of investigation, which can serve as checks on one another. The version will generally omit some material found in the source, add explanatory or extraneous material that does not appear in the original text, rearrange the order of words or phrases, and change semantic meanings of the original. Other types of change include tense alterations, poetic meter or prosody, treatment of acrostics, and transcriptions of names and technical terms. Categorizing these types of

¹ See United Bible Society, “Statistical Summary of languages with the Scriptures.” 2008, Archived from the original on 8 March 2008. Retrieved 2008-03-22.

² In Noss, Philip A. *A History of Bible Translation*. Rome, Italy: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 2007, p. 29.

³ Peter. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1981, p. 3.

change allows a comparison of the results from these various categories, confirming or annulling the conclusions derived from each.⁴

However, Bible translation, in the area of linguistics and from an anthropological angle, remains a frontier to conquer in modern scholarship. This could be due to the fact that Bible translation is a multifaceted subject. For example, the Hebrew Bible starts with the words *b're'shît bara' 'Elohîm ...* meaning *When God began to create ...* (Gen. 1:1). Other translations, like the KJV, RSV, and NIV, render this, “*In the beginning God created.*” This beginning is indefinite in the Septuagint and the Bohairic Coptic Text that literally read: “*In a beginning ...*” Both translations are possible, but we cannot be sure that this difference is more than stylistic.⁵ At issue is the fact that none of the earliest translations – the Targum (Tg); the Peshitta (Syr); the Septuagint (LXX), and the Coptic Bible (Copt) – convey the same meaning as the Hebrew Text (MT). To solve this problem, a critical comparative analysis of the original Hebrew Text of Gen. 1:1-5 and these four translations pre-cited is revealed necessary, and a consideration of some contemporary academic disciplines such as philology, anthropology, theology, psychology, history, geography, religion, cultural studies, and linguistics, should be made.

When it comes to the politics of translating the biblical text, we take into consideration the interrelationship that exists between the methodology for biblical studies and other academic disciplines such as those pre-cited. Because, “the worldview

⁴ David Norval. Wigtill, *The Translation of Religious Texts in the Greco-Roman World*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1983, p. iii.

⁵ W. Gunther. Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, p. 18.

of the translators affected their intercultural communication.”⁶ Many times, the reader of the Hebrew Scripture is compelled to use Bible criticism and other reading strategies or techniques to better understand what the original writer wanted to communicate to his contemporary audience. So, Bible translation is not about theology only, but it encompasses many other aspects of scholarship as mentioned above, which gives it many facets.

Genesis, as the first book of the Hebrew Bible, is the focus of this study. Genesis is read not just by biblical scholars and theologians, but also by all sorts of religious and non-religious people in search of authentic expressions for the identity of humanity. Luther explains the importance of the beginning of Genesis, “the first chapter of Genesis is written in the simplest words, yet contains very important, though also very obscure, matters.”⁷ According to St. Jerome, “it was forbidden to anyone among the Jews to read or explain it to others before he had reached the age of thirty years.”⁸ Luther and Jerome said that for them, someone should study and digest all the Sacred Scriptures first if that person wants to read or understand the first chapter of Genesis. This work will try to set forth a critical comparative analysis concerning these precious and profound matters. More specifically, a detailed examination of Gen. 1:1-5 based on five manuscripts – the Masoretic Text (MT), the Targum (Targ), the Peshitta (P), the Septuagint (LXX), and the Coptic Text (Copt) – will be offered.

As soon as one translates, that person interprets. The same Greek term *hermêneutês* stands for “translator” or “interpreter.” This dissertation will demonstrate in

⁶ Charles H. Kraft, *Culture Communication and Christianity*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001, p. 115.

⁷ Martin. Luther, *Luther’s Commentary on Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958, p. 3.

⁸ Ibidem.

the pages that follow that with regards to the translators of Gen. 1:1-5 from Hebrew to Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic, their translations suggest what they were doing as scribes, their ideologies, and their methodology for their word choices. A study of both the original text and the translations will show what took place during the translation period.

Even the earliest translations into Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic versions of Gen. 1:1-5 are not verbatim translations from the Hebrew text. There are places where scribal errors could have taken place, but in other places, the translators deliberately chose other words. Also, printed Bibles only go back to the sixteenth century. Previous to that the Scriptures had to be copied by hand. This was a laborious work and a slow process.⁹ So then, our original manuscripts could have had scribal errors.

It is generally assumed that the parent text of the Septuagint Genesis – though at times, it is difficult to reconstruct – does not differ much from the Masoretic Text of Genesis.¹⁰ We understand the differences between them on the level of syntax and semantics, especially to say that the LXX *Volage* was “read” and interpreted very differently from the MT. Moreover, the divergences that exist between the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic manuscripts will be shown to be a good argument to support the idea that scribes incorporated their cultural contributions in the translation process of the Bible.

⁹ Sebatian. Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*. Second Revised Edition. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006, p. 7.

¹⁰ Arie Van Der. Kooij, *The Oracle of Tyre: The Septuagint of Isaiah XXIII as Version and Vision*. Leiden: Brill, 1998, p. 12.

The reasons why I have chosen these languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic are as follows: the translation of the original Hebrew Text into Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, and Coptic are among the first translations of the Bible into another language.¹¹ Hebrew is considered the original language for Genesis 1:1-5, and it will be the basis for comparison and analysis. Syriac is a western dialect of Aramaic - one of the earliest languages into which the Hebrew Bible was translated. It is important to see the affinity that there is between both of them. The Coptic text was not translated from the Masoretic Text, but from the Septuagint. After comparing the Greek and Coptic traditions with critical eyes, it should be possible to see how close or far the Coptic Text is from the Hebrew Text. However, there are differences between the Coptic Text and the Greek Text, even when these versions are trying to say the same thing. Last, the focus is only the first pericope (Gen. 1:1-5) of the first biblical creation story, because it – being the first stanza – sets the paradigm for the rest of the chapter.

This work will address the accuracy of each translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers, to determine when and how the worldview and theology of the scribes influenced their translations. At issue is the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic texts of the first day of creation. The goal is to highlight how subtle shifts in translation change meaning.

There is always a close connection between language and culture in societies, an understanding of the original language also provides a greater appreciation for the cultural background of the Hebrew Bible. Four questions can be raised in relationship to this affirmation: Why was the Hebrew text of Gen. 1:1-5 translated into another

¹¹ Massoud, Mary M. F. *Translate to Communicate: A Guide for Translators*. Illinois, USA: David C. Cook Foundation Elgin, 1988, p. 1.

language? Did the translators want people to understand what they were translating? What did these terms mean at the time during their translations? What do we think a word mean? This dissertation will seek to explain why many variations between the original Hebrew Text and the translations can best be explained on technical grounds.¹²

This work will show that the fashions in biblical translation changed over the course of time; the differences between the MT and the Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic translations are, for the most part, to be ascribed to scribal activity¹³; and the ancient translators were oriented towards both the original text and their reader. The aim of this work is, first, to explain, with the help of an historico-philological method of interpretation, the meaning of the Biblical text, and to arrive, as nearly as possible, at the sense that the words of Genesis 1:1-5 were intended to have for the reader as they exist in the Masoretic Text.

Second, the basic Hebrew Text used here is the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*. The Dead Sea Scrolls that contain material bearing on an earlier stage of the Hebrew text are consulted, as well as the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes. These documents also shed light on the origins and development of the biblical text

This dissertation will flow as follows: a history of the use of the Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic translations is presented in the first chapter of the book. Chapter two is a textual analysis of the Hebrew Masoretic text of Gen. 1:1-5. This includes an engagement with the critical apparatus of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ Chapter three compares

¹² Arie Van Der. Kooij, Op. Cit., p. 7.

¹³ Robert, J. V. Hiebert, *Translation Is Required: The Septuagint in Retrospect and Prospect*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010, p. 161.

¹⁴ The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.

the Aramaic and Syriac translations with each other, because they are related: one is derived from the other. However, there are places where the Targum reading is different from the Peshitta, as the latter was not translated from the former, but the Hebrew Text.

Chapter four is devoted to a critical consideration of the Septuagint version of Gen. 1:1-5. The story of the creation of light according to the native Egyptian (Bohairic) manuscript is scrutinized in the fifth chapter. Actually, there is no text at all for Gen. 1:1-5 in the Sahidic manuscript – possibly a third century CE document. The possibility for reconstruction starts in Gen. 1:19. The Sahidic text is very fragmented. The Sahidic text is older than the Bohairic text. Gen. 1:1-5 is a complete passage in the Bohairic dialect manuscript, but the Sahidic text was not less than the Bohairic text. During the analysis of the Coptic text, I will compare a Bohairic verse with the Sahidic equivalent – where there is material in both texts – in order to understand both.

Chapter six is a comparison of all the traditions, particularly, those that are related or derived from one another. An exploration of the subject is made in quest of resolutions to the problems cited in the beginning. Also, it is in this section that the similarities between the manuscripts and the reasons why they differ from one another are displayed. Chapter seven lays out some recommendations for a better understanding of the works of the scribes and the translators, and synthesizes the data by tying it all together. Last, some linguistic and philological counsel are provided.

Chapter One: A History of Translations

This chapter will present a general overview of how ancient and modern translators of the biblical narrative of the first day of creation approached, read, and translated their texts. Textual inconsistencies will be drawn from the issues presented in this part of the book. This is the foundation upon which the analysis of the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic Texts will be based. This is also the beginning of the critical comparative examination, because each of the following chapters will deal with different aspects of the same text in another language. One of the goals here is to further the work of previous biblical translators and scholars, while fostering the philological branch of the field so-called Bible translation. My purpose is to show that a biblical translation from the original Hebrew text was not done in exactly the same words or, when translated to another language, exactly equivalent words.

A. How Genesis 1:1-5 Has Been Translated from the Hebrew Text Across Traditions

Any given translation of a biblical passage from the original Hebrew should not be isolated from how previous translators of the same text translated it. Later toward the conclusion of this work, we will see that earlier interpreters of Gen. 1:1-5 might have something to teach us today. Here, my aim is to lay out how our focus passage was read and interpreted across different traditions before modern times. It should be remembered at all times that a translation is an interpretation. Translations nearly always have an interpretive element. There are very few words that have a 1 to 1 correlation from one

language to the next. For instance, voice, punctuation, and nuance also directly affect meaning in context.

Specific commentaries can be useful sources in the writing process of this book, as some commentators have based their translations of the biblical text on the Hebrew original or the Septuagint (LXX) before their interpretation. Also, it will be important to lay out how some previous scholars approached and read the Bible, even if their main concern was not Gen. 1:1-5. Three groups of translators that are targeted are the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Church fathers, and the reformers. These three groups of translators are among the first people to translate and interpret the Scriptures throughout history.

1- The Dead Sea Scrolls

According to Freedman and Kuhlken, “the Dead Sea Scrolls are fragments of papyrus (sheep or goatskin), and, in one case, copper that were once part of complete books in scrolls form. They were originally the property of the Essenes, a Jewish sect who made their home in the caves at Qumrân near the Dead Sea.”¹⁵ John C. Trever gives us more historical information related to them by saying that: “The Scrolls were discovered by two Ta‘mireh Bedouin goatherds, when Muhammaed ed-Dhib threw a rock into a cave and heard something shatter. At first frightened away, he returned later and found ten clay jars, one of which contained ancient writings.”¹⁶

Over 100,000 fragments can be pieced together into over 900 separate documents, with multiple copies of most books, as one would expect of a library. These fragments

¹⁵ David Noel. Freedman, and Pam Fox. Kuhlken, *What are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why do they Matter?*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

provide extensive excerpts from the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible. There are also fragments from the so-called Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical works. However, when scholars refer to the “Dead Sea Scrolls,” they usually include certain non-biblical, sectarian documents such as the *Manual of Discipline* or the *Damascus Document*. Eight of the Scrolls are housed in Israel at a museum called the Shrine of the Book.

Khirbet Qumran, located in the northwestern Dead Sea Valley, is a controversial site. Prevalent theory sees it as a communal center of the Essene sect. But was it a kind of monastery in which the members of the sect gathered for communal meals and prayers? Did these same Essenes copy the scrolls that were found in the nearby caves? More scholars have become convinced that these scrolls originated in Jerusalem. Then, were they brought from the Capital at some time during the First Jewish Revolt (66-70 C.E.) and concealed in the caves near the site?¹⁷ Qumran was destroyed in 68 CE.¹⁸

Based on the Dead Sea Scrolls, we do not really know what we do not know. There are many lines in the Dead Sea Scrolls that we cannot read very well. Most of the manuscripts are fragmentary, and each piece requires hours of study before it can be identified and placed in a column of a manuscript. Though they were enclosed in clay jars to be protected against humidity in Palestine, the edges of fragments have been eaten by moisture, fungi, and generations of worms. So, nothing fits together clearly, and in many ways, the scrolls are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Moreover, we have a lot of questions about the material found at Qumran. Hempel says that: “The full corpus of texts has many holes in it – sometimes more holes

¹⁷ See Yizhar. Hirschfeld, *Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004, p. xv.

¹⁸ Lim, Timothy H. Et al. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: In Their Historical Context*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2000, p. 68.

than preserved text – and even where plenty of text is preserved it is fair to say that we are now still short of just as many answers and often even reformulating the questions.”¹⁹

So then, on one hand, a lot is missing, but on the other, a lot is there. Alongside the authors cited here and those presented in this chapter’s bibliography, three other Dead Sea Scrolls scholars who studied these documents in depth are William H. Brownlee, Eleazar L. Sukenik, and Frank Moore Cross, Jr..²⁰ This section is about what we know and what we’ve learned over the last sixty years since their discovery in 1947, particularly regarding Genesis 1:1-5.

By 1970 scholars believed that a Jewish sect had inhabited Khirbet Qumran in antiquity. The belief was held almost universally. Except that a few writers claimed that the scrolls had been written not in the period of Hasmonaean rule and Roman domination but in the Middle Ages.²¹ In his work titled *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Norman Golb gives three reasons for an earlier composition date as follows:

First, the scroll handwritings often resembled those known from Palestinian Jewish inscriptions of intertestamental times, while ancient Greek biblical fragments, as well as a significant number written in the old, so-called Canaanite or palaeo-Hebrew script, had also been found in the caves along with the other scrolls. Second, the jars found in some of the caves at the same stratigraphic level as the scrolls were themselves from the period of Roman domination. These facts proved quite effectively that the scrolls had to be ancient rather than medieval texts. Third, another significant factor that played a role in showing this to be the case was the scrolls’ literary character, revealing many features known from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.²²

¹⁹ Charlotte. Hempel, *The Qumran Rule Texts in Context*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism. Vol. 154. Tübingen, Germany, Mohr Siebeck, 2013, p. 20.

²⁰ See for instance, Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History: Volume One, 1947-1960*. First Edition. Boston, MA: Brill, 2006, pp. 51, 61, 104, and 194.

²¹ See especially the articles of Solomon Zeitlin of the Dropsie College relating to this subject that appeared in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* during the 1950s. This view was notably supported by Sidney Hoening of Yeshiva University in published articles, and by Ellis Rivkin of the Hebrew Union College in his lectures to the rabbinical students there.

²² Norman. Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Search for the Secret of Qumran*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995, p. 65.

The text known as the *Damascus Document* (CD) had already been known since the end of the last century. In 1886-1887 two manuscripts (A and B) of this work were found in the genizah of the El Cairo synagogue, dated to the 10th and 12th centuries.²³ At Qumran, ten copies of this document came to light. This served to prove that it was not a composition from the medieval period but a work which was already known in about 100 BCE, since the oldest copy found at Qumran goes back to 75-50 BCE.²⁴

The members of the Qumran Community are considered a Jewish ascetic sect of the 2nd century BC – 2nd century AD in Palestine, who lived in highly organized groups and held property in common. Some of the Essenes lived in a celibate community in the desert; others in villages and towns. They were the ones who loved the name of the Lord and walked on the paths of “justice” – a theological theme found in their writings.

Martínez and Barrera tell us that: “this great multitude, the men of the Dead Sea, were waiting in these tombs in silence for the reward of their faithfulness in a new life.”²⁵ They believed in a better life to come (after death). One of their texts, 4QMMT, states clearly *why* they separated themselves from all their brothers: *out of a desire for absolute faithfulness to the revealed word, of which only they possessed the correct understanding.*

For the Essenes, those who were worshipping in the Jerusalem temple did not keep the Law of Moses as prescribed. Thus, it was not possible for them to take part in the worship there. In short, “perhaps the easiest way to describe their life is to define it as a life completely dedicated to the observance of the Law,” say Martínez and Barrera.²⁶ As prescribed in the Mosaic Law, these regulations have to do with the lunar calendar, the

²³ Florentino García. Martínez, and Julio Treballe. Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Writings, Beliefs and Practices*. Leiden, the Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995, p. 52.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

sacrifices of the gentiles, the transmission of impurity by flowing liquids, defilement brought into the holy city by animal skins, unlawful unions, marriages of priests with the laity, tithes, etc. Also, “the name of God (YHWH) was so sacred to the Essenes that, in the Scrolls, it was the only word written in a more ancient form of Hebrew script,” say Freedman and Kuhlken.²⁷

We will never have film footage of the Essenes – the religious community who created the Scrolls – as they joined together for meals, prayer, study, deliberation, and work. Scholars would like to know how close they came to living in pure love, as the first line of their rule book gives their aim: “To seek God with all one’s heart and all one’s soul, to do what is good and right before him, as he commanded through Moses and all his servants the prophets, to love all that he has chosen and to hate all that he has rejected.”²⁸

Here, the vocabulary of the Qumran sectarian texts should be analyzed. First, the corpus of writings discovered in the caves near Qumran has provided us with fragments from around 1000 scrolls, the majority written in Hebrew, some in Aramaic, and a small number in Greek.²⁹ Second, from the outset, students of the scrolls recognized the peculiar character of the documents connected with the group in question – the Essenes. Third, the scrolls also demonstrated the community’s organizational and conceptual features. The specific style and terminology used by these documents, which articulated a

²⁷ David Noel. Freedman, and Pam Fox. Kuhlken, *What are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why do they Matter?*. Op. Cit. p. 25.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

²⁹ Nota Bene: The numbered manuscripts yielded by the caves is 823. However, with the advance of the editorial work, nearly 200 scrolls were added to it, recognized when fragments were reidentified and separated from the manuscripts to which they were originally assigned. At least 25–30 manuscripts from the Qumran caves remain in private hands (Devorah. Dimant, *History, Ideology and Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014, p. 57.)

particular set of associated ideas and concepts, became the hallmark of the literature associated with this community. So, there are linguistic and conceptual affinities between the fragments. Such great similarities are exemplified in the *Damascus Document*, and the *Rule of the Community*. Last, the distinctive literature of this community is usually designated by the term “sectarian literature.”

Many fascinating writings reveal how the Community at Qumran searched and interpreted the Scriptures. Elledge maintains that: “Their value extends beyond Qumran studies, since they preserve abundant evidence for how the Bible was interpreted in Palestine during the Second Temple period.”³⁰ Moreover, “few Palestinian sites have attracted as much scholarly attention as has Qumran, primarily because of the abundance and importance of the scrolls discovered in the caves near the site (Khirbet Qumran),” says Hirschfeld.³¹ That is why; for some archaeologists, the discovery of the Dead Sea Documents is the greatest archaeological find of the twentieth Century: a 2,000-year-old time capsule.³² Later, we will see that studying the material recovered from the caves around Qumran is a useful activity for one who wishes to understand either ancient Judaism or sub-groups.³³

A large number of scriptural commentaries from Qumran are called “pesharim,” since they typically begin their interpretations with the word “peshar” (פֶּשֶׁר). Several other commentaries also use the word *peshar*, yet they proceed differently. Scholars often call these writings “thematic pesharim,” since they select passages from several different

³⁰ C. D. Elledge, *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005, p. 72.

³¹ Yizhar. Hirschfeld, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

³² This view is supported by Freedman and Kuhlken. Op. Cit., p. 13.

³³ Timothy H. Lim, Et al. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2000, p. 10.

biblical books and interpret them together to elaborate particular themes.³⁴ It should be noted that the pesharim constitute a literary genre in the texts themselves that characterize the Qumran commentators.³⁵ The *Commentaries on Genesis A-D* (4QCommGen A–D = 4Q252-254) is one of the three exegetical works from Qumran that use pesher exegesis within a larger retelling of events from the book of Genesis. These writings are, thus, perhaps best described as “narrative-exegetical,” since they combine pesher exegesis with paraphrases of biblical narratives.³⁶

Four additional narrative-exegetical works dedicated to the book of Genesis have been discovered in Cave 4. The best preserved of these is the Commentary on Genesis A (4Q252). Like the *Pesher on the Periods*, the remains begin with the events recorded in Gen. 6 and continue with an interpretation of the ancestral narratives of Gen. 12–49. Through these pesharim, conclusions can be made about the Essenes’ love for the Bible, and how they would have translated our focus passage, if they were to do so. It is within this perspective that Elledge informs us that:

Beyond continuous and thematic pesharim and narrative-exegetical works, many Qumran manuscripts attest the interpretive methodology of paraphrasing biblical texts. Others prefer to list verses from different scriptural contexts, creating an anthology of key biblical passages on a particular theme. These manuscripts deal with how the Scriptures were collected, copied, and transmitted at Qumran.³⁷

³⁴ C. D. Elledge, *Op. Cit.*, p. 76.

³⁵ For an in-depth studies on the literary genre of the pesharim, see Maurya P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 8. Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979, p. 229.

³⁶ The other two writings that share this style of exposition include *Pesher on the Periods* (4QAgasCreat A–B = 4Q180-181), and *Exposition on the Patriarchs* (4QExpPat = 4Q464). *Ibid.* p. 79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

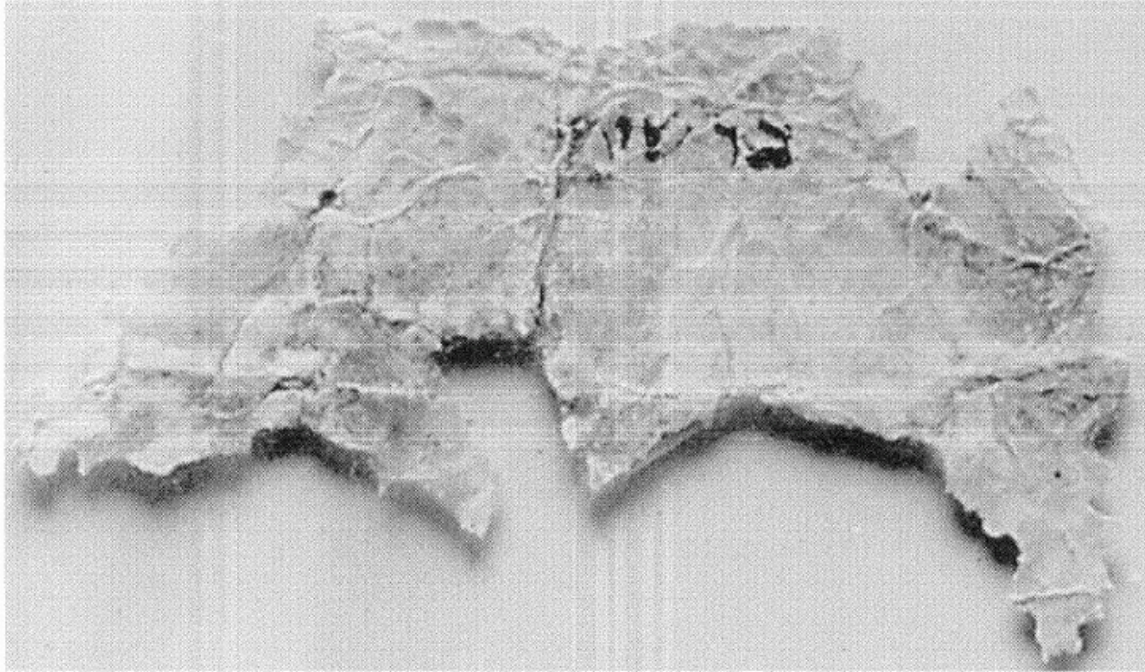


Image 1.

ברשית

4QGenh(title)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Digital image provided by the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormom Studies.

Ronald S. Hendel informs us that: “this image is a fragment of the oldest preserved title page or dusk jacket (*page de garde*) of Genesis, 4 QGenh(title). The alert reader will note that the word **בראשית** has suffered a scribal error: the **א** is missing. This mistake, motivated by the phonetic quiescence of **א** in the speech of this period, is fairly common in the Qumran scrolls” (cf. several instances in the retelling of Genesis 1 in 4QJuba).³⁸ He continues to say that: “this earliest evidence for the Hebrew title of Genesis provides a striking example of the vicissitudes of ancient texts and is an apt reminder of the simple necessity of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.”³⁹ Later in this

³⁸ Ronald S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University, 1998, p. vii.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

work, we will consider some scribal mistakes that are present in the biblical text, and the importance of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible will also be laid out while analyzing the work of Emanuel Tov.

Finding Gen. 1:1-5 in Qumran is a difficult task. For whether the commentaries on Genesis are all one work or several is unclear. Of the four manuscripts on Genesis, 4Q252 is the best preserved; its six columns cover Genesis 5:32-49:21. The tiny fragments of 4Q253 are here taken as the remains of a commentary on Genesis, but the matter is tenuous. 4Q254a appears to be an intentional alteration of 4Q252 frag. 1, cols. 1-2. That means, we do not have material for Gen. 1:1-5. Furthermore, there should be no confusion between the Book of Genesis as found in the Masoretic Text and the Genesis Apocryphon (4Q20) – the tales of the Patriarchs or the Apocalypse of Lamech. This latter text is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1946 by Bedouin shepherds in Cave 1 near Qumran. But in spite of the absence of our passage (Gen. 1:1-5) at Qumran, our research has demonstrated that the Essenes used the biblical text as an interpretive tool, vis-à-vis the reality in which they were living.

The men of the Dead Sea, though, continue to be anonymous persons to us, figures without a face. What were their names? We cannot even give them names. Except four transgressing members who failed to observe the Law: Johanan ben Mattatias, Hananiah Notos, Hananiah ben Simeon and another member whose surname alone has been preserved (ben Joseph). Scarcely four names from among the hundreds of “sons of light” are known. At most they are titles, functions: Mabaqker, Paqid, Interpreter, Teacher of Righteousness... To paraphrase Martínez, “the echo of their voices from the

three cemeteries around Qumran reaches us today, hardly distinguishable from the desert wind.”⁴⁰

The data that we have prove that the Essenes approached Scriptures with an eye toward interpretation and teaching. In other words, they were interpreting the biblical text which was not assembled yet at that time, and they were also teachers of the Mosaic Law. For instance, the *Peshet of Habakkuk* (1QpHab) is an actualizing interpretation of the prophecies of Habakkuk according to the particular exegetical method employed by the Qumran community. In *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?* Freedman and Kuhlken are right to state that: “The Essenes combed the Hebrew Scriptures to find clues to understanding their community’s social and historical situation.”⁴¹

There are two reasons that support this argument: First, they longed for a king from the line of David to lead them to victory over their Roman occupiers. That is why the Psalms, especially the Royal Psalms, were very popular at Qumran. Second, the Essenes were on the lookout for the beginning of a new age, and a messianic figure to bring it. Consequently, copies of the entire Book of Isaiah were found at Qumran, as the messianic theme of the Book of Isaiah captured the Essenes’ imagination. So, the Messianic passages, such as chapters 7, 9, 11 and 61 were key texts for the Qumran community.

According to the Scroll known as the *Manual of Discipline*, every person falls into one of these two categories: the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness.⁴² Clearly, in their own minds, the Essenes were the Children of Light, a class that excluded

⁴⁰ Florentino García. Martínez, and Julio Trebolle. Barrera, Op. Cit., pp. 47-48.

⁴¹ David Noel. Freedman, and Pam Fox. Kuhlken, Op.Cit., p. 29.

⁴² Ibid., p. 47.

most of their fellow Jews. The rest of humanity are Sons of Darkness and they are doomed, as the Scroll attests. Could this idea of light have been grounded in Genesis 1:1-5? The answer to this question could be negative due to the fact that darkness and light are elements in creation in Genesis whereas in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the dubbing of the armies are a moral category. They are linked to Persian concepts of light and darkness as moral categories. Interestingly, in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh dwells in deep darkness. In Isaiah 45:7a Yahweh says, “*I form light and create darkness.*”

Actually, Scriptural passages contained within the Dead Sea Scrolls can also be viewed as literature of resistance. Most recently Popović highlights the widespread context of “violence and conflict” as the background to most manuscript depositions in the Judean desert including Qumran.⁴³ Freedman and Kuhlken also tell us that: “Cave 4 truly looked like the aftermath of a war. The surprise in Cave 4 was that tens of thousands of fragments (the official report stated 15,000) had all suffered serious damage and were strewn about under three feet of accumulated debris. These Scrolls were clearly moved at the last minute under great threat when the Romans came through on their way to the siege of Jerusalem.”⁴⁴ To an extent, the contents of Cave 4 have been the engine of the researchers of the Dead Sea Documents. This material has also inspired most of the innovative re-evaluation of the texts in current Qumran studies.⁴⁵ It is interesting to see the reason why Cave 4 was more abundant in Scrolls than the other Caves:

Most likely, the Essenes originally kept all the Scrolls in their Scriptorium, a large hall that served as their library and on-site copying center. There must have been a librarian to keep track of all the documents. But they moved everything into Cave 4 for preservation because they were under attack and needed to secure their

⁴³ Mladen. Popović, *Qumran as Scroll Storehouse in Times of Crisis? A Comparative Perspective on Judean Desert Manuscript Collections*. JSJ 43, 2012, pp. 551-594.

⁴⁴ David Noel. Freedman, and Pam Fox. Kuhlken, Op.Cit., p. 19.

⁴⁵ Charlotte. Hempel, Op. Cit., p. 19.

valuables for safekeeping, expecting to return to their hoard when the danger had passed. But it never did.⁴⁶

Last, in light of the contents of the Qumran Scrolls, we have come to understand that the pesharim were companions to the biblical text. The Essenes believed that the words of the books that they were interpreting were full of mysteries. Both their mysteries and their interpretations were revealed by God to them as being the prophetic author and the Teacher of Righteousness in the sect's tradition of biblical interpretation. Fascinatingly, they had copies of the biblical text and commentaries on it as two separate texts.

As mentioned earlier, if a translation is a commentary, the Essenes' commentaries on specific passages can be considered as the Qumran sect's translations of these texts. However, their translation of Gen. 1:1-5 or their commentary on it is not found. We have drawn some conclusions on the basis of how they translated and commented on other texts such as the Genesis Apocryphon, the Book of Psalms, Isaiah, the Book of the Twelve, and particularly Habakkuk. Their contribution to this topic is the way in which they viewed Scriptures (biblical interpretation in ancient Israel) prior to the Common Era (CE): as a document that is related to morality (good, evil, justice, and righteousness), and a source of divine revelation. Most importantly, the Essenes give us a view of the nature and institution of scribal practice in ancient Israel.

Fishbane is right to say that: "Significantly, the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran, and Jesus, and Paul, and all the religious reformers that come to mind, presented themselves as the authentic *interpreters* of the religions which they represented."⁴⁷ The

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

⁴⁷ Michael. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford, England: The Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 2.

relevance of this section in this book is the fact that if someone is laying out the history of translations or the history of interpretation of a biblical passage, that person should not ignore the work of the Essenes who interacted with portions of the Hebrew Text – which will be called “Hebrew Bible” later – from the get-go.

2- The Church Fathers

The early chapters of Genesis (1–11) had arguably a greater influence on the development of Christian theology than did any other part of the Christian Old Testament which is different from the Hebrew Bible. Based on these early chapters, the Fathers have set out the fundamental patterns of Christian theology. Particularly here, there was affirmed the doctrine of creation, in accordance with which the created order had been brought into being from nothing by God’s Word as something “exceedingly good” (Gen. 1:31).

The Church Fathers excessively wrote commentaries on Genesis 1. One of the most popular genres of scriptural commentary among the Fathers was commentary on the six days of creation, the Hexaemeron. Those by Basil the Great and Ambrose are perhaps the most famous. Although Augustine titled none of his books *The Hexaemeron*, he returned at least five times to exposition of the first chapter of Genesis.⁴⁸ These five works are: *On Genesis against the Manichees (De Genesi contra Manichaeos)*; *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book (De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber)*, *Confessions (Confessiones)*; *On Genesis Literally Interpreted (De Genesi ad litteram)*; and *The City of God (De civitate Dei)*. Both Origen and John

⁴⁸ Andrew. Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*. v. 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. xxxix.

Chrysostom wrote homilies on the first biblical account of creation, especially Gen. 1:1-5, for spiritual edification. So, the Church Fathers left a number of texts on the first chapter of the Book of Genesis.

It is worth noting that the Christian Old Testament is the Greek Septuagint (LXX), whereas what is translated in our Bible is the Hebrew Text, of which the Septuagint is an early translation. In other words, the Old Testament Scriptures most used by early Christians was actually a translation from Hebrew to Greek known as the Septuagint (LXX). There are some major and minor discrepancies between the Greek Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint is the version quoted and referred to, for the most part, in the New Testament, which is in the Greek (*Koinè*) of the first Christian communities. Moreover, the Old Latin version (or versions) was a translation of the Septuagint and remained the principal text of the Scriptures for those who spoke Latin throughout the patristic period.⁴⁹ The Vulgate is not a translation of the Hebrew Bible, but the LXX, so it is another witness to the LXX, not necessarily to the Hebrew Text.

The earliest dissenting voice from the primacy of the Septuagint seems to have been the Latin scholar Jerome, whose translation, now called the Vulgate, was inspired by his ideal of Hebrew truth (*Hebraica veritas*), though even here, despite his drill defense of the priority of the Hebrew, his version frequently follows the text of the Septuagint. That is why some scholars, like Ronald S. Hendel, have come to appreciate the value of the Septuagint as a witness to the original Hebrew. Others have called for a return to the original Christian tradition, according to which the Christian Old Testament is the Septuagint.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. xl-xli.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. xli.

Thus, the actual text that the Fathers used is not something that we can detect in a current English translation, for English Bibles use the Hebrew Text for the Old Testament. Moreover, even if there were a reliable translation of the Septuagint available in English, that would not be exactly the text of the Fathers either, for printed versions of the Septuagint text are based on Alfred Rahlfs's edition, first published in 1935, which is an attempt to work back from the texts that have survived to the original text of the Alexandrian translators. We have seen, the text that most of the Fathers would have used would have been some form of the so-called Hexaplaric text or at the very least have contained readings derived from the Hexapla.⁵¹

The Hexapla is the sixfold text of Origen in parallel columns, especially of the Old Testament. A. Vööbus informs us that: "Origen's work in the Hexapla represents the most intensive study imaginable on the Old Testament texts and it marks the turning point in the history of the text of the Septuagint."⁵² Origen's purpose was to put all these versions together into the first critical edition of the Old Testament text to ultimately produce a perfect version. "His goal was the conformation of the Septuagint text with the current Hebrew Text, producing a Greek version corresponding as closely as possible to the Veritas Hebraica."⁵³

The contents of the six columns of the Hexapla are as follows: The first column was reserved for the Hebrew Text in transliteration in Greek characters.⁵⁴ The second column was possibly composed of transliterated texts made by the Jews for liturgical

⁵¹ Ibid., p. xliv.

⁵² Vööbus, Arthur. *The Hexapla and The Syro-Hexapla*. Wetteren, Belgium: Cultura Press, 1971, p. 1.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 4.

purposes.⁵⁵ The third column inaugurates the section devoted to a cycle of Greek versions. The version of Aquila was introduced as the first Greek text.⁵⁶ The fourth column brings the version of Symmachus as the second Greek text – another second century version, in several respects similar to Aquila’s translation and thus fitting in the scheme which first presents versions which are as close as possible to the Hebrew original.⁵⁷ The fifth column was reserved for the Septuagint. Since this is the most important column it deserves separate treatment.⁵⁸ Last, the sixth column was reserved for the text of Theodotion, another second century version.

The way that the Church Fathers translated the Old Greek text of Genesis into the Latin of their time is fascinating. The Fathers read the first chapters of the Bible as unfolding a theological understanding of the human condition.⁵⁹ Consequently, they approached Genesis 1:1-5 with the goal of theological interpretation, spiritual reading, wholesome teaching, and preaching. For example, Augustine treated the text of Genesis, particularly the six Days (Hexameron), first as history and then as prophecy.⁶⁰ He explains, “In the creation of light on the first day is found a likeness to the beginnings of human history, the ten generations from Adam to Noah, and to the infancy of every man, when each one of us begins to see the light. As that age was wiped away by the flood, so our infancy was wiped away by oblivion.”⁶¹

An overview of the standpoint of the Church Fathers based on their translations is that God created heaven and earth through the Word: creation by fiat. Because God

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 13.

⁵⁹ Andrew. Louth, *Op. Cit.*, p. lii.

⁶⁰ See Saint Augustine. *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine On Genesis*. Trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J. Vol. 84. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991, p. 24.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 25.

spoke, and what he called out into existence came to be. To support his position about the fact that heaven and earth were created through the word, Augustine used John 1:1: “*In the beginning was the Word.*”⁶² The Latin text states “*In principio ...*” Origen’s translation is almost the same with Augustine’s. Origen asks, “What is the beginning of all things except our Lord and ‘Savior of all,’ Jesus Christ ‘the firstborn of every creature’”? He concludes to say that: “‘in the beginning,’ that is, in the Savior.”⁶³

According to Basil the Great, “it appears, indeed, that even before this world an order of things existed of which our mind can form an idea but of which we can say nothing, because it is too lofty a subject for men who are but beginners and are still babes in knowledge.”⁶⁴ He continues to say, “the birth of the world was preceded by a condition of things suitable for the exercise of supernatural powers, outstripping the limits of time, eternal and infinite.”⁶⁵ What that means is, according to the Church Fathers, the universe was made from absolutely nothing; the order “heaven and earth” in Gen. 1:1 shows how almighty is the deity by setting up the roof before laying the foundation; and all things that are in heaven and earth were created by God (cf. Col. 1:16). For Didymus the Blind, through the reconstruction of P. Nautin, “the word *αρχη* in Gen. 1:1 often also signifies royalty, to say here that God made the universe like a king endowed with power: He did not use matter as substance to create the universe.”⁶⁶

It is interesting to see that how the Fathers of the Church translated the first part of Gen. 1:2 was influenced by their theology, understanding of the cosmic elements, and

⁶² Ibid., p. 1.

⁶³ Origen, *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Vol. 71. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982, p. 47.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Pierre. Nautin, *Didyme l’Aveugle. Sur la Genèse*, SC 233 and 244. Paris, France: Du Cerf, 1976 and 1978, p. 37.

the creational process. For Augustine, the darkness and the deep signify the absence of the bodily light that had to be created by God. He believed that “water” is another definition of the formless matter to be arranged by God.⁶⁷ “The Spirit moving over the face of the waters foreshadows baptism,” said Jerome.⁶⁸ In his first homily on Genesis 1 (*In Genesim homiliae: Homily I*), Origen translates this verse as follows: “*And the earth was invisible and disordered (Lat. informis et inanis) and darkness was upon the abyss, and the spirit of God moved over the waters.*”⁶⁹ It is hard to connect all these definitions together – formless and void; invisible and disordered; without shape and flat – from the Hebrew *Tohûwabohû*. What is its original meaning? Later, our analysis of the manuscripts in five different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic) will shed more light on these questions.

Basil noted that: “On the first day the creation was still incomplete.”⁷⁰ Because the perfect condition of the earth consists in its state of abundance: the budding of all sorts of plants, the putting forth of the lofty trees, the freshness and fragrance of flowers, and other things that appeared on earth a little later by the command of God to adorn their mother (the Earth). We might say the same also about the heavens; that they were not yet brought to perfection themselves, nor had they received their proper adornment, since they were not yet lighted around by the moon nor the sun, nor crowned by the choirs of the stars.⁷¹

How can we define the term “darkness”? What is “the abyss”? Augustine considered darkness as the absence of light, and thus, saying, “*darkness was over the*

⁶⁷ Origen, *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Op. Cit., p. 4.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ Origen, *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Vol. 71. Op. Cit., p. 47.

⁷⁰ Andrew. Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*. v. 1. Op. Cit., p. 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

abyss,” is as if to say, “There was no light over the abyss.”⁷² In the same manner, he compares this phenomenon with sound by saying that: “So too we make a sound by crying out, and we make a silence by not making a sound. Still in some sense we distinguish between sound and silence and call the one sound and the other silence.”⁷³ Origen gives a spiritual meaning of abyss in that way: “That place, of course, where ‘the devil and his angels’ will be (Cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:3; Mt. 25:41). This indeed is most clearly designated also in the Gospel when it is said of the Savior: ‘And the demons which he was casting out were asking him that he not command them to go into the abyss’ (Lk. 8:31).”⁷⁴

According to John Chrysostom, Gen. 1:2 reads as follows: “*The earth was invisible and lacking shape.*” He gives the reasons for such translation in this manner: “For what reason, tell me, did he create the sky bright and finished, but let the earth appear formless? This too was not done without purpose;” declared Chrysostom, and he continues, “his intention was that you would learn about his craftsmanship from the better part of creation, and so have no further doubts or think that it all happened out of a lack of power.”⁷⁵

In Gen. 1:3, the Latin translation reads, “*Et dixit Deus, Sit lux. Et fuit lux*” meaning “*And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.*” From this verse, Ambrose deduced that “God is the author of light.”⁷⁶ Ephrem added that: “Light in its

⁷² Ibid., p. 5.

⁷³ Augustine. *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichaeans*. 1.9.15.

⁷⁴ Origen, *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Vol. 71. Op. Cit., pp. 47-48.

⁷⁵ Saint John. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*. Translated by Robert C. Hill. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986, p. 36.

⁷⁶ Andrew. Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*. v. 1. Op. Cit., p. 6.

primordial form did not come from the sun, which had not yet been created.”⁷⁷ Then, to what can we compare this light on the first day of creation? Light was the very first thing that the deity created. What was it like? It is believed that God could not perform the deeds that he did from Day II to Day VI in darkness. So, it is like when a person gets to a dark room; the first thing to do is to look for the switch in order to turn on the light. There is an expression that says, “first things first.”

Some Fathers of the Church, like Origen and Didymus the Blind, were concerned about the kind of light that existed on the first day of creation. This verse raises a difficulty for the fact that it places the creation of light on the first day, while the stars did not exist until the fourth day. Was it another kind of light different from the luminaries? If yes, then, what was that light prior to the stars? Didymus relies himself on Ps. 148:3 where light is mentioned to make reference to the sun, moon, and stars.⁷⁸ But again, according to the biblical narrative, these luminaries came to existence later.

Some fogs are dispelled by the way the Church Fathers translated Gen. 1:4 and how they interpreted it. For Augustine, the fourth verse of the first chapter of Genesis – “*And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness*” (*Viditque Deus lucem quod bona esset; et divisit Deus lucem a tenebris*) – signifies that “God approved his work, not that he found before him a good that he had not known.”⁷⁹ Both Origen and Calvin (a reformer) support this statement. Furthermore, “darkness” should not be confused with “night.” Basil informs us that: “the condition in the world

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁸ Pierre. Nautin, *Didyme l’Aveugle. Sur la Genèse*, Op. Cit., p. 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

before the creation of light was not night but darkness. That which was opposed to the day was named night.”⁸⁰

In reality, how the commentators proceed in their commentaries on the biblical text is based upon their translation of it. The way in which the last line of our focus Scriptural passage – the fifth verse of Gen. 1 – was viewed by the Church Fathers demonstrates that to the full. According to Basil, Ephrem, and Augustine, Gen. 1:5a which reads “*God called the light day, and the darkness he called night*” (*Et vocavit Deus lucem, Diem: et tenebras vocavit Noctem.*) means that God made a distinction between light and darkness.⁸¹ So then, darkness was not replaced by light, but they were divided.

Chrysostom’s version of Gen. 1:5b is the following: “*Evening came and morning came: one day*” (*Fuitque vespera, et fuit mane dies primus.*)⁸² This is a very literal translation, but the verb is “to be” or “to become” (Hb. *hayah*) in the Masoretic Text. It is true that in Greek, the verb *ginomai* can be translated as “to be”; “to become” or “to come to pass”; and “to come”. But in English, “to become” is different than “to come.” Is there a conventional way to translate the Hebrew Text into another language in relationship with [without ignoring] the Septuagint? Further philological studies need to be done in order to answer that question. Moreover, Origen tells us that: “the text did not say: ‘the first day,’ but said, ‘one day.’ It is because there was not yet time before the world existed. But time begins to exist with the following days. For the second day and the third and fourth and all the rest begin to designate time.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 7-8 (See also Hexameron 2.8).

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸² Saint John. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*. Op. Cit., p. 39.

⁸³ Origen. *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Vol. 71. Op. Cit., p. 48.

In short, for the Church Fathers, God created the universe from nothing. Could we say that light was created through the word of God (isn't this something, though not matter)? Ephrem the Syrian attests that: "Heaven, earth, fire, wind, and water were created from nothing as Scriptures bears witness, whereas the light, which came to be on the first day along with the rest of the things that came to be afterward, came to be from something. ... There those five created things were created from nothing, and everything else was made from those [five] things that came to be from nothing."⁸⁴

Another Christian theologian in the Church of Alexandria who wrote a commentary titled *On Genesis* in Greek is Didymus the Blind (313-398 CE). He taught the Scriptures in Alexandria for about half a century. The persecution of Diocletian and the ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Constantinople I left an imprint on his work. It is fascinating to see that: "Despite the loss of his sight in early childhood, Didymus not only became a monk but also attained such eminence as a scholar, adversary of heretics and spiritual director as to win the admiration of a prelate like Athanasius and a hermit like Anthony."⁸⁵ Didymus' commentary on Genesis is truly the fruit of his passion for the Scriptures. Didymus' works on other books of the Bible can tell us about how he approached, read, and interpreted the Scriptures: he critiqued the biblical text while comparing one manuscript to another.

It was in 1941 that a discovery was made at Tura outside of Cairo of Didymus' partial commentary on Genesis along with those on Zechariah, Job, Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms. We are told that: "If not complete, the Genesis commentary shares with the other Tura works the distinction of coming to us in Greek by direct manuscript tradition

⁸⁴ Ephrem the Syrian. *Commentary on Genesis*. 1.14.1; 15.1.

⁸⁵ Didymus the Blind. *Commentary on Zechariah*. The Fathers of the Church. Translated by Robert C. Hill. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016, p. 3.

and of unquestioned authenticity, and has been critically edited.”⁸⁶ The commentary is consistently indebted throughout the work to his mentors Origen and Philo, often incorporating their commentary verbatim. The opening pages on the first five verses of chapter 1 are in a particularly fragmentary condition; subsequent lines and even pages are missing in; and commentary trails off in fragmentary fashion at the opening of chapter 17.

We regret in particular the loss of Didymus’s comment on key passages dealing with the creation of the world, specifically Gen. 1:1-5 that tells us about the creation of light. What comes to us by indirect tradition in the catenae and in extracts from Procopius of Gaza leads us to wonder if in fact Didymus had treated the Hexameron at length. Surprisingly, we would not expect of a blind commentator that he would busy himself with textual criticism; as is true of the Zechariah work also. We have learned that: “Didymus rarely (and then with likely dependence on Origen) cites alternative versions of the Hebrew associated with the names of Aquilla, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and nowhere any alternative form of the LXX, *antigrapha*.”⁸⁷ Didymus’s approach to Scripture should be taken into consideration. There is no doubt of his attachment to the Holy Scriptures, of his remarkable familiarity with them (considering his disability), and of his facility in moving from one scriptural text to another – a procedure not always conducive to systematic commentary. So, inter-textuality is a feature of this work as well, especially considering his commentary on Zechariah.⁸⁸

As stated earlier, the manuscript is defective for the first five verses of Genesis 1, but notes from the Father of the Church (FOTC) editor and words supplied by the

⁸⁶ Pierre. Nautin, *Didyme l’Aveugle. Sur la Genèse*, SC 233 and 244. Op. Cit., p. 11.

⁸⁷ Didymus the Blind. *Commentary on Genesis*. Op. Cit., pp. 7, 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Sources Chrétiennes (SC) editor appeared in brackets in the SC edition are assimilated into the translation. Though Didymus' commentary on Genesis is incomplete, and its state of preservation imperfect, we can be grateful that we have a work in Greek from an author who is demonstrably faithful to the principles of his Alexandrian mentor Origen. Moreover, his teaching of the biblical material has attracted a variety of approaches throughout patristic literature.⁸⁹

To summarize the contribution of Early Church writers, it is not an exaggeration to say that Patristic theology is very Christological. The Fathers of the Church wanted to present a theological interpretation of the person and work of Christ in their commentaries on the biblical text. It is fascinating to see that they translated the text in a way to prove that a particular word pointed to Christ or this concept represented Jesus – the Son of God – at creation. Their Christian ideology greatly influenced how they read the Bible.

3- The Reformers

One of the cries of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 was: *Sola Scriptura* meaning “The Scriptures Alone.” The reformers had a passion for the Bible. They studied the biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) in depth to fully understand what the authors wanted to express to their communities when the text was being written. Only the Roman Catholic priests were allowed to have a copy of the Holy Scriptures in their hands. Through the invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century, the reformers made different copies of the Bible available to the people. They did not just translate the Bible for their contemporaries, but also, they wrote commentaries on

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

different books of the Scriptures to show the people what they were reading meant at that time (French: *d'alors*).⁹⁰ How they translated Gen. 1:1-5 from a previous Latin version, while having at hand the original texts, will be analyzed here. Both Luther and Calvin wanted to see Jesus – the Jewish Messiah – in all the pages of the Bible. This Christological phenomenon had a considerable impact on their translations, and commentaries on the biblical text.

a) Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German theologian, composer, priest, monk, and is considered the principal figure of the German Reformation. He translated the Bible into the German vernacular of his time (instead of Latin). His translation of the Bible made it more accessible to the laity, an event that had a tremendous impact on both the church and German culture.⁹¹ Newmark states, “Luther’s Bible translation in 1522 laid the foundations of modern German and King James’s Bible (1611) had a seminal influence on English language and literature.”⁹² The Tyndale Bible (an English translation) is influenced by Luther’s Bible, as Luther’s work fostered the development of a standard version of the German language, and added several principles to the art of

⁹⁰ Without forgetting to mention here Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus (1466-1536 CE) known as Erasmus – a Dutch priest - who used humanist techniques to work on texts, and he prepared important Latin and Greek editions of the New Testament. On March 1, 1516, Erasmus published the Greek New Testament first ever “critical edition” – a version that drew from all available Greek manuscripts – to compile a text with wording as close as possible to that of the original authors. But Gen. 1:1-5 is not found among his works.

⁹¹ Ian D. Kingston. Siggins, *Luther*. NY: Barnes & Noble Books, 1972, p. 87.

⁹² Peter. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*. Op. cit., p. 3.

translation.⁹³ Luther also wrote commentaries on different books of the Scripture, including Genesis.

Here is an excerpt of Gen. 1:1-5 from the German Luther's Bible paralleled with the 1534 English Tyndale version of the same passage:

1:1 *Am Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde.*

In the begynnyng God created heaven and erth.

1:2 *Und die Erde war wüst und leer, und es war finster auf der Tiefe;*

The erth was voyde and emptie ad darcknesse was vpon the depe

und der Geist Gottes schwebte auf dem Wasser.

and the spirite of god moved vpon the water

1:3 *Und Gott sprach: Es werde Licht! Und es ward Licht.*

Than God sayd: let there be lyghte and there was lyghte.

1:4 *Und Gott sah, daß das Licht gut war.*

And God sawe the lyghte that it was good:

Da schied Gott das Licht von der Finsternis

and devyded the lyghte from the darcknesse

1:5 *Und nannte das Licht Tag und die Finsternis Nacht.*

and called the lyghte daye and the darcknesse nyghte:

Da ward aus Abend und Morgen der este Tag.

and so of the evenyng and mornynge was made the fyrst daye.

Even though English is a Germanic language, we can see that the English translation is different from the German text in several instances, but at the same time, these two versions of the same biblical passage are connected to each other at many places. In part six of this essay, we will discover that languages that are part of the same family share a lot of similarities, especially syntactically and morphologically. However, their styles can be different, and this does not change the meaning of the text. This

⁹³ Erwin. Fahlbusch, and Geoffrey William. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Vol 1. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999-2003, p. 244.

divergence can be due to the word choice of the translator as he takes the understanding of his message by his audience into account.

In his work *Luther: His Life and Times*, Friedenthal informs us that: “The Fathers of the Church, whose line had come to an end at roughly the same time as the Roman Empire, were recognized as the earliest and most eminent authorities, and to take one’s stand was to be on firm ground.”⁹⁴ So, the Church Fathers had already translated the biblical text before Luther, though they had by no means always been of one mind. For instance, soon after his death, two thousand of Origen’s writings were suspected of heresy.⁹⁵ Luther had the advantage of reading Augustine – the last and greatest of the Fathers of the Church – in the original (Latin). Augustine was also the patron of Luther’s order and on this ground alone his supreme authority, but the way in which they approached the Bible was different. Prior to Luther, the Bible was interpreted allegorically or analogically, but during the Reformation era, Luther offered literal and Christological commentaries on the Scriptures to his contemporaries. During his years in the monastery, Luther rejected a figurative interpretation of the Bible.⁹⁶ Here, his translation of our focus passage and how he understood that text will be displayed.

It is important to state first here how Martin Luther approached Gen. 1:1-5, before laying out how he translated it. For Luther, Moses was the author of Genesis. He thought that Moses wrote for simple and unlearned people in order that they might have a clear explanation about the creation. In other words, Moses wanted to write for an unintelligent people, only of simple things, not on weighty matters; not on matters which were not absolutely necessary (*for them*) to know, as, for example, the nature and the fall of the

⁹⁴ Richard. Friedenthal, *Luther: His Life and Times*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970, p. 54.

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

angels, and the like.⁹⁷ He viewed the spoken word of God in creation as being the creative work of Jesus Christ. Differently from Augustine – someone he admired and to whom he often referred in his writings – Luther took the creational narrative literally, not figuratively or allegorically, telling us that the world with all its creatures was made within six days, just as the words read.⁹⁸ That is why Luther’s translation of the text, and his commentary on it are greatly influenced by his own theology, and how he read through the biblical passage.

Moreover, Luther cares about the fact that the narrative does not start by saying: “*God said,*” or “*In the beginning God said, ‘Let there be the heaven and the earth.’*” So, after reading just verse 1, we do not know the word by which the heaven and the earth were made.⁹⁹ He used II Peter 3:5, 6 which says, “*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing was, being overflowed with water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*” to support his argument that heavens and earth were created by the word of God, and that Peter here refers to Moses (cf. Gen. 1:2). Luther declares that: “I like what is stated plainly and can be understood by the unlearned and simple. It seems to me that Moses here wanted to indicate the beginning of time, so that the expression ‘In the beginning’ means ‘when time was not yet’ or ‘when the world began.’”¹⁰⁰ Did Luther have access to the Samaritan Pentateuch where the vocalization of the text suggests that the Hebrew Bible starts with the word *barashit*... meaning “*In the beginning...*”?

⁹⁷ Martin. Luther, *Luther’s Commentary on Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958, p. 14.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp. 9, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

Luther understood the second verse as such: “*And the earth was waste and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2). According to Luther, the “water,” the “deep,” and the “heavens,” are here put for the same thing; namely, for that dark unformed substance which afterwards was divided by the Word. For Luther, it was the office of the second Person of the Trinity, namely Christ, the Son of God, to divide and adorn that chaotic mass produced from nothing. Furthermore, because of the ambivalence that there is in the meaning of *pneuma*: wind, or spirit in verse 2; some authors regard “spirit” here to mean nothing else than “wind.” But Luther prefers to take it in the sense of the Holy Ghost.¹⁰¹ He believes that wind did not exist as yet when the heaven and the earth were mingled into one mass. With this in mind, the idea of the Holy Trinity being present in creation – as the Holy Spirit sat upon the waters – is reinforced.

In fact, for Luther, the general Hebrew name for God – *'Elohîm* – is used here to make reference to one God divided into three persons. Because Moses could have used many other words for God, like “In the beginning the Almighty (*Adonai*) created the heaven and the earth,” but he did not.¹⁰² A person who is against the idea of the Trinity can argue that *'Elohîm* can be rendered as “Gods.” However, it is worth mentioning here that in mythological texts, especially in those from Ugarit, *'ilm* is used instead for “gods” or “deities.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰³ For example, see William M. Schniedewind, *A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 44, 63, 75, 84, 119, 146.

Luther continues to affirm that: “On the first day God created the shapeless mass of heaven and earth, to which He afterwards added the light.”¹⁰⁴ On the one hand, this comment of Luther supports the LXX translation that renders the Hebrew “... *tohûwabohû*” as “... *unsightly and unfurnished*” (“*inanis et vacua*” NOV) which was the basis for the Coptic text that reads “... *invisible and flat*”. Because the shapeless lump, or mass, of earth with fog, or water could not be seen before God put into it the light.¹⁰⁵ On the other, Luther tells us that: “*Tohû* means ‘waste,’ that is to say, the earth was unformed and empty, without any roads, places, mountains, valleys, grass and herbs, animals and men. ... In addition it was a *bohû*, that is, a dark and dreary deep which like a heavy veil was drawn and placed around the earth.”¹⁰⁶ In the next chapters of this work, an exploration of what *tohu* and *bohu* mean will be presented. Especially, how a Modern Hebrew Lexicon renders this Hebraic construction; but not just the Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) Hebrew and English Lexicon.

Luther translates Gen. 1:3 in the following manner: “*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light*” (“*Dixitque Deus: ‘Fiat lux’. Et facta est lux.*”). He gives the reasons why the verb *’amar* is used in the Hebrew Text:

Moses here mentions the means or instrument which God the Father used in His (*creative*) operation, namely, the Word. We must carefully note the distinction between *’amar* and *dabar*. We translate both words with talk or speak. But in Hebrew *amar* properly denotes a word that is spoken, while *dabar* may denote also something essential. The prophets thus use the term *dabar* and not *’amar* when they say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’¹⁰⁷

In the Latin translation, Gen. 1:4a reads as follows: “*Et vidit Deus lucem quod esset bona*” meaning “*And God saw the light that it was good...*” (Gen. 1:4a). This is not

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

the same as “*And God saw that the light was good...*” though the former is closer to the Hebraic construction. It should also be noted that in English, sometimes the relative pronoun “that” can be replaced by a comma (.). Here, in both the Hebrew text and the Vulgate, we have ׀ and *quod* respectively that require us to translate them in our English translations.

The next sections of this work will highlight how subtle shifts in translation change meaning. Moreover, Gen. 1:4b is rendered as such: “*et divisit Deus lucem a tenebris*” which means, “And God divided the light from the darkness.” “To separate” could be a better verb here, because in the Oxford dictionary, “divide” means to separate or make something separate into parts, while “separate” means to divide things into different parts. “To separate” evokes more precision. Also, in some other Latin translations, such as Jerome’s Vulgate, “Deus” appears just once in this verse (*God saw that ... and he divided*), but Luther puts it twice following the Hebrew Text that puts an emphasis on the deity (*God saw that ... and God divided*).

Fascinatingly, Luther translated the chorus of the first biblical creational story as follows: “*And the evening and the morning were the first day*” (Gen. 1:5). Here, *evening* and *morning* are still two entities. The verb “to be” is in the plural as there are two subjects. But it is not so in the Masoretic Text where the verb “to be” is repeated twice. Moreover, there is a shift in connotation when the sentence is: “*And there was an evening, and there was a morning – the first day.*” What is the best way to translate the Hebrew Text? When a translator changes the structure of a sentence from the original text, can the same message be communicated to his reader? In the prospective critical

comparative analysis, a study of syntax vis-à-vis communication will be taken into consideration.

Finally, it is important to say that Luther read the Genesis story with Christian eyes. His theology of the Son of God being present at creation and as creator based on early Christian writings¹⁰⁸ can be seen throughout his translation of Gen. 1:1-5. Most importantly, it should be noted that Luther was writing against the new Arians (Unitarians). For instance, the new Unitarians say that '*amar* means something that is created, just as (is) Christ, who is called the Word. Against this position toward the text, Luther argued that: "Moses used '*amar*, spoken Word, to distinguish the Word from Him who speaks."¹⁰⁹ So, according to Luther, the Word by which the world was made is the personal, divine Word, or the Son of God.

b) John Calvin

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French theologian and reformer. On becoming a Protestant, he fled to Switzerland, where he attempted to reorder society on reformed Christian principles. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* published in 1536 was the first systematic account of reformed Christian doctrine.¹¹⁰ His commentaries on various books of the Bible (Romans, all the Epistles of Paul; Hebrews; the Epistles of Peter, John, Jude, and James; Isaiah; Acts of the Apostles; Genesis; Psalms; Hosea; the Twelve Minor Prophets; Daniel; and Joshua) are useful today in both preaching ministry and biblical scholarship. It is recommended that a reader begin to read the Commentaries of Calvin,

¹⁰⁸ See for example, John 1:1; Col. 1:15, 16; Eph. 1:4; Hb. 1:2.

¹⁰⁹ Martin. Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*. Ibid., p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, *New Oxford American Dictionary*. Third Edition. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 250.

as he began to read the Bible itself, at the Book of Genesis (1554). Before his interpretation of a biblical text, Calvin offers his own translation of that particular passage from the original texts.

Like Luther, Calvin believed that the narrative found in Gen. 1:1-5 was penned by Moses. But for Calvin, to expound the term “beginning,” of Christ, is altogether frivolous. Here, I am also referring back to the Christology of the Early Church Fathers. Calvin understood the Latin *In principio* (In the beginning) as an assertion that the world was not perfected at its very commencement; but that chaos was there before order (*cosmos*).¹¹¹ Calvin continues to teach us that the word “created” (Latin: *creavit*) is used in Gen. 1:1 because, what before did not exist was now made; for Moses has not used the term יצר (*yatsar*) which signifies to frame or form, but ברא (*bara*) which means to create. Calvin also believes that the world was made out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). He considers the name of “*heavens and earth*” as the generally recognized division of the world.¹¹² That confused mass, afterwards (in verse 2), is called *waters*.

In Gen. 1:2, the words “without form and void” and “the deep” are rendered by “*informis et inanis*” and “*voraginis*”, respectively. He thinks that the Hebrews used these two epithets – תהו (*tohu*), and בהו (*bohu*) to designate anything empty and confused, or vain, and empty, and nothing worth. Regarding *the spirit hovering over the waters*,” Calvin informs us that: “The opinion of some interpreters that *ruach* means the *wind*, is too frigid to require refutation. They who understand it to be the Eternal Spirit of God, do so rightly.”¹¹³ So, could we say that this was the Holy Spirit at creation? He uses two scriptural passages to support this statement: “*Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be*

¹¹¹ John, Calvin. *Genesis*. Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, pp. 69-70.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

created, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30); and “so, on the other hand, as soon as the LORD takes away his Spirit, all things return to their dust and vanish away” (Psalm 104:29).¹¹⁴

Syntactically, Calvin’s translation of Gen. 1:3 is almost the same as the Hebrew Text. He pays close attention to the reversive and conjunctive vav (ו) in all places. Verse 3 reads, *Et dixit Deus, Sit lux. Et fuit lux.* The English equivalent is the following: “*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*”

Gen. 1:4 reads, “*And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*” According to Calvin, “we ought not so to understand the words of Moses as if God did not know that this work was good, till it was finished. But the meaning of the passage is, that the work, such as we now see it, was approved by God.”¹¹⁵ Earlier, we saw that Augustine said something similar to this affirmation. So then, by seeing that the light was good on the part of the deity, this is just approval, not a new degree that is reached in his divine senses at that time. In other words, “this sentence does not signify joy as if over an unexpected good but an approval of the work” would say Augustine.¹¹⁶

A version of the first part of Gen. 1:5 (1:5a) can be close to the Hebrew manuscript when it comes to its grammatical construction, but the second part of the verse can cause translation difficulties and theological tensions, as the latter can have different meanings based on the wording of Gen. 1:5b. Calvin’s translation of the whole verse is as follows: “*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*” The verb “to be” is not in plural in the

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 74.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹⁶ Andrew. Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*. v. 1. Op. Cit., p. 8.

