

The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

ISSN 1203-1542

<http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhs>



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Volume 5, Article 7

Aron Pinker, "The Hard 'Sell' in Nah 3:4b."

The Hard 'Sell' in Nah 3:4b

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1. Nahum 3:4 presents a rationale for the dramatic downfall of the mighty Nineveh,

מֵרַב זְנוּנֵי זוֹנָה	<i>Because of the countless harlotries of the harlot,</i>
טוֹבַת חַן בְּעֵלַת כַּשְׁפִּים	<i>The winsome mistress of sorcery,</i>
הַמְּכַרַת גּוֹיִם בְּזוֹנוּיָהּ	<i>Who ensnared nations with her harlotries</i>
וּמְשַׁפְּחוֹת בְּכַשְׁפֶּיהָ	<i>And peoples with her sorcery¹</i>

Her fate is described as being the direct consequence of her whore-like behavior, and her punishment metaphorically similar (Nah 3:5-6). It is easy to understand how the powerful, rich, and glamorous Nineveh exerted its bewitching allures in the region, entrapping as a whore the smaller and less developed and sophisticated nations (Nah 3:4a). However, one is baffled by Nahum's statement that these very characteristics were used by Nineveh to sell (הַמְּכַרַת) nations (Nah 3:4b).

Certainly, Assyrian influence could have been bought in local or regional disputes (2Kgs 15:19), but such trades were based on the power that it wielded rather than whore-like allure. Moreover, "selling" presumes *a priori* possession and consequently acquisition, yet Nahum castigates the "selling" but not the acquisition. In what sense could the "selling" have been more horrific than the acquisition to warrant making it the prime cause for Nineveh's downfall? It is clear that Nineveh was engaged in some "less than honest" practices that led to

her demise, but the term **המכרת** (“who sells”) describing these actions seems incongruous in the context of the metaphor. The purpose of this note is to discuss the attempts at understanding the word **המכרת** and suggest an approach to its possible meaning.

2. That **המכרת** in Nah 3:4b is problematic is obvious already from the approach taken by the older Jewish exegetes, who correctly understood the gist of the verse, but could not reconcile it with the text *per se*. Ibn Ezra’s interpretation of the entire verse is **דרך משל שרמתה הכל**, “It’s a metaphor, that she fooled all.” While this sets the framework for understanding the verse, the process alluded to remains unclear. Rashi’s explanation along this same line is “Because of the flattery of the city. It knew how to entice the heart of the kings of the land to join it, and then occupied them.” He seems to imply that **המכרת** refers to a practice of “diplomatic” persuasion that led to an alliance and subsequent occupation. The Assyrian used psychological warfare in their campaigns, and in particular in siege operations.² However, psychological warfare was not unique to them, though more frequently practiced because of their many campaigns. Kimchi understood the metaphor of the harlot as implying that Assyria upset the normal order in the region as infatuation with a harlot would upset the well being of a family.³ He says, “All this came to her because of the magnitude of the disturbance that she brought about. And he compared her to a harlot, because a harlot does so. She

sells those who follow her because of her witchery and adornment, and does with them whatever she wishes. So did she with the other nations.” To Kimchi the situation described is one of an infatuation, that inevitably leads to loss of independence and complete control by the harlot, so much so that she can sell those infatuated by her as her own possessions. One may well ask “To whom would Assyria sell ‘those who follow her’ being the superpower of the region?” Metzudot resolved this problem by saying, “she sells to herself,”⁴ which is questionable economics. Alkumissi simply says, **המכרת מענהו המאברת** (“*hammōkeret?* Its answer is ‘she that annihilates’”).⁵ This meaning imbues the term **המכרת** with much evil but has no biblical or etymological support. It would not be out of line to say that these commentators struggled in this verse with the “buy – sell” problem in the context of a harlot’s normal *modus operandi*. The harlot sells “her” body, in Nah 3:4b Nineveh sells “other” nations, which she would normally be interested to acquire and keep. Indeed, acquisitions rather than divestitures to a third nation characterized Assyrian imperial policies.

