Israelian Hebrew, Inscriptions from the North of Israel, and Samaritan Hebrew: A Complex of Northern Dialects

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Abstract

This article surveys the three sources at our disposal for the recovery of ancient northern Hebrew: a) Israelian Hebrew, that is, the dialect present in those portions of the Bible with a northern provenance; b) inscriptions from the northern kingdom of Israel, including Kuntillet 'Ajrud; and c) Samaritan Hebrew. The overall goal is to determine the common lexical and grammatical features of this complex of northern Hebrew dialects from the biblical period, many of which are shared with Phoenician and Aramaic, though not with Judahite Hebrew.

Keywords: Israelian Hebrew; Hebrew inscriptions; Samaritan Hebrew; northern Israel; regional dialects

Introduction

As the knowledgeable reader of this article will know, for much of my scholarly career I have been engaged in research on the question of regional dialects of ancient Hebrew. The starting point is the generally accepted conclusion that the majority of the Bible stems from Judah in general or Jerusalem specifically, or from the pen of individuals exiled from Judah. Thus, for example, one thinks of historical books such as Kings and Chronicles, prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel, poets such as the authors of Lamentations and the many psalms that evoke Zion, and much more.

At the same time, however, there are compositions included in the canon which derive from northern Israel. Here I have in mind, for example, stories in the book of Judges with geographical settings in the north, such as the stories about Deborah and Barak and Gideon (Rendsburg 2003, 2012); the material concerning the kingdom of Israel, which is embedded in the Judah-centric narrative of the canonical book of Kings (Rendsburg 2002a); and prophets such as Amos and Hosea (Yoo 1999; Rendsburg 2021).

In my studies, I have identified dozens of lexical items and grammatical features, which a) appear only in these northern sources, or nearly always in these sources, b) depart from the standard vocabulary and grammatical norms of Biblical Hebrew (BH), and c) typically have cognate uses in the dialects and languages spoken to the north of Israel, that is, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramaic. I have labelled the umbrella dialect that emerges from this analysis Israelian Hebrew (IH), applying the term "Israelian" coined by H. L. Ginsberg as the adjectival form for the northern kingdom of Israel (Ginsberg 1982).

As such, IH stands in contrast to Judahite Hebrew (JH), which is, in light of what we stated above concerning the majority of biblical books, to be equated with Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH). Once IH elements and the dialect as a whole are identified in the basic sources such as the relevant sections of Judges and Kings set in the north, along with the books of Amos and Hosea, one also is able to determine that other biblical compositions show a similar concentration of IH features. Here I have in mind Proverbs (Chen 2000; Rendsburg 2016, 112, 136–41), Song of Songs (Noegel and Rendsburg 2009), and Micah 6–7, among others—though I hasten to add that certain scholars have argued for northern provenance for these works, even without noting the linguistic evidence. Thus, for example, both Burkitt (1926) and Ginsberg (1982, 25–31) argued for the northern provenance of Micah 6–7, based on the mention of Omri and Ahab, along with the toponyms Bashan and Gilead in this section, though without recourse to the linguistic profile of these two chapters. In addition, one finds various dialectal traits used for literary and rhetorical purposes at times, even in Judahite texts, as we shall see in several instances below.

Here follows a representative sampling of grammatical and lexical features characteristic of IH, which stand in opposition to the standard usages known from JH.

Since I have treated all of these linguistic elements in prior publications, I resort here to a schematic presentation only.

Examples of IH Grammatical Features

1. Infinitive construct of IIIy verbs, as in Ugaritic (Tropper 2000, 666–67):
   - Judg 13:21 לְהֵרָאֹה (Samson)
   - 1 Sam 1:9 שָׁתֹה (Shiloh)
   - 1 Sam 3:21 לְהֵרָאֹה (Shiloh)
   - 2 Kgs 13:17 כַּלֵּה (Elisha)
   - Hos 6:9 חַכֵּי (northern prophet)
   ○ CAT 1.6:I:9 ʿd tšbʿ bk
     "until she is sated in crying"
   ○ CAT 1.15:IV:27, V:10, VI:4 llḥm . lšty . ṣḥtkm
     "to eat (and) to drink I have summoned you"

Note that in Ugaritic the IIIy infinitive construct may retain the third root consonant *y* (as in the second example) or it may elide the *y* (as in the first example). Regardless, though, an ending with -*t* does not occur, as one might expect upon comparison with SBH.

