

**Retroversion to Jesus' *ipsissima verba* and the
Vocabulary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic:
the Case of *mata'* and *qarta'* ⁽¹⁾**

In a recently published article, Herbert Bassler explains Jesus' perplexing statement "Let the dead bury the dead" (Matt 8,22), by means of retroversion to the presumed original Aramaic. According to Bassler's ingenious reconstruction, Jesus played on the consonantal equivalence of two Aramaic words and said, "Let the city (*mata'*) bury its dead (*meta'*)", but the Greek translators misread the unvocalized text and thus produced the puzzling "Let the dead (*meta'*) bury the dead (*meta'*)". Bassler's argument that *mata'* was part of the vocabulary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA) of Jesus' time rests upon the evidence found in four sources, two from the rabbinic canon and two from Qumran literature: *Leviticus Rabbah* 24.3, *Exodus Rabbah* 9.7, *Genesis Apocryphon* 2.23, and *Testament of Levi* ⁽²⁾.

The response that follows is concerned with the several methodological issues involved in retroversion to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. Taking Bassler's argument as an example, I try to show that such attempts at retroversion are methodologically problematic unless the targeted lexical base in Aramaic can be chronologically and dialectally restricted to the language of Jesus' time and place. In the specific instance under discussion, I explore the vocabulary of

⁽¹⁾ My thanks are due to Sol Cohen, Michael Sokoloff, Richard Steiner, and Yaakov Sussman for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I adopt the chronological division set out by Joseph A. FITZMYER (see *A Wandering Aramean* [Chico, CA 1979] 23, n.38): Old Aramaic 925 BCE - 700 BCE; Official (Imperial) Aramaic 700 BCE - 200 BCE; Middle Aramaic 200 BCE - 200 CE; Late Aramaic 200 CE - 700 CE; Modern Aramaic 700 CE onward.

⁽²⁾ H. BASSER, "Let the Dead Bury Their Dead", *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: New Series* 5 (ed. H. BASSER - S. FISHBANE) (Atlanta 1993) 79-96. The article was preceded by discussion (June 1992) on "Ioudaios", the electronic discussion group dealing with Judaism of late antiquity. The meaning of *mata'* is actually "town", not "city"; see S. KAUFMAN, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago 1974) 71, n.201.

Aramaic in regard to *mata'* (and the semantically related *qarta'*) and show that the necessary chronological and dialectal criteria are not met⁽³⁾.

I. Chronological Disparity (and Other Methodological Problems)

Leviticus Rabbah 24.3

The first difficulty in relying on this source is one of chronology. How can a statement attributed to someone living ca. 300 CE (R. Simon or R. Levi), found in a work redacted in the 5th century, provide evidence of language spoken in the first century? Aside from this problem, there is another: the word for "town", which appears three times in the text, is always a form of *qrt'* in the MSS and in citation in the *'Arukh* and in *Yalqut Makhiri*⁽⁴⁾. Bassier's evidence rests solely on the second occurrence of the word as found in the printed editions (*mata'*)⁽⁵⁾. Although it is not impossible that the printed editions preserve superior readings, it should be noted that many of the manuscripts of *LevR* predate the printed editions by centuries. This is so particularly of MS London, an excellent representative of Palestinian readings and orthography, written before the year 1000⁽⁶⁾.

Nevertheless, Bassier, on the basis of *lectio difficilior*, accepts the reading *mata'* of the printed editions. He thinks that since "*qarta'* was unquestionably more popular in Palestinian Galilean Aramaic", a scribe "assimilate[d] *mata'* to the other *qarta'*s for uniformity". On the other hand, "assimilation" in the opposite direction is not possible, "since *qarta'* could not explicably move to *mata'* only one of the three times".

The methodology behind this reasoning is problematic. Bassier thinks that the version represented by the printed edition (*qarta'*,

⁽³⁾ Other methodological problems in Bassier's article, in regard to the use of ancient sources, will be noted along the way.

⁽⁴⁾ M. MARGULIES, ed., *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah* (Jerusalem 1960) 553-554; Nathan b. Yehiel's (1035-1110, Rome) *'Arukh*, published by A. KOHUT, *Aruch Completum* (1878-1892; repr. New York 1955), s.v.; Makhir b. Abba Mari's (14th century?, Spain?) *Yalqut Makhiri Psalms*, published by S. BUBER (1899/1990; repr. Jerusalem, 1963) to Ps 20,7.

⁽⁵⁾ Margulies lists the first two: Constantinople, 1512 and Venice 1545.

⁽⁶⁾ MARGULIES, Introduction, 5:xxxiv. The midrash itself was compiled, according to Margulies, no later than the mid-5th century, while the essential part of it was already edited at the end of the 4th century.

mata', *qarta'*) was corrected to that found in the manuscripts (*qarta'*, *qarta'*, *qarta'*), rather than vice versa. The assumption being made is that the text of the first and second printed editions, which contain the reading *mata'*, reflects first-century Palestinian Aramaic which used both terms, *mata'*, and *qarta'*, interchangeably. In fact, however, it is far more likely that underlying these 16th-century European printed editions (the only witness for *mata'*) is a European *Vorlage*, which would thus reflect the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud with which the European scribes were familiar. In this common scribal phenomenon, Palestinian Aramaic was often leveled to Babylonian Aramaic⁽⁷⁾. The case of *mata'* in *LevR* probably reflects this process.

Exodus Rabbah 9.7 (not 9.4)

Basser's second proof of first-century Palestinian Aramaic is from a story in *ExodR* 9.7 in which the word *mata'* appears. When Moses, before Pharaoh and his magicians, turned his staff into a serpent, the magicians said to him: "Are you bringing straw to 'Afarayim?!" (i.e., Are you bringing sorcery to Egypt?! Egypt is the home of sorcery!) Moses replied: "Take your vegetables to the place [*mata'*] of vegetables". (Precisely to the place of magic, where such things can be appreciated, do I bring my magic.)

Although the story is paralleled in the Babylonian Talmud (*Men* 85a), Basser thinks that this work was not the source for the Palestinian *ExodR*, since (a) the incidence of *mata'* in *LevR* does not require us necessarily to see a Babylonian origin for the word, and (b) the story preserves a saying about the Palestinian (Galilean) town of 'Afarayim. Therefore the source was the Palestinian *ExodR*, thus supplying proof of *mata'* in JPA.

