NOTES ON ISRAELIAN HEBREW (II):

This article presents four separate notes on lexical items characteristic of Israeli Hebrew. The items studied are: 1) the phrase שְׁמוֹר אֲלָפֶּים וְעֵרֵי יָם "the offspring of your cattle and the fertility of your flock"; 2) the noun עיר "donkey"; 3) the unique form "villages" appearing in Judg 10:4; and the noun "basket".

The phrase שְׁמוֹר אֲלָפֶּים וְעֵרֵי יָם "the offspring of your cattle and the fertility of your flock" occurs four times in the book of Deuteronomy (7:13, 28:4, 28:18, 28:51). Of the four words in this expression, only עיר "flock" is standard Hebrew; the other three words are rare. The distribution of these three words—and their cognates—suggests that the phrase developed in northern Israel.

The word אלפ is standard Phoenician for "cattle, bull, ox" (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:64). The expected alternative word שיר (or better שְׁרו) without mater lectionis) does not occur in Phoenician. In Ugaritic alp is used commonly (Gordon 1967:359; del Olmo Lele & Sanmartín 1996:29-30), though of course tr also appears (Gordon 1967:501-502). However, if the instances of the phrase tr il "Bull El" are disregarded, it appears that alp is the more common term.

---

1 The first article by this title appeared in the Festschrift for Michael Heltzer (Rendsburg 1999:255-258). I continue my studies into Israeli Hebrew (II), the northern dialect of ancient Hebrew, with the following contribution.

2 In the first and fourth occurrences, שְׁרו is written defectiva; while in the second and third occurrences, the word appears plene as שְׁרו. I use the latter spelling herein throughout for clarity and consistency.

3 The form Ṣor in "The Life of Sulla after Plutarch," line 17:8, reflects Aramaic, not Phoenician, as seen correctly by Altheim & Stiehl 1963:228.

4 Of course, it is possible that a slight semantic distinction existed between alp and tr in Ugaritic, but our data do not allow us to refine the general translations "cattle, bull, ox."
In the Bible, outside of the phrase in Deuteronomy, אֲלָלָים occurs in Isa 30:24, Ps 8:8, 50:10, Prov 14:4. There is little in Isaiah 30 that suggests a northern source for this chapter or this section. However, it is striking that the phrase והָאֵלָים והָאֹנָס נֶבֶרְיָה גָּדָרְיָה and oxen and donkeys, tillers of the soil in v. 24 pairs the word אֲלָלָים with the word נֶבֶרְיָה, itself an Israeli lexiceme (see below, Section 2). A clear instance of אֲלָלָים in a northern text is Prov 14:4, as this book is a well-known repository of Israeli lexical and grammatical features.\(^5\)

The two instances in Psalms do not appear to help our case. Ps 8:8 occurs in a poem without a concentration of northern forms, though it is worth remarking that the phrase גָּדוֹל אֲלָלָים "sheep and oxen, all of them" includes the exceptional form שֹׁנֶה "sheep". Ps 50:10, on the other hand, is part of the Asaph collection, which originated in northern Israel.\(^6\) However, the phrase נְדֵרֵי אֲלָלָים "mountains of cattle" or "mountains of thousands" is most likely to be emended to נְדֵרֵי אֲלָלָים "mountains of God" or "lofty mountains," with the letter פ to be attached to the next verse as the conjunction.\(^7\) But if one wishes to follow those scholars who desire to retain אֲלָלָים in Ps 50:10, without emendation,\(^8\) and to understand it as "cattle," then this attestation of the word should be accounted as a northern occurrence.

In short, regardless of how one understands Ps 50:10, and notwithstanding the use of אֲלָלָים in Ps 8:8, the appearance of our word in Isa 30:24 and Prov 14:4, along with the cognate evidence forthcoming from Phoenician and Ugaritic, points to the conclusion that אֲלָלָים "cattle, bull, ox" is an Israeli lexiceme.

