

The Doctrine of Gâmal

Introduction: Once and awhile, the meaning of a passage, such as Psalm 142:7 turns on the meaning of a verb. And, once and awhile, the verb has meanings which are so diverse, that it appears, at first, as though there is no way to pin down a proper, definitive meaning.

Pronunciation and spelling	KJV Renderings and Lexicon Meanings	Albert Schultens
Noun cognates	An Examination of All Scriptural Occurrences of the Word Gâmal (גָּמַל)	Conclusion

1. Pronunciation and spelling: gâmal (גָּמַל) [pronounced *gaw-MAHL*].
2. KJV renderings: *to do; to reward, to recompense, to bestow, to deal bountifully; to wean; to ripen.*
3. BDB rendering: *deal fully, adequately with, deal out to, do to, deal bountifully with [with [˘]al]; recompense, reward, repay, requite; wean; ripen* (BDB #168)
4. Strong's renderings: A primitive root; to treat a person (well or ill), that is, benefit or requite; by implication (of toil) to ripen, that is, (specifically) to wean: - bestow on, deal bountifully, do (good), recompense, requite, reward, ripen, + serve, wean, yield. Strong's #1580.
5. Gesenius: *to give, to do, to show [to anyone, good or evil]; to do good to anyone, doing good to himself; to repay [anyone, good or evil]; to wean [an infant]; to ripen [fruit].*¹
6. Gesenius adds the following: This primary signification and the origin and connection of the other meanings are well illustrated by Albert Schultens (on Prov. 3:30); comparing Arabic *غعل* preposition. *To cover with fomentations, to produce warmth, to cherish, which notion of cherishing and warming is applied* —(a) to ripening fruit. — (b) to a weaned child. — (c) to benefits conferred on anyone, and with which as it were we cherish him; nor is it difficult to understand how such a word afterwards became used in a bad sense (see *בַּשָּׂר*). Gesenius adds to this: But the verb *غعل* can only refer to the significations in No. II (*to wean an infant, to ripen fruit*); while for those in No. I, we may compare *עָמַל*, Arabic *عَد* which means, *to labor, to do.*²
7. The problem with Strong's explanation is that they appear to have it backward—the meaning that we are attempting to ascertain seems to come from *weaning, ripening*, rather than the other way around, which Schultens seems to favor. In any case, whereas the meanings *to wean, to ripen* are self-evident (all of the passages are listed below), the other meanings are not. I need to add one additional point missed in all of these discussions: *weaning* and *ripening* all come at a particular stage of growth. At that stage of growth, the infant is weaned or the fruit ripens.
8. Noun cognates:
 - a. Masculine noun: *g^omûwl* (גָּמוּל) [pronounced *g^o-MOOL*], and it means [*proper*] *recompense, dealing, benefit*. Strong's #1576 BDB #168.
 - b. Feminine noun: *g^omûwlâh* (גָּמוּלָה) [pronounced *g^o-moo-LAW*], which means *reward, dealing, recompense*. Strong's #1578 BDB #168.
 - c. Masculine noun: *tag^omûwl* (תָּגָמוּל) [pronounced *tah-g^o-MOOL*], which means *benefit*. Only found in Psalm 116:12. Incorrectly listed in my BDB as Strong's #1583 (an obvious misprint). Strong's #8408 BDB #168.
 - d. These cognates are found over 20 times in Scripture, in total, and are therefore less subject to scrutiny.
9. Therefore, we must be able to associate the idea of *reward, benefit, and recompense* with this verse.
10. Passages: all listed below:

¹ H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 175. I don't know if I got the Arabic letters correct or not and I made a few minor changes.

² H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 175.

It is sometimes very difficult to get a handle on these verbs, particularly when they are used in several different ways.

An Examination of All Scriptural Occurrences of the Word Gâmal (גָּמַל)

First, some preliminary information about gâmal: In the Niphal, gâmal consistently means *to wean*, and it is found in Gen. 21:8 (twice) and I Sam. 1:22. It is also consistently translated that way as a Qal passive participle (see Psalm 131:2 Isa. 11:8 28:9). Thrice in the Qal, it is also rendered *wean* (I Sam. 1:24 I Kings 11:20 Hosea 1:8) as well as every time it is found in the Qal infinitive (I Sam. 1:23). We have one time in the Qal when this refers to grapes *ripening* (Isa. 18:5). We gave a similar usage in Num. 17:8, where Aaron's rod that budded *produced* almonds. What these words have in common is that they refer to coming to a particular stage of development or maturation.

Although we have, strictly speaking, what *occurs* at a stage of growth here or what *results* from a particular stage of growth, this word was used in both poetry and prose to mean *to do, to make*.

