

# Poetic Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization and Three Difficult Phrases in Jacob's Blessing: יְתָר שְׂאֵת (Gen 49:3), יְצוּעֵי עֵלָה (49:4), and יְבֹא שִׁילָה (49:10)

RICHARD C. STEINER

rsteiner@yu.edu

Revel Graduate School, Yeshiva University, New York, NY 10033

---

*In memory of my esteemed teacher,  
Moshe Greenberg ז"ל*

Jacob's Blessing in Genesis 49 is full of difficult phrases that have challenged exegetes since antiquity. In this article I shall discuss three of these: יְתָר שְׂאֵת (v. 3), יְצוּעֵי עֵלָה (v. 4) and יְבֹא שִׁילָה (v. 10). Although all of these phrases have been emended, I shall attempt to show that they make perfect sense as they are. I shall argue that, in all of these phrases, the Masoretes have succeeded in preserving linguistic features peculiar to the poetic dialect of Biblical Hebrew in their oral reading tradition(s). Finally, I shall note some other successes of the Masoretes (alongside some of their failures) and discuss the light that they shed on the history of the Masoretic reading tradition(s).

## I. יְתָר שְׂאֵת, "ENDOWED WITH EXTRA DIGNITY"

רְאוּבֵן בְּכָרִי אֶתָּה כְּחֵי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנֵי יְתָר שְׂאֵת וְיְתָר עֹז  
(Gen 49:3)

The syntactic structure of רְאוּבֵן בְּכָרִי אֶתָּה כְּחֵי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנֵי is reasonably clear. The first two words, בְּכָרִי אֶתָּה, constitute a simple verbless clause with many parallels in the Bible, for example, בְּנֵי אֶתָּה (Ps 2:7), אָבִי אֶתָּה/אֶתָּה (Jer 2:27; Ps 89:27; Job 17:14), אָחִי אֶתָּה (Gen 12:13; Prov 7:4), עֲצָמֵי וּבְשָׂרֵי אֶתָּה (Gen 29:14; 2 Sam 19:14), and so on. The last three words, כְּחֵי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנֵי, are in apposition to the predicate noun בְּכָרִי and, hence, equivalent to it (cf. Deut 21:17, כִּי אֶת־הַבֶּכֶר בְּוַהֲשֵׁנוּאָה יִכִּיר).

(. . . כִּי־הוּא רִאשִׁית אֲנֹ). Precisely the same syntactic (surface) structure is found in אָבִי אֶתָּה אֵלֵי וְצוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי (Ps 89:27). Even the structure of the appositive phrase is the same; it consists of a single noun followed by a genitive phrase, both with a suffixed first common singular pronoun.

The syntax of the last four words in the verse is less clear. Does it continue the appositive phrase, or is it an independent part of the predicate of אֶתָּה? The answer depends, in part, on the syntactic category of יְתָר. If it is a noun in the construct state (like רִאשִׁית), it can be taken as continuing the appositive phrase, assuming that שְׂאֵת and עָז can be elliptical for שְׂאֵתִי and עָזִי;<sup>1</sup> if it is a different part of speech, it must constitute a separate part of the predicate.

The Peshitta opts for the first possibility, taking יְתָר as a noun meaning (ג-ו) זֶכֶר “remainder (of).” This is understandable, for the segolate יְתָר looks like a noun and, in fact, *is* a noun everywhere else in the Bible, usually with the meaning “remainder, remnant, rest.” Most modern scholars follow the Peshitta in taking יְתָר to be a noun, but since the usual meaning does not fit the context, they posit another meaning, unattested elsewhere: “excellence, preeminence.”<sup>2</sup> Many of these scholars, however, appear to assume that the appositive phrase ends with אֲנִי, presumably because the absence of a suffixed pronoun on שְׂאֵת and עָז seems to signal discontinuity. The parallel with Ps 89:27, which ends at אֲנִי, seems to support this sense of discontinuity. If so, the context would seem to call for an adjective here, and many scholars have alluded to this problem in one way or another.

J. P. N. Land notes that יְתָר (properly “excellence” in his view) is used as an adjective, and he compares this use with the use of פִּחְזוֹ (properly “ebullience” in his view) in the sense of “ebullient.”<sup>3</sup> August Dillmann suggests that the substitution of “pre-eminence” for “pre-eminent” is a poetic usage.<sup>4</sup> Arnold B. Ehrlich emends יְתָר to יָתֵר, presumably on the analogy of the construct adjectives in כְּבֹד־פָּה (Exod 4:10) and עָרַל שְׂפָתָיִם (Exod 6:12).<sup>5</sup> E. A. Speiser writes: “Heb.

<sup>1</sup>This possibility was raised by an anonymous *JBL* reader. For possible examples of ellipsis/gapping of suffixed pronouns in biblical poetry (double-duty pronominal suffixes), see G. R. Driver, “Hebrew Studies,” *JRAS* (1948): 164–65; M. O’Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 404. However, all of the examples occur within a single colon, between parallel hemistichs.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to BDB, 451–52, and many English versions, see S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis: With Introduction and Notes* (2nd ed.; Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen, 1904), 382; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 514; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis בראשית: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 333; Stanley Gevirtz, “The Reprimand of Reuben,” *JNES* 30 (1971): 88–89; and Raymond de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in Its Literary and Historical Context* (OtSt 39; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 87.

<sup>3</sup>Land, *Disputatio de carmine Jacobi Gen. XLIX* (Leiden: J. Hazenberg, 1857), 40–41, 44.

<sup>4</sup>Dillmann, *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament: Die Genesis* (3rd ed.; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1875), 474.

<sup>5</sup>Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* (7 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 1:242.

yeter (twice), used as a construct adjective;<sup>6</sup> cf. the cognate Akk. (*w*)atar, notably in the familiar *Atar-ḥasīs* “exceeding wise.”<sup>7</sup> Stanley Gevirtz asserts that “the use of a substantive in the construct state to convey an adjectival idea is frequent enough in biblical literature, both prose and poetry, to warrant no concern.”<sup>8</sup> He refers us to GKC §128r, where we find examples like *בְּמִבְחָר קְבָרֵינוּ* (Gen 23:6) and *רַע מֵעֲלֵיכֶם* (Isa 1:16), glossed “our choicest sepulchres” and “your evil doings,” respectively. However, the ability of abstract nouns to function in genitive phrases as attributive modifiers of other nouns has no relevance here. At the end of the day, such genitive phrases are still noun phrases, whereas our context calls for an adjective phrase. In other words, Gevirtz’s translation, “pre-eminent in authority,” cannot be justified by the parallels in GKC; those parallels are, at best, evidence for the meaning “preeminent authority.”

A number of ancient translations use an adjective to render *יָתֵר*. Since some of these may reflect views similar to those of Land and Dillmann, we shall restrict ourselves to two of the most literal translations: the Samaritan targum (J) and Aquila’s revision. The Samaritan targum renders *יָתֵר מִסְבֵּלָה*, “endowed with extra endurance,” using the Aramaic adjective *יָתֵר*, “extra.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Aquila translates *περισσὸς ἄρσει*, “extraordinary in dignity [lit., raising].”<sup>10</sup> Here he uses the masculine adjective *περισσός*<sup>11</sup> (followed by the dative of limitation) rather than the substantivized neuter adjective *περισσόν* (followed by the genitive) that he uses to render *יָתֵר*, “rest, remainder,” in 1 Kgs 14:19; 22:47.<sup>12</sup> Note that *περισσός* is the adjective that Theodotion uses to render the Aramaic adjective *יָתֵר*, “extra,” in Daniel. Had Aquila been translating into Aramaic, he would no doubt have agreed

<sup>6</sup> This formulation seems to imply that *יָתֵר* is not a construct adjective but is merely *used as one*.

<sup>7</sup> Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 364; cf. *CAD* 1/2:501. For the same comment (without attribution), see E. Testa, “La formazione letteraria della benedizione di Giacobbe (Gen. 49,2-27),” *SBFLA* 23 (1973): 184.

<sup>8</sup> Gevirtz, “Reprimand,” 89. For the same comment (without attribution), see Hoop, *Genesis* 49, 87.

<sup>9</sup> התרגום השומרוני לתורה (ed. Abraham Tal; 3 vols.; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1980–83), 1:210. For the rendering “endurance,” see Abraham Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (HO, Nahe und Mittlere Osten 50; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2:629, s.v. עֲזוּה. For the rendering of *יָתֵר*, see below. For Syriac commentaries that use *ܢܘܘܪܐ* in our verse, see R. B. ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress: The Use of Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa’s Commentary on Genesis* (Traditio exegetica Graeca 6; Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 431. The Palestinian targumim also have the adjective *יָתֵר* here, but their rendering is much less literal. See, e.g., *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch: According to Their Extant Sources* (ed. Michael L. Klein; 2 vols.; AnBib 76; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:65–66: *לך הוּיָא חֲזִיָא לְמִיסְבָּ לְתַתָּא חוּלְקִין*; *יְתִירִין עַל אַחַד וְכוּ* “it would have been proper for you to take three portions more than your brothers. . . .”

<sup>10</sup> *Origenis Hexaplorum* (ed. F. Field; 2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 1:69.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Haar Romeny, *Syrian in Greek Dress*, 430.

<sup>12</sup> *Origenis Hexaplorum*, 1:625, 644.

with the Samaritan targum in using יְתִיר to render יֵתֵר. But what is the justification for using an adjective to render יֵתֵר in a highly literal translation?

The answer is found in a lexicon of biblical homonyms composed by Judah Ibn Bal'am in the eleventh century: “יֵתֵר שְׂאֵת” is an adjective, like כְּבֵד עֹזן ‘heavy with sin’ (Isa 1:4) and עָרְל לֵב וְעָרְל בָּשָׂר ‘uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of flesh’ (Ezek 44:9), and I have mentioned this so that no one should err concerning it and think that it is a noun.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, just as כְּבֵד (alongside כָּבֵד) is a construct form of the adjective כָּבֵד, and עָרְל (alongside עָרְל) is a construct form of the adjective עָרְל, so too יֵתֵר must be a construct form of the adjective יֵתֵר.

The adjective יֵתֵר has been overlooked in modern discussions of our verse, presumably because it is virtually unknown in the Bible (with the possible exception of Prov 12:26). To find clear attestations we must turn to postbiblical Hebrew. For example, in deeds of sale it occurs with its antonym in the formula meaning “more or less”: אִם יֵתֵר אִם חָסֵר (Mur 22 and 30)<sup>14</sup> = אִם יֵתֵר אִם חָסֵר (m. B. Bat. 7:2, 3). Like its antonym, יֵתֵר is actually a stative participle. And just as the stative participle אֶבֶד is preserved by Mishnaic Hebrew but replaced in Biblical Hebrew by אֶבַד(ו),<sup>15</sup> so too יֵתֵר is preserved by Mishnaic Hebrew but replaced in Biblical Hebrew by יֵתֵר(ו).<sup>16</sup>

In the Mishnah, יֵתֵר also occurs with the meaning “extra,” e.g., אֶצְבַּע יֵתִירָה, “an extra talon” (m. Hul. 3:6 and passim).<sup>17</sup> When used of a person, it means “extra-endowed.” Thus, a person with extra fingers and toes is said to be יֵתֵר בְּיָדָיו וּבְרַגְלָיו, “extra-endowed in his hands and feet” (m. Bek. 7:6). The Aramaic equivalent of יֵתֵר, the adjective יְתִיר (which, as noted above, is used to render יֵתֵר in several translations of our verse), is found in two syntactic constructions. In addition to יְתִיר X, “(an) extra X,” we find genitive phrases of the form יְתִיר X, “extra-endowed with (an) X, endowed with (an) extra X,” e.g., יְתִיר אַבְרָם, “endowed with an extra limb” (Tg. Neof. Lev 22:23) and יְתִיר ו, “endowed with an extra *waw*” (Aleppo Codex, Masorah Marginalia).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> שלשה ספרים של רב יהודה בן בלעם (ed. Shraga Abramson; Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher, 1975), 51, s.v. יֵתֵר. Abramson notes that other medieval philologists did indeed make the mistake in question.

