Gary A. Rendsburg

Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew

To all who have ever undertaken the linguistic study of the Hebrew Bible, it is abundantly clear that the text bristles with an inordinate number of grammatical peculiarities. Although I have no empirical evidence to substantiate the following statement, my sense is that on a relative scale one encounters more such difficulties in the Hebrew Bible than in comparable corpora, for example, Homer's _Iliad_ and _Odyssey_, the Qur'ān, the Avesta, Assyrian annals, etc. In the past, scholars have ascribed this situation to the unusual history of the Bible's textual transmission, which purportedly has led to all sorts of scribal errors being inadvertently introduced into the text. The response of scholars who are responsible for our standard reference grammars and for our standard editions of the Bible has been to emend the text in innumerable instances in order to restore it to its presumed autographed version. Often this is done with the support of other manuscript traditions (Qumran, Samaritan, etc.) and/or the versions (Septuagint, Targum, Vulgate, etc.), but just as often these emendations are executed ad hoc.

Author's note: I take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for College Teachers program, which enabled me to spend a good portion of the academic year 1986–87 in Jerusalem. Research for the present article was conducted there at the Jewish University and National Library of the Hebrew University and at the École Biblique. I am indebted to the staffs of both institutions for many privileges extended to me. I have benefited greatly from the good counsel of a number of faculty members of the Hebrew University, who kindly discussed with me many aspects of my investigation into regional dialects of ancient Hebrew. In particular I offer my thanks to Joshua Blau, Jonas Greenfield, Avi Hurvitz, Shelomo Morag, and Shalom Paul. An oral version of this paper was presented to the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, March 1988, in Chicago.

1. I have in mind here, of course, such volumes as GKC and _BHS_.

65
In recent years, at least in some circles, the practices just outlined have lessened. Instead of simply emending the text when a difficulty presents itself, there has been a growing trend toward seeking to explain the peculiarity. This has resulted in an increased respect for the MT, or at least its consonantal skeleton. David Noel Freedman's recent opinion on the subject is emblematic of this new approach. The following lines were written in regard to the Book of Job, but they are equally cogent for all of the MT:

Traditional approaches and methods have not proved notably successful, and neither has the radical surgery attempted by many more recent scholars. Most such conjectural emendations have proven ephemeral or evanescent and have failed to convince any stable majority of scholars. . . . Some commonly accepted rules of the road can help in the assessment of procedures and products in this field. (a) It is better to stay with the existing text than to change it. . . . (d) Emendation of the text, while sometimes inevitable and unavoidable in view of the present and ongoing state of research, is often little better than a counsel of despair. . . . For books like Job, there is little choice among texts and versions. Some help can be gained from the newly published Targum, as well as the versions, but for the most part we are bound to the MT. 2

Often this defense of the MT has been sparked by the discovery of cognate forms in other Semitic languages. For example, before the recognition of enclitic mēm in Ugaritic and thence in Hebrew, rare was the scholar who would defend mnynm qmyw in Deut 33:11. Now, with our increased knowledge of ancient Hebrew morphology, rare is the scholar who would not defend the consonantal text of the MT at Deut 33:11. 3 Or another example more recently advanced: virtually all scholars who have dealt with wmn in Ezek 48:16 have proposed deleting the mēm. Now, however, with the discovery that enclitic mēm may be attached to conjunctive u in Eblaite, a number of such constructions have been isolated in the Bible and thus we may defend the otherwise peculiar wmn in Ezek 48:16 and various other passages. 4

In the two preceding paragraphs, I have spoken mainly of the consonantal text. But the rules against emendation are also valid for the vocalization of the Masoretes. Many if not most scholars, and here I include even those who do respect the consonantal text, have little regard for the pointing of the text. They consider it a relatively unreliable guide to the pronunciation of ancient Hebrew, and peculiarities are typically considered corrupt and then altered to conform to the standard Masoretic vocalization. However, several


compiled numerous examples of grammatical forms which are to be labeled post-classicisms (in the case of Hurvitz's work) or colloquialisms (in the case of my own work), but which in no way are to be considered textually corrupt, as many scholars of the past have opined.

In light of the foregoing, in the present article I propose to present evidence for the existence of regional varieties of Hebrew in antiquity. Based on the above conclusions that in the main the MT is a reliable textual witness and that it preserves dialectal differences, I hope to demonstrate that atypical grammatical forms often are characteristic of regional variation. With most scholars, I assume that the vast majority of the Bible was written in Judah, in Jerusalem in particular, and/or by exiles from Judah. This holds presumably for most, if not 99 percent, of the Pentateuch; the material in Samuel and Kings concerning David, Solomon, and the succeeding kings of Judah; the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Zechariah, Habakkuk, Second Isaiah, etc.; most of Psalms; the books of Ruth, Lamentations, Chronicles, etc. But naturally there are portions of the Bible which demonstrably are non-Judahite in origin, namely the stories in Judges dealing with the northern and Transjordanian heroes, the material in Kings presenting the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, the prophet Hosea, some Psalms, etc.9

An investigation into these latter sections of the Bible reveals that it is specifically in these texts where one finds a larger concentration of the aforementioned atypical grammatical forms. This will become clear in the treatment of the individual morphemes below. Most of these forms also appear in other non-Judahite dialects of Canaanite (e.g., Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, Deir 'Alla)10 and/or in Aramaic. The conclusion to be reached is that in regions of Israelite settlement away from Jerusalem and Judah there was a distinct dialect (or dialects) of Hebrew with isoglosses connecting this speech to other Canaanite and Aramaic dialects. This has been theorized be...


10. I accept the conclusion of J. A. Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla (Harvard Semitic Monographs 31; Chico: Scholars Press, 1986), that the Deir 'Alla texts are written in a dialect of Canaanite. See now the very important article by B. Halpern, "Dialect Distribution in Canaan and the Deir Alla Inscriptions," in Working with No Data: Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin (ed. D. M. Golumb, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 119–39. This article came to my attention too late for its results to be incorporated into the present paper in any meaningful manner. But its overall conclusion that "Canaan was linguistically cantonized even in the latest Israelite periods" (139) is consistent with my own approach.


kingdom. As I noted above parenthetically, it is possible if not probable that we are dealing with more than one Israeliic dialect. There is no reason to assume, for example, that the people of Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan all spoke the same brand of Hebrew. With perhaps two exceptions (the third-person masculine singular pronominal suffix -ôhî and the third-person masculine plural objective pronoun hîm, on which see below) it is doubtful whether there is enough evidence to posit, let us say, a Transjordanian dialect of Hebrew versus an extreme northern dialect of Hebrew. Of course, it may be assumed that the former is closer to Deir ‘Alla, Ammonite, and Moabite, and the latter closer to Phoenician and Aramaic, but lack of sufficient information prevents us from drawing any unequivocal conclusions. Therefore, I use the term Israeliic Hebrew, keeping in mind that it may be an umbrella for a series of subdialects. Collectively it stands in contrast to what I call Judahite Hebrew, a term already inherent in the oft-cited yehîdollî in 2 Kgs 18:26, 28 = Isa 36:11, 13 = 2 Chr 32:18; Neh 13:24.