Hebrew Text, and it is repeated twice in the singular for both “morning” and “evening” consecutively. Moreover, this reading can admit a double version; as Calvin said, “either that this was the evening and morning belonging to the first day, or that the first day consisted of the evening and the morning.”¹¹⁷ So then, based on the biblical text, “darkness preceded time itself; when God withdrew the light, he closed the day,” said Calvin.¹¹⁸

Calvin also believes that “the first day” lays out “the error of those who maintain that the world was made in a moment.”¹¹⁹ Could the deity create everything in just one day? He concluded that: “God himself took the space of six days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men.” Ecclesiastes 18:1 says that: “*He who lived forever created all things at once.*” Calvin supports his affirmation by advancing that: “For the Greek adverb *χοινη*, which the Greek writer uses, means no such thing, nor does it refer to time, but to all things universally.”¹²⁰

It was later after the Reformation that biblical theologians discovered that Moses is not the author of everything that is written in the Pentateuch. Why is this important? Authorship matters because when we know [the person] who wrote a piece of literature, we tend to approach that text with a particular notion, theology, human assumption, and even preconception.

To summarize, the reformers were reading the biblical text with Christian eyes. During the Reformation period, the reformers were in quest of a new Christology where Christ would be elevated above any other mediator between God and man. As a result,

¹¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

¹²⁰ Ibidem.

they read the beginning of Genesis as the beginning of Christ; the creative or spoken word as Christ, and the light itself being Christ. Third, they conceived the wind that was hovering over the face of the deep at creation as the Spirit of God. Last, they reckoned the Creator God as an omniscient deity who knows everything, to say that when God saw that it was good, he already knew that it was good.

c) The Old Vulgate and the *Nova Vulgata*

There are some discrepancies between the Old Vulgate (VUL) and the *Nova Vulgata* (NOV). First, it should be said that the *Nova Vulgata* is the official Latin version of the Bible for the Catholic Church. It has its origins in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) to bring the Scripture in line with modern text-critical research. Still, the textual basis of the *Nova Vulgata* is the critical edition of Jerome's Vulgate. The original goal of the *Nova Vulgata* was to provide an authoritative edition of Jerome's translation for the production of a reformed Latin liturgy, while also correcting the Vulgate in use and taking into account other important liturgical factors such as readability in public and singability for choirs.¹²¹

Second, in verse 2, modern terms are used instead of old ones for a better understanding of the text. The "*informis et inanis*" of the VUL is translated as "*inanis et vacua*" in the NOV. According to the *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, "*informitas*" signifies "shapelessness, lack of form."¹²² The Latin term "*inánis*" stands for "vain, empty, void."¹²³ It seems that the NOV translation puts an emphasis on emptiness or vacuity, since "*vácuus*" also means "void, empty free; worthless, useless (in vain)." This

¹²¹ <https://www.logos.com/product/8081/nova-vulgata-bibliorum-sacrorum-editio>

¹²² Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1995, p. 131.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

connotation is very close to the Hebrew concept of “vanity, and emptiness” which is הבל. When pronouncing that word in Hebrew, it also sounds like “breath, emptiness.” Interestingly, בהו sounds the same. “*Voraginis*” in the VUL is viewed as “*abyssi*” in the NOV. Cassell’s Latin Dictionary defines “*vorago-inis*” as being “a pit, chasm.”¹²⁴ Then, “*abyssi*” meaning “abyss” could be a better translation here while being closer to the Septuagint (LXX) reading (αβυσσος). Moreover, “*agitabat*” is rendered “*ferebatur*”¹²⁵ which also connotes “to put in motion,” “to move.”¹²⁶ This is a better verb than “to agitate.”

Third, in verses 3 through 5, the modern forms of some verbs are used instead, and the present tense is preferred to the past tense (perfect) within the indicative mood. For example: *dixit = dixitque; sit = fiat; fuit = est; viditque = vidit; vocavit = appellavitque; fuitque = factumque; fuit = est*. Again, this could be for a better understanding of the contemporary reader of the Bible, as languages developed over time.

Last, “*dies primus*” of the VUL is “*dies unus*” in the NOV. The NOV is closer to both the Masoretic Text (MT) and the LXX where the cardinal number (אחד or unus) is used just in the first day refrain, but ordinal numbers are used throughout the rest of the hymn for the other days of creation (choruses). Here again, the translators of the VUL might have come up with that convention for consistency, using the ordinal numbers all throughout the text. Later, in chapter 2, we will see why the Hebrew writer chose to use אחד (*one*, cardinal number) instead of ראשון (*first*, ordinal number) in the text. So then, these are some textual changes in the Latin translations to which a reader of both versions of the same text needs to pay attention. Overall, these translations try to communicate the

¹²⁴ D. P. Simpson, *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1968, p. 649.

¹²⁵ “*Ferebatur*” is the third-person singular imperfect passive indicative of “*fero*”.

¹²⁶ D. P. Simpson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 244.

same message, but a new revised edition of the passage helps the contemporary reader understand the text better.

B. How Scholars Have Used these Translations Throughout the Centuries

We now consider how three modern scholars – Walter Ewing Crum, John William Wevers, and Emanuel Tov – translated or viewed the terms found in Gen. 1:1-5. We will start to see the meaning of a word here. Because the same word can mean something that is completely different in another sentence or setting, depending on the context in which it is used. Technically, even in English, almost every word has multiple meanings, and many words have slightly varying meanings in context (when they are used differently). We should go into a dictionary to look up the meanings that are listed next to a word.

1. Walter Ewing Crum (1865-1944)

Crum (1865-1944) was a scholar of Coptic language and literature. He completed a dictionary of translations from Coptic to English in 1939 titled *Coptic Dictionary*. He graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, in 1888, after which he continued his studies of Egyptology in Paris and in Berlin with Adolf Erman. Crum spent much of his career cataloguing various Coptic materials, including the manuscript holdings of the John Rylands Library and the British Museum. Alongside several books and many articles that he wrote, his most prominent publication is the Coptic dictionary. In 1950, a *festschrift*¹²⁷

¹²⁷ The term *festschrift* is borrowed from German, and literally means “party-writing” (cognate with “feast script”) or “celebration publication”. In academia, a *festschrift* is a book honoring a respected person, especially an academic, and presented during their lifetime. It generally takes the form of

– *Coptic Studies in honor of Walter Ewing Crum* – was published as a special issue of the Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute of America.¹²⁸

Sadly, none of the writers of the essays written in honor of Walter Ewing Crum deals with Gen. 1:1-5. Malinine who is considered as the main editor writes excessively on the Minor Prophets in French (*Fragment d'une version achmimique des Petits Prophètes* meaning “Fragment of an Akhmîmic version of the Minor Prophets”). Later, we will compare texts that are related to the creation of light from this manuscript of Akhmîm with the two other texts in other Coptic dialects (Bohairic and Sahidic) where intertextuality can be done, as diachronic studies of a passage is greatly encouraged in this book. However, there are lots of notions in this *festschrift* about Coptic literature, philology, manuscripts, texts, art, and archaeology from which we can learn.

In this present work, Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary* will be used extensively, especially to see the various contexts in which a Coptic word can be used, as this was one of his big contributions to the field of Coptology. In the fifth chapter of this book, the Bohairic Coptic manuscript will be analyzed, particularly, there are some key terms of the Bohairic Coptic text that will be considered – under the form of word studies – based on the Coptic Dictionary of Crum.

an edited volume, containing contribution from the honoree’s colleagues, former pupils, and friends.

¹²⁸ Michel. Malinine, *Coptic Studies In Honor Of Walter Ewing Crum*. Boston, MA: The Byzantine Institute, Inc., 1950.

2. John William Wevers (1919-2010)

Weavers (1919-2010) was a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, at the University of Toronto. He held a BA in Classics from Calvin College (1940) followed by a ThB at Calvin Theological Seminary (1943), and a ThD from Princeton Theological Seminary (1946) where he studied with Henry Snyder Gehman from whom Wevers acquired his lifelong passion for Septuagint research. The breadth and mastery of so many fields from Classics and Biblical Studies to Ancient Near Eastern languages, Islamic civilization and Indo-European Philology and Linguistics demonstrate competence and scholarship, and his competence is reflected in his career.

John Van Seters reports in his biography that Wevers' greatest academic achievement was undoubtedly his work on the editing of the entire Greek Pentateuch for the Septuaginta-Unternehmen of the Akademie der Wissenschaften, Göttingen, to which he was appointed as an editor in 1966. He produced 10 volumes on these respective biblical books, with their accompanying text-histories, from 1974 to 1992, followed by an additional five volumes of "notes on the Greek text" of the Pentateuch (1990-1998). In addition to these massive projects, Wevers was very active in the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, serving as its president from 1972 to 1980, and many of the prominent members of this organization were trained as his students.¹²⁹

Similar to Crum, in 1984, Wevers received a *Festschrift*, *De Septuaginta*, in his honor from former students and friends on the occasion of his retirement. His legacy in the field survived for many years. Here in this book, from time to time (occasionally),

¹²⁹ John Van. Seters, *John William Wevers (June 4, 1919 – July 22, 2010)*. *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses (SR)*, 39 (4), p. 634.

reference will be made to Wevers' notes on the Greek version of Gen. 1:1-5. The fourth chapter of this essay will deal with the Septuagint (LXX) Manuscript.

3. Emanuel Tov (1941 to current)

Emanuel Tov (1941 – current) is emeritus Professor in the Bible Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As a boy, Tov studied at a “gymnasium” in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where he learned classical and modern European languages, and at the same time learned Hebrew at Talmud Torah. He studied at the Department of Near Eastern Studies and Languages at Harvard University. His dissertation, written under the guidance of Professors Shemaryahu Talmon of the Hebrew University and Frank Moore Cross of Harvard University, was submitted to the Hebrew University in 1973 as “The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch.” In 1990, he was appointed Professor at the Hebrew University and in 1990 he became the J. L. Magnes Professor of Bible Studies.

It should be noted here that Emanuel Tov is a text critic. His study is concerned with Hebrew readings found and reflected in ancient textual sources which are considered relevant to exegesis. He focuses himself on large differences between the MT and the LXX, in particular those bearing on literary analysis. Hendel writes that: “the textual critic of the Hebrew Bible is helped immensely by the recent production of comprehensive introductions to the field, particularly the works by Tov (1981 and 1992a) and P. Kyle McCarter (1986).”¹³⁰ This is to say that these two scholars handled

¹³⁰ Ronald S. Hendel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

splendidly most of the theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the task of textual criticism.

He offers some criteria for evaluating variations of the LXX: (1) The LXX either reflects or does not reflect a much deviating Hebrew Text. (2) Tov maintains that, “probably the best supporting evidence for the assumption of a deviating Hebrew Text is contained in Hebrew sources supporting the LXX.” (3) Furthermore, he often turns to the argument from translation technique suggesting either a free or a literal approach, and the existence of Hebraisms supporting the assumption of a Hebrew underlying text. In all these previous cases, Tov presents the text of the LXX in English translation together with notes on its deviations from MT.

In his work *Textual Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, Tov’s translation of Gen. 1:1-5 is a consideration of both the MT and the LXX. He critiques some translations of that passage that seem unfamiliar. Three examples are as follows: First, to paraphrase Tov, the Hebrew verb ברא in Gen. 1:1 should not be translated as “made” but “created.” Instead of “God *made* the earth,” it should be “God *created* the earth.” In Gen. 2:7, יצר is used to signify “to form” which is closer to the verb “to make.” For him, “one does not recognize the translation.”¹³¹ Second, Tov continues to inform us that: “even more so when the ‘divine wind’ is mentioned. This is actually not one of the hundreds of English translations of Hebrew Scripture, but one of the translations of the Septuagint (LXX).”¹³² Third, Tov brings to our attention that:

According to the LXX, in this primeval chaos (Gen. 1:2), at the beginning of creation, the earth was *ahoratos kai akataskeuastos*, αορατος και ακατασκευαστος that is ‘invisible and unformed.’ These two Greek words translate the Hebrew *tohu wa-bohu*, תהו ובהו a phrase that cannot be translated

¹³¹ Emanuel. Tov, *Textual Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*. p. 125.

¹³² Ibidem.

easily, but which is traditionally rendered as ‘without form and void.’ (This equivalent, initiated by the King James Version, is probably influenced by the LXX). The LXX thus added an exegetical dimension to a Scripture text in the course of the semantic identification process applied to all words in the source text.¹³³

As mentioned above, in his study of the manuscripts, Tov attempts to distinguish between semantic identifications of this type and reflections of different Hebrew readings, while focusing on the second type.

In his work titled *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Tov clarifies the nature of the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. He expresses his views on some basic issues which require the involvement of textual criticism. He offers four factors that explain the need for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible: “1. Differences between the many textual witnesses of the Bible (sequence of books, chapter division, the layout of the text, verse division, single letters and words, and the notes of the Masorah); 2. Mistakes, corrections, and changes in the Textual Witnesses, including MT; 3. In many details MT does not reflect the ‘original text’ of the biblical books; 4. Differences between inner-biblical parallel texts.”¹³⁴

Actually, Tov’s contribution to biblical scholarship is one of the primary and pivotal sources for the redaction of this book. Because a critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 based on the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic manuscripts can also be considered as a textual critical examination of the same biblical passage according to these manuscripts pre-cited. So then, the field of Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible is a very important subject for this present work.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 126.

¹³⁴ Emanuel. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012, pp. 2-13.

C. The Missing Part

First, none of the translators that were previously considered in the first chapter of this work stated why their translations were not a word for word translation from the *Vorlage*. They truly produced a new version of the text from a lingua franca, but we are left to determine the distance that there is between the original text and their translations. In the next chapters, the reasons why Gen. 1:1-5 was translated in this manner for the understanding of their audience will be given. Most importantly, up to this point, the translation technique of the early biblical translators is not yet known to us, but they did have one. A consideration of the cultural anthropology of the scribes milieu will be made, without ignoring the philological studies of their works. So, the next sections of this book will present an analysis of the specific words that the translators of Gen. 1.1-5 used.

Second, some Old Testament scholars may have written on this topic before me, considering the Hebrew Masoretic text of Gen. 1:1-5 in relation to the Targum, and the Septuagint. I will bring the Syriac and the Coptic versions of the creation of light in the forefront of biblical scholarship. With two other witnesses (Syr. and Cop.) of the same account on the table, this will shed more light on our academic path. Also, as we shall see, manuscripts of the standard Syriac Bible are remarkably uniform in character and comparable to Hebrew biblical manuscripts, and unlike Greek ones. Moreover, the morphology of the Coptic language is very similar to the Greek language even when they are different from one another in syntax.

Third, I will advocate for the following statement in the next chapters: the cultural anthropology of a people should be taken into consideration when translating the Scripture to them. What does a word mean? The meaning of a word within the cultures of

the biblical translators will be investigated. Because, Bible translation is not about theology only, it encompasses many other aspects of scholarship such as history, sociology, cultural anthropology, philology, psychology, and so on. It is within that perspective that the impact that the worldview of the translators had upon their translations will be considered.

Last, the goal of the next sections will not be to present a new interpretation of Gen. 1:1-5 from its Hebrew originality, but a critical comparative analysis of five manuscripts (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek and Coptic) of the same passage, starting with a study of the Masoretic Text, and its critical apparatus. There is already a lot of work done in the area of form-critical methodology of the Book of Genesis itself. Basically, chapters 2 through 7 of this work will be a presentation of the differences and similarities that exists between these manuscripts. In the end, the reader will discover that these languages (Semitic, Indo-European, and Hamitic) are connected to each other at some point, and they depart from one another intentionally based on the goal of the translators of the original text. This critical comparative analysis will broaden our scope of understanding of how dialects of the same family of languages are interrelated, and how they differ from each other.

Chapter Two: A Textual Critical Analysis of the Hebrew Manuscript

Understanding the text-critical apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) of 1977 is a task by itself. Someone who reads the Hebrew Text in its originality should pay attention to the masora parva (Mp), the masora magna (Mm), the accents placed on words, unusual letters, and other markings that appear in the text. By doing so, the reader will see the divisions of a verse, and be in a better position to translate the original text to a mother tongue with clarity and efficacy. Gérard E. Weil is correct to point that: “the Masora is the most concrete fruit in terms of study of the biblical text that has been produced by many generations of professors and exegetes that the Synagogue has known.”¹³⁵ The Masora is a useful tool. More than ten centuries of research were devoted to the margins of the manuscripts and between the columns of the books of the Hebrew Bible. The reader who engages the text-critical apparatus will also be equipped for good exegetical work on the biblical passage which is not the goal of this book.

This chapter will present: (a) an English translation that is closer to the Masoretic Text (MT) than another version of the text, and the reasons for¹³⁶ such English version; (b) a study of the critical apparatus of the BHS; and (c) how ancient Near Easterners – particularly Mesopotamians – understood the creation of light, and creation through utterance.

¹³⁵ Gérard E. Weil, *Massorah Gedolah*. Vol. 1. Rome, Italy: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1971, p. xiii.

¹³⁶ Or “the reasons behind”

A. Toward An English Version of the Masoretic Text of Genesis 1:1-5

A translation is a commentary. So then, the way Gen. 1:1-5 is translated here can be considered a short commentary on that text. Because a word can have different definitions, the process of choosing which meaning is best to use in a particular context and based on the circumstance is a big part of the interpretation of the passage itself. If I were to offer a form-critical analysis of Gen. 1:1-5, I would (still) begin the task with a translation of the passage as well. For having a text at hand precedes looking at the nature of this text. This is to say that text comes before genre. Translation techniques of previous scribes and biblical translators will be laid out in the sixth chapter of this work. But here in this part, the reasons why I have translated the Hebrew Text into English in this way will be offered after studying the critical apparatus that accompanies it. In other terms, I will explain my reasoning along with the critical apparatus.

1. An English Translation Closer to the Masoretic Text

What is the BHS? After forty years the *Biblia Hebraica* of Kittel made its appearance before the learned world in a new form. The critical apparatus in particular was thoroughly revised; and to guard against its confusion with the apparatus of earlier editions, especially in scholarly references, the editors – Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph – decided to modify the name of the work in such a way as to make it quite apparent whether one of the earlier editions or the new one was intended. The name *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* promised to guarantee this, while also preserving a continuity with Kittel's work. The editors therefore suggested that the new edition be cited as BHS, as distinguished from BHK. The Leningrad Codex B19A was the basis for

both editions, maintaining a relationship to the Ben Asher text.¹³⁷ The BHS, following the BHK, deviates from the order of the Biblical books in the Leningrad Codex only in placing 1, 2 Chronicles at the end.¹³⁸ After carefully reading the Masoretic Text of Gen. 1:1-5 presented below, the following English translation is provided in a smooth manner:

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

ב וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תְהוֹמוֹת וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹת אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר:

ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחָשֶׁךְ:

ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחָשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: פ

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

1:2 And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of [the] deep and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

1:3 And God said: “Let there be light.” And there was light.

1:4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

1:5 God called the light “day” and he called the darkness “night.” And there was an evening and there was a morning. It was [on] day one.

2. A Study of the Critical Apparatus Accompanying the Hebrew Text

First, according to the notes found in the masorah parva, in the BHS, the first letter of the first word of Gen. 1:1 – ב – is in a slightly enlarged form. Tal explains that: “The tradition of writing certain letters in a slightly enlarged form is referred to in the

¹³⁷ K. Elliger, , and W. Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5th ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997, p. xi.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*.

eighth-century tractate *Soferim* (Gen. 9:1), and is attested in some manuscripts and in the majority of modern printed editions.”¹³⁹ For Norzi, “the enlarged כ is the correct way of writing the first word of Genesis.”¹⁴⁰ However, this scribal tradition did not impose itself universally. There are many other places in the Hebrew Bible where some letters appear in a diminished or an enlarged format in some of the editions. Tal continues to say that: “According to the diplomatic edition *BHQ* reproduces enlarged letters, or other special ways of writing certain letters, where the Leningrad Codex offers them. In the Leningrad Codex the כ of Gen. 1:1 appears to have been re-inked (by a later hand?), causing it to appear enlarged, but it is difficult to establish conclusively whether this is the case.”¹⁴¹ In the list of large letters in the Masorah finalis of the Leningrad Codex, Gen. 1:1 is included.

Second, some accents are wrongly placed in Gen. 1:1 in the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Three instances of this mistake are as follows: The first issue is that a circellus is mistakenly positioned between בראשית and ברא. The second mistake is that the phrase את השמים occurs seventeen times but it is only here that the accusative particle את has a serê. In all the other sixteen occurrences, the את has a segol. The third problem is that the circellus is wrongly placed between ואת השמים and ואת. Its correct place is between ואת and the following word: הארץ. Also, this combination occurs fifteen times, but it is only here that ואת has a serê, an acent, and no *maqeph*.

Third, Gen. 1:1 has three accents or cantillation marks. Reading from right to left, the first one is *munach*, a conjunctive connecting ברא with אלהים. The second is *atnach*, a

¹³⁹ Abraham. Tal, *Biblia Hebraica: Genesis*. quinta editione cum apparatu critico novis curis elaborato. Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004, p. 15.

¹⁴⁰ Norzi, in *Minhat Shay*. quoted by Abraham. Tal, *Ibidem*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

disjunctive that indicates both a pause in the verse and the stress in the word. The third accent is *silluq*, a disjunctive that indicates the last word of the verse, as well as the stress in the word. It should be noted that *silluq* is the same symbol as *metheg*, which, when accompanying a vowel, indicates that the reader or singer is to briefly pause to allow full pronunciation of that vowel. *Silluq* is followed by the punctuation mark *sof pasuq*, which indicates the end of the verse, and is similar to our period in English.

The Masoretic Text of Gen. 1:1-5 is used here because: a. The MT is widely used as the basis for modern-day translations. b. The Masoretic Text does not just include the Hebrew text, but also, the correct pronunciation with an emphasis on letters and words, and grammatical guides using diacritical markings known as “masorah.” c. Translation notes regarding the meaning of the text are placed in the margins. Here, we can see the different readings of a word or a verse at large in other manuscripts. It is good to put the MT in conversation with other manuscripts, such as the Septuagint (LXX) which is an alternate source used by some Eastern Orthodox Churches. d. This section is placed before “the reasons for my English translation” because my translation of the Hebrew Text takes into account the masorah.

3. The Reasons for this English Translation

In Gen. 1:1a, the Hebrew Text does not have the definite article. The preposition ב with a sheva under it – without *patach* or *qamets* under it – is added to the indefinite noun יתראש to signify “in a beginning.” The BHS critical apparatus indicates that originally the first Hebrew word בראשית was Βρησθ or Βρησθηθ (-σεθ), and the Samaritan Pentateuch

reading is *barasit*.¹⁴² So then, the word “beginning” is definite in the Samaritan Torah. Proper English requires us to write the definite article as: “In the beginning.” However, later, we will see that both the Septuagint and the Bohairic Coptic text keep the word beginning in the indefinite: “In a beginning” for a purpose. There are theological dimensions to the phrase: “In a beginning,” suggesting that there were different beginnings, not just one.

I did not follow Rashi who translated *b're'shît bara' 'Elohîm...* as *When God began to create...*¹⁴³ He said that: “the text would have been written *bari'shônah* if its primary purpose had been to teach the order in which creation took place.”¹⁴⁴ This may be a temporal clause in need of a subordinate clause to be a complete sentence. Furthermore, the Masoretic punctuation mark, so-called *soph pasuq* at the end of the verse, requires the reader to make a full stop while reading this passage. Both translations are possible, but we cannot be sure that this difference is more than stylistic.¹⁴⁵

In his book *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*, in a thought-provoking return to the original Hebrew conception of God, Levenson defines God’s authorship of the world as a consequence of his victory in his struggle with evil. Based on the view of creation found in the Hebrew Bible, Levenson argues that Genesis 1 does not describe the banishment of evil but the attempt to contain the menace of evil in the world, a struggle that continues today. Levenson quotes Rav, an Amora of the early third century C.E. and Bar Qappara’s exegesis of Gen. 1:1-2 to

¹⁴² K. Elliger, and W. Rudolph. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5th ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Some modern scholars think that this translation is also possible in order to connect the beginning of the Hebrew Bible with the opening of the *Enuma Elish* (meaning “When On High...”).

¹⁴⁴ W. Gunther. Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, p. 18.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

advance that: “the watesland called *tohû wabohû* in Gen. 1:2 served as the substratum of creation.”¹⁴⁶ This challenges the doctone of *creatio ex-nihilo*, that God created the world out of nothing. What is nothing? Levensen states,

The question remains, however, whether the ancient sources held this rather abstract conception of ‘nothing.’ It seems more likely that they identified ‘nothing’ with things like disorder, injustice, subjugation, disease, and death. To them, in other words, ‘nothing’ was something – something negative. It was not the privation of being (as evil is the privation of good in some theodicies), but a real, active force, except that its charge was entirely negative. When order emerges where disorder had reigned unchallenged, when justice replaces oppression, when disease and death yield to vitality and longevity, this is indeed the creation of something out of nothing.¹⁴⁷

So then, according to this theory of creation and this interpretation of creation from the Hebrew Bible (specifically Gen. 1), chaos existed before cosmos or order, and “creation is a positive that stands in pronounced oppostition to the harsh negative of chaos. The world is good; the chaos that it replaces or suppresses is evil. ... *God did not create the good world out of nothing, but out of a malignant substratum.*”¹⁴⁸

Regarding the other Samaritan reading option – *barashit* – this vocalization of the text is only preserved in the Synagogue reading tradition. So then, the text (without vowels) is left open to different translations, consequently, different interpretations.

The Samaritan Pentateuch is composed of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, written in the Samaritan alphabet which is derived from the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet. This text is used as scripture by the Samaritans. These 5 books constitute the entire biblical canon for the Samaritans. There are about six thousand differences between The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Masoretic Text. Most of these differences are

¹⁴⁶ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. xx.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. xx-xxi.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.xx.

minor variations in the spelling of words or grammatical constructions. But others involve significant semantic changes, such as the uniquely Samaritan commandment to construct an altar on Mount Gerizim, instead of Jerusalem.¹⁴⁹ Nearly 2,000 of these textual variations agree with the Septuagint and the Vulgate.

Throughout their history, Samaritans have made use of translations of the Samaritan Pentateuch into Aramaic, Greek and Arabic as well as liturgical and exegetical works based upon it. Also, several biblical commentaries and other exegetical texts based upon the Samaritan Torah have been written by members of the Samaritan community from the fourth century CE onwards.¹⁵⁰ Samaritans also use liturgical texts containing catenae extracted from their Pentateuch.¹⁵¹ It is difficult to follow references to the “Samaritan translations” since the makeup of the Samaritan tribes mixed and changed over time; they intermarried with a lot of other tribes and cultures.

This manuscript first became known to the Western world in 1631 CE, proving the first example of the Samaritan alphabet and sparking an intense theological debate regarding its relative age versus the Masoretic Text. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, some Pentateuchal manuscripts have been identified as bearing a “pre-Samaritan” text type.¹⁵² For some textual critics, the Samaritan Pentateuch represents an authentic ancient textual tradition despite the presence of some unique variants introduced by the Samaritans. Here is an excerpt of Gen. 1:1-5 from the Samaritan Pentateuch:

¹⁴⁹ J. Alberto. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ Montgomery, James Alan. *The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect, Their History, Theology and Literature*. Philadelphia, PA: The John C. Winston Co., 1907, pp. 293-297.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

¹⁵² Emanuel. Toy, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, pp. 82-83.

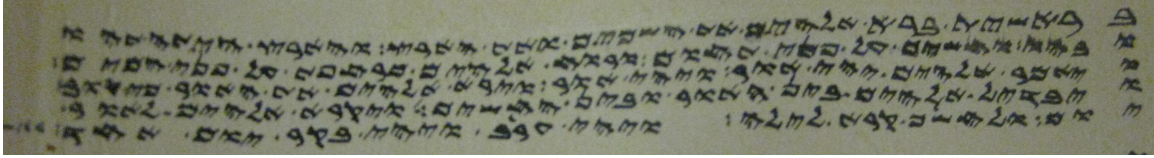


Figure 2. From the Samaritan Pentateuch Scroll found at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center (ABMC), Claremont, CA

A transcription of this passage written in the Aramaic square script could be as follows:

א בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ:
 ב והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים:
 ג ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור:
 ד וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך:
 ה ויקרא אלהים לאור יום ולחשך קרא לילה ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד:

There is not a significant difference between the Samaritan Torah and the Masoretic Text. The Samaritan Pentateuch is also a consonantal text. The vocalization was added for the reading of the text in the Synagogue. Zeev Ben-Hayyin has transcribed the whole Aramaic text. He is the author of *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew: Based on the Recitation of the Law in Comparison with the Tiberian and Other Jewish Traditions*.¹⁵³ The Hebrew *Elohîm* is translated as *Elooweem* in the *Bible Works* Software based on the reading of the Samaritan Torah. There is a difference between the consonants *he* and *waw*, but both *he* and *waw* are *matres lectionis*. Most importantly, it

¹⁵³ Ben-Hayyim, Zeev. *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew: Based on the Recitation of the Law in Comparison with the Tiberian and Other Jewish Traditions*. Jerusalem, Israel: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000.

should be concluded that both Hebrew and Samaritan are closely related linguistically.

However, their vocalizations are very different. According to Ben-Hayyim,

The Hebrew language comes down to us in several versions, each ethnic community having its own unique tradition of pronunciation. Even though these traditions are subject to the influence of various vernaculars and sometimes differ markedly from each other, their common basis is evident for all to perceive. All, that is, but the pronunciation of the Samaritans, whose tradition stands apart from the others, unique and surprising. One who hears the Samaritan recitation of the Torah or any of their Hebrew prayers would think he is listening to a distant, foreign tongue. Only here and there would his ear discern a Hebrew word.¹⁵⁴

My reading of Bowman reveals that Gen. 1:1-5 is the first part of *the Samaritan Ten Words of Creation*. Here, the number ten (10) was doubtlessly influenced by God's Ten Words or Ten Commandments given at Sinai (Ex. 20). Also, "And God said," appears ten times in Gen. 1. This manuscript came from the old area of Nablus where the old Samaritan quarter used to be. It was found in the nineteenth century in the ruins near *Hisn Ya'kub* mosque, on the minaret of which, built in upside down, is the Nablus Samaritan Decalogue inscription. Both inscriptions may well have originally come from the same building; both end with 'Arise LORD, return LORD!' This is a very important document from the Samaritans, especially, in view of its almost perfect condition. Rosen was the first to publish *the Samaritan Ten Words of Creation* with an English translation of this inscription; and Montgomery gives also a facsimile of it.¹⁵⁵ The sections of Creation are chanted at the beginning of every Samaritan service. At the end of the first section (Gen. 1:1-5), the inscription has the following blessing: "*Blessed be our God; Praised be our God! Exalted is our God! Holy is our God.*"¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ John. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents Relating to their History, Religion and Life*. Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1977, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 3, 6.

There are three observations to make in verse 1b: (a) the verb ברא does not mean “to make” here but “to create.” “To form, fashion by cutting, or shape out” could be possible translations, but the basic verb for “to make” in terms of creation is יצר with its participle *yotser* as “making” and “maker.”¹⁵⁷ (b) The plural noun אלהים is translated as God, not gods, because when referring to the Hebrew God, אלהים is usually understood to be grammatically singular. It also governs a singular verb or adjective. Some of the Church Fathers and Reformers understand this as a concept that means “one God in three persons.” For some modern thinkers and exegetes, this is eisegesis.¹⁵⁸ (c) את, though repeated twice to indicate what the deity created – “the heavens” and “the earth” – is not translated at all in English. It is the direct object marker.

The punctuation of an English version of Gen. 1:1-5 can relate to the theology and exegesis of the person who is translating the text. For instance, in my translation, in both verses 3 and 5, quotation marks are used for the speech of the deity (“let there be light”), and the names given to light (“day”) and darkness (“night”). Technically, it is because the narrator quotes the words of God in the third verse, and I lay out the nomination of the light and the darkness as two entities using quotation marks. In the third verse, in the

¹⁵⁷ It is יצר that is used in Gen. 2:7. Also, see Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an appendix, containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008 [original date, 1906], pp. 427, 428. Note that there are many verbs of creating in Second Isaiah (*bara* [16 times], *yatsar* [15 times], *asâ* [24 times], *pa'al* [5 times], *natâ shamayim* [6 times], and *kûn* and *yasad* [1 each]). For Jerome, this idea of creation in Second Isaiah was simply a proof that the God who created the world could redeem Israel; his real concern was to show that Christ is the creator (See *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorum in Esaiam Libri I-XVIII*. Turnhold : Brepols, 1963).

¹⁵⁸ Like John Calvin, I do not insist upon the word אלהים, making a big deal out of it. Some scholars think that: “those who treat that Hebraic concept as the three Persons of the Godhead have testimony against the Arians to prove the Deity of the Son and of the Spirit, but in the meantime they involve themselves in the error of Sabellius – theory maintaining that ‘the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one hypostasis, and one Person under three names;’ or, in the language of that eminent ecclesiastical scholar, the late Dr. Burton, ‘Sabellius divided the One Divinity into three, but he supposed the Son and the Holy Ghost to have no distinct personal existence, except when they were put forth for a time by the Father.’” (See John, Calvin. *Genesis*. Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth, 1975, p. 71.)

Masoretic Text, there is an *atnach* under light (Hb. אור) to indicate that it is the middle of the verse. A reader of the Hebrew Text should make a stop when the reader gets to this word. The King James Version (KJV) puts a colon (:) between “*let there be light*” and “*and there was light*,” meaning that the second clause explains, enumerates, or lists what is happening in the first clause. So, “*let there be light*” can stand by itself, as the colon functions as a gate, inviting one to go on. The New International Version (NIV) translators place a comma (,) instead between the two phrases to signify that they are two independent clauses. The conjunction “and” (Hb. ו) is also part of the Hebrew Text. It coordinates and connects the clauses.

In this English translation, I use a period (.) between the two phrases of Gen. 1:3. Three reasons for that are as follows: First, a period can be used at the end of a command. Here, the jussive – “*let there be*” (Hb. יהי) – is a form of the verb “to be” expressing a command or issuing an order. Second, “*And God said, ‘let be there light’*” could be considered a statement. A period (.) used at the end of a sentence makes a statement. Third, in reality, “*and there was light*” is an answer to or a result of “*let there be light*.”

I prefer the verb “to separate” to the verb “to divide” in Gen. 1:4c (Hb. בדל). In the Oxford Dictionary, there is not much of a difference between these two verbs. The former as being “to divide things into different parts,” and the latter, “to separate, or to make something separate into parts.”¹⁵⁹ So, the dictionary does not provide a specific difference between them. However, we need to look for the difference these two verbs in terms of the situation where we would use them more, and less in their meanings. For example, we say, “this issue divided the nation” instead of “this issue separated the

¹⁵⁹ See Eugene. Ehrlich, et al. *Oxford American Dictionary*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 188, 618.

nation.” Likewise, someone would say that: “My wife and I are separated.” The person would not say, “I and my wife are divided.” The context, and the audience or the reader should be taken in consideration while translating and writing.

The *Tyndale’s Old Testament* has the chorus of the first biblical creational hymn as follows: “*and so of the evening and morning was made the first day.*”¹⁶⁰ Here, this translation may sound as a synonym of my translation: “*And there was an evening and there was a morning. It was [on] day one.*” In reality, they are not synonyms, for the former presupposes that the first day was just composed of an evening and a morning, without taking the work of the deity into account. God worked on that day, as he brought into existence something that was not there before: the light. It was on the seventh day that God rested.

In Gen. 1:5, contrary to some modern translators that end the first chorus of this hymn with: “*the first day*” (KJV and NIV); or “*One day*” (English Revised Version), this English version of the passage reads, “*It was on day one*” assuming that the verb “to be” is there, even when it does not appear in the Hebrew text per se. The verb “to be” is absent in verbless sentences in Hebrew, and the tense of the verb “to be” must be inferred from the context, as it can be perfect or imperfect (past, present, or future). Also, the cardinal number (Hb. אחד) goes better with the number “one” placed after the noun “day,” instead of the ordinal number placed before the noun in English (*first day*). Interestingly, only here for the first day of creation, the cardinal number is used instead of the ordinal – first (Hb. ראשון). Another important reason for this translation is to say that the light was created on the first day, and so on.

¹⁶⁰ William. Tyndale, *Tyndale’s Old Testament*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992, p. 15.

B. The Masoretic Text as we Have it

A consideration of the Hebrew Text is necessary for a solid critical comparative analysis on Gen. 1:1-5. Hebrew is the language in which our focus passage was originally written. According to Tov,

Every biblical scholar somehow turns to the textual data that are found in ancient Hebrew scrolls, medieval Hebrew Manuscripts, and the ancient translations. The earliest direct evidence that has been found in archaeological excavations dates from the third century BCE to the second century CE. Great importance has been attached to the Hebrew texts from Qumran, near the Dead Sea, and to the Septuagint translation in Greek (LXX), but more important than all of them is the Masoretic text (MT), known from many sources from the Second Temple period and from the Middle Ages.¹⁶¹

The MT will be our basic text in this critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5. First, it is important to say what the Masoretic Text (MT) is. Freeman and Kuhlken give us a clear definition of the MT by saying that:

The name comes from the Masorettes, who were a group of scribes in Medieval times. They lived in Egypt late in the first millennium, in the ninth or tenth century AD. They codified the rules about how to copy a manuscript, adding numerous marginal notes, called *masorah*, to the Hebrew Bible. These *masorah* usually specified the correct spelling and pronunciation of words, explained editorial decisions, and indicated how the text should be preserved without variations. The Masoretic Text became the standard Hebrew language text of the Bible.¹⁶²

Based on this definition, the vocalized text of the traditional Hebrew Bible is the work of the Masorettes. These Masorettes – known as experts of the Hebrew language – produced a collection of information and comments on the text that are useful to both readers and exegetes of the Hebrew text. Prior to the Masorettes, the scribes had to write down stories that were passed down to them from many generations, as Deuteronomy

¹⁶¹ Emanuel. Tov, 2001. Op. Cit., p. xxxvii.

¹⁶² David Noel. Freedman, and Pam Fox. Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?*. Op. Cit. p. 11.

6:4-9 encourages parents to impress Yahweh's commandments on their children. So then, the Hebrew Bible as we have it now went through a long process. In fact, our focus passage (Gen. 1.1-5) concerning the creation of light was not fallen from heaven, and it was not written overnight. In the following section, the redaction process of the Hebrew Bible will be considered with an emphasis on "scribal schools," "the works of the Masoretes," and "the earliest two codices of the Hebrew Bible that survived."

1- Scribal Schools

In *How The Bible Became A Book*, Schneiderwind tells us that: "Early Israel was an oral society. Biblical literature depicts the early Israelites as semi-nomadic wanderers who finally settled in Canaan and followed a pastoral and later, an increasingly agrarian lifestyle."¹⁶³ We do not expect writing to flourish in this setting. Rather, the "literature" of the early Israelites was an oral literature. This traditional society had songs, stories, proverbs, folktales, a creation account, etc. The Hebrew Bible reflects the orality of the early Israelite tribes.

Then, how did the Bible become a book? To understand how the Bible became a book, a person should explore a number of related questions such as "what function did writing serve in ancient Israelite society during different historical periods? How is the increasing importance of writing in ancient Israel reflected in the formation of the biblical literature? How does the Bible itself view its own *textuality*? What is the relationship

¹⁶³ William M. Schniederwind, *How the Bible became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 48.

between oral tradition and written texts? When and how does the written word supplant the authority of the oral tradition and the living voice of the teacher?”¹⁶⁴

Based on my reading of Schneiderwind, during the second millennium B.C.E. scribes appear in the major Canaanite cities, even though the vast majority of people were non-literate. Moreover, it was according to the needs of the early Israelite state that writing was used, and written literature was formed. During the Late Bronze and early Iron Ages (between 1550 B.C.E. and 900 B.C.E.), even petty Canaanite kings had royal scribes. “Even a tiny city-state like Jerusalem, which numbered no more than two thousand people in the Late Bronze Age, had royal scribes.”¹⁶⁵ Scribes could be found in two places: in the palace and in the temple. So, “writing was not unknown in early Israel, but the level and sophistication of early Israelite literature was necessarily tied to the development of the state,” affirms Schneiderwind.¹⁶⁶

It should also be said that in the ancient times, even though flourishing literary activity required a complex state, writing itself did not. Scribes were employed by small kingdoms. Two examples of this phenomenon are Iron Age Moab and Late Bronze Jerusalem. In the case of early Israel, writing was merely an extension of kingship – a tool for mundane record keeping, and a means of diplomatic communication - no matter what was the size of the state (or kingdom).¹⁶⁷ There is not enough evidence to prove that writing was much more than a projection of royal power. Schneiderwind tells us that: “Even in the great kingdoms of Egypt and Mesopotamia, writing was largely an administrative tool. Literary texts were primarily used for the training of scribes; they

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

were certainly not written for the general public, which was essentially non-literate.”¹⁶⁸ The scribes, while working for the king or the temple, kept lists and records; they were responsible for diplomatic correspondence; and they were also required to create inscriptions for public display. Again, “these inscriptions were meant to have visual impact and not to be read.”¹⁶⁹

In his work titled *The Role of Scribes in the Transmission of Biblical Literature*, Michael Fishbane tells us that: “Scribal practice provides the most concrete evidence for the transmission of a body of tradition, and of its elucidation and clarification.”¹⁷⁰ The scribes also interpreted the oral tradition so that the readers of their texts might better understand it. At times, comments and corrections can be found in their texts. Moreover, Fishbane continues to say that: “scribal practice provides the most concrete context for the transmission of a *traditum*.” He is right to say so, because while traditions and teachings were transmitted orally throughout the biblical period, it is only as these materials are presented under a literary form that we can examine their continuities and developments. So then, the scribes were guardians of the written tradition. For Fishbane, “the basic role of scribes as custodians and tradents of this *traditum* (in its various forms) is thus self-evident. Scribes received the texts of tradition, studied and copied them, puzzled about their contents and preserved their meanings for new generations.”¹⁷¹ That means, there was a time that the stories that we have in the Hebrew Bible (including the creational narrative of Genesis 1) – no matter where they are from – were in the process of becoming manuscripts in the hands of the scribes, and later we received them as such.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁰ Michael. Fishbane, *The Role of Scribes in the Transmission of Biblical Literature*. Oxford, England: The Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 24.

¹⁷¹ Ibidem.

Scribes did not just copy what came to hand, but also responded in different manners to the formulations which they found written in earlier manuscripts. Some of these responses have left their traces in the Masoretic Text (MT) – as we have seen in this chapter and we shall see in chapters 3 through 5 of this book – as well as in the other principal textual versions of Gen. 1:1-5 (like Septuagint, Samaritan, Peshitta, and Coptic texts). The scribal comments exhibit striking exegetical diversity, they may serve as typological prolegomenon to the interpretations found in inner-biblical legal and aggadic exegesis.¹⁷²

My point is that these scribes left their worldview, and the way they understood what they were recopying, imprinted into the biblical text. At times, they added their own explanation of a scriptural passage into the biblical narrative to tell their readers the meaning of what they were reading. Fascinatingly, one of the most problematic passages in biblical literature has been Jer. 8:8 that says that: “*How can you say, ‘We are wise, for we possess the Torah of YHWH,’ when actually the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.*”¹⁷³ A challenge for scholars is the accuracy of the information provided by the Scripture. Some theologians ask, “can we consider the account of the creation of light found in Gen. 1:1-5 as history?”

According to De Mieroop, “all historians of the Near East in the first millennium are confronted with the question of the historicity of the account in the Hebrew Bible.”¹⁷⁴ Interestingly, there are events that are recorded in both the biblical text and inscriptions found by archaeologists that kings and scribes carved or wrote with ink from early on.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹⁷³ Or “*the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely.*”

¹⁷⁴ Marc Van. De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*. 2nd Ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 223.

For example, the first biblical narrative of creation does not stand by itself. There were stories about how light was created in the ancient world even before our passage of Gen. 1:1-5 was written. That is why both biblical scholars and historians should approach the Bible as a human book; it is a literature. Another example is the fact that there are biblical narratives that are not historical accounts, but they are stories. The Bible was meant to be read aloud. In fact, the Hebrew verb *qara* means both “to read” and “to call out.” The biblical text is truly a product of orality.¹⁷⁵

However, intellectuals should endeavor to discover the value of these biblical data about how light came to be, to contemporary scholarship and the human mind today. It is good to do critical comparative analysis of the Hebrew Scripture vis-à-vis ancient Near Eastern documents. It is true that at various times, archaeology confirms the biblical information that we have, but the Bible should not be our only source for the reconstruction of the past. Therefore, historical texts can be treated as comparative tools to clarify existing theories.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, in the ancient world, one of the fascinating tasks of a scribe was to count how many times a word appears in a particular section, and even how many times that word appears in the book as a whole. It is interesting to see that the Hebrew word ספר can mean both “scribe” (*sopher*) and “to count” (*sapar*). For instance, Gérard E. Weil presents this aspect of the work of the scribes in his critical work titled *Massorah Gedolah: Manuscript B. 19a De Léningrad*. Here are five examples from Gen. 1:1-5: First, בראשית appears here in Gen. 1:1, and in four other places in the Hebrew Bible: Jer.

¹⁷⁵ William M. Schniederwind, *How the Bible became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*. Op. Cit., pp. 1, 11-17.

¹⁷⁶ For further discussion see Christopher. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*. Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2014, p. 36.

26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34. Another Hebrew [feminine construct] word that connotes the same meaning (“in the beginning”) is תחלה (See Hos. 1:2). Second, ברא אלהים can be found in Gen. 1:1 as well as in Gen. 2:3; Dt. 4:32. Third, the grammatical construction והארץ appears in eight other places outside of the first biblical creational narrative (Gen. 1:2; Lv. 25:23; 26:43; Dt. 11:11; Josh. 13:5; Isa. 24:5; Ez. 36:34; Hos. 2:24; and possibly Nu. 32:4). Fourth, ויאמר אלהים can be found in Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; 6:13; 9:8, 12; 9:17; 17:9; 17:15; 17:19; 21:12; 35:1; 46:2; Ex. 3:14; Nu. 22:12; I Kgs. 3:5; 3:11; Jon. 4:9; II Chr. 1:11.¹⁷⁷ Fifth, the Hiphil verb and the *vav* consecutive ויבדל is found in Gen. 1:4; 1:7; I Chr. 25:1; I Chr. 23:13. Truly, there is a concordance too in the BHS! It is not just the ancient scribes; the Masoretes did somewhat a similar exegetical job with the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible.

2- The Work of the Masoretes

In his work titled *A Simplified Guide To BHS*, Scott¹⁷⁸ gives us some information about the Masoretes. To paraphrase him, sometime between 300 and 700 CE, as the body of rabbinic teaching was being codified and the Mishnah produced, a new type of Hebrew biblical scholar began to assume the responsibility for preserving and transmitting the biblical text. These scholars incorporated vowel points and accent marks on their manuscripts. They also developed a system of notations in the margins of the text which provided both exegetical and text critical information. These notations were called the masorah. Some scholars have traced the word “masorah” to the root אסר which means “to bind.” Others trace the word to the root מסר which means “to hand down” or

¹⁷⁷ See Gérard E. Weil, *Massorah Gedolah*. Vol. 1. Rome, Italy: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1971, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ William R. Scott, *A Simplified Guide to BHS*. Third Edition. Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press, 1987, pp. 8, 9.

“tradition.” In either case, these Hebrew biblical scholars [the Masoretes] were remarkable for the techniques which they perfected over time to prevent corruption of the text, for their phenomenal knowledge of what modern students might consider textual “trivia,” for their devotion to the preservation of the consonantal biblical text and for their conservative approach to its study. So, the Masoretes were successors to the scribes, as they inherited the consonantal text from the scribes. They standardized the Hebrew Text. Did they destroy all prior deviating manuscripts? The evidence of this is circumstantial, because we do not know for sure.

Regarding the dates and the texts of the standard Tiberian tradition, Israel Yeivin argues, “the work of the Tiberian Masoretes, who studied and preserved the text of the Bible, began, it would seem, between 600 and 800, and reached its peak in the work of Aharon ben Asher (about 915). The work of individual Masoretes is still clearly reflected in MSS written up to about 1100, but increasingly faint after that period.”¹⁷⁹ It is on this basis that manuscripts are divided into two groups: those written between 850 and 1100; and those written after 1100. The texts of the former group are old, and generally not compiled from material of different origins.¹⁸⁰ Those of the latter are generally copies based on one or more older manuscripts. So, the latter group of manuscripts is not uniform, being a mixture of different traditions.¹⁸¹

However, Yeivin also tells us that: “the last of the Masoretes themselves did not vary in matters of substance but in minor details of vocalization or accentuation. ... and the differences between individual manuscripts, which are numerous, are not difference

¹⁷⁹ Israel. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*. Trans. by E. J. Revell. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977, p. 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 13.

of substance, but of insignificant detail.”¹⁸² So then, there is both a certain uniformity and a degree of variation in manuscripts written before 1100. Similarly, the differences between the traditions maintained by the various Tiberian Masoretes, such as ben Asher, ben Naftali, Piḥas, Moshe Moḥeh, are of minor significance. Then, which one is the standard text? According to Yeivin, “Aharon ben Asher (c. 915), the last of the masoretes, is considered the outstanding representative of the standard tradition. Many grammarians, and also Maimonides himself, relied on his Biblical tradition.”¹⁸³

Moreover, Scott informs us that: “By the end of the Masoretic period there was a virtual *textus receptus* agreed upon within the western tradition. Initially there were at least two textual traditions divided along East/West lines. The Eastern tradition was associated with Babylon. The Western tradition was associated with Palestine. Its most important center was at Tiberias.”¹⁸⁴ That is why the latter is called the Tiberian tradition, and the Masoretes of the Tiberian tradition are referred to as the Tiberian masoretes. Some scholars consider these traditions as being three schools – the Babylonian, the Palestinian and the Tiberian. The difference from each other is in their methods of formulating notes and in the signs they used for vowels and accents.¹⁸⁵ One of the most important families of the Tiberian Masoretes was the Ben Asher family.¹⁸⁶ It is worth noting that the last major work of the Tiberian Masoretes was that of Aaron ben Asher (son of Moses ben Asher). It was one of his manuscripts which was claimed to be the exemplar for the manuscript that is reproduced in BHS.¹⁸⁷ Aron Dotan states

¹⁸² Ibidem.

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 15

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem.

Aaron ben Moses ben Asher (beginning of the tenth century) gained fame in his time from his work on the vocalization and accentuation of the Bible, and editing of the Masora and masoretic treatises. But he attained his leading position and status of supreme authority when Maimonides declared in *Hilkhot Sefer Torah* (VIII, 4) that he had relied on the manuscript ‘corrected and examined minutely by Ben Asher for a great many years and corrected numerous times.’¹⁸⁸

A number of grammarians and Masoretes proclaim the superiority of Ben Asher’s text. Among them are: R. David Kimḥi, R. Elijah Levita, Jedidiah Solomon Norzi, and Maimonides of blessed memory. Subsequent scholars throughout generations have held similar opinions.¹⁸⁹

Relevant to this study is that the same text can be accentuated by a scribe in Tiberias in a vowel system different than the way a scribe in Babylonia would. It remains the same story with different accents and vowel systems. Style does not change meaning, though it can open up new avenues for various interpretations. Toward the end of this work, we will discover that the ways in which the scribes translated the original Hebrew text to a lingua franca did not change the essence or the message of the original writer, but they presented their text in a linguistic style with which their contemporaries were familiar.

It is not known exactly when the Hebrew consonants [in the Aramaic square script] started to be pointed. The question of the chronology of the Hebrew vocalization systems has become progressively more complex since the end of the 19th century. Several scholars of the Hebrew language and the Bible wrote in depth on this topic. Among them are Solomon Frensdorff (1803-1880); Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891); Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930); Paul Ernst Kahl (1875-1964); Judah Benzion Segal (1912-2003); and Aron Dotan (1928-current). The discoveries of additional systems and

¹⁸⁸ Aron. Dotan, *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, p. viii.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

sub-systems – such as the Palestinian, the different types of the Babylonian system, the Tiberian (non-conventional), and the Syriac systems – all these made it necessary to re-examine or to revise our notions regarding the formation and the development of the Hebrew vowel notation. Moreover, according to Aron Dotan, “even before the relatively recent studies and the discoveries that preceded them there existed theories which suggest that Hebrew vocalization systems are dependent on, or even actually derive from foreign systems – the Syriac or, in the case of the accentuation – the Greek neumes.”¹⁹⁰

Compared with the two other vocalization systems – the Babylonian and the Palestinian – the Tiberian vocalization system is of a particularly unique nature. In the *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*, Dotan explains this uniqueness as follows:

While the Tiberian system came down to us in its complete and perfected form, these two reached us in their primary stages and in the course of their development. While the earlier stages of the Tiberian system and its process of formation are unknown to us, the two other systems are documented in various stages, and the process of their development is better known than their final form, for they actually have not reached a *final* form.¹⁹¹

The reason for that can be because the Tiberian system was established by Hebrew experts who determined its final form. The two other systems, the Babylonian and the Palestinian, were never standardized, never attained uniformity and consistency, and were never used based on a single rule.¹⁹² Because its historical beginning is not known, the inferiority of the Tiberian system is evident, although it is a normative system that spread and became universally accepted. Its beginnings are a mystery. That is why some scholars conclude that the Tiberian system is younger than its two brothers, a

¹⁹⁰ Aron. Dotan, *The Beginning of Masoretic Vowel Notation*. in International Organization for Masoretic Studies (IOMS) 1972 and 1973 proceedings. Masoretic Studies 1. Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1974, p. 21.

¹⁹¹ Aron. Dotan, *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Op. Cit. p. 1243.

¹⁹² *Ibidem*.

conclusion that does not necessarily derive from the known facts.¹⁹³ Residues of the earlier stages of the Tiberian vocalization have been detected in Tiberian Bible manuscripts. Such a manuscript is the famous Leningrad Codex B19a, dated 1009 C.E.

The period of introduction of Hebrew vowel signs of any system may be limited to the 6th and 7th centuries. According to Heinrich Graetz, “Hebrew vowel signs did not yet exist in the 5th century, whereas at the beginning of the 8th century, the first vowel signs, Babylonian, made their appearance.”¹⁹⁴ The same general limits are true also for the Syriac vocalization where, however, more definite and more reliable data can now be established. Graetz proposed the reign of the Persian king, Anuschirwan (531-579) as the period when the East-Syriac vocalization was introduced, thus fixing its *terminus a quo* about the middle of the 6th century and its *terminus ad quem* at the death of Jacob of Edessa in 710.¹⁹⁵

In the name of this Father of the Church (Jacob of Edessa), explicit evidence was transmitted based on which he suggested several graphemes originating in Greek letters to be used as vowel signs in the West-Syriac script. The actual introduction of what we now know as the Jacobite vocalization is attributed by historical sources to the Karkaphites – a West-Syriac church about which little is known. Graetz was able to draw a fascinating sketch of the chronologically parallel development of the vocalization in Hebrew and in Syriac, and to delimit their actual invention between the middle of the 6th and the end of the 7th centuries. But in this work, our goal is not to discuss the conclusions regarding the origin of each of the systems and their interrelation. Rather it

¹⁹³ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁴ Aron. Dotan, *The Beginning of Masoretic Vowel Notation*. Op. Cit. p. 22.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem.

will be displayed that the pointing of the text, and the vowel system used, affect the way in which the text is translated into another language.

However, there are three facts that should be taken into consideration here: First, even before the introduction of vocalization signs in Syriac, the scribes were in the habit of distinguishing between homographs of different pronunciation by using a dot above or below the word. In the beginning, the sole function of these dots was a diacritical mark aimed at making a distinction between homographs of different pronunciation or even between homophones of different meaning. To cite some of the examples from Graetz: הוּ = [hu] “he,” הוּ = [hau] “yonder” (masculine); הִי = [hi] “she,” הִי = [hai] “yonder” (feminine); הוּא = [(h)wa] “was,” הוּא = [hawe] “is” (participle).¹⁹⁶ Second, a point under or above a word had different functions: it could also indicate the stress and not a vowel differentiation, especially in the Tiberian system versus the Babylonian oxytone. Third, it was possible to offer a satisfactory explanation for the meanings of a Hebrew word without involving non-existent diacritical points.¹⁹⁷

In the ancient times, Hebrew as a consonantal language used the *matres lectionis*¹⁹⁸ (א, ה, ו, and י) as vowels. It would be very difficult, almost impossible, to just have a group of consonants to read without vowels. For instance, how can someone pronounce *brst br lhm*? It is interesting to see that the ancients would recognize the I-class vowels – *long alef* and *yod* – in בראשית; the *alef* as a long vowel in ברא; and the vowels *alef*, and *hiriq-yod* in אלהים without diacritical points. Fascinatingly, the Masoretes added *sheva*, and *hiriq* to facilitate the reading of *bere'shît*; *kamats* under each syllable of the verb; and *hataf seggol*, *holam*, and *hiriq* to 'elohîm, in order to make the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁹⁸ *Matres lectionis* is the Latin for “mothers of reading,” and the singular form is *mater lectionis*.

reading of these words less difficult, especially for a person whose Hebrew is not a native language. So then, we cannot say that the primitives did not have vowels! We are grateful for the system of vowel points to indicate vowels (diacritics), called niqqud, that was developed later. Furthermore, modern Hebrew is written without those dots that were added by the Hebrew biblical scholars, but still, the Israelis can read their text today. The person who is acquainted with the Hebrew language will recognize the *matres lectionis*.

The addition of vowel points affects grammar, because a word can have different meanings based on the vowels used. First, a word can be fully written, and the same word can also have a defective writing. The difference is based on the presence or the absence of the mater lectionis such as ם or ן. Second, participles can also be writing with *holam* or *holam-vav*. Also, the past participle of a verb in the Qal conjugation can be written with *qibbutz* or *shureq*. Third, three un-dotted consonants of a word standing by themselves can mean a lot of things. For example, the three Hebrew roots ברא without vowels can mean “he created” (as a verb in the perfect tense); “to create” (as an infinitive absolute; twice in Ez. 21:24); “making” (as a participle); “creator” (as a masculine singular noun); and so on. In a sense the dots are important and a valuable contribution to our understanding of the text. The work of the Masoretes should be appreciated.

Another important aspect of the work of the Masoretes is their division of the Hebrew Text with accents. Tov argues that “as with the vocalization, there are three systems of accentuation: Tiberian, Palestinian, and Babylonian.” In addition, in the Tiberian system the אמת books¹⁹⁹ are accented with a separate system. Furthermore, it

¹⁹⁹ Acronymic for Job, Proverbs, and Psalms.

should be noted that within the Tiberian system itself, signs pointing to the existence of different traditions can be recognized.²⁰⁰

For example, in Gen. 1:4, there are disjunctive accents of the highest level. Neither disjunctive accents of the lowest level nor conjunctive accents are found. The Masoretic Text of Gen. 1:4 is as follows:

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיִּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

These signs mean that the verse is divided into two parts: The first part is marked by the at'nach (^) “*And God saw that the light was good.*” The second part ends with the *sof-passuq* (period in Hebrew) “*And God separated the light from the darkness.*” It should be noted that the *sof-passuq* occurs on every verse of the Tanakh.²⁰¹ Those two parts are then further divided into two parts each, and so on. The process is repeated until each subdivision consists of at most two words.²⁰²

In short, it should be said that there have never been diacritical points to indicate vowels in Hebrew. The differentiation between homographs was a necessity both in Syriac and in Hebrew, and scribes of both cultures were engaged in compiling lists of homographs in order to avoid ambiguity.²⁰³ Many deviations had taken place in the application of the biblical text, because some of these notions could not be sufficiently defined. Emanuel Tov declared that: “The relatively numerous differences in vocalization (vowel signs) and accents usually do not affect the meaning of the text.”²⁰⁴ Contrary to Emanuel Tov, on one hand, in this book, I will maintain that accents do affect the

²⁰⁰ Emanuel. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Op. Cit. p. 69.

²⁰¹ Tanakh is an acronym made of the first (initial) letters of the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketubim.

²⁰² See Aron. Dotan, *The Beginning of Masoretic Vowel Notation*. Op. Cit. p. 19.

²⁰³ In Syriac the name of Joseph Huzaya of the second half of the 6th century, is mentioned as one of the first to deal with this.

²⁰⁴ Emanuel. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Op. Cit. p. 6.

meaning of the text, because the position of the accents opens up avenues for different critical explanations or exegesis of the same passage. On the other hand, this question should be asked: “*Is there a difference between the meaning of the text and the understanding of the text?*” Perhaps Tov is correct in saying that the meaning of the text is unchanged. But certainly our understanding of the text is different. If we take the commas and periods out of an English sentence, we certainly change the meaning of the text. This sets the stage to view the Masoretes as exegetes.

David B. Freedman and Miles B. Cohen wrote an article titled “The Masoretes As Exegetes: Selected Examples” in which they maintain that: “The accentuation of the MT represents an early exegetical commentary on the Bible. For the accents indicate a syntactical division of a verse, combining words into phrases and showing the relationship of component phrases to each other.”²⁰⁵ The accentuation reveals how the Masoretes understood the biblical text. The way in which they accentuated a verse of the Hebrew Bible can be considered their written commentary of that passage in words. However, it is not all the time that the accentuation demonstrates the simple meaning of the verse. At other times, the accents reflect an intriguing alternate interpretation.

Another example of accentuation could be the fact that the *atnach'ta'* (אתנחתא) divides the verse into two parts. In English, a coma can be used to separate two clauses in the same manner. Here, the Masoretes determined which word that will constitute the end of a section of the verse, and this already represents a structure of the passage in itself.

²⁰⁵ David B. Freedman, and Miles B. Cohen. *The Masoretes As Exegetes: Selected Examples*. in International Organization for Masoretic Studies (IOMS) 1972 and 1973 proceedings. Masoretic Studies 1. Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1974, p 35.

Accentuation is a necessary factor and component of Genesis 1:1-5 as being the first stanza of the first biblical creation hymn.²⁰⁶ The accents tell a singer when he should sing high or low; when he needs to rest; makes a full stop; and so on. It is within that perspective that Tov advances, “At the outset, the accentuation was probably intended to indicate the melodic pattern of the reading, although according to some scholars, its primary function was exegetical syntactic.”²⁰⁷ To make it clearer, the accents perform three functions. Their primary function was to indicate the music for reciting or singing Hebrew Scripture during worship. A second function of the accents is to present the interrelationships of the words in the text. The third function is to mark the position of stress in the word. In brief, Tov maintains that: “the tradition of the accents is ancient.”²⁰⁸

Regarding the accentuation of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), Freedman and Cohen say that: “these editors decided not to propose emendation in agreement with the Erfurt manuscript. Quite satisfied with the traditional accentuation, they only wanted to correct the difficulty of the reputed Leningrad version, namely the extraneous *dagesh* in ן.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, the critical apparatus of the BHS goes with several manuscripts which have a spirantized ן. Yes, the systematic omission of *dagesh* signs can be both grammatical and phonetic.²¹⁰ So then, in the critical apparatus of the BHS, the editors have proposed an emendation of the body of the text, without knowing that they were emending the erroneous version printed in *Biblia Hebraica* (1937)! Furthermore, “their proposed emendation merely reproduces the reading found in the vast majority of

²⁰⁶ Possibly, this text was supposed to be sung as part of the liturgy of the second Temple period.

²⁰⁷ Emanuel. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Op. Cit. p. 68.

²⁰⁸ Ibidem.

²⁰⁹ David B. Freedman, and Miles B. Cohen. *The Masoretes As Exegetes: Selected Examples*. Op. Cit. p. 45.