The word that follows אֲלָלָים, namely נְדֵרֵי, is treated here as a common noun, conveniently translated "fertility"; but it derives, as is well known, from the name of a Canaanite fertility goddess Astarte (thus in Greek sources), Ugaritic ʾttr (Gordon 1967:463; del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 1996:94-95). The Deuteronomy usage is the only place in Northwest Semitic where this word, or at least this specific form of the noun (i.e. the feminine) is utilised as a common noun.\(^9\)

---


\(^6\) Rendsburg 1990:14, and the sources cited in nn. 60-61; with the supporting linguistic evidence in Rendsburg 1990:73-81.

\(^7\) Rendsburg 1990:74, citing M. Dahood in n. 8.

\(^8\) For examples see the sources cited in Rendsburg 1990:74, nn. 8-9.

\(^9\) Recent treatments of the phrase נְדֵרֵי אֲלָלָים include Görg 1993:9-11 and Hadley 1996:115-133.
A parallel usage may occur in the Deir 'Alla inscription, Combination I, line 14, where the text reads $skl$ $hzw$ $qqn$ $§gr$ $w^pstr$. Unfortunately, a) the text is broken at this point; b) the reading of the first word is unclear, as it could be $wkl$; c) we are unsure where to punctuate this group of words; and d) the word $qqn$ suggests several different meanings. In the words of Hackett, "This is the most perplexing grouping in the first combination" (Hackett 1980:53). Accordingly, nothing definite can be said about the word $wstr$ here, except that it is paired with $§gr$, in striking agreement with the phrase in Deuteronomy. However, since the general context of the inscription at this point is the reversal of the norms of nature, most likely the text "has something to do with failure to produce offspring" (Hackett 1980:53). If so, the Deir 'Alla inscription affords us a very close parallel to the Hebrew usage, differing only in the gender of the noun. Moreover, since the dialect of the Deir 'Alla inscription shares so much in common with Israeli Hebrew (Rendsburg 1993:309-329), the nexus between these two usages provides evidence for the II nature of $נמרות$ as a common noun meaning "fertility."

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the city named $נמרות$ is located in Bashan. While one would not wish to rely too strongly on toponymic evidence, this fact serves to support the above conclusion.

The noun $ננ$ "offspring" occurs elsewhere in the Bible in Exod 13:12. This source is devoid of any northern connections, so I have no explanation for its appearance here. But the cognate evidence once more points to a northern home for the four-word expression under discussion. As noted above, the form $§gr$ occurs in the Deir 'Alla inscription. In addition, the word is attested in Ugaritic, albeit in a broken context in CAT 1.5 (UT 67) III:16, 17, and again as the name of a deity (presumably connected with fertility of flocks) in CAT 1.148 31.10

In sum, with the exception of the common noun לֵבָש" flock," the members of the repeated expression $שֶׁר$ $אֶל$ $נָמְרוֹת$ $לָא$ "the offspring of your cattle and the fertility of your flock," occurring four times in Deuteronomy, point to a northern home for this phrase. Numerous scholars have suggested that the book of Deuteronomy is a northern composition (Nielsen 1977-78:77-89; Weinfeld 1991:44-50), though the linguistic evidence has not been utilised in such discussions. The identification of one northern linguistic coinage in the rather large composition of Deuteronomy is insufficient grounds for reaching a

---

general conclusion. But if more such terms could be identified (see below, Section 4), the linguistic evidence should then be brought to bear on the discussion.

2. "DONKEY"

The standard Hebrew word for "donkey" is זעירה, with the feminine noun זעירה "jenny." But a second term appears as well, namely זעירה (henceforth to be indicated without vowels), attested eight times in the Bible. In some cases, exemplified best by Isa 30:24, there appears to be no semantic distinction between זעירה and זעירה. In other instances, such as Zech 9:9, it appears that זעירה bears the special meaning "young ass." But this issue aside, as we shall see in the following discussion, the word occurs almost without exception in Israeli contexts.

The most obvious examples are Judg 10:4 with reference to Jair the Gileadite, and Judg 12:14 with reference to Abdon from Pirathon in Ephraim. Normally one would not expect to find IH features in the Patriarchal Narratives in Genesis, but in Gen 32:16 the setting is in Transjordan (specific toponyms mentioned are Mahanaim, Peniel and the Jabbok River). Apparently the author wished to denote the Transjordanian setting and thus used the IH form זעירה as the male of the species, alongside זעירה for the feminine, instead of the usual word זעירה.

