

PAPERS

AN ARABIC SCHOLION
TO GENESIS 9:18–21
(NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS)
ATTRIBUTED
TO PHILOXENOS OF MABBUG

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ABSTRACT

Among the scholia of an Arabic catena to Genesis published by P. de Lagarde in 1867 is an explanation of Gen 9:18–21 attributed to Philoxenos of Mabbug. This short passage is the subject of the present study. After a brief survey of the biblical text in question according to various Arabic versions, it will be shown that there is very little to commend its Philoxenian authenticity, while it clearly echoes an interpretation found in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis. In addition, two other related passages (one with a new interpretation) in Ephrem are brought to the discussion, and the scholion's similarity and difference to Jewish traditions recorded in the Targums, Bereshit Rabba, and Midrash Tanhuma (Buber) are also pointed out.

In his monumental and weighty work on Christian literature existing in Arabic, Georg Graf, when speaking of the exegetical literature of Philoxenos that was translated and survives in Arabic, remarks: “Minor [or tenuous] loans from the exegetical work of Philoxenos are found as scholia in the Arabic Pentateuch catena together with Ephrem at Gen 1:21 (on the extraordinary pairing of the dragons), independently at Gen 9:18–20...”¹ This brief note will take a closer look at the scholion on Gen 9 in question, but before turning there, it is worth asking why Graf connects Philoxenos here with Gen 1:21 and Ephrem’s interpretation of it. In the catena itself,² only Ephrem and Moshe bar Kepha are named together there, and a perusal of the passage leads to no indication of Philoxenos at all (as observed also by de Halleux).³ Graf’s work being of the sort it is—a survey, albeit a very detailed and comprehensive one—he goes into no further detail about this specific passage. Perhaps there are Philoxenian elements in this exegesis of Gen 1:21, but the catena’s compiler was apparently unaware of them or unwilling to grant the Bishop of Mabbug any part in those remarks.

Philoxenos did not fare as well as some other authors when it came to rendering Syriac literature into Arabic. This does not, of course, mean that he ceased being read in Syriac, as the number of surviving Syriac manuscripts to his work bears witness.⁴ But he is

¹ Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vols. 1–2, *Studi e Testi* 118, 133 (Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944, 1947) [= GCAL], vol. 1, 452–453. “Unbeteutende Anleihen aus dem exegetischen Schrifttum des Philoxenos finden sich in Scholienform in der arabischen Pentateuch-Katene zusammen mit Ephräm zu Gen 1,21 (über die aussergewöhnliche Paarung der Drachen); selbständig zu Gn 9,18–20...”

² Paul de Lagarde, ed., *Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), 17.

³ André de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1963), 126.

⁴ See E.A.W. Budge, ed. and trans., *Discourses of Philoxenos*, vol. 2 (London, 1894), xlviii–lxv, for manuscripts in London, Paris, and Rome, with additional manuscripts pointed out in Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Webers Verlag, 1922) [= GSL], 141–144.

not mentioned at all in Abū al-Barakāt's (d. 1324) *Catalog of Christian Literature in Arabic*.⁵ The part of Philoxenos' oeuvres in Arabic with the greatest representation is his letters (Vat. Syr. 207, Vat. Ar. 126, Mingana Syr. 401, Jerusalem Hl. Grab Ar. 24, Cairo 563 and 702, Sbath 1018, Fihris 440). His *Discourses* are known in Arabic only in a MS. at the Zaʿfaran monastery⁶ and, in a truncated form, from BNF Syr. (Garshuni) 239.⁷ Finally, a number of manuscripts preserve his prayers.⁸ Noticeably absent from this list is Philoxenos' exegetical work, and Graf's description, "unbedeutende Anleihen/minor loans" is apt for that whole class of his commentaries.

Before we look specifically at the Gen 9 scholion, it is worthwhile first to offer a few remarks on the catena to the Pentateuch published by Lagarde in which the scholion occurs. The MS. he used is Leiden Or. 230,⁹ but there are also several others.¹⁰ The catena typically gives a block of Scripture, often following the words قال الكتاب "Scripture said," and then proceeds with exegetical remarks from this or that named Greek or Syriac writer.¹¹ The proem to the Catena¹² includes a narrative of how the Torah was passed on and preserved from God to Moses through

⁵ (See Wilhelm Riedel, ed. and trans., "Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abū 'l-Barakāt," in *Nachrichten der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-hist. Klasse* 5 [1902], 635–706; for a recent ET by the present writer, see http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/abu_l_barakat_catalogue.htm).

⁶ See GCAL, vol. 1, 453, who cites Louis Cheikho, *Catalogue des manuscrits des auteurs arabes chrétiens depuis l'Islam* [in Arabic] (Beirut, 1924), 167.

⁷ H. Zotenberg, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1874), 194–195, also cited by Budge, *Discourses*, vol. 2, lxxv.

