HEBREW-GREEK EQUIVALENTS FOR THE NETHER WORLD, ITS MILIEU AND INHABITANTS, IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I: THE PSALTER.¹

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1. The commonest of the technical terms for the underworld in the OT is הַיּוֹם הַיּוֹם.² a word of uncertain etymology which is found sixty-six times, and of which all but fifteen of these occurrences are in poetical passages.³ Accordingly we shall consider this term first and, for facility of reference, follow with the synonyms in alphabetical order.

In the Psalter הַיּוֹם is rendered uniformly by ὠδής,⁴ including 18(17):6, the parallel to which in 2 Sam. 22:6 renders the Hebrew, identical in both cases (יַיָּם) by ὠδής θανάτου. Neither of the current texts of this Psalm can be taken as original: the probability lies with 2 Sam. 22, later adapted for liturgical use in the Psalter. Both however have suffered textually in the course of transmission and may be independent recensions of an earlier textform. Similarly the marked differences between the Greek versions of 2 Sam. 22 and Ps. 18(17), conveniently set out in parallel columns alongside the Hebrew

¹ Abbreviations. The standard lexicons, Brown-Driver-Briggs and Koehler-Baumgartner (both currently under revision) are cited respectively as BDB, KB; the Hebrew Grammar of Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley as GK; the LXX Concordance of Hatch-Redpath as HR; early versions and learned journals by the recognized abbreviations; standard commentaries (Psalms unless otherwise indicated) by the name of the author, with number of volume following (i, ii). Scriptio plena, -defectiva, hapax legomenon, respectively as s.p., s.d., a.l.; noun masc., -fem. as n.m., n.f. PBV = English Prayer Book Version, based on the Great Bible of 1539; AV = English Authorized (King James) Version (1611); RV = English Revised Version (OT 1885); EVV = AV & RV; RSV = American Revised Standard Version (1952); NEB = New English Bible (Oxford & Cambridge Univ. Presses) O.T. & Apoc. 1970. t. = times. α = Aquila; θ = Theodotion; σ = Symmachus. (A fresh investigation of these sigla is imperative.)

² S.d. in Gen. 37:35; 44:29, 31 (all with ἵλιος locale); 1 Ki. 2:6; Is. 7:11 (with ἵλιος loc.); Ez. 31:15, 16, 17 (all with ἵλιος loc.); Job 17:16 = 9 t.

³ Prose passages are Gen. 37:35(E); 42:38; 44:29, 31 (all J); Num. 16:30, 33 (JE); 1 Ki. 2:6, 9; Is. 7:11; Ezek. 31:15, 16, 17; 32:21, 27; Eccl. 9:10.

in Vannutelli’s Synopsis,⁵ point equally to the Greek as independent translations.

Although the strictly grammatical constructions εἰς ἀδήν, ἐν ἀδήν are found (the former in Is. 14:15; Job 7:9; 17:16; Ps. 15:10; with art. εἰς τὸν ᾧ’ in Ps. 9:18; 138:8; Prov. 5:5; and the latter in Job 14:13; Ps. 48:15; Eccl. 9:10; with art. ἐν τῷ ᾧ’ in Ps. 6:6, 48:15; also πρὸς τὸν ᾧν in Is. 28:18, and παρὰ τὸν ᾧν in Ps. 140:7), the much commoner construction is that of the genitive after εἰς and ἐν,⁷ scil. οἴκον, -ος οἴκους, -οςς, -οςς. The usage is not a ‘Septuagintalism’, but is found from Homer onwards as ‘classical and correct Greek, “Ἀδής being firstly a person; the abode of Hades, so, e.g. Aesch. Agam. 1528, μεθών ἐν “Ἀδήνι μεγαλαυχεῖτο.”’⁸ Cp. also for Sheol as the house of the dead Job 17:13, ᾧς μου ὁ οἶκος (ὑπὲρ Θεοῦ).

2. ἀναστάσις n. f. (?); α.λ. in Psalter (88:12), otherwise only in Wisdom Literature: Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Prov. 15:11; 27:20 (Qere). Beer adopts it as original reading, following LXX ἀνάπλασις for MT נבון, in Job 41:14 (but see, per contra, Dr. & Gray, phil. n., Pt. II, 341).

LXX, uniformly, = ἀνάπλασις, except Job 31:12, which, paraphrasing the Hebrew, affords no proper equivalent. Dhorne takes LXX ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν μερῶν = MT נבון וַעֲשָׂרָה ‘even unto Abaddon, to the very bottom’. This however is a doubtful equivalent (not recognized by HR). The influence of the Hebrew term might more appropriately be discerned in the verb ἀνάπλασις, which closes the verse.

The context in Ps. 88(87):12 hardly justifies an adumbration of the later distinctions in Sheol such as some have discerned in the term. Here it is simply one of a quadruplicity of epithets for the underworld, viz. ἁπάντης, ἀναστάσις (v. 12); ὑψιστὸς, ἐνωπίως, the latter a.λ. in OT (LXX ἐν γῇ ἐπιλεξομένῳ).

3. ἅπαντι n.m. (verb ἅπαντι not found in OT; cp. Arab. ’asala, ‘disappear’, ‘set’ [of the sun]). The term occurs twice in Psalter (not certainly of Sheol, though in Job 10:22 the context clearly denotes the underworld); otherwise only Job 3:6, 10:22 (bis), 23:17, 28:3, 30:26, Is. 29:18. Psalms passages are as follows:

(1). 11(10):2. ἅπαντι ἑξάδες ἐν Σκοτομήν. Σκοτομήν, also the reading of θ’,⁹ is a.λ. in LXX, but is the reading of (1) α

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6 20 t. in all OT, of which only three are in Psalter: 30:18; 54:16; 113:25. Also extra-canonically, Tob. 3:10; Baruch 3:11, 19.
7 Job 11:8; Is. 38:18 (bis); also extra-canonically Sir. 14:16: 17:27; 41:4.
9 σ’, ἐν ζόφοι.
in 1 K. (1 Sam.) 30:17 (Heb. יִשָּׁר), where LXX (ἕωσινφόρος) and MT are at variance, and in Job 28:3 (LXX σκοτία, MT בְּשֵׂא לְתָךְ); (2) σ’ in Prov. 20:20, γεν σκοτει. In 11(10):2 for LXX ἐν σκοτιῃ the ς reading is ὡς ἐν ὄρφῳ.


4. יִרְס n.f.; occasionally (e.g. Gen. 13:16) masc. 2407 t. in OT. The analogy of Ugaritic, which employs arš as a name for the abode of the dead, has reopened the question of the use of יִרְס in this sense in OT, a matter on which attention had already been focused by Akk. ersetu of the nether world. Tromp,9a after citing examples of a similar use in Ugaritic, adds a number of passages in which it is claimed that יִרְס, in varying degrees, may relate to the regions beneath the earth rather than to its surface only (op. cit., 23–46). As our present concern is with Greek equivalents, we list the passages below and refer the reader to Tromp’s volume for detailed discussion; as will be observed, LXX renders uniformly by γῆ.