Once again the reasoning and methodology are problematic. The reasoning of (a), that *mata'* was used in *ExodR* because it appears in *LevR*, is circular. We do not in fact know that the word appears in *LevR*. That is what Basser tries (and in my opinion, fails) to prove.

Basser's methodology in (b) is unsatisfactory on several grounds. (1) Why assume that a saying about a particular place

(7) See now Y. SUSSMAN's remarks in *Mehqarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmudit: Yom 'Iyun le ... Sha'ul Lieberman* (Jerusalem 1983) 16.

cannot be adopted and used away from ^{that} place? Obviously, in instances such as this, distance must be measured not in geographic, but in cultural, terms. Even if the saying "That's like bringing straw to 'Afarayim" originated in Palestine, it could have been used in Babylonia (with a linguistic change from Western Aramaic *qarta'* to Eastern Aramaic *mata'*). The ties between the Palestinian and Babylonian academies would justify this supposition. Just as in America we adopt the English saying "That's like bringing coals to Newcastle", so too the Amoraim in Babylonia could have adopted the Palestinian equivalent "That's like bringing straw to 'Afarayim". (2) In any case, it seems that the saying about 'Afarayim and the following saying ("Take your vegetables to the place [*mata'*] of vegetables") constitute two separate and distinct sayings. This is clear from the two sources Basser quotes, *GenR* 86.5 (not 86.6) and *Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, *Va-ʿerah* (not *Va-Yerah*) 12, which, in a different context (Joseph's magic in Egypt), contain only the first saying. In other words, even if " 'Afarayim" were a saying that originated and was used exclusively in Palestine, it would imply nothing about the second (*mata'*) saying. (3) In fact, there are two indications that "Take your vegetables to the place [*mata'*] of vegetables" is a Babylonian saying. First, in *bMen* it is preceded by "people say", [*amri ʿenaše*] indicating, as is common in the Babylonian Talmud, a Babylonian expression. Second, the language of the saying, aside from *mata'*, is almost certainly Eastern Aramaic. The verb *šeqal* (*l|hemata' de-yarqa' yarqa' šeqol*) is probably exclusive to Eastern Aramaic (the Western equivalent is *nsb*). The single occurrence of it in M. Sokoloff's *Dictionary* refers to *yBM* 9c where, however, MS Escorial reads *nsb*. Sokoloff notes to the entry *šql*: "Probably corrupt from Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic" (8). See also Y. Kutscher's remark that this verb is possibly to be found only in Eastern Aramaic (9). (4) Lastly, it is surprising that Basser would give priority to *ExodR* (first part), a late 9th-century or later midrash (10) over the

(8) *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat Gan 1990) 565, s.v.

(9) "The Language of the 'Genesis Apocryphon'", *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 4 (1957) 14; reprinted in *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* (ed. Z. BEN-HAYYIM et al.) (Jerusalem 1977) 16.

(10) See A. SHINAN, *Midrash Shemot Rabbah, Chapters I-XIV* (Jerusalem 1984) 23.

Babylonian Talmud. Clearly, the source of this story in *ExodR* was the Talmud⁽¹¹⁾.

But even if *ExodR* were the source of the *mata'* statement, we may wonder how a 9th-century work can provide evidence of first-century vocabulary. As with the case of *LevR*, but even more so in the case of *ExodR*, we are centuries removed from the time Jesus lived and spoke. These works were, after all, redacted centuries after his time⁽¹²⁾. Several scholars have recently made this point about rabbinic writings and they thus turned to Qumran as more closely representing the language of first-century Palestine⁽¹³⁾. Bassier's two proofs from Qumran would then seem, on the face of it, to be methodologically more valid, especially in the case of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which is dated to 100 BCE - 70 CE⁽¹⁴⁾.

Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) 2.23

A line which is very unclear was transcribed by N. Avigad and Y. Yadin as *w'zl Prk mt lprwyn*. In their Hebrew translation, Avigad and Yadin do not translate *mt*, rendering the line with cautionary question marks *whlk Prk mt (?) lprwyn (?)*, and in their English version they do not translate the problematic words at all ("And he went to...")⁽¹⁵⁾. In his edition of the work, J. Fitzmyer noted several different proposed readings and interpretations, none of which see *mt* = region/land. Fitzmyer himself, however, does read it that way: "He went through the length of the land of Parvaim"⁽¹⁶⁾. While B. Jongeling et al. followed Fitzmyer they noted, "Neither the reading nor the meaning of these words [*Prk mt*] can be

⁽¹¹⁾ So too Shinan, ad loc.

⁽¹²⁾ The chronological discrepancies between first-century Palestine and the proffered prooftexts surface again when Bassier attempts to show that there was a Jewish law/custom obliging cities to bury their dead. Bassier refers to *bMQ* 27b and *bKet* 17a. However, the proof found in these sources dates to the third and fourth centuries (R. Judah in the name of Rav and R. Hamnuna).

⁽¹³⁾ See FITZMYER, *A Wandering Aramean*, 8 and notes for sources.

⁽¹⁴⁾ J. A. FITZMYER, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1* (Rome 1971) 15. The scroll itself has been dated between 73 BCE and 14 CE: G. BONANI et al., "Radiocarbon Dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls", *Atiqot* 20 (1991) 30.

⁽¹⁵⁾ *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem 1956) 40, 34 (Hebrew numbering), transcription column II.

⁽¹⁶⁾ *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1*, 94-95.

ascertained" (17). More recently Milik suggested another reading, which does not have *mt* (18). Similarly, Muraoka does not seem to accept Fitzmyer's reading (19). Lastly, Elisha Qimron, who is working on a new edition of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, does not see *mt* in the line. "The reading *Prk mt* is very doubtful. Only the first and last letters are clear; the other letters are almost impossible to identify. An additional difficulty is the lack of space between the two words (if we read *k* and not *n*)". Because of the combined difficulties of legibility, context, grammar, and identification of the place-name, Qimron does not accept the reading *mt*, and for these reasons he adds, "even if the reading *mt* were certain, I would not translate it as *mata'* = city" (20). In sum, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which derives from the time of Jesus and thus can theoretically furnish proof of his language, says nothing about *mata'*. The word is not there.