11 By "Deuteronomy" here, I mean the core of Deuteronomy. The poem in Deuteronomy 32 is replete with IH features; this point needs to be defended in detail, but for the moment the reader may consult examples via the index in Rendsburg 1990:127. For previous scholars who have claimed a northern provenience for Deuteronomy 32, see Rendsburg 1990:12 and nn. 52-53. The blessings of the northern tribes in Deuteronomy 33 also have a concentration of IH features, and I hope to devote a study to this material as well.

12 Some lexicographers extend the meaning "young ass" to all the attestations of the word, but the evidence does not bear this out. Thus, for example, BDB, p. 747 ("male ass, young and vigorous"); and Even-Shoshan 1992:862 ("זעירה זעירה"). The LXX translators rendered Gen 32:16, 49:11, Judg 10:4, 12:14, Zech 9:9 with פאולוס "young ass, young horse," but translated Isa 30:6 and Job 11:12 with עונס, the regular word for "donkey" (Isa 30:24 is understood completely differently, as "oxen"). On the Greek terms, see Lust et al. 1992-1996:334, 413. The Targumim typically use יִּילָע הַשָּׁלָה "young ass" to render זעירה, but occasionally there is a departure from this norm; for example, Targum Yonatan uses זעירה זעירה "donkeys" for זעירה in Isa 30:24. For Aramaic יִּילָע הַשָּׁלָה "young ass," see Jastrow 1903:1069; and Sokoloff 1990:404.

13 On the homonym זעירה "villages" in this verse, see below, Section 3.

14 However, note the Aramaicisms in the Jacob and Laban story, as deduced by Greenfield 1981:129-130; and Rendsburg 1996:182-183.
Job 11:12 once more places us in a Transjordanian setting. Isa 30:24 was treated above; again, while there is nothing in this section that would indicate an Israeli context, the pairing וַּאֲנָףָּו וְעֶרֶםְו "and oxen and donkeys" nonetheless collocates two IH terms.

The remaining examples do not fit the pattern, but a few comments are worth noting. In Isa 30:6Q, יָּרֵא occurs in the מַהֵךְ הָרֶמֶת נֵב יָּרֵא "The Beasts of the Negeb Pronouncement"; while there are no other glaring indications of IH or non-standard language in this poem, one must assume that the author used יָּרֵא for the specific purpose of his desert setting. The most famous attestation of יָּרֵא in the Bible is in Zech 9:9 (famous because of its reverberation in the New Testament [Matt 21:5, John 12:15]); while one does not wish to rely too heavily on the crutch of IH features in post-exilic Hebrew due to the reunion of Israelite and Judahite exiles in Mesopotamia, this explanation cannot be ruled out. In addition, the poet may have included the word יָּרֵא here to create an alliteration with the key word יָּרֵא "poor, humble" earlier in the verse. The sole exception which runs counter to the evidence presented here is Gen 49:11, part of the blessing to Judah.

In short, five of the eight attestations of יָּרֵא "donkey" occur in Israeli contexts (and one or two of the other occurrences may be relevant). This is sufficient evidence by which to claim the word as an IH lexeme, especially when one recalls that the great majority of the Bible is Judahite in origin.

The cognate evidence supports our conclusion. Ugaritic 'r "donkey" is well attested, occurring in the major literary texts (CAT 1.4 [UT 51] IV:9, 14; CAT 1.19 II:3, 8, 10 [UT 1 Aqht 52, 57, 59]) and elsewhere (e.g. CAT 1.119 16; see Gordon 1967:455; del Olmo Lete & Sanmartin 1996:87). While הָמָר "donkey" also occurs (e.g. CAT 1.14 III:17, V:10

---

15 However, note that the final word of the first stanza, בָּשָׂנָא in Isa 30:6, may mean "hot wind, extreme heat." This word occurs in Bereshit Rabba 29:2 and in 2 Sam 23:7 (see also some textual traditions of B. Ta'anit 6b [line 29] for the Aramaic cognate אֵלֶבֶן), as noted by Nach 1996:260-265. For this lexeme as an IH trait, see Rendsburg 1999:258.


