

The Northern Origin of "The Last Words of David" (2 Sam 23,1-7)*

The dating of biblical poetry is an endeavor which attracts many divergent views. Many individual poems are assigned by some scholars to an early period and by other scholars to a late period. To cite what is perhaps the best example of this disagreement, Martin Noth concluded that "das grosse 'Schilfmeerlied' in [Exod] 15,1-19 ist ein verhältnismässig junges Stück"⁽¹⁾, whereas F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman have spoken of "an early dating of the poem [with] a *terminus ad quem* in the tenth century B.C. for its written composition", with the additional comment that the song "is scarcely later than the twelfth century in its original form"⁽²⁾. Fortunately, certain methods, especially the linguistic approach, often provide an objective basis for settling such issues⁽³⁾. In the above instance, for example, the evidence presented by D. A. Robertson is most impressive in pointing towards an early composition for Exod 15,1-18⁽⁴⁾.

The situation just described also applies to the problem of determining whether any individual sections of the Bible have a provenance other than Jerusalem or Judah. It is safely assumed that an exceedingly large proportion of biblical literature, especially in its final form, emanated from circles in Jerusalem or from exiles from Jerusalem⁽⁵⁾. There have been attempts to attribute northern origins to various compositions, e.g., the studies of Otto

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⁽¹⁾ M. NOTH, *Das Zweite Buch Mose, Exodus* (Göttingen 1959) 98.

⁽²⁾ F. M. CROSS and D. N. FREEDMAN, "The Song of Miriam", *JNES* 14 (1955) 240.

⁽³⁾ Two excellent volumes along these lines are A. HURVITZ, *Beyn Lashon le-Lashon* (Jerusalem 1972); and D. A. ROBERTSON, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Missoula, MT 1972).

⁽⁴⁾ ROBERTSON, *Linguistic Evidence*, 154-155.

⁽⁵⁾ Examples, of both prose and poetry, would be the Court History of David, the books of Kings (where the editorial perspective is that of the southern kingdom), the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, et al., the many psalms focusing on Zion, etc.

Procksch on the so-called Elohist source⁽⁶⁾, Michael Goulder on the Korah psalms⁽⁷⁾, and H. L. Ginsberg on Deuteronomy and various smaller sections of the Bible⁽⁸⁾. But clearly there has been no unanimity in this regard⁽⁹⁾.

Moreover, the objective basis of linguistic method has not been utilized to settle such issues⁽¹⁰⁾. One of the reasons for this has been the relative lack of linguistic data available. We simply do not have hoards of epigraphic material from northern Israel or from neighboring Canaanite dialects. However, each new inscription found, no matter how small, yields important data which are constantly expanding our knowledge of dialectal differences in ancient Canaan⁽¹¹⁾. Another reason why scholars have not been apt to utilize the linguistic method for determining the provenance of a particular composition is that most have been influenced by the generally held opinion that grammatical differences in BH "have for the most part been obliterated by the harmonizing activity of the Masoretes"⁽¹²⁾. But this is certainly not the case, as various studies have demonstrated considerable dialectal differences within BH⁽¹³⁾.

Accordingly, I believe that just as strides have been made in dating Hebrew poetry based on linguistic criteria, the linguistic approach can also be productive in determining the provenance of a particular poem or pericope in the Bible. There exists now sufficient Northwest Semitic material to act as our guide, and all we need do is reject the notion that BH itself is monolithic. To illustrate the possibilities of this approach I have chosen "the last words of David", 2 Sam 23,1-7. This poem lends itself nicely to such an endeavor for various reasons. First, it is relatively short and unified. Second, though naturally there are difficulties in the poem, the text presents few

⁽⁶⁾ O. PROCKSCH, *Das nordhebräische Sagenbuch, Die Elohimquelle* (Leipzig 1906).

⁽⁷⁾ M. D. GOULDER, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (Sheffield 1982).

⁽⁸⁾ H. L. GINSBERG, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York 1982).

⁽⁹⁾ See, for example, the cogent remarks of O. EISSFELDT, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen 1964) 269-271, concerning the view of a northern Elohist source.

⁽¹⁰⁾ A notable exception is GINSBERG, *Israelian Heritage*, 36, where various Phoenicianisms in Proverbs 1-9 are noted to bolster his claim concerning the northern provenance of these chapters.

