



Interpretative Analysis of the Translation of Matthew 6:12 in the Farefare Bible

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to analyze the translation of the Greek word “ἄφεσις” (forgive) as “patience” in the Farefare language of the Upper East Region of the Republic of Ghana. Using the views of respondents in the field study conducted as well the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics methodology by Kuwornu-Adjaottor, the findings of the study maintained that the Farefare term *suguru* which is often used to translate “ἄφεσις,” is inappropriate because *suguru* is a noun, while “ἄφεσις” is a verb. The study also established that the word *bahe* in Farefare means “forgive,” and frequently accompanies the noun *be'em* (sin/wrongdoing). The cultural understanding of the Farefare is that patience is necessary before granting forgiveness. As a result, this research recommends that the Farefare translation incorporates both “patience” and “forgive” in the appropriate order (that is patience first and then forgive) to reflect the intended meaning of the text and the indigenous cultural understanding. This work contributes to interpreting Biblical texts in the field of theology.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible which has been accepted by some practitioners to be the word of God (the creator of the universe) did not drop from heaven. It was written by human beings and in human languages. The Old Testament (OT) was written in Hebrew whilst the New Testament (NT) was in Koine Greek. The OT and NT were later translated into several languages as the need arose.

How to translate some words and phrases as well as disagreements over which Bible manuscripts and versions should be used as source texts have all contributed to the long-standing contentious nature of the Bible translation problem. Some are literal to the source text whilst others are considered to be too liberal to the source text. Despite these difficulties, Bible translation is still an important and ongoing process because new translations are created to satisfy the demands of various language groups worldwide to enable as many people as possible to interact with the rich spiritual and cultural traditions that the Bible represents by making the text of the Bible available to

them.¹ There is a gap in the inculcation of indigenous cultural understanding into the translations for easy understanding. This work intends to look at that in the Farefare Translation of Matthew 6:12.

The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) in their translation of Matthew 6:12 used *Bahe to be'em bo to* (leave/ stop/let go/ forgive us, our sins) and *wo tomam n dite suguru bo'ora to taaba se'em la* (just as we have patience for one another). Can the Greek words “ἄφεσις” [aphes] which means “I forgive” and “ἀφίκαμεν” [aphiekamen] “we forgive” be interpreted to mean patience in the Farefare context? In any case, is it possible to translate this verse neglecting the keywords “ἀφίκαμεν” [aphiekamen] “we forgive” and “ὀφειλέταις” [opheiletais] “debtors” as in the Farefare translation? Even though the expression “have patience for others” used in the Farefare text is popularly used within the area, this research seeks to know if this traditional rendering could reflect the intention of the author and the purpose for which the prayer was said.

METHODOLOGY

This study sought the views of thirty (30) respondents through interviews and also used the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics methodology by Kuwornu-Adjaottor to determine the proper words for their accurate translation in the Frafra language. It studied the translation of Matthew 6:12 in relation to the Greek text and did exegesis of the text which brought to the fore its accurate rendition that reflects what the author meant in the passage.

EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 6:12

The exegesis of the text in question is aimed at establishing the meaning of the text according to the intention of the author or writer using the exegetical tools below.

Establishing The Text (Matt. 6:12)

Matthew 6:12 is a petition that has two parts. The first part is the dependent clause “καὶ ἄφεσις ἡμῶν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν”² (And forgive us our debts)³ and the action verb as recorded in the *Didache* text reads “τὴν ὀφειλήν” (debt) while the second century Church Father “Origen in his citation offers “τὰ παραπτώματα” (sins or wrongdoings).”⁴ For the variants readings to the main clause “ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν”⁵ (as we also have forgiven our debtors)⁶ in the text, Wandusim notes them as follows:

1. Matt 6:12 ἀφίκαμεν: (DO5) Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis, (L019) Minuscule 19, (W032) Washingtonianus, (Δ037) Codex Sangallensis, (Θ038) Codex Koridethi, (565) Minuscule 565.
2. Matt 6:12 ἀφίκαμεν-Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, Minuscule 017, Family 13, Minuscule 579, Minuscule 700, Minuscule 1241, Minuscule 1424, Minuscule 1 844, Minuscule 1 2211, the “Majority text,” Coptic and the *Didache*.
3. Matt 6:12 ἀφίκαμεν *ⲁ (Aleph-star)** Codex Sinaiticus (Corrected), 01 (01) Codex Vaticanus, (B 03) Codex Vaticanus, (Z 035) Minuscule 35, (f1) Family 1, (vgst) *Vetus Latina* and (syp.h) *Syriac Peshitta*.⁷

These manuscripts are important sources for studying the text of the New Testament and its variations. The sigla are commonly used by scholars as shorthand references to these manuscripts.