As the title of this article implies, the evidence presented is all in the realm of morphology (embracing morphophonemic and morphosyntactic material). Phonological differences between Israeliic and Judahite Hebrew no doubt existed, and it would not be surprising to find syntactic distinctions as well. But for the purposes of linguistic classification, the morphological evidence remains primary. I. J. Gelb’s dictum for linguistic classification is most apt: “We must recognize that certain levels have preceded over others; grammar over lexicon, and within grammar, morphology over phonology and, even more, over syntax. These are not spur-of-the-moment conclusions; they reflect my thinking on these matters over the years of life-long experience.” With all this in mind, let us proceed to the evidence.


Meh before Nonlaryngeal Consonants

The standard form of the interrogative pronoun for inanimate objects is mah. Before laryngeals, changes occur, including the shift to meh before hêt and ‘ayin normally. However, in more than a dozen instances the form meh occurs before nonlaryngeal consonants: 1 Sam 4:6, 4:14, 15:14; 2 Kgs 1:7, 4:13, 4:14; Isa 1:5; Jer 8:9, 16:10; Hag 1:9; Ps 4:3, 10:13; Job 7:21; Prov 31:2. In addition, instead of the standard forms lammâh, kamâmâh, bamâmâh, we also encounter the variants lâmeh in 1 Sam 1:8tris, kamâmeh in 1 Kgs 22:16, and bamâmeh in Exod 22:26, 33:16; Judg 16:5bis, 16:6bis, 16:10, 16:13, 16:15; 1 Sam 6:2, 29:4; Isa 2:22; Mal 1:6, 1:7, 3:7, 3:8; Ps 119:9; Prov 4:19.

An investigation of these passages reveals that a disproportionate number occur in non-Judaic contexts. All seven attestations in Judges 16 are spoken by either the Philistine lords or Delilah; in 1 Sam 1:8 the speaker is Elikanah of Ephraim; in 1 Sam 4:6, 6:2, 29:4 once more the Philistines are the speakers; in 1 Sam 4:14 it is Eli, priest of Shiloh, speaking; in 1 Sam 15:14 it is Samuel of Ephraim; in 1 Kgs 22:16 it is the Israeliic king Ahab; in 2 Kgs 1:7 it is his son Ahaziah; in 2 Kgs 4:13, 4:14 it is the northern (or Transjordanian) prophet Elisha; and in Prov 31:2 the speaker is the mother of Lemuel king of Massa. In addition, the example in Prov 4:19 occurs in a section of the Bible with many Phoenician affinities, and the example in Ps 10:13 occurs in a chapter which witnesses several other Israeliic Hebrew elements (see below). I have not explained all of these attestations of meh, but a sizable majority are in non-Judaic contexts. Moreover, I have accounted for all the attestations of meh before nonlaryngeal consonants in narrative prose. On the basis of this evidence, one may postulate an isogloss stretching from Philistia in the southwest through central and northern Israel to Massa in the northeast.

19. From several scholars (orally) I have heard the suggestion that the use of meh here is an intentional imitation of the sound that sheep make. This is very clever, and I would have no objection to this explanation were this the only example of meh before a nonlaryngeal consonant in the Bible. But I prefer to explain the meh of 1 Sam 15:14 with the other attestations of the form in Biblical Hebrew and not as a singular phenomenon.
23. Regardless of what language the Philistines spoke before they arrived in Canaan, it is abundantly clear from the biblical record that once in Canaan they spoke a Canaanite dialect.
2sg Pronominal Suffix -ki

The standard Hebrew second-person feminine singular pronominal suffix is
-ki preceded by a vowel (e with verbs and nouns, a after consonantal prepositions, etc.). However, in the following instances the suffix -ki appears,
retaining the proto-Semitic form.24 2 Kgs 4:2 Kethiv, 4:3 Kethiv,
4:7bis Kethiv; Jer 11:15; Ps 103:3bis, 103:4bis, 103:5, 116:7bis, 116:19,
135:9, 137:6; Song 2:13 Kethiv. The form -ky also appears in Aramaic,25
which leads me to suggest that its occasional presence in Biblical Hebrew is
due to geographical variation. This conclusion is bolstered by the following
considerations: (a) four of the attestations of -ki, from 2 Kings 4, are placed
in the mouth of Elisha; (b) five occurrences of -ki are in Psalm 103, which
witnesses an additional northerness;26 (c) three instances of -ki appear in
Psalm 116, which is another chapter which evinces a concentration of
northerners (see below); and (d) the example from Song of Songs dovetails
with other linguistic evidence in this poem which points to a northern
provenance.27 Again, I have not accounted for all sixteen examples of -ki in
the MT, but since thirteen of them occur in texts which include additional
Israelian Hebrew elements, there is every reason to conclude that this
second-person feminine singular suffix was at home in northern Israel.

3msg Pronominal Suffix -ôhî

Standard Hebrew utilizes several third-person masculine singular pronominal
suffixes, -ô, -ôhî, -w, etc., depending on the phonetic environment. In one
instance a unique form occurs: -ôhî in the word tagmûlôhî ‘his good deeds’

Note that never is communication a problem between Israelites and Philistines; see C. H.
24. This reconstruction is based mainly on the Akkadian, Arabic, and Ethiopic forms, which are
all 4î (the vowel is apparently anceps). See S. Moscati, An Introduction to the Comparative
Grammar of the Semitic Languages (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964) 106, 109; J. H. Kran-
26. I refer to the use of ntr ‘guard’ (instead of standard Hebrew ntr) in Ps 103:9. See further the
following note.
27. I have in mind such usages as the relative particle še-, the use of the root ntr ‘guard’ (com-
pare standard Hebrew ntr), the word bêrôšî ‘cypresses’ (compare standard Hebrew bêrôšî),
etc. See M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (Anchor Bible 7c; Garden City: Doubleday, 1977) 33–
34, 362; S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (New York:
Scribner, 1906) 448–49; Y. Avisar, “Le-ziqâ ha-šignîlit ben šir ha-širim we-sîprut
3-šârîrî,” Beth Mikra 59 (1974) 508–25; and idem, Stylistics Studies of Word-Pairs in Bib-
lical and Ancient Semitic Languages (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 210; Neukirchen-
are noted below.

in Ps 116:12. This usage is almost always characterized as an Aramaism, but
new evidence forces us to evaluate -ôhî afresh. It is true that -wh is the Ara-
maic third-person masculine singular pronominal suffix attached to plural
nouns,28 but the same form is now attested at Deir ‘Alla.29 In addition, Mo-
abite -h probably was vocalized somewhat similarly.30 Accordingly, the sole
use of -ôhî in Ps 116:12 should be understood as a non-Judahite form.31 It
may, moreover, even be further localized to Transjordan. As I have already
mentioned, Psalm 116 also includes the second-person feminine singular
pronominal suffix -ki, which is uttered by the Transjordanian prophet Elisha
four times in 2 Kings 4. It also includes another feature which may be char-
acterized as a feature of Israelian Hebrew (see the discussion below on the
non-elision of hê3 in Hiphil/Hophal imperfects and participles).