⁽¹¹⁾ For one example see G. A. RENDBURG, "The Ammonite Phoneme /T/"; *BASOR* (forthcoming); and G. A. RENDBURG, "More on Hebrew *Šibboleṯ*"; *JSS* (forthcoming). For a general picture see the excellent volume of W. R. GARR, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia 1985).

⁽¹²⁾ E. KAUTZSCH, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, translated by A. E. Cowley (Oxford 1910) vii.

⁽¹³⁾ For general orientation into the question of northern Hebrew, see C. RABIN, "Leshonam shel 'Amos ve-Hoshea'", in B. Z. LURIA, ed., *Iyyunim be-Sefer Tre-Asar* (Jerusalem 1981) 117-136, especially 117-122. For a specific application, note the northernisms in the stories of the north Israelite kings collected by C. F. BURNEY, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford 1903) 208-209. Of a different nature, but also demonstrating dialectal distinctions in BH is G. A. RENDBURG, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (New Haven, CT, forthcoming), which treats the question of written vs. spoken Hebrew.

if any problems⁽¹⁴⁾. Third, the date of the poem is not subject to great debate. The majority of scholars accept a 10th century date and indeed many affirm David himself as the author of these lines⁽¹⁵⁾.

My thesis concerning 2 Sam 23,1-7 is as follows: there are a number of non-normative uses of BH in this poem which can best be explained as being characteristic of a northern or even northeastern dialect of Hebrew. The clustering of six such linguistic usages in a poem of only seven verses points to a northern origin of the song. The following paragraphs will present the evidence to bolster this conclusion.

The first philological datum is the use of the word *ne'ûm* in v. 1. As is well known, this vocable is regularly used when God is the speaker. Only in four contexts is it used with a human speaker: Num 24,3-4; 24,15-16 with Balaam, Prov 30,1 with Agur, Ps 36,2 in a very obscure manner, and here in 2 Sam 23,1 with David⁽¹⁶⁾. An investigation of the other instances demonstrates that *ne'ûm* in connection with human speakers is a northern usage. Balaam stems from Pethor on the Euphrates in the land of Aram (Num 22,5; Deut 23,5)⁽¹⁷⁾, and his Hebrew is tinged with various Aramaisms. To cite

⁽¹⁴⁾ My own approach is not to emend MT just because a difficulty appears, rather to deal with the text as best one can. It is methodologically sounder, especially when the linguistic approach is involved, to work with actual readings than with hypothesized reconstructed readings. See the astute remarks of A. HURVITZ, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship Between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris 1982) 19.

Regarding 2 Sam 23,1-7 in particular, I see no a priori reason to alter MT in any one instance. For an excellent attempt to deal with the poem's most difficult passages, see R. A. CARLSON, *David: The Chosen King* (Stockholm 1964) 254-256, with the comment that "the Masoretic text of 2 Sam. 23:3b-5 is superior to that of the Versions". See further the opinion of H. W. HERTZBERG, *Die Samuelbücher* (Göttingen 1960) 329-330.

⁽¹⁵⁾ The following consider the poem to be an authentic Davidic composition: O. PROCKSCH, "Die letzten Worte Davids", in *Alttestamentliche Studien Rudolf Kittel zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig 1913) 112-125; M. H. SEGAL, "Studies in the Books of Samuel. I. David's Three Poems", *JQR* 5 (1914-15) 225-227; HERTZBERG, *Die Samuelbücher*, 330; and K. A. LEIMBACH, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Bonn 1936) 216. Others speak only of the Davidic period: W. F. ALBRIGHT, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London 1968) 24; H. N. RICHARDSON, "The Last Words of David: Some Notes on II Samuel 23:1-7", *JBL* 90 (1971) 257; F. M. CROSS, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA 1973) 234-237; D. N. FREEDMAN, "Divine Names and Titles in Early Hebrew Poetry", *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (F. M. CROSS, W. E. LEMKE, and P. D. MILLER, eds.) (Garden City, NY 1976) 73; and P. K. MCCARTER, *II Samuel* (Garden City, NY 1984) 485. Two scholars suggest the Solomonic period, which represents a difference of only a few decades: A. CAQUOT, "La prophétie de Nathan et ses échos lyriques", *Congress Volume, Bonn 1962* (SVT 9; Leiden 1963) 218; and T. ISHIDA, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel* (BZAW 142; Berlin 1977) 107-108.

