Israelian Hebrew Features in Deuteronomy 33

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The author apologizes for the repeated error that appears in the printed version of this article: in notes 32, 33, 51, 65, 69, and 82, the spelling Ma’agarim should be corrected to Ma’agarim.
In an article published 15 years ago, I called attention to a series of Israelian Hebrew (IH) features that appear in the blessings to the northern tribes in Genesis 49 (e.g., דֶּרֶךְ 'bone' in the blessing to Issachar, רָפֶה 'beauty' in the blessing to Naphtali, etc.). This essay, devoted to the similar blessings to the tribes in Deuteronomy 33, is a natural complement to that article. As we shall see, also in this poem one encounters grammatical forms and lexical items that reflect the regional dialects of the tribes.

It gives me great pleasure to dedicate this essay to my friend and colleague Jeffrey H. Tigay, whose many publications have illumined the world of the Bible and the ancient Near East and whose commentary on Deuteronomy is a singular achievement, destined to remain the standard work for years to come. I am especially delighted to develop further the succinct statement penned by our jubilarian in that volume: “It is also possible that the poem uses words or forms from regional variations of Hebrew spoken by the individual tribes.”

1. The noun דַּנַּג 'choice fruit' appears five times in the blessing to Joseph in vv. 13–16. This word occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in Song 4:13, 4:16, 7:14; the concentration of IH features in the Song of Songs reveals the...
composition to be of northern provenance. The distribution of גֵּדַמ in the Bible, accordingly, demonstrates that this lexeme was at home in northern Israel but was not utilized in Judahite Hebrew (JH). The presence of an Aramaic cognate דְּגָמ, with meanings 'precious ware, costly gift, etc.' as well as 'choice fruit', solidifies this conclusion. One happily notes an adumbration of this position by the master Hebraist S. R. Driver more than a century ago: “The word may be here a North Isr. Aramaism.”

2. The noun בִּיר, 'month' occurs in v. 14, also in the blessing to Joseph (in the plural form בִּירִים). The Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) form is בּיר 'month', appearing 281 times in the Bible; clearly it was used in all strata of ancient Hebrew. By contrast, בַּיר appears only 12 times, with a distribution pointing to its home in northern Israel.

The word בַּיר appears in another decidedly Israelian context in 2 Kgs 15:13, within the short description of the brief reign of King Shallum.

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7. The data from other sources are similar: מִיר occurs 2x in Ben Sira and 87x in the DSS (see DCH, 3:165), whereas מִיר occurs 8x in Ben Sira and 4x in the DSS (see DCH 4:296). The inscriptive evidence is an even split: the former occurs 8x in the Arad ostraca, while the latter occurs 8x in the Gezer calendar (see further below). I do not include Arad ostraca 20, line 2 (which apparently is counted by DCH 4:296, with 9 attestations of מִיר in Hebrew inscriptions), on which see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, J. J. M. Roberts, C. L. Seow, and R. E. Whitaker, Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 43.

8. For previous discussion, see my Israeli Hebrew in the Book of Kings (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2002) 127–28. Note that the numeral “28” given on p. 127 should be corrected to “281.”
We also encounter the noun יְרֵא three times in the description of the building of Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 6:37–38, 8:2). There is nothing more Judahite and “non-northern” than the temple in Jerusalem; thus, at first glance, the presence of יְרֵא in these chapters would seem to counter our argument that this lexeme is an IH feature. When we recognize, however, that in each of its three usages יְרֵא precedes month names known from Phoenician (Ziv, Bul, and Etanim, respectively), the evidence suggests the following: not only were Phoenician builders and artisans responsible for the construction of the temple, but Phoenician scribes were responsible for recording the activity. The individual responsible for the final form of the book of Kings simply “lifted” this material from an earlier source and retained the Phoenician elements.

The other text in which one finds the noun יְרֵא in common usage is the book of Job (3:6, 7:3, 20:2, 39:2). Here we are dealing with the technique of style-switching, a prominent feature of this composition. The many Aramaic-like features (and Arabic-like features as well) in the book of Job provide local color to the story, geographically set in the eastern desert fringe.

The other three attestations of יְרֵא in the Bible are as follows: Exod 2:2, Deut 21:13, Zech 11:8. The third of these may be explained as a true Aramaism in the prose of a postexilic writer; the other two require special comment.

Exod 2:2 is part of the Moses birth story and thus within the larger context of the slavery-plagues-exodus narrative, in which no other signs of IH are present. However, the author’s desire to treat his readers to a superb display of alliteration led him to select the dialectal word יְרֵא (in the plural), because of the expression יְרָאָה בְּלֵא (‘she loamed it with loam’) in the next verse. Note the presence of the consonants ה, מ, and ר in all three words.