Though one must admit that in this case Phoenician does include the /t/ (Krahmalkov 2001, 202), as in:
   ▪ לבנת "to build" (*KAI* 26 A II 11)
   ▪ למחת "to erase" (*KAI* 26 C IV 15)

2. Preposition קבל "before," as in Aramaic:
   - 2 Kgs 15:10 קֳבָל־עָם "before the people" (Shallum)[1]
   ○ Dan 3:3 לָקֳבֵל צַלְמָא "before the statue"
   ○ Dan 5:1 וְלָקֳבֵל אַלְפָּא "and before the thousand"

The two Biblical Aramaic passages are, of course, illustrative, as the preposition קבל is common in almost all dialects, with a range of meanings (Rendsburg 2002a, 126; Kaufman et al., s.v., *qwbl*).[2]

3. גֶּפֶן זֹאת "this vine" construction (indefinite noun + indefinite demonstrative pronoun), as in Phoenician (Krahmalkov 2001, 80–81):
   - 2 Kgs 1:2, 8:8, 8:9 חֳלִי זֶה "this illness" (Ahaziah, Ben-Hadad)
   - Mic 7:12 יֹם הוּא "that day" (northern section of Micah)

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[1] The form here represents the pointing in the St. Petersburg (Leningrad) Codex (L). This section of the Aleppo Codex (A) (specifically 2 Kgs 14:21–18:13) is wanting.

[2] The exceptions are Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic, in which the preposition *q(w)bl* does not appear; see Sokoloff (2009, 1311–12, 1322); and Sokoloff (2014, 361, 364).

- Ps 80:15 גֶּפֶן זֹאת "this vine" (IH psalm)[3]
  o *KAI* 14.4, 7, 10 משכב ז "this resting-place" (Eshmunazor)
  o *KAI* 14.11 חלת ז "this coffin" (Eshmunazor)
  o *KAI* 10.11 מזבח זן "this altar" (Yeḥawmilk)
  o *KAI* 10.14 מקם ז "this place" (Yeḥawmilk)
  o *KAI* 1.2 ארן זן "this coffin" (Ahiram)
  o *KAI* 13.2 ארן זן "this coffin" (Tabnit)
  o Kition A.29.2, A.30.2 סמל אז "this image"
  o Kition B.47.2 מצבת ז "this stele"

As this list of examples indicates, the Phoenician construction of anarthrous noun + anarthrous demonstrative pronoun (serving as attribute) is very common. There are only three such examples in the Bible, but all occur in Israelian texts (Rendsburg 2002a, 80–81).

Examples of IH Lexical Items

1.   חֵלֶק "field": 2 Kgs 9:10, 9:36, 9:37, Hos 5:7, Amos 7:4 (cf. Aramaic)

The noun חֵלֶק means "portion" throughout Biblical Hebrew (Gen 14:24, 31:14, Lev 6:10, etc.), in all genres, during all periods. In the passages listed above, however, the noun means "field," per its cognates in Aramaic and Akkadian: חקל and *eqlu*, respectively (for the former, see the information conveyed in Cook [2008, 98]; and Kaufman et al., s.v., *ḥql*). One will assume that the Semitic cognates reflect the original consonantal order (*ḥ-q-l*), with the IH form חֵלֶק (*ḥ-l-q*) "field" reflecting metathesis or assimilation to the commoner noun חֵלֶק "portion" (and, of course, the two nouns originally may be one and the same within Semitic, given the overlap of meanings). Most importantly, one observes the lexical isogloss shared by IH and Aramaic (Rendsburg 2002a, 111–12; Rendsburg 2021, 732).

2.   כַּד "jar": 1 Kgs 17:12, 17:14, 17:16, 1 Kgs 18:34 (Elijah), Judges 7 (4x) (Gideon), Qoh 12:6 (IH), Genesis 24 (9x as style-switching). (cf. Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic [see also Kinneret epigraph below])

The noun כַּד "jar" occurs in the Bible either in decidedly IH compositions (Judges 7; 1 Kings 17–18) or as a style-switching element to reflect the geographical setting in Aram (Genesis 24).[4] The one additional attestation appears in Qoh 12:6, which is both northern (Davila 1990) and late (Seow 1996). The former is self-explanatory, in light of the present discussion; the latter, reflecting a Persian-period setting, also explains why

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3   See Ginsberg (1982, 31–32); and Rendsburg (1990, 73, 79).
4   See discussions in Rendsburg (2002a, 48–49); and Rendsburg (2002b, 30–31).

Aramaisms appear in the composition. Note that the word occurs in all three languages attested to the north of Israel: Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramaic.