⁽¹⁶⁾ This has been noted by W. NOWACK, *Richter, Ruth und Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen 1902) 251; S. R. DRIVER, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford 1913) 356; and FREEDMAN, "Divine Names and Titles in Early Hebrew Poetry", 74.

⁽¹⁷⁾ See S. E. LOEWENSTAMM, "Bil'ām", *Enşiqlopediya Miqra'it* 2 (1973) 133-134.

two examples: 1) *naḥaš* meaning "magic, fortune, omen" occurs in Hebrew only at Num 23,23, and its cognate is best known from Aramaic *naḥšā'*, Syriac *neḥšā'*; and 2) *yithaššāb* in Num 23,9 is the only Hithpa'el of the root *ḥšb* in the entire Bible; since one might expect a Niph'al here, we may explain the form by noting the lack of a corresponding N-stem in Aramaic⁽¹⁸⁾. Similarly, Agur stems from Massa which is located by most authorities in the Syrian Desert⁽¹⁹⁾. Although Aramaisms may not be readily apparent in the verses attributed to him, in the passages ascribed to his congener Lemuel king of Massa, we may note such forms as *bar* in Prov 31,2 (*ter*) and *mēlakīn* in Prov 31,3. When we turn to Psalm 36, we once again find forms which resemble Aramaic, specifically the verbs *yehesāyūn* in v. 8 and *yirwēyūn* in v. 9. In both instances the *yod* of III *y* roots is retained, thus representing an important isogloss between the dialect of this psalm and Aramaic⁽²⁰⁾. Furthermore, the non-syncope of the *he* in the form *bēhaššāmayim* in v. 6 may be indicative of northern provenance as well. (This phenomenon is attested in Punic [though admittedly not in any standard Phoenician texts]⁽²¹⁾, and it occurs elsewhere in BH in such texts as 1 Sam 13,21 where the action occurs in the territory of Benjamin, 2 Kgs 7,12K where the speaker is a north Israelite king, Qoh 8,1 where northern influence has long been suspected⁽²²⁾, and Neh 9,19 which apparently originated from the northern kingdom of Israel as well⁽²³⁾.) In other words, the other places in the Bible where *ne'ūm* is employed in a human context suggest that this usage was non-normative Hebrew, or non-Judahite to be more exact. More specifically, these texts: the oracles of Balaam, the words of Agur/Lemuel, and Psalm 36 all contain important isoglosses with Aramaic, suggesting that they stem from the northern or northeastern regions of Israelite settlement⁽²⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ For a similar attempt to explain a *crux interpretum* in Balaam's oracles, see E. Y. KUTSCHER, "La-Millon ha-Miqra'i", *Leshonenu* 21 (5717) 254-255, though see now G. A. RENDSBURG, "Eblaite *ū-ma* and Hebrew *WM-*", *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and the Eblaite Language* (C. H. GORDON, G. A. RENDSBURG, and N. H. WINTER, eds.) (Winona Lake, IN 1987) 36-37.

⁽¹⁹⁾ See I. EPH'AL, *The Ancient Arabs* (Jerusalem 1982) 218-219.

⁽²⁰⁾ See, e.g., *yhywn* "they will live" in line 8 of the inscription published by A. CAQUOT, "Une inscription araméenne d'époque assyrienne", *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris 1971) 9-16. Other, though not all, instances of the preservation of the *yod* in 2mpl and 3mpl imperfect III *y* forms in the Bible also occur in contexts where geographical variation is the most probable explanation. Note, e.g., Num 24,6 *nittāyū* in the Balaam oracles; Isa 17,12 *yehemāyūn* in the oracle addressed to Damascus; Isa 21,12 *tib'āyūn*, *bē'āyū*, *'ētāyū* in the oracle addressed to Dumah in the Syrian Desert; and a number of such forms in Job.

⁽²¹⁾ J. FRIEDRICH and W. RÖLLIG, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik* (Rome 1970) 53.

