

Abstracts: "Motion and Posture in the Bible: Language, Translation, Reception and Effects"

Wednesday 8 May 2024

Agustinus GIANTO

On motion and posture verbs in the Hebrew of Jonah

While motion verbs represent the movement of entities from one place to another, thus a dynamic situation, posture verbs describe the position of entities in space, hence basically a static situation. The dynamic situation in motion verbs can be described in terms of its components, i.e., the moving entity (FIGURE), the motion in itself (PATH), the beginning and end of the motion (GROUND), and the type of motion (MANNER). The static situation of posture verbs, on the other hand, shows various degrees of effort to maintain the posture (HIGH; MEDIUM, or LOW). These notions will then be applied to the motion and posture verbs in the story of Jonah whose plot proceeds on the movements and postures of its protagonist: Jonah was told by the Lord to go to Nineveh, but he fled to Joppa, embarked on a ship that was sailing to Tarshish. During the storm cast by the Lord, Jonah went down to the deepest part of the ship, lying down in deep sleep there. The story continues along Jonah's movements and postures that provide material for further study of motion and posture verbs.

Paola MOLLO

Semantics and syntax of *yšb* ("to sit") in Biblical Hebrew

This paper investigates the verb *yšb* within the Hebrew Bible, illustrating both its dynamic and stative postural meanings ("to sit down" / "to be seated"), and its figurative extensions ("to settle" / "to dwell", "to stay (for a certain time)", "to be still", "to refrain from doing", "to marry"). The investigation aims at identifying the semantic features of the verb, focusing on how they are selected and hierarchized in its different senses and contexts of use. Particular attention is paid to the syntax-semantics interface, that is, to how the semantics of the verb impacts on its syntactic uses (addition of locative- or time-adjuncts, presence, or absence of certain prepositions, etc.).

Thursday 9 May 2024

Lucie PEREZ

Going Up to Jerusalem: Linguistic Variation in the Light of Motion Verb Complements in Manuscripts of Isaiah

Motion verb complements in Ancient Hebrew can exhibit different constructions: with at least one preposition, with a directive -he (sometimes in addition to a preposition), or alone as a simple "verbal complement". Recent analysis of these complements in the Masoretic Text (Medill, 2020) has shown that the choice of complement construction is influenced by multiple factors, such as the complement's definiteness, complexity, individuation, or animacy. However, there has been limited investigation into these constructions and factors in extra-Masoretic sources. Additionally, previous research presents conflicting views on the extent of variation in the Masoretic Text and the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls.

This paper proposes a cross-textual comparison of motion verb complements in three different manuscripts of the Book of Isaiah: the Masoretic Isaiah, the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), and the Lesser Isaiah Scroll (1Q8 or 1QIsab), focusing on syntactic and lexical variants. By examining both Masoretic and extra-Masoretic sources, this paper challenges the assumption that the MT should be the primary focus of textual analysis.

Using the ETCBC digital database, I compiled a dataset of approximately 600 complements, considering key variables such as the manuscript source, specific characteristics of the motion verb complements (animacy, individuation, complexity, and definiteness), and the type of motion expressed (factive or fictive). A basic statistical investigation is employed to explore differences and similarities among the three sources. This provides insights into the extent of variation in the three manuscripts and allows us to compare the impact of complement animacy, individuation, complexity, and definiteness across different sources.

The Great Isaiah Scroll, as one of the longest preserved biblical manuscripts from Qumran, serves as an ideal source for comparison with the MT. Nevertheless, the questions raised here can be extended to all the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, allowing for an investigation of variations across numerous versions of the biblical books in ancient Hebrew.

Luigi SANTOPAULO

Journeying Through the Heavens: Celestial Motion in Aramaic Apocalyptic Literature

Mark AVILA

Mesopotamians in Motion: gestural language in Sumerian and Akkadian texts

The Sumerian lexicon is rather rich in phrasal verbs consisting of noun + motion verb in lexicalized combination expressing actions which in many languages, including Italian and English, are expressed with simple verbs that do not involve perceivable motion. Furthermore, the Sumerian allative morpheme, conveying "forward movement" and used predominantly in motion verbs, appears to have made its way into Akkadian, further reinforcing, so to say, the "eastern" character of this Semitic language. A few texts drawn from both literatures will be presented showcasing these features and the difficulties in capturing the different nuances in translation. The presentation will conclude with a look at various idiomatic expressions involving motion verbs, intended either wholly figuratively or indicating stylized gestures deployed as social metaphors.

