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The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription¹⁾

The genetic classification of the dialect of the Deir 'Alla inscription continues to be the center of debate among scholars of Northwest Semitic²⁾. Prior to the discovery of this inscription³⁾, it was a commonplace among Semitists to divide the Northwest Semitic dialects of the 1st Millennium B.C.E. into two groups: Aramaic and Canaanite⁴⁾. Accordingly, when the Deir 'Alla inscription was discovered, the question arose: into which of these two groups does the new dialect fit? The original editors of the text, as is well known, classified the dialect as Aramaic⁵⁾, and their position has gained a good number of adherents. Others saw little or no Aramaic in the inscription; they, of course, concluded that the text was Canaanite⁶⁾.

I will argue for the latter identification, i.e., that the dialect of Deir 'Alla inscription is a dialect of Canaanite. But first I need to say a word about the approach of the first school of thought which classifies the text as Aramaic. In aligning this text with the Aramaic group, my sense is that J. Hoftijzer and his followers have done so because it does not fit well into the largest corpus of 1st Millennium Canaanite material available to us. That corpus, of course, is the Hebrew Bible, in particular those portions of the Bible which are written in standard Biblical Hebrew (BH), more accurately to be called Judahite Hebrew (JH). But the Bible includes many sections not written in Judah or Jerusalem; these texts emanate from northern Israel or Transjordan and are written in a dialect best called Israelian Hebrew (IH). Advances in the regional dialectology of ancient Canaan have permitted us to identify Israelian texts with

greater confidence in recent years⁷⁾. Of greatest importance for our current enterprise is the finding that in dozens of instances the dialect of the Deir 'Alla inscription aligns itself both grammatically and lexically with IH.

In making this claim, I recognize that I am not wholly original. In fact, B. Halpern wrote an extremely important article on this subject, so important that I find it necessary to state his conclusion here *in extenso*:

"DAPT [Deir 'Alla plaster texts] have altered the face of Hebrew language history. They remind us not to make of Judahite Hebrew a monolith, an unproved norm for the north and east. They caution us to sensitivity to geography — dare one add, to topography and sociology as well — in assessing provisionally the dialectology of Canaan. To my mind, the inscriptions establish that Canaan was linguistically canonized even in the latest Israelite periods"⁸⁾.

I accept these conclusions wholeheartedly. Indeed, my studies cited above on Israelian texts in the Bible provide the raw data necessary to confirm Halpern's suspicion that Judahite Hebrew (JH) is not to be extended to regions north and east of Jerusalem. Furthermore, while Halpern pointed to some connections between the Deir 'Alla dialect and IH (though he did not use this term), he left unmentioned numerous other links. Accordingly, the chief goal of the present study is a systematic treatment of all the evidence linking the Deir 'Alla text to IH.

I am quick to add that my approach is wholly synchronic. I am well aware of the current method which utilizes a diachronic approach for linguistic taxonomy, emphasizing most of all shared innovations. But as we shall see at the end of our study, the results of the diachronic approach are far from conclusive in regard to the Deir 'Alla dialect⁹⁾. In light of the lack of a clear picture emerging from the diachronic approach, I find it perfectly acceptable to utilize the synchronic method in the present enterprise (especially once it is realized how a clear picture emerges from this methodology)¹⁰⁾.

¹⁾ An oral version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, April 1, 1992, in Cambridge, Massachusetts (U.S.A.) (at a joint session with the North American Conference on Afroasiatic Linguistics). I am grateful to both Jonas C. Greenfield and Stephen A. Kaufman for their oral comments at that occasion, and for their critical reading of an earlier version of this article. They do not necessarily agree, however, with all of the conclusions of this paper, for which I alone remain responsible.

²⁾ This issue was one of the main foci of the International Symposium held at Leiden, August 21-24, 1989. The proceedings appear in J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, eds., *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-evaluated* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991) (henceforth *BTDAR*). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were many excellent studies on the Deir 'Alla inscription and its dialect. The bibliography is well known and does not need to be repeated here. In the present study, I cite mainly the discussions in *BTDAR*; only rarely do I cite earlier works on the subject.

³⁾ Still another issue is whether to refer to the two large combinations as one "inscription" (in the singular) or two "inscriptions" (in the plural). While I am inclined to view the two combinations as two parts of a single text, I do not enter into this issue here. Rather, I use the term "inscription" (in the singular) merely for the sake of convenience. Regardless of whether or not the two parts are related literarily, they clearly are written in the same dialect; thus the issue is of little consequence for the present undertaking.

⁴⁾ See, e.g., H.L. Ginsberg, "The Northwest Semitic Languages", in B. Mazar, ed., *Patriarchs* (World History of the Jewish People; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 102-24, 293.

⁵⁾ J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976) (henceforth *ATDA*).

⁶⁾ The view was first presented by J.C. Greenfield, "Review of *ATDA*", *JSS* 25 (1980): 248-52; and J. Naveh, "Review of *ATDA*", *IEJ* 29 (1979): 133-36. A more detailed treatment is J.A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Allā* (HSM 31; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980).

⁷⁾ See the following, all by G.A. Rendsburg: "The Northern Origin of 'The Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23,1-7)", *Biblica* 69 (1988): 113-21; "Additional Notes on 'The Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23,1-7)", *Biblica* 70 (1989): 403-08; *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* (SBLMS 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); "The Northern Origin of Nehemiah 9", *Biblica* 72 (1991): 348-66; and "Israelian Hebrew Features in Genesis 49", in R.J. Ratner, et al., eds., *Let Your Colleagues Praise You: Studies in Memory of Stanley Gevirtz = Maarav* 7-8 (forthcoming). More general discussions are to be found in two additional articles by G.A. Rendsburg: "Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew", in W. Bodine, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 65-88; and "The Strata of Biblical Hebrew", *JNSL* (forthcoming).

⁸⁾ B. Halpern, "Dialect Distribution in Canaan and the Deir Alla Inscriptions", in D.M. Golomb, ed., "Working With No Data": *Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), pp. 119-39, in particular p. 139.

⁹⁾ The ground work (and much more) already has been laid by W.R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); below we shall return to his material on the Deir 'Alla dialect (see especially pp. 224, 229) and demonstrate why the evidence is ambiguous.

¹⁰⁾ Furthermore, as I understand the value of the diachronic approach, it is especially beneficial when considering languages attested at disparate times, e.g., 1st Millennium B.C.E. Hebrew and 1st Millennium C.E. Arabic. But in the present enterprise that is not a factor. Instead, we are weighing Deir 'Alla against the contemporaneously attested material from Canaanite (BH, Moabite, etc.) and Aramaic (Old Aramaic especially).

We turn now to the specific evidence, proceeding through the text point by point, for a total of twenty-six grammatical and lexical items shared by Deir 'Alla and IH¹¹⁾.

1. **Masculine plural nominal ending** ךֿ, e.g., אלהן (I,1), etc.: In standard BH, standard Phoenician, and Ammonite, the masculine plural nominal ending is ם (ים). The Deir 'Alla usage is shared by Moabite and by the Phoenician inscriptions from Arslan Tash¹²⁾. In addition, the ending ךֿ is attested in Mishnaic Hebrew (MH), at least in the best manuscripts¹³⁾; my study of MH reveals it to represent the vernacular speech of northern Israel¹⁴⁾. Less widely recognized is the fact that this usage occurs in the Bible in about two dozen instances.

The most prominent place where masculine plural ךֿ occurs is the book of Job, where it occurs fifteen times. As S.A. Kaufman demonstrated, Job is a prime example of style-switching¹⁵⁾. The setting is the desert fringe in Trans-jordan; thus all the characters speak the local dialect of that region. We continue to classify this dialect as Canaanite, for regardless of how "Aramaic" the language of Job may look, in the long run it is still Canaanite (not JH to be sure, but within the umbrella of IH and thus within the Canaanite grouping). As we shall see, this is but the first of many examples of features shared by the Deir 'Alla dialect and the language of the book Job.

If we turn to the few examples of ךֿ in pre-exilic biblical texts, we see additional evidence for the identification of this usage as a regional dialectal feature in ancient Hebrew. Most important are Judg 5:10 מדין 'saddle-cloths' (?), which occurs in the Song of Deborah¹⁶⁾; 1 Kgs 11:33 צדנין 'Sidonians', which occurs in the mouth of the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh in territory of Ephraim; and Prov 31:3 מלכין 'kings', in a section of the Bible stemming from Massa, and thus not written in JH, but as another example

of style-switching¹⁷⁾. Also of relevance may be 2 Kgs 11:13 רציין 'outrunners', where the perspective of Athaliah may be represented (if so, this would be a very subtle rhetorical device, a rare form of code-switching or style-switching). In a later Hebrew text, mention should be made of Ezek 26:18 אִינן 'islands', in connection with Tyre; although standard Phoenician used ם, at least one dialect of Phoenician (Arslan Tash) used ךֿ, so here too style-switching probably is at work. To be sure, not all examples of this usage in the Bible can be explained as northernisms or as instances of style-switching. But the general impression one gathers from the distribution of this feature in the Bible is clear: masculine ךֿ was an IH trait (probably not of all IH sub-dialects, but of some).