⁽²²⁾ M. J. DAHOOD, "Canaanite-Phoenician Influences in Qoheleth", *Bib* 33 (1952) 30-52, 191-221, in particular 45-46.

⁽²³⁾ A. C. WELCH, "The Source of Nehemiah IX", *ZAW* 47 (1929) 130-137.

⁽²⁴⁾ In the case of Balaam, we may be dealing with another phenomenon: the author specifically portrayed the Aramean prophet as speaking a Hebrew mixed with Aramaisms. On this phenomenon elsewhere in the Bible, see N. H. TUR-

The second philological item is a lexicographical one, namely *millāh* in v. 2 (with the pronominal suffix *millātô*). Elsewhere the noun occurs in Ps 19,5; 139,4; Prov 23,9; and 34 times in Job⁽²⁵⁾, and it has been consistently called an Aramaism⁽²⁶⁾. The dangers of labeling a word an Aramaism have been well demonstrated by several scholars⁽²⁷⁾, and the presence of *millāh* in a composition such as Psalm 19 should caution us in the case at hand⁽²⁸⁾. However, the following points need to be considered: a) the fact that the only cognate to Hebrew *millāh* is *miltā'*, *meltā'* in the various Aramaic dialects⁽²⁹⁾; b) the weighty evidence of the 34 attestations in Job (13 of which are in the plural form *millin*); and c) the presence of northern influence in Proverbs in general and in chapter 23 in particular⁽³⁰⁾, e.g., the negative particle *bal* in v. 7⁽³¹⁾ and the verb *lhm* meaning "eat" in vv. 1 and 6⁽³²⁾. Accordingly, while I agree that *millāh* should not necessarily be labeled an Aramaism (especially if we define this term as a borrowing from Aramaic), we may wish to consider it a non-Judahite vocable. Its presence in the poe-

SINAI, "'Aramit: Hashpa'at ha-'Aramit 'al ha-'Ivrit shel he-Miqra'", *Ensiqlopediya Miqra'it* 1 (1965) 593-594, who also discussed the III y verbs in Isa 21,12 listed in n. 20 above.

⁽²⁵⁾ The verbal root *mll* occurs in Gen 21,7; Ps 106,2; Job 8,2; 33,3, and has been shown by G. R. DRIVER, "Hebrew Poetic Diction", *Congress Volume, Copenhagen 1953* (SVT 1; Leiden 1953) 26-39, particularly 30, to be part of the stock of rare words utilized by Israelite poets.

⁽²⁶⁾ See, e.g., E. KAUTZSCH, *Die Aramaismen im Alten Testament* (Halle 1902) 60-61; and M. WAGNER, *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im Alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (Berlin 1966) 77-78.

⁽²⁷⁾ DRIVER, "Hebrew Poetic Diction"; and A. HURVITZ, "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew", *IEJ* 18 (1968) 234-240.

⁽²⁸⁾ See already T. NÖLDEKE, "Review of E. Kautzsch, *Die Aramaismen im Alten Testament*", *ZDMG* 57 (1903) 413.

⁽²⁹⁾ See L. KOEHLER and W. BAUMGARTNER, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 3rd edition (Leiden 1974) 556. The Arabic word *millat* is almost certainly a borrowing from Hébrew; see F. BUHL, "Milla", *Enzyklopaedie des Islām* III (Leiden 1936) 573.

⁽³⁰⁾ This fact does not militate against the well-established relationship between Prov 22,17-24,22 and the Egyptian Wisdom of Amenemopet.

⁽³¹⁾ The closest cognates in Semitic are Phoenician and Ugaritic *bl*. See R. S. TOMBACK, *A Comparative Semitic Lexicon of the Phoenician and Punic Languages* (Missoula, MT 1978) 46; C. H. GORDON, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome 1967) 372; and J. AISTLEITNER, *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache* (Berlin 1963) 151.

