

# *Analysis of Ephesians 4:8 & Psalm 68:18*

## *Introduction*

The passage quoted in Ephesians 4:8 is taken from Psalm 68:18. However, there is a difference in the translation found in the New Testament quote from what is written in the Old Testament passage in Psalms. This analysis is an attempt to help explain where that difference comes from and why. If you have any questions about what is discussed in this passage, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## *Exegesis*

I. English (NT) - “Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men’” (Ephesians 4:8 - NAS).

II. Greek (NT) - διὸ λέγει· ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (Ephesians 4:8)

III. English (OT) - “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive Thy captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there” (Psalm 68:18).

IV. Hebrew (OT) - לְמַנְרוֹם: שְׁבִית שְׁבִי לְקַחַת מִתְּנוֹת בְּאֲדָם וְאָרַךְ סוֹרְרִים-  
עֲלִית:

(Psalm 68:18) לְשִׁכֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים:

V. LXX (English) - “Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for man, yea, for they were rebellious, that thou mightest dwell among them” (Psalm 68:18).

VI. LXX (Greek) - ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός (Psalm 68:18).

The first thing I want to take note of is that in the NT quote, the verb used to translate “He led captive” is the 3<sup>rd</sup> ps. sg. aor. act. ind. (ἠχμαλώτευσεν [*\_chmal\_teusen*] from αἰχμαλωτεύω [*aichmal\_teu\_*]), whereas in the LXX it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> ps. sg. aor. act. ind. (ἠχμαλώτευσας [*\_chmal\_teusas*]), which corresponds exactly with the Hebrew, “Thou hast led captive” (שְׁבִית [*\_bîṭ\_*]). The natural question is, why is there a difference in the persons, from “Thou hast led” in both the Hebrew and LXX, to “He led captive” in the Greek NT? Therefore, based merely on the NT Greek, OT Hebrew and LXX, there

appear to be two possible explanations: (1) Paul may have been referring to a different LXX version that had the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, versus the 2<sup>nd</sup> person performing the action. (2) It may have simply been an oversight, or perhaps he felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to emphasize God being the one performing the action by using the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, versus what he may have believed was a tentative “you,” which, with such a short quote, he may have felt didn’t give clarity as to who was actually performing the action.

However, the real difference between the Greek NT and the LXX is the use of the verb δίδωμι (*did\_mi – to give*) in the Greek NT, versus λαμβάνω (*lamban\_ – to receive/take*) in the LXX. In the Hebrew text, the word used is לָקַח (*l\_qah*) - *to take/receive*), which corresponds exactly with the word used in the LXX.

However, in the Targumic translation of this same verse, we find an interesting reading:

You ascended to the firmament, *O prophet Moses*; you captured captives, *you taught the words of Torah*, you gave gifts to the sons of men, and even the stubborn *who are converted turn in repentance*, [and] *the glorious presence of the LORD God abides upon them.*

סִלְקָתָא לְרַקִיעַ [מִשָּׁה נְבִיא] שְׁבִיתָא שְׁבִיתָא [אַלְפָתָא פְתִנְמִי אֹרִיתָא]  
 יְהִבְתָּא לְהוֹן מַתָּנָן לְבֵנָא נְשָׂא וּבָרַם סְרַבְנִיא [דִּי מַתְנִירִין וְתִיבִין בְּתַתּוּבָא]  
 שְׂרַת [עֲלִיהוֹן שְׁבִינַח יְקָרָא] דִּי אֱלֹהִים

The words in *italics* in the English translation above represent those words added in the Targum that do not correspond to any similar words in the Hebrew (I have set off in [ ] those words in the above Aramaic translation that are the *italicized* word in English translation). Interestingly, the word for “You ascended” (סִלְקָתָא [*silagt\_*]) in the Aramaic is the Pael stem, which is intensive, and the same is true for the word “you captured” (שְׁבִיתָא [*Ébit\_*]) and “you taught” (אַלְפָתָא [*al\_pt\_*]). However, the Rabbis clearly saw this passage as referring to Moses when he went and received the Law from God on Mt. Sinai. In addition, the “gifts” (מַתָּנָן [*matn\_n*]) that are referred to here are referring to those blessings that attend the ministry of the Torah to those who repent and turn to the Lord, and in turn, His presence abides “upon them.”

Consequently, Paul, who was unquestionably aware of the rabbinical teaching on this passage, may very well have substituted “gave,” according to the Targumic tradition, in place of the Hebrew and LXX “take/receives.” This seems to me the most reasonable conclusion to come to when taking all the sources together. Thus, Paul sees God giving to us of His riches in Christ, in the same way the Rabbis saw God giving to His people, through Moses, the blessings of truth from the Torah. In fact, even more so through Christ do we have the fullness of God’s revelation, which was only partially fulfilled in the Torah.