3. English versions of the Bible also struggled with the translation of Nah 3:4b, sensing that something incongruous in the use of the term **מכרת**, “sell” or “deliver over to another.”⁶ For instance, the KJV (NASB, ASV, Webster, Darby, Young) has the literal “sell,” but the RSV has “betrays,” the NEB has “beguile,” the NLT has “enticed,” and the NJPS has “ensnare.”⁷ The normal meaning of **מכר** appeared improper in the context of Nah 3:4b because it does not make

sense that Nineveh would *sell* other nations. While the concept of “selling a nation” occurs in the Hebrew Bible, it is exclusively used to describe handing over of Israel into the hands of others (Deut 32:30, Isa 50:1, 52:3, Ps 44:13, 1Sam 12:9, Jud 2:14, 3:8, 4:2, 10:7, Est 7:4). Some three decades ago Dahood categorized this word as “unexplained” and so it remained.⁸

4. Haupt says, “The verb **מכר** means here, not *sell*, but *to cheat, deceive, cozen, beguile, entice*. Arab. makkâr means *swindler*.”⁹ Similarly, Thomas argued for a Hebrew root **מכר**, “practice deceit, guile.”¹⁰ He focused his attention on the three passages 1Kgs 21:20, 25, and 2Kgs 17:17 where the hitpa’el of **מכר** occurs figuratively (followed in each case by the phrase **לעשות הרע בעיני יהוה**).¹¹ In each of these cases the Targum and the Peshitta translate **המכרת** differently than “who sells.” Thomas finds in this fact support for his view that underlying **התמכר** is not “sell” but a distinct root **מכר**, which means as mkr in Arabic “practiced deceit, guile.” In his view such a sense would be more natural in each of the three cases that he uses, and perhaps also Sir 47:25. However, it is arguable whether the interpretation suggested by Thomas for the biblical sources (1Kgs 21:20, 25, and 2Kgs 17:17), which understands **מכר** as “practice deceit, guile,” is the better one. There is really no problem in interpreting **התמכר** by “has sold himself” as the older commentators have done.¹² The modern Hebrew meaning for **התמכר**

“devote oneself, dedicate oneself” also connotes an act of ‘transfer’ that is equivalent to the figurative ‘selling.’¹³ This meaning for **התמכר**, while still quite close to “sell,” would also adequately translate **התמכר** in each of its biblical occurrences. Furthermore, while the Targum and the Peshitta do not translate **המכרת** using the meaning “sell” of the root **מכר**, they do not assign it the sense of “practiced deceit, guile,” as suggested by Thomas; the Targum has “you have planned” and the Peshitta has “you have magnified yourself.” In a later note, Thomas finds support for his suggestion also in 1Mac 1:15.¹⁴ Yet, his argument based on a Greek extracanonical source is too tenuous to be of value.¹⁵

5. Lipinski observes that there texts (Joel 4:3, Nah 3:4) where **מכר ב** refers to a kind of barter. Parallelism of Nah 3:4 with Joel 4:3 would then imply that Assyria gives away nations to satisfy its perversities. This seems historically unreasonable.¹⁶ Van der Woude felt comfortable with the meaning “sell” for **מכר** here, understanding that Nineveh ‘sells out’ nations, she betrays their trust gained with beautiful pleasantries and charm.¹⁷ However, **מכר** never means in the Hebrew Bible “sell out” or “betray.” Smith suggested that “Selling and cheating were somewhat closely related and may easily have been denoted by the same root.”¹⁸ A similar position is intimated by Thomas’ comment: “It is worth while asking whether ‘sell’ and ‘deal deceitfully’ are really distinct roots, as suggested above, or whether they are in fact the same root. The Oriental seller habitually

