

Richard A. Taylor & Craig E. Morrison, eds. *Reflections on Lexicography. Explorations in Ancient Syriac, Hebrew, and Greek Sources*. Perspectives on Linguistics and Ancient Languages 4. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014. Pp. xxiii + 382; hardcover. \$150.00.

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The existing dictionaries of the various pre-modern Semitic languages are all very conventional and largely geared towards identifying translation equivalents rather than providing a more comprehensive semantic analysis. As a result, there is hardly a distinction between chronological stages, e.g., current versus archaic, as well as communicative registers, such as formal, informal, and technical usage, in which individual lexemes are employed, and the finer nuances of the grammatical constructions in which they appear, for instance, the variation between a direct object and a prepositional construction as the complement of a transitive verb, or the exact shades of different verbal stems. (These are the main shortcomings the present reviewer tried to address when editing and writing the *Aramäisches Wörterbuch*, Stuttgart 2016, which situates the vocabulary of the Aramaic parts of the Bible against their background of historical semantics and language use. Similar advances can also be seen in many articles in the likewise recent three-volume *Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten*, edited by Heinz-Josef Fabry and Ulrich Dahmen, Stuttgart 2011–2016.) Yet although lexica belong, together with grammars and text editions, to the most basic tools, it is currently much easier to secure funding for fleeting fads than a long-term, sustainable, investment in a new comprehensive dictionary of Classical Syriac, if only, for the sake of feasibility, one that covers the earliest period until the split into an Eastern and a Western tradition. *Reflections on Lexicography* thus by necessity relates to the *longue durée* of Semitic studies.

That being so, the eighteen papers collected in the volume under review, largely authored by people associated in some way or other with the ‘International Syriac Language Project,’

discuss a variety of distinct methodological issues and present various case studies, evenly distributed among Syriac, Biblical Hebrew, and New Testament Greek. Not all of them fall within the scope of lexicography. They are introduced by three brief prefaces (two by the series editor, Terry Falla) and, oddly, two likewise short notes (a few very general, unconnected autobiographical reflections by the late Frederick Danker on his own work as a lexicographer of Biblical Greek and a few accompanying thoughts on the author, again by the series editor) that might better have been included, if at all, as an appendix.

The first proper contribution is Janet Dyk on 'The Hebrew and the Syriac Copula in Kings' (p. 13–23). She observes that the Hebrew verb *hyi* 'to be' and its Syriac cognate *hwi* do not always correspond in the Peshitta rendering. Most of the omissions in the Syriac relate to the characteristically Hebrew past-tense narrative marker *nyhy* when it cannot be idiomatically reproduced with a form of *hwi* (especially in 2 Kings), the majority of the plusses to clauses that are verbless in the original and were, one might add, apparently understood as having past-tense reference (at least this is how the 'perfect' of *hwi* is normally used in Syriac, see Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, Leipzig 1898, §313). The topic as such pertains to translation technique rather than to lexicography, however.

Timothy Martin Lewis, 'Lexemes with High Risk of Infection: Methodology for Examining Low-Frequency Words' (p. 25–62), has a very lengthy discussion of the Syriac translation equivalent *hbt* in the basic stem, commonly glossed with 'to knock off' in the usual dictionaries, for the rare Greek verbs *rhēsein* 'to throw to the ground' (Mk 9:18) and *susparassein* 'to tear' (9:20), both said of a boy who was tormented by an evil spirit. The author offers an overview of the semantic field and concludes that there is no overt reference to epilepsy here, neither in the Greek (contrary to what is sometimes assumed) nor in the Syriac. The synopsis of synonyms and their rendering in the lexicographical tradition is useful, as are the methodological caveats for establishing

the meaning of infrequent lexemes in the Syriac New Testament, but the same point could have been made in a fraction of the space. Moreover, the author ignores the use of *ḥbṭ* in other Aramaic varieties of the same period; one might remark that its employ for a storm that violently hits or shakes an olive tree in the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Qumran (13:17) comes quite close to the traditional understanding of the Gospel passage in the sense of ‘convulsions’.