⁸ For these, see Budge, *Discourses*, vol. 2: lxxv, and GCAL, vol. 1, 453, no. 4. In Ge'ez, too, his prayers seem to have been at least somewhat popular.

⁹ See J. Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Ter Lugt, 2007), 99.

¹⁰ See GCAL, vol. 2, 289 for a list.

¹¹ See Lagarde, *Materialien*, vol. 1, xv–xvi for an index of authors named.

¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 2–4.

various personages of the Hebrew Bible down to Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) and later Annas and Caiaphas (cf. Lk 3:2, Jn 18:13), as well as a supposed reference to Eusebius of Caesarea's notice in his *Chronicle* (مكتب الزمان) of the translation of the Torah into Greek under Ptolemy Philadelphus, but the details given at the beginning of the Arabic Catena are not to be found in Eusebius' *Chronicle* as we know it.¹³ The Catena claims, supposedly based on Eusebius, that Ptolemy, upon finding different interpretations among the translators, threw them bound into prison, and put the translation of the Torah into a pit with fire and ash for seven days, and after that they covered it with garbage, in which condition it remained for seventy years.¹⁴ The book survived, it says, unharmed, and was brought out of the pit later, perhaps in the 21st year of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (?),¹⁵ but nothing else of its fate is mentioned in the proem, which then ends by spending several lines describing the scattering of the Jews.

¹³ For mention of the event in Jerome's translation, see Rudolf Helm, ed., *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, GCS 24, Eusebius Werke 7.1 (Leipzig, 1913), 129, lines 15–26. I do not have access to J. Karst's translation of the Armenian version, *Die Chronik, aus dem Armenischen übersetzt*, GCS 20, Eusebius Werke 5 (Leipzig, 1911).

¹⁴ According to the *Chronicle of Ps.-Zacharias* (Syriac text in J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, vol. 3 [Leiden: Brill, 1870], 327), also supposedly based on the *Chronicle* (حزقم) of Eusebius, Ptolemy, having provided for the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, "hid and kept them to himself" (سجد هبطه لنفسه). For a brief discussion of the passage, see Abraham Wasserstein and David L. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint from Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133–134.

¹⁵ Reigned 204–181 BCE. This identity is merely a guess. The Arabic reads افيانوطوس الملك, so I am assuming the name has been garbled in transmission. Since the last king mentioned was a Ptolemy, and no other qualification is given with this name, it is reasonable to suppose that we have another Ptolemy here. The next events referred to are Jesus' ascension and Titus' entry into Jerusalem.

Since we are dealing with a piece of commentary, it is fitting to make a few remarks about the biblical text itself. Moreover, since the scholion is in Arabic, and since the study of the numerous versions of the Bible in Arabic (especially as used by Christians) is a field that has hardly been thoroughly tapped, as relatively most of the relevant material remains only in manuscripts, this is a suitable place to present a modicum of the data, though only for Gen 9:20–21, if for no other reason than to highlight the complexity of the question and encourage future work on this very important topic. Of course, this is hardly the place to go into any sort of detailed discussion of the subject or a presentation of the *status quaestionis*.¹⁶ Here I simply give the Arabic version as quoted in the catena together with a few other texts; the aim here is merely to underline the variety of the available texts and emphasize the great potential of future research to be done in this field, from initial comparison of manuscripts and the preparation of editions to specific studies, especially regarding Vorlagen and translation technique. Since the English translations are very similar, some differences in grammar and vocabulary are indicated in brackets.

In the Catena, according to Leiden Or. 230, fol. 110v (Garshuni):¹⁷ واذا ابتدى نوح فلاحه الارض فغرس كرما. وشرب من الخمر وتكشف في خبابه “Noah began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground and planted a vineyard. He drank of its wine and got drunk, and was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*bayt*].”

Saadia Gaon:¹⁸ واذا ابتدى نوح فلاحه الارض فغرس كرما. وشرب من الخمر وتكشف في خبابه “When Noah began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground, he planted a vineyard and drank of its wine, got drunk, and was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*khibāʿ*].”

¹⁶ I am in the process of preparing a bibliography on the subject of the Bible in Arabic.

¹⁷ Lagarde's edition in Arabic script, *Materialien*, vol. 2, 86, reads: وايتدا نوح ان يفلح الارض وغرس كرما وشرب خمره فسكرو وتكشف في بيته As below, I heartily thank Ronny Vollandt for having shared this and some other of these MS readings with me.

¹⁸ J. Derenbourg, *Œuvres complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1893), 16. I have transcribed the edition's Hebrew script into Arabic letters.

Leiden. Warn. 377:¹⁹ وبدأ نوح في الارض يعمل وغرس كرما وعصر
 “Noah began [I stem] working the ground and he planted a vineyard. He pressed wine from it and drank of it, got drunk, and went to sleep. He was then uncovered [VII stem] in his tent [*kehibā*(?).”

