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A SUMMARY EVALUATION OF OLD TESTAMENT HEBREW LEXICA, TRANSLATIONS, AND PHILOLOGY IN LIGHT OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN HEBREW LEXICOGRAPHIC AND SEMITIC LINGUISTIC HISTORY

W. CREIGHTON MARLOWE

Any evaluation of an Old Testament lexicon or translation must consider what quantity and quality of Hebraic and Semitic compara-tive data were available when a particular volume or version was writ-ten. First, major OT lexical developments are evaluated by surveying their two main historical periods—from the first known lexicon in A.D. 913 to the present—in light of the most significant Semitic philological advances. Then guidelines and suggestions are given for choosing which lexica to purchase in light of the perspective gained from the historical overview. Next, translations of the Bible—from the LXX of ca. 250 B.C. to the present, through the same periods as the lexica—are evaluated along similar lines; and again advice is offered for selecting the best (primarily English) version of the Bible for personal, private, and public use today. Finally, certain Semitic languages are evaluated as to their individual, collective, and practical values for enabling the translator and lexicographer to understand more accurately the pos-sible meaning(s) of some Hebrew words. Included as an appendix is a helpful chart displaying a time-line of the highlights in Hebrew lexico-graphic and related linguistic history.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

O LD Testament lexica, translations, and philology are in a constant state of development. The continuing and abundant advances in linguistic knowledge make regular revision necessary. Consequently, the final or perfect lexicon or Bible version has not been achieved.

Many agree that the recent discovery and decipherment of a lost Semitic language at Ebla will not be the last such revelation coming from the science of archaeology. Any evaluation of an Old Testament lexicon or translation must consider what quantity and quality of Hebraic and Semitic comparative data were available when they were written. The value of a Semitic language for Hebrew philology is judged in light of its extent of textual information and the nature of its relationship to Hebrew.

THE LEXICA EVALUATED

This evaluation, like those following, will be a general, summary appraisal of the subject—lexica in this case—by periods. Each lexicon will not be examined in depth; but the nature of the philological context—affecting the potential of each to describe accurately the usage of the entire Biblical Hebrew vocabulary—will be reviewed.

During the Formative Period (A.D. 913–1810)

Hebrew lexica written during this era greatly differed as to how well the Hebrew language was understood when each was composed. Lexicographers such as Saadiah, Ben Abraham, and Saruq worked prior to the establishment of the rule of triradical roots during the last half of the tenth century. Arabic was the major comparative source for solving lexical problems throughout the period. Akkadian and Ugaritic were totally unknown. The creation of Hebrew linguistics and philology took place in the eleventh and first half of the twelfth centuries. Yet monoliteral roots were still recognized when Ibn Janach's dictionary appeared in the 1040s. Not until ca. 1437–45 did the first Hebrew concordance come on the scene. Christian lexicographers (1506–) such as Reuchlin, Pagninus, Buxtorf, and Simonis depended on Jewish tradition almost exclusively. For the most part, however, Jewish lexicographic scholarship ceased from ca. 1500–1700. Christian dictionaries were heir to few advances during these years. Lexica produced before 1753 were prior to Robert Lowth's revelation of the true nature (parallelism) of Hebrew poetry. Lexica of the formative period of Hebrew lexicography, in general, clearly were very inadequate by today's standards; but the major works apparently were thorough and quite extensive. The lexicographers were highly skilled linguists for their day and very competent at handling difficult forms in light of their contexts. Present students of the Hebrew Bible can profit from these lexica by observing the often insightful interpretations of medieval philologists working without the elaborate tools and Semitic data available today.

During the Scientific Period (A.D. 1810–)

Hebrew lexica of the scientific period of Hebrew lexicography were developed during two distinct sub-periods: (1) the classical years dominated by the lexicographic innovations and insights of Wilhelm Gesenius; and (2) the modern years characterized by an unparalleled recovery and development of Semitic linguistic aids, which included the discovery and decipherment of Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Eblaite.

During the classical years (1810–71)

Hebrew lexica compiled during these years were all influenced— as all subsequent lexica—by the scientific method that Gesenius brought to lexicography. Most of the dictionaries were either revisions or translations of Gesenius' works. Akkadian was discovered and deciphered during the last half of this period; but no lexicon incorporated its data until 1871, which marked the beginning of a new stage in Hebrew lexicography. Thus Arabic, at times abused, was still the major comparative source for solving lexical difficulties. Those who translated Gesenius, like Samuel P. Tregelles, gave few thoughts of their own and, overall, tried to represent only Gesenius' lexicography. Also following Gesenius, these lexica sought to place every Old Testament Hebrew word under a basic root, whether verified or theoretical. For some lexically difficult words, unfortunate comparisons to Indo-European languages were made in order to postulate a definition. Outside of the initial advances Gesenius brought to the science of lexicography and the use of comparative information, few advances occurred in Semitic linguistics. Moabite was discovered in 1868. The value of these lexica following Gesenius have been indebted to his pioneering efforts and now classical approach, which have made his lexica standard works. Although the lexica of the classical years are now outdated, they offer the results of Gesenius' genius for consideration, especially for some lexical problems in the Old Testament.