1. 7:6. // ἡμαμέν. LXX: εἰς γῆν... εἰς χοῦν.
2. 22(21):30. // ἡμαμέν. LXX: τῆς γῆς... τὴν γῆν.
4. 61(60):3. יִרְס הַפִּקָּע ‘from the edge of the nether world’, so Tromp (p. 37), following H. Schmidt (Die Psalmen, Tübingen, 1934), but the present writer regards this exegesis as doubtful. LXX: ἀπὸ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς.
9. 141(140):7. This passage is hardly relevant, as יִרְס is contrasted with לֵאָשׁ ρ.’
11. 147(146):6. יִרְס לְמָאָר בְּשֵׂא לְתָךְ (γῆ). LXX: (ὁ κύριος) ταπεινῶν δὲ ἀμαρτωλοὺς ἐξω τῆς γῆς.
12. 148:7. Again the term, in its present context, must be regarded as a dubious reference to Sheol. At most it may bear undertones of the primitive cosmogony in its juxtaposition with ψυχή and τολμή. At the same time it

should be borne in mind that terms may persist in common usage without reference to, or even any knowledge in the user, of their derivation and original signification, especially terms deriving from proper names, as e.g. ‘boycott’, ‘sandwich’, ‘browderize’, ‘chauvinistic’.

5. בָּר n.f. 37 t. OT, mostly Hexateuch (29 t.); otherwise only Prov. 5:15, 23:27; Cant. 4:15; and twice in Psalter, viz. 55(54):24, 69(68):16, where alone the usage is of Sheol. LXX renders all occurrences by (τὸ) φρέαρ, anarthrously in Pss.

6. רָב n.m. 65 t. OT, including Pss. = 7 t. As with preceding (בר), derivation uncertain; neither BDB כי, or KB כי II satisfactory. More plausible is הר, ‘eat’, hence ‘swallow up’. Probably both and רָב originally from biliteral √br, ‘a variation of orthography and dialect’. As a synonym of Sheol the usage is late and poetical, always without article. Pss. passages are as follows.


(2). 28(27):1. רָבך. LXX, also α’, σ’, literally τοις καταβαίνουσιν εἰς λάκκον. See further on this verse, infra, paragraph 14.

(3). 30(29):4. רֹמַם. Read רֹמַם as required by Kt. On Qere (unlikely) see GK 69m. LXX, τῶν καταβαίνοντων εἰς λάκκον, followed by θ’, Syr, Vulg., preferable to Qere, α’, σ’. Targ., which postulate an inf. constr. רֹמַם, not otherwise found. Perowne (i, 291), though favouring Kt., draws attention to a similar anomalous inf. constr. רֹמַם, Job. 38:4. Cp. also רֹמַם, Ezra 3:12.


It is the nomen rectum רָבָם that presents the difficulty here, the derivation being uncertain. BDB (981a) places under √רומ, ‘make a din, or crash’, and renders, with some reservation, ‘pit of roaring (of waters ...)’. More probably the term is a.l. (as KB 935 f.) and a derivative of √רומ ‘be desolate, waste’. Dahood (i, 243), presumably following a line of interpretation similar to that of J. T. Milik (Biblica 38 (1957), 249 f.), which to the present writer appears highly artificial in this context, renders ‘pit of Destruction’ and connects with Sheol; similarly Tromp (68). Oesterley (i, 233), following Gressmann, emends to ריב. The passage may be construed quite naturally without any bearing on Sheol. Later exegesis, however, referred it to the deliverance of ‘the sinners of Israel and the righteous of the Gentiles’ from Gehenna by Michael and Gabriel (Yalqūt, 429, on Isa. 26:2). 10

10 Described by Herbert Loewe, who cites the passage in full, as a “striking piece of eschatology” and as “naive but sincere”. Essay “Pharisaism” in Judaism and Christianity,
(5). 88(87):5. רבי בד רומ קתביו καταβαίνοντον εἰς λάκκον. LXX: μετὰ τῶν καταβαίνοντον εἰς λάκκον. See also under רומ, infra.
(6). 88(87):7. תבושת יבש וסוח LXX: ἀδειντό μὲν λάκκοι κατωτάτω. See also under רומ, infra.
(7). 143(142):7. רומ וסוח ניב LXX: τοῖς καταβαίνουσιν εἰς λάκκον. In all the foregoing passages, LXX renders uniformly by λάκκος and, in conformity with the Hebrew, anarthrously; similarly α᾽ θ᾽ σ᾽ where extant.

7. קלليل 27 t. OT. BDB and KB construe the term as a compound, קל + ליל, ‘without worth, use, profit’, ‘ohne Nutzen’, and so most commentators. It is difficult to regard this etymology as other than artificial. קלב as a noun does not occur apart from this putative combination, though this is not, of course, conclusive of itself. Far more probable is Cheyne’s view.11 Following Lagarde, he derives the term from קלב, קלב + ליל, ‘no rising up’, hence of Sheol as ‘the land of no return’, but originally the name of a goddess of vegetation, hence of the underworld, a view favoured by G. R. Driver,12 and jointly by F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman. There are three occurrences of the term in the Psalter:

(1). 18(17):5. קלב ליל קלב // נני. The context here is in full accord with Cheyne’s view. LXX: ὁδύνας θανάτου; // 2 Sam. 22:6, where Hebrew identical, LXX: σκληροτήθες θανάτου.
(2). 41(40):9. Here the term occurs as nomen rectum of קלב, where incantation appears to be indicated, as A. Guillaume (Prophecy and Divination, London, 1938), who notes the presence in the previous verse of ‘two words of dubious associations with the occult’, שד ה and באת (34, cp. 279, 284). G. R. Driver (JTS 43 (1942), 154) points nomen regens קלב, but MT is probably correct and is followed by LXX, λόγον παράνομον = קלב קלב קלב; α᾽ θ᾽, λόγος ἀποστασίας; σ᾽, λόγος παράνομος.
(3). 101(100):3. The Hebrew here is identical with the preceding passage, the Psalm, like 41(40) originally an anti-magical formula, representing in its present form an adaptation to liturgical usage. In Ps. 101(100):3, LXX renders πράγμα παράνομον, omitted in the original hand of Cod. B.

It would appear that in (2) and (3) LXX recognizes no connexion of the term with the underworld. Undoubtedly in קלב we have a relic of ancient Semitic mythology (as tehom, tannim(-n), leviathan, rahab), and it is probable that Barton is correct in conjecturing that ‘Belial was an old name for Sheol’ (loc. cit.), which would account for its becoming, at a later stage, when the

underworld was regarded as the abode of evil spirits, the name among extra-canonical writers of the prince of demons. Meanwhile, with the increasing tendency to emphasize the negative aspects of Sheol and its inhabitants consequent upon the teaching of the eighth-century prophets and its adoption by the Deuteronomist school, the term appears to have acquired the secondary sense of ‘worthlessness’, ‘lawlessness’, and to have been understood in this sense generally by the LXX translators, e.g., Deut. 13:13; Jud. 19:22; 20:13; 2 Sam. (2 K.) 16:7; 20:1; 23:5; 1 (3) K. 21(20); 10, 13; 2 Chr. 13:7, also α and ο’ in Prov. 19:28.


8. נקף n.f. ‘Silence’ as a characteristic of Sheol occurs continually in the Psalter and frequently in the Book of Job. The noun is found twice in Pss. Following Dahood’s interpretation of the term as ‘fortress’ in Ez. 27:32 (s.d.)13, Tromp14 so renders in the two Pss. passages, 94(93):17 and 115:17 (113:25), as does Dahood himself15 in the former instance. Despite Dahood’s advocacy, the rendering ‘silence’ is much more in keeping with the context in both of the above Pss. passages (where alone the term is found as presumably an abstract noun) than ‘fortress’. LXX unfortunately gives no help, as it translates by ἐκδής in both cases.

