

The phrase *ksh 't šyn h'ryš* (literally “covers the eye of the land”), which is used again to describe the Israelite threat in Num. xxii 11, is not merely a generic expression referring to a multitude of people. Rather it is a trope drawn from a particular semantic field, i.e. the language used for describing a swarm of locusts. We read in Exod. x 12-15:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Hold out your arm over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat up all the plants in the land, whatever the hail has left.” So Moses held out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord drove an east wind over the land all that day and night; and when the morning came, the east wind had brought the locusts. Locusts invaded all the land of Egypt and settled within all the territory of Egypt in thick mass; never before had there been so many, nor will there ever be so many again. They hid the surface of the whole land (*wyks 't šyn kl h'ryš*) until the land was black; and they ate up all the grasses of the field and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left, so that nothing green was left, of tree or grass of the field, in all the land of Egypt.³

Here, then, is an ironic echo of the spies' report in Balak's speech. The spies imagined their enemies regarding them as helpless grasshoppers. Balak's invitation to Balaam proves the spies to have spoken more truly than they could have imagined. Their enemies did indeed view them as grasshoppers, not tiny individual grasshoppers, but rather an enormous unstoppable horde of grasshoppers, a locust swarm which would destroy all in its path.

Kibbutz Sheluhot

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¹ All biblical quotations are from *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia and New York, 1988).

² B.A. Levine *Numbers I-XX*, The Anchor Bible (New York, 1993), p. 359.

³ The idea that Num. xxii employs the locust-metaphor is hardly new. See, for instance, G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (Edinburgh, 1903), p. 327.

PSALM CX 3B

The recent article by W.P. Brown presented the many issues involved in the elucidation of Ps. cx 3b.¹ Its coverage of the versional evidence and of recent scholarly approaches to this verse relieves me of the need to cover the same territory in this short note.

As often happens, no matter how exhaustive a scholar may be in his or her survey of the secondary literature, another scholar's contribution to the problem may go unnoticed. This is especially the case when said contribution is included in an article whose title may not reveal its immediate relevancy to the issue at hand. In the present instance, I discussed Ps. cx 3 in an article published more than fifteen years;² and since Brown did not refer to my very brief remarks in his note, I take the opportunity to put forward my suggestion in greater detail here.

I do so, moreover, because the two approaches—mine and his—are contrastive in the extreme. For while at first Brown stated, “I want to suggest a new reading that has the advantage of retaining the integrity of the consonantal text of the MT”,³ in the end he was forced to “propose only a slight emendation of the consonantal spelling that assumes an early corruption due to haplography”,⁴ namely, the reading לך כטל for MT טל. Furthermore, Brown's solution involved emending the vowels of no less than three of the five crucial words under discussion (that is, the last five words of the verse), namely, מִשְׁדָּר, לך, and יִלְדֶהֶךָ. In sum, of the five words, only the first, מִרְדָּם, was left untouched, with one word emended by the consonants and three words emended by the vowels. Still further, Brown's reading violates the Masoretic punctuation, which has the disjunctive accent *'atnah* on מִשְׁדָּר, though as the translation below reflects, Brown requires it on טל.⁵ Such an approach to the text, I am forced to say, allows the emender to have the passage state virtually anything that he or she desires.⁶ In this case, Brown's translation, “In holy splendor, out of the womb, towards the dawn go forth! Like (the) dew, I have begotten you”,⁷ bears only slight resemblance to what has been transmitted by the ancient Jewish tradents.

By contrast, my proposal follows the MT consonant by consonant, vowel by vowel, and accent by accent. Ps. cx 3b divides into three stichs:⁸

בְּחִדְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ
 מִרְדָּם מִשְׁדָּר
 לך טל יִלְדֶהֶךָ

The words most in question are the two words of the middle stich, vocalized in MT as *mēreḥem mišḥār*. Given the parallelism involved, רָדָם should be understood not as “womb”, but rather as “rain”. Words for “rain” and “dew” are a well-known word-pair, occurring both in parallelism and in parataxis in a variety of biblical and ancient Near

Eastern texts.⁹ The meaning “rain” for רָחַם was discussed at length in my aforementioned article; here I need repeat only that this root bears this meaning in the modern South Arabian languages and that various biblical passages (all poetic) reflect this usage.¹⁰

The second word should be understood quite simply: מִשְׁדֹּר is a byform of the more common word שָׁדַר meaning “dawn”. Note that words of this semantic field typically bear the *mem* before the root—thus מִזְרָח “sunrise, east”, מִרְצָא “sunrise, east”, מִבּוֹא “sunset, west”, and מִעֶרֶב “sunset, west”—so it should not be surprising to encounter the word מִשְׁדֹּר “dawn” in the ancient Hebrew lexicon.¹¹

The resultant expression is “from the rain of dawn”,¹² referring to morning rain, which is perfectly parallel to “yours is the dew of your youth”, referring (more metaphorically) to morning dew. Especially germane is the collocation of יְלֻדוֹת “youth” and שְׁדֵרוֹת “dawn” (the latter still another byform from the same root) in Qoh. xi 10,¹³ as two items of הַבֵּל, referring to the fleeting nature of both.¹⁴ As is widely recognized, the individual members of a word pair can appear either in parallelism or in parataxis (as noted above for “rain” and “dew”).