⁽³²⁾ Elsewhere it occurs in Ps 141,4; Prov 4,17; 9,5; and in Ugaritic it is the commonest verb for "eat". Psalm 141 is certainly a northern composition; cf. M. J. DAHOOD, *Psalms III* (Garden City, NY 1970) 309. The strongest Phoenician influence on Proverbs is in chapters 1-9; cf. GINSBERG, *Israelian Heritage*, 36. For the Ugaritic verb see GORDON, *Ugaritic Textbook*, 427; and AISTLEITNER, *Wörterbuch*, 169-170. In Deut 32,24 *l'hūmē rešep* may mean "attacked by Reshef" or "consumed by Reshef". If it is the former, the passage is not germane. If it is the latter, or if this is a case of polysemy as seems probable, then we have another instance of *lhm* "eat". But even in Deuteronomy 32 there are signs of northern origin as has been argued effectively by O. EISSFELDT, *Das Lied Moses Deut. 32:1-43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (Leipzig 1958).

try of 2 Sam 23,1-7, then, would be another indication of this poem's northern origin.

A third grammatical peculiarity which again connects with Aramaic is *kullāham* "all of them" in v. 6, instead of the expected *kullām*. The 3mpl pronominal suffix in Aramaic is *-hm* or *-hwm*, even after consonants, and in fact the very form *klhm* is attested in line 2 of the Kandahar inscription (the feminine counterpart *klhn* is attested in the Arsama correspondence, fragment 26, line 1)⁽³³⁾. It is true that Fekherye now presents us with something unique, namely, the forms *klm* (*bis*) in line 4 and *kln* in line 3⁽³⁴⁾, but the overall picture is not greatly affected⁽³⁵⁾.

Some scholars have opted simply to emend *kullāham* to *kullām*⁽³⁶⁾, while others appear ready to retain the consonants as long as the vowels are altered to *kullāhem* or *kull^ehem*⁽³⁷⁾. This is not the place to enter into the debate surrounding textual emendation; the methodological problems involved are well known. Suffice to say that in the present instance, especially in light of the comments in note 14 above, there is no *a priori* reason to alter MT *kullāham*, certainly not the consonants and probably not the vowels either. A much sounder approach is to accept the form as a dialectal variation.

In fact, some scholars have argued that *klhm*, however it is to be vocalized, is an archaic form representing a stage of the language before intervocalic *he* was elided⁽³⁸⁾. But it is doubtful if the morphophonemics of standard (= Jerusalemite or Judahite) Hebrew of the 10th century B.C.E., even of the poetic idiom, was still operating with this option. Instead, I would argue that *kullāham* represents a dialectal variation based on geographical lines, namely, it was characteristic of the Hebrew spoken in areas adjoining the Aramaic-speech communities. This theory gains some support by noting the contexts of other instances in the Bible where the *he* is not elided in 3mpl and 3fpl pronominal suffixes following a consonant. Although none of the suffixes in the following examples correlate exactly with *kullāham*, note that 2 Kgs 9,18 *'ad-hēm* occurs in a north Israelite setting, 1 Kgs 7,37 *kullāhnāh* occurs in the description of the building of the Temple where Phoenician evidence may be detected (e.g., the month names Ziv and Bul), and Ezek 13,17 *libb^ehen*, Ezek 16,53 *š^ebīthen*, Ezek 16,53 *b^etōkāhnāh* occur in a book with well-known Aramaic influences⁽³⁹⁾.

⁽³³⁾ S. SEGERT, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1975) 170, 173, 222; and R. DEGEN, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Wiesbaden 1969) 55-56.

⁽³⁴⁾ See T. MURAOKA, "The Tell-Fekherye Bilingual Inscription and Early Aramaic", *Abr-Nahrain* 22 (1983-84) 92.

⁽³⁵⁾ See GARR, *Dialect Geography*, 105-106.

⁽³⁶⁾ E.g., A. SCHULZ, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Münster 1920) 271, 273; and NOWACK, *Richter, Ruth und Bücher Samuelis*, 253.

⁽³⁷⁾ P. A. H. DE BOER, "Texte et traduction des paroles attribuées à David en 2 Samuel xxiii 1-7", *Volume du Congrès, Strasbourg 1956* (SVT 4; Leiden 1957) 55; and MCCARTER, *II Samuel*, 478.

⁽³⁸⁾ DE BOER, "Texte et traduction", 55; RICHARDSON, "The Last Words of David", 265; and MCCARTER, *II Samuel*, 478.

⁽³⁹⁾ I admit, however, that other instances cannot be so easily explained: Isa 3,17 *pāthen*; Gen 21,28 *'ebadd^ehen*; Lev 8,16; 8,25 *helbb^ehen*.