Basser, however, accepts Fitzmyer's reading of *mata'* in the text. But, once again, his reasoning is problematic. As was the case with *ExodR*, here too he accepts *mata'* because the word appears in *LevR*. However, we do not know that the word in fact appears in *LevR*. That is what needs to be proved. Basser's other reason for accepting Fitzmyer's reading is that "nothing else makes sense". S. Kaufman, on the other hand, comments on Fitzmyer's reading: "Aside from [*mt*] being a unique occurrence in Western Aramaic, this reading is difficult to support both orthographically and syntactically" (21).

Similar to the case of the *Genesis Apocryphon* are the readings in two Qumran fragments recently made by K. Beyer (after Basser's article appeared). According to Beyer, 4QAmram^c (= 4Q457) line 10 reads *wmn m't lm't*, "and from region to region", and 4QEnGiants^b ii 22 (= 4Q530) reads *mnd'] 'tr' wm't*, "knowledge of the place and land" (22). However, it seems to me that these

(17) B. JONGELING – C.J. LABUSCHAGNE – A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, *Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden 1976) 86.

(18) J.T. MILIK – M. BLACK, *The Books of Enoch* (Oxford 1976) 41, n. 1.

(19) See his discussion of the use of *lamed* in "Notes on the Aramaic of the *Genesis Apocryphon*", *RevQ* 8 (1972) 38-39.

(20) Personal communication, July 6, 1992.

(21) *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 71.

(22) *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*. Ergänzungsband (Göttingen 1994) 90 R7, line 10; 120 G9, line 22.

readings are not at all certain. The relevant parts of the MSS are not clear, and do not support Beyer's readings⁽²³⁾. In fact, in 4QEnGiants^b Beyer originally did not read *m't*², nor does Milik, nor F. Garcia Martinez, nor J. C. Reeves⁽²⁴⁾, and in 4QAmram^c neither Garcia Martinez nor Eisenman-Wise reads *m't*⁽²⁵⁾.

Testament of Levi

The Cairo genizah fragment of the *Testament of Levi*, according to the published text, contains the word *m't* three times, two of which occur in the expression *m't(°) wmdynh (mat umedinah)*, "land and country"⁽²⁶⁾.

⁽²³⁾ See the photographs (PAM 43.567 and 568) in the microfiche edition of the Israel Antiquities Authority, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche* (ed. E. TOV with the collaboration of S.J. PFANN) (Leiden 1993) fiche 78; or in R. H. EISENMAN – J. M. ROBINSON, *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Washington 1991) vol. 2, plates 1515 and 1516.

⁽²⁴⁾ J. C. REEVES, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (Cincinnati 1992) 58. See pp. 51-56 for a discussion of the dating of the Book of Giants, which keeps getting earlier. Milik had decided on ca. 125-100 BCE, F. GARCIA MARTINEZ, *Qumran and Apocalyptic* (Leiden 1992) 113-115, had suggested mid-second century BCE, and Reeves now pushes back the date to possibly before 225-175 BCE.

⁽²⁵⁾ K. BEYER, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen 1984) 265. J. MILIK, "Turfan et Qumran: Livre des Géants juif et manichéen", *Tradition und Glaube: Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn* (ed. G. JEREMIAS et al.) (Göttingen 1971) 117-127, text on 122; J. MILIK, *The Books of Enoch* (Oxford 1976) 305. F. GARCIA MARTINEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden 1994; original Spanish ed. 1992) 261, 274. See also J. A. FITZMYER – D. J. HARRINGTON, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (Rome 1978) 74. R. H. EISENMAN – M. WISE, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesburg UK 1992) 153. E. Qimron agrees that Beyer's reading of *m't* in 4QAmram and 4QEnGiants is not certain (personal correspondence, August 22, 1995). BEYER, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 210, dates 4QAmram to the first half of the 2nd century BCE at the latest. Regarding Beyer's readings, see S. F. Bennett's review of Beyer's first volume (*Maarav* 4/2 [1987] 243-260, esp. 250-256), in which several unsubstantiated readings are called into question.

⁽²⁶⁾ Text: R. H. CHARLES, *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Oxford 1908) Appendix III, p. 245, line 15 and p. 256, lines 6-7, 20-21; BEYER, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 195 and 206. These readings have been confirmed by a rereading of the text by J. C. GREENFIELD – M. E. STONE, "Remarks on the Aramaic Testament of Levi from the Geniza", *RB* 86 (1979) 214-230 (includes a photograph of the fragment). Translation of the fragment by these authors, based on their rereading, is

The genizah text, of course, is late for our purpose (probably not earlier than the 10th century), and, as has been noted, "there is no doubt ... that it was not transmitted in its original form" (Kutscher), and "it has been tampered with" by scribes (Greenfield)⁽²⁷⁾. Greenfield and Stone add that the increasing publication of Qumran Aramaic fragments confirms Kutscher's initial conclusion⁽²⁸⁾. The genizah fragment of *TestLevi*, therefore, by itself cannot stand as evidence of first-century Palestinian Aramaic.

However, we do have an Aramaic fragment of *TestLevi* from Qumran (4QTL^{Levi} ar^a = 4Q213) which corresponds to, and confirms, one of the *mata'* readings in the genizah text (Charles, p. 256, lines 6-7) — it reads *lkl mt wmdynh*⁽²⁹⁾. Basser cites this text indirectly through the *Preliminary Concordance* of the Qumran material⁽³⁰⁾ and concludes that it "shows that *mat* = *medina*, 'city' precisely in first-century Palestinian Aramaic". But is *TestLevi* to be dated to first-century CE Palestine? The fragment has been dated by Carbon-14 analysis to the 2nd century BCE (between 191 and 120 BCE), and by paleographic means to the late 2nd – early

included in H.W. HOLLANDER – M. DE JONGE, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden 1985) 457-469; our text on pp. 468-469. An earlier translation is in Charles's *APOT* 2:364-367.