<sup>14</sup> P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, *Les grottes de Murabba'at* (2 vols.; DJD 2; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 118, 145, 147; Ada Yardeni, *יהודה ומדבר יהודה: עבריות ונבטיות ממדבר יהודה*, אוסף תעודות ארמיות עבריות ונבטיות ממדבר יהודה (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2000), 1:47, 51; 2:65.

<sup>15</sup> All that remains in Biblical Hebrew is the noun אֶבֶדָה, “lost object,” a fossilized stative participle. For other fossilized stative participles in Biblical Hebrew (שָׁכֵן, “neighbor”; גֵּר, “resident alien”; and שֶׁקֶד, “almond”), see Richard C. Steiner, “עֵין and דָּת: Two Verbs Masquerading as Nouns in Moses' Blessing (Deuteronomy 33:2, 28),” *JBL* 115 (1996): 697–98.

<sup>16</sup> This is one of a number of archaic features of Mishnaic Hebrew that show that it is not a direct descendant of Biblical Hebrew.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Akkadian *ešemtu watartum*, “a superfluous bone” (*CAD* 1/2:500).

<sup>18</sup> For the latter example, see Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (trans. and ed. E. J. Revell; SBLMas 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), 54.

The Biblical Hebrew phrase *שֶׁאֵת יִתֵּר* exhibits the same construction as *יִתֵּר* *אֲבִיר* and *יִתֵּר* *אֲבִיר*; it means “endowed with extra dignity.” It may be compared also with the phrase *לֵב חָסֵר*, “endowed with insufficient intelligence” (Prov 6:32; etc.), in which *חָסֵר* “under-endowed with, deficient in,” is the antonym of *יִתֵּר*. The relationship between these two forms is even more obvious in a Genizah fragment with Babylonian pointing, where the phrase from Prov 6:32 is vocalized with what appears to be the Babylonian equivalent of *לֵב חָסֵר*.<sup>19</sup>

## II. *יְצוּעֵי עֲלָה*, “THE BED OF A NURSEMAID”

*כִּי עָלִיתָ מִשְׁכַּבִּי אָבִיךָ אֲזַח חֲלִלָתָ יְצוּעֵי עֲלָה*  
(Gen 49:4)

The phrase *יְצוּעֵי עֲלָה* has traditionally been taken to mean “my bed he mounted,” but this reading has numerous problems. The most obvious one is what John Skinner called “the harsh change from 2nd pers. to 3rd.”<sup>20</sup> Throughout most of the verse, Jacob refers to Reuben in the second person (*תּוֹתֵר*, *עָלִיתָ*, *חֲלִלָתָ*) and to himself in the third person (*אָבִיךָ*). The traditional reading implies that, at the end of the verse, Jacob refers to Reuben in the third person (*עָלָה*) and to himself in the first person (the suffix of *יְצוּעֵי*).

Now, shift in person deixis by itself is not unusual in the Bible, and at least one scholar considers our verse quite normal:

There are other cases of such shifts of pronominal reference in Genesis 49 (e.g., vv. 9, 24–26) that complement the shift in v. 4. . . . Throughout the “testament,” the ostensible audience of the 12 sons often gives way to the implied narrative audience. The sudden shift in v. 4 is consonant with this pattern and is fitting for the contextual desire to drive home Reuben’s heinous deed.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that the deixis shift in our verse is different from the ones in vv. 9 and 24–26, in that it involves the repetition of a verb in different persons: *עָלִיתָ* followed by *עָלָה*. Nevertheless, even that feature can be found elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

In any event, this problem led to emendation of *יְצוּעֵי* already in antiquity. In 4Q252 (4QCommGen A) IV, 5, *יְצוּעֵי* is changed to *יְצוּעֵיו* to make it consistent

<sup>19</sup> Israel Yeivin, *מסורת הלשון העברית המשתקפת בניקוד הבבלי* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1985), 443. In other fragments, the form is *חָסֵר*.

<sup>20</sup> Skinner, *Genesis*, 515.

<sup>21</sup> Excerpted from a comment by an anonymous *JBL* reviewer.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Deut 32:15: *וַיִּשְׁמַן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעֹט שְׂמֵנָה עֲבִיתָ כְּשֵׁיתָ*. The shift in that verse seems to make more literary sense: Moses interrupts his dispassionate narrative and turns to the people with a stinging rebuke, repeating one verb but adding others.

with third person אַבִּיכָה.<sup>23</sup> In 1857, Abraham Geiger proposed emending יְצוּעֵי to יְצוּעֵי (and עָלָה to בְּלָהָה).<sup>24</sup> Geiger presented three arguments: (1) the noun -יְצוּעֵי appears only in the plural elsewhere in the Bible; (2) the phrase יְצוּעֵי עָלָה stands in parallelism to the genitive phrase מִשְׁכְּבֵי אָבִיךָ; and (3) the Septuagint translates “the couch” instead of “my couch.” In 1896, C. J. Ball added two new arguments: (1) חָלַל is transitive elsewhere in the Bible; and (2) the parallel passage about Reuben in 1 Chr 5:1 has וּבְחָלְלוּ יְצוּעֵי אָבִיו.<sup>25</sup> These arguments have proved persuasive to the vast majority of scholars, and the emendation to יְצוּעֵי is widely accepted today. I shall argue below that, although Geiger was right in interpreting עָלָה יְצוּעֵי as a genitive phrase, he was wrong to assume that his interpretation required an emendation.

Geiger’s emendation of עָלָה to בְּלָהָה has proved much less popular than his emendation of יְצוּעֵי to יְצוּעֵי. Later scholars proposed other emendations, including יוֹלְדֶךָ, “your sire”;<sup>26</sup> יַעֲלָה, “female mountain-goat”;<sup>27</sup> and עָלָה = Arabic *‘allah*, “co-wife.”<sup>28</sup> In 1971, Gevirtz suggested that all of these emendations are superfluous, for עָלָה is the singular of the hollow participle עֹלֹת, “nursing,” attested five times in the Bible (Gen 33:13; 1 Sam 6:7; etc.).<sup>29</sup> Gevirtz conceded that all of those attestations refer to animals, but Jean-Daniel Macchi remedied this defect by noting that עוֹל, “suckling, nursling,” from the same root, is used of humans in the Bible (Isa 49:15; 65:20).<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, Gevirtz’s interpretation forced him to place “the act of filial impiety . . . during the period when Bilhah, still nursing Dan, was pregnant with

<sup>23</sup> George J. Brooke, “The Thematic Content of 4Q252,” *JQR* 85 (1994): 35.

<sup>24</sup> Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judenthums* (Breslau: J. Hainauer, 1857), 374.

<sup>25</sup> Ball, *The Book of Genesis* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Ezekiel Mandelstamm, *באורים והערות על תורה וכתובים* (Kiev, 1894), 18; Mitchell Dahood, “Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography III,” *Bib* 46 (1965): 319. I am indebted to S. Z. Leiman for the first reference.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Reider, “Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew,” *VT* 4 (1954): 276, citing Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863–71), 2124. Hoop (*Genesis* 49, 90–91), citing Reider and Lane, changes their gloss of *‘allah* to “concubine.” This meaning (for which, see Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* [ed. and trans. J. Milton Cowan; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961], 633), appears to have developed later. Joshua Blau (oral communication) notes that it is not recorded in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, and he calls my attention to the phrase *banū l-‘allāt*, “the sons of co-wives,” which implies that the term *‘allah* refers to a *reciprocal* relationship between wives.

<sup>29</sup> Gevirtz, “Reprimand,” 97–98.

<sup>30</sup> Macchi, *Israël et ses tribus selon Genèse 49* (OBO 171; Fribourg, Suisse: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 48 n. 42. The other forms cited there have no evidentiary value. On the relationship between עָלָה and עוֹל, not fully clarified by Macchi, see further below.

Naphtali.”<sup>31</sup> This contradicts the plain sense of the narrative, according to which Reuben's action comes on the heels of Rachel's death and may well have been prompted by it:

This incident is directly linked to the foregoing because it is Rachel's demise that presents the occasion for Reuben's act. By violating Bilhah, Reuben makes sure that she cannot supplant or even rival his mother's position of chief wife now that Rachel is dead. As a statement in Shabbat 55b expresses it, “He resented his mother's humiliation. He said, ‘If my mother's sister was a rival to my mother, must the maid of my mother's sister be a rival to my mother?’” In this connection, it is interesting that Reuben had earlier been involved in the attempt to get his father to restore the conjugal rights of his mother (30:14–16). As a result of Reuben's cohabitation with Bilhah, she would thereby acquire the tragic status of “living widowhood,” as happened to David's concubines whom he left behind when he fled Jerusalem and who were possessed by his son Absalom, as recounted in 2 Samuel 15:16, 16:22, and 20:3.<sup>32</sup>

In short, Reuben's deed took place long after Bilhah stopped nursing her children. How then can עֵלָה refer to Bilhah?

I suggest that עֵלָה may have a broader meaning than commonly thought. In his commentary on Gen 33:13, Rashi takes עֵלָה to mean מגדלות עולליהן, “rearing their infants.” Evidence for that interpretation can be found in a line of the poem on wisdom preserved in the Psalms Scroll from Qumran: למלמדי לי, ועלה היתה לי, “and she became for me a nurse; to my teacher I give my ardour,” adding: “Here Wisdom is in the role of the nursing mother, parallel here to her role as the teacher of the young man.”<sup>34</sup> Most scholars have accepted this interpretation;<sup>35</sup> a few have rejected it in favor of their own interpretations.<sup>36</sup> Among the latter is Isaac Rabinowitz, who argues: “Sanders' and Delcor's derivation of this word from עוּל, ‘give suck,’ is doubtful, since the word is apparently not used in Hebrew of human wet-nurses, but rather of animals—in the תנ”ך cows and ewes only—giving suck

<sup>31</sup> Gevartz, “Reprimand,” 98.

<sup>32</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 244.

<sup>33</sup> J. A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11* (DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 80, line 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–82.

<sup>35</sup> M. Delcor, “Le texte hébreu du Cantique de Siracide LI, 13 et ss. et les anciennes versions,” *Textus* 6 (1968): 33 (“nourrice”); Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997–98), 2:1175 (“wet-nurse”); Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach, Ben Sira* (ATD, Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 348 (“Amme”); *Weisheit für das Leben* (trans. Otto Kaiser; Stuttgart: Radius, 2005), 120 (“Amme”).

<sup>36</sup> Patrick W. Skehan, “The Acrostic Poem in Sirach 51:13–30,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 393 (עֵלָה\*, “profit”); Isaac Rabinowitz, “The Qumran Hebrew Original of Ben Sira's Concluding Acrostic on Wisdom,” *HUCA* 42 (1971): 177 (עֵלָה, “reason”); Charles Mopsik, *La Sagesse de ben Sira* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2003), 330 (עֵלָה, “holocaust”).

to their young.”<sup>37</sup> We have already noted the problem with this claim concerning the use of ע-ו-ל in the Bible.<sup>38</sup> It focuses on the *active* participle, עֹלָה, ignoring the *passive* participle, עוּל, “suckling, nursling [lit. suckled/nursed one].”<sup>39</sup> The latter is attested twice in the Bible, both times of humans and both times in poetic passages (Isa 49:15; 65:20). Thus, there is no reason to reject Sanders’s interpretation of עֹלָה in Ben Sira 51, which is also a poem. However, there *is* a reason to revise it slightly.