These three usages, the word *ne'ûm* attached to human speakers, the lexeme *millāh*, and the form *kullāham*, are characteristic of non-standard, i.e., non-Judahite, Hebrew of the 10th century B.C.E. From the evidence presented, it may be posited that these three items represent isoglosses shared by Aramaic and a Hebrew dialect in northern or northeastern Israel. Concentrated as they are within a few verses, we may conclude that the author of 2 Sam 23,1-7 was an Israelite from the far northern or northeastern part of Israel (approximately the tribal areas of Dan, Naphtali, and eastern Manasseh, perhaps even Zebulun, Issachar, and northern Gad). If, on the other hand, we wish to uphold the Davidic authorship of these verses, we may wish to posit a scribe who spoke this particular dialect of Hebrew.

Three linguistic usages may not be sufficient to prove our claims, so it is worth suggesting three additional elements in the poem which are exceptional in BH. They do not share a common ground with Aramaic usage, but there are indications of northern usage nonetheless. The first of these is the expression *dibber-bî* "spoke to me" in v. 2. Normally, the verb *dbr* is governed by the preposition *le* or *'el*⁽⁴⁰⁾. When the preposition *be* is used, it means "about, against, through"⁽⁴¹⁾, but it is clear that this is not the case here. The only other places in the Bible where *dbr b-* means simply "speak to" are 1 Kgs 22,28 where the northern prophet Micaiah is speaking and Hos 1,2 which once more places us in a northern setting⁽⁴²⁾. Accordingly, the plain usage of *dbr b-* was presumably a northern variant to standard Hebrew *dbr l-* or *dbr 'l*.

The second additional usage to be forwarded is the divine name *'al* in v. 1. This theophore was first noted by H. S. Nyberg⁽⁴³⁾ and it has been proposed in various other places in the Bible and elsewhere⁽⁴⁴⁾. In point of fact, however, most of these suggestions are spurious. Apart from 2 Sam 23,1, I would affirm only the following instances: a) 1 Sam 2,10 where *'ālāw* is parallel to *yhw* in words spoken by Hannah of the tribe of Ephraim; b) the personal name *'ēli* who ministers at Shiloh; c) the personal name *yhw'ly* in Samaria Ostrakon 55:2; d) the personal name *ym'l* in UT 2106:4; and e) the term *'ly* parallel to *b'l* in UT 126:III:6,8. From this list it is probable that we are dealing with a northern phenomenon, and this may be used as further evidence for the northern provenance of "the last words of David".

(40) F. BROWN, S. R. DRIVER, and C. A. BRIGGS, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1907) 181.

(41) *Ibid.*

(42) DRIVER, *Samuel*, 357, suggests other attestations where *dbr b-* means "speak to", but a closer examination reveals other nuances to be present, e.g., Hab 2,1 where *lir'ôt mah ydabber bî* must mean "to see what he will speak against me", especially in light of the following stich *ûmāh 'āsib 'al tōkahtî* "and how I shall respond upon my reproof".

(43) H. S. NYBERG, "Studien zur Religionskampf im Alten Testament", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 35 (1938) 329-387.

(44) For complete discussion see A. COOPER and M. H. POPE, "Divine Names and Epithets in the Ugaritic Texts", *Ras Shamra Parallels III* (S. RUMMEL, ed.) (Rome 1981) 451-458.

The final piece of evidence to be adduced is the use of *kēn* in v. 5. The stich *kī lô' kēn bēti 'im 'el* has evoked much discussion. One issue, which is only tangentially relevant here, is whether *l'* is to be read as the negative particle or as the asseverative particle. S. R. Driver, for example, opted for the former and read the line as a question "For is not my house thus with God?"⁽⁴⁵⁾, whereas H. P. Smith, for example, selected the latter route and translated "Verily, sure is my house with God"⁽⁴⁶⁾. Although this issue may affect our understanding of *kēn*, in reality it matters little since the overall sense of the line is unaffected⁽⁴⁷⁾.