²¹⁰ Aron. Dotan, *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Op. Cit. p. 1245.

manuscripts and printed editions, including the Leningrad manuscript itself, the very manuscript that the body of their text is supposed to present.”²¹¹ The Leningrad Codex will be considered in the next section of this book.

In summation, we have come to comprehend that first, the accentuation is a useful exegetical tool, revealing different interpretations of biblical grammar and syntax, as well as, on occasion, a rabbinic midrash. Second, when the accentuation found in early manuscripts appeared to be strange or peculiar, variant accentuations often developed secondarily in manuscripts and printed editions. Third, in instances where variants do exist, modern editions often present instead a conflation of various readings (sometimes appearing humorous to the reader). Last, this study tells us about the reverence of both the scribes and editors of the biblical text for the Bible. Instead of changing what was found in early manuscripts, they preferred to offer different options of readings.

3- The Earliest Two Codices That Survived

It should be said that there are more manuscripts for the early Christian writings than those of the Hebrew Bible. Four reasons for this lack of Hebrew Bible manuscripts can be as follows: First, the material on which the Jewish manuscripts were made could not last for a long period of time. Second, the children of Israel were exiled and deported many times between 1800 BC and 1948 AD. This could have made it quite difficult to preserve the manuscripts that the Jews had. Even the Masoretic Text comes to us from outside of the land of Israel. Third, in the ancient times, some manuscripts had errors and were old, and they were destroyed, but not Jewish manuscripts. The Jews did not destroy their manuscripts. The Cairo Genizah’s prove that.

²¹¹ Ibidem.

Fourth, if the Masoretes were to destroy all deviating manuscripts that could have hindered their work of standardizing the Hebrew text, then many Hebrew Bible manuscripts could have been destroyed in the process of vocalizing the Hebrew text. The earliest existing Masoretic manuscript was made in 900 AD, prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. This is about 13 centuries after the completion of the Hebrew Bible (right before the 400 years of silence of the intertestamental period). The Masoretic tradition has provided us with several manuscripts. Two of them that will be analyzed in this section are the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex.

a) The Aleppo Codex

The Aleppo Codex is the oldest Hebrew Bible in book form, being dated from 930 CE. It is the most authoritative and accurate traditional Masoretic Text of the Bible.²¹² Originally, it was written in the city of Tiberias, in what is currently Northern Israel. Nehmad tells us that: “the Karaite Jewish community of Jerusalem purchased the codex about a hundred year after it was made.”²¹³ During the First Crusade (1095-1099), the synagogue was plundered and the codex was transferred to Egypt, whose Jews paid a high price for its ransom. It was preserved at the Karaite then Rabbanite synagogue in Old Cairo, where it was consulted by Maimonides, who described it as a text trusted by all Jewish scholars.²¹⁴ The codex remained in Syria for five hundred years.

²¹² Nota Bene: There are older manuscripts of translations into other languages, such as the Codex Amiatinus in Latin. This is the earliest surviving complete manuscript of the Latin Vulgate version (See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 106.) of the Christian Bible. It was produced around 700 CE in the north-east of England, at the Benedictine monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria and taken to Italy as a gift for the Pope in 716.

²¹³ M. Nehmad, *Keter Aram Tzova*. Aleppo, 1933.

²¹⁴ Fascinatingly, in his work titled *The Aleppo Codex*, Journalist Matti Friedman traces how this precious manuscript was smuggled from its hiding place in Syria into the newly founded state of Israel and

There was a time in history (1948) when we had a complete version of the Hebrew Bible in the Aleppo Codex. But in its rescue from a burning synagogue in 1948 and subsequent smuggling from Syria to Israel, portions of it were lost. The Aleppo Codex lost Gen. 1:1-Deut. 28:16 in a fire (in the Aleppo Synagogue) during the riots of 1948. That means, our focus text – Gen. 1:1-5 – is not found in this Codex. If we were to compare a passage that is found in both the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex (B19A), we would see that there is not a lot of difference between these two codices.

b) Leningrad Codex (B19A)

First, it is important to note that the Leningrad Codex was copied from the Aleppo Codex. According to its colophon, this manuscript is dated 1008 CE or possibly 1009 CE. Internal and external evidence also confirms this date. So then, the Aleppo Codex is several decades older than the Leningrad Codex. As parts of the Aleppo Codex have been missing since 1948, the Leningrad Codex is the largest and only complete text of the Hebrew Bible. However, the Leningrad Codex, although complete, is not the best quality Hebrew Manuscript. Although carefully hand-written, it was corrected against the Aleppo Codex, and the Aleppo Codex remains the best quality manuscript exemplar.

BHS (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*), BHQ (*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*), and BHL (*Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*) can be considered printed editions of this manuscript. The Westminster Leningrad Codex is an online digital version of the Leningrad Codex maintained by the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research at the

how and why many of its most sacred and valuable pages went missing. [See Matti. Friedman, *The Aleppo Codex: In Pursuit of One of the World's Most Coveted, Sacred, and Mysterious Books*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (a division of Workman Publishing), 2012.]

Westminster Theological Seminary. Modern Bible software such as Bible Works, Accordance and Logos have electronic editions of the Leningrad Codex based on the text created by the Westminster Theological Seminary, and referred to as the Michigan-Claremont-Westminster Electronic Hebrew Bible.

Second, The Leningrad Codex is so named because it has been housed at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg since 1863.²¹⁵ This manuscript cataloged as “Firkovich B19A” was purchased by a collector of Hebrew manuscripts, Abraham Firkovich, who did not discuss anywhere in his writings where he acquired the manuscript. The manuscript was brought to Odessa in 1838 and later transferred to the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg in 1863. After the Russian Revolution in 1924, Petrograd²¹⁶ was renamed Leningrad, and, because the codex was used as the basic text for the *Biblia Hebraica* since 1937, it became internationally known as the “Leningrad Codex”. Although in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the original name of the city was restored to Saint Petersburg, the National Library of Russia requested that “Leningrad” be retained in the name of the codex.

Third, the information found in the colophon of the manuscript tells us that the codex was copied in Cairo from manuscripts written by Aaron ben Moses ben Asher.²¹⁷ It has been claimed to be a product of the Asher scriptorium itself; however, there is no evidence that Asher ever saw it. The letter-text of the Leningrad Codex is not superb, and

²¹⁵ See Forward by Gérard E. Weil, in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997, pp. xiii-xviii.

²¹⁶ Formerly named “Saint Petersburg.”

²¹⁷ Daniel D. Stuhlman, *The Leningrad Codex*. Librarian’s Lobby. 1 March 1998.

it contradicts its own Masoretic apparatus in many hundreds of places.²¹⁸ There are numerous alterations and erasures present in this manuscript. It should be noted that the Leningrad Codex is also an outstanding example of medieval Jewish art. There are sixteen pages and the end decorated in gold, blue, and red with Masoretic rules in micrography.²¹⁹

Fourth, in 1935, the Leningrad Codex was lent to the Old Testament Seminar of the University of Leipzig for two years while Paul E. Kahle supervised its transcription for the Hebrew text of the third edition of *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK), published in Stuttgart, in 1937. The codex was also used for the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) in 1977, and is being used for *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ). As an original work by Tiberian masoretes, the Leningrad Codex was older by several centuries than the other Hebrew manuscripts which had been used for all previous editions of printed Hebrew Bibles until *Biblia Hebraica*.

Fifth, based on my reading of Aron Dotan, “*The Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* represents a thoroughly revised, reset, and redesigned edition of the תורה וביאים וכתובים, originally published in 1973 by ADI (Tel Aviv) and the School of Jewish Studies of Tel Aviv University, with several corrected printings until 1986.”²²⁰

Sixth, regarding the order of the books, Christian D. Ginsburg informs us that:

The most ancient record with regard to the sequence of the books in the Hebrew Scriptures is that given in the Babylonian Talmud. Passing over the *Pentateuch*, about which there never has been any doubt, it is here laid down on the highest authority that the order of the *Prophets* is as follows: Joshua, Judges, Samuel,

²¹⁸ On the vocalization and letter-text of the Leningrad Codex see Israel. Yeivin, *The Aleppo Codex of the Bible: A Study of its Vocalization and Accentuation*. Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes, 1968, pp. 357-359 (Hebrew).

²¹⁹ Micrography is an artistic arrangement of words printed in small letters. See Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*. 2nd ed. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1959, pp. 81-92.

²²⁰ Aron. Dotan, *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, p. 1243.

Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and the Minor Prophets, whilst that of the *Hagiographa* is as follows: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.²²¹

However, in the Leningrad Codex, after the first two sections – the Torah, and the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) – the *Ketubim* (Writings) section starts with Chronicles, and ends with Ezra-Nehemiah. Therefore, our focus passage – Gen. 1:1-5 – would be located at the beginning of any Hebrew Bible manuscript in its [first] original form. Whether the manuscript has that text or not (because it was burnt) is secondary.

Last, it is worth noting here that the most famous among the Hebrew Bible manuscripts is the Septuagint (LXX), to be covered in detail in the fourth chapter of this book.

C. The Creation of Light in Mesopotamian Contexts

There are striking and intriguing parallels between documents from the ancient Near East and the biblical story of creation of light. Three of these similarities are as follows: (a.) creation through utterance: the deity creates by the spoken word. (b.) the separation of material things: the divine being sets a division between natural entities (c.) the naming of the objects of nature: the creator names what he creates.

All the extant texts of the Nippur tradition narrate a cosmogonic act that is similar to each – the marital union of heaven and earth – while they differ from one another widely in their function. The reason why these cosmogonies are told is not to provide factual information about the past, but to ground or explain some aspect of present

²²¹ Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*. Pt. 1. London, England: Trinitarian Bible Society or New York: KTAV, 1897, p. 1.

reality. These texts from Nippur represent diverse literary genres, each with its own goal in depicting the origin of the world. So, context is very important.²²²

It was within this perspective that Schneider also suggests that: “these are not the only mythological texts with religious themes, nor is this the only genre of texts shedding light on Mesopotamian religion. The myths are discussed separately here precisely because whether these texts contain any kind of religious doctrine, are for ritual purposes, or are for pure entertainment is not clear.”²²³ So then, a reader of any Sumerian mythological text or any ancient Near Eastern text has the responsibility to interpret the text according to its context, as the Sumerian language is not completely understood. Based on interpretations, some conclusions can be drawn.

Second, among the narrative texts of the Nippur tradition, there is a text that associates a great storm with the first day:

*That day, it was
Because of that day;
that night, it was
because of that night;
that year, it was
because of that year:
the storm raged,
lightning flashed.
(Over) the shrine of Nippur
the storm raged,
lightning flashed:
(it was) heaven (An) who spoke
with earth (Ki);
(it was) earth (Ki) who spoke with heaven (An)...²²⁴*

Clifford continues to explain that:

²²² Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the ancient Near East and in the Bible*. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Monograph Series 26. Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994, p. 22.

²²³ Tammi J. Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*. Op. Cit. p. 50.

²²⁴ Richard J. Clifford, Op. Cit., p. 25.

The marriage of Heaven and Earth occurs amid a fierce storm, presumably bringing fertilizing rains. The text possibly interprets the thunder as speech. Elements known from the other cosmogonies appear: the phrase ‘that day,’ a storm, the proleptic mention of a temple city which will be built after the marriage. After a break in the text, the mother goddess *Ninhursag* and *Enlil* appear in the next column. Presumably they were born after the union of heaven and earth.²²⁵

There are three similarities between this account and the biblical narrative of creation: (a) the very first line of the Hebrew Bible states what the deity created as two direct objects: the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1 cf. 2:4). Here we see their wedding. (b) the image of “rain, storm, and lightning” is not in Gen. 1:1-5, but it is vivid in Gen. 2:5, 6, where we read that: “*Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth [land] and no plan had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams [mist] came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.*” (c) Here, it is Earth (*Ki*) who spoke with heaven (*An*), but in the Biblical story, it is God who spoke light into existence.

Third, another cosmogony from Nippur starts with these words: “*The Great Foundation (ki-ùr-gal-e) made herself resplendent, her body flowered joyously. Vast Earth adorned her body with precious metal and lapis-lazuli. She adorned herself with diorite, chalcedony, carnelian (and) elmeshu. [Heaven] clothed the plants in beauty, stood by their majesty.*”²²⁶ There is truly the idea of light in the concepts of “resplendence,” and “majesty,” as the brightness of a deity who is richly colorful and majestic can be perceived through the light. Though the Sumerian word for “light” –

²²⁵ Ibidem.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

“*nuru*” or “*immaru*”²²⁷ – does not appear in this text, the notion of light is expressed in another way as indicated above.

A main source for Ugaritic cosmogonies is a text that is about the divine epithets of El and Asherah, “creator of (heaven) and earth,” which occurs in Phoenician, Aramaic, and Punic inscriptions from the eighth century B.C. to the second century A.D. El, the chief of the pantheon, is called *bny bnwt* five times.²²⁸ This is a participle governing a substance meaning “*the creator of creation/creatures.*” Also, El’s wife Asherah has an analogous epithet *qnyt ’lm*, “creator of the gods.”²²⁹

Fifth, another important Ugaritic evidence bearing on cosmogonies is the so-called Baal cycle, six tablets that describe the battles of the storm god with *Yammu* (Sea) and with *Môtu* (Death).²³⁰ We cannot assume that these texts are genuine cosmogonies. Many specialists deny this assumption, among them is J. C. Greenfield who maintains that: “The Ugaritic texts record no creation or flood story, although fragments from Akkadian texts excavated at Ugarit deal with elements of these stories.”²³¹ According to John Day, “the Ugaritic Baal-Yam text (CTA =KTU 1.2) is not concerned with the creation.”²³²

Here again, it is hard to find an account of the creation of light in these texts from Syria. As a matter of fact, four things can be said here: 1. Ordering of chaos is not creation. 2. There is not a Baal creation as cosmogony. For, “creation is when something

²²⁷ Light = Summu Nura (they are deprived of light).

²²⁸ The five instances are KTU 1.4.ii.II; iii.32; I.6.iii.5, II; I.17.i.25.

²²⁹ See Richard J. Clifford, *Op. Cit.*, p. 118.

²³⁰ Knowledge of Baal’s personality and functions derives chiefly from a number of tablets uncovered from 1929 onward at Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra), in northern Syria, and dating to the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE (See Encyclopaedia Britannica).

²³¹ J. C. Greenfield, *The Hebrew Bible and Canaanite Literature*. in R. Alter, and F. Kermode, *The Literary Guide of the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 547 and 557.

²³² J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 17.

new which was not there before is produced,” affirmed Arvid Kapelrud.²³³ 3. According to André Caquot, Maurice Sznycer, and André Herdner, “these Baal texts are interpretations of specific phenomena rather than cosmogonies. The conflict between Baal and Sea is a theomachy pure and simple; the story of Baal’s death and liberation can be a mythic transposition of the annual disappearance of rain in the spring and its return in the autumn.”²³⁴ Last, Frank Moore Cross makes a distinction between “the Ugaritic cosmogonic cycle (in which Baal battles with Sea and Death to secure kingship)” and theogony which he defines as “the birth and succession of the gods, especially the old gods.”²³⁵

Interestingly, Baal was also a god of thunder and lightning – a sudden electrostatic discharge that occurs typically during a thunderstorm. This discharge is referred to as a flash. Lightning creates light! It is a powerful force of nature. It may be seen and not heard when it occurs, because the distance can be too great for the sound to carry as far as the light from the flash. In light of this analysis, can Baal be also considered a god of light?

²³³ A. Kapelrud, *Creation in the Ras Shamra Texts*. ST 34. 1980, pp. 3, 9. Other scholars who deny that there are cosmogonies at Ugarit are M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 1955, p. 49; and B. Margalit, *The Ugaritic Creation Myth: Fact or Fiction?* UF 13. 1981, pp. 137-145.

²³⁴ *Textes Ougaritiques*. LAPO 7. Paris: Cerf, 1974, pp. 116, 234.

²³⁵ F. M. Cross, et al. “The ‘Olden Gods’ and Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths,” *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976, pp. 333, 329.

D. Creation through Utterance in Ancient Near Eastern Documents

While doing a critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5,²³⁶ it is good to also consider creation through utterance in its larger historical, geographical, sociological, and philological context – which is the ancient Near Eastern. Because “the Hebrew Bible, at least in its origins, is a product of the ancient Near East.”²³⁷ Batto says that: “prior to the Hellenistic period, most of the peoples of Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, and, to a lesser extent, Egypt shared a common culture and world view that has been designated as ancient Near Eastern.”²³⁸ Of course, these nations had their own social organizations, laws, and religions, but one can see these civilizations as distinctive parts of a larger culture. Ancient Israel, where the Hebrew Bible is from, is no exception.

Batto continues to inform us that: “Hebrew ideas of creation were no more unitary than those in the rest of the ancient Near East.”²³⁹ In the Hebrew Bible, we have two stories of creation (Gen. 1:1-2:25) followed by the narrative of the consequences of the human couple’s eating of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-24). This cosmogonic myth culminates in the story of the universal flood found in Gen. 6-9 and seen in similar Mesopotamian stories.²⁴⁰ Moreover, other creation motifs are spread throughout the Hebrew Scripture, in various genres and in different books, based on epics and tales of

²³⁶ The focus is on Gen. 1:1-5, but there are the testimonies of other Hebrew Bible passages related to the creation. For example: a. Isaiah 40:21-23; 51:9, 10; b. Jeremiah 31:35, 36; c. Psalms 8, 104; and d. Job 38.

²³⁷ Bernard Frank. Batto, *Creation Motifs in the Ancient Near East and the Bible*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013, p. 7.

²³⁸ Ibidem.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁴⁰ Here, two other ancient Near Eastern parallel texts could be “the Epic of Atrahasis” (in Akkadian); and “the Gilgamesh Epic” (in Akkadian) which is a masterpiece from ancient Mesopotamia. There were two Babylonian versions of the Flood Story, one long and one short. It should also be noted that there are stories about Gilgamesh in Sumerian. (See Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. IV. New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995, pp. 2327-2336.)

the Israelites' surrounding cultures.²⁴¹ It is our task here to demonstrate that biblical ideas of creation are set in the cultural context of the ancient Near East, including the creation of light through a spoken word. For the purposes of this essay, we will look briefly at few examples of creation through utterance in various regions of the ancient Near East – namely, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan.

Schneider writes that: “many of the myths from Mesopotamia that have been discovered are copies of earlier texts and date as early as the second millennium, and the myths may continue in some form for more than a thousand years.”²⁴² So, there are contemporary myths that can be the same old stories with the same deity in very different words. Part of this essay is to demonstrate that there is always a close connection between language and culture in societies, and the meaning of a word should be investigated. Because many variations between the original Hebrew Text of Gen. 1:1-5 and the translations can best be explained on technical grounds. That is why the biblical story of creation will be also analyzed here through the lens of older stories of creation of light.

The most cited ancient creation account from the ancient Near East is the *Enuma Elish*, dated around 1936 BCE-1901 BCE,²⁴³ supposedly, because of its parallels with the Biblical Genesis. The name of the Babylonian poem of creation is derived from its two opening words in Akkadian – *Enuma Elish* – meaning “When on high.” Part of this story is a description of the conflict between the younger god Marduk and the older goddess Tiamat; after Marduk killed Tiamat, he used her body to make the world. Rendsburg summarizes the narrative as such:

²⁴¹ A myth is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. Synonyms are: folk tale, story, legend, tale, fable, saga, allegory, parable, tradition, lore, folklore, etc.

²⁴² Tammi J. Schneider, Op. Cit., p. 38.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 42.

The Babylonian story begins with a conflict among the gods – in particular, the deity Tiamat, who is the goddess of salt water and is symbolic of evil, and the god Marduk, who is the heaven god or storm god and symbolizes good. Marduk kills Tiamat, and he creates the world out of her body, using the upper part of her body to create the vault of heaven and the lower part of her body to create the earth. The story continues with the creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and it finishes with the creation of man. The Babylonian story ends with the construction of the temple to Marduk in Babylon – holiness in physical space – as is typical of the polytheistic world.²⁴⁴

The creation of the luminaries is not part of our focus text – Gen. 1:1-5 – but it is displayed on the fourth day of creation (Gen. 1:14-19). The fourth day is in constant dependency/need of the first day. Here is a synopsis of both days of creation in a chiastic fashion:

Introduction (1:1-2) “Heavens” and “Earth” “created” by God “darkness” / “waters” as unformed, chaotic elements	
I. Day One (1:3-5) “Light” spoken into existence (i.e., by <i>fiat</i>). Separation of light from darkness; darkness delimited. “Day” and “Night.”	IV. Day Four (1:14-19) “Lights/Luminaries” “made” in the firmament. “Greater” to rule “Day,” “Lesser” to rule “Night,” plus stars.

Figure 3

The *Enuma Elish* was performed every year during the Akitu festival – a spring festival in Mesopotamia.²⁴⁵ This celebration took place at the beginning of the year, based on the lunar calendar, and the epic was to be recited (possibly enacted) on the fourth day,²⁴⁶ to rectify the power of the king, and to renew the cosmos which includes

²⁴⁴ Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Book of Genesis*. Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2006, p. 11.

²⁴⁵ Stephanie. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 229.

²⁴⁶ Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*. Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993, p. 444.

the animals of the fields, the crops (agriculture), the land, etc.²⁴⁷ Thus, the Israelites must have heard the *Enuma Elish* while they were in exile in Babylon (586 BCE-539 BCE). As a matter of fact, the similarities between the first biblical creation account and the Babylonian Genesis are striking!

Scholars have long recognized a considerable number of points which invite comparison between the Chaldean Genesis and the first biblical narrative of creation. These scholars conclude that the Hebrew Bible passage is dependent on Babylonian sources. Evidently, this matter has a lot of implications for questions of religious faith. An examination of some of the outstanding points of comparison between Babylonian cosmology and the Old Testament with an eye on Gen. 1.1-5 can be presented here, considering this chart:

<i>Enuma Elish</i>	The Biblical Genesis
Divine spirit and cosmic matter are coexistent and coeternal	Divine spirit created cosmic matter and exists independently of it
Primeval chaos; Tiamat enveloped in darkness	The earth a desolate waste, with darkness covering the deep (<i>tehom</i>)
Light emanating from the gods	Light created

Figure 4

Based on this chart, first, a spirit from the deity as being the creator can be seen in both narratives. Second, chaos precedes order. In other words, darkness existed before light. Third, there is an account of the creation of light in both narratives. Last, the deity is a source of light. In the *Enuma Elish*, light is reflected from the gods, but in the biblical narrative, the light was created through the spoken word. In the first chapter of this essay,

²⁴⁷ It should be noted that the Babylonian Akitu festival has played a pivotal role in the development of theories of religion, myth and ritual, yet the purpose of the festival remains a point of contention among both historians of religion and Assyriologists.

we saw that for some of the Church Fathers, that light was Jesus Christ Himself.²⁴⁸ So, it is important to compare the Babylonian narrative of creation with the Biblical story of creation. Bloom and Collins explain that:

Part of the appeal for this comparison comes from the simple fact that *Enuma Elish* was one of the first texts discovered from the ancient Near East that covers the making of the world. Further, the Akkadian name Tiamat seems to be parallel to the Hebrew word for 'the deep,' *tehôm* (Gen. 1:2), which led some scholars to think of Genesis 1 as describing a conflict of sorts between God and the forces of nature, or even a sea monster, this gains some traction from the possibility that 'without form and void' is a paraphrase for 'chaos.' The opening words of the Akkadian story, 'when on high,' also influenced some to argue that the opening words of Genesis should be translated 'when God began to create' (See the alternate translation of the RSV).²⁴⁹

However, Assyriologists are now less likely to endorse the comparison than they did formerly, even though some Bible experts continue to make these comparisons. This is partly due to the work of W. G. Lambert who argued that: "The first major conclusion is that the Epic of Creation [another name for *Enuma Elish*] is not a norm of Babylonian or Sumerian cosmology. It is a sectarian and aberrant combination of mythological threads woven into an unparalleled compositum."²⁵⁰ For instance, Kitchen argues, "most Assyriologists have long since rejected the idea of any direct link between Gen. 1-11 and *Enuma Elish*."²⁵¹

Moreover, many have come to acknowledge that the supposed parallel between Babylonian Tiamat and Hebrew *tehôm* ("the deep") is unlikely. The linguistic details

²⁴⁸ In his gospel, the Apostle John presents the same theology by writing that: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Though him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*" (John 1:1-5).

²⁴⁹ John A. Bloom, and C. John. Collins, *Creation Accounts and Ancient Near Eastern Religions*. Christian Research Journal (CRJ). Vol. 35. Nu. 1. 2001, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ Ibidem.

²⁵¹ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, p. 425.

show that there is no way that the Hebrew term *tehôm* can be a borrowing from the Akkadian Tiamat.²⁵² Likewise, “*without form and void*” (Gen. 1:2) is a phrase, not for “*unruly and disorderly chaos,*” but for “*an unproductive and uninhabited place.*”²⁵³ Furthermore, the violence among the gods that pervades the *Enuma Elish* is absent in the biblical story of creation. In other words, there is nothing in Gen. 1 that can be reasonably said to imply any kind of struggle on God’s part, and so, especially in light of Psalm 33:9 that states: “*for he spoke, it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*”²⁵⁴ Therefore, it is unfortunate that the similarities between the accounts of creation from different traditions are misleading.

However, Gen. 1 shows intriguing parallels to other ancient Near Eastern documents. For example, the *Chaldean Cosmogony* (in Akkadian) begins with undifferentiated sea. Other texts have a seven-fold creation process, for instance, an Akkadian incantation and The *Dunnu Theogony* (in Akkadian Cosmogony).²⁵⁵ Most importantly, some scholars have come to understand that there is more Egyptian influence on Gen. 1. To support their argument, these scholars point to the Memphite cosmogonic traditions in which a watery mass is progressively given shape and light plays an important role.²⁵⁶ Based on what we know, it is difficult to demonstrate that any single work from the ancient Near East is the source of Gen. 1.

²⁵² C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. P and R Publishing, 2005, pp. 44–45, nn. 15–16.

²⁵³ Ibidem.

²⁵⁴ This verse of the Hebrew Bible is considered an excellent summary of the creation story.

²⁵⁵ The *Dunnu Theogony* is a Late Babylonian manuscript of a theogony that was published, in 1965, by W. G. Lambert and P. Walcot. Some forty lines of this document, not all complete, are preserved.

²⁵⁶ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. Op. Cit. p. 141.

In an Egyptian creation account from Memphis, the god Ptah²⁵⁷ speaks new things into existence: “*All the divine order really came into being through what the heart [of Ptah] thought and the tongue commanded.*”²⁵⁸ This is very similar to what we have in the first biblical narrative of creation, as the God of the Bible commands, “*Let there be...*,” and “*And there was...*” However, according to Bloom and Collins, “it seems strange to assert that Israel borrowed this unique concept from one among dozens of different Egyptian creation accounts, when the decrees of a king would be more familiar to the audience. There is no need to appeal to the similarities in a pagan creation account when the commands of any powerful leader will do.”²⁵⁹ On top of that, “the standard model of creation in the ancient Near East is sexual procreation: Pre-existing, primordial waters is the first god(s) and through procreation new generations of gods are produced, bringing greater differentiation in the material (land, sky, air, rivers, etc.) with each succeeding generation,” declared Bloom and Collins.²⁶⁰

The famous *Memphite Theology* is an extremely reflective statement of Ptah’s creative role, and it merits to be laid out here:

*1 Through²⁶¹ the heart and through the tongue something
developed into Atum’s image.
And great and important is Ptah,
who gave life to all the gods and their kas as well
through this heart and this tongue
5 through which Horus and Thoth became Ptah.
10 His Ennead is before him, in teeth and lips –*

²⁵⁷ Memphis was the capital of Egypt during the Old and Middle Kingdoms. So, Ptah was important because he was the god of a capital city, like Amun at Thebes. The Greeks identified him with Hephaistos.

²⁵⁸ James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950, p. 5.

²⁵⁹ John A. Bloom, and C. John. Collins, *Creation Accounts and Ancient Near Eastern Religions*. Op. Cit., p. 4.

²⁶⁰ Ibidem.

²⁶¹ This translation is of J. P. Allen, in *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts*. Yale Egyptological Studies 2. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1988, p. 43.

*that seed and those hands of Atum:
for it is through his seed and his fingers that Atum's Ennead developed,
but the Ennead is teeth and lips in this mouth
that pronounced the identity of everything,
15 and from which Shu and Tefnut emerged
and gave birth to the Ennead.
20 So were all the gods born.
Atum and his Ennead as well,
for it is through what the heart plans and the tongue
commands that every divine speech has developed.*

According to this text, Ptah was also the divine craftsman, but later, creation through word or sex was ascribed to him. The intellectual creative principle is essentially embodied in Ptah. Based on the first verse, the creator's thought and command ("heart" and "tongue") engendered the elements of the world. The very first thing that Ptah does is, "to pronounce the identity of everything." So, he creates through concept and speech ("teeth and lips in this mouth"). In reality, what is created is the product and the image of the primordial source from which it came ("Atum's image"). Then, there is a relationship between the creation and the creator's original concept.²⁶² As a matter of fact, "'image' and 'divine speech' are terms used in hieroglyphic writing, which for the Egyptians was 'a means for capturing reality through symbols.'²⁶³

The power above Atum is Ptah as seen illustrated by figure 5 below; the creative function of thought and "in-formation" is conceptualized in him. More clearly, Allen concludes that: "in general, the *Memphite Theology* is concerned less with the creator's actions than with explaining the means through which his concept of the world became

²⁶² New Testament Theology portrays Jesus in the same way: "*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him*" (Col. 1:15, 16). "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs*" (Hb. 1:3, 4). "

²⁶³ J. P. Allen, Op. Cit., p. 45.

transformed into reality. That means is the principle embodied in Ptah.”²⁶⁴ The means through which creation happens in both accounts – whether Egyptian or biblical – is the word. The following schema is offered as a demonstration of this previous reasoning:

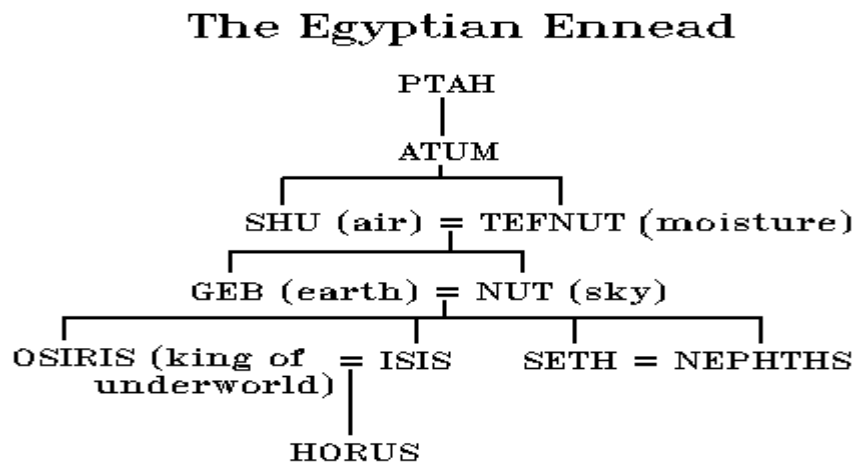


Figure 5

Strikingly, it is only in the Bible that the *ex nihilo* creation of the material world by a transcendent, immaterial, pre-existing God is found. In other terms, this idea of creation out of nothing has no parallel in the ancient Near East.²⁶⁵ Even the Egyptian god Ptah, who offers the closest parallel when he creates the other gods by thought and speech, is himself created from primordial water. There are some New Testament passages that Bible scholars quote excessively to support their standpoint about the fact that God spoke the universe into existence out of nothing, such as John 1:3; Rom. 4:17; and Heb. 11:3.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁶⁵ See Richard J. Clifford, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 104-105, 114.

Although found in Mesopotamia (primarily in language of praise), creation by *fiat* is most striking in the Memphite cosmologies of Egypt.²⁶⁶ Clifford explains that: “Ptah creates by his action as befits the god of sculptors and artisans; he creates in the *Memphite Theology* according to a plan devised in the heart and realized by a word.”²⁶⁷ In the Hebrew Bible, in addition to Gen. 1, there are also passages such as Ps. 33:6-9; 148; Is. 48:13 that support such idea of creation by a spoken word. Most importantly, in the fifth chapter of this book, the biblical story of the creation of light according to the native Egyptian (Sahidic and Bohairic) manuscripts will be analyzed to evaluate the similarities and differences that exist between the texts that are presented to us in different languages.

Last, some would argue that within the Hebrew Bible, there is a sense of Egyptian influence through Moses, as the children of Israel were in slavery in Egypt for more than four hundred years. If Moses were to be the author of this biblical hymn of creation, possibly, his devout parents might have told him these stories, being part of an oral society. Later, these words were put into writing within a tradition that is much Egyptian in both form and content.

In short, for comparative purposes, there is not much evidence in Canaanite religious texts to affirm that the terms used that are related to the creation of light found in Gen. 1.1-5 are connected to other nations, but there are ancient Near Eastern influences upon the biblical text. In fact, texts from Egypt have given us better information for a parallel study between the story of the creation of light in ancient Near Eastern documents and the Bible. Clifford tells us that: “the Bible borrows language belonging

²⁶⁶ Claus. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984, pp. 26-41.

²⁶⁷ Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Op. Cit. p. 105.

both to the god Baal and the patriarch El for its portrait of Yahweh.”²⁶⁸ He continues to say that: “the battles between the storm god Baal (sometimes assisted by his consort Anat) and Sea and Death have certainly influenced biblical cosmogonies in which Yahweh created by defeating the sea.”²⁶⁹ In fact, many times in the Hebrew Bible, it is seen that the children of Israel wanted to worship Yahweh in a Canaanite manner.²⁷⁰ So, through this Hebrew story of creation, it is true that the Israelites wanted to elevate their deity above all other gods in the region, using terms within a particular language that could be understood by ancient Near Easterners.

Then, could we say that the Bible has a more complete story of creation than these documents from Mesopotamia and Egypt? The answer to this question is yes, because some of the tablets from archaeological excavations are broken, and many lines are defective or missing, making it difficult to understand what the original scribes wanted to communicate to their contemporaries within their Mesopotamian or Egyptian culture. Throughout the rest of this book, the Hebrew Text will be put into conversation with other translations of the same passage – Gen. 1:1-5 – to see their similarities and differences, especially, to prove that they are not word for word translations. The first translation to be considered in the next chapter is the Targum in tandem with the Peshitta.

²⁶⁸ Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Op. Cit. p. 124.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

²⁷⁰ Note that in antiquity, “Canaanite” refers to the culture common to the east coast of the Mediterranean. The Languages of the area are classified as Northwest Semitic. Among them are: Ugaritic, Phoenician, Moabite, Ammonite, and Hebrew.

Chapter Three: The Biblical Creation Story Based on the Targum and the Peshitta

In his foreword to the book titled *What Are The Targums?*, Phillipe Gruson says that “since the Renaissance biblicists have tried to go beyond the customary translations in order to draw nearer to the original languages: the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. More recently, however, interest has shifted to the great ancient Jewish translations of the Scriptures: the Septuagint in Greek and the Aramaic Targum.”²⁷¹ For some, these last two translations – the Targum and the Septuagint – are fanciful, laden with popular legends, and inaccurate. However, for others such as modern researchers, these texts should be treated differently for what they really are. They are commented versions of the Hebrew Bible, and testimonies of the Jewish religion.

This previous affirmation supports one of the fundamental premises of this book: *any translation is an interpretation*. In fact, etymologically, Targum means “interpretation.” In other words, the basic meaning of the Aramaic word *targum* (often used in its Hebrew plural form, *targumim*) is “translation.”²⁷² It is derived from the Hebrew verb *tirgēm*, meaning “to explain, to translate” (cf. Esd. 4:7).²⁷³ Grelot informs us that “the word Targum passed into Aramaic and then into Hebrew from the Akkadian: *Targumanu* was the ‘interpreter’: he himself was designated by a word of foreign (Hittite) origin. It is employed in Judaism by an entire genre of the rabbinic literature that offers ‘interpretative translations.’”²⁷⁴ So then, the Targum is a genre in itself, and some sacred books are based upon it. Here, we can see that the writers provide an explanation

²⁷¹ Pierre. Grelot, *What Are the Targums?*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992, p. 7.

²⁷² Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011, p. 7.

²⁷³ Roger Le Déaut, *Targum du Pentateuque: Traduction des Deux Recensions Palestiniennes Complètes avec Introduction, Parallèles, Notes et Index*. Tome I. Paris, France: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978, p. 15.

²⁷⁴ Pierre. Grelot, Op. Cit., p. 9.

of the original text so that their readers might understand what he or she is reading. There may be some major or minor modifications and amplifications, but the authors of the Targumic Bible were interpreting the original with creativity in order to edify their listeners and readers. The Targumic text is not a *midrash*.²⁷⁵

As an introduction to this section, the origins of the Jewish synagogue remain mysterious, in spite of extensive research and considerable progress. Inscriptions from a synagogue in Egypt discovered by archaeologists are dated to the third century BCE, while the earliest finds from Palestine stem from the first century BCE.²⁷⁶ Both sets of evidence suggest an already mature institution with no founding moment of the synagogue. Literal evidence for the synagogue and its practices starts to appear in the first century CE, with descriptions in *the Gospels* of Jesus' synagogue visits and Philo's comments in his *On the Life of Moses*.²⁷⁷ The reading of Scripture and prayer were among the principal activities in this institution. The Jewish historian Josephus notes that the reading of the Torah (Greek, *nomos*) was particularly vital for meetings in synagogue.²⁷⁸ This Scriptural reading practice continued in the ancient period even after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 AD. Synagogues were also used as spaces for schools and public meetings.

²⁷⁵ For Grelot, this interpretative translation is not, properly speaking, a midrash, that is to say an "explanation" added to biblical verses cited in their literalness. Rather, it is often the offspring of such verses, creatively interpreted and freely utilized for the instruction and the edification of listeners and readers (Ibidem).

²⁷⁶ J. G. Griffiths, *Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue*. Pages 3-16 in Urman and Flesher, *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 1. p. 4-8.

²⁷⁷ See e.g., Mt. 13:53-58 and Lk. 4:14-30, and for Stephen, Acts 6:9; Philo, *Life of Moses* 2:216; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 156. Some scholars see the earlier Ben Sira 51:23 as an observation about the synagogue.

²⁷⁸ Josephus, *Against Apion*. 2:174, 275. See H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Life, Against Apion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926 (1976).

Lier observes that

the destruction of the Second Temple was the most decisive event and leading factor for the development of Jewishness without the Temple. It led to the re-organization of Jewish political and spiritual leadership as well as the standardization of its faith expression. ... Within this process of standardization, the compilation and redaction of two main bodies of interpretive texts of the Hebrew Scriptures began to take place. These are the Targums or Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible and the Midrashim.²⁷⁹

This process of standardization is attributed by some experts to a number of aspects, that is, the prevalence of sectarianism within Judaism, the influence of Hellenism and the Herodians, and the pressure of the Roman rule.²⁸⁰ To make the context in which the process of standardization of the Jewish religion took place after the Destruction clearer, Lier continues, “The standard scholarly view is retained that priests and rabbis did not remain in distinct groups after the destruction of the Second Temple, but became part of an active learning community within the evolvement of rabbinic academies in Palestine after the Destruction.”²⁸¹ As a result of this, rabbis sought to standardize Jewish exegetical traditions to preserve monotheism, and to keep the expressions of their faith alive.

The focus of the first half of this chapter will be on the extant Targum traditions that deal with Gen. 1:1-5. Here, the task will be to consider the origin of the Targums and the circumstances under which they were produced. To accomplish this goal, how

²⁷⁹ Gudrun Elisabeth. Lier, *A Redaction History of the Pentateuch Targums: Genesis 1:26-27 in the Exegetical Context of Formative Judaism*. Piscataway, NJ: Georgia Press, 2010, pp. 1-2.

²⁸⁰ Ibidem.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 6.

Hebrew Scripture was read and interpreted into Aramaic in the Synagogue will be analyzed based on the oral tradition of Jewish laws written in the Mishnah.²⁸²

Le Déaut states, “The rabbinical tradition has considered the scene described in Neh. 8:1-18 – the public reading of the Torah done by Esdras after the return from exile – as the prototype of the liturgy of the synagogue.”²⁸³ This reading is evidently tied up to the prescription of Deut. 31:9-13 to read the Law at the end of every seven years, before all the people, men, women, and children.²⁸⁴ This practice was also in vogue at least during the time of Rab²⁸⁵ (175-247) and it is connected to the origin of the Aramaic versions of the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁸⁶ Actually, the most important part of the synagogue service has always been the reading of the Law and the Prophets, of which the regular reading, on the day of Sabbath, is well attested for the New Testament period.²⁸⁷

To understand this scene well, one must consider the linguistic situation of Palestine after the return of the exiles. Since before the exile, knowledge of Aramaic was well spread in the upper classes, because the peoples of the East – of the Aramaic language – were in contact with each other. From the beginning of the sixth century BCE, this language became a sort of a *lingua franca* used in the relations among various peoples of the Near East and Aramaic is attested in inscriptions from the ninth century

²⁸² According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the Mishnah is an authoritative collection of exegetical material embodying the oral tradition of Jewish law and forming the first part of the Talmud (Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, Op. Cit., p. 1118.).

²⁸³ R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la Littérature Targumique*. Rome, Italy: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966, p. 23.

²⁸⁴ Was this scene an already existing inspiration for the institution of the synagogue, or was it a model to this institution? Some authors tend to opt for this last explanation. Cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism*. Vol. I, Cambridge, 1927, p. 296.

²⁸⁵ Rab is the name given to Abba Arikha, the founder of the famous academy of Sura, that was, with Nehardea, the most important center of rabbinic culture of Babylonia.

²⁸⁶ See for instance: Meg. 3a; J.Meg. IV, 1; Ned. 37b.

²⁸⁷ R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la Littérature Targumique*. Op. Cit. p. 37. For example, see Lk. 4 :16 and Acts 15 :21 ; 13 :14. Also, Josephus brings this institution of a weekly reading of the Law back to Moses himself, and this tradition is accepted by rabbinic writings (Josephus, *Against Apion*. 2:175).

BCE. An index of the linguistic situation in Palestine during the time of Hezekiah (716-687) is given in II Kgs. 18:26-28 (cf. Is. 36:11-13). Aramaic was understood in certain cities, but in the country, the people only knew Hebrew.²⁸⁸

The linguistic situation was inversed by the exile: almost everybody had to learn Aramaic, the dominant language in Assyro-Babylonia. Hebrew – the language of the worship service and sacred books – surely continued to be taught, as a mark of opposition. For instance, the Hebrew language must have been taught because worship continued in Hebrew. The Jewish communities seem to have enjoyed from a certain independence and they have lived a life of withdrawal, and they were folded upon themselves. The Talmud itself reveals that the bilingualism was pretty wide spread “because the language of Babylonia has a great resemblance with Hebrew” (*Pesachim* 87b).²⁸⁹

The authorities of the Mishnah expected worship to feature the reading of the Hebrew text; the participants could also listen to an oral Aramaic rendering if they wished.²⁹⁰ During this time, most of the synagogue attendees did not understand Hebrew fully or very well, though Hebrew and Aramaic share some words. Flesher and Chilton write, “Generally speaking, most Jews around the eastern Mediterranean spoke Greek, the language of the Roman Empire, while in Galilee and its surroundings, as well as in cities and regions settled under Persian hegemony, the Jewish vernacular was Aramaic.”²⁹¹ Services included hearing both the Hebrew Scriptures and their translation during this time. According to rabbinic tradition, the Hebrew text should be treated with

²⁸⁸ R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la Littérature Targumique*. Op. Cit. p. 24.

²⁸⁹ Ibidem.

²⁹⁰ m. Meg. 2:1. See also t. Meg. 2:6.

²⁹¹ Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, Op. Cit., p. 4.

greater respect and honor than the translation,²⁹² as Aramaic renderings were to be given from memory. Both Hebrew and Aramaic are parts of the Semitic language family.

The ancient texts suggest that the biblical text was read in Hebrew, and this reading was followed by a translation into Aramaic. Here are two imagined examples of Scripture reading in two services: In the first example, two men stand before the congregation of the synagogue, each one with a scroll before them. One reads aloud from his Torah scroll in Hebrew. This is considered the holy book, but few of the congregants know Hebrew very well, although they might understand some familiar words or few whole sentences. When the first man pauses, the second person reads the same passage from his scroll in Aramaic, which is a Targum. Yes, the reading is done in two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic, but here, the synagogue attendees pay more attention to the Aramaic reading, because they fully understand its message. For the bulk of the congregants, the Targum *is* Scripture. This procedure does not receive rabbinic approval. The Mishnah's and Palestinian Talmud's rules about Torah and Targum purposefully discourage this format.²⁹³

In the second imagined synagogue service, again two men stand in front: one behind a podium on which is spread a large scroll in Hebrew, and the other stands to the side with nothing in front of him. That second person gives a translation of what the first man reads from the scroll in Hebrew each time the first man stops. Here again, translation in Aramaic is needed because the audience understands only a little from the reading in Hebrew. The second man seems to have memorized what the first man reads, but when he forgets a phrase of the passage his voice falters. Since that second person realizes that

²⁹² Palestinian Talmud Meg. 74d.

²⁹³ Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, Op. Cit., pp. 5-6.

he cannot recall what he memorized, from time to time he instead tries to give an extemporaneous translation. This happens, because the second man accomplishes the translation task without preparation. Indeed, occasionally, the Aramaic rendering is significantly longer than the Hebrew. This Aramaic translation has enabled the service's participants to understand the Hebrew's meaning, at least to the extent that the memory of the translator, his translation abilities, and the accuracy of the Aramaic version he was trying to convey can be trusted.²⁹⁴

So then, the Aramaic translation is presented in the synagogue as equivalent to Scripture. The congregants treat both texts equally. But although the Aramaic is to provide what is understood, the Hebrew remains the original. Those who attend the synagogue service do not hesitate to accept the translation as an equivalent to the original, as they understand the Hebraic message through an Aramaic vehicle. Within that perspective, Flesher and Chilton declare that "the *targum*'s meaning gives the actual content of Scripture according to its ritual presentation, even when it is manifest that the Aramaic and Hebrew version are not literally equivalent."²⁹⁵ The translations done based on the Hebrew text were not word for word translations. Yet the receptions of these Bible translations were positive among the people for whom the Scripture was translated. That is why, "if modern scholars want to know what Jews of this period considered the Torah to say, they need to study the Targums."²⁹⁶

In the first two chapters of this essay, our focus biblical passage, alongside the Hebrew Text, was viewed in three other different languages: Latin, German, and Samaritan. Here, we will consider it in Aramaic and Syriac. In reality, this third chapter is

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁹⁵ Ibidem.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 7.

the beginning of the comparative task in this book. In the following section, first, the Aramaic text then the Syriac manuscript of Gen. 1:1-5 will be compared to the Masoretic text. Then, both the Targum and the Peshitta versions of the same biblical text (Gen. 1:1-5) will be put into conversation with each other.

A. The Aramaic Manuscript of the Account of the Creation of Light

Aramaic is a Semitic language. A Semite is someone who speaks a Semitic language.²⁹⁷ According to Sasson, “the Semitic languages are humanity’s longest-attested language family and constitute the dominant linguistic group in much of the Near East throughout history, from the mid third millennium BCE, when Akkadian and Eblaite documents appear, down to the present.”²⁹⁸ Semitic languages served as a lingua franca for the entire Near Eastern region depending on the era. For a long period of time, Aramaic was the lingua franca of the region from the mid first millennium BCE to the mid first millennium CE. This resulted in the translation of Hebrew Bible manuscripts into Aramaic in the beginning of the Common Era, yet none of the Targumic texts from Rabbinic Judaism are that old, and some of them are considered compositions from later centuries.

According to Fitzmyer, the only example of pre-Christian Aramaic texts was the Aramaic texts of the Old Testament. During that time, these Aramaic texts had to be explained either from themselves alone or from ancient translations of them. However, from the end of the nineteenth century, so many Aramaic documents have been discovered and interpreted by the dedicated work and talent of experts. The Aramaic

²⁹⁷ See Gen. 10:21-32.

²⁹⁸ Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. IV. New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995, p. 2117.

language which played an important role in the lives of the people of the ancient Near East, emerged from oblivion, and the long history of this language became known.²⁹⁹

There are two types of Aramaic: Eastern and Western. Western Aramaic comprises: Samaritan, Jewish-Palestinian Aramaic, Nabatean, and Dalmaroenian. Eastern Aramaic is Syriac that is composed of: Jacobite, Nestorian, the language of the Babylonian Talmud, and Mandaic (the language of the Gnostic texts; also, the religious language of this sect which is a form of Aramaic). Moreover, “there are some scattered dialects of Aramaic.”³⁰⁰ The type of Aramaic used in this essay is Western Classical Aramaic. Without forgetting to mention here that Fitzmyer differentiates the types or styles of language found in Aramaic documents chronologically in the following way: Old Aramaic (ca. 900-700 B.C.), Imperial [Official] Aramaic (ca. 700-300 B.C.), and Middle Aramaic (300 B.C.-A.D. 200).³⁰¹

The definition of Targum used here is: an ancient Aramaic paraphrase or interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, of a type made from about the first century AD when Hebrew was declining as a spoken language.³⁰² It is hard to date the Targumic text, and it had a long oral tradition – a very conservative one – that is linked to the transmission of the Scriptures. That means, the Targum was not a word for word translation from the Hebrew Text. Rather, these scribes were trying to interpret what was laid before them in function of the current language of their readers or audience, since the Hebrew language would cease to be spoken during the time of translation. Another important reason for the

²⁹⁹ Fitzmyer, J. A. *A Lexicon of Biblical Aramaic: Clarified by Ancient Documents*. Roma, Italy: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011, p. 6.

³⁰⁰ Jack M. Sasson, *Op.Cit.*, p. 2117.

³⁰¹ Fitzmyer, J. A. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 8-10.

³⁰² Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1776.

differences between MT and the Aramaic Bible is that the Targums were once oral. These scribes used a translation technique that will be laid out and analyzed later in this section.

In their book titled *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*, Flesher and Chilton inform us that “the foundation of the modern study of the Targums was laid in Germany during the nineteenth century. The first scholarly editions of the texts, the first major linguistic studies, early literary and historical studies, as well as attempts to understand the Targums’ role in worship and study were created at this time. Scholars such as Isaac Berliner, Theodore Nöldeke, and Gustav Dalman, along with many others, set the stage for much of the twentieth-century study of these translations.”³⁰³ Later, “Wilhem Bacher’s entry on Targums in the 1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia* provides a snapshot of the scholarly assessment of the Targums to the pentateuchal books known at that time.”³⁰⁴ So, it’s gradually that the Targumic text was being studied during the past century, and it remains the focus of some contemporary experts.

There are different kinds of Targums. For instance, Grelot tells us that “in the present state of affairs there exist three Targums of the Torah (or Pentateuch): the most ancient one is the Targum *Yerushalmi* (= of Jerusalem). It is composed of about 850 verses from the marginal variants found in the other manuscripts, especially from Targum Onqelos.”³⁰⁵

The second one tended to draw its text closer to the original Hebrew: this is the so-called Targum of Onqelos (O). Le Déaut points that “the name of Onqelos is read in Meg. 3a; but the parallel passage of the Palestinian Talmud (J Meg. I 71 c) shows that it

³⁰³ Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, Op. Cit., p. 71.

³⁰⁴ Ibidem.

³⁰⁵ Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit., p. 23.

is a confusion with Aquila (Ἀquila), the author of a Greek version in the 2nd century of our era.”³⁰⁶

The third type is a later composition, to which the name *Yerushalmi I* (TJ1) or Pseudo-Jonathan (P.J.) is given.³⁰⁷ Regarding the redaction date of the one that we will examine here, Kaufman concludes from a comparison with 11 QtgJob that “the final Palestinian form of Targums Onqelos and Jonathan must, therefore, date between 70 A.D. and the fall of Bar-Kochba.”³⁰⁸

Cathcart argues, “By the term ‘Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch’ is meant those Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch other than the Targum of Onqelos that have been transmitted to us by Rabbinic Judaism.”³⁰⁹ Rabbinic Judaism transmitted Targums of all books of the Hebrew Canon, with the exception of Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah, which are partly in Aramaic.³¹⁰ Flesher and Chilton report that

in 1949 Professor Alejandro Díez Macho of Spain’s University of Barcelona was investigating manuscripts of Targum Onqelos in the Vatican Library. One day, a manuscript known as Codex Neophyti 1³¹¹ – because it came from a part of the library called Neophytorum (‘of the neophytes’) – was delivered to his desk. Despite its having been catalogued as Targum Onqelos, Díez Macho quickly realized that the text he was looking at was not Onqelos and indeed was not even written in the same dialect as Onqelos. By 1956 Díez Macho’s study of the manuscript had revealed that it contained a previously unknown, yet amazingly complete, text of a Palestinian Targum. Indeed, the manuscript of the entire Pentateuch lacks only a few phrases erased by censors or accidentally skipped by copyist.³¹²

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁰⁷ Pierre. Grelot, *What Are the Targums?*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992, p. 11.

³⁰⁸ S. A. Kaufman quoted in English by Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit., p. 21. See also, JAOS 93 (1973), 327.

³⁰⁹ Kevin. Cathcart, et al. *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992, p. 1.

³¹⁰ Ibidem.

³¹¹ It is worth noting that the name Codex Neophyti 1 should not be confused with the appellation Targum Neofiti, although early on some scholars confused the two in their terminology. The difference is the following: when the manuscript is discussed as being manuscript, it should be named Codex Neophyti 1; when the text found in the manuscript is analyzed as a Targum, it is called Targum Neofiti.

³¹² Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, Op. Cit., p. 74.

The copy of this manuscript was written by hand. It is composed of 449 folios of parchment. The colophon of the Codex Neophyti 1 (N) dates it to either 1499 or 1504 CE. But for Giles of Viterbo, this hand-written Codex was written in the dialect of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, executed in early sixteenth century AD (1504) in Rome.³¹³ N was written by three principal scribes.³¹⁴ That means, although the original Targum is old, the copy that we have in N has been through several stages of scribal copying which includes both mistakes of the scribes and their “improvements.” Textual criticism of this manuscript is almost impossible, because there are no previous manuscripts of the same type found that can be accessed by scholars for comparison. Consequently, the Codex Neophyti requires grammatical and lexicographical studies that should be done with great care or diligence and caution, as there are no other witnesses to it. So then, its text stands alone.³¹⁵

A last composition of the Targum that will not be considered in this essay is the Samaritan Targum. This kind of Targum is a long version of the Hebrew Text. The Samaritan Targum has additional comments in the body of the text itself that are based on the vocalization of the Hebrew Text. “The Samaritan Targum has never known *textus receptus* and the variants from one manuscript to another are constant.”³¹⁶ The quotations of the Samaritan Targum given by the *Memar Marqah* – a Midrashic commentary of the 4th century – do not always correspond to the text found in our editions.³¹⁷ If our main focus were on the Samaritan Targum, it would be interesting to compare the language and the message with the tradition represented by O and the other recensions, after the

³¹³ Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit. p. 38.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

³¹⁵ Ibidem.

³¹⁶ Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit. p. 27.

³¹⁷ See Roger. Le Déaut, Ibid., pp. 27-28.

publication of a good critical edition.³¹⁸ So, “the field of Targum studies is very broad and complex, even without the addition of midrashic studies.”³¹⁹

The Targum of Gen. 1:1-5 that will be considered in this essay for a critical comparative analysis with the MT, the Peshitta, the LXX, and the Coptic Text is the Targum of Onqelos. There are two main reasons for this selection: it is because of its closeness to the original Hebrew, and it is because the Jewish academies of Babylon conferred upon the Targum of Onqelos an official value since around the third century.³²⁰ The Targum of Onqelos provides a complete translation of the entire Torah. It has a *Masorah*. However, the body of the text is very clean. “In direct contrast to the Palestinian Targums, Jewish scribes and scholars attempted to preserve it as a single text with no variation in its wording or even spelling,” say Flesher and Chilton.³²¹ This may be why the Onqelos manuscript was copied frequently and used widely. Indeed, it is a single text, but most of the other manuscripts of Targum are in a fragmentary state. Flesher and Chilton continue, “Onqelos has the widespread reputation of being the most literal of all the Targums from the rabbinic period.”³²² Here, the use of the adjective “literal” is fair, because Onqelos contains the fewest expansions or additional words.

³¹⁸ Also see, L. Goldberg, *Das Samaritanische Pentateuchtargum*. Stuttgart, 1935.

³¹⁹ Gudrun Elisabeth. Lier, Op. Cit., p. 7.

³²⁰ Nota Bene: These 3 Targums are different in their sources and compositions: 1. The Targum *Yerushalmi* was based upon an ancient oral tradition that was taught in the rabbinic schools of Galilee from the second century on. Up to around 1950 it was known only in a fragmentary form. Its fragments were restored by the *Cairo Gueniza*. 2. The Targum (Tg.) of Onqelos contains still some *amplifications* in certain Haggadic passages but its *Halaka* aligns itself strictly with that of the rabbinic tradition. Conceivably, it is from Palestine. Its dialect is close to the classic “Aramaic” of Daniel. 3. The Pseudo-Jonathan took over whole fragments of the Tg. *Yerushalmi*, inserting them in a framework that followed the Tg. of Onqelos and adding midrashic passages. We can trace the sources of this Tg. It remains a literal witness of the Tg. *Yerushalmi*.

³²¹ Paul V. M. Flesher, and Bruce. Chilton, Op. Cit., p. 83.

³²² *Ibidem*.

For application, the following text is the Aramaic version of Gen. 1:1-5 from the Targum of Onqelos written with both Palestinian and Tiberian vocalizations³²³ with my English translation of the Aramaic Text in parallel:

1 בְּקִדְמִין בְּרָא יוּ יְת שְׁמַיָּא וְיְת אַרְעָא :
1 בְּקִדְמִין בְּרָא יוּ יְת שְׁמַיָּא וְיְת אַרְעָא :

1. In the antiquities³²⁴ the LORD created the heaven and the earth.

2 וְאַרְעָא הָיְת צְדִיָּא וְרוֹקְנִיָּא וְחֹשְׁכָא עַל אֲפִי תְּהוּמָא וְרוּחָא מִן קִדְּם יוּ מְנֻשְׁבָּא עַל אֲפִי מַיָּא :
2 וְאַרְעָא הָיְת צְדִיָּא וְרוֹקְנִיָּא וְחֹשְׁכָא עַל אֲפִי תְּהוּמָא וְרוּחָא מִן קִדְּם יוּ מְנֻשְׁבָּא עַל אֲפִי מַיָּא :

2. And the earth was deserted and barren, and darkness was upon³²⁵ the abyss, and a spirit that was from before the LORD was blowing over the face of the waters.

3 וְאָמַר יוּ יְהִי נְהוּרָא וְהוּה נְהוּרָא :
3 וְאָמַר יוּ יְהִי נְהוּרָא וְהוּה נְהוּרָא :

3. And The LORD said: "Let there be light!" And there was light.

4 וְהוּא יוּ יְת נְהוּרָא אֲרִי טָב וְאַפְרִישׁ יוּ בִין נְהוּרָא וּבִין חֹשְׁכָא :
4 וְהוּא יוּ יְת נְהוּרָא אֲרִי טָב וְאַפְרִישׁ יוּ בִין נְהוּרָא וּבִין חֹשְׁכָא :

4. And the LORD saw [that] the light was good, and The LORD separated the light from the darkness.

5 וּקְרָא יוּ לְנְהוּרָא יְמָמָא וְלְחֹשְׁכָא קְרָא לַיְלִיָּא וְהוּה רִמְשׁ וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוּם חָד :
5 וּקְרָא יוּ לְנְהוּרָא יְמָמָא וְלְחֹשְׁכָא קְרָא לַיְלִיָּא וְהוּה רִמְשׁ וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוּם חָד :

5. And the LORD called the light "(the) day," and the darkness he called "(the) night." And there was an evening, and there was a morning - The first day.

Hebrew and Aramaic are close to each other. This closeness appears in the syntax, grammar, vocabulary, etymology, and morphology of both languages. Hebrew is even

³²³ Both vocalizations are provided here because the Palestinian system is no longer in use having been supplanted by the Tiberian vocalization system.

³²⁴ *Baqad'min* literally means "in the antiquities" or "in the east." In Genesis 3:24, *miqèdèm* can also be a preposition meaning "in front of."

³²⁵ Some copies, "Darkness was outspread upon the face..."

written in the Aramaic square script. The Aramaic alphabet – written in the square script – was used to write the Aramaic language and had displaced the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet which was a derivative of the Phoenician alphabet. This Aramaic square script was also used for writing Hebrew. At times, their vocalization was different, because Masoretic Hebrew used the Tiberian vowel system, but the Palestinian vowel system was used to write the Aramaic of the Targum Onqelos. “The Targum is closely linked to the liturgical reading of Scripture.”³²⁶

Considering our focus passage of Gen. 1:1-5 mentioned above, there are several differences between the Masoretic Text and the Aramaic translation. Among them are the following:

(a) The Targum of Onqelos translates the first word of the Hebrew Bible – בראשית (*bere'shît*) – as *baqad'mîn* which literally means “in the antiquities” or “in the east.”³²⁷ Onqelos does not stand alone, because both the Targum Jonathan and the Targum Neofiti have the reading of מלקדמין that signifies “from the antiquities.” The Aramaic “in the antiquities” is more specific than the Hebrew “in the beginning.” The period of time that is before the Middle Ages is considered “the antiquities.”³²⁸ So, the Aramaic suggests a specified historical period during the ancient past. Did the translator of this passage also have geography – such as an eastern place – in mind (cf. Genesis 3:24)?³²⁹ The Hebrew Bible tells us that: “the LORD God planted a garden in the east, in Eden” (Gen. 2:8).

³²⁶ Pierre. Grelot, Op. Cit., p. 9.

³²⁷ The Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon states that קדם as a noun can mean both “east” (e.g. Dt. 33:27; Jdgs. 8:10) and “ancient time” (e.g. Dt. 33:15; Is. 23:7; Mi. 5:1). Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an appendix, containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Op. Cit., pp. 869-870.

³²⁸ See Eugene. Ehrlich. et al. Op. Cit. p. 26.

³²⁹ In Genesis 3:24, *miqèdèm* can also be a preposition meaning “in front of.”

Since the Aramaic rendition of the Hebrew Text is translated as “in the east,” “the Garden of Eden” could be the implication, because, based on Gen. 2, life started there.

The location of Eden remains problematic. Some scholars argue that the Garden of Eden is mythological. For its location, others suggest, for example, that it’s at the head of the Persian Gulf, in southern Mesopotamia (now Iraq) where the Tigris and the Euphrates run into the sea, or in the Armenian Highlands or the Armenian Plateau.³³⁰ At issue is, how did our translators understand the geographical places that we have in Genesis 2? Was Eden a real location for the writer of Genesis, or an idea? Do the translations provide more information related to geography for the interpretation of the text? The Targum seems to provide additional information about where the creation of light took place, depending on how *baqad’min* is defined.

As a side note, and for the purpose of inter-textuality, the original site of the garden of Eden is conjectural. The principal means of identifying its geographic location is the Bible’s description of the river “issuing out of Eden,” which thereafter divided into four “heads,” producing the rivers named as the Euphrates, Hiddekel, Pishon, and Gihon (Gen. 2:10-14). The Euphrates (Heb., *Perath*) is well known, and “Hiddekel” is the name used for the Tigris in ancient inscriptions.³³¹ The other two rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon, however, are unidentified. Some, such as Calvin and Delitzsch, have argued in favor of Eden’s situation somewhere near the head of the Persian Gulf in Lower Mesopotamia, approximately at the place where the Tigris and the Euphrates draw near

³³⁰ Arthur. George, and Elena. Goerge, *The Mythology of Eden*. Elliniko, Greece: Hamilton Books, 2014, p. 458.; Brook. Wilensky-Lanford, *Paradise Lust: Searching for the Garden of Eden*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 2012. See also, Philip R. Davies, and David J. A. Clines, *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, pp. 28-30.

