

INTRODUCTION

The present PLAL volume contains papers that were presented for the most part between 2017 and 2020 in the International Syriac Language Project (ISLP) section of international conferences. The 2020 meeting was carried out online.

The process of creating the volume has been slower than anticipated due to a number of factors, but especially the Covid pandemic. The scholars, whose work appears in this volume, and the reviewers, without whom publication could not proceed, are domiciled in various countries and continents—from Europe to Australia, from North America to Africa. Many endured extensive lockdowns that prevented them from accessing libraries. In addition, those authors and reviewers who had teaching duties were burdened with online classes, a new and confronting experience for some. Accordingly, there were extensive delays in receiving all the material. The Editors of this volume would like to thank each and every one of the contributors and reviewers for their willingness to persist, despite the odds they were facing. Special thanks are due to the Nano Nagle Trust and the Yarra Theological College of the University of Divinity in Melbourne for a grant to cover the employment of Katherine Blyth to help with matters of communication.

This volume is dedicated to David Clines (1938–2022), whose loss the ISLP group greatly mourn. David was a giant within Biblical Studies. His exegetical skills are exhibited in his commentaries on Ezra-Nehemiah and Job—to mention just two of his works that have enriched the understanding of academics and students alike. His interest in a literary approach to the Hebrew text and particular areas of inquiry, such as feminism and masculinity have been notable, as has his encouragement of the study of ecology and the Bible. But the publications for which David will be especially remembered by generations to come relate to the Hebrew language. These are his nine volume *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (1993–2016), followed by a revised version of the same work which began to appear in published form in 2018.¹ It was his lexicographical interest that led David to the meetings of ISLP, established in 2003. ISLP does not limit itself to Syriac lexicography, with scholars of other ancient languages finding a congenial home amongst its members; hence David's involvement. In the words of the founder of ISLP, Terry Falla, "David was in every way

¹ A fuller celebration of David Clines's publications and his achievements, including his role as a leading publisher of works relating to the Bible and its languages, can be found in the obituary featured on the SBL and Sheffield Phoenix Press websites.

a generous and enthusiastic participant in ISLP, bringing with him a lifetime of experience as an ancient-language lexicographer and Hebrew Bible specialist. At one of the carefully organized sessions of our 2014 St Petersburg conference, we found ourselves, unexpectedly, with more than twenty minutes to fill. We decided to share a few anecdotes. David thought it fun. He readily contributed to the impromptu stories, laughter and jokes, lightheartedly suggesting we make it a precedent. He equally enjoyed the contributions and the company, and saw the annual conference dinners as a highlight. His enthusiasm was energizing.

The chapters in this volume are arranged in the following order of languages: Hebrew and Aramaic first, as the Hebrew Scriptures have priority chronologically, then Greek and Syriac. Janet Dyk's "Syntax and Semantics: Patterns and Meanings of the Biblical Hebrew verb שׁים" involves a comparison of the respective entries for שׁים in two databases: the Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew and that of the Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer. The former focuses on the semantic nuances of a word within its context, whereas the latter records morphological and syntactic data. Dyk aligns the meanings of שׁים as given in the Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew with the syntactic patterns of the Eep Talstra database, thus providing data as to how semantics and syntax interact. This approach has the potential to enrich the entire database of the Eep Talstra Centre. Dyk thereby provides an important indication of how Biblical Hebrew linguistics could be presented in a more integrated way. Such a comprehensive lexical study also has the potential to be used as the basis of a lexicographic entry, with a higher level of accuracy than has been achievable in traditional works of the past. The methodology of an in-depth lexical analysis alongside a summary in a dictionary entry is well illustrated in the Falla Turner chapter in this volume.

The chapter from Dean Forbes, "Dependency Relations in Biblical Hebrew Grammar" also provides an advance in understanding Biblical Hebrew linguistic structures. The subject matter relates to ongoing research for *Biblical Hebrew Grammar Visualized*, the Andersen-Forbes syntactic database of the Hebrew Bible. This database is focused principally on representing and visualizing constituency relations, but Forbes now extends that to cover dependency relations. Being a non-projective language, Biblical Hebrew does not evidence adjacency as a constraint on its dependency relations, and this makes it all the more challenging to represent those relations whilst also maintaining word order precedence. Forbes even extends these considerations to intra-clausal and inter-clausal dependency relations. It is clear that the much-used Andersen-Forbes database still has a great deal to offer by way of enabling us to represent grammatical relations of all kinds, and not only in Hebrew.