tries to deceive the buyer.”¹⁹ How such a biased generalization, spanning centuries and encompassing nations with so little evidence, could have been reached defies logic. It is not clear how Christensen obtained the sense “enslaves” for **מכר**.²⁰ Haldar, relying on Akkadian *makāru* “to trade” and Ugaritic **מכר** “merchant,” assigns **מכר** the basic meaning “to trade.” He explains “If we assume **מכר** in this sense here, the meaning would be that the hostile city throws nations under her dominion through manipulations compared with a cultic act and more exactly described as **זנונים** and **כשפים**.”²¹ It is difficult to see how “trade” is equivalent to “throwing under one’s dominion.” The existence of such meanings as “sell out,” “betray,” “enslave,” “deal deceitfully,” “trade” for the root **מכר** in Hebrew is uncertain.²² None have been attested in the Hebrew Bible, where **מכר** is always “sell” or “deliver over to another.”²³

6. The word **המכרת** was also subject to various emendations. Dahood, argued for **המכרת** (*hammukkeret*), “who was known.” He says, “The rest of the verse becomes syntactically viable when MT *hammōkeret* is repointed *hammukkeret* the hophal feminine participle of *nkr*, whose hiphil means ‘to know, recognize.’ 2Kings 12:6 **מכרו** ‘his acquaintance,’ and 2Kings 12:8 **מכריהם** ‘your acquaintances,’ derive from *nkr* ‘to know, recognize,’ and if their vocalization is authentic, one might also vocalize Nah 3:4 *hammakkeret*, the feminine

counterpart of *makkār*. But syntactic considerations favor its vocalization as hophal passive participle.”²⁴ Cathcart adopts Dahood’s emendation.²⁵ However, Dahood’s translation “The one known by the nations for her harlotries and by the clans for her sorceries” would also necessitate the emendations גוים → בגוים and ומשפחות → ובמשפחות, and would not provide a strong enough accusation against Nineveh.²⁶ BHS suggested the reading הכמרת (*hakkōmeret*), “who ensnares.”²⁷ However, the verb כמר, in the sense “ensnare,” is not attested in the Hebrew Bible. Roberts, following Marti, emends הכמרת to המשכרת, “who intoxicates” (cf. Jer 51:7). Roberts claims that the reading in 4Q 169 (=4QpNah), col. 2, line 7, namely הממכרת could be explained as a corruption of המשכרת. In the late paleo-Hebrew script מ and ש differ only slightly apart from the tail on מ. Once ש had been corrupted to מ, the second מ was later dropped by dittography, producing the present MT.²⁸ Roberts’ explanation is questionable. The reading הממכרת appears to be an internal corruption and nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is intoxication related to harlotry.²⁹ Spronk suggested that Nahum may have wanted to indicate that for Nineveh, her harlotry and sorcery were more important than nations and families (Joel 4:3).³⁰ Yet, Assyria has been known for its administration of its empire and strict discipline. The Assyrians were known for their love of beer but not for debauchery. It should be noted that the MT is

supported by the Septuagint, Targum (דמכרא), and Vulgate (quae vendidit). The Peshitta's "who brings up" (דמרביא) for המכרת is perhaps an internal corruption.³¹

7. An interesting insight into the meaning of מכר is provided by Rashi in his commentary on Hos 3:2. Rashi understands ואכרה as a corruption of ואמכרה. He says,

ואכרה לי: לי' סחורה ברגניי"א בלע"ז כמו (בראשית נ) אשר כריתי לי
ובכרכי הים קורין למכירה כירה

“ואכרה לי: An expression of merchandise, ‘bargain’ in foreign language, as
אשר כריתי לי (Gen 50:5),³² and in the cities of the sea they say כירה for
מכירה.”³³ In Old French, to which Rashi refers, *bargaine* was an agreement to
exchange, sell, or buy goods. It seems that to Rashi ואמכרה/ואכרה means “I
bargained for her.” The sense of “bargain” for מכר, without specific reference to
the outcome of the process, would well fit Nah 3:4. Nahum would then perceive
Nineveh as bargaining with other nations using the charms and witchcraft of a
harlot. Yet, Rashi did not use in Nah 3:4 the interpretation that he suggested for

מכר in Hos 3:2. Why? Perhaps Rashi felt that bargaining with other nations using a harlot's tricks and sorcery was not sufficient cause for a total eradication of the Assyrian.³⁴ Obviously, the reference to a late anecdotal source deprives Rashi's interpretation in Hos 3:2 much of its validity. Still, this interpretation points to an approach that would consider מכר in Nah 3:4 a corruption of נכר.