9. They apparently recorded not only these chapters but other sections of the account of Solomon’s reign as well. Note the proper nouns יְרֵא הִירוֹמ ‘Hirom’ (1 Kgs 5:24, 5:32, 7:40; the first two refer to the king of Tyre, the third refers to the master craftsman) and יְרֵא אֱלֹח ‘Elot’ (1 Kgs 9:26). Both forms reflect the characteristic Phoenician shift ą > ą, on which, see J. Fox, “A Sequence of Vowel Shifts in Phoenician and Other Languages,” JNES 55 (1996) 37–47. A thorough survey of the account of Solomon’s reign with an eye toward identifying additional Phoenician features remains a desideratum.

10. There are two attestations of SBH יְרֵא in Job (14:5, 21:21).


Concerning Deut 21:13, it is apposite to note that scholars have suggested that the book of Deuteronomy is a northern composition. A thorough investigation of this question using the linguistic evidence, especially the differentiations between IH and JH, still has not been conducted. I myself have pointed to an occasional Northernism in Deuteronomy, and yet at the same time one hesitates to claim that a significant concentration of elements of this sort is present in the book. Until this question is settled with some certainty, for the nonce we should judge Deuteronomy to be a Judahite composition, and thus I would not include this passage within the IH corpus.

The overall picture that emerges from this survey of יִירָייִ is that this lexeme is an IH trait, notwithstanding an occasional attestation in Judahite texts. This conclusion is bolstered by the presence of יִירָייִ in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramaic. In the first two, יִירָייִ is limited to ‘new moon’, while יִירָייִ is employed for ‘month’; whereas in Aramaic, יִירָייִ is attested in all dialects and is used for both ‘month’ and ‘new moon’.

The Gezer Calendar (KAI 182) utilizes the word יִירָייִ eight times (see above, n. 7). Given the location of Gezer in the territory of Judah, the presence of יִירָייִ in this inscription presents a problem for my thesis. Presumably, the dialect at Gezer—situated in the far northwestern corner of Judah, at the edge of the

coastal plain, bordering on the southern extreme of what would emerge as the Northern Kingdom of Israel within decades of the writing of this inscription—was a border dialect that included features of IH.\textsuperscript{19}

In conclusion, the noun יָם 'month' is a classic example of an IH trait, based on (a) the distribution of this word in the Bible, (b) the opposition of this term to SBH שָׁלוֹם, and (c) the cognate data from Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramaic.

3. The form יֵרֶה 'mountains (of)' in v. 15, also in the blessing to Joseph, is an example of the reduplicatory plural of a geminate noun.\textsuperscript{20} This particular form occurs 10 times in the Bible, as opposed to the standard form יְרֶה, which occurs 28 times. The complete paradigm is offered by the noun יָם 'people', with the standard plural forms יְמִים (absolute), יָמִים (construct), and with the atypical plural forms יָמִים (absolute) in Neh 9:22, יָמִים (construct) in Neh 9:24 (see also יָמִים in Judg 5:14). As the following will demonstrate, the latter forms appear in the Bible overwhelmingly in Israelian texts.

Before presenting the biblical evidence, note that this grammatical form is a standard feature of Aramaic, as witnessed, for example, by the following Old Aramaic forms: אָמִים 'peoples', בְּרִי 'pitchers', and שְׁלָלִים 'shades'.\textsuperscript{21} This feature, therefore, represents an isogloss shared by Aramaic and IH, a point recognized already by E. Y. Kutscher.\textsuperscript{22}

Biblical examples include: Num 23:7 יֵרֶה (as part of the style-switching device present in the Balaam oracles\textsuperscript{23}), Judg 5:14 יִרְמִים and 5:15 יֶרֶק (both in the Song of Deborah, a northern poem\textsuperscript{24}), Pss 36:7, 50:10, 76:5, 87:1, 133:3,

\textsuperscript{19} Note that Shmuel Ahituv in his standard edition of Hebrew inscriptions (Hakhtav veha-Miktav [Jerusalem: Bialik, 2005] 228–32, esp. 228) included the Gezer Calendar in his chapter on Israel, and not in his chapter on Judah. Ahituv’s main reason for designating the Gezer Calendar as Israelian is the presence of the contracted diphthong in the word יַע in line 7 of the text.

\textsuperscript{20} 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: Akademie-Verlag, 1955) 198–204.

\textsuperscript{21} See S. Segert, Altaramäische Grammatik (Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1975) 537, 546.