17 For more on this technique, see Note 30 below.

18 There are, of course, IH elements in Genesis 49, specifically in the blessings to the northern tribes; see Rendsburg 1992b:161-170. However, one would not expect them in the verses devoted to Judah. While on the subject of this verse, note that the actual form is יָּרֵא "his (young) donkey," with the diphthong reduced from ay to i (and not the expected e); does this peculiarity have a bearing on our problem?
[UT Krt 121, 225; see Gordon 1967:397; and del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 1996:177], it appears that ‘r is the more common of the two lexemes in Ugaritic, certainly in the literary texts.

In addition, I am inclined to correlate the aforesaid (see Note 12) Aramaic יִלָּו "young ass." One cannot dismiss the possibility that this word developed from the root יִלָּו "suckle," but most likely Aramaic is the cognate of Hebrew יִלָּו יִירָס, with interchange of lamed and resh.

3. "VILLAGES"

In the discussion above, I referred to Judg 10:4 where the plural of "donkey" occurs within the brief notice about the minor judge Jair the Gileadite. The full passage reads as follows:

והי צֶרֶס מוֹד רְבוֹם עַל צֶרֶס יִירָס צֶרֶס צֶרֶס לָאָרָא
לָאָרָא צֶרֶס יִירָס צֶרֶס יִירָס צֶרֶס לָאָרָא

"And he had thirty sons, riding on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty villages; and they call them Havvoth-jair until this day, that are in the land of Gilead."

I have translated the passage following the syntax and word order of the Hebrew original. A more idiomatic translation, which also captures the wordplay most felicitously, is that of the NJPSV:

"He had thirty sons, who rode on thirty burros and owned thirty boroughs in the region of Gilead; these are called Havvoth-jair to this day."

With a footnote adding:

"Imitating the pun in the Heb., which employs 'ayarim first in the sense of 'donkeys' and then in the sense of 'towns'."

In short, the form יִירָס occurs twice in this passage, in the first instance meaning "donkeys" (see above, Section 2) and in the second instance meaning "villages."

This is the only appearance in the Bible of the form יִירָס "villages" (henceforth to be indicated without vowels). Some commentators simply emend the word by deleting the second yod and thereby restore the common plural form יִירָס "cities." Others recognise that the form is

---

19 See, for example, Burney 1918:292; and Boling 1966:295-296, summarized in Boling 1975:188.
genuine, stating that it has been chosen specifically because of the wordplay created.\textsuperscript{20} The latter approach is clearly the preferred route.\textsuperscript{21}

But we should not think that "עירים" is simply an alternative, perhaps dialectal, form for "ערים". I have been careful in the above to distinguish the meanings of the two: the former means "villages" and the latter means "cities." Clearly there could be small "cities" or "towns" in ancient Israel, and the Bible uses the word "עירי" in such contexts (e.g. Josh 13:17, where "its cities" must refer to towns smaller than Heshbon), but it is very unlikely that this is what is intended by "שְׂלַחְתֵּי עִירִים" in Gilead, an area better known for its grazing land. More plausibly, these "עירים" should be understood as a different type of settlement, probably to be identified with some kind of open settlement typical of Transjordan.\textsuperscript{22} Indeed, the "עירים" that belong to Jair are referred to in the same verse as "ותְדוֹ" (see also Numb 32:41, Deut 3:14, etc.), a word which appears to mean "encampments," "tent camps," or the like. Note the Arabic cognate "hiwa" "circle of tents."\textsuperscript{23}

Our understanding of "עירים" in Judg 10:4 can be advanced by incorporating the full evidence of ancient Hebrew into the picture. By this phrase I intend the evidence from Mishnaic Hebrew, in which the form "שְׂלַחְתֵּי עִירִים" (always in the plural; and here written with double 'yod, as typical in manuscripts of the Mishna, Tosefta and other Tannaitic texts) occurs commonly.\textsuperscript{24} Kutscher posited that MH "עירים" is a new

\textsuperscript{20} See the sources cited in Moore 1895:275.

\textsuperscript{21} The standard form "cities" would alliterate with "donkeys" (on this phenomenon, again, see below, Note 30), but the wordplay is more effective with the form "villages." On wordplay in the Bible, see Rendsburg 2000.