In the chapter "Aramaic Verbal Participles as an Associative Device in the Narrative of Daniel 2:4^b–7:28." Stephen Levinsohn investigates the discourse function of participles in that section of the book of Daniel, from an information structural perspective. The patterns of the verbal participles of ענה and אמר in the Aramaic passages in Daniel have been a puzzle in previous analyses; Levinsohn's approach attempts to remove that anomaly. He demonstrates how Development Units may be introduced with suffix-conjugation verbs and then continued with imperfective forms

(especially participles). He considers the question of whether the subjects of these participles mark their referent as thematic or not. In sum, Levinsohn adds here another to his already long list of case studies concerned with the information structure and discourse analysis of Hebrew.

The chapter by Ian Young, “The Throne Vision in Daniel 7:9–10 in the Old Greek Version” deals with the problem that the Greek text of the Throne Vision differs in certain details from what is found in the Masoretic text. The chapter explores various possible explanations for these differences. He concludes that it is probable that the OG reflects a different, likely earlier, Aramaic *Vorlage* as compared to the Masoretic text, and that in fact the editor of the Masoretic text has added details to an earlier version. He further points to differences between the Greek version of the Throne Vision and the parallel passages in 1 En 14:18–23; 90:20 and the Book of Giants. Young bolsters the consensus view that these versions are different formulations drawn from a pool of common traditions. He thereby contributes to the modern search for a more holistic way of reading the multiplicity found in the history of the texts.

In the chapter “The Perfect Indicative as a Rhetorical Device in New Testament Greek” Stephen Levinsohn explores the implication of the perfect when it appears in a set with only two members: the perfect and the aorist, as well as when it occurs in relation to three members: the imperfect, the perfect and the aorist. He also examines passages in which Robert Crellin says that the perfect “behaves as a narrative tense.” Differences between English and Greek, uses of the perfect tense and consequent English translations of the Greek, can be attributed to English being tense-prominent and Greek being aspect-prominent.

In “‘The Word will not Wait’: Specialized Vocabulary in Syriac Divinatory Texts (*Hermeneiai*),” Jeff Childers explores the divinatory “interpretations” found inserted in red ink into a 6th–7th century copy of John’s Gospel in Syriac. This Syriac copy is one of the most complete divinatory gospels extant from a tradition that is widely attested across late ancient Europe and the Near East. All versions are drawn upon in this survey of the vocabulary used in the divinatory “apparatus.” Childers demonstrates that while the words may be common ones, they appear to be used in unusual and cryptic ways to fit a divinatory purpose. Thus, the chapter increases our knowledge of the semantic range of Syriac words and terms, as well as helping us to understand the way the texts functioned for their ancient devotees. The essay should be read together with others on the same topic by Childers, especially his 2020 monograph on the subject.

In “Biblical correspondences to Syriac *mekkēl*,” Mats Eskhult discusses the adverb *mekkēl*, investigating the ways in which it corresponds to Hebrew and Greek source texts and how frequently it does so in each of its senses. He is able to show that a lexeme which is often described merely as an adverb of location in time may carry also a persistive sense, and also, as a conjunction, an inferential sense. For this lexeme, the essay expands the knowledge to be found in the standard lexica. Readers should connect this paper with the broader analyses of the chapter below “Conjunctions and Conjunctive Adverbs,” where cross references to this paper may be found.

Penetrating and rounded linguistic descriptions of Syriac particles, conjunctions, and adverbs is a much-needed growth area within Syriac linguistics.

A well-known feature of Classical Syriac grammar is the use of *qetal (h)wā* for the simple past. There are also ancient texts where *qetal (h)wā* has been taken to be indicative of the past perfect. In the chapter entitled “*Qetal (h)wā* for the Greek Conjunct Participle,” Mats Eskhult explores why this might be so. He shows through a selection of early Syriac texts that arose originally in a bilingual Greek-Syriac milieu, that the *qetal (h)wā* form may have been influenced in its semantics by the Greek conjunct aorist participle. Specifically, the combination of participle with an aorist verb could be represented in translation by a combination *qetal (h)wā* + *qetal*.