The parallelism with מלמד in Ben Sira 51 suggests that עֹלָה refers to a nursemaid-teacher rather than a wet nurse.<sup>40</sup> Further evidence for this revised interpretation emerges from a comparison of ועֹלָה היתה לי, למלמדי אתן הודו/י, “and she (Wisdom) was a nursemaid to me; I gave respect to my teacher, (but) I plotted mischief and played,” with וְאָהֳיָה אֶצְלוֹ אֶמּוֹן וְאָהֳיָה שְׁעֵשְׂעִים, “I (Wisdom) was with Him as an אֶמּוֹן, occupied with dandling every day, constantly playing in His presence” (Prov 8:30). There is a clear similarity, perhaps even dependence, between these two poetic passages. Just as ואשחקה parallels מְשַׁחֲקֶת, so too עֹלָה-מלמד parallels אֶמּוֹן. But what is the meaning of אֶמּוֹן? Biblical Hebrew nouns on the פֿעוּל pattern like אֶמּוֹן are normally equivalent in meaning to the corresponding active participle: וְהִצִּילוֹ גְזוּל מִיַּד, “and rescue from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed” (Jer 22:3) = וְהִצִּילוֹ גְזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֶׂק (Jer 21:12, with the same meaning); בְּגוֹדָה בְּגוֹדָה יְהוּדָה אֶחָוֶתָהּ, “Faithless Judah, her sister” (Jer 3:7, 10) = אֶחָוֶתָהּ יְהוּדָה (Jer 3:8, with the same meaning); לִשְׁוֹא צָרָף צָרוּף, “the smelter smelts in vain” (Jer 6:29) = הַבִּישׁ כָּל-צוּרָף, “every smelter is put to shame” (Jer 10:14); פַּח יְקוֹשׁ, “the fowler’s trap” (Hos 9:8) = מִפַּח יוֹקְשִׁים, “from the fowlers’ trap” (Ps 124:7).<sup>41</sup> This is true in Proverbs as well: מֶלֶךְ/רֹזֵן, “king//ruler” (Prov 14:28) = מְלָכִים//רֹזְנִים, “kings//rulers” (Prov 8:15; 31:4). In Syriac, the relationship between the two forms is quite regular: “With *ô* after the 2nd radical [and *ā* after the 1st radical], *Nomina agentis* may be formed from every Part. act. of the simple verb stem (Peal).”<sup>42</sup> If it is true

<sup>37</sup> Rabinowitz, “Qumran Hebrew Original,” 177–78.

<sup>38</sup> See at n. 30 above.

<sup>39</sup> For the *qal* II-*w* passive participle, cf. Biblical Hebrew מוּל, “circumcised”; Mishnaic Hebrew טוּחַ, “plastered” (*m. Mid.* 4:1) and צוּרָה, “depicted” (*m. Mid.* 1:3). Cf. also Old Aramaic עַל, “foal” (KAI 222A, 22), probably to be vocalized as a passive participle, like Syriac עֵל.

<sup>40</sup> The parallelism עֹלָה//מלמד is reminiscent of מִיִּנְקָת//אֶמּוֹן in וְהָיוּ מְלָכִים אֶמְנִיד וְשָׂרוּתֵיהֶם מִיִּנְקָת (Isa 49:23). For the meaning of מִיִּנְקָת, see below.

<sup>41</sup> The examples to the left of the equals signs (and a few others) are cited in connection with Prov 8:30 by Avi Hurvitz, בספר משלי ח, ל, לדיוקו של המונח ‘אֶמּוֹן’ (ed. Sara Japhet; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994), 649. However, he draws a different conclusion from them than I do.

<sup>42</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (trans. James A. Crichton; London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 69. In my view, the Hebrew use of the *pāʿōl* pattern as a stylistic variant of the active participle (in its nominal use) is a very early borrowing from Aramaic. In the Bible, the earliest occurrence of this pattern in a common noun is יְקוֹשׁ in Hos 9:8, a northern text. The earliest occurrence in a proper noun is אֶמּוֹן, governor of Samaria in the time of Ahab.

that the *pā-ōl* pattern functions in Biblical Hebrew as a stylistic variant of the active participle, we must conclude that אָמוֹן = אִמּוֹן.<sup>43</sup> This conclusion agrees with one of the interpretations suggested for אָמוֹן at the very beginning of *Genesis Rabbah*: אָמוֹן = פִּידְגוּג = אִמּוֹן.<sup>44</sup> In short, two related poems about Wisdom, Ben Sira 51 and Proverbs 8, have parallel passages describing her as a nursemaid-teacher.

It appears, then, that עֲלָה, used only of animals in prose, was used of humans in poetry. It was a poetic synonym of מִיִּנְקָה, the normal Hebrew word for “wet nurse,” which is taken to mean “nursemaid, governess” (מרבייתה/פדגוגתה) in the Palestinian targumim to Gen 24:59 and 35:8. Both עֲלָה and מִיִּנְקָה, like English “nurse,” underwent a semantic shift that broadened their meanings to include the dry nurse as well as the wet nurse.<sup>45</sup> The background of the shift is fairly transparent:

The wet nurse is termed *meineket* in verse 7,<sup>46</sup> a word that corresponds to the Akkadian *musheniqtum*, “the one who suckles.” She frequently had the additional duties of *tarbitum*, rearing the child and acting as guardian. From Genesis 24:59 and 35:8 it is clear that Rebekah's *meineket* was an esteemed member of the household. Her position is reflected in the rendering of *meineket* by Targum Jonathan in those passages as *padgogtha*, from Greek *paidagogos*, “tutor.”<sup>47</sup>

We conclude that עֲלָה is a synonym of מִיִּנְקָה with the meaning “nursemaid, governess” in biblical poetry and that יְצוּעֵי עֲלָה means “the bed of a nursemaid.”

---

This distribution is compatible with an Aramaic origin, since Aramaic influence was probably mediated to Judah via the northern kingdom. The names אָמוֹן, עֲמוֹס, and עֲמֹסִיָּה seem to express the wish that the newborn baby be carried and cared for by a divine nursemaid; cf. כְּאֲשֶׁר יִנְקֶה אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד יֵשָׁא הָאִמּוֹן אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד (Num 11:12). For יָנוּק, “child,” in Assyrian transcriptions of Old Aramaic (*ia-nu-qu/qa*, *Ia-nu-qu*), see Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 598, s.v. יָנוּק.

<sup>43</sup> Michael V. Fox (“*Amon* Again,” *JBL* 115 [1996]: 701) rejects the notion that “Wisdom was doing the child-rearing” on the grounds that “there was not yet any child figure on the scene.” That is true if we assume that these verses refer to the same time period as the preceding ones, but why make that assumption? Since the form וְאֶהְיֶה has a *waw*-consecutive, why not render “and (then) I became”? Indeed, how else can one explain the references to תִּבְלָה, “the inhabited world,” and בְּנֵי אָדָם in v. 31?

<sup>44</sup> מדרש בראשית רבא (ed. J. Theodor and C. Albeck; Berlin: M. Poppeloyer, 1927), 1. The midrash cites כְּאֲשֶׁר יִנְקֶה אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד יֵשָׁא הָאִמּוֹן אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד (Num 11:12) as a proof-text, no doubt because the Palestinian targumim use פִּידְגוּג to render אִמּוֹן there.

<sup>45</sup> The meaning of מִיִּנְקָה cannot be separated from the meaning of Mishnaic Hebrew תִּינוּקָה. The latter is used in *b. Yoma* 82a of a thirteen-year-old boy.

<sup>46</sup> That is, Exod 2:7.

<sup>47</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus שׁמוֹת: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 10 (Exod 2:9).

Rachel's death left Benjamin in dire need of a foster mother. That may be why the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nursemaid, is reported eleven verses earlier. The job of raising Benjamin fell to Bilhah alone; hence, the use of the term עֲלָהּ to refer to her.

Let us return now to Geiger's interpretation of יְצוּעֵי as a construct form. It too requires no emendation. I have argued elsewhere that \**ay* contracted in Old Canaanite to *ī* when either (a) the glide *y* was strengthened (i.e., geminated) or (b) the nucleus *a* was weakened (i.e., unstressed).<sup>48</sup> The Masoretic vocalization preserves vestiges of this sound change in poetic passages, including Jacob's blessing. For environment (b) we have עִירָה (Gen 49:11), שִׁיתוֹ (Isa 10:17), עֵינֹת (Prov 8:28); environment (a) will be discussed in section III below.

This Old Canaanite monophthongization should be viewed as a feature of the poetic dialect of Biblical Hebrew, much like the morphological and syntactic features that have been identified in the past.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the appearance of *hireq* instead of *šērê* in יְצוּעֵי is probably no different from the appearance of *hireq* instead of *šērê* in עִירָה, a few verses later. In both cases, we are dealing with the Old Canaanite monophthongization of unstressed *ay* to *ī*.<sup>50</sup>

The use and preservation of this feature in יְצוּעֵי עֲלָהּ (but not in מְשַׁכְּבֵי אֲבִיךָ) help to create a double entendre, with “my bed he mounted” as the secondary reading.<sup>51</sup> The parallelism with עָלִיתָ lures the reader into interpreting עֲלָהּ as the third person masculine singular perfect of ע-ל-י instead of the feminine singular participle of ע-ו-ל.<sup>52</sup> The pun works thanks to the use of two ambiguous poetic forms: יְצוּעֵי (instead of יְצוּעֵי) and עֲלָהּ (without the definite article, as normal in poetry).

<sup>48</sup> Richard C. Steiner, “On the Monophthongization of \**ay* to *ī* in Phoenician and Northern Hebrew and the Preservation of Archaic/Dialectal Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization,” *Or* 76 (2007): 73–83. In that article, I spoke of two distinct, albeit related, monophthongizations. I now view them as two aspects of a single Old Canaanite sound change, \**ay* > \**iy* > *ī*, in which the nucleus *a* was totally assimilated to the glide *y*. In other words, the nucleus was overpowered by the glide either when the glide was strengthened or when the nucleus was weakened.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Raphael Sappan, הייחוד התחבירי של לשון השירה המקראית (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1981).

<sup>50</sup> Another possibility, which cannot be ruled out, is that יְצוּעֵי has a *hireq compaginis* like אֲסָרִי and בָּנִי in 49:11, and possibly חֲכָלִילִי in 49:12. This possibility is raised as an alternative to emendation by Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (SBLDS 21; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 78.

<sup>51</sup> The secondary reading presupposes that יְצוּעֵי is singular. It is true that, as noted above, יְצוּעֵי appears only in the plural elsewhere in the Bible, but there is a good literary explanation for the exceptional use of the singular here: it was needed to create the play on words.

<sup>52</sup> For a similar play on words in Isa 52:2 (הִתְנַעְרִי מֵעַפְרֵי קוֹמֵי שְׁבִי יְרוּשָׁלַם הִתְפַּתְחִי מוֹסְרִי) based on the homonymy of שְׁבִי, “sit [fem. sing. imperative]” and “captive,” see David Yellin, לתורת המליצה התנ"כית (צוּאָרְדֵי שְׁבִיָּה בַת־צִיּוֹן כתבים נבחרים in לתורת המליצה התנ"כית, 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Va'ad ha-yovel . . . le-R. David Yellin, 1939), 2:62–63 = idem, חקרי מקרא (ed. E. Z. Melamed; Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1983), 262–63; Mitchell Dahood, “Some Ambiguous Texts in Isaias,” *CBQ* 20 (1958): 43–

### III. יבֵּא שִׁילָה, "TRIBUTE SHALL COME TO HIM"

לֹא־יִסּוּר שְׁבֵט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחֲקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי־יָבֵא שִׁילָה וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים  
(Gen 49:10)

This is, of course, one of the most famous cruxes in the Bible. Adolf Posnanski's survey of the ancient and medieval exegesis of the verse,<sup>53</sup> extending to more than six hundred pages, gives some idea of its importance and its difficulty. According to Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, "No satisfactory solution of the problems in this bicolon has ever been presented, and there is no present prospect of a definitive solution."<sup>54</sup> Most discussions have found the phrase יבֵּא שִׁילָה particularly enigmatic. Nahum M. Sarna writes: "Hebrew *yavo*<sup>5</sup> *shiloh* is wholly obscure; neither the subject of the verb nor the meaning of *shiloh* is clear. . . . None of the many interpretations of *shiloh* is without objection, and the term remains an enigma, though the present translation<sup>55</sup> seems to be the most acceptable."<sup>56</sup>

At first glance, שִׁילָה appears to be the well-known toponym, attested dozens of times in the Hebrew Bible, albeit with somewhat different spellings.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, even the collocation with the verb ב-ו-א is attested in 1 Sam 4:12. Yet, surprisingly, there is not a single ancient source that takes שִׁילָה as a toponym in our verse.<sup>58</sup> Modern scholars, too, have largely abandoned previous attempts to find a role for the town of Shiloh here. Instead, they have taken a closer look at rabbinic exegesis.

