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SABAIC NOTES TO HEBREW GRAMMAR

BY

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Unquestionably the Semitic language least known to Hebraists is South Arabian. Depending on one's particular area of concentration, the typical Hebrew scholar has an expertise in Arabic, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and/or Ethiopic. For example, the Biblicist will know Akkadian and Ugaritic if he deals with ancient literatures and religions, or he will know Aramaic (including Syriac) and Ethiopic if he is a text-critic. The Talmudist by definition will be expert in Aramaic, and the medievalist cannot proceed far without a handle on Arabic. By contrast, in none of these fields is a knowledge of South Arabian a requirement. Accordingly, this language is the step-child of Hebrew studies.

The Hebraist is not totally to be blamed for this situation. A current worker in the field of South Arabian writes: "The lack of attention heretofore paid to these languages has been due largely to the difficulty of access to the texts, and to the absence of even the most basic critical tools, such as dictionaries and concordances, to aid in their study" (Biella 1982, p. vii). Happily, progress is now being made and these problems are being alleviated. Most importantly, three recent books have appeared, all at affordable prices. They are A.F.L. Beeston's *Sabaic Grammar* (1984) in the Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph Series; J.C. Biella's *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (1982) in the Harvard Semitic Series; and the quadrilingual dictionary of A.F.L. Beeston, M.A. Ghul, W.W. Müller, and J. Ryckmans, entitled *Dictionnaire sabéen/Sabaic Dictionary/ al-Muʿjam al-Sabaʾī* (1982), listing Sabaic words with their French, English, and Arabic equivalents. The appearance of these volumes has served as my main impetus in writing this article. In offering some notes on South Arabian grammar, specifically designed for the Hebraist, it is my hope that others in our field will be attracted to the study of this neglected Semitic language.

By way of introduction, let us first delineate the various South

Arabian tongues.[1] The term South Arabian covers various dialects, both ancient and modern. The former group is usually called Epigraphic South Arabian and is subdivided into 1) Sabaic, 2) Minaic, 3) Qatabanic, and 4) Hadramatic. Inscriptions in Epigraphic South Arabian range from the 6th century B.C.E. to the 6th century C.E., and have been found in Yemen and Aden. Unfortunately, none of these texts can be considered great literature, that is to say, we lack a South Arabian "Gilgamesh Epic" or "Baal Cycle". But what we lack in quality is at least compensated for in quantity. There are literally thousands of texts in these four dialects; many of them are extremely brief graffiti but there are also some important historical documents.[2] Of the four dialects, Sabaic is by far the best represented; accordingly its place in the title of the three aforementioned books and in the title of this article.

The Modern South Arabian languages are 1) Mehri, with the closely related dialects of Ḥarsūsi and Botahari, 2) Jibbāli (formerly called Šḥauri or Śḥeri), and 3) Soqoṭri. These tongues have been known to Western scholars since only the 19th century. They are still spoken today in Aden and Oman. The exact relationship between Modern South Arabian and Epigraphic South Arabian still has not been worked out, though clearly there are affinities between the two groups. The modern dialects are a remarkable subject of study all their own, but, again as the title suggests, we will concentrate our efforts on the Epigraphic South Arabian group. (Henceforth "South Arabian" refers only to the ancient language.)

The following notes are based largely on Beeston's recent grammar. Additional details may be found in the two dictionaries, where appropriate.[3] Let it also be noted that older grammars such as Beeston (1962) and Höfner (1943) and the glossary in Conti Rossini (1931) are still very valuable and should be consulted for further investigation.

Assimilation of *nun*

One of the phonological features which demarcates Hebrew and the other North Semitic languages from South Semitic is the

[1] For a more detailed treatment and bibliographic survey, see Leslau (1970, pp. 507-527).

[2] For a sampling in English translation, see Jamme (1969).

