

-20-

“Raising up” as “Resurrection/Ascension” and the Correct Translation of Acts 3:22a

The Greek word *anastasis*, resurrection, (from which we get the lovely name Anastasia) is related to the Greek verb *anistemi* “to raise up” which occurs in verses 22 and 26 of Peter’s sermon. What is the meaning or correct interpretation of “raising up” in these two occurrences of this expression in our passage? Does it refer to raising up in the sense of the “establishing” of the Prophet spoken of by Moses (v. 22) and of the establishing of the Child, Jesus as the covenantally promised Seed of Abraham (v. 26) or does Peter in these occurrences (either additionally or instead) refer to Christ’s resurrection/ascension? This important question is very much at the heart of the present book. This matter is widely discussed in the commentaries, and, although there is no general consensus, the possibility is quite frequently put forward that resurrection/ascension is a valid (additional) interpretation of Peter’s words for one or both passages —i.e. that an element of deliberate ambiguity or “wordplay” is being employed.

In the present book, I am being very bold and am suggesting a different viewpoint— that Peter primarily has in mind references to Christ’s resurrection/ascension in both passages. I currently think there are difficulties with understanding the flow of the second part of Peter’s sermon when other viewpoints are adopted, and I attempt to address some of these difficulties later, as well as defending the resurrection/ascension viewpoint, starting in this chapter with a discussion of the correct translation of Peter’s words (quoting Moses) in Acts 3:22a regarding God’s “raising up of a Prophet like Moses.”

(One aspect of “raising up” with respect to prophets is that God’s prophets are part of the heavenly council (e.g. Amos 3:7, Jer. 23:18,22): there is thus an intrinsic “ascension” element to the prophetic calling.)

In this chapter then, I wish to look, not at every aspect of the proposed validity of the “resurrection/ascension” understanding of the “raisings up” in verses 22 and 26, but at translation issues for just one of these verses, v.22- the (hopeful) resolution of these translation issues will provide evidence for the “resurrection/ascension” interpretation in this verse.

What is the Correct Translation of Moses’ Words Quoted in Acts 3:22a?

An important part of the interpretation of the second part of Peter’s sermon being proposed in this book concerns the correct translation of Acts 3:22a. These words, (Peter’s quotation of Moses’ words from Deut. 18:15) are, I suggest, incorrectly or ambiguously translated in most English translations. These (?mis-)translations do not by any means *prevent* the resurrection/ascension interpretation of the “raising up” described in v. 22, but what I see as the correct translation *enhances* this understanding of “raising up” by showing that the resurrection/ascension of Jesus is not specifically described as taking place “from amongst your brethren” (i.e. from amongst Israel generally) - this latter idea is not really described elsewhere in Scripture. Rather Peter in his sermon says in Acts 3:15 that “we” (presumably here, Peter and John, but more generally the Apostles (Acts 1:3,8, 22; Acts 10:41; Acts 13:31) were witnesses to the resurrection (though there were other witnesses to the resurrection, including, especially, the women at the tomb) and it was the Apostles who were present at the ascension.

The translation that I support is basically that of the NKJV:

“A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me . . .”

Here, by contrast, is a more modern translation (the ESV):

“The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers . . .”

Here, apart from the fact that the ESV has changed the (emphatic!) word order of the original Greek, the basic semantic difference is that most people reading the ESV would understand the “raising up” to be a raising up of the prophet “from your brothers” - i.e. the phrase “from your brothers” is adverbial telling us something about the “raising up”. By contrast, the NKJV clearly avoids that understanding, by translating the relevant phrase as “of your brethren”, which is an adjectival phrase telling us something about the prophet, not about the raising up, since “to raise up *from* something” is valid English, but “to raise up *of* something” isn’t. (I quote the NKJV here because, as has recently been kindly pointed out to me, “Elizabethan” English from the era of the KJV and its antecedents *did* in fact sometimes use the word “of” where in modern English we would use

“from”. So, in the KJV, it’s not clear whether the phrase “of your brethren” is adjectival or adverbial.

In this chapter, I wish to argue for the following translation of Acts 3:22a which I use in the main body of the book

“A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up for you, one from your brethren (one) like me . . .”

In this attempted translation, I have tried to indicate that the prophet is “*one from your brethren*” and that he is a prophet “*like me*” (i.e. like Moses), and also that one of the similarities between the prophet and Moses is that Moses too was “from your brethren”. This multivalency, which exists structurally in the Greek, is hard to present in a single (linear) translation, but I have attempted to do this by repeating the word *one* and putting the second occurrence in brackets.

What I have tried to avoid in this translation is the idea that a raising up *from* the brethren is being described. Even if it can be argued that such a raising up from the brethren is implied or can be inferred by the words of the text of Acts 3:22a, I suggest that this is not what Peter is specifically describing.