Some midrashic sources interpret שִׁילָה as שִׁי לָהּ, "tribute to him." In one version of *Genesis Rabbah* we read:

---

45; and Shalom M. Paul, "Polysensuous Polyvalency in Poetic Parallelism," in "*Shafarei Talmon*": *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (ed. Michael Fishbane et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 154–55. To the evidence noted there, add the parallel between קוּמִי שְׁבִי and קוּם־נָא שְׁבֵה, "sit up" (Gen 27:19).

<sup>53</sup> Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904).

<sup>54</sup> Cross and Freedman, *Studies*, 83.

<sup>55</sup> That is, "tribute . . . to him."

<sup>56</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 336–37.

<sup>57</sup> The spelling of the form has been cited by some scholars as evidence that it does not refer to the toponym. Although taken as a whole the spelling is indeed unique (as pointed out in a Masoretic note), the orthography of each syllable is paralleled in unambiguous occurrences of the toponym; see J. A. Emerton, "Some Difficult Words in Genesis 49," in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas on His Retirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge* (ed. Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 87.

<sup>58</sup> S. R. Driver, "Genesis XLIX. 10: An Exegetical Study," *Journal of Philology* 14 (1885): 3.

עד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילָה שְׁעֵתִידִין כָּל אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם לְהַבִּיא דוֹרוֹן<sup>59</sup> לְמֹשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד שֶׁנִּבְּרָא בְּעֵת הַהִיא יוֹבֵל־שִׁי לֵה' צְבָאוֹת.<sup>60</sup>

“Until there come tribute to him [שי לה]” (means) that all the nations of the world are going to bring tribute to the Messiah descended from David, as it is said, “In that time, tribute [שי] shall be brought to the Lord of Hosts.”

A slightly more revealing version of this midrash is found in *Yalqut Shimʿoni* to Isa 18:7:

בְּעֵת הַהִיא יוֹבֵל־שִׁי לֵה' צְבָאוֹת, שְׁעֵתִידִין אוֹ"ה לְהַבִּיא דוֹרוֹן לְמֶלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ, וְכֹה"א עַד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילָה קָרִי בִּיה עַד כִּי יוֹבֵל שִׁי לוֹ.

“In that time, tribute [שי] shall be brought to the Lord of Hosts” (means) that the nations of the world are going to bring tribute to the King Messiah, and so it says, עד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילָה—read “until there is brought tribute to him [שי לה].”

It is telling that this interpretation is largely ignored by the major Jewish exegetes of the Middle Ages. The only important exception is Rashi, but even he labels it a *מדרש אגדה*, presumably because it seems to require revocalization and breakup of the word.<sup>61</sup> In an ironic role reversal, the past half-century has seen an increasing number of modern scholars and English translations that accept שִׁילָה = שִׁי לֵה as the plain sense of the verse.<sup>62</sup> At this point in time, it is probably legitimate to speak of an emerging consensus.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that Mishnaic Hebrew דוֹרוֹן, used to gloss שִׁי in this midrash, is a borrowing of the Greek word δῶρον, used (in the plural) by the LXX to render שִׁי in Isa 18:7; Pss 67:30 (MT 68:30); and 75:12 (MT 76:12).

<sup>60</sup> *מדרש בראשית רבא* (ed. J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck; 1903–29; Jerusalem, 1965), 1219 lines 7–8.

<sup>61</sup> The medieval exegetes may have viewed the breakup of שִׁילָה as an example of *נוטריקון*-exegesis, similar to the breakup of the toponym חֲדָרֶךְ (Zech 9:1; cuneiform *Hatarikka*) at the beginning of the *Sifre* on Deuteronomy. As the medievals knew well from the continuation of the *Sifre*, the *נוטריקון*-exegesis of חֲדָרֶךְ, which also creates a messianic reading, elicited a vigorous protest from a *tanna* of Syrian origin: “Why do you twist the holy writings for us? I call heaven and earth to witness that I am from Damascus and that there is a place there whose name is Hadrach” [ed. L. Finkelstein; Berlin: Jüdischer Kulturbund in Deutschland, 1939], 7 lines 5–6).

<sup>62</sup> See the literature cited by Robert Martin-Achard (“A propos de la bénédiction de Juda en Genèse 49,8-12[10],” in *De la Tôrah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut Catholique de Paris, Octobre 1979* [ed. Maurice Carrez et al.; Paris: Desclée, 1981], 126), Gordon J. Wenham (*Genesis 16–50* [WBC 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994], 478), and Hoop (*Genesis 49*, 130 n. 291). To the aforementioned literature we may add O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 172–73; Chaim Cohen, “Elements of *Peshat* in Traditional Jewish Exegesis,” *Emanuel* 21 (1987): 33; idem, “פרשנות ימי הביניים על, ספר בראשית לאור הפילולוגיה המקראית בת זמננו — חלק שלישי: בראשית לז-מט,” in *Zaphenath Paneah: Linguistic Studies Presented to Elisha Qimron on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (ed. Daniel Sivan et al.; Beersheba: Ben-Gurion University, 2009), 271–73; and Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 377.

<sup>63</sup> See already Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac*

The midrashic interpretation is certainly attractive. It has often been noted that it enhances the parallelism within the second half of the verse. Moreover, it makes *לֹא-יִסּוּר שֶׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה* *לֹא-יִסּוּר שֶׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה* <sup>64</sup> a perfect antithetical parallel to *לֹא-יִסּוּר שֶׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה*, “the scepter shall not depart from Judah,” in the sense of “rather tribute shall come to him.” Asseverative/adversative *כִּי* is used to contradict a preceding clause introduced by negative *לֹא*, as in *לֹא אָמוּת כִּי-אֶחְיֶה*, “I shall not die; rather I shall live” (Ps 118:17), and *וְלֹא-תִסָּבַב נַחֲלָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמַּטָּה אֶל-מַטָּה כִּי אִישׁ בְּנַחֲלַת מַטָּה אֲבָתָיו יִדְבְּקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*, “so that no inheritance of the Israelites shall be passed around from one tribe to another; rather the Israelites shall remain bound to the inheritance of their ancestral tribes” (Num 36:7).<sup>65</sup> Similarly, *יָבֹא . . . לֵה*, “shall come to him,” is the antithesis of *יִסּוּר . . . מִיְהוּדָה*, “shall depart from Judah,” both with verbs of motion in the *qal* stem (see below). As for *שִׁי* (which we leave unpointed for the moment) and *שֶׁבֶט*, both are metonyms for dominion.

The first critical scholar to recognize the value of the midrashic interpretation of *שִׁי* was Ehrlich.<sup>66</sup> He emended *שִׁי* to *לֵה* because he assumed a contradiction between Midrash and Masorah. Ehrlich was followed by W. L. Moran, who made the same assumption.<sup>67</sup> These scholars were hardly alone in making this assumption. Moshe Greenberg, in his review of the NJPS translation, cites the rendering “so that tribute shall come to him” with the accompanying note (“Shiloh, understood as *shai loh* ‘tribute to him’ following Midrash . . . ; Heb. uncertain . . .”) as an example of “an emendation . . . adopted in the body of the translation.”<sup>68</sup> J. A. Emerton writes: “Moran’s reading of the line is possible, but it lacks support in any ancient version<sup>69</sup> and departs from the pointing of the Massoretic Text. It is still necessary to ask whether the traditional vocalization can yield a satisfactory sense. . . .”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, it appears that all exegetes, medieval and

---

*Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 283 n. 5: “The consensus today is tending towards reading *šay loh* . . .”; and Martin-Achard, “La bénédiction,” 126: “l’hypothèse de W. L. Moran . . . tend à être popularisée.”

<sup>64</sup> Not *עַד כִּי-יָבֹא שִׁי*! In a future article, I shall attempt to prove that *עַד* was originally part of the previous hemistich (with the meaning *לְעַד*, “to eternity”), as various Jewish exegetes suggest.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *לֹא כִי* in Gen 18:15 (“no, you *did* laugh”); 42:12; Josh 5:14; 24:21; Judg 15:13; 1 Sam 2:16; 2 Sam 24:24; 1 Kgs 3:22-23; Isa 30:16; Jer 42:14.

<sup>66</sup> Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 1:246. Mark S. Smith (*The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* [2 vols.; VTSup 55, 114; Leiden: Brill, 1994–], 291 n. 128) attributes the recognition to W. M. L. de Wette, but I have been unable to confirm this point. In de Wette, *Die heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments* (3rd ed.; Heidelberg: Mohr, 1839), 55, the rendering of *עַד כִּי-יָבֹא שִׁי* is “bis Ruhe kommt.”

<sup>67</sup> Moran, “Gen 49,10 and Its Use in Ez 21,32,” *Bib* 39 (1958): 412.

<sup>68</sup> Greenberg, “The New Torah Translation,” *Judaism* 12 (1963): 234 = *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought* (JPS Scholar of Distinction Series; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 255.

<sup>69</sup> On this claim, see the appendix below.

<sup>70</sup> Emerton, “Difficult Words,” 84.

modern, have assumed that the midrashic interpretation is incompatible with the Masoretic pointing. I suggest that that assumption is incorrect.

As noted above, I have argued elsewhere that *\*ayy-* contracted in Old Canaanite to *i*; put differently, *ay > i / \_y*.<sup>71</sup> This sound change is preserved by the Tiberian reading tradition in three poetic forms: *ע*, “ruin-heap” < *\*cayy-* < *\*cawy-* (cf. the toponyms *ע* = *Γαι*; *ע* = *Ἀγγα* = Samaritan *āḡī*; *ע*; *ע*); *ב*, “burning” (Isa 3:24) < *\*kayy-* < *\*kawy-* (cf. *בויה* and Arabic *kayy-*, “burning”); and *ר*, “saturation” (Job 37:11) < *\*rayy-* < *\*rawy-* (cf. *רויה* and Arabic *rayy-/riyy-*, “saturation”). All of these are attested exclusively in poetry; in prose, we find *ד*, “sufficiency, enough” < *\*dayy-* < *\*dawy-* (cf. Arabic *dāwī*, “much, abundant [food]”<sup>72</sup>) and *ח*, “alive” < *\*hayy-* < *\*hawy-* (cf. Arabic *hayy-*, “alive”).

All of these are from roots of the form *X-y-y* < *\*X-w-y*. Is the noun *ש*, “gift, offering,” a member of this class as well? Already at the beginning of the thirteenth century, R. David Qimḥi asserted that “the root of the word is *שיה* or *שוה*.”<sup>73</sup> There is, in fact, good evidence that (1) *ש* is derived from *\*šayy-* and (2) *\*šayy-* is derived from *\*šawy-*.<sup>74</sup>

Evidence for (1) comes from an obscure Semitic text in Greek script. The previously undeciphered passage is read by Manfred Krebernik as follows: *αμμουσδ αμασαι / σεΓιΓια ιααβνα λα(ι) / ζαβδαια σαυιει / να αμμοδ ζαβ / δαια*.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See n. 48 above.

<sup>72</sup> Lane, *Lexicon*, 941, s.v. *dāwī*.

<sup>73</sup> R. David Qimḥi, *ספר השרשים* (Berlin: G. Bethge, 1847), 383.