Peter DUBOVSKÝ

Starting a military campaign: A study of the verbs of motion in Sargon II's inscriptions

Rita FRANZIA and Matteo VIGO

Focusing on some ritual actions in Hittite magic rituals and *Festrituale*

The group of ritual texts, both magic rituals and *Festrituale* (i.e. carried out for cultic purposes), constitutes the largest part of the Hittite tablets collection. The texts stem from different ritual traditions: Central Anatolian-Hattian (what we generally define as 'Hittite'), Luwian, Palaic, and Hurrian. They also belong to the different stages of the attested language and script, having been copied multiple times over the years. The 'Hittite culture' emerged from a mixed socio-cultural background. The present study intends to explore some specific ritual gestures such as, for example, drinking while sitting vs. standing; standing vs. sitting 'in front of', in order to verify whether there is a functional distinction of ritual gestures between different ritual traditions.

Alessio AGOSTINI

Motion and posture in the ancient South Arabian ritual setting and related ceremonies

This paper focuses on some lexical elements that could reflect specific moments of pre-Islamic rituality in Southern Arabia. In particular, the analysis will contemplate some of the most recurrent situations that indicate individual attitudes, physical postures, or movements, within a ritual context

and in a sacral space. The investigation is mainly based on internal epigraphic documentation, and, when relevant, also considers the archaeological background, to clarify the terminology connected to some ritual ceremonies in pre-Islamic South Arabia. These terms, often still doubtful in their meaning, but with a probable connection to the present topic, will be analyzed in their epigraphic and linguistic context and, where appropriate, also in a comparative perspective.

Gian Pietro BASELLO

Motion and Posture Verbs in Context: The Elamite Evidence

Our knowledge of the Elamite language and the current status of its lexicography are far from allowing a detailed analysis of motion and posture verbs. Notwithstanding this, the project MEGA, recently established by Katrien De Graef & Shai Gordin and aiming at the digitization of the Elamite lexicon, provides data that permits, finally, a systematical analysis. The most attested Elamite motion verbs will be analyzed in their verbal form (according to the so-called “conjugation” system) and syntactical context, focusing on verb / conjugation distribution patterns and morphological marking of spatial complementation. It will be shown preliminarily that (1) the usage of conjugations is not uniform: some verbs are never attested in some conjugations, suggesting that they have different functions with respect to transitivity, as already noted in the seminal paper by E. Tucker (in *Achaemenid History* 11, 1998); (2) with some motion verbs, the target of the spatial movement is left unmarked.

Liana TRONCI

Motion verbs in motion: Insights from Biblical translations in Greek and Latin

This paper examines the usage of motion verbs in the Old Testament in Greek and Latin comparing them with similar usages in the Greek and Latin New Testament. These usages mirror the verbal hendiadyses of Biblical Hebrew, wherein motion verbs are combined with another verb to denote a single event (Chrzanowski 2011, Lillas 2012, Andrason 2019). In Biblical Greek and Biblical Latin, these combinations manifest in two distinct constructions: the participial type, wherein the motion verb functions as a participle alongside a finite main verb, and the serial or coordinated type, where both verbs share the same mood and are either juxtaposed or coordinated (Logozzo & Tronci 2019, 2022, 2023, Tronci 2021).

This paper provides a diachronic analysis of the behaviour of motion verbs in the examined constructions, comparing the Septuagint and the New Testament, as well as their Latin translations by Jerome. This analysis will encompass both lexical and syntactic aspects. First, it will explore whether differences exist in the lexical selection of motion verbs between the Old and New Testaments. Secondly, it will examine the distribution of the two construction types – participial and serial / coordinated – within the texts.

Craig E. MORRISON

Was David’s Movement toward Absalom in 2 Sam 13:39 hostile or friendly?

