

‘AFTER THE SABBATH’ (MATT. 28:1)—
ONCE MORE INTO THE CRUX*

MATTHEW 28:1 reads: ‘Ὁψέ δὲ σαββάτων τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων. This verse has caused problems for interpreters. Logically, it ought to mean ‘at the end of the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was beginning’, i.e., as a reference to nightfall. The problem is, of course, that the verb ἐπιφωσκούσῃ means ‘dawning’, and seemingly refers to the morning. As P. Gardner-Smith phrased the problem in an article published in this journal, ‘The problem is plain; ὀψέ σαββάτων should mean towards sunset on Saturday evening, and τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων should mean towards sunrise on Sunday morning’¹. The verse has been a crux and much discussed in the literature, mostly, it would seem, in the *Journal of Theological Studies*. I wish in this communication to bring sufficient evidence to support one of the extant philological solutions so as to tip the scales in that direction.

In 1913, in the pages of this journal, C. H. Turner insisted correctly, contra Kirsopp Lake, that the verse and its cognates, to which I will refer below, must mean ‘nightfall’ or ‘evening’, but he had no philological solution to the lexicographical problem.² F. C. Burkitt, in the same year and also in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, unfortunately further confused the issue, although his article can be said to have pointed the way toward a solution as well.³ Burkitt’s argument, essentially, was that the term ἐπιφώσκειν is a calque on the Syriac and Aramaic ܥܘܪܝܢܐ, which though having a root meaning of ‘bright’, nevertheless refers to the evening. He claims that the term refers to the evening star, which is indeed referred to as ܥܘܪܝܢܐ, ‘the bright one’. Burkitt is correct, I think, in suggesting a Semitic substratum for this phrase, but there will be a serious problem to bridge the gap from the east Aramaic Syriac usage to the usage of Palestinian Greek writers such as Matthew.⁴

* I wish to thank Chava Boyarin for advice on points of Greek syntax and anonymous readers for the *JTS* for saving me from some embarrassing gaffes

¹ P. Gardner-Smith, ‘ΕΠΙΦΩΣΚΕΙΝ’, *JTS* 27 (1926), pp. 179–81

² C. H. Turner, ‘The Gospel of Peter’, *JTS* 14 (1913), pp. 188–90

³ F. C. Burkitt, ‘ΕΠΙΦΩΣΚΕΙΝ’, *JTS* 14 (1913), pp. 538–46

⁴ The truth is that the way to a correct solution had already been pointed by George Foote Moore in 1905, George Foote Moore, ‘Conjectanea Talmudica’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 26 (1905), pp. 323–9, but if scholars normally so attuned to ‘Jewish’ connections of the Gospels as Nodet and Taylor on the one hand, and W. D. Davies on the other can still consider the question

In 1926, in the article referred to above, P. Gardner-Smith took a step backward.⁵ His premise was that there were two extant solutions to the problem, one that distorts the meaning of the second phrase to have it refer to Saturday evening, and one which makes 'Ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων mean 'a time which we should call the early hours of Sunday morning', an equally improbable solution. He accordingly suggested that radical surgery on the text was indicated. He argues that Matthew copied and combined parts of two different verses from Mark:

16 ἰ καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠβόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν 2. καὶ λίαν πρῶτὴ τῇ μίᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου

According to Gardner-Smith, the scribe who rewrote Mark in order to create Matthew performed the following set of actions. First he substituted ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων for Mark's διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου, 'a change which made no difference to the sense'. However, perhaps after having written Mark's verse, he decided to leave out the women's action in bringing the spices. Accordingly he erased the first verse and went on to verse 2, 'paraphrasing λίαν πρῶτὴ τῇ μίᾳ τῶν σαββάτων quite correctly as τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων'. He then simply, 'forgot to erase ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων which he had already written, and the result is the impossible ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων'. Gardner-Smith goes on to confound the issue further by claiming that Luke 23:54, which clearly refers to the beginning of the Sabbath as well, is an interpolation, and that ἐπέφωδκεν was used because 'the interpolator lived at a time when Mt. xxxviii 1 had influenced the use of the word, and in Christian circles it was commonly used as meaning "draw on"... Thus an accident perhaps led to a new meaning being given to a Greek word.' This is the philological equivalent of a motorway pile-up.