³³¹ Compare also Dan. 10:4.

together. They associated the Pishon and Gihon with canals between these streams. However, this would make these rivers tributaries, rather than branches dividing off from an original source.³³²

The Hebrew ראש also cognates “head” of a river. For some thinkers, the Hebrew text points, rather, to a location in the mountainous region North of the Mesopotamian plains, the area where the Euphrates and Tigris rivers have their present sources. Thus, Speiser³³³, in his notes on Genesis 2:10, states, “In Hebrew the mouth of the river is called ‘end’ (Josh. 15:5, 18:19); hence the plural of *ro’sh* ‘head’ must refer here to the upper course. . . . This latter usage is well attested for the Akkadian cognate *resu*.”³³⁴ The fact that the Euphrates and Tigris rivers do not now proceed from a single source, as well as the impossibility of definitely determining the identification of the Pishon and Gihon rivers, is possibly explained by the effects of the Noachian Flood, which undoubtedly altered considerably the topographical features of the earth, filling in the courses of some rivers and creating others.

Surprisingly, ראש can also mean “beginning” based on the context in which it is used. Two examples are Pr. 8:22, 23 where the biblical poet says, “*The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be.*” According to my reading of Ethridge in his volume titled *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch: With the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee*,

³³² Konrad. Schmid, and Christoph. Riedweg, *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2 – 3) and Its Reception History*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, p. 18.

³³³ E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis, Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964, p. 17.

³³⁴ *Ibidem*.

baqad'mîn can also signify “*In the first times.*”³³⁵ Furthermore, when the Aramaic expression *Be-kadmin*, “*in antiquities*” is used in the plural, as here, it is sometimes put for “*eternity.*”³³⁶ Then, what should be done with an Aramaic word that has several definitions? This is a question that will be addressed later in further detail.

(b) In Gen. 1:1 of the Aramaic Text of Onqelos, the Hebrew *Elohim* (*God*) is translated by the tetragrammaton abbreviation (yvy) which stands for *The LORD*? Is this a ‘tri-grammaton’ in Aramaic? But it is *Elohim* in the Targum Jonathan.³³⁷ In our English Bibles, *Elohim* is translated as “God,” but the Hebrew Yahweh is translated as “the LORD” with all capital letters. The main difference between *Elohim* and Yahweh is that the former is the general name for God while being in the plural form grammatically, and is used in the context of God as creator (e.g. Gen. 1), and the latter is the personal name of God and it is used in the context of God having a relationship with his people. Essentially, Yahweh is a real translation of the deity’s true name.³³⁸ So, when the deity is personally involved with his people, YHWH is the proper way to designate Him. Though YHWH is not a normal equivalent *nomina sacra*³³⁹ for God (Hb. *Elohim*), the Aramaic YHWH here may suggest that this is a deity who does not just create, but who also seeks a relationship with his creatures.

(c) In verse 2, maybe the translator is having trouble finding words for how to treat the Hebrew concept *Tohûwabohû*, the “formless void.” The Targum Onqelos reads

³³⁵ J. W. Ethridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch: With the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee*. Hoxton Square, London, Britain: William Nichols, 1862, p. 35.

³³⁶ Compare Onqelos on Deut. 33:27, *Eloha de-milkadmin*, “*the Eternal God*,” or, “*God who is from eternity*,” with Jonathan on Mic. 5:2, “*Messiah, ... whose name is called (milkadmin) from eternity.*”

³³⁷ Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit. p. 75.

³³⁸ In Ex. 3:14, God revealed His name to Moses in those terms: אהיה אשר אהיה meaning “*I Am Who I Am*” or “*I Will Be What I Will Be.*”

³³⁹ Latin for “*sacred name.*”

צָדִיָּא וְרוֹקְנִיָּא (*tsadya' verôqanya*) which stands for “deserted and barren.” Maybe this is how the translator understands it or he does not know. Another English translation for the same Aramaic text can be: “waste and empty.” All these attempts are trying to translate the Hebrew “formless waste.”

(d) In Gen. 1:4, the Hebrew verb *ra'ah* is rendered into the Aramaic verb *chaza'* in the Peal pattern (Hb. *binyan*). Depending on the context where it is used, this Aramaic verb can be translated as “to see (with the eye), to look, to behold, to watch, to witness, to see as a seer, and to prophesy.” It appears mostly in the Pe'al conjugation in both Daniel (2:8, 26, 31, 34, 41, 43, 45; 3:19, 27; 4:5, 9, 10, 13, 18, 20, 23; 5:5, 23; 7:1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11 twice, 13, 21) and Ezra (4:14). This verb is used 31 times in the Hebrew Bible: once in Ezra, and 30 times in Daniel. Two cognates are חָזַה (*chazèh*) meaning “seer,” and חֶזוֹן (*chazôn*) that stands for “vision.” Figuratively, the Aramaic verb חָזַי can also mean “to realize” or “to understand.” Moreover, in *A Lexicon of Biblical Aramaic*, Vogt adds that the verb *chazat* means “to contemplate,” and “to gaze.”³⁴⁰ In Hebrew, this verb is mostly used in prophetic settings to signify “vision, seer, and prophecy.” So, the Aramaic translators considered *chaza'* to be the same as or an equivalent of *ra'ah*.

(e) The Aramaic verb *aph'reish* also means “to distinguish.” But two basic definitions for the verb root *perash* is “to separate,” and “to divide.”³⁴¹ In fact, some Eastern Churches Bibles prefer the translation “to separate” to “to divide.”³⁴² The same

³⁴⁰ Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an appendix, containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Op. Cit., p. 302. See also, Ernst. Vogt, *A Lexicon of Biblical Aramaic: Clarified by Ancient Documents*. Rome, Italy: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011, pp. 130-133.

³⁴¹ Ernst. Vogt, *Ibid.*, p. 277.

³⁴² See for instance, George M. Lamsa, *The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts: Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East*. Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1957, p. 7.

verb is used in Ezra 4:18 to say that “the letter ... has been plainly read before me,” i.e. “in separate details.” It is also used in Daniel 5:25, 28 – during the writing on the wall by the fingers of a hand at the great feast made by the Chaldean King Belshazzar for a thousand of his lords – to signify that the Babylonian Kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Remember, there are two books in the Hebrew Bible that were partly written originally in Aramaic: Daniel and Ezra. Therefore, this verb cognates the idea that two elements are plainly divided, each item by itself. That means, where there is light, there is no room for darkness.³⁴³

(f) The Aramaic language has its own absolute nouns רמש (remash) and צפר (tsephar) that can mean “evening” and “morning” respectively. For instance, the lexical form רמשא (remasha)³⁴⁴ appears in Gen. 19:1 to state, “*And there came two angels to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom...*” The Aramaic term tsaph’ra’ that stands for “morning” is a good equivalent for the Hebrew הבקר (haboqer).³⁴⁵ Later, we will see that these new terms do not change in the Peshitta! What is the deviation here between Hebrew and Aramaic stays the same in the Syriac. When two languages are related, especially with Semitic languages: though at one point, the nouns may seem to have the same root, but at another, these languages diverge because there is an indigenous way to express the same idea in the other language. The Aramaic words רמש and צפר for “evening” and “morning” are good examples for that philological phenomenon. That means, these words are local to Aramaic and Syriac.

³⁴³ See I John 1:5b.

³⁴⁴ Michael. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002, p. 1089.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 971.

(g) The Targumic Text is longer than the Masoretic Text, because the interpreter defines and explains some concepts that need to be clear for his audience. As an example, we can consider here this Targumic version of Gen. 1:1-5 that reads,

1. *In the Beginning, <the Word> of Yahweh, with wisdom, created <and> completed the heavens and the earth. 2.* *The earth was barren and chaotic, deprived of men and animals³⁴⁶ empty of every culture of plants and of trees. Darkness was extended over the face of abyss and a spirit of love³⁴⁷ from before Yahweh was blowing upon the face of the waters. 3.* *The Word of Yahweh said: Let there be light [to shine the world]!”³⁴⁸ and there was light according to the decision of his Word. 4.* *And it appeared before Yahweh that the light was good and the Word of Yahweh separated the light from the darkness. 5.* *The Word of Yahweh called the light “day”, [and he made it so that the inhabitants of the world (might) work;] and the darkness, he called (them) “night” [and he made them so that the creatures (might) rest at them]. And there was an evening and there was a morning: (according to) the order of the work of creation, first day.³⁴⁹*

There are four observations to make here about the length of the Targum: First, the Targum is clear about the fact that the world was created by the word of God. Instead of *Elohim* speaking, it is the word of Yahweh that speaks, calling things into being. We do not have that in the Masoretic Text. Could this theology of the word be the same as the one presented by the Apostle John in his gospel (John 1:1)? Indeed, the use of *λογος* in the Hellenistic, first century, and Neo-Platonic periods is an extremely complex subject. But the use of *λογος* in the LXX to refer to God is explained monotheistic. Jews used *λογος* to refer to God, since He was the rational mind – reason – behind the creation and coordination of the universe. Truly, there are similarities between these notions of the word of God with regard to the creation of the world. John was undoubtedly using the LXX and the Hellenic concept in Judaism to bridge the gap between Judaism and

³⁴⁶ Jeremiah 33:10 says, “*this is what the LORD says: ‘You say about this place, ‘It is a desolate waste, without people or animals.’”*

³⁴⁷ Some translations have “an awesome spirit” (cf. LXX).

³⁴⁸ Targum Jonathan offers the possibility of a longer reading in two verses: “*to shine the world!*” (verse 3). “*and he made it so that the inhabitants of the world (might) work;*” “*and he made them so that the creatures (might) rest at them*” (verse 5).

³⁴⁹ Roger. Le Déaut, Op. Cit. pp.74-77.

Christianity. As we have seen in chapter 1, many of the Church Fathers would make the same statement, and they would also write word with capital W, thus, Word, to support their Christology, though *λογος* is not written with Λ – the uppercase letter – in the Greek Scripture.

Second, the chaos is more defined in the Targumic passage: now, we are told that there were no people, beasts, culture, and vegetation when the earth was desolate and barren. Third, it is the Targum that tells us the purpose of the light: “*to shine the world!*” In the Hebrew Bible, this explanation is given later on the fourth day of creation in Gen. 1:15 as being the purpose of the two luminaries: “*to give light on the earth.*” Last, it is from the Targum that we know the reasons why “day” and “night” as two different entities were divided: so that men might work during the day, and rest at night.

In summation, it can be said that there are similarities and differences between the MT and Targ. Most of the Hebrew words are also Aramaic ones. Basically, these two languages have great affinities between them, i.e. they are related to each other. But some concepts are purely Aramaic, such as the verb *chazah*, in verse 4, the equivalent of *ra'ah* meaning “to see.” Moreover, the Aramaic manuscript presents a bigger picture of how desolate the earth was before the word of YHWH created the light. Also, the Aramaic interpreter gives us more reasons for some phenomena that are happening in the Scripture, e.g. the purpose of creating light. Lier is right to advance that “Targums did not only translate the Hebrew Text of Scripture into Aramaic but, at times, they also added words to the translation or incorporated ideas and words that were not directly linked to the Hebrew Text.”³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ Gudrun Elisabeth. Lier, Op. Cit., pp. 9, 10.

Last but not least, in textual-critical methodology, one of the rules by which the oldest manuscript is recognized is through its shorter length.³⁵¹ Tov also presents two factors in determining which text is the earliest: *Lectio brevior* (the shorter reading); and *Lectio difficilior* (the difficult reading).³⁵² That means, the Hebrew Text is the original from which the lengthy Aramaic translation was made.

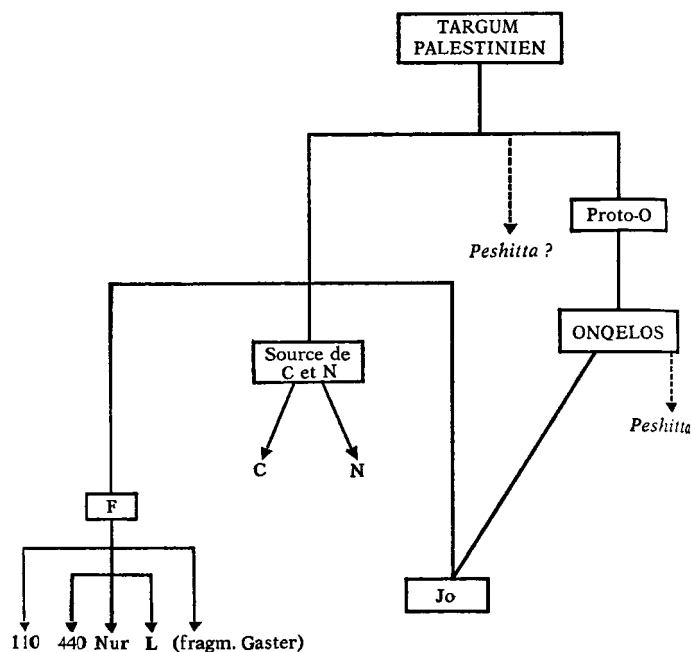


Image 6. The relationships between the Targums and the Peshitta

³⁵¹ This principle is used in New Testament studies to affirm that Mark was the earliest written gospel, as it is the shortest one. Within the same perspective, some Hebrew Bible scholars believe that the Greek Septuagint Jeremiah which is 1/7 or 1/8 shorter than the Hebrew Text might have been translated from a Hebrew original that we do not have or that was preserved separately, and that is older than what we have in MT (See for instance, William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989, p. 6.).

³⁵² See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992.

B. The Syriac Witness of Genesis 1:1-5

The term “*Peshitta*” is derived from the Syriac *mappaqtâ pshitta* that literally means “simple version.”³⁵³ However, it is possible to define *peshitta* as “common”, or “straight.” Weitzman advanced, “in Syriac, as in Jewish Aramaic, the meaning of the participle ܡܫܝܬܐ sometimes developed from ‘stretched out’ to ‘straight, straightforward, simple, obvious.’ Its counterpart ܡܫܝܬܐ in Mishnaic Hebrew likewise came to mean ‘straightforward’.”³⁵⁴ So then, the Holy Scripture in this version was the simple version of the biblical text, and the Bible for all people.³⁵⁵ This manuscript is written in the Syriac alphabet. That name is also transliterated into the Latin script as *Pshitta*, *Pshitto*, and *Fshitto*, but in this essay, “Peshitta” - the most conventional spelling in English – will be used all throughout. Possibly, in the past, this designation has been used to distinguish the Syriac version from others that are encumbered with signs and marks in the nature of a critical apparatus. However, the term “Peshitta” as a designation of the version has not been found in any Syriac author earlier than the ninth and tenth century. In fact, “the name Peshitta is first found in two works by Moses bar Kepa (c. 813-903): his Hexaemeron and his introduction to the Psalms.”³⁵⁶

The Peshitta is the standard version of the Bible for Churches in the Syriac tradition. Weitzman informs us, “The eastern churches have preserved a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Syriac.”³⁵⁷ For some scholars, the Peshitta was the Bible of the Syrian Church. However, for others, the Peshitta was translated by the Jews. The evidence of a

³⁵³ See Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1310.

³⁵⁴ M. P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 2, 3.

³⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

date given for the Syriac version of the Scripture would admit that the Peshitta text has Christian as well as Jewish origin.³⁵⁸ Whether the translators of Gen. 1:1-5 were Jewish or Christian is a matter for debate, and this is not the purpose of this book. What is undeniable, however, is that the Syriac version of the Hebrew Bible has been handed down exclusively by the Eastern Churches, which view these books as the Old Testament.³⁵⁹ So, we owe a big debt of gratitude to the Syriac Churches that have transmitted this version of the Bible to us.³⁶⁰ The point here is that someone should be cautious when approaching this version of the Bible, considering its origin and how it was made.

The circumstances under which the Peshitta was produced and came into circulation is not fully known. Throughout the twentieth century, several scholars wrote on “the Peshitta and its manuscripts” and “the form an edition of the Old Testament (O.T.) Peshitta ought to take.” Among them are M. H. Goshen Gottstein, M. D. Koster, W. E. Barnes, Harold Gordon, and B. J. Roberts. Gordon began his study with an introduction on the origins of the Peshitta (P), mainly based on B. J. Roberts’s *The Old Testament Text and Versions*, and on Pfeiffer’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, mostly quoting them literally.³⁶¹

A big aspect of Gordon and Koster’s work is “the assessment of the type of text of the oldest Manuscript extant (MS 5b1, British Library Add. 14.425, formerly called ‘D’) and of the role it played in the transmission of P-Genesis, as a sequel to the Barnes-

³⁵⁸ Ibidem.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. xiii.

³⁶⁰ Jansma, T. and M. D. Koster, *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version: Genesis – Exodus*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1977, p. xiv.

³⁶¹ P. B. Dirksen, and M. J. Mulder, *The Peshitta: Its Early Text and History: Papers Read at the Peshitta Symposium Held at Leiden 30-31 August 1985*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988, pp. 99-104.

Pinkerton debate seventy years ago.”³⁶² Gordon’s study is intended to discuss the relation of 5b1 to MT, but he only deals with a selection drawn from odd peculiar readings of 5b1 that he found. In fact, there are places, especially in Exodus, where this MS disagrees with MT whereas P (= the average text of the Peshitta) agrees. Koster says that “despite this purely negative approach of the relation of 5b1 to MT, Gordon yet agrees with Pinkerton’s conclusion, that 5b1 has a more literal text than P – meaning with ‘more literal’ that its text stands nearer to MT.”³⁶³

Another part of Gordon’s study is his appreciation of the quotations of the early Syrian Fathers, such as Aphrahat and Ephrem, of the Syriac Text of Genesis and Exodus. But a controversy between him and Pinkerton lays in the fact that “in Pinkerton’s eyes the evidence pointed to the quotations’ being ‘more familiar with the literal type of text’. Gordon, however, in his fifth (and final) chapter ‘relation of MS. <5b1> to the 4th-5th centuries writers’, endeavors to prove just the opposite.”³⁶⁴ Koster continues to explain that “in a number of cases Gordon draws his conclusions before the evidence has been presented on which they are based. So it comes as a big surprise that he confirms Pinkerton’s conclusion regarding the close adherence of 5b1 to MT after having devoted a whole section of his work to a discussion of all the differences that exist between 5b1 and MT – a discussion, moreover, which is based on the Apparatus Criticus.”³⁶⁵

A last facet of Gordon’s analysis of the P-Genesis and P-Exodus is the relationship that exists between the Peshitta Manuscripts, the MT, and the Septuagint (LXX). Koster’s study reveals that:

³⁶² W. E. Barnes, *A New Edition of the Pentateuch in Syriac*. JTS 15, 1914, pp. 41-44, and J. Pinkerton, *The Origin and the Early History of the Syriac Pentateuch*. JTS 15, 1914, pp. 14-41.

³⁶³ See P. B. Dirksen, and M. J. Mulder, *Op. Cit.*, p. 104.

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

As for the LXX Gordon is content with the remark that in none of the fifty-three instances, where the LXX disagrees with MT, it agrees with 5b1. For him this is sufficient reason to reject Pinkerton's conclusion already mentioned, that 'for every one agreement of LXX with the fuller form there are three or four agreements with the simpler.' He does not think it necessary to compare those fifty-three readings of the LXX with BTR (e.g. the edition of Barnes), in support of his contention that his own 'investigation of LXX influence has shown the reverse to be the case.'³⁶⁶

In short, the words of Koster can be borrowed here to summarize this

phenomenon:

In an unpublished thesis H. Gordon argues that, although his own collations of 5b1 confirm Pinkerton's conclusions that this MS contains a more literal text which still stands nearer to MT, the original P already contained the fuller text of the later P-MSS (versus Pinkerton), stating that all early fathers testify to such a text. In his argumentation the essential elements needed for the investigation of textual affinities are either incompletely presented or absent. Gordon judges on a deficient quantitative basis without investigating quality when comparing variants in MT, 5b1, BTR and the Syrian fathers. There is no reason to assume that the early P-text was targumic and that the literal text was a later adaptation to MT. ... These should be labeled 'Rabbinic' or 'Midrashic' rather than 'Targumic'.³⁶⁷

A comparison between the Syriac Manuscripts and how the Church Fathers quoted P-Genesis and P-Exodus throughout the centuries is not the goal of this essay, but it is good to know that the source of P is not fully known to us. This analysis is important to this work because it reveals three stages of the Syriac Text of Gen. 1:1-5 in two successive parts: (1) the development from the literal type of text of 5b1 to the BTR-text of the seventh and eighth century MSS (like the Codex Ambrosianus that will be considered next) and that from BTR to the TR-text of the later MSS and most printed editions.³⁶⁸

In short, "one of the major issues in Peshitta research over the past century has been the question whether text forms that are closer to the supposed Hebrew *Vorlage*

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 262-263.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

attest to an older stage of the Syriac textual tradition, or have been adapted to a Hebrew text.”³⁶⁹ Important in this respect is the well-known article of Rahlfs on the textual criticism of the Peshitta (7a1). Despite Koster’s extensive and thorough work on the Peshitta of Genesis and Exodus, the debate has continued. Van der Kooij stressed the importance of translation technique for the study of the textual tradition.³⁷⁰ R. B. ter Haar Romeny says, “*One should not count variants, but weigh them.*”³⁷¹ 5b1 has some secondary readings which cannot be traced in later manuscripts, though they are generated by the same processes that brought about secondary readings in other manuscripts.

An extremely important folio-sized Syriac (Eastern Aramaic) manuscript of the entire Aramaic Peshitta Old Testament is the Codex Ambrosianus (MS B. 21 Inf; 7a1).³⁷² It has that name because it is currently located in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy. It is written in the Estrangelo script, an older form of the Syriac script. It dates to the sixth or seventh century C.E., and it was acquired around 1006 or 1007 C.E. by the Monastery of the Syrians.³⁷³ The Codex Ambrosianus has all the books of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), and it also includes several of the Apocryphal books which are outside the Western Canon, such as the Wisdom of Solomon, Letters of Jeremiah and of Baruch, Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, Judith, Ben Sirach, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, 2 Baruch with the Letter of Baruch, 2 Esdras, and Book VI of *The Jewish*

³⁶⁹ Dirksen, P. B. and M. J. Mulder, Op. Cit., p. 177.

³⁷⁰ Ibidem.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p. 178.

³⁷² F. C. Burkitt, *The Codex Alexandrinus in Reduced Photographic Facsimile*. The Journal of Theological Studies. Vol. 11, No. 44. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1910, pp. 603-606.

³⁷³ This monastery is also known as the Monastery of the God-Bearer. In Arabic, it is called: “*Dier Al-Suryani*” (Arabic for “The Monastery of the Syrians”). It is located in the Wadi Nitrun in the desert of Scetis south of Alexandria, Egypt.

War of Josephus.³⁷⁴ This is the only Syriac manuscript that contains the Apocalypse of Baruch and IV Ezra in full. Interestingly, the books in Codex Ambrosianus are arranged in historical order, rather than traditional canonical order.

The reason why this manuscript is mentioned here is because it was used as the base text for the critical edition of the Aramaic Peshitta of the Tanakh, being a product of the Leiden Peshitta Institute. After being moved to Milan in the 17th century, the manuscript was discovered by Antonio Ceriani in 1866 and published in facsimile in 1876-1883.³⁷⁵ Barnes also tells us that “this MS. seems to be, all things considered, certainly the most valuable authority which we possess for the Peshitta text of the Old Testament.”³⁷⁶ An electronic version of the canonical books of Codex Ambrosianus, based on that of the Leiden Peshitta Institute, can be examined at the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon.³⁷⁷ A morphologically tagged edition of this electronic version is available in Accordance Bible software. Also, a photolithographic Facsimile Edition of Codex Ambrosianus was published in Milan by A. M. Ceriani, called *Translatio Syro Pescitto Veteris Testamenti Ex Codice Ambrosianus*, or “A Translation of the Syriac Peshitta Old Testament from Codex Ambrosianus” (Milan: Angeli della Croce, 1876-1881). The manuscript contains 330 folios, and it is arranged in 3 columns per side [to each side of the folio]. Only five folios are missing as indicated by the Latin preface.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ William Emery. Barnes, *An Apparatus Criticus to Chronicles in the Peshitta Version: with a Discussion of the Value of the Codex Ambrosianus*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. xx, xxi.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

³⁷⁷ Online resource. See: cal.huc.edu

³⁷⁸ Peshitta Institute, *The Old Testament in Syriac: According to the Peshitta Version*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977p. ix.

The text of Genesis, including Gen. 1:1-5, in this MS³⁷⁹ is written in a neat Estrangela hand. In an emended form it is the basic text of the present edition. The text of Genesis and Exodus is complete. The consonantal text of Genesis has been altered, probably by the original scribe, in 27 places: once (Gen. 29:28) an omission of a mechanical nature (5 words) was made good; 15 cases are corrections of one or two letters; 5 times the correction was made by a small erasure; 4 times the alteration concerned such orthography as an original **אֱלֹהֵי** changed to **אֱלֹהֵי** and **אֱלֹהֵי** to **אֱלֹהֵי**; 2 times the original **אֱלֹהֵי** was changed to **אֱלֹהֵי** by the scribe himself or a near contemporary, but a much later hand altered the text in both cases to its original form.³⁸⁰ For the printed text **אֱלֹהֵי** and **אֱלֹהֵי** are retained. In the MS it seems that changes have already been made by the scribe himself or a later hand in the pointing. Fortunately, Gen. 1:1-5 is preserved intact in the Codex Ambrosianus (7aI), also, in the Sinai Monastery of St. Catherine (Syr. Ms 89).³⁸¹

C. The Derivation of the Syriac Text from Hebrew

The Syriac Text was derived from the Hebrew, probably in the second century AD or earlier, differently from the Syriac New Testament that was translated from the Koine Greek. The Syriac Text is not too far from the MT. However, according to Barnes, there are “some interesting and perhaps original readings in which it stands alone against all other authorities, especially in Chronicles and Ezekiel.”³⁸² The reasons why the Peshitta was produced from the Hebrew Text will be given in this section. Also, an

³⁷⁹ 7aI = Milan, Ambrosian Library, MS B. 21 Inferiore, fols, Ib-29a. Estrangela.

³⁸⁰ Peshitta Institute, *The Old Testament in Syriac: According to the Peshitta Version*. Op. Cit. Ibidem.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. xxxviii.

³⁸² William Emery. Barnes, Op. Cit., pp. xvi-xxvi.

analysis of the Syriac manuscript will be provided, and this will be the basis for further critical comparative analysis.

First, based on my reading of Robinson, it should be underlined that “Syriac belongs to a group of languages classified by philologists under the general name of Semitic, and more especially to the Aramaean section of these languages. While its center was Edessa, the Syriac language was spoken over a wide area in early Christian times, and was more generally used than Greek in Western Asia, apart from Asia Minor.”³⁸³ Muraoka states more clearly that “geographically, at one point or another of its history, Syriac was spread over a vast area comprising Lebanon, Northern Syria, Eastern Turkey, Iraq, and Western Iran. It still survives as a literary language to this day.”³⁸⁴ Muraoka continues, “Apart from some epigraphic materials and translations from classical authors, and the like, the extant Syriac literature is mostly ecclesiastical or theological in its contents, and its quantity is enormous; this has important implications for the study of relatively poorly documented idioms of Aramaic. *All in all, we have in Syriac the best attested and most intensively studied Aramaic idiom.*”³⁸⁵

Second, it should be specially noted that “Syriac is the language of ancient Syria, an eastern dialect of Aramaic in which many important early Christian texts are preserved, and that is still used by the Syrian Christians as a liturgical language.”³⁸⁶ Thackston says, “today it is the classical language of the Jacobites of Eastern Anatolia and the Maronites of Greater Syria. As a result of the far-reaching missionary activity of

³⁸³ Theodore H. Robinson, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 1.

³⁸⁴ Takamitsu. Muraoka, *Classical Syriac for Hebraists*. Second, revised edition. Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, 2013, p. 1.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ See Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1763.

Syriac speakers, the script of Mongolian even today is a version of the Syriac alphabet written vertically *à la chinoise* instead of horizontally. Syriac is also the language of the Church of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast of India.³⁸⁷ As stated earlier, technically, Syriac is usually classified along with the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, and Mandaic. According to Robinson, historically

the Aramaic of the Bible is closely related to the ‘official’ or ‘imperial’ Aramaic that was an international language during the time of the Achaemenid Persian empire of the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. Syriac began as one of the local varieties of so-called ‘middle Aramaic’ that persisted after the breakup of that empire. Syriac itself then became a standard language spoken and written over a wide area of Mesopotamia and Persia.³⁸⁸

It is this “classical Syriac” version of Gen. 1:1-5 exhibited in manuscripts surviving from the fifth century CE onwards, that is the subject of the rest of this chapter of this book.

Third, it is important to briefly mention the historical background of the Syrian Church here in this section. Because, the translation of the Hebrew Text into Syriac can also be explained by historical reasons. In other terms, the translator’s choice of word was greatly influenced by his religious background, church community, and tradition history. Historically, “the famous Christological controversy of the fifth century led to the gradual development of dialectal traits distinguishing Eastern (Nestorian) from Western (Jacobite) Syriac. The two differed from each other in phonetics and phonology, and also developed two distinct alphabets.”³⁸⁹ However, we cannot determine whether these two

³⁸⁷ Wheeler M. Thackston, *Introduction to Syriac: An Elementary Grammar with Readings from Syriac Literature*. Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 1999, p. vii.

³⁸⁸ J. F. Coakley, *Robinson’s Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. Sixth Edition Revised. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 1.

³⁸⁹ Takamitsu. Muraoka, *Classical Syriac for Hebraists*. Op. Cit. pp. 1, 2.

dialects differed significantly in grammar, vocabulary and other matters as well, just based on our present scanty knowledge of both.³⁹⁰

Fourth, the Syriac language can be divided into two branches: East and West. Research has documented that: “in ancient times, the Syriac language-area overlapped the Roman and Persian empires. Later, this geo-political division was broadly reinforced by ecclesiastical boundaries (and doctrinal differences), so that the Syriac-speaking communities in the two empires were separated from each other. The eventual result was two grammatical traditions within the language, the West Syriac and East Syriac.”³⁹¹ Most of the Nestorians were from the East, and most of the Jacobites were from the West. Consequently, the Syriac language is written in two different scripts: (a) the earliest Eastern script called *estrangelo* or *estrangela*, properly *στρογγύλη* meaning “rounded,” fully developed by the 5th century; and (b) the character most in use in Syriac printing which is that of the West-Syrians (Jacobites and Maronites) which is *Serta* (or *Serto*).³⁹² The latter has been developed from the older one. Especially in recent times, this *Estrangelo* character also is often employed in printing. This is also true for the Nestorian character that is nearer to the *Estrangelo* than the *Serta*.³⁹³ But all the styles of writing of the Syriac language are *cursive*.

Fifth, the following Syriac Text of Gen. 1:1-5 in the *Estrangela* script is from the *Vetus Testamentum Syriace Iuxta Simplicem Syrorum Versionem* (The Old Testament

³⁹⁰ Nestorians spawned from Nestorius in the 5th century. Nestorius basically viewed the human and divine natures of Jesus as separate. He was declared a heretic by the Church at the Third Ecumenical Council (at Ephesus in AD 431). Jacobites are non-Chalcedonians, which means that they split from the rest of the Church at the Fourth Ecumenical Council (at Chalcedon in 541 CE).

³⁹¹ See J. F. Coakley, *Robinson's Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2013, Op. Cit. pp. 2-3.

³⁹² George Anton. Kiraz, *The New Syriac Primer*. Piscataway, NJ: Georgias Press, 2007, p. xxvii.

³⁹³ Theodor. Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001, p. 1.

in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version). This edition is based on material collected and studied by T. Jansma, prepared by the Peshitta Institute.³⁹⁴

ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ (1)

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ (2)
 ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ

2. The earth was formless and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ (3)

3. And God said, “let there be light.” And there was light.

ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ (4)

4. And God saw that the light was beautiful. And God separated the light from the darkness.

ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ (5)
 ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ

5. And God called the light “Day” and the darkness he called “Night.” And there was (an) evening and there was (a) morning, the first day.

If the Syriac Text were written with square Aramaic letters, a reader who knows square Aramaic script would quickly see that it is almost the same language as the one of the text written in an older script. For critical comparative analytical purpose, here is the same passage written with the Aramaic square script:

ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ
 ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܘܒܪܝܫܝܬܐ
 ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ
 ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ
 ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ
 ܘܕܝܘܗܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ

³⁹⁴ The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version: Genesis – Exodus. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977, p. 1.



ברשית ברא אלהא ית שמיא וית ארעא.
 ארעא הות תוה ובוה וחשוכא על אפי תהומא
 ורוחא דאלהא מרחפא על אפי מיא.
 ואמר אלהא יוהא נוהרא והוא נוהרא.
 וחזא אלהא לנוהרא דשפיר ופרש אלהא בית נוהרא לחשוכא.
 וקרא אלהא לנוהרא איממא ולחשוכא קרא ליא.

Sixth, it is captivating to see how Lamsa renders Gen. 1:1 in his *Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts*, especially based on the Peshitta: “*God created the heavens and the earth in the very beginning.*”³⁹⁵ Lamsa has reversed the order of the different parts of the sentence, treating the first part as being the last part. This can sound nice because of style, but it can be more difficult for someone who has to translate the same text from English to Syriac. My English translation of the Peshitta is closer to the Masoretic Text’s. The Syriac definite noun ܪܝܫܐ (“*rysh*”) in the context of Gen. 1:1-5 – a narrative about the creation of light – can mean “head, top, beginning, chief, head of a group.”³⁹⁶ But based on context, the best choice here is “beginning.” It happens that the Hebrew term ראש (*rosh*) also has the same definitions as the Syriac word.

Captivatingly, the word “*rysh*” / “*rosh*” is the name of the twentieth letter of both the Hebrew and Syriac alphabets (ר/ܪ), and it has a numerical value of 200. The ancient picture for this letter (𐤒) looks like the head of a man. Consequently, this letter has the meanings of “head” and “man” as well as “chief,” “top,” “beginning” and “first” each of which are the “head” of something! However, the range of meaning is wider in the

³⁹⁵ George M. Lamsa, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

³⁹⁶ Michael. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann[’s] Lexicon Syriacum*. Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009, pp. 1462, 1463.

Hebrew language as it can also mean: “summit,” “leader,” “start,” and “best.”³⁹⁷ In fact, in daily life conversations and matters, this word can stand for “capital; division, part, section, company.” So the biblical writer is saying, *from the get-go, the deity created the universe. 'Alaha' is the head of time, and He is the starting point of history.* That means, the Syriac translators have chosen the equivalent terms here to signify “in the very beginning.”

Seventh, some Hebrew nominal expressions of the original text remain the same in Syriac. Seven of them are as follows: (a) *b'reshît* (Hb. and Syr.) literally means “in a beginning” (verse 1). (b) *'Elohîm / 'Alaha* (Hb. and Syr.) is used for “God” (v. 1). (c) *shamayim / shemaya'* stands for “heavens” (v. 1). (d) *tohu wabohu* signifies “formless and void” (v. 2). (e) *choshek / chashoka'* means “darkness” (v. 2). (f) *tehôm / tehôma'* connotes “deep” (v. 2). (g) *'echad / chad* expresses “one” (v. 5). These nouns are linguistically related.

Eighth, many of the verbs are almost identical. Here are three (3) examples from Gen. 1:1-5 found not just in the Hebrew Text and the Peshitta, but also in all of the three manuscripts (MT, Tar, and P) that have been considered so far: 1. *Bara'* means “to create, to cause to come into existence” (v. 1). 2. *Rachaph* signifies “to hover [over]”³⁹⁸ (v. 2). 3. *'Amar* stands for “to say”³⁹⁹ (v. 3). This similarity can be because Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac are Northwest Semitic languages. In the sixth chapter of this book, the triconsonantal root system that all of them use will be displayed.

³⁹⁷ Here are some biblical examples from the Syriac Bible where the term “*rysh*” is used in these various contexts pre-cited: Gen. 2:10 11:4; 19:12; Ex. 16:16; Jer. 2:3; 2:16; Am. 6:6; Deut. 18:4; Ju. 7:16; 10:18; and Ezra 5:8 (see also, Rev. 6:15).

³⁹⁸ Michael. Sokoloff, Op. Cit. p. 1458.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

Ninth, both the Targum and the Peshitta follow the MT in using the cardinal number 1 to designate the first day of creation – *echad* (Hb.) / *chad* (Ar. and Syr.) – as “Day *One*”. But all three of them use ordinal numbers throughout the rest of the creational narrative, i.e. “second, third, fourth, fifth...”

Last, the agreement of the Codex Ambrosianus with the Massoretic text is no doubt a fact. But Barnes writes, “The whole truth seems to be that *a text formed from the best and oldest MSS. would agree about as frequently as Cod. A with the Massoretic and would disagree as frequently with another Syriac Bible printed text.*” This can be due to the fact that there are different copies of the same text depending on space (geography), time (date), scribal school, and cultural context. Later, in the sixth chapter, it will be shown that many times, the Peshitta agrees with the Septuagint! Another important factor in the differences that exist between MT and P is that a Syriac copy could have been produced from another Hebrew Manuscript of the same biblical passage. It is within that perspective that Weitzman declares that

the extant texts for P are separated from the other extant forms of the Hebrew Bible by many removes. When we study the relationship of P to these other textual witnesses, all the different stages have to be taken into account. The more we attribute to one such stage, the less can be attributed to the others: for example, in relation to the discrepancies between P and MT, the more are ascribed to translation technique, the fewer can be ascribed to a difference in the Hebrew *Vorlage*.⁴⁰⁰

Here is a schema⁴⁰¹ that explains the relationship between the extant Hebrew and Syriac texts:

⁴⁰⁰ M. P. Weitzman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

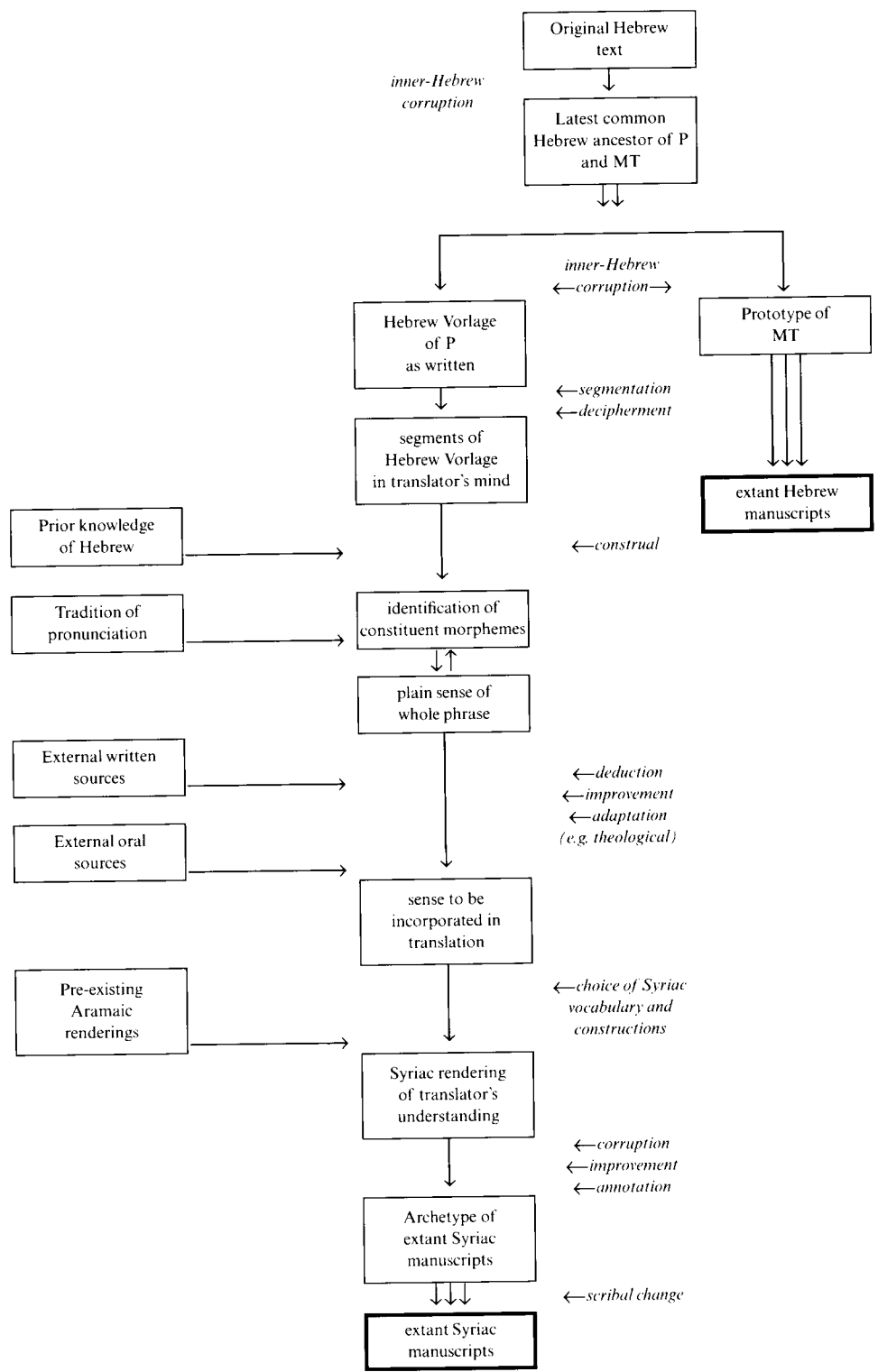


Image 7. The relationship between the extant Hebrew and Syriac texts

D. The Distance and Closeness of the Aramaic and the Syriac Traditions from Each Other

Aramaic and Syriac are closely related; they are the same language. In fact, there is a Syriac version of the Old Testament (Peshitta) that is written with the Aramaic Square Script.⁴⁰² As stated earlier, Jews translated the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic. We call these translations Targums. Some of these texts have been found at Qumran. Moreover, Brock informs us that “Jews may also have translated some books of the Bible into an Aramaic dialect resembling Syriac (Syriac originated as the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa), and these were then taken over by the early Syriac-speaking Christian community to form the beginning of the Peshitta Old Testament.”⁴⁰³

Furthermore, Le Déaut declares that “when it comes to the Syriac version of the Pentateuch (Peshitta), we generally agree to recognize a certain connection with the Jewish Targums.”⁴⁰⁴ P. Kahle estimates that the Peshitta is derived from a version translated in the first century CE, at the time of the conversion of the King Izates II, and of his mother Queen Helena of Adiabene to Judaism, and that the Peshitta definitively lays under the form of Palestinian Targum. On the contrary, P. Wernberg-Moller holds that the writers of the Syriac version had in their hands some prototype of the Onqelos recension. Anyhow, the study of these connections or parallels could partly give an account of the astonishing affinity (in the midrashic exegesis) between the Jewish tradition and the commentaries of Aphrahat and Ephrem.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² *BibleWorks* presents the Peshitta in the Square Script.

⁴⁰³ Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*. Second Revised Edition. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁴ Roger Le Déaut, *Targum du Pentateuque: Traduction des Deux Recensions Palestiniennes Complètes avec Introduction, Parallèles, Notes et Index*. Op. Cit. p. 28.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

How do these translations differ from one another? What are the intersections between the Targum (Tg.) and the Peshitta (P) of Gen. 1:1-5? This section will address these questions.⁴⁰⁶

The linguistic similarity and philological intersection that there is between Tg. and P is clearly seen in both texts. First, the presence of the direct object marker ת / ܕܐ (yat) is a very ancient usage in both versions of Gen. 1:1, as modern Aramaic and Syriac texts do not use *yat* to signal a direct object in a particular sentence. Though in *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*, Sokoloff defines ת as “sign of the accusative.”⁴⁰⁷ Second, the verb “*chazah*” means the same thing – *he saw* – in both Aramaic and Syriac while the verb that is used in the MT (*ra’ah*) is different (Gen. 1:4a). Third, in the same verse, the relative pronoun אר and *dalet* (ܐ) that signify “that” or “which” used respectively in both Tg. and P is not found in MT. Here, both traditions are not close to each other in the exact words used (or a word for word translation), but in the idea that is expressed. The English text reads: “*And God saw that the light was good.*” The Hebrew Text uses the direct object marker א instead in Gen. 1:4a, but both the Targum and the Peshitta have a pronoun that stands for “that” or “which.”

However, the very first verse of the text is different in both traditions. First, the Aramaic Text has “*in the antiquities*” or “*in the East,*” but the Syriac Text agrees with the MT to start the narrative with *b’re’shit* meaning “in a beginning” (Gen. 1:1). Second, in

⁴⁰⁶ The relationships that exist between the Syriac version of the Pentateuch and the Targums have been studied by J. Perles in *Meletemata Peschittoniana* (Wroclaw, 1859), by J. M. Schoenfelder in *Onkelos und Peschitto. Studien uber das Alter des Onkeloschen Targums* (Munchen, 1869) and by J. Prager in *De Veteris Testamenti versione quam Peschitto vocant* (Gottingen, 1875). Like Kahle, Prager affirmed that: “the Syriac Pentateuch definitively lays upon a Targum of the 2nd-1st century BCE. See R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la Littérature Targumique*. Op. Cit., p. 60.

⁴⁰⁷ Michael. Sokoloff *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*. Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2003, p. 55.

the Peshitta, the name of the deity is ‘*Alaha*’ (the linguistic equivalent of the Hebrew *Elohim*). The Targum has the abbreviation of the tetragrammaton instead (יְי), which stands for *Adonai* or “The LORD.” Plus, *Adonai* and YHWH are different words in the Hebrew with different roots and essential meanings. Most of the times, modern Jews pronounce the word “*Adonai*” as a substitute for YHWH, but one does not “stand” for the other.

Third, in Gen. 1:2, the way in which the Peshitta expresses the chaotic state of the earth is closer to the MT: *tohû wabohû*.⁴⁰⁸ The Targum has two different terms to express the same thing: צְדִיָּא וְרִיקְנִיָּא (barren and deserted). This is how chaos is expressed in Aramaic. In the next chapter, we will see that the Greek Text uses other concepts to talk about the earth that was *formless and void*.

Fourth, in Gen. 1:4a, the adjective ט (tav) that stands for “good” in the Aramaic Text is rendered by ܫܦܝܪܐ (*shapiyra*) meaning “beautiful” in the Syriac Text.

According to the *Syriac Lexicon* of Sokoloff, this adjective – based upon the context where it is used – connotes: “1. beautiful. 2. suitable for. 3. noble. 4. opportune. 5. respected. 6. pious. and 7. devout.”⁴⁰⁹ So then, the translators are saying that “*the light that was called out into existence by ‘Alaha’ was beautiful to look at.*” Also, possibly, it is because *tab* can also signify “well.” The Syriac translators did not use the word *tab* which they also have in the Syriac language, but here, they preferred to use a particular word from their Aramaic dialect (Eastern Syriac) to express that “*And God saw that the light was beautiful.*”

⁴⁰⁸ English: formless and void.

⁴⁰⁹ Michael. Sokoloff, Op. Cit. p. 1588.

In short, the Targum is very close to the Peshitta. In a clearer way, P. Kahle says, “Today there can be no doubt that the closest relationship existed between the Syriac Pentateuch and the Old Palestinian Targum, of which we found the first specimens in the Old Cairo.”⁴¹⁰ The differences between these two manuscripts can lay in the fact that they use different scripts – square script versus the estrangela script – but it is almost the same thing that is expressed in both the Aramaic Text and the Syriac Text. A good reason for their similarities is that Syriac is an Aramaic dialect. Semitic languages share syntactical and grammatical features alongside a vocabulary that is almost / pretty much the same. An Aramaic speaker who hears another person read Gen. 1:1-5 from the Syriac Bible will understand most of the message that this reader wants to communicate to his or her audience.

The next chapter of this book is about the most famous among the Hebrew Bible manuscripts, the Septuagint (LXX). The materials therein are arranged in this way because Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac are Northwest Semitic Languages, Greek is considered an Indo-European Language, and Coptic is now recognized as a Hamitic Language (an independent branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family). It is good to analyze the Semitic traditions first, and then, Hellenistic and Byzantine texts, as we will see that these last two kinds of literature are not far from each other.

⁴¹⁰ Paul. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*. 2nd Edition, 1959, p. 272.

Chapter Four: The Septuagint Version of Genesis 1:1-5

According to Dines, “the Septuagint – the Greek Bible – represents the first known attempt to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into an Indo-European language. It stands at the very beginning of the history of the diffusion and interpretation of the Bible in translation.”⁴¹¹ The Septuagint was the first translation made of the Hebrew Bible (or of any literary work of comparable size) into another language. “It was not, however, the first translation of a text from one language into another. The practice of translation was old and well established in the Near East long before the translation of the Hebrew Bible, and translation techniques had existed for many centuries before the Hellenistic age. Its products had long been known over wide areas. Such translations often served official and administrative purposes.”⁴¹²

With regards to the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, Jobes and Silva state, “It marks a milestone in human culture. Any knowledge of the ancient world would be incomplete without understanding the significance of the Septuagint and the history that brought it into existence.”⁴¹³ It is true that “the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was a literary enterprise of immeasurable consequence in the history of western mankind. It has just been called ‘the most important translation ever made.’”⁴¹⁴ Two different cultures are represented by having the Scripture in both Hebrew and Greek, because Hebrew is a Semitic language and Greek is an Indo-European language. Dines continues to say that: “the Greek Bible is important for our understanding of both Greek-

⁴¹¹ Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004, p. ix.

⁴¹² Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 1.

⁴¹³ Karen H. Jobes, and Moisés. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000, p. 19.

⁴¹⁴ Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

speaking Hellenistic Judaism (almost all the translations were made between the third and first centuries BCE) and emerging Christianity. It provides our earliest evidence for the way in which the Hebrew Scriptures were understood by non-Hebrew-speaking readers, both Jewish and Christian. It also contributes to our knowledge of Koine Greek.”⁴¹⁵ So then, the Septuagint Manuscript (LXX) has a lot of importance to this book. Comparing the LXX with the Hebrew Text will reveal again that the early translations of Scripture from the Hebrew language to another specific language were not word-for-word translations.

Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to lay out the origin of the extant Greek Text of Gen. 1:1-5, the Ecclesiastical authority of the Septuagint across the ages, a critical analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 based on the Greek Text, and a comparative analysis of the same biblical passage vis-à-vis the Masoretic Text (MT).

A. The Old Greek Text, Its Provenance

First, it should be mentioned that Greek is the ancient and modern language of Greece. It is the only representative of the Hellenic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The ancient form of Greek was spoken in the southern Balkan peninsula from the 2nd millennium BC. The Greek alphabet, used from the 1st millennium BC onwards, was adapted from the Phoenician alphabet. The dialect of classical Athens formed the basis of the standard dialect (koinè) from the 3rd century BC onwards, and this remained as literary language during the periods of the Byzantine Empire and Turkish rule. The colloquial language, however, continued to evolve independently.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Jennifer M. Dines, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

⁴¹⁶ See Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, Op. Cit. p. 761.

Katharevousa is considered the purest form of modern Greek used in traditional literary writing, as opposed to the form that is spoken and used in everyday writing (called demotic).⁴¹⁷ Later in this dissertation, we will see that the Greek language had greatly influenced the Coptic language. The Septuagint was written in Koinè Greek. Some sections of the Septuagint may show Semiticisms, or idioms and phrases based on Semitic languages like Hebrew and Aramaic.

Second, the question “*what is the Septuagint?*” should be answered. Surprisingly, the term “Septuagint” is slippery. It is derived from the Latin *septuaginta* which means “seventy”; the standard abbreviation – LXX – is the numerical Latin equivalent. As a title, *Septuaginta* is abbreviated from *interpretatio septuaginta virorum* (“the translation by the seventy men”) or similar expressions. The Greek equivalent, found in manuscripts from the fourth century CE onwards, is *kata tous hebdomekonta*, meaning “according to the seventy”, or similar.⁴¹⁸ Harl tells us that: “the Hebraic Torah was translated in Alexandria in the third century B.C.E. To this core, little by little were added the other biblical books, translated or directly composed in Greek especially in Egypt, principally in the second and first centuries B.C.E.”⁴¹⁹ So, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was not done overnight. Dines also writes, “It is a kind of shorthand, reflecting early legends about seventy or, more properly, seventy-two original translators of the Pentateuch. The stories are preserved in a Hellenistic Jewish work, the pseudepigraphical

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 462.

⁴¹⁸ Jennifer M. Dines, Op. Cit., p. 1.

⁴¹⁹ Marguerite. Harl, et. al., *La Bible Grecque Des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien*. Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 1994, p. 31.

Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates (Ep. Arist.) and in other early sources, both Jewish and Christian.”⁴²⁰

Third, it is widely assumed that the Book of Genesis was the first book to be translated into Greek. Likewise, Gen. 1:1-5 could have been among the first lines that the LXX translators interpreted from the Hebrew Text to their own Greek context. Therefore, Genesis has captivated the attention of many Hebrew Bible scholars. Dines explains, “The translation contains many interesting linguistic and exegetical solutions to challenges and difficulties in the Hebrew, as the translator strives to create something for which there is no exact precedent.”⁴²¹

The LXX is a faithful translation. Based on a comparison of both texts (MT and LXX), the Greek scribes aimed to translate the Hebrew correctly. The Hebrew text that they were using at the time of translation is very similar to (though not always identical with) the later MT. Of course, that Hebrew Text back then was unvocalized or unpointed. “The translator produces a Greek which is sometimes elegant and idiomatic, sometimes apparently influenced by Hebrew expressions and syntax. His practice is not always consistent, but this is understandable in someone who is, perhaps, feeling his way step by step,” declares Dines.⁴²²

Fourth, the exact circumstances of the creation of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Text are uncertain, but different versions of a legend about the miraculous nature of the translation have existed since antiquity. When it comes to the origins of the LXX Manuscript, there should be a consideration of both fact and fiction. There are some information about its origins that are accurate, and there are others that seem imaginary

⁴²⁰ Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴²² Ibidem.

or inventory. My reading of Dines reveals that it is around the middle of the second century BCE that evidence begins to accumulate for the existence of many books of the Hebrew Bible.⁴²³ Wider collections of these writings were in circulation among both Jews and Christians by the end of the first century CE. In the fourth century, all the books of the LXX were considered as Scripture, although there were also alternative versions, such as the Aquila's.⁴²⁴

The *Letter of Aristeas* or *Letter to Philocrates* is a Hellenistic work of the second century BCE. Some Bible scholars assigned this letter to Pseudepigrapha. Josephus who paraphrases about two-fifths of the letter, ascribes it to Aristeas and to have been written to a certain Philocrates, describing the Greek translation of the Hebrew Law by seventy-two interpreters sent from Jerusalem to Egypt at the request of the librarian of Alexandria. This resulted in the Septuagint translation. Though some have argued that its story of the creation of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is fictitious, it is the earliest text to mention the Library of Alexandria.

The *Letter of Aristeas* is a curious and paradoxical piece of literature. It is best known as what purports to be a contemporary, and thus the earliest extant, account of the translation of Scripture into Greek. It is important because, with the exception of the Septuagint itself, it is the longest of the extant products of Alexandrian Judaism in the Ptolemaic period and because it is the most complete piece of Alexandrian prose surviving in its original dress. Yet its historical significance derives from its function in Christian history rather than in the history of Hellenistic literature.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴²⁴ Ibidem.

⁴²⁵ Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, Op. Cit., p. 19.

Beginning in the *Letter of Aristeas*, the legend describes how the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy Philadelphus (285 – 247 B.C.E.) commissioned seventy-two Jewish scribes to translate the sacred Hebrew Scriptures for his famous library in Alexandria. Subsequent variations on the story recount how the scribes, working independently, produced word-for-word, identical Greek versions. In the course of the following centuries, to our time, the story has been adapted and changed by Jews, Christians, Muslims, and pagans for many different reasons: to tell a story, to explain historical events, and – most frequently – to lend authority to the Greek text for the institutions that used it. It should be noted here that over the last two millennia, this legend has not been used properly, as it has been abused in various cultures around the Mediterranean.⁴²⁶

A modern theory of origin is *the Septuagint as a Greek Targum* viewed by Paul Kahle. Kahle holds that “the Greek translation of the Law was not made, not by the order of a Ptolemaic King, but to meet the needs of the Egyptian Jewish communities who could no longer understand Hebrew.”⁴²⁷ Kahle also agrees that the translation was not made (as Aristeas represents) by Palestinian Jews but by Jews who were residents of Egypt. He considers Aristeas as a work of propaganda, written by a Jew for the purpose of glorifying his own people and their Law.⁴²⁸ According to Kahle, “although the document embodies older material, it must be placed about 100 B.C., and has reference not to the *original* translation of the Law, but to a revision which had recently been made

⁴²⁶ See “The Legend of the Septuagint” in Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁴²⁷ Sidney. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press At The Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 59.

⁴²⁸ *Ibidem*.

of Greek translations already in existence, which is termed as the ‘standard edition’ of the Greek Law.”⁴²⁹

In a nutshell, three other modern theories of origin are the following ones: (a.) *A Palestinian provenance*: according to Moses Gaster, “only a Palestinian origin could have sufficient prestige for reception by the Diaspora.” The request of an Egyptian king for a copy of the Jewish Law for an enrichment of his library must be assigned to the ‘domain of legend,’ its presence forming part of the ‘apologetic tendency so characteristic of the whole Hellenistic literature.’

(b.) *The liturgical approach*: for H. St. John Trakeray, these texts were translated to be used in the liturgy of worship services performed in Greek. Because “liturgiology, once largely pursued as an autonomous field and in isolation, is now recognized as reflecting not merely the forms and patterns but the innermost life, with its growth and development, of the worshipping community.” A study of the worship of the people of God under the aegis of both Old and New Covenants supports this theory. For example, “some modern writers have gone so far as to present the Gospels as Christian lectionaries.”

(c.) The transcription theory according to which “the translators used a Hebrew text transliterated in Greek characters,” is associated in modern times with the name of Frantz Xavier Wutz of Eichstätt.⁴³⁰

Moreover, regarding the interpretation of the *Letter*, Harl informs us that it can be approached in three different ways: a. In the Antiquities, for Philo and Flavius Josephus, the *Letter* is considered as **an apology of the Greek translation of the Torah.**

⁴²⁹ Ibidem.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., pp. 63-73.

Formulated as such, this interpretation is not held anymore, because it does not seem true. Is it a propaganda for an ancient translation of ca. a century ago? b. The Letter would be **a work of propaganda in favor of Judaism for the Greeks**. The Jews would address the Greeks to show them the excellence of their religion and Law (N. Meisner shares that view). c. The Letter would be **a work of propaganda in favor of Judaism for the Jews**. According to J. R. Barlett, E. Bickerman, D. W. Gooding, M. Hadas, R. Hanhart, G. Howard, F. Parente, V. Tcherikover, G. Zuntz and others, the Letter is aimed at a Jewish public and wants to defend the productions of Alexandrian Judaism against Palestinian Judaism. Among these productions is, in first position, the allegorical method of interpretation of the Law and dietary interdictions, and especially to do a synthesis between Jewish monotheism and the Greek philosophy.⁴³¹ Without forgetting to mention here that Jews were preoccupied with keeping the value of the LXX up, and they fought against anything that could rival their Scriptures.

Another hypothesis to the *Letter of Aristeas* is that we could translate section 30 of the letter as follows: “*The books of the Law of the Jews are absent, with some others; for it is found that they are written with Hebrew characters with Hebraic pronunciation; on one hand some passages have been translated orally (*sesemantai*) with negligence and incorrectly, those who knew about it reported this as such.*” This translation gives to the verb *sesemantai* neither the meaning of “being written” nor “being translated, but that of “being defined orally.” Certainly, this meaning does not seem attested by the dictionaries. But is it impossible to give that signification to the verb *semainomai*, which has an unknown semantic field? So then, the 30th section would aim at the Jewish liturgy

⁴³¹ Marguerite. Harl, et. al., *La Bible Grecque Des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien*. Op. Cit., p. 43.

in Alexandria, that would have been Targumic: reading of the Hebrew text followed by a Greek oral translation. At the time of Demetrius, there was no written translation of the Hebrew text; on the other hand, there were only oral translations that were not of a good quality according to those who knew about them, i.e. the Greek speaking Jews, the friends of Demetrius. These translations would be partial and improvised. Nothing exists from these translations that could not be written.⁴³²

Fifth, why was the name “Septuagint” given to this translation of the Hebrew Bible? What does it stand for? Jobes tells us about the reason why the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is named as such as follows:

Although the translation was Greek, its name ‘Septuagint’ comes from later Latin church language, *septuaginta*, which is the numeral seventy. The name of this ancient translation is, therefore, commonly referred to by its Roman numeral as the LXX. This apparently represents the number of translators of the Pentateuch, although there are conflicting traditions whether they numbered seventy or seventy-two. The number seventy-two symbolically represents the ancient tradition that there were six translators from each of the twelve tribes, for the tribes had long since been dispersed by the time the translation was made. The point would be that the translation was made by and for “all Israel.” A second source gives the number of translators as seventy, representing the belief that the translators were assisting Moses by disseminating the Torah to Greek-speaking Jews (Num. 11:16).⁴³³

As stated earlier, both the name Septuagint and the number 70 (LXX) would make sense because Yahweh told Moses to bring Him seventy of the elders of Israel who were known to him as leaders and officials among the people of Israel. These 70 elders were to come to the tent of meeting and stand there with Moses. Yahweh would take some of the power of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the 70 elders. It is

⁴³² For more explanation, see Marguerite. Harl, et. al., *La Bible Grecque Des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien*. Op. Cit., p. 54.

⁴³³ Karen H. Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2016, p. 11.

interesting that this took place in the wilderness so that Moses would not have to carry the burden of the people alone. Here, someone may find that the appellation and designated number are appropriate to the circumstance in which the translation took place. More importantly, this translation work is not about one particular group or tribe, but it concerns the whole nation of Israel.

“Attempts at definition have revealed a complex historical and textual reality and have shown the importance of distinguishing between the original translations and the manuscripts and editions in which these have come down to us,” informs Dines.⁴³⁴ Again, the LXX is a vast diverse corpus of religious texts in Greek. It comprises: the Pentateuch (Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut.); the historical books [Jsh., Jdgs., Rt., 1-4 Kingdoms (Samuel-Kings); 1-2 *Paraleipomenon* (1-2 Chronicles); 1-2 Esdras; Esther; Judith; Tobit; 1-4 Maccabees; The sapiential books [Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), Song of Songs]; Job; Sirach (Ben Sira/Ecclesiasticus); the prophetic books [the Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi)]; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; and Daniel. But the goal of this essay is not to present an analysis of the transmission of the LXX – understood as collections of sacred texts both like and unlike their Hebrew counterpart – through the centuries in manuscripts and printed editions, but rather to compare the LXX Text with four other versions (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Coptic) of Gen. 1:1-5.

Moreover, Harl informs us that what we call today the LXX or the Bible of the LXX is the totality of the Greek Old Testament: that means, not only the Greek translation of the collections of the books of the Hebrew Bible, but also, on one hand, various additions to Esther, to the Psalms, to Jeremiah and to Daniel, and on the other

⁴³⁴ Jennifer M. Dines, Op. Cit., p. 24.

hand, the ‘deuterocanonical’ or ‘apocryphal’ books.⁴³⁵ By the term “Septuagint,” are designated the books that were received in the Canon of the Church that existed only in Greek (for instance, Wisdom, 2 Maccabees 2, 19-end, 3 and 4 Maccabees); or the Greek translation of the Hebrew or Aramaic books that the Jewish Canon did not retain (1 Esdras, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees 1, 1-2, 18, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, Psalms of Solomon).⁴³⁶

Furthermore, in the *Antiquity*, on one hand, the LXX designated two distinct realities. From the beginning of the second century of our era, it designated the entire Old Testament. Some of the writers that support this view are Justin, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea. On the other hand, in the Jewish hellenophone tradition (such as the *Letter of Aristeas*, and Flavius Josephus), the LXX stands for the five books of the Torah, the Hebraic law.⁴³⁷

Sixth, why did the Hebrew Bible have to be translated into Greek? Jobs and Silva answer this question by informing us that

the Bible contains ancient writings that have been continuously read from the time of its authors until our own. The first and oldest part of the Bible was written originally in Hebrew (with some small portions in Aramaic: Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4-7:28; Jer. 10:11; and two words in Gen. 31:47). The abiding importance of these sacred writings – first to the Jews and later to the Christians – demanded that throughout history they be translated into the languages of the peoples who received them as Scripture.⁴³⁸

Jewish people living outside of the Holy Land did not speak Hebrew. For instance, after Alexander the Great conquered the Near East (ca. 333 B.C.E.), the Jewish

⁴³⁵ Marguerite. Harl, et. al., *La Bible Grecque Des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien*. Op. Cit., p. 39.

