

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
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Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: *Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible*
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Resurrection, Sunday

Is it really true that Yeshua was resurrected on Sunday? Does a Sunday morning resurrection of the Messiah at all validate the common Christian observance of Sunday as “the Lord’s Day”?

This information has been reproduced and adapted from the sub-section “The Resurrection of the Messiah,” from the article “The Last Seder and Yeshua’s Passover Chronology” by J.K. McKee (appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*)

It is sad to say this, but what is probably the most important part of the narrative beginning at Yeshua’s execution and death—**His resurrection** on the third day—is the most under-discussed aspect of all of the events among today’s Messianic people. While our faith community tends to have a good handle with wanting to make connections between the Last Supper and Passover *seder*, and also the Passover lamb and sacrifice of the Messiah—we often do not know what to do with the resurrection of the Lord or what it means. Is this just the result of a general avoidance of discussing the aspects of “death” altogether? Or is it because, once again, there are some issues we might have with the Lord’s resurrection which we do not really know how to handle? Do we so not want to have any association with questionable traditions of Easter Sunday, that we go overboard and fail to discuss the Messiah’s resurrection itself?

In today’s mainstream Christian thought, it is simply assumed that Yeshua the Messiah resurrected on Sunday morning, and so it should be no surprise why the Lord’s resurrection is honored on Resurrection Sunday (many churches do make an honest effort to not use the term “Easter”). Yet, whether or not Yeshua was actually raised from the dead on Sunday morning can be challenged from the Greek text of the Synoptics:

“When the Sabbath was over [*Kai diagenomenou tou Sabbatou*], Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen” (Mark 16:1-2, NASU).

“Now after the Sabbath [*Opse de sabbatōn*], as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave” (Matthew 28:1, NASU).

“But on the first day of the week [*Tē de mia tōn sabbatōn*], at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared” (Luke 24:1, NASU).

All three of these witnesses indicate the Marys’ intent to go and anoint the body of Yeshua with various spices and ointments, as it would retard the smell of decay. (Obviously following the death of Yeshua, there was no morgue available, where the body could be refrigerated until internment.) We can safely assume that they did make it to the gravesite, as early as they could be there, on Sunday morning. The Marys’ intention to be at the tomb as soon as they could, by Sunday morning, should immediately cause us to see a critical problem in the Wednesday crucifixion scenario: as after the High Sabbath of Passover on Thursday they could have been at the gravesite by Thursday evening or Friday morning. Only a Thursday crucifixion (then followed by a High Sabbath on Friday and weekly Sabbath) or Friday crucifixion (then followed by a weekly Sabbath) fits the evidence of the Marys being at the tomb by Sunday morning.

Both Mark and Luke indicate that the Marys had arrived at Yeshua’s gravesite by Sunday morning, but Matthew’s witness interjects something which we need not overlook. The clause which begins Matthew 28:1 is

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Opse de sabbatōn, with the preposition *opse* notably able to mean “late in the day, at even” (LS).¹ The 1901 American Standard Version opens Matthew 28:1 with, “Now late on the sabbath day,” followed by Lattimore’s rendering, “Late on the sabbath.” While some may think that the inclusion of “...as it began to dawn toward...” in Matthew 28:1 settles the fact that this was actually in the morning hours, the verb *epiphōskō* fully means “to draw towards dawn” (LS),² something which in Hebraic time reckoning begins in the evening. While some are inclined to think that Matthew is just using Jewish-specific language to describe what is entirely a Sunday morning event,³ I would suggest that Matthew’s witness interjects something additional into the record, especially given the occurrence of the earthquake (Matthew 28:2). In its entry for *epiphōskō*, AMG explains,

“In the evening of the Sabbath when the Jewish day was drawing on towards the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went (or better, set out). It does not appear that they actually came at this time to visit the sepulcher, perhaps being delayed by the great earthquake (Matt. 28:2) which preceded our Lord’s resurrection.”⁴

Matthew’s interjection of *Opse de sabbatōn*, more correctly regarding “Late on the Sabbath,” indicates that the Marys’ intention was to go to the gravesite of Yeshua as soon as the weekly Sabbath was over—having likely been preceded by the Passover High Sabbath on Friday, and now the weekly Sabbath on Saturday. They were stopped from proceeding, because as the Sabbath day closed, in the dusk moments, the earthquake signaling Yeshua’s resurrection occurred. While the Marys would try again on Sunday morning, discovering the empty tomb, **this would mean that Yeshua did not actually resurrect from the dead on Sunday morning—but actually on Saturday evening.** The witness of the Synoptics which follows only states that the empty tomb was discovered on Sunday morning.