During the modern years (1871–)

The modern years of Hebrew lexicography were marked by the most rapid developments in Semitic philology. Many advances were introduced into the lexica, as a result, which were never before possible. Since 1871 Akkadian and Ugaritic linguistic information has become available; the former was discovered earlier but utilized since the date given, while the latter was discovered in 1928–30 but not used in a lexicon until 1953. Other linguistic developments since the last third of the nineteenth century were the plethora of related Semitic literary finds and the recovery of the language and literature of ancient

Ebla. All of this has allowed lexicographers to identify homonyms which lexicographers without this information were unable to recognize or substantiate. One of Gesenius' major weaknesses was his failure to list many homonyms as separate entries because he equated them with the same basic root.[1] The establishment of proper and unforced homonymic roots is a challenge which had a far less chance of success before the comparative data from Semitic philology—since the beginning of the twentieth century—were available. In this light and for the American scholar, the lexica by Brown, Driver, and Briggs; Köhler and Baumgartner; and Holladay[2] should all be consulted at the very least when a lexical question arises. These, naturally, differ in the quantity and quality of their information.

Choosing a Lexicon

A question frequently asked by seminary students is: "Which lexicon is the one to purchase?" This immediately demonstrates their great misunderstanding of the lexica they use and the history of lexicographic development. Moisés Silva wrote:

> Lexicology takes priority in the exegetical process. We may pursue the analogy and suggest that, although not every exegete need become a professional textual critic, every exegete must have sufficient involvement in that work to evaluate and assimilate the results of the "experts." Similarly, all biblical interpreters need exposure to and experience in lexicographic method if they would use the linguistic data in a responsible way.
>
> In a survey of biblical scholars and students conducted in the late 1960s, some respondents commented on the need for "a better understanding of the nature, use, and limitations of a lexicon" on the part of dictionary users.[58] The point . . . is still valid today. This requisite understanding, however, can only be developed on the basis of a solid grasp of the theoretical foundations of lexicology.[3]

[1]E. F. Miller, The Influence of Gesenius on Hebrew Lexicography (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1966) 49–50.

[2]See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, eds., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907); L. H. Köhler and W. Baumgartner, eds., Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (2d ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958); L. H. Köhler et al., Hebräischen und aramäischen Lexikon zum Alten Testament (3d ed.; 2 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967–); and W. L. Holladay, ed., A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971; reprinted, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, n.d.).

[3]M. Silva, Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 31–32, citing J. E. Gates, An Analysis of the Lexicographic Resources Used by American Biblical Scholars Today (Missoula, Montana: SBLDS, 1972) 134.

The serious exegete of the Old Testament cannot rely on just one lexicon. A number of them have varying degrees of value for the student of Hebrew today. The most valuable are those which have been compiled within the context of modern Semitic philology; that is, the ones which were able to utilize Akkadian or, better yet, Akkadian and Ugaritic when the study of these languages reached a state of maturity. Because of its early date, the lexicon by Brown, Driver, and Briggs is sometimes inaccurate in its use of Akkadian.[4] Even at the present date the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary[5] (hereafter *CAD*) remains incomplete. Still, Brown-Driver-Briggs (or *BDB* by its popular acronym) preserves an updated version of Gesenius' lexicography. Köhler and Baumgartner's first lexicon, along with its supplement volume, offers the lexical description of Hebrew vocabulary that is heir to the fifty years of Semitic linguistic advances following *BDB*. Yet it cannot be followed blindly or uncritically in every application of Akkadian or Ugaritic.[6] Much has been learned in the quarter-century since they were published. The recently completed Hebrew portion (four vols.) of a new German Hebrew–Aramaic lexicon (edited initially by Köhler-Baumgartner and continued by Kutscher-Hartmann, et al.; see n. 2, p. 6) promises to be the most philologically complete and correct lexicon to date; but the rapid rate at which such data are presently being made available will eventually make any current lexicon somewhat outdated. This is especially true of the earlier volumes because of the large number of years involved in writing a Hebrew lexicon. The first

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[4]This is not to indicate they erroneously used the information but that the data at hand was sometimes faulty by today's standards; that is, some of the Akkadian lexical data they consulted is now outdated. An example is the suggestion of ḫilu as a cognate (s.v. ḫûl) to support the meaning "dance," to which CAD gives no related definition.