Al-Ĥārīt b. Sinān (Vat. Ar. 1, fol. 38v):²⁰ وأبتدا الانسان اعني نوحا ان
 “The man (that is, Noah) began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground and planting a vineyard. He drank of its wine and then got drunk and was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*bayl*].”

Vat. Ar. 465, fol. 8r: وأبتدا نوح ان يفلح الارض وغرس كرما وشرب
 “Noah began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground and planted a vineyard. He drank what had been pressed [*ʾayr*] of its wine, got drunk, was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*bayl*], and his genitals [*aura*] were visible.”

Vat. Ar. 468,²¹ pt. 1, fol. 7v, col. 2: وأبتدا الانسان اعني نوحا ان يفلح
 “The man (that is, Noah) began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground and planted a vineyard. He drank its wine and then got drunk and was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*bayl*].”

Sin. Ar 3, fols. 35r-v: وأبتدا نوح ان يفلح الارض وغرس كرما وشرب
 “Noah began [VIII stem] cultivating the ground and planted a vineyard. He drank the wine that had been pressed [*ʾayr*], got drunk, and was uncovered [V stem] in his tent [*bayl*].”

St. Mark's, Jerusalem 44 (Garshuni), f. 80r:²² وأبتدا نوح ان يفلح
 “Noah began [I stem] to be a man cultivating the ground and he planted a

¹⁹ Lagarde, *Materialien*, vol. 1, 10.

²⁰ Cf. A. Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio e Vaticanis Codicibus Edita*, vol. 4 (Rome, 1831), 1–2. This translation is from the 5th column of the Hexapla.

²¹ See S. Euringer, “Zum Stammbaum der arabischen Bibelhandschriften Vat. ar. 468 and 467,” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 7 (1929): 259–273.

²² In Arabic script: وبدأ نوح ان يكون رجلا يفلح الارض. وغرس كرما وشرب
 من خمره وسكر وانكشفت سواعده.

Erpenius, *Pentateuchus Mosis Arabice*.²³ [?] ويدا نوح رجل صخراي “Noah began [I stem] [to be] a farming [?] man and planted gardens [*janān*]. He drank of the wine [*nabīḏ*], got drunk, and was uncovered [VII stem] within a tent [*khibāʿ*]”.

Hebrew: ויחל נח איש האדמה יטע כרם: ויישת מן היין וישכר ויתגל
בתוך אהלה

Peshitta:²⁵ ²⁶ܡܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ
ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܨܐ ܕܡܪܝܨܐ

Syro-Hexapla:²⁷ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ
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The likely interrelationships between these Arabic translations and their possible Vorlagen will not be discussed here; only a few observations about the biblical text in question as translated in the Arabic catena will suffice. We note, first, the unique absence of “from” before “wine.” The two Syriac versions cited here, the Hebrew, and the Septuagint all have this preposition, as do the Arabic translations given above, with the exception of those from Sin. Ar. 3, Var. Ar. 465, and Vat. Ar. 468. The beginning of the translation in the catena, “And Noah began to cultivate the ground,” while it makes perfect sense, does not exactly match any

²³ (Leiden, 1622), 18–19.

²⁴ J.W. Wevers, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 130.

²⁵ The Peshiṭta Institute, *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version*, pt. I, fasc. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 16–17.

²⁶ MS. 5b1 (i.e. BL Add. MS. 14425) has simply **ⲕⲓⲁ**, a unique reading. This part of that important MS is original, in the hand of John of Amid from 463/4. For details see The Peshitta Institute, *The Old Testament in Syriac*, vi.

²⁷ P. de Lagarde, *Bibliothecae Syriacae* (Göttingen, 1892), 38.

of the possible Vorlagen in terms of syntax and parts of speech. Finally, at the end of these verses, our translation only has “he was uncovered²⁸ in his tent,”²⁹ without specific mention of Noah’s genitals, like most other Arabic versions (and the Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac texts), but unlike Vat. Ar. 465 and St. Mark’s 44. In terms of these and similar points of inquiry, the (Christian) Arabic versions of the Bible for the most part remain, unlike Noah, covered; until a Ham (in fact, several of them), who will in this case merit a blessing and not a curse, comes along and makes them better known, there will remain a significant gap in the field of Christian Arabic literature and indeed in the study of eastern Christianity in general.

We now turn to the Gen 9 scholion, the only part of the Catena attributed to Philoxenos.³⁰ I give the scholion first in Garshuni according to Leiden Or. 230, fol. 110v,³¹ and then in Arabic script from Lagarde’s edition:³²

مَا فَمَقْصُودُهُ أَهْمُجْ صَحِيحٌ: أَيْ هَلَاءَ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْآلَاءِ
 الْكَلْبَةُ أَيْ هَلَاءُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ
 الْكَلْبَةُ هَلَاءُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ
 حَذَا: فَامَّا هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ
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 الْكَلْبَةُ الْكَلْبَةُ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ: هَمْزُ الْكَلْبَةِ

²⁸ Note that Leiden Or. 230 and most other versions use the V stem, but Leiden Warn. 377, St. Mark’s 44, and Erpenius’ text use the VII stem.