3mpl Pronominal Suffix -ham

In 2 Sam 23:6 we encounter the unusual form kûlîham ‘all of them’. Stan-
dard Hebrew calls for the elision of hê3 after consonants (thus the expected
form is kûlîm). In Aramaic, on the other hand, the third-person masculine
plural pronominal suffix is normally -hm or -hmîm. The very form klîm is at-
tested in line 2 of the Kandahar inscription and the feminine counterpart klîm
is attested in the Arsama correspondence, fragment 26, line 1.32 It is true that
the Fekherye inscription now presents us with something unique, the forms
klî in line 4bis and klîn in line 3,33 but the overall picture is not greatly
affected.34 Thus, I would argue that the use of -ham in 2 Sam 23:6 represents
an isogloss between a northern variety of Hebrew and neighboring Aramaic.

28. Segert, Altaramäische Grammatik, 169–70; and R. Degen, Altaramäische Grammatik (Ab-
handlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 38/3; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969) 57.
29. Hackett, Balaam Text, 115–16; and Harr, Dialect Geography, 108.
Exploration Journal 29 (1979) 136; J. C. Greenfield, Review of J. Hofstijzer and G. van der
Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, JJS 25 (1980) 250; and Harr, Dialect Geography,
108.
31. Regardless of how this form is judged, Hackett, Balaam Text, 115–16, is wrong in stating
that -wh appears “in Aramaic and never in Canaantite” or that it does not occur “in previously
known Canaanite texts.” It patently does occur in Ps 116:12. Ironically, Hackett re-
furred to the presence of -wh in Deir ‘Alla as “the strongest argument for the Aramaic
classification of the text.” Had Hackett cited this unique occurrence in the Bible, she would
have removed the sole nexus with Aramaic and further bolstered her argument that the lan-
guage of the Deir ‘Alla texts is Canaanite.
32. Segert, Altaramäische Grammatik, 170, 173, 222; and Degen, Altaramäische Grammatik,
55–56.
33. See T. Muraoka, “The Tell-Fekherye Bilingual Inscription and Early Aramaic,” Abr-
naham 22 (1983–84) 92.
This is further borne out by the presence of other links with Aramaic in this pericope.  

3mpl Objective Pronoun hem

Another unique third-person masculine plural pronominal suffix occurs in 2 Kgs 9:18 in the expression 'ad hem’ ‘unto them’. The typical reaction of exegetes to this usage has been emendation to the expected form 'adhèhem.  

Again, however, an apparent anomaly in Biblical Hebrew is paralleled in another Canaanite dialect. In the Mesha Stele, line 18, we read w3šh.b hm ‘I dragged them’, with a very clear word divider separating the two words. Garr commented that “the objective suffix was probably a form of the independent pronoun in Moabite; the plural suffix had not yet been fused to the verb.” This is exactly what appears in 'ad hem in 2 Kgs 9:18. Furthermore, as J. C. L. Gibson astutely noted, in later dialects of Aramaic the third-person masculine plural independent pronoun is similarly used.

In light of this evidence there is no reason to emend the MT at 2 Kgs 9:18. Rather, we are dealing with a dialectal variation presumably rare to Transjordan. The context of 2 Kings 9 places us once more in that region. Although the specific words 'ad hem are spoken by a watchman from Jezreel, the central character of this pericope is Jehu. And although we do not know exactly whence Jehu hailed, it is clear that he has Transjordanian connections. For example, in 1 Kgs 19:16 the Gileadite prophet Elijah is instructed by God to anoint Jehu; and in 2 Kgs 9:1—6 there is not coincidental that 'ad hem occurs in an Israeli story and that it is closely paralleled by Moabite usage. The two passages mutually elucidate each other and confirm that we are dealing with a non-Judahite construction.

Non-elision of ḥê in the prefix of Prefix-Prepositions

As is well known, when the definite article ha-/ha-/he follows the uninsonant prefixed prepositions bê, lê, kê, “the ḫi is elided, and its vowel is thrown back to the prefix, in the place of the ūwâ” (GKC §35n/p. 112). However, in the following instances this process does not occur: 1 Sam

35. See my detailed study, “The Last Words of David.”
37. Garr, Dialect Geography, 112.

13:21; 2 Kgs 7:12 Kethiv; Ezek 40:25, 47:22; Ps 36:6; Qoh 8:1; Neh 9:19, 12:38; 2 Chr 10:7, 25:10, 29:27. The only parallel usage to the non-elision of ḥê in this environment within the Canaanite sphere is its eightfold appearance in Punic. Now it is true that this phenomenon does not occur in any standard Phoenician texts, but nevertheless it may be suspected that it was native to some north Canaanite dialects. There are indications of this at least some of the aforementioned biblical attestations.

In 1 Sam 13:21 the action occurs in the territory of Benjamin and the story concerns the kingship of Saul. 2 Kgs 7:12 Kethiv is in the mouth of an Israeli king (which king is referred to is not altogether certain). Psalm 36 has other grammatical peculiarities which I have analyzed as Israelite Hebrew elements in a previous study. Qoh 8:1 appears in a book where considerable northern influence has been demonstrated. Neh 9:19 appears in a pericope which also originated in the northern kingdom.

I have only placed five of the eleven occurrences of this usage in northern texts, but proportionately this is sufficient to label this phenomenon a characteristic of Israelite Hebrew. The remaining six passages are all in explic or postexplic compositions. At first this may seem to present an insurmountable problem for identifying this feature as characteristic of Israelite Hebrew. However, I appeal to the attractive hypothesis of C. H. Gordon that postexplic literature exinces northern grammatical and stylistic features due to the reunion of Israelite exiles and Judahite exiles in Mesopotamia in the sixth century B.C.E. The non-elision of ḥê following the prefixed prepositions would be another example of this phenomenon. I return to this discussion on several occasions below.