9. נקף n.f. A term found only in the Psalter, but unlike נקף having no reference to Sheol. Occurrences, included for comprehensiveness only with LXX equivalents, are as follows:

(1) 22(21):3. ἀνωτάτου; σ’, σγή.
(2) 39(38):3. LXX paraphrases, ἐταπεινώθη; α’, σιωπή ἐσίγησα; σ’, σγή ἐσιωπήθην.
(3) 62(61):2. Paraphrased υποταγήσεται16 (ὢ ψυχή μου).
(4) 65(64):2 (s.d.), where most authorities point נקף as read by LXX (πρέπει), Syr. Vulg. (Qal part. fem. נקף I, ‘be like’, ‘resemble’; ‘devise’, ‘intend’). α’ (σιωπήσα) and Jer. (silent), retain participial form, as against LXX, but derive from נקף II, ‘be silent’. The communio sententia is open to objection: see, e.g. phil. nn. in Perowne i, 520f., Briggs ii, 84f.

10. נקף n. (m). Ps. 83(82):2. נקף נקף LXX: μὴ σγήσης. Not of Sheol. Otherwise only Is. 62:6,7, in a context having no reference to Sheol, but which has a bearing on the skill of the LXX translators. There are two roots נקף: I = ‘be like’ ‘resemble’; II = ‘be silent, still’ (BDB 197f.; KB 212f). BDB

13 Biblica 45 (1964), 83 f.
15 In Vol. 2 of his Commentary on the Psalms, Anchor Bible, (1968), 349.
16 σ’: ἐρεαὶ.
places the three foregoing references under II, together with Isa. 38:10, which G. R. Driver (JTS 38 (1937) 46) has shown to be erroneous, the proper root being I, 'be like', as KB, s.v. יָ֣שֶׁר, 213b. LXX appears to have discerned this meaning in Is. 38:10, ἐν τῷ ὑπεύ θῶν ἤμερον μου; MT: ἡμερίᾳ πάρα. The question that now arises is whether in Isa. 62 the LXX translator distinguished the two different roots underlying יָשֶׁר, the one in v. 6 and the other in the v. following. It would appear so, as in 62:6 יָ֣שֶׁר לַחֶ֣ם נֶּֽפֶשׁ is rendered ως σωματίζωνται as if from יָשֶׁר II, 'be silent', whereas in v. 7 ἡμερίᾳ ἀναλήψασθαι is translated όσι ἐστι γὰρ ὡμίν δομιος, the adjective δομιος suggesting יָשֶׁר I, 'be like'.

11. The lexicons list יָשֶׁר (BDB as n.m., 'silence' under קֹדֶשׁ) in Ps. 56(55):1 (title) and Ps. 58(57):2, but neither is germane to our present purpose.

To complete this section, the verbal forms יָשֶׁר II, דּוֹמֵם I, ἀναλάβω I, all of silence, should be noted.


Ps. 49(48):13, 21. Both instances in refrain: יָשֶׁר, syncopated relative clause. The subject of this Ps. is the state of the dead, the title יָשֶׁר מְתָה having been appropriated to the end of the previous Ps. 17 The specific reference is to the ultimate destiny of man in common with 'the beasts that perish'. Already the Ps. as it lay before the Greek translator had been interpolated in the interests of a more advanced eschatology by the insertion of v. 16. Either the translator failed to grasp the Sitz im Leben of the refrain (vv. 13 and 21), or he followed in the steps of this Hebrew redactor and rendered these verses in the spirit of his own doctrinal interest:

(καὶ) ἀναθρωματῶν ἐν τιμῇ ὡν οὐ συνήκεν,
παρασυνεβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσιν τοῖς ἁνοίγοις καὶ ὁμοιώθη αὐτοῖς.

13. יָשֶׁר Pss. 4:5, 37(36):7, 62:6, 131(130):2. These passages have no bearing on the verb in relation to Sheol, nor the usage in Ps. 37(36):7, although this Ps. has undertones of the nether world. Ps. 30(29), a thanksgiving for deliverance from sickness and the attendant dread of Sheol, has the verb in the last verse (נָּה יָשֶׁר), where the context suggests a state of joyful praise in contrast to the prospective silence of the underworld. LXX aptly renders: καὶ οὐ μὴ κατανυσσόμεται here indicative of torpor, stupefaction, deep sleep. (On the meaning and usage of this verb, see the extended note in Sanday and Headlam, Romans (ICC), 314f.). It is unnecessary, as most recently Bardtke in BHS (Lib. Psalmorum, p. 25, יָשֶׁר), to suggest emendation of MT on the basis of LXX.

17 See below, s.v. יָשֶׁר 21(4).
18 α', συσπηθη; β', ἀποσπηθη; σ', παρασιωπηθη.
In Ps. 31(30):18 the verb is found in juxtaposition with לְשׁוֹן הָשָׁלֶד. RSV renders, correctly, ‘let them go dumbfounded to Sheol’, a conception similar to the preceding example, but LXX has the weak paraphrase καταχθέισαν εἰς ὅδου, the only instance in which דִּמְעָה is rendered by κατάγειν in the Greek version.

14. שִׁבָּה; 15. נֹשָׁא

Ps. 28(27):1 yields two verbs in parallelism, explicitly of Sheol: ‘My Rock, be not deaf (silent) (MT שִׁבַּה; LXX, μὴ παρασιωπήσης; α’, κοφεύσης; σ’, σιγής) to me, lest, if thou be silent (MT נוֹשָׁא; LXX παρασιωπήσης; α’, σιγής; σ’, ἡσυχασάντος σου) to me I become like them that go down to the Pit’. (RSV).

שִׁבַּה elsewhere in Psalter: 32:3; 35:22; 39:13; 50:3; 109:1. Of these only 39(38):13 is relevant, and this only indirectly, being in the context of a cry for recovery from sickness, ‘before I depart and be no more’ (v. 14).

נוֹשָׁא, less frequent in OT; otherwise in Psalter only 39:3; 107:29. Not of Sheol.


Sheol as a land of darkness and gloom is frequently encountered in the Psalms, as in Job. The locus classicus is Job 10:22, where even the light is as darkness. Although the text is not altogether in order, the import is clear: see Dr. & Gray, Job (ICC) ad loc. and phil. n., Pt II, 669). Marvin Pope, Job (Anchor Bi., 77), renders by oxymoron, ‘A land... which shines as darkness’ and cites Milton, ‘No light, but darkness visible’ (Paradise Lost, Bk. I, l. 63). LXX paraphrases the verse: οὐδὲ ἐστὶν φέγγος, οὐδὲ ὀράν ζωὴν βροτῶν.20

16. נוֹשָׁא n.m. OT 79 t., including 11 t. in Psalter, certainly of Sheol only 88(87):13; possibly 107(106):10, 14, and 139(138):11, 12.