Naturally, the ending ךֿ (or ךֿ) immediately calls to mind Aramaic, but as the above survey indicates, regional forms of Canaanite used this morpheme as well¹⁸⁾.

2. **Root** אתי 'come' (I,1; II,14): This root is common in Aramaic, but it is attested in Hebrew as well. Moreover, the distribution of this verb in the Bible points to its home in IH. Most of the usages of אתי (אתה) in the Bible occur in Job, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah. Job has been discussed above; the two prophetic works require comment.

Notwithstanding the locale of the book of Jeremiah in Jerusalem, the prophet hailed from Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Research into regional dialects of ancient Hebrew reveals that Jeremiah includes a high frequency of IH elements; the same is true of stories about Saul of Benjamin in 1 Samuel. The conclusion to be reached is that the Benjaminitic dialect of Hebrew shared much with JH (standard BH), but a significant number of isoglosses with IH as well¹⁹⁾.

Second Isaiah is a book where true Aramaisms will begin to appear; thus the prominent use of אתה 'come' by this prophet is due to the workings of Aramaic influence in the Neo-Babylonian empire.

In earlier biblical texts, the root appears in Deut 33:2, 33:21, Isa 21:12 (2x), 21:14, Mic 4:8, Ps 68:32, Prov 1:27. As most commentators have noted, Ps 68:32 is extremely ancient, in which case יאתרי would simply be an old poetic usage; the archaic aspect of this word is indicated also by the retention of the *yod* in this IIIy verb. Deut 33:2 and Mic 4:8 should be excluded from our discussion because in these cases the root אתה is used as the B-word for the A-word בא in poetic parallelism; in the latter case there is also an attempt at assonance with the word ואתה at the beginning of the same hemi-stich.

This leaves us Deut 33:21, Isa 21:12 (2x), 21:14, Prov 1:27, to consider. Another of Kaufman's examples of style-switching is the pericope of Isa 21:11-15, in which the language

¹¹⁾ The readings I utilize are those of Hackett, *Balaam Text*. I do so not because readings proposed by others are impossible, but because, as far as I am able to determine, her study of the inscription has been the most detailed (including a visit to Amman to personally inspect the text). In the discussion which follows, items are cited by the order in which they occur in the text, without attempting to judge their individual values. The cumulative force of the argument will become evident. Forms are cited by combination and line, e.g., "I,1" refers to Combination I, line 1.

¹²⁾ Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 89, 91. In light of J. Teixidor, "Les tablettes d'Arslan Tash au Musée d'Alep", *AuOr* 1 (1983): 105-09, caution is advised in the utilization of the Arslan Tash material. But this does not affect the point under consideration here. Regardless of the disposition of the Arslan Tash texts, there exists sufficient evidence to defend the conclusion that the masculine plural nominal ending ךֿ is an IH feature.

¹³⁾ See E.Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), p. 129.

¹⁴⁾ G.A. Rendsburg, "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew", in L.I. Levine, ed., *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), pp. 225-40.

¹⁵⁾ S.A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof", in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988), pp. 55-56. See also G.A. Rendsburg, "Kabbir in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for Style-Switching and Addressee-Switching in the Hebrew Bible", *JAOS* 112 (1992): 649-51, building on the base established by Kaufman.

¹⁶⁾ On Judges 5, see already C.F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (London: Rivingtons, 1918), pp. 171-76; and more recently C. Rabin, "The Emergence of Classical Hebrew", in A. Malamat, ed., *The Age of the Monarchies: Culture and Society* (World History of the Jewish People; Jerusalem: Masada Press, 1979), pp. 72, 74, 293, n. 4.

¹⁷⁾ Kaufman, "Classification", 55-56.

¹⁸⁾ It is not clear to me how some scholars can use the masculine plural ending ךֿ to argue on behalf of the Aramaic identification of the Deir 'Alla dialect; thus P.K. McCarter, "The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Texts", in *BTDA*, 88; the Moabite evidence alone would militate against this view. For a more balanced approach, including the citation of the above example of Judg 5:10, see E.A. Knauf, "War 'Biblisch-Hebräisch' eine Sprache?" *ZAH* 3 (1990): 16.

¹⁹⁾ Much of the evidence is presented in Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence", though a systematic treatment remains a desideratum. See also A.D. Goldberg, *Northern-Type-Names in the Post-Exilic Jewish Onomasticon* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1972), especially pp. 90-104.

of Dumah and environs is portrayed (again, like Job, as part of the greater Transjordanian dialect). Prov 1:27 is an excellent example of an Israelian text²⁰). And most telling of all is Deut 33:21, which is in the poem about Gad, the very territory of Israel in which lies Tell Deir 'Alla. Undoubtedly, the individual poems about the tribes in Deuteronomy 33, as well as in Genesis 49, originate among the tribes themselves. Thus, the local dialects are reflected. I already have demonstrated this for the poems in Genesis 49²¹), and in a future study I will treat Deuteronomy 33. In the meantime, this example from Deut 33:21 concerning Gad, will serve as an excellent illustration of the method and the overall picture.

In short, at first glance the root **אח** (**אתה**) is associated more readily with Aramaic, but it also was a feature of certain dialects of Canaanite. In particular, we may assume it was used regularly in Transjordanian Canaanite (as indicated by Job, Deut 33:21, Isa 21:12-14, and the Deir 'Alla text) and in other local varieties of IH too (as indicated by Prov 1:27).

3. **3mpl pronominal suffix** **יה**, as in **אלה** 'to him' (I,1; I,4): Virtually all scholars who have dealt with the Deir 'Alla text have pointed to the Aramaic form of the ending **יה**. This includes even those scholars who have argued strongly for the Canaanite identification of the dialect. Emblematic is Hackett's statement that the suffix "is as yet unknown in a Canaanite inscription ... so that the appearance of the *-wh* suffix in this text is actually the strongest argument for the Aramaic classification of the text"²²). But as J.C. Greenfield and J. Naveh both pointed out, the reading **ימה** 'his days' in Mesha Stele line 8, presumably contains the same morpheme²³). Moreover, one example of this suffix is retained in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in the word **תגמוליה** 'his good deeds' in Ps 116:12. In a detailed study of this psalm, I identified various IH features in the poem, and further suggested that we can pinpoint its geographical origin to Transjordan²⁴). In sum, the 3mpl pronominal suffix **יה** (**יהיה**) was used in certain Canaanite dialects, especially in Transjordan.

4. **'son'** (I,2): This lexeme naturally suggests Aramaic. Defenders of the Canaanite school are quick to point out that this noun appears only in Balaam's patronymic, which naturally would be Aramaic, given the tradition (cf. Numb 22:5, Deut 23:5) that the prophet hailed from Aram. In like manner, the word also occurs in the Phoenician inscription of Kilamuwa, in the personal name **כלמו בר חיא**, which is patently Aramaic. Accordingly, say the proponents of the Canaanite school, the presence of **בר** in our text should not be used to evaluate the dialect.

On the other side, in arguing for an Aramaic identification of the dialect, D. Pardee retorts as follows: "The word

br cannot be totally ignored ... It is neither a proper name, nor part of a proper name. It is a common noun serving to indicate the patronymic"²⁵). But even if we grant Pardee his claim, the counter-argument is Prov 31:2, where the form **בר** appears three times, and not in a patronymic, but rather as a true common noun²⁶). As part of the Massa material, again it is the speech of Israel's neighbors to the east which is being portrayed. Most likely, some Transjordanian dialects (even ones classified as Canaanite, and not Aramaic) used the form **בר** and not **בן**. Thus either the lexeme **בר** should be ignored (because it appears only in Balaam's name), or it should be accepted that **בר** could be used by an author writing in a Canaanite dialect, in particular a Transjordanian one.

5. **Root פעל 'do, make'** (I,2): This is a classic instance of an IH feature. Before turning to the biblical evidence, note as well that **פעל** is standard in Phoenician, that Ugaritic uses the by-form *b'l*, and that **פעל** is very common in MH. The distribution of **פעל** in the Bible is telling: a disproportionate number of its attestations occur in Israelian texts: Hosea (7:10), Proverbs (16:4, 30:20), Deuteronomy 32 (v. 27)²⁷), and northern Psalms (44:2, 58:3)²⁸). In addition, style-switching is at work in the cases of Job (34:32, 36:23) and the Balaam oracles (Numb 23:23)²⁹). The presence of **פעל** in the Deir 'Alla text, in conjunction with the above evidence, allows us to answer the question posed by Kutscher: "Is it possible that here, too, we should look for its origin in Canaanite where it is employed as a standard root?"³⁰) The answer, of course, is yes, with the qualification that more specifically it is a trait of Canaanite dialects north of Judah.