⁽²⁷⁾ KUTSCHER, "The Language of the 'Genesis Apocryphon'", 34. Similarly, speaking of other Qumran materials that were paralleled in the genizah — the Damascus Document and Ben Sira — Kutscher noted that the genizah texts were heavily edited. "The Ben Sira fragments from Masada prove that the genizah texts were 'corrected' on every line". (*Erkhe ha-Milon he-Hadash le-Sifrut Hazal* 1 [Ramat Gan 1972] 20-21, n. 97). J. GREENFIELD, "Standard Literary Aramaic", *Actes du premier congrès international de linguistique sémitique et chamito-sémitique, Paris, 16-19 juillet, 1969* (éd. A. CAQUOT – D. COHEN) (The Hague-Paris 1974) 286, n. 33.

⁽²⁸⁾ "Remarks", 227.

⁽²⁹⁾ 4Q213, PAM 43.241. Fiche 68 in the microfiche edition of the Israel Antiquities Authority, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche*, and plate 1277 in Eisenman and Robinson's *Facsimile Edition*. The reconstructed (Qumran + genizah) fragment, was sent to me in advance of publication by the authors, M. Stone and the late J. Greenfield.

⁽³⁰⁾ *Preliminary Concordance to the Hebrew and Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Caves II-X* prepared by R.E. BROWN, J.A. FITZMYER et al. (privately printed in Göttingen, 1988) vol. 10, p. 2308. On Basser's translation "city", see above, n. 2.

1st century BCE⁽³¹⁾. The work itself is undoubtedly older — “on the evidence none of the Aramaic DSS are autographs”⁽³²⁾ — and Milik opts for a third- or even fourth-century date⁽³³⁾.

A similar situation obtains with two other “*mata*” texts (not relied on by Basser). First is the recently deciphered Aramaic text in Demotic (pAmh63, col. xvii), which contains the phrase *mt bbr*, i.e. *mt bbl*, “the land of Babylonia”⁽³⁴⁾. Most important from our point of view is that linguistically the text exhibits connections with “Western Aramaic in general and Galilaean Aramaic in particular”⁽³⁵⁾. Nevertheless, on chronological grounds we must rule out its use as representative of first-century CE Aramaic. According to Vleeming and Wesselius the papyrus dates from the 4th century BCE and is of Egyptian provenance⁽³⁶⁾. Steiner and Nims, while agreeing on the location, at first differed on the date and opted for the late second century BCE⁽³⁷⁾. In a revised view,

⁽³¹⁾ BONANI et al., “Radiocarbon Dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls”, 30.

⁽³²⁾ M.O. WISE, “Accidents and Accidence: A Scribal View of Linguistic Dating of the Aramaic Scrolls from Qumran”, *Studies in Qumran Aramaic* (Louvain 1992) [*Abr-Nahrain*, Supplement 3] 140, n. 57.

⁽³³⁾ *The Books of Enoch*, 24.

⁽³⁴⁾ R. C. STEINER – C. F. NIMS, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script”, *RB* 92 (1985) 71 twice, once as *mt b(r)br*. See also the translation of S. P. VLEEMING – J. W. WESSELIUS, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1985) 34. (I am indebted to E. Qimron for the reference to pAmh63.) A third instance of *mt*² may appear elsewhere in this papyrus; see S. P. VLEEMING – J. W. WESSELIUS, “Betel the Saviour”, *JEOL* 28 (1983-84) 135.

⁽³⁵⁾ R. C. STEINER – C. F. NIMS, “You Can’t Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat it Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script”, *JNES* 43 (1984) 98.

⁽³⁶⁾ “An Aramaic Hymn from the fourth century B.C.”, *BO* 39 (1982) 501; “Betel the Savior”, 111; *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 7. See also K.A.D. SMELIK, “The Origin of Psalm 20”, *JSOT* 31 (1985) 78, for an early date (“first half of the first millennium”).

⁽³⁷⁾ “A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2-6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script”, *JAOS* 103 (1983) 261. In regard to provenance, the papyrus was found near Thebes and bears a reference to “our home Syene”. Steiner believes that “a link with Elephantine seems unavoidable” (“The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy in a New Year’s Festival Imported from Bethel to Syene by Exiles from Rash”, *JAOS* 111 [1991] 363).

Steiner would now place the document at the beginning of the Hellenistic period⁽³⁸⁾.

The second text is a Qumran fragment (4Q536 = 4QBirth of Noah^d) recently published by Beyer⁽³⁹⁾. Although Beyer's reading of *bmtt*², "in the lands", is not 100 percent certain to me (the *b* is not at all obvious and the context is too broken to allow for sure reconstruction), it remains possible that we do have the word *mata*³ in this fragment. If this fragment is part of the Book of Noah (Beyer: "besser zu G[iganten]?"), it would be dated — i.e. the original composition — no later than the first half of the 2nd century BCE, and perhaps earlier, since this work is already incorporated in Jubilees⁽⁴⁰⁾.

4QTL^{Levi} ar^a, pAmh63, and 4QBirth of Noah^d thus reflect an Aramaic vocabulary that antedates Jesus by at least two centuries, and probably by more. Furthermore, these texts presumably represent the written, and not the spoken, dialect. Palestine at this time was linguistically a diglossia with the spoken language representing a different language than the written. "The authors and copyists of [the Qumran] texts were working in a different dialect ... than they spoke"⁽⁴¹⁾. The Aramaic of Qumran is in a dialect that Greenfield has termed "Standard Literary Aramaic". This is the language of *TestLevi* as it is of the written language of

⁽³⁸⁾ Personal communication.

⁽³⁹⁾ *Ergänzungsband*, 126 E6, line 6. PAM 43.575; *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche* (where the fragment is titled 4QAramaic C), fiche 79; *Facsimile Edition*, plate 1523.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ MILIK, *Books of Enoch*, 56, dates the work after the end of the 4th century or the first half of the 3rd century BCE (the date of Aramaic *TestLevi*), but before the Greek version of *TestLevi*. Garcia Martinez thinks that it might even predate the Aramaic *TestLevi* (*Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 3, n.9). Regarding the early dating of this and the other Aramaic Qumran fragments, note B.Z. Wacholder's conclusions that these texts are part of "the ancestral patrimony" of the sect and predate its founding, a point hinted at by Greenfield already in 1978. Wacholder opts for a 3rd-2nd century BCE date for most of them ("The Ancient Judaeo-Aramaic Literature [500-154 BCE]: A Classification of Pre-Qumranic Texts", *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* [ed. L.H. SCHIFFMAN] [Sheffield 1990] 273-274. Greenfield in his "Aramaic and Its Dialects", 35). My opinion about the uncertainty of seeing the word *mt* in the Birth of Noah fragment is shared by E. Qimron (personal correspondence, August 22, 1995).