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Mark L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* ((Grand Rapids, MI: , 2014), 14-17.

² Matt. 6:12 BGT

³ Matt. 6:12 NRS

⁴ Michael Wandusim, “2 Exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9b–13),” in *The Lord’s Prayer in the Ghanaian Context* (De Gruyter, 2021), 15–95, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110730579-004>.

⁵ Matt. 6:12 BGT

⁶ Mat. 6:12 NRS

⁷ Wandusim, “2 Exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9b–13),” 15-95.

Others are:

4. τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν (our debts) - Majority text, Textus Receptus, Byzantine text-type, Old Latin, Vulgate, Peshitta, Harklean Syriac, Coptic Bohairic, Sahidic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Arabic versions.
5. τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν (our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors) - Western text-type, Old Syriac (Curetonian and Sinaitic), some Coptic manuscripts, and some Armenian manuscripts.
6. τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν (our sins or transgressions) - Alexandrian text-type, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts, some Old Latin manuscripts, some Coptic manuscripts, and Origen's citation.
7. τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν τὰ ἀναπίπτοντα ἡμῖν (our debts that are outstanding to us) - Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis.
8. τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἡμῖν (what is owed to us) - some Latin manuscripts.⁸

The Reading that Followed and Analyses

The reading that followed in the BGT text in Bible Works 8 is τὰ ὀφειλήματα (“debts”).⁹ Matthew 6:12 falls into the first major divisions of his Gospel that start from Chapter 4 verse 23 through to Chapter 9 verse 35 *inclusio*, where both verses begin with the conjunction *Kai* (and) followed by the verb *περιῆγεν* (went around). In both quotations, the job description of Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) explicitly mentioned in Chapter 9:35 is in three folds: (1) διδάσκων (teaching) in the συναγωγαῖς (synagogues), (2) κηρύσσων (preaching) τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (the gospel) τῆς βασιλείας (of the kingdom) and (3) θεραπεύων (healing) πᾶσαν νόσον (all kinds of diseases) καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν (and all kinds of sicknesses).

Chapter 4:23 begins a particular job of teaching, preaching, and healing, setting the tone for what happens in later Chapters and repeats the same in chapter 9:35. In Matthew’s Gospel, emphasis is laid on teaching before the other two job descriptions and this can be confirmed by the way he puts it in, chapter 5:2. In Matthew 5:2, Jesus begins his famous Sermon on the Mount in which he teaches his disciples and the crowds who have gathered to hear him. This sermon contains many of the most well-known teachings of Jesus, including the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁰

Beginning in Matthew 5:1, Matthew starts to recount the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Golden Rule are among the teachings of Jesus that are found in this portion of the Gospel. A crucial source for Christian ethics and spirituality, the Sermon on the Mount, paints a complete picture of Jesus’ ethical and moral teachings. The location of the Sermon on the Mount is significant because Jesus is portrayed as a modern-day Moses who instructs his followers and a sizable crowd of onlookers while speaking from a mountaintop. The use of this imagery highlights the significance and power of Jesus’ teachings while also connecting them to the history of Jewish law and prophecy. There are several unique sections to the Sermon on the Mount, each with a different theme and purpose. These chapters cover the Beatitudes (5:3–12), the exhortation to be salt and light (5:13–16), the fulfilment of the law (5:17–20), the lessons on anger, lust, and divorce (5:21–32), the command to love one’s enemies (5:43–48), giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting (6:1–18), and the riches of paradise (7:1–17), (6:19–34).¹¹

Overall, the Sermon on the Mount presents a vision of the kingdom of God as a community of love, justice and righteousness, in which God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

⁸ Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of New Testament* (Рипол Классик, 1968), 76.

⁹ Wandusim, “2 Exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9b–13),” 15–95.

¹⁰ D.L. Turner, *Matthew* (Baker Academic, 2008).

¹¹ D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993).