3.   שֶׁפַע / שִׁפְעָה "abundance, multitude": Deut 33:19 (Issachar-Zebulun), 2 Kgs 9:17 (2x), Ezek 26:10 (Tyre), Isa 60:6, Job 22:11, 38:34. (cf. Phoenician, Aramaic)

In earlier biblical texts, the noun שִׁפְעָה/שֶׁפַע "abundance, multitude" occurs only in Deut 33:19, the blessing delivered to the northern twin tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, and in 2 Kgs 9:17, set in the Jezreel Valley (= the territory of the selfsame two tribes). The prophet Ezekiel then uses the noun in his oracle directed at Tyre (26:10), as an addressee-switching element.[5]

4.   ע-ר-ב "offer, sacrifice": Hos 9:4. (cf. Phoenician)
  •   Hos 9:4 לֹא־יִסְּכוּ לַיהוָה ׀ יַיִן וְלֹא יֶעֶרְבוּ־לוֹ זִבְחֵיהֶם
       "they shall not libate to YHWH wine,
       and they shall not offer to him their sacrifices"
  ○   Phoenician inscription (Avigad and Greenfield 1982)
       קבעם ׀׀ אן חן ערבת למרזח שמש
       "2 cups I, Hanno, have offered to the *marzeaḥ* of Šemeš"

The presence of the root ע-ר-ב with the meaning "offer (sacrifice)" in Hos 9:4 constitutes the only such usage of this multifaceted verb in the Bible.[6] Within the Northwest Semitic realm, this usage is known elsewhere only in Phoenician, in the inscription presented above (Krahmalkov 2000, 386).[7]

I could, of course, continue to present numerous illustrations of IH features, but since I have published widely on the subject, including a comprehensive listing of such features (Rendsburg 2003), let us turn now to the next topic among the three announced in the title of this article.

Inscriptions from the North of Israel

One would assume that substantiation for my research into Israelian Hebrew would be forthcoming from the inscriptions unearthed at northern Israelite sites. Unfortunately, however, we have so little data to work with, especially in contrast to the epigraphic finds from Judah. As witness thereto, note that Shmuel Aḥituv in his standard textbook

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5   For this term and its rhetorical effect, see Rendsburg (2013b). True, the only attestation of שפעת in Phoenician is in a late Neo-Punic text, Mactar B IV 1 (Krahmalkov 2000, 478–79), but one will assume its presence in the lexis throughout the history of the language. See my earlier treatment in Rendsburg (2002a, 114–15).

6   Clines (2007, 548) proposed some other instances, though none of them is convincing (as he himself implies).

7   The parallel usage in Sabaic (Beeston et al. 1982, 18–19) takes us too far afield.

on ancient Hebrew inscriptions (Aḥituv 2008) includes 232 pages on Judah (with more than 20 sites represented: Arad, Lachish, Jerusalem, Ḥorvat ʿUzza, Meṣad Ḥashavyahu, etc.), compared with only 85 pages on Israel (with only six sites represented—Gezer, Ḥazor, Kalaḥ, Samaria, Kinneret, and Kuntillet ʿAjrud).[8] Of these, note that Gezer is on the border of northern Israel and southern Judah, Kuntillet ʿAjrud is far into the Sinai desert, and Kalaḥ is in Mesopotamia. This leaves only Ḥazor, Samaria, and Kinneret in true northern Israel. Moreover, for Ḥazor we have extremely little, while for Kinneret we have only a single two-word inscription. The Samaria ostraca, furthermore, are exceedingly formulaic, and while they provide valuable information about northern Hebrew, they are mainly repetitive throughout (see further below).

Nevertheless—and most fortuitously given this very limited database—we are able to point to several links between IH as identified in the Bible via the analysis outlined above, and IH as witnessed by the inscriptions from northern Israel. Indeed, of the four or five words reclaimed from Ḥazor (that is, apart from personal names), one of them may be identified as an IH lexeme; and of the two words appearing in the Kinneret epigraph, one of these is also an IH feature.

Both inscriptions appear on jar fragments: the Kinneret text reads כד השער (Aḥituv 2008, 332); while the Ḥazor text reads לפקח סמדר (Aḥituv 2008, 330–31).

In the former epigraph, we note the word כד "jar, vessel," which was one of the lexical examples used in the first section above. In the latter epigraph, we note the unusual word סמדר "blossom" (or the like), which appears elsewhere only in the Song of Songs (2:13, 2:15, 7:13), whose northern provenance also was mentioned above.