[5]I. J. Gelt et al., eds., The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–).

[6]L. Köhler, Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros s.v. "zrb"; CAD s.v. "ṣarāpu"; Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon s.v. "zrb"; and L. Köhler et al., Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon s.v. "zrb." Even though this lexicon was published fifty years later than BDB, it is now over twenty years since its first edition; so its weaknesses must be seen in the same light as that of BDB. An example is its explanation of zrb, a hapax in Job 6:17, as meaning "to press" in light of the Akkadian cognate zurubu. More recently, however, the CAD has established the proper cognate as ṣarāpu, "to burn" (1961); and a decade later, Holladay's concise abridgement of the lexica based on the editorship of Köhler and Baumgartner gave the meaning "dry up." However, the third edition of the Köhler-Baumgartner lexicon (later edited by E. Y. Kutscher and B. Hartmann et al.) arrived at the translation "scorch, burn" based on the Hebrew cognate ṣrb. Unlike the second edition, the Syriac and Akkadian zrb "to press" was questioned but shown to be a solution offered by some. Most modern English versions—the NEB a notable exception—have adopted an idea related to "a time of heat or burning"; cf. NIV, RSV, NASB, JB.

two volumes of this latest Old Testament lexicon begun by Köhler and Baumgartner appeared in print during a nineteen-year period (1967–86); while volumes three and four were published, respectively, in 1983 and 1990. William Holladay's abridged Hebrew lexicon (published in 1971) was able to make use of manuscript material for this third edition of Köhler-Baumgartner through the letter *samek*; but such a concise work in English cannot substitute fully for the parent German production. Where Holladay could not rely on published or unpublished portions of that lexical project (letters *ᶜayin* through *taw*), the same advantages obviously were not inherited and thus not incorporated. A comprehensive, up-to-date Hebrew lexicon in English is still lacking among the existing and fully-published Old Testament Hebrew lexica. The student must ask: "What *lexica* should be owned?" No one lexicon is sufficient, or probably ever can be, for Hebrew exegesis. The careful student must, and the wise student will, consult a variety of the most complete and current lexica available.[7] Presently, the American student or scholar should at least consult the lexica by Gesenius-Tregelles; Brown, Driver, and Briggs; Holladay; and Köhler-Baumgartner.

[7]See J. Barr, "Hebrew Lexicography," and P. Fronzaroli, "Problems of a Semitic Etymological Dictionary" in Studies on Semitic Lexicography (Florence: Instituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, 1973) 1–24, 103–26, for a detailed examination and examples of the potential and problems of the latest lexica.

Also the reader should be made aware of other lexica in production, especially one in English which will replace BDB and has reported good progress since work began in September 1988. This lexicon, The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, unlike previous works and as its name implies, will seek to incorporate all the biblical and extra-biblical remains of the Classical Hebrew language. The director and chief editor of the project is Professor David J. A. Clines, University of Sheffield, with co-editors J. W. Rogerson and P. R. Davies. Also unlike BDB and other older lexica, the words will appear in alphabetical order. A special feature is the inclusion of syntagmatic information. The project is being carried out under the auspices of the Society for Old Testament Studies.

Fascicules and the first volume of the third edition of Köhler-Baumgartner appeared in 1967. The lengthy production schedule created a further delay in that it became necessary to complete the project under the new general editorship of E. Y. Kutscher and B. Hartmann.

Other lexica underway include, most importantly, another remake (the eighteenth edition) of Gesenius' Handwörterbuch, of which the first volume, prepared by R. Meyer and H. Donner, has appeared. Two features will make this a very valuable addition to the field of Hebrew lexicography and set it apart from the other German and especially the English lexica discussed above. Even more than the aforementioned German work and in contradistinction to the "new BDB," in true Gesenius style this dictionary will contain an abundance of references to cognate Semitic languages and to scholarly word studies in bibliographic entries. Like the other German but unlike the latest and novel English approach, it remains strictly a dictionary of the remains of Classical Hebrew in the Old Testament; however, its treatment of the Ben Sira and Qumran materials is more extensive than that in any previously published Hebrew lexica. See D. J. A. Clines, editor, and

As with the lexica the value of any translation of the Hebrew Old Testament is partly determined by the quality of the linguistic tools— in this case mainly the lexica themselves—used by the translators. Since accurate translation is dependent on sound exegesis, which in turn is dependent on the best lexica, what was generally noted about the linguistic and lexicographic climate of the periods of Hebrew lexicography applies to the potential of any versions produced within the same periods. The following will focus on a few representative OT translations of each period and suggest why extreme views regarding the priority of any one translation be abandoned.