[3] Of the two volumes, Beeston-Ghul-Müller-Ryckmans (1982) is the preferred one. As Jamme (1984) has pointed out, Biella (1982) cannot be used uncritically.

assimilation of vowelless *nun* to the following consonant (Moscati 1964, p. 57). Thus we note Hebrew **yinten* > *yittēn* "he gives", Akkadian **indin* > *iddin* "he gave", etc. And yet contrary to the preservation of *nun* in Arabic, Ethiopic, and Modern South Arabian, generally Sabaic agrees with Hebrew and the other North Semitic languages. It is true that "assimilated and non-assimilated spellings both occur freely" (Beeston 1984, p. 11), but South Arabian still departs from the expected South Semitic norm.

Furthermore, before the consonants ' ʿ *ḥ ḫ ǵ m* this assimilation does not occur. With the exception of the presence of *m* and the absence of *ḫ* from this list, this accords with Hebrew especially. In the other North Semitic languages, various phonological rules apply when vowelless *n* precedes a laryngeal, pharyngeal, or velar fricative, but they all differ from Hebrew.

In Syriac, except before *h*, *n* assimilates (Brockelmann 1955, p. 19). In Ugaritic, one encounters forms such as *UT* 95:8 *tǵrk* "may they guard you" (root *nǵr*) (Gordon 1967, p. 445), *UT* 75:I:35 *yh* "he goes toward" (root *nhw*) (Gordon 1967, p. 442), and *UT* 51:VII:54 *bǵlmt* "son of the young woman" (Gordon 1967, p. 373), all with *n* assimilated. Forms such as *UT* 68:11, 18 *ynḫt* "he brings down" are most likely D-stems with a vowel intervening between *n* and the following consonant (cf. Gordon 1967, p. 443). The only evidence which would suggest that *n* was not assimilated comes from personal names. Alphabetic *ynḫm* in *UT* 84:10 etc. is spelled syllabically as *ia-an-ḫa-am-mi* and *ia-an-ḫa-mu* (Gordon 1967, p. 443; Sivan 1984, p. 47; Gröndahl 1967, pp. 22, 165). Similarly, alphabetic *ynḫn* in *UT* 327:rev 5 (Gordon 1967, p. 443) appears syllabically as *ia-an-ḫa-nu* (Sivan 1984, p. 47; Gröndahl 1967, pp. 22, 165). Thus we may conclude that in contemporary Ugaritic vowelless *n* was assimilated before all consonants, including laryngeals, pharyngeals, and velar fricatives, but that personal names preserved an older form with *n* preserved.

In Akkadian one of two developments may arise. More common is progressive assimilation of *n* + ' [= etymological ' ʿ *ḥ ḫ ǵ*] > *nn*, e.g., *innepiš* "it was done" < **in'epiš* (von Soden 1969, pp. 25, 34, 126). Less common is regressive assimilation of *n* + ' > ", e.g., *i"abit* "it was destroyed" < **in'abit* (von Soden 1969, pp. 25, 34, 128, 150).

Only in Hebrew (and apparently in other Canaanite dialects) was *n* regularly preserved before laryngeals, pharyngeals, and velar fricatives,

e.g., *yinḥal*, *yin'aṣ*, *yinḥag*, etc.[4] Thus only Hebrew and South Arabian share the feature of assimilating vowelless *n* before most consonants but not before ' ʿ *ḥ ḫ ǵ ḥ* (for Hebrew) *m* (for South Arabian).

Prepositions with *-y*

As is well known, three Hebrew biliteral prepositions, *'l, ʿd,* and *ʿl*, appear as well with suffixed *-y*. The attestations are limited to poetry: *'ly* "to" occurs only in Job (4 ×), *ʿdy* "until" occurs in Numbers 24, Isaiah, Second Isaiah, Psalms, and Job (12 ×), and *ʿly* "upon" occurs in Genesis 49, Numbers 24, Deuteronomy 32, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Lamentations (40 ×). But regardless of this distribution, it is still remarkable that Hebrew should have interchangeable forms, the standard shorter ones and the rarer ones with *-y*.[5]

The norm is for any Semitic language to have but one of these sets, to wit, Syriac *ʿal* and *ʿad*, Arabic *'ilā(y)* and *ʿalā(y)*.[6] Eblaite presents something unique with the prepositions *a-de* and *al*, the former corresponding to the Hebrew *-y* form and the latter to the standard Hebrew usage. Nevertheless, variation does not occur, these being the only forms attested (Pennacchietti 1981, p. 293). The Ugaritic evidence is, of course, ambiguous, since one cannot determine the vocalization of the prepositions *ʿd* and *ʿl* based merely on the orthography (see Gordon 1967, p. 99; Segert 1984, pp. 78-79).