The raising up of the Prophet (v.22)

In v. 22 then we read Peter’s quotation of Moses’ words (following the word order in the Greek text), “A Prophet for you will raise up the Lord God of you from among the brothers of you like me”. Now the question as I see it is, “Does the phrase “from among your brothers” refer primarily to the “raising up for you” or to “a Prophet like me”? (In grammatical terms we are asking whether is it an adverbial phrase modifying the verb “to raise up” or is it an adjectival phrase modifying the noun “Prophet”?)

(Another issue is whether the “raising up” is a raising up to be a prophet, or whether the raising up is a raising up of one who is already a prophet. My current feeling is that this semantic issue is hard to determine, but with the proposed “resurrection/ascension” view with regard to the raising up of Christ the Prophet, it would be the second of these that applies.)

In other words, (using, for now, the “establishing” meaning of “raising up”) we are asking whether Moses is saying a) that the raising up will consist in the “selecting” or “establishing” of the Prophet for them from out of the “group” of brothers, just like God did with Moses, or is he saying b) that

the raising up will consist in God’s elevating someone who is one of them, one of their brethren, to be a prophet (or who is already a prophet) for them (just as the prophet Moses, who was from amongst them, was elevated—see e.g. Josh. 4:14)? When we look at the original OT reference in Deut 18:15, both in Hebrew and in the Septuagint it seems reasonably clear (to me anyway!) that, there (in Deuteronomy), although both understandings are in theory “grammatically” possible, namely a) that the Person spoken of is being elevated from amongst the brethren to be, (or as), a prophet for them, and b) that, *as one amongst the brethren*, he is being elevated to be, or as, a prophet for them, the structure of Deut 18:5, and other factors, together favour the second of these. But which does Peter intend here in Acts 3:22? Almost all translations of Acts 3:22 opt for the first possibility (the NKJV being an exception!) but I currently think that Peter intends the second, and also that choosing between these is a very important hermeneutical decision for the interpretation of the second half of Peter’s sermon. Clearly I have some explaining to do!

Let us start by looking at Deut. 18:15, the verse that Peter quotes in Acts 3:22.

Deuteronomy 18:15 in the Original Hebrew:

In this article, I have been suggesting that the “raising up” of the prophet in Acts 3:22 is not to be understood as a “raising up from the brothers”, but rather it is a prophet from amongst the brothers who is to be raised up. I think that this understanding is also that of the original Hebrew verse, Deut. 18:15 as well as the Septuagint translation of that verse, as I now attempt to show.

In Joseph Fitzmeyer’s commentary on Acts (p. 289) he draws attention to the fact that the order of some of the words in Peter’s quotation of the passage is “inverted”, as well pointing out a very slight difference between the Hebrew original and the Septuagint Greek translation. A further alteration is that the word *humin* (for you) has been brought near to the front in Peter’s version. (Please see Darrell Bock’s commentary on Acts p. 178 for this where he sees the move serving to emphasise the word *humin* (“for you”) and refers to it as a “dative of advantage”.)

I think that Peter’s inversion of the order and other changes can be accounted for (please see below). However, many in Peter’s audience would likely be familiar with the wording of the well-known original reference in Deuteronomy in the Greek of the Septuagint and probably in Hebrew too.

Why does Peter choose to invert the word order in some places? I suggest it is, at least in part, to incorporate the passage within a (rhetorical) chiasmic structure as discussed later below, but let us look now at the passage in Deuteronomy that Peter quotes.

The part of Deut. 18:15 that we are currently considering has, I suggest, eight elements :

1. A Prophet
 2. from among you
 3. from the brothers of you
4. like me

5. shall raise up
 6. for you
7. the Lord
 8. God of you.

In this “list”, we note the frequency of references to “you”. These are singular in the Hebrew (in the Septuagint the “you”s are also singular) but plural in Peter’s quotation. (In Deuteronomy, Moses is addressing Israel but in Peter’s quotation, Moses is addressing “the fathers”).

Items 1-4 describe the Prophet, (the object of the sentence), and are structured chiasmically—1 and 4 correspond, as do the two references to “you” - items 2 and 3. Also items 1 and 2 considered together are related chiasmically to items 4 and 3 considered together (as indeed are items 1, 2 and 3, considered together, and items 4, 3 and 2, considered together!) (These structural considerations are I suggest helpful in attempting to assess the nature and extent of the similarity between Moses and the Prophet as described in this verse: the structural approach here would suggest that the similarities include (unspecified) similarities in their respective Prophetic ministries as well as their (specified) both coming from the midst of Israel/from the brethren.)

Items 5-8 describe what God does for the prophet, and the structure is basically linear with 5 and 7 giving the verb and subject of the sentence respectively, and 6 and 8 providing the corresponding references to “you” - thus 5-6 is sort of paralleled by 7-8.