\textsuperscript{22} E. Y. Kutscher, “Ha-Safa ha-’Ivrit u-Venot Livyata be-Meshekh ha-Dorot,” Hadar 47 (1968–69) 507–9, in particular 507; reprinted in E. Y. Kutscher, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977) 167–175, in particular 175.


all הער, Ps 77:18 תצניר (all in northern psalms), Prov 29:13 כוכב (in an IH composition), Song 2:17, 4:6 תלהם, Song 4:8 הער (in an IH composition), and Neh 9:22, 9:24 טמון, Neh 9:24 הננה. To this list we may add the following: Jer 6:4 תלהל (either as part of the Benjaminites dialect or as an Aramaism), and Ezek 4:12, 15 להלם (most likely an Aramaism). This leaves only one occurrence in a Judahite text, Hab 3:6 הער, and one occurrence in a text of uncertain provenance, Deut 8:9 הער (on which, see above, p. 171).

The evidence is clear: based on both the distribution of this feature in the Bible and its standard usage in Aramaic, we conclude that the reduplicatory plural of a geminate noun is an IH characteristic.

4. The noun תועש 'abundance, multitude' occurs in v. 19 in the joint blessing to Zebulun and Issachar. Elsewhere in the Bible, this lexeme takes the feminine form תועשת, the distribution of which points to its being an Israeli feature. The word occurs twice in Kgs 9:17, in a story set in northern Israel; twice in Job (22:11, 38:34), where style switching is at work; once in the prophet Ezekiel's oracle to Tyre (26:10), where the related technique of addressee switching is at work; and once in Second Isaiah (60:6), which most likely should be considered an Aramaism in the lexis of the Exilic prophet.

The two noun forms occur, albeit infrequently, in Mishnaic Hebrew (MH): תועש occurs 6 times in Sipre Devarim 354 (and only here), in an exposition of our verse; and תועשת occurs twice in the corpus, in the parallel texts m. Sojah

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27. As noted above in the treatment of דגומת; again, see my "Israelian Hebrew in the Song of Songs."
29. On these issues in the book of Jeremiah, see below, in the discussions of items nos. 5 and 7. In general, see C. Smith, "With an Iron Pen and a Diamond Tip": Linguistic Peculiarities in the Book of Jeremiah (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 2003).
31. On this technique, by which the prophets adopt linguistic features of the foreign nation being addressed, see my "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," 184–88.
8:1 and Sipre Devarim 192. More substantial is the productivity of the verbal root שָׁמַע in MH: it occurs 36x in Qal, Piel, Pual, and Hiphil conjugations, with a range of meanings, such as 'pour in abundance, overmeasure, etc.', as well as the derived sense of 'slant, make diagonal, etc.' The MH evidence is relevant to our enterprise (see also below, item nos. 6, 7, 10), given the Galilean provenance of the Mishna and related Tannaitic literature. This explains why many IH lexemes, which appear relatively rarely in the Bible, are attested more frequently in MH.

Even more generous evidence is forthcoming from Aramaic, in which the root is exceedingly common and productive, generating both nouns and verbs, especially in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, and Syriac.

Examples from the Targumim include Tg. Neofiti to Exod 26:12–13, with five instances of the root שָׁמַע 'overflow, abundant' (3x in the text, 2x in the margin) to render the Hebrew root כָּךְ. Tg. Yonatan incorporates the root שָׁמַע into its slightly expansive rendering of Hebrew כַּךְ 'like the River (Euphrates)' in Isa 48:18, 59:19, 66:12: כַּךְ כָּךְ נָּהּ מִדְרָשׁ 'like the flow of the River Euphrates'. Tg. Proverbs uses the root שָׁמַע to render Hebrew כְּפִים in Prov 3:10 and to render Hebrew כְּפִים in Prov 5:16. These examples—to which many more could be added—indicate the extent to which the root שָׁמַע is utilized in Aramaic.

In addition, the word כָּךְ occurs in a Punic inscription with the meaning 'abundance'.

This cognate evidence from Aramaic and Phoenician (Punic) provides the background for the presence of the noun כָּךְ in the book of Job (style switching), in Ezekiel’s oracle to Tyre (addressee switching), and in Deut 33:19 within the blessing to Zebulun and Issachar (representing a lexical isogloss shared by IH and the neighboring dialects/languages to the north).

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33. Data from Ma’agarim; see also M. Moreshet, Leqsiqon ha-Po’al she-nithaddesh bi-Leshon ha-Tanna’im (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990) 375.
5. Scholars are divided on the meaning and derivation of שומן in v. 19 at the end of the joint blessing to Zebulun and Issachar. While some prefer to derive this word from the root קסס ‘cover over’, 37 with the assumption of hyper-corrective orthography, namely, סינ for samekh, 38 most likely the meaning of the word in our passage is ‘hidden’ to be derived from the root זמן ‘hide’. As such, the phrase שלמה יבשומן תומך יושב includes two relatively synonymous terms, to be rendered ‘the hidden treasures of the sand’. 39

For this interpretation to be valid, one must assume the shift of שד to סינ in this instance. This shift is attested elsewhere in the Bible in the proper name ישע ‘Isaac’, occurring 4 times in the corpus in place of the standard form ישוע. The picture is especially complicated given the many reflexes of the root for “laugh” in Semitic, 40 and yet the distribution of קשוע indicates that we are dealing with an IH feature.