Syntactical and Morphological Synthesis of Matthew 6:12

“καὶ ἄφεξ ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν.”
 (Matt 6:12 BGT)¹²

The text as stated earlier fits into the first job description in the Gospel which is teaching; therefore, the text is a teaching text and forms an integral part of what scholars term the sermon on the mountain. It is the fifth petition directed to God and is very crucial in terms of its reception in the locality. It is crucial because, among the total of seven petitions, it is the only one that has a reciprocal effect. In other words, the fifth considered in this work consists of two main clauses:

“καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν” (and we have forgiven our debtors) and “καὶ ἄφεξ ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν” (and forgive us our debts). Each of these clauses contains a main verb: “ἀφήκαμεν” (we have forgiven) - the main verb of the first clause and “ἄφεξ” (forgive) - the main verb of the second clause.

The dependent clauses in this prayer are phrases that modify the main clauses: “τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν” (our debtors) - modifies the action of forgiving in the first clause. “τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν” (our debts) - indicates the object of the action of forgiveness in the second clause.

The prayer includes two main clauses, each expressing an action of forgiveness, and two dependent clauses providing additional information about the objects of the forgiveness.¹³ The main clause involves human effort thus one has to forgive others so that God would forgive in return. As to whether the main clause is the basis on which the dependent clause is fulfilled, a detailed discussion follows below as the various meanings of the words in the passage are examined.

καὶ

Matthew 6:12 has two forms of *καὶ* which according to Friberg, are used either as coordinating conjunction with varying sense according to its circumstances or as adverbs in the NT. Below is a table of its usage in the New Testament.

Table 1.1: Kai used as a Conjunction in the NT

| Usage | Explanation | Meaning | Location |
|-------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Connective | Connecting single words | And | Matthew 2:11 |
| Continuative | Connecting clauses and sentences | And | Matthew 21:23 |
| Coordinate time | Coordinating time with an event | When | Mark 15:25 |
| Introduce results | Introducing results from preceding circumstances | And then, and so | Matthew 4:19 |
| Contrast | Introducing an abrupt question expressing contrasting feeling | Then, in that case | 2 Corinthians 2:2 |
| Emphasis | To emphasise an unexpected fact | And yet, nevertheless, and in spite of that | Matthew 3:14 |
| Explain | To explain what is preceded | And so, namely, that is | Matthew 8:33, John 1:16 |

¹² <http://johnmeister.com/BIBLE/TEXT-EN-DE-FR-GR/LIMITED/NKDG.html>

¹³ <https://app.biblearc.com>

Table 1.2: Kai used as an Adverb in the NT

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| Adjunctive | Joined or linked together | Also, too | Matthew 5:39 |
| Ascensive | Introducing something unusual | Even | Matthew 5:46 |
| Comparison | To reinforce contrast or comparison | Also | 2 Corinthians 8:11 Hebrews 8:6 |

The verse began with *καὶ* (and) which is a conjunction that indicates a continuative speech establishing the link between “τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον.” (Mat 6:11 BGT) “give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11 NRS) and “καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν.” (Mat 6:12 BGT) “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Mat 6:12 NRS) duly represented in table 1.1 above with an example in Matthew 21:23.¹⁴ The other *καὶ* in this verse is used as an adverb and rightly translated as “also” to establish the comparison between the main clause “καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν” and the dependent clause “ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν.”

ἄφες and ἀφήκαμεν

The verb “ἄφες” is an imperative aorist active 2nd person singular from the verb “ἀφίημι” meaning “I forgive” whilst “ἀφήκαμεν” is a verb indicative of aorist active 1st person plural from the same verb “ἀφίημι.”¹⁵

Kwornu-Adjaottor notes that;

The NT uses the Greek verb ἀφίημι (*aphiēmi*) together with its cognate noun ἄφες (*aphes*) to express the concept of forgiveness and occurs 142 times in the New Testament with 47 in Matthew, 34 each in Mark and the Lucan writings, and 14 times in John. It occurs 45 times in the sense of “to forgive.” It is used occasionally in a secular sense (Matt.18:27, 32), in the religious sense of forgiveness or forgiveness of sins (*aphiēmi harmatias*, Mk. 2:5, 7, cf. Lk 7:47, ff), debts (*opheilēmata*, Matt. 6:12), and trespasses (*paraptōmata*, Mk. 11:25 f.; Matt. 6:14 f.).¹⁶

