

Linguistic and Stylistic Notes to the Hazon Gabriel Inscription¹

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Abstract

This article presents four notes on the recently discovered Hazon Gabriel inscription. Attention is paid to (1) the word קִיטוּט in line 24; (2) the phrase מִי אֲנֹכִי in line 77; (3) the presence of alliteration in the text; and (4) the use of variation, especially in the assorted “thus says YHWH” phrases present throughout the composition.

Keywords

Hazon Gabriel vision; alliteration; variation

Scholars are indebted to Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elitzur for their swift publication of the Hazon Gabriel inscription (henceforth HG),² and to Israel Knohl for his initial and yet thorough treatment of this important text.³ This inscription already has stimulated much discussion, both in the popular press and in scholarly circles, and no doubt it will continue to do

¹ It is a pleasure to thank my colleagues Azzan Yadin (Rutgers University) and Steven Fassberg (Hebrew University) for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I also express my gratitude to the anonymous *DSD* reviewer, whose careful reading of the originally submitted version led me to rethink several key points.

² A. Yardeni and B. Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i ‘al ‘Even min ha-Me’a ha-Rišona lifne Sefirat ha-Noṣerim: Hoda’a Rišona,” *Katedra* 123 (Nisan 5767 [2006–2007]): 155–66.

³ I. Knohl, “‘Iyyunim be-‘Hazon Gavri’el,” *Tarbiz* 76 (5767 [2006–2007]): 303–28.

so for years to come. The present study is a modest contribution to the subject, offering some minor linguistic and stylistic notes.

1. קיטוט (line 24)

HG 24 reads as follows: עוד מעט קיטוט היא ואני מרעיש את.. השמים ואת הארץ “in a short while there will be trembling, and I will cause the heaven and the earth to quake.”⁴ The meaning “trembling” for the verbal noun קיטוט is clear from the context and is confirmed by the appearance of the root קטט in Job 8:14. The biblical verse reads as follows: אֲשֶׁר-יְקוּט בְּסֵלֹוּ וְבֵית עֲבָבִישׁ מְבֹטָחוֹ “whose folly is shaken, and whose trust is a spider’s web.” The verb יְקוּט is not to be derived from the root קוט “loathe, detest,” attested 7x in the Bible (Qal 1x, Niph’al 4x, Hitpolel 2x).⁵ Rather, as the *ô*-vowel in the prefix conjugation indicates, the verbal root is of the ע"ע class; thus יְקוּט is a Qal form of the verb קטט (cp., e.g., 1 Kgs 7:15 יִסֵּב from the root סבב; cf., by contrast, Ps 95:10 אֶקוּט from the aforementioned root קוט “loathe, detest”, with the characteristic *û*-vowel of the ע"ו paradigm).⁶

⁴ For succinct treatment of the word, though without attention to Job 8:14 and the meaning “shake, tremble” (see below), see Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 162.

⁵ As implied already by two standard dictionaries. See BDB, 876 (with two separate entries, one for קוט and one for קוט); and KB, 398 (with a separate entry for יְקוּט [albeit with a proposed emendation], and with no inclusion of Job 8:14 in the entry for קוט on p. 831). *HALOT*, 1083, by contrast, included Job 8:14 in its entry for קוט “feel disgust,” though with redirection to a separate entry for יְקוּט on p. 430 (where several emendations are proposed). For the most recent dictionary, see *DCH*, 4.273, where various possibilities (including several emendations) are suggested.

⁶ Of course, in theory יְקוּט could be a Qal form of the root קוט (regardless of meaning), and indeed such is suggested by *HALOT*, 1083 (see previous footnote). This possibility arises since other ע"ו verbs present similar atypical forms (cf. P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* [Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991], 217), and of course the commonest such verb, namely בוא, is always vocalized with the *ô*-vowel. In addition, there is the general contamination of ע"ו verbs by ע"ע verbs, which indeed occurs with the root קוט in Ezek 6:9 (ibid., 219). For more detailed examination, see L. M. Kuriakos, *Non-Paradigmatic Forms of Weak Verbs in Masoretic Hebrew* (Kerala, India: Assisi Press, 1973), 70–72 (with יְקוּט discussed on p. 182).