6. **מן before an anarthrous noun**, as in **מן מחר** 'on the morrow' (I,3), etc.: The norm in Hebrew calls for the *nun* of the preposition **מן** to assimilate before a noun without the definite article; in Aramaic the norm is the retention of the full form **מן** (especially since the definite article is post-positive, not prepositive). Accordingly, the usage represented by **מן מחר** (and the four other examples in the inscription) appears to form a bridge with Aramaic³¹). However, the use of **מן** before an anarthrous noun is attested in BH as well, to be exact, 98 times. Now of these 98 occurrences, 51 are in Chronicles, and a few additional ones appear in Daniel and Nehemiah³²). There can be little doubt that the widespread appearance of this usage in Chronicles and the

²⁵) D. Pardee, "The Linguistic Classification of the Deir 'Alla Text Written on Plaster", in *BTDA*, p. 103, n. 7.

²⁶) See Kaufman, "Classification", 55.

²⁷) On the northern provenance of this poem, see O. Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32.1-43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), p. 42; and E. Nielsen, "Historical Perspectives and Geographical Horizons: On the Question of North-Israelite Elements in Deuteronomy", *ASTI* 11 (1977-78): 82. Still needed is a full study of the IH lexical and grammatical features of Deuteronomy 32; in the meantime, consult the references in Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 127.

²⁸) Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 55, 63.

²⁹) Again, see Kaufman, "Classification", 55-56.

³⁰) Kutscher, *History*, 135.

³¹) This point has been emphasized most of all by Pardee, "Linguistic Classification", 102.

³²) For a complete list of occurrences, see E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache*, vol. II (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1895), p. 292.

²⁰) On the northern affinities of Proverbs, see W.F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom", in M. Noth and D.W. Thomas, eds., *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (SVT 3; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), pp. 1-15; H.L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 36; and Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (AOAT 210: Neukirchen Verlag, 1984), p. 440 and n. 6.

²¹) Rendsburg, "Israelian Hebrew in Features in Genesis 49", (forthcoming).

²²) Hackett, *Balaam Text*, p. 116.

²³) Greenfield, "Review", 250; Naveh, "Review", 136.

²⁴) Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 83-86.

other late books is due to Aramaic influence over Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH)³³).

But what of the earlier attestations of מָן before an anarthrous noun? Although I readily admit to not being able to account for every instance of this usage in earlier parts of the Bible, a pattern is discernible. As the following listing of examples indicates, מָן before an anarthrous noun must have been a feature of IH³⁴). Numb 23:7 places us, most importantly for our present concern, in the Balaam oracles. Judg 5:20, 7:23 (2x), 10:11 (2x), 19:16 are all in northern settings. 2 Kgs 15:28 is part of the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, composed in IH³⁵). Jer 7:7, 17:5, 25:3, 25:5, 44:18, 44:28 aid us in aligning the Benjaminitic dialect with IH. Ps 45:9, 73:19, 116:8 are all in northern poems³⁶). Prov 27:8 occurs in a northern book, as noted earlier. Song 4:15 appears in still another example of a northern composition³⁷). Finally, Job 30:5, 40:6 is again part of the Transjordanian dialect.

In sum, the usage under discussion is a trait of both IH and Aramaic. Under the influence of the latter, it became more common in LBH as well. As far as the Deir 'Alla text is concerned, the five-fold use of מָן before an anarthrous noun in the inscription links the dialect with IH.

7. **Root חיר 'tell' (I,5):** This root is relatively common in Aramaic, and it is less common in BH. But a quick glance at the distribution of this root in the Bible reveals something quite striking. The root חיר 'tell' occurs in the Bible in Ps 19:3, Job 13:17, 15:17, 32:6, 32:10, 32:17, 36:2. I have no explanation for the first of these attestations (Psalm 19 is not among the northern psalms I have isolated); but what needs to be stressed is the six-fold usage of this verb in Job. Above I discussed the case of Job as a classic example of style-switching, representing the dialect of Transjordan. As we shall see in numerous instances below, there are many nexuses between Job and the Deir 'Alla text. This is only to be expected, given the close geographical proximity of both settings³⁸).

³³) R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (HSM 12; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), p. 66; and G.A. Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the Date of 'P'", *JANES* 12 (1980): 72.

³⁴) I omit from consideration Deut 33:11, where מָן must be something else. Also, מָן הָיָה in Isa 18:2, 18:7 is not to be considered in this regard, though clearly it represents a dialectal feature of some sort (my hunch is that addressee switching is at work here, since Ethiopia is addressed in this pericope).

³⁵) For an early treatment of IH traits within the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, see C.F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), pp. 208-09. More recently, see the brief comment of M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), p. 9.

³⁶) Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 45-50, 73-81, 83-86 (though in my treatment of these Psalms, I did not include the present point as evidence for their northern provenance). On the Asaph collection in general, of which Psalm 73 is a member, see also M.J. Buss, "The Psalms of Asaph and Korah", *JBL* 82 (1963): 382-92.

³⁷) See S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), pp. 448-49; and Y. Avishur, "Le-Ziqā ha-Signonit beyn Shir ha-Shirim ve-Sifrut 'Ugarit'", *Beth Miqra* 59 (1974): 508-25.

³⁸) McCarter, "Dialect", 89, states that חיר occurs "only in later Biblical Hebrew", with no further comment. By this statement, I assume he is suggesting that its presence in BH is due to Aramaic influence. But of course there is much at fault with this approach. First of all, even though I am setting aside Psalm 19, it is not clear to me that this composition is late. Secondly, while I agree that Job is late (early post-Exilic period, in my

8. **'Itpa'al אִתְּפָאֵל** 'they gathered together' (I,5): Because the אִתְ preformative for the reflexive conjugation is common in later Aramaic, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that the use of the 'Itpa'al form in the Deir 'Alla text creates a bridge with Aramaic. However, as J.C. Greenfield pointed out, in Early Aramaic, the only known example of a T-stem perfect bears the הִתְ preformative (Bar Rakib 1:14 [*KAI* 216:14])³⁹). Not until later texts in Imperial Aramaic do we find examples of the אִתְ preformative.

In fact, the only other early occurrence of the 'Itpa'al conjugation comes from Canaanite⁴⁰), specifically the lone instance of an 'Itpa'al (or more accurately 'Etpolal = 'Etpa'al/'Itpa'al of a geminate verb) in the Bible, אִתְּפָאֵל in Ps 76:6⁴¹). As part of the Asaph collection, Psalm 76 is to be considered a northern composition. Thus, the Deir 'Alla usage and the Psalm 76 passage allow us to conclude that in certain regional dialects of ancient Canaanite the 'Itpa'al conjugation was employed.

9. **2fsg pronominal suffix עֲכִי**, as in עֲכִי 'your cloud' (I,6): This morpheme again looks to be pure Aramaic, but once more closer inspection reveals it to be a characteristic of IH as well. Before proceeding to the biblical evidence, note that it is attested in Phoenician, specifically in a Punic source with the orthography עֲכִי ⁴²). In the Bible, the form עֲכִי occurs predominantly in Israelian compositions: 2 Kgs 4:2K, 4:3K, 4:7K (2x), Ps 116:7 (2x), 116:19, Song 2:13 K. The four occurrences in 2 Kings 4 are in the Elisha cycle, a set of stories clearly composed in IH⁴³); Psalm 116 already has been mentioned as a northern poem; and likewise the northern provenance of Song of Songs was noted above. The first two of these literary works probably are Transjordanian: Elisha likely hailed from Gilead⁴⁴), and Psalm 116's use of the 3msg pronominal suffix וְהִי (discussed above) points to Transjordan.

Two other example of עֲכִי , in Jer 11:15 and Ps 137:6, may reflect northern dialect. Jeremiah has been discussed above.

mind), the presence of "Aramaisms" in the book are due to a conscious representation of the Transjordanian speech of the characters, not because Imperial Aramaic was influencing Hebrew at this time.

³⁹) J.C. Greenfield, "Philological Observations on the Deir 'Alla Inscription", in *BTDA*, 110. The example is the admittedly difficult word הַתְּנָאֵב ; for discussion see R. Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969), p. 67. Nonetheless, the word begins with הִתְ , not with אִתְ .

⁴⁰) But not from Ugaritic, as claimed by Hackett, *Balaam Text*, p. 119 and n. 24, where her references to C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), p. 81 (§ 9.33), is a discussion of the Gt from of the verb.

The form אִתְּפָאֵל in 2 Chr 20:35 is no longer early; here Aramaic influence may be the cause (by this time the הִתְ preformative had begun to shift to אִתְ). Also germane may be the 'Aph'el form אִשְׁכִּים in Jer 25:3, instead of the usual Hiph'il. Is this due to the Benjaminitic dialect of Jeremiah? These forms were cited by Halpern, "Dialect Distribution", 128 (though the other forms mentioned are less pertinent), but he did not cite Ps 76:6.

⁴¹) I hesitate to offer an English translation of this difficult word; for brief discussion see F. Zorell, "Zu Ps 12,9; 76,6", *Biblica* 10 (1929): 100.

⁴²) J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), p. 47; and S. Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1976), p. 96.

⁴³) For a partial list of IH features in these chapters, consult the references in the index of Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 142.

⁴⁴) G.A. Rendsburg, "A Reconstruction of Moabite-Israelite History", *JANES* 13 (1981): 67-73, especially p. 71.