⁽⁴¹⁾ WISE, "Accidents and Accidence", 136-138.

Qumran, and it is "a cardinal error for anyone to assume that it approximates the spoken Palestinian Aramaic of its period" (42).

Despite these distinctions of chronology and dialect, we may still ask whether the vocabulary of the three texts was not familiar to Jesus and his audience. May we not assume that the speakers of a later period understood the writings of an earlier period? After all, these texts — at least the 4Q fragments — continued in use in later times. The Qumran apocalyptic texts, it is now generally believed, antedate the existence of the sect, were incorporated into the sect's library, and were used and understood by the sect.

Perhaps so. But would Jesus have used the vocabulary of an early and a literary language in a spoken pun and have expected his listeners, whose knowledge of the literary dialect we cannot presume, to understand it? As noted above, Fitzmyer turned to the Qumran material as linguistic evidence for the language of Jesus, but he admits that "the discussion of the Aramaic background of the NT should be limited to ... Aramaic evidence of the period contemporary with or slightly prior to the composition of the Greek New Testament writings themselves. The ideal period would be from the first century and the beginning of the second up until the revolt of Simon ben Kosiba (132-135)" (43). To this important qualification we may add that of the spoken, as opposed to the written, dialect. On the basis of these two criteria, 4QTL^{vi} ar^a, pAmh63, and 4QBⁱBirth of Noah^d fail to supply linguistic evidence for Jesus' *ipsissima verba*.

In sum, the major problem in retroverting to Jesus' original speech lies in proving that the targeted vocabulary was part of the spoken lexical base of the time. In regard to *mata'*, this has not been shown. Either the evidence does not exist, or it derives from sources predating or postdating Jesus by centuries, or from a nonspoken

(42) GREENFIELD, "Standard Literary Aramaic", 286. Similarly in "Aramaic and Its Dialects", *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations* (Cambridge, MA 1978) 35-36, where Greenfield argues against using Qumran Aramaic (literary) as a means of uncovering the *ipsissima verba* (vernacular) of Jesus. On this issue, see also FITZMYER, *A Wandering Aramean*, 9, 72-74. P. Lapide has proposed a different sort of diglossia at work, in which Hebrew, the "High" language, was used for "religious" purposes, while Aramaic, the "Low" language was restricted to "secular" statements; "Insights from Qumran into the Language of Jesus", *RevQ* 8 (1975) 483-502.

(43) *A Wandering Aramean*, 5; see further pp. 8-9.

literary dialect. In fact, a review of the linguistic evidence will reveal that in Late Aramaic *mata'* belonged exclusively to the vocabulary of the eastern dialects; its equivalent in the western dialects was apparently *qarta'*.

II. Dialectal Location of *mata'* and *qarta'*

I. *mata'*

An examination of the various dictionaries and standard collections will show that *mt* is a commonly found word in Old and Official Aramaic⁽⁴⁴⁾. Some examples follow:

Fekherye: In this bilingual Assyrian-Aramaic inscription from 9th-century BCE Syria, *mt(h)* occurs three times (lines 3,5 and 23)⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Ashur ostrakon (7th century BCE, Babylon): *bmtkdy*, "in the region of Akkad"⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Nineveh (7th century BCE): *bmt bbšqn*, "in the region of Babshuqin"⁽⁴⁷⁾.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See J. HOFTIJZER – K. JONGELING, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden 1995) 706-707 (now replacing C.-F. JEAN – J. HOFTIJZER, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest*, 1965), and the sources to which reference is made. Not to be confused with the Samalian *mt* in the Hadad (*KAI* 214) and Panammu (*KAI* 215) inscriptions, which is to be translated as an adverb "always" or "immediately", or as an emphatic particle, "certainly", "indeed", (for the latter translation, add to Hoftijzer-Jongeling's references also J. TROPPER, "Sam'alisch *mt* 'wahrlich' und das Phänomen der Aphärese im Semitischen", *Or* 61 [1992] 448-453]. In I. N. VINNIKOV, "Slovar' Arameyskikh Nadpisey" (A Dictionary of Aramaic Inscriptions), which appeared in a series of articles in *Palestinskiy Sbornik* 3 [66] (1958) 171-216; 4 [67] (1959) 196-240; 7 [70] (1962) 192-237; 9 [72] (1962) 141-158; 11 [74] (1964) 189-232; 13 [76] (1965) 217-262, *mt* is at 11 [74] (1964) 205.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ A. ABOU-ASSAF – P. BORDREUIL – A. R. MILLARD, *La Statue de Tell Fekherye* (Paris 1982) 23-24.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ H. DONNER – W. RÖLLIG, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden 1962) no. 233. J. C. L. GIBSON, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford 1975) vol. 2, no. 20. *mt 'kdh* (thus) is also found in the inscription (7th-6th centuries) published by A. CAQUOT, "Une inscription araméenne d'époque assyrienne", *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris 1971) 9.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (Paris 1889) vol. 2, no. 31; L. DELAPORTE, *Épigraphes araméennes* (Paris 1912) 47-48, no. 30.

Adon papyrus (end 7th century BCE): *bmt*² (⁴⁸).

Saqqāra (5th century BCE): *bnbyh mt*² ..., *bmt nbyh* "in the land of Nbyh", *wmtk* (?), *mth zy* (?), *bmtwh*["in his place[s]" (⁴⁹).

Aḥiqar (5th century BCE): *mt*² (⁵⁰).

Bisitun (5th century BCE): *mt*², *bm[t hrwḥty* "in the land of Arachosia" (⁵¹).

In Old and Official Aramaic *mata*² appears fairly often. In Middle Aramaic (200 BCE - 200 CE) we have not found a trace, with the possible exception of 4QBirth of Noah^d at the beginning of this period. What is the situation in Late Aramaic?