Now, what is the connection between the natural phenomena of rain and dew, and the preceding expression הִדְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ “manifestation of holiness”?¹⁵ The latter phrase is strikingly similar to הִדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ “manifestation of holiness” in Ps. xxix 2, which, as is well known, is followed by a description of God’s power as revealed in a rainstorm. In other words, in both poems, the poets use the imagery of the rainstorm as the manifestation of God’s holiness.¹⁶

The setting of Psalm cx is that of military confrontation; note in particular the references to בַּקְרֵב אֵיבִיךָ, “in the battle of your enemies” (*v.* 2) and בְּיוֹם הַיָּלֶךְ, “in the day of your strength” (*v.* 3a). Here one should recall the poetic imagery in Judges v, where the rainstorm brought by God is a major factor in the defeat of the enemy (anticipated in the general description of God’s coming forth in *vv.* 4-5, and invoked at the particular point of the battle in *vv.* 20-21¹⁷). In short, the author of Psalm cx envisions the people of Israel coming forward willingly (thus the first two words of *v.* 3: עִמָּךְ נִרְבְּהוּ [see the similar expressions in Judg v 2, v 9]) on the day of battle, that is, at day-break, accompanied by the natural phenomena at God’s disposal, not late in the day which would imply their delay, but at dawn implying their immediate readiness.¹⁸

I propose the following translation for Ps. cx 3b:

In the manifestation of holiness,¹⁹
 With the rain of dawn,
 Yours is the dew of your youth.

I recognize that I have not solved all the problems of this half-verse. The exact force of לך “yours” is not clear; and similarly the function of “your” in ילדותך, “your youth”, is not readily apparent.²⁰ But regardless of such minor issues, I hope to have demonstrated that the parallelism works in this poem in two ways, with “rain” parallel to “dew” and with “dawn” parallel to “youth”.

Finally, it is apposite to note the alliteration produced by some of the word choices in this line of poetry.²¹ The form מַשׁוּר “dawn” includes all three consonants present in the word רַחַם “rain”, a fact which would not be true if the standard form שָׁוֶר “dawn” were used. Similarly, the last three words of the verse all alliterate, with the final word ילדותך “your youth” rehearsing the sounds of לך “yours” and טל “dew” (in the latter case, the *ṭet* is the emphatic counterpart of the voiceless dental *taw*). Of course, neither of these alliterations explains why the poet chose רַחַם for “rain” in the first place (as opposed to one of the common words נֶשֶׁם or מִצֵּר, or a rarer word such as רַב־יָבִים), but answers to this question are not difficult to produce. First, we may look to the next verse of the poem, where the presence of the root נָחַם “console, relent” (v. 4) probably had an effect. And secondly, “sense effect”, not just sound effect, most likely played a role, with the more common use of רַחַם “womb” echoing at the end of the line with the root לָדַע “give birth”.

The net result is a masterful line of poetry that need not be subjected to textual emendation.

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Abstract

A recent article by W.P. Brown offers a solution to the difficult half-verse Ps. cx 3b based on a series of emendations of the Masoretic text (consonants, vowels, and accents). In the present article, I offer an alternative approach to this line of poetry, one which remains fully faithful to the Masoretic text and which demonstrates the literary techniques (parallelism, alliteration, etc.) at play.

¹ W.P. Brown, "A Royal Performance: Critical Notes on Psalm 110:3ay-b", *JBL* 117 (1998), pp. 93-6.

² G.A. Rendsburg, "Hebrew *RHM* = 'Rain'", *VT* 33 (1983), pp. 357-62, especially p. 358.

³ Brown, "A Royal Performance", p. 93.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵ Some may object that changing the vowels or shifting an accent is not an emendation of the text, but such claims are easily countered. One cannot enter into a detailed treatment of this subject here, but the works of Shelomo Morag and James Barr (among others) may be consulted. See especially S. Morag, "On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible", *JAOs* 94 (1974), pp. 307-15.

⁶ See the very honest comments by D.N. Freedman, "Problems of Textual Criticism in the Book of Hosea", in W.D. O'Flaherty (ed.), *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley, 1979), p. 58; reprinted in J.R. Huddleston, ed., *Divine Commandments and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1997), vol. 1, p. 316. I have discussed Freedman's view, which represents a shift from his earlier practice, in my review of the latter volume in *BASOR* 310 (1998), pp. 92-4.

⁷ Brown, "A Royal Performance", p. 96.

⁸ Ps. cx 3b, as I define it, begins with בַּדְּדָר, following the major pause marked by the *'oleh we-yored*. Brown ("A Royal Performance") considered Ps. cx 3b to be only the last three words, that is, those following the *'atnah*, and considered the remainder of the passage under discussion to be Ps. cx 3ay. He apparently read this verse in accordance with the accentuation system of "the 21 books", and not that of the three poetic books. In the end, however, this is an unimportant issue for our present purposes.