8. It seems that מכר and נכר may have shared some sense to result in confusion between the two. Mandelkern observed that in Aramaic מכר also means “purchase of wife,” and that the root מכר is perhaps close to נכר.³⁵ Indeed, in Akkadian *makkûru*, *namkur(r)u*, *nakkuru* mean “possession, property,” depicting the possibility for an interchangeability of the m and n. Again, Hos 3:2 can provide some insight into the relationship between מכר and נכר. Most commentators derive וְאֶכְרֶהָ in Hos 3:2 from the root כרה, which can have the meaning “get by trade, trade.” However, Ibn Ezra's suggestion that וְאֶכְרֶהָ is of the same derivation as הִכַּר נָא indicates that he entertained the possibility of the root being נכר.³⁶ It seems from a *piyut* by Eliezer ben Kallir (6th century) that he also took the root as נכר.³⁷ More recently, Gordis proposed derivation of וְאֶכְרֶהָ from נכר, “to purchase (for marriage).”³⁸ Tushingham tried to develop the meaning “to acquire possession” from the juridical meaning of *nkr*, “to

acknowledge or recognize as a possession.”³⁹ Dahood mentions that Albright took a similar approach, translating there “I acquired her in marriage.”⁴⁰ Yet, Andersen and Freedman felt there is no proof that **נכר** means “to purchase.”⁴¹ Ginsberg dismissed such a meaning entirely.⁴² Perhaps, **מכר** and **נכר** are close to each other in the sense that each is a bargain, as suggested by Rashi, though the end result of the bargain in each case is different, in the first case it is a “sell” and the second case it is a “buy.”

9. Nah 3:4 has some affinity with Hos 3:2, sharing a context of adultery. There appears to be strong scholarly sentiment that **ואכרה** in Hos 3:2 contains a verb that means, “to get, to acquire, to buy.”⁴³ Some commentators identify this verb as **נכר**. Perhaps, the term **הנכרת**, having the meaning “which acquires, gets,” for **המכרת** in Nah 3:4, would not be altogether strange. In the paleoscript the **מ** and **נ** are orthographically very similar. It is not inconceivable that a scribe had subconsciously copied **המכרת** instead of the original **הנכרת**, having just written the **מ** of **כשפים**.⁴⁴ It is even possible that such scribe made this correction consciously, believing that he corrects an error, or makes the text clearer. Indeed, the Septuagint may have made such a change consciously; reading **מכר** for **נכר** in 1Sam 23:7, and it has been followed by many.⁴⁵ If this assumption is correct, then Nah 3:4b would read “She that acquires nations with her harlotry and clans

with her sorcery,” an apt description of Nineveh or Assyria. It is also possible to understand **הַנְּכַרְתָּ** as “she that alienates,”⁴⁶ the Qal participle feminine (singular) of **נָכַר** II with the basic meaning “foreign, strange.” While the adjectives **נָכַרִי**, **נְכַרִּיהָ**, **נְכַרִּיּוֹת**, **נְכַרִּים** occur in the Hebrew Bible the verbal forms are only in Niphal, Piel, or Hithpa’el.⁴⁷ Reading Nah 3:4b as “She that alienates nations with her harlotry and clans with her sorcery,” would also make good sense. It is not difficult to imagine that “Assyrianism” was annoying many nations in the past, perhaps as “Americanism” does these days.

