Some forty years ago, Robert Gordon and I—academic novices both—shared an office at the University of Glasgow. The building in which it was situated was occupied by the staff of the closely associated departments of Hebrew and Semitic Languages and Old Testament Language and Literature. I had been appointed to a lectureship in the former and he joined me when taking up a similar post in the latter. Alas, by the necessary order of such things, many of those who were our colleagues in that building have gone to their eternal rest while, equally sadly but by a somewhat less necessary order laid down in the name of academic progress (so genannt), such university departments have long been consigned to the genizah of educational history. I soon appreciated that Robert loved all manner of scholarly fare but always sought to season it with generous sprinklings of humour and even a soupçon of irreverence. Teaching for him essentially meant giving of himself and on many occasions assigning priority to students over his own ambitions and interests. While deeply committed to the critical study and sound analysis of primary sources, he never felt that this precluded him from personal commitment and institutional involvement in the religious sphere. I found myself in awe of his deep, emotional attachment not only to the Hebrew Bible but also to the land of Israel. And so it was that from our first meeting we discovered that we shared not only a professional place of work but a definition of what kind of scholarly esprit de corps we wished to adopt and encourage. To our minds, the maintenance of honesty and integrity was much to be desired and promoted in scholarly circles. Since those early days in our academic careers until the present time in Cambridge, when we somehow appear to have acquired a seniority at least of years, we have enjoyed being friends, exchanging confidences, supporting some fairly harmless forms of iconoclasm, and even, I daresay, indulging in a degree of mutual admiration. There is no scholar in the realm of Biblical Hebrew studies more worthy of recognition, admiration and respect and I am delighted to be able to offer my modest contribution.
to a volume that is intended to bring him at least part of the honour that he richly deserves.

A problem that often confronts teachers and students of Hebrew, especially in its Biblical and early post-Biblical forms, is the tendency of the language to use a limited number of verbs and nouns for a great variety of meanings, rather than to develop a more extensive vocabulary (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 74–75). Whether this is an innate characteristic of a language with a simple triliteral root system that inevitably has its limitations, or a phenomenon that should not be unexpected in the language’s earlier, and therefore more primitive, forms, will not here concern us. What has often intrigued me is the degree to which the verb הקשה and the noun﹀ฌา exemplify the problem and consequently present a challenge to translators and exegetes alike. The topic I specifically propose to address is whether, in the case of the word﹀ฌา, the lexicographers have provided adequate guidance as to its semantic range and variety of nuances, and whether the translations and comments provided for its occurrences in a wide range of Biblical Hebrew verses do adequate justice to the meaning being conveyed in each instance. Given the editorially imposed limit (certainly a wise precaution!) on the size of each essay in this collection, I shall obviously not be able to deal with every relevant verse but I hope to provide enough examples to be able to illustrate the problem and to suggest that there may be some cases in which renderings and annotations might be improved.

Firstly, then, what is noted by the lexicographers about any special senses of the word﹀ฌา? Given the major contribution he made to the development of Hebrew grammatical studies in the Middle Ages, it is not inappropriate to begin with the views of one of the most distinguished and insightful Jewish scholars of Hebrew in eleventh-century Spain, Jonah (‘Abū al-Walid Merwan) Ibn Janāḥ. In his comments on the rootעשה (Ibn Janāḥ, 388), he points to the sense of ‘property’ sometimes carried by the word﹀ฌา and goes on to champion an explanation that this derives from the basic agricultural sense of ‘collecting and storing up produce’. He cites Ezek. 28.4 for the verbal use but, more pertinently to the current analysis, makes reference to Jer. 48.7 in which Moab is accused of trusting in CONTEXT and to the rendering by Targum Jonathan which finds precisely such a sense in the word﹀ฌา, translating it as ‘your riches’ and the subsequent word as ‘your treasure house’. David Qimḥi of twelfth-century Provence, and therefore still very much