This handful of items, extracted from an extremely limited corpus, leads one to express the desire: would that we had more such material—not only from Ḥazor and Kinneret, but from other northern centres such as Dan, Megiddo, Jezreʿel, Shiloh, and other sites. Yet none of these has yielded a single Hebrew inscription of any note.[9]

We are fortunate, naturally, to have found the exceptionally important Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan, mentioning ביתדוד, along with a few other extremely short Aramaic epigraphs from Tel Dan and ʿEin Gev—but I repeat, the amount of Hebrew material from the north is not great. I should add here, though, that the presence of Aramaic inscriptions from Tel Dan and ʿEin Gev (even if the latter is a single word: לשקיא "to the drink providers") provides vital background information for

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8   Since the publication of the book in 2008, a series of inscriptions was found at Reḥov (Aḥituv and Mazar 2014), but these are mainly personal names inscribed on sherds and jar handles, which therefore provide little linguistic information.

9   Aḥituv (2008) presents none, while the volume compiled by Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005, 353–55) presents only two one-word jar fragments from Megiddo, each containing a personal name, for a total of seven letters! (Only one of these is listed in Davies 1991, 108.)

understanding how the many IH-Aramaic isoglosses came to be. These texts go a long way to explaining, for example, how the preposition קבל "before," well known from Aramaic, appears in a Hebrew text in 2 Kgs 15:10 (see above).

This leaves us with only the Samaria Ostraca. Here at last we have a sizable corpus of texts from a northern site, indeed, from the capital of the northern kingdom—and yet even these texts reveal so little, given their very formulaic nature. How many true lexemes do we read in these texts? Apart from numerals and personal names, in general we are able to list only the following (Aḥituv 2008, 258–310):

שת "year"
נבל "vessel"
ין "wine"
ישן "old"
שמן "oil"
רחץ "pure" (lit. "washed")
כרם "grove, vineyard"

Only in Samaria ostracon no. 111 do we gain more than the usual formula (Aḥituv 2008, 310–11):

ברך שלם]	Baruch, greeting!
ברך הרעם הקשבו]	Baruch, the shepherds heeded
ימנה שערם 3	he will count 3 barley (measures)

with the following lexical items: the nouns שלם "peace, greeting," רעם "shepherds," and שערם "barley," and the verbs ק-ש-ב "heed, pay attention," and מ-נ-ה "count, remit, appoint."

Notwithstanding the relatively meagre amount of material, to our good fortune, we are able to observe two significant linguistic features of the Samaria ostraca, both of them well known now for more than a century. The first is the monophthongisation of *ay* > *ē*, as reflected in the word ין "wine," in contrast to the southern form יין attested in epigraphs from Arad, Lachish, and Hebron (see, e.g., Arad ostracon no. 3, line 2), with the diphthong *ay* retained.[10] (This form, of course, accords with BH יַיִן "wine," with the anaptyctic /i/-vowel in place.[11])

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10 The form יין also may occur in the Jerusalem pithos inscription, per the restoration by Galil (2013).

11 When I use term Biblical Hebrew (BH) herein, in general I intend BH as transmitted by the Tiberian Masoretes.

The process of monophthongisation is standard in Phoenician (and from an earlier period Ugaritic),[12] and thus we are able to trace a phonological isogloss shared by Phoenician and the dialect of Samaria. IH as known from the Bible does not reflect this shift, though quite possibly this is due to the transmission of the texts, even the northern ones, by Judahite scribes, tradents, and readers. That is to say, while the northern texts in the Bible retain their distinctive IH lexical, morphological, and syntactic traits, even when reaching us through the filter of Jerusalem, the pronunciation of the Hebrew of these texts may have been adjusted to the Judahite dialect. As an example, I would note that when an American reader reads British English, he or she is likely to pronounce the words in the text as an American does, such as *filet* /fɪˈleɪ/, and not /ˈfɪlɪt/, *clerk* /klərk/ and not /klɑːk/, and so on.[13]

The second item is שת, the word for "year," instead of BH שָׁנָה. Once more, we have an isogloss with Phoenician, though in this case we need to note that the Aramaic form is also שת. Regardless, once more we have gained an important piece of knowledge about the Hebrew dialect used in Samaria. One needs to ask, however, why this form does not appear in the Bible, not even in those texts which clearly come not just from the north in general but from Samaria in particular—texts such as those appearing in the book of Kings whose original source is the סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "book of the annals of the kings of Israel." One possible explanation is that the official royal annals used the word שנה, perhaps continuing a practice learned from the united kingdom of David and Solomon, while the bookkeeping scribes responsible for the wine and oil receipts used שת, following a practice learned from Phoenician (or perhaps Aramean) scribes. While not a perfect analogy, one might wish to consider the English abbreviation *lb.* for "pound," continuing a system learned from scribes using this abbreviation for Latin *libra* during the Middle Ages.