The simplest solution would be one that would enable both Luke and Matthew to be aware of a Greek usage for this verb that refers to the evening, the time of the beginning of the next day. The latest and arguably most definitive scholarly commentary on Matthew, however, still claims that Sunday morning is being

unsettled or even lean against the translation-Greek solution, it seems that it is not superfluous to bring more evidence and philological precision from the Hebrew side to bear on the question.

⁵ Gardner-Smith, 'ΕΠΙΦΩΣΚΕΙΝ'.

spoken of in Matt. 28:1.⁶ Moreover, the suggestion of Burkitt which, for all its flaws, points the way to a solution, has recently been ostensibly totally discredited in a work by Nodet and Taylor that is likely to mislead many,⁷ particularly as the solution is dependent on subtleties of rabbinic philology⁸

In my opinion, Burkitt is essentially correct. We have Semitic translation Greek here (or a Semitic calque in Palestinian koine, which amounts, for our purposes, to the same thing). It seems worthwhile, therefore, to establish this point at some length via examination of some early Palestinian rabbinic texts, for they show that there is a Semitic usage that provides a much better *Vorlage* for the unusual Judaeo-Greek usage than the Syriac cognate offered by Burkitt.

In dismissing Burkitt's solution that the miracle was in the evening, immediately following the Sabbath, Nodet and Taylor write—following Gardner-Smith—that 'The verb ἐπέφωσκεν designates very naturally in Matt. 28:21 the first light of dawn (לְפָנָיו before sunrise. ... The meaning in Luke, according to which the Sabbath begins in the evening, is certainly secondary)'. They based their rejection of Burkitt's solution that the verb here is a calque on the Aramaic and Syriac נִגְהִי 'brightening' meaning evening, by claiming that the Syriac word 'normally refers to the dawn, but, in the context of the Passover, mean[s] the evening (*b Pes.* 2a–4a)'. They claim, moreover, that 'this distortion [!] does not proceed from any ambiguity in the terms, but from a change of calendar. originally the reference was to the morning, or at least the day'.

There is hardly a word of this unsupported presumption that will stand the light of day, or even the light of the evening star, as a philological survey will make clear. There are two other closer usages in Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) which make perfectly clear what I believe the background to the unusual ἐπιφωσκούση to have been. While the Syriac usage of נִגְהִי may

⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentaries (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Vol. 3, 1997), p. 663.

⁷ Who, moreover, follow G. R. Driver in yet another article in *JTS* on this subject, to wit, G. R. Driver, 'Two Problems in the New Testament', *JTS* 16 (1965), pp. 327–31, in assuming that Matthew indicates a calendar in which Sabbath runs from dawn to dawn.

⁸ Étienne Nodet and Justin Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity An Exploration* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 1998), p. 50, n. 148.

or may not be ambiguous, as we shall see, the Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic usage of **אור/אורתא** most certainly is not.

First of all, there may be no question whatever that **אורתא**, 'light', in talmudic Aramaic means evening and nothing but evening.⁹ The following example among literally dozens that could be cited will be sufficient.

תפלה המנחה עד הערב (ר' יהודה אומר עד פלג המנחה). אמר ליה רב חסדא לרב יצחק: התם אמר רב כהנא הלכה כרבי יהודה הואיל ותנן בבחירחא כוותיה, הכא מאי? אישתיק ולא אמר ליה ולא מידי. אמר רב חסדא: נחוי אנו, מדרב מצלי של שבת בערב שבת מבעוד יום - שמע מינה הלכה כרבי יהודה. אדרבה, מדרב הונא ורבנן לא הוה מצלו עד אורתא, שמע מינה אין הלכה כרבי יהודה! השתא דלא אתמר הלכתא לא כמר ולא כמר, דעבד כמר - עבד, ודעבד כמר - עבד.

The afternoon prayer may be said until the evening; [Rabbi Yehuda said until the middle of the afternoon]: Rav Ḥisda said to Rav Yizhaq: In another place Rav Kahana said that the law is like Rabbi Yehuda, since the best traditions follow him; here what is the case?

He was silent and did not say anything to him.