²⁹ The word used is *bayt*, often meaning “house,” but also sometimes “tent,” as here. The same may be said of οἶκος in the Greek version, but the difference in rendering between the Peshitta (ܡܝܬܬܐ) and Syro-Hexapla (ܡܝܬܬܐ), not surprisingly, follows the Greek closely and clearly reflects at least a technical lexical distinction between the two Syriac words.

³⁰ See Lagarde, *Materialien*, vol. 1, xvi.

³¹ As before, I sincerely thank Ronny Vollandt for sharing the reading of this scholion in the MS with me.

³² *Materialien*, vol. 2, 86, ll. 25–29, with one correction from Harold Sidney Davidson, *De Lagarde’s Ausgabe der arabischen Übersetzung der Genesis (Cod. Leid. Arab. 230) nachgeprüft* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1908), 16.

In Arabic script:

وقال فيلوكسينوس اسقف منبج ان هولاء الثلاثة هم الاباء الذي
تتاسلوا على الارض وملوها ومنهم ظهرت جميع المشبهة في
الصنایع ونسل هولاء الثلاثة بنو البرج ببابل فاما نوح غرس
كرما وشرب خمره فسکر ونقول ان نوح غرس الكرّم في السنة
الاولاة من بعد الطوفان وفي السنة الثالثة بعد الطوفان شرب
نوح الخمر وسکر

Philoxenos, Bishop of Mabbug, said: These three are the fathers that propagated over the earth and filled it. From them appeared every problem in the [various] skills. The progeny of these three built the Tower in Babel. As for the text, “Noah planted a vineyard, drank its wine, and then got drunk,” we say that Noah planted the vineyard in the first year after the Flood, and in the third year after the flood he drank the wine and got drunk.

This scholion consists of two parts, the first of which, regarding the dispersal of Noah’s descendants through his sons, is somewhat obvious, but the line “From them appeared every problem [مشبهة] in the [various] skills,” at least is of interest. For the word *مُشَبَّهَة*, both *Al-Muḥīṭ*³³ and the Maronite Germanos Farhat³⁴ give *مشكلة*, and I have followed them here in my understanding of the passage. Kazimirski³⁵ only lists the word as a feminine adjective, but offers the French meanings, “1. Assimilé. 2. Douteux, obscur, ambigu.” The former of these meanings given by Kazimirski is the more usual, but the latter, which agrees with *Al-Muḥīṭ* and Farhat, is almost certainly the one required here. On these skills or arts of sin, we might well think of Canaan as the subsequent renewer of certain arts, especially (at

³³ Al-Firūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs Al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Dar Ehia al-Tourath al-Arabi, 2003), 1148–1149.

³⁴ *Dictionnaire arabe*, ed. Rochaid de Dahdah (Marseilles, 1849), 571. He vocalizes the word with *fatḥa* over the *mīm*.

³⁵ A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1875), 662.

The second part of the scholion, regarding the timing of Noah's planting of the vineyard and subsequent enjoyment of its fruit, is more unique in the exegetical history of this passage. These details about Noah's activity are not obvious from the text but are reliant upon a tradition associated with it. Readers familiar with Ephrem's *Commentary* (ܟܡܬܝܐ) on *Genesis* will perhaps recognize this second part of the scholion, and more will be said on the connection between our scholion and Ephrem's *Commentary* below. Despite the fact that it occurs in Ephrem's work on *Genesis*, however, this detail about Noah does not seem to have been

[illegible]

popular in later Syriac (or, as far as I know, Arabic) exegesis. To mention only a few sources: *The Cave of Treasures*³⁸ records the event, but not with the chronological details given here. The interpretation in the Arabic scholion likewise does not recur in the commentary of Isho‘dad or the Arabic work of Ibn al-Ṭayyib, who heavily relied on Isho‘dad. Barhebraeus’ remarks on this biblical passage in his *Storehouse of Mysteries* are confined to the following: “Noah began to be a worker of the earth,’ because he believed in the Lord’s covenant. ‘And he planted a vineyard and drank of its wine and got drunk,’ because he was not experienced with drinking it, he thought of it like water.”³⁹ We have just mentioned the Arabic commentary of Ibn al-Ṭayyib, but to cite another Arabic commentary, that of the Coptic writer Marqus al-Daʿir b. Mawhūb b. al-Qanbar⁴⁰ does not deal exactly with Noah’s drunkenness as an event in and of itself, but it does give an extended interpretation of Noah here as a type of Christ in his death and resurrection, including an appeal to Ps 78:65 (f. 82v), a connection also made in *The Cave of Treasures*.⁴¹

The scholion on the Gen 9 passage that is attributed to Philoxenos, however, may in fact not be his at all, but rather Ephrem’s. In his prose commentary on Genesis, Ephrem gives two proofs for the fact that it was Noah’s long absence from wine that allowed him to get as drunk as he did: the years it took to plant a vineyard and have it bear fruit, and the years it would have taken

³⁸ Bezold, *Schatzhöhle*, vol. 1 (GT), 24–25, vol. 2 (Syriac and Arabic), 104–105. It is interesting that *The Cave of Treasures*, in both Syriac and Arabic, uses plural verbs for the sowing, planting, and pressing of the vineyard and its fruit; in this view, Noah was apparently not alone in his agricultural endeavor.