In short, we have two important linguistic traits forthcoming from the Samaria ostraca, though neither of them connects up with information gleaned from the Israelian texts in the Bible. A third item also may be present, namely, the use of the word רחץ *raḥūṣ*, lit. "washed," in the expression שמן רחץ, about which Aḥituv (2008, 277) states: "the standard technical term used in the northern Kingdom for the biblical שֶׁמֶן זָךְ."

Finally, the lexical items in Samaria ostraca 111 are all standard in Biblical Hebrew, without an affiliation with IH—though perhaps the use of the root מ-נ-ה in the sense of "pay, remit," if this be the proper interpretation (Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005, 490) may reflect a usage peculiar to this dialect.

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12 See also the fragmentary trilingual cuneiform tablet from Tel Aphek, dated to the Late Bronze Age, with the Canaanite form of "wine" presented as *ye-nu*, reflecting monophthongisation (Rainey 1983; Horowitz et al. 2006, 31–32).

13 Pronunciation transcriptions via the Oxford English Dictionary.

And that is it. Some interesting points from the Samaria ostraca, but quite strikingly nothing that matches up with IH as determined from the Bible per se.

Fortunately, while Kuntillet ʿAjrud is a desert outpost in the far south, the epigraphic remains demonstrate clearly that the visitors to (or denizens of) this site came from northern Israel. In my analysis of the Kuntillet ʿAjrud material, I am able to identify several IH features.

Kuntillet ʿAjrud Inscriptions

1. nos. 2.4–2.5–2.6 (incised on pottery vessels)
   - 2.4 – לשרער "to the governor of the city"
   - 2.5 – [ל]שרער "[to] the governor of the city"
   - 2.6 – לשר[ער] "[to the governor of] the city"
   - Contrast שר הער (Jerusalem bulla),[14] with the definite article
   - Phoenician – *KAI* 43.2 רב ארץ "governor of the land"

The title שר ער "governor of the city" appears in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions without the definite article, in accord with Phoenician usage (see the example in the last bulleted point above). By contrast, note the Jerusalem bulla, with the reading שר הער, with the definite article in place, in accord with expected Hebrew usage.

What I have written here was true until 2017, at which time a second Jerusalem bulla was found, though with the words לשרער, precisely as one sees in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud epigraphs above (Ornan et al. 2017).[15] The inscription, without the definite article, certainly calls into question the dichotomy that I have suggested, though two points may be raised: a) the bulla is tiny, and space considerations may have led to the non-inclusion of the letter *he*;[16] and b) even though the bulla was found in Jerusalem, one may wish to suggest that it was brought to the capital of Judah by the governor of a former northern city c. 721 BCE.[17]

2. no. 3.9, lines 2-3: ואם פתה ונתן לה יהו כלבבה (Pithos B)
   "and if he would desire, then Yʜw will grant him
   in accordance with his heart"

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14 See Avigad and Sass (1997, 171), bulla no. 402. For the *editio princeps*, see Avigad (1976).

15 My thanks to Shmuel Aḥituv for directing my attention to the publication of the seal by Ornan et al. (2017). See also the media reports, such as this one (with excellent photographs): https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/MAGAZINE-governor-of-jerusalem-s-sealing-from-first-temple-era-found-near-western-wall-1.5630145.

16 This was not an issue with the Kuntillet ʿAjrud epigraphs, which are incised on pottery vessels, with plenty of room for an additional letter, were such deemed necessary: see the images in Aḥituv et al. (2012, 80).

17 Such could be determined by a neutron activation test.

- לָכֵן הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מְפַתֶּיהָ וְהֹלַכְתִּיהָ הַמִּדְבָּר וְדִבַּרְתִּי עַל־לִבָּהּ: Hos 2:16
- בְּאֹרֶךְ אַפַּיִם יְפֻתֶּה קָצִין וְלָשׁוֹן רַכָּה תִּשְׁבָּר־גָּרֶם: Prov 25:15

Generally in the Bible, the verbal root פ-ת-י carries a negative valence: "seduce, entice, allure, etc." In the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscription above, however, the sense is neutral or even positive, hence my rendering "desire." Only in two passages in the Bible does one encounter a similarly neutral or even positive connotation: Hos 2:16, Prov 25:15 – both of which are Israelian compositions.