(1). 88(87):13. נוֹשָׁא LXX: εἶν τῷ σκότει in // with נוֹשָׁא II (BDB), I (KB). Noun נוֹשָׁא is α.λ. in OT. Emendation (as Cheyne, Pss. (1904), ii, 60, and crit. n., 61 f.: נוֹשָׁא לְמִיק νב ‘in the land of sleepers’) unnecessary.

(2). 107(106):10–16. This passage is usually taken as a thanksgiving for deliverance from prison or captivity, but it is reasonable to see, in the mind of the Psalmist, some analogy to the final prison from which there is no release. In v. 10 the ‘redeemed of Jahveh’ (יְהוָה לִם נִשָּׁא) — the subjects of the Psalm — dwell in darkness (נֵֹם) and deathly gloom (נוֹשָׁא)21 (LXX, εἶν σκότει καὶ σκιά θανάτου) bound in affliction and in irons. Both terms re-

19 α’ σ’ render by σιωπᾶν.
21 On the term see under 23 below.
appear in v. 14 (Heb. and LXX as v. 10). The idea of imprisonment also occurs in Ps. 88(87):9 — MT שׁוּבָה אֲלֵה מָלֶךְ which LXX, παρεδόθην καὶ οὐκ ἔξηγο- 
ρεόμενην, Syr. and Vulg. interpret as יַעֲשֶׂה אָלָה𠐫ַשֶּׁה; σ’, φρουροῦμεν καὶ 
μὴ προερχόμενον.

(3). 139(138):8–12. In this passage Sheol is no longer beyond Jahveh’s reach;
its very darkness has become light. In vv. 11f. פְּנֵיה occurs in the first stichos 
of each verse as follows: v. 11a, פְּנֵיה פְּנֵיה; LXX: ἡ ἡμέρα σκότος καταπνισθεὶ 
με. V. 12a פְּנַי פְּנַי פְּנֵיה לְאֵל פְּנֵיה וּבַי LXX, literally, ὅτι τὸ σκότος οὐσ 
σκοτισθήσεται ἀπὸ σοῦ. σ’, οὔτε σκότος σκοτεινὸν ἐσται ὑπὲρ σέ.

17. פְּנַי n.f. 3 t. in Psalter; otherwise only Gen. 15:12; Is. 8:22; 50:10; 
Mich. 3:6 (cf. for MT פְּנַי).

(1). 18(17):12. יִצְוַת פְּנֵיה LXX: σκοτεινὸν ὕδατον; α’, σκοτασμὸς ὕδατον; 
σ’, γνώφωσις ὕδατον. Context here suggests a theophany. Allusion not to 
Sheol. LXX reflects MT. Some read, as // in II Sam. 22:12, יִצְוַת פְּנֵיה ‘a mass
of water’, but against this is the non-appearance elsewhere of פְּנֵיה. LXX σκό τος ὕδατον would suggest an original reading in II Sam. of פְּנֵיה, as in
Ps. 18.

(2). 82(81):5. לְכַלָּוָה פְּנֵיה. This expression is commonly interpreted
figuratively, in view of the antecedent יַעֲשֶׂה הַלַּיְלָה נְאָל as ‘lack of under-
standing’. The present writer would, however, regard the Ps. in its original
form as a condemnation of necromancy, emphasizing the nescience of the dead.
Accordingly, the darkness in which they walk is the darkness of the underworld.
LXX throws no light on the correct exegesis as it renders literally: οὐκ
ἐγνώσασαν ὕδατας συνήκαν, ἵνα σκότει διασπορέβουνται.

σκότος αὐτῆς, οὔτως καὶ τὸ φῶς αὐτῆς, but omits stichoi a and b, αὐτῆς
referring back to νός in the preceding verse. Cod. A omits only stichos b,
kai νος ὡς ἡμέρα φωτισθήσεται. The stichos under consideration (c) is com-
monly rejected as an interpretative gloss, but is so well attested that it must
have been incorporated in the text as it lay before the LXX translator. B’s
omission must be regarded as deliberate, and in keeping with its methodology,
i.e. the ‘exclusive’ principle in contrast with the ‘inclusive’ of Lucian,23 v. 12a,b
being omitted as redundant, and 12 c following naturally on 11 b.

18. פְּנֵיה n.m. OT only Is. 29:15; 42:16; Lam. 3:6 (= Ps. 143:3), and
Pss. 4 t.

(2). 88(87):7. In // with two further synonyms for the nether world, viz.

22 σ’, δομοῦν.
23 See, more fully, the present writer in JBL 82 (1963), 416–8.
3. 88(87):19. While the former stichos of this verse is straightforward, the latter, ἐν σκότεινος, has been a source of difficulty to translator and exegete from earliest times. MT reads: יִרְשֶׁת נַשְׁתָּה חֲרֵשׁ נַשְׁתָּה. NEB, reading מְשֹׁתְנָה with Syr. Jer. (notos meos abstulisti), ‘and parted me from my companions’ (so, with variations, AV, PBV, Oesterley) is unsatisfactory; RSV ‘my companions in darkness’ is better. More plausible is Dahood who, taking בְּשַׁדַּי as indicative of Sheol (as BDB, s.v. 365a) renders ‘my chief companion is the Darkness’ (Pss. ii, 302, and n., 307: cf. Tromp, 179, n. 12). LXX, reading ψηθμα and interpreting figuratively, renders: ἐμάκρυνας... τοὺς γυναῖκας μου ἀπὸ ταλαιπωρίας (σ’, σκοτασμόν).

4. 143(142):3 (= Lam. 3:6) וְנְסַפְּר וְנְסַפְּר לְךָ. LXX: ἐν σκότεινος.

19. רַחְמֵנוּ Ps. 140(139):11. a.l. in OT.

Special interest attaches to this term in that it is now paralleled in the Ugaritic mhmr, which has confirmed its putative connexion with Arab. hamara, ‘poured’, ‘pour out’, ‘pour down’, as Briggs ii, 506, BDB 243a, hence ‘place of pouring down’ (of flowing waters), ‘miry depths’; Perowne ii, 449: ‘floods of water’, as against Ibn Ezra, Qimḥi, ‘deep pits’. LXX, ἐν ταλαιπωρίας reflects, not as Cheyne (Pss. 1888), 354, 405 and Briggs, ad loc., reading πολὺς for π, ‘nets’ √ ρήμα III, i.q. Akk. kamaru, ‘net’, but יִשְׁמֶר II, Syr. kmr, ‘be gloomy, sad’. See, more fully, Tromp’s comprehensive discussion, with refs., op. cit., 54–56.

20. יִֽנְבְּר n.m. 161 t. OT. A term which has received renewed attention with the Ras Shamra discoveries (Mot). BDB distinguishes three usages of the term in OT: (1) ‘death as opposed to life’, a distinction which, it might be observed, is not universal among primitive peoples; (2) ‘death by violence as a penalty’; (3) ‘the state of death’ or ‘place of death’. Of the twenty-one occurrences of the term in the Psalter, it is only with (3) that we are here concerned.

1. 6:6. וְנְסַפְּר // לְךָּ בֵּית יִשָּׂרָאֵל. LXX: ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ... ἐν δὲ τῷ γόμῃ.


3. 9:14. וְנְסַפְּר כְּלָלָה. LXX: εἰ τῶν πυλῶν τοῦ θανάτου. See also (17) below.