During the Preparatory Period (before A.D. 913)

No known Hebrew lexicon was created during this era. Three major translation projects of the Hebrew Scriptures were: (1) the Greek version of ca. 250 B.C. (the *LXX*, or Septuagint); (2) the Syriac version of possibly A.D. 40–70 (the Peshitta); and (3) the Latin version of A.D. 390–405 (the Vulgate). Each of these clearly was written before any science of Hebrew linguistics or philology in the modern sense developed. On the other hand, they were composed at a time which possibly preserved lexical knowledge of Hebrew that was lost to later generations. The exact nature and value of these versions is a subject that is highly complex and technical and has been extensively debated. The concern here is merely to point out the apparent Semitic linguistic context in which their translators worked. In this case little is known specifically, but all these translations show that often the translators were not willing or able to render adequately the Hebrew text before them.[8] Yet these versions remain very valuable for exegesis because they sometimes preserve a reading preferable to that in the Masoretic text or proposed by a lexicon. As the examples that are charted at the end of the next major evaluative section (p. 14) would show in some instances when investigated as regards their translation history, sometimes an ancient version contains the rendering not followed by subsequent versions and lexicographers but recovered and substantiated by data from modern Semitic philology.

J. W. Rogerson and P. R. Davies, co-editors, "The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew: Newsletter 1" (University of Sheffield, July 1988) 1–2, and Clines, "Newsletter 2" (December 1988) 1–2, for the basis of much of and further elaboration on the information contained in this endnote.

[8] See E. Würthwein, The Text of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979) 47–83; and S. P. Brock, "The Phenomenon of Biblical Translation in Antiquity" in Studies in the Septuagint (New York: KTAV, 1974) 541–71.

The Syriac Bible, or Peshiṭta, requires special consideration at this point in regard to a modern theory about its value. George M. Lamsa sought to popularize the view that the Syriac Bible represents the original language and idioms of biblical revelation, rather than Hebrew and Greek. In 1957 his English translation of the Peshiṭta[9] was published. His claim was that Aramaic was the more natural language of discourse for the biblical writers. However, the Aramaic they spoke was western Aramaic, whereas Syriac is eastern Aramaic. Syriac is not the Aramaic of the Old Testament. Besides, evidence of written or oral Aramaic originals of the Hebrew Bible is speculative. As indicated above, the Syriac Bible sometimes might contain the more original reading; but Lamsa has sought not to revise but to replace the Hebrew text with a much later Syriac text. Unless his presupposition is accepted, his novel renderings usually are unnecessary because the Hebrew is clear and contextually valid. He is often helpful with *hapax legomena* and other difficult words. As an example of the former, the Peshiṭta has "venom" where the Hebrew has "wine" in Deut 32:33; but the context favors the Hebrew meaning.

During the Formative Period (A.D. 913–1810)

During this initial stage of lexicographic growth, important translations appeared such as: (1) the Arabic version of ca. A.D. 1000; (2) the German version by Luther in ca. 1532; and (3) the Authorized, or King James, English Version of 1611. The theoretical common Semitic vocabulary stock available to the translators of the *LXX*, if it existed then, was a long-lost resource by the time of the Christian era. Christian Hebraists of the Middle Ages were dependent on Jewish tradition; and Arabic dominated comparative linguistics. Knowledge of the Hebrew language had waned among Christian scholars because of disinterest until the sixteenth century, when Jewish Hebraic studies declined.

Before 1500 the understanding of Hebrew was incomplete and at times incorrect on basic matters; but from 1500–1810—with the loss of Jewish scholarship leading the way—few advances were made. This state of Hebraic knowledge was reflected by the lexica and translations. The Old Testament was not translated as often as the New, and some translators were guided by literary as much as—possibly in a few cases more than—exegetical purposes. The versions of this period are not valuable as witnesses to the original text; but they are helpful in a supporting role, when a reading is suggested by stronger evidence.

[9]See G. M. Lamsa, The Holy Bible: From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (16th ed.; Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1957) v–viii.

The translators of this period were greatly influenced by and dependent on former translations, especially the *LXX* and Vulgate and especially for rare and difficult Hebrew words. The Authorized Version is the outstanding example.