The meaning of the root is confirmed by the overall context of Bildad's description of the man who forgets God (see v. 13), with v. 15 expressing the point most clearly: יִשָּׁעַן עַל-בַּיְתוֹ וְלֹא יִעֲמֵד יַחֲזִיק בּוֹ וְלֹא יִקּוּם "he leans upon his house, but it does not stand; he grasps it, but it does not hold." In such a rhetorical setting, the meaning "is shaken" for יָקוּט is most fitting,⁷ especially in light of the new attestation of the root קטט in HG 24. In short, the two passages mutually elucidate each other.

One further observes that the root קטט has passed from the simple stem in Biblical Hebrew (BH) (that is, Job 8:14 יָקוּט in the Qal [as noted above]) to the so-called intensive stem in HG 24 (that is to say, קיטוט "trembling" is a verbal noun of the *qittûl* formation, derived from the Pi'el stem). This passage from Qal to Pi'el represents a general trend noticeable already in Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) and more visible in post-Biblical Hebrew, especially Mishnaic Hebrew (MH).⁸ In addition, note that the verbal substantive *qittûl* is relatively rare in BH, but appears more prominently in MH.⁹ Examples from ע"ע roots include the following:¹⁰

⁷ This finding mitigates against any proposed emendation of this word. For a survey of opinions, see R. Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978), 91. See further below, n. 13.

⁸ The point has been noticed in passing by a number of scholars, including A. Bendavid, *Lešon Miqra' u-Lešon Ḥakhamim* (2 vols.; Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1967–1971), 1.376, 2.482; N. Waldman, *The Recent Study of Hebrew* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1989), 120; A. Saenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 190–91; and M. Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 99–100. The most thorough statement on the subject is S. E. Fassberg, "The Movement from *Qal* to *Pi'el* in Hebrew and the Disappearance of the *Qal* Internal Passive," *HS* 42 (2001): 243–55, with many references to earlier studies.

⁹ E. Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 128; and Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, 57. For some specific examples, see Fassberg, "The Movement from *Qal* to *Pi'el* in Hebrew," 248, and the references cited in nn. 29, 31–32.

¹⁰ Citations (with these specific spellings) are taken from *Ma'agarim: Mif'al ha-Millon ha-Histori la-Lašon ha-Ivrit* (online version). The first two examples are not verbal substantives *per se*, but the form of the noun for "crumbs" is a *qittûl* form nonetheless, and thus I have included these citations here, especially given the relative paucity of ע"ע roots in the language.

M. Shabbat 21:3 פירוים

T. Berakhot 5:28 פרורין

M. 'Avot 5:9 חילול (and nine additional times in Tannaitic texts)

Mekhilta Wayyissa' 3 (165) סיבוב

Later *piyyutim* take us beyond the epoch of Hebrew as a living language; nevertheless, it is worth citing two examples from the poetry of 'El'azar Qallir:

Qedušatot le-Šabbatot Meyuḥadot מידוד

Qedušatot le-'Arba' Parshiyot דימום

Finally, one notes the use of *mater lectionis yod* to represent short /i/ in the spelling קיטוט. While this is exceedingly rare in the Dead Sea Scrolls,¹¹ the use of *yod* to represent the /i/ vowel in *qittūl* forms is common in reliable Mishnah manuscripts. See, for example, שילוח, ייבום, טינור, all from MS Parma A (de Rossi 138),¹² along with the examples just cited from Tannaitic texts (especially חילול and סיבוב).

In short, קיטוט “trembling” in HG 24 continues a lexical usage found in the Bible,¹³ though it reflects grammatical trends discernible in post-biblical texts.

¹¹ E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 19; with more details available in E. Qimron, *Diqduq ha-Lašon ha-'Ivrit šel Megillot Midbar Yehuda* (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1976), 53–54. Qimron opines that virtually all examples of *yod* to represent the /i/ vowel in the scrolls are either textually doubtful or are to be read as *waw*. One certain case, however, at least to my mind, is 1QH^a 16:18 פיתאום “suddenly.”

¹² G. Haneman, *Torat ha-Šurot šel Lešon ha-Mishna 'al pi Mesorat Ketav-Yad Parma* (De Rossi 138) (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1979–80), 443.

¹³ In addition to what I state above in n. 7, the evidence from HG should allay the “fears” expressed or implied in several reference works concerning יקוט in Job 8:14. Note that BDB, 876, labels the usage “dub.” (= dubious); while KB, 831, simply omits (!) this passage in its entry for קוט.