3. no. 4.1.1, line 1: יתנו ל[י]הוה (plaster inscription)
    "may they recount to [Y]HWH"
    - שָׁם יְתַנּוּ צִדְקוֹת יְהֹוָה (Deborah) Judg 5:11
      "there they recount the righteous-acts of YHWH"
    - מִיָּמִים | יָמִימָה תֵּלַכְנָה בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת־יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי Judg 11:40
      "from year to year the daughters of Israel go-out to recount (the story) of the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite"

The verbal root ת-נ-י "recount" occurs only twice in the Bible, as indicated above, in stories set either in the north (Deborah) or in Trans-Jordan (Jephthah). Its presence in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud plaster inscription may be explained on the basis of its status as an IH (though not JH) lexeme.

Samaritan Hebrew

We now turn to the third topic announced in my title: Samaritan Hebrew (SH). Of the northern features discussed so far, the one that stands out most is the contraction of diphthongs in the Samaritan pronunciation. Thus, for example, the following *qawl* and *qayl* forms, even in absolute state, in contrast to the Masoretic Text (MT) tradition (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 65):

   MT מָוֶת SH /mot/
   MT תָּוֶךְ SH /tok/ (Num 35:5)
   MT בַּיִת SH /bit/ /bet/
   MT זַיִת SH /zit/
   MT אַיִן SH /īn/
   MT עַיִן SH /īn/

See further the letter names עין /īn/ and זין /zīn/.

This feature represents an important isogloss between the information forthcoming from the Samaria ostraca, which in turn links up with Phoenician (see above), and the later pronunciation of the Samaritan tradents.

A second phonological feature that characterises SH is the merger of *šin* and *śin*. In BH, that is to say, Tiberian Hebrew (TH), as is well known, the *śin* eventually lost its lateral

pronunciation and merged with the simple sibilant /s/ marked by *samekh*, presumably under Aramaic influence. In SH, by contrast, the *śin* also lost its unique pronunciation, but it merged with *šin* – in fact at a relatively early stage, it appears, since Samaritan Aramaic does witness the shift of /ś/ > /s/. The merger of /ś/ and /š/ is also true of Phoenician—witness the single grapheme 𐤔 created by the inventors of the alphabet— and thus we are able to identify another nexus between SH and Phoenician.

Let us now turn to some morphological features of SH, which link up with IH. Scholars long have suspected that the relative pronoun -ש is an IH feature, and I have confirmed this point in my own research: see, for example, Judg 5:7 (2x) (IH poem), Judg 6:17, 7:12, 8:26 (Gideon cycle), 2 Kgs 6:11 (in a story set in the north) (Rendsburg 2002a, 103–04). Unfortunately, this form does not appear in the Torah (apart from the enigmatic TH בְּשַׁגַּם in Gen 6:3), and indeed the Samaritan Pentateuch also reads אשר throughout (again, except for בשגם in Gen 6:3).[18] It is worth noting, however, that the form -ש is known to the Samaritan tradition and in fact underlies the reading of some words. Thus, for example, the toponym שניר (TH שְׂנִיר) in Deut 3:9 is pronounced /šinnər/ and understood as "of the yoke" (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 321); while later Samaritan grammarians added additional examples in their literature.

The pronunciation of the 1st common singular personal pronoun (the longer form, that is) is germane to our presentation. Semitists usually reconstruct a proto-Semitic form *ʾanāku* (exactly as appears in Akkadian), which becomes אָנֹכִי in TH, via the shift of /a:/ > /o:/ and the analogic development of final /-u/ > /-i:/. The Samaritan pronunciation of this form, however, is /ånåki/, with the same short vowel in both the first and second syllables, presumably the result of vowel harmony (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 226). A similar, though not identical, phenomenon appears in Phoenician, where the Punic pronunciation *anec* (Plautus, *Poenulus*, 947, 949, 995) suggests two short vowels as well, with the second short /a/ having shifted to /e/, as discussed by Friedrich et al. (1999, 36–37). If the Punic form can be retrojected to homeland Phoenicia, then we have identified another isogloss between at least one northern Israelite dialect and the speech of their neighbours to the northwest.

The 2nd feminine singular personal pronoun is always written with a *yod* on the end, thus אתי, and pronounced /åtti/ (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 226). This form is known from Aramaic, of course,[19] and it appears seven times in the Bible, always as the *ketiv*, with a distribution that points to a northern home:[20]

- o Judg 17:2K (Micah of Ephraim)
- o 1 Kgs 14:2K (Jeroboam I)

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18   See now Schorch (2021, 34).
19   See, for example, Muraoka (2011, 38). Naturally, אתי is only one form among several others (including את, אנת, אנתי) in Aramaic dialects—see the convenient chart in Fassberg (1990, 112).
20   See my earlier treatments in Rendsburg (2002a, 37–38) and Rendsburg (2012, 345).