4. 13(12):4. תֶּן (read †ף) נָעִיר נִנָּר נָעִיר. הרֹמא = constructio praegnans for תְּנָה, on which see GK 117r, n. 4. LXX brings out the sense admirably: φῶτισον τούς δραμαλμοῦντας μου, μήποτε ὑπνώσῃ εἰς θανάτον.

5. 18(17):5. וְנְסַפְּר כְּלָלָה // לְךָּ בֵּית יִשָּׂרָאֵל. Some commentators read רֶפֶם for יִשָּׂרָאֵל as 2 Sam. 22:5, assuming a copyist’s assimilation to רֶפֶם, the opening

24 Cp. e.g. W. H. R. Rivers, Psychology and Ethnology, (London, 1926), 40f.
word of the following verse. But see (18) below where the same combination reoccurs. LXX: ὀδύνες θανάτου; α', σκοτια θαν'; σ', τρόπεις θαν'.

(6). 18(17):6. ἀπέκτεινεν ἡ δόξα. LXX: παγίδες θανάτου. Only occurrence of ἡ δόξα in this sense in the Psalter, where the term occurs elsewhere 5t. (fem. in 141:9, otherwise always masc.).


(9). 49(48):15. πομάδοι τῆς γῆς. LXX, literally, θάνατος πομάδοι(ν)ει. Tromp (op. cit., p. 120) cites Ugaritic parallel from M. Pope (Job, Anchor Bi., 126). Cheyne's significant parallel from the Arabic Ḥamāsa should also be noted (Pss. 1888, 138).

(10). 55(54):5. εἰς τοὺς ἄγνοιας. LXX: δεσποινία θανάτου (readings singular); σ', μέριμναι φοβερά θανάτου. Some commentators omit the whole phrase, others γη only, as dittography.

(11). 55(54):16. τῶν οὐκ ἦσαν ἐν θανάτῳ ἠδραίωσιν. Text corrupt, as frequently in this Ps.; Kt. τοίοντω, 'desolations' (as RVm, RSVm) improbable, the word occurring elsewhere only in the place name ἰδραίωσις λεγ. 4t.; Qre γης = Hiph imperf. s.d. for ἡ γη (GK 746), 'beguile', and so 'come treacherously upon' (as Dr. Parallel Psalter, 155), the reading of the majority of the MSS and versions. Read probably, with Brüll, Cheese, BDB (674a, s.v. γης II 'conj. plausibly'), and others: εἰς τοὺς οὐκ ἦσαν ἐν θανάτῳ LXX: ἐλθότω θάνατος ἐπ' αὐτοῦς, καὶ καταβήσωσάν εἰς ἄδου ζωντες. α', ἐπάξει θάνατον... σ', αἰφνιδίως θάνατος ἐπέλθω αὐτοῦ.


(13). 68(67):21. The textual and exegetical problems attaching to this Ps. are well nigh insuperable, the extreme position being that of W. F. Albright, who explained the composition as a series of titles of poems compiled during the era of Solomon and later expanded orthographically. Albright (op. cit., 26) comments, inter alia, on the use of the preposition lāmed before māwet in the clear sense of 'escape from', as in Ugaritic. He omits ἐκ γῆς with LXX, and renders (38): 'And YHWH giveth escape from death'. Particularly apposite

25 σ', νεμήθη.
26 (HUCA 23 (1950-51), 1-39. Albright's approach is taken up and developed by Dahood (Psalms ii, 130-52) with the application of 'other grammatical and poetic principles that have been elucidated by the Ugaritic-Phoenician discoveries since 1950.'
is A. Cohen’s note in the Soncino edition. He renders the stichos: ‘And unto God the LORD belong the issues of death’, 27 with the comment ‘the issues of death: means of escape when death threatens’. LXX well reflects the sense with καὶ τοῦ κυρίου αἱ διέξοδοι τοῦ θανάτου.


(16). 89(88):49. καὶ καθάρσει αὐτῶν μὴ μή // ἀπὸ λαλῶν (καὶ παραγόντων). LXX strictly literal, but with weak rendering (ἀνθρωπος) of ἄνηπτος, a term connoting ‘man as strong as distinguished from women, children, and non-combatants whom he is to defend’ (DJB, 150a, s.v.). Term occurs 66 t in OT, nine of these in Psalter, in all of which, except 34:9 and 40:5 where it is rendered by its proper equivalent ἀνήπτος, it is invariably translated ἀνθρωπος.

(17). 107(106):18. ἀπὸ λαλῶν as 9:14. LXX (ἐν) τῶν πολλῶν τοῦ θανάτου. We pass over the interesting Ancient Near East parallels (for which, together with a possible example from Ugaritic, see Tromp, op. cit., 152–4) and simply note the only occurrence of the exact phrase outside the Psalter, namely Job 38:17 (LXX: πολλαὶ θανάτου) and the cognate παλαιότερος (ἐν πολλάς ἀναθήμασι) in the Psalm of Hezekiah (Is. 38:10), both poetical. Extra-canonical, the term πολλαὶ ἀναθήμασι occurs in Wisd. 16:1328 and III Macc. 5:51.

(18). 116(114):3. ἀπὸ θανάτου (see (5) above). Here // to ἀπὸ λαλῶν. LXX: καὶ παλαιότερος ἀναθήμασι, paraphrasing nomen regens in both stichoi. ἀπὸ λαλῶν occurs otherwise only in Ps. 118(117):5 and Lam. 1:3 (LXX respectively ἁλίνις, ἀλιβρόντες). In the passage under consideration the context could favour Oesterley’s suggestion that ἀπὸ λαλῶν should be translated ‘ropes’, as Late Heb. (cf. Akk. širitu, ‘rope’, ‘bridle’), but less so in the other two passages. In Lam. 1:3 LXX appears to construe as masc. part. plur. of ἀπὸ λαλῶν (ἄνα ἀναθήματα not found in Hiph.) where MT = מִשְׁפַּת שָׁמַר הָעָם; LXX: πολλεῖς οἱ καταδικάζοντες αὐτήν, κατέλαβον αὐτήν ἀνα μέσον τῶν θλιβόντων. σ’, ἐντὸς τῶν θλιβόντων αὐτήν. The conjectured reading in BH3, 1229 (ἀπὸ λαλῶν; Lam. 1:3) is not to be commended.

(19). 116(114):8. This verse, together with that which follows, is a repetition with variations (on which see Briggs ii, 36) of Ps. 56(55):14. The opening words are identical in both cases in the Hebrew (see (12) above), but in 116(114):8 LXX, otherwise identical, reads ἐξείλετο for ἔβρυσεν, the translation in 56(55):14. For LXX addition in 56(55):14 (τοὺς ὀρθολόμοις μου ἀπὸ δακρύων from Ps. 116(114):8) see apparatus in Rahlfs, Ps. cum Od., 172.

27 ‘Ways of escape’. Only found in plural (23 t. O.T.) and usually of extremity (border) of territory. Only here in Psalter, and at all in this particular sense.

28 πολλακος om. by the sub-Lucianic group (see Ziegler, Sap. Sal., (1962) 56, 60, 152), Cod. 766 and Armenian.