<sup>74</sup> The usual derivation, which goes back to H. L. Ginsberg (*נוספות לעלילת אלפין בעל*) *Tarbiz* 4 [1933]: 384 n. 16) is quite problematic. According to Ginsberg, *ש* cannot be separated from (1) the Hebrew verb *שָׁפַע*, “accept (an offering)” (Gen 4:5), (2) the Ugaritic verb *tʿy*, “offer,” and (3) the Ugaritic noun *tʿ*, “offering.” Ginsberg’s defense of this derivation leaves much to be desired: “The letter *ʿayin* is sometimes elided in *speech* in Hebrew; see Ges.-Buhl, 17. Aufl., s.v. *ʿ*; in our case it could have been deleted in *writing* through haplography, since *ʿayin* and *šin* are similar.” The obvious weaknesses in this Hebrew note have not been pointed out because later scholars have relied on the inaccurate English summary provided by William Foxwell Albright (“The Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from Sinai and their Decipherment,” *BASOR* 110 [1948]: 15 n. 41): “Ginsberg is probably right in deriving Hebrew *šay*, ‘gift,’ from *\*taʿy* by partial assimilation.” It is this new version of Ginsberg’s etymology (including its misuse of the term “*partial* assimilation”) that Frank Moore Cross (“The Evolution of the Proto-Canaanite Alphabet,” *BASOR* 134 [1954]: 21 n. 19) accepts: “The derivation *taʿyu* > (by partial assimilation) *tayy* > *šay(y)*, has been established by Ginsberg and Albright.” And it is this version that Gary A. Anderson (*Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance* [HSM 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 34 n. 18) finds problematic: “[Ginsberg] related this Semitic root [*tʿy*] to Hebrew *šay* by a process of partial assimilation. . . . The problem with this view is that the assimilation of *ʿayin* is unparalleled.” We may add that the final nail in the coffin of Ginsberg’s theory is the Aramaic form *σευαια* = *שׁוּי* discussed immediately below; it must be derived from *\*šayy* rather than *\*tayy*.

<sup>75</sup> Krebernik, “Ein aramäischer Text in griechischer Schrift?” in “*Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es!*” 60 *Beiträge zur Semitistik: Festschrift für Otto Jastrow*

I suggest that this is a transcription of Aramaic: לזבדיא // עמוד עמסי שיא יהבנא, “we donated the pillar<sup>76</sup> of the gift bearers;<sup>77</sup> for the offerings, we bestowed the pillar of offerings.” The form  $\sigma\epsilon\iota\iota\alpha\alpha$  shows that Aramaic שי, known also from the Old Aramaic dialect of Samal (KAI 214, 18),<sup>78</sup> had a geminated *yod* in suffixed forms. Indeed, the gemination has long been assumed based on the Masoretic vocalization of the noun with *pataḥ* instead of *qames*.<sup>79</sup>

Evidence for (2) comes from the form  $\sigma\alpha\upsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha$  = שוינא, “we have bestowed,” in the passage cited above and from Ps 21:6 עָלִיו תְּשׁוּהַ וְהִדְרַתְּ הַשְׁׁוֹהַ עָלָיו, “you bestowed splendor and majesty upon him.” The root of these verbs is, of course, ש-ו-י.<sup>80</sup> Note that the recipient of the gift in the verse is the Davidic king; the three biblical attestations of שִׁי (Isa 18:7; Pss 68:30; 76:12) refer to an offering to the Lord.<sup>81</sup> In Aramaic the root can be used of imposing tribute: ושׁוּי עֲלֵיהוֹן מְדָא, “and they imposed tribute upon them” (*Genesis Apocryphon* [1QapGen] 21:26). Thus, it is not clear whether the original meaning of שִׁי (a verbal noun that acquired a concrete sense) was “bestowal” (with the *giver* as the underlying subject) or “imposition” (with the *recipient* as the underlying subject).

In light of the above, it is very likely that the form שי, “tribute,” existed in Old Canaanite. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that שי, a poetic synonym of מְנַחָה, is vocalized like the prose forms הַי and הַי instead of the poetic forms הַי, הַי, and הַי. Perhaps Old Canaanite שי was displaced at some point (in the poetic dialect or the reading tradition) by Aramaic שי. In any event, the variation in Biblical Hebrew between שי and שי is paralleled by the variation in Biblical Hebrew between עַי and עַי.

The writing of שיליה as a single word in the MT is not a serious problem.<sup>82</sup> Short proclitic words are occasionally written together with the following word in the Bible<sup>83</sup> and in inscriptions as well. In Qoh 4:10, we have וְאֵילֹו, “and woe unto

zum 60. *Geburtstag* (ed. Werner Arnold and Hartmut Bobzin; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 427. The slashes indicate line breaks.

<sup>76</sup> See LaMoine F. DeVries, “Cult Stands: A Bewildering Variety of Shapes and Sizes,” *BAR* 13, no. 4 (July/August 1987): 29: “Sometimes the pedestal has a pillar-like appearance with decorated registers at various levels on the pedestal; the bowl on top may be decorated with petals to resemble the capital of a pillar.”

<sup>77</sup> The phrase עמסי שיא is reminiscent of Biblical Hebrew מְנַחָה.

<sup>78</sup> For this and other epigraphic attestations, see *DNWSI*, 1125, s.v.  $\text{šy}_1$ .

<sup>79</sup> See Anderson, *Sacrifices*, 34 n. 18.

<sup>80</sup> It may well be related to the root meaning “be equal.” If so, it is worth noting that, from the cognate root in Arabic, *s-w-y*, “be equal,” we find two forms of the verbal noun: *siyyun* < \**siwyun* and a dialectal variant *sayyun*.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Naveh (“More Hebrew Inscriptions from Meşad Ḥashavyahu,” *IEJ* 12 [1962]: 30–31) assumes that the same is true of שי in an ostrakon from Meşad Ḥashavyahu belonging to the time of Josiah.

<sup>82</sup> I am indebted to S. Z. Leiman for raising this issue.

<sup>83</sup> For a (nonexhaustive) list of fifteen examples, see ספר אכלה ואכלה (ed. S. Frensdorff; Hannover: Hahn, 1864), 96–97.

him,” written as a single word in the Leningrad Codex and other accurate Tiberian manuscripts,<sup>84</sup> as well as in Babylonian Genizah fragments.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, it is possible that the writing of שִׁילָה as a single word hints at a secondary meaning.<sup>86</sup>

For Ehrlich, the emendation of שִׁילָה to שִׁי לָהּ was not sufficient. In his view, a second emendation was necessary: יָבֵא, “shall come,” to יוּבָל, “shall be brought.”<sup>87</sup> Most later scholars felt that a more modest emendation was sufficient: יָבֵא to יָבֵא.<sup>88</sup> Both emendations are contradicted by all of the ancient witnesses to the text:

Samaritan: עַד כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילָה/שִׁילָה (‘*ād kī yābū šilā*)<sup>89</sup>

LXX: ἔως ἃν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκαίμενα αὐτῶ

<sup>84</sup> Jordan Penkower was kind enough to check eight Eastern (commonly called “Oriental”) manuscripts in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the National Library of Israel. His findings are as follows: the reading וְאִילּוֹ (one word) is found in seven of the eight manuscripts: Cairo, Karaite synagogue, #13 in Gottheil’s list, *JQR* 17 (1905); Letchworth, Sassoon 1053 (formerly); Oxford, Bodleiana Hunt. 591; St. Petersburg, Russian National Library (Firkowitch collection), Evr. I B 19a; Evr. II B 34; Evr. II B 94; St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies D 67. One manuscript, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. 1213, not to be listed among the group of “accurate Eastern manuscripts,” reads וְאִי לוֹ (two words). He adds that the Aleppo Codex is no longer extant for Qohelet (with no other evidence of its readings therein) and that MS SP, RNL Evr. II B 92 is not extant here.

<sup>85</sup> For וְאִילּוֹ (and וְאִילּוֹ in Qoh 10:16!) in the Babylonian tradition, see Yeivin, *מסורת*, 1114–15. H. L. Ginsberg *קְהֵלֶת* [Tel Aviv: M. Newman, 1961], 82) compares אִילּוֹ, “woe unto him” (twice), in *t. Ber.* 3:20 (Ms. Vienna) and in some versions of the Mishnah. We find אִילּוֹ in *m. Yebam.* 13:7 according to two of the most important vocalized manuscripts of the Mishnah (Codex Kaufmann and Codex Parma De Rossi 138).

<sup>86</sup> It has been suggested that לָהּ is deliberately spelled with final *he* and placed at the end of the clause (instead of after יָבֵא) “in order to create a literary allusion to the holy place Shiloh” (Cohen, *פרשנות*, 273 n. 52). Another candidate for a secondary meaning of שִׁילָה in our verse is שְׂאִילָה, “his requested one,” an interpretation proposed by Paul Lagarde with a reference to Mal 3:1 (*Onomastica Sacra* [2 vols.; Göttingen: Adalbert Rente, 1870], 2:96). These two possibilities may not be as different as they seem. Ran Zadok (“On Five Biblical Names,” *ZAW* 89 [1977]: 267) has argued convincingly that the toponym שִׁילָה derives from ש-א-ל (cf. the toponym אֶשְׁתָּאוּל) and that the Jewish Aramaic personal name שִׁילָה (cf. Late Babylonian *Ši-la-*<sup>2</sup>) is equivalent to the Palmyrene name שאִילָה, “requested one” (cf. Neo-Assyrian *Sa-i-la-a* and NT Σιλᾶς). Indeed, there are several plays on the name שִׁילָה in the story of Samuel’s birth: שְׂאִילָה אֶשְׁרָה שְׂאִילָה מֵעַמּוֹ (1 Sam 1:17); כִּי מָה שְׂאִילָתִי (1 Sam 1:20). Thus, it is not impossible that the orthography alludes both to Shiloh and to the requested one, that is, the king requested by Judah (cf. 1 Sam 12:17, לְשִׂאוֹל לְכֶם מֶלֶךְ; 12:19, לְשִׂאוֹל לְגֹ מֶלֶךְ).

<sup>87</sup> Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 1:246.

<sup>88</sup> N. H. Torczyner [Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai], *עַד כִּי יָבֵא שִׁילָה*, *Tarbiz* 13 (1941–42): 214 = הלשון הַלְשׁוֹן בְּרַךְ הַלְשׁוֹן וְהַסְפָּר, (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1954), 483; Moran, “Gen 49,10,” 412; Testa, “La formazione,” 193 n. 85; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis* (2 vols.; NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 1995), 2:661; Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 130; Cohen, “Elements,” 33; idem, *פרשנות*, 271–72.

<sup>89</sup> For the spelling of the verb with *waw* (all manuscripts), see *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner* (ed. August Freiherrn von Gall; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1918), 107; and *The Samaritan Pentateuch Edited According to MS 6 (C) of the Shekhem Synagogue* (ed. Abraham Tal; Tel Aviv:

Onqelos: עד דייתי משיחא, דדיליה היא מלכותא  
 Aphrahat and Ephrem Syrus: <sup>90</sup> בנסא נסאואא סך גוגלמ סג סלכואא  
 Peshitta: בנסא נסאואא סך גוגלמ סג  
 Targum Neofiti, Fragmentary Targum: עד זמן דייתי מלכא משיחא, דדידיה היא  
 מלכותא  
 Samaritan targumim: עד הלא ייתי שלה/נמרה<sup>91</sup>  
 4Q252 (4QCommGen A) V, 3–4: עד בוא משיח הצדק צמח דויד<sup>92</sup>  
 T. Judah 22:2: ἔως τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὸ σωτήριον Ἰσραήλ<sup>93</sup>

The earliest witnesses to א-ו-א in the active voice are עַד-בֹּא אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַמְשָׁפֵט, “until the coming of him to whom punishing belongs,”<sup>94</sup> in Ezek 21:32 and הִנֵּה מַלְכְּךָ יָבֹוא לְךָ, “your king shall come to you,” in Zech 9:9, phrases believed to allude to our verse.<sup>95</sup>

Tel Aviv University, 1994), 51. For the oral reading tradition, see Z. Ben-Hayyim, עברית וארמית (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1957–67), 3.1:34.