40. I exclude from consideration 2 Sam 21:20, 22 liṭhārâpîh = 1 Chr 20:6, 8 liṭhārâpî, where ḥê is apparently considered part of the title; Dan 8:16 liṭhālîz, where ḥê is an essential part of the demonstrative pronoun; and the eight cases of liṭhāyôn ‘on this particular day’, which is used to distinguish it from kâyôn ‘now’.  
43. See M. J. Dahood, “Canaanite-Phoenician Influences in Qoheleth,” Biblica 33 (1952) 30—52, 191–221. Dahood already referred to the non-elision of ḥê after the prefixed prepositions in his study (see 45—46). Although Dahood may have pressed some of the evidence too far (as he often did, especially in his later research), I accept his overall conclusion concerning Qoheleth. See also J. R. Davila, “Qoheleth and Northern Hebrew,” Maarav 5—6 (1990) 69—87.
44. Welch, “Source of Nehemiah IX.”
46. Alternatively, I would explain these instances as hypercorrections (on this aspect of language see J. Blau, On Pseudo-Corrections in Some Semitic Languages (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1970)). Given the tendency for ḥê to be syncopated
Gary A. Rendsburg

Non-elision of הֵז in Hiphil/Hophal Verbs

Another place where הֵז is typically elided is after the preformatives of the Hiphil/Hophal imperfect and participle (yiqtol, maqtol, etc.; GKC §53q/p. 148). In about ten instances, however, הֵז is retained. The same is true of the corresponding Aramaic Hapheh,47 a fact which led P. Jouon to suggest that the biblical examples were “peut-être en partie sous l’influence de l’araméen” (Jouon §54b/p. 121). To some extent Jouon was correct, but some refinement of his opinion is necessary.

In several instances Hiphil/Hophal imperfects which retain הֵז are found in northern compositions. Ps 45:18 yehôdâkâ ‘they praise you’ occurs in a poem which has long been recognized as a northern psalm, probably a Tyrian epithalamum in origin.48 Ps 116:6 yîhôśîē ‘he will save’ occurs in a poem in which other Israeli Hebrew elements appear (see the discussions on the second-person feminine singular pronominal suffix -ki and the third-person masculine singular pronominal suffix -ōhî above). The proper name yēhôsēp ‘Joseph’ in Ps 81:6 is a third instance. This psalm is part of the Asaph collection, in which previous scholars have already detected northern affinities.49

The remaining cases of the non-elision of הֵז in Hiphil/Hophal imperfects and participles occur in unexplained contexts (1 Sam 17:47 [in the mouth of David], Ps 28:7 [a chapter which does not evidence other Israeli Hebrew elements]), or in books from the time of Jeremiah to the time of

47. Segert, Altoramäische Grammatik, 264, 269; Degen, Altoramäische Grammatik, 66, 70; and Rosenthal, Biblical Aramaic, 44, 60.

48. See most recently M. D. Goulder, The Psalms of the Sons of Korah (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 134–35. For the identification of northern grammatical elements in this chapter see already C. A. Briggs, A New and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms (2 vols.; International Critical Commentary; New York: Scribner, 1906–7) 1:384. In an extremely illuminating study, T. H. Gaster, “Psalm 45,” JBL 74 (1955) 239–51, pointed out “that in the Near East, as elsewhere, it is common convention to treat a bridal couple as royalty” (239); thus it may be unnecessary to have to posit a particular royal couple as the subject of the poem. Gaster is correct, yet I would still argue for a northern provenience, based on the linguistic evidence and on the reference to the bride as bat ybrʾ ’daughter of Tyre’ in v. 13.

49. See M. J. Buss, “The Psalms of Asaph and Korah,” JBL 82 (1963) 382–92, esp. 384–85; Ginsberg, Israeli Heritage, 31–33; and Goulder, Sons of Korah, 220. An additional northern element in Psalm 81 is the word kēseh ‘full moon’ in v. 4. This lexeme appears elsewhere only in Prov 7:20 (where it is spelled kēseh’) in a section of the Bible with numerous Phoenicianisms (see n. 22 above), and it has cognates in Phoenician and Ugaritic; see M. Dahood, Psalms II (Anchor Bible 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968) 264.

Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew

Nehemiah (Isa 52:5; Jer 9:4, 37:3; Ezek 46:22; Job 13:9; Neh 11:17). For the latter set we may again appeal to Gordon’s hypothesis concerning Israeli Hebrew elements in postexilic works, or we may merely consider them Aramaisms (pace Jouon). Regardless of these cases, I view the non-elision of הֵז in Hiphil/Hophal imperfects and participles as another isogloss uniting Israeli Hebrew and Aramaic.

Retention of Feminine Singular Nominal Ending -at

All the Canaanite dialects for which we have sufficient evidence retain the feminine singular nominal ending -at in the absolute state. This may be demonstrated in Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, and Deir ‘Alla,50 and probably in Edomite as well.51 The sole exception is Hebrew, where normally this ending shifts to -āh (Meyer §42.3b/pp. 2:41–42). Nevertheless, there are isolated instances in Biblical Hebrew where the dominant Canaanite form appears, vocalized either -at (with patah) or -āt (with qames).52 These examples may be explained in a variety of ways, for example, the vocables maḥārāt ‘morrow’ (25x) and rabbat ‘much’ (7x) are adverbs where the ending -at/āt was felt to have an adverbial function and thus did not shift to -āh;53 the forms pōrāt (Gen 49:22bis) and zīmrāt (Exod 15:2) appear in early poetry, so they presumably stem from a time before the shift of -at > -āh and/or they reflect archaic diction, as poetry often does;54 and the noun qēṣāt, which appears only in Daniel and Nehemiah, is a borrowing from Aramaic.55

For the remaining cases of -at in the MT, it is apparent that once more regional variation is the best explanation. Two nouns, mēnāt ‘portion’ (Ps 16:5) and nahlāt ‘heritage’ (Ps 16:6), appear in a psalm with other indications of northern provenience.56 The same is true of šēnāi (Ps 132:4); this

50. Garrow, Dialect Geography, 93–94.


52. When the latter appears in construct state, this will also be considered an example of the retention of -at, since the expected vocalization would be with patah, not qames. The question of the different a vowels in this ending is an issue which requires further discussion.


54. The word zīmrāt also appears in Isa 12:2 and Ps 118:14 in the expression ‘ezzī wēzīmrāt yāh, but one can surmise that it is merely a fossilized form in the three-word phrase which apparently had become a byword in ancient Israel.