³⁹ Mor Gregorios Yohanna, ed., *Bar Ebroyo. Die Scheune der Mysterien: Kommentar zum alten und neuen Testament* (Losser: Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, 2003), 19.

⁴⁰ See GCAL, vol. 2, 329–332. I have consulted the commentary from St. Mark’s, Jerusalem, MS no. 44 (Garshuni), beginning at f. 80r, the full manuscript having been made available online thanks to the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, Brigham Young University, cpart.byu.edu (see GCAL, vol. 1, 101–103 for information on the Pentateuch of this commentary).

⁴¹ Bezold, *Schatzhöhle*, vol. 2, 108 (Syriac) and 109 (Arabic).

for the Flood's survivors to build a city and streets. The latter tradition is based on a textual reading that also occurs in Targums Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan,⁴² but the former comment is directly in contrast to another Jewish tradition, the assertion in *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) and *Beresbit Rabba*⁴³ that Noah planted the vineyard, harvested the fruit, and drank his wine all on the same day.

⁴² On "in the street (or marketplace)" (בִּשּׁוּקָא; the Hebrew text has "outside," בְּחוּץ) as where Ham informed his brothers of their father's nakedness, see Targums Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan to Gen 9:22, with the notes of Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988), 59, n. 4, and Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1B (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 46, n. 16), and, for the Ephrem passage in particular, S. Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979): 212–232 (p. 219 in particular) (reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Christianity* [Hampshire, Great Britain and Brookfield, Ver.: Ashgate, 1992], chap. IV). For the possibility of Ephrem here preserving an earlier reading of the biblical text than that of Peshitta MSS—contrary to Edward G. Matthews and Joseph P. Amar, trans., *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, ed. Kathleen McVey, The Fathers of the Church 91 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 144, n. 313, this reading with "street" is *not* in the Peshitta—, see M.P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 288. Van Rompay accepts this possibility, but opts rather for the likelihood "that he [Ephrem] knew of its existence, adopted it, and used it in its most literal sense ('in the street' rather than 'outside'), because it suited his reasoning" ("Antiochene Biblical Interpretation," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* [Louvain: Peeters, 1997], 113).

⁴³ *Tanhuma Buber* 2.20 (Salomon Buber, ed., *Midrasch Tanchuma. Ein agadischer Kommentar zum Pentateuch von Rabbi Tanchuma ben Rabbi Abba* [Vilna, 1885], 48; ET, John T. Townsend, trans., *Midrash Tanhuma Translated into English with Notes (S. Buber Recension)*, vol. 1, *Genesis* [Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989], 52) and *Beresbit Rabba* 36.21 (J. Theodor, ed., *Beresbit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar. Parascha I–XLVII* [Berlin, 1912], 338; ET, H. Freedman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah. Genesis*, vol. 1 [London: Soncino, 1939], 290).

Now following are five points of consideration that shed light on the question of the Arabic scholion's origin.

1. The passage cannot be found in Philoxenos' surviving works. For his exegetical works,⁴⁴ we have his partially preserved Gospel Commentary, but that really is all.⁴⁵ His doctrinal works are well known, and of his epistolary remains Baumstark remarks, "Bald die dogmatische, bald die asketische Richtung waltete in einer ausgedehnten Korrespondenz des Ph. vor..."⁴⁶ that is, these letters are often of dogmatic or ascetic interest, but not so much exegetical. With specific regard to this Arabic scholion, de Halleux remarks, "quant à la second citation, elle provient effectivement d'un commentaire philoxénien, mais c'est de celui de *Luc*."⁴⁷ He later⁴⁸ cites the Arabic scholion as a witness to Philoxenos' interpretation of Lk 3:23–38 on the genealogy of Jesus and the Image of God. This Arabic scholion, he says, fits into that scheme because it deals with the transmission of the Image of God through the sons of Noah.⁴⁹ In this fragment, Philoxenos is indeed concerned with the Image of God and he comments on some of the earlier parts of Genesis there, but not as far as the narrative and records of Noah and his sons in Gen 5:30–10:32. There is, therefore, no concrete cause for connecting the Arabic scholion to this segment of Philoxenos' oeuvres. True, Philoxenos' name is attached to the scholion, but the disentangling of names and the

⁴⁴ See de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, chapter one.