2. מי אנכי (line 77)

As is well known, the 1st person common singular pronoun **אנכי** greatly recedes in LBH¹⁴ and in Qumran Hebrew (QH),¹⁵ and then disappears altogether in MH.¹⁶ Naturally, one sees the concomitant increase in the use of the alternative form **אני**. In light of these data, one is not surprised to see the form **אני** appearing 6x in HG (lines 17, 24 [cited above], 57, 77, 80, 83 [these last three include the expression **אני גבריאל**]).

On the other hand, one does not expect to encounter the form **אנכי** in the expression **מי אנכי** “who am I” (line 77). The use of this expression, however, is explicable once one realizes that the author is borrowing the phrase from the Bible; see the use of **מי אנכי** in Exod 3:11, 1 Sam 18:18, 2 Sam 7:18.¹⁷ True, there are three attestations of **אני מי** as well, but note that all occur in Chronicles (1 Chr 17:16, 1 Chr 29:14, 2 Chr 2:5), reflecting the aforementioned shift from **אנכי** to **אני** in LBH (see especially 1 Chr 17:16 as the parallel to 2 Sam 7:18). By invoking the older biblical passage, I suspect that the author of HG is consciously archaizing. And of

¹⁴ R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 126–27; Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 30, 81; and Saenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 117, 124.

¹⁵ Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 57. The data presented there now may be updated as follows, based on a word search conducted in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library* (Leiden: Brill, 2006): **אנכי** occurs 43x and **אני** occurs 151x. Note, however, that the vast majority (if not all) of the 43 instances of **אנכי** occur either in biblical quotations or in texts that rephrase or imitate biblical (especially pentateuchal) language, with God as the speaker (as noted by Qimron already). Thus, for example, 23 of the 43 attestations occur in the *Temple Scroll* (22x in 11Q19 [11QT^a], 1x in 11Q20 [11QT^b]). Note further that in Ben Sira only **אני** appears (30:25, 36:16, 51:13), with no instances of **אנכי**; see *Sefer Ben Sira* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Shrine of the Book, 1973), 95.

¹⁶ M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), 39; M. Z. Segal, *Diqduq Leshon ha-Mishna* (Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1936), 44–45; Haneman, *Torat ha-Šurot*, 458; and Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, 18.

¹⁷ The phrase (along with its biblical antecedent) is discussed very briefly by Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 161.

course such archaizing techniques are noticeable in QH as well, notwithstanding the many LBH developments naturally occurring in this dialect.¹⁸

3. Alliteration

One of the less appreciated stylistic devices in ancient literature is the use of alliteration to enhance the oral performance of literary compositions. In recent years I have noted diverse examples of the phenomenon (albeit mainly as tangential remarks in several publications),¹⁹ though now I have devoted at least one major article to the subject.²⁰ HG evinces two excellent examples of this technique, though admittedly both are dependent on the reading and decipherment of unclear portions of the text.

¹⁸ While this is not the forum for a full discussion on the matter, I now am convinced by William Schniedewind's argument that the language of QH is an anti-language. To my mind the archaisms (some of them pseudo-archaisms) in QH represent conscious efforts by the authors to evoke the language of old (again, notwithstanding the naturally occurring LBH traits in QH). See W. M. Schniedewind, "Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage," *JBL* 118 (1999): 235–52; and idem, "Linguistic Ideology in Qumran Hebrew," in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 245–55. I presented my views on the subject at the New York University conference on "The Dead Sea Scrolls at 60: The Scholarly Contributions of NYU Faculty and Alumni" (Ranieri Colloquium on Ancient Studies) in March 2008, and I would be happy to provide a copy of the detailed handout to any interested party. None of this is to imply that the language of HG is identical to QH—such a conclusion would be premature, pending a thorough grammatical analysis of this new inscription (the present article, naturally, does not pretend to accomplish this)—but given the points of contact between HG and the Dead Sea Scrolls, one would not be surprised to find a similar approach to language in these sources.

¹⁹ See, e.g., G. A. Rendsburg, "Psalm cx 3b," *VT* 49 (1999): 548–53, esp. p. 551; and J. P. Fokkelman and G. A. Rendsburg, "נגדה נא לכל עמו" (Psalm cxvi 14b, 18b)," *VT* 53 (2003): 328–36, esp. p. 335.