55. For the Aramaic form and its development see Segert, Altoramäische Grammatik, 111, 207.

56. For example, the negative particle baḥ, whose closest cognates appear in Phoenician and Ugaritic especially, appears five times in Psalm 16; and the consonantal writing ‘imr ḫlāc in v. 2 reflects Phoenician orthography and is to be translated as ‘I said’. On the former note that H. L. Ginsberg, “The Northwest Semitic Languages,” in Patriarch (ed. B. Mazar;
composition also exhibits several Israeli Hebrew elements. The form šip'at 'multitude' in 2 Kgs 9:17 appears in a story about the northern kings Je-horam and Jehu and is actually placed in the mouth of an Israeliite scout. Jeremiah utilizes the words yirat 'abundance' (48:36) and têhîlath 'praise' (49:25 Qere) in speeches addressed to Moab and Damascus respectively, and thus has colored his native Anathoth dialect with non-Judahite Hebrew forms. The musical instruments mahâlath (Ps 53:1, 88:1) and nêginat (Ps 61:1) may have been borrowed from a Canaanite dialect which preserved the -at suffix. Finally, mē'âat 'hundred' in Qoh 8:12 is further evidence on the northern origin of this book.

Furthermore, a survey of those toponyms which end in -at/ât reveals that the vast majority of them are located in northern Israel (Anathar in Issachar; Daberath in Zebulun; Helkath and [Shihor-]libnath in Asher; Hammath, [Beth-]anath, and Rakkath in Naphtali; etc.) or in non-Israelite territory (Elath in Edom; Zephath [=Hormah] in the Negeb; Kenath and Tabbath in Transjordan; Hammath and Tibhath in Aram; Zareath in Phoenicia; etc.) It is true that proper names often fossilize earlier linguistic features. In the present case, however, the geographical distribution of these cities may be regarded as confirmation of the fact that retention of the feminine singular nominal ending -at in the absolute state was an element of Israeli Hebrew.

---

57. Most importantly, note the feminine singular demonstrative pronoun zô in v. 12. With this spelling it occurs again only in the northern prophet Hos 7:16. With the spelling zôh it occurs in an Israeli story in 2 Kgs 6:19 and in Qoh 2:2, 4:18, 7:23; 9:13. In three additional instances we encounter the idiomatic expression kâzôh velkačēz 'thus and thus'. Of these, Judg 18:4 occurs in the story of the Danite migration northward, and 1 Kgs 14:5 appears in a story about the Israeli king Jeroboam 1. Accordingly, all of the occurrences of zô/zôh in Biblical Hebrew only Ezek 40:45 and 2 Sam 11:25 are in typically Judahite contexts. These data conform with the fact that in Phoenician the feminine singular demonstrative pronoun is z('); see Friedrich and Röllig, Phöniisch-punische Grammatik, 50; and Garr, Dialect Geography, 83. The northern home of zô/zôh is generally recognized; see E. Y. Kutscher, A History of the Hebrew Language (Jerusalem: Magnes/Leiden: Brill, 1992) 31. On the form êdôt in Ps 132:12, see below.


60. Ginsberg, Israeli Heritage, 36.


62. This point has been made by E. Z. Melamed, 'Sna'im Skeem 'echad (hen dia daoim) ba-Miqra': Turbio 16 (1944–45) 173–89, esp. 177. This article has been reprinted in Miqra'a be-Hagé Lešon ha-Miqra' (ed. A. Haruzit, Lique Turbie; 3: Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982–83) 177–89.

63. The same is true of English hendiatlas constructions: by hook or by crook, jot and tittle, etc., vs. odds and ends, bits and pieces, etc.

64. Many scholars, e.g., Gaster, "Psalm 45," 251, translate the word as singular.

65. Butenweiser, Psalms, 512, opined similarly, translating the word as 'joy' and calling it an "intensive plural, intensifying the idea expressed — a nicety which is lost in the translation."
'madness' in Qoh 1:17, 2:12, 7:25, 9:3 as a feminine singular noun. It too is linked solely with singular nouns. Finally, if we accept the position that Psalm 53 is a northern version of Psalm 14, then yëšu’ät 'salvation' in 53:7 (corresponding to yëšu'at in 14:7) would be another feminine singular noun ending in -ät.61

Use of b and l for 'from'

The interchange of the prefixed prepositions b, l, and m(n) is considered a standard feature of Biblical Hebrew by many scholars.68 In a very important article which has still gone unanswered, Z. Zevit raised some serious objections to this view.69 Moreover, his call for a complete detailed study of the subject has also gone unheeded.70 I also have no intentions of conducting such a study—at least not in the present article—but I would like to underscore one of Zevit’s points and posit a working hypothesis. Zevit noted that in Phoenician not until the fourth century B.C.E. do we have the first appearance of ablative m(n),71 suggesting that b and l served to express 'from' in this language prior to this time.72 If this is the case, it would not be too great a step to suggest the same for Israeli Hebrew.

67. Ibid. I do not, however, concur with the long list of such examples presented by Dahood. For the most comprehensive statement see M. Dahood, Psalms III (AB 17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 379–80.
68. This most important article on the subject remains N. M. Sarna, “The Interchange of the Prepositions Beth and Min in Biblical Hebrew”, IBL 78 (1959) 310–16.
69. Z. Zevit, “The So-Called Interchangeability of the Prepositions b, l, and m(n) in Northwest Semitic,” JANESCU 7 (1975) 103–11.
70. Ibid., 111: “What is desired is an inner Hebrew study. ... All verbs which are coordinated with at least two proclitic prepositions should be isolated and their semantic and syntactic contexts described, catalogued, and compared. ... Once collected, the data should be analyzed with an eye to the synchronic and diachronic distribution of the phenomena insofar as this is possible.”
71. Ibid., 107–9: “Thus it seems that Phoenician, or minimally Phoenician up to the fourth century B.C.E., like Ugaritic, functioned with only b and l (tm in Aramaic).”
72. As Zevit, ibid., 109, noted, the situation in Phoenician is similar to that in Ugaritic. The Ugaritic poetic texts, presumably composed in a more archaic idiom, use only b and l. The prose texts, where innovative usages are likely to appear first, include the one attestation of m. See M. Liverani, “Elementi innovativi nell’ugaritico non letterario”, Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, 8th ser., 1965–6 (1964) 173–91, esp. 188. Should this be used as another point to bolster the classification system of Ginsberg (“Northwest Semitic Languages”), with a Phoenic group distinguished from a Hebrewic? I am content merely to raise the issue without entering further discussion.