Well, does Deut. 18:15 tell us whether

- a) The Prophet will be raised-up-from-among-you/your-brothers or

- b) the-Prophet-(who-is)-from-among-you/your-brothers will be raised up or
 c) both of these?

For a number of reasons I think that b) is the correct understanding: one of these reasons is that the structure of the verse in the original Hebrew seems (to me) strongly to point in this direction since the “from amongst you, from amongst your brethren” is structurally linked with the noun “Prophet”, rather than with the verb “shall raise up”. This matters for the Christological interpretation because it allows the view that Jesus, who was a Prophet from the midst of Israel/from the brethren, was raised up in resurrection and ascension.

It is certainly true that Jesus as a/the Prophet was also raised up from amongst them (i.e. “a” above): in this case, either “He was raised up from amongst them *to be* a prophet” or, “as (*already*) a prophet, He was raised up from amongst them”. This is true, even if *this particular verse* does not describe this truth. The second of these views could possibly fit the “resurrection/ascension” meaning of “raising up”, though elsewhere in Scripture the “resurrection/ascension” raising up of Jesus is *from* the grave and *to* glory, without the (additional) idea of “resurrection/ascension” being “from amongst Israel/the brothers”. Nevertheless, as already stated, this latter understanding is describing something that is true, and John Gill in fact, gives both of the above possibilities for a) (i.e. the raising up of Jesus to be the Prophet and the raising up of Jesus, the Prophet in resurrection) as meanings of Deuteronomy 18:15. His comments (below) are consistent with the KJV translation of the verse which reads as follows:

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

The KJV to me seems ambivalent about whether the phrase “from the midst of thee” refers to the raising up of the prophet from the midst of them in either of the above two senses (i.e. “a”) or to the prophet being from the midst of them (i.e. “b”), although I think most people reading the KJV of this verse would understand it to be saying “a” (in either or both senses given above).

Both senses of “a” are how John Gill seems to understand the verse. He says:

and he was raised up of God, called, sent, commissioned and qualified by him for the office of a prophet, as well as was raised from the dead as a con-

firmation of his being that extraordinary person:

from the midst of thee; he was of Israel, according to the flesh, of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, preached only in Judea, and was raised from the dead in the midst of them, and of which they were witnesses:

Two interesting features of the KJV translation are:

1) The emphatic word order of the Hebrew text which places the word Prophet first has been altered so that The Lord thy God is now first in the sentence.

2) The two expressions, “from among you” and “from the brothers of you” *appear* to be treated differently by the KJV. The first of these is connected with the “raising up” as just discussed, whereas the second of these, (“of thy brethren” in the KJV) *appears* to be linked, not adverbially with the raising up but adjectivally with the Prophet or with the expression “like me” (i.e. like Moses) in the KJV translation. Here for example, is a comment from John Gill on the meaning of “of thy brethren”:

of thy brethren; the Israelites, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and to whom he was sent as a prophet, and among whom he only preached:

This adjectival linkage *appears* to be indicated by the KJV’s use of the preposition “of” rather than “from”: “of” does not, in modern English, naturally follow the verb “to raise up”, unlike “from”. We have, I suggest a bit of a dilemma here since, as already noted, in Elizabethan English, the word “of” can mean “from”, whereas, John Gill, writing in the 18th Century seems, from the above quotation, to understand “of” in our modern way. The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that the NKJV, which is a modern update of the KJV, very clearly replaces the “of thy brethren” of the KJV with “from your brethren”:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear”. (Deut. 18:15, NKJV)

The NKJV seems to me read both “from your midst” and “from your brethren” adverbially—that is, they both seem to relate primarily to the “raising up” rather than primarily describing the Prophet.

This “adverbial” approach, appears to be followed by other modern translations. For example, here is the NIV of Deut. 18:15:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him”.

There is one respect in which I think that the modern translations are correct, and that is that they, (unlike, apparently, the excellent John Gill) treat both phrases consistently (in their case as both adverbial, whereas John Gill appears to treat one as adverbial, the other as adjectival.)

I think that consistency is a virtue here since both prepositional phrases “from amongst you” and “from/of the brothers of you” are structurally “sandwiched” between “a Prophet” and “like me” in the Hebrew of Deut 18:15 and they also use the same prepositional prefix—the Hebrew prefix “min” meaning “from”. Both these points suggest to me that the two prepositional phrases should likely be translated in a similar fashion.

Where I differ from the modern translations is that I think both phrases are adjectival, not adverbial, (and that the location of both phrases in the original Hebrew favours the adjectival view!)

I realise that Deut. 18:15 is quite difficult to translate because it is hard to know and to specify the precise nature and range of applicability of some of the prepositional phrases. However, I’m currently suggesting that the sense (here using the basic word order of the KJV etc.) is something like:

The Lord your God will raise up a prophet for you—one from the midst of you, one of your brethren, (one) like me.