The concept of atonement is rooted in Old Testament passages (Gen 50:17; Ex 10:17; 1 Sam 15:25; 25:28; Prov. 17:9), with God serving as the central figure. (Ex 34:7; cf Num 14:18-20; Neh 9:17; Ps 130:4; Mic 7:18; Dan 9:9). However, according to Ellingworth, the Old Testament does not represent forgiveness as automatic: It flows from the sovereign freedom of the living God.¹⁷

The usage of “ἄφες” in the petition which is in the singular form relates well to God the Father, hence the Father in the singular forgives. The mood of the verb is somewhat questionable. The imperative mood is often used to issue commands so Kuwornu-Adjaottor asserts that this mood seems to issue a command to God to forgive.¹⁸ Some scholars also hold the view that the “passage should never be misconstrued that our forgiving spirit somehow causes or earns God’s pardon; rather God’s pardoning grace is solely found in Christ’s merits being graciously applied to us.”¹⁹ Therefore the phrase “as we also have forgiven our debtors” highlights how crucial forgiveness is in human existence. Humans are called to offer the same mercy and forgiveness to others as God does to those

¹⁴ <http://johnmeister.com/BIBLE/TEXT-EN-DE-FR-GR/LIMITED/NKDG.html>

¹⁵ Jonathan E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Comparative Study of Matthew 6: 12 and Its Parallel in Some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible” (International Conference on Research and Development, 2010), 62-66.

¹⁶ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Comparative Study of Matthew 6: 12 and Its Parallel in Some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible,” 62-66.

¹⁷ P. Ellingworth, “Forgiveness of Sins,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Comparative Study of Matthew 6: 12 and Its Parallel in Some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible,” 62-66.

¹⁹ The Lord’s Prayer: Specific meaning in the wording and content of the original text. Considering all the manuscript variants in Luke 11:2-4 and Matthew 6:9-14, <https://notjustanotherbook.com/thelordsprayer.htm>

who repent. As emphasized in Matthew 6:14–15, the inability to forgive others is viewed as a barrier to getting forgiveness from God.

The conclusion that follows is that the Lord's Prayer's fifth petition emphasizes the connection between God's forgiveness of debts and people's willingness to forgive. It is however imperative to be forgiven when you have done so yourself. In addition, it would be interesting to note that if the "I forgive" statement is hereby referred to God the Father as in the preceding verse (v.9), then there is the possibility of command to forgive especially to the righteous ones. In other words, when one does the right thing, it forces God to repeat the same as a reward. It is against this background that ἀφήκαμεν sets in pushing humans to forgive one another so that God would forgive them in return. Despite that the "we forgive" statement is not entirely the standard at which God would forgive us our sins, it is worthy to note that there is always a protective reward for doing good and then what is right in the face of God. Translators of mother-tongue bibles should therefore not mince with these important words.

ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν and ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν

The noun serving as an object of ἄφες in the sentence is ὀφειλήματα hence its usage as an accusative plural form of ὀφειλήμα with the plural pronoun ἡμῶν in the passage. The noun ὀφειλέταις is a dative in the plural of ὀφειλέτης and serves as an indirect object to ἀφήκαμεν in the passage. Here, the universal nature of the prayer is reiterated with the plural pronoun ἡμῶν (our). Traditionally, it is believed that human beings cannot count the number of times one offends God so "debts" in the plural fit well in the passage and conforms to the other usage as "sins" in Luke's account. As stated earlier in this work, "debt" is the same as "sin" in Aramaic literature and this makes the choice of any of them appropriate in either verse. This does not mean that humans are literally indebted to God in a financial sense, but rather that sin creates a moral and spiritual debt that must be repaid.²⁰ The idea of sin as debt is frequently used in the New Testament and by Jesus in his lessons. For instance, Jesus describes a man in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23–35) who owes a large debt to his master and is pardoned, but who then refuses to pardon another servant for a much smaller debt. The purpose of the parable is to stress the value of forgiving others and the gravity of sin as a moral obligation that needs to be repaid.²¹ Similar to this, the Apostle Paul frequently compares the connection between people and God to a debt. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," he says in Romans 6:23. Here, the idea of sin as an obligation is employed to highlight the gravity of its repercussions and the necessity of redemption through Christ.²² In general, the metaphor of sin as debt serves to emphasise the moral and spiritual repercussions of sin and the necessity for repentance and redemption. It is intended to serve as a potent and evocative way of describing the human situation from a biblical point of view rather than to be taken literally. Translators should therefore choose the one that best explains the idea in the passage in relation to their culture for the benefit of the audience.