The example from Psalm 137⁴⁵), a poem from the Babylonian Exile, may be explained according to the hypothesis that during the 6th Century B.C.E. exiles from Judah were reunited with the earlier exiles of the kingdom of Israel, and that IH forms began to mingle with JH forms at this time⁴⁶). The other attestations of כִּי, Ps 103:3 (2x), 103:4 (2x), 103:5, 135:9, are in post-exilic compositions⁴⁷), and may be due to Aramaic influence, or once more the above theory of the reunion of exiles may be invoked.

The net result of this survey is the conclusion that the 2fsg pronominal suffix כִּי was a feature of certain Canaanite dialects during the Iron Age, especially in Transjordan, as reflected in the Deir 'Alla text, the Elisha Cycle, and Psalm 116⁴⁸).

10. **Negative particle אַל before a noun**, as in אַל נָגַה (I,6-7): In standard BH the negative particle אַל is used most widely to negate the jussive⁴⁹). In a rare number of instances it occurs before a noun with a negating force⁵⁰): 2 Sam 1:21 (2x), Amos 5:14, Joel 2:13, Ps 141:5, Prov 8:10, 12:28, 17:12, 27:2. A study of these passages reveals this syntagma to be a trait of IH. The dirge in 2 Samuel 1 purports to be from the pen of David, but the setting is Mount Gilboa, so a northern background is present; Amos is Judahite, but he prophesied to the north (or perhaps, with David Qimhi, we should assume that he was Israelian in origin)⁵¹); Psalm 141 is a clear case of a northern composition⁵²); and the northern provenance of Proverbs has been noted above. This leaves only Joel 2:13 (which, potentially at least, could be explained by the theory of IH influence on post-exilic Hebrew; alternatively the prophet may have utilized a dialectal form to heighten the assonance between אַל וְאֵלֶיכֶם (בְּנֵיכֶם ... אֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). In sum, the use of אַל to negate a following noun is a feature of both Deir 'Alla and IH.

11. **Root יָהַב 'give, put' (I,7)**: This verb is very common in Aramaic. Elsewhere in Canaanite it is attested only in the Bible, and even there only in the imperative. Indeed, because the masculine singular imperative is virtually always the long imperative form הַבְּה, one is led to conclude that we

are dealing here with a fossilized form, i.e., a form which has ceased to be productive in the language. The only exception to this rule is Prov 30:15 where twice we have the regular form הַב. The entire book of Proverbs, as noted on several occasions above, reflects IH, but the section which commences with Prov 30:1 is Massaite material and thus may reflect Transjordanian usage in particular. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find a productive derivative of the root יָהַב in Proverbs 30, thus forming a lexical link with the Deir 'Alla inscription⁵³).

12. **3fsg perfect in חֲרַפְתָּ** 'reproaches' (I,7-8), חֲרַפְתָּ 'chases' (I,15): Some interpreters of the text consider this first example to be a noun (namely, a kind of bird); I prefer to see חֲרַפְתָּ as a verb, meaning 'reproaches'. Regardless of this example, however, we have a second, sure instance with חֲרַפְתָּ 'chases' later in the inscription. The 3fsg perfect ending in חֲרַפְתָּ is attested throughout Aramaic (including Samalian), but nowhere else in Northwest Semitic inscriptions⁵⁴). However, this usage is attested in the Bible in several instances, the distribution of which suggests it to be a northern dialectal feature.

The three cases in the Bible are Deut 32:36, Isa 23:15, Ezek 46:17⁵⁵). The first of these is most instructive, since above we commented on the northern origin of Deuteronomy 32⁵⁶). Isaiah 23 is part of the oracle against Tyre. Here, even though Phoenician attests the shift of -at > -a (perhaps to -o)⁵⁷), I would propose that an attempt has been made to produce northern usage⁵⁸). Only the last example, from Ezekiel, can be considered a true Aramaism⁵⁹).

Also germane may be the fact that with לִי"ה verbs, northern Hebrew appears to have retained the חֲרַפְתָּ ending more widely. The evidence for this comes mainly from MH, in which this is the regular usage⁶⁰). In the Bible, we can point to slender evidence. The form חֲרַפְתָּ occurs in 2 Kgs 9:37, with reference to Jezebel, thus in a text emanating from the northern kingdom. The form חֲרַפְתָּ in Jer 13:19 may represent a feature of the Benjaminite dialect discussed above. Other examples, however, either cannot be so easily explained (Lev 25:21, 26:34), or are to be considered true Aramaisms (Ezek 24:12).

The final conclusion of this entire discussion is as follows: in certain Canaanite dialects, the 3fsg perfect ending חֲרַפְתָּ was retained. Its presence in Deir 'Alla, therefore, need not automatically be taken as a sign of the Aramaic classification of the dialect.

⁴⁵) For detailed treatment of this and other issues in this poem, see G.A. Rendsburg and S.L. Rendsburg, "Physiological and Philological Notes to Psalm 137", *JQR* (forthcoming).

⁴⁶) C.H. Gordon, "North Israelite Influence on Postexilic Hebrew", *IEJ* 5 (1955): 85-88; Kutscher, *History*, 55.

⁴⁷) On Psalm 103 at least, see A. Hurvitz, *Beyn Lashon le-Lashon* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972), pp. 107-52.

⁴⁸) See the balanced statement of F. Israel, "Reflexions méthodologiques sur le classement linguistique de DAPT", in *BTDA*, 307: "on peut difficilement considérer certaines de ces formes comme des aramaismes".

⁴⁹) B.K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns: 1990), pp. 564-70.

⁵⁰) Hoftijzer, *ATDA*, 196; J. Hoftijzer, "What Did the Gods Say? Remarks on the First Combination of the Deir 'Alla-Plaster Texts", in *BTDA*, 129; and G.I. Davies, "Response to J. Greenfield and J. Hoftijzer", in *BTDA*, 148, refer only to אַל נָגַה in Prov 12:28. This example may have closer connections to אַל נָגַה in the Deir 'Alla text, but there are other instances of this usage in the Bible, as my list indicates.

⁵¹) On the employment of northern dialect in Amos, see A. Wolters, "Wordplay and Dialect in Amos 8:1-2", *JETS* 31 (1988): 407-10.

⁵²) See the detailed treatment in Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 99-102 (where, however, the syntagma under discussion here was not treated). For other issues centering around Ps 141:5, see G.A. Rendsburg, "Monophthongization of aw/ay > ā in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic", in C.H. Gordon and G.A. Rendsburg, eds., *Eblaite: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language*, vol. 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 91-126.

⁵³) If M. Dahood, "Review of *ATDA*", *Biblica* 62 (1981): 127, is correct that חֲרַפְתָּ in Numb 21:14 reflects the root יָהַב, then we have still another non-Judahite passage in which this verb occurs. Note that this statement, from the Book of the Wars of Yahweh, deals with Transjordan.

⁵⁴) Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 125-126.

⁵⁵) I do not include here examples with לִי"ה verbs, but see the discussion below.

⁵⁶) This example was noted by Israel, "Reflexions méthodologiques", 311. As an aside, note that the root חֲרַפְתָּ is an example of a lexical trait of IH. This is established from its attestations in the Bible (Deut 32:36, 1 Sam 9:7, Jer 2:36, Ezek 27:19, Prov 20:14, Job 14:11) and from its more common use in Aramaic.

⁵⁷) S. Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1976), pp. 130-31.

⁵⁸) I call this phenomenon "addressee-switching", on which see G.A. Rendsburg, "The Strata of Biblical Hebrew", *JNSL* (forthcoming); and Rendsburg, "Kabbir in Biblical Hebrew".

⁵⁹) Kutscher, *History*, 39.

⁶⁰) See Kutscher, *History*, 128.

13. **rod** (I,9): The vocable **חטר** 'rod' is common in Aramaic (later **חטרא**). But it appears in Canaanite in a few instances as well, in particular in Phoenician (*KAI* 1:2) [Byblos] and in Prov 14:3, an Israelian text. The fact that this usage is unknown from JH (I exclude Isa 11:1 where it means something else, namely, 'shoot') should not lead scholars to conclude that it automatically is Aramaic and not Canaanite. It is spread over three dialects (Phoenician, IH, and Deir 'Alla) and must have been characteristic of Canaanite dialects to the north of Judah.

14. **Retention of yod in perfect of IIIy verbs**, as in **שתי** (I,10): Notwithstanding the fact that **חזו** 'they see' in I,14 (with syncope of intervocalic *yod* [unless this verb is a IIIw verb])⁶¹ apparently is a 3mpl perfect, I am inclined to view **שתי** 'they drink' in I,10 as a 3mpl perfect as well. The alternative, to view **שתי** as a masculine plural imperative⁶², flies in the face of another form in the same inscription, namely, **ראו** 'see' in I,5⁶³.

Retention of the *yod* in the perfect of IIIy verbs occurs in the Bible sporadically: Numb 24:6, Deut 32:37, Isa 21:12 (2x), Ps 57:2, Prov 26:7. With the exception of Ps 57:2 — for which I have no explanation — the list demonstrates the IH nature of this usage. The remaining texts all have been discussed above. Numbers 24 is in the Balaam oracles, which naturally is significant for our present investigation of the Deir 'Alla inscription. Deuteronomy 32 and Proverbs are Israelian compositions, and Isaiah 21:11-15 places us in the Transjordanian desert fringe.