The word “one” near the end of the sentence is placed in brackets to indicate that it is probably to be linked both with the word Prophet as well as with “one of your brethren”.

A possible additional difficulty (as I see it) with applying “from the midst of you” to the “raising up” (or of applying both “from the midst of you” and “from your brethren” to the “raising up”) relates to the characteristic ways that the Hebrew word for “raising up”, *qum*, is used in the OT. Now, the “raising up” in Deut 18:15 already has the prepositional phrase “for you” attached to it, and it is not clear to me whether *qum* can have more than one adverbial phrase attached. With the possible exception of our verse, I do not currently know of any other occurrences of *qum* where there is more than one such prepositional phrase attached, (and *qum* is a common verb, occurring 627 times in the OT so there should be plenty of examples to choose from!) I discuss this further later in the chapter (after the excursus below), but if I’m wrong regarding this aspect of Hebrew grammar, please let me know so that I can amend this chapter!

[Excursus:

Is the phrase “for you” in Deut 18:15 adverbial or adjectival?

We can see that the phrase “for you” is very likely to be understood as an adverbial phrase modifying the verb “raise up” rather than an adjectival phrase modifying the noun “Prophet” from the fact that it is wedged, in the Hebrew, between the words “will raise up” and “the Lord”. In what follows, I’ll be treating this phrase as adverbial, modifying “will raise up”. Thus I’m assuming that we should read this part of the verse as, “The Lord will-raise-up-for-you a Prophet . . .” rather than as, “The Lord will raise up a-Prophet-for-you . . .”. But is there actually a significant difference between these possibilities when considering a Christological resurrection/ascension interpretation of the “raising up” (rather than, for the moment, the perfectly valid “raising up to be a Prophet” interpretation)?

I’m struggling to see this at all clearly, but I currently feel that the first (adverbial) understanding points to the actual resurrection and ascension themselves as being “for you” (i.e. for Israel), and so indicates that the resurrection and ascension are on the behalf of and for the benefit of Israel (as well as including the aspect of judgement for unbelief in Deut 18:19). (The New Testament shows that these glorious truths are for everyone equally, not just Israel, but we are currently attempting to “exegete” this particular OT verse). The second (adjectival) understanding does not so clearly (so it seems to me) point to the “application” of the benefits of Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the believer, nor to Christ’s resurrection and ascension as necessary precursors leading to judgement on those who disbelieve and reject the Prophet and His words. In the first (adverbial) understanding—the one being advocated in this book—the “raising-up-for-you” of the Prophet is consistent with, and links in with, the representative and inclusive/participatory aspects of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, though these wonderful consequences of being “in Christ” are not *explicitly* indicated in the Christological interpretation of this important OT verse.

A further possibility here is to see that the adverbial Christological resurrection/ascension interpretation actually *includes* the adjectival version of that interpretation. I’m reasoning as follows:

Let us take the fulfilment of Deut. 18:15 as referring both to the raising up, in the sense of God “establishing” Jesus as the Prophet as well as God raising up Jesus in His resurrection/ascension/glorification. In this case, the

resurrection/ascension/glorification “raising up” happens to Jesus who has already experienced the “establishing as a prophet” raising up.

If we consider the “establishing” aspect first, then, on the adjectival view, God establishes Jesus as a prophet-for-them. Now, whether or not the “establishing” here understands Jesus as *already* a prophet (or as already a prophet-for-them) who is *then* established as a prophet-for-them, or whether the establishing consists *in*, as it were, the selecting or setting up of Jesus *as* a prophet-for-them, (or perhaps aspects of both) the end result, at least, is the same: Israel has, in Jesus, a prophet-who-is-for-them.

Now, let's see how this “establishing” would operate on the “adverbial” view. Here, Jesus is established-for-them as a prophet. This seems to me to be an identical result to the adjectival case since the person and work of the prophet are in both cases directed at Israel: Jesus is thus in both cases a-prophet-who-is-for-Israel.

Having (hopefully) arrived at a correct conclusion here, let us now look at the (subsequent) “resurrection/ascension” view from both “adverbial” and “adjectival” perspectives.

With the adverbial perspective, we would see that Jesus is a Prophet-who-is-resurrected/ascended-for-you (i.e. for Israel). But we have just demonstrated that prior to this, Jesus has been established as a prophet-who-is-for-Israel. Since He is the same prophet, we can therefore conclude that from the adverbial perspective, Jesus is a-prophet-for-Israel who has now been resurrected-and-ascended-for-Israel also. So both his role as prophet and his resurrection/ascension are “for you” - i.e. for Israel.