Issues in the Farefare Translation of Matthew 6:12

An assessment of Matthew 6:12 and its parallel in Luke 11:4 in the GILLBT Farefare Bible raises the following hermeneutical issues.

It reads:

Bahε ti be'em bo to wo to mam n di te suguru bōra to taaba se'em la.

Literarily the above translation means: "Forgive us our sins just as we also have patience for one another."

²⁰ Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann Publishing Company, 2007).

²¹ J.R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 16. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

²² F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 2.

The major question here is whether “to forgive” and “to have patience” are understood to be the same in the Farefare context. In any case, if we have patience for one another, would God forgive us our sins in return? What does the theory of forgiveness of sin add up to in Matthew 6:12?

Analyses of Matthew 6:12 in the Farefare Bible

GILLBT in their translation of Matthew 6:12 used “*Bahe*” (leave/ stop/let go/ forgive us) *to be'em bo to* (us our sins) and “*wo tomam n dite suguru*” (just as we also have patience) “*bɔ'ɔra to taaba se'em la*” (for one another). The problems identified as stated earlier include:

1. The absence of the conjunction *kai* “and” that begins the dependent clause.
2. The substitution of “we also have forgiven” for “we also have patience” in the main clause.
3. The absence of ὀφειλέταις (Matt 6:12 BGT) “debtors” in the main clause

Obviously, one could realize that the translators employed the dynamic or functional equivalence approach in the translation of Matthew 6:12.²³ However, as previously stated in this work, the purpose of the conjunction at the start of the verse is to connect the words “give us this day our daily bread” and “forgive as our debts” with each other.

Does it imply that the Farefare language does not have the equivalence of the conjunction “and” or the translators did not use the Greek text as the source text?

The Farefare Language has the conjunction “and” that is “*la*.” Matthew 2:4 begins with the conjunction *καὶ* and the Farefare translated it as “*te*” (then/until) also in Matthew 2:7. And “*la*” (and) for the other *καὶ* that appears in the middle of the sentence. The same applies to the “and” in Matthew 13:55 whilst Luke 2:47 is another verse that begins with *καὶ* and again “*te*” was used. It must be noted that the meaning of *te* and *la* depends on their usage in a sentence. This means that apart from their functions as conjunctions, they can also be used as adverbs and others. Agreeing with the translators on this issue is that *te* cannot be applied here because it does not combine well with the action verb *Bahe*. *La* (and) on the other hand would combine well with the verb *Bahe* if the pronoun *ho* (you/then) is added to it before the verb as in Matthew 2:13 (*Ban daa kule la te Na'ayene sojora yele Yosef a zaanheɔ poan yeti, Ihege la ho tare bia la la ka ma la keɛ Egipt teɔ poan la ho ta bona bilam te n han ta yele ho te ho lebena ho lebena. Se're n sɔe la Herod wan ta ε bia la ko' en*).

The dependent clause in the passage can then be translated as *La ho bahe te be'em bo to* (and you/then “forgive us our sins/and forgive us our sins”²⁴). In this way, the link is established in the passage whilst the dynamic equivalence translation approach is still maintained. As to why the translators did not use these words in their translations, the contention is that they translated from the NIV text as the source text and this version did not include the conjunction and also has wider usage in the Ghanaian communities.

The verb *Bahe* when used in a high voice carries the sense of a command like in *Bahe en!* (Leave him). It is also true that *Bahe* when used to begin a sentence mostly functions as a command in the Farefare language. It is therefore the right word for the Greek ἄφεες (I forgive) since in the locality and depending on the collocated meaning of the sentence, it carries the meaning of “forgive” without any complex issues.

It is simple to state that the phrase “I forgive” can easily be used with the pronoun “we” to get its plural form. But this is not so in the Farefare translation of the plural form “we forgive” in Matthew 6:12. *Bahe* (leave/ stop/let go/ forgive us) and *Suguru* (patience) used in the Farefare Bible are not the same in the sense that the former is a verb whilst the latter is a noun. It is often said that patience can be the key to greater empathy and forgiveness toward others, hence the classification that patience is virtue and forgiveness is divine. This concept does not apply here in the Lord's Prayer because when

²³ Alexander Akaninga, “Kasem, Farefare and Gonja Rendition of Touch in 1John 1:1 1,” *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 1, no. 2 (2019): 57–66.