Thus, the retention of the *yod* in the perfect of at least one IIIy verb in the Deir 'Alla inscription fits into the picture of regional dialects of ancient Canaanite. It was not a feature of JH, but it was present elsewhere⁶⁴.

15. **wine** (I,10): This noun often is considered a characteristic of Aramaic, especially when contrasted with the usual Hebrew form **יין** 'wine'. But this is too hasty a conclusion, because the vocable **חמר** occurs in Canaanite texts as well. It is attested in Ugaritic⁶⁵, Phoenician (two attestations from Shiqmona), and three times in the Bible: Deut 32:14, Ps 75:9, Isa 27:2. Two of these three occurrences are in Israelian compositions: Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 75 (part of the Asaph collection). Isaiah 27 is presumably Judahite, but according to some scholars it is exilic or post-exilic, in which case IH influence could have exerted itself over JH writers. Regardless of how one explains the presence of **חמר** in Isa 27:2, the overall picture is clear: **חמר** was at home in regional dialects of Canaanite north of Judah⁶⁶.

16. **PS /d/ > q**, as in **קבעו** 'hyenas' (I,10); **יקחך** 'laughs' (I,11); **קקו** 'troubles' (I,14); **נקר** 'shoot' (II,5; II,12; II,14): Although there have been attempts to read every instance of

ק in the Deir 'Alla inscription as derivative from PS /q/, in truth this quest is a pursuit of the wind. There are, of course, sufficient cases in the text of ק representing PS /d/.

Since this shift is typical of Aramaic, but not of Canaanite, this point is an important one for those scholars who argue for the Aramaic classification of the Deir 'Alla dialect. However, again it must be kept in mind that this shift is attested in BH as well⁶⁷, though naturally not in JH, but rather in IH. The two best examples are **מחקה** 'she struck' in Judg 5:26, alongside **מחצה** in the same verse, derived from PS *mhd*; and **קלעים** 'door leaves/sides' in 1 Kgs 6:34, alongside **צלעים** in the same verse, derived from PS *dl*⁶⁸. The former example occurs in the Song of Deborah which is of obvious northern origin. The latter example occurs in the description of Solomon's reign, in which one would not expect to find IH elements. However, there are quite a few northern elements in these chapters, which I explain as the influence of a Phoenician scribe (an excellent example is the vocalization *'ēlōt* 'Eloth' in 1 Kgs 9:26, instead of the usual vocalization *'ēlat*, reflecting the Phoenician shift of short *a* > *o*)⁶⁹. And while I am quick to admit that there is no Phoenician evidence for /d/ > q, still this must be a northern trait.

In later Aramaic, the reflex of PS /d/ is '. There also are examples of this in the Bible, and again they occur in northern texts⁷⁰. Examples are 1 Sam 28:16 **ערך** 'your adversary', instead of the expected **צרך**; Ps 9:7 **ערים** 'adversaries', instead of the expected **צרים**; Song 1:7, **רעה** means both 'shepherd' (paralleling **תרביץ** 'pasture') and 'desire' (paralleling **אהבה** 'love'), thus creating a Janus parallelism⁷¹; and the oft-used word **רעות** 'desire' in Qohelet. The root of 'enemy' is of course *ḏrr*; and the root of 'desire' is of course *rdy*. The texts are all northern: Song of Songs has been discussed above; Qohelet is another book with northern affinities⁷²; 1 Sam 28:16 places us in the Samuel/Saul narrative of Ephraim and Benjamin (see above on the Benjaminite dialect), and the word in question appears in the mouth of Samuel; and Psalm 9-10 is one of the northern compositions in Psalms⁷³.

In short, although the shift of /d/ > q/ is a characteristic feature of Aramaic, there were also Canaanite dialects

⁶⁷ See Rabin, "Emergence of Classical Hebrew", 294, n. 12; Halpern, "Dialect Distribution", 125; Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 113; and Israel, "Reflexions méthodologiques", 307-08.

⁶⁸ The use of two variants of the same form side-by-side is a stylistic feature of Hebrew literature. See, for example, the use of both **נחנו** and **אנחנו** 'we' in the same verse in Gen 42:11. I owe this observation to Shamma Friedmann of the Seminary for Jewish Studies (Jerusalem). It merits further investigation.

⁶⁹ See Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 29-30.

⁷⁰ If the root **רבע** 'lie down' derives from *rbd*, the normal Hebrew reflex of which is **רבק** (see Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 113), then there may be one example of the shift of /d/ > ' in standard BH. Regardless of the findings of my research into regional dialects of ancient Hebrew, we must always reckon with dialect mixture in which northern items pass southward and southern items pass northward (for example, note the presence of both **נדר** and **נור** throughout the Bible, both derived from *ndr*).

⁷¹ This was observed first by my student Scott Noegel.

⁷² On the northern features in this book, see most recently J.R. Davila, "Qoheleth and Northern Hebrew", in E.M. Cook, ed., *Sopher Mahir: Northwest Semitic Studies Presented to Stanislav Segert* = *Maarav* 5-6 (1990): 69-87. This article represents a start in the right direction, but much more can be said about the IH traits of Qohelet.

⁷³ Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 19-27, especially pp. 19-20.

⁶¹ See Hackett, *Balaam Text*, 54, n. 47.

⁶² Hofstijzer, *ATDA*, 292; and Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 136-37.

⁶³ As noted by Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 162, n. 382.

⁶⁴ I have not treated the imperfect in the Deir 'Alla text. Probably the *yod* was elided in the 3mpl imperfect (see Hackett, *Balaam Text*, 98), but the two instances do not lead us to a firm conclusion. The reading **יחזו** in II,13 is not certain; and the form **יחזו** in I,1 is a *waw* consecutive which, because it employs the jussive and not the indicative, may undergo a different phonetic development. In the Bible, the distribution of IIIy imperfects with the *yod* retained is also a feature of IH; see Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 42-43.

⁶⁵ I accept the classification system of Ginsberg, "The Northwest Semitic Languages", which places Phoenician and Ugaritic together in the Phoenic group of Canaanite.

⁶⁶ See further Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 76-77.

which underwent the same process. The presence of this shift in Deir 'Alla, in light of all the other connections with Canaanite in the inscription, is not necessarily a point in favor of the Aramaic classification of the dialect.

17. **Root קחך 'laugh'** (I,11): In the preceding point I discussed the specific graphemic/phonemic issue of the use of ק to represent /d/. Here I devote a special section to the root קחך 'laugh'. As is well known, there is a great diversity among the Semitic languages regarding the various etyma of this word⁷⁴). The closest cognate is Syriac *ghk* and thus this point has been raised in favor of the Aramaic classification of the Deir 'Alla dialect. However, there is great likelihood that the root קחך appears in the Bible, in Job 15:12. The full passage reads לבך ירמוץ עיניך מה יקחך, which, like many other passages in Job, is extremely difficult. The parallel verb רום is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible, but most likely it is cognate with Arabic and Aramaic *rmz* (with metathesis) meaning 'wink'⁷⁵). All commentators naturally assume that קחך derives from the Hebrew root לקח 'take'⁷⁶), but they are at pains to fit this meaning, even through semantic extension, into the context. Much better, I think, is the approach which sees in this word the root קחך 'laugh', parallel to רום 'wink'. The passage is to be translated 'why does your heart laugh, and why do your eyes wink?', thus creating a plausible parallel thought process. If this be granted, then we have still another connection between the Deir 'Alla text and the book of Job.

18. **Root קרק 'flee'**, specifically in the H-stem הקרקה 'cause to flee' (I,15): Much has been written about this root. Theoretically, it could derive from *drq*, but as Greenfield pointed out, this root is not attested in Semitic⁷⁷). Much better is Greenfield's suggestion to assume that the root is *'rq*, and that the Aramaic form קרק attested at Sefire is due to assimilation. Regardless, this verb appears in the Bible in two places, Job 30:3, 30:17. The former passage is to be translated "they flee to the parched land"⁷⁸), while the latter means "my fleers [metaphor for 'legs'] do not lie down". This verb most likely was not employed in JH, but in the dialect represented in the book of Job it was used. We have in this example yet another of the many (mainly lexical) links between the book of Job and the Deir 'Alla text.

19. **Root רטב 'moist, wet'** (II,5): This word is common in Aramaic and MH. It appears in the Bible only twice, in Job 8:16, 24:8. Again we have a link between Deir 'Alla and Job. The picture which emerges from this evidence leads us to conclude that קחך 'moist, wet' was characteristic of IH, but not of JH.

20. **Root בית עלמן 'house of eternity' (= afterlife, grave, Sheol)** (II,6): This expression occurs in the Bible only once, in a

northern composition: Qoh 12:5 בית עולמו 'his house of eternity'. Elsewhere it is used in MH, Punic, and Aramaic⁷⁹). This distribution bespeaks a northern usage, one which did not penetrate as far south as Judah.

21. **Root גרש 'grave'** (II,8): In BH גרש usually means 'heap of grain', but in two instances the meaning 'grave' is more suitable. Both are in Job (5:26, 21:32)⁸⁰). The use of גרש 'grave' in the Deir 'Alla inscription forms another link between this dialect and IH, and more specifically between this dialect and the language of Job.