A major deficiency of the existing Syriac dictionaries, that is, a proper treatment of specialized technical terminology, is addressed by Daniel King’s ‘Remarks on the Future of a Syriac Lexicon Based upon the Corpus of Philosophical Texts’ (p. 63-81). He rightly points out that philosophical vocabulary in Syriac, due to the impact first of Greek, then of Arabic, contains numerous lexical borrowings, loan translations, words used with a different meaning, and various other types of influence. In addition to these perceptive methodological remarks, he provides a very valuable, albeit non-exhaustive, list of works to be included in a corpus of Syriac philosophical texts ranging from Bardaisan to Barhebraeus, supported by ample bibliographical references and a survey of other branches of scientific writing. (On a minor point of detail, the present reviewer thinks that a first-century date of the letter of Mara bar Serapion, a hypothesis entertained in passing on p. 64 and indeed *en vogue* in some circles, is thoroughly unlikely on grounds of both language and content, see *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 110 [2015] 1–5.)

Subsequently, Richard A. Taylor muses about ‘The Inclusion of Encyclopedia Information in Syriac Lexical Entries’ (p. 83–99). He suggests that an analysis of figurative language should be part of a lexicon of the Syriac Old Testament and adduces a few key terms from the visions of Daniel and their conventional interpretations as examples. The reader is surprised to see that he never mentions the various *Theologische Wörterbücher* (of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and, recently, the Qumran texts) and their guiding principles, as opposed to more general manuals of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek that focus on lexical semantics and lan-

guage use rather than on the underlying ideas. Without further discussion, however, it remains unclear what an envisaged counterpart to these Theological Dictionaries specifically for the Syriac Bible would actually add, especially since the wording in the Syriac does not throw any new light at all on the well-established understanding of the biblical passages cited. Prior to advocating for a proper historical and contextual dictionary of the Peshitta, one should assess how the lexical profile of the translation relates to the original on the one hand and native Syriac use on the other. In addition, it would be impossible to distinguish systematically between literal and metaphorical use anyway. If the author simply wants to stress the obvious advantages of specialized dictionaries for certain corpora (as has been done much more convincingly by King in his contribution on philosophical terminology), the Syriac Old Testament is not a suitable case in point. The focus of his paper thus remains blurred and the conclusions unconvincing.

Two other papers in this section briefly evaluate Michael Sokoloff's recent English edition of Brockelmann's *Lexicon Syriacum*. Alison Salvesen (p. 01–105) points out a number of cases where the English rendering of Brockelmann's Latin is inaccurate because the Syriac it is meant to reproduce has not sufficiently been taken into account; Takamitsu Muraoka (p. 107–112) addresses the differences between both versions—alphabetical order instead of roots, inner-Aramaic instead of comparative Semitic etymological information, updated (at times corrected) citations and references—more systematically.

The section on Biblical Hebrew lexicography begins with Reinier de Blois, 'Where Syntax and Semantics Intersect: The Story of שלח' (p. 115–124). He outlines how valence bears on the nuances of the verb *šllh* 'to send' when it is used with a human being ('to send someone to do something'), a letter or command ('to send a message'), a non-human entity ('to send as a gift, tribute, or payment'), an agent of divine punishment, or another type of intermediary ('to give someone the task of doing something', 'to commission') as a direct object. These constructions appear to govern different prepositions.

However, all that information is readily available in the respective lemma in the eighteenth edition of the Gesenius dictionary (s.v., p. 1360–1362), which the author does not seem to know, even though it is clearly the most accurate and well-documented lexicon of Biblical Hebrew currently available. (Also, this reviewer would maintain that it is quite misleading to think that the verbal stems ‘play a relatively insignificant role in the semantic analysis of Hebrew lexemes’, as claimed on p. 117–118, since transitivity and actionality bear strongly on semantics.)

Jan Joosten, ‘Hebrew Thought and Greek Thought in the Septuagint: Fifty Years after Barr’s *Semantics*’ (p. 125–133), tries to address, very impressionistically, the old-fashioned relation between language and ‘thought’ but fails to come up with a coherent argument, let alone a convincing framework or methodology that would explain what he actually means with ‘thought’ or ‘biblical ideas’. It all boils down to a superficial presentation of two or three arbitrary examples of idiomatic Hebrew expressions translated literally in the Greek, or with words that have different overall implications (e.g., ‘fellow’ vs. ‘citizen’). Hence the main point is completely trivial: ‘the possibility to express biblical thoughts in languages other than Hebrew’ (p. 130) and ‘words of similar meaning can activate very different connotations’ (p. 133). It is unclear to the present reviewer why one should wish to publish a paper full of such open doors.