In this stage of the language two dialects are obvious, and we find that *mata*² is consistently represented in the vocabulary of one of them (Eastern Aramaic), and is absent in the other (Western Aramaic). According to the dictionaries and databases, the word appears commonly in Syriac (including modern vernacular), Mandaic and Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic — all of the eastern branch. On the other hand, it does not appear in the western dialects. It is not found at all in the Palestinian Talmud (⁵²). In all aggadic midrashim that I could check, it appears but once — *LevR* 24.3, which we saw above is not the reading of the manuscripts and is incorrect. The word is also absent in Targum Onqelos, Targum Neofiti, and Targum Jonathan (Prophets) (⁵³). It is no wonder that

(⁴⁸) KAI no. 266; GIBSON, *Textbook*, vol. 2, no. 21; B. PORTEN – A. YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Jerusalem 1981-) 1:6 A1.1.

(⁴⁹) J. B. SEGAL, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqāra* (London 1983) nos. 2, 10a, 29, and 55a; PORTEN – YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 2:150 B 8.1, 2:168 B 8.9.

(⁵⁰) A. COWLEY, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1923) 213, line 36; PORTEN – YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 3:30.

(⁵¹) J. C. GREENFIELD – B. PORTEN, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version* (London 1982) lines 29, 60 (partially restored), 62 = PORTEN – YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 3:66-68. Restored readings in COWLEY, *Aramaic Papyri*, 252-253, lines 16, 17, 48; GREENFIELD-PORTEN, *Bisitun Inscription* and PORTEN-YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, lines 30 and 35.

(⁵²) Well before databases, J. LEVY, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* (Berlin 1924) s.v., noticed its absence in the Palestinian Talmud (not in JPA, as Basser has it), as did S. KRAUSS, *Qadmoniyot ha-Talmud* (Berlin-Vienna ²1923) 1/1:48, who noted its absence also in the midrashic literature.

(⁵³) KAUFMAN, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 161, for Onqelos

Sokoloff does not include *mata'* in his new dictionary of JPA. Nor does the word appear in F. Schultess's dictionary of CPA (*Lexicon Syropalaestinum*). It seems quite clear that in Late Aramaic the word is restricted to Eastern Aramaic⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Can we push this conclusion back a century or two to the time of Jesus? The dialect division between East and West is clear and pronounced in Late Aramaic. It may be that such a dialect division existed also earlier in Middle Aramaic. Some have argued for such a division in Official and even in Old Aramaic, and Ginsberg and Greenfield have classified Official Aramaic as an Eastern dialect⁽⁵⁵⁾. In a recent article, also arguing against the "*Stammbaum*" reconstruction of Aramaic dialectal history, D. Boyarin has concluded: "From the earliest period of Aramaic known to us, it

and Jonathan; for Neofiti, S. KAUFMAN – M. SOKOLOFF, eds., *A Key-Word-in-Context Concordance to Targum Neofiti* (Baltimore 1993).

(⁵⁴) This was already noticed by KAUFMAN, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 71, who shows the Akkadian origin (*mātu*) of the word. Two other presumed appearances of *mata'* must be ruled out of our discussion for both their late date and their suspect reading. (1) An Aramaic magical text from Oxyrhynchos (6th century CE) contains a line which, according to Beyer's reading, includes the phrase *wkl mt* (*Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, 367). However, the line is very unclear and the publisher of the text, F. Klein-Franke, cannot make it out with any degree of certainty. He reads *wglm̄t* with doubt and does not translate the line at all ("Eine aramäische Tabella Devotionis", *ZPE* 7 [1971] 47-52). Basing himself on Kutscher, Klein-Franke feels that the text is linguistically of Western Aramaic origin. (2) In the formulary of a *ḥaliṣah* document, as preserved in *Hilkhote Re'u* (circa 10th century; place unknown), the word *mata'* appears three times (ed. A. L. Schlossberg [Versailles 1886] 121). However, the word does not appear in the parallel in *Halakhot Gedolot* and, more importantly, a genizah fragment of the *ḥaliṣah* text has *qarta'* in place of *mata'*. N. Danzig notes in this regard that *qarta'* is the term that appears in Palestinian documents (*sheṭarot*) (*Halakhot Gedolot* [Jerusalem 1980] 2:145). For the genizah reading, see N. DANZIG, *Mavo' le-Sefer Halakhot Pesuqot* (Jerusalem 1993) 93, n. 120 to whom I am indebted for the reference.

(⁵⁵) The early dialect division of Aramaic has been argued in a series of articles by H. L. Ginsberg, E. Y. Kutscher, and J. Greenfield. See the discussion in FITZMYER, *A Wandering Aramean*, 70-71, and J. GREENFIELD, "The Dialects of Early Aramaic", *JNES* 37 (1978) 93-99 and the literature cited there. A. TAL, *Leshon ha-Targum li-Nevi'im Rishonim u-Ma'amadah bi-Khlal Nive ha-'Aramit* [= "The Language of the Targum of the Former Prophets and Its Position within the Aramaic Dialects"] (Tel Aviv 1975) Introduction, 30-32, provides a review of the debate to his time.

has been characterized by a continuum of dialects ... There seem to have been dialectal differences which were consistent from the Old Aramaic period through Imperial Aramaic into the dialects" (56).

Nevertheless, even if the dialectal division of Aramaic existed in the Middle Aramaic phase of the language, that does not mean that *mata'* would have been necessarily restricted to the presumed eastern dialects, thus excluding its use by Jesus. In a study of the morphological features of Qumran Aramaic, E.M. Cook has found that its isoglosses "range across the geographical spectrum from East [Hatran, Edessene, Palmyrene] to West ... Palestinian Aramaic continued to be open to waves originating from other dialect centers" (57). It is reasonable to assume that if this is true in morphology, it would be true in vocabulary. In fact, S. Kaufman has shown this to be the case in regard to Akkadian borrowings in Official Aramaic: "they are found in all groups and all genres ... Dialectal divisions solely on lexical grounds" cannot be made (58). It is thus possible that even if a word shows up later only in eastern dialects, it existed at an earlier stage in "western" JPA.

A different theoretical reconstruction, based on the *Stammbaum* model, would assume that the division between eastern and western dialects did not occur until the Late Aramaic phase. In this case the lexical base we find in Old and Official Aramaic would have continued into Middle Aramaic, JPA included. In such a reconstruction, *mata'* would have continued in use throughout Old, Official and Middle Aramaic (JPA included) and then would have been retained exclusively in eastern dialects.