With the adjectival perspective, Jesus is a Prophet-for-you who is resurrected/ascended. Here, we are only saying that it is Jesus role as prophet is specifically for Israel, and not specifically saying that the resurrection/ascension is for Israel also (nor is this being denied). Therefore, the adjectival view is, on this analysis included *within* the adverbial view: we could just consider the adverbial view without “losing” any theological truth about Jesus. When this is coupled with the fact already noted that the structural aspect (“for you” is “sandwiched between the subject (the Lord) and the verb (will raise up), but not linked so closely to the object (the noun Prophet) I think these two reasons combined point us in the adverbial direction for the prepositional phrase “for you”.

I hope the above reasoning has established the feasibility, (and perhaps even the general correctness) of a translation from the Hebrew of these

words in Deut. 18:15 that would look something like this:

“A Prophet from your midst, from your brethren, (one) like me will raise up for you the Lord your God.”

Before moving on, I would like to look at a possible “semantic” objection to the adverbial treatment of “for you” but the adjectival treatment of “from you midst, from your brethren” - i.e. the view which has been advocated above.

It’s this:

In the Hebrew of Deut. 18:15, we have been looking at the prepositional phrases “for you” and “from your midst” and “from your brethren” - and I have been suggesting that the latter two “belong together” and should be translated in a way consistent with that “belonging”.

The prepositions to/for and from in the Hebrew are the prepositional prefixes “lə” (pronounced “la”!) and “min” respectively, and they are recognised “opposites” rather like “to” and “from” are in English.

So, it could be argued that, because of this known association, the three prepositional phrases should all be treated alike, and thus all be adjectival (attached to “the Prophet”) or all adverbial (attached to the “raising up”). However, although there is this “semantic” linkage, the structural linkage that we would expect to accompany the semantic linkage is clearly missing. Rather, I would argue that the contrast between lə and min, which is clearly present both structurally and semantically, is actually being emphasised by what is “for you” being the raising up but what is from your midst/from your brethren being the Prophet.

End of Excursus.]

Before we move on to look at the Septuagint translation, which seems to me to point equally strongly in the direction of option a), (as defined earlier in this chapter) I would like to put forward a possible further piece of evidence for option a), and that is the way the Hebrew word for raising up, *qum*, appears to function.

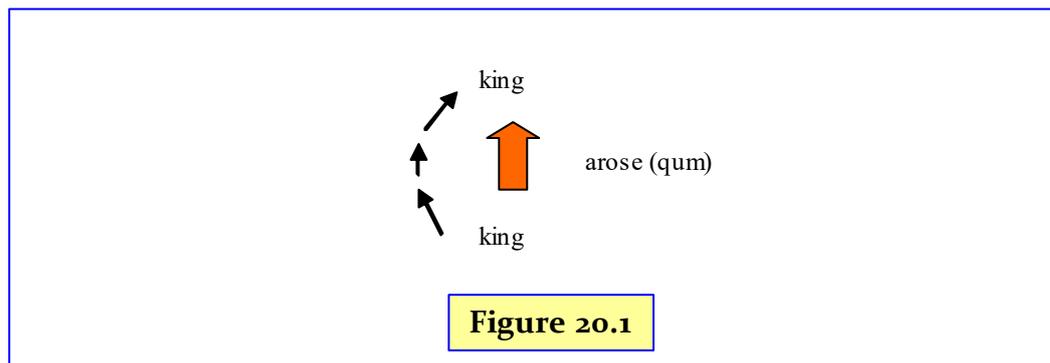
In the interpretation put forward by the KJV and almost all translations, there are two adverbial phrases modifying the verb “will raise up”, but does *qum* occur with two adverbial phrases simultaneously associated with it?

Use of prepositional phrases with “qum”.

One argument which I have mentioned earlier for not regarding “from your midst/from your brethren” as adverbial concerns the fact that “qum”, to arise or stand, never seems to have more than one prepositional phrase associated with it. It thus appears to describe a single movement, either to somewhere, or from somewhere, or with respect to some other aspect, but not more than one aspect in any given occurrence of the verb. Thus, if we accept that the rising up is “for them” (i.e. for Israel), which is the closest prepositional phrase, then, on this understanding, other prepositional phrases “in the vicinity” of the verb would not be “attached” to the verb, but rather to some other verb or noun—in our case to “the Prophet”.