There can be a great deal of unnecessary discussion which occurs among some Messianic people, specifically as it concerns the Gospels’ usage of “first day of the week,” appearing in the Greek as *mian sabbatōn* (Matthew 28:1) or *mia tōn sabbatōn* (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1). Confusion has been caused because a version like Young’s Literal Translation renders these clauses as “the first of [the] sabbaths.” Some people, seeing the term *sabbaton* multiple times in a single verse, assume that something is up when in one place it is rendered as “Sabbath,” and in another place it is rendered as “week.” This has led to all sorts of proposals, one being that “first of [the] sabbaths” is not really the Marys arriving at the tomb on Sunday morning, but instead them arriving at the tomb on the first Sabbath of the counting of the *omer* toward *Shavuot*. While this might sound good at first glance, it fails to take into consideration the flexibility of uses which not only the Greek *sabbaton* possesses, but also its Hebrew progenitor *Shabbat*.

Within the instructions about the counting of the *omer*, Leviticus 23:15 says that it is to involve “seven complete sabbaths” (NASU) or *sheva Shabbatot temimot*. Later in Leviticus 25, though, we see how Jubilee years are determined by a count of “seven sabbaths of years” (Leviticus 25:8, NASU) or *sheva shabbatot shanim*. This latter usage of “sabbath” very clearly means “seven weeks of years” (RSV, NRSV, NJPS, ESV), just as the actual counting of the *omer* toward *Shavuot* is not determined by the weekly Sabbath, but actually periods of seven-day weeks (cf. Deuteronomy 16:9).⁵ Lexically speaking, one finds how the term *Shabbat*, while frequently meaning “day of rest, sabbath,” can also as the plural *Shabbatot* mean “weeks” (CHALOT).⁶

When the Hebrew Tanach was translated into Greek, the only term really available at the translators’ disposal for the concept of “week” for the Septuagint was *hebdomas*, simply meaning “the number seven or a number of seven” (LS, Leviticus 23:15 and 25:8, LXX).⁷ By the First Century, though, the Hebrew loan word *sabbaton* was

¹ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 582.

² *Ibid.*, 306.

³ Cf. John Nolland, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp 1244-1245.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 645.

⁵ Note how most versions render *sheva Shabbatot temimot* in Leviticus 23:15 as “seven full weeks” or something close (RSV, NIV, NRSV, ATS, NJPS, ESV, HCSB, CJB, et. al.).

⁶ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 360.

⁷ LS, 220.

used in the Greek-speaking Jewish community, with very much the same flexibility as *Shabbat*. “[T]he Greek term *sábbaton*...[was used] in the diaspora. The plural *tá sábbata* may mean one sabbath, several sabbaths, or the whole week (like the Hebrew term)” (TDNT).⁸

While it may seem odd to us today, the term “Sabbath” to a First Century Jew could mean “week,” and it is in various places used in precisely this way. In Luke 18:12, for example, we see a Jewish person say “I fast twice a week” (NASU), *nēsteuō dis tou sabbatou*, which would literally be “I fast twice on the sabbath” (LITV)—but this really makes no sense as fasting typically lasts an entire day or longer (a period of not eating between breakfast and supper can hardly be regarded as a “fast”), and so the translation of *sabbatou* as “week” is valid. In the *Didache*, from the late First Century C.E., it is said that the Jews “fast on the second and the fifth day of the week” (8:1), *deutera sabbatōn kai pemptē*, meaning twice a week.⁹ Here, the plural *sabbatōn* or “sabbaths” is used. It here likewise has to represent the “week,” as it would again make no sense for one to fast two times on the Sabbath day or Saturday.

What would have been the highlight for the ancient Jewish week? *The Sabbath occurring every seven days*. So, should one be too surprised that the “Sabbath” also affects the terminology “week”? That the term *sabbaton* can mean either “Sabbath” or “week” is something noted by scholars as not being irregular.¹⁰ It stands valid to recognize that the Marys did arrive at Yeshua’s tomb on Sunday morning. But, simply because they arrived at the tomb on Sunday morning by no means indicates that the seventh-day Sabbath has somehow been Divinely transferred to Sunday or invalidated, *and* neither does it mean that Yeshua’s resurrection has somehow validated the Saddusaical reckoning of the counting of the *omer* which always began on a Sunday. All this means is that the Marys arrived at the gravesite to anoint Yeshua’s body as soon as they could, and Sunday morning—following the delaying earthquake when everything was safe—was the earliest time.