A number of comments are necessary concerning the Authorized Version (*AV* hereafter) in particular because of its long history of popularity and in light of a current problem stemming from an untenable claim about its value as a Bible version. Like all translators, the King James committee members were products of their lexicographic climate, which by today's standards and Semitic linguistic situation was severely limited. Many of the best English Hebraists of that day, however, were involved in the translation process. At the same time, their purpose should not be forgotten. In the "Address to the Reader"—left out of most modern printings of the *AV*—the translators stated their purpose and policies. They let it be known that their purpose was not "to make a new translation but a traditional one,"[10] that is, in the tradition of the Vulgate and previous English versions with which Europeans were familiar. So their purpose was more literary than linguistic. At the same time, their Semitic linguistic climate was limited, prescientific in the modern sense, and lacking the aids of modern philology. The reason the *AV* failed to put the great amount of OT poetry in poetic stanzas was that it was made more than a century before Lowth revealed the nature of Hebrew poetry. The translators may have sensed a little about the feature of parallelism in Hebrew, but their work shows it was not fully appreciated until after Lowth. As demonstrated by the chart on p. 18, the King James translators could not adequately deal with many *hapax legomena* because they lacked the advances in Semitic philology available now. Because such discoveries have been so late, the numerous lexical changes needed in the OT were much less noticeable. Thus new translations were rarely called for, and the *AV* remained popular for over three hundred years.

A current problem is that the *AV* has remained popular and is the most popular English version today because of its beauty and tradition in spite of its lack of accuracy and clarity. The same twentieth-century person who would never read a seventeenth-century book wants a seventeenth-century version of the Bible. Coupled with this is the current claim by many—of whom some have scholarly credentials—that the King James Version is the perfect written Word of God in English for all time. This has come in the period of Hebrew lexicography when the need for new translations and their constant revision is undeniable in light of the evidence from linguistic and philological study related to the biblical languages. No argument is being made against those who wish

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[10]N. Frye, The Great Code (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982) xiii.

to follow the Textus Receptus,[11] but those who so choose must seek the best translation of that New Testament and the Masoretic text. In 1611 the *AV* was it, but not now.

During the Scientific Period (A.D. 1810–)

The rest of this discussion of translations will focus on English Versions. As indicated, no great need was felt for new Bible translations until the modern years of Hebrew lexicography (1871–). Numerous English versions have appeared during the twentieth century; and as many philological advances have progressively occurred, so have the translations progressively improved as to the accuracy of solving lexical problems in the Old Testament. The more recent versions stand out in this area; but such changes have been incorporated very slowly and conservatively.

Choosing a Translation

The use of data from Semitic philology affects the accuracy feature of good translation; however, the best translation must have beauty and clarity as well. Thus one should use a translation that has taken into account the most recent linguistic findings—not necessarily the most recent proposals, uncritically—and is readable, yet written in the best style its language offers for the age in which the translation is done. The reader is most interested in what the Bible says so he can interpret what it means; consequently, the lexical aspect is primary to the value of a translation. The best translations, however, are not those which have been

[11]Neither does the author accept the Textus Receptus as the most authentic representation of the original Greek New Testament text, but the issue concerns the choosing of the best English translation no matter which tradition of textual transmission is followed. Siding with the TR does not necessitate staying with the AV/KJV as the final word in translating the TR. Also this debate has no bearing on the OT text, where the Masoretic text is accepted by most translators as the primary textual witness to the original Hebrew Scriptures. Witnesses to other textual traditions (the Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Qumran documents—which latter recension reflects the two others named and the MT) are consulted for variant readings by all who employ the science of textual criticism; but those who believe the AV possesses a special sacred quality as an English version look to no other OT text than the MT as being fundamentally the "TR" of the Hebrew Bible. Thus they must deal with the same basic issue in relation to the OT as noted above with the NT, but without clouding the discussion by accusing their opponents of using the wrong Hebrew or OT text. Those who postulate the primacy of the AV of 1611 based on a preference for the TR must still explain the supposed supreme accuracy of that translation for the OT in light of an abundantly increasing accurate knowledge of Hebrew grammar and lexicography since that time, coming from the many comparatively recent developments and advances in Semitic linguistics and comparative and cognate studies.

influenced the most by Semitic comparative linguistics but those which have accepted the most certain results of the lexical light from cognate studies. An example of the former is *The Anchor Bible* commentary and translation, which frequently treats the Old Testament as more of a Ugaritic than a Hebrew document. An example of the latter is the *NIV*.

A translation should never be chosen on the basis of tradition alone. Accuracy is the foremost but not the only guide. The Bible reader finds differences in translations because of differences in perspective and knowledge when each was written. For example, the *AV* has "spider" in Prov 30:28 where the *NIV* has "lizard." Both may be, and one has to be, incorrect. Of the two, the *AV* was written long before the meaning of the Hebrew behind these renderings was answered by available evidence from linguistic discoveries.