²⁴ The Lord's Prayer: Specific meaning in the wording and content of the original text. Considering all the manuscript variants in Luke 11:2-4 and Matthew 6:9-14, <https://notjustanotherbook.com/thelordsprayer.htm>

you do not forgive but only have patience for one another, then God would also not forgive your sins but would have patience for you to continue in your sins. All things being equal, it is believed that the fifth petition portrays the notion of what “you sow is what you reap” in Galatians 6:7. What then prevents the Farefare translators from using *tomam n bahe* (we have forgiven) but used *tomam n di te suguru* (we have patience).

The contention is that: In Mark 2:1–12, Jesus’ cure of the crippled man is described. In this story, a group of individuals brought a man who was paralyzed to Jesus while he was preaching in a home. They lowered the man through the roof to be close to Jesus because they could not fit him through the crowded home. Jesus after observing their faith told the man that his sins are forgiven. Some scholars are of the view that the scribes’ outrage at Jesus’ statement stemmed not just from the fact that forgiveness of sins by one person to another is unknown, but also from the way Jesus spoke suggesting a claim to speak for God. Given that only God can pardon sins, the scribes would have considered this to be blasphemous.

It is of interest to note that some people believe that it is only God who forgives sins. For the Kasena of Navrongo for example, the common widely used word for sin is *weleera* where *We* is God and *leera* the plural of *lɔrem* means “sins.” Put together, *weleera* literally means “God-sins” or “sins against God.” In this situation, the scribes today if they had the opportunity to translate these types of texts will be obliged to utilize the opportunity as a payback time.

Comparative Analysis of Matthew 6:12 in Three Translations

Table 1.3: Comparative Analysis of Matthew 6:12 in Farefare, Kasem and Gonja Translations

| Language | Translation | Meaning |
|---|---|--|
| Farefare (YeneGɔŋɔ, 2007: BL/GILLBT) | Bahe to be'em bo to wo tomam n dite suguru bɔ'ɔra to taaba se'em la | Forgive us our sins as we are also having patience for one another. |
| Kasem (We Tɔnɔ, 2015: GILLBT) | Yage de weleera n ma n che debam, ne debam de che wolo maama na ke wo-balɔɔ o ma choge de yiga tei to | Forgive us our sins as we also forgive all their wrongdoings. |
| Gonja (Ebɔre Be Kawɔl ŋkre Popɔr Na, 1984: IBS) | Nseŋ ta anyi be alubi m paŋ anyi fane kanane anyi ale gba ta m paŋ bumo ne b wora n da anyi so na | And lend/loan us our sins as we also have lended/loaned those who offended us. |

From the above table, the Farefare and Kasem from the Gur family of languages were translated by GILLBT while the Gonja rendition was by IBS. In both renditions (Farefare and Kasem) of Matthew 6:12, the translators used the thought-for-thought approach whilst the Gonja rendition took to the combination of the two approaches. The evidence that GILLBT used thought-for-thought is based on the fact that both translations did not begin with the conjunction “and” as in the source text. The Gonja rendition blends the two approaches which are the formal and dynamic equivalence. This is so because the Greek word *kai* that begins the passage is duly translated but *m paŋ* in Gonja is the same as *fa firi* in the Asante Twi language which means “to loan” our sins instead of *ta n ke* “to forgive” our sins outright. All three languages translated *opheilēmata* (debts) as *be'em*, *weleera* and *alubi*, meaning sins or wrong-doings which reflects the substitution of (debts) with Luke’s (sins), in Luke 11:4. The fact that these translations used the words *be'em*, *weleera* and *alubi* which all means “sins or wrong-doing” instead of “debts” reiterates Kuwornu-Adjaottor’s view that “there is a problem with the translation of *ta ophilēmata* as “debts” in the Ghanaian context.”²⁵

²⁵ Jonathan E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Are Sins Forgiven or Loaned?: Translations and Interpretations of Matthew 6: 12 by Some Dangme Scholars,” *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 42, no. 2 (2010): 67–81.