More germane for the present discussion is how to translate *kēn*. A common suggestion is "firm, established"⁽⁴⁸⁾, but in Hebrew this would be *nākôn* not *kēn*⁽⁴⁹⁾. Other attempts to render *kēn* as "thus, like this"⁽⁵⁰⁾, or as "so, just, right"⁽⁵¹⁾ are more faithful to the usual meanings of the word in Hebrew, but both are forced within the context of the line. The actual intention of the line has been sensed by several scholars, but they have had to translate *kēn* very loosely to deliver this meaning. Otto Procksch renders the stich "So lebt mein Haus vor Gott"⁽⁵²⁾, and H. W. Hertzberg very similarly translates "So (lebt) mein Haus mit Gott"⁽⁵³⁾. These renderings reflect the proper understanding of *kēn*, whose basic sense here is one of existence. Such a meaning is attested for *kēn* in Phoenician and Ugaritic, for in both languages the root *kwn* is the common verb "to be"⁽⁵⁴⁾. In other words, *kī lô' kēn bēti 'im 'el* means "For *is* not my house with God?" or "For indeed my house *is* with God", again depending on how one understands *l'*. The use of *kēn* in 2 Sam 23,1-7 for the verb "to be", exactly as in Phoenician texts, is another indication of the poem's northern authorship.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ DRIVER, *Samuel*, 359-360.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ H. P. SMITH, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh 1899) 382.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ For this reason, if for no other, the radical emendations and restorations proposed by PROCKSCH, "Die letzten Worte Davids", 118-119; and S. MOWINCKEL, "Die letzten Worte Davids", II Sam 23 1-7", *ZAW* 40 (1927) 30-58, are totally unnecessary, if not absurd.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ *JPSV; NJPSV; Jerusalem Bible; CARLSON, David the Chosen King*, 256; and RICHARDSON, "The Last Words of David", 259.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ In fact, emendation to *nākôn* has been suggested by A. B. EHRLICH, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* III (Leipzig 1910) 341; *BHK, ad loc.*; and others.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ T. N. D. METTINGER, "The Last Words of David", A Study of Structure and Meaning in II Samuel 23:1-7", *SEA* 41/42 (1976-77) 153-154; and MCCARTER, *II Samuel*, 482.

⁽⁵¹⁾ DE BOER, "Texte et traduction", 54; CROSS, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 236.

⁽⁵²⁾ PROCKSCH, "Die letzten Worte Davids", 112.

⁽⁵³⁾ HERTZBERG, *Die Samuelbücher*, 329.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ TOMBACK, *Phoenician and Punic*, 140-141; GORDON, *Ugaritic Textbook*, 418; and AISTLEITNER, *Wörterbuch*, 151. Incidentally, H. L. GINSBERG, "The Northwest Semitic Languages", *Patriarchs* (B. MAZAR, ed.) (The World History of the Jewish People, II; Tel-Aviv 1970) 105, lists *kwn* "to be" as one of the lexical features which distinguishes his Phoenic group (= Phoenician-Ugaritic) from Hebrew.

Our investigation has turned up six instances of non-normative Hebrew usage within the seven verses which comprise "the last words of David" in 2 Sam 23,1-7. Two of these (*millāh*, *kullāham*) are paralleled in Aramaic, one (human use of *nē'ûm*) points very strongly in that direction, one (*dbr b-*) is paralleled in the Bible only in northern compositions, one (*'āl*) is limited to northern Israel and to Ugaritic texts, and one (*kēn*) is paralleled in Phoenician and Ugaritic. The obvious conclusion, already noted above, is that the poem stems from the northern or northeastern regions of Israel. Either the author himself hailed from this area or, if we wish to affirm the biblical statement of Davidic authorship, we must assume a scribe who hailed from this area⁽⁵⁵⁾.

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⁽⁵⁵⁾ If I may be permitted a bit of speculation, we may wish to consider the possibility that the poem stems from Mahanaim in Trans-Jordan. The exact location of the site is still debated, but the Jabbok valley is its general locale; see Y. AHARONI, "Maḥanayim", *Ensiqlopediya Miqra'it* 4 (1970) 806-807. This city served briefly as David's capital during the rebellion of Absalom (see 2 Sam 17,24; 17,27; 19,33) and there he was greeted by nobles from Gilead. Since David's stay there occurred during the end of his reign and since 2 Sam 23,1-7 purports to be his "last words", we may wish to make the connection.

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