⁴³⁶ Ibidem.

⁴³⁷ Ibidem.

⁴³⁸ Karen H. Jobs, and Moisés. Silva, Op. Cit., pp. 19-20.

people came under the influence of Hellenistic culture. Their religious values collided with Greek philosophies, language, and practices. “Because as a rule the Jews of the Diaspora (Dispersion) scattered throughout the Mediterranean no longer spoke Hebrew, they needed to translate their sacred writings into Greek, which had become the *lingua franca* of the Hellenistic world. Thus the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, now known as the Septuagint, became Scripture to the Greek-speaking Jewish communities in the Diaspora.”⁴³⁹

Last, it is worth attesting that “the legend of the Septuagint grew and developed a great deal, but differently from the way it changed among the Jewish people. Principally this was because of the different status accorded to the Greek translation of the Bible itself among followers of the two faiths.”⁴⁴⁰ On one hand, the Greek version of the Bible, among Jews, gradually became less and less important. The invention of the legend of the miracle among Jews in the narrow space of time (between 80 and 117 CE) was a happy marriage of need and opportunity. On the other hand, among Christians, things went in the other direction. The Bible was acclaimed from the very beginning of Christianity. The Greek Septuagint was considered early in the history of the Church as the Bible. For instance, “the beginning of the Greek version came to be seen as a matter of great importance too; the story of the origins of that Greek version became closely intertwined with and reflecting the history of that version itself.”⁴⁴¹

The early Christians took over the Jewish legend, but they made changes to it, and they probably needed to do so. Thus Origen (AD 185-254) aimed at discovering the quantitative differences between the LXX and the Hebrew Text in order to provide

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁴⁰ Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, Op. Cit., p. 95.

⁴⁴¹ Ibidem.

material for Jewish-Christian disputation. Jerome looked at the LXX differently from Origen. He saw the link with the Hebrew original, and the tie with its contents, as integral to the accuracy and the authority of the Greek Text, and of any Latin versions dependent on it. The Greek translation was the first Bible used by the new Christian Church in its proselytizing mission. Moreover,

it was also used by the Byzantine Church, the dominant church in the East for many centuries, and even more importantly, it served as the basis for virtually all the oriental translations and indeed for the Latin translation also; the *Vetus Latina* was made from it, and the Vulgate as it left the hands of Jerome is not quite as 'Hebrew' as Jerome might have made it. Although he planned to bring the Latin Bible as near as possible to the *Hebraica Veritas*, he understood that there were limits to what the Christian churchgoer could tolerate.⁴⁴²

That means, for theologians and Bible translators in the first centuries of the Common Era, it was a must to engage with the Septuagint. Since many Jews only spoke Greek at that time, the Greek Bible was a necessary tool for both Abrahamic faiths, although this view was stronger in Christianity. This leads us to a consideration of the authority that the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible had in the Early Church across ages.

B. The Ecclesiastical Authority of the Septuagint Throughout the Centuries

The Greek version of the Hebrew Scripture, together with the Greek New Testament, was the Bible of most Christians during the first centuries of the church.⁴⁴³ Jobs and Silva are also right to claim, "The Septuagint, not the Hebrew Bible, was the primary theological and literary context within which the writers of the New Testament and most early Christians worked. This does not mean that the New Testament writers were ignorant of the Hebrew Bible or that they did not use it. But since the New

⁴⁴² Ibid., pp. 95, 96.

⁴⁴³ Karen H. Jobs, and Moisés. Silva, Op. Cit., p. 20.

Testament authors were writing in Greek, they would naturally quote, allude to, and otherwise use the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible.”⁴⁴⁴

Consequently, familiarity with the Greek Old Testament will enlighten the student of the Koinè Greek New Testament. Engagement with the Greek Text is valuable. The Greek Bible provided some of the vocabulary upon which the New Testament writers drew. These Greek words could have been straight from the LXX or they were already part of the Greek-speaking community of Jews of the first-century Palestine. In other instances, the early Christian writers borrowed terms from the Septuagint to affect a “biblical” style.

Second, the New Testament writer sometimes quoted the Septuagint word for word to draw the attention of his contemporary readers to specific passages of Old Testament Scripture. For example, John starts his Gospel by describing the creator of light as being the incarnated word as follows: “Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων: καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν” (John 1:1-5).⁴⁴⁵ This theology of word and light is grounded in Gen. 1:1-5 that is considered as being the first day of creation, and the creation of light through the spoken word. Surely, this is a writer who knew the Greek text of Gen. 1:1-5. So then, Gen. 1:1-5 in Greek is the scriptural text that most Christians who lived during the first centuries of the Common Era (CE) read.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁴⁵ English translation: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (John 1:1-5).

Third, at the present time, it is recommended by some theology professors that Hebrew Bible students have the MT in one hand and the LXX in the other, or both texts side by side. The continuity and development of thought that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament should be appreciated. This is of particular concern for biblical theology. There are theological links between both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Text of the Old Testament. These theological links would have been familiar to Christians of the first century, though they are not easily perceived in the Hebrew version. Yes, it should be confessed that “the LXX contains textual links that are not found in the Hebrew Text that provide historical and literary continuity for the important task of biblical theology.”⁴⁴⁶ But in spite of these discrepancies, someone who would like to study the Greek New Testament adequately should pay attention to the Old Testament in Greek as well. It is within that perspective that Jobes and Silva maintain that: “no New Testament scholar can afford to ignore the Septuagint.”⁴⁴⁷ Metaphorically, a passage of the Koine Greek New Testament is a window open toward an Old Testament field. Here, the terms “Old Testament” include a consideration of both the MT and LXX. The early Christian writings are better understood in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly the Septuagint. So, both MT and LXX are important in the study of the Holy Scriptures.

However, the *Tanakh* has to be studied in its own right. Like many Church Fathers, some contemporary Christian theologians tend to interpret the Hebrew Bible in the light of the New Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures should be analyzed on the basis of their cultural, anthropological, historical, and geographical contexts or background. The writers of the Hebrew Bible were writing for their original readers and audience, not

⁴⁴⁶ Karen H. Jobes, and Moisés. Silva, Op. Cit., p. 26.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

for us today. For instance, what did the word φῶς mean for a Jewish Christian living in Alexandria or Jerusalem during the first century CE? Possibly, they thought that light was something creative, and an element that could give life. However, darkness is not viewed positively in both the past and our time. But the way that the Hebrew Bible scribe wanted to impress on his contemporaries that light was the very first thing created through the spoken word. This may not be apparent to how a later writer would approach the notion of light within his own modern culture, space, and time. So then, the meaning of a Greek word in the past and its meaning in the present time should be taken in consideration.

Fourth, after the redaction of the New Testament, the Septuagint, not the Hebrew text, was the Bible used by the early church fathers and councils. This was for a long time (for about 500 years). Most of the church fathers could not read Hebrew, consequently, they used key passages of the LXX in their doctrinal discussions centered on the nature of Christ and the Trinity. Certainly, they experienced difficulties with Greek terms that were used in the translation of the Old Testament associated with Greek culture and philosophy. Because the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. Probably, these terms were alien to the thought of the original Greek translators. Jobes and Silva add, “The simple fact that the Hebrew Scriptures existed in the Greek language and were read by people living in Greek culture led to exegesis by both Jewish and Christian interpreters (e.g., Philo and Arius, respectively) that was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy.”⁴⁴⁸ Jobes and Silva conclude, “Of course, one must also consider that the Greek translator himself originally rendered the Hebrew in ways that were to some extent influenced by Greek culture and thought making the text even more congenial to a later

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

exegesis that would be similarly influenced.”⁴⁴⁹ For example, Jesus is associated with rationality (*logos*) in the opening verses of the Gospel of John. The philosophers of the intertestamental period would understand these images very well, and the contemporaries of the Apostle John clearly understood what he meant.

Fifth, it was not until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century that Christians of the Western church started to become unfamiliar with the LXX. Part of the reasons for this development is that the Reformers encouraged their contemporaries to return to the original text of the Old Testament which is Hebrew. The use of translations of the Hebrew Bible, including the Septuagint, was discouraged. So, attention was shifted from the early translations of the Hebrew Text to go back to the original Hebrew Text. Today, as a result, the English translations of the Old Testament are quite rightly based on the Masoretic Text, not the Septuagint or the Vulgate (V). “While the Hebrew is the best textual base for modern translations, we cannot forget that the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament was nevertheless the Bible of the earliest Christian writers.”⁴⁵⁰ Within that perspective Brown writes that few early Christian interpreters engaged with Gen. 1:1–2:3 in the original Hebrew. The Septuagint (LXX) or Greek translation of the OT was the Scripture of the early church. Until Jerome’s innovative Latin translation from the Hebrew, begun about AD 390, the Latin translations used in the western areas of the Roman Empire were based on the LXX; then scholars depended on Jerome’s version until the flourishing of Hebrew scholarship in the Renaissance.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Ibidem

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵¹ Brown, Andrew J. *The Days of Creation: A History of Christian Interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3*. Blandford Forum, Dorset, US: Deo Publishing, 2014, p. 13.

Last, a consideration of the manuscripts and codices of the Septuagint should be briefly presented. For the manuscripts, the familiar threefold classification into (a) uncials, (b) cursives, and (c) papyri has been adopted, although it is not entirely satisfactory.⁴⁵² To attempt to describe, or even to list, the uncial, cursive, and papyri manuscripts of the LXX would take us far beyond the limits of the present work. This is not in any measure to minimize their importance. The three oldest codices of the LXX that have survived are as follows: Codex Vaticanus (B or 03), Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ or S), and Alexandrinus (A).

(a) The Codex Vaticanus (1209) is a fine vellum tri-columnar manuscript housed in the Vatican Library at least since the late fifteenth century, except for a brief sojourn in Paris as a spoil of the Napoleonic wars, when attention was drawn to its antiquity and importance by the Roman Catholic scholar J. L. Hug. The text of this Codex is far from uniform in value, and from the time of Grabe onwards it has been widely identified with the recension of Hesychius.⁴⁵³ B is regarded as the oldest extant manuscript of the Greek Bible (Old and New Testaments), one of the four great uncial codices – ancient, handwritten copies of the Greek Bible – including S and A. The original lacks Genesis 1:1-46:28a; II Sam. 2:5-7, 10-13; Psalms 105(106):27-137(138):6b; and Maccabees in the Old Testament and from Hb. 9:14 onwards in the New Testament.

⁴⁵² Sidney. Jellicoe, Op. Cit. p. 175.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 177.

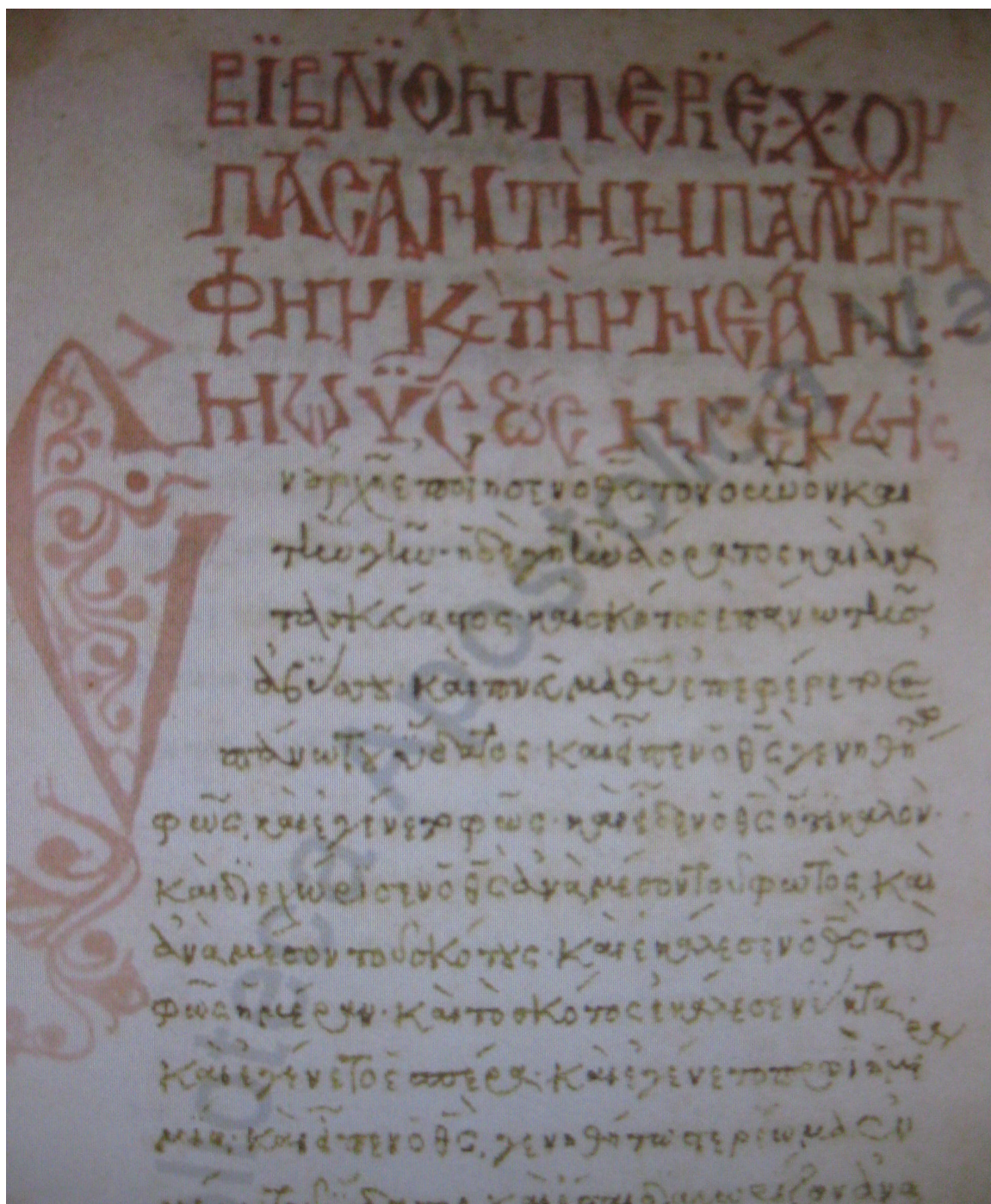


Image 8. An excerpt of Gen. 1:1-5 from the *Codex Vaticanus*, from the Vatican library.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ Online resource

(b) The Codex Sinaiticus – from the very nature of the circumstances of its discovery, could not be other than incomplete.⁴⁵⁵ Unknown to the earlier generations of collators, it became available only in 1862 when it was edited in four volumes (forty-three leaves; the fragment Is. 66:12-Jer. 1:7; parts of Gen. 23-24, Num. 5-7; Lev. 22:3-23:22) by its discoverer Tischendorf (1815-1874) on his first visit to the Convent of St. Catherine at Sinai. Swete's plea for a 'homogeneous edition of the remains of S or a photographic reproduction of the text' as 'one of the most urgent needs in the field of Biblical palaeography' had to wait for twenty years before its fulfillment by the Lakes. Although defective in the Old Testament, the manuscript is complete in the New Testament.⁴⁵⁶

(c) The Codex Alexandrinus (5th century) is now bound in four volumes of which the first three contain the Old Testament. It has been in London since 1627, first in the Royal Library of St. James' and from 1757 in the British Museum. Like \aleph and B it is defective in Genesis. Apart from a missing leaf in I Sam. (12:20-14:9) and nine in the Psalter [49:19-129(130):10], and a few slight defects owing to tearing, it is complete in the Old Testament.⁴⁵⁷ Along with the Codex Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus, A is one of the earliest and most complete manuscripts of the Greek Bible.

This shifts our attention to the textual variants of the Greek Bible version of Gen. 1:1-5.

⁴⁵⁵ For a complete story, see *The Mount Sinai Manuscript of the Bible With Four Illustrations*, 2nd ed., For the Trustees of the British Museum, 1934.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. 180.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

C. Textual Variants of the Septuagint Version of Genesis 1:1-5

This section will present some of the different readings that one may find in the Greek Text of Gen. 1:1-5 while reading the same biblical passage from various sources. This is due to the fact that they are some early revisions of the text, such as some done by Aquila⁴⁵⁸, Theodotion⁴⁵⁹, and Symmachus⁴⁶⁰. This order of the names of these linguists has widely been accepted as chronological. These translators wanted to produce a Greek version that would faithfully reflect the Hebrew Text.

In fact, in the Hexapla, Origen had already tried to present a glimpse of these early versions of the biblical text. Jellicoe enlightens us by saying that “the extremes are represented by Aquila and Symmachus, the former on the side of linguistic fidelity to the original, the latter on that of literary elegance. Midway comes Theodotion, whom Thackeray has described as ‘a successful plagiarist ... best known for his habit of transliteration, in other words for the evasion of the translator’s function.’”⁴⁶¹

After a close consideration of the manuscripts, a text critic can come to realize that the LXX answers some questions that one might have concerning the MT. First, an English

⁴⁵⁸ Aquila was a translator of the Old Testament into Greek, a disciple of Rabbi Akiva, sometimes assumed to be one and the same as Onkelos. Nota Bene: only fragments of this translation (α’) have survived in what remains of fragmentary documents from the Old Cairo Geniza in Fustat, Egypt. The Aquila manuscript is also supported by excerpts taken from the Hexapla (Ernst. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995, p. 55).

⁴⁵⁹ Theodotion was a Hellenistic Jewish scholar – perhaps working in Ephesus – who in c. 150 CE translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Whether he was revising the Septuagint, or was working from Hebrew manuscripts that represented a parallel tradition that has not survived, is debated (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*. III. xxi. 1).

⁴⁶⁰ Symmachus (late 2nd century) translated the Old Testament into Greek. His translation was included by Origen in his *Hexapla* and *Tetrapla*, which compared various versions of the Old Testament side by side with the Septuagint. Some fragments of Symmachus’ version that survive, in what remains of the Hexapla, inspire scholars to remark on the purity and idiomatic elegance of Symmachus’ Greek. He was admired by Jerome, who used his work in composing the Vulgate (Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*. LIV).

⁴⁶¹ Sidney. Jellicoe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 83.

translation of the Greek passage will be provided, and the following text is Gen. 1:1-5

from the LXT LXX *Septuaginta* Rahlfs':

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.
In a beginning God made the heaven(s) and the earth.

2 ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος.
And / But⁴⁶² the earth was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the abyss, and the Spirit of God moved over the water.

3 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.
And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.

4 καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκότους.
And God saw the light that [it was] good. And God divided between the light and (between) the darkness.

5 καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.⁴⁶³
And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And there was an evening and there was a morning, (the) first day.

Gen. 1:1 in the Rahlfs' edition starts in the following way: Ἐν ἀρχῇ meaning "In a beginning." This is an accurate or acceptable translation in light of the MT that also starts with בראשית. Wenham argues, "Omission of the definite article is regular in temporal phrases and does not necessarily indicate that ראשית should be taken as construct (cf. Isa. 46:10; Prov. 8:23)."⁴⁶⁴ Interestingly, Aquila (α') has the preposterous ἐν κεφαλαιῷ which can only be justified as an etymological play on the root ראש, hence "head, heading, topic" in Greek usage. Wevers maintains, "It does illustrate the lengths to

⁴⁶² Dana and Mantey, in *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, suggest that 'now' is sometimes the connotation of the conjunction δέ.

⁴⁶³ Alfred. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta: Id Est Vetus Testamentum Graece Iuxta LXX Interpretes*. Vol. II. Stuttgart, Germany: Privilegierte Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935; 1979, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *World Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1–15*. Vol. 1. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987, p. 3.

which α' would go to maintain etymological equivalents."⁴⁶⁵ Moreover, α' has εκτισεν as might be expected, since ποιεω is reserved for the root עשה.

In Gen. 1:2, α' renders the Hebrew pair – תהו ובהו – as κενωμα και ουθεν meaning “empty and nothingness.” Theodotion preserves a rhythmic pair by the neologism θεν και ουθεν in imitation of the Hebrew. Symmachus has αργον signifying “uncultivated” and αδιακριτον which means “mixed, undifferentiated.” All are attempts to understand the negative character of the Hebrew lexemes as applied to the earth before the creation of light.⁴⁶⁶ It is interesting to see that both α' and Theodotion render על־פני literally by επι προσωμον (*upon the face*).

It is not just the Hebrew word רוּחַ that has several definitions, but also, the Greek concept πνεῦμα, ατος (cf. Gen. 1:2; 6:3, 17; 7:15; 8:1).⁴⁶⁷ Depending on the context where it is used, it can mean *wind* (Ex 15,10) that is mostly rendering רוּחַ; *the breathing out of air, blowing, breath* (Jb. 8,2); *breath, (life) spirit, soul* that which gives life to the body (Jgs. 15,19); *spirit* to denote the immaterial part of a person (Wis. 15,11); *spirit* as seat of feelings and will (I Kgs. 20,5); *spirit, spiritual being* (Nm. 16,22); *(evil) spirit* (Jgs. 9:23); *spirit of God* (Gn. 1:2; Isa. 11:2). For example, πνεῦμα ζωῆς *breath of life* (Gn 6:17); διὰ πνεύματος τοῦ θυμοῦ “by the breath of anger” (Ex 15:8); οὐκ ἐλύπησεν τὸ

⁴⁶⁵ John William. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis: Septuagint and Cognate Studies*. Number 35. 1993, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁶ John William. Wevers, Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁴⁶⁷ Speiser provides a translation that is possible: *an awesome wind*. He deduces that the Hebrew *ruach* means primarily “wind, breeze” secondarily “breath,” and thus ultimately “spirit.” But the last connotation is more concrete than abstract; in the present context, moreover, it appears to be out of place – see H. M. Orlinsky, JQR 47 (1957), 174–82. The appended *'elohim* can be either possessive (“of/from God”), or adjectival (“divine, supernatural, awesome”; but not simply “mighty”) cf. **Gen. 30:8** (Speiser, 1964, p. 5).

πνεῦμα Αμων “he did not grieve Amon’s spirit, i.e. he did not grieve Amon – or – he did not cause pain to Amon” (II Sam. 13:21; see also Job. 7:15).⁴⁶⁸

Gen. 1:3 is a common bond between the Biblical Text and ancient Near Eastern Documents where the deity calls things into existence through the spoken word. “καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς...” (And God said...) appears nine times in this first biblical narrative of creation. According to the biblical story, light is among the things that were created by *fiat*. God (θεός) called light into existence, and light came to be. Psalm 33:6 presents God as the Sublime divine Being, whose word is clothed with power, authority, and efficacy, and who can do and does whatever he will. It is not a mistake that the Apostle John speaks of the *logos* or word as being the creator, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who himself is the light that lightens every creature. For some Christian interpreters of the Bible – based on Gen. 1:1-5 – light was the very first thing created through the spoken word, and Jesus Christ is considered to be both word and light in the Christian tradition (cf. John 1:1; 8:12).

Gen. 1:4 reads, “*And God saw the light that [it was] good. And God divided between the light and (between) the darkness.*” The Greek verb εἶδεν (3. sing. aor. act. ind. ὁράω) is used to signify “he saw.” In English the past tense of “go” is “went,” from the archaic verb “wend.” Similarly in Greek, the most frequently occurring past tense of “see” takes its second aorist form from ὁράω, although the first aorist form, εβλεψεν (from βλεπω), occurs rarely.⁴⁶⁹ α’ has αγαθον, a root he reserved for טוב. The attributions of καλος for טוב by Turner are highly questionable; this word was used as equivalent for יפה that means “beautiful.” Now, it is not surprising that the Peshitta (the

⁴⁶⁸ Lust, Johan. et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003, p. 977.

⁴⁶⁹ Karen H. Jones, *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*. Op. Cit. p. 21.

Syriac Bible) has ܠܫܦܝܪܐ (*shapiyra*) meaning “beautiful” instead of ܬܘܒܐ (*tav*), good, valuable, precious.⁴⁷⁰ Also, LXX usually renders the preposition בֵּין by ἀνα μέσον whereas α’ uses μεταζυ / μετοζυ.

Concerning the repetition of the Hebrew verb קרא in the fifth verse of the first chapter of Genesis, Wenham says that “chiasmus of verb and indirect object “call-light” paralleled to “darkness-call” is used to express unity of the two acts of naming.”⁴⁷¹ The LXX scribes follow this idea to have ἐκάλεσεν (he called) twice also. Moreover, the Septuagint reads, “*èméra mia*” meaning “day one.”

Verse 5 is unique in that the cardinal is used to modify “day” rather than the ordinal, i.e. *mia* rather than *protè*. This is done in imitation of the Masoretic Text (MT) which has *èchad* instead of *rishôn*, but ordinals for the next six days. Wenham, quoting Speiser, declares that: “the cardinal ‘one’ may be used for the ordinal ‘first’ in Hebrew and Akkadian.”⁴⁷² The Hebrew writer does the same thing in Gen. 2:11 while enumerating the four headwaters of the river that was watering the garden flowed from Eden. Regarding the *first day*, Speiser maintains, “In Semitic (notably in Akkadian, cf. the Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet XI, lines 215ff.) the normal ordinal series is ‘one, second, third,’ etc., not ‘first, second, third,’ etc.”⁴⁷³ In Gen. 1:5, α’ with rare judgment did use πρωτη.

In spite of these difficulties in the Greek translation of the Biblical Text, both the technical and conceptual complexities of Septuagint studies have to be appreciated.

⁴⁷⁰ See chapter 3 of this book. See also, Michael. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin: Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann[’s] Lexicon Syriacum*. Op. Cit. p. 507.

⁴⁷¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *World Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1–15*. Vol. 1. Op. Cit., Ibidem.

⁴⁷² Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁷³ E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964, p. 6.

Linguistic and philological studies of a specific scriptural passage can help us see the beauty of the Bible. In this book, it is just a consideration of the first five verses of the Bible (Gen. 1:1-5). It amazes us to see how much information that can be found when we compare the Hebrew original with a Greek translation. Critical comparative and analytical work is a good endeavor.

D. Parallels Between the Hebrew and the Greek text

“The presence of special elements in the LXX which may date to early periods in history of the biblical books has always intrigued scholars,” declares Tov.⁴⁷⁴ Students of the Bible are fascinated by the parallels that exist between the LXX and MT. In the following comparison of these two versions (MT and LXX) of the same narrative (Gen. 1:1-5), the aim is not just to look at what is only mentioned in one and what is lacking in the other, but also, to evaluate the purpose of the writers and the translators of these two pieces of literature at the time of redaction or at the time of translation. What was the goal of the authors when they were writing their texts? A difference in purpose can explain why one translation intersects the other, and the reasons why they are parallel to one another.

The Greek Septuagint translation of Gen. 1:1-5 is both close and far from the original Hebrew (Masoretic) Text at the same time. In other words, on one hand, the Greek scribes followed the MT closely, but on the other, for linguistic, theological, and cultural reasons, their translations differ from the Hebrew original. The data that we have about the evidence of the LXX suggests that there are different types of literary material

⁴⁷⁴ Schenker, Adrian. *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible: The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, p. 121.

in this version of the Hebrew Bible. These materials are useful and relevant to the literary analysis of the Bible, and some of them are often dated earlier than MT. As Tov says, “Having reviewed the evidence of the LXX, other biblical versions, and the Qumran manuscripts, we note that beyond MT, the LXX preserves the greatest amount of information on different stages in the development of the Hebrew Bible, early and late.”⁴⁷⁵ For example, in the following lines we will meticulously compare the LXX translation of Gen. 1:1-5 with its Masoretic Text. This is the whole point of this chapter.

In Gen. 1:1, the Greek translators did not understand בראשית as bound to the following clause, but simply as a prepositional phrase modifying ברא, and in exact imitation of MT, the LXX has ἀρχῆ unarticulated.⁴⁷⁶ Yet, in English we require the definite article “in *the* beginning.” Jobes comments, “‘Αρχῆ is a monadic noun, i.e., a noun for which in any given context there is only one corresponding referent. Languages handle monadic nouns differently with respect to the presence or absence of the definite article. ‘Αρχῆ is monadic because it refers to the unique point or origin of heaven and earth.”⁴⁷⁷ Muraoka informs us that: “the feminine noun ἀρχῆ means *beginning, commencement, starting point; rule, dominion; high office; the far end; that which is fundamental and of prime importance; division of an army, ‘company.’*”⁴⁷⁸

The primary meaning of the term ἀρχῆ is very appropriate to the context in which it occurs here in Gen. 1:1, i.e. “beginning.” The same noun appears in Hosea 1:2: “‘Αρχῆ λόγου Κυρίου εν Ὠσηε” meaning “*here begins the Lord’s pronouncement through Hosea.*” *Genesis* is the title of the book in the Greek version and also in English Bibles.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁷⁶ John William. Wevers, Op. Cit., p. 1.

⁴⁷⁷ Karen H. Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*. Op. Cit., p. 20.

⁴⁷⁸ T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2009, p. 94.

Genesis means “beginning.” However, if the English translation of the name of the book in Hebrew – בראשית (which is the first word of the book) – was used in English Bibles instead, that would give a hint to the reader: “*In a beginning.*” This is because the way in which the biblical books were named in Greek culture is different than how ancient Near Easterners did the same thing by selecting one of the first words that appear in that specific book. But most importantly, the meaning of the name of the book is connected to the contents of the book, and what the book is about.

Moreover, the verb ברא occurs 11 times in *Genesis* and is always translated by ποιεω as here. The subject of ברא is given as ο θεος whereas MT has an unarticulated אלהים. Of course, α’ has θεος unarticulated, being closer to MT.⁴⁷⁹ But in many places of the Biblical text, the name of God is considered definite even if the definite article is absent. *Genesis* always has articulated θεος throughout the book except for 17:7, 8; 21:33 where the noun either serves as predicate nominative of ειναι or as second modifier of the verb επικαλεσω, but cf. note on 21:33.

Furthermore, the accusative ουρανον is articulated as might be expected for אר השמים. The noun ουρανος occurs 44 times in *Gen.*, and it is always in the singular over against the dual form of the Hebrew; it is also normally articulated as well regardless of MT. Only three times does it occur without an article; in two cases, 1:8; 49:25, it equals MT. In 2:4 the noun occurs twice, the first time without an article and the second one with the article, both contrary to MT!⁴⁸⁰ Τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν (the heavens and the

⁴⁷⁹ John William. Wevers, Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibidem.

earth) is “probably an example of merism, where two nouns are used to represent a totality. Here, “heaven and earth” represent everything there is.”⁴⁸¹

The Greek language has cases, as does Hebrew. The use of the Hebrew direct object אִת is a good way to express the Greek accusative case. Another example can be the Hebrew word pairs or construct forms of nouns that are good equivalent of the genitive case in Greek, without forgetting the genitive ל and the use of *maqfef* (־) as a connector in Hebrew. $\text{עַל־פְּנֵי הַהַיָּוִם}$ meaning “over the face of the deep” in Gen. 1:2 supports this grammatical rule mentioned above as well. Dana and Mantey note that: “Modern Greek, like most other modern languages, uses the preposition as the chief device for representing case distinctions.”⁴⁸²

In Gen. 1:2, the $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ (which occurs 849 times in Gen.) can often be interpreted either as contrastive or as indicating change of subject to $\gamma\eta$. The Greek translators interpret the rhythmic pair תהו ובהו (cf. Isa. 34:11; Jer. 4:23 as well) as “invisible and unorganized.” The Hebrew words are synonyms, both meaning “waste, void” and the LXX interpreters tried to distinguish them by two negative terms reflecting the context. Also, that the primeval land was “unseen” is clear from the following statement that darkness reigned; light had not yet been created (v. 2).⁴⁸³ Later in the narrative, according to verses 6 and 7, it is clear that light was still undifferentiated from darkness, and it is evident that the earth had not yet been divided into seas and dry land.

The use of the adjective $\acute{\alpha}\beta\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\sigma\omicron\nu$ for the Hebrew *tehôm* is linguistically a major shift in the Greek translation. Did the scribes know about the mystical dimension that was

⁴⁸¹ Karen H. Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*. Op. Cit., Ibidem.

⁴⁸² Dana, H. E., and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1967, p. 96.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

present in the text laid before them? Wevers continues, “The term תהום is a mythological one, and the choice of such a Greek adjective – ἀβύσσος – ‘unfathomable; boundless’ is not inappropriate, though the term itself had no mythological overtones as such. Gen. also articulates the word, thereby nominalizing the adjective, whereas MT never does (except once at Ps. 106:9).”⁴⁸⁴ In his *A Greek-Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Muraoka defines ἀβυσσος as “*source of water located exceedingly deep below*” (cf. Gen. 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; Deut. 8:7; Am. 7:4; Hb. 3:10).⁴⁸⁵ The word also occurs as a rendering for תהום in the flood story in Gen. 7:11; 8:2, where it refers to the subterranean regions (αιπηγαι της ἀβύσσου).

Darkness was ἐπάνω the abyss, as was the πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπάνω the water. So, the darkness and the divine wind are here personified as being “over, upon,” for MT’s על-פני. Wevers argues, “Since πνευμα θεου is fully articulated, as is the Hebrew, it probably means a divine wind or breath, rather than the spirit of God. This divine wind was being brought over the water, the imperfect ἐπεφερετο being used to represent the Hebrew participle, thereby showing its continuous character.”⁴⁸⁶ That is why another translation can be “sweeping.” The same stem is used in Deut. 32:11 of eagles in relation to their young. The Ugaritic cognate describes a form of motion as opposed to a state of suspension or rest.⁴⁸⁷

In Gen. 1:3, we find *the first word of creation*. God speaks ten times throughout the chapter (cf. Gen. 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29), and the formula obtains: verb in third person imperative + και + verb in the aorist, e.g. “let be ... and it was ...” Here,

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁸⁵ T. Muraoka, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁶ John William. Wevers, *Op. Cit. Ibidem.*

⁴⁸⁷ E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*. *Op. Cit.* p. 5.

in view of the σκότος existing over the abyss, φῶς was created to contrast with it. According to Lust, “φῶς, φωτός in Gen. 1:3 means “light,” but *daylight* in II Kgs. 7:9, *light* (metaphorically) in Hos. 10:12⁴⁸⁸, and *illumination* in Ex. 27:20.⁴⁸⁹ So, it is the same word, but the meaning varies in function of where it is used, and based on the context in which the Greek scribes used the term.

In Gen. 1:4, the LXX translators imitate MT by placing the subject of the ὅτι clause outside the clause, i.e. God saw the light ὅτι καλόν. Muraoka differentiates **αγαθος** (flowing from kind and generous character as a substance; *good* and acceptable; *useful* and desirable; joyful; *performing* or *functioning well*) from **καλός** [advantageous, beneficial, desirable (Gen. 15:15); morally good and acceptable (Gen. 2:9); *Good and pleasing in appearance, beautiful* (Gen. 1:4); conducive to pleasure and enjoyment)].⁴⁹⁰ In the Book of Genesis, the Greek translators preferred to use καλός to render the Hebrew “טוב”; it is used 31 times in the book, whereas αγαθός occurs only five times. This contrasts with the Book of Deuteronomy where αγαθος is used 16 times and καλος only five times. Harl rightly points out that “καλος is particularly appropriate here in that the term also has an esthetic, moral and ordered intent.”⁴⁹¹ Wevers believes that “the divine recognition was more than functional; it was also an assessment of worth in and for itself.”⁴⁹²

The second clause of Gen. 1:4 deals with the αορατος nature of the primordial γῆ; God put order into his creation by creating a division between the φῶς he had

⁴⁸⁸ The word *light* is also used in the early Christian writings as a metaphor (e.g. by Jesus in Mt. 5:14; John 8:12).

⁴⁸⁹ Lust, Johan. et al., Op. Cit., p. 1262.

⁴⁹⁰ T. Muraoka, Op. Cit., pp. 1, 2, 359, 360.

⁴⁹¹ French: “*non pas seulement ce qui fonctionne bien, mais ce qui a une valeur esthétique, morale, ordonnée.*” See Marguerite. Harl, La Bible d’Alexandrie: La Genèse. Paris, 1986, p. 88.

⁴⁹² John William. Wevers, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

commanded into existence and the σκότος which had been total prior to the creative word. *The darkness is not replaced by light*, but the two stand side by side, though differentiated. The word διεχώρισεν is modified by two ἀνὰ μέσον phrases. The repetition of ἀνὰ μέσον is conditioned by the (necessary) repetition of the preposition בין in the parent text. Such repetition of בין occurs 32 times in the book. In exactly half of them (16) ἀνὰ μέσον is also repeated (in Gen. 3:15⁴⁹³ four times!); in 11 cases it is not repeated, and in three cases (9:12, 13; 17:10) בין occurs three times and the Greek scribes translate only the first and the third. The other two cases are not translated.⁴⁹⁴

Last, in Gen. 1:5, the Septuagint scribes quite properly rendered ל קרא ל by an accusative; καλέω normally takes two accusatives, the modifier of the “named” and the “name” itself. The created differentiation between light and darkness constituted the alternation of day and night. In Haitian Creole, *Nwa* is used to translate “black” and “night.” In English *black* has the connotation of a color, and *night* has the connotation of a time period. That is why “*lannwit*”⁴⁹⁵ is used in the Haitian Creole Version of Gen. 1:5, not “*nwa*.” It is about a period of time, not a color. Each creation day’s activity is concluded with the formula: “*and there was an evening and there was a morning ...*” Gen. 1:5 is unique in that the cardinal is used to modify “day” rather than the ordinal, i.e. *μια* rather than *πρωτη*. This is done in imitation of MT which has אהר, but ordinals for the next six days.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ This is the proto-euangelion (the first gospel): “And I will put enmity *between* you and the woman, and *between* your offspring [or your seed] and hers; he will crush [or strike] your head, and you will strike his heel.”

⁴⁹⁴ John William. Wevers, Op. Cit. p. 3.

⁴⁹⁵ Derived from French: “*La Nuit*” (English: “the night”).

⁴⁹⁶ John William. Wevers, Op. Cit. p. 3.

According to Frank Robbins – who underlined Philo’s role in initiating the hexaemeral literary tradition, the first extant work in Greek dealing with the interpretation of the creation story in Genesis is Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi* (On the Creation of the World).⁴⁹⁷ As a result, Philo was the first to articulate a metaphysical significance in the unusual ‘one day’ (יֶחָדַי, *yôm ’echad*) of Gen. 1:5; for him it indicates that the creation of Day 1 is not the material world but the perfectly unified intellectual world that forms the prototype for the material world.”⁴⁹⁸

Thus, Philo introduces a material/immaterial dualism into the understanding of the creation account that frequently reappears in later treatments. Likewise, he proposes that creation should be instantaneous, because the heavenly bodies – the markers of the time that we know – do not exist when creation begins. In other words, time itself is a created, not an eternal, entity.⁴⁹⁹ Then, what kind of light (φῶς, *phōs*) is there here in Gen. 1:1-5? Actually, as we have seen earlier – because the creation hymn of Gen. 1 is in a chiasmic structure – the creation of light in Day 1 can be considered an introduction to Day 4 where the luminaries are mentioned with more precision: sun, moon, and stars. We have come to understand that the Greek scribes tried to preserve and present the same message that was in the Hebrew Text into another language. Most of the time, they succeeded in their attempt to know the intention of the original Hebrew author. But the culture of the Greek translators is so vividly portrayed in their translations, and we are not so sure about which Hebrew Manuscript that they had in front of them. Jobes and Silva explain that

⁴⁹⁷ Frank. Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, 27; Folker. Siegert, *Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style*. in HB/OT, vol. I, bk. 1:167.

⁴⁹⁸ *De opificio mundi* 9.35; Jack P. Lewis, “Days of Creation,” p. 435.

⁴⁹⁹ *De opificio mundi* 7.26; Philo, “Allegorical Interpretation, I,” in *The Works of Philo*. ed. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 25 (*Legum allegoriae* 2.2).

one of the reasons scholars cannot be certain that the Greek exactly represents its Hebrew *Vorlage* is that translation between any two languages always involves a degree of interpretation. The translators who produced the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible were also interpreters who came to the text with the theological and political prejudices of their time and thus had to deal with hermeneutical issues similar to those we face today. Their translations were no doubt influenced, whether deliberately or subconsciously, by what they believed the Hebrew meant in light of their contemporary situation, which may not have been what the author of the Hebrew intended. Clearly, this is bad news to the textual critic, who wants to use the Greek version to reconstruct its Hebrew parent text.⁵⁰⁰

When the translation of the Greek translators differs from the original Hebrew, it is for linguistic, cultural, grammatical and stylistic reasons. A translation should not be expected to be exactly the same text with the original whether in length, syntax, grammar, or vocabulary. Why? Hebrew and Greek are two different languages! So then, it was not all the times that the LXX translation was consistent, but this is understandable, as the Greek scribes needed to insert their own cultures, histories, and worldviews within their translations. Another reason is that the terms used in one language to translate terms of another language are seldom equal in connotation. For instance, often what we perceive as translation is actually an overlap between the two (2) ideas represented in the 2 terms, like a Venn diagram. It is fortunate that the translators of the LXX were Jews living in the Diaspora who knew both languages (Hebrew and Greek).

⁵⁰⁰ Karen H. Jobes, and Moisés. Silva, Op. Cit., p. 21.

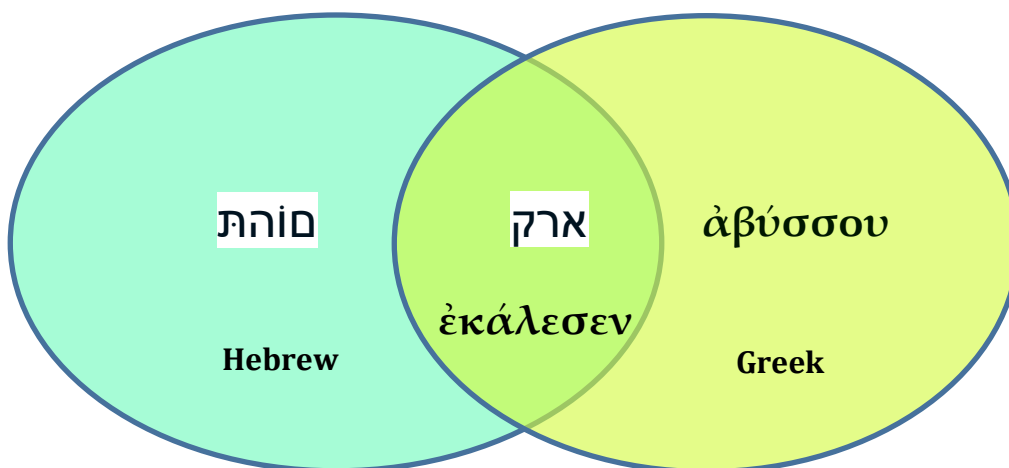


Image 9. Venn Diagram demonstrating for commonality between 2 terms from different languages used to translate the same concept.

In view of the above, in translation work, there are times when a verb of the original language fully corresponds to a verb used in the language of translation. For example, Hb. קרא = Gr. εκαλεισεν (Gen. 1:5). But at other times, a Hebrew noun can be translated by another concept while the Greek translator is trying to express the same idea. For example, Hb. תהום = Gr. Αβυσσου (Gen. 1:2). These scribes knew why they picked these words. These concepts were used to express their ideas – straight or in a zigzag manner – derived from the Hebrew text. “The LXX translation of our text is competent and straightforward, along with what Wevers calls “the tendency to level out or harmonize the text.”⁵⁰¹ Captivatingly, while bringing up the parallels that exist between MT and LXX, the beauty of both texts are exposed, and possible ways of interpretation (literal, theological, and analogical) are laid out. Brown rightly points, “A

⁵⁰¹ Andrew J. Brown, Op. Cit. p. 14.

final alteration in translation might seem fairly trivial, but had significant consequences for the future interpretation of our creation narrative.”⁵⁰²

Though the purpose of this book is not to lay out which translation of the Bible is the best one, it is relevant to ask the following question: is there a standard version of the Hebrew Bible? For example, the Samaritan Pentateuch that does not go beyond the Pentateuch, did not participate in any subsequent Masoretic developments, and thus became a valuable witness of relatively early textual conditions. There are some 6,000 cases throughout the Torah where the Pentateuch of the Samaritans differs from the received text. In about 1/3 of these cases, the Samaritan Torah has the support of the LXX. This suggests that both the Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX made independent use of common earlier traditions.⁵⁰³

In the end, it is necessary to note that – among other translations of the Bible such as P, T, and V – the LXX translation is the single most important source preserving redactionally different material relevant to literary and critical studies of the Scriptures.⁵⁰⁴ It is amazing to see how the Septuagint translation was the basic text of the Christian Church for many centuries. For instance, The LXX Text of Gen. 1:1-5 is a trustworthy version of the biblical narrative of the creation of light. However, it remains a difficult task to find out the Hebrew parent text from the LXX Manuscript.

The next chapter is about the Coptic version of Gen. 1:1-5. There is a reason why the Coptic Text is placed right after the Septuagint Text of Gen. 1:1-5 in this critical comparative analytical essay: both Greek and Coptic have affinities. The similarities and differences that exist between their stories of the creation of light will be discovered. It is

⁵⁰² Ibidem.

⁵⁰³ E. A. Speiser, 1964, Op. Cit., p. LXXI.

⁵⁰⁴ See Emmanuel. Tov, in Adrian. Schenker, Op. Cit., p. 143.

not an exaggeration to say that the next section is a culminant point in this book, because the Egyptian narrative of the creation of light will talk back to both the MT and the LXX.

Chapter Five: The Story of the Creation of Light According to the Native Egyptian (Sahidic and Bohairic) Manuscripts

The Bible of the Egyptian Christians in Bohairic and Sahidic is an important text to study, for critical comparative analysis with other manuscripts, such as the LXX, MT, T, and P. The goal of this chapter is to present a textual analysis of the native Egyptian Manuscripts of the story of the creation of light, and a comparison of it with the other manuscripts of Coptic dialects, such as Fayyumic, Akhmimic, Mesokemic, and others.

A. The Birth of the Coptic Version of the Bible

According to the New Testament, the Day of Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. On that day, the Apostle Peter preached about the life, work, death, and resurrection of Christ. Many people (about 3,000 souls) believed in his evangelistic message, and they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Among the audience that listened to St. Peter's sermon were "devout Jews" from Egypt.⁵⁰⁵ Many of those Jewish residents of Egypt spoke Greek, and they came from different parts of the Egyptian country that were part of the Roman Empire. Possibly they were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (7 weeks after Passover). After this celebration, they returned home with the news that they had heard, but these Egyptian communities needed to hear an apostle preach about Jesus Christ as a first-hand experience to believe in the Christ.

⁵⁰⁵ See Acts 2:5 and 2:10.

A missionary journey to Alexandria⁵⁰⁶ is not mentioned in the New Testament, but there are some grounds for the consideration of Mark as being the founder of the Alexandrian Church. According to the Book of Acts of the Apostles, on the first journey to Seleucia and Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas were accompanied by Mark who is also known as John Mark.⁵⁰⁷ The biblical text tells us that Mark was a “helper” (Gr. *Hupêretês*) to them.⁵⁰⁸ Apparently, Mark’s close relationship to Barnabas even involved family ties: Mark is identified as Barnabas’ cousin (Gr. *Anepsios*) in Colossians 4:10. Mark traveled with them to Pamphylia in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), where he left the group and returned to Jerusalem.

Later, the departure of Mark was a source of tension between Paul and Barnabas. During the second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted Paul to take Mark with both of them again. However, Paul was not persuaded by Barnabas, and Paul refused to take Mark with the two of them, because, prior to this journey, Mark had abandoned them. As a result of their disagreement, Paul and Barnabas parted ways: Paul went to Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus.⁵⁰⁹ No more information is recorded in the Acts narrative about the role of Mark in the Christian mission of the Early Church.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ William Harmless informs us that “Alexandria was the gateway to Egypt and was one of the largest, most prosperous, and most sophisticated cities of the Roman Empire. It had been named after Alexander the Great, who founded it in 331 BCE. It stood at the western edge of the Nile Delta and served in Roman population, having, by recent estimates, at least 200,000 inhabitants” (William. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 4).

⁵⁰⁷ See for example, Acts 12:12 and 12:25 (“John, whose other name was Mark”), Acts 15:37 (“John called Mark”), and Acts 15:39 (“Mark”). In Acts 13:5 and 13:13, he is simply referred to as “John.”

⁵⁰⁸ Acts 13:5.

⁵⁰⁹ Acts 15:36-41, especially verse 38.

⁵¹⁰ Mark is also linked with the apostle Peter in I Peter 5:13. Moreover, Mark was credited as the author of the Second Gospel at least by the early second century. This tradition of authorship first appears in the writings of Papias, bishop of Hieropolis ca. AD 120-130 (See Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity*. Cairo, Egypt: The

Based on tradition, Copts have viewed Mark the Evangelist as the founder of their church and as the first in the line of Alexandrian patriarchs.⁵¹¹ There is not much historical evidence to support this view. Takla explains, “The introduction of Christianity by St. Mark has been challenged in scholarly work because of the lack of any historical sources before Eusebius of Caesarea. However, there is an obscure mention of an encounter between Clement of Rome and St. Barnabas in Alexandria, as Barnabas was despondently leaving Alexandria amidst arguments he had with the Jewish leaders and philosophers of the city.”⁵¹² Because Mark and Barnabas were companions, it is plausible that they were together during that trip.

In the *Clementine homilies*, there is an account about the traditional story of Mark in Alexandria where *he walked around the city until his sandals broke*.⁵¹³ On that basis Mark would have started his preaching in Alexandria ca. AD 54-55. Davis, quoting Eusebius, affirmed that: “when Nero was celebrating the eighth year of his reign, Anianus, as the first after Mark the evangelist, received the responsibility for serving the districts in Alexandria.” According to Eusebius, “Mark’s mission ended when he ordained Anianus as bishop in AD 61.”⁵¹⁴ So, traditionally, Mark – being a representative of the Jerusalem Church (or Apostolic Church) – is considered the founder of the Alexandrian Church.

American University in Cairo Press, 2004, pp. 3-5). Except that Mark and Paul were reconciled, and Mark became one of Paul’s apostolic assistants (cf. Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24).

⁵¹¹ On an early seventh-century ivory relief from Alexandria, now preserved in the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris, the figure of Saint Mark the Evangelist appears in the foreground, seated on a throne and surrounded by a group of bishops who are gathered together beneath the gate of a city. This Alexandrian relief gives the viewer a vivid, visual sense of the emerging self-identity of the Coptic church and its patriarchate during the first six and a half centuries of its existence (Ibid., p. 1).

⁵¹² Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Coptica. Vol. 6. Los Angeles, CA: Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society, 2007, p. 2.

⁵¹³ Ibidem or consult Clementine Homilies 1.9-14.

⁵¹⁴ Eusebius HE 2.24.

Christianity came to Egypt at a time when Greek was the dominant language, as “Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) – a king of Macedonia (336–323), son of Philip II – conquered Persia, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Bactria, and the Punjab; and he founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt.”⁵¹⁵ The Roman Empire was later established by Augustus in 27 BC and divided by Theodosius in AD 395 into the Western or Latin and Eastern or Greek Empire.⁵¹⁶ Lambdin states that

the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. and the subsequent Greek-speaking administration of the country under the Ptolemies led to the thorough Hellenization of Lower (i.e. Northern) Egypt. Egyptian-Greek bilingualism was apparently commonplace in the Delta, and it is probable that much Greek technical, legal, and commercial terminology was introduced into spoken Egyptian at this time. Rough and unsystematic attempts to transcribe Egyptian in the Greek alphabet were made as early as the third century B. C. It was only natural, then, that the Coptic translators of the Bible not only adopted the Greek alphabet but also generously supplemented the native lexicon with many more borrowings from Greek. The Greek vocabulary of any Coptic text is significantly large.⁵¹⁷

However, it was not the same Greek that was spoken everywhere. For instance, Classical Greek was spoken in Greece, Alexandria had its own Greek, and *Koinè* was the common language for everybody outside the Empire. Greek was spoken by the educated people.

When the missionaries of the Universal Church or the Catholic Church came to the Egyptian countryside, they wanted to preach Christianity to the native Egyptian people in their own indigenous language. In order to standardize preaching in the Church, there was a need to translate the Holy Scriptures from Greek to the native Egyptian

⁵¹⁵ Angus. Stevenson, and Christine A. Lindberg, Op. Cit., p. 39.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1515.

⁵¹⁷ Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983, p. vii.

language. Lambdin explains the origin and the development of the native Egyptian language as follows:

The political unification of Egypt took place around the beginning of the third millennium B. C. with the establishment of the First Dynasty at Memphis. Soon afterward written records began to appear in the hieroglyphic script, which together with its cursive derivatives, hieratic and demotic, remained the sole medium for writing the Egyptian language until the end of the second century A.D. At that time, the missionaries of the Church, then centered in Alexandria, undertook the translation of the Bible from Greek into Egyptian in order to facilitate their task of Christianizing the country. They abandoned the three-thousand-year-old hieroglyphic writing system, probably as much because of its complexity and imperfections as for its 'heathen' associations, and chose instead to employ a modified form of the Greek alphabet. Egyptian in this new guise is known as Coptic, a modern term derived from Arabic *qubṭī*, itself a corruption of the Greek word (*ai*)*gúpti(os)*, Egyptian.⁵¹⁸

Consequently, the Coptic or Egyptian version of the Old and New Testaments was born. This endeavor was undertaken by the Catechetical School of Alexandria with the sanction and encouragement of the new bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius.⁵¹⁹

In the Coptic tradition, both Testaments are embraced by the adherents of the Christian faith. In other terms, the complete Bible of 66 books⁵²⁰ [that is also considered the canon of protestant Christians] is held as Sacred Scriptures in Egyptian Christianity. So then, Gen. 1:1-5 – the key text of this critical comparative analysis – was among the first passages that were translated for the people to read about the creation of light according to the Holy Scriptures. While the Protestant Copts follow and keep both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Orthodox Copts do not just follow the Bible, but also, the traditions. The Egyptian traditions are necessary too for the Roman Catholic

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

⁵¹⁹ Hany N. Takla, Op. Cit. p. 4. It is only after Demetrius, the 11th bishop after Mark, that we finally begin to get something other than the most stereotypical report about the first two centuries of the Egyptian church. Scholars like Walter Bauer, and C. H. Roberts lament "the obscurity that veils the early history of the Church in Egypt" (Stephen J. Davis, Op. Cit. pp. 15-17).

⁵²⁰ It is important to acknowledge that the Coptic Bible and Greek manuscripts coming from Egypt include more than the 66 books found in the KJV.

(Uniate) Copts. What do Egyptian traditions say about the creation of light? This is a question that will be addressed later in the present chapter.

With the spread of the Gospel in Egypt, Coptic dialects were revived. That indicates that geography and philology play an important role in the translations of the Bible. Before a discussion about the Coptic version of the Bible, it is important to introduce the major dialects of the Coptic language, because they served as vehicles for the transmission of the Holy Scriptures. According to Takla, “These dialects are primarily distinguished by their unique orthography and geographical location.”⁵²¹ Lambdin says that: “the exact geographical location of the dialects is still a matter of scholarly debate, but the reader should become familiar with their names and the approximate chronological range of their use for literary purposes.”⁵²² So, one should not be surprised to see that a particular form of the Coptic language is peculiar to a specific region or social group of Egypt.

1. Coptic Dialects

Some scholars, especially Rodolphe Kasser, have identified many dialects and subdialects of the Coptic language, but in this essay only a brief description of the ones that preserved biblical texts, to a great extent, Gen. 1:1-5, will be presented. In other terms, the fifth chapter of this dissertation will only describe those dialects that pertain to the translation of Gen. 1:1-5. A map of Egypt is also provided here to help locate where these dialects were spoken. Nine of these dialects are as follows: a. Sahidic (S), b.

⁵²¹ Hany N. Takla, Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁵²² Thomas O. Lambdin, Op. Cit. p. viii.

Bohairic (B), c. Fayyumic (F), d. Akhmimic (A), e. Lycopolitan (L), f. Mesokemic (M), g. Dialect P, h. Dialect 17, and i. Dialect K.



Image 10. A Geographic Map of Ancient Egypt

First, Sahidic was the classical dialect of the Egyptian land. Takla supports this statement by informing us that: “Sahidic is considered a neutral language or dialect that was in use over the whole of Egypt.”⁵²³ Scholars assume that the Sahidic dialect developed in Upper Egypt, i.e. in the South of Egypt, because most of the early manuscripts in that dialect came from that region.⁵²⁴ However, Kahle demonstrated that Sahidic was spoken in the North or in the Delta.⁵²⁵ Takla advanced that: “The Sahidic Coptic dialect is characterized by the use of only six modified Demotic characters plus

⁵²³ Ibidem.

⁵²⁴ “The Nile flows from south to north. This means that Upper Egypt is south and Lower Egypt, north” (See William. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 7.).

⁵²⁵ Paul E. Kahle, *Bala'izah. Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt*. Vol. 1. Oxford, 1954, p. 247.

those of the Greek alphabet. It has a rich vocabulary of Greek loanwords, which is significantly more than that found in other dialects.”⁵²⁶ Early scholars, such as Horner and Maspero, referred to this dialect by the term Thebaic or Thebaine.⁵²⁷

Second, Bohairic is considered a language rather than merely a regional dialect.⁵²⁸ “It replaced Sahidic as the standard literary dialect.”⁵²⁹ Some scholars like Scholtz suggest that: “it originated in Lower Egypt,” i.e. North of Egypt, “especially around modern-day Cairo or ancient Memphis.”⁵³⁰ Takla continues to state, “It is characterized by having seven demotic characters plus those derived from Greek. Its vocabulary is infused with Greek loanwords, but they are not employed as frequently as in the Sahidic dialect, and the orthography of the words changed to the forms that would be adopted by all other dialects.”⁵³¹ The word Memphitic was also used to reference this dialect in early publications.⁵³²

Third, Fayyumic was spoken primarily in the oasis of al-Fayyum, south west of modern Cairo. While quoting Crum and Vaschalde, Takla informs us that: “in early publications, Fayyumic referenced as ‘Middle Egyptian,’ or “*Moyen Egyptien*.”⁵³³ Another term that is used to reference this dialect in early works is Bashmuric or “*dialecte Baschmourique*.”⁵³⁴ Takla also maintains that: “Fayyumic survived longer than any of the other regional dialects except for Bohairic. ... Its surviving manuscripts tended

⁵²⁶ Hany N. Takla, Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁵²⁷ Cf. Horner 1911-1924 and Maspero 1892 as examples.

⁵²⁸ Rodolphe. Kasser, *Bodmer Papyri*. in Coptic Encyclopedia. Vol. 8. 1991, p. 145.

⁵²⁹ Thomas O. Lambdin, Op. Cit., p. viii.

⁵³⁰ Hany N. Takla, Op. Cit., p. 5.

⁵³¹ Ibidem.

⁵³² Cf. G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect, otherwise called Memphitic and Bohairic, with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and literal English Translation*. 4 Vols. Oxford, 1898-1905.

⁵³³ Hany N. Takla, Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁵³⁴ Ibidem.

to be fragmentary due to extended use. Some of these manuscripts traveled as far south as the library of the White Monastery in Sohag.”⁵³⁵ Classical Fayyumic has the unique characteristic of substituting λ for ρ . It also uses the same number of demotic characters as Sahidic while utilizing the same format for the Greek loan words as the Bohairic.⁵³⁶

Fourth, “Akhmimic, generally located in the area of Akhmim (Panopolis) in southern Middle Egypt, enjoyed only a brief literary period from the third to the fifth century.”⁵³⁷ Takla suggests after Shisha-Halevy that “Akhmimic was the vernacular dialect of the residents around the White Monastery, which was reflected at times in St. Shenouda’s sermons.”⁵³⁸ Takla continues that: “Although there are written evidence of its survival until the eighth century, it must have been eclipsed in the fifth century by the Sahidic writings of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite, which dominated the literature from that region.”⁵³⁹

Fifth, Lycopolitan was probably confined to the Southern part of Middle Egypt or the area of modern-Asyut. According to Takla, “this area has been a hotbed of heterodoxy or at least anti-Alexandrian church sentiments. The survival of translated Gnostic texts in this dialect or those bearing its influence suggests that the Gnostic community found a safe haven there, where I believe the last of these texts were translated from Greek into Coptic.”⁵⁴⁰ This heterodox influence could be a reason why there is a lack of Old Testament texts surviving in this dialect. Unlike Fayyumic, and Akhmimic, this dialect uses the same character set of the Sahidic. In the past, Maurice

⁵³⁵ See Hany N. Takla, *Biblical Manuscripts of the Monastery of St. Shenoute the Archimandrite*. in Gawdat. Gabra, and Hany N. Takla (eds.), *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*. Vol. 1. Akhmim and Sohag. Cairo, 2008.

⁵³⁶ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit. Ibidem.

⁵³⁷ Thomas O. Lambdin, Op. Cit., p. ix.

⁵³⁸ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 6.

⁵³⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibidem.

Chaine referred to Lycopolitan as “Asiutic” or “*Assioutique*,” i. e. Asyutic. Walter Crum referenced it in his Dictionary as Subachmimic and used Chaine’s siglum of “A².”⁵⁴¹ So, one can say that some of the Nag Hammadi texts are in Sahidic with Subachmimic influence and others are just in Subachmimic.

Sixth, Mesokemic was probably native to the area around modern-day Bani Sueif and al-Bahnasah region in Middle Egypt. In fact, another name for this dialect is “Oxyrhynchite.” A detected influence of Mesokemic is found in the Gospel of Judas discovered not long ago.⁵⁴² This can be a premise to support the conclusion that this dialect was doomed to an early grave! Mesokemic is the most recently identified of the major dialects.

Seventh, Dialect P is only attested in a substantial portion of a manuscript of the Book of Proverbs found at the Bodmer Library. Rodolphe Kasser, its editor, designated this dialect as “P” and dubbed it as “Proto-Sahidic.”⁵⁴³ Unlike the other dialects that preserved seven demotic characters, Dialect P is characterized by the presence of more demotic characters.

Eighth, Subdialect 17 is described by Kasser as proto-Lycopolitan. It is a subdialect of Dialect I. It is unique in the sense that a fragment of the Book of Genesis has survived in this dialect, and this fragment is currently preserved in the Berlin Museum. This is different from the Lycopolitan dialect in which no fragments of the Old Testament were found.

⁵⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁵⁴² Ibidem.

⁵⁴³ Cf. Rodolphe. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer VI (Proverbes I I-XXI 4)*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO) 194-195, Scriptorum Coptici (SC) 27-28. Louvain, 1960.

Last, Dialect K is the dialect of some of the texts found in the University of Michigan excavation in the Fayyum area. A fragment of the Book of Job is found in this dialect. This fragment is edited by Gerald Browne. Interestingly, Takla says that “the text was initially thought to be Sahidic with Fayyumic influence.”⁵⁴⁴

For further details on the dialects, the reader should consult the works of Worrell, Vergote, Kahle, and Till mentioned in the Bibliography.

The display of these Coptic dialects is important to show how a language slightly changes depending on geographical locations. For example, here, we have seen that it is the same country of Egypt with the same Coptic language, but there are variations into that specific language when a person moves from one corner to another. The translators of the biblical text paid attention to that. There are some words that are very similar in the Coptic dialects, but some others are different from each other. Possibly, because that specific region where the dialect is spoken has its own way to express the same idea. At times, there is typical ending or prefix that the dialects use which is characteristic to each one of them. These characteristic features help the reader to see where the text is from, when was it written, who wrote it, and what kind of language it is. For instance, the word “light”⁵⁴⁵ is ⲟϥⲟⲉⲛ in Sahidic, and ⲟϥⲟⲓⲛ in Bohairic.