This conclusion is bolstered by the following examples from the Bible where b and l clearly do mean 'from':

Josh 3:16 Kethiv harḥeq mē'ōd bē'ādām [Qere: mē'ādām] very far from Adam
2 Kgs 4:24 ʾal taʿādšor li lirkōb
do not prevent me from riding
2 Kgs 14:13 bēšaʾar ʾeprayim ʾad šaʿar happinnāh from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate
2 Kgs 14:28 hēšīb ʾet dammeseq weʾet hāmāt līḥūdāh bēyiṣrāʾēl he retrieved Damascus and Hamath from Yehuda [=Samšal] for Israel73
Ps 10:1 lāmāḥ ywhw taʿāmōd bērāhōq why, O Yahweh, do you stand from afar?
Ps 29:10 ywhw lammabāb yāsāb Yahweh has reigned from [=since] the flood

In these examples there is evidence for northern composition. The first concerns a city in the territory of Manasseh; the second appears in a story of the northern prophet Eliasha; the third and fourth occur in the records of Israeli kings (Jehoash and Jeroboam II, respectively); and the last two occur in psalms with northern affinities. In Psalm 10 we may note the fivefold use of bāl, the occurrence of meb in v. 13 (see above), and the periphrastic perfect hāyītā ʿōzer ‘you were helping’ in v. 14 (a usage which occurs commonly in Aramaic). Psalm 29, as is well known, refers to northern locales such as Lebanon, Sirion, and Kadesh, and mentions northern flora such as cedars and forests.

In light of this evidence, I am inclined to include the ablative sense of b and l in my list of Israeli Hebrew features. I repeat that this proposal is but a working hypothesis, and I agree that it merits further study along the lines called for by Zevit, but for the nonce I believe the conclusion is defensible.

Retention of yōd in III-y Verbs

In standard Biblical Hebrew, the yōd of III-y verbs is elided, as in *yigilayu > yigilā (Meyer §82.1b/pp. 2:156–57). In a number of instances, however, yōd is retained, both in perfect and in imperfect forms.74 Many of these occur

74. For a complete list and discussion see D. A. Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 3; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972) 57–62.
in sections of the Bible where northern origin may be detected or where code-switching is at work. Furthermore, the retention of yōd in III-γ verbs is also a characteristic of Aramaic; thus we may recognize another isogloss linking Israeli Hebrew and Aramaic.

The biblical forms which occur in northern compositions are Deut 32:37 hashayyā `seek refuge’, Ps 36:8 yeḥēṣayyān `seek refuge’, Ps 36:9 yirwēyān `overflowing’, Ps 77:4 yeḥēmāyān `moan’, Ps 78:44 yiṣṭāyān `drink’, and Ps 83:3 yeḥēmāyān `moan’. O. Eissfeldt has argued on nonlinguistic grounds for a non-Judahite provenience of Deuteronomy 32,76 and his conclusion is generally accepted. As noted above, Psalm 36 is a poem with other elements of Israeli Hebrew. The three last examples occur in the psalms of Asaph, which, as noted above, demonstrate northern connections. Psalms 77 and 78, for example, refer several times to Joseph and Ephraim. Psalm 83 invokes the memories of the battle against Sisera and Jabin and the exploits of Gideon. An additional linguistic marker of Israeli Hebrew is found in Ps 77:18: the plural form ḫāṣāṣekā (see below).

Code-switching is present in many other cases where yōd of III-γ verbs is retained, namely, Num 24:6 nittāyā `stretch out’, Isa 17:12 yeḥēmāyān `roar’, and Isa 21:12 tibāyān `inquire’, bēḥāyā `inquire’, ēṣṭayā `come’. The first occurs in the Balaam oracles,77 the second appears in Isaiah’s address to Damascus, and the last three examples appear in Isaiah’s reproduction of the speech of a watchman of Damascus.78 In addition, we should probably add the six examples from Job (3:25, 12:6, 16:22, 19:2, 30:14, 31:38), all of which are placed in the mouth of the protagonist.

Use of Inflected Participles

Eight times in the Bible, participles (both active and passive) are inflected with the suffixes normally attached to perfect verbs. Most scholars subsume this usage under the phenomenon known as the ḥīreq compaginis.79 I am inclined, however, to separate these eight instances and treat them as a distinct phenomenon.

Before proceeding to the biblical evidence, it should be noted that this usage is paralleled in certain dialects of Aramaic.80 In his grammar of Galilean Aramaic,81 G. Dalman presented about a dozen examples, of which I cite three for purposes of illustration: Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 15:12 myamsyt ‘she was given’; Num 22:30 myśhyyyt ‘ich wurde benutzt’; and t. Ketub. 11:5 myznt ‘du wirst ernährt’.82 In his monograph on the language of the Babylonian Talmud, M. Margolis noted that although the masculine plural participle is paradigmatically yḥhy(n), the form yḥbw also appears, with “the ending imported from the perf.”83

In view of the Aramaic evidence, we can explain the eight examples of inflected participles in the Bible. Gen 31:39bīs genāḇēt ‘I was robbed’, uttered by Jacob to Laban, appears in an Aramaic-speaking environment.84 2 Kgs 4:23 Kethiv ḥikit (presumably to be vocalized ḥōlāḥit) ‘you [fem. sing.] are going’ is spoken by the man from Shunem in the territory of Issachar. The remaining examples occur in books written ca. 586 B.C.E. when Aramaic influence began to exert itself upon Hebrew: Jer 10:17 Kethiv, 22:33b Kethiv, 51:13 Kethiv; Ezek 27:3 Kethiv; Lam 4:21. Moreover, all but one of these passages may evidence code-switching. Although Jer 22:23 occurs in a speech addressed to Jehoiakim in Jerusalem, the prophet evokes the imagery of far northern Israel (“Lebanon” and “cedars”). Jer 51:13 occurs in the famous address to Babylon, a country which at this time was already speaking Aramaic. Ezek 27:3 is in a context concerning Tyre, and although we have no evidence for inflected participles in Phoenician, we are once again in a northern setting. Finally, Lam 4:21 refers to Edom and Uz. We know precious little about


76. O. Eissfeldt, Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32,1–43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Leides (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse 104/5; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958) 41–43.

77. For additional Aramaizing elements in the Balaam oracles, see Rendsburg, “The Last Words of David,” 115–16.

78. See Kaufman, “Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects,” 55; and Tur-Sinaï, “‘Aramī,” 593–94.

79. GKC §90l–n/pp. 253–54; and Robertson, Linguistic Evidence, 69–76.

80. The use of inflected participles is not to be confused with another, quite widespread, phenomenon in Aramaic, namely, the attachment of the independent pronouns (or shortened forms thereof) to the participle. This is an altogether different feature. See T. Nüdlke, Mandäische Grammatik (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1875) 230–33; idem, Compendious Syriac Grammar (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904) 45; and C. Brockelmann, Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1908–13) 1:582.

81. For the use of this term see E. Y. Kutscher, Meḥiqarim ba-‘Aramit ha-Ge’ilit (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1952); and idem, Studies in Galilean Aramaic (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1976).