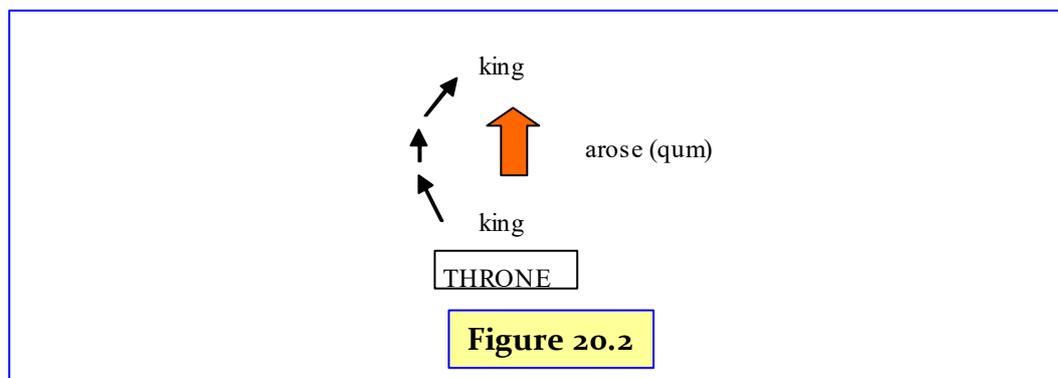
Here are some examples of the use of qum:

First, qum can occur with no qualifying phrases e.g. “the king arose”. This can be diagrammed (Figure 20.1) as:



This could have a physical meaning such as “standing up”, or a “symbolic” idea e.g. “a new king arose and smote his enemies”.

Secondly, the place from which the arising takes place may be specified using a single prepositional phrase, e.g. “the king arose from his throne”. This may be diagrammed (Figure 20.2) as follows:



1. A Prophet
 - 2/3. out from the brothers of you
 4. like me
5. will raise up
 6. to you
 7. the Lord
 8. God of you.

Again items 1, 2/3 and 4 form a “mini-chiasm”.

In the Hebrew and the Septuagint, when the sentence is read “linearly” the basic grammatical order is object—verb—subject (i.e. Prophet—will raise up—the Lord God.) as indicated in the diagram above.

Now let us consider Peter’s quotation in Acts 3:22a

1. A Prophet
6. for you
5. will raise up
7. The Lord
8. God of you
- 2/3. out from the brothers of you
4. like me

It seems to me that Peter is basically using the Septuagint but has changed the word order. Peter also has seven rather than eight items, but I’ve retained above the “numbering system” I’ve used for the MT.

Analysis 1:

Basically, Peter has “distributed” the information about the Prophet to the beginning and end of the sentence, and slightly re-arranged items 5, 6 7 and 8 so that “will raise up the Lord God of you” is a thematic centre with the related “you”s on either side. Thus:

- a) A Prophet
 - b) for you
 - c) will raise up the Lord God of you
 - b') out of the brothers of you
 - a') like me

Here, reading “chiastically” (sometimes referred to as helically), in towards

the centre produces a different emphasis compared with a “linear” reading. Thus if we read in the order a, b, a’, b’, c we obtain:

“A prophet for you, like me out from the brothers of you, will raise up the Lord God of you”.

This reading suggests that the raising up may be different from the initial choosing of the Prophet from amongst his brothers.

Analysis 2

However, a second chiasmic feature of Peter’s re-arrangement comes as a result of the introductory clause, “For Moses indeed said to the fathers . . .” (Note: Unfortunately, NA27 omits “to the fathers”.) If we include this in the analysis we get the following chiasmic structure:

- a) Moses
- b) said to the *fathers*
- c) a Prophet for you
- d) will raise up
- c’) the Lord God of you
- b’) out of the *brothers* of you
- a’) like me

Peter has placed the “raising up” in the chiasmic centre, and “the Prophet for you” is closely linked with “the Lord God of you” by being on either side of the centre. Towards the periphery of the chiasm, brothers is now linked with fathers, and Moses and “like me” form an *inclusio* or “outer layer” for the passage. To me, this structure rather suggests that the “raising up” consists in the establishment of the Prophet as a prophet.

End of Excursus]