22. **Interrogative ה continued by או** (II,9): This syntagma occurs in the passage הלעצה בך ליתעץ או למלכה ליתמלך 'will he not take counsel with you, will he not ask advice (of you)?'. In the Bible this usage is attested only in northern settings⁸¹): Judg 18:19, 2 Kgs 4:13, 6:27, Job 16:3, 38:28, 38:31, Qoh 2:19, 11:6⁸²). Job and Qohelet require no comment by this point; the Judges passage occurs in the story of the Danites' finding their new home in the north; the two passages from 2 Kings occur within the history of the northern kingdom of Israel (the former in the mouth of Elisha, the latter in the mouth of the Israelian king). It is clear that the use of ה ... או in an extended question is a feature shared by the Deir 'Alla dialect and IH.

23. **Double plural**, as in משכבי עלמך 'your bed of eternity' (II,11). In the expression משכבי עלמך, both the *nomen regens* and the *nomen rectum* of a construct chain are in the plural; thus we have what may be called a "double plural". S. Gevirtz noted that this formation is characteristic of northern texts such as Judges 5, Phoenician, and the Amarna letters from Byblos⁸³). In a separate article he noted Gen 49:23 בעלי חצים 'masters of arrows', in the poem about the northern tribes of Joseph, as another example of this usage⁸⁴). My own investigations have confirmed this view with other examples (I translate literally, to highlight the syntax): Gen 49:24 זרעי ידיו 'arms of his hands', also in the poem about Joseph; Ps 29:1 בני אלים 'sons of the gods', Ps 45:6 בנות מלכים 'daughters of the kings', Ps 47:10 נדיבי עמים 'princes of peoples', Ps 74:13 ראשי תנינים 'heads of the sea monsters', all in northern psalms; etc.⁸⁵). Furthermore, this construction is common in MH, e.g., Rosh Hashanah 1:1 ראשי שנים 'heads of years'⁸⁶). While it is true that double plurals also occur where northern provenance is not indicated, e.g., Chronicles⁸⁷), the overall picture favors the conclusion that this usage is an element of IH. Its presence in Deir 'Alla

⁷⁴) The best treatment remains R.C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (AOS 59; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1977), pp. 111-20.

⁷⁵) For best treatment, see L.L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job: A Study in Methodology* (SBLDS 34; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 66-67. See also F.E. Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and Its Treatment Since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms* (SBLDS 74; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), pp. 156-57.

⁷⁶) The reverse occurred in the study of the Deir 'Alla text. Greenfield, "Review of ATDA", 250, suggested deriving יקחך in I,11 from the root לקח, but I think the meaning 'laugh' fits the context better.

⁷⁷) Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 113.

⁷⁸) See R. Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 326, 330.

⁷⁹) See discussion in and sources cited by D.C. Fredericks, *Qoheleth's Language* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988), p. 180. Although this volume at times presents arguments for a northern origin of Qohelet, I hasten to add that it must be used critically.

⁸⁰) In the former passage, wordplay is present, and גרש carries both of its connotations.

⁸¹) For further discussion, see Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 116, where, however, only 2 Kgs 6:27 is cited.

⁸²) The examples in Gen 44:19, Deut 4:32, represent different syntagmas.

⁸³) S. Gevirtz, "Of Syntax and Style in the 'Late Biblical Hebrew' – 'Old Canaanite' Connection", *JANES* 18 (1986): 28-29.

⁸⁴) S. Gevirtz, "Asher in the Blessing of Jacob (Genesis xlix 20)", *VT* 37 (1987): 160.

⁸⁵) Rendsburg, "Genesis 49"; and Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 106 (consult the references).

⁸⁶) M.H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 187; and M.Z. Segal, *Diqduq Leshon ha-Mishna* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1936), p. 96.

⁸⁷) Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 42.

is thus another link between the dialect of our inscription and IH.

As to the specific interpretation of **משכבי עלמך**, it should be noted that only one bed need be referred to here (see my translation above). The double plural has different semantic sub-categories. In cases such as **בנות מלכים** and **בעלי חצים**, there could be many masters of multiple arrows, or many daughters of multiple kings, so that both *nomen regens* and *nomen rectum* are in the plural (though **בעלי חץ** and **בנות מלך**, respectively, would be the standard expressions for 'archers' and 'princesses'). In a case such as **ראשי תנינים**, probably there is only one great sea monster (= Lotan of Ugaritic mythology), but since he is multi-headed, the *nomen regens* needs to be in the plural, and then by extension the *nomen rectum* is pluralized as well. In the example from the Deir 'Alla text, we have the opposite: the *nomen rectum* is pluralized to create the term 'eternities' (poetic usage, presumably), and thus by extension the *nomen regens* is pluralized as well. But the overall meaning of **משכבי עלמך** would still be 'your eternal bed'⁸⁸).

24. **Negative particle** **לש** (II,13): There still is some uncertainty as to the exact reading of the string of letters in this difficult line. I follow van der Kooij, who reads **לש** as an independent word here⁸⁹). If this reading is correct, probably it is the negative particle, a usage which is paralleled elsewhere in Northwest Semitic only in Job 9:33 **לש** (though the Aramaic equivalent **לא אית** also occurs). Again, we notice a striking similarity between the Deir 'Alla text and the book of Job.

25. **'sprinkle'** **זלף** (II,15): Although the context is not clear, the reading **זלף** is reasonably certain. This verb, meaning 'sprinkle', appears in MH and Aramaic⁹⁰). Its presence in the former need not be due to Aramaic influence. Instead, more than likely the root was characteristic of Canaanite dialects north of Judah, including Deir 'Alla and MH.

26. **'punishment'** **מלקה** (II,17): This noun derives from the root **לק** (לקה), whose causative derivations mean 'strike, administer corporal punishment, etc.'. Verbal and nominal forms from this root appear in MH and Aramaic⁹¹). As we have seen on several occasions above (including the immediately preceding example), we again witness a distribution of Deir 'Alla, MH, and Aramaic. There is no *a priori* reason why this term should be considered more Aramaic than Canaanite. It is not attested in JH, our largest corpus of Iron Age Canaanite, but it did exist in other regional varieties of Canaanite.

In sum, then, there are twenty-six items which link the Deir 'Alla dialect to a type of Canaanite very close to IH⁹²).

Several scholars recently have stated that our knowledge of IH unfortunately is insufficient, with the suggestion that, if we knew more of this dialect (or dialect bundle), we would be in a better position to judge the Deir 'Alla dialect. Greenfield, for example, wrote: "If we had a better idea of Israelite [= Israelian] Hebrew in its varied aspects, it might be possible to assess the role of this dialect in the transmission of Aramaic"⁹³). M. Weippert wrote in a similar vein: "The position of Israelite [= Israelian] among the Canaanite languages is not well known as no texts have survived from which we could glean sufficient information regarding its phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon"⁹⁴). But in my own recent studies into the regional dialectology of ancient Hebrew, I believe I have begun to fill exactly what these two scholars see as a gap in our knowledge. Contra Weippert, Israelian texts have survived⁹⁵); and, as I have demonstrated in the detailed treatment of the twenty-six grammatical and lexical points above, the dialect of these texts coheres to a great extent with the dialect of Deir 'Alla.

Can we be even more specific? As I have noted several times above, there is a tremendous amount shared by Job and Deir 'Alla. I am not the first to point this out; both M. Dahood and Greenfield called attention to this fact⁹⁶). The eleven points noted above (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24), in which Deir 'Alla grammatical and lexical features appear in the book of Job as well, demonstrate the validity of this approach⁹⁷). In both cases we are dealing with a

[1980]: 53). The verb **עלל**, in turn, is usually considered Aramaic, but note that it appears in Job 16:15 (its only occurrence in the Bible).

If we accept Hackett's view (*Balaam Text*, 31) that **אש** in I,1 is the relative pronoun, this too would form a bridge with IH. Cognates occur in Ammonite and Phoenician, and the Hebrew relative pronoun **ש** (this shorter form clearly is related) occurs predominantly in IH texts (see Rendsburg, *Psalm*, 91-92).

Somewhat speculative, but perhaps germane, is the attempt by H.-P. Müller, "Einige alttestamentliche Probleme zur aramäischen Inschrift von *Dēr 'Allā*", *ZDPV* 94 (1978): 57, to see the root **קבב** 'curse' in two of the very fragmentary combinations: IX,a,3 **לקב**, and X,a,3 **קבת**. If he is correct, note that this root is also a trait of IH. It occurs only in the Balaam story (10x), Prov 11:26, Job 3:8, 5:3.

⁹³) Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 118, n. 30.

⁹⁴) M. Weippert, "The Balaam Text from Deir 'Allā and the Study of the Old Testament", in *BTDA*, 162.

⁹⁵) See also Knauf, "War 'Biblich-Hebräisch' eine Sprache?" 11-23, especially pp. 18-19.