Terry Falla is the author of “The Rhetorical Place of Conjunctions and Conjunctive Adverbs in the Literary Landscape of Classical Syriac.” This is a generic and wide-ranging essay designed to complement the next piece in the volume. Here, Falla starts out from the relative lack of serious attention granted to conjunctions in Syriac lexicography and proceeds to begin filling this gap with an examination of the contribution of conjunctions to Syriac poetics. Falla and Turner’s *Key to the Peshitta Gospels* aims more fully to meet the need of a syntactic, semantic, and literary analysis of Syriac conjunctions.

The next chapter is from both Terry Falla and Beryl Turner and is a companion piece to the one described above. It is entitled, “The Classical Syriac Particle ܩܬܐ: A Syntactic and Semantic Analysis.” The chapter is divided into four sections: the first defines conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs; the second reviews how ܩܬܐ has been treated in previous Syriac lexicons; the third provides a methodology for the lexical entry that follows in the fourth section, which will be published also in *Key to the Peshitta Gospels*, Vol. 3. Sometimes the best lexicography requires that simple lexicon entries are complemented by in-depth analyses that underpin the brief explanations used in the lexicon; this is one such case. It will prove a useful model to be followed by other semantic analyses within ancient language lexicography. Moreover, the inclusion of synonyms within the entry is especially welcome, the sort of thing lexicons ought to be doing, and which has already been discussed in the first chapter of this volume.

Jerome Lund in the chapter “New Readings of the Peshitta Text of Revelation” provides his reasoning for a group of textual emendations that have been suggested for the Syriac text of Revelation in the next edition of the Antioch Bible. The British and Foreign Bible Society edition of 1920 was based on the unicum Crawford Syriac 2, and the Antioch Bible does the same. The new readings include incorrect vocalizations, conjectural single-letter emendations, and a small number of more significant single-word emendations. Critical comparison with Greek sources and patterns of translation technique provide help in the task of emendation. The underlying principle is that an edition based on a unicum manuscript requires critical analysis and redaction. This is a problem that applies especially to Revelation and its sparse tradition in the Syriac church.

In “Bridging Ancient Texts and Modern Linguistics: A Syntax of Syriac Objects in Contrast to Hebrew and Arabic,” Paul Noorlander contributes to typological descriptive Syriac linguistics. He deals here with ditransitive clauses marked by the

“dative” preposition *l-*. He demonstrates that the optimal method leading to an understanding of the functions of *l-* is to distinguish between role-based and salience-based strategies. By pursuing this path through the examination of examples of Bible translations in a variety of ancient Semitic languages, he notes that each strategy behaves differently in two types of ditransitive constructions in Syriac; further, that *l-* has evolved into being a general marker for human referents, such that when a clause involves two human referents both preceded by *l-*, their function in grammatical terms is ambiguous, an ambiguity that the language tolerates: object agreement and word order are more significant markers of argument disambiguation. It is a significant finding that the syntactic methods of Syriac differ markedly from those of Hebrew and Arabic.

Richard Taylor is the author of the translation of Psalms in the Antioch Bible (2020). In the present chapter, “Reflections on the Syriac Psalter in Light of the Antioch Bible Project,” Taylor presents a selection of key observations on the Peshitta text of the Psalter made while preparing his own translation for the Antioch Bible. His comments appear under three headings: 1. “Canonical Considerations” which discusses the apocryphal Psalms 151–155; 2. “Psalm Headings in the Eastern Syriac Tradition,” some of which, he points out, relate to an historical event, although others encapsulate a theological or Christological interpretation, whilst all provide an insight into the world of the eastern Syriac Christians; 3. “Text Critical Issues” which is organized under five subheadings that demonstrate that the *Vorlage* was proto-Masoretic. Although the majority of variants are secondary, they testify to significant interpretive traditions at play within early Syriac Christianity and deserve close scrutiny.

Knowledge is advanced by small increments, and linguistic and lexicographical knowledge especially depends not upon “big theory” but upon step-by-step construction out of numerous detailed studies—studies on individual lexemes or syntagms, for example. It is hoped that the papers in the present volume offer just this, a stimulating and vital selection of detailed studies that will constitute bricks in a much more complex edifice. In this way, they all contribute to new understandings of ancient texts and languages.