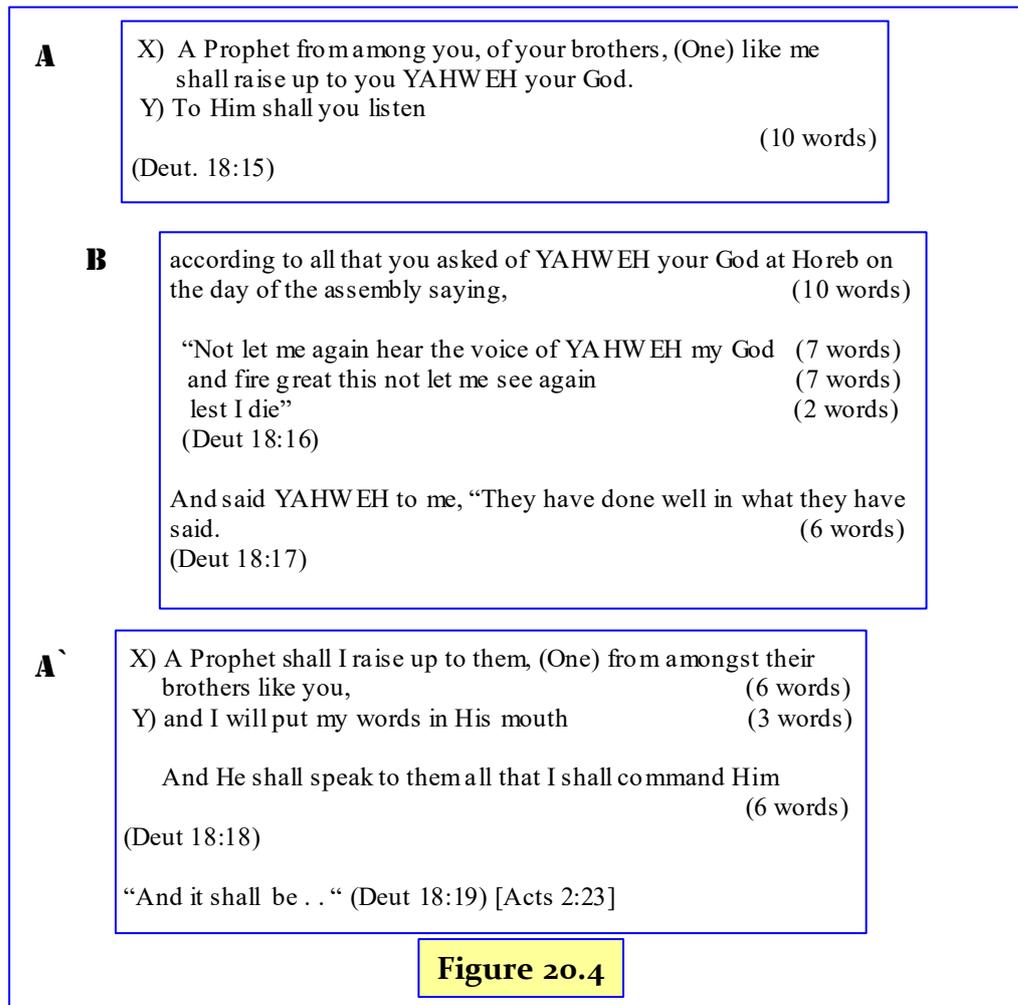
The meaning of “raised up” as discussed above will clearly fit both i) the Prophet Jesus’ resurrection/ascension and ii) God’s elevation of Jesus as the Prophet. I think (tentatively) that the first analysis favours i) and the second analysis favours ii). Given that Peter is quoting Deut. 18:15 however, that would I suggest point to i) as the more likely understanding.

The chiasmic aspect of Deut 18:15-19 and its bearing on Peter’s “inversion” of the text.

It is nevertheless not really clear to me why Peter has changed the word

order of Deut 18:15 in his quotation in Acts 2:22a. However, a possible explanation is that Peter is being “comprehensive” since the section of Deut. Ch. 18 from which Peter’s quotation is taken actually forms a little chiasm, and the word order that Peter uses is actually similar to Deut 18:18 - which gives similar information to Deut 18:15 and is chiastically related to it.

Here is the little chiasm (Figure 20.4):



We note that the words that Peter uses in Acts 3:22a follow more closely the order of A` (X) rather than the order of A(X), - although A` (X) is shorter since “YAHWEH your God” in A(X) is replaced by “I” in A` (X) and in this respect, Peter follows A(X). One interesting little feature is that A` (X) also abbreviates “from among you, of your brothers” in A(X) to “from amongst their brothers”, and Peter does likewise in Acts 3:22a. (The Septuagint uses the “abbreviated” version in Deut 18:15 also, so Peter may simply be copying this). Acts 3:22b also seems to combine features of A(Y) and A` (Y). Peter’s statement in Acts 3:22 therefore constitutes a combina-

tion of features of A and A' showing an awareness of both.

Summary and Conclusion

I think some of the translations are absolutely clear that they understand that the phrase “from your brothers” is adverbial and that it tells us from where the Prophet was raised up. Some of the other translations of Acts 3:22 avoid using the strategically placed commas which would clarify whether “from/of your brothers” is an adverbial or an adjectival phrase – or (most unlikely!) both simultaneously. Rather they seem content with a “studied ambiguity” which allows the reader to decide for himself whether to associate the phrase with the verb “to raise up” or with the noun “prophet”. Even so, the impression I get is that most of these translations “flow” more naturally when “from your brothers” is understood adverbially rather than adjectivally.