The form is best known from the book of Amos, where it appears two times (7:9, 7:16). To my mind, Amos is a northern book, in line with the argument first advanced by David Qimhi, who identified the prophet’s home town as Tekoa of the Galilee and not Tekoa of the Judean wilderness. 41 Even if one accepts the majority view, however, that Amos hailed from Judah, 42 one still could imagine IH elements in his composition, either in light of the addressee-switching technique prevalent in other prophetic books (see above) and/or because the prophet’s words were recorded in the north. 43

The form ישוע also occurs in Jer 33:26 (the only reference to Isaac in the book), about which two (not mutually exclusive) points may be made. First, it

37. Thus, e.g., BDB 706; and HALOT 928.
41. For a recent treatment advocating this approach, see S. N. Rosenbaum, Amos of Israel (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990). For a convenient summary of the primary data, though with a contrary conclusion, see A. Hakham, “‘Amos,” in Ye ‘Asar (Da’at Miqra; Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990) 6.
42. For a recent championing of this position, see R. C. Steiner, Stockmen from Tekoa, Sycomores from Sheba (CBQMS 36; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 2003).
is possible that the form reflects the local dialect of Jeremiah from the village of Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Second, because the prophet refers to the reunion of the Northern and Southern tribes in this section (see vv. 14–15 in particular), he may have selected this form as a deliberate stylistic device.

The only occurrence of קֶשּׁי that I cannot readily explain is Ps 105:9, which presumably is a Judahite composition (there being no other immediate signs of IH in the poem). Interestingly, the parallel verse in 1 Chr 16:16 reads בְּזוֹקִית, which either reflects a different recension of the poem or may represent a reversion to the accepted form of the name by a late author incorporating an earlier psalm into his work.

We also should note the representation of the name Isaac in a Demotic ostracon dated 152/151 B.C.E., where the orthography יְשָּׁהְג suggests קֶשּׁי rather than קְשּׁי, implying that the bearer of this name was a northern Israelite. On the other hand, since קֶשּׁי is the only form of ‘Isaac’ that appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls (7x, including the attestation in CD A 3:3), one should conclude that the form with סִינ replaced the SBH form with סָדֶה, in line with the general trend in LBH and postbiblical Hebrew for the root קֶשּׁי to replace the root קְשּׁי.45

The picture that emerges from the evidence presented above is that the shift of סָדֶה to סִינ was a feature of IH phonology.46 Even more fascinating is the geographical correlation reflected in the form יְשָּׁהְג in Deut 33:19 and the two occurrences of קֶשּׁי in Amos in particular.47 Given the location of (northern) Tekoa within the territory of Issachar, we may wish to limit this feature to a relatively restricted area within northern Israel, namely, the lower Galilee, the Jezreel Valley, and the Carmel mountain range and surrounding coastal regions.48

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44. Thus R. C. Steiner, “On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes (*H > H and *G > G) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith),” JBL 124 (2005) 237 and n. 43. I am grateful to Richard Steiner for bringing this reference to my attention (e-mail, August 5, 2006).
46. Regardless of the specific phonetic factors involved, a point that I have not touched on here.
47. Moreshet, “םַּהֲאָה—םַּהֲאָה; יִשָּׁהְג—יִשָּׁהְג,” 129, specifically rejected the notion that קֶשּׁי represents a northern dialect. He attributed the usage of this form in Amos to literary effect, to allow the reader to hear the root קֶשּׁי, in the sense of ‘scorn, disdain’.
48. As an aside, note that there is more evidence for the interchange of סָדֶה and סָמָךְ, which may be related to the present issue, and which also is an IH phonological trait. See further my Kings, 54–55.
6. The root ḫps generally means 'cover with, panel over' in the Bible, but this meaning is unsuitable in the case of ḫps in v. 21 in the blessing to Gad.49 Instead, one should follow the lead of the njpsv translators, who rendered the word as 'revered', with an eye to MH ḫps.50 This specific form (either singular or plural) occurs 4 times in Tannaitic texts (e.g., Mekhilta Wayyissa 2), with an additional 3 attestations of the verb ḫps 'honor, revere' in the corpus (e.g., t. Ket. 7:5). In addition, there are 20 occurrences of the root in Amoraic and Geonic sources.51 The context of Deut 33:21 supports this interpretation, with ḫps serving as an adjective to the preceding noun ʿqΕıµ, yielding the phrase 'revered chieftain' (thus njpsv), 'esteemed ruler' (my suggested rendering), or the like.52

49. Though the Jewish interpreters of late antiquity and the Middle Ages commonly interpreted the word in this fashion, leading to the idea that the term refers to the burial place of Moses; thus, for example, Tg. Onqelos, Tg. Neofiti, Tg. Ps-J., t. Soṭah 4:8, Sipre Devarim 355, Rashi, Seforno, et al.