Passage	Morphology and Additional Comments
Gen. 50:15: <i>When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"</i>	1 st person plural, Qal perfect of gâmal plus the sign of the direct object and the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix. Gesenius says that gâmal has to do with how a person is <i>treated</i> , whether poorly or well.
Joseph's brothers said that his father charged him not to treat his brothers harshly. Gen. 50:17b: <i>"Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong."</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect preceded by the word <i>evil</i> .
Deut. 32:6b: <i>"Do you thus repay Jehovah, O foolish and unwise people?"</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect. <i>Jehovah</i> is preceded by the lamed preposition.
I Sam. 24:17: <i>And he said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you."</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with a 1 st person singular suffix; followed by a 1 st person singular, Qal perfect with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix. With the first use of the gâmal, we have <i>the good</i> and with the second use, we have <i>the evil</i> .
II Sam. 19:36: <i>"Your servant would merely cross over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king compensate me with this reward?"</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 1 st person singular suffix. <i>This reward</i> is not preceded by any preposition.
II Sam. 22:21a: <i>"Jehovah has rewarded me according to my righteousness."</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 1 st person masculine singular suffix. <i>My righteousness</i> is preceded by the kaph preposition.
II Chron. 20:11: <i>"Listen, they are rewarding us, by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance."</i>	Masculine plural, Qal active participle. This is followed by the ʿal preposition and the 1 st person plural suffix.
Psalm 7:5: <i>If I have reward evil to my friend, or have plunder him who without cause was my adversary.</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect followed by a suffixal Qal active participle (<i>my friend</i>) and the word <i>evil</i> . This is a Davidic psalm.
Psalm 13:6b: <i>I will sing to Jehovah because He has dealt bountifully with me.</i>	The 3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect followed by ʿal affixed to a 1 st person masculine singular suffix. A Davidic psalm.

Passage	Morphology and Additional Comments
Psalm 18:20: For Jehovah has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands, He has recompensed me.	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 1 st person singular suffix. Put into parallel with the verb <i>to be caused to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution</i> . The kaph preposition is used twice.
Psalm 103:10: He has not dealt with us according to our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect. Set in parallel with <i>to do, to make, to construct</i> . Followed by ^ʿ al and the 1 st person plural suffix. <i>Our iniquities</i> is preceded by the kaph preposition. A Davidic psalm.
Psalm 116:7b: ...for Jehovah has dealt bountifully with you.	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect followed by the ^ʿ al preposition. A Davidic psalm.
Psalm 137:8: O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us.	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect followed by the lâmed preposition. <i>Recompense</i> is the noun cognate of gâmal. Also, set in parallel with the Hebrew verb <i>to make secure, to keep safe, to complete, to finish, to restore, to requite, to recompense</i> .
Psalm 142:7b: The righteous ones will surround me for You will deal bountifully with me.	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect followed by the ^ʿ al preposition.
Prov. 3:30: Do not contend with a man without cause if he has done you no harm.	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix and the feminine singular noun <i>evil, harm</i> .
Prov. 11:17: The man of grace does himself good , but the cruel man does himself harm.	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect.
Prov. 31:12: She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.	3 rd feminine singular, Qal perfect with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix. This is followed by <i>good and not evil</i> .
Isa. 3:9b: Woe to them, for they have brought evil on themselves.	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect followed by ^ʿ al and the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix, followed by the word <i>evil</i> .
Isa. 63:7: I will make mention of the grace of Jehovah, the glories of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah has done [to] us and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has done [to] them according to His compassion and according to the riches of His grace.	In both instances, we have the 3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of gâmal with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix.
Joel 3:4: "Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you [rendering] Me a <i>recompense</i> ? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your <i>recompense</i> on your head."	The masculine plural, Qal active participle of gâmal. The two words in italics are singular noun cognates of gâmal.

We therefore come to the following conclusions: this word specifically refers to either being weaned (generally a passive sense, so it is in the Niphal); or a plant or tree producing (grapes or almonds). These are things which come at a specific period or stage of growth, or are the result of coming to a specific period or stage of growth. The plant or tree produces the fruit, so this word is used more figuratively for *to do*, *to make*. Since it is often the result of reaching a particular stage of growth, we have the renderings *reward*, *recompense*, which are not exactly accurate, but I don't know of any other word in the English which would convey quite the same thing.

You will note that in the more literal sense, when active, the subject of *gâmal* appears to act upon itself. The plant produces grapes; the rod produced almonds. However, most of the rest of the time, we have one person (or persons) acting on another. Probably the most correct understanding of this verb is *to do to*, *to give*, *to reward*, *to recompense*, *to bestow* [**as a result of a particular stage of growth**]. When followed by the *ʿal* preposition, we understand that the object of the verb is the recipient of great benefits, possibly as a result of a stage of growth.

11. Conclusion: the meaning of *gâmal* is, *to produce [fruit]; to do, to make; to give, to reward, to recompense; to bestow [blessings as a result of a stage of growth; when followed by ʿal]*.

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