⁴⁵ In his *memra* on Philoxenos, Eli of Qartmin (13th cent.) says that Philoxenos, being learned in both Greek and Syriac, **ܡܠܟܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ** (André de Halleux, ed., *Éli de Qartamin. Mémra sur Mār Philoxène de Mabbog*, CSCO 233 / Syr 100 [Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1963], 5, line 131). This verb de Halleux translates as "traduisit" (André de Halleux, trans., *Éli de Qartamin. Mémra sur Mār Philoxène de Mabbog*, CSCO 234 / Syr 101 [Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1963], 5, with n. 3) but it can of course also mean "explain, interpret, comment on, etc."

⁴⁶ GSL, 142.

⁴⁷ *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 126

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 149

⁴⁹ See fr. 57 in J.W. Watt, *Philoxenos of Mabbog, Fragments of the Commentary on Matthew and Luke*, CSCO 392–3 / Syr 171–2 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1978), 87–93; ET, 74–80.

scholia associated with them in catenae is no easy task, and accepting these attributions uncritically is rarely wise.

2. I leave to readers more familiar with his work to answer more definitively the question of how Philoxenian the air of this scholion is, but it gives the initial impression, at least, of being rather more along the lines of something a more Antiochene-inspired commentator might write.⁵⁰ Indeed, both the type of comment given and the very fact that it is on a passage from Genesis marks it as somewhat suspect in terms of Philoxenian provenance. While Philoxenos did, it seems, write on Genesis, we do not know much about his work on that book aside from some remarks on Gen 1–2.⁵¹ Indeed, the interpretation in this Arabic scholion is found in Ephrem's commentary on Genesis (see the next item), which Van Rompay selected as containing links with Antiochene exegesis, while not itself being fully within that fold.⁵²

3. As already mentioned, the idea found in the second part of this scholion is present in Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis*.⁵³ Since

⁵⁰ On the Antiochene school and its proximity to the Syriac-speaking world, see R.B. ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis and the Origins of the Antiochene School," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 125–142. Van Rompay's general description will serve well here: "Antiochene exegesis concentrates above all on the historical facts narrated in the Bible. The Bible contains a faithful report of these facts, couched in human and understandable language. There is only one level of meaning, the one envisaged by the biblical author" ("Antiochene Biblical Interpretation," 108). In Romeny's words, one practice of an Antiochene exegete is that "he fills gaps in the story" ("Eusebius of Emesa," 128), which is exactly what happens in Ephrem's comment on this passage and in the Arabic scholion under discussion.

⁵¹ On the *Memra on the Tree of Life* as witness to Philoxenos' Old Testament exegetical activity, see de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 126–127.

⁵² See his "Antiochene Biblical Interpretation," but especially 110, n. 22; 111–113; and 122–123; on 112–113, the Gen 9 passage is briefly discussed. See also Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa," 139 and the sources mentioned at 129, n. 21.

⁵³ The much later Armenian commentary on Genesis attributed to Ephrem passes over the passage without remark, turning to focus on the curse of Canaan (Edward G. Matthews, Jr., *The Armenian Commentary on the*

[1] ስህተት ያለው ምረቃ ሲሆን ለሌሎች ስህተት ሊያስተላልፍ ይችላል። ስህተት ያለው ምረቃ ሲሆን ለሌሎች ስህተት ሊያስተላልፍ ይችላል። ስህተት ያለው ምረቃ ሲሆን ለሌሎች ስህተት ሊያስተላልፍ ይችላል።

[illegible][illegible]

⁵⁴ R.-M. Tonneau, *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii*, CSCO 152 / Syr 71 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1955), 63–64; his Latin translation may be found in CSCO 153 / Syr 72, 50–51.

⁵⁵ The English translation given here is adapted, in some places rather heavily, from Matthews and Amar, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 144.

7.1 After these things, [Scripture] recorded about Noah, that “he planted a vineyard and drank of its wine, got drunk, fell asleep,⁵⁶ and lay uncovered in his tent. Ham saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.” Noah’s drunkenness was not from an excess of wine but because it had been a long time since he had drunk [any wine]. In the ark he had drunk no wine; although all flesh was going to perish, Noah was not permitted to bring any wine onto the Ark.

Because, therefore, Noah did not drink [any wine] the year of the Flood, and in the year that he left [the Ark], he did not plant a vineyard, for he came out of the ark on the twenty-seventh of Iyyār [May]—not the time of [fruit] maturing and not the time for planting a vineyard—and so, because in the third year he planted the vineyard from the grape stones⁵⁷ that he brought with him on the ark, until there was a [productive] vineyard in three or even four years, there were six years’ of interval during which the just one had not tasted any wine.