\textsuperscript{22} I have consulted the standard works on the archaeology of Transjordan, but apparently a true survey of the region (of the type conducted in Cisjordan by mainly Israeli scholars) has not been accomplished. Still, even without empirical archaeological evidence, and notwithstanding the presence of several large cities in Gilead, one can assume, based on the textual evidence in the Bible, that the region supported large numbers of animals and that open settlements conducive to supporting animal husbandry would have been common in the region. For very general information, including a reference to "dozens of small Iron Age I sites in Gilead," see Mazar 1990:337, 357-359 (the quotation is from 1990:337).

\textsuperscript{23} All three standard Hebrew dictionaries cite the Arabic cognate "hiwa", thus \textit{BDB}, p. 295; \textit{KB}, p. 280; \textit{HALAT}, p. 284 = \textit{HALOT}, p. 296. See further Lane 1863:679, which lists not only "hiwa" but also the derived nouns "muhawwan, mahwan" as "a collection of tents."

\textsuperscript{24} For citations consult the database for the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language produced by the Academy of the Hebrew Language in either its
plural formation of עיר, replacing עירִים, and that the meaning of singular עיר, plural עירִים, shifted from "city" to "village(s)," with the MH words כְּרֵיהֶמֶר and כְּרֵיהֶנָה taking over the meaning of "city."

Other options are possible, though. One could posit that a singular form such as עיר meaning "village" existed in the Hebrew of biblical times, though it was restricted to certain regional dialects. Or one could posit that עיר meant "village" in certain areas of the country, perhaps in Transjordan (note the setting of the aforesaid Josh 13:17 in the region of Heshbon).

Regardless of how we analyse the data, we can state with certainty that a plural formation עירִים existed in at least one variety of ancient Hebrew, and that it managed to find its way into the Bible in one passage, Judg 10:4. The setting suggests that this is a regional usage, perhaps limited to Gilead in Transjordan, perhaps more widespread within the IH umbrella. The word surfaced in Hebrew sources in post-biblical times, with a new plural ending, thus as מְרִים (although the construct form remains as עירִים), but these sources are rabbinic texts which originate in the Galilee and again point to a non-Judahite usage.28

---

25 The database of the Academy of the Hebrew Language (see previous note) allows us to test Kutscher's position. By my count, there are 58 examples of עיר and only 10 examples of עירִים (though the construct form remains as עיר [also with pronominal suffixes]).


27 If he does not state this last point explicitly, it certainly is implied quite strongly. See Kutscher 1961:19-21; and earlier Kutscher 1957:291-292. In the former source (1961:19) he cited our word עירִים in Judg 10:4.

28 See Rendsburg 1992a:225-240. This article treats mainly grammatical issues. In the last few years, I have collected dozens of MH lexemes with parallels in IH, Ugaritic and Phoenician; both individually and collectively they serve as additional evidence for the northern home of MH. I presented this material at the conference on "Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar and Lexicon" organized by Moshe Bar-Asher at the Institute for Advanced Study, Hebrew University, in September 1996. I plan to publish this material in the future. But anyone wishing a copy of the extensive handout may request one from the author.
In short, "villages" is an IH lexeme, attested in a sole biblical text with a Gileadite context, and, in the form הַכָּרְתָּה, in numerous instances in MH texts stemming from the Galilee.

4. מַשָּׁא "BASKET"

Unlike standard Hebrew בָּל "basket," which is well distributed throughout the Bible (actually mainly in the Torah, but in a variety of contexts; only Judg 6:19 otherwise), the atypical term מַשָּׁא "basket" occurs only four times, all in Deuteronomy (26:2, 26:4, 28:5, 28:17). Due to the restricted use of this lexeme in the Bible, I am unable to bring internal BH evidence (see below, however, for MH evidence) to support the view that מַשָּׁא is an IH feature. The cognate evidence is helpful, but not definitive. In Phoenician מַשָּׁא is an exceedingly common verb meaning "erect" (Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995:424-426), but it is not clear if our word מַשָּׁא "basket" derives from this root.