When the women arrived at the tomb, they did ask who would roll the stone away which had sealed it, but they saw that it had already been moved. They entered in, and rather than seeing a shrouded corpse, they saw two angels sitting (Mark 16:3-5; Matthew 28:2-3; Luke 24:2-3). **The Lord Yeshua had already resurrected from the dead**, as He told them He would, and the Roman guard has been scared away (Matthew 28:4). They were told by the angels that Yeshua had been raised just as He said He would, and that the women are to tell His Disciples, in particular Peter, so that He can meet them in Galilee (Mark 16:6-8; Matthew 28:5-8; Luke 24:5-7). As the women leave the tomb, they actually encounter the risen Yeshua, they worship Him, and He tells them to go tell the Disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Mark 16:9-10; Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:8-10). When they hear what had transpired, the main Disciples largely refused to believe the report (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11), but Peter went to the tomb and only sees the linen shroud in which the Lord’s body had been wrapped, being amazed (Luke 24:12). We should think that the other Disciples were mostly concerned about their own welfare, given the tenuous circumstances of recent days. With the Sabbath period now over, they would be free to leave Jerusalem, but a mob might be looking for them.

Matthew interjects how the Roman guard reported to the chief priests how Yeshua’s body was now missing. I am not sure that the Romans told them that Yeshua was raised from the dead, but all they knew was that there was an earthquake and then some kind of supernatural events. The chief priests gave the Roman soldiers money for them to only say that the Disciples stole the body, and they promised that should they get into any trouble with their superiors, they would take care of it. The intention, for sure, was to quell any word that Yeshua might have been resurrected from the dead (Matthew 28:11-14). Matthew’s narrative word is, “they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is to this day*” (Matthew 28:15, NASU), which would have likely been a few decades after the actual resurrection at the composition of Matthew’s Gospel.

⁸ E. Lohse, “*sábbaton*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 989.

⁹ Cf. Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 910.

¹⁰ Nolland, 1244 fn#3.

Resurrection, Sunday

We have to remember that Yeshua's resurrection did not only affect the Eleven main Disciples of the Lord (minus Judas), but also other people who followed Him. Mark 16:12 indicates that Yeshua appeared to two who were walking to the country, something expanded upon by Luke in Yeshua's encounter with the two on the road to Emmaus, a town adjacent to Jerusalem (Luke 24:13). While walking, the risen Yeshua walked alongside them, although they did not recognize who He was (Luke 24:14-16). The Lord asked the two what they were talking about (Luke 24:17), and Cleopas answered Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" (Luke 24:18, NASU). The two told Him about how Yeshua was put to death, and how they had both seen the empty tomb. But, they express doubts as they had not seen the resurrected Yeshua themselves (Luke 24:19-24).

Hearing this, Yeshua asked the two, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26, NASU). The Lord then explained the Messianic expectation from the Torah and the Prophets (Luke 24:27). The two disciples, approaching the village, asked Him to join them because it was evening (Luke 24:28-29). They reclined to eat, and taking the bread and blessing it—the *matzah* for the week of Unleavened Bread (Luke 24:30)—they immediately recognize who this man is as the Messiah, and so Yeshua vanishes away (Luke 24:31). They asked themselves, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32, NASU). They returned to Jerusalem at that moment to meet with the Eleven Disciples, reporting how they had seen the resurrected Yeshua (Luke 24:33-34). Luke narrates, "They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35, NASU).

The Eleven Disciples have not followed Yeshua's instruction to meet Him in Galilee; they were still in Jerusalem huddled down and afraid. The other Messiah followers, who encountered Him on the road to Emmaus, have quickly gone back to Jerusalem—but their report was dismissed (Mark 16:13). Presumably, sometime late on Sunday evening while the Eleven were eating, Yeshua then simply appeared to them, and "He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen" (Mark 16:14, NASU; cf. Luke 24:36).