1 Samuel 13:39 is among the most important verses for interpreting Absalom’s rebellion in the David Narrative, but it is among the most cryptic verses in 1-2 Samuel. The main verb, **וַתֵּלֶךְ** focus of several, diverse interpretations, is complemented by an infinitive from **צָוַן** that expresses movement: David “went out to Absalom.” The Targum heightens the metaphorical sense of this phrase: “the *nephesh* of King David delighted to go to (לֵךְ) Absalom.” The Peshitta has three different interpretations for David’s movement toward Absalom. This paper will consider how the metaphorical sense of **צָוַן** was expanded by the Targum and the Peshitta.

Michael KOLARCIC

The Communicative Power of Posture in the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 5:1)

The first part of the Wisdom of Solomon (1-6) unfolds with a barrage of words championing justice over injustice. Justice leads to immortality. Injustice leads to death. The drama of the conflict unfolds

in a metaphorical trial scene. The ungodly are accused. They in turn mount a defense by attacking the powerless and subjecting the just one to a shameful death as proof of the power of injustice. In three diptychs the author sifts through the appearances and reality of strength and weakness (Wis 3-4). Finally in bringing readers to the lofty height of an apocalyptic judgment, the author has the just one stand in the presence of the oppressors (τότε στήσεται 5:1). Not a word of defense or accusation. The simple gesture of “standing” in their presence unravels their arguments to shreds, and they confess their vacuous moral state which ends in the apocalyptic judgement. All lawlessness is blown away by a mighty tempest (Wis 5:23).

Daniele TRIPALDI

One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand: Re-Describing the Collapse of the Seer—From Emotional ‘Backlash’ to Identity Transformation (Rev 1,17-18)

Starting from the lexical comparison between Rev 1,17-18 and its literary model, Dn 8,18 (TM / LXX / Theodotion) – with Ez 1,28-2,2 in the background – in this paper I will attempt to highlight the implicit re-interpretation and re-signification of the topos of the seer’s collapse in its different linguistic formulations. Echoing and re-working into his text traditional postures in Jewish visionary literature, John elaborates and adapts them to his own rhetorical and polemical aims.

Juan Manuel GRANADOS

Motion and Posture in Romans 6: βαπτίζω and ἐπιμένω

In the NT the verb βαπτίζω indicates a movement of immersion. Yet few NT studies have analyzed it and its related vocabulary from the perspective of posture and motion. Many studies on βαπτίζω focus on the traditions behind its use in the Synoptics and Paul’s letter, whether its use reflects Jewish rites of purification, pagan initiation rites, or an early Christian liturgy. If βαπτίζω means movement, one may ask what the initial and final positions are. Studying Romans 6 may clarify the comprehension of this movement.

Friday 10 May 2024

Daniela SCIALABBA

The term ἐπιστρέφω in the LXX and NT: how an everyday-use motion verb expresses a theological concept

The aim of this paper is to present the main meanings of the verb ἐπιστρέφω and, in particular, to show how it takes on a specific nuance of meaning in the LXX in relation to the meanings found in the texts of classical and Hellenistic Greek literature. For if, on the one hand, it takes on the basic meaning whenever it is intended to express the concrete movement in space of ‘returning’, ‘turning’ or ‘turning round’. On the other hand, when it is used in the context of a relationship with a divine being (be it the God of Israel or other deities in general), it can indicate a ‘turning’ towards him / them. This is not to be understood in a spatial sense, but as a return in a figurative sense, and can express repentance, in the case of Israel, to its God; or an adherence of faith to the God of Israel, in the case of foreign nations. However, the question arises as to how to explain such a semantic evolution towards the translational use of the verb: are there attested uses of the verb in which the two meanings of movement and change of opinion coexist? Can we identify certain stages of such an evolution in biblical or non-biblical texts?

Agostino SOLDATI

"...the sense of priority being lost"? on the uses of φθάνειν in Greek OT and NT

Among the movement verbs of the Greek language, the case of φθάνειν is peculiar. Starting from an initial expression of anticipation in acting, the verb often becomes in Late Greek a substantial synonym of ἔρχεσθαι. According to the opinion of authoritative scholars, such a meaning would generally be the value that the verb holds in the Greek versions of the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. However, an up-to-date overview of the polysemy of the verb in the Greek documents of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, not neglecting Byzantine and Neo-Greek usages, may perhaps enable us to clarify certain scriptural usages.