7.2 To indicate that it had been a long time since he had drunk [any wine], and for that reason it made him drunk, [Scripture] said, “Ham went out into the street and told his brothers.” How could they have a street, unless they had built a village? If they had built a village, it would have taken them several years to build. Therefore the building of the village and the laying out of its streets also bear witness that it had been years, as

⁵⁶ This verb is not in the Peshitta version of the text, but the rest of Ephrem’s citation agrees with it almost exactly. The other main difference, as mentioned above, is the reading “outside.”

⁵⁷ While *Bereshit Rabba* 36.20 (Theodor, 337; for an English translation, see Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 289) says that the vineyard was planted from *shoots* (זמורות) that Noah had brought on the Ark, according to the lesser known (at least among non-Rabbinic scholars) *Tanhuma Buber* 2.20 (Buber, 48; for an English translation, see Townsend, *Midrash Tanhuma*, 52), it was grape seeds (חרצנים) brought along in the Ark that were the source for the vineyard, just as Ephrem says here. For other Jewish traditions about the narrative, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909), 167–174, with notes in vol. 5 (1925), 190–196.

we said, since the old man had drunk any wine, and for that reason it made him drunk.

In a note to their translation, Matthews and Amar⁵⁸ also point to Ephrem's *Nis.* 57.5 and, in contrast, *Virg.* 1.10. It will be worthwhile to give these passages and discuss them in a little detail. First, in *Nis.* 57.5–6,⁵⁹ part of a *sogitā*, we find Satan boasting,

ܐܠ ܗܡ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ
ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ

Noah, who conquered the flood like death,
With Ham's mouth I laughed at him whom wine
conquered.

To which Death replies,

ܐܠ ܗܡ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ
ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ ܕܡܝܬ

Noah was not harmed, but your own vessel
Put on curses, because you had put him on and he
became a servant.

Satan first declares that he was using wine to weaken and denude Noah, but Death, on the other hand, implies that Noah himself did not succumb to any vinous temptation, nor was he in and of himself susceptible to its destruction: rather, Satan first had, in a sense, to embody and “bedevil” him. The harm of wine that came upon Noah, then, was in fact harm that came upon Satan himself! While it is sometimes dangerous to attribute any words or views of an author's interlocutors to that author himself, there is nothing to bar us from hearing Ephrem claiming, here too as in the *Commentary on Genesis*, Noah's freedom from guilt or blame in the incidence of the vineyard and its fruit.

In the second relevant passage, *Virg.* 1.10,⁶⁰ we have Ephrem counseling a female solitary:

⁵⁸ *Ephrem the Syrian*, 144, n. 314.

⁵⁹ For E. Beck's ed., see *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena*, pt. 2, CSCO 240 / Syr 102 (Louvain, Secrétariat du CorpusSCO: 1963), 85; GT, CSCO 241 / Syr 103, 74; in G. Bickell's earlier ed., *S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena* (Leipzig, 1866), the text will be found at 112, with a LT on 196.

⁶⁰ I have quoted from E. Beck's ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem der Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*, CSCO 223 / Syr 94 (Louvain: Secrétariat du

[illegible]

The text of this part of the hymn is somewhat sketchy, as a look to Beck's apparatus will show, but the exact meaning of one part of it has also perhaps been misunderstood. At the end of the first line, Rahmani translated נִיבֵּן בְּדוֹרָם with "prae ceteris clarum," Beck with "den Sieger in seiner Generation," and McVey with "victorious in his generation." These three similar renderings are possible, to be sure, but an alternative reading is also worth suggesting, especially in light of Ephrem's remarks on the passage in his Commentary. At 7.2 there (see above), we met the form

CorpusSCO, 1962), 3; GT, CSCO 224 / Syr 95, 3, but see also Ignatius Ephraem II Rahmani, *S. Ephraemi Hymni de Virginitate* (Sharfeh, 1906), Syr 3, LT 3 and, for an ET, Kathleen E. McVey, trans., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 264.

⁶¹ This is certainly the more difficult reading. BL Add. 17141 has **כַּשְׁמִי**, which adjective is applied to Noah at Gen 6:9 and here fits rather euphonically with the following word. Note that this adjective “just” is added, presumably from Gen 6:9, to Noah in Gen 9:20 of Targum Neofiti and the Genizah Targum (for the latter see, Michael L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, vol. 1 [Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1986], 26-27). On the other hand, *Bereschit Rabba* stresses that while Noah had been called “righteous” in Gen 6:9, he was subsequently “a man of the ground” (Theodor, *Bereschit Rabba*, 337; ET, Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah. Genesis*, 290). Philoxenos calls Noah **כַּשְׁמִי** in the passage referred to below under no. 4.