2. Coptic Versions of the Bible

The theories that relate to the development of the Coptic version of the Bible mainly address the New Testament. But because the Copts considered the Old and New Testaments as a unity, it is acceptable to apply these theories to the Old Testament as

⁵⁴⁴ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁴⁵ Thomas O. Lambdin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

well. Takla, relying upon Kasser (1965), wrote that: “scholarly opinion has proposed a date as early as the second half of the second century for the first translation of parts of the Bible in Coptic. The publication of the Bodmer collection of early biblical texts prompted its skilled linguist scholar, Kasser, in 1965 to propose a speculative seven-stage scheme for the development of this translation into its various known dialects.”⁵⁴⁶ The following is a brief discussion of Kasser stages.

According to Bruce Metzger, Kasser’s seven stages of development are briefly as follows:⁵⁴⁷ (a.) *Preliminary Stage (AD 150-200)*: private translations were done and arranged by the faithful. (b.) *Pre-Classical Sahidic Stage (AD 200-250)*: this work was based upon the community, as the need of some of the biblical books arose in evangelization. But no complete translation of the entire canon was made yet. During this period of time in the history of the Christian Church, the Greek Septuagint was still the dominant source of the Bible. (c.) *Classical Sahidic Stage (AD 250-300)*: at this stage, more people came to know about Christianity. The style was more literal than before, and a complete translation into Sahidic was made.

(d.) *Pre-Classical Bohairic Stage (AD 300-500)*: translations in all known Coptic dialects were spurred [or created] and spread rapidly during that era, encouraged by the fact that Constantine was the first Roman emperor to be converted to Christianity and in 324 CE made Christianity the empire’s state religion.⁵⁴⁸ (e.) *The Classical Bohairic Stage (AD 500-650)*: Throughout this pre-Arab conquest era, translations into the Sahidic dialect were still in vogue. Fayyumic became common to the people, and the classical

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁴⁷ Bruce Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament – Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations*. Coptic Version 99-141, Oxford, 1977, pp. 129-132.

⁵⁴⁸ In 330 CE, Constantine moved the Roman Empire’s capital from Rome to Byzantium, renaming it Constantinopolis (Constantinople). He is venerated as a saint in the Orthodox Church.

Bohairic translation was made with a more literal style than what was found in the classical Sahidic version the Bible.

(f.) The Final Sahidic Stage (AD 650-1000): During this period of time, the Bohairic dialect began gaining ground, as the use of the Sahidic version was declining slowly. The other Upper Egyptian dialects started to become extinct. (g.) The Final Bohairic Stage (after AD 1000): the entire Coptic Church made use of the classical Bohairic biblical text in the liturgy of the Church. The use of the Sahidic translation ceased to exist by the fourteenth century. The Bohairic Coptic dialect was relegated to the status of a liturgical language.

Last, it is important to note that these seven (7) stages are not agreed by all as secure. Other scholars, such as Tito Orlandi (three-stage development scheme) and Fredrick Wisse (four-stage system) proposed other ways to explain the development stages of the Coptic versions of the Bible. At times, it is just a combination of two or three stages of Kasser's view into one that makes the difference. These scholars aimed at the explanation of the same development phenomenon. Kasser's division may seem more plausible considering the Decian persecution of AD 250-251. On the basis of this, a differentiation should be made between pre-Decian and post-Decian Christian Egypt.

Takla says, "The above systems cannot claim a high degree of accuracy in the dating of their respective stages. This is due to the poor state of the field of Coptic paleography in comparison to that of Greek."⁵⁴⁹ The surviving manuscripts are in a poor state, there is a lack of scribal uniformity especially in the early manuscripts, and there are not many experts from the scholarly community who want to devote their time to the study of these sacred writings – a challenging task. So, one has to rely upon history,

⁵⁴⁹ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibid., p. 12.

archaeology, and Church traditions for guidance on how the development process of the Coptic translation of the Scriptures occurred.⁵⁵⁰

Certainly, this Coptic translation endeavor should be based upon the missionary movement that began during the time of Bishop Demetrius.⁵⁵¹ In other words, the Coptic translation is a result of the missionary movement by which the Church of Alexandria attempted to Christianize the Egyptian countryside. One can argue that these regional Coptic dialects became alive as the Bible was being translated into them. Now the Coptic Bible in general, and the Old Testament in particular, though incomplete, have survived primarily in the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects. Takla explains that this can be due to “the centuries of decreasing number of Christians and the persistent infiltration of Arabic into Coptic religious life.”⁵⁵²

3. Version Exemplar

As stated in the previous chapters of this book, most of the original books that formed the Christian canon of the Old Testament were composed originally in Hebrew.⁵⁵³ Parts of the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek under Ptolemy Philadelphus in the third century [BCE] so that this work might be included in the famed Library of Alexandria. Based on tradition, 70 or 72 bilingual Jewish scholars were chosen to perform this task. This version of the Bible became known as the Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX).⁵⁵⁴ This was the scriptural text among the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria and elsewhere. The early Christians adopted the Septuagint as their Bible. Variants of the

⁵⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵⁵¹ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁵³ For instance, see the festal letter of Athanasius of Alexandria of AD 361.

⁵⁵⁴ A detailed analysis of this translation is offered in the previous (4th) chapter of this dissertation.

same text can be found in the translations done by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian. “The Christians in Egypt adopted the Septuagint with substitutions by later writers as well as the fourth century recension by the Egyptian bishop Hesychius,” claims Takla.⁵⁵⁵

The Coptic translators of the Old Testament relied completely on the Greek text that circulated in Alexandria during the early Christian centuries.⁵⁵⁶ The first Coptic translators had a Greek background. The Coptic Old Testament was not translated from the Hebrew Bible, but the Greek Septuagint. Some manuscripts were of post-hexaplaric origin, and others were dated earlier. Consequently, two Coptic (Sahidic first, and then, Bohairic) traditions survived in the case of the Book of Job, because of the confusion caused by the misinterpretation of Origen’s hexaplaric readings. The Sahidic, being the oldest relied on manuscripts of pre-hexaplaric origin. The Bohairic relied on manuscripts of post-hexaplaric origin. Both translations were used in the Church at specific time periods, though the Bohairic version was later adopted by the Church to replace the Sahidic version in the early centuries of the second millennium. Takla points out, “This was probably based more on the acceptance of the translator than the quality of the translation.”⁵⁵⁷ However, it is still difficult to know which exemplar was used to produce the Bohairic lections of the historical and some of the poetic books in liturgical manuals.

⁵⁵⁵ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibid., p. 13. See also Swete, 1914, pp. 78-80.

⁵⁵⁶ This opinion is reflected in Peter. Nagel, *Coptic Translations of the Old Testament*. in *Coptic Encyclopedia*. 1991, p. 1837.

⁵⁵⁷ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibidem.

4. Development of this Version

Throughout the years, enormous efforts were undertaken by scholars from a variety of backgrounds and aims over a period of more than four centuries, to do research on the origin of the Coptic Bible and its current state. Their work has edited the majority of Old Testament manuscripts known to us. There are nine distinguishable chronological stages in the more than 400 years of work on the Coptic OT.⁵⁵⁸ These stages chronicle interest by Bible experts to search for the original text and meaning of the Scriptures, European missionary motivation, and the OT use as a philological tool by the Egyptologists to enhance their knowledge of Ancient Egypt. These nine stages are as follows:

(a.) Polyglot stage (16th-17th centuries)

As scholars discovered the shortcomings of the Latin version of the Bible (the Vulgate) during the sixteenth century, they turned their energy to publishing the different Greek versions available at that time. In Rome in 1593, Giovanni Battista Raimondi announced his intention to produce a polyglot edition of the biblical texts – especially the whole of the Coptic Pentateuch – that would include some of the oriental languages, such as Ethiopic, Arabic, Syrian, and the Coptic language.⁵⁵⁹ Sadly, Raimondi died in 1614 without making use of these codices. Almost 50 years later, the Dutch Bible expert Theodore Petraeus became the first to publish any biblical text in Coptic. His first publication was the first Psalm in three languages: Latin, Arabic, and Coptic.⁵⁶⁰ Two

⁵⁵⁸ The nine-stage scheme was developed by Hany Takla.

⁵⁵⁹ A. Hamilton, *The Copts and the West 1439-1822 – The European Discovery of the Egyptian Church*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 260.

⁵⁶⁰ See T. Petraeus, *Psalterium Davidis in Lingua Copta seu Aegyptiaca, una cum Versione Arabica Nunc Primum in Latin Versum et in Lucem Editem*. Leiden, 1663.

students of the Coptic biblical codices who laid a solid foundation for the next stage of research are Thomas Marshall and Guillaume Bonjour, though their works were not published.

(b.) Early Bohairic publication stage (1701-1784)

One century later, a missionary or pastoral impulse began to develop alongside the academic pursuit of the Coptic OT. The centers for the academic work were England and Germany, while the Vatican focused itself on the pastoral or missionary approach. On the pastoral front, Raphael al-Tukhi was busy preparing Coptic service books for the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Egypt. In England in 1731, David Wilkins published the first edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch, using three manuscripts from European libraries.⁵⁶¹ The work of Wilkins was criticized by Paul Jablonski, and the Coptologist Moritz Gotthilf for its deficiencies in the Latin translation, and the lack of Coptic grammatical skills.⁵⁶² Nevertheless, a considerable amount of the Coptic OT became available for scholars of the LXX, which they used as a basis for their studies for many years to follow.

(c.) Early Sahidic publication stage (1785-1815)

At this stage, one finds the first publication of fragments that came from the library of the White Monastery in Sohag. The multi-dialectal language division took place as the perception of Sahidic and Fayyumic fragments being synonymous with those in Bohairic had changed. The first person to identify these new fragments in transcription

⁵⁶¹ Cf. D. Wilkins, *Quinque Libri Moysis Prophetarum in Lingua Aegyptiaca ex MSS Vaticano, Parisiensi et Bodleiano Descripsit et Latine Vertit*. London, 1731.

⁵⁶² A. Hamilton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 265.

form was Giovanni Mingarelli in 1785.⁵⁶³ The following year in Rome, the Sahidic and Bohairic text of Daniel chapter 9 was published by Fredrick Münter, with no Latin translation.⁵⁶⁴ In 1797 in Rome, Giovanni Carabelloni published other Sahidic fragments, including Psalm 48, but only with Latin and Greek parallel text.⁵⁶⁵ In 1808, the very first biblical text appeared in the Fayyumic dialect – Lamentation and Epistle of Jeremiah – was published by Etienne Quatremère, and these fragments are housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.⁵⁶⁶

(d.) English missionary work in Egypt stage (1815-1852)

Takla says that: “during this phase, Boharic OT texts were still dominant and several extensive editions emerged.”⁵⁶⁷ The Church of England dispatched a mission to Egypt during the Holy Week observance, a moment of glory in the history of the Egyptian Church.⁵⁶⁸ The mission came to acknowledge the existence of a viable church as well as her need for publications of the Holy Scriptures.⁵⁶⁹ As a result, several Arabic and Bohairic-Arabic books were published in London for distribution within the Church of Alexandria. The Psalms were also published in 1826.⁵⁷⁰ In 1836, the Minor Prophets

⁵⁶³ J. A. Mingarelli, *Aegyptiorum Codicum Reliquiae, Venetiis in Bibliotheca Naniana Asservatae*. 2 Vols. Bologna, 1785.

⁵⁶⁴ See F. Münter, *Specimen Versionum Danielis Copticarum, Nonum Eius Caput Memphitice et Sahidice Exhibens*. Rome, 1786.

⁵⁶⁵ A. Hamilton, Op. Cit., p. 268.

⁵⁶⁶ E. Quatremère, *Daniel et les Douze Petits Prophètes*. Manuscripts Coptes de la Bibliothèque Impériale no. 2, Saint Germain no. 21. NE 8:220-289, 1810, pp. 228-246.

⁵⁶⁷ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 20.

⁵⁶⁸ Hany N. Takla, *Relations Between the Church of England and the Coptic Church*. Vol. 10.2. SSCN, 2004a, Op. Cit., pp. 9-14.

⁵⁶⁹ It was around that time (mid-1850s) that the first printing press in the Coptic Church came during the Patriarchate of Cyril IV (1854-1861). Takla informs us that “all biblical and liturgical books used in the church were in manuscript format” (Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 21).

⁵⁷⁰ See R. Watts (ed.), *Psalms of David in Coptic and Arabic*. London, 1826.

were published by the Rev. Henry Tattam in Bohairic and Latin on opposing pages.⁵⁷¹

Though his goal was never completely achieved, he had a lofty aim to publish the entire Coptic Bible in Bohairic and Sahidic.⁵⁷²

In 1837, an edition of the Psalms in Bohairic from three Berlin Museum manuscripts were published by the German scholar Julius L. Ideler, including some Sahidic Psalms by Karl Gottfried Woide. Schwartz also published another edition of the Bohairic Psalms in 1843.⁵⁷³ In 1849, the Italian Professor Joseph Bardelli from Pisa published the complete Bohairic text of Daniel including the LXX additions.⁵⁷⁴ Takla says that the end of this stage is marked by “Tattam’s 1852 edition which used the same manuscripts of the Major Prophets for Daniel. However, he added presumably his own Latin translation while reproducing the Septuagint additions at the end of the text rather than in their original order in the manuscripts.”⁵⁷⁵

(e.) Early biblical scholarship stage (1853-1879)

The work of Paul Anton de Lagarde – while laying the foundation for LXX studies at Göttingen – dominated this period of time. The OT texts published were predominantly Bohairic. De Lagarde’s first OT publication in 1867 was the Pentateuch. The focus text of this critical comparative analysis – Gen. 1:1-5 – must have been among these Bohairic texts published. De Lagarde then published another edition of the Psalms

⁵⁷¹ H. Tattam, *Duodecim Prophetarum Minorum Libros in Lingua Aegyptiaca Vulgo Coptica seu Memphitica ex manuscript Johannis Lee*, J.C.D. Collatos Latine Edidit. Oxford, 1936.

⁵⁷² Hany N. Takla, . *Relations Between the Church of England and the Coptic Church*. Vol. 10.2. SSCN, 2004a, Op. Cit., pp. 11.

⁵⁷³ M. G. Schwartz, *Psalterium in Dialectum Copticae Linguae Memphiticam Translatum ad Fidem Trium Codicum MSS Regiae Bibliothecae Berolinensis Inter se et cum Tukii et Ideleri Libris Necnon cum Graecis Alexandrini Codicis a Vatinani Hebraicisque Psalmis Comparatorum Edidit Notisque Criticis et Grammaticis Instruxit*. Leipzig, 1843.

⁵⁷⁴ J. Bardelli, *Daniel Copto-Memphitice*. Pise, 1846.

⁵⁷⁵ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 22.

in 1875.⁵⁷⁶ This also included a first edition of Sahidic Psalm fragments from a manuscript now housed in the British Library.⁵⁷⁷ De Lagarde's last publication OT texts during this stage is the Bohairic lectionary readings of the historical books in 1879.⁵⁷⁸ According to Takla, "this publication is still the only one available for such readings in Bohairic to this day."⁵⁷⁹ A very significant publication was made by A. Fallet in 1854, which contained the first twenty seven chapters of the Bohairic Genesis. Other notable publications⁵⁸⁰ during this time include those that were made by the Catholic Bishop – Agabius Bsciai in 1870,⁵⁸¹ Bernardino Peyron in 1875,⁵⁸² and Heinrich Brugsch.

(f.) Wholesale publication stage (1880-1918)

Around the 1880s, there was a shift in publications, from the decrease of Bohairic texts to the increase of Sahidic texts. Up to this point in time, only fragments of Psalms had been published in the Sahidic dialect. The appearance of the first scientific grammar of Coptic by Ludwig Stern in 1880 paved the way for scholars to confidently pursue studies in this dialect.⁵⁸³ By the beginning of this stage, the manuscripts that were already

⁵⁷⁶ de Lagarde, P. *Psalterii Versio Memphitica e Recognitione Pauli de Lagarde, accedunt Psalterii Thebani Fragmenta Parhamiana, Proverbiorum Memphiticorum Fragmenta Berolinensia*. Göttingen, 1875.

⁵⁷⁷ B.L.Or.8808. This parchment codex was obtained by Robert Curzon in 1838 from Dayr al-Surian in Wadi al-Natrun. It was numbered in his collection as Parham 111, until this whole collection was deposited and then bequeathed to the British Museum in 1917 (Layton, Catalog No. 13, 1987, pp. 13, 14).

⁵⁷⁸ Lagarde 1879. It also contains lections from Proverbs and Sirach.

⁵⁷⁹ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 23.

⁵⁸⁰ H. Brugsch, *Memphitisch-Koptische Fragmente*. ZAS 14:116-120, 1876.; Id. *Der Bau des Tempels Salomos nach der Koptischen Bibelversion*. Leipzig, 1877.

⁵⁸¹ A. Bsciai, *Liber Baruch Prophetæ*. Rome, 1870.

⁵⁸² B. Peyron, *Psalterii Copto-Thebani Specimen quod Omnium Primum in Lucem Prodit Continens Praeter Decem Psalmorum Fragmenta Integros Psalmos Duos et Triginta ad Fidem Codicis Taurinensis cura et Criticis Animadversionibus Bernardini Peyronis; Accedit Amadei Peyronis Dissertatio Posthuma de Nova Copticae Linguae Orthographia a Schwartzio v. cl. Excogitata*. Turin, 1875. = Id. *Psalterii Copto-Thebani Specimen*. Memorie Accad. ser. 2:28:117-206, Torino, 1876.

⁵⁸³ L. Stern, *Koptische Grammatik*. Leipzig, 1880.

available in Europe from monasteries became available to biblical scholars and Egyptologists. Most of these collections were generated by the White Monastery. Takla suggests that: “Austrians, Russians, Americans along with Copts in Egypt contributed to publishing OT texts in Sahidic, Bohairic, Fayyumic, and Akhmimic.”⁵⁸⁴

Only the most important publications from various backgrounds – to name a few – will be mentioned here, especially taking in consideration the Sahidic Coptic dialect in which the writers published their texts, and Gen. 1:1-5.⁵⁸⁵ the eminent Egyptologist Adolf Erman continued the Göttingen tradition by publishing Sahidic fragments of the OT. In 1880, some of the Sahidic fragments that Ch. Cuegney published were from the Book of Genesis. The Coptic Catholic bishop Bsciai, in 1881, published a large portion of the Sahidic Proverbs. In 1883, Paul Anton de Lagarde published the remains of two Sahidic wisdom books and Gaston Maspero published five Sahidic fragments from Exodus and Psalms. L. Stern then published some fragments from the Berlin Museum collection.⁵⁸⁶

Cardinal Agostino Ciasca, in 1885, produced one of the most significant publications of this stage in Rome that contained fragments of the Pentateuch and the Historical books. In 1886, Émile C. Amélineau – the most prolific editor of Coptic texts in history – began to publish a series of five articles which included his transcriptions of Coptic OT texts.⁵⁸⁷ Urbaine Bouriant published some of the older fragments of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris in 1887. In that same year, some of the Sahidic OT fragments were published by Jakob Krall. Francesco Rossi published fragments from Proverbs in 1889. Willem Pleyte and Pieter Adriaan Aart Boeser published their catalog

⁵⁸⁴ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 24.

⁵⁸⁵ Though Old Testament texts in Coptic dialects other than Sahidic received attention during this stage as well, here, the focus is put on Sahidic publications.

⁵⁸⁶ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., pp. 24-25.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 25.

of Coptic manuscripts, including some OT texts, in 1897. E. A. Wallis Budge, in 1898, published an edition of the complete Sahidic Psalter.⁵⁸⁸

In the twentieth century, de Lagarde's student – Alfred Rahlfs – published a fourth century Sahidic Psalter in 1901. Two publications of Johannes Leipoldt in 1904 edited Sahidic fragments of the OT. Three articles of the new biblical fragments were published by Eric O. Winstedt during the period 1903-1905. Seymour de Ricci, in 1906, published an important extensive fragment of the Sahidic Exodus.⁵⁸⁹ In 1907, it was by Carl Wessely that Sahidic-Greek Psalter fragments were published.⁵⁹⁰

Alan E. Brooke, Albert Deiber, Stephen Gaselee, von Lemm provided corrections to the edition of Maspero that was left unpublished between 1906 and 1909.⁵⁹¹ In 1909, Walter E. Crum published his catalog of the Coptic manuscripts. Two major articles about fragments of the Sahidic OT were published by Pierre Lacau in 1901 and 1911. Fragments from the Sahidic Job were published by Léon Dieu in 1912. In 1913 Adolphe Hebbelynck published several fragments of the Sahidic Isaiah. Henri Munier in the years 1913 and 1916, and William Worrell in 1916.⁵⁹² In short, many authors published Sahidic OT fragments throughout Europe in the twentieth century.

The intensity of the First World War (WWI) in Europe from 1917 to the end of 1918 greatly affected further contributions in this field.⁵⁹³ Another characteristic of this stage is the appearance of several important catalogs of Coptic texts as well as the publication of the first volumes of the Cambridge Septuagint edition, which used Coptic

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 26

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁹² Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., p. 31.

in its critical apparatus. Literary manuscripts were circulated in scholarly journals by Jean Chabot, Franz Cumont, and Hyvernat.⁵⁹⁴ For Takla, “With respect to the Coptic OT, this stage can be referred to as its Golden Age.”⁵⁹⁵

(g.) Interwar stage (1919-1945)

After the bloody experience of WWI, peace returned to Europe, and scholarly activities resumed, although with a limited research. More catalogs, especially of Bohairic material, were published along with several studies of OT texts that were published during earlier stages. The Cambridge LXX continued until it was stopped before WWII (1939-1945). Takla states, “The first publication was probably the most significant and most welcomed in the field after the abundance of publications of Coptic OT and NT texts.”⁵⁹⁶ In 1919 and 1920, A. Vaschalde published 4 articles that thoroughly surveyed the publications of all Coptic Sahidic books and fragments up to 1916.⁵⁹⁷ This valuable work enabled students and scholars alike to observe the wealth of material published over the previous centuries.

This stage also witnessed the unveiling of the find of the century, the Hamouli Collections, and new interest by American scholars in this area. Twelve sets of copies in the form of facsimile edition were all distributed, rather than sold, to famous institutions of learning in Europe, the US, and Egypt.⁵⁹⁸ Takla adds that: “this edition showed that the collection rivaled the Paris acquisition of the 1880s in having complete volumes, dated

⁵⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁹⁷ A. Vaschalde, *Ce qui a été publié des versions coptes de la Bible*. RB 28 :220-243, 513-531 ; 29 :91-106, 241-258, 1919-1920.

⁵⁹⁸ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 32.

colophons, and preserved binding. It had texts in Sahidic as well as Fayyumic, the regional dialect of the monastery in which these manuscripts were produced.”⁵⁹⁹

Some important publications that cannot be ignored in this essay are the following ones: (i.) Worrell’s own edition of the Sahidic Psalter in 1923 that has significantly contributed to the field of Old Testament scholarship.⁶⁰⁰ (ii.) Munier continued to publish Sahidic fragments from private collections in Egypt with articles in 1919 and 1921.⁶⁰¹ (iii.) In 1925 Oswald H. E. Khs-Burmester and Eugène Dévaud republished de Lagarde’s 1875 edition of the Bohairic Psalter in Coptic characters.⁶⁰² (iv.) In Austria, Walter Till published a series of important articles and monographs in 1933, 1934, 1937, and two in 1939, containing Sahidic OT fragments.⁶⁰³ (v.) A detailed study of the Sahidic, Bohairic, and Akhmimic versions of the Minor Prophets was published by Willem Grossouw in 1938.⁶⁰⁴

Interestingly, Grossouw provided a useful survey of the available manuscripts and publications of these books along with a collation against the Greek text. Grossouw believed that “corrections made to the Coptic text were based on the Hebrew recension.” This theory has been contested by later scholars, among them Nagel.⁶⁰⁵

(vi) In 1939 a large volume containing the Bohairic Genesis and Exodus with an Arabic translation was published by the Egyptian Society Abna’ al-Kanisah, but without

⁵⁹⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 33. Or W. H. Worrell, *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection*. New York, 1923

⁶⁰¹ H. Munier, *Mélange de Littérature Copte*. I. Collection du Rev. E. H. Hoskyns. ASA 19:225-241, 1919. And Id. *Mélange de Littérature Copte*. II. Manuscripts Coptes de Cheikh Abadeh. ASA 21:77-88.

⁶⁰² O. H. E. Khs. Burmester, and E. Devaud. *Psalterii Versio Memphetica e Recognitione Pauli de Lagarde*. Reedition avec le Texte Copte en Caractères Coptes. Louvain, 1925.

⁶⁰³ See Till 1933; Till 1934; Till 1937; Till 1939; Till and Sanz 1939.

⁶⁰⁴ See Grossouw 1938.

⁶⁰⁵ See Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 36.

any notes about the origin of the text.⁶⁰⁶ (vii) In 1940, Lefort combined literary manuscripts, including OT ones, in a single monograph, which included an edition of fragments from eleven Sahidic manuscripts, and among these biblical books was Genesis.⁶⁰⁷ (viii) In 1942 Simaika published his catalog of the Cairo Patriarchal Library, which listed one Bohairic and twelve Bohairic-Arabic manuscripts of the OT.⁶⁰⁸ The Pentateuch was included among these publications.⁶⁰⁹ The Cambridge Greek Septuagint and the Göttingen Septuaginta in 1931-1943 by Rahlfs and Ziegler made use of all available publications of Coptic texts in their critical apparatus.⁶¹⁰ Takla believes that: “in general the publication of texts during this stage tended to be more scientific in their approach.”⁶¹¹

(h.) Post World War II stage (1946-1969)

Publication of Coptic OT texts took a few years to resume after the end of WWII. It was 7 years in the case of the Sahidic dialect. In 1949, J. Payne published his dissertation on a comparative study of the Sahidic I Samuel,⁶¹² which is complete in the Pierpont Morgan's Hamouli collection.

⁶⁰⁶ Abna' al-Kanisah. *The Holy Book*. The Old Testament. Bohairic-Arabic, Cairo, 1939 [only Genesis-Exodus].

⁶⁰⁷ L. Th. Lefort, *Les Manuscrits Coptes de l'Université de Louvain*. I. Texts Littéraires. Louvain, 1940.

⁶⁰⁸ M. Simaika, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, and the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt in 3 volumes*. Vol. 2. The Patriarchal Library, Cairo, 1942.

⁶⁰⁹ Simaika 1942: nos. 176, 188 (Bible 1-2 Genesis); no. 154 (Bible 3, Genesis-Exodus); no 111 (Bible 4-5 Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

⁶¹⁰ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 37.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁶¹² J. B. Payne, *A Critical and Comparative Study of the Sahidic Coptic Texts of I Samuel*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Princeton, 1949. This dissertation was never published, but later, Payne published a short essay based on his earlier work titled, Payne 1953.

The first article in which Sergio Donadoni published a fragment of the Lamentation and Jeremiah appeared in 1952.⁶¹³ Takla affirms, “The most important work of the 1950s that involved publication of Sahidic OT fragments was the 1954 publication of Paul Kahle, Jr.’s dissertation on Balaizah.⁶¹⁴ During the period of 1961-1965, five monographs were published by Rodolphe Kasser, editing texts from the Sahidic OT, and adding a French translation on the opposing page.⁶¹⁵ G. Giamberardini, in 1962, published an important Sahidic fragment of Genesis that belonged to one of the manuscripts published earlier by Ciasca and Maspero.⁶¹⁶

Publications in other Coptic dialects were also prominent during this era. Michel Malinine republished the French portion of the Akhmimic Minor Prophets in 1950.⁶¹⁷ According to Takla, “The first important contribution in Bohairic during this stage was by Kasser in 1958, when he published an Old Bohairic version of the first few chapters of Genesis.”⁶¹⁸ At the end of this stage, Hans Quecke published more fragments from the Psalms.⁶¹⁹

(i.) *Modern stage (1970-present time)*

It was in 1970 that Tito Orlandi began to work on reconstructing the contents of the codices of the White Monastery out of the thousands of fragments that survived.⁶²⁰

⁶¹³ S. Donadoni, *Una Pergamenta Saidica dei Thrênô di Geremia*. Vol. 20. Archiv Orientalni. 1952, pp. 400-406.

⁶¹⁴ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., pp. 37, 38. Or Paul E. Kahle, Bala’izah. *Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala’izah in Upper Egypt*. 2 Vols. Oxford, 1954.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶¹⁶ G. Giamberardini, *Testo Copto Sa’idico de Genesi 23, 18-20; 24, 1-24*. Coll. 7. 1962, pp. 209-220.

⁶¹⁷ M. Malinine, *Fragment d’une Version Achmimique des Petits Prophètes*. In *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum*. Bulletin of Byzantine Institute, 2. 365-415. Boston, 1950.

⁶¹⁸ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 39. Or Kasser 1958.

⁶¹⁹ Quecke, H. *Zu Zwei Koptischen Fragmenten mit Psalmtexten*. Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilungen. Vol. 25. Kairo, 1969, pp. 107-109.

⁶²⁰ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Ibidem.

John Sharp also reedited chapters of the Bohairic Genesis, first published by Kasser in the previous stage. However, this stage did not see a substantial scholarly edition of the Sahidic OT for over 30 years. This was possibly due to the appearance of the Nag Hammadi texts. The Göttingen Septuaginta continued, but it stopped in 1991, except for one publication in 2006.⁶²¹ Takla claims that: “the inaugural publication of this stage, James Drescher’s 1970 publication of the Sahidic text of I and II Samuel, was from the Hamouli collection.”⁶²²

In 1972 two papyrus fragments of Genesis were published by Kasser.⁶²³ In 1978 Bellet published Coptic texts that included a fragment of Sahidic Exodus.⁶²⁴ New fragments from Sahidic Genesis were published in 1986 by Albert Pietersma and Susan Turner Comstock from the University of Toronto.⁶²⁵ In 1987 and 1989, Nagel – while pursuing his project to publish a critical edition of the Sahidic OT – produced two important publications of the Sahidic Pentateuch.⁶²⁶ Hany N. Takla compiled a continuous text of the Sahidic text of Tobit primarily from two manuscripts in 1996-1997.⁶²⁷ The first and most substantial work since Drescher’s publication of I and II Samuel, was Frank Feder’s critical edition of the Sahidic Jeremiah and Associated

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶²² Ibidem. Or J. Drescher, *The Coptic (Sahidic) Version of Kings I, II (Samuel I, II)*. CSCO 313 SC 35 (text).

⁶²³ Rodolphe. Kasser, *Fragments du Livre Biblique de la Genèse Cachés dans la Reliure d’un Codex Gnostique*. NHC VII. Mus 85:65-89, 1972.

⁶²⁴ Bellet, P. *Anlecta Coptica*. CBQ 40:37-52, 1978.

⁶²⁵ Pietersma, A. and S. T. Comstocke. *New Fragments of Genesis in Sahidic*. BASP 23:137-147, 1986.

⁶²⁶ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 43.

⁶²⁷ Takla 1996-7. Mainly, this publication is based on previously published texts, including a concordance of the Greek loan words.

books.⁶²⁸ Also in 2004, R. Schulz published a fragment of Exodus from Baltimore's Walter Art Museum.⁶²⁹

For Takla, "Publications in other dialects brought more excitement in the scholarly circles during this stage."⁶³⁰ Five examples are as follows: (i.) Melvin Peters began his publication of a critical edition of the Bohairic Pentateuch in 1983, with the book of Deuteronomy.⁶³¹ This was followed by his edition of Genesis in 1985 and Exodus in 1986. (ii.) In 1991 in Egypt, the Pentateuch in two volumes was published by Shaker Bassilius. This edition reprinted the Coptic text only of Genesis and Exodus from the 1939 Coptic-Arabic edition mentioned above.⁶³² (iii.) In 1995, an edition of the fourth/fifth century Mudil Codex of Psalms in Mesokemic was published by Gawdat Gabra.⁶³³ (iv.) Surprisingly, two fragments of Genesis from the Berlin Museum in Dialect 17 – which Leopoldt had edited in 1904 – was reedited by Wolf-Peter Funk.⁶³⁴ (v.)

"The most significant publications of this last stage were of catalogs of Coptic manuscripts."⁶³⁵ These publications include those of Walter E. Crum in 1902, 1905, 1909 and Bentley Leyton in 1987. In collating the Coptic texts, Hanhart – while depending on Nagel's assistance to some degree – completed the Pentateuch volumes with the recruitment of John Wevers. Genesis was published first in 1974 followed by

⁶²⁸ F. Feder, *Biblia Sahidica, Ieremias, Lamentationes (Threni) Epistula Ieremiae et Baruch*. Texte und Untersuchungen 147. Berlin and New York, 2002b.

⁶²⁹ Schulz, R. *A Coptic Exodus Text in the Walter Art Museum (W. 739)*. in W. Noel (ed.), *A Catalogue of Greek Manuscripts at the Walters Art Museum and Essays in Honor of Gary Vikan* (=Journal of the Walters Art Museum 62). Baltimore, 2004, pp. 213-227.

⁶³⁰ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 45.

⁶³¹ M. K. H. Peters, *A Critical Edition of the Coptic Bohairic Pentateuch*. Vol. 5. *Deuteronomy*. Atlanta, GA, 1983.

⁶³² Shaker. Bassilius, *The Holy Bible, the Old Testament*. Genesis-Exodus. Cairo, 1991a. Again, this is a reproduction of the Coptic text only based on the Abna' al-Kanisah 1939 edition.

⁶³³ Gawdat. Gabra, *Der Psalter im Oxyrhynchitischen (Mesokemischen/Mittelägyptischen) Dialekt*. Heidelberg, 1995. This Codex of Psalms was found in Egypt in a necropolis excavation a decade earlier.

⁶³⁴ W-P. Funk, *Die Zeugen des Koptischen Literaturdialektes 17*. ZÄS 114:117-133, 1987.

⁶³⁵ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit., p. 47.

Deuteronomy in 1977, Numbers in 1982, Leviticus in 1986, and finally Exodus in 1991.⁶³⁶

Unfortunately, much work is still needed to complete the Coptic translation of the OT. In the light of these editions of the Coptic Bible, Takla affirms that “unless there are future discoveries, it is unlikely that any future text publication will fill the gaps that exist in the Sahidic and the Bohairic versions of the OT. What is needed now is a collation of all these fragments in a cohesive edition.”⁶³⁷ Nevertheless, these first scholars should be encouraged for laying down a history of research done on the Coptic Text of the Old Testament.

This demonstrates that the biblical text, whether the original text or a translation of it, went through a long process. Lovers of the Holy Scripture and linguistic experts published different editions of the same Bible, based on time, place, and the language used at that specific time. During this process, alterations and variants may have taken place. Consequently, new interpretations and approaches of the same scriptural passages arose. Each time a text is edited, there are avenues for a fresh way to look at it, because these editions offer new readings of the text. Later scholars discovered some truths and beauty in the Coptic Bible that earlier readers of the biblical text in Coptic could not comprehend and see.

The next section of this chapter will address the preservation of the biblical text through monasticism, and the representation of light in artistic works from Egypt.

⁶³⁶ J. Wevers, VTGG. I. *Genesis*. Göttingen, 1974; Id. VTGG. III.2 *Deuteronomium*. Göttingen, 1977; Id. VTGG. III.1 *Numeri*. Göttingen, 1982; Id. VTGG. II.2 *Leviticus*. Göttingen, 1986; Id. VTGG. II.1 *Exodus*. Göttingen, 1991.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

B. The Preservation of Scripture and its Representation in Egyptian Art

This section deals with two important aspects of this critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 in the light of Coptic studies: (a.) how the Scripture was preserved in monasteries will be displayed. Then, (b.) the way in which the concept of light is represented in Egyptian Art will be taken into consideration.

First, it should be stated that: “the most significant and wide-reaching contribution made by Egypt to Christianity was the monastic movement, since practiced in the western world, for it was amongst the Copts that it originated and was developed.”⁶³⁸ It is evident that a tendency towards asceticism predated Christian Egypt. For example, asceticism was found among the Nazarites, the Rechabites, the Essenes, and the Chasidim ha-Risbonim. But it was in Egypt that “in the second century BC, recluses known as the Katachoi were to be found at Memphis, attached to the local Serapeum and living in the catacombs containing the sarcophagi of the sacred Apis bulls that were buried there.”⁶³⁹ In Upper Egypt, the chief ascetic movement was that of the Gymnosophists, who worshipped the Nile and lived in the open, wearing the minimum of clothing.⁶⁴⁰ Christian asceticism was most closely approached by the Therapeutae (healers), who originated in Alexandria. The precursor of Christian monasticism was *anachoresis*, which in Egypt usually meant withdrawal into the desert.⁶⁴¹

Philo, the Jewish philosopher who was born in Alexandria at the beginning of the first century AD, described a group of Therapeutae, formed by Egyptian Jews, who lived on the shores of Lake Mareotis in solitary cells (*monasteria*), meditating on the Law and

⁶³⁸ Barbara. Watterson, *Coptic Egypt*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Scottish Academic Press, 1988, p. 54.

⁶³⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibidem

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

meeting at intervals to worship and break bread together. There are some similarities between this way of life and the lifestyle of the early monks.⁶⁴² That is why some Church historians, such as Eusebius, identified the Therapeutae described by Philo with the earliest Christian converts, although there is no other reason for believing this to be so.⁶⁴³

There are different reasons why these monastic people withdrew into the desert to live the kind of life that they lived. Based on Athanasian asceticism, the incarnation of the Word⁶⁴⁴ made a successful ascetic life possible: (a.) by dwelling in a human body, the Word granted incorruption to human bodies, (b.) through the renewal of humanity's knowledge of God in preparation for a life of virtue, and (c.) in the defeat of the devil and his demons. Watterson added that: "the term 'anchorite', which is today synonymous with 'hermit', was used in pre-Christian times originally to mean 'one who withdraws his labor until a grievance is remedied; later, it became the term used to describe those who fled into the desert to escape high taxation or unjust treatment. Many Egyptians became anchorites in the third century AD, some for the reasons outlined above, others to escape the Decian persecution of Christians'"⁶⁴⁵

However, the Christian anchorite was one who withdrew into the desert in order to lead a life of prayer and fasting undistracted by worldly affairs. That person was not, at least in theory, someone who was trying to escape from the pressures of life, but rather one who believed that the desert was populated with demons and monstrous animals who represented the Devil and with which it was his or her duty to wrestle as an '*athlete of god*', so that by overcoming them he would ensure the safety of his fellow-Christians in

⁶⁴² Aziz S. Atiya, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991, p. 1661.

⁶⁴³ Barbara. Watterson, Op. Cit., p. 55.

⁶⁴⁴ John 1:1-14.

⁶⁴⁵ Barbara. Watterson, Op. Cit., Ibidem.

the Nile Valley.⁶⁴⁶ According to tradition, “the first Christian anchorite was Paul the Hermit, otherwise known as Paul the Theban, whose *Life* was written (in Latin) by Jerome in the fourth century.”⁶⁴⁷

The first historically authentic figure to withdraw into the desert as a Christian anchorite was Anthony, who later became the father of Christian monasticism. Much of the information that we now have on the career of Anthony comes from the *Life* written, in Coptic, by Patriarch Athanasius (328-373).⁶⁴⁸ Watterson continues that “the development of the Egyptian monastery, from the eremitical stage inspired by Anthony into that of an enclosed community with rigid and strict rules, was the work of Pachom [at *Tabennesi*], whose monastic rule was elaborated and further organized by Shenute [at *Atripe*].”⁶⁴⁹

“Every year, we become much better informed about life in monasteries and hermitages because of ongoing archaeological campaigns.”⁶⁵⁰ “In the Pachomian system, the monastery consisted of a group of buildings surrounded by an enclosure wall. Within this wall there were cells for monks, a church, an assembly hall, and a refectory together with a kitchen, a library and workshops. There was also a guesthouse; and a house for the porters who guarded the entrance to the monastery.”⁶⁵¹ A library was very important to the life of a monastery as mentioned above. In that library, the Bible was kept, and the

⁶⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁵⁰ Gawdat. Gabra, ed. *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*. Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005, p. 5.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., p. 62.

Scripture was being recopied by monks throughout the years. The services consisted of psalms, prayers, and lessons, presided by the Head of the monastery.⁶⁵²

Another form of monasticism is cenobitic monasticism (in the early 4th century) which stresses community life. By definition, the English terms cenobite and cenobitic are derived from the Greek words κοινός, “common”, and βίος, “life” meaning literally “common life.” The life of a cenobitic monk is regulated by a religious rule, a collection of precepts. That sense of community is also vividly seen in the study of Scripture, the time of sharing the biblical story corporately, and the preservation of the scriptural writings. In short, the monks studied the Scriptures together as well.⁶⁵³

Monasticism was a vehicle for the spread of the written Scripture. People had to learn how to read in order to have access to the Bible. It was an obligation to be literate. Especially in the Pachomian order, monks were under the obligation to know how to read and write, while life was hard for them.⁶⁵⁴ Imitation of Pachomius was made the primary motive for the other monks.⁶⁵⁵ It is certain that Pachomius had a natural sense of balance, his shrewdness, and his sympathy were mixed together. Daily rules were to be carried out (or observed), and reflections on the saving role of Christ in the church were also emphasized.⁶⁵⁶ Rousseau states, “The structure of authority both in Pachomius’s lifetime and later was complex and fluid.”⁶⁵⁷ He continues to affirm that

one is brought back also to that basic experience which colored the monastic day and governed the understanding of what it was to live under rule: the whole community, superiors and subjects, thought of themselves constantly as living in

⁶⁵² Ibid., p. 65.

⁶⁵³ See Harry R. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 129-130.

⁶⁵⁴ CE: 1859a-1864b.

⁶⁵⁵ Philip. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999, p. 121.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

the presence of God. It was from God that the line of command would always run; and it was that sense of confidence that gave authority its rights and submission its self-respect. Here again Pachomius was the prime example.⁶⁵⁸

The text that was used while learning how to read and write was the Bible itself.

Orlandi, in his article on *the Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe*, informs us that “the Bible has the largest number of codices than any other literary genre from the White⁶⁵⁹ Monastery.”⁶⁶⁰ the Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲁ or S) – an Alexandrian text-type manuscript written in uncial letters on parchment in the 4th century – can be another good example of this preservation phenomenon to cite here. This manuscript testifies about how the Scriptures were preserved in the monastic tradition, and how monks recopied and kept the biblical text through the ages.⁶⁶¹

The Bible talks about how God created light through the spoken word in Gen. 1:1-5. The monasteries cherished stories that related to the creation. Surely, the monks wanted to know about the origin of the universe, how life got started, and about the creator who is God himself, according to the creational stories found in the Bible. In short, because it was important, the monks are the ones who preserved the biblical text.

Also, the leaders of the Coptic Church – the bishops and the patriarchs – coming from a monastic background, carried the importance of the Holy Scriptures to local parishes abroad. This is called “transmission.”⁶⁶² These leaders of the Coptic Church encouraged their parishioners to develop a particular love for the Bible. Moreover, orality

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

⁶⁵⁹ Another name for the Monastery of Saint Shenute the Archimandrite is White Monastery because the Church in Atripe, a mountain in Egypt, was built with white stones.

⁶⁶⁰ A. Egberts, et al. *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002, p. 225.

⁶⁶¹ For a complete story, see *The Mount Sinai Manuscript of the Bible With Four Illustrations*, 2nd ed., For the Trustees of the British Museum, 1934.

⁶⁶² Though for some conservative biblical scholars, “transmission” is a specialized term that describes the process of how the word of God was transmitted to us today.

played an important role in the preservation of the Scripture across the centuries. “The desert fathers were gifted storytellers.”⁶⁶³ Ancient Egyptians, being ancient Near Easterners, could have preferred for the use of (or could have had a tendency to use) spoken forms of their Coptic language. The Coptic language is the latest stage of the ancient Egyptian language.

Second, among the beautiful paintings from the Monastery of the Syrians or the Monastery of the God Bearer are found some depictions with lamps. This also reveals the presence of lamps in this monastery as a source of light and as a representation of light in the Coptic tradition. The pictures of these lamps remind the person who is looking at them about how the description of lamp as light is like a beautiful tapestry in the Holy Scriptures. Three (3) examples are as follows: (a.) the word of God is compared to a lamp in Psalm 119:105. (b.) in Matthew 25:1-13, we are told the nice story of the ten virgins (5 wise and 5 foolish) who took their lamps with them, going forth to meet the bridegroom. (c.) the Apostle John, in a vision, saw Christ walking in the midst of seven golden lampstands, which symbolically represent the seven churches (Rev. 1:12-20).

In his work titled *Coptic Art and Archaeology: the Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Later Antique to the Middle Ages*, Badawy attempts a comprehensive survey of Coptic art and archaeology from the third to the thirteenth centuries, A.D.⁶⁶⁴ In this book, Badawy’s concern is to demonstrate the make-up of Coptic art and culture in terms of its debt towards both the long tradition of Egyptian art and Hellenistic and Roman influences. Time and space would not allow up to go in depth, considering the scope of

⁶⁶³ William. Harmless, Op. Cit. p. vii.

⁶⁶⁴ Badawy, Alexander. *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA, and London, England: M.I.T. Press, 1978, pp. xiv + 387.

the art of the Copts throughout the ages. The architecture of the early churches of Egypt could be a faithful witness to this previous statement. In fact, the concept of light is an important subject in monastic visions, wall paintings, and especially among the finds from the Monastery of St. Anthony at the Red Sea.⁶⁶⁵ Light is viewed as something good, and darkness, evil. John 1:5 reads, “*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*”

Early scholars tend to think that most of the monks were simple, uneducated and theologically naïve. However, their writings and paintings have proven that they knew how to exegete the biblical text. They were exegetical monks. For instance, St. Anthony of Egypt and his northern counterpart St. Ephraim the Syrian were teachers who knew popular Platonic philosophy and they were familiar with the great Eastern theological doctrines and traditions. By painting or drawing a picture, they wanted to represent the reality in which they lived and how they understood the deity. *A picture is worth a thousand words.* It is in that perspective that Karel C. Innemée affirms that “there is a considerable variety in the quality of the mural paintings *in Kellia*. Some are no more than graffiti and could be the product of the inhabitants, while other decorations, in fact the majority, seem to be the work of trained or professional painters.”⁶⁶⁶ Most importantly, their artistic works could be seen as Egyptian, because the majority of these artists were also from Egypt.

Sometimes, these artists who were hired to paint and to do the work were not Christians. Culture has its way to infiltrate religion. God’s Creation of Light is not

⁶⁶⁵ See Elizabeth. Bolman, *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Anthony at the Red Sea*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.

⁶⁶⁶ Karel C. Innemée, in Gawdat. Gabra, and Hany N. Takla, *Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt: Beni Suef, Giza, Cairo, and the Nile Delta*. Cairo, Egypt and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2017, p. 267.

represented in Coptic Art. However other scenes based on the book of Genesis appear in Coptic monasteries. For example, the narrative of Gen. 14 that is related to Abraham and Melchizekek is best reflected in a twelfth century painting of the Monastery al-Baramus;⁶⁶⁷ and the sixth or seventh-century painting of the Sacrifice of Isaac is depicted according to the description of Gen. 22.⁶⁶⁸

What does the creation of light mean for an ancient Egyptian? In his speech, Stephen mentioned that: “*Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*” (Acts 7:22a), and so, for forty years. Knowing where a text is from, and who wrote it are important in the literary studies of that text. Then, if some readers of the Bible consider Moses to be the author of Genesis 1, there are a lot of Egyptian studies to be done here to fully understand this passage of Gen. 1:1-5. It is possible to present a literary and comparative analysis of the Bohairic Coptic manuscripts of Gen. 1:1-5 in the following section.

C. The Current State of the Sahidic and Bohairic Manuscripts

The Bohairic Manuscript, dated circa 4th century is among the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Bible itself. The date of the Bohairic text rivals the Codex Ambrosianus (7a1) that is also dated around this time period. The extant Hebrew manuscripts (the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex) and the Septuagint manuscripts that we have do not go that far in date. In fact, it is possible that the oldest

⁶⁶⁷ DAYR AL-BARAMUS, Church Paintings in Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia: <http://cdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cce/id/2111/rec/1>; Gawdat Gabra, *Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture*. American University in Cairo Press, 2002, p. 41, fig. 1.4.

⁶⁶⁸ Gawdat. Gabra and Marianne. Eaton-Krauss, *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic Museum and the Churches of Old Cairo*. American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 2007, p. 106 f.

complete version of the Bible is the Sahidic translation, though it is fragmentary. This is different for New Testament studies.

As stated earlier, the Old Testament was translated into Coptic from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew Text.⁶⁶⁹ So then, the similarities and the differences that exist between the Coptic text and the Greek text may be of great significance. The Bohairic Manuscript of the Old Testament [that we have] which is dated to the 4th century is younger than the Sahidic Manuscript that is possibly a third century CE document. Again, this Sahidic Manuscript is the oldest complete translation. Because the text is fragmented, some of my conclusions regarding this version of Gen. 1:1-5 will be drawn in the appendix. The Coptic text was written on Papyri, so, some parts of the text are lost, as its state of preservation is not complete. What happened to the Sahidic Manuscript?

Based on what Maspero offers us in his *Fragments de Manuscrits Coptes-Thébains* and the fragments provided by Von Lemm in *Sahidische Bibelfragmente III*,⁶⁷⁰ the Sahidic text starts towards the end of Gen. 1:19. Because Day I goes hand in hand with Day IV, looking at the text in its chiasmic structure, the Sahidic version of Gen. 1:20 will be put into conversation with the Bohairic translation of Gen. 1:20.

In this study, we will discover that the Sahidic text is older than the Bohairic text. Gen. 1:1-5 is preserved intact in the Bohairic tradition. This is different when it comes to New Testament. The complete passage of Gen. 1:1-5 that is used in this critical comparative analysis is from *A Critical Edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch, Volume I, Genesis*, edited by Peters K. Melvin.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ See the section: "Version Exemplar."

⁶⁷⁰ Cod. orient. Berlin. in fol. 1605, fol. 1.

⁶⁷¹ Melvin K. H. Peters, *LXX: A Critical Edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch. Volume I, Genesis*. Septuagint and Cognate Studies 19. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985, p. 1.

Here is the Bohairic Text of Gen. 1:1-5, and each verse is followed by an English translation that tends to be literal, i.e. closer to the Bohairic itself:

1:1 𐩧𐩬𐩨 𐩪𐩁𐩣𐩬𐩪 𐩁 𐩫𐩱 𐩈𐩀𐩎𐩈 𐩨𐩲𐩫𐩈 𐩨𐩈𐩎 𐩨𐩕𐩁𐩣𐩨

1:1 In a beginning God did create the heaven and the earth.

1:2 𐩨𐩕𐩁𐩣𐩨 𐩂𐩈 𐩨𐩁𐩫𐩮𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩀𐩲𐩨𐩁𐩮 𐩈𐩣𐩸 𐩨𐩈 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩀𐩲𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩱 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩀𐩲𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈 𐩫𐩱 𐩨𐩁𐩕𐩨𐩨𐩸 𐩮𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸

1:2 And the earth was being invisible [to it] and without form⁶⁷² and (a) darkness was existing upon the deep and a Spirit of God was coming over the waters.

1:3 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈𐩸𐩸 𐩫𐩱 𐩸𐩈 𐩎𐩁𐩣𐩮𐩸𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩕𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸

1:3 And God said: let light become,⁶⁷³ and it happened namely the light.

1:4 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩕𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸 𐩫𐩱 𐩈𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩸𐩈 𐩨𐩀𐩨𐩈𐩕 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩕𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸 𐩫𐩱 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸𐩸

1:4 And He, namely God, saw the light that it was good, and He divided (made clear distinction) between the light and the darkness.

1:5 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩕𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸 𐩫𐩱 𐩈𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩸𐩈 𐩨𐩈𐩣𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩕𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩈𐩣𐩸 𐩸𐩈 𐩨𐩈𐩸𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩪𐩸𐩸 𐩈 𐩣𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩈 𐩲𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩈𐩣𐩸𐩸𐩸 𐩨𐩣𐩸𐩸𐩸

1:5 And He, namely God, called the light day and the darkness he called it night and an evening became, and a morning became. In the first day.

In the following lines, an analysis of the Coptic Bohairic Text itself will be presented. Some linguistic features that are shared by both Greek and Bohairic Coptic are more visible through a literary analysis of the Bohairic Text.

In Gen. 1:1, the term 𐩁𐩣𐩨 is not found in the Coptic Dictionary, because it is a Greek loan word. The indefinite article is used in the first clause. So, the word “beginning” is undefined. This is in imitation of the LXX that followed the MT at first. Based on the Coptic tradition, the absence of the definite article can be interpreted in three ways: a. It can mean that there were different beginnings. b. It can also signify that God does not have a beginning. “*The beginning*” presupposes that God has a beginning. c. We really do

⁶⁷² Lit. “without wall.”

⁶⁷³ or “happen”

not know what that beginning is, and we do not have a specific time for that. But we know what was created (heaven and earth), and the information that we have in Gen. 1 is just about the earth.

ϕ† is used here as a *nomina sacra* that stands for “God.” In Coptic, some important names have their abbreviations that are used within the language itself for longer terms that are not fully written in the text. The λ that succeeds the *nomina sacra* is the perfect or past tense marker. ΘΔΜΙΟ (Sahidic: ΤΔΜΙΟ) is the verb “to create, to make.”⁶⁷⁴ The Ν (before ΤΦΕ) is the direct object marker. When ΦΕ (*phe*) is with the short or weak article (i.e. ñ̄ ϕ̄, ṝ θ̄), it means “heaven” but with the long or strong article (i.e. ϖ, †), it means “sky.” It is not bound in one place, but it is a general location. The weak article means that it is one of the kind. ΝΕΜ is the conjunction that connects *sky* with *earth*. It plays the role of a connector to coordinate the words (ΤΦΕ and ΠΚΔϚΙ) within the same clause. “*Heaven and Earth*” stand for two different things: one above and one below.

In the Egyptian way of thinking, *Earth* is masculine. *Earth* relates to geography and climate. These words could have also been about the deities.⁶⁷⁵ Without forgetting the Greek “γη (*gē*).” What did the original writer have in mind when he used the term “Earth” in his own language? Moreover, when weak articles are used, such as ñ̄ ϕ̄, ṝ θ̄, that means, we have strong nouns here.

⁶⁷⁴ Richard. Smith, *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*. Second Edition. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999, p. 32.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Mythology.

In Gen. 1:2, the terms $\text{N}\alpha\text{Q}\text{O}\text{P}\ \text{N}\alpha\text{T}\text{N}\alpha\text{Y}$ (“was being invisible”) occupy the same grammatical position, and they are related. This is an N of attribution, which means that the word is an adjective. It is interesting that N has a lot of definitions in both Sahidic and Bohairic. Among these meanings are the fact that N can be genitive (of), a preposition (e.g. “in”), and a plural definite article. The word $\overline{\text{N}\alpha}$ is a nomina sacra that stands for $\text{P}\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ which is a Greek loan word.

$\text{P}\epsilon\ \text{OY}\text{OZ}\ \text{N}\alpha\text{T}\text{C}\text{O}\text{B}\text{T}$ (and was without form) means that the earth was shapeless, or it did not contain – or was without – wall. αT is what we call “a negative adjective marker.” Or the negation is marked by αT in Coptic. It should be noted that $\alpha\text{T}\text{N}\alpha\text{Y}$ functions as a noun. That means, the earth does not have a defined boundary / it is boundless. OYOZ is a conjunction that connects $\text{N}\alpha\text{Q}\text{O}\text{P}\ \text{N}\alpha\text{T}\text{N}\alpha\text{Y}$ (“being invisible”) with $\text{N}\alpha\text{T}\text{C}\text{O}\text{B}\text{T}$ (“being without form”). $\text{E}\rho\text{OQ}$ meaning “to it” can be omitted, depending on the English translator, but it is translated in this analysis for the purpose of emphasis. The Coptic language makes use of this reflective device very often. So, this construction is really an expression. It is possible that the earth was under water, and it was invisible. We do not know when the earth was as such. There is no specific time here. Interestingly, Epsilon (ϵ) instead of Alfa (α) is used in Coptic for opposite adjectives. The $\text{P}\epsilon$ is present here because of the imperfect tense. Hebrew and Greek do not have it, but it is used here because of the Coptic syntax. XH is the qualitative of XO , and it signifies the state of being. There was truly darkness ($\text{X}\alpha\text{K}\text{I}$). In other terms, darkness was a real entity.

Crum defines ΝΟΥΝ (masculine noun) as being “abyss of hell, depth of earth, and sea.”⁶⁷⁶ Crum makes reference to two other places where the same term is used: (a.) Gen. 7:11 where it is written that: “*And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.*” and (b.) Is. 51:10 that states, “*Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?*” This can be a good definition to support the connection of “abyss, depth” with a spiritual place. The biblical text can be seen like something dramatic happened between Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:2.⁶⁷⁷ The fall of Satan could have been on the sixth day based on Coptic theology. On that day, humanity was also created. Because Genesis is not a science book, these statements should be made with caution. This is an important discussion to this essay, because the fall of Satan could have also taken place between Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:2.

ΟΥ̅Π̅Ν̅Α̅ Ν̅Τ̅Ε̅ Φ̅†̅ Ν̅Α̅Ϟ̅Ν̅Η̅ΟΥ̅ Ζ̅Ι̅Χ̅Ε̅Ν̅ Ν̅Ι̅Μ̅Ω̅ΟΥ̅ signifies “*a spirit of God was coming over the waters.*” Depending on the translator, the first part [subject] of this sentence can also be “*a wind from God.*” The Coptic Bible is the most literal translation of the Greek Septuagint, while the LXX was a literal translation of the Hebrew. Both the LXX and MT have the ideas of “a spirit of God” or “the spirit of God”⁶⁷⁸ and the verb “to move” or “to hover.” The more we translate a piece of literature to another language, the further we will get from the original of that same text.

Based on this manuscript, creation was a process; it was not an instantaneous thing. This affects the way we read and interpret the text, and consequently, it plays over

⁶⁷⁶ Crum, Walter E. *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1939; 1962, p. 226.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. The gap theory

⁶⁷⁸ Hebraic construct form or word pair.

our theology. At least, this was in the mind of the person who translated the text. Then, if someone says that it took God sometime to create the world. Well, that is fine. We do not know the length of time for sure. So, we understand the text based on the grammar at that time and during the time when the text was being written.

By the way, this is our problem with the Greek translation. We do not know the meanings of these words when they were being written. A big part of our interpretation is based upon medieval words and works, while the Coptic manuscript gives us a literal translation according to the proper meaning of the words used at that time of translation in the Coptic language. The Coptic language gives us more detail about what is going on in the time considering its syntax and its grammar themselves. For example, the tense can be bipartite or tripartite; the use of the habitual and the present tenses, the imperfect and the first perfect tenses, though they are also different from one another.

In the Bohairic version of Gen. 1:3, the verb $\omega\omega\pi\iota$ meaning “to become” or “to happen” is added after $\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\gamma\omega\iota\iota\iota$ (“let light be / become”). We should ask ourselves: what was the scribes’ understanding of what they read? Greek written on papyri is different than Coptic on the same material. In the case of the Greek text, this is the oldest. It is always good to consult the Göttingen Septuagint. Peters says that “the critical text established by the Göttingen Septuaginta Unternehmen is a reliable approximation of original LXX.”⁶⁷⁹ But to fully understand why the scribes opted for a specific grammatical construction, one should pay attention to both the original text and the intention of the translator.

⁶⁷⁹ Melvin K. H. Peters, *Op. Cit.* p. xiv.

In Gen. 1:4, the masculine subject pronoun is used: “*And He saw namely God that the light was good...*” The same thing happens in Gen. 1:5, “*And he namely God called the light day and the darkness he called it night...*” The Coptic translators understood that God is a man.

In the fifth verse, there is agreement between the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Bohairic Coptic Text in the fact that both the light and the darkness have received a name by the deity. The verb “to call” appears twice in the Coptic past tense or the perfect tense in Hebrew. It is interesting that God does the naming in Gen. 1. In reality, God asked Adam to name just the animals in Gen. 2. Adam did not name the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, and the sky, etc. Also, when someone is reading that text, the person should look at the sequences of creation with the deity, his method, and his step-by-step way of creating. For instance, consider what God creates first, then, what is the other element of creation that follows.

There are some important notions pertaining to the Coptic language syntax and grammar to note in Gen. 1:5. For example, $\text{OY}\text{OZ} \ \& \ \text{POY}\text{ZI} \ \text{OY}\text{OPI} \ \& \ \text{TOOY}\text{I} \ \text{OY}\text{OPI}$ stands for “... *and an evening became, and a morning became.*” OYOPI is an intransitive verb, so, there is no need of a direct object. The last clause of Gen. 1:5 is $\text{N}\text{PIEZOY} \ \text{N}\text{ZOYIT}$ (“*In the first day*”). According to Crum OYOPI followed by N means “happen/become in”⁶⁸⁰ In the Coptic text, it is an ordinal number. Here the Coptic Text uses the ordinal number (*first*), probably for consistency. But the Septuagint reads, $\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha \ \mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*eméra mia*) meaning “day one.” Verse 5 is unique in that the cardinal is used to modify “day” rather than the ordinal, i.e. *mia* rather than *protè*. This is similar to the Masoretic Text

⁶⁸⁰ Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005, p. 578.

(MT) which has *èchad* instead of *rishôn*, but ordinals for the next six days. Of course, the Coptic translators did not have MT.

The ñ in ñϣΟΥΙΤ is an ñ of attribution. Each language can have its particular way to say an expression. This is the Coptic scribes' own syntactical and grammatical construction. Moreover, when we compare the end of the Bohairic Gen. 1:19 – ñπμερσοϣ ñϣΟΥΙΤ (“*In the first day*”) with the Sahidic manuscript, the μ is not present in the Sahidic text. This also happens in the other choruses found in Gen. 1:23, 31 for the fifth and the sixth days. Furthermore, all the other Coptic manuscripts do not have any problem with the μ. They seem to be in agreement with each other. The scribes may have had different types of Greek Manuscripts around them at that time. Sahidic – being the most prominent dialect of the Coptic Egyptian language – was known all over Egypt, though survived in parts of Upper Egypt. Bohairic, originally from the western Nile Delta in Lower Egypt, inherited a lot of syntactical and grammatical features of the Sahidic dialect.

The following is Von Lemm's reconstruction of Gen. 1:19c from the Sahidic manuscript. An English translation of this Sahidic portion can be as follows: “... *the fourth day.*”

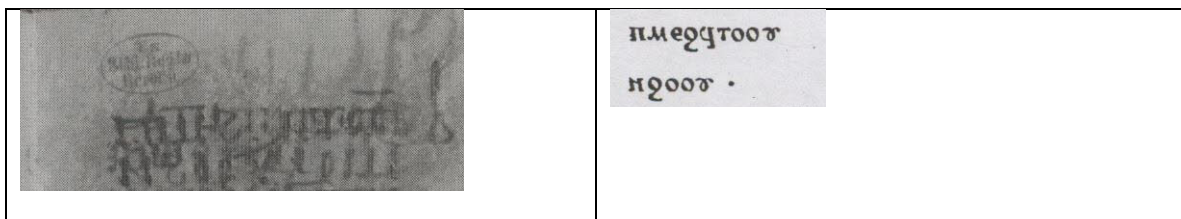


Image 11. (Gen. 1:19c. Cod. orient. Berolin. in fol. 1605, fol. 1).⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹ Von. Lemm, *Sahidische Bibelfragmente III*. p. 5 (# 097).

It was on that fourth day that the deity created – through the spoken word – lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night. The greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night, without forgetting the creation of the stars. On that day, God also saw that it was good, and the end of the chorus that is repeated throughout Gen. 1 is the beginning of the Sahidic text (cf. Gen. 1:14-19).