50. See also Tigay, Deuteronomy, 410 n. 165, which calls attention to Rashi’s comment at b. Meg. 6a, in which he glossed ḫps with the word ḫשנ 'important'.

51. Information from Ma’agarim. Normally in my studies I cite only the MH¹ (= Tannaitic) sources, which are representative of Hebrew while still a living language. In the present instance, I cite the material from MH² (= Amoraic period) and beyond, because to my mind the 20 additional attestations in these sources are evidence of our word’s vitality in the postbiblical period; that is to say, these usages are not based on a frozen, fossilized biblical usage that is being imitated but rather develop from the active and productive use of the word in the earlier Tannaitic period. The entries for this word in the older dictionaries are still valuable: J. Levy, Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midrashim (2nd ed.; 4 vols.; Berlin: Harz, 1924; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963) 3:567; and A. Kohut, ‘Arukh ha-Shalem / Aruch Completum (2nd ed.; 8 vols.; Vienna: Menorah, 1926) 6:104.

52. The meaning 'esteemed, revered' for ḫps in this passage was adduced already by J. Leclerc (1657–1736) and J. A. Dathe (1731–91), whose interpretation was brought to the attention of modern scholars by A. Caquot (“Les Bénédictions de Moïse [Deutéronome 33,6–25], II: de Joseph a Asher,” Semitica 33 [1983] 71). As far as I can tell, no medieval Jewish commentators interpreted the passage this way; my sincere thanks to colleagues Alan Cooper, Isaac Gottlieb, Robert Harris, and Martin Lockshin for their assistance on this issue (email exchanges, August 2006). The medievals may be silent, but note the following: Professor Lockshin directed my attention to the work of Moses Mendelssohn, who translated ḫps as וַחֲסָרִים, i.e., 'verehrt', with the notes in the Be’ur (from the hand of Herz Homberg, who is responsible for the Deuteronomy volume) providing further elucidation. Apparently, this interpretation was very much in the air in the 18th century, as the works of Leclerc, Dathe, and Mendelssohn attest. I have not been able to determine whether the translators of the njpsv consciously followed Leclerc...
The root also occurs sporadically in Aramaic, though in a variety of forms, indicating that it remained productively: as a verb in Jewish Palestinian sources and as an adjective 'worthy' in Jewish Babylonian sources.

This trio of indications—sole attestation in the Bible in the blessing to Gad, more frequent usage in MH, and presence in Aramaic—demonstrates that the word 'esteemed, revered' in Deut 33:21 is an IH lexeme.

As an aside, I note the juxtaposition of the blessings to Zebulun/Issachar and to Gad, thereby producing alliteration between 'hidden' in v. 19 and 'esteemed, revered' in v. 21. Above (item no. 2), I explained the presence of 'months' in Exod 2:2 alliterationis causa—and the present example is another illustration of this literary device in biblical literature.

7. The next word in v. 21, 'he came' derives from the root 'come'. This verb is the regular Aramaic verb for 'come' (the Targumim regularly use it to render Hebrew, for example). In Hebrew, the root is limited to certain contexts.

We begin with examples within style-switching environments. The root is used three times in the short passages concerning Dumah and Arabia in Isa 21:11-15. In addition, one finds 4 appearances in the book of Job (3:25, 16:22, and Dathe, read Mendelssohn/Homberg, or independently arrived at the same explication based on the MH usage. There is no discussion of this point in H. M. Orlinsky, Notes on the New Translation of the Torah (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1970) 257.

55. This understanding of the passage, moreover, obviates the need for textual emendation of and the following word to produce , with the support of the LXX (also see Deut 33:5). This proposal has a long history in biblical scholarship, beginning with F. Giesebrecht ("Zwei cruces interpretum Ps. 45,7 und Deut. 33,21," ZAW 7 [1887] 90-93). See also R. Gordis, "Critical Notes on the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxii)," JTS 34 (1933) 390-92; N. H. Tur-Sinai, Ha-Lashon ve-ha-Sefer (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1950-55) 2:112; and N. H. Tur-Sinai, Peshuto shel Miqra (4 vols.; Jerusalem: Qiryat Sefer, 1962-68) 1:240. One may agree with I. L. Seeligmann ("A Psalm from Pre-Regal Times," VT 14 [1964] 85 n. 2) that this proposal "is more surprising than convincing." My thanks to Chaim Cohen for a very helpful exchange on this issue (e-mail, August 2006).