⁹⁶) Dahood, "Review of *ATDA*", 126: "the language of Deir 'Allah (*sic*) and that of Job have many elements in common". But he went too far with the following statement: "Some of the most striking grammatical and lexical isoglosses are with the Book of Job which is classical Hebrew without any significant Aramaic features" (p. 125). Obviously, the book of Job, set in the desert fringe in Transjordan, has strong links with Aramaic.

Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 120: "A fruitful area of comparison with the Deir 'Alla inscription which has not been given the attention that it deserves is the Book of Job ... There is also an important religious context for the book of Job is dominated by El and Shaddai, divine names also present in the DAPT". Davies, "Response", 144, n. 3, was impressed with this observation: "I find his [Greenfield's] suggestion of literary, linguistic and even religious parallels with the book of Job particularly inviting, in view of its likely Transjordanian setting". On the issue of **שרי**, see further the next footnote.

⁹⁷) An additional point, not treated in the present study, is the extremely common use of **שרי** in Job and the presence of **שרי** in the Deir 'Alla text (I,5 [restored], I,6). Incidentally, this also reopens the question of **שרי** in Job 19:29.

Is the two-fold use of **שרי** in Ruth 1:20-21 to be understood in like regard? That is, Naomi, the returning woman from Moab in Transjordan, invokes this particular divine name.

⁸⁸) See Hoftijzer, *ATDA*, 233; and Hackett, *Balaam Text*, 67.

⁸⁹) *ATDA*, 128.

⁹⁰) M. Moreshet, *Leqsiqon ha-Po'al she-Nithadesh bi-Lshon ha-Tanna'im* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1980), p. 153; and M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), p. 178.

⁹¹) Moreshet, *Leqsiqon*, 202-03; and Sokoloff, *Dictionary*, 286, 311.

⁹²) I have based my presentation largely on my own understanding of the text. But if we accept other scholars' positions, then still other links between Deir 'Alla and IH are forthcoming. For instance, while I prefer to derive **רעל** in I,4 from the root **עלה** 'go up' (with Hackett, *Balaam Text*, 37), others prefer to see the root **עלל** 'enter' here (e.g., P.K. McCarter, "The Balaam Texts from Deir 'Allā: The First Combination", *BASOR* 239

Transjordanian dialect⁹⁸), one which falls within my definition of IH (see below).

In arguing for the inclusion of the Deir 'Alla dialect into the Canaanite group, still more can be said⁹⁹). There are other grammatical and lexical features in the inscription which are not specific to IH, but which belong to Canaanite (including JH) in general. Since all of these have been treated before, I present them here in summary fashion, with only a few additional comments in the notes¹⁰⁰):

- 1) use of the *waw* consecutive (I,1, etc.)¹⁰¹
- 2) the imperative forms of הלך 'go, come', specifically לכו (I,5) and לך (II,17)
- 3) the root ראי (ראה) 'see' (I,5)
- 4) the root יחד 'unite, gather together' (I,5)¹⁰²
- 5) the word מועד 'assembly' (I,6)
- 6) the word מוסר 'chastisement' (I,10)
- 7) the use of the Niph'al, specifically, נצבו 'standing' (I,6) and נאנח 'sighing' (II,12 [2x])
- 8) the infinitive construct לדעת 'to know' (II,17)¹⁰³
- 9) the root דבר 'speak' (II,17)

Note further the two-fold use of שדי in the Balaam oracles (Numb 24:4, 24:16). I disagree with much of what Weippert, "Balaam Text", 176, states: "One could perhaps argue that the mention of El and Šadday in Numb. 24:16 reflects Balaam's relation to El and the Šaddayin in the Deir 'Alla text; but since both theonyms are common designations of Yahweh in post-exilic literature this is at best ambiguous evidence". First, I see a more direct connection between the appearance of שדי in Numbers 24 and of שדך in Deir 'Alla; for general discussion see H.-P. Müller, "Die aramäische Inschrift von Deir 'Allā und die älteren Bileamsprüche", *ZAW* 94 (1982): 238-43. Secondly, while I agree that Job is post-Exilic, its frequent use of שדי is to be ascribed not to its date, but apparently to its Transjordanian setting. Note that books contemporary with Job, such as Jonah, the latter part of Second Isaiah (= Third Isaiah [?]), Haggai, Zechariah, etc., do not utilize שדי at all (a possible exception is Joel 1:15, though a) we do not know the exact date of Joel, and b) even here the passage is a citation of Isa 13:6). The Genesis and Exodus passages which use שדי are not post-Exilic, there being no justification for this conclusion; see Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew"; and G.A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, in: Eisenbrauns, 1986), pp. 107-20.

If G.R. Driver, "Job 39:27-28: the Ky-bird", *PEQ* 104 (1972): 64-66, is correct that כץ in Job 39:27 is the name of a bird, and if A. Wolters, "Aspects of the Literary Structure of Combination I", in *BTDA*, 303, is correct that כץ in I,7 is the name of a bird, then perhaps we should see another link between Job and Deir 'Alla.

⁹⁸) See already Halpern, "Dialect Distribution", 135-36.

⁹⁹) Should the evidence of the pottery finds from Tell Deir 'Alla Phase IX (destroyed c. 800 B.C.E.) also be brought into the picture? The storage jar types are known especially from Tell el-Fara (North), Hazor, and Samaria; two juglets have close parallels in the Achzib tombs; and the variety of loomweights is strikingly similar to the finds at Tell Qasile. By contrast, no evidence of material culture "is available to postulate a close contact with the Aramaic culture at Damascus or Hama". See M.M. Ibrahim and G. van der Kooij, "The Archaeology of Deir 'Alla Phase IX", in *BTDA*, pp. 24-26 (the quotation is from p. 26).

¹⁰⁰) This section is heavily indebted to the excellent treatment of Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 111-16.

¹⁰¹) Notwithstanding the arguments raised by Pardee, "Linguistic Classification", 101-02, in the long run the Zakkur inscription shows clear Canaanite influence. On this point, see Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 111-12; and earlier J.C. Greenfield, "The Zakir Inscription and the Danklied", in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1971), pp. 332-39.

¹⁰²) This appears in Old Aramaic only in the Zakkur inscription, where once more Canaanite influence is to be seen; see Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 115.

¹⁰³) The interpretation of Pardee, "Linguistic Classification", 101, n. 3, is less likely. Even if we grant him that דעת in our text could be the noun 'knowledge', this form still would be Canaanite, since Aramaic uses other forms, e.g., דעה, מדע, etc.

To be sure, there are items in the Deir 'Alla inscription which connect with Aramaic¹⁰⁴). Since they too have been noted by previous scholars, only a quick summary is necessary here¹⁰⁵):

- 1) יין 'dove' (I,9)
- 2) מדר 'soil, earth' (II,5)¹⁰⁶
- 3) חד 'one' (II,10)
- 4) חניץ 'little pig' (II,15)

Now even a quick glance at this list shows that the only "pure" Aramaic connections in the Deir 'Alla inscription are lexical items. Since I have used quite a few lexical items in the above twenty-six (plus nine) points, I do not mean to disparage the use of lexical items for linguistic taxonomy. Nevertheless, it is striking that not a single grammatical item in the Deir 'Alla texts forms an isogloss with Aramaic to the complete exclusion of Canaanite. The proponents of the Aramaic school have argued in this manner, but in all instances, as detailed above, parallels may be found in Canaanite as well, especially in IH (nos. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16).

Furthermore, the following needs to be stated. In my research into the regional dialects of ancient Hebrew, I have noted that specifically in IH texts there are numerous instances of rare or unique Hebrew words that possess Aramaic cognates. A few of these have been noted above, e.g. יהב 'give, put', חטר 'rod', חמר 'wine', etc. But there are many others as well which we have not had occasion to mention in this article (because they do not appear at Deir 'Alla). Examples are גרם 'bone', דבר 'carry off, pursue', דיר 'dwell', יקר 'grievous', כנה 'stem, stalk, root', כשח 'cut down', כשיל 'hatchet', מוק 'mock', רחש 'astir', שפר 'good, pleasing, beautiful', and תרה 'grieve'¹⁰⁷). In short, the teachings of dialect geography inform us that we can expect to find many lexical links between IH and Aramaic, which are not shared by JH.

Accordingly, at least one item in the above list of four words could very reasonably have existed in IH. I have in mind מדר 'soil, earth' (assuming that this is what the word means). The IH corpus is limited to a small portion of the Bible and a few inscriptions. At the very least, since this

¹⁰⁴) Similarly, there are several items which go both ways. They are the least instructive for our purposes. Here I have in mind 1) the root חזי (חזה) 'see' (I,1; I,14; II,13); and 2) the use of the H-stem causative in הקרקת 'chase' (I,15) (on which see Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 122). In the same vein, the lack of a definite article cannot be used as a factor in determining whether the Deir 'Alla dialect is more closely related to Canaanite or to Aramaic. In either case, we would expect a definite article in a text from this period. The absence of the definite article in the Deir 'Alla inscription remains, then, a curiosity, but this fact cannot help us in the present enterprise.