The passage (Matthew 6:12) could have therefore been translated as:

Farefare: *La ho bahe to be'em bo to wo tomam n bahe/bahere to taaba be'em bo ba se'em la.*

Gonja: *N sey ta anyi be alubi n ke anyi fane kanane anyi ale gba ta n ke bumo ne b wora n da anyi so na.*

In this way the conjunction *la ho* “and then” is introduced as well as *tomam n bahe/bahere* “we have forgiven/forgiving” in the Farefare text whilst *m paŋ* which is “to loan” is replaced with *n ke* “to forgive” outright in the Gonja translation.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table 2.1 Personal Interviews

| No: | Interviewee | Question: How do you say “forgive” in Farefare? | Question: How do you say “patience” in Farefare? | Question: Is there a relationship between the two in Farefare? |
|-----|-------------|---|--|---|
| 1 | A | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes: you have patience first before you forgive one another |
| 2 | B | Bahe bo en | Di suguru | Yes |
| 3 | C | Deke kye en | Nyoke ho minja | Yes |
| 4 | D | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 5 | E | Deke daase en | maae ho minja | No |
| 6 | F | Bahe bo | Di suguru | No |
| 7 | G | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes: when you cannot forgive then you have patience for the person. |
| 8 | H | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 9 | I | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 10 | J | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 11 | K | Bahe peŋe en | Anna simm | Yes |
| 12 | L | Bahe bo en | Di suguru | Yes |
| 13 | M | Bahe bo en | Di suguru | Yes |
| 14 | N | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes: suguru first before bahe |
| 15 | O | Bahe bo | Di suguru | No |
| 16 | P | Bahe bo en | Di suguru | No |
| 17 | Q | Bahe bo | Di suguru | No |
| 18 | R | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 19 | S | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 20 | T | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 21 | U | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 22 | V | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 23 | W | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 24 | X | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |

| | | | | |
|----|----|---------|-----------|-----|
| 25 | Y | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 26 | Z | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 27 | AA | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 28 | AB | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 29 | AC | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |
| 30 | AD | Bahe bo | Di suguru | Yes |