- o   2 Kgs 4:16K, 8:1K (Elisha)
- o   2 Kgs 4:23K (husband of the Shunammite woman)
- o   Jer 4:30K (Benjaminite? Aramaism?)[21]
- o   Ezek 36:13K (Aramaism?)

The SH form, accordingly, continues a northern usage, with an isoglossic nexus to Aramaic used to the northeast of Israel.

Related to the 2nd feminine singular pronoun is the use of the suffix *-ti* for the 2nd person feminine singular on suffix-conjugation verbs, thus, to use Ben-Ḥayyim's paradigm form, פקדת /få̄qå̄dti/ (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 108)—and yes, this form is equivalent to the 1st person common form (that is, in pronunciation, since 1.c.sg is written פקדתי, while 2.f.sg. is written פקדת).

As is well known, the stellar instance of this form in the Bible occurs twice in Judg 5:7:

עַד שַׁקַּ֫מְתִּ֫י דְּבוֹרָ֔ה שַׁקַּ֫מְתִּי אֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
"until you arose, Deborah, (until) you arose, mother in Israel"

The Song of Deborah, of course, is both archaic and northern (Rendsburg 2012), so that either characterisation would explain the presence of the 2.f.sg. suffix-conjugation ending *-tī*.

This form appears in the Bible as the *ketiv* in Ruth 3:3, 3:4, as an archaism in the mouth of the older Naomi as she addresses the younger Ruth,[22] and then relatively commonly in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, presumably as an Aramaism, though in the former case one also needs to countenance the *-tī* suffix as a linguistic trait of Jeremiah's Benjaminite dialect.[23]

In short, whereas JH (and most likely ancient Hebrew more broadly) reflect the loss of the final (short? long? anceps?) vowel,[24] in some dialects of Hebrew, especially in northern Israel, the vowel was retained. The retention of the /i/-vowel in this morpheme aligns with Aramaic, for which see *TAD* A2 3.5 וכעת ארה ספר לה שלחתי "and now, verily, you have not sent a letter" (addressed by one Makkibanit to his sister Reia).[25] Unfortunately, we have no evidence from Phoenician-Punic for this morpheme (in theory, Punic and Neo-Punic could represent the vowel, either in the Phoenician

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21   On this instance, see Hornkohl (2014, 119).
22   Holmstedt (2010, 46–49) considers this option, though ultimately prefers a slightly different explanation.
23   See the discussion in Hornkohl (2014, 114–19).
24   Lipiński (1997, 360–62) reconstructs *-ki/-ti*, with short vowel, for proto-Semitic, while Weninger (2011, 160) reconstructs *-tī*, with long vowel. On anceps within Semitic, see Al-Jallad (2014).
25   I cite the text and the translation from the *TAD* modules incorporated into Accordance (Oaktree Software). See also Muraoka (1998, 98).

alphabet and even more so in Latin transcription, but no instances are attested). Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence here to demonstrate an IH-SH-Aramaic bundle for this morpheme.

Another feature of SH is the existence of but a single infinitive form, typically pronounced /fåqad/ (with variants) (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 208–09), serving the functions of both infinitive absolute and infinitive construct in BH. On the one hand, this development within SH most likely reflects Second Temple period Hebrew generally, for in Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) the infinitive absolute greatly recedes and in Mishnaic Hebrew (MH) the form disappears altogether—in which case this feature has no connection to the issue of a northern regional dialect. On the other hand, one notes the infinitive construct forms of ל״י verbs discussed at the outset (and see also Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 204), which look like infinitive absolute forms, e.g., 1 Sam 1:9 וְאַחֲרֵי שָׁתֹה "and after drinking," even though preceded by a preposition, and one wonders if there is not some influence streaming into SH from a regional dialect of earlier First-Temple-period Hebrew.

My final example concerns the expression of the reciprocal. In seven places in the Tabernacle account, the MT uses the expression אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו (masc.) or אִשָּׁה אֶל־אֲחֹתָהּ (fem.) to express the reciprocal "one to another" (Exod 25:20, 37:9, for the former; Exod 26:3 [2x], 26:5, 26:6, 26:17, for the latter). In SP, however, the expressions occur as אחד אל אחד and אחת אל אחת, literally "one to one." (Oddly, this is not the case in other places: Exod 16:15, Lev 25:14, Num 14:4 – with SP and MT aligning.)