56. For a different interpretation regarding these two words, also with an eye to literary effect, see I. Young, "The Style of the Gezer Calendar and Some 'Archaic Biblical Hebrew' Passages," VT 42 (1992) 372-73.
57. I am less concerned with the atypical morphology of this form, which seems to be endemic to this root in the Bible; see H. Bauer and P. Leander, Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1922) 442.
30:14, 37:22). All of these point to the Transjordan, which also holds for the location of Gad, of course.

Prov 1:27 provides an instance of the root יתך in a decidedly Israelian composition.58 The two attestations in Jeremiah (3:22, 12:9) may be due to the prophet’s Benjaminitic dialect, or they may be Aramaicisms in his diction. The largest distribution of the root יתך in the Bible is represented by 7 appearances in Second Isaiah (41:5, 41:23, 41:25, 44:7, 45:11, 56:9, 56:12); once more, Aramaic influence is indicated.59

This leaves only a scattering of usages of the verb יתך: in Deut 33:2 and Ps 68:32, we are in the realm of archaic poetry;60 and in Mic 4:8, we may have a conscious employment of an archaism to evoke “the memories of the language of old theophanies (Deut 33:2).”61

Finally, it is important to note the twofold presence of the root יתך ‘come’ in the Deir ‘Ala‘a inscription (I.1, II.14),62 thereby providing firsthand testimony to the use of this verb in the territory of Gad.

8. The verb יתך in v. 22 in the blessing to Dan is the only attestation of this root in the Bible.63 The context suggests a meaning ‘leap forth’ for this verb, representative of an action typical of a lion:

Dan is a lion’s whelp, leaping forth from the Bashan.64

The verb is better attested in Tannaitic sources, appearing 5 times in the corpus (m. Ḥul. 2:6, t. Šabb. 16:13, t. Yom Tov 3:13, t. Ḥul. 2:11, Sipre Devarim 355 [in this instance admittedly in explanation of Deut 33:22]).65

In addition, the biblical hapax legomenon finds a congener in the relatively common Syriac verb יתך ‘shoot, hurl, sling, cast’.66 The Hebrew and Syriac

58. See the references cited above, n. 26.
59. See M. Wagner, Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch (BZA 96; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1966) 31. The entry is very short, though, and (I must add) the information conveyed there is not totally accurate; for example, the author listed Psalm 68 and Micah as exilic or postexilic texts.
63. At least as a verb, because many scholars ascribe יתך ‘sparks, firebrands’ to the root יתך.
65. Information from Ma‘agarim.
connotations fall within the semantic field—namely, action directed from one location to another—thus permitting the connection.

As we saw above in the case of מָפְסָן (item no. 6), the trio of indications—a singular attestation in the Bible in the blessing to a northern tribe, more frequent usage in MH, and presence in Aramaic (in this case Syriac specifically)—demonstrates that the verb קָנָץ ‘leap forth’ in Deut 33:22 is an IH lexical element. Note further that the poem specifically places the described action in the Bashan, that is, the territory of Israel closest to Aramaic-speaking territory.

9. Hebrew has a series of words for ‘south’, most commonly מַעֲרָד (24x), נָכֵב (21x), and מִים (8x)—the first and third words are obviously related to one another.67 In v. 23, however, within the blessing to Naphtali, one encounters the word מַעֲרָד ‘south’. This form appears 17 times in the Bible, including 13 times in Ezekiel (see further below). The other four attestations are in Job 37:17, Qoh 1:6, 11:3, and the verse under consideration, Deut 33:23.

Since the word מַעֲרָד is the common Aramaic word for ‘south’ (see more below), one is able to explain all of the biblical appearances. Its presence in Deut 33:23 in the blessing to Naphtali represents an isogloss between IH and Aramaic. Its usage in Job 37:17 is once more part of the overall coloring of that book. In Qoh 1:6, 11:3, we are dealing with a true Aramaism in this postexilic book.68 And the same holds for Ezekiel, composed during the early exilic period in Babylonia, with its 13 instances of מַעֲרָד (one in Ezek 21:2; the remaining 12 appear in chaps. 40–42).