Rav Ḥisda said let me figure this for myself. Since Rav used to pray the evening prayer for the Sabbath on Friday afternoon when it was still day, we can derive that the law is like Rabbi Yehuda [i.e., that one may not say the afternoon prayer until the evening, since Rav said his evening prayer in the late afternoon and if it were still possible to say the afternoon prayer then, there would be a self-contradiction]

The opposite reasoning should be adopted. Since Rav Huna and all of the other Rabbis would not pray [the evening prayer] until evening [**אורתא**], we can learn that the law is not like Rabbi Yehuda!

(Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 27a)

This example is sufficient to demonstrate that in that dialect of Aramaic at least, **אורתא**, 'the light', is the ordinary and everyday word for evening, and never means anything else. This is so much the case that when the Talmud wishes to argue the point that in rabbinic Hebrew (which is more relevant to our case here) 'light' also means evening, the word **אורתא** is the word used to make this point. Let us see this case as well:

מיתבי, רבי יהודה אומר: בודקין אור לארבעה עשר, ובארבעה עשר שחרית, ובשעת הביעור. מדקאמר רבי יהודה בודקין אור ארבעה עשר ובארבעה עשר שחרית אלמא אור אורתא הוא! שמע מינה.

⁹ Contrary to the claim of Nodet and Taylor ad loc that '**אורתא** normally refers to the dawn, but, in the context of Passover mean[s] evening', **אורתא** in talmudic Aramaic *always and in all contexts* means evening, as Moore already correctly pointed out in 1905

They have answered Rabbi Yehuda says

One searches [for leaven] at the light [אור] of the fourteenth, and on the fourteenth in the morning, and at the time of burning. Since Rabbi Yehuda says that we search at the light of the fourteenth and on the fourteenth in the morning, therefore 'light' [אור] means evening [אורתא]. (Babylonian Talmud *Pesachim* 2b)

As I have said, this text demonstrates two things. First of all, it demonstrates that it is so clear in Babylonian Aramaic that the word אורתא, 'light' means 'evening', that it is used to simply gloss Hebrew אור as meaning 'evening' in an argumentative setting. Secondly, it does provide fine philological proof for this interpretation, for if Rabbi Yehuda said that the leaven is examined at three occasions: On the ? of the fourteenth, on the morning of the fourteenth, and at the hour of burning [later in the morning of the fourteenth], then ? must be the evening.

Finally, this meaning is attested in at least two other tannaitic passages that have nothing whatever to do with Passover. The subject is, unfortunately, a less than congenial one:

המפלת אור לשמנים ואחד בית שמאי פוטרין מן הקרבן בית הלל מחייבים אמרו בית הלל לבית שמאי מאי שנא אור לשמנים ואחד מיום שמנים ואחד אם שוה לו לטומאה לא ישוה לו לקרבן אמרו להם בית שמאי לא אם אמרתם במפלת יום שמנים ואחד שכן יצאה בשעה שהיא ראויה להביא בה קרבן תאמרו במפלת אור לשמנים ואחד שלא יצאה בשעה שהיא ראויה להביא בה קרבן

One who aborts a foetus at the light [אור ל] of the eighty-first. Beth Shammai release her from a sacrifice and Beth Hillel require it. Beth Hillel said to Beth Shammai: What is the difference between 'at the light', [i.e., in the evening of the eighty-first], and the day of the eighty-first? If they are identical for purposes of impurity, shall they not be identical for purposes of sacrifice? Beth Shammai responded to them. No. If you were to say that if she aborts during the day of the eighty-first [she would indeed bring a sacrifice], for then the foetus came out at an hour when she may bring a sacrifice, will you [then] say that this is true [even] if she aborts in the evening [אור ל] of the eighty-first, when the foetus did not come out at an hour when it is fit for her to bring a sacrifice? (Mishna *Keritot* 1:6)

The argument is based on the notion that for the first eighty days after conception, the embryo is not an embryo but only 'water', and, therefore, a miscarriage does not confer a requirement on the mother to sacrifice. However, a miscarriage following the eightieth day does require such a sacrifice. The mother has miscarried in the evening following the eightieth day. Beth Shammai say that she does not need to bring a sacrifice, as sacrifices are only brought by day, and since the miscarriage took place in the evening before

the possible obligation to bring the sacrifice became active, she was not yet obligated and therefore is free of the sacrifice. Their last sentence consists of a fairly typical form in midrash in which a rhetorical question disputing the reasoning of an opponent is offered, Beth Shammai arguing here that there is no analogy from a miscarriage in the morning when the sacrifice is already possible and obligatory to a miscarriage in the evening when the sacrifice could not yet be brought. This is a particularly significant example, for it indicates that early in the rabbinic period—perhaps at a time not far off from the time when the Gospel of Matthew was produced—**אור ל**, ‘at the light of’, unambiguously meant the evening and only the evening. Had it had even the slightest possibility that it meant morning, the entire text would be totally incomprehensible, and it is impossible in this context to imagine that it originally meant ‘the morning’ and an *ad hoc* change in practice led to the new meaning, as Nodet and Taylor argue for Syriac **ל נגהי** and by implication for Hebrew **ל אור**.