In two previous articles, I proposed that the formulation with the numeral "1" repeated is an IH feature (Rendsburg 2013a, 254; Rendsburg 2014, 166). See, most notably, 2 Sam 14:6 הָאֶחָד אֶת־הָאֶחָד in the mouth of the woman of Tekoa, (= northern Tekoa, located in the Galilee).[26] This usage parallels the Aramaic phrase, as reflected in the Targumim to the aforementioned passages from the Tabernacle account, e.g., Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod 26:3 חדא עם חדא.[27] See also Job 41:8 אֶחָד בְּאֶחָד, reflecting clear Aramaic influence.[28] In short, the presence of אחד אל אחד and אחת אל אחת in SP reflects SH's preference for this phrase, over the SBH idiom, and once more continues an IH feature known from the Bible, with a nexus to Aramaic.[29]

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26 For the location of Tekoa, see Rendsburg (2021, 717–22).

27 Peshitta, Samaritan Targum, and Targum Neofiti use essentially the same construction, though with different prepositions.

28 By "Aramaic influence," I do not mean an Aramaism per se, for as scholars recognise, any number of factors may be at work, including the author's desire to reflect a Trans-Jordanian (or other) dialect and/or the author's desire to use a wide range of linguistic traits for poetical-stylistic effect. On the language of Job, see especially Greenstein (2003).

29 Somewhat surprisingly, MT Exodus 36 uses the phrase אַחַת אֶל־אֶחָת, with the repetition of the numeral "1" five times (vv. 10 [bis], 12, 13, 22). In the latter three instances, the parallel passages in MT Exodus 26 (vv. 5, 6, 17) use the expected expression אִשָּׁה אֶל־אֲחֹתָהּ. I have no ready explanation for the

Conclusion

Let us now summarise. We have seen that IH as reconstructed from the Bible is sufficiently distinct from SBH or JH to merit its label as a distinct regional dialect of ancient Hebrew, sharing many isoglosses with Phoenician and Aramaic, to the exclusion of Judahite Hebrew. The inscriptions from the north of Israel, notwithstanding their limited scope, expand our picture: a) by confirming some of our IH findings, e.g., the word כד "vessel"; and b) by providing additional data, e.g., the use of the word רחץ "pure" (lit. "washed"), most likely the northern equivalent to JH/SBH זָךְ "pure."

SH also links up with IH in certain ways, though perhaps not to the extent that one might expect. An explanation for this is readily forthcoming, however. We must keep in mind that the Torah is the product of Judah (Rendsburg 2005; 2019, 443–67), and indeed very little of the Torah evinces IH features. We find them in the blessings to the northern tribes in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 (Rendsburg 1992, 2009), and somewhat surprisingly in the Jubilee pericope in Leviticus 25 (Rendsburg 2008)—but not anywhere else in concentrated numbers. In short, by and large the Torah is devoid of IH traits.

At some point, this Torah became the patrimony also of the Samaritan community, presumably during the Persian period, but its overall composition was essentially whole and complete by this point and was not to be changed except in minute ways. In my look at SH, accordingly, we have focused solely on grammatical issues, with no lexical evidence brought to the fore. That is because the Samaritan tradents received the Torah from Judah and did not begin to substitute lexemes characteristic of their own regional dialect in the place of their Judean equivalents. Thus, for example, נֶגְבָּה "southward" remains in place (Gen 13:14, etc.) and is not replaced with דרום (TH דָּרוֹם), the IH equivalent (cf. Deut 33:23, MH, Aramaic).[30]

Differences of pronunciation presumably were introduced in the most natural way at a very early time, if not from the outset—recall once more my analogy of an American reading British literature, or the opposite, a British person reading American literature. Some grammatical differences also were introduced, most likely also in a perfectly natural way, especially in the case of commonly occurring features, such as the 2nd and 3rd person plural pronouns and pronominal suffixes ending in -*a* (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 225–27, 232–34) a point which we have not addressed herein but which is well known.

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presence of the former wording in MT Exodus 36, other than to suggest an attempt at repetition with variation—on which see Rendsburg (2013c, 2015, and 2019, passim, esp. 229–68).

30   All other instances of דָּרוֹם "south" in the Bible are due to Aramaic influence of one sort or another (Job 37:17, Qohelet 2x, Ezekiel 13x).

In sum, the result of our survey is the confirmation of a complex of northern dialects reflected in the three sources adumbrated in the title of this article: Israelian Hebrew, Samaritan Hebrew, and inscriptions from the north of Israel.

Acknowledgements

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