- 10.** In summary, I adopt the view that the root of **וַאֲכַרְתָּ** in Hos 3:2 is **נָכַר** “to get, to acquire, to buy.” In Nah 3:4 the problematic **הַמְּכַרְתָּ** is the consequence of a **נ/מ** scribal confusion mitigated by similarity between **מָכַר** and **נָכַר**, as well as the **מ** in preceding **כְּשָׁפִים**. **הַנְּכַרְתָּ** would then have the sense of “she that acquires.” Such an approach would also help with understanding of 1Sam 23:7. It is also possible to construe **הַנְּכַרְתָּ** in the sense of “she that alienates,” though this grammatical form of **נָכַר** is not attested in the Hebrew Bible.

NOTES

¹ The translation is according to the NJPS, which also notes that its translation of **מְכַרְתָּ** by “ensnared” is uncertain.

² I. Ephal, *Siege and its Ancient Near Eastern Manifestations* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996) 44-55.

³ Note the use of “families” (משפחות) in this verse.

⁴ אשר אז מוכרת לעצמה עכו"ם

⁵ D. Alkumissi, *Commentarius in Librum Duodecem Prophetarum* (ed. I.D. Markon) (Jerusalem: Societatis Mekize Nirdamim, 1958) 51.

⁶ מוכרת is the Qal participle feminine (singular) of the root מכר, which usually means in the Hebrew Bible “to give away,” “to hand over,” “to transfer,” or “to deliver.” In Akkadian makkûru is “possession, property.”

⁷ The Standard American Edition of the Revised Version of the Bible reverts to “selloth.”

⁸ M. Dahood, “Causal Beth and the Root NKR in Nahum 3,4,” *Bib* 52 (1971) 397.

⁹ P. Haupt, *The Book of Nahum: A New Metrical Translation with an Introduction, Restoration of the Hebrew Text and Explanatory and Critical Notes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1907) 24.

¹⁰ D.W. Thomas, “The Root מכר in Hebrew,” *JTS* 37 (1936) 388-389.

¹¹ Cf. also Sir 47:25.

¹² K.F. Keil, *The books of the Kings* (trans. J. Martin), (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883) 315.

¹³ E. Ben Yehudah, *Thesaurus totius hebraicitatis et recentioris*, (Yerushalayim: Ben-Yehudah, hoza'ah la-or le-zekher Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, c1940) 2998.

¹⁴ D.W. Thomas, “A Further Note on the Root mkr in Hebrew,” *JTS* 3 (1952) 214. Thomas surmises that the Hebrew behind the Greek at the end of the verse in 1Mac 1:15 is ויתמכרו לעשות הרע, as in 2Kgs 17:17, and there too the more natural translation is “and they showed themselves deceitful by doing evil” rather than as translated into Greek “and sold themselves to do evil.”

¹⁵ C.C. Torrey, "A New Hebrew and English Lexicon," *American Journal of Theology* 11 (1907) 514. Torrey mentions the occurrence of **התמכר** in 1Mac 1:5 among a sample of words in canonical Old Testament the understanding of which could benefit from documents originally written in Hebrew, while it was still a living language, but now extant only in translation. Torrey does not suggest a meaning different than "sell" for **מכר**.

¹⁶ E. Lipinski, "**מכר** mkr," in G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* vol. VIII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 291-296.

¹⁷ A.S. van der Woude, "The Book of Nahum: A Letter Written in Exile," *OTS* 20 (1977) 111. Woude translates **המכרת**, "who sold," implying the perfect.

¹⁸ J.M.P. Smith, "*Commentary on the Book of Nahum*," in J.M.P. Smith, W.H. Ward, and J.A. Bewer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1985) 338.

¹⁹ D.W. Thomas, "The Root **מכר** in Hebrew," *JTS* 37 (1936) 389, note 4.

²⁰ D.L. Christensen, "The Acrostic of Nahum Reconsidered." *ZAW* 87 (1975) 28.