The term מַעֲרָד is an example of an Aramaism that came to penetrate virtually all varieties of Hebrew in the postbiblical period: it occurs 6x in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4x in the Murabba’at and Nahal Ḥever documents, and throughout Tannaitic sources (129x).69

מַעֲרָד is so well documented in Aramaic sources, one hardly needs to provide examples.70 The interested reader, however, could look at the Targumim, where

67. Number of occurrences derived from A. Even-Shoshan, Qonqordan Ḥadasha (Jerusalem: Qiryat Sefer, 1990) 472, 736, 1229.
69. Data from Ma‘agarim. The standard biblical words occur sporadically, e.g., מים in Sir 43:16 and נָכֵב in 11Q1 31:10, 38:14, 39:12 (though in the last of these instances the word is glossed, as it were, by מַעֲרָד).
70. Sokoloff, Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, 155; idem, Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, 351; and Tal, Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic, 1:194.
one finds מַרְדָּם used to render the standard BH terms, e.g., Tg. Onqelos to Exod 26:18, 26:35, 27:9, rendering מַרְדָּם; Tg. Onqelos to Gen 13:9, rendering מַרְדָּם; and Tg. Onqelos to Gen 12:9, 13:1, 13:3, 13:14, rendering מַרְדָּם.

In light of the regularity of מַרְדָּם in Aramaic and in light of the additional evidence presented above, one should understand the presence of this word for ‘south’ in Deut 33:23 as an IH feature in the blessing to Naphtali.

10. The form מַרְדָּם, ‘possess!’ (masculine singular imperative) occurs in v. 23 in the blessing to Naphtali. The final ה is a sign of the lengthened imperative, while the vocalization arises from the retraction of the accent in pause (as occurs regularly, in lesser as well as in greater pause; compare, for example, the two instances in Dan 9:19).

The unusual element in this form is the retention of the yod, for typically the yod does not appear in the imperatives of pe-yod verbs. Thus, for example, one regularly encounters forms such as מַרְדָּם (Gen 27:19, 29:19; Judg 17:10; 1 Sam 22:23; Ruth 4:1; 2 Chr 25:19) and מַרְדָּם (Gen 45:9; 2 Kgs 1:9, 1:11; Ezek 32:19), two commonly attested lengthened imperatives.

The retention of the yod occurs in two other places in the Bible, 1 Kgs 18:34 מַרְדָּם and Ezek 24:3 מַרְדָּם, both from the root מַרְדָּם ‘pour’. When one recalls that this verb, along with other pe-yod verbs whose second root consonant is yade, attests to other atypical forms, one is inclined to exclude this evidence from consideration altogether. In addition, as L. M. Kuriakos noted, these two imperatives are preceded in the same verses by strong imperatives with all three root consonants present (רָמַל ‘fill!’ and מַרְדָּם ‘place!’ [ז], respectively), and thus the strong pattern may have influenced the weak pattern in both cases.

On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that 1 Kgs 18:34 occurs in a decidedly northern setting, the story of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel. We further recall that the retention of the

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71. Some scholars have attempted to analyze this form as either a feminine noun or a 3rd-feminine-singular suffix-conjugation verb; see the brief discussion by S. Fassberg (Sugyot be-Tahbir ha-Miqra’i [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994] 16 n. 23). I prefer to follow the Masora here, however, and understand the verb as a masculine singular imperative.

72. As noted by Driver, Deuteronomy, 413.

73. A standard exception (apologies for the oxymoron) to the norm occurs with the root מַרְדָּם ‘fear’, in which the yod is always retained.


75. L. M. Kuriakos, Non-Paradigmatic Forms of Weak Verbs in Masoretic Hebrew (Kerala, India: Assisi, 1973) 62–63.

76. For IH elements in this chapter, see my Kings, 52–55.
lamed in the imperative of the root יָקַל is an IH trait—one of the examples, in fact, is יָקַל in 1 Kgs 17:11, also in the mouth of Elijah.⁷⁷ Given the parallel morphology between the root יָקַל and pe-yod verbs, one presumes a connection here. Furthermore, occasionally in Aramaic, one encounters the retention of the yod in the imperative of pe-yod verbs, e.g., y. Git. §⁹⁵ יָלָה ‘bring!’, y. Suk. §⁵۴b יָלָה ‘bring!’ (in the plural), Syriac yilad ‘give birth!’ (feminine singular, obviously).⁷⁸ These usages might explain the retention of the yod in Ezk 24:3, assuming Aramaic influence on the Judahite prophet in Exile in Babylonia.

Though the cumulative evidence is limited, given the presence of יָקַל in the Naphtali blessing in particular, I argue that this form is an IH feature. Note that the SBH form יָלָה (contextual and pausal, respectively) appears 4 times in the Bible (Deut 1:21; 2:24, 31; 1 Kgs 21:15), while the masculine plural form יָלָה appears twice (Deut 1:8, 9:23). These standard forms allow us to see the contrast between the JH morpheme (even if one of them occurs in 1 Kgs 21:15, in another story set in the north, with the specific word in the mouth of Jezebel) and the IH morpheme exemplified by יָקַל in Deut 33:23.