This verse, though not strictly of the abode of the dead or its inhabitants, is included for the form ἡμῶν which, si vera lectio, is a.λ. in OT and is construed as a feminine form of ἡμᾶς. Some, as BH3 followed by BHS, read, unnecessarily, ἡμᾶς, found only twice in OT, both in the Psalter and in the phrase ἡμῶν τῶν (Ps. 79:11; 102:21) ‘those worthy of death and appointed to death’ (BDB, s.v., 560b), ‘dem Sterben Verfallene’ (KB 1031b). In both cases LXX, τοὺς ὑπό τῶν τεθανατωμένων misrepresents the meaning of the original, for which ἑαυτοκτονοῦν or (ἀπο-)θανομένων29 should be read, cf. ‘morituri mortuus salutant’.

(21). 118(117):18. רַבֵּ יִתְרוֹנָה. LXX: καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ οὗ παρέδωκεν με. 21. רָמָ. The verb רָמָ occurs eighteen times in the Psalter, but the following being general references to death, may be discounted: 34:22; 37:32; 59:1 (title); 105:29; 109:16; 118:17. Relevant instances are as follows:

(1). 9:1 (title). See under (4) below.

(2). 31(30):13. Although overtones of Sheol characterize this Ps., this particular strophe, ‘I am forgotten, like a dead man out of mind’ (NEB), relates essentially to the attitude of the living: בּוּ וְהָנֶךְ יִתְרוֹנָה LXX: ἐπαλήσῃ σειρός ἀπὸ καρδίας, rendering בּ וְהָנֶךְ literally of the heart as the seat of the mind in accordance with the contemporary Hebrew psychology.

(3). 4:40:6. מַנְתַּנְתִּ יִתְרוֹנָה reflects either the negative conception of the underworld or, as NEB ‘...and his line become extinct’. LXX, rendering the Hebrew quite literally, is indeterminate for exegesis: ποτὲ ἀποθανεῖται καὶ ἀπολεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

(4). 48(47):15. רַבֵּ יִתְרוֹנָה. As already mentioned, this phrase is best explained as a displacement from the title of the following Ps. of which it is indicative of the subject-matter and should be pointed יִתְרוֹנָה יִתְרוֹנָה, ‘concerning death’ (cf. BDB, 745b, secn.h) for this use of יִתְרוֹנָה. As both Pss. 48 and 49 originally belonged to the same collection (the Qorahite, assigned by J. P. Peters30 to the sanctuary of Dan), the displacement is probably earlier than the final redaction. Against LXX εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας is the non-occurrence elsewhere of the fem. plur. יתֶרָנָה which the translator appears to have read, a form not recognized by BDB (s.v. יתֶרָנָה 761b) or KB (s.v. 588a). The masc. plur. occurs in OT 11 t.

A similar explanation might be offered for יִתְרוֹנָה in the title of Ps. 9, which has occasioned considerable difficulties both to the ancient translators.

29 Simplex future only once in LXX (θαναταται, Prov. 13:14); compound in fut. 115 t, but fut. partic. not found.

and to successive commentators. LXX: ὑπὲρ τὸν κρυφίων τοῦ υἱοῦ, reading "conceal". If, however, κρυφίων be pointed δεδομένον (i.q. Akk. labanu, ‘throw down’, ‘oppress’), the expression would be quite intelligible as descriptive of the subject-matter of the psalm (originally, with 10, one psalm), 'concerning the death of the oppressor', whose overthrow the psalmist envisages (9:6ff., 16ff.; 10:15ff.). See more fully the present writer in JTS 49 (1948), 52 f.

(5) 49(48):11. This clause reads in MT: יִרָאֵת יְהוָה כֹּל מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה. One end to all, wise, foolish and brutish, as Eccles. 2:16. RV ‘For he seeth that wise men die…’ is to be preferred to RVm, RSV, NEB, the last named = ‘But remember this: wise men must die’.

Clearly there has been some textual transposition here, as elsewhere in this psalm (see apparatus in BHS and the commentaries), possibly the work of the redactor who interpolated vv. 9 and 16 and to whom the transposition of מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה from the title to 48:15 may also be due. Verse 11b (חָשֹׁךְ יְרֵא ה' חָסְדִי) is variously assigned to v. 10 or 12. LXX, however, follows the order of MT. Taking יִרְאֶה in the sense of ‘when(ever)’ (BDB s.v. 2a. p. 473a; KB secn. 19, p. 432b; GK 164d.) involves the translator in a grammatical problem with the apodosis, for which he resorts to anaclathion by a literal rendering of the Hebrew: δεῖ οὖν τὸ τῶν ἀποθνήσκων, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀφέων καὶ ἀνους ἀπολοῦνται καὶ καταλείπουσιν ἄλλοτριός τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτῶν. Rahlfs (Ps. c. Od. ad. loc., and manual edn. ii, p. 50) takes δεῖον... ἀποθνῄσκων with preceding verse in accordance with the MS tradition,31 which removes the grammatical problem at the expense of logical sequence.

This psalm (vv. 1–15, ἐν τῷ ἡμέρα) is included in the Ambrosian Hexapla fragments. (For transcription of the constituent columns, with plates, see Psalterii Hexapli Reliquiae, cura et studio Johannis Card. Mercati... editae (Vatican City, 1958), 84–89. Also contained in this publication are the Hexapla columns of Pss. (in LXX enumeration) 17:26b–48 (lacunae vv. 37b–40, 43–45); 27:6-end; 28:1–3c; 29; 30:20-end; 31:6b-end; 34:1–2, 2, 13-end; 35:1–5; 45; 48:1–15; 89:26-end.)

(6) 49(48):18. לַיְבָנָה נַחֲשׁ בִּלְבָנָה לְיִרְאֶה בְּלֵבָנָה. LXX: δεῖ ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἀποθνήσκειν αὐτῶν λήμβατα τὰ πάντα, faithfully rendering the Hebrew idiom לְיִרְאֶה בְּלֵבָנָה...ائي.

(7) 82(81):7. This reference is included as, in the judgment of the present writer, the milieu commonly assigned to it fails to take into full account certain features present in the psalm. It is almost certainly the case that in its present form it is adapted to liturgical purposes, depicting ‘a heavenly court scene in

31 All Codd. except Rahlfs’s “Western” group (for which see Rahlfs. Ps.c.Od., 32–52). See also apparatus, op. cit., 159.
which God calls to account the gods who are subordinate to him', 32 but it might plausibly be suggested that in its original form the psalm was a condemnation of necromancy, the nucleus being discernible in vv. 5–7. Our concern here, however, is with v. 7 as it stands in MT:

(8) 88(87):6. רָבָּרָה תַּחַת אַלְּפֵי שְׁבָכֶבּ. The difficulty here is רָבָּרָה, an adjective found elsewhere in OT 15 t. in the sense of ‘free’, e.g. from slavery, Ex. 21:2, 5 (JE); Deut. 15:12, 13, 18 (verb רָבָּרָה only Lev. 19:20 Pu. (H). LXX so renders here: εν νεκροις ἔλευθερος, ὥσει τραυματια δριμένοι καθε- δοντες εν τάφῳ, followed by Vulgate, ‘inter mortuos liber’, whence PBV, AV ‘free among the dead’. RV ‘cast off’, RVm ‘cast away’ RSV ‘forsaken’, Luther, ‘verlassen’, apparently construe in the sense taken in BDB, s.v. 344b ‘free (i.e. adrift, cut off from Jahweh’s remembrance)’, whereby emendation is avoided. BHS proposes (1) רָבָּרָה (as also S. R. Driver, The Parallel Psalter (Oxford, 1904), 256, n. 4); (2) רָבָּרָה (3) רָבָּרָה, on which cf. G. R. Driver, יִשְׁרָאֵל, JTS 44 (1943), p. 17. A further suggestion is רָבָּרָה as adopted in the Revised English Psalter (D. W. Thomas, The Text of the Revised Psalter (London, 1963), 36). Dahood’s ‘my cot’ on the basis of Ugaritic ḫpt is precarious, but should nevertheless be noted. See his note, Pss. ii, 304, also Tromp, op. cit., 157–9.