⁹ Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984), p. 551. Avishur dealt only with the word-pair *mtr* // *tl*. See also the word-pair *rbb* // *tl* in Ugaritic, used twice in *CAT* 1.3 II 39-41.

¹⁰ For details, see Rendsburg, "Hebrew *RHM* = 'Rain'".

¹¹ And, of course, there are many doublets of this type, with and without preformative *mem*, throughout the language, e.g., אֵכֵל and בָּאֵכֵל, both meaning "food", אָמַר and בָּאָמַר, both meaning "word", אָרַב and בָּאָרַב, both meaning "ambush", etc.

¹² I understand the preposition *min* as "with" here. While this usage is not common in Hebrew, it does occur at times, e.g., Song i 2 נִנְשָׁקָהּ "with kisses". More generally, note that in other languages a single preposition or case may serve both an ablative function and an instrumental function. Thus, for example, the close relationship between Akkadian *isti* "with" and *istu* "from", and the frequent use of the latter for the former, e.g., *istu qam* "with the reed", *istu qemi* "with flour", etc. (examples cited from *CAD* 7 [I/J], p. 283); the use of the Latin ablative case with instrumental function (W. Smith and T.D. Hall, *A Smaller Grammar of the Latin Language* [London, 1894], pp. 175-6); and the interchange of the ablative and instrumental cases in Neo-Hittite (H.C. Melchert, "Ablative and Instrumental in Hittite" [Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977]).

¹³ As pointed out by M. Dahood, *Psalms III* (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), p. 116.

¹⁴ I recognize that many commentators and translators render שְׁדֵדָה as "blackness", with reference to black hair (see, for example, *NJV*). I am happy to see both meanings inherent in the author's word choice. "Dawn" is the primary meaning, suggested by the imagery of the immediately surrounding passages which refer to the light of the sun (xi 7), "days" (xi 9, xii 1), the darkening of the sun, the moon, and the stars (xii 2). At the same time, on a secondary level, "blackness", or black hair, anticipates the mention of "the almond-tree blossoms", a metaphor for the whitening of one's hair, in xii 5. For discussion on שְׁדֵדָה, see R. Gordis, *Koheleth: The Man and His World* (New York, 1968), p. 337; and C.L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes* (New York, 1997), pp. 350-1.

¹⁵ On the root *hdr* in Hebrew and Ugaritic, see J.C. Greenfield, "Keret's Dream:

dhrt and *hdrt*", *BSOAS* 57 (1994), pp. 87-92 (though the current passage is not considered in the article).

¹⁶ While the root דד can be used in royal contexts (Prov. xiv 28, Dan. xi 20), when accompanied by the word קדש , the reference must be to God. Thus, notwithstanding the royal background of Psalm cx, we are forced to understand קדש דד in v. 3 as referring to God.

¹⁷ On the reference to the stars in v. 20 as sources of rain, see J. Blenkinsopp, "Ballad Style and Psalm Style in the Song of Deborah: A Discussion", *Biblica* 42 (1961), p. 73; and B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 266, 268.

¹⁸ I admit that whereas rain was seen by the ancient Israelites as a divine weapon, dew does not fit this context in the same fashion. "Dew" may be figurative here (thus, e.g., BDB, p. 378), or it simply may be invoked as the parallel term for "rain". In any case, other interpretations of this verse also must contend with the problem of how to understand של in this context.

¹⁹ I understand the preposition *bet* here as "with" or "accompanied by". In fact, "Accompanied by the manifestation of holiness" would be a better translation (as explained in the previous paragraph), but I find the rendering of a uniconsonantal Hebrew preposition with a two-word thirteen-letter English equivalent a bit too cumbersome from a literary perspective (here I have the translation theories of Everett Fox and Robert Alter in mind). While the equation *min* = "with" requires explanation (n. 12 above), one hardly needs to justify the rendering of the preposition *bet* as "with"; see BDB, p. 89 (in particular, definition III.1.a).

²⁰ A "problem" that has been created only in the minds of scholars is the form לדרוך "your youth"; for discussion see Brown, "A Royal Performance", p. 95. However it is to be explained, clearly this is the correct form; it appears again in Qoh. xi 9.

²¹ For additional examples of rare words in the service of alliteration in Hebrew poetry, see G.A. Rendsburg and S.L. Rendsburg, "Physiological and Philological Notes to Psalm 137", *JQR* 83 (1993), pp. 385-99, in particular pp. 396-99; and G.A. Rendsburg, "הלפידה (Song 4:4)", *JNSL* 20 (1994), pp. 13-19. I am preparing a monograph on this subject with reference to all of biblical literature, both prose and poetry.

TWO TEXTUAL NOTES (PS. LXXIV 11; LXX GEN. XLVI 17)

1. *Ps. lxxiv 11*

There are some obscurities in this verse. There is the question of its bisection into two parallel hemistichs: since the verse contains seven words, the problem is where the second hemistich starts. The other obscurity is the meaning of כלה in this context. This verb usually needs an object, and the problem is, what is its object in our case. According to the cantillations it should be divided thus:

למה תשב ידך וימינך מקרב דוקקי' בלה

Ibn Ezra explains accordingly, that the first hemistich speaks metaphorically and the second is the reality. According to the first of his two