Luke records how "they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit" (Luke 24:37, NASU). Yeshua confirmed to them that He was no ghost, but that He has real hands, feet, and a body (Luke 24:38-40). The Disciples were noticeably excited, and to show them that He really was resurrected and is no apparition or specter, Yeshua asked them for something to eat, being handed some broiled fish (Luke 24:41-42). While Yeshua in His resurrected state possess the power to transport Himself at will from place to place, He can still eat food. Just as He did to those on the road to Emmaus, Yeshua explained to them His fulfillment of the Scriptures about suffering, dying, and resurrecting on the third day (Luke 24:43-46). Yeshua announces His intention that the Disciples be able witnesses of these events, being sent forth with power from Jerusalem, to proclaim the good news of repentance and forgiveness to all (Luke 24:47-49).

While it is easy to think that the remaining narrative of the Synoptics (Mark 16:15-20; Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53) deals with only the few days or so following Yeshua's resurrection, He was actually present with His followers an additional forty days until His ascension into Heaven (Acts 1:3)—just under six of the seven total weeks of the counting of the *omer* to *Shavuot*/Pentecost. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the Believers so that they could now accomplish the mission and tasks which Yeshua had left for them, with His sacrificial work now completed.

The Fourth Gospel adds important details to what the Synoptics record of what took place in the moments following Yeshua's resurrection. Mary Magdalene arrived at the gravesite when it was still dark, very early in the morning, and saw the stone removed (John 20:1). She ran to Simon Peter and John, announcing that the Lord is gone (John 20:2). Peter and John go to the tomb, enter in, and they see the various linen wrappings (John 20:3-7). John, who had arrived just ahead of Peter to the scene, believes that Yeshua is resurrected (John 20:8), but the other disciples present did not fully understand and they go away (John 20:9-10). Yet, hearing and seeing that the body of Yeshua was gone, what would they have actually thought? Did some of Yeshua's detractors steal His

remains? The body could not have decomposed in such a short time. All John 20:9 says is, “they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (NASU).

Some disciples leave the scene of the gravesite—not believing that He has been resurrected, even though Yeshua’s body was gone. *Stupidly, they just leave.* Mary Magdalene stepped into the tomb (John 20:11). She saw two angels sitting where Yeshua’s body had rested, and they asked her why she was crying (John 20:12). She simply responded with, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him” (John 20:13, NASU). At this moment, she turned around and saw a man standing, who also asked her why she was crying—not knowing that this was actually Yeshua (John 20:14-15a). She thought it was actually the gardener, and asked this “gardener” where Yeshua’s body was so she can take it away (John 20:15b). All Yeshua had to say to her is “Mary!” and she recognized that it was her Rabbi (John 20:16). Yeshua instructed her not to grab Him, an indication that she cannot prevent Him from His eventual departure to the Father in Heaven (John 20:17). Even though Yeshua had been resurrected from the dead, He would soon leave for Heaven.

Mary Magdalene told the Disciples that she had encountered the risen Yeshua (John 20:18). On that Sunday evening, for fear of their lives, the Disciples have locked themselves away. This did not matter for their risen Lord, as He simply appeared to them (John 20:19), showing them the wounds on His hands and side—with the Disciples rejoicing (John 20:20). Yeshua issued peace to them, and breathed on them so that they could receive of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22), including some specific power regarding sins (John 20:23).

The disciple Thomas was not present to witness the appearance of Yeshua, and how He was resurrected from the dead (John 20:24). Even though the others told him that they had seen the Lord, Thomas would not believe, asserting, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25, NASU). John records that eight days actually pass, and then Yeshua appeared again, *with* Thomas now present (John 20:26). He simply said to him, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing” (John 20:27, NASU). Thomas’ skepticism totally vanishes, and the narrative actually records that he recognized Yeshua’s Divinity in the declaration “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28, NASU). While Thomas believed Yeshua because he had seen Him, the Lord said nonetheless, “Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed” (John 20:29, NASU). And Thomas did believe, because according to early Church history, he made his way proclaiming the good news into Parthia (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.1.1), and according to local tradition down into India as well—one of the largest geographical areas of any of the original Disciples of the Messiah.

The witness of the Apostle Paul, in his writing to the Corinthians, adds even more details than what is seen in the Gospels regarding Yeshua’s post-resurrection appearances. He says, “He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:5-7, NASU). After His ascension into Heaven, Yeshua also appeared several years later to Paul himself, on the road to Damascus (1 Corinthians 15:8).¹¹

¹¹ For a further discussion about the post-resurrection events, and the differences we see among the four Gospels, consult the relevant sections of Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), especially pp 506-508.