Whichever hypothetical reconstruction one chooses, the facts in regard to *mata'* leave us with the large hole of Middle Aramaic (59). The word exists commonly in Old and Official Aramaic and then

(56) "An Inquiry into the Formation of the Middle Aramaic Dialects", *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns* (ed. Y.L. ARBEITMAN – A.R. BOMHARD) (Amsterdam 1981) 2:613-649; quotation on pp. 643-644.

(57) "Qumran Aramaic and Aramaic Dialectology", *Studies in Qumran Aramaic*, 16.

(58) *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, 157.

(59) *Mata'* in the Makter Phoenician inscription (KAI 145) is, as has been pointed out, a mistake for *maṭa'*, "below" (*qr' lm m'p mt'*, "read them from top to bottom"). See KAI 2:143 and G.A. COOKE, *A Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford 1903) 155.

again in Late Aramaic exclusively in eastern dialects. What happened in between? We do not know; there are no extant attestations⁽⁶⁰⁾.

With this conclusion we can return to the methodological issues of retroversion and ask whether it is sound to fill in the unknown as Basser has done. Using his approach we can just as well posit a different retroversion, this one employing the use of Hebrew **mot* (pl. *metim*), "person", and it would be just as wrong. The word is common in Biblical Hebrew and is also found in Amorite (proper name), Akkadian, Egyptian, Ugaritic and Ethiopic⁽⁶¹⁾. Perhaps it was in use in the Aramaic of Jesus' time. Or, if not, perhaps Jesus used the Hebrew word in a pun that was spoken in Hebrew or a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic ("You follow me; let the people bury the dead"). All things are possible. But it is the application of methodological rigor to our theories that turns the possible into the probable, with which we ought to be concerned⁽⁶²⁾.

2. *qarta'*

The discussion above on *Leviticus Rabbah* gave some indication that in Late Aramaic *qryh* (*qrth*?) may be the western equivalent for the eastern *mata'*. Yet, *qrt'* is commonly found in the Babylonian Talmud. A close examination of the evidence, however, would appear to invalidate, or at the least weaken, the evidence of the Talmud.

Qry/qryh commonly occurs in Old and Official Aramaic, as seen by a check of the entries in Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*.

In Middle Aramaic, Fitzmyer and Harrington list five occurrences (excluding reconstructions) from Qumran (4QpsDan,

⁽⁶⁰⁾ I exclude from consideration 4Q Birth of Noah. As said above, this text is dated to the beginning of, if not before, the Middle Aramaic period, and is thus much too early for our consideration. Furthermore, it represents (Greenfield et al.) Standard Literary Aramaic, a written dialect whose origins are in Eastern Aramaic.

⁽⁶¹⁾ W. VON SODEN, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden 1965-1981) 2:690, s.v. *mutu*. L. KOEHLER – W. BAUMGARTNER, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Leiden ³1974) 617.

⁽⁶²⁾ Another attempt at retroverting Matt 8,22 was made by M. BLACK, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford ³1967) 207-208: "Let those who waver [*metinin*] bury the dead".

5QNewJerus, 11QTgJob) and one from a later period, the En Gedi Synagogue inscription⁽⁶³⁾. This last reference can be supplemented by the Palestinian synagogue inscriptions in Aramaic found at Husefah, Bet Alpha (partially restored text), and Susyah⁽⁶⁴⁾. Several more instances of *qrt* in Qumran Aramaic can be found in the *Preliminary Concordance* and in Beyer's indexes⁽⁶⁵⁾. Rosenthal's *Handbook* shows the word in Old and Middle Aramaic (Palmyrene) and Late Aramaic of the western dialects (JPA, Samaritan Aramaic, Neo-Aramaic Ma'lula) and of Syriac⁽⁶⁶⁾. The 10th-11th century Samaritan dictionary (*Ha-Melis*), published by Ben-Hayyim, has it in Samaritan Aramaic for Hebrew 'ir⁽⁶⁷⁾. Nöldeke notes its appearance in Phoenician (in the place-name Carthage), CPA, and Neo-Aramaic Tur 'Abdin⁽⁶⁸⁾.

Qarta appears regularly in the Palestinian Talmud (twelve times) and in aggadic midrashim (fifty-one times), and it is the consistent translation of 'ir in Targum Onqelos and Targum Neofiti⁽⁶⁹⁾. In the Samaritan Targum (both manuscripts published by Tal), spot checks of several occurrences of 'ir always turn up a version of *qrth* as translation. Jewish divorce documents (in Aramaic) from 10th-11th century Israel also attest to the use of *qarta*⁽⁷⁰⁾.

⁽⁶³⁾ FITZMYER – HARRINGTON, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, indices. See also HOFTIJZER–JONGELING, *Dictionary*, 1037, s.v. *qrt*.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ J. NAVEH, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 1978) 66, 72, and 122. The En Gedi inscription is on p. 70.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ *Concordance*, 10:2392-2393. BEYER, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, vol. 1, 686; vol. 2, 409.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ *An Aramaic Handbook* (Wiesbaden 1967) vol. 2/2, glossaries. The occurrence of *qry*, however, in the Palmyrene bilingual tariff (COOKE, *A Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, 329, line 13) may transliterate, rather than translate, the Greek *χωρία*, which it parallels; see Cooke's note on p. 339.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ 'Ivrit ve-'Aramit Nusah Shomron (Jerusalem 1957) 2:545.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg 1910) 131.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Talmud and midrash according to the Bar-Ilan "Responsa" database. Targum Onqelos according to *Oṣar Leshon Targum 'Onqelos* (revised ed. M. KOSOVSKY) (Jerusalem 1986). Targum Neofiti: *A Key-Word-in-Context Concordance to Targum Neofiti* (above, n. 53). For the semantic range of *qarta*, see Y. SUSSMAN, "Ketovet Hilkhatit me-'Emeq Bet-She'an", *Tarbiz* 43 (1974) 106, n. 104; SOKOLOFF, *Dictionary*, 505-506, s.v.; and NAVEH, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 109.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ M. FRIEDMAN, "Yedi'ot Hadashot mi-Kitve ha-Genizah ha-