11. The final item to consider is the root יָבָד in v. 25 in the blessing to Asher. The noun form יָבָד ‘your power’ is a hapax legomenon, whose meaning is established by several routes.

First, we may rely on the ancient interpretive tradition stretching back to יָבָד in the Septuagint and יָבָד in Tg. Onqelos.⁷⁹

Second, we may point to the appearance of this root in a Ugaritic text.⁸⁰ CTU 1:10 II:21–22 reads as follows:

 qrn dbtk btl ‘nt
 qrn dbtk btl ymsh

Your horns of power, Maiden Anat
Your horns of power, may Baal anoint

⁷⁷. For discussion, see ibid., 46–48.
⁷⁸. For the forms from the Talmud Yerushalmi, see Sokoloff, Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, 235. The two cited examples appear not only in the Leiden manuscript but in the Venice edition as well (and, in the case of בְּדַי, in the Constantinople edition, too); see P. Schäfer, Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi (4 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991–2001) 3:330 and 2/5–12:173. In general, see C. Levis, Diqduq ha-ªAramit ha-Gelilit (ed. M. Sokoloff; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1986) 117, though I cannot guarantee that all of the cited examples are accurate, on which, see the critique by M. Sokoloff on p. xiii. For the Syriac form, see E. Lipinski, Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar (OLA 80; Leuven: Peeters, 1997) 427.
⁷⁹. For a full survey of the versions, see Syrén, The Blessings in the Targums, 43–44.
⁸⁰. See Tigay, Deuteronomy, 333 and 411 n. 189.
In conjunction with the word qrn ‘horn’, the traditional symbol of strength in the ancient Near East, we can assign the meaning ‘power’ to the word dbat.81 MH evidence for this root is very limited; indeed, there are but two (or three) attestations, both in Sipre Devarim, one of which expounds Deut 33:25 and all of which reflect the same phraseology. In the midrashic exposition of Deut 11:14, Sipre Devarim states: נג ארץ ורביה למלאתぱחמה כף והבק, which then is explained as שרייה כל ארץ ורביה כף והבר לאירן ישרא (para. 42); regarding Deut 33:25, Sipre Devarim states: שכיל ארץ ורביה כף לאירן ישרא (para. 355).82 The sense is that the bounty of Israel will be indicated and enhanced by the flow of silver and gold from other lands to the land of Israel. The semantic interconnection between ‘power’ and ‘flow’—the former is the sense of the root in Ugaritic and BH, the latter is the sense in MH—is paralleled, for example, by English ‘fluent’ (from Latin fluere ‘flow’) > ‘influential’.

The totality of the evidence—though limited to single contexts in Ugaritic, the blessing to Asher, and Sipre Devarim—yields the conclusion that the root דבַת was part of the IH lexicon, though not the JH vocabulary.83

Conclusion

The 10 features discussed above appear in the poetry devoted to the northern tribes in Deuteronomy 33, specifically, the material concerning Joseph, Zebulun and Issachar, Gad, Dan, Naphtali, and Asher (vv. 13–25).84 Notwithstanding the brevity of these blessings, each northern tribe has at least one IH trait contained in the poetry.85 By contrast, there are no IH elements (not surprisingly) in the poetry devoted to Judah, Levi (associated with Jerusalem in

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82. In addition to consulting Maºagarim, see Moreshet, Leqsiqon ha-Poºal she-nit ˙addesh bi-Leshon ha-T annaªim, 131.

83. F. M. Cross (“Ugaritic dbªat and Hebrew Cognates,” VT 2 [1952] 162–64) suggested that this root is present in Job 41:14 as well, which once again is outside SBH.

84. Five of the features discussed herein were not included in my most detailed listing of IH elements: “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon,” Orient 38 (2003) 5–35. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 of this essay are listed there; I identified nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 more recently, mainly while researching Deuteronomy 33 more thoroughly.

85. The only exception is Reuben (v. 6), assuming that it is "northern" on the basis of its Transjordanian location, though note the extreme shortness of this blessing.
Deuteronomy 33\textsuperscript{86}), and Benjamin (vv. 7–12).\textsuperscript{87} Our analysis confirms Tigay’s view stated at the outset and further suggests that the poems originated among the individual tribes themselves.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{86} See Tigay, \textit{Deuteronomy}, 522.

\textsuperscript{87} Though in theory, given what I stated above about the dialect of Benjamin, in the last of these three an IH feature would have been explicable.

\textsuperscript{88} An idea also noted by ibid., 523. For a similar position regarding Genesis 49, see N. M. Sarna, \textit{Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary} (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 331.