In this chapter, we have been following the trajectory of Deuteronomy 18:15 text from the original Hebrew through the Septuagint and into Acts 3:22. This analysis, rightly or wrongly, points in a different direction from the above mentioned translations which opt for the “adverbial” view of “from your brothers”, and below, in summary form are some of the arguments for our alternative view:

1) The original context of Deut. 18:15 and surrounding verses requires that the Prophet will be less “threatening” than was Yahweh on Mt. Horeb – i.e. the Prophet will be “one of their own”, raised up for them. This is in contrast with Him being “raised up from them” which would distance Him from them (that was one aspect of the original problem with the “Mt. Horeb” events!). It is as one of them that He is raised up for them! (The Christological, representational, implications of this truth are enormous!) Whether or not one accepts this contextual interpretation as a valid feature, the Deut. 18:15 text, from a variety of considerations including structure, word order, grammar etc. (as already discussed) seems to me very strongly to view “from the midst of thee, of thy brethren” as adjectival, not adverbial, and it is perhaps somewhat hard to understand how so many translators and commentators have apparently reached a different conclusion!

2) The verb to raise up (*i.e.* *qum* in Hebrew and its Greek equivalents) never (so far as I am aware) has more than one adverbial phrase attached to it in any usage in the OT, the Septuagint. or the NT (with the putative exception of Acts 3:22!) One can be raised up from something/somebody or one can be raised up to something, or for something, but I currently

know of no examples where one is raised up both to/for something and from something simultaneously, and we know that Acts 3:22 unambiguously fills up the “vacant” adverbial phrase “slot” with “to/for you”.

3) The structural and word order aspects of Deut. 18:15 in Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint and of Acts 3:22 in the Received Text point to the adjectival use. Thus, for example, “of/from your brothers” is never adjacent to the verb “raised up” in any of these verses – structurally it is linked to the noun Prophet, not to the verb “raised up”.

4) The grammatical aspects of the Hebrew “min” and “li” in Deut. 18:15 are “opposites” – one cannot really be raised up “from” someone and “to” that same person simultaneously since “raising up” requires “linear” (not “circular”!) movement – at least metaphorically. Rather, “min” refers to the brothers, and “li”, I suggest, refers to the raising up “for you” (metaphorically “to” you).

5) The expression “*ek ton adelphon*” in the Greek of Acts 3:22 appears possibly to have been misunderstood by some of the translators (c.f. the analogous expressions “*ex ephemeris Abia*” and “*ek ton thygateron*” in Luke 1:5, and many, many other examples.) It refers, I suggest, adjectivally to the origin of the Prophet, not adverbially to movement “away from” someone or somewhere – metaphorically or otherwise!

6) The overwhelming likelihood is that Peter understands “raised up” as a reference to Christ’s resurrection/ascension – which was undoubtedly “for” his hearers (e.g. Rom. 4:25), but Christ is never in Scripture (apart from the putative example of Acts 3:22!) said to be resurrected from the Jews or from Israel etc. Peter is most unlikely to have failed to recognise, and make use of, the resurrection/ascension aspects of Deut. 18:15 – especially in the light of Luke 24:25-27 – in his sermon. The overwhelming significance of Christ’s resurrection would surely have provided the motivation for Peter’s use of this verse at this time.

7) The Prophet of Deut 18:15, Jesus, is represented in Peter’s sermon as speaking to Peter’s hearers (“you shall hear Him whatever He says to you”) then and there. At this time, Jesus had been “raised up” in the sense of resurrected and ascended! (Unfortunately, the linking word “for” (*gar*) near the start of v. 22, which makes this connection clear, is missing in NA27, (and therefore in the translations that unfortunately follow NA27), but not, thankfully, in the TR!

These points, together with other lines of evidence have led me to con-

clude that the “adverbial” view of the phrase “from your brothers” is wrong. The significance of this, I think, is that the adverbial understanding seems to “feed into” the view that the raising up of Jesus as the Prophet in Acts 3:22 refers primarily to the prophetic aspects of Jesus’ earthly ministry, rather than to His heavenly role as the Prophet which was taking place even through Peter’s words in the sermon. By contrast, the adjectival view makes the resurrection/ascension understanding of the raising up of the Prophet more plausible since the resurrection and ascension are not said (elsewhere) in Scripture to be “from amongst you brethren”. Indeed, elsewhere, Peter is insistent that Jesus did not become visible “to all the people” after the resurrection, but to hand-picked witnesses—Acts 10:41. The consequences of treating the “raising up of the Prophet” as exclusively the establishing of Jesus as the Prophet in his earthly ministry creates a profound difficulty for exegesis of our passage since the Received Text, by means of the word “for” near the start of v. 22, gives the raising up of the Prophet like Moses Who must be obeyed as an example of the prophecies concerning the times of the restoration of all things during Jesus’ reception in heaven. Failure to interpret the raising up in this “resurrection/ascension” way has led in many instances, I fear, to an incorrect exegesis of important aspects of Peter’s sermon, and even to an inability to follow the basic logical structure of the application section of the sermon.