As for the clarity of translations, the *AV* is full of words from the seventeenth century like "cockatrice" in Isa 59:5 ("vipers" in the *NIV*) and "reins" in Ps 139:13 (literally, "kidneys"; "inmost being" in the *NIV*), which almost no one who speaks modern English understands. The question "Which translation is best?" has the same problem as the similar query with the lexica. No serious Bible student can limit himself to just one translation for study. No perfect translation exists; they all have a number of strengths and weaknesses. The *AV* excels in the beauty of classical English prose; and even extreme renderings—those that abuse, refuse, or are unable to use data from Semitic philology— need to be consulted at times. In light of the criteria established above, the most important English Old Testament versions are the Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible, New American Bible, and the New International Version. Those which should be regularly consulted for study are, at least, the ones just mentioned plus the Septuagint, Vulgate, New American Standard Bible, Revised (or New Revised) Standard Version, *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, and the Berkeley Translation. The average English Bible reader who has an Authorized (King James) Version should at least obtain a New International (or some modern version) and a New King James Version.

THE LANGUAGE EVALUATED

Semitic languages originated before the periods of Old Testament Hebrew lexicography began. The value of one of these languages or dialects for clarifying an obscure word or passage in Hebrew is determined by its affinity with the Hebrew language. Ugaritic, therefore, has become very important to OT scholars because both it and Hebrew reflect the speech of Canaan. The value of the Semitic languages for OT study is a topic of much technical debate. Such cannot be reviewed

in full here, nor can each language be described and critiqued in detail. The reader is referred to the relevant literature,[12] of which some of the more important titles are named in the note just indicated.

Assessing their Collective Value

A statement by Edward Ullendorff will suffice to support this writer's position and present purposes:

> Hebrew is a Semitic language. This trite statement implies that many aspects of Hebrew can be properly evaluated only against the background of the *ensemble* of Semitics. The principal Semitic languages include Akkadian . . . in Mesopotamia, Ugaritic, Amorite, Phoenician . . . Hebrew-Moabite, and Aramaic in the . . . [Syrian and Palestinian] area, Arabic and South-Arabian in central and south-west Arabia, and Ethiopic in the horn of Africa. The closeness and relationship of the classical Semitic languages to each other and their essential unity (this would not be true of the developed forms of many modern Semitic tongues) had been recognized by Muslim and Jewish grammarians as early as the tenth century.[13]

Assessing their Individual Value

Unfortunately, the lexicographers of the Middle Ages were unaware of the most ancient Semitic linguistic data which are available today; but each of the languages has the potential of solving a lexical problem that none of the others can. All are indispensable, but some (Akkadian and Ugaritic) are more reliable and frequently employed because of their extensive materials and closer historical and linguistic relationship to Hebrew. At one time or another the value of these for an improved translation of the Old Testament has been extremely exaggerated. Like Arabic and Akkadian before it, a pan-Ugaritic school of thought is in vogue now among the disciples of Mitchell Dahood, who have taken Hebrew-Ugaritic philology to the extreme of treating Hebrew as if it were Ugaritic. Dahood popularized Ugaritology by re-writing Hebrew linguistics in terms of Ugaritic grammar and lexicography. Scholarship is correct to reject this extreme; but sometimes the extremist uncovers things no one with a conservative approach is likely to see. Where the Hebrew text is clear and contextually valid, unless other factors dictate it, the exegete need not resort to parallel passages and etymological cognates with different meanings in

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[12]See E. Y. Kutscher, A History of the Hebrew Language (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982) 46–53; E. Ullendorff, "Old Testament Languages" in Is Biblical Hebrew a Language? (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977) 29–35; and Fronzaroli, Studies on Semitic Lexicography 1–, among a multitude of similar studies which vary widely in value.

[13]Ullendorff, "Old Testament Languages" 31.

the other Semitic languages. Dahood and his followers have abused Ugaritic in this manner.

Cultural backgrounds and a number of lexical and grammatical problems in the Hebrew Bible, however, are indebted solely to the discoveries at Ugarit for their illumination. Hebrew is not to be equated with Ugaritic or any other Semitic tongue, but neither was the Old Testament written in a literary vacuum. The ancient Semitic languages and dialects together offer the possibility of filling the gaps left in the present understanding of Hebrew.

Assessing their Practical Value

The serious student of Hebrew need not master all the Semitic languages, but he must at least be able to interact critically with the philological literature—this means the lexica if nothing else—related to his efforts at Old Testament exegesis. Accordingly, an introduction to comparative Semitics should be required of all seminary students. In addition to Hebrew and Aramaic, anyone who wishes to interpret and translate the Hebrew Old Testament should at least be familiar with the language and literature of Ugarit.