A similar topic is addressed with much greater rigor and precision by Charles Lee Irons, ‘Is “Righteousness” a Relational Concept in the Hebrew Bible?’ (p. 135–145). He takes issue with the interpretation of *śdq* as ‘faithfulness to the

demands of a given relationship,’ itself the result of a nineteenth-century discussion in Protestant dogmatics, because that word is not exclusively positive but can also refer to the divine punishment enacted for sin. Yet he does not further substantiate his view why ‘righteousness’ in a punitive sense, applied to the wicked, should not be ultimately positive as well, because retribution for evil can also be seen as promoting salvation: covenant faithfulness does not necessarily

presuppose *apokatastasis*. The main value of this paper lies in its contribution to the history of interpretation.

In the longest paper, Marie-Louise Craig, 'Take One Hebrew Lexicon, Add Fresh Theology, and Mix Well: The Impact of Theology on Hebrew-English Lexicons' (p. 147–210), uncovers the theological presuppositions (mostly surfacing in etymological speculation) of the now long-forgotten eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Biblical Hebrew dictionaries by Parkhurst, Levi, Leo, and Lee.

The two remaining contributions to the Hebrew section are both autobiographical. A. Dean Forbes, 'A Tale of Two Sitters and a Crazy Blue Jay' (p. 211–232), surveys the progress in information technology and the unfolding of his interests between 1970 and 2011, largely devoted to compiling a computer-based tagged dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, statistics, the parsing of sentences, and discourse analysis, besides a professional career at Hewlett-Packard Laboratories. Again, it is unclear how this ties in with the envisaged focus of the volume on lexicography. That point becomes more prominent in the brief *retractationes* by David Clines, 'How My (Lexicographical) Mind Has Changed, Or Else Remained the Same' (p. 233–240). If he were to write his *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* afresh, he would talk more extensively to the envisaged readers, consider semantic domains (in addition to individual lexemes), be more systematic at providing definitions (and not just translation glosses); for the major part, however, the paper is a justification of the choices made – by way of, in a sense, avuncular advice.

It is the Greek section that maintains, by and large, the sharpest focus of the three. Frederick William Danker argues in favor of 'A Linguistic-Cultural Approach to Alleged Pauline and Lukan Christological Disparity' (p. 243–264) and makes numerous observations on the choice of words more or less relating to the theme of God and Christ as benefactors.

Jesús Peláez, 'Contextual Factors in the *Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament (DGENT)*' (p. 265–275), distinguishes between different shades of the verb *baptizein* and a

few other lexemes, depending on the context, and thereby tries to overcome the tension between translation glosses (e.g., 'to baptize') and general definitions (e.g., 'to use water in a rite for purpose of renewing or establishing a relationship w. God'). In a similar vein, Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, 'The *Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament* (DGENT): Meaning and Translation of the Lexemes; Some Practical Examples' (p. 277–288), adds a handful of other cases in point, but with greater emphasis on abstract semantic classes.

A cognitive approach underlies Margaret C. Sim's analysis of 'The Genitive Absolute in Discourse: More Than a Change of Subject' (p. 289–302). She stresses that this construction is chiefly used for providing access to certain 'contextual assumptions' that are not made explicit (such as the various implications of eventide in the expression *opsias genomenēs*), but the subject obviously pertains to syntax and discourse pragmatics, not to lexicography.

Steven E. Runge, 'Now and Then: Clarifying the Role of Temporal Adverbs as Discourse Markers' (p. 303–323), tackles the discourse functions—drawing attention to the following proposition—of the lexemes *nun* and *tote* in addition to their ('framing') function as temporal adverbs 'now' and 'at that time'.

Finally, Stephen H. Levinsohn, "'Therefore" or "Wherefore": What's the Difference?' (p. 325–343), studies the use of inferential connectives and their distinct nuances in the discursive style of the Pauline epistles.

As a whole, the articles united in this volume differ greatly in quality and relevance, but they have all been edited very diligently and appear in a visually attractive fashion. Indices of biblical and other references, modern authors, and subjects facilitate access to the material discussed in them. Although many authors belong to a very specific network, several themes touch upon quite general issues of future Semitic lexicography: the need for specialized dictionaries based on diachronic or thematic sub-corpora, more attention to grammatical constructions as well as semantic fields, and an explicit account of the lexicographer's own presuppositions.

This book is pretty expensive, though, and the present reviewer wonders whether an open access publication would not have been a more suitable format. The editors, at any rate, merit thanks for executing their task so carefully.