Now with respect to the Passover itself: The Babylonian Talmud (*Pesahim* 3a) in its attempt to prove that **אור לארבעה** Talmud (*Pesahim* 3a) in its attempt to prove that **אור לארבעה**, ‘at the light of the fourteenth’, means that on the evening of the fourteenth one searches for the leaven, cites this Mishna from *Keritot* as absolute proof for their case, and to my taste at least, their philology is absolutely sound. There is no other way to interpret ‘at the light of’ in this context.

Here is the text of the Talmud with its further proofs, which I take to be conclusive:

מדקאמר בית הלל לבית שמאי מאי שנא אור שמונים ואחד מיום שמונים ואחד שמע מינה אור אורתא הוא! שמע מינה.

After citing the Mishna from *Keritot* cited above, the Talmud goes on to argue:

‘Since Beth Hillel asked Beth Shammai: what is the difference between “the light of [**אור ל**] the eighty-first day” and “the day of the eighty-first day”? it follows that “the light of” means the evening **אורתא QED**’.

QED indeed; the Talmud’s philologic is impeccable here. And once more, we should at least allow for the possibility that this QED refers us back to the late first century, the time in which Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai flourished.

This is then followed by a somewhat more complex argument with respect to sacrifices.

מיתבי: יכול יהא נאכל אור לשלישי; ודין הוא: זבחים נאכלים ליום אחד, ושלמים נאכלים לשני ימים. מה להלן לילה אחר היום - אף כאן לילה אחר היום

'They object: "It could be that it is eaten 'at the light' of the third day [but isn't]! And it is logical sacrifices are eaten for one day and peace-offerings are eaten for two days Just as there the night follows the day, so here the night follows the day "'

The argument is: Here seemingly 'the light of the third day' means indeed the morning, since we are speaking of a peace offering which may be eaten according to the Torah for two days. Now since in the case of a sacrifice which may be eaten for one day, 'the night follows the day', i.e., it may be eaten until the morning, so also here we would conclude that it may be eaten until the morning of the third day, ergo, 'at the light of' here seems to mean the morning and not the evening, which would constitute an argument against the point of the Talmud that 'the light of' means the evening, and also an argument against the point of the present writer.

However, the Talmud continues:

תלמוד לומר: +ויקרא יט+ ביום זבחכם יאכל וממחרת הנותר עד יום
- בעוד יום הוא נאכל, ואינו נאכל לאור שלישי. . מדקאמר יהא נאכל
אור לשלישי אלמא: אור אורתא הוא! שמע מינה.

But the Torah says: "On the day of sacrificing it may be eaten and on the morrow" [Leviticus 19] It may be eaten during the day, and it may not be eaten "from the light of the third day" . . . Since it says, "it may [not] be eaten from the light of the third day", [and contrasts that with eating it "during the day"], it follows that "the light of" [אור] means evening [אורתא]. Q E D

Once more the Talmud's philological reasoning here is unimpeachable. Since the Hebrew text contrasts 'light of' to 'during the day', indicating that the sacrifice can be eaten during the second day but not 'at the light of the third day', it follows that 'light of' [אור] refers to the evening, called, once more, in the Aramaic of the Talmud also, 'light of' [אורתא].

The Talmud then cites a final and absolutely definitive (and somewhat simpler to follow) instance.

תא שמע: אור של יום הכפורים מתפלל שבע ומתודה, שחרית מתפלל
שבע ומתודה, במוסף מתפלל שבע ומתודה, במנחה מתפלל שבע
ומתודה, בערבית מתפלל מעין שמונה עשר.
אלמא: אור אורתא הוא! שמע מינה. תא שמע, דתני דבי שמואל: לילי
ארבעה עשר בודקין את החמץ לאור הנר, אלמא: אור אורתא הוא! -
אלא: בין רב הונא ובין רב יהודה, דכולי עלמא: אור אורתא הוא. ולא
פליגי, מר כי אתריה ומר כי אתריה. באתריה דרב הונא קרו נגהי,
ובאתריה דרב יהודה קרו לילי.