There may, however, be one attestation of מַשָּׁא "basket" in Phoenician, but unfortunately the text is difficult to read at this very point. I refer to KAI 37A:10, a Kiton tariff inscription. Peckham, "with some hesitation," read the line in question to include the word מַשָּׁא "basket" (Peckham 1968:305-306, 314; the quotation is from the last-cited page). Healey, on the other hand, read the text differently, with the frank comment, "The text now becomes very difficult to read ... any reading is dubious" (Healey 1974:55). I have checked the excellent photograph published by Peckham (1968:Plate XLIX), but I am unable to determine whether or not he is correct in his assessment. The text simply is too difficult to read.29

The only sure extra-biblical evidence, then, is forthcoming from Mishnaic Hebrew.30 Here the form מַשָּׁא (once מַשָּׁא, in T. Sotah 15:1)

29 For a summary of views and additional bibliography, see Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995:426.

30 The word מַשָּׁא also occurs in Ben Sira 34:14 (Greek 31:14), but I exclude this attestation from the discussion on IH. Unless one can prove otherwise, we assume that Ben Sira is a Jewish composition. Nonetheless, I take the opportunity for a few remarks. The Greek and Syriac texts use words for "dish" (Greek τραβάα, Syriac כַּמַּא; cf. Barthelemy & Rickenbacher 1973:145), which fits the context of proper etiquette for dining better than the word "basket." But this does not mean that the Hebrew original is incorrect. Rather, I assume that the author reached into the deep resources of the Hebrew language, and stretched the meaning of מַשָּׁא, normally "basket" but here "dish," in order to produce alliteration in the verse. The entire verse reads מַשָּׁא יִכְבָּה אַל תִּשְׁפָּה וְאַל תִּרָּדֵה עַל מְנוֹנָת מַשָּׁא "to the place that he looks, do not extend (your) hand; and do not unite with him in the basket" (a marginal note
appears on a regular basis, with the meaning "container" of various types ("basket", "box", etc.) (M. Tamid 3:6, etc.; M. Kelim 12:3, etc.; and elsewhere). As discussed above, MH is a later variety of IH, and thus we may use this evidence to bolster our claim. The evidence for classifying "basket" as an IH lexeme is not as abundant as the above examples, but even the small amount of evidence that we possess points to that conclusion.

Above I stated that one IH item in the large book of Deuteronomy is insufficient grounds for positing a northern home for the composition in general. We have now identified a second item. I still would argue that this is insufficient data on which to develop the linguistic argument, especially given the size of the book. But some serious research into the language of Deuteronomy might identify still other IH usages, in which case the linguistic argument could be put forward. Should the two items presented here, the expression נַפְרָא אלפים וַתְּבָנָת נַפְרָא - "the offspring of your cattle and the fertility of your flock," and the noun נָבָא "basket," prove to be the totality of the evidence, then some other explanation for the presence of these words in Deuteronomy will have to be sought. One could imagine, for example, that the terms originated in the north, but that they filtered southward. This explanation would work well with the first

in the manuscript [MS B] corrects דָּגַג דָּגַג; cf. Sefer Ben Sira [Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language and Shrine of the Book, 1973], p. 30). Note that provides a third use of the letter tet in this poetical couplet, in addition to which there are two taws and two dalet (another marginal note in MS B "corrects" נִשְׂבָּה "extend" to נִשְׁבָּה "place," which would affect our argument for the centrality of the letter tet to this passage, but the number of dental consonants remains the same nonetheless). This would be another example of "Alliteration as a Compositional Factor in Biblical Hebrew Literature," the title of a talk that I have delivered on several occasions in recent years (Association for Jewish Studies annual meeting, Boston, Mass., December 1997; Leiden University, January 2000; and Johns Hopkins University, February 2000). I am preparing a monograph on the subject.


The only statement about Deuteronomy that I have made heretofore is in Rendsburg 1992c:88, n. 102. There I referred to "the lack of any northerns ... in the core of Deuteronomy," thus mitigating against the view that the book is Israel. The identification of two elements in the present article necessitates an adjustment of my previous statement, but I repeat that it does not thereby prove the northern provenance of Deuteronomy.
example, since it is an entire phrase, for which Judahite Hebrew may not have had an equivalent expression.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