<sup>90</sup> Arthur Vööbus, *Peschitta und Targumim des Pentateuchs* (Stockholm: Etse, 1958), 25–27; T. Jansma, “Ephraem on Genesis XLIX, 10,” *ParOr* 4 (1973): 247–56; Robert J. Owens, *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (Monographs of the Peshitta Institute 3; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 172–75. For the relationship of these fourth-century citations to the official Syriac biblical text, see Sebastian Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” *JJS* 30 (1979): 218, and the literature cited there.

<sup>91</sup> Tal, התרגום השומרוני לתורה, 1:210–13.

<sup>92</sup> Brooke, “Thematic Content,” 35.

<sup>93</sup> M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (PVTG 1.2; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 75.

<sup>94</sup> This is a slightly revised version of the translation given by Moshe Greenberg (*Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997], 417, 434), who follows Eliezer of Beaugency.

<sup>95</sup> For Zech 9:9, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry,” *JBL* 80 (1961): 57; and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 501–2. For Ezek 21:32, see the literature cited by Hermann Gunkel (*Genesis* [1901; trans. Mark E. Biddle; Mercer Library of Biblical Studies; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997], 456), Moran (“Gen 49,10,” 416 n. 3), and L. Monsengwo-Pasinya (“Deux textes messianiques de la Septante: Gn 49,10 et Ez 21,32,” *Bib* 61 [1980]: 360 n. 16). And add E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christologie des Alten Testaments und Commentar über die Messianischen Weissagungen der Propheten* (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1829), 67; Charles Augustus Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfilment of Redemption through the Messiah* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 96; Skinner, *Genesis*, 523; Driver, *Genesis*, 411; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 502–3; and Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (NAC 1B; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 895. It is even possible that לֹא עֹת־בֹּא in Hag 1:2 alludes to Gen 49:10 and/or Ezek 21:32 and should be allowed to have its literal meaning: “it is not the time of (the) coming” (instead of “the time has not come”); cf. לֹא־עֵת הַאָסֶף הַמְקַנֵּה, “it is not the time of the gathering [or: coming in] of the livestock” in Gen 29:7. In that case, the appositive phrase הַלְהַבְנוֹת הַבַּיִת הַלְהַבְנוֹת, “the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt,” would imply that some of Haggai’s contemporaries argued that the temple could not be rebuilt until the coming of the messianic king. Such an

Despite all of this early and unanimous support for the Masoretic vocalization, most scholars have emended active יָבֵא to passive יָבֵא without even bothering to explain the need for emendation. The closest thing to an explanation I have found is given by André Caquot: “One will wonder whether *šay* ‘tribute’ is appropriate as the subject of the verb ‘come.’”<sup>96</sup>

In fact, the Masoretic vocalization here yields perfectly idiomatic Hebrew. An excellent parallel to the *textus receptus* is יָבֹאוּ הַלְבָנוֹן אֵלֶיךָ יְבוֹאוּ, “the riches of Lebanon shall come to you” (Isa 60:13); cf. also בָּא אֵלַי בָּא, “your money came to me” (Gen 43:23); לֹא־בָא כַבֶּשֶׂם עוֹד לְרֹב אֲשֶׁר־נִתְּנָה מִלְכַת־שֶׁבַע לְמֶלֶךְ, “never again did spices come in such great quantity as that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon” (1 Kgs 10:10); לְבַלְתִּי־בֹאוּ הַכֶּלִים הַנּוֹתָרִים בְּבֵית־ה', “not to let the vessels remaining in the House of the Lord, in the royal palace of Judah, and in Jerusalem come to Babylon” (Jer 27:18); וּבָאוּ חֲמֻדַת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם, “and the precious things of all the nations shall come” (Hag 2:7).<sup>97</sup> These parallels show unequivocally that the *qal* verb א-ב-ו can take as its subject inanimate nouns referring to precious objects. We may also compare the interchange between חֵיל גּוֹיִם יָבֹאוּ לְךָ, “the riches of nations shall come to you” (Isa 60:5), and לְהָבִיא אֵלֶיךָ חֵיל גּוֹיִם, “to bring the riches of nations to you” (Isa 60:11), and the interchange between הַקֶּסֶף הַשֹּׁב בְּאִמְתָּחַתֵּינוּ, “the money that returned in our sacks” (Gen 43:18), and הַקֶּסֶף הַמוֹשָׁב בְּפִי אִמְתָּחַתֵּיכֶם, “the money that was returned in the mouth your sacks” (Gen 43:12).

The use of יָבֵא here with an inanimate subject is no doubt connected with the use of יָסוּר with an inanimate subject at the beginning of the verse. Both are *qal* verbs of motion that could have been replaced with their *huphal* counterparts. As noted above, לֹא־יָסוּר שֶׁבַע שֵׁי לֵה stands in antithetical parallelism to לֹא־יָבֵא שֵׁי לֵה. Thus, there is a good literary explanation for the Masoretic vocalization of יָבֵא.

#### IV. ARCHAIC VOCALIZATIONS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE MASORETIC READING TRADITION(S)

The preservation of archaic, nonstandard vocalizations is an impressive achievement of the Masoretes. The three segolate construct adjectives discussed in

---

interpretation would eliminate the stylistic problems in Hag 1:2 discussed in Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25B; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 19–20.

<sup>96</sup> Caquot, “La parole sur Juda dans le testament lyrique de Jacob (Genèse 49, 8-12),” *Sem* 26 (1976): 24.

<sup>97</sup> The last parallel is noted by Moran himself (“Gen 49,10,” 412) as evidence that the emendation “is not absolutely necessary.”

section I are *hapax legomena*.<sup>98</sup> They appear to be the product of a Proto-Semitic syncope rule,<sup>99</sup> a rule that, thanks to the Masoretes, Hebrew managed to preserve better than any other Semitic language.<sup>100</sup> Most of the examples of the Old Canaanite monophthongization \**ay* > *i* discussed in sections II and III are also *hapax legomena*.

Even more remarkable is the fact that all of these anomalous forms are found only in poetry,<sup>101</sup> and several of them (עֵינֹת, עֵינֹת; עֵרֶל, עֵרֶל; כְּבֵד, כְּבֵד) contrast with forms found only in prose (עֵינֹת, עֵרֶל; עֵינֹת, עֵרֶל). In other words, the Tiberian Masoretes<sup>102</sup> also succeeded in preserving a grammatical distinction between poetry and prose expressed solely in the vocalization. From them we learn that the language of poetry in ancient Israel had distinctive characteristics not only in the area of morphology, syntax, and lexicon, but also in phonology and morphophonemics.

One of the features in question, the monophthongization \**ay* > *i*, is not native to Hebrew; it is borrowed from a neighboring dialect. Such borrowing is known from the Modern South Arabian languages as well. According to T. M. Johnstone: "The language in which Šheri speakers compose poetry is indeed very specialized and is not well known to Dhofaris whose first language is Arabic. . . . This poetic medium is, in fact, a mixed language; most features of the phonology and morphology are Šheri, while a few important phonological features and many of the lexical items are Mehri."<sup>103</sup>

The Masoretes preserved these grammatically anomalous poetic forms without any help from postbiblical Hebrew and without any knowledge of their origin; they had to accept them on blind faith, resisting the temptation to substitute

<sup>98</sup> The form אֶרֶךְ הָאֵבֶר—the segolate construct form of אֶרֶךְ occurring in the phrases אֶרֶךְ הָאֵבֶר (Ezek 17:3), אֶרֶךְ רוּחַ (Eccl 7:8), and אֶרֶךְ אַפְּיִם (passim)—is of course far more common, but that is mainly because of the theological importance of the phrase אֶרֶךְ אַפְּיִם.

<sup>99</sup> See Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1922), 176–77 §12c, 552 §70p–q; cf. 554–55 §70z; and Richard C. Steiner, "From Proto-Hebrew to Mishnaic Hebrew: The History of אֶרֶךְ and אֶרֶךְ," *HAR* 3 (1979): 166 n. 20.

<sup>100</sup> The alternation of construct מְמַלְכֶת < \**mamlaktu* with absolute מְמַלְכָה < \**mamlákatum* is a product of the same rule, which thus must go back to the birth of the \*-*t* allomorph of the feminine ending; see Carl Brockelmann, "Die Femininendung T im Semitischen," *Schlesische Gesellschaft für vaterländische Kultur. IV. Abteilung. Orientalisch-sprachwissenschaftliche Sektion* 81 (1903): 13–23. Hebrew—more precisely, Masoretic Hebrew—is the only Semitic language in which there is a class of nouns that have \*-*t* solely in the construct state and/or with pronominal suffixes. Other Semitic languages exhibit only vestiges of what must be considered the original conditioning; see Richard C. Steiner, "Vestiges of a Proto-Semitic Syncope Rule in the Semitic Languages" (forthcoming).

<sup>101</sup> The form אֶרֶךְ, too, is attested mainly in poetry.

<sup>102</sup> The fragments that survive show that the Babylonian Masoretes preserved some of these forms but not others. For the two construct forms of כְּבֵד (and חֶסֶד) in the Babylonian reading tradition, see Yeivin, *מסורת*, 443. On the other hand, they have עֵינֹת in Prov 8:28 (ibid., 869).

<sup>103</sup> Johnstone, "The Language of Poetry in Dhofar," *BSOAS* 35 (1972): 1.

the normal prose vocalizations (עִינוֹת, שִׁיתוּ, עִירוּ, יְצוּעֵי; עָרַל, כָּבֵד, יִתָּר). Their success in preserving relic forms that even modern scholars have misunderstood confirms in full the judgment of Ian Young:

Firstly, the validity of the Masoretic vocalization as historical evidence of a period well before the Masoretic period has been demonstrated in recent scholarship. Secondly, it is the tendency of both reading traditions, and of language in general, to level anomalous forms. Therefore the retention of such forms can be taken with caution as survivals of earlier or divergent linguistic systems.<sup>104</sup>

The linguistic distinction between poetry and prose is only one of the many linguistic distinctions that the Masoretes managed to preserve in their oral reading tradition(s). The ones that are best preserved are so well known that we often lose sight of them in evaluating the Masoretic enterprise. One such distinction is that between Hebrew and Aramaic. The Masoretes of the early Islamic period (not to mention the pre-Islamic period) wrote and spoke Aramaic, and yet they managed to keep their Hebrew reading tradition(s) relatively free of Aramaic influence. This achievement, too often taken for granted, can be seen by comparing their pointing of Hebrew words with their pointing of Aramaic homographs with the same meaning, for example, שָׁמַח (passim) vs. שְׁמַחַ (Dan 3:10), לְמֹות (2 Sam 15:21) vs. לְמֹות (Ezra 7:26), יִטַּב (passim) vs. יִיטַב (Ezra 7:18), שָׂא (passim) vs. שְׂא (Ezra 5:15), יְבַקֵּר (Lev 13:36) vs. יְבַקֵּר (Ezra 4:15), עָנוּ (passim) vs. עָנוּ (passim), יָדַע (passim) vs. יָדַע (Dan 5:21), יָדַע (passim) vs. יָדַע (Dan 2:22), שָׂאֵל (passim) vs. שְׂאֵל (Dan 2:10), הֵקִים (passim) vs. הֵקִים (passim), עָרוֹת (passim) vs. עָרוֹת (Ezra 4:14), לְבַבָּךְ (passim) vs. לְבַבָּךְ (Dan 2:30). Synonymous homographic pairs of this type can be found within a single book, for example, עֲבַדְיָךְ (Ezra 9:11) vs. עֲבַדְיָךְ (Ezra 4:11), הִתְנַדְּבוּ (Ezra 2:28) vs. הִתְנַדְּבוּ (Ezra 7:15), מִתְנַדְּבִים (Ezra 3:5) vs. מִתְנַדְּבִים (Ezra 7:13), עֵינֵי (Dan 8:3) vs. עֵינֵי (Dan 4:31). They can even be found within a single passage, for example, יֵאבְדוּ (Jer 10:15) vs. יֵאבְדוּ (Jer 10:11), סִפְרָא (Ezra 7:11) vs. סִפְרָא (Ezra 7:12). Two of the distinctions, הֵ- vs. הֵ- and הֵ- vs. הֵ-, are particularly noteworthy since other Hebrew reading traditions (Origen, Samaritans) did not succeed in preserving them.<sup>105</sup>

At the other extreme, we find the Masoretes preserving the most minute and isolated distinctions. For example, we learn from several sources that the פ in the word אֶפְדָּנוּ (Dan 11:45) had a unique pronunciation, a pronunciation reflecting its origin as an Iranian loanword with an unaspirated *p*.<sup>106</sup> That the preservation

<sup>104</sup> Young, "The Diphthong \*ay in Edomite," *JSS* 37 (1992): 29. See also Shelomo Morag, "On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible," *JAOS* 94 (1974): 307–15, cited by Young.