Claudio BALZARETTI

The Gesture of Prayer: from Hebrew to Syriac

This research begins with a survey: checking the Syriac translation of passages usually cited in previous research on posture in the Old Testament. From this survey, a significant difference emerges when there is a hand gesture. It seems that the translation does not fully capture the nuances of the Hebrew when it comes to the gesture of prayer. The most famous gesture of prayer is that of *proskynesis*. This gesture is aimed at both divinity and men: is there a difference in the Syriac translation?

Philip BURTON

Biblical Translation and the Invention of Intuition

This paper examines the rise in frequency of words in the semantic field of insight and intuition (notably *intueor* and *inspicio*) in post-classical Latin. It is suggested that while models in earlier Latin and in non-Christian usage exist, a large part of this rise may be explained as arising from the use of ἐμβλέπω in biblical Greek. The physical action of looking ‘at’ someone or something merges into the spiritual action of looking ‘into’ someone. We then consider how whether this empirical feature of later Latin is best understood as a purely linguistic/stylistic phenomenon, or whether it represents the invention of a new intellectual category.

Alfio Giuseppe CATALANO

‘Moving’ the hands: the verb ῥαπίζω-*expalmo*, ‘I slap’, in the *Vetus Latina* between Africa and Europe

The translations of the denominal verb ῥαπίζω and the correlative noun ῥάπισμα in the Latin versions of the Bible allow us to trace an evolution in the use of the Latin equivalents parallel to the history of revisions.

In ancient African versions, in fact, the synthetic form *expalmare*, ‘to slap with a full hand’ (Codex Bobbiensis), and the periphrastic form *verberare palmis* (Cyprian, Lactantius, VL 176, cf. Plautus, *Cas.* 405) predominate. Both expressions are concrete and vivid, and the former is a neologism of Christian Latin. The analytical renditions *agere palmas* (VL 173) or *dare palmas* (Codex Palatinus), which resort to support verbs, are also attested. Later or in a higher register the replacement of *palma* with *alapa* tends to occur (*alapis percutere*, *alapis caedere*, *dare alapas*), but only Jerome employs the abstract full verb *percutio*, without complements (Matt 5,39 Vulgate). The conceptualisation carried out was probably aimed at eliminating forms felt to be too popular or improper and producing versions of a more literary flavour (diastratic and / or diaphasic variation).

The process of revision of the translations of ῥαπίζω is matched by a similar one in the renditions of ῥάπισμα, ‘slap’: from the use of *palma*, with metonymic value (Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius) towards the abstract *alapa* (Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome).

The analysis of linguistic variation sheds light on the semantic and lexical restructuring processes that occurred in the passage from Africa to Europe of ancient Latin translations of the Greek, while it contributes to the understanding of some of Jerome’s choices in revising Latin versions, or in translating *ex novo* from Hebrew.

Nathalie BOSSON

“Sans me bouger, je cours”. Jonah in motion

The Book of Jonah not only features a rich vocabulary of verbs of motion but is also attested in three major Coptic dialects (Sahidic, Bohairic and Akhmimic). It thus provides a unique opportunity to study and compare the way in which Coptic translators have rendered the ceaseless motion of up / down and to / from, symbolic transpositions of the emotional changes at work among the story’s protagonists, with a particular focus on the interaction between verbs and prepositions, the role of certain verbs (including the phenomenon of auxiliation), and the aspectual-temporal framework. Yet, paradoxically, this text from the Minor Prophets, whose hero is a stubborn, elusive prophet, and whose narrator makes him a subject of inaction-action or motion-emotion, has been variously portrayed by writers, particularly when they refer to the episode of the fish: Immobile and yet mobile (“sans me bouger, je cours”) in Du Bartas, which contrasts with the mobile (*mobilis in mobile*) in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