Perowne (Pss. ii, 142 ‘cast away’) remarks significantly (145) that the equation of רָבָּרָה with Arab. ḫafša ‘be weak, prostrate’, would accord well with רָבָּרָה in v. 11, to which we turn next.

(9) 88(87):11. לֹא קִשְׁרָה נַפְסִי // נַפְסִי רָבָּרָה. on which see below. LXX: μὴ τοῖς νεκροῖς ποιήσεις θαυμάσθαι...; σ’, ἀρα νεκροῖς ποιήσεις τεράστια.

(10) 106(105):28. פְּרוֹפַת לָאֵב הַצַּעַד יֵאָלָל יַעֲקֹב הַיַּעַצְיָה. This verse would be construed by the present writer, like Ps. 82, as a reference to sorcery or necromancy, רָבָּרָה ‘cleft’ ‘fissure’. Such were commonly regarded by the ancients as entrances to the underworld, hence places where the dead were wont to be consulted. 33

LXX: καὶ ἐτελέσθησαν τῷ Βεελφέγωρ, καὶ ἔφαγον θυσίας νεκρῶν. Ba’al


33 See further, ERE i, 428b; Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, (1937), 57, n.l. Cf. Kautzsch’s derivation of Sheol, ‘wide gaping’ (HDB v, 668a, n.l.)
Pe'or elsewhere Num. 25:3, 5; Deut. 4:3 (bis), Hos. 9:10. LXX uniformly Ἀλβοφεγώρ. Combination יִבְשָׁם is a.λ.

(11) 115:17(113:25) הֶעָרָיָלְתַּנֵּכְךָ אוֹתָנוּ בַּשָּׁם נַפְשָׁב (see 5 above). LXX: οὐχ οἱ νεκροὶ αἰνεῖσθε σε, κῦρε.

(12) 143(142):3. μακάκοι συγκεκριμένοι (see ψυχή above). LXX: ὁς νεκροὺς αἰθῶν.

22. ῥωπός n.m. Of the thirteen occurrences of this term in the Hebrew Psalter, only three are strictly ‘eschatological’, i.e. employed as synonyms for the netherworld. This may appear surprising in view of its universal prevalence in the Babylonian underworld, where dust rests on bolts and doors and constitutes the nourishment of the departed. 34 It is, however, in the Book of Job 35 rather than in the Psalter that these ideas are reflected. For example, in ‘Let the enemy… lay my glory in the dust’ (Ps. 7:6), the metaphor is of humiliation rather than the dust of death (cf. Briggs i, 58); and again in ‘When thou withdrawest36 their breath they die, and to their dust they return’ (104:29), the allusion is not to Sheol per se, but to the material of the human body, to which, on death, it will return, as Ps. 103:14, cf. Gen. 2:7; 3:19 (both J).

The three relevant passages are as follows:

(1) 22(21):16. אַחֲרֵי הָעַלָּמִים לָמָּכָה יְהֹוָה וּלְקֻתָה לְעֵצָת מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָع — picturesque but unnecessary.

(2) 22(21):30. לָכַּל הָעַלָּמִים לָמָּכָה יְהֹוָה וּלְקֻתָה לְעֵצָת מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע אֶל מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע — picturesque but unnecessary.

As Kirkpatrick well remarked, this is ‘a most obscure verse’, for which the commentaries reveal an abundance of emendation and interpretation toward elucidation. The problem lies in the opening stichos, MT: הָעַלָּמִים יְהֹוָה וּלְקֻתָה מִי שָׁפָה בְּרַע חֲדָשׁ יָדָע, which, by slight emendation, yields good sense. Reading יִבְשָׁם (or יִבְשָׁם) for יִבְשָׁם, omitting initial waw from יִבְשָׁם, and reading יִבְשָׁם, gives the rendering: ‘How can those sleeping (NEB ‘buried’) in the earth do him homage? [How can] those who go down to the dust (NEB ‘grave’) bow before him?’. RSV ‘Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow down’ is less satisfactory. LXX, as MT: ἐφανον καὶ προσεκαύνησαν πάντες οἱ πίνακες τῆς γῆς, ἐνόπλιον αὐτοῦ προσεκαύνησαν πάντες οἱ καταβαίνοντες εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀ', εἰς χοῦν. σ', εἰς κόμων. Note the rendering here of

34 ‘Descent of Ishtar’, Pritchard, ANET 107, 8–11; Tromp, op. cit. 17 cites // from Ug. for dust (pr) = the Underworld (UT 76:II:24f.).
35 7:21; 17:16; 20:11; 21:26; 19:25(?).
36 Reading for דַּעַת: דַּעַת, Qal imperf. 2 masc. sing. (see BDB, s.v. דַּעַת 62a; GK 68b). Briggs (ii, 399) wrongly takes as Hiph. imperf.
37 Cp. KB s.v. דַּעַת 220b; BH3 (or דַּעַת); BHS; D. W. Thomas, Text of the Revised Psalter, 8.
by γῆ, as otherwise in Psalter only 113(112):7. In 119(118):25 ἔδαφος =
Vulg. ‘pavimentum’) otherwise uniformly by χοῦς.

(3) 30(29):10. ἐξερήμισεν // Γεφυρ. q.v. infra.

LXX: μὴ ἐξερήμισεται σοι χοῦς. σ’, κόνις.

23. τητρακτύλιον. 18 t. OT. The extent and content of the literature on the deriv-
ation and signification of this term will already be familiar to OT scholarship.
Here, where we are concerned primarily with the claims of LXX, it is important
to stress the testimony of this version, which can hardly represent other than
an ancient tradition, and which accordingly must be regarded as weighty.
Eighteen occurrences of the term feature in MT, in all cases pointed τητρακτύλιον.
Although it is true with D. Winton Thomas, that in all instances in which
the term occurs is the superlative force of ‘very deep shadow’, ‘thick darkness’
would satisfy the context, it is also the case that only in Job 10:21, εἰς γῆν
σκοτεινήν καὶ γνοφιμορίαν (MT — τητρακτύλιον νήθ οἱρωμένος) that LXX under-
stands it specifically in that sense. In all other cases, save those in which the
Greek affords no certain equivalent, viz. Job 10:22; 34:22; 38:17; Jer. 2:6;
the term is rendered uniformly by σκιά θανάτου, (σκιά only, according to
the best MS readings in Job 16:16(17) and Am. 5:8). Thus for the Psalter
in the four occurrences of the term (23(22):4; 44(43):20; 107(106):10, (14)
θανάτων = σκιά θανάτου.

24. ἥλιος n.m. 67 t. in OT, four of these (MT three) in Psalter.