Come and hear: *at the light* of the Day of Atonement, he prays seven and confesses; in the morning, he prays seven and confesses; at the additional

prayer he prays seven and confesses; in the afternoon prayer he prays seven and confesses, and in the evening prayer eighteen

It follows that 'the light of' is the evening. QED.

And indeed we have learned this explicitly [in a parallel passage]: The Tanna of the House of Shmuel says: On the night of the fourteenth, one examines the leaven by the light of the candle.

Therefore [when the Mishna says] 'the light of the fourteenth' it means the evening also, and in fact, there is no disagreement on this matter. Each Rabbi used the dialect of his own place. In the place of Rav Huna, the night is called נגהי and in the place of Rav Yehuda, it is called לילה.

The Talmud finishes its demonstration that there are several places in the Mishna in which 'at the light of' a certain day means at the evening of that day, when the day begins according to Jewish law from time immemorial (cf. Lev. 23.32 with reference to Yom Kippur), by demonstrating that it is explicitly the case in a parallel text to the Mishna that the time for examining the leaven is defined as the night-time, and, since there is no reason to assume a difference of custom, this must be what the Mishna means as well. They then conclude the entire case by saying that, in fact, there is only one opinion on this subject. One of the authorities who glossed the Mishna's 'at the light of' to mean 'night', used the term current in his dialect of Aramaic for 'night', the normal לילי, while the other used a dialectal term נגהי, 'brightening/shining', which in his dialect means night as well (and this term is otherwise well attested in this sense as well; indeed it is precisely the Syriac attested by Burkitt).¹⁰

There is thus ample proof that in archaic rabbinic Hebrew 'at the light of' would *only and always* mean the beginning of the day at sunset, considered perhaps a brightening of the sky, a shining, and thus the term 'the lightening of' for sunset. Via a combination of usage of the comparative resources of their own semitic language and their very close philological reading of the Mishna, the talmudic scholars have reconstructed what is compelling evidence that the phrase 'at the dawning of' meant precisely the beginning of the day in the evening in Palestinian spoken Hebrew (and perhaps in Palestinian Aramaic as well). The Syriac phrase attested by Burkitt fits this idiomatic usage as well. Matthew's ἐπέφωσκεν means just what he says it means. Since this usage was apparently an archaism by the time of the

¹⁰ We can now suggest that the ambiguity in Syriac might also be a difference of dialects with some Syriac dialects, like some Jewish Aramaic ones, using the term נגהי to mean night, either as a euphemism or as a reference to the evening star

talmudic writers themselves, my assumption is that it belongs to a relatively ancient stratum of the Hebrew we call rabbinic, which is not an artificial language but the Hebrew spoken at the time of the Evangelists.¹¹ It seems to me highly plausible, therefore, that in the very semitically tinged Greek spoken and written by Syro-Palestinian Jews, the Greek word had taken on the meanings of its Hebrew equivalent, *particularly in the context of the fixed technical usage having to do with the onset and outgoing of the Sabbath*. There is no reason in the world, therefore, *pace* Nodet and Taylor, to assume from this usage that the Sabbath ever began in the morning.

The fact that Luke refers to the beginning of the Sabbath in v. 54 indicates that he is referring to what we would describe as the evening of the Friday, and this supports the point that I am making. On the other hand, Luke then seems to get into a muddle by referring to the preparation of the spices in v. 56 apparently after v. 54—a mistake that was apparently spotted by the scribe of MS D, who amended the verse to read: ἦν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα προσαββάτου.¹²

The assumption that translation Greek is to be found in Matthew is supported as well by the terms 'Οψὲ δὲ σαββάτων, which is Hebrew מוצאי שבת, 'the outgoing of the Sabbath', as pointed out by Moore,¹³ and μίαν σαββάτων, half a simple loan from Hebrew, half a calque on אחד בשבת for the first day of the week.¹⁴