This study has become more significant with the work of Daniel B. Sharp on the Papyrus Bodmer III in which he presents an early Coptic version of the Gospel of John and Genesis through the reconstruction of the manuscript. In the words of one scholar, “This manuscript [P. Bodmer III] is the principal witness to the Bohairic biblical tradition of the early Coptic era.”⁶⁸² It is only P. Bodm. III that preserves an extensive amount of text.⁶⁸³ Another reason why P. Bodmer III is necessary is that “it is an important witness to the early Greek text.”⁶⁸⁴ There is not much difference between this manuscript and the version of Gen. 1:1-5 offered above from Melvin K. H. Peters, with the exception of the conjunction $\sigma\gamma\omicron\zeta$ (meaning “and”) that is found more often in Peters’ than in P. Bodm. III. Two big themes for the Evangelist John are word and light.⁶⁸⁵ Gen. 1:1-5 envisions the same thing, laying out how God created light through the spoken word.

Last, when we consider these three versions of Gen. 1:1-5 – MT, LXX, and Copt – we should always remember that the scribes were copying the Greek text not just for the church use, but also for personal use. However, the Hebrew Scriptures were only for synagogue use. Later, in chapter 6, the similarities and the differences that exist between these versions of the same text will be offered.

⁶⁸² Sharp, Daniel B. *Papyrus Bodmer III: An Early Coptic Version of the Gospel of John and Genesis*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016, p. 3.

⁶⁸³ Ibidem.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Jn. 1:1-14.

Now, let's turn to the relationship that exists between the Sahidic and Bohairic versions of the Bible and the other Coptic dialects biblical manuscripts.

D. Their Relationship with other Coptic Dialects Manuscripts

There is a linguistic intersection between the Coptic dialects. It is not a big difference when it is just an iota (ι) that has become an epsilon (ε). Even if some of these dialects use more Demotic letters than others, the script – that is composed of both Greek and ancient Egyptian – remains the same. There is a Greek influence upon the Coptic language as a whole, i.e. upon all the Coptic dialects. It is amazing to see that about 20% of the Coptic language is Greek, but 80% of the vocabulary is from the ancient Egyptian language. There is no doubt that many of the first Egyptian Christians spoke and wrote Greek as well.

These statements above are to say that learning another Coptic dialect will be less difficult for someone who had previously studied one. A good starting point could be to learn Sahidic at first, then Bohairic.⁶⁸⁶ In fact, a linguist who knows both Hamitic languages and Semitic languages can easily conclude that the relationship that exists between Sahidic or Bohairic and the other Coptic dialects is almost the same with the West Semitic languages that share linguistic similarities. But the syntax, especially the spelling of words, can be different from one Coptic dialect to another. For example, the Bohairic verb ⲩⲱⲡⲓ (perfect or past tense: ⲗⲢⲩⲱⲡⲓ) – that appears in Gen. 1:3, 5 and throughout the creation narrative – would be ⲩⲱⲡⲉ (perfect or past tense: ⲗⲢⲩⲱⲡⲉ) in Sahidic.

⁶⁸⁶ Another starting point can be the Greek language.

According to Takla, “the Coptic Bible in any dialect was never found complete in any one manuscript.⁶⁸⁷ This is due to the enormous size it would have occupied. Also, what has survived was dictated by the liturgical use of the Bible in the Coptic Church as well as the monastic tradition. The writing material of the manuscripts, their size, and their writing format changed over the centuries. The changes were made as the environment and tradition dictated.”⁶⁸⁸ As discussed earlier, the dialect of the text reflected the geography and the time of its writing, as discussed earlier.

With regards to the state of preservation, some scholars agree that the Coptic version of the OT was translated in its entirety, at least in the Sahidic version, by the fourth century. However, the extant manuscripts are incomplete and much fragmented. Time and deteriorating status of the Coptic community since the seventh century with the Arabic invasion can explain this lack in the manuscripts of Coptic dialects. Even if we combine all that survived in the different dialects, there are still substantially missing books of the Hebrew Bible. The next chart⁶⁸⁹ provides the state of preservation of the book of Genesis in the different Coptic dialects, based on the number of surviving verses, complete or in part:

Dialect / Book	Sahidic	Bohairic	Fayyumic	Akhmimic	Mesokemic	Other
Genesis	71%	100%	1% ⁶⁹⁰	1% ⁶⁹¹	1% ⁶⁹²	17: <1% ⁶⁹³

Image 12. State of Preservation of Genesis

⁶⁸⁷ See the Appendix for a short list of the OT manuscript codices in Sahidic and Bohairic.

⁶⁸⁸ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Op. Cit. p. 58.

⁶⁸⁹ Hany N. Takla, *An Introduction to the Coptic Old Testament*. Loc. Cit. p. 74.

⁶⁹⁰ Gen. 27:41 is preserved in part in a Fayyumic homily in the John Rylands Library (Walter E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Collection of the John Rylands Library*. Manchester, 1909, no. 411).

⁶⁹¹ Only 14 verses survived.

⁶⁹² Only 12 verses survived.

⁶⁹³ Only 13 verses survived in Dialect 17.

In summary, Egyptian Christianity is revisited and reconsidered in this chapter. Though each dialect is spoken at a specific region of the country of Egypt, the Coptic dialects have a linguistic similitude between them. Because Coptic as a Hamitic language is greatly influenced by Greek that is an Indo-European language, it's a good idea that the Coptic Bible was translated from LXX. The syntax of the Greek language is different from the syntax of the Coptic language. For instance, in Gen. 1:1a, the Greek Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς corresponds to the Bohairic Coptic 𐩧𐩨𐩣 𐩠𐩢𐩀𐩪𐩣𐩬 𐩠 𐩢𐩀𐩪 𐩠𐩢𐩀𐩪𐩣 meaning literally “In a beginning God created [did create].” The monks contributed to the preservation of Scripture, as biblical manuscripts were preserved and found in some of the libraries of monasteries. A critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 from the Bohairic Coptic text reveals that the Coptic translators presented to their readers a text that they could understand while staying as close as possible to the Greek text.

Chapter Six: The Divergences and Intersections Between the Manuscripts

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the translation data that were collected during the redaction process of this work, and those that were offered in this essay. This is the summit of the critical comparative analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 based on five different manuscripts – MT, T, P, LXX, Copt – in this book. All the translations will be compared to the original Hebrew text. Three special considerations will be made for T and P; LXX and MT; and Copt and LXX. Because (1.) Aramaic is very close to Syriac linguistically, (2.) LXX was translated from the Hebrew text, and (3.) the Coptic Bible was translated from LXX. The reasons for their differences from one to another, and their similarities with each other will be given. Before comparing the original Hebrew text with the four translations of Gen. 1:1-5, and the translations between themselves, the question “*what is translation?*” should be answered.

The study of translation has been dominated by the debate about its status as an art or a science. According to Bell, “The linguist inevitably approaches translation from a ‘scientific’ point of view, seeking to create some kind of ‘objective’ description of the phenomenon... It could, however, be argued that translation is an ‘art’ or a ‘craft’ and therefore not amenable to objective, ‘scientific’ description and explanation and so, ‘a *fortiori*,’ the search for a theory of translation is doomed from the start.”⁶⁹⁴

In spite of this dichotomy between ‘art’ and ‘science,’ the title of a book on translation theory published in 1988 is as follows: *The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation*.⁶⁹⁵ In this work, the author – while taking care to distinguish ‘pure’ linguistics from applied linguistics – places the main emphasis on literary translation

⁶⁹⁴ Roger T. Bell, *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London, UK: Longman, 1991, p. 4.

⁶⁹⁵ See Malone (1988) and also Biguenet and Schulte (1989) whose collection of papers on the process of translation has, none the less, the title *The craft of translation*.

since, we are told: “The quintessence of translation as art is, if anything, even more patent in literary texts.”⁶⁹⁶ In Bible translation, the translator also deals with text.

For Catford, “the theory of translation is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and is consequently a branch of Comparative Linguistics.”⁶⁹⁷ It is within that perspective that translation has been defined as “the expression in another language [or target language (TL)] of what has been expressed in another, source language (SL), preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences.”⁶⁹⁸ Considering the nature of equivalence, Hartmann and Stork offer a second definition of the term as follows: “Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language.”⁶⁹⁹

However, there is ‘the problem of equivalence’ between texts and the extent to which it is desirable or even possible to ‘preserve’ the semantic and/or stylistic characteristics of the source language text (SLT) in the course of translating it into the target language text (TLT). Later, it will be displayed more clearly that none of the translations of Gen. 1:1-5 from the Hebrew original text to another language is a word for word translation. The authors continue and make the problem of *equivalence* very plain by advancing that “Texts in different languages can be equivalent in different degrees (fully or partially equivalent), in respect of different levels of presentation (equivalent in respect of context, of semantics, of grammar, of lexis, etc.) and at different ranks (word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, sentence-for sentence).”⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁶ Malone, J. L. 1988, *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁷ J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965; 1974, p. 20.

⁶⁹⁸ Roger T. Bell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁹ R. R. K. Hartmann, and F. C. Stork, *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Applied Science. 1972, p. 713.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

For example, if we translate the English text *What time is it?* into French as *Quelle heure est-il?* there is replacement of SL (English) grammar and lexis by equivalent TL (French) grammar and lexis. There is *replacement* of SL graphology by TL graphology – but the TL graphological form is by no means a translation *equivalent* of the SL graphological form. Moreover, there may be no replacement at all at one or more levels, but simple transference of SL material into the TL text.⁷⁰¹

On this note, a distinction between *full* translation and *partial* translation should be made: “In a *full* translation the entire text is submitted to the translation process: that is every part of the SL text is replaced by TL text material. In a partial translation, some part or parts of the SL text are left untranslated: they are simply transferred to and incorporated in the TL text.”⁷⁰² It is common for some SL lexical items to be treated as such in literary translation. There are two (2) reasons for that: (a.) these lexical items can be regarded as ‘untranslatable.’ (b.) it can be for the deliberate purpose of introducing ‘local color’ into the TL text.⁷⁰³

The discipline of translation studies has become more vulnerable in the twentieth century. For the scholars of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, “translation was just an act of mirroring a lacked creative potential, and therefore was a subsidiary and derivative practice. It was also a mechanical process associated with notions like ‘imitation’ and ‘mimicking.’”⁷⁰⁴ The cause for this underestimation was an overemphasis on the finished translated work, rather than the process of translation. “An examination of the translated work would inevitably mean *a comparison with the ‘original’ work, giving*

⁷⁰¹ J. C. Catford, Op. Cit. pp. 20, 21.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. 21.

⁷⁰³ Ibidem.

⁷⁰⁴ Amith. Kumar P. V., *Bakhtin and Translation Studies: Theoretical Extensions and Connotations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 1, 2.

rise to value-judgments like gain or loss after translation [emphasis mine]. Such an analysis led to a hierarchical relationship of master/servant between the author of the ‘original’ work and her/his translator.”⁷⁰⁵ In the twentieth century, there was a shift from the finished translated work to the activity of translation, as “the servant translator” rose to challenge the inferior position he or she was granted.

Bell is right to say that: “it is apparent, and has been for a very long time indeed, that the ideal of total equivalence is a chimera.”⁷⁰⁶ Languages are not the same. In other words, languages are different from each other. These differences can be seen in the form having distinct codes and rules that regulate the construction of grammatical stretches of language and these forms have different meanings.⁷⁰⁷

By definition, to shift from one language to another is to alter the forms. But these forms cannot but fail to coincide totally; “there is no absolute synonymy between words in the same language,” says Bell.⁷⁰⁸ Then, why should anyone be surprised to discover a lack of synonymy between languages? In the process, something is always ‘lost.’ At times, one might suggest that something is ‘gained.’ Translators can find themselves being accused of reproducing the original partly and so ‘betraying’ the author’s intentions or motives. Hence the notorious Italian proverb – *traduttore traditore*⁷⁰⁹ – ascribes a traitorous nature to the translator.

There are times in translation work when equivalence is ‘preserved’ at a particular level at all costs. For example, for a formulaic sentence such as “I name this ship

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁰⁶ Roger T. Bell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibidem.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibidem.

⁷⁰⁹ *Traduttore traditore* means “translator, traitor.” (Similarly, the Hungarian, *a fordítás: ferdítés*, which is roughly translated as “translation is distortion”.)

Liberté”, there is normally only one equivalent in, say, French, “Je baptize ce navire sous le nom de *Liberté*” and the translator has no options such as would be available if the sentence had read: “I wish the *Liberté* all success.”⁷¹⁰

But at other times, it cannot. What are the alternatives? The answer to this question lays in the dual nature of language itself. Bell defines language in the following way: “Language is a formal structure – a code – which consists of elements which can combine to signal semantic ‘sense’ and, at the same time, a communication system which uses the forms of the code to refer to entities (in the world of the senses and the world of the mind) and create signals which possess communicative ‘value’.”⁷¹¹ So then, according to Bell, “the translator has the option of focusing on finding *formal* equivalents which ‘preserve’ the context-free semantic sense of the text at the expense of its context-sensitive communicative value or finding *functional* equivalents which ‘preserve’ the context-sensitive communicative value of the text at the expense of its context-free semantic sense.”⁷¹² The choice is between translating word-for-word (literal translation) or meaning-for-meaning (free translation), as it goes back to Classical times (Cicero 46 BC).

The next section will present a comparison of the Targum and the Peshitta to the Hebrew Text of Gen. 1:1-5.

⁷¹⁰ See Peter. Newmark, Op. Cit., pp. 7-8.

⁷¹¹ Roger T. Bell, Op. Cit., pp. 6, 7.

⁷¹² Ibid., p. 7.

A. The Aramaic and Syriac Texts in Comparison to the Masoretic Text

As stated earlier, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac are Northwest Semitic languages. They have linguistic and philological features that are similar or identical. These languages are notable for their discontinuous morphology. That is, word roots are not themselves syllables or words, but instead are isolated sets of consonants. Most of the time, these sets of consonants are three, making a so-called trilateral root. Words are composed by filling in the vowels between the root consonants, not so much by adding prefixes or suffixes, although these are often added as well. For example, the Aramaic reading of *וּלְחֹשֶׁכָּה* “and to the darkness” (Gen. 1:5) has the conjunction *ו* and the preposition *ל* as prefixes and the definite article as a suffix. In the Syriac text, the same root is used to signify “darkness” – *ܘܠܚܘܫܘܟܐ*. Hebrew is not exempt from this rule. The MT has the root *חשך* for “darkness” as well.

Robinson writes that: “in Syriac, as in the other Semitic languages, the majority of nouns and verbs are associated, for grammatical purposes, with a trilateral root. It is by no means certain that trilateral roots were as fundamental to the Semitic languages as was once thought.”⁷¹³ Just in the consideration of Gen. 1:1-5, there are nouns and verbs that share a common form in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. Seven among them are: *בָּרָא* (v. 1) meaning “to create,” *רָחַף* “to hover” (in the piel), *תְּהוֹם* “deep,” *רוּחַ* “spirit, wind” (v. 2), *רָאָה* (v. 3) “to see,” *קָרָא* (v. 4) “to call,” and *חֹשֶׁךְ* “darkness,” and *אָמַר* (v. 5) “to say.” Without forgetting the three consonants *ראש* / *ܪܘܫܐ* that stand for “head, beginning,

⁷¹³ Theodore H. Robinson, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. 1962, Op. Cit. p. 1.

chief” (v. 1) used in both MT and P, though the *matter lectionis* is different in both languages (*alef* versus *yod*).

Robinson continues to say that: “it generally happens that all words having the same three ‘radicals’ can be traced to a single idea. Derivatives are formed by prefixing or affixing consonants, by a change of vowels, or by the doubling of a consonant within the root itself.”⁷¹⁴ As discussed in chapter 2 of this book, before the Masoretes, Hebrew was not written with pointings. In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, it’s the root that conveys the meaning of a noun or a verb, though a root can have a different definition based on the vowels that are used. In short, a reader who sees a specific Semitic word – looking at the root – the form that is used will notify a signification of the word into his or her mind. Moreover, these three languages also have many bilateral nouns and bilateral verbal forms. Robinson explains, “Many verbs which now show a trilateral form in some of their inflected forms may be expansions of an original bilateral form by the repetition of a letter or by the addition of a weak letter.”⁷¹⁵

In Gen. 1:1, the beginning of the Aramaic translation is different from the beginning of the Peshitta version: **בְּקִדְמִיָּן** (“in the antiquities” or “in the East”) versus **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (in the beginning). That means, here, P is closer to MT than T. The verb “to create” (**בָּרָא** / **בָּרַע**) is identical in all the three languages. It is not only here this happens, the same phenomenon is reproduced in verse 3 with the verb “to say” (**אָמַר** / **אָמַר**) though it is the *wayiq'tol* form that is used in the MT, and the verb “to call” (**קָרָא** / **קָרַע**) that appears twice in verse 5. The Syriac translators followed the divine name

⁷¹⁴ Ibidem.

⁷¹⁵ Ibidem.

Elohim of the Hebrew text to render the name of the deity as אֱלֹהִים (transliteration: *'alaha*) that is the exact equivalent of אֱלֹהִים which is different than the Aramaic abbreviation of Yahweh or “the LORD” (יְיָ) that is used all throughout the Targumic version of Gen. 1. Here again, one may assume that the Peshitta Gen. 1:1-5 was translated straight from the original Hebrew text, not from T.

For Leupold, “He that did the creative work is said to be God, *'elohim*. This Hebrew name is to be derived from a root found in the Arabic meaning ‘to fear’ or ‘to reverence.’ It, therefore, conceives of God as the one who by His nature and His works rouses man’s fear and reverence. It is used 2,570 times in the Hebrew Bible.”⁷¹⁶ Some scholars think that the name of the deity here is a characteristic mark of a particular source as E, or in a measure also P, as Old Testament criticism is in the habit of claiming. But others view this name used by the editor conveys God’s omnipotence, His mighty works of power and majesty, and it rouses man’s reverence and holy fear. Again, this is different than Yahweh, the faithful, merciful one.⁷¹⁷

Syntactically, it should be noted that the definite article (ה) is placed in front of the word in the Hebrew language as a prefix, but it is placed at the end as a suffix (א) in both Aramaic and Syriac. For instance, Hb. הַשָּׁמַיִם / Ar. שמיא or Syr. ܫܡܝܐ (“the heavens”) and Hb. הָאָרֶץ / Ar. ארעא or Syr. ܐܪܥܐ (“the earth”). Moreover, in Syriac, many of the nouns are initially definite, having the definite article at the end most of the times, especially, the lexical forms of the nouns.

⁷¹⁶ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*. London, England: Evangelical Press, 1972, p. 40. Also, KTAT-(K) p. 144.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

There are some grammatical and linguistic features that should be considered in the second verse of Genesis 1. Gen. 1:2 starts with the conjunctive *vav* (ו) meaning “and” in both Hebrew and Aramaic, but P does not have the *vav* in the beginning of this verse. Is this a discontinuity between verse 1 and verse 2 in the Syriac text? Or could it be that P does not need to start with “and” (ܐ)? Or is this absence of the *waw* an indicator for the rejection of the gap theory [of creation]?⁷¹⁸ Surely, the gap theory is more implied with the conjunction right in the beginning of the second verse of the biblical narrative.

Some theologians – such as C. I. Scofield⁷¹⁹, and the translators of the Nelson Study Bible⁷²⁰ - believe that the bleak condition of the earth in verse 2 is a consequence of the sins of Satan and the angels that rebelled with him against God. Scofield states, *Earth is made waste and empty by judgment (cf. Jer. 4:23-26)*.⁷²¹ What follows in the next 7 stanzas (or 7 days of creation) of the narrative is an account of how God first renewed (i.e. repaired) the damage that the devil’s rebellion had caused, and in the end, God created man (Gen. 1:26, 27). These biblical scholars can base their argument on Psalm 104:30 that tells us that: “You renew the face of the earth,” and according to them,

⁷¹⁸ According to Morris, “a widely held opinion among fundamentalists is that the primeval creation of Genesis 1:1 may have taken place billions of years ago, with all the geological ages inserted in a tremendous time gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The latter verse is believed by these expositors to describe the condition of the earth after a great cataclysm terminated the geological ages. This cataclysm, which left the earth in darkness and covered with water, is explained as a divine judgment because of the sin of Satan in rebelling against God. Following the cataclysm, God then “re-created” the world in the six literal days described in Genesis 1:3-31” (Henry Madison. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984, p. 46).

⁷¹⁹ See Cyrus Ingerson. Scofield, *Oxford NIV Scofield Study Bible: New International Version, New Scofield Study System with Introductions, Annotations, and Subjects Chain References*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1984.

⁷²⁰ See for example, Jerome. H. Smith, *Nelson’s Cross Reference Guide to the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

⁷²¹ Cyrus Ingerson. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1917, p. 3.

that is precisely what God did from Gen. 1:3 and onwards. The Peshitta leaves no room for the gap theory approach, and in that sense, P stands alone (by itself).

Ironically, where someone may see that a Syriac word is closer to an Aramaic word morphologically, it is the Syriac and the Aramaic scribes' way of rendering the Hebrew in their local context. For example, the Hebrew אור "light" is expressed by נהורא / ܢܗܘܪܐ in both Aramaic and Syriac. The verb "to be" (Gen. 1:3, 5) varies in conjugation, depending on the language, context, time, and aspect where it is used (e.g. the clip form is used in MT), but the Hebrew *hayah* corresponds perfectly with the Aramaic and Syriac *chavah*. The Hebrew language is more distant yet from Syriac, although it belongs to the same subfamily usually known as Northwest Semitic.⁷²² For instance, the Hebrew טוב and the Aramaic ܬܒ which means "good" in Gen. 1:4 can be a good example to support this claim.

Though I consider some of his statements too conservative, it is worth quoting Leupold here. In his book titled *Exposition of Genesis*, Leupold explains this philological phenomenon as follows:

Note well that we have carefully avoided the rendering of the last clause of Gen.1:2 which makes the verb involved to mean "brooding." A good example was set by the Septuagint translators who used the term ἐπεφέρετο, "was born along"; "moved" is less colorful but not wrong. The verb *rachaph* from which the piel participle is used, *mera(ch)chépheth*, signifies a vibrant moving, a protective hovering. No single instance of the Biblical usage of the verb would suggest 'brooding,' a meaning which was foisted upon the word in an attempt to make it bear resemblance to various old myths that speak of the hatching out of the world egg – a meaning specially defended by Gunkel, the strong advocate of mythical interpretation. Deut. 32:11 surely will not allow for the idea of 'brooding.' An eagle may brood over eggs but not over 'her young.' The fact that the Syriac root does happen to mean 'brood' cannot overthrow the Biblical usage, which takes strong precedence over mere similarity of root in kindred languages. Such

⁷²² For more details, see Theodore H. Robinson, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. 2013, Op. Cit., p. 2.

similarity may mislead. [For example,] the Syriac and the Aramaic *melakh*, which is the Hebrew *malakh*, means in Syriac and Aramaic ‘to give counsel’ and incidentally ‘to rule,’ but in Hebrew it signifies ‘to be king.’ **Comparative philology has its limitations.** Or the Arabic *hálíka*, ‘to perish,’ appearing as the Hebrew verb *halakh* signifies ‘to go.’⁷²³

In Gen. 1:3, all the three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac) follow a similar grammatical pattern: the deity speaks (אמר), commanding light to come into being (יהי), and light came into existence. This is a key passage to advance the idea that the deity created everything through the spoken word. In this verse, most of the nouns and verbs are almost the same. With regards to the Syriac language, the script is different, but the letters can be recognized by someone who studied the alphabet(s).

Gen. 1:4 starts with the letter *waw* that was missing in the beginning of the Peshitta version of the previous verse (v. 3). The restoration of the conjunction could mean that this is the beginning of a new line, though the first stanza will end in the fifth verse of Gen. 1. The Hebrew verb ראה meaning “to see” is translated by חזה (transliteration: *chazah*) in both Aramaic and Syriac. As mentioned earlier in the third chapter of this book, it is surprising to see that the Syriac adjective ܘܘܕܘܢܐ (“beautiful”) is used to translate the Hebrew טוב and the Aramaic ܬܘܒ (“good”). The writer might have had the same perspective in mind in Gen. 2:9ab that states: “*The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.*” Beauty is different than goodness, but there is an intersection between the Hebrew SL and the Syriac TL in the fact that the creative work of God was not just good to look at, but what God created [the light] was also beautiful in his eyes. Once more, the construction “*between ... and ...*” that is similar in both Hebrew and Aramaic is unlike

⁷²³ H. C. Leupold, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 48-49. Words in brackets are mine.

the Syriac **ܕܘܕܐ ... ܕܘܕܐ** meaning “*between... and...*” for a Syriac speaker. So then, the Syriac translation for Gen. 1:4 is not 100% the equivalence of the original Hebrew text. It is important to learn the idioms of a language to fully know how this language is used by its speakers.

Last, almost all the nouns and the verbs of Gen. 1:5 are identical in Hb., Ar., and Syr. Except the Aramaic / Syriac words *remash* meaning “evening” and *tsephar*, “morning” that are different, as they are *laila* and *bokèr* in Hebrew. These words are among the few Aramaic words that a speaker of the Hebrew language would not know if that person were to read the text in Aramaic or Syriac. The same unawareness would happen if Gen. 1:5 were being read in a Synagogue setting where there are some people who only know Hebrew.

This signifies that these words are local to Aramaic and Syriac! For example, there are terms that are part of the jargon of a specific language. When someone is learning a new language, time should also be spent in the acquisition of knowledge of special words or expressions that are used particularly in that language, even if the person knows another language that is related to the new language. This is beyond the differences that exist between the dialects of a language, because at times, the difference is just a vowel / consonant change. It is about a group of words established by usage as having a meaning that is not deducible from those of the individual words.

In summation, it can be said that the Syriac text of Gen. 1:1-5 is closer to the Aramaic translation than the Hebrew original. There are places in our focus text where MT agrees with Targ, and Syr stands alone. But again, Syriac, being an eastern dialect of

Aramaic, is more similar to Aramaic than Hebrew, and some of the linguistics features that make this possible are laid out above.

In the next section, close attention will be paid to the Septuagint version in comparison to the MT of the same biblical passage.

B. The Old Greek Witness Vis-à-vis The Hebrew Text

In her work titled *Translate to Communicate: A Guide for Translators*, Mary M. F. Massoud presents some basic qualifications for translation work. According to Massoud, “good translators are both bilingual and bicultural. That is, they are fluent in the two languages concerned, at home in the two cultures, and aware of any historical and linguistic factors relevant to the text to be translated.”⁷²⁴ Fortunately, the Greek translators of the original Hebrew Pentateuch were experts in both languages: Hebrew and Greek! They followed the Hebrew text of Gen. 1:1-5 closely, and offered an accurate Greek translation, even though it is not a word for word translation.

First, the Greek text of Gen. 1:1 starts with Ἐν ἀρχῇ meaning “in a beginning” in imitation of MT where the definite article is absent (בְּרֵאשִׁית). This phrase “in the beginning” (*berêshîth*) refers to the absolute beginning of created things, to the *Uranfang*.⁷²⁵ The corresponding phrase in Greek, Ἐν ἀρχῇ, which the Septuagint translators used here and which appears at the beginning of John’s Gospel, is plainly a reference to the absolute beginning. According to Leupold, “the noun *rêshîth* appears without the article, appearing in use practically as a proper noun, Absolute Beginning.

⁷²⁴ Mary M. F. Massoud, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 6-7.

⁷²⁵ German for “first beginning.”

The Greek Hexapla of Origen supports this, for its transliteration with few exceptions gives βρησιθ seldom βαρησηθ.⁷²⁶

Both אֲלֵהֶיִם and אֶרֶץ of the SL are translated by their equivalents in the TL: ὁ θεός and ἐποίησεν. The same fidelity is maintained for “the heavens and the earth” (וְאֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ = τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν), but the Greek language does not have the direct object marker that is found in MT (תָּא), instead the accusative case is used to signify the same thing.

Second, in Gen. 1:2, the Greek translators understood וְהָיָה וְרָקָה as ‘unsightly and unfurnished’ (ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος). This Hebrew pair means “waste and void.” *Tohû* is really a noun used as an emphatic adjective, as is also, of course, *bohû*. At this point, the Greek translation is not literal, but free. It is not always that we expect something that is formless to be “unpleasant to look at” or “ugly.” Shapelessness can be the absence of a structure, though beauty is big part of form. But logically, “the earth was void” can be understood as “the earth was unfurnished.” Here, we do not have the elements of nature yet. It is later in the narrative, we see that the deity furnished the earth, by filling it with trees, animals, humans, and so on.

A key Hebrew word to this passage – תְּהוֹם – is translated by ἄβυσσος in the LXX. This is where the same word might convey the name of a monstrous deity⁷²⁷ in the Semitic literature or world, but a location for the Greek context. Figuratively, “abyss” is

⁷²⁶ H. C. Leupold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

⁷²⁷ Such as “*Tiâmat*” though this view is debatable. Two references for this debate can be as follows: John A. Bloom, and C. John Collins, *Creation Accounts and Ancient Near Eastern Religions*. Christian Research Journal (CRJ). Vol. 35. Nu. 1. 2001, p. 2. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, p. 425.

the regions of hell conceived of as a bottomless pit. Moreover, the participle מְרַקְפָּת is translated by the imperfect ἐπεφέρετο. There is a distinction between “was moving” and “moved.” In the former, the idea is progressive and it is a continuous aspect of the verb. In the latter, the tense implies that the action was being done at a particular time in the past and that the action stopped (being done) at a certain point, without knowing when it got started. The imperfect tense combines both past tense and an imperfective aspect of the verb “to move” or “to hover.”

In both Hebrew and Greek, the same word (רוּחַ / πνεῦμα) that stands for “wind” can also mean “spirit” or “Spirit.” Then, what exactly is “the Spirit of God?” In the Hebrew context, since in this account the noun for God *‘elohim* is without a doubt definite, the word “spirit” also becomes definite, according to a simple rule of Hebrew syntax (called “word pair”). This is when two nouns are placed side by side to form the Hebrew “construct state.” A good example is רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים / πνεῦμα θεοῦ. The first noun is the construct noun. The second is the absolute form. The second (absolute) noun possesses the first (construct) noun. The Hebrew grammar rules will never allow a person to see a definite article before the first noun. If the second has an article, it is also for the first noun. Then, the absolute noun governs the construct noun. Considering our example above, the definite article is also absent in the Greek Text. Consequently, “the thought must be ruled out that we are dealing with some such concept as ‘divine Spirit,’ and it must definitely be rendered ‘the Spirit of God,’” says Leupold.⁷²⁸

Third, with the exception of some changes in tenses and cases, the Greek version of Gen. 1:3-5 is very similar to the MT of Gen. 1:3-5. In Gen. 1:3, both the writers of the

⁷²⁸ H. C. Leupold, Op. Cit., p. 49

Hebrew text and Septuagint translators present an anthropomorphism to their readers: “*God said...*” The Hebrew jussive of the verb “to be” – “let there be” (יְהִי)⁷²⁹ – is rendered by the imperative “be!” (Γενηθήτω) in the LXX. Both the jussive and the imperative express a command. “The Hebrew is really more expressive than the English for the word spoken by God which is rendered: ‘Let there be light.’ It is a vigorous imperative of the verb *hayah*, ‘to become’: ‘Become light.’”⁷³⁰ *God speaks, and it is done*. In other terms, *the deity commands and it stands fast* (cf. Ps. 33:9). It has been maintained that this notion of the creative power of the word is known to us from elsewhere in the ancient Near East.⁷³¹ This is very important in the Genesis concept of creation by divine fiat. So, it is interesting that the divine word is acted creatively in both MT and LXX. Clearer, both MT and LXX have the sense of divine fiat in God’s creative actions.

In the following verse (Gen. 1:4), thus far, it should also be noted that there is a second anthropomorphism: “*God saw...*” in both the SL and the TL. The Greek adjective *καλός* meaning “good” is used instead of “*αγαθός*” to translate the Hebrew טוב, because “good” here is less about character than “being beneficial, desirable.”⁷³² The same grammatical construct for “*between... and...*” that requires the repetition of בֵּין ... בֵּין ... in MT is valid in the Greek language: ἀνὰ μέσον ... καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον. In verse 5, the *lamed* (ל) of “to the light” (לְאֹר) that is present in MT is not needed in Greek, but both

⁷²⁹ In Hebrew, the most common form of the Jussive is the third person of the verb in the imperfect.

⁷³⁰ H. C. Leupold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 52.

⁷³¹ S. N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*. New York, 1959, p. 79f.

⁷³² See T. Muraoka, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 1, 2, 359, 360.

“light” (τὸ φῶς)⁷³³ and “day” (ἡμέραν) are in the accusative case in LXX. Here, the deity does the naming, but later in Gen. 2:20, 23, it is Adam (the man) who will name the livestock, the birds in the sky, all the wild animals, and the woman. The refrain – *And there was an evening, and there was a morning* – is identical in both Hebrew and Greek.

So, on one hand, the Greek translators did their best to represent what was laid before them in the SL in an exact manner into the TL, but on the other, there are times when a local corresponding definition of the Hebrew term was used instead of a word for word translation.

In the following section, our attention will be shifted from Semitic languages to Indo-European and Hamitic languages, as the focus will be on a conversation between the Coptic versions and the LXX translation of Genesis 1:1-5.

C. The Coptic Texts in relationship with the Septuagint

Compared to the Hebrew Text, the LXX version is a translation of the MT. However, for the Coptic translators, their original text was the LXX. So then, here, LXX is considered an original text! The Coptic translators did their best to keep their translation close to the original, closer to the Greek Text.

It should be mentioned that both ἀρχῆ, meaning “beginning”, and πνευμα / ΠΝΕΥΜΑ (abbreviated as ΠΝΔ), “Spirit” (Gen. 1:1, 2) – in Coptic – are Greek loan words. Moreover, the Greek preposition δὲ remains the same in Coptic (ΔΕ) with the same meanings, “and, but, ...” Thus, these terms were borrowed from the Greek vocabulary and made their way to the Coptic lexicon / semantics field. As stated earlier, 20% of the

⁷³³ Identical to the nominative case of that word that is (also) φῶς.

Coptic language is Greek, but 80% of the vocabulary is from the ancient Egyptian language.

The Coptic word *beginning* carries the indefinite article (ΟΥΑΡΧΗ) to agree with the Greek where the absence of the definite article means that the word is indefinite (ἀρχή). There is no indefinite article in Greek. Different from all the other target languages in this book, the Bohairic and Sahidic Coptic verb ΘΑΜΙΟ (“to make”) has the prefix Δ to signify that it is in the perfect tense or past tense, i.e. “he made” (Greek: ἐποίησεν). The Coptic language uses Ν as direct object marker, while this indicator is not found in the Greek language, but the Greek accusative has the same function. It is all to say that the same thing can be expressed differently depending on the languages in question. Each language has its own syntax, and grammar rules.

There are four observations to make in verse 4. First, the Coptic word Ḳᶨᶔᶈ is used right before the name of the deity (ϕⲧ) for specificity. It means, “that is to say” or “to be specific.” Therefore, Ḳᶨᶔᶈ ϕⲧ is translated as “namely God.” The third person of the verb implies that someone is doing something (*he ...*), but the translator defines and demarks the subject clearly by using Ḳᶨᶔᶈ before the name of the deity in abbreviation (*it is God who is doing this or that*). This construction is also used throughout the rest of the narrative in the Coptic Text (cf. Gen.1:7, 10, 12, 16, 19, 22, 25, 27, etc.). Second, similar to the intense meaning of the Greek verb διεχώρισεν (“*he divided...*”), the Coptic verb ΔϠϜϠϠ ἔΒΟΛ is used to signify “*he made clear distinction...*” Third, the grammatical construction of the Greek ἀνὰ μέσον... καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον..., meaning “*between ... and...*”, is

translated to Coptic in the same manner though not equivalently: ΟΥΤΕ... ΝΕΜ ΟΥΤΕ... (Gen. 1:4).

A uniqueness of Gen. 1:5 in the Coptic Text is the use of the ordinal number instead of the cardinal number that is used by the LXX translators. In the Septuagint Text, the cardinal number is used to modify “day” rather than the ordinal, i.e. *mia* rather than *protè*. This is done in imitation of the Masoretic Text (MT) which has *èchad* instead of *rishôn*, but ordinals for the next six days. The ordinal number is used in verse 5, and so, all throughout the Coptic Text of Gen. 1. The Coptic translators possibly did so for consistency. Here in Gen. 1:5, the Coptic Text is different from both LXX and MT.

So then, synthetically, it can be said that there are times when Coptic, as being a target language (TL), relied upon Greek, a source language (SL) here. For example, the term ΑΡΧΗ is borrowed from the SL. But there are other times when the Coptic translators used local terms to translate the LXX. For example, the majority of the Coptic terms found in Gen. 1:1-5 are derived from ancient Egyptian. Also, some of these nouns are very similar in the other Coptic dialects, including ΧΑΚΙ (“darkness”) and ΟΥΩΙΝΙ (“light”). Without forgetting to say that there may be words in the TL that is influenced by the SL, or that has its origin from the SL.

D. Reasons for their Differences and Similarities

After comparing Tg. with P in the light of MT, and LXX with Copt. of Gen. 1:1-5, the reasons for their juxtaposition and closeness will be stated here. **The examples that are offered in this section are not just limited to Gen. 1:1-5. In other words, the theories of differences between the manuscripts presented here are not only related to our focus passage – Gen. 1:1-5 – but also they pertain to other texts of the Hebrew Bible as well.** This is to say that *in general, it can happen that the original text is different from a translation for this specific reason.* **Other valuable illustrations from the field of translations will be given to make the point that this dissertation is trying to make.** The goal here is to explain why the translations are different from one another and why they are similar to each other.

Differences

It is worth noting that this critical comparative analysis of the biblical narrative of the first day of creation based on five manuscripts is not just to lay out what is missing from one version or what is mentioned in one place that does not appear in another. Most importantly, the intention of the writer is key. Why was this story translated to other languages? The motives of the scribes should also be part of our comparison. This section is devoted to the task of giving reasons for the differences that exist between the biblical manuscripts.

1. Mistranslations

The scribe may have not translated the original correctly. Lack of linguistic training, lack of knowledge of the culture, and lack of integrity can be some of the factors

for mistranslations. At times, the translators intentionally changed the original text to offer a translation that was more in line with their theology, and their beliefs. In this case, the Hebrew text is sacrificed for theological reasons, and for the sake of a community that believes in something that is different than what the original text is saying.

Also, when ancient scribes copied parts of the biblical text, they wrote notes on the margins of the page (marginal glosses) to correct their text – especially if a former scribe accidentally omitted a word or line – and to comment about the text. When later scribes were copying the copy, sometimes, they were uncertain if a note was intended to be included as part of the text. This is almost the same phenomenon with the Hebrew notes *Qere* and *Ketiv*. Over time, different regions evolved different versions of the same passage, each with its own assemblage of omissions, additions, and variants (mostly in orthography), but the main ideas of the text could have remained the same.

An instance of mistranslation could be the name of the deity in Gen. 1:1 according to the Aramaic manuscript. In the Hebrew text, it is *Elohim* meaning “God,” but it is Yahweh, “LORD,” in the Tg. Here, it appears that the Aramaic translator had theological motivations for preferring Yahweh to the generic name God. Because God is viewed as a creation deity, but Yahweh or Adonai (Master) is a covenant deity. The difference between both manuscripts – MT and Tg. – is explained by a theological reason.

2. Misreadings of the Hebrew

The translator could have not read the Hebrew Text well. In other words, the scribe possibly was unable to decipher the Hebrew Text. One of the reasons for misreading the original text is that some Hebrew letters in the square script look alike. Six cases of this likeness are the following ones: Beth (ב) and Kaf (כ), He (ה) and Chet (ח), Chet (ח) and Tav (ת), Vav (ו) and Zayin (ז), Vav (ו) and Yod (י), and Final Mem (ם) and Samech (ס). Before the invention of printing, the scripture was written by hand on parchment, papyrus, or other material rather than being typed and printed. Some of the biblical manuscripts deteriorated after a number of years, though preserved in clay jars to protect them from the humidity of Palestine. For example, in Jon. 1:9, the word עִבְרִי (meaning “Hebrew”) was understood to be עֶבֶד (that means “servant”) by the Septuagint translator. Consequently, the word δούλος (“servant”) appears in the LXX translation of this verse, which is totally different than what the original writer wanted to communicate.

Another example is, most of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered ca. 1947 were in a fragmentary state at the time of discovery. In chapter 1, we have seen the image of a fragment of the oldest preserved title page or dusk jacket (*page de garde*) of Genesis, 4 QGenh(title). The word בְּרֵאשִׁית has suffered a scribal error: the א is missing (i.e. בְּרֵשִׁית). This mistake, motivated by the phonetic quiescence of א in the speech of this period, is fairly common in the Qumran scrolls.⁷³⁴ So, the translator must be careful about letters that can look similar, and deterioration that might have happened to the manuscript, when translating a passage from Hebrew to another language.

⁷³⁴ Ronald S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University, 1998, p. vii.

Moreover, translation studies are greatly affected by structuralism.⁷³⁵ Nida, in his essay “*Principles of Translation as Exemplified by Bible Translating*,” writes:

it is essential that we point out that in Bible translating, as in almost all fields of translating, the most frequent mistakes result from a failure to make adequate syntactic adjustments in the transference of a message from one language to another. Quite satisfactory equivalents for all words and even the idioms may have been found, but a person’s oversight or inability to rearrange the semantic units in accordance with the different syntactic instruction as being ‘foreign’ and unnatural.⁷³⁶

However, Nida’s approach suffers from certain fundamental limitations. Nida underestimates the role of interpretation, while attempting to develop a ‘science’ of translation. According to Kumar P.V., “a text is neither a closed entity nor a systemic totality. The message of the text is never intact, and it will not be possible to grasp its pulsation through a search for a hidden deep structure. A text is the result of a dialogue with the culture from which it emerges.”⁷³⁷ This statement means that what we take for a misreading can also be a difference that takes place between the manuscripts for cultural reasons. Further, Nida does not recognize the significance of context in the emergence of a text. His attempt to find a ‘science’ freezes the entire social aspect of a text and its translation.⁷³⁸ This is to say that adjustments may need to be made in the syntax of the TL, but the translators are not infallible.

⁷³⁵ In sociology, anthropology, and linguistics, structuralism is the methodology that implies elements of human culture must be understood by way of their relationship to a broader, overarching system or structure. It works to uncover the structures that underlie all the things that humans do, think, perceive, and feel. Alternatively, as summarized by philosopher Simon Blackburn, structuralism is “the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations. These relations constitute a structure, and behind local variations in the surface phenomena there are constant laws of abstract structure” (Simon. Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Second edition revised. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 353).

⁷³⁶ Eugene A. Nida, *Principles of Translating as Exemplified by Bible Translating*. SAGE Journals, 1959, p. 31.

⁷³⁷ Amith. Kumar P. V., Op. Cit. p. 4.

⁷³⁸ Ibidem.

3. Guesses because of Difficulties in the Hebrew

At times, when the Hebrew Text is difficult to read, the scribe guesses the meaning of a particular word or a sentence. By chance, the result can be positive, but sometimes, the translator may end up making mistakes that will affect the theology of those who will interpret the same biblical passage from the translation, not from the original. For example, it is rigorous to translate and even transliterate a number of biblical names and nouns. In none of the four translations that we have studied in this dissertation could an example of guesses because of difficulties in the original (either Hebrew or Greek) be found. But this is to say that this can be one of the reasons why the texts are different from one another. This sub-point is also an option in critical comparative studies of biblical manuscripts.

4. A Different Hebrew Original (*Vorlage*)

The translation could have been made from a different original.⁷³⁹ The German term *vorlage* means “what lays before you.” This is to say that the interpreter may have had another Hebrew version of the same text in front of him. Consequently, there are different versions of translations of the same narrative. For example, the Septuagint Jeremiah is 1/8 (or approximately 1/7) shorter than the Masoretic Text.

On one hand, someone can say that this Greek version of this prophetic book was translated from a shorter Hebrew text. On the other hand, some scholars believe that the original was Greek, especially by assigning a late date to the text. This position can also be supported by the following rule in textual criticism: “the shorter text is the earliest.” In this case, the Hebrew version is considered a development of the short Greek original.

⁷³⁹ I know that we do not have any original manuscripts. The term “version” could also be used.

Other scholars, including Dr. Marvin A. Sweeny, hold that the Vorlage of the LXX version of Jeremiah would be the earliest text dating to the early Persian period. The proto-MT would be the later version of the text dating to the period of Ezra-Nehemiah. It is all to say that differences between the biblical manuscripts could be due to the fact that the translators may have used different originals for the same text.

It is important to read a text in its original language that was [/is] plural, i.e. “in various versions.” Three reasons for that can be as follows: (1.) The reader has a broader scope of understanding of what the text is talking about. (2.) The beauty of languages in comparison with each other can be displayed. (3) The reader will see that the same thing can be said in another way while communicating the same message in other languages. In other terms, the person who is reading both texts will conclude that the way in which something is expressed in one language (e.g. Greek) is different than how the same thing is articulated in another language (e.g. Hebrew).

5. Socio-Historical Context, Culture, and Language

The point of this sub-section of this dissertation is to show that there is a relationship between the structure of a society and its language. To fully understand the versions of the biblical account of the creation of light analyzed in this essay, the history and the culture of the people for whom these texts were translated should be taken into consideration. That is why a new definition of “anthropology” should be given:

anthropology is not just the study of humans, but also, it is the study of cultures. Here, our focus text – Gen. 1:1-5 – is viewed with socio-linguistics eyes. Moreover, our goal is

to state that the language and the style of writing used by the translators of Gen. 1:1-5 affect the nature of this piece of biblical literature.

The original writers of the Bible and the translators of their texts were not from a single community. Their social origins were different from one to another. For example, Israel, Egypt, and Northwest Mesopotamia (Aram) are parts of the Near East, but these places have different socio-historical contexts. These scribes also had a different historical trajectory. Sometimes, because of the history of a particular society, the translator cannot use a language that could have been closer to the original. The interpreter may choose to soften his words, run away from the source text, or interpret what he reads from the original for a better reception of this piece of literature among the people of his community.

Culture is a big part of a society, if not one of the most important things that characterize a group of people living in community. Among many other factors, culture comprises the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of this particular social group. So, a translator cannot ignore these aspects of culture, if he wants to produce a translation that will be effective and well received among the people for whom he is translating a text. Consequently, a translation may not be word-for-word because of the way in which the people think. Jargon from that community can be used by the translator.

Moreover, language is a big part of culture. Language professors, linguists, and philologists recommend that one of the best ways to learn a language is while living with the people who speak such language. Because the person who is learning the language will hear how certain words are pronounced by the native speakers, why some things are done in this community, and what is expected after hearing specific words in that culture

or what the actions of the hearer should be. At times, the tenses of the verbs that are used in the SL and the TL can disagree if the aspect of the tense in the language of translation has a different meaning. The translator can choose what is appropriate. So then, an interpreter of Scripture makes grammatical and lexical adjustment where and when it is needed.

Harald Schweizer is the author of *Metaphorische Grammatik*.⁷⁴⁰ In the late 1970s, linguistics became very important. He promoted text linguistic methodology for the study of the Bible. For Schweizer, texts do not tell what their agendas are, but it is to the reader to get it. For example, some questions that we must ask are: What kind of social dimensions that lead to that political event? What role do social settings play in literature? What is the character of the literary work? What does an author hope to achieve by writing a piece of literature? Remember that *we are studying ancient sacred literature*. How do we reconstruct the mind of that author writing in the antiquity? It might be that we do not have the grammar that they used (were using), but before our great Hebrew grammarians, we should assume that the language had a grammar.

For instance: the Greek word “*Christos*” is used as an equivalent of the Hebrew “*Mashiach*” in early Christian writings.⁷⁴¹ How do we understand the meanings of those two (2) terms? A text does not exist without an author. But also, a text does not exist without a reader. So, the reader has to get the author’s intention. How do we understand the accents, jargons, and dialects within people groups who tend to speak the same

⁷⁴⁰ See Harald. Schweizer, *Metaphorische Grammatik*. Wege zur Integration von Grammatik und Textinterpretation in der Exegese, ATSAT 15; St. Ottilien: EOS, 1981.

⁷⁴¹ The pagan Greeks who used the term “*Christos*” would have had no concept of the Jewish Messiah.

language? We need to understand language as a living entity. How does the communicative aspect play over language?⁷⁴²

Phonetics and phonology can also be considered points of intersection between languages that belong to the same family, and even those that are not part of the same family. Bodine informs us, “phonetics is the study of the physical properties of speech sounds, while phonology is the study of how those speech sounds are organized into systems. Phonology is heavily dependent upon phonetics, since without a knowledge of language production and perception linguists would have no framework for their phonological descriptions.”⁷⁴³ The Hebrew language has two basic pronunciations that are also based upon geography: Ashkenazi and Sephardic. “Ashkenaz” in Hebrew refers to Germany, so Ashkenazi Jews are those who are from Eastern Europe. Sephardic Jews, by contrast, originated in Spain, Portugal, the Middle East, North Africa, and around the Mediterranean Sea. Interestingly, where the Ashkenazi reading is “ts,” it is “s” in the Sephardic reading, “b” = “v,” “sh” = “s,” and so on.

In general, Semitic languages share some similarities in their vocabularies. For example, in Gen. 1:1, the word *b'reshit* is identical in both Hebrew and Syriac. The Hebrew direct object marker ל is ܠ in both Aramaic and Syriac. One of the connections between these two words are the fact that both *Alef* (א) and *Yod* (י) are *matres lectionis*.⁷⁴⁴ Most of nouns and verbs that end with a final mem (ם) in Hebrew end with a final nun (ן) in Aramaic.

⁷⁴² Schweizer's study is greatly connected to Lévi-Strauss's, in the sense that the structure of a society has an influence upon its systems of communication.

⁷⁴³ Bodine, Walter R. *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992, p. 7.

⁷⁴⁴ Latin for “mothers of reading.”

Consonants that are produced by the same organs to make different sounds share linguistic similarities. Six categories of these sounds, and the parts of the mouth and the throat that are used, are the following ones: 1. Labials: partial closure of the lips (ׁ, ׀, ׆, - ׇ), 2. Dentals or Alveolars: the tip of the tongue behind the upper teeth (׃, ׄ, ׅ, ׆, ׇ), 3. Dental Fricatives or Sibilants (a hissing sound caused by friction of the breath through a narrow opening formed with the tongue (׈, ׉, ׊, ׋), 4. Prepalatals: the tongue against or near the front of the palate (׌, ׍), 5. Palatal – velars: the back of the tongue touching the soft palate (׎, ׏, ן), and 6. Gutturals: in the throat – larynx or pharynx (ב, ג, ד, ה, ו).⁷⁴⁵ In Gen. 1:3, the Hebrew and Aramaic preposition םׁׂ meaning “between” is ܘܢܘܢ in Syriac. Both the tongue and the upper teeth should be used in the pronunciation of *Nun* (ׁ, ׀) and *Taw* (׆).

To make it clear, there are languages – such as the Korean language - that do not have “f” sound, then “p” is used. Instead of saying “copy,” a Korean speaker will say “coffee.” The Korean language does not have the v sound either, “b” is used where someone would expect a “v.” Futhermore, the *begadkefats* (the Hebrew letters *bet, gimel, dalet, kaf, pe, and tav*) have two sounds, even though it is the same letter. Depending on where the dot is placed (on the right or on the left), the letter sin (׃) can also be shin (ׄ) while being just one consonant of the Hebrew alphabet.⁷⁴⁶ Some people might say “sh” in a specific language, and others say “s” in another one, and both words have the same definition. So, there are connections between languages!

⁷⁴⁵ Ross, Allen P. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001, pp. 22-24.

⁷⁴⁶ Shibboleth / sibboleth (See Jdgs. 12:4-7).

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician. He is known as the philosopher of human communication.⁷⁴⁷ His works on a variety of subjects (philosophy of language, literary theory, and so on) inspired experts who are working in a number of different traditions, such as Marxism, structuralism, religious criticism, semiotics, etc. Bakhtin's distinctive aesthetic and literary position did not become well known until he was rediscovered by Russian scholars in the 1960s. Bakhtin brought on surface a philosophy of the art, the polyphonic aspect of communication, and the way in which a translation is in dialogue with the original. Similarly, one of the goals of this book is to display the dialogue that there is between the MT of Gen. 1:1-5 and four other early translations of this biblical text (Targ, P, LXX, and Copt). In short, "Bakhtin's life work can be understood as a critique of the monologization of the human experience that he perceived in the dominant linguistic, literary, philosophical, and political theories of his time."⁷⁴⁸

For Bakhtin, there is a point of similitude between languages that are part of a family. In the same fashion, this book tries to lay out the linguistic and philological relationship that exists between three Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac), and between an Indo-European language (Greek) and a Hamitic language (Coptic). However, some experts do not agree with Bakhtin's critique of language, his position toward verbal behavior, and his critique of "abstract objectivist" theories, maintaining that "such theories assume language to be outside of contextualization and consequently

⁷⁴⁷ David. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: From Word to Culture*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1991, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁴⁸ Leslie A. Baxter, *Communication as Dialogue: Perspectives on Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2006, p. 102.

outside of history; and that such theories tend to hypostatize their own categories.”⁷⁴⁹ For instance, Ferdinand de Saussure had written in the *Cours de linguistique générale* that:

In separating language from speaking we are at the same time separating: (1) what is social from what is individual; and (2) what is essential from what is accessory and more or less accidental. Language is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual. It never requires premeditation, and reflection enters in only for the purpose of classification. ... Speaking, on the contrary is an individual act. It is willful and intellectual.”⁷⁵⁰

In *Discourse in the Novel* Bakhtin writes, “A passive understanding of linguistic meaning is no understanding at all, it is only the abstract aspect of meaning.”⁷⁵¹ Based on this thought of Bakhtin, “such an abstraction from the concrete utterance would be a dead end, reifying its own categories of the linguistic norm and producing a model with no capability of discussing linguistic / social change.”⁷⁵² Here, Bakhtin lacks something that Saussure does not lack: the major heirlooms of Saussurian linguistics – *langue* vs. *parole*, the arbitrary nature of the sign, and more indirectly, the distinction between poetic and ordinary language. *Langue* can be considered a pool in which *parole* is swimming. It is generally known that the structuralists have depended on **F. de Saussure** for their differentiation between *the prelinguistic activity of the human mind (langue)* and *the activity of language (parole)*.

To borrow the words of Newmark, “translation theory derives from comparative linguistics, and within linguistics, it is mainly an aspect of semantics; all questions of semantics relate to translation theory.”⁷⁵³ At the time of translation, the translators of

⁷⁴⁹ Gary Saul. Morson, *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on His Work*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1986, p. 42.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁷⁵¹ Mikhail. Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*. in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. ed. Michael. Holquist, trans. Caryl. Emerson, and Holquist, Slavic Series, no. 1. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 281.

⁷⁵² Gary Soul. Morson, Op. Cit., p. 43.

⁷⁵³ Peter. Newmark, Op. Cit., p. 5.

Gen. 1:1-5 from Hebrew to Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic were conscious about both linguistics (the rules of the TL, and the relationship between the SL and the TL) and their readers' understanding of their texts. Newmark continues, "Sociolinguistics, which investigates the social registers of language and the problems of languages in contact in the same or neighboring countries, has a continuous bearing on translation theory.

Sociosemantics, the theoretical study of *parole* – language in context – as opposed to *langue* – the code or system of a language – indicates the relevance of 'real' examples – spoken, taped, written, printed."⁷⁵⁴

More importantly, the kind of language that is present in a text can be used to determine the nature of the text, its genre. This dissertation is not based on the form-critical analysis of Gen. 1:1-5, but language is an intersection between this dissertation and form-critical methodology. For Knierim,

"form criticism has attempted to interpret individual entities by discovering the matrices to which they owe their existence and which they reflect. ... Individual texts emerging from **a matrix** can be explained as specifications of a distinct typicality, as a matrix is assumed to be typical in nature. ... The way form criticism has conceived of the typical is basically sociolinguistic and morphological. ... The coherence of all these factors, at least that of the mood, the formulaic language, and the setting would have to be recognized in an attempt to identify **a genre**."⁷⁵⁵

It was for Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) that genre cannot be changed. For Knierim, genre can change, depending on the type of language that is present in the text that is at hand. Van der Kooij wrote on the oracles of Tyre of Isaiah 23 as vision and as oracle.⁷⁵⁶ It is all based on the translations that are different from one to another, having different languages therein. "Genre can be conceived of as an external reproduction - in

⁷⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵⁵ Rolf. P. Knierim, *Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered*. [Claremont, CA], [1973], p. 436.

⁷⁵⁶ Arie Van Der. Kooij, *The Oracle of Tyre: The Septuagint of Isaiah XXIII as Version and Vision*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

action and language. In other words, a genre such as myth can be understood as *the expression of a 'conceptual genre' of the mind.*" A genre is no longer to be constituted by its societal setting. The centrality of this problem is indicated by its high visibility in different fields of research such as literature, folklore, myth and symbol, phenomenology of religion, linguistics and, most vocally, structuralism."⁷⁵⁷

The Chicago or neo-Aristotelian school, represented by R. S. Crane, has developed the concept of "intrinsic genre." This concept means that genres cannot be discovered except through individual texts intrinsically shaped by them. The proximity of this position to that taken by the representatives of French structuralism is fairly obvious. Lévi-Strauss aims at discovering the fundamental patterns of the human mind that underlie its overwhelming diversity of expression. To be sure, the word "genre" scarcely occurs in the structuralist language, and understandably so. Nevertheless, "the structuralist method becomes interesting for the discussion of genre precisely at the point where it assumes that the variable patterns of linguistic expression and human behavior are received in already structured forms from the patterns and schemata conceived by the collective consciousness on its prelinguistic level," states Knierim.⁷⁵⁸ This may be useful since we have reason to assume that **typical linguistic entities** may arise from and reflect origins other than societal settings. Knierim informs us that:

There are two theories: one, the relationship between **language and *langue***, the other the relationship between **language and reality**. The first one builds on a fundamental distinction between the synchronic and the diachronic understanding of language (the horizontal language-field and the vertical language-history). The second

⁷⁵⁷ Rolf. P. Knierim, Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered. Op. Cit. p. 439.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 440.

and more important thesis holds that the synchronic structure of language is always related to a certain state of prelinguistic conceptualization (*état de langue*). The conclusion seems unavoidable that “**setting**,” in the sense **biblical form criticism** has understood it, cannot be regarded indispensably as one of the factors that constitute **genres**. Not if genre is understood as a *linguistic* phenomenon.”⁷⁵⁹

For instance, there are cosmological terms that are used throughout these first five verses of Gen. 1, and these words are more vividly portrayed from one text to another based on the manuscript at hand: sky (Copt), dry land / country (MT), abyss (LXX), darkness, light (MT, Tg, P, LXX, and Copt), etc. It will not take long for a reader to discover that this is a creational story according to the Bible. It should be noted that there are some other aspects of the conceptualization of genre, but they are not related to the thesis of this book. The linguistic aspect is considered here for the purpose of this dissertation.

In short, each scribe has his linguistic style. *Le style, c'est l'homme*.⁷⁶⁰ Here, the translator should not be judged for using a specific or proper language, especially if this is appropriate to his social or communal context. In fact, according to Knierim, “**Life and language** correspond to one another: life creates language, and language reflects – societal, customary – life and its meaning.”⁷⁶¹ Within the same perspective, Newmark explains that: “the individual uses of language of the text writer and the translator do not coincide. Everybody has lexical if not grammatical idiosyncrasies, and attaches ‘private’

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 441.

⁷⁶⁰ French for “the style is the man.” Or “a man is characterized by his style.”

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 437.

meanings to a few words. The translator normally writes in a style that comes naturally to him, desirably with a certain elegance and sensitivity unless the text precludes it.”⁷⁶²

6. Exegesis

There are times when a scribe does not offer a literal translation, but an interpretation of the original text. Some differences between the original Hebrew text and the Greek text can sometimes be best understood as the result of a particular interpretation.”⁷⁶³ This can be due to different factors. Three of these factors are the following ones: (1) a word-for-word translation of the original passage may not be understood by the readers of the scribe. (2) the equivalent terms may not exist in the language of the interpreter. (3) deliberately or intentionally, the translator may choose to explain what the original text means for the understanding of his readers or audience. For example, in Gen. 1:2, the Greek translation – *But the earth was unsightly and unfurnished* – is an interpretation of of the Hebrew *And the earth was without form and void*. There are times when the translation should explain what the original text says, and make it clear in the TL what can be idiomatic in the SL.

⁷⁶² Peter. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1981, p. 8.

⁷⁶³ Arie Van Der. Kooij, *The Oracle of Tyre: The Septuagint of Isaiah XXIII as Version or Vision*. Loc. Cit. p. 1.

Similarities

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac are cognate languages. Because these languages are related to or descended from a common ancestor. There are some intersections between these manuscripts – MT, Tg., and P. Moreover, Greek is related to Coptic. A reader of Gen. 1:1-5 in both languages should expect some commonalities between these two Texts – LXX and Copt – as well. In the next sub-sections, the similarities that exist between all these 5 texts of Gen. 1:1-5 in these three areas – ideology, division, and independence – will be considered.

1- The Main Ideas

All these five texts of Gen. 1:1-5 are about the first day of creation according to the Bible. On that day, the deity created light. These texts aim at identifying who creates what, how does the creator proceed, and what constitutes his creative work. In Gen. 1:1, the name of the deity (*Elohim* / Yahweh) is given as creator, though MT, P, LXX. and Copt have “God” and Tg has “the LORD.” The things that the creator creates are named: the heavens and the earth. In Gen. 1:2, the manuscripts display the chaotic condition of the earth. Even though the LXX and Copt translators tried to describe the chaos within their own words (“*invisible and unfurnished*”), the main idea of a *formless and void* earth permeate Tg and P. All the four translations (Tg, P, LXX, and Copt) follow MT in stating that the deity commanded light to come into being, and light came into existence in Gen. 1:3.

The fourth verse presents two main ideas: (a.) the deity saw that his luminous work was good (MT, Tg, LXX, and Copt) or beautiful (P). (b.) the creator separates the

light from the darkness. This idea of “dividing” is not just present in Gen. 1, but through the rest of the Bible.⁷⁶⁴ The Coptic verb that is used here can even stand for “clear distinction.” The last verse (Gen 1:5) gives us information about God naming his creatures: He called the light “Day,” and He called the darkness “Night.” This idea is present in all the texts that we have studied in this present volume.

2- The Division of the Text

The same scholars (the masoretes) who supplied Hebrew texts with vowel pointings also devised a system of accent signs and added these to the vocalized text.⁷⁶⁵ For example, four Hebrew punctuation marks that appear in Gen. 1:1-5 are the following ones: (a.) The *sof-passuq* (:) is placed at the end of every verse. This corresponds to the period (.) that is also used in the Greek text. (b.) The *atnach* is placed under the last word of the first half of each verse. It divides the verse into two different parts or two main ideas. A comma (,) is used in LXX Gen. 1:1-5 to separate a sentence into different units. (c.) The *silluq* is found under the last word of the second half of a verse in MT. The end of the verse is expected after seeing the *silluq*. (d.) The *Munach* is placed under a word that is connected with a following word.

The Tg. uses most of these Hebrew signs as well to divide the text. The Syriac text also uses a *suf pasuk* at the end of each verse. Each verse from a translation corresponds to a verse of MT, as the division laid by the Hebrew experts is respected. So, it is not quite the same Hebrew punctuation marks that are used in all the four translations that we have analyzed in this essay, but each translation has its way of dividing the text

⁷⁶⁴ For instance, the deity is also dividing things in the Flood story (Gen. 6-9).

⁷⁶⁵ Page H. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, p. 16.

into different units just like the Hebrew passage is divided into different clauses. This is a point of similarity between the original text and these four versions of Gen. 1:1-5.