²⁰ G. A. Rendsburg, "Alliteration in the Exodus Narrative," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 83–100.

The prime example is the use of טַחְבוֹ “his mist” in line 40 (thus according to Knohl)²¹ and טַבְּחֵי “the slaughtered of (Jerusalem)” in line 57. Now these two roots, which form anagrams of each other, appear at a relative distance from each other, but note that they are bracketed by the phrase אָמַר יְהוָה in lines 39 and 57, suggesting that a section commences and concludes with the alliterative pair.²² One should note that alliterative words do not always appear in close proximity to one another, but at times occur further apart, sometimes for rhetorical effect (as here, according to my analysis),²³ while at other times without such effect (presumably simply to rehearse the sounds heard earlier).²⁴ Furthermore, one or both of the alliterative words is frequently a rare lexeme or a rare usage, which has been specifically chosen by the author *alliterationis causa*²⁵—and

²¹ See Knohl, “Iyyunim be-‘Hazon Gavri’el,” 326, n. 93. Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 158, read this line differently.

²² Of course, caution is advised, given the illegible lines at the end of column I (lines 41–44) and the beginning of column II (lines 45–51), since another attestation of אָמַר יְהוָה conceivably could occur here (in line 46, for example).

²³ The classic example, to my mind, is the correlation of וַיַּעֲתֵק “and he traveled” in Gen 12:8 (a rare usage in the prose corpus; see only Gen 26:2) and וַיַּעֲקֹד “and he bound” in Gen 22:9 (a *hapax legomenon*) as one of many lexical and thematic links between the two לָךְ לָךְ sections of the Abraham cycle. On the links between Gen 12:1–9 and Gen 22:1–19, see B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934), 493; U. Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 296; N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 160–61; R. Davidson, *Genesis 12–50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 94; and G. A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 30–35 (though I discovered this particular nexus only after the completion of my book, when I began to work on the subject of alliteration in the Bible).

²⁴ See the following examples: (a) the phrase מָדוּעַ לֹא כָלִיתֶם חֻקְכֶם “why did you not finish your quota?” in Exod 5:14 (with the rare if not unique employment of the word חֻק for “quota”) rehearsing the sounds of לָכוּ קְחוּ “go, take” three verses earlier (v. 11); and (b) the use of פֶּרֶסֶה “hoof” in Exod 10:26 (where it is used metonymically for “domesticated animal” in general) and the echo of this word in the phrase אַל תִּסַּף רְאוֹת פָּנַי “you are not to see my face again” two verses following (v. 28). For details, see Rendsburg, “Alliteration in the Exodus Narrative,” 88–89, 92.

²⁵ See the examples in the previous two footnotes.

such is indeed the case here, given the uncommonness of the noun טחב “mist.”²⁶

The second example is the presence of the common verbs חנה “encamp” and נוח “rest” in the expressions יח[נו] על ירושלים “they will encamp against Jerusalem” (line 14) and [ע]ל שער ירושלים ושערי יהודה ינחו “at the gate of Jerusalem and the gates of Judah they will rest” (line 27; the reading of the last word once more as per Knohl).²⁷ Again there is a distance between the alliterative words, but once more we may note the rhetorical effect, since the key word ירושלים “Jerusalem” appears in both expressions, with no intervening occurrence (fortunately the text can be read in full in this section).

I repeat that the text of HG is (unfortunately) subject to varying readings in both of these cases, but if Knohl’s analysis is correct, attention to alliteration permits one to understand the lexical choices made by the author during the process of composition, especially in the former instance, given the rarity of the word טחב “mist.” Moreover, the literary patterns (that is, the bracketing phrase אמר יהוה in lines 39 and 57 in the first instance, and the key word ירושלים in lines 14 and 27 in the second instance) which accompany these two examples of alliteration indicate the extent to which HG may be considered a carefully crafted composition.

4. Variation

Another stylistic device that is underappreciated in the study of ancient texts is the use of variation for the sake of variation. By varying the wording of repeated phrases, the author engages his or her readers (and the presenter does likewise with his or her listeners) through a kind of mind game. Classic illustrations in the Bible include Lev 18 (the laws of incest), Num 29 (the sacrifices for the individual days of Sukkot), and Amos 1–2 (the “I will send forth fire” line).