<sup>105</sup> Zeev Ben Hayyim, *Studies in the Traditions of the Hebrew Language* (Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1954), 22–39. See also Steiner, "From Proto-Hebrew," 157–64, and the literature cited there.

<sup>106</sup> Richard C. Steiner, "הפ"א הנחצית במלה אֶפְדָּנוּ (דניאל יא, מה), in *Hebrew and Arabic*

of such a phonological *hapax* was not a trivial accomplishment is shown by the transliteration  $\epsilon\phi\alpha\delta\alpha\nu\omega$  in Theodotion's translation of the verse, with aspirated  $\phi$  instead of the unaspirated  $\pi$  = Latin *p* reported by Jerome. The Masoretes managed to preserve it despite the fact that the word was not in use in Western Aramaic.

Another minute detail is preserved in Hos 2:7, where the Tiberian reading tradition has  $\text{פִּשְׁתִּי}$  instead of  $\text{פִּשְׁתִּי}$ , expected on both linguistic and literary grounds. Unlike virtually all modern authorities, the Tiberian Masoretes refrained from emending their tradition, even though they are not likely to have known that Hosea used a northern form here, a form well attested in Phoenician and Ugaritic.<sup>107</sup>

The archaic vocalizations discussed above would seem to imply that the Masoretes had an unbroken tradition stretching back to the biblical period. This conclusion is consistent with the conclusion of E. Y. Kutscher's study of the short high vowels *\*i* and *\*u*.<sup>108</sup> Kutscher noted that the lowering of short *\*i* to [ɛ] in closed unstressed syllables that we find in the Hebrew of the LXX (e.g.,  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega\rho$  =  $\text{צִפּוֹר}$ ,  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega\rho\alpha$  =  $\text{צִפְרָה}$ ) and Josephus (e.g.,  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$  =  $\text{צִפּוֹרִין}$ ;  $\epsilon\sigma\sigma\alpha$  =  $\text{אֶשָׁה}$ )<sup>109</sup> is found also in Galilean Aramaic (e.g.,  $\text{לְבָא}$ , “the heart”;  $\text{לְשׁוֹן}$ , “tongue”) and, we may add, in Syriac (e.g.,  $\text{ܠܒܐ}$ ,  $\text{ܠܫܘܢ}$ ,  $\text{ܘܥܝܪܐ}$ , “bird”). Coins minted at Sepphoris have the abbreviated forms  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega$  and  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega\rho$  under Vespasian (69–79 C.E.) and the form  $\Sigma\epsilon\pi\phi\omega\rho\eta\gamma\omega\nu$ , “of the Sepphorites,” under Trajan (98–117 C.E.).<sup>110</sup>

Now it is quite normal for the pronunciation of classical texts in Latin and Hebrew to be affected by developments in the spoken language.<sup>111</sup> And yet, in both the Tiberian and Babylonian reading traditions, we find unstressed closed-syllabic *\*i* unlowered in Biblical Hebrew (e.g.,  $\text{צִפּוֹר}$ ,  $\text{צִפְרָה}$ ) and Biblical Aramaic

---

*Studies in Honour of Joshua Blau Presented by Friends and Students on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1993), 551–61.

<sup>107</sup> Steiner, “Monophthongization,” 81–83.

<sup>108</sup> Kutscher, *ביצוע תנועות U I בתעתיקי העברית המקראית בארמית הגלילית ובלשון חז"ל*, in *קובץ מאמרים בלשון חז"ל* (ed. Moshe Bar-Asher; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1972), 129–65.

<sup>109</sup> The toponym, not cited by Kutscher, is found dozens of times in Josephus's works; for  $\epsilon\sigma\sigma\alpha$ , see *Ant.* 1.1.2 §36 (*Les Antiquités juives* [ed. Étienne Nodet; Paris: Cerf, 1990–], 1:7). I have deliberately chosen examples in which the lowering occurs in a syllable closed by a geminated consonant; see n. 112 below.

<sup>110</sup> Yoel Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes, 2004), 81.

<sup>111</sup> For Latin in France, see G. C. Moore Smith, “The English Language and the ‘Restored’ Pronunciation of Latin,” in *A Grammatical Miscellany Offered to Otto Jespersen on his Seventieth Birthday* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1930), 168: “Every change in the vernacular extended simultaneously to the pronunciation of Latin.” For Latin in England, see Frederick Brittain, *Latin in Church: The History of Its Pronunciation* (2nd ed; London: Mowbray, 1955), 55: “Since the time of Erasmus, it has followed the changes in English phonetics step by step.” For Hebrew examples, see Richard C. Steiner, “Variation, Simplifying Assumptions and the History of Spirantization in Aramaic and Hebrew,” in *Sha'arei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher* (ed. A. Maman et al.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 2007), \*60 n. 30.

(e.g., צַפְרִיָּו), except in the vicinity of gutturals.<sup>112</sup> In other words, the two traditions are more archaic than the LXX in their treatment of \*i! Kutscher deduced from this that already in the third century B.C.E. there was a standard pronunciation of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic that retained the ancient realization of the high vowels alongside a substandard pronunciation (influenced by Western Aramaic)<sup>113</sup> that did not. Now, it is not likely that \*i could have survived unchanged in closed unstressed syllables without some sort of reading tradition or, at least, a formal “reading style.”<sup>114</sup> This would seem to imply that, already at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, there were readers of the Bible who strove to keep their pronunciation free of colloquial influence.

I do not mean to suggest that the reading tradition(s) did not evolve. In our Masoretic reading tradition(s), survivals frequently coexist with recent developments. This can be seen even with the high vowels. The Babylonian Masoretes preserved both \*i and \*u in closed unstressed syllables, but, for some reason, the Tiberians did not do nearly as good a job of preserving \*u as they did with \*i. In most closed unstressed syllables, they allowed \*u to be lowered all the way to [ɔ].<sup>115</sup>

The proto-Masoretes had particular difficulty in preserving sounds lost to sound change in the spoken language(s). In a few cases, we can show that where they failed, it was not for lack of trying. Take, for example, the old voiceless uvular fricative \*ħ, which disappeared from spoken Hebrew and Aramaic in the first century B.C.E. or (at the latest) the beginning of the first century C.E.<sup>116</sup> The

<sup>112</sup> The lowering appears to have begun in closed unstressed syllables containing one of the pharyngeal consonants, which have a lowering effect on neighboring vowels even outside of Semitic; see Richard C. Steiner, “A-coloring Consonants and Furtive *Pataḥ* in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic According to the Tiberian Masorah,” in Sivan, *Zaphenath Paneah*, \*143–55. The Tiberian reading tradition preserves a slightly later stage in which the shift is conditioned by laryngeals (e.g., אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי) as well as pharyngeals (e.g., יְחִידִל, חֶשְׁבֹּן, עֲזָרִי), except in syllables closed by a geminated consonant (e.g., אֶתְמוֹל ~ אֶתְמוֹל, אֶשֶׁם ~ אֶשֶׁם, חִזְיוֹן ~ חִזְיוֹן). The Babylonian tradition exhibits no trace of the shift; see Yeivin, *מסורת*, 287 (אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי, אֶזְרִי), 454 (חֶשְׁבֹּן, עֲזָרִי), 458 (יְחִידִל).

<sup>113</sup> For Aramaic influence on the transcription of proper names in the LXX, see Jan Joosten, “The Septuagint as a Source of Information on Egyptian Aramaic in the Hellenistic Period,” in *Aramaic in Its Historical and Linguistic Setting* (ed. Holger Gzella and Margaretha L. Folmer; Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 50; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 97–99.

<sup>114</sup> By contrast, the substandard pronunciation does not necessarily imply the existence of a reading tradition or style; see Joosten, “Septuagint,” 98–99.

<sup>115</sup> For example, in the first syllable of קָרְבַּן, “sacrifice.” Outside of the phrase קָרְבַּן הָעֵצִים (Neh 10:35; 13:31), we find קָרְבַּן in the Tiberian reading tradition vs. קָרְבַּן in the Babylonian reading tradition, קָרְבַּן in the Palestinian reading tradition, and  $\kappa\alpha\rho\beta\acute{\alpha}\nu$  in Josephus and the NT; see Richard C. Steiner, “Hebrew: Ancient Hebrew,” *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (ed. William Bright; 4 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2:113.

<sup>116</sup> Richard C. Steiner, “On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes (\* $\dot{H}$  >  $\dot{H}$  and \* $\dot{G}$  >  $\dot{c}$ ) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith),” *JBL* 124 (2005): 229–67.

transcriptions of Josephus and Aquila<sup>117</sup> show that \**h* did not disappear from the biblical reading tradition(s) until the second century C.E., although signs of its decline are already apparent in the first century C.E.<sup>118</sup>

Another example is \**rr*, which is well attested in the LXX but underwent degemination in the Masoretic reading traditions,<sup>119</sup> for example, Ἀμορραῖον = אַמְרַי (cf. Akkadian *Amurru*), Ἀρραβ = אֲרָב, Χαρραβ = חָרַב (cf. Akkadian *Harrānu*), Χορραῖος = חֲרַי (cf. Akkadian *Hurru*), Μερρα = מְרָה, Σαρρα = שְׂרָה. Here again, the first century C.E. appears to be a time of transition. The name Σαρρα = שְׂרָה appears almost two dozen times in Josephus's *Antiquities*<sup>120</sup> with virtually no manuscript variation,<sup>121</sup> while inscriptions of the first century C.E. have Σαρα, Σαρας,<sup>122</sup> presumably reflecting the spoken language. In other names, Josephus seems to be inconsistent in his treatment of geminated *r*. In one passage of *Antiquities*, he has Ἀρανης = אֲרָן four times with virtually no manuscript variation (1.6.5–1.7.1 §§151–54),<sup>123</sup> while in another passage he has Ἀρρανης = אֲרָן twice, again with virtually no manuscript variation (1.19.4 §289).<sup>124</sup> He seems to have a similar fluctuation in his renderings of אַמְרַי (13x).<sup>125</sup> Although in most places the manuscripts vary between Ἀμοριτις and Ἀμορριτις or between Ἀμοραιος and Ἀμορραιος, the forms Ἀμοριτις and Ἀμορραιος are each found in one place with almost no manuscript variation relevant to geminated *r* (4.5.1, 3 §§85, 94).<sup>126</sup>

In these cases, the difficulty of preserving sounds no longer extant in the spoken language was exacerbated by historical circumstances. As I have written elsewhere, “The change in the reading traditions may have been accelerated, if not initiated, by the death and destruction that resulted from the rebellion against the Romans (66–74 C.E.). Born in 37 C.E., Josephus must have received his education well before the rebellion, even though he did not complete his *Antiquities* until 93 C.E.”<sup>127</sup>

<sup>117</sup> I refer to those transcriptions that are independent of the transcriptions in the LXX.

<sup>118</sup> Steiner, “On the Dating,” 248–51, 266.

<sup>119</sup> The Tiberian tradition probably does have a geminated *r*, but in most cases it is a later innovation, not the reflex of Proto-Semitic geminated *r*. For geminated *r* in postbiblical Hebrew and Aramaic, see Yeivin, *מסורת*, 284–86, and the literature cited there.

<sup>120</sup> See Abraham Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 108.