(1) 5:10. Figurative use of the vain talk of the wicked, but according
to some interpreters, of the soothsayer. MT: μη ἠκούσῃ τατουραίον; LXX: τάφος
ἀνεφαρμένος ὃ λάρνγος αὐτῶν.

(2) 49(48):12. μυρίῳ κόμισαν κυρίῳ τῆς ταφοῦ. (PBV), AV, RV paraphrase MT ‘Their
inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever’, but RVm, and
all modern versions following LXX, Targ., Syr., Vulg., read μυρίῳ: καὶ οἱ
tάφοι αὐτῶν οἰκίαι αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. σ’, οὗ ἐντὸς αὐτῶν οἰκίαι (read
οἰκίας) αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνα. σ’, τὰ ἐντὸς τῶν οἰκίων αὐτῶν...

Cf. R. H. Charles: ‘in all probability Sheol was originally conceived as a
combination of the graves of the clan or nation, and as thus its final abode’.
(Eschatology (2London, 1913), 33).

(3) 88(87):6. πᾶν ἄδειον τῆς ταφῆς κύριον, see 21(8) above. LXX: ὠσκι
τραυματία ἐν ταφοῖς καθευθοῦντες ἐν τάφῳ. μητρίδης: Ἄνυι ἔλημεν I ‘pierced’,
‘fatally wounded’; ἐδραμμένοι, read by B & Bo; om. A, 1219. Lucian; =
καθευθοῦν is admitted by Briggs ii, 249 metri causa. καθευθοῦν (a.λ. in Psalter)

38 VT 3 (1953), 219–24; JSS 7 (1962), 191–200. Reiterated in Text of the Revised Psalter,

39 a.λ. in LXX.
renders ἐρημώσῃ in 24 of the 31 (including four extra-canonical) occurrences of the verb in LXX.


In Psalter only 88(87):11, // ἁίατόρ. LXX, ιοτρώι, reading ἁίατόρ as if from ἁμέρ. Also thus Is. 26:14. Elsewhere only Prov. 2:18; 9:18 (both transl. γήγενης, plur.); Prov. 21:16; Job 26:5; Is. 14:9 (all γήγενς, plur.); In the remaining passage, Is. 26:19, LXX (πῶν ἀσβοῦ) affords no proper equivalent. Ottley (Isa. acc. to the Septuagint ii (Cambridge, 1906), 232) suggests that the translator read ἁίατόρ for ἁίατόρ.

26. ταφή n.f. √ ταφή ‘sink down’ (BDB, 1001; KB, 954b, 963b). 23 t. OT. LXX, passim, erroneously identifying with √ ταφή renders by διαφθορά, καταφθορά. Term used of a hollow dug in the earth for catching prey in Ps. 7:16; 9:16; 94:13; Prov. 26:27; Ez. 19:4; of a natural hollow in Job 9:31.

Used of Sheol in Job 17:14 and 5 t. in chap. 33, Is. 38:17; 51:14(?), Ez. 28:8; Jon. 2:7, and in the following passages in the Psalter:

(1) 16(15):10. ταφή τοῦ Δανίησ, τοῦ τῆς καταφθορᾶς. Kt. δανίησις; Qere, followed by all ancient versions, also Acts 2:27; 13:35, δανίησις. See further for authorities, Perowne’s comprehensive note, Pss. i, 204 f. LXX: οὔτε δωσεῖς τόν ὅσιόν σου ἰδέων διαφθορὰς.


27. ἄσβος n.f. and m. 36 t. OT. Twelve occurrences in Psalter, none certainly of Sheol, though some regard 71(70):20 in this light. LXX renders uniformly ἄβους.

28. ἄσβος BDB (1066a,f.); KB (1027a) take as adj. and noun, ‘lower’ ‘lowest’ (places). The question again arises as to whether the usage of the word implies the recognition of divisions in the Underworld, or whether it is merely a circumlocation for Sheol. An examination of the relevant usages strongly suggests the latter. Three of these are in the Psalter, the first two of which may be taken together:

(1) 86(85):13. ‘For Thy loving-kindness is great upon me; And Thou wilt pluck me from Sheol beneath.’ ἄπρομπθυ ἄβους. LXX: εἰς ἀδόου κατωτάτου.

(2) 88(87):7. ‘Thou (Jahweh) hast laid me in the lowest Pit (ὁλοκλήρως ἄβους). LXX: ἐν λάκκω κατωτάτῳ.

The term is found again in conjunction with ἄσβος in the poetical passage,
Deut. 32:22, the date of which is uncertain: Driver (ICC, 347), assigns probably to the age of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. From the context it is clear that the meaning is simply ‘to the furthest limits of Sheol’:

‘A fire burneth to the nethermost Sheol’ נשמית יאשך דרורים יאשך, LXX: ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου κάτω,
‘a graphic but hyperbolical description… of the far-reaching and destructive operation of the Divine anger; …the stream of Jahveh’s fire penetrates even to the Underworld’ (ibid. 366).

Driver compares Amos 9:2. Another comparison is Job 31:12.

(3) In Ps. 63(62):10. The term is no more than a synonym of Sheol as situated beneath the earth:

‘They that seek after my life to destroy it (or, ‘to their own destruction’)
(הֵאָשְׁנֹת)
Shall go into the lower (or ‘lowest’) parts of the earth.’ נַשָּׂהַת תַּחְתֵּיהָא לְפָנֵיהּ לְפָנֵיהּ, LXX: εἰς τὰ κατώτατα τὴς γῆς).
Perhaps omit נַשָּׂהַת as gloss; it is ambiguous, and can be interpreted either subjectively or objectively. If the original were נַשָּׂהַת, which is unlikely, a distinction might be admitted, especially if MT in following verse is correct:

‘They shall be delivered (with LXX, Syr., וְיַעַל for וַיַּעַל) to the power of the sword;
They shall be a portion for jackals’ (הֵאָשְׁנֹת).

But נַשָּׂהַת is dubious. Si vera lect., absence of burial would seem to be indicated, with all its deleterious consequences. Probably the word should be pointed נַשָּׂהַת, ‘hollow places’.

It might be urged that the form נַשָּׂהַת is an intensive plur., meaning ‘the lowest places’, and that in this form the term implies a distinction. But in Ezek. both sing. and plur. appear to be used indiscriminately: 31:14, נַשָּׂהַת, // נַשָּׂהַת: 16, נַשָּׂהַת, נַשָּׂהַת // בּוֹר; and נַשָּׂהַת: 18, form as in 14; 26:20, נַשָּׂהַת, נַשָּׂהַת // בּוֹר; 32:18, 24, נַשָּׂהַת // בּוֹר; in both cases. In Isa. 44:23, נַשָּׂהַת נַשָּׂהַת is contrasted with the heavens: נַשָּׂהַת in antithetic parallelism to ‘deeps of the earth.’

(4) The remaining occurrence in the Psalter is 139(138):15 (הַשָּׁמָיִם נַשָּׂהַת), where some see an allusion to an early legend of the fashioning of the body, then of the soul, in the underworld; v. HDB iv 63b, art. ‘Pre-existence of Souls’. But the reference may be nothing more than figurative of the inner recesses of the womb (so HDB iii 225b ‘context points to the embryonic development of the body.’).

Thus there would appear to be no evidence, either in the use of the term נַשָּׂהַת in the Psalter or elsewhere in the OT, which would imply any distinctions in Sheol such as were recognised at a later stage.