¹¹ A reader for the *JTS* asks if my suggestion is 'that earlier Jewish Palestinian Aramaic had the same usage as the talmudic, and did that influence both talmudic Hebrew and the New Testament Greek?' This seems to presuppose that Hebrew was not spoken in the time of the evangelists, a highly questionable assumption in the light of current research and settled seemingly definitively by the Bar Kochba letters in which it is clear that a dialect of Hebrew, very similar to that of the Mishna, was spoken and written in Palestine at that time, Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *L'hébreu, 3000 Ans d'Histoire* (Paris A Michel, 1992), pp 63-4 Cf Nicholas de Lange, 'The Revival of the Hebrew Language in the Third Century CE', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996), pp 344-5, who disputes this argument, suggesting that Hebrew was 'dying on its feet' in the second century and that the mishnaic language represents a revival. If de Lange's suggestive arguments prove compelling, then indeed one would speak of earlier Jewish Palestinian Aramaic being a common substrate for both mishnaic Hebrew and Judaeo-Greek.

¹² I wish to thank Prof Morna D Hooker for making this suggestion and for much else in the preparation of this paper.

¹³ Moore, 'Conjectanea Talmudica', p. 323

¹⁴ As we see from the beginning of the verse, the genitive plural is used here in accordance with Greek usage for periods of time. Other than this minor syntactical adaptation, however, the verse retroverts into perfect Hebrew and hardly makes

The meaning here is exactly identical to *Gospel of Peter* 9:35, which can only be translated: 'Now in the night [νυκτί] in which the Lord's day dawned.. there rang out a loud voice in heaven', preserving a tradition similar to that of Matthew in which a miracle took place immediately with the end of the Sabbath at night.¹⁵ This must, of course, be at night, because they go to wake the centurion and the elders. The succession of events there is clearly the morning of the Sabbath (v. 34), Saturday night, 'in which the Lord's day dawned' (v. 35), and then at 12:50, 'Early in the morning of the Lord's Day'. In the same text, in chapter 2, furthermore, we find ἐπεὶ καὶ σάββατον ἐπιφώσκει, which can only mean 'since the Sabbath is falling', for it explains why the Jews would have buried Jesus before night-fall, since it is written in the Torah that the sun may not set on a slain man.¹⁶ Moreover, we find in Luke 23:54: καὶ ἡμέρα ἣν παρασκευῆς καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκει (= and it was the day of preparation [i.e., Friday] and the Sabbath was dawning), where surely no-one doubts (except apparently Kirsopp Lake and G. R. Driver who seem to have thought that the Jews observed the Sabbath from the morning and prepared for it all night) that it is the evening that is referred to. This usage is thus well attested in Jewish Greek and entirely unknown from non-Jewish Greek texts. I think that if the rabbis had known these Judaeo-Greek texts they would have cited them in support of their own interpretation of the Mishna.¹⁷ Indeed, they would have been presumably less puzzled at the mishnaic usage itself, understanding that the verb refers to the 'breaking through' or 'dawning' of a new day, whether that happens at evening, as in the traditional Jewish calendar, or at morning.¹⁸

sense in Greek. In any case, the meaning is clear and the supposition of loan-translation seemingly unassailable, as noted by W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr, *Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), vol. 3, p. 663.

¹⁵ Turner, 'The Gospel of Peter', p. 180.

¹⁶ See also Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon, 1967³), p. 137.

¹⁷ As Burkitt shows, Epiphanius (*Panar.* lxxi. 2) still knew that Jews use the verb to mean the time at the end of the Sabbath, the beginning of Sunday.

¹⁸ The etymology of the Hebrew-Aramaic usage is still a crux. Jastrow in his dictionary suggests that the root meaning of פָּרַץ is to 'break through' or something of the like, others have suggested the appearance of Venus as the referent, still others (the great medieval philologist, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra) suggest a fairly typical sort of Semitic euphemistic usage. Whatever the ultimate solution to the etymology, the semantics are simply not in question. See also Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964), p. 641.

In short, on philological grounds, the first verse of Matthew 28 is in perfect Hebrew, just happening to have been translated virtually word for word into Greek, and, on that assumption, is easily translated: 'at the end of the Sabbath, at the beginning of the first day of the week'. I would be inclined to understand Mark 16:2 as a misunderstanding of a Semitic idiom that Matthew understood well (or at least translated literally).¹⁹

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¹⁹ See also J. M. Winger, 'When Did the Women Visit the Tomb?' *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994), pp 284-8

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