Using the Semitic Cognate Lexical Data:
Examples of their Translational Value

The following chart provides examples of OT Hebrew words whose traditional translations have been confirmed or changed as a result of comparisons with cognate Semitic lexical data. The new renderings are not universally accepted, especially among evangelical exegetes; but their existence in the conservative *NIV* demonstrates they are clear instances where the translators are convinced that the context and linguistic evidence are best served by relying on the usage of cognate roots in Arabic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic, especially, among other Semitic languages.[14]

[14]A question mark (?) in the chart means that it is not clear how that version (either AV or NIV) so marked handled the translation of the Hebrew term in question.

The triradicals ḥkr, štᶜ, and škh were new roots proposed and substantiated by their contexts and cognate data for inclusion in OT Hebrew vocabulary. The meaning preserved by Ugaritic for the latter term has been accepted by recent lexica, but its form remains entered as śkh. The terms dy, ᶜrb, and br were proposed homographs of otherwise well-known terms. At least one modern lexicon has added another root, ᶜrb, for "clouds." Recent lexica have recognized a new homographic term: br, "field," in Biblical Hebrew. As yet dy has not been included in the lexica published and available to this writer (see chart on p. 14) as a newly discovered Hebrew homograph; but its meaning supported by an Arabic cognate has influenced some English translators. The remaining roots were never debated as to the need for emendation. Their radicals are clear; but their usage has been difficult to determine, since each is either a hapax (all but two of them) or a word

Hebrew Term Transliterated	Semitic Cognate and Lexical Solution	AV	NIV
dy	Arabic dwy, "noise"	?	"blast"
šph	Arabic saf'a, "sweep bare"	"high place"	"bare hill"
ḥkr	Arabic ḥakara, "to wrong someone"	"make strange"	"attack"
zrb	Akkadian ṣarāpu, "to burn"	"wax warm"	?
brm	Akkadian birmu, "multicolored trim"	"rich"	"multi-colored rugs"
klp	Akkadian kalappu, "ax"	"hammers"	"axes"
štᶜ	Ugaritic ttᶜ, "fear"	"dismayed"	"dismayed"
ᶜrb	Ugaritic ᶜrp	"heavens"	"clouds"
škh	Ugaritic ṭkh, "ship"	"pictures"	"vessel"
br	Aramaic br, "field"	"corn"	"wilds"
gb'	Ethiopic gb', "to gather (water)"	"pit"	"cistern"

CONCLUSION

In summary fashion this paper provided a linguistic basis for evaluating and selecting lexica and Bible translations for personal use. The developmental periods of Hebrew lexicography and corresponding advances in Semitic languages were employed as a framework for this evaluative overview. In addition Semitic philology itself was assessed as to its practicality and necessity. It was demonstrated that the most recent OT lexica and versions are generally the most accurate tools. Comparative Semitic studies were shown to be a necessary pursuit for the exegete to be able to use the best linguistic tools and produce the most reliable interpretations and translations.

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appearing very infrequently in the OT. These are instances where new meanings were established for familiar roots when the appropriate Semitic comparative lexical data became available. Most modern English versions recently published and the most recent Hebrew lexica have accepted the translations of these terms substantiated and preserved by Arabic, Akkadian, and/or Ethiopic. Readers unaware should note that among Semitic phonemes, Hebrew š and Arabic s, Hebrew z and Akkadian ṣ, and Hebrew š and Ugaritic t are interchangeable consonants.

APPENDIX
TIME-LINE OF HIGHLIGHTS IN LEXICOGRAPHIC AND LINGUISTIC HISTORY[15]

Dates BC/AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History

THE PREPARATORY PERIOD OF ANCIENT LEXICOGRAPHY
(BEFORE A.D. 913)

Dates BC/AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
ca. 3100–450	Sumerian, Eblaite, Akkadian, Hittite, and Persian word lists	
ca. 1500–425		Recording of OT Hebrew language
ca. 458–323		First Aramaic OT paraphrases (Targums)
ca. 250		Septuagint Pentateuch (Greek OT version)
ca. 10 BC		First Latin dictionary
AD		
ca. 40–70		Syriac OT
ca. 130–70		other Greek versions of the OT
ca. 180–430	First major advances in Greek lexicography	
ca. 150–400		Old Latin versions
ca. 250–500		Coptic, Ethiopic versions
ca. 386–405		Jerome's Latin Vulgate
700s	Beginning of Arabic lexical analysis	First Arabic grammars and Bible versions
ca. 875–900	Paltoi's Talmudic lexicon	

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF HEBREW LEXICOGRAPHY
(A.D. 913–1810)
The Jewish Era (913–1550)

Dates BC/AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
ca. 913	First-known Hebrew lexicon (Saadiah Gaon)	
ca. 945–1010		Triliteral root theory established
1040s	First complete lexical and grammatical descriptions of Hebrew (Jonah ibn Janach)	

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[15]See W. C. Marlowe, "The Development of Old Testament Hebrew Lexicography" (Dissertation: Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985) for a more complete and comprehensive chronological survey and chart of the highlights in the growth of the OT lexicon in light of Semitic lexicographic and linguistic history.