82. G. Dalman, Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäischen (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905) 284.


about Edomite and of course nothing about the language of Uz (save for what may be inferred from our knowledge of North Arabian dialects such as Thamudic, Lihyanic, and Safaitic). However, the Aramaic coloring of the Book of Job, set in the land of Uz, is substantial. It is possible and maybe even probable that Aramaic or Aramaic-type dialects were spoken over a wide area of the Syrian Desert.85

The total picture, then, allows us to conclude that the use of inflected participles was another isogloss linking Israelitic Hebrew and Aramaic. Whether other dialects (Phoenician? Edomite?) also incorporated this feature cannot be determined given the present state of our knowledge.

Reduplicatory Plural of Nouns Based on Geminate Stems

The term reduplicatory plural refers to the repeating of the final consonant of a singular noun based on a geminate stem. Normally, Hebrew resorts to gemination in such cases, for example ʿām ‘people’, pl. ʿāmmim. But in a considerable number of instances the reduplicatory type appears, for example ʿāmmānīm.86 This latter method of forming the plural is standard in Aramaic, as in ʾinnīn ‘peoples’, kādn ‘pitchers’, ḥilīnu ‘shades’.87 Accordingly, it will not be surprising to learn that a goodly number of the reduplicatory plurals in the Bible appear in texts where northern origin may be detected.

Judges 5 is a good place to start the survey. The northern affinities of this poem are well established. Two reduplicatory plurals of nouns based on geminate stems appear therein: ʿāmāmekā ‘your peoples’ (v. 14) and ḥiqēqē ‘decisions’ of (v. 15). Num 23:7 harērē ‘mountains of’ is in the mouth of Balaam, the Aramean prophet. Nehemiah 9, whose northern provenience was mentioned earlier,88 includes two such plurals: ʿāmmānīm ‘peoples’ (v. 22) and ʿāmmēnē ‘peoples of’ (v. 24). Ps 36:7 harērē ‘mountains of’ occurs in a poem with a plethora of northernisms (see above). Ps 50:10 harērē ‘mountains of’, Ps 76:5 harērē ‘mountains of’, and Ps 77:18 ḥāsatāqēkā ‘your arrows’ all appear in the Asaph collection, whose northern provenience was commented upon above. Ps 133:3 ḥarērē ‘mountains of’ occurs in a poem which evokes Mt. Hermon (v. 3) and in which the relative pronoun še- appears (vv. 2 and 3).89 Prov 29:13 tēkkām ‘oppressions’ places us in a book with considerable northern influence.90 Song 2:17, 4:6 selēqē ‘shadows’ and Song 4:8 harērē ‘mountains of’ may be advanced as additional examples of the northern affinities of this book. Analogous to the discussion in the previous section, Jer 6:4 ṣilēqē ‘shadows of’ and Ezek 4:12, 4:15 ṣilāqē ‘pulpets of’ appear in prophetic books where Aramaic influence may be increasingly seen. There thus remain only a handful of occurrences which do not fit this interpretation: Deut 33:15; Hab 3:6; Ps 87:1.91 In short, I have isolated another isogloss linking Israelitic Hebrew and Aramaic.92

The Plural ʾēšim ‘Men’

The standard plural of Hebrew ʾēš ‘man’ is ʾānāšim ‘men’, built from a different root. Three times, however, Biblical Hebrew admits the “expected” plural ʾēšim: Isa 53:3, Ps 141:4, Prov 8:4. Since Phoenician utilizes ʾēšim ‘men’ as the plural of ʾēš ‘man’,93 there is reason to believe that the biblical form was at home in northern Israel. This conclusion is borne out by two of the attestations listed above.

Psalm 141 includes several indications of northern origin. Dahood already noted that this poem uses dal ‘door’ (v. 3) and manʾammēmēh ‘their delicacies’ (v. 4), hupax legomena with analogs only in Phoenician, as well as the negative particle bal (v. 4).94 In addition, I have already pointed out that the use of lām ‘to eat’ (v. 4) is a northern feature.95 Furthermore, it is more than likely that the very enigmatic vānī (v. 5) is ‘my wine’, reflecting monophthongization of the diptongh ay.96 Note that this vocable is parallel

85. The linguistic evidence from Isa 21:11–15 would suggest this; see Kaufman, “Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects,” 55–56.
86. For the term reduplicatory and for the Afroasiatic background of this formation, see J. H. Greenberg, “Internal a-Plurals in Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic),” in Afrikanistische Studien (ed. J. Lukas; Berlin: Akademische Verlag, 1955) 198–204. In light of Greenberg’s penetrating study, it is best to view the reduplicatory plurals of geminate nouns in Hebrew as internal or broken plurals with the -im ending added secondarily due to Anagogiebildung. Note the similarity between the Hebrew forms under discussion and such Afar-Sahi (Cushitic) lexemes as īl ‘eye’, pl. īlat; boʾr ‘cloth’, pl. boʾr.
87. Segert, Altaramäische Grammatik, 537, 546; and M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (London: Luzac, 1903), 1:537.
88. Welch, “Source of Nehemiah IX.”
89. For the northern origin of še-, see Kutscher, History of the Hebrew Language, 32.
90. Furthermore, nearby in Prov 29:10 we encounter the expression ʾanēš dāmim with both members of the construct chain in plural. For the northern origin of this syntagma, see Ge viirz, “Asher in the Blessing of Jacob,” 160; and above n. 17.
91. For Ps 87:1, however, note that Goulder, Sons of Korah, has argued for a Danite origin for the Korah collection.
92. After I completed the research for this section, I was happy to discover that I was anticipated in my conclusion by E. Y. Kutscher, “Ha-Šaṣa ba-ʾirith u-Benot Libyata be-Meseq ha-Dorot,” Hadara 47 (1968–69) 507–9. This article has been reprinted in E. Y. Kutscher, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977) 182–84; see esp. 183.
96. On monophthongization of anšay as an Israelite Hebrew feature, see G. A.
to šemen ‘oil’ in Ps 141:5, as is also the case in Amos 6:6; Mic 6:15; Ps 104:15; Song 1:2–3, 4:10.\footnote{Rendsburg, “Monophthongization of awa/ > a in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic,” in Eblaistica 2 (1990) 91–126; also BL §171/p. 202; and see C. H. Gordon, “Eblaite,” Eblaistica 1 (1987) 24.}

Little need be said about the use of ʾîšîm in Prov 8:4. After all the evidence adduced in this article, it is patently clear that Proverbs in general and chapters 1–9 in particular exhibit numerous traits of Phoenician and Israel- 
ian Hebrew. As far as Isa 53:3 is concerned, I again advance Gordon’s theory concerning the influence of Israelian Hebrew on exilic and postexilic literature.