The one phrase that repeats most often in HG is the “thus says YHWH” expression. But far from mechanically using the same wording each time, the writer has elected to vary the language in the following way.²⁸

²⁶ For discussion, see Knohl, “Iyyunim be-‘Hazon Gavri’el,” 326, n. 93. Cp. Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 158.

²⁷ See Knohl, “Iyyunim be-‘Hazon Gavri’el,” 325, n. 85.

²⁸ The point is noted, ever so briefly and without details, by Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 159.

- (a) line 11: כן אמר אלהים צבאות
 (b) line 13: [] אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל
 (c) lines 17–18: כי אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל
 (d) lines 19–20: כי אמר יהוה אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל
 (e) line 25–26: הגנה כבוד יהוה אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל
 (f) lines 29–30: כן אמר יהוה אלהים צבאות אלהי ישראל
 (g) lines 39–40: אמר יהוה א.ל.
 (h) lines 57–58: כי אמר יהוה צבא[ות] אלהי ישראל
 (i) line 68: ליהוה צבאת אל>ה<י ישראל
 (j) line 69: כה אמר יהוה צבאת אלהי ישראל
 (k) line 84: יהוה צבאת אלה[י] יש . . .

I have included in this listing not only the phrases introduced by “thus says YHWH,” but also three other cases where YHWH is followed by an epithet, since these passages at times will be relevant to the discussion that follows.

The variation in phraseology is readily apparent. Twice (a,f) the introductory adverb is כן,²⁹ three times (c,d,h) כי is used, and once (j) the form כה is utilized (in example [b] the word preceding אמר cannot be read). In addition, on one occasion (g) no introductory term is used; note that the text is not broken at this point, the preceding word is ירושלים, and in this case the phrase under discussion may actually follow (and not precede) the quoted words, though one cannot be certain given the overall fragmentary state of the inscription in lines 39–40.

The divine name יהוה occurs in every instance, except for the first one (a). This also holds true for the expression אלהי ישראל—the endings of (g) and (k) are broken, but the restoration of this phrase in both instances seems relatively certain, while the omission of the ה in (i) is apparently a scribal error. One might suggest that (a) was continued with the phrase אלהי ישראל at the beginning of line 12, but there is simply not enough room for this restoration.

Four times (a,d,e,f) we read the epithet אלהים צבאות, while five times (c,h,i,j,k) we encounter יהוה צבאות. Incidentally, the former sounds odd, but it does occur six times in the Bible (Ps 59:6, 80:5, 8, 15, 20, 84:9), versus 15 attestations of the more expected phrase אלהי צבאות (though both of these pale in comparison to the 245 occurrences of יהוה צבאות).

²⁹ On כן אמר as an Aramaism, see Yardeni and Elitzur, “Teqst Nevu’i,” 160 and n. 15.

Another kind of variation occurs within the five instances of יהוה צבאות, since on three occasions the latter word is written without *waw*, that is, צבאות. Naturally, this is not a difference that listeners to a text could perceive, so in this instance we are dealing with a game (for lack of a better term) between scribe and reader (i.e., oral presenter). And note once more that this type of variation is a regular feature of the Bible.³⁰

In short, the only verbatim repetition within the series of “thus says YHWH” phrases in HG is between (c) and (h) (the latter needs to be partially restored, but there is no doubt about the reading here). Examples (d) and (f) are distinguished by the introductory adverb; the former has כי, the latter has כן. Examples (c) and (d) are differentiated by the absence of אלהים in the former and its inclusion in the latter. Passage (j) departs from examples (c) and (h) by its use of כה instead of כי. And so on.

Finally, on a much smaller scale, we note the variations between ואגדה in line 12 and ואגיד in line 21, both meaning “and I will tell”; and between מן לפני in line 16 and מלפני in line 21, both meaning “from before” (rendered literally here). In the first pair, the former uses the old cohortative form and is spelled *defectiva*, while the latter uses the standard prefix-conjugation form and is spelled *plene*. In the second pair, the former is an Aramaic-like formation, with the non-assimilated *nun* in the word מן, while the latter presents the standard Hebrew form, with the *nun* assimilated.

These examples amply demonstrate the technique of variation for the sake of variation, a device employed by authors (and scribes) in order to keep the mind of both the reader and his/her listeners ever active.

³⁰ See J. Barr, *The Variable Spellings of the Bible* (The Schweich Lectures 1986; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).