Dates AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
ca. 1080–1100		First monograph on Hebrew homonyms (Judah ibn Bal°am)
ca. 1150–1250	Centers of Judaism shift from Arabic to Christian environment	
ca. 1200		Complete description of OT Hebrew with Arabic references (David Kimchi)

<div align="center">End of the "Golden Era" of Hebrew medieval philology</div>

Dates AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
ca. 1270–90	First dictionary of OT synonyms (Isaac Bedersi)	
ca. 1437–45		First Hebrew concordance
ca. 1450		Printing press invented
1488		First printed Hebrew Bible
ca. 1500–50	The lead in Hebrew studies shifts from Jewish to Christian hands almost exclusively	
1506/1523	First Hebrew lexicon by a Christian (J. Reuchlin)	Latin linguistics begin to be applied to Hebrew
ca. 1532		Martin Luther's German translation of Bible

<div align="center">*The Christian Era (1550–1810)*</div>

Dates AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
1607	J. Buxtorf's Hebrew lexicon	
1611		The Authorized, or King James, English version
1612	First lexicon by a Christian to compare Hebrew with other Semitic languages (V. Schindler)	
1750	Hebrew established as one of many Semitic languages and Hebrew-Arabic studies placed on a scientific basis (A. Schultens)	
1752/1753	J. Simonis' OT lexicon	R. Lowth's work reminding western scholars of the true nature of Hebrew poetry (parallelism)
1799		Rosetta Stone found

THE SCIENTIFIC PERIOD OF HEBREW LEXICOGRAPHY (A.D. 1810–)
The Classical years (1810–71)

Dates AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
1810–34	Gesenius' lexical and grammatical contributions to OT Hebrew and Semitic philology	
1820–22		Egyptian deciphered
1836–55	Robinson's translation of Gesenius' manual Hebrew lexicon into English	
1837–50		Akkadian deciphered Sumerian discovered
1846–57	Tregelles' translation of Gesenius' 1833 manual lexicon into English	
1868		Moabite discovered

The Modern years (1871–)

Dates AD	Lexicographic History	Linguistic History
1871	Davies' Hebrew lexicon uses Akkadian lexical data	
1872–99		Gilgamesh Epic translated
1879–1901	Syriac thesaurus published	
1880		Siloam inscription discovered
1886–1903	Jastrow's Targumic lexicon	
1887		Tell el-Amarna letters discovered
1896	Delitzsch's Assyrian handbook	
1901		Hammurabi's code found
1906–7		Hittite library found
1906	Brown, Driver, and Briggs' Hebrew lexicon of the OT	Elephantine papyri found
1907	Dillmann's Ethiopic lexicon	
1920s–30s		Nuzi tablets excavated
1929–30		Ugaritic deciphered
1933/1935		Mari tablets and Lachish letters discovered
1937		Mandelkern's OT Hebrew concordance
1947–65		Three editions of Gordon's Ugaritic handbook
1953	Köhler-Baumgartner's Hebrew lexicon adds Ugaritic data	
1956–	The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary	
1956		Young's Ugaritic concordance

1958	Second edition of Köhler-	Lisowsky's OT Hebrew
	Baumgartner's Hebrew lexicon	concordance
1959–	Von Soden's Akkadian handbook	
1963		Herdner's corpus of
		Ugaritic texts
1964–		Excavations at Ebla
1967–	Work begun on the third edition of	
	Köhler-Baumgartner's OT Hebrew	
	lexicon (vol. 1)	
1967	Aistleitner's Ugaritic dictionary	
1968–		Eblaite deciphered
1971	Holladay's English and abridged	
	lexicon based on Köhler-	
	Baumgartner (3rd ed.)	
1974–83	Vols. 2–3, third ed. of Köhler-	
	Baumgartner's OT Hebrew	
	lexicon completed	
1988–	Work begun on The Dictionary of	
	Classical Hebrew (ed. Clines)	
	18th edition of Gesenius'	
	Handwörterbuch (ed. Meyer and	
	Donner; vol. 1)	
1989/90–	Available: one vol. Gesenius	Murtonen's Hebrew in its
	(18th); three vols. Köhler-	West Semitic Setting,
	Baumgartner (3rd)	3 vols.
1990/91	Third edition of Köhler-	
	Baumgartner's OT Hebrew	
	lexicon completed (vol. 4;	
	Aramaic portion, vol. 5,	
	wanting) Part one (Aleph)	
	of The Dictionary of Classical	
	Hebrew (ed. Clines) completed.	