²¹ A. Haldar, *Studies in the Book of Nahum* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1947) 67.

²² W. A. Maier, *The Book of Nahum: A Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959) 306.

²³ F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001) 569.

²⁴ Dahood, 398.

²⁵ K.J. Cathcart, "Nahum in the Light of Northwest Semitic," *BibOr* 26 (1973) 129.

²⁶ Dahood, 396. Dahood recognizes some of the difficulties. He says, “Compare especially Isa 53:4 מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים ‘the one struck by God,’ where the hophal participle is followed by the agent and Phoenician Karatepe I:1, hbrk b’l, “the one blessed by Baal,’ where the article plus genitive of agency resembles the syntax of hammukkeret gôyim ‘the one known by the nations.’”

²⁷ A. Alt, O. Eissfeldt, P. Kahle, and R. Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) (Fifth edition; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997) 1047. This suggestion goes back at least to Horst (1938).

²⁸ J.J.M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991) 70. Cf. Isa 3:10, where אֲמָרוּ should probably be emended to אֲשֶׁרִי.

²⁹ R. Weiss, *Studies in the Text and Language of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981) 213. Weiss considers the reading הַמְּכַרְתָּ to be the result of a (מ) dittography.

³⁰ K. Spronk, *Nahum* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997) 122

³¹ Haldar, 67.

³² J. Greenberg, *Foreign Words in the Bible Commentary of Rashi* (Jerusalem: Self Published, Undated) 164. Greenberg translates אֶ בְּרִנְיָי as “bargain; trade, bargaining.” Rashi’s reference to Gen 50:5 is to the Midrashic explanation “which I bought.” The Peshat is “which I dig.”

³³ Rashi’s comment “in the cities of the sea they say כִּירָה for מְכִירָה” is based on a statement by R’ Akiba (TB Sotah 13a), which would be of no relevance to the biblical text. Rashi seems to suggest that כִּירָה is a mispronunciation of מְכִירָה.

³⁴ Note that the critical phrase in Rashi’s commentary on Nah 3:4 is כּוֹבְשִׁים אוֹתָם “conquer them.”

³⁵ S. Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti, Concordantiae Hebraicae Atque Chaldaicae* (Lipsiae: Veit et Com, 1896) 671.

³⁶ In his commentary on Hos 3:2 Ibn Ezra says on the meaning of **ואכרה**,

יש אומרים ואקנה אותה כמו תכרו מאתם ואינו נכון בטעם ובדקדוק והוא
מגזרת הכר נא רק ראוי היה להיות ואכירה

(Some say that it means “I will buy her” as it is said **תכרו מאתם** (Deut 2:6). But it is not correct in sense and grammar. It is of the same derivation as **הכר נא** (Gen 37:2, 38:25) but it should have been **ואכירה**).

³⁷ Y. Kiel, *Sepher Hoshea*, In *Tere Asar im Perush Daat Mikra*, Vol I (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1973) 22, n. 13.

³⁸ R. Gordis, “Hosea’s Marriage and Message. A New Approach,” *HUCA* 27 (1954) 25.

³⁹ A. D. Tushingham, “A Reconsideration of Hosea, Chapters 1-3,” *JNES* 12 (1953) 153.

⁴⁰ M. J. Dahood, “Review of T.H. Robinson and F. Horst *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten* (Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (1954)),” *CBQ* 17 (1955) 104. Robinson derives the form **ואכרה** from **כרה** II, “to get by trade,” and explains the dagesh in the kaph as a *dagesh forte dirimens*.

⁴¹ F. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea* (AB 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980) 298-9. Andersen and Freedman observe “The unique form **ואכרה** can be derived from **כרה**, “to buy,” though the morphology is difficult. The root with this meaning has dubious attestation in Deut 2:6; Job 6:27; 40:30. In these the **כ** is raphe, as expected; the dagesh in the **כ** here is inexplicable. If it is called dagesh

forte dirimens (GKC §20h), to make sure that the shewa is pronounced, then we have two problems. First, if it comes from כרה the shewa should be silent; secondly, this would seem to be the only occurrence of such a dagesh in a כ, and no phonetic explanation is in sight.”