<sup>121</sup> The form Σαρα is listed in the apparatus of Nodet, *Antiquités juives*, for only three of the twenty-two occurrences, each time from only a single witness.

<sup>122</sup> Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* (vols. 1, 3; TSAJ 91, 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 2008), 1:255. So too at Beth She'arim (ca. 200–352 C.E.), the name appears in a dozen Greek inscriptions, always as Σαρα; see *בית־שערים* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1944–71), 2:98.

<sup>123</sup> Nodet, *Antiquités juives*, 1:25–26.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:48.

<sup>125</sup> Schalit, *Namenwörterbuch*, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Nodet, *Antiquités juives*, 2:23\*, 25\*.

<sup>127</sup> Steiner, “On the Dating,” 251.

The Masoretes and their predecessors lived in an age of harmonization. Take, for example, the two versions of the Ten Commandments. The Samaritans engaged in *textual* harmonization, replacing זכור את יום השבת (Exod 20:7/8) with שמור את יום השבת (Deut 5:12).<sup>128</sup> The targumists practiced *translational* harmonization, rendering זכור את יום השבת with הוון זהירין ית יומא דשובתא, “be careful of the Sabbath day,” instead of הוון דכירין ית יומא דשובתא, “be mindful of the Sabbath day.”<sup>129</sup> The rabbis engaged in *historical* harmonization, asserting that זכור and שמור were uttered simultaneously.<sup>130</sup>

The Masoretes, by contrast, strove to *prevent* harmonization or, at least, *textual* harmonization. As a means of preserving differences between parallel passages, they compiled treatises with names like חלוף פסוקי התורה דדמין, “variation between similar Pentateuchal verses.”<sup>131</sup> In them they carefully noted the differences between the two versions of the Ten Commandments, including זכור vs. שמור.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the Masoretes noted the discrepancies between their oral reading tradition and their written textual tradition; for them they created a marginal *ketiv-qere* apparatus.<sup>133</sup> In this article, we have dealt with linguistic variation solely within the oral reading tradition(s). The evidence suggests that the Masoretes were obsessive preservationists in that area as well. In the words of one student of their system:

In other words, all levels of analysis would seemingly lead to the observation that the Massorettes could not have sat down to their task by deciding which

<sup>128</sup> Emanuel Tov, “Proto-Samaritan Texts and the Samaritan Pentateuch,” in *The Samaritans* (ed. Alan David Crown; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 402–3.

<sup>129</sup> *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (ed. and trans. Michael L. Klein; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986), xxxi, 267. The reading [דכ]ירין, given in the Targum Studies Module of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, is erroneous. The reading of Paul Kahle (*Masoreten des Westens* [2 vols.; Texte und Untersuchungen zur vormasoretischen Grammatik des Hebräischen 1, 4; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1927, 1930], 2:58) and Klein is זהירין, and Klein’s photograph (vol. 2, plate 91) leaves no doubt that it is correct. A more striking example of translational harmonization is the targum of Isa 6:7, transferred unchanged from Jer 1:9. See also Michael L. Klein, “Associative and Complementary Translation in the Targumim,” *ErIsr* 16 (1982): 134\*–140\*.

<sup>130</sup> See Ezra Zion Melammed, “‘Observe’ and ‘Remember’ Spoken in One Utterance,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition* (ed. Ben-Zion Segal and Gershon Levi; Publications of the Perry Foundation for Biblical Research; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 191–217.

<sup>131</sup> See the lists in Christian D. Ginsburg, *The Massorah* (4 vols.; London, 1880–1905), 3:136–74, and the Prolegomenon by Aron Dotan in the reprint (New York: Ktav, 1975), xxv–xxx.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:138.

<sup>133</sup> For this view of the *ketiv-qere*, see Richard C. Steiner, “*Ketiv-Qere* or Polyphony: The ש-ש Distinction According to the Masoretes, the Rabbis, Jerome, Qirqisānī, and Hai Gaon,” in *Studies in Hebrew and Jewish Languages Presented to Shelomo Morag* (ed. M. Bar-Asher; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1996), \*153 n. 5, \*174–76, and the literature cited there. Add now Yosef Ofer, בתיב וקרי: פשר התופעה, דרכי הסימון שלה ודעות הקדמונים עליה, *Leš* 70 (2008): 55–73 and 71 (2009): 255–79.

reading made the most sense at a given point. If they had worked this way, then a highly regularized patterning would have been likely. It would seem much more probable, then, that the Massoretes simply reduced to a writing system the pronunciation of biblical Hebrew that was traditional for them, i.e., that one generation had learned by rote from the prior generation.<sup>134</sup>

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The phrases discussed in this article—*יְתֵר שְׂאֵת* (Gen 49:3), *יְצוּעֵי עֵלָה* (Gen 49:4), and *יְבֹא שִׁילָה* (Gen 49:10)—make perfect sense as they are, without the emendations that have been suggested. Their obscurity stems, in part, from the fact that they reflect linguistic features peculiar to the poetic dialect of Biblical Hebrew.

Although usually taken as a noun, *יְתֵר* is the archaic poetic construct form of the adjective *יְתֵר*, the latter known from Mishnaic Hebrew. *יְצוּעֵי* is another poetic form, either the Old Canaanite form of *יְצוּעֵי* (like *עִירָה* for *עִירָה* in 49:11) or a singular form with *hireq compaginis* (like *אֶסְרִי* for *אֶסְרִי* and *בְּנִי* for *בֶּן* in 49:11). *עֵלָה* (used only of animals in biblical prose) is a poetic synonym of *מִיִּנְקָה*; it is attested with the meaning “nursemaid” in the poem from Ben Sira preserved in the Psalms Scroll from Qumran (11QPs<sup>a</sup>). *שִׁילָה* is composed of *שִׁי*, “tribute,” another poetic form, plus *לָהּ* “to him.” *שִׁי* is the Old Canaanite form of *שִׁי*, serving in the Bible as a poetic synonym of *מְנַחֵה*. The Masoretic vocalization of *יְבֹא* is supported by all ancient witnesses, including the allusions in Ezek 21:32 and Zech 9:9. The use of this verb with an inanimate subject has many parallels (e.g., Isa 60:13, *כְּבוֹד הַלְּבָנוֹן*, (אֵלֶיךָ יְבוֹא); moreover, it has an excellent literary explanation: *כִּי־יְבֹא שִׁי לָהּ* stands in antithetical parallelism to *לֹא־יִסּוֹר שְׂבֹט מִיְהוּדָה*.

In all likelihood, the Masoretes did not understand these forms any better than modern scholars do, but, unlike the latter, they resisted the temptation to emend them, thanks to their blind faith in their oral reading traditions. Although the Tiberian and Babylonian reading traditions evolved over the centuries in tandem with the spoken languages, the evidence shows that they preserve obscure forms and archaic features from the biblical period.

## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL ECHOES OF THE *שִׁי לָהּ* INTERPRETATION?

It has usually been assumed that the *שִׁי לָהּ* interpretation is found only in midrashic literature, but that is by no means certain. Take, for example, the

<sup>134</sup> Gene M. Schramm, *The Graphemes of Tiberian Hebrew* (University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies 2; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 64–65.

rendering of the LXX (Gen 49:10): ἕως ἂν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ, “until the things stored (put) away for him come.” Many scholars assume that this rendering is based on שילה = שלו = אשר לו.<sup>135</sup> Others hold that it is based on (or at least similar to) the שי לו interpretation.<sup>136</sup> There is no room for certitude here. In the words of John William Wevers: “The Greek is almost as mysterious as שילה.”<sup>137</sup>

Another way of understanding the Septuagint is suggested by Symmachus’s use of τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτοῦ, “his stored (put) away things,” to render שיתו in Isa 10:17.<sup>138</sup> That rendering takes שית- to be the passive participle of ש-י-ת, “put,” presumably on the analogy of the passive participle שים in Hebrew and Aramaic. In Western Aramaic (Galilean Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and Samaritan Aramaic), the feminine passive participle, סִימָה, has the meaning “treasure.”<sup>139</sup> The rendering τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτοῦ = שיתו in Isa 10:17 would seem to imply τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ = שית לה in Gen 49:10. In other words, the Greek translators may have taken שילה as a contraction of שית לה.

What of the targumim? *Onqelos* has: עד דייתי משיחא, דדיליה היא מלכותא, “until the coming of the Messiah, to whom kingship belongs.” *Neofiti* and *Fragmentary Targum* are more or less the same: עד זמן דייתי מלכא משיחא, דדידיה היא מלכותא, “until the time of the coming of the King Messiah, to whom kingship belongs.” So too Aphrahat and Ephrem Syrus (both fourth century): עד זמן דייתי מלכא משיחא, דדידיה היא מלכותא, “until the coming of the one to whom kingship belongs.”<sup>140</sup> Medieval exegetes and modern scholars believe that this rendering takes שילה as equivalent to שלו, and indeed the Hebrew counterpart found in some

<sup>135</sup> Driver, “Genesis XLIX. 10,” 4; Driver, *Genesis*, 411; Walter Schröder, “Gen 49:10: Versuch einer Erklärung,” *ZAW* 29 (1909): 189; Roger Syrén, *The Blessings in the Targums: A Study on the Targumic Interpretations of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33* (Acta Academiae Aboensis, Ser. A., Humaniora 64.1; Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1986), 57 n. 155; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 2:660; Martin Rösel, “Die Interpretation von Genesis 49 in der Septuaginta,” *BN* 79 (1995): 63; Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem Biblical Studies 8; Jerusalem: Simor, 1997), 78; James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 472.

<sup>136</sup> K. Kohler, *Der Segen Jacob’s mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der alten Versionen und des Midrasch kritisch-historisch untersucht und erklärt* (Berlin: J. Benzian, 1867), 52; Leo Prijs, *Jüdische Tradition in der Septuaginta* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), 68; Jerome A. Lund, “The Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta: A Re-evaluation of Criteria in Light of Comparative Study of the Versions in Genesis and Psalms” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988), 185; and Yeshayahu Maori, *תרגום הפשיטתא לתורה והפרשנות היהודית הקדומה* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 133 n. 175.

<sup>137</sup> Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* (SBLSCS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 826.

<sup>138</sup> *Origenis Hexaplorum*, 2:450.

<sup>139</sup> Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), 375; Friedrich Schulthess, *Lexicon Syropalaestinum* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1903), 134-35; Tal, *Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*, 584.

<sup>140</sup> See n. 90 above

versions of *Genesis Rabbah* (< *Tanḥuma*) seems to support them: עד כי יבוא שילה מי שהמלכות שלו, “until the coming of שילה, the one to whom kingship belongs.”<sup>141</sup> This interpretation assumes that the verse is elliptical; we must supply “kingship” (or at least “it”) as the subject of the asyndetic relative clause.

A different interpretation of the targumic rendering is suggested by one manuscript of *Genesis Rabbah* that has a slightly longer version: עד כי יבוא שילה מי שהמלכות שלו. <sup>142</sup> According to this version, the paraphrase עד שיבוא שילה מי שהמלכות שלו is based on the שי לו interpretation—assuming that שי is equivalent to שיי. In other words, it is possible that the targumim take שילה to mean “the one to whom tribute belongs,” with “tribute” as a metonym for מלכות, “kingship.” After all, they certainly take שבט as a metonym—for עביד שולטן, “ruler,” in the case of *Onqelos* and for מלכין (ושלטנין), “kings (and rulers),” in the case of the Palestinian targumim. According to this interpretation, the targumim are interpreting figurative language<sup>143</sup> rather than assuming ellipsis. I hope to provide further evidence for this interpretation of the targumim in a future article on Gen 49:10.

<sup>141</sup> מדרש בראשית רבא (ed. Theodor-Albeck), 1280 line 4.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 1208 line 15.

<sup>143</sup> For the treatment of figurative language in the targumim to Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33, see Syrén, *Blessings*, 21–24. Cf. R. Kasher, “Metaphor and Allegory in the Aramaic Translations of the Bible,” *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 1 (1999): 53–77, and the literature cited there.