3- Each Text in its Own Right

Each of the translation stands alone as being a different tradition of the same text. This autonomy of every text can be due to the fact that the translators were producing literary works for different communities. MT was addressed to the Jews. Tg. saw the light in the Synagogue context, and was probably oral at first before its written form. It is difficult to know the addressee of P. LXX was made for Jews living in the diaspora, especially Alexandria. The Catholic missionaries wanted to reach the countryside of Egypt with the message of the Gospel in the fourth century. Consequently, the Coptic version of the Bible was birthed. So, the intentions and the aims of the editors may not be the same. Each one of these texts should be studied in its own right. In the light of these striking similarities or intersections, it can be said that the translators had the same story of the creation of light in front of them at the time of translation, as is presented to us today in our Bibles in different languages. Our research reveals that the interpreters of the Holy Scriptures did take the original text into consideration.

In summation, the scribes were *not* distorting the Holy Scriptures. The early translators of the Bible aimed at presenting to their communities a text that the people of their time (*d'alors*) could understand. Their translations had to take into consideration their readers' socio-historical context, geography, traditions, culture, and language. The scribes who contributed to the translation of the Bible that we have today in many

different languages and versions were not “idiots”⁷⁶⁶ as some people might think. Others are used to critiquing the works of the biblical translators, and the linguistic and philological inequality that exists between the Hebrew original text and the four other translations that we have analyzed in this book – Targ, P, LXX, and Copt. But now, we have come to understand that there are reasons for the linguistic and philological differences between the manuscripts.

After all, a translation remains a translation. It is almost impossible for the original message to remain intact (keeping its original connotations and nuance) from the SL to the TL. But the scribes used their philological method throughout the translation process, doing their best to convey the meaning of what the original writer wanted to communicate in their language to their own audience or readers.

⁷⁶⁶ Here, I mean that some people may think that the scribes were not smart or they were lacking in intelligence. But the scribes knew what they were doing.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

The aim of the last chapter of this dissertation is threefold: First, the ideas that were given in the previous parts of this essay will be processed and clarified in a discussion. Second, it is important to combine these thoughts to form a theory of translation. Third, some suggestions are provided in this chapter for scholars, translators and readers of the Bible who would like to be more efficient in the area of Bible translations. Some of these concerns may sound like that they are related to the field of communication and translation in general, but these ideas are tied up to Bible translation and to the focus text of this work that is Gen. 1:1-5. These recommendations are neither exhaustive nor final.

A. Discussion

Can we produce an English translation of Gen. 1:1-5 that takes into consideration MT, Tg, P, LXX, and Copt? The reasons for this English version of Gen. 1:1-5 would be to take into consideration the pros and cons of each text, and to display the differences and similarities between all the five manuscripts in full view. It is possible, with a lot of effort, to create a unified, standardized text, based on these manuscripts that we have considered in this writing. As we have seen in the first chapter of this book, in the third century (sometime before the year 240 CE), the theologian and scholar Origen tried to do something similar to this endeavor in the Hexapla.⁷⁶⁷

So, it is not impossible, but all these five witnesses (MT, Tg, P, LXX, and Copt) should be consulted during the translation process. This interpretative text would

⁷⁶⁷ A critical edition of the Hebrew Bible in six versions: the Hebrew consonantal text, the Hebrew text transliterated into Greek letters, the Greek translations of Aquila of Sinope and Symmachus the Ebionite, one recension of the Septuagint, and the Greek translation of Theodotion.

probably be longer in words and teachings, as it would attempt to give a more complete account of the creation of light, and as *no one text can claim to have said it all*. Certainly, this new English translation would give us a broader view of the creation of light than the view that is presented just by the Hebrew Bible which is considered the original text. Or this would be a broader view of the interpretation of light which is different. That means, these texts that were translated from the original Hebrew are also important. Someone who is studying Gen. 1:1-5 should be encouraged to consult other versions of the same biblical passage. Because these manuscripts (Tg, P, LXX, and Copt) are neither word-for-word translations, nor 100% equivalent to MT, considering the language or interpretation that is used in each manuscript.

B. Synthesis

As we have seen in the sixth chapter of this book, there are different ways of translating a text. Three of these options can be the following ones: word-for-word translation, literal translation, and free translation. The LXX Gen. 1:1 is a literal translation from MT, but in Gen. 1:2, the Greek translators offer a free translation of the *formless and void* earth. The Hebrew concept of *tehom* is rendered *ἀβύσσου* in Greek. For the LXX translators, this is a local way to express the Hebrew idea. In Gen. 1:1, P is closer to MT than Tg, because the Aramaic translators included their theology, culture and geography in their text. The third verse of Gen. 1, in all the five traditions, pretty much states the same thing: God spoke light into existence, and it was so.

Based on the concept of division that is used in Gen. 1:4, the verb “to divide” (Hb. *בָּדַל*) can be expressed with more intensity in one language than another. The Coptic

scribes rendered the Greek into Coptic as “to make clear distinction” (or complete separation). This enlightens us about the dividing actions of the deity. Moreover, the Coptic Bible stands alone by using the ordinal numeral adjective in Gen. 1:5, and so, all throughout the first biblical creative narrative. This was possibly done for consistency.

On what basis should a person evaluate a translation? A translation can be considered poor in the eyes of someone, and the same translation looks great for another. To repeat Newmark, “A good translation is one in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended and as strongly felt by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.”⁷⁶⁸ When a translation is well done, the people who speak the TL will be satisfied with the fact of having the text in their own language. Although it is always good for a reader to use the original text if he or she can, the work of a good translation should also be encouraged and praised. Readers of Gen. 1:1-5 in Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, or Coptic may have felt no need to go back to the MT, because the translators provided to their readers in their own native language the same narrative of the creation of light that is presented in the Hebrew original text.

The assessment of a translation is heavily dependent upon the target language culture.⁷⁶⁹ For Newmark, “if the text is personal and authoritative, we have to assess how well the translator has captured the idiolect of the original, no matter whether it is clichéd, natural or innovative.”⁷⁷⁰ It is the understanding of the message of Gen. 1:1-5 by the people who speak Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic that determines that the translators of the biblical creation of light into one of these languages did a good job.

⁷⁶⁸ Peter. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*. Op. Cit., p. 4.

⁷⁶⁹ Peter. Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*. New York, NY: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. 189.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 189.

Furthermore, translations and interpretations have power. Someone who reads the translation of a scriptural passage may trust its message to be true or that what this piece of literature says is accurate. There is power also into the way the text of Gen. 1:1-5 is interpreted from the translations. Readers can also be authors. It is when readers are seen as authors that the fluidity of the message of a text is valued. For example, in chapter 1 of this dissertation, a consideration of the translations of the reformers, especially Luther, revealed that the Bible was read with Christological eyes. The idea of Christ at creation may have not been the intention of the original writer, but such new notion is imposed by those who read and interpreted the same passage with the authority to tell its meaning.

In short, the four translations – Tg, P, LXX, and Copt – that we have analyzed in this work took into consideration the reality of the people for whom their texts were produced, as the translators were concerned about their readers. These translations were relevant to the people who received them not just because the texts in these specific languages were new, but the translations were also linked up with the context of the people in some way. The message of the translators was relevant, as they remained faithful to the original text, as long as it was possible. At times, they interpreted nonliterally the ideas presented in the SL for the better understanding of their readers. The translators aimed at translating with successful communication tools. Gutt states, “The ultimate aim of Bible translation must be that of communicating the full intended interpretation of the original to the receptors, as far as we have access to that. None of us feel happy about loss of meaning relative to the original.”⁷⁷¹ Gutt continues, “To some people, the freer rendering seems preferable because measures, such as explication, can

⁷⁷¹ Ernst-August. Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation*. Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc., 1992, p. 74.

help to communicate *more* of the intended meaning of the original than a rendering that more closely represents what was actually expressed in the original.”⁷⁷²

C. Linguistic and Philological Counsel

First, a fresh translation is a starting point for the study of any document.

“Language permeates human interaction, culture, behavior, and thought.”⁷⁷³ It is one of the best methods of communication among human beings. According to the Bible, the deity also uses human languages to communicate to humanity. Three original languages in which the Bible was written are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. A person who wishes to do a critical comparative scriptural analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 based on MT, Tg, P, LXX, and Copt should first translate all these texts into a spoken language that he or she is familiar with. Translation is a starting point, even in the interpretation of a biblical passage. So, to fully understand the message and the meaning of the Bible, it is extremely helpful to know (or at least study) these original languages.

Second, when translating a document, it is not enough to know the meaning of individual words. The translator needs to have a thorough knowledge of the syntax, grammar, and morphology of both the original language and the target one. Whether the language is spoken or written, it always consists of the use of words in structured and conventional ways. Language is not just the method of human communication, either spoken or written, but also a system of communication used by a particular country or community. Based on the language that is used, the translation will be either literal (i.e. concerned with form) or technical (i.e. concerned with content). In the previous chapters

⁷⁷² Ibidem.

⁷⁷³ Suzette Haden. Elgin, *What is Linguistics?* Prentice-Hall Foundations of Modern Linguistics Series. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. vii.

of this essay, it was shown that the scribes used a translation technique to translate Gen. 1:1-5 from Hebrew to the language of their own communities. This technique is seen in the syntax, grammar, and jargon of their texts.

Third, language can also be the manner or style of a piece of writing or speech. For instance, if a reader wants to illustrate how Gen. 1:1-5 should be approached today, that person will also need to convey the way Gen. 1:1-5 was viewed by the original audience or the readers in the past. Earlier in chapters 1 through 6, it was shown that the mention of some specific words in a text would signal the nature of the piece of literature at hand to the reader. So then, a translator of the Scripture should pay attention to the linguistic style that is used therein. Finding the style or voice of the author, often affects the understanding of the passage.

Fourth, to be a translator, (1.) someone needs to have the ability to speak and write both the SL and the TL. (2.) That person should have the ability to understand source text. (3.) A translator should have integrity.⁷⁷⁴ For instance, according to the legend of the Septuagint, the 70 translators submitted similar copies after their work.⁷⁷⁵ That means that these translators did not impose their own ideas on the text. In the ancient world, usually, “translating” was a job; “to be a scribe” was a position in the society connected to the royal government in place.

In translation work, translators can commit significant mistakes because of insufficient linguistic knowledge. In other words, a deficiency in linguistic knowledge has serious repercussions. The lack of integrity, self-discipline, and cultural ignorance has

⁷⁷⁴ Mary M. Massoud, Op. Cit. pp. 7, 8.

⁷⁷⁵ See “The Legend of the Septuagint” in Abraham. Wasserstein, and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

more serious faults. For example, in Indonesian, the words “*malam Minggu*”⁷⁷⁶ should be rendered “Saturday night” in English, because the word *Minggu* comes after *malam*. If the intended meaning were “Sunday night,” the expression would have been “*Minggu malam*.” Massoud continues,

A wrong translation of an important political message by one who lacks integrity could lead to war; the wrong translation of a holy book could lead to spiritual confusion. A belated translation of a commercial document by one who lacks self-discipline in the use of time could lead to the physical starvation of a whole community; a distorted translation of cultural material by an uninformed translator could result in mistaken views of other countries. It is, therefore, of vital importance that the right translators be recruited.⁷⁷⁷

So, a translator of the Holy Scriptures should take his or her job seriously. For instance, Gen. 1:1-5 states specifically that *Elohim*⁷⁷⁸ is the creator of light. If the translator changes that divine name to another deity’s name or another secular person, that will open up new avenues for interpretations with new ways of approaching the same text. In chapter 2, it was shown how the biblical text was already being interpreted by the masoretes just by adding vowel pointings to the consonantal text. The fact of adding punctuation marks to a text can also change its meaning. Linguistic capabilities are a must for an interpreter of the Bible.

Fifth, a translator of Gen. 1:1-5 should keep an open mind that there could be other meanings of the text than the immediate one considered by the translator. In fact, a reader needs to be careful about the eyes with which he or she reads the Bible. It was considered in the first chapter of this work that how the story of the creation of light is approached varies from one group of readers to another, such as the Essenes, the Church Fathers, and modern biblical scholars. An original text can mean “this” for some

⁷⁷⁶ *Malam* means “night.” *Minggu* stands for “Sunday.”

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁷⁸ Hebrew for “God.”

translators, while it can mean “that” for others. So, the meaning of a literature is based upon how it is viewed by an interpreter of the text. How should someone approach the biblical text? It heavily depends on the reader. Each religious tradition has its way to read the Bible. Someone should not be narrow-minded, thinking of one interpretation of Gen. 1:1-5, but several interpretations of the same story.

Sixth, a critical comparative scriptural analysis of a portion of the Hebrew Bible will necessitate a consideration of disciplines that are outside of the theological realm, such as history, geography, sociology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, and philology, among others. For example, in the third chapter of this dissertation, the Aramaic rendition of the Hebrew בראשית (“in the beginning”) is בקרמין meaning *in the East*. Through geography, we conclude that the Garden of Eden was planted by God in the East (Gen. 2:8)⁷⁷⁹, and the Aramaic translator made a good choice. Moreover, chapter 5 lays out nine Coptic dialects [Sahidic (Upper Egypt, i.e. South), Bohairic (Lower Egypt, i.e. North), Fayyumic, Akhmimic, Lycopolitan, Mesokemic, Dialect P, Dialect 17, and Dialect K] that are both similar and different from each other. Their locations on the map show that they are spoken in different parts of the country of Egypt. Their differences are greatly based upon geographical areas. Thus, a particular form of the Coptic language is peculiar to a specific region or social group of Egypt.

Furthermore, the three Semitic languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac – that are vehicles of analysis in this dissertation – are part of the Northwest category. An interpreter of a text written in one of these languages primordially has to find out what it means for a Semitic language to belong to the Northwest group. It is all to say that an

⁷⁷⁹ Joy A. Schroeder, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Book of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015, p. 67.

interpreter of Gen. 1:1-5 will need to make reference to some modern academic disciplines while interpreting that biblical passage.

Seventh, the translator should be aware of some special linguistic problems along the way. Many linguistic constructions do not correspond exactly to their equivalent in another language. Depending on the context, a preposition in one language may be translated in three or four ways in another language. For instance, the Hebrew preposition **בְּ** that is found right in the beginning of Gen. 1:1 can be rendered “in, with, by, on” in English. Based on context, and good English, **בְּרֵאשִׁית** is translated as “in a beginning” or “in the beginning.”

In summation, the translation of a piece of literature should be faithful to the original, even if sometimes, it is hard to find the exact and equivalent words in the TL that correspond to the SL. A good translation is correct, but not perfect. A translation of Gen. 1:1-5 into another language can be different from the Hebrew Text because of a consideration of the target language and culture. For instance, most of the time, the reasons for the differences between MT and LXX of Gen. 1:1-5 are both cultural and linguistic.⁷⁸⁰ The interpreter should pay attention to both the original text at hand, and his or her readers. Because a translation is an interpretation, each of the languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic) studied in this dissertation has a unique contribution to our understanding of the first pericope of Genesis 1.

⁷⁸⁰ See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

D. Tie It All Together

Considering the beginning of Gen. 1:1, the Syriac text is closer to MT than the Targumic text, because the first two texts (MT and P) start with “in (the) beginning”, while the last one (Targ.) begins with “in the East” or “in the antiquities.” In verse 2, LXX has its own way of understanding the state of the chaotic earth by rendering the Hebrew “formless void” to be “unsightly and unfurnished,” and “the deep” to “abyss.” In verse 3, apparently, both the SL and the four TLs represent in their own terms how the deity is commanding light into existence, and light was created through the spoken word. All of them agree in contents or ideas.

In Gen. 1:4, the way in which the Syriac language constructs “*between... and...*” is different from all the other four languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Coptic) ways of expressing the same grammatical construction. In the end of verse 5, the Bohairic Coptic Text follows neither LXX nor MT. The Coptic text ends with the cardinal adjective: “first day.” So then, there are points of similitude between the translations, and there are places where a text stands alone (by itself). These differences are occasioned by culture, geography, history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and philology, as shown throughout this critical comparative analytical study.

Our hopes of all the years are met in the fact that this work has shown that the fashions in biblical translation changed over the course of time; the differences between the MT and the Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Coptic translations are, for the most part, to be ascribed to scribal activity; as the ancient translators were oriented towards both the original text and their reader. We have explained, with the help of an historico-philological method of interpretation, the meaning of the Biblical text, and we have

arrived, as nearly as possible, at the sense that the words of Genesis 1:1-5 were intended to have for the reader at the time when they were written. It is a reality that every verse has its primary signification, and we need to understand the text based on the grammar at that time.

Conclusion

This study is an attempt to compare the Masoretic Text of Gen. 1:1-5 with four other manuscripts that offer four different translations – Targum, Peshitta, Septuagint, and the Coptic Bible – of the same text. The authentic features and the translation technique of the first translators of Gen. 1:1-5 from the original Hebrew Text have become evident more and more as we have seen throughout this process of critical comparative analysis. Because a full analysis of the biblical creation narratives (Gen. 1 and 2) would far exceed the bounds of a single monograph, this study has focused on the creation of light (only the first day of creation). The results of this critical and analytical study may now be summarized and conclusions drawn concerning their meaning.

We have seen in chapter 1 that throughout the ages, the way in which people and scholars read the Bible occasioned different interpretations of the Scripture. How do we read the Bible today? The way we read the Holy Scriptures will affect our theology, our conception of God. For example, the Essenes viewed Scripture as a document that is related to morality (good, evil, and righteousness). The Church Fathers read Gen. 1:1-5 with Christological eyes, as they wanted to present a theological interpretation of the person and work of Christ in their biblical commentaries. Consequently, Patristic theology is very Christological. The reformers – such as Luther and Calvin – see the Son of God being present at creation and as creator based on early Christian writings (cf. Jn. 1:1; Col. 1:15). So then, our theology will be either adequate or inadequate depending on how we read the Bible. The Bible was not originally written in Latin, German, or English.

In chapter 2, it became clear that while pointing the Hebrew consonantal text, the masoretes were exegeting the biblical text. Because in Hebrew, three consonants that are written without vowels can stand for several / different things. For instance, ברא can mean “creator,” “to create,” “he created,” “the one who creates,” and “creating.” By adding the dots to vocalize the text, the Hebrew language experts of the early Middle Ages chose which reading is the best one based on their own point of view, and how we should read that same passage. The golden rule of hermeneutics is to be applied: context is key. It was for the synagogue use that the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) was vocalized. Compared to the Masoretic Text (MT), the consonantal structure is almost the same between the two Torahs (Jewish and Samaritan). However, MT is written in the Aramaic square script, while SP is written in the paleo-Hebrew script (similar to / derived from Phoenician). We have comprehended that the scribes left their worldview, and the way they understood what they were recopying, imprinted into the biblical text. At times, they added their own explanation of a scriptural passage into the biblical narrative to tell their readers the meaning of what they were reading.

In Chapter 3, the Targum of Gen. 1:1-5 was put into conversation with its Peshitta version. The fact that Syriac is an eastern dialect of Aramaic contributes to the closeness of the Targum to the Peshitta. Though Aramaic is written in the square script, and Syriac in the cursive script, there are some linguistic, philological, syntactical, and grammatical similarities between the two of them, because both languages are Northwest Semitic. There are times when the Syriac Bible shows derivation from the Targum and the Masoretic text, but at other times, it stands alone. For example, “And God saw that the light was beautiful” (Gen. 1:4) is unique to P. The beauty of it all is that an Aramaic

speaker will understand some Hebrew words while a person is reading from a Hebrew Torah scroll at a Synagogue, and someone who studied Aramaic will have less difficulties to learn Syriac.

The fourth chapter of this work presented a critical analysis of Gen. 1:1-5 from the Septuagint (LXX) – one of the most famous manuscripts of the Old Testament (OT). The LXX text was compared to MT. We can conclude that the Greek translation is an accurate translation. The Greek Bible was very authoritative across the ages. We have come to understand why the books of a modern English Bible is classified based on the order of the books in the Septuagint, and the English names of the biblical books are derived from the names of the books in the LXX. The early Christians and the Church Fathers primarily worked with the LXX within a theological and literary context.

In chapter 5, we have learned that the Coptic text was translated from LXX, not from MT. A description of the Coptic dialects that pertain to the translation of Gen. 1:1-5 was offered. While considering the location of each dialect on the map of Egypt, it is revealed to us that a language slightly changes depending on geographical locations. A specific region where the dialect is spoken has its own way to express the same idea. Some notable publications in the field of Coptic studies were considered to show that the Holy Scriptures, whether the original text or a translation of it, went through a long process. A critical comparative analysis of the Bohairic Text of Gen. 1:1-5 laid out some important notions pertaining to the Coptic language syntax and grammar. Syntactically, Coptic is different than Greek.

Chapter 6 has displayed the fact that these translations are not word-for-word translations. It is almost impossible to translate a piece of literature from a SL to a TL

with a 100% equivalence. A translation technique was used by the biblical translators, because they wanted their readers to understand their translations.

The recommendations that were given in chapter 7 are not supreme or sovereign, but they are advice for someone who would like to do translation work more effectively. This last chapter of the book encourages us to take into consideration three main factors for a contextual translation: author (A), text (T), and reader (R).⁷⁸¹ R should understand T that is from A. For this to happen, a local language should be used by A.

This is a dissertation that displays the beauty of languages, especially those that are related to each other. Two examples are: (1) Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac; (2) Greek and Coptic. It was shown that as Semitic languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac share many nouns, verbs, and adjectives that have a similar root. Coptic, heavily influenced by Greek, has a large proportion of its vocabulary that is derived from the Greek language. On top of that, the Coptic translators of the Bible adopted the Greek alphabet. This is to say that it was not randomly that these specific languages were chosen for this critical comparative analysis of Genesis 1:1-5. These languages have an intersection or a point of similitude between them, but also, they are different from each other.

The intention of the original writer and the translators were also considered, because comparing five pieces of literature in five different languages is not just to lay out what is mentioned in one text, and what is absent in the other text. Some of the authors of the lexicons that were consulted during the redaction of this book “aimed at

⁷⁸¹ Newman, Aryeh. *Mapping Translation Equivalence*. Leuven, Belgium: Acco (Academic Publishing Company), 1980, p. 20.

presenting not only the various meanings of words in a general way, but also at explaining specifically their peculiar uses.”⁷⁸²

Lastly, we have come to understand that a translation of Gen. 1:1-5 is an interpretation of that passage. There is loss and gain in both words and meaning in the four translations that we have considered. The words of Speiser can be borrowed here to summarize the main focus of this book:

The main task of a translator is to keep faith with two different masters, one at the source and the other at the receiving end. The terms and thoughts of the original, the impact of sound and phrase, the nuances of meaning, and the shadings of emphasis should all be transposed from one medium into another without leaving any outward sign of the transfer. It is, of course, an ideal goal, one that can never be attained with complete success. Yet the translator must strive to approximate this ideal. If he is unduly swayed by the original, and substitutes word for word rather than idiom for idiom, he is traducing what he should be translating, to the detriment of both source and target. And if he veers too far in the opposite direction, by favoring the second medium at the expense of the first, the result is a paraphrase. The task is an exacting one even with contemporary or relatively recent sources. With ancient sources, the difficulties are compounded as problems of text, usage, and cultural setting increase progressively with age.⁷⁸³

Furthermore, as shown all throughout this work, “translation theory is an interdisciplinary study.”⁷⁸⁴ The field of Bible translation encompasses philology, linguistics, history, culture, geography, sociology, and anthropology to name a few. In this dissertation, we have not said everything that needs to be said on the subject of critical comparative scriptures, but a sample of how biblical translations should be treated – not as word-for-word translation – is offered. May this piece of literature bring joy to the lovers of languages, and enlighten scholars who are comparing MT to Tg, P, LXX, and Copt.

⁷⁸² J. A. Fitzmyer, *A Lexicon of Biblical Aramaic: Clarified by Ancient Documents*. Roma, Italy: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011, p. 6.

⁷⁸³ Speiser, *Genesis*. 1962, pp. lxiii-lxiv.

⁷⁸⁴ Peter. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1981, p. 7.

Appendix

Parallel Scriptures

Gen. 1:1

MT	Tg	Syr	LXX	Copt
בְּרֵאשִׁית	בְּקִדְמִין	בִּיזְמַנְא	Ἐν ἀρχῇ	ⲉⲈⲎ ⲐⲘⲀⲮⲬⲬⲐ
בָּרָא	בָּרָא	בִּרְא	ἐποίησεν	ⲁ - ⲐⲁⲘⲐⲐⲐ
אֱלֹהִים	יוֹי	ⲁⲗⲁⲃⲁ.	ὁ θεός	ϕⲓ
אֶת	יְת	ⲁ		ⲛ-
הַשָּׁמַיִם	שְׁמַיָּא	ⲁⲃⲉⲛⲁ	τὸν οὐρανὸν	-ⲧⲪⲉ
וְאֶת	וְיְת	ⲁⲃⲁ	καὶ	ⲛⲉⲘ
הָאָרֶץ:	אַרְעָא:	ⲁⲓⲗⲁ.	τὴν γῆν.	ⲛⲕⲁⲗⲓ

Gen. 1:2

MT	Tg	Syr	LXX	Copt
וְהָאָרֶץ	וְאֶרְעָא	ܟܘܕܝܟܐ	ἡ δὲ γῆ	ⲡⲕⲁⲗⲓ ⲁⲉ
הִיְתָה	הָיָה	ܥܐܡܐ	ἦν	ⲛⲁⲘⲱⲡⲓ
תְּהִי	צְדִיָּא	ܥܐܡܐ	ἀόρατος	ⲛⲁⲧⲛⲁⲘ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ
וְבָהּ	וְרוֹקְנֵיָא	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος,	ⲟⲘⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲧϮⲟⲃⲧ
וְחֹשֶׁךְ	וְחֹשׁוּכָא	ܟܘܟܘܟܘܬܐ	καὶ σκότος	ⲟⲘⲟⲩ ⲟⲘϫⲁⲕⲓ
	[פְּרִישׁ]			
עַל-פְּנֵי	עַל-אַפֵּי	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	ἐπάνω	ⲛⲁⲘϫⲏ ⲗⲓϫⲉⲛ
תְּהוֹם	תְּהוּמָא	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	τῆς ἀβύσσου,	ϫⲛⲟⲘⲛ
וְרוּחַ	וְרוּחָא	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	καὶ πνεῦμα	ⲟⲘⲟⲩ ⲟⲘⲡⲛⲁ
	מִן-קֶדֶם	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ		ⲛⲧⲉ
אֱלֹהִים	יְי	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	θεοῦ	ϫⲧ
	דֵּי			
מֵרָחֳקַת	מִנְשַׁבָּא	ܥܘܒܘܬܐ	ἐπεφέρετο	ⲛⲁⲘⲏⲛⲟⲘ

עַל-פְּנֵי	עַל-אִפֵּי	עַל-פְּנֵי	ἐπάνω	ΖΙΧΕΝ
הַמַּיִם:	מֵי־אֵ:	מֵי־אֵ.	τοῦ ὕδατος.	ΝΙΜΩΟΥ

Gen. 1:3

MT	Tg	Syr	LXX	Copt
וַיֹּאמֶר	וַיֹּאמֶר	ܟܘܠܗ	καὶ εἶπεν	ογορ πεχε
אֱלֹהִים	יְי	ܟܘܠܗ	ὁ θεός	ϕf
				χε
יְהִי-	יְהִי	ܟܘܠܗ	Γενηθήτω	μαρε-
אֹר	נְהוֹרָא	.ܟܘܠܗ	φῶς.	γωινι
וַיְהִי-	וַיְהִי	ܟܘܠܗ	καὶ ἐγένετο	ογορ αϕγωινι
				ν̄χε
אֹר:	נְהוֹרָא:	.ܟܘܠܗ	φῶς.	πιγωινι

Gen. 1:4

MT	Tg	Syr	LXX	Copt
וַיֵּרָא	וַחֲזָא	ܟܘܒܐ	καὶ εἶδεν	ογοϛ αϥϩναγ
				نّخه
אֱלֹהִים	יְי	ܟܘܠܐ	ὁ θεὸς	ϥϥ
אֶת־	יַת			ϵ-
הָאֹר	נְהוֹרָא	ܟܘܠܐ	τὸ φῶς	πιογωινι
כִּי־טוֹ	טַב אֲרִי	ܕܘܟܠܐ.	ὅτι καλόν.	خه نانهϥ
וַיַּבְדִּיל	וַאֲפָרִישׁ	ܘܟܘܠܐ	καὶ διεχώρισεν	ογοϛ αϥϩωρϥ ἔβολ
				نّخه
אֱלֹהִים	יְי	ܟܘܠܐ	ὁ θεὸς	ϥϥ
בֵּין	בֵּין	ܒܝܢܐ	ἀνά μέσον	ογτε
הָאֹר	נְהוֹרָא	ܟܘܠܐ	τοῦ φωτὸς	πιογωινι
וּבֵין	וּבֵין		καὶ ἀνά μέσον	nem ογτε
הַחֹשׁ:	חֹשׁוּכָא:	ܠܘܟܘܠܐ.	τοῦ σκότους.	πικακι

Gen. 1:5

MT	Tg	Syr	LXX	Copt
וַיִּקְרָא	וּקְרָא	ܟܝܩܪܐ	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν	ογοζ αϥμογϥ ն'չե
אֶל	יְי	ܟܘܠܟ	ὁ θεὸς	ϥϥ
לְאֹ	לְנִהוֹרָא	ܟܝܩܪܐ ܠ	τὸ φῶς	ἐπιουωινι չե
יּוֹם	יְמָמָא (יּוֹמָא)	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ.	ἡμέραν	πιεζουϥ
וְלַ	וְלַחֲשׁוֹכָא	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ ܘܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ	καὶ τὸ σκότος	ογοζ πιχაკι
קָרָ	קָרָא	ܟܝܩܪܐ	ἐκάλεσεν	αϥμογϥ ἐροϥ ܟܘܠ
לַ	לַיְלִיא	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ.	νύκτα.	πιεϥωϥ
וַיְהִי	וַיְהִי	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ	καὶ ἐγένετο	ογοζ α-ϥωπι
עֶרֶב	רַמְשׁ	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ	ἑσπέρα	ροϥ
וַיְהִי	וַיְהִי	ܟܘܠܟܘܬܐ	καὶ ἐγένετο	α-ϥωπι
בֶּקֶר	צֶפֶר	ܟܝܩܪܐ	πρωί,	Τουϥ

יום	יום	יום	ήμέρα	ήμεροσ
יום:	יום:	יום.	μία.	ήμεροσ

בראשית GENESIS

1 ^[א] בְּרֵאשִׁית^א בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ² : וְהָאָרֶץ
הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי
3 הַמַּיִם³ : וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי אֹר⁴ וַיְהי־אֹר⁴ : וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־
5 הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיְבָרַךְ אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ⁵ : וַיִּקְרָא
אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהי־עֶרֶב וַיְהי־בֹקֶר יוֹם
6 אֶחָד⁶ : 5 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי רִקיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהי מַבְדִּיל
7 בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם^א : וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ וַיְבָרַךְ בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר
8 מִתַּחַת לְרִקיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרִקיעַ וַיְהי־כֵן^א : וַיִּקְרָא
אֱלֹהִים לְרִקיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהי־עֶרֶב וַיְהי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי^ב : 6
9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מְקוֹם^א אֶחָד וְתֵרָאֵה
10 הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהי־כֵן^ב : וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבְשָׁה אָרֶץ וּלַמְּקוֹה הַמַּיִם
11 יַמִּים וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב^ב : וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תְּדַשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ
^אדִּשָּׂא עֵשֶׂב^א מִזְרִיעַ זָרַע עֵץ^ב פְּרִי עֵשָׂה פְרִי לְמִינֵו^א אֲשֶׁר זָרַעוּ־בו
12 עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהי־כֵן¹² : וַתִּזְעַן הָאָרֶץ דִּשָּׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זָרַע לְמִינֵהוּ
13 וְעֵץ עֵשָׂה פְרִי אֲשֶׁר זָרַעוּ־בו לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב¹³ : וַיְהי־
14 עֶרֶב וַיְהי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי^ב : וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי מְאֹדָה
15 בְּרִקיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהַיּוֹם לְאֶתֶת וְהַלַּיְלָה לְאֶתֶת וְהַיּוֹם וְהַלַּיְלָה לְאֶתֶת וְהַלַּיְלָה לְאֶתֶת
16 וַיְהי־כֵן¹⁶ : וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹדָה הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת־הַמָּאוֹר

ה' ה' ו' ו' מ' מ' .
1 בתור' . ו' ו' ב' ב' .
ח ר' מ' .

ב' . ב' . ב' . ב' .
ב' ב' . ב' ב' .
ב' ב' . ב' ב' .

כה' . 10 .

11 .

12 . 13 . 14 .
ס' ס' בחור

15 . 16 .
כה' מנה בטע בעיני .

ל . 14 . 11 .

כ' . 17 .

ל .

כה' . 10 .
ל . 10 . 10 .

ו בעיני . 20 .

כה' . 10 .

ג . ב' . 14 .

ו בעיני . 1 .
ג . 14 . 11 .
ב' מל וחד חס' .

י' . 1 . ר' .

כה' . 10 .

ג חד מל וחד חס

23 .

ו בעיני . 16 .
א' . 16 .
א' את את ואת ואת .
ב' חס .

Cp 1¹ Mm 1. ²Mm 2. ³Mm 3. ⁴Mm 3139. ⁵Mp sub loco. ⁶Mm 4. ⁷Jer 4,23, cf Mp sub loco. ⁸Hi 38,19. ⁹2 Ch 24,20. ¹⁰Mm 5. ¹¹Mm 6. ¹²Mm 3105. ¹³Hi 28,3. ¹⁴Mm 200. ¹⁵Mm 7. ¹⁶Mm 1431. ¹⁷Mm 2773. ¹⁸Mm 3700. ¹⁹Mm 736. ²⁰Ps 66,6. ²¹Mm 722. ²²Mm 2645. ²³Qoh 6,3.

Cp 1, 1^a Orig *Bḡaiθ* vel *Bapḡaiθ* (-*σεθ*), Samar *bārāsīt* || 6^a huc tr 7^{a-a} cf 9. 11. 15. 20. 24. 30 || 7^{a-a} cf 6^a; ins וירא אלהים כי-טוב cf 4. 10. 12. 18. 21. 31 et 8 (8) || 9^a 9 *συναγωγῆν* = מקנה cf 10 מקוה המים || 10^b 10 + *καὶ συνήχθη τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ὄφθη ἡ ξηρά* = וַתֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים וַתִּבְרָא הַיַּבְשָׁה || 11^{a-a} 11 cj עשב c דשא || 11^b 11 c pc Mss *μῶσῃ* cf 12 || 12^c prb dl cf 12.

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§ i 18 בְּקֶדְמִין בָּרָא יוֹי יֵת שְׁמַיָּא וְיֵת אֲרַעָא : 2 וְאֲרַעָא הָיִת צְדִיָּא
 וְרוֹקְנִיָּא וְחֹשׁוֹכָא עַל אֲפִי תְהוּמָא וְרוּחָא מִן קִדָּם יוֹי מְנֻשְׁבָּא עַל אֲפִי
 מִיָּא : 3 וְאָמַר יוֹי יְהִי נְהוּרָא וְהוּה נְהוּרָא : 4 וְחֹזָא יוֹי יֵת נְהוּרָא אֲרִי טָב וְאֲפִרִישׁ
 יוֹי בִין נְהוּרָא וּבִין חֹשׁוֹכָא : 5 וְקִרָא יוֹי לְנְהוּרָא יִמְמָא וְלְחֹשׁוֹכָא קִרָא לִילִיָּא
 וְהוּה רִמְשׁ וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוֹם חָד : 6 וְאָמַר יוֹי יְהִי רְקִיעָא בְּמִצִּיעוֹת מִיָּא וְיְהִי
 מְפִרִישׁ בִּין מִיָּא לְמִיָּא : 7 וְעֵבֶד יוֹי יֵת רְקִיעָא וְאֲפִרִישׁ בִּין מִיָּא דְמַלְרַע
 לְרְקִיעָא וּבִין מִיָּא דְמִיעַל לְרְקִיעָא וְהוּה כִּין : 8 וְקִרָא יוֹי לְרְקִיעָא שְׁמַיָּא
 וְהוּה רִמְשׁ וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוֹם תְּנִין : 9 וְאָמַר יוֹי יִתְכַנְשׁוּן מִיָּא מִתְחֹת שְׁמַיָּא לְאֲתֵרָא
 חָד וְתִתְחַזִּי יִבְשֶׁתָא וְהוּה כִּין : 10 וְקִרָא יוֹי לִיִּבְשֶׁתָא אֲרַעָא וּלְבֵית כְּנִישֶׁת מִיָּא
 קִרָא יִמְמִי וְחֹזָא יוֹי אֲרִי טָב : 11 וְאָמַר יוֹי תְדַאִית אֲרַעָא דְתֵאָה עֶסְכָּא דְבָר
 זְרַעִיה מְזַדְרַע אֵילָן פִּירִין עֵבִיד פִּירִין לְזִנְיָה דְבָר זְרַעִיה בֵּיה עַל אֲרַעָא וְהוּה
 כִּין : 12 וְאֲפִיקֶת אֲרַעָא דְתֵאָה עֶסְכָּא דְבָר זְרַעִיה מְזַדְרַע לְזִנְיָה וְאֵילָן עֵבִיד
 פִּירִין דְבָר זְרַעִיה בֵּיה לְזִנְיָה וְחֹזָא יוֹי אֲרִי טָב : 13 וְהוּה רִמְשׁ וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוֹם
 תְּלִיתִי : 14 וְאָמַר יוֹי יְהוּן נְהוּרִין בְּרְקִיעָא דְשְׁמַיָּא לְאֲפִרִישָׁא בִין יִמְמָא וּבִין
 לִילִיָּא וְיְהוּן לְאֲתִין וְלְזִמְנִין וְלְמִמְנִי בְהוּן יוֹמִין וְשַׁנִּין : 15 וְיְהוּן לְנְהוּרִין בְּרְקִיעָא
 דְשְׁמַיָּא לְאֲנְהָרָא עַל אֲרַעָא וְהוּה כִּין : 16 וְעֵבֶד יוֹי יֵת תְּרִין נְהוּרִיָּא רְבִרְבִיָּא
 יֵת נְהוּרָא רְבָא לְמִשְׁלֵט בִּימְמָא וְיֵת נְהוּרָא זְעִירָא לְמִשְׁלֵט בְּלִילִיָּא וְיֵת כּוֹכְבִיָּא :
 17 וְיֵהֵב יִתְהוּן יוֹי בְּרְקִיעָא דְשְׁמַיָּא לְאֲנְהָרָא עַל אֲרַעָא : 18 וְלְמִשְׁלֵט בִּימְמָא
 וּבְלִילִיָּא וְלְאֲפִרִישָׁא בִין נְהוּרָא וּבִין חֹשׁוֹכָא וְחֹזָא יוֹי אֲרִי טָב : 19 וְהוּה רִמְשׁ
 וְהוּה צֶפֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי : 20 וְאָמַר יוֹי יִרְהֻשׁוּן מִיָּא רְחִישׁ נְפִשָׁא חֵיתָא וְעוֹפָא
 יִפְרַח עַל אֲרַעָא עַל אֲפִי רְקִיעָא שְׁמַיָּא : 21 וּבְרָא יוֹי יֵת תְּנִינִיָּא רְבִרְבִיָּא וְיֵת כָּל
 נְפִשָׁא חֵיתָא דְרַחֲשָׁא דְאֲרַחֲשׁוּ מִיָּא לְזִנְיָהוּן וְיֵת כָּל עוֹפָא דְפִרַח לְזִנְיָהוּ וְחֹזָא יוֹי
 אֲרִי טָב : 22 וּבְרִיךְ יִתְהוּן יוֹי לְמִימְר פּוֹשׁוּ וְסִגּוּ וּמְלוּ יֵת מִיָּא בִּימְמִיָּא וְעוֹפָא
 b c d g h i k l n s

א 2 : וריקניא (צד) G F Men - 10 : כנישות G M - 21 : דרחישא Mc.

א 2 : [וחשוכא] + פריש c s - מן קדם יווי] דיי n - מתנשבא 1 - 5 : וקרא
 till ליליא c < - יממא] יומא n - 7 : דמיעל] דמלעיל D ; די מלעיל 1
 (די מלרע and in second place די מלעיל : first (I reverses the order) - 10 :
 יממי] ימי n - 11 : תדאית] תדאי D - לזניה] לזנויה M - 12 : לזנויה (1°)
 לזניה h - 20 : יפרח] דפרח E ; יהא פרח Gan (פרח) - אפי] + אויר
 n - 21 : דארחישו] דרחישו d n ; די רחישו 1 - לזניהו] לזנויה 1 - 22 :
 ביממייא] בימייא E.

ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ

¹ Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ² ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν 1
 ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ
 πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος. ³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός 3
 Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. ⁴ καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι 4
 καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον
 τοῦ σκότους. ⁵ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος 5
 ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.

⁶ Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω στερέωμα ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ὕδατος 6
 καὶ ἔστω διαχωρίζον ἀνὰ μέσον ὕδατος καὶ ὕδατος. καὶ ἐγένετο
 οὕτως. ⁷ καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στερέωμα, καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεός 7
 ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ὕδατος, ὃ ἦν ὑποκάτω τοῦ στερεώματος, καὶ ἀνὰ
 μέσον τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ ἐπάνω τοῦ στερεώματος. ⁸ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν 8
 ὁ θεὸς τὸ στερέωμα οὐρανόν. καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ
 ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα δευτέρα.

⁹ Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Συναχθήτω τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 9
 εἰς συναγωγὴν μίαν, καὶ ὄφθῆτω ἡ ξηρά. καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως. καὶ
 συνήχθη τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς
 αὐτῶν, καὶ ὤφθη ἡ ξηρά. ¹⁰ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν ξηρὰν γῆν 10
 καὶ τὰ συστήματα τῶν ὑδάτων ἐκάλεσεν θαλάσσας. καὶ εἶδεν ὁ
 θεὸς ὅτι καλόν. — ¹¹ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Βλαστησάτω ἡ γῆ βοτάνην 11
 χόρτου, σπείρον σπέρμα κατὰ γένος καὶ καθ' ὁμοιότητα, καὶ ξύλον
 κάρπιμον ποιοῦν καρπόν, οὗ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ κατὰ γένος
 ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως. ¹² καὶ ἐξήνεγκεν ἡ γῆ βοτάνην 12
 χόρτου, σπείρον σπέρμα κατὰ γένος καὶ καθ' ὁμοιότητα, καὶ ξύλον
 κάρπιμον ποιοῦν καρπόν, οὗ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ κατὰ γένος
 ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι καλόν. ¹³ καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα 13
 καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα τρίτη.

¹⁴ Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτωσαν φωστῆρες ἐν τῷ στερεώματι 14
 τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς φαῦσιν τῆς γῆς τοῦ διαχωρίζειν ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς
 ἡμέρας καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἔστωσαν εἰς σημεῖα καὶ εἰς
 καιροὺς καὶ εἰς ἡμέρας καὶ εἰς ἑνιαυτοὺς ¹⁵ καὶ ἔστωσαν εἰς φαῦσιν 15

Gen.: 1—46²⁸ ηρωων A, 46²⁸ πολιν—50 BA, 23¹⁹—24⁴⁶ (mutila) etiam S.
 Inscr.] + κοσμου A†

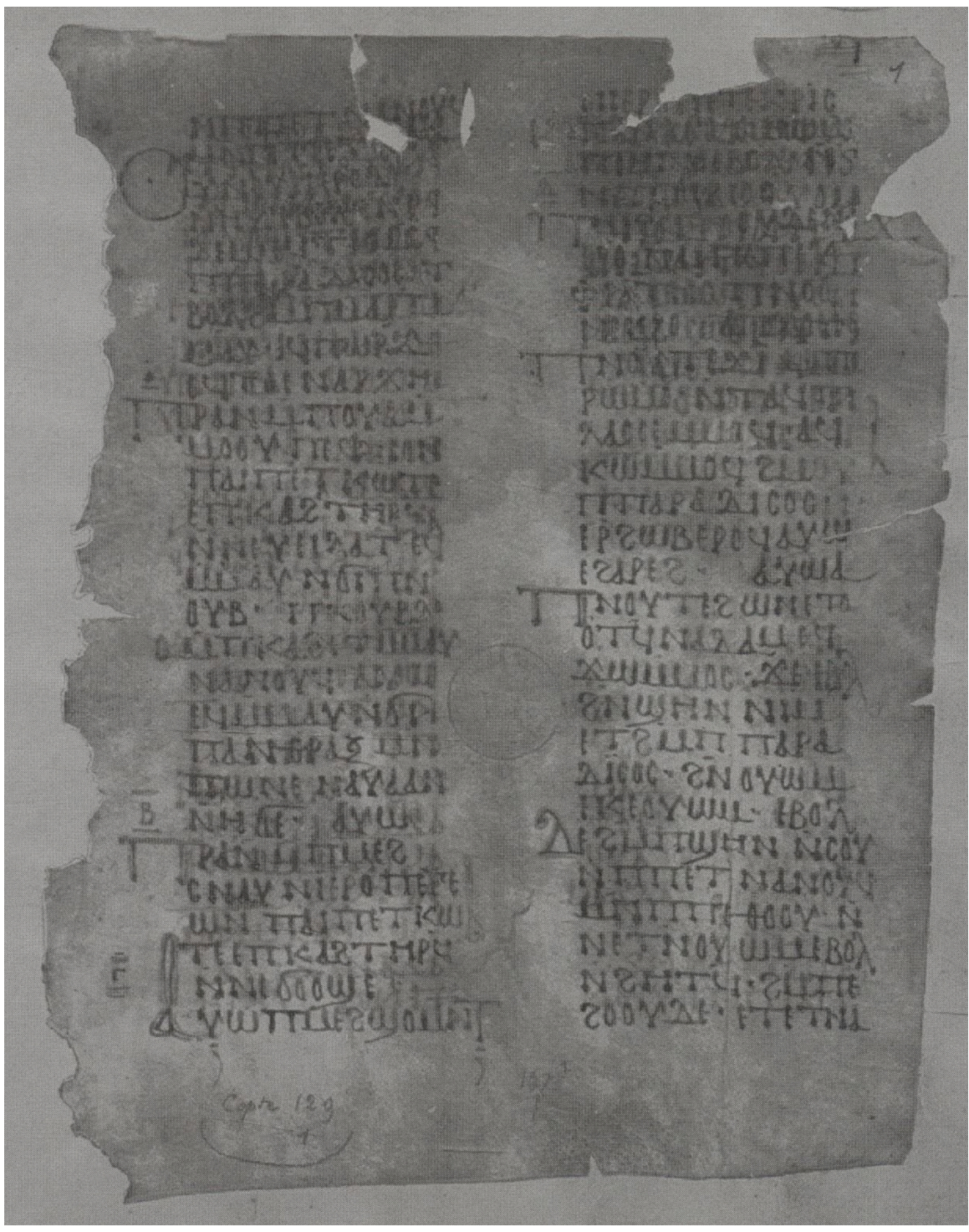
111 κατα γενος 20 mu.] εις ομοιοτητα A (Ac pr. κατα γενος) || 14 του διαχ.
 mu.] και αρχειν της ημερας και της νυκτος και διαχ. A

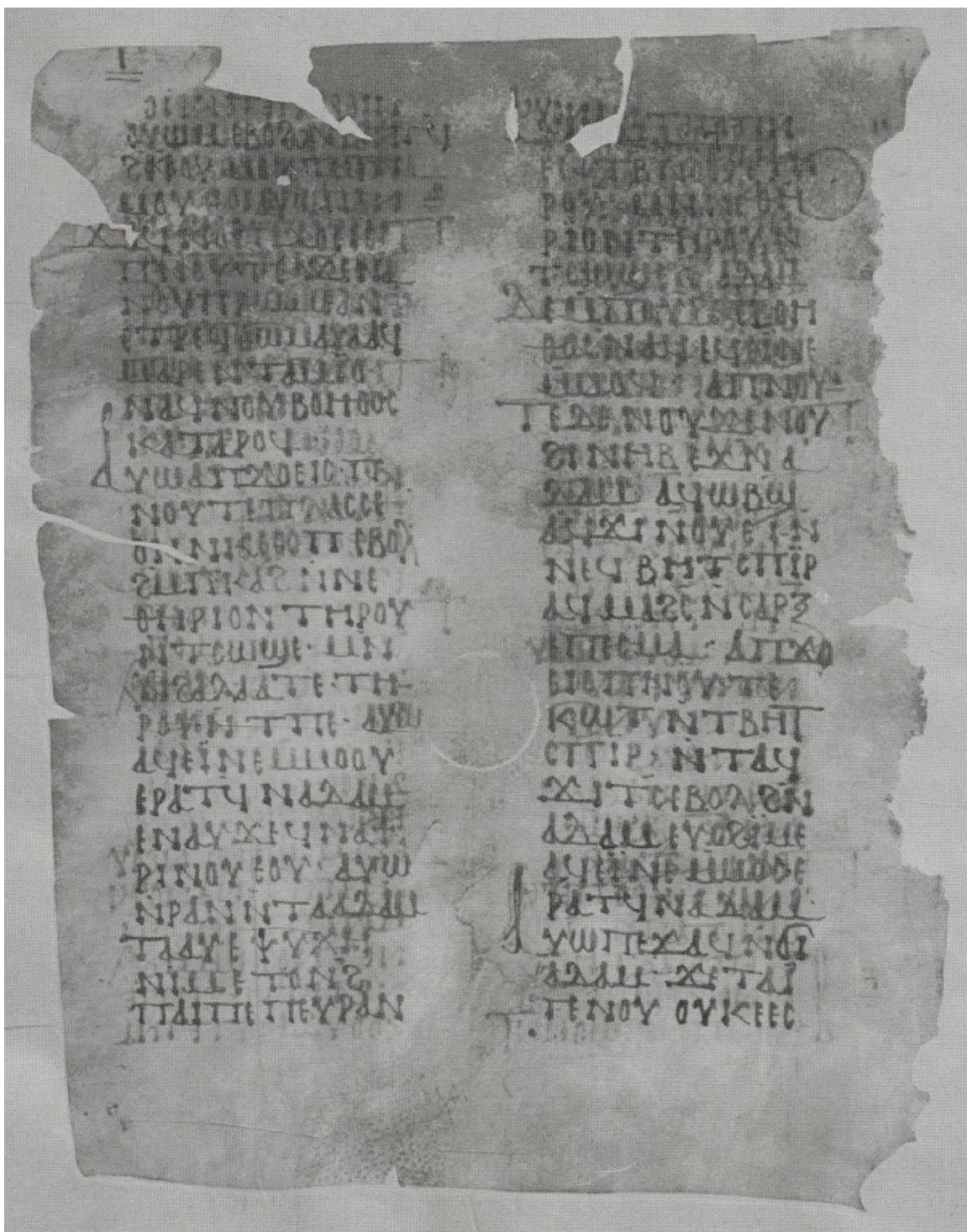
I

¹ՃԵՆ ՕՍԱՐԻՄ Ա ՓՈՒՅԻ ԹԱՄԻՈ ՆԻՓԵ ՆԵՄ ՍԿԱԶԻ Զ ՍԿԱԶԻ ԼԵ ՆԱԿՓՈՍ
 ՆԻԱՏՆԱՅ ԵՐՈՉ ՈՒՅՈՒ ՆԱՏՈՎԻՒ ՕՍՈՒ ՕՍԽԱԿԻ ՆԱԿԻՆ Զ ԻՋԵՆ ՓՈՒՅՈՒ ՕՍՈՒ
 ՕՍՍԻՆԵՄԱ ՆԵՑ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՆԱԿՆՈՒՅ Զ ԻՋԵՆ ՆԻՄՓՈՒ ³ՕՍՈՒ ՈՒՅԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՉԵ ՄԱ-
 ՐԵՄԻՆԻ ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿՓՈՍԻ ՆՃԵ ՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ ⁴ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿՆԱՅ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ԵՍԻՕՒՄ-
 ԻՆԻ ՉԵ ՆԱՆԵՉ ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿՓՈՐԽ ԵՅՈՒ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՕՍԵՒ ՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ ՆԵՄ ՕՍԵՒ
 ՍԻՃԱԿԻ ⁵ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿՈՒՅԻ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ԵՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ ՉԵ ՍԻԵԶՕՍՅ ՕՍՈՒ ՍԻՃԱԿԻ
 ԱԿՈՒՅԻ ԵՐՈՉ ՉԵ ՍԻԵՃՈՐԶ ՕՍՈՒ Ա ՐՕՅԻ ՓՈՍԻ Ա ԴՕՍԻ ՓՈՍԻ ՄՍԻԵԶՕՍՅ
 ՆԶՕՍԻԿ ⁶ՕՍՈՒ ՈՒՅԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՉԵ ՄԱՐԵՍԿԱՐՈ ՓՈՍԻ ՃԵՆ ՕՄՆԻՒ ՆԵՑ ՆԻՄՓՈՒ
 ՕՍՈՒ ՄԱՐԵՉՓՈՍԻ ԵԿՓՈՐԽ ՕՍԵՒ ՄՓՈՒ ՆԵՄ ՄՓՈՒ ՕՍՈՒ ԱՏՓՈՍԻ ՆՍԱԻՐԻՒ
⁷ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿԹԱՄԻՈ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՄՍԻԿԱՐՈ ՕՍՈՒ ԱԿՓՈՐԽ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՕՍԵՒ ՍԻ-
 ՄՓՈՒ ԵՏՏԱՐՆԻ ՄՍԻԿԱՐՈ ՆԵՄ ՕՍԵՒ ՍԻՄՓՈՒ ԵՏՏԱՍՓՈՍԻ ՄՍԻԿԱՐՈ ⁸ՕՍՈՒ
 Ա ՓՈՒՅԻ ՄՈՒՒ ԵՍԻԿԱՐՈ ՉԵ ԴՓԵ ԱԿՆԱՅ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՉԵ ՆԱՆԵՉ ՕՍՈՒ Ա ՐՕՒ-
 ՅԻ ՓՈՍԻ Ա ԴՕՍԻ ՓՈՍԻ ՄՍԻԵԶՕՍՅ ՄՄԱԶԵ ⁹ՕՍՈՒ ՈՒՅԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ ՉԵ ՄԱՐԵՉ-
 ՓՈՒՅԻ ՆՃԵ ՍԻՄՓՈՒ ԵՏՏԱՐՆԻ ՆԻՓԵ ԵՆԵՉՍՆԱԴՐՈՂ ՕՍՈՒ ՄԱՐԵՉՕՍՄՈՆԶ ԵՅՈՒ

1. ԹԱՄԻՈ]-16 BOK | ՆԻՓԵ] ԵՏՓ. BOK | ՍԿԱԶԻ] ՕՍԿ. F; ՍԿ. BOK |
 2. ՍԿԱԶԻ ACG BOK] ՍՍԿ. F; ՍԿ. rell | om ΔC F | ՆԱԿՓՈՍ ՆԻԱՏՆԱՅ
 BOK] ՆԵ ՕՍԱՐԻՄ (c var) rell | bis ser ԵՐՈՉ G | om ΠE BOK | ՆԱՏ-
 ՈՎԻՒ] ԱԻԿ. F; ԵՆԱ. BOK | ՕՍՈՒ ՕՍԽԱԿԻ] ՕՍԽ. ΔE BOK; -ΔK F | ՆԱԿ-
 ԻՆ] ԵՆ. BOK | ՆԻՋԵՆ 1° B/J BOK] ԵՋԵՆ rell | ՓՈՒՅՈՒ] ՓԻ. B/J BOK;
 -ՕՍ F | om ՕՍՈՒ 3° BOK | om ՓՈՒՅԻ A* | ՆԱԿՆՈՒՅ]-ԿՆԱԿ F | 3. om
 ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | om ՉԵ ACG | ՄԱՐԵՄԻՆԻ BOK] ՄԱՐԵՉՓՈՍԻ ՆՃԵ (om C)
 ՕՍՕՍՄԻՆԻ (ՕՍՄ. B/J) rell | om ՕՍՈՒ 2° BOK | ՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ B/J BOK] ՕՍ-
 ՕՍՄ. rell | 4. om ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | ԱԿՆԱՅ] ԱՆԱ. F | ԵՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ] ԵՍՅ.
 F | om ՕՍՈՒ 2° BOK | tr ԵՅՈՒ post ՍԻՕՒՄԻՆԻ BOK | ՕՍԵՒ 1°] Մ-
 BOK | ՆԵՄ ՕՍԵՒ] Մ- BOK | 5. om ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | ԱԿՈՒՅԻ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ
 BOK] Ա ՓԻՒ ՄՈՒՒ (ՄՈՒ F) rell | ՉԵ 1°] ՆԵՑ G | ՕՍՈՒ ՍԻՃԱԿԻ] ՍԻՃ.
 ΔE BOK | ԱԿՈՒՅԻ ԵՐՈՉ] ԱԿՐԵՆԿ BOK | om ՕՍՈՒ 3° BOK | Ա ԴՕՍԻ] pr
 ՕՍՈՒ La; E ԴՕ. B/J | ՆԶՕՍԻԿ] ՆՆԶ. BOK | 6. om ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | ՄԱ-
 ՐԵՍԿԱՐՈ ՓՈՍԻ BOK] ՄԱՐԵՉՓՈՍԻ ՆՃԵ ՕՍԿԱՐՈ rell | ՃԵՆ BOK] ՕՍΔE C;
 ՕՍԵՒ rell | ՆԵՑ BOK] Մ- rell | om ՕՍՈՒ 2° BOK | ՄԱՐԵՉՓՈՍԻ BOK]
 ՆԵՉ. rell | ԵԿՓՈՐԽ B/J (-ՓՈՐԽ) BOK] ԵԿԵՓ. ԵՅՈՒ rell | ՄՓՈՒ 1°]
 ՍԻՄ. B | ՄՓՈՒ 2° BOK] + ՕՍԵՒ La; + ՕՍ- rell | ԱՏՓՈՍԻ] ԵՏ. F |
 7. om ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | ԱԿԹԱՄԻՈ ՆՃԵ ՓՈՒՅԻ BOK] Ա ՓԻՒ ԹԱՄԻՈ rell | ՄՍԻ-
 ԿԱՐՈ 1° BOK] ՆՈՒՅ. rell | ԱԿՓՈՐԽ BOK] ՓՈՐԽ F; + ԵՅՈՒ rell |
 ԵՏՏԱՐՆԻ]-ԱՍԵՑԻՒ BOK | tr ԵՏՏԱՐՆԻ et ԵՏՏԱՍՓՈՍԻ B/J BOK | ՆԵՄ ՕՍԵՒ
 ՆԵՏԵՆՈՒ F | 8. init + ԵՍԻԿԱՐՈ] ԱԿՐԵՆ ՍԻԿԱՐՈ BOK | ԱԿՆԱԿ]
 ԵԿ. F; pr ՕՍՈՒ J La | om ՕՍՈՒ 2° BOK | Ա ԴՕՍԻ]-ԴՕՍԻ F; pr ՕՍՈՒ
 La | ՓՈՍԻ] ՄՄՓ. BOK | ՄՄԱԶԵ] ՄԱԶԵ BOK | 9. om ՕՍՈՒ 1° BOK | om
 ՉԵ G La | ՄԱՐԵՉՓՈՒՅԻ + ՍԻՄՓՈՒ] ՄԱՐԵ ՍԻՄՓՈՒ ՓՈՒՅԻ BOK | ԵՏՏԱՐՆԻ
 ՆԻՓԵ] om BOK; -ՆԻ ԵՏՓԵ B/J; -ՆԻ ԴՓ. F | ԵՆԵՉՍՆԱԴՐՈՂ BOK] ԵՍՍՆԱՆ-
 ՓՈՒՅԻ ՆՈՒՄԻ rell | om ՕՍՈՒ 2° BOK | ՄԱՐԵՉՕՍՄՈՆԻ]-ՕՍՄՈՆԶ A; ՄԱՐԵՑՕ.
 BOK







(Cod. orient. Berolin. in fol. 1605, fol. 1).

I. Genesis I, 19—25.

пмерцтоот
нроот .
20 Пезац нѳи пн
отте же маре
ммоот тато
евоѳ нрен
хатце . мѳт
хн етоп̄ ато
ренралаате ет
рнл еораѳ ежм
пнао . ната пе
стерома нтне
атω асшопе ри
21 наї . *а пнотте
Таміо н̄ноб̄ н̄
нѳтос . ато
ѳтхн нм н̄
зопн . нхат
це нта ммоот
татотоот^н еораѳ
ната неѳгенос
атω ралнт .
н̄м ешадроѳл
ната генос .
А пнотте нат же

22 нанотот *ац
смот ероот еѳжω
ммос же ашаї
н̄тетнаїаї
н̄тетнмер
ммоот . етн̄
неѳаласса . ато
нралаате . ма
роташаї еораѳ
23 ежм пнао . *а рот
ре шопе . а рто
оте шопе пмер
ѳот нроот . —
24 Пезац нѳи пнот
те же маре пнао
тато евоѳ нот
ѳтхн . есон̄
ната генос н̄
т̄нн̄ мн̄ нха
тце . ато неѳт
рпн̄ мпнао на
та генос . ато н̄
т̄н̄ноот̄е ната
генос . ато ас
шопе ри наї .
25 А пнотте таміо

I. Genesis I, 26—28.

[26]

п̄не̄нр̄ион м
п̄на̄р̄ к̄ата ге
нос · а̄т̄ω н̄т̄ѣ
но̄оте к̄ата ге
нос · а̄т̄ω н̄х̄ат
џе т̄ирот м̄п̄на̄р̄
к̄ата не̄т̄ченос

А̄ п̄но̄тте к̄ат̄
же к̄ано̄тот ·

26 П̄е̄х̄а̄р̄ н̄б̄и п̄но̄т
те же ма̄рента
м̄ю̄ но̄т̄р̄оме
к̄ата та̄ те̄но̄г̄
ӣон · а̄т̄ω к̄ата
пене̄иле · а̄т̄ω
ма̄рот̄р̄-хо̄е̄ис̄ е
р̄ра̄г̄ е̄х̄н̄ н̄т̄ѣт̄
н̄ѳа̄ласса · м̄н̄
н̄ра̄ла̄ате н̄
т̄пе · м̄н̄ н̄т̄ѣ
но̄оте · м̄н̄ не
ѳӣр̄ион м̄п̄на̄р̄
т̄ир̄џ · а̄т̄ω е̄х̄н̄
жа̄т̄џе н̄им̄ е̄т̄
мо̄о̄ще · р̄ра̄г̄ р̄г̄
ж̄м̄ п̄на̄р̄: —

27 А̄ п̄но̄тте та̄
м̄ю̄ м̄п̄ро̄ме
к̄ата ѳӣно̄н
м̄п̄но̄тте ·
а̄р̄та̄м̄ю̄от̄
от̄ро̄от̄т̄ м̄н̄

28 от̄с̄р̄ѣме · *а̄р̄
та̄м̄ю̄от̄ · а̄р̄
смо̄т̄ е̄ро̄от̄ н̄
б̄и п̄но̄тте
е̄р̄ѳ̄ω̄ м̄мос̄
же а̄ш̄а̄г̄ · н̄те
т̄на̄га̄г̄ · н̄те
т̄н̄ме̄р̄ п̄на̄р̄
н̄тет̄н̄р̄-хо̄^{с̄ӣо}
е̄х̄ω̄џ · а̄т̄ω н̄
тет̄на̄р̄ѳ̄е̄ӣ · е̄
ж̄н̄ н̄т̄ѣт̄ н̄
ѳа̄ласса · а̄т̄ω̄
е̄х̄н̄ н̄ра̄ла̄ате
н̄т̄пе · м̄н̄ н̄
т̄ѣно̄оте т̄н̄
ро̄т̄ м̄п̄на̄р̄
а̄т̄ω е̄х̄н̄ н̄х̄ат̄
џе н̄им̄ е̄т̄мо̄

[о̄ще]

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