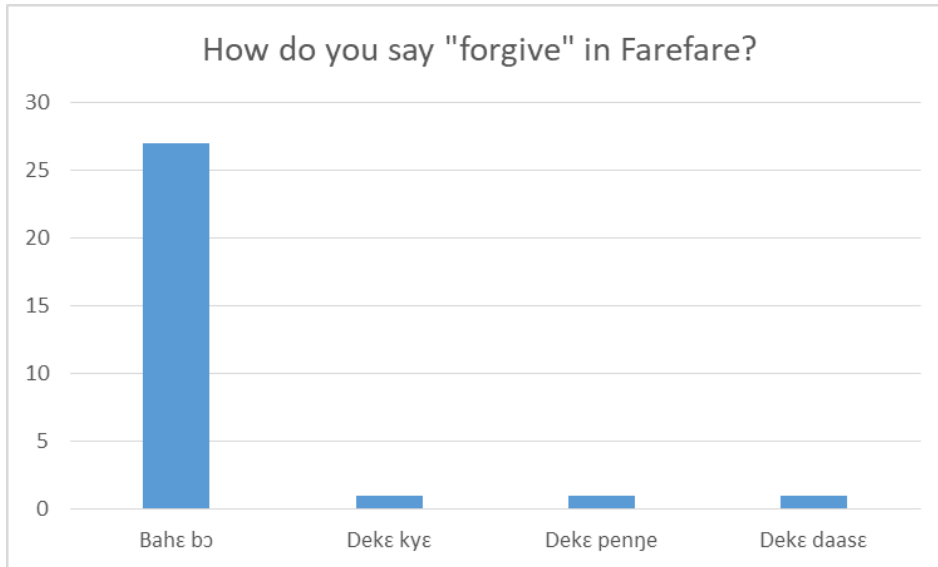


Figure 1: Forgive in Farefare language

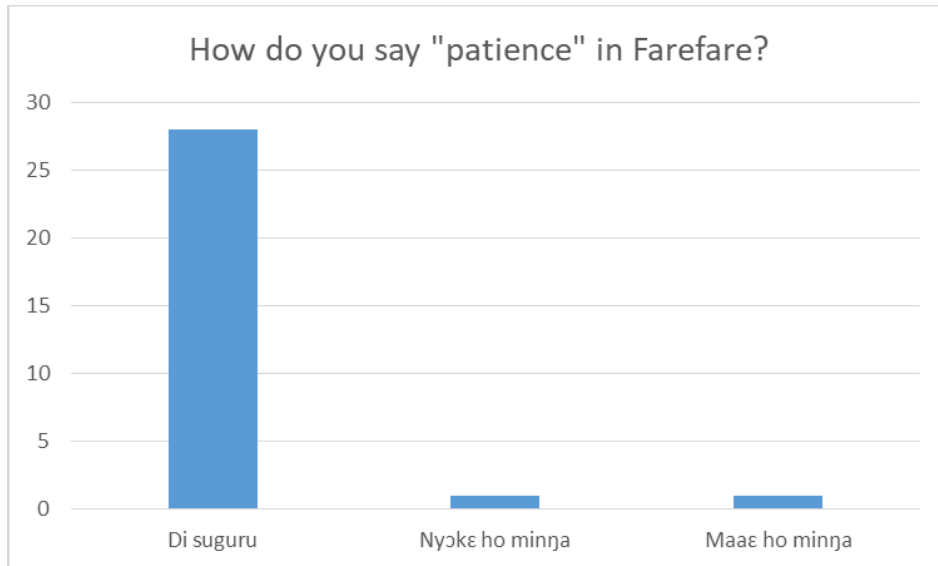


Figure 2: Patience in Farefare language

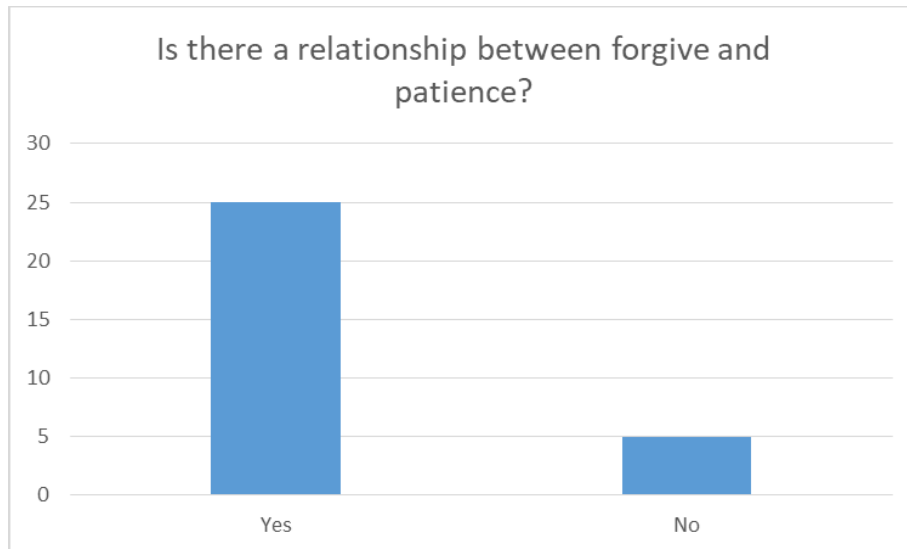


Figure 3: Relationship between forgive and patience

Out of the thirty interviewees represented in Table 2.1 above, only three of them representing 10% translated “forgive” as *deke kye en* (forgive- Ashanti Twi), *deke daase en* (forgive-English) and *bahe peye en* (loan-Farefare) as shown in fig 1. The remaining 90% maintain *bahe bo* (let go/forgive) as also used by the Farefare Bible translators. In the same vein, the Farefare word for “patience” is *suguru* as shown in Fig. 2 with a little over 93% of the interviewees in agreement.

The relationship between “forgive” and “patience” in the Farefare context is complimentary. In Fig. 3, 83.3% of the interviewees maintain that there is a relationship between the two because in the locality, patience is necessary and forms part of the process to forgive someone outright. In other words, one needs patience in forgiving someone for his or her wrongdoings. This means that patience is the prerequisite in forgiving another person. However, the other way does not hold because forgiveness surpasses patience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers, therefore, recommend that Matthew 6:12 be translated as follows:

1. *La ho bahe to be'em bo to wo tomam n bahe/bahere to taaba be'em bo ba se'em la* (and then forgive us our sins as we also forgive those who have sinned against us)
2. *ge bahe to be'em bo to wo tomam n dite suguru ge bahe to taaba be'em boba se'em la* (and forgive us our sin as we have the patience to forgive those who sin against us).

CONCLUSION

The study has analyzed the translation of the Greek word “ἄφεσις” (forgive) as “patience” in the Farefare language of the Upper East Region of the Republic of Ghana. The exegesis and data collected from the field have shown that the Farefare term *di suguru* found its way into the text because of its role as an absolute necessity to the Farefare people. This research has therefore established that to put “patience” in place of “forgive” is inappropriate. Instead, the two can be maintained in the translations by only making sure that *suguru* “patience” comes first before *bahe* “forgive.”

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