בָּדַרְהוּ, not meaning “in his generation” (*b-dāreh*), as the form here in this hymn is supposed to mean by the aforementioned translators, but “made him drunk” (*baddreh*). Since we have the same form in both passages, and since they deal with the same theme, it is fitting to ask whether the form has not been misread. It is true that the meaning “make drunk” is rare for *baddar*: the lexica, when they give it, only cite §7.2 in the Genesis commentary,⁶² but there is hardly any other way to understand the word in that passage. Another possible objection to this reading is that the expression “in his generation” might for some readers call to mind the description of Noah in Gen 6:9, but the word “generation” there, in both Hebrew (בְּדֹרֹתָיו) and in the Peshitta (ܒܕܪܬܐܝܗܘܢ ܢܗܝܬܐ ܕܢܗܝܬܐ ܕܢܗܝܬܐ), is *plural*, not singular, which it would have to be here in Ephrem’s hymn if that word is understood. So it is not conclusive, but the alternative reading proposed here and in the translation of the passage above does at least deserve serious consideration.

4. While Ephrem in his Genesis Commentary, as well as the author of the Arabic scholion, is at pains to leave Noah blameless for his drinking incident,⁶³ Philoxenos himself⁶⁴ specifically cites Noah as having given in to his desire for drink. There he puts Noah forth as one of a number of biblical personages—including Cain, Esau, and the Sodomites—whom “the lust of the belly” has conquered, and he offers nothing whatsoever in Noah’s defense.

⁶² Gabriel Cardahi, *Al-Lubāb. Dictionarium Syro-Arabicum* (reprint, Damascus: Sidawi, 1994), 87; Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon* (Piscataway/Winona Lake: Gorgias/Eisenbrauns, 2009), 120.

⁶³ Other patristic writers also give reasons to support Noah’s ultimate guiltlessness. According to Theodoret of Cyr, Noah was the first man to drink wine and therefore inexperienced in its use and effects (*Questions on the Octateuch* 53 [Gen 56]). Cyprian (*Letters* 63.2–3) and Jerome (*Hom. in Gen.* 13) see, like Ibn al-Qanbar as mentioned above, in Noah’s drunkenness a prefiguration of the passion of Christ. (For all these, see Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1–11*, in collaboration with Marco Conti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament I* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 156–158). Similarly, on Joseph in Gen 43:34, “Is it true,” Jerome (*Hom. Pss* 13) asks, “and is it literally possible that a holy man became drunk?” (see conveniently Mark Sheridan, ed., *Genesis 12–50*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament II* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002], 286).

⁶⁴ Budge, *Discourses*, vol. 1, 458.10–11; vol. 2, 439.

This Philoxenos passage is from his eleventh *Discourse*, *‘Al ‘anwāyutā w-kubbāšā d-pagrā*, that is, *On Asceticism and the Subjugation of the Body*; that both eating and drinking are in view is clear not only from the negative examples cited in this place, but also from an express statement of Philoxenos previously in the *Memra*.⁶⁵ Defending Noah would, of course, be out of place for Philoxenos’ purpose in this *Memra* and any excuses would nullify Noah as an example of the danger inherent in the “the lust of the belly,” but in any case, Philoxenos, while he may at times have considered Noah blameless in the drunkenness incident, we only have clear evidence for his contrary opinion.

5. Finally, Ephrem—who admittedly is a common source for this Catena⁶⁶—is the supposed source for the scholion following the one in question, but it has nothing to do with the scholion attributed to Philoxenos. Might the sources, though, simply have gotten mixed up, both scholia in fact really stemming from Ephrem? In that case, the question remains: Why is Philoxenos’ name in the text to begin with? Perhaps the first part of the scholion, up to “the Tower in Babel,” is indeed Philoxenian, but the latter part is actually Ephrem’s. Another question, though, in that case is why the catena-collector (or a copyist?) fails to attribute this interpretation to Ephrem. As Burkitt said many years ago of the Severus Catena, “It is often impossible to discover where the passages taken from S. Ephraim really begin or end, and even if a passage be accepted as S. Ephraim’s there is generally nothing to shew that a Biblical quotation occurring in it may not have been supplied or edited by Severus.”⁶⁷ The Arabic Catena edited by Lagarde has yet to be the subject of any complete text—or source-critical analysis, so it is impossible to answer this question, but at least the prospective investigator has Lagarde’s index of authors cited to begin from, and of course hardly one of these authors has

⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, 456.10–11; vol. 2, 437. On Philoxenos and asceticism see Robert A. Kitchen, “The Lust of the Belly is the Beginning of All Sin,” in the previous issue of *Hugoye*, 13.1 (2010), 49–63.

⁶⁶ See Lagarde, *Materialien*, vol. 1, xv, for a list of scholia attributed to him.

⁶⁷ *S. Ephraim’s Quotations from the Gospel*, Texts and Studies 7.2 (Cambridge, 1901), 87.

remained in the same state in terms of editions and studies as when Lagarde wrote.

Hopefully this humble inquiry has gone some way in highlighting both the stimulating character and the possible problems of this text. While scholars and other readers of Christian literature in Arabic may continue to hope for further evidence of Philoxenos in Arabic sources, most probably this particular scholion should be struck from the list of likely fragments.

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