**CONCLUSION**

The work of scholars such as Burney, Albright, Ginsberg, Kutscher, and Rabin has provided a basis for the conclusion that the Hebrew of northern Israel differed in a variety of ways from the Hebrew of Judah in the south. Rabin has been somewhat cautious in his statement: “The geographical separation of Judah and its non-participation in the political events affecting the north must also have led to a certain amount of linguistic separatism. How large this gap was, we cannot properly gauge. . . .”\footnote{As a syntactic parataxis the nouns yāyin and šemen appear in Prov 21:17 and 2 Chr 11:11, and they are also collocated in Deut 28:39–40. In Ugaritic poetry they are parallel in Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, 126:iii:15–16, 128:iv:4–5, 128:iv:15–16. For discussion see M. Dahood, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” in Ras Shamra Parallels (ed. L. R. Fisher and S. Rummel; Analect Orientalia 49; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1972) 210; and Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word Pairs*, 367–68.} In the foregoing presentation I have adduced fourteen additional features of Biblical Hebrew which may be considered characteristic of Israelian but not of Judaithe Hebrew. In light of this material, I believe we may now better assess the situation described by Rabin. We still, unfortunately, do not possess sufficient data to conduct a thorough investigation of the problem, but the picture is becoming clearer. There were, in fact, considerable differences between the Hebrew of the north and the Hebrew of the south. Obviously, there was no communication problem between, let us say, Naphtalites and Judaithe. But the differences between Israelian and Judaithe Hebrew during the Iron Age were probably along the lines known to us from such modern examples as English in the northern and southern regions of the United States, German in northern Germany versus Bavaria and Austria, Arabic as represented by the various colloquials spread from Morocco to Iraq, etc.

Moreover, the relatively small geographic area covered by ancient Israel (in contrast to the aforementioned English-, German-, and Arabic-speaking areas) is no reason not to assume regional dialects. The United Kingdom, for example, is one thirty-fifth the size of the United States, and yet the former has far more regional varieties of English than the latter.\footnote{R. McCrum, W. Cran, and R. MacNeil, *The Story of English* (New York: Viking, 1986) 238.}

This article has utilized Aramaic and Phoenician parallels to a great extent. Does this mean that Israelian Hebrew more closely resembled these two varieties of Northwest Semitic speech than it did Judaithe Hebrew? To answer this question, I turn once again to Rabin (who treated only Aramaic, but the discussion is equally appropriate for the case of Phoenician):

It is an acknowledged fact in modern linguistics that dialect features are not distributed in sharply defined areas, but rather each single feature, and in fact every single word in a certain dialect form, has its own distinct area of distribution; the lines drawn around such areas, called “isoglosses,” cross and recross each other. Sharp divisions are generally brought about by political events which obliterate the dialects of intermediate areas. There is thus nothing unusual in thinking that certain (features of Aramaic) extended over parts of the northern dialects of Hebrew, as well as over the area of Damascus. . . . Some such isoglosses may well have run along the northern edge of the Canaanite corridor of Jerusalem, thus marking off Judah from the northern tribes, but linking the latter to the plain of Damascus.\footnote{Rabin, “Emergence of Classical Hebrew,” 71.}

In other words, Israelian Hebrew shared many isoglosses with Phoenician and Aramaic. Nevertheless, based on such texts as Judges 5; Deuteronomy 32; Psalms 10, 36, 45, 103, and 116; Proverbs 1–9, etc., it is clear that the language of the northern tribes is still Hebrew. Again a modern analogy will be helpful. The language spoken by rural Dutchmen on the Dutch-German border shares many isoglosses with that of their German counterparts across the border, and such speech communities have little difficulty communicating with each other. The speech of these Dutchmen may even have more in common with the German spoken across the border than it does with the Dutch spoken in Amsterdam. Similarly, the German spoken along the Dutch border may have more in common with the Dutch spoken across the border than it does with the German spoken in Frankfurt. And yet, due mainly to political reasons (see Rabin’s statement above), we still must label the language of these rural Hollanders “Dutch” and the language of their German counterparts “German.” Similar situations are found elsewhere in the world, as in the French and Italian spoken respectively along the French-Italian border. Accordingly, we must still reckon Israelian Hebrew as Hebrew, albeit a regional variety thereof sharing many isoglosses with Phoenician and Aramaic. A
glance at the map indicates that Dan, Naphtali, Asher, and other northern tribes were closer to Tyre and Damascus than they were to Jerusalem. It is not surprising, therefore, to be able to isolate northern dialectal features in Hebrew paralleling usages better known from Phoenician and Aramaic.

As far as the presence of northernisms in exilic and postexilic literature is concerned, the evidence adduced herein confirms Gordon's position. Gordon's article only discussed a few features; I have now added several additional items (non-elision of $h\tilde{e}$ following prefixed prepositions, and non-elision of $h\tilde{e}$ in Hiphil/Hophal imperfects and participles). Accordingly, I affirm the view that northern tribes reunited with Judahites during the Exile in Babylonia, at which time Israeli Hebrew elements returned to Hebrew idiom.

Finally, let me respond to an obvious criticism which may be leveled against the methodology used in this article. There is a danger, in some of the treatments above, of circular reasoning. That is to say, grammatical feature $X$ is considered a northernism on the basis of its parallel in Phoenician or Aramaic; it is then located in text $A$ which is now considered a northern composition. When grammatical feature $Y$ is isolated and it too appears in text $A$, this is considered confirmation both of the identification of $Y$ as an Israeli Hebrew characteristic and of the northern provenience of text $A$. As I remark above, I recognize the difficulties with this kind of argumentation. However, I should note the following. In almost every case, the texts in which northernisms have been found have previously been theorized as being Israeli compositions based on other, nonlinguistic criteria. This is true of such diverse compositions as Deuteronomy 32; the stories of the northern judges; the material concerning the northern kingdom of Israel; Psalms 29, 45, and 77; Nehemiah 9; etc. Accordingly, the linguistic evidence adduced herein confirms the views already expressed by Eissfeldt, Welch, Ginsberg, Goulder, etc., concerning the non-Judahite origin of such sections of the Bible as the aforementioned chapters.

101. See n. 45 above.

102. On the other hand, although we are dealing with an argument *ex silentio*, the lack of any northernisms in the so-called $E$ source and in the core of Deuteronomy mitigates against proposals to view these documents as Israeli. See O. Procksch, *Das norddeutsche Sagenbuch, Die Elohimquelle* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906); and Ginsberg, *Israelian Heritage*.


*Note added in proof:* Since the present article was authored, I have turned my attention to the northern Psalms in great detail. The result is the book cited above in n. 56. I was able to incorporate mention of my newer study into the footnote, but I have made no substantive changes in the text of the article itself. I append this one suggestion: that Psalm 87:1 is *also* a northern text (though see n. 91). In light of further research, I am now able to demonstrate that the Korah collection of Psalms is also of northern origin. See *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms*, 51–60.

[March, 1988]
Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew

Edited by Walter R. Bodine

Eisenbrauns
Winona Lake, Indiana
1992