¹⁰⁵) The attempt to understand הא in I,1 as Aramaic 'behold' is difficult. See Weippert, "Balaam Text", 167, n. 1. In like manner, little should be made of ססה in II,15 (thus Pardee, "Linguistic Classification", 102, albeit with qualification). As many have recognized, the word could be simply feminine ("mare") or it might include the 3msg pronominal suffix ("his horse"); see, e.g., M. Dijkstra, "Response to E. Puech and G. van der Kooij", in *BTDA*, p. 265 and n. 11.

Similarly, שקי in II,8 may be related to Syriac *sāqā* 'mound of earth, sarcophagus'; thus Hackett, *Balaam Text*, 63. But the line is broken at this point and the context is difficult. For an alternative understanding, see Greenfield, "Review of *ATDA*", 252, where שקי = 'thighs of' is suggested, parallel to אש בני אש 'testicles/thighs of men'.

¹⁰⁶) I include this entry in the list, even though the context is not clear and other possibilities exist.

¹⁰⁷) For גרם, see Rendsburg, "Genesis 49"; for the other lexemes, consult the references in Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 106-07.

word was in use at Deir 'Alla (which, we must remember, is on territory traditionally considered Israelite¹⁰⁸), it is possible that it was used in IH as well.

About the other words in the above list, the same cannot be said. Since יֶדֶד 'dove', חֶד 'one', and חֲנִיץ 'little pig' stand in contrast to what we have in Hebrew (respectively יֶדֶד, אֶחָד, and חֲזִיר), these items are probably the only "pure" links with Aramaic which can be considered. Even here, in one instance, namely חֶד, it should be noted that this form too appears in the Bible, in Ezek 33:30, though undoubtedly this is due to Aramaic influence.

Before concluding, more must be said (as promised above) about the diachronic approach to our dilemma. In his meticulous study of the 1st Millennium Northwest Semitic dialects, Garr isolated ten innovations in the Deir 'Alla dialect¹⁰⁹). Of these, three are shared by both Aramaic and Hebrew (3:6b, 3:23d, 3:25a)¹¹⁰); three are shared by Aramaic only (2:1, 2:14, 3:10b); three are shared by Hebrew only (2:16, 3:21b, 3:24b); and one (4:11, which is only a possible point) is independent of either Aramaic or Hebrew. Thus, I repeat what I stated at the outset: a clear picture of the linguistic taxonomy of the Deir 'Alla dialect does not emerge from this methodology. Moreover, of the three innovations shared by Aramaic and Deir 'Alla, two of these are attested in Hebrew as well, albeit not in epigraphic Hebrew (the corpus utilized by Garr), but in IH texts in the Bible (namely, 2:1 and 3:10b). Thus, we are left with only 2:14, specifically, the use of חֶד 'one' (and even here Garr left the door open for the possibility that this usage may be borrowed [presumably from Aramaic], just as it was in Ezek 33:30).

Kaufman pointed out that another innovation in the Deir 'Alla dialect is בֶּר 'son'¹¹¹). Of course he is correct, but as discussed above a) the word may be part of the protagonists's patronymic and thus may be of little or no value for our concern, and b) it is in any case attested in IH as well. But let us not enter these quibbles here; instead let us be maximilist and state categorically that yes, the use of בֶּר represents an innovation in Deir 'Alla shared with Aramaic. We still are left with more innovations shared with Hebrew only (2:16, 3:21b, 3:24b) than with Aramaic only (2:14, and use of בֶּר)¹¹²). But obviously no major argument should be entered on the basis of three innovations shared in one direction versus two innovations shared in another direction. The quantity of discriminants is too small, and the scales are too closely balanced (even though they tip in the direction of Hebrew/Canaanite)¹¹³). Thus we return to my

claim that the diachronic approach yields inconclusive results when applied to the case of the Deir 'Alla dialect¹¹⁴). By contrast, as was made clear above, the synchronic approach yields very conclusive results.

Our study has shown that, with the exception of a few lexical items, nothing in the Deir 'Alla inscription is exclusively Aramaic. On the other hand, there are some important grammatical points, e.g., the use of the Niph'al, that point heavily toward Canaanite. More importantly, there are more than two dozen isoglosses created between Deir 'Alla and IH. This last finding, the most crucial result of our undertaking, demonstrates beyond doubt that the Northwest Semitic dialect most closely related to the Deir 'Alla dialect is IH. For lack of a better term, I am content to accept the term "Gileadite"¹¹⁵), which I would reckon within the IH umbrella¹¹⁶). Our study strongly supports Halpern's view that Canaan was linguistically cantonized in the 1st Millennium; the Deir 'Alla dialect fits into this picture perfectly¹¹⁷).

Ithaca, march 1992

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¹¹⁴) Virtually stated by Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 229.

¹¹⁵) I very much like the statement of Kaufman, "Classification", 43: "If a new language appears in Gilead in the 8th century or so, looks somewhat like Aramaic to its North, Ammonite and Moabite to its South, and Hebrew to its West (that is to say: it looks exactly like any rational person would expect it to look like) ... why not simply say it is Gileadite and be done with it?" Regardless of this comment, however, in the long run Kaufman opted for a closer identification with Aramaic than with Canaanite. Greenfield, "Philological Observations", 118, recently employed the term "Gileadite" too, though earlier he used the term "Ammonite" (see Greenfield, "Review of *ATDA*", 251). See also, Naveh, "Review of *ATDA*", 136. There must have been much shared by Gileadite and Ammonite, though our sparse records prevent us from producing a clear picture of all the connections. For one isogloss, however, see G.A. Rendsburg, "The Ammonite Phoneme /T/", *BASOR* 269 (1988): 73-79; and G.A. Rendsburg, "More on Hebrew *šibbole*", *JSS* 33 (1988): 255-58.

¹¹⁶) See Rendsburg, *Psalms*, 8, 103.

¹¹⁷) The evidence presented in this article also will serve to counter the proposal of J. Huehnergard, "Remarks on the Classification of the Northwest Semitic Languages", in *BTDAR*, 282-93, that the Deir 'Alla dialect "need not be classified as a form or sub-branch of either Aramaic or Canaanite, but rather as a representative, thus far unique, of another independent branch of the larger Northwest Semitic family" (p. 293). (See similarly Davies, "Response", 144, n. 3). This is an ingenious solution to the problem, but I am unwilling to postulate a third branch of 1st Millennium B.C.E. Northwest Semitic (alongside Canaanite and Aramaic) on the basis of several dozen fragmented lines of one inscription. Furthermore, as I have indicated, with very few exceptions, there is nothing in the text that does not point to Canaanite.

Moreover, I do not follow Huehnergard's reasoning. His three markers of the Canaanite dialect group are "the change of **qattila* and **haqtilla* to **qittila* and **hiqtilla*; the change of **anākū* to **anōkī* and the concomitant change of the first person singular suffix *-tū to *tī; and the generalization of the suffix *-nū for the first person plural" (p. 286); he then goes on to state: "When we turn to examine the dialect of the plaster inscription found at Deir 'Allā we find no evidence for any of the features I have just cited as characteristic of Proto-Canaanite" (pp. 286-87). But there is also no evidence to the contrary. Huehnergard's first item would not be differentiated in the Deir 'Alla orthography; his second point is moot since the 1csg independent pronoun and 1csg perfect verbs are lacking in the inscription; and his third point is also moot because 1cpl perfect verbs likewise are wanting.

It is also worth noting that my approach is the inverse of that of S.A. Kaufman, "The Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Allā", *BASOR* 239 (1980): 73 (see also Kaufman, "Classification"). Kaufman considers the Deir 'Alla dialect to be peripheral Aramaic, with the following clarification: "And, surrounded on three sides by Canaanite speakers, it is hardly surprising that this dialect lies on the Canaanite side of many isoglosses". I prefer to classify the dialect as Canaanite, with its closest cousin being IH, and to

¹⁰⁸) On the historical issue, as to whether Deir 'Alla was Israelite or non-Israelite at the time of the writing or use of this inscription, see, among others, Halpern, "Dialect Distribution", 121; and Weippert, "Balaam Text", 179-80. J.W. Wesseliuss, "Thoughts about Balaam: The Historical Background of the Deir Alla Inscription on Plaster", *BiOr* 44 (1987): 589-99, went too far in arguing that the text is Israelite. In theory, he could be correct (that is, the inscription could reflect popular [not official] Israelite religion), but there is no proof for the text being Israelite and thus methodologically it is sounder to consider the material non-Israelite.

¹⁰⁹) See the summary list in Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 224.

¹¹⁰) I include only Hebrew here among the Canaanite dialects (leaving Phoenician, etc., aside). The sigla refer to Garr's numeration system; the reader is invited to consult Garr's monograph for the details.

¹¹¹) Stated publicly in the discussion following the oral presentation of this paper at the American Oriental Society meeting.

¹¹²) For a contrary view, see Kaufman, "Classification", 52-53.

¹¹³) See similarly Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 216.

consider the links between IH and the Deir 'Alla, on the one hand, and Aramaic, on the other, as due to the dialect continuum now well established for this period (see most importantly Garr, *Dialect Geography*).

Note added in proof: The recent treatment by H.-P. Müller, "Die Sprache der Texte von Tell Deir 'Allā im Kontext der nordwestsemitischen Sprachen", *ZAH* 4 (1991), pp. 1-31, reached me after the present paper was completed.