David MEYER

A small motion for man, a giant theological leap for God

One of the smallest human motions one can imagine is perhaps the tears rolling from our eyes when we cry. The almost imperceptible movement of the eyes and subsequent falling of tears, is evocative of a downward motion that is not only the result of pure gravity but also, possibly, of our very human nature aiming to return to the earth as we face pain, sadness, or grief. The Bible makes humble references to such tears and motions. One can think of Jeremiah 8,23 or Lamentation 3,48 to perceive, not only the rawness of pure emotions, but also the downward motions associated with human tears. Commenting on these verses, the midrashic collection on Lamentation, Eikhah Zuta (a collection whose existence was attested in the Xth century and containing most probably much earlier individual midrashic material), developed a unique and astonishing theological perspective. By inverting the downward motion of the tears, the midrash posits that God learns from human motions and postures to mourn for the destruction of the temple and the exile. The *Imitatio Dei* is, as it were, inverted, paving the way for a down-up “anthropological theology” that, far from being a top-down “theological anthropology”, presents to the midrashic readers the comforting image of a God learning from humans the postures and motions of grief, covenantally sharing the pain of his people. From the almost imperceptible downward motions of the tears, the midrash gives voice to a gigantic upward theological leap: that of an intimate theology in which the God of the Bible is not only understood as being in a “relation of concern” (an expression used by Heschel) with humanity, but becomes a God learning from human corporality, postures and motions to remain close to his suffering children.

Massimo GARGIULO

Moving toward hospitality in Homer and Philo

Studies have highlighted Homer’s privileged place in the writings of Philo of Alexandria: Philo quotes or alludes to Homer several times and he often uses exegetical methods already applied to Iliad and Odyssey. An interesting case in point is *Quaestiones in Genesim* 4.20, where, as in many other passages, Philo tries to show how the Hebrew culture expressed in the Bible is not inferior to the Homeric one and that Homer somehow follows Moses. The passage is about the very important theme of hospitality and Philo goes into a lexical analysis concerning the most appropriate verb of movement to use, comparing a verse from Genesis with a verse from the Odyssey.

Vasile BABOTA

The High Priest’s ‘Entering’ of the Holy of Holies in Leviticus 16 and Some Interpretations

The scope of this presentation is to examine the way Leviticus 16 was received in several sources in Late Antique Judaism and early Christianity. We will investigate the verbs – as well as some of the

related aspects – that describe the entering of the high priest into the holy of holies. The specific focus will be on the bodily actions and language that reflect the high priest's experience of divine presence. We shall see how, and to what extent, the interpretation of the same text was influenced by the socio-religious milieu of a given author. Sources studied: Lev 16 (MT&LXX), Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, Hebrews.

Valentina MARCHETTO

«Si 'stabant' 'volare' non poterant» (Orig. *His* I 2). On the Motion of the Seraphim in Origen's exegesis.

Several times, Origen turns to comment on the 'most difficult vision' (Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah III 1) of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:1ff. Among the many aspects that raise questions and seem to contradict each other is precisely the motion of the angelic creatures: how is it possible that they simultaneously 'stand' and 'fly'? And what is the significance of their movement?

With this presentation, we wish to explore the lines of continuity and the peculiarities of the Origenian interpretation of the seraphim in relation to what may have been its sources (Philo) or the more or less coeval Christian interpretation (Clement); we will also explore the authors who, more or less explicitly, borrow the Alexandrian writer's ideas in their commentaries on Isaiah (Eusebius, Jerome), in order to emphasize how the specific reflection on the movement of angelic creatures remains unique to Origen's exegesis.

Claudio ZAMAGNI

Posture in early Greek Christian texts (I-II century)

Emanuela PRINZIVALLI

Motion and Posture in the Commentary on Psalms of Didymus the Blind

The *Commentary on the Psalms* by Didymus the Blind is an interesting case study for examining postures in the Bible and ancient Christian exegesis. Indeed, in the Book of Psalms, the gestures of God and the believer, in their mutual relationship, are constantly in the foreground. Moreover, Didymus's *Commentary* is a rare case of an ancient work composed of lessons directly addressed to students, who pose questions. My essay will focus on Didymus's interpretation and the students' questions regarding: 1) the postures and movements of God, 2) the postures and movements of the faithful, 3) the postures and movements of the wicked.