Balancing the appearance of *qarta'* in the western dialects is the word's common occurrence in the Babylonian Talmud. However, these attestations may not in fact provide evidence of the word in BTA, for of the many times that the word appears in the Talmud⁽⁷¹⁾, it is either: in a biblical quotation or an exegesis or other usage of a biblical place-name (*'Eruv* 53a, *San* 38a, *RH* 31b, *Ta'an* 29a, *Sheq* 15b, *BB* 78b, *Mak* 10a, *'AZ* 24b, *Hor* 10b, *Soṭ* 13a, *Zev* 118b, *Nid* 16b), an incorrect reading (*Qid* 16b: *yod qeret* for the place-name *ydqrt*⁽⁷²⁾; *San* 98a: *qarta'* for a censored *Romi*)⁽⁷³⁾, in a Palestinian — and not Babylonian — Talmud text (*Sheq* 15a), or in a quotation of a Western Aramaic or Official Aramaic speaker/writer: an interlocutor of R. Elazar b. Šadoq (*Suk* 44b)⁽⁷⁴⁾, Rabbi (*BM* 85a), R. Yoḥanan (*BB* 91b, cf. *Nid* 16b), Targum Jonathan to Isa 19,18 (*Men* 110a)⁽⁷⁵⁾, and put into the mouth of Sennacherib (*San* 95a) and Merodach-Baladan (*San* 96a), which probably reflects the talmudic editors' (or sources') perception of how these Babylonian kings would have spoken.

Of all the citations in the concordance, only seven would appear to be in the eastern dialect of BTA⁽⁷⁶⁾. These seven instances, however, share two characteristics which may invalidate them as evidence for BTA. First, each incident tells a story that took place in Palestine and concerns Palestinian personalities: the sons of

Qahirit", *Between Yaron and Ayalon* [Hebrew] (ed. D. GROSSMAN) (Ramat Gan 1983) 81 and 85, n. 47.

⁽⁷¹⁾ See Kossovsky's concordance, *ʿOṣar Leshon ha-Talmud*, 34:686 and 722.

⁽⁷²⁾ See Kossovsky's references (B. M. LEVIN, *ʿOṣar ha-Geonim*, vol. 9: *Qiddushin* [Jerusalem 1939] 19 and 207), p. 722, and *bTa'an* 23b-24a and 21b.

⁽⁷³⁾ See R. RABBINOVICZ, *Diqduqe Soferim*, ad loc.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Or Elazar b. Isaac (A. HYMAN, *Toledot Tannaim we-Amoraim* [London 1910] 1:184). In any case, the matter discussed — Sabbatical laws regarding the man's field — shows that the dialect used was that spoken in Palestine.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ In the talmudic text, R. Joseph, head of a Babylonian academy, quotes an anonymous Targum. For its identification as Targum Jonathan (Prophets), see P. CHURGIN, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven 1927) 13-14. The Palestinian composition of this Targum has been demonstrated by A. Tal in his *Leshon ha-Targum*.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Kossovsky, p. 686, s.v. *le-qiryeta'* (*Ber* 18b, *Beṣ* 9b, *Nid* 24a; *'Eruv* 28b, *Pes* 3b, *Yev* 105a, *BB* 98b).

R. Ḥiyya, R. Jeremiah, Levi, R. Ḥanina, and Yoḥanan Ḥaqqoqa'ah⁽⁷⁷⁾. Second, in each case the word under discussion appears in precisely the same phrase, *nefaq le-qiryeta* or *qiryata* (bene R. Ḥiyya *nefoq le-qiryeta*, R. Yirmeyah *nefaq le-qiryeta*, Yoḥanan Ḥaqqoqa'ah *nefaq le-qiryeta*, Levi *nefaq le-qiryeta*, R. Ḥanina *nefaq le-qiryeta*), thus suggesting that we might be dealing with a frozen expression⁽⁷⁸⁾. If this is the case, the expression would not necessarily provide evidence for the vocabulary of the dialect. These two qualifications — the Palestinian environment and the similar phrasing — may indicate that the five different stories originated in the western Palestinian dialect and were transmitted, with certain frozen stock phrases, in BTA. In any case, at the very least, it would seem that the apparently overwhelming evidence for *qarta'* in BTA is questionable.

The only "eastern" dialect, then, in which *qarta'* makes an unequivocal appearance is Syriac, where it is commonly found⁽⁷⁹⁾. However, Syriac is not a pure eastern dialect. Both its vocabulary and its grammar have been shown to share elements common to western dialects⁽⁸⁰⁾. Its place in a schematic of dialect relationships would put it somewhere between the eastern and western dialects of Late Aramaic.

(77) R. Ḥiyya's sons, R. Jeremiah and R. Ḥanina, emigrated to Palestine (*bSuk* 20a, *bKet* 75a, and *bMen* 79b respectively). On Yoḥanan Ḥaqqoqa'ah, see HYMAN, *Toledot*, 2:687.

(78) Perhaps indicative of the frozen character of the phrase is the fact that *nefaq le-qiryata'* may have the specific meaning of "to go to the fields". See S. Krauss's discussion in *Qadmoniyot ha-Talmud* 1/1:44-45, and note that in the two Palestinian parallels (*pNid* 3.2 50c end // *bNid* 24a; *pBeṣ* 1.4 60c // *bBeṣ* 9b) to the stories of R. Ḥiyya's sons, the text reads *le-bar* (*le-bara'*) ("to the fields", "to the country") instead of *le-qiryata*. See J. N. EPSTEIN, *Mavo' le-Nusah ha-Mishnah* (Jerusalem 1964) 16. On *bar*, see the dictionaries and D. Goldenberg in *In the Margins of the Yerushalmi* (ed. J. NEUSNER) (Chico, CA 1983) 131.

(79) R. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford 1879) s.v. *qr'*.

(80) Vocabulary: TAL, *Leshon ha-Targum*, 215 (= p. xi of the English summary). Grammar: BOYARIN, "An Inquiry". "[Syriac] belongs, in my opinion, both from the geographic and linguistic points of view, in an intermediate position between East and West" (GREENFIELD, "Aramaic and Its Dialects", 37).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would appear that within Late Aramaic *malā* is restricted to the eastern dialects, and *qarīā*, its equivalent, to the western dialects. (Syriac, a dialect sharing western and eastern features, has both words.) This confirms our earlier findings regarding the question of Jesus' *ipsisima verba*. Chronological and dialectal evidence thus converge to indicate that *malā* was not part of the vocabulary of spoken JPA and would not likely have been used by Jesus.

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