⁴² H.L. Ginsberg, “Studies in Hosea 1-3,” in *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960) (50)-(69).

⁴³ H. S. Nyberg, *Studien zum Hoseabuche. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Problems der alttestamentlichen Textkritik* (Uppsala: Almqvist und Wiksells, 1935) 23. Nyberg preferred for ואכרה the nuance “and I hired her” since the Arabic cognate of כרה means “to hire a beast.”

⁴⁴ Hiebert, T. *God of My Victory, The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3*, (Harvard Semitic Monographs 38: Scholar Press, 1986) 19-20. Hiebert considers the scribe’s graphic confusion between the 7th century mem and nun as “common.” He effectively uses this confusion to emend the difficult שם חביון and ימרד in Hab 3:4-5. Cf. M. Bolle, *Sepher Habakkuk, in Tere Asar im Perush Daat Mikra*, Vol. II, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1970) 22 note 11. Bolle also notes that that the מ can be exchanged with the נ, resulting in the emended ינדר. Zer-Kavod suggested to consider the problematic ממוזר in Zec 9:6 as a corruption of מנוזר = “garrison” (Nah 3:17) (M. Zer-Kavod, *Sepher Zechariah, in Tere Asar im Perush Daat Mikra*, Vol. II, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1970) 35 note 19b). I am indebted to Rabbi A. Haramati for calling my attention to the following cases of מ/נ confusion: איין and איים (Ez 26:18); צדנין (1Kgs 11:33) though צדנים in v. 5; רציין (2Kgs 11:13) though רצים in vv. 6 and 19; חטיין (Ez 4:9) but חטים in a similar list in 2Sam 17:28; עיין (Mic 3:12) but quoted עיים in (Jer 26:18); מלכין (Prov 31:3) but מלכים in Prov 25:2, 3; מליין (Job 4:2) but מלים in Job 8:10;

אחרין (Job 31:10) but אחרים in Job 34:24; שוממין (Lam 1:16) but שוממים in Lam 1:4; תנין (Lam 4:3) but the *Qere* is תנים; ימין (Dan 12:13) but ימים in Dan 10:14; להם (Ex 1:21) instead of להן; אתם (Lev 26:3) instead of אתן; להם; עשיתן ... עמכן (Ruth 1:8) instead of עמכם ... להן (Num 27:7); לכן (Ruth 1:9, 11) instead of לכן; מכם (Ruth 1:13) instead of מכן. In Nah 2:6 instead of the MT יכשלו Smith reads ימשלו, “they take command,” justifying the emendation as a כ/מ confusion (J.M.P. Smith, “Commentary on the Book of Nahum,” in J.M.P. Smith, W.H. Ward, J.A. Bewer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985) 330). Cf. Mic 2:1 for an example of a כ/מ confusion. Obviously, מ is also similar to כ as much as it is similar to נ. However, the preceding מ in כשפים makes the נ to מ scribal error more likely.

⁴⁵ A sale requires a *quid pro quo*, which is not obvious in 1Sam 23:7. The Targum and Peshitta appear to be sensitive to the imbalance in the Septuagint’s use of מכר, translating נכר as “delivered.” If, however, נכר could mean “acquire, get,” then no emendation of נכר is required in 1Sam 23:7. The meaning of נכר אותו אלהים בידי would then be “the Lord caused to get him (David) into my hand.”

⁴⁶ BDB, 648. BDB note that נכר II is translated in the Syriac by terms “reject” or “alienus.”

⁴⁷ In private communication, Professor Lawrence Zalcman suggested the piel, המנכרת, which would explain both the reading in 4Q 169 (=4QpNah) and in the MT. I am indebted to Professor Zalcman for a number of helpful comments.