Akkadian might be considered a parallel to the Hebrew phenomenon, although the data are reversed. In this language, *adi* and *eli* are the standard forms, with *ad* and *el* as poetic variants (von Soden 1969, pp. 165-166).[7]

The closest parallel to Hebrew usage, then, is Sabaic. One of the unique features of its prepositional system is the same variation as occurs in Hebrew. An entire range of prepositions has both base

[4] Phoenician agrees with Hebrew on this point, viz., *tnḥl* "you will inherit" (*KAI* 3:4) vs. *yzq* "he damages" (*KAI* 24:14). See Garr (1985, pp. 42-43) and Friedrich-Röllig (1970, pp. 22, 70).

[5] Of course the forms with suffixed *-y* are also the basis for the series with pronominal suffixes: *'ēlay*, *'ēlênû*, etc. (Meyer 1969, p. 179). But I do not include these forms in the present discussion.

[6] Syriac also possesses the longer forms with *-y*, but only when the pronominal suffixes are added (Brockelmann 1955, p. 82). Again, I exclude these forms from the discussion. The orthography of the Arabic prepositions suggests that in origin they are more closely related to the Hebrew forms with *-y*.

[7] An additional variant is Old Akkadian *al* (von Soden, p. 166).

forms and forms with *-y*, including the exact correspondants of two of the aforementioned Hebrew prepositions, namely *ʿd/ʿdy* and *ʿl/ʿly* (Beeston 1984, pp. 53-54, 56-57).[8]

A closer investigation of the distribution of the Hebrew forms with *-y* suggests that the use of these forms may have been a stylistic device. By far the largest accumulation of such forms is to be found in Job (21 ×). In addition four forms with *-y* occur in the mouth of Balaam (Numb 24:6 [2 ×], 24:20, 24:24) and one occurs in the Massa material collected at the end of Proverbs (30:19). In sum, 26 of the 56 attestations of *ʾly*, *ʿly*, *ʿdy* occur in what I would call Syro-Arabian contexts. Of the remaining 30 usages, we may be inclined to exclude six cases which occur in older poetry (Gen 49:17 [2 ×], 49:22 [2 ×], Deut 32:2 [2 ×]) and six cases of the fossilized expression *ʿdy ʿdy* "forever" (Isa 26:4, 65:18, Ps 83:18, 92:8, 132:12, 132:14). Thus, our ratio may be one of 26 of 44 usages of *ʾly*, *ʿly*, *ʿdy* in Syro-Arabian contexts. I consider this a significant percentage. Recently S.A. Kaufman (1988, p. 55) has argued persuasively that the Balaam and Massa materials, as well as other selections of biblical literature, are "intentional stylistic representations of Trans-Jordanian speech on the part of Hebrew authors within Hebrew texts".[9] He labels this technique "style-switching". I wholeheartedly endorse this approach and would extend its application to Job as well. Accordingly, I conclude that the prepositions with *-y* were deliberately used by the author of Job to color his Hebrew in an Arabian manner.[10]

The preposition *bn*

Most scholars have judged *bin* in Jonah 4:10 (2 ×) to be a slight variant of standard Hebrew *bēn* "son" (Kautzsch 1910, p. 285; Bauer-Leander 1922, p. 618; Koehler-Baumgartner 1951, I, pp. 133f.; Landes 1982, p. 153*). They base this conclusion on other attestations of this form: the proper name *binyāmîn* (Gen 35:18 etc.), the patronymics *bin-nûn* (Exod 33:11 etc.) and *bin-yāqeh* (Prov 30:1), and the common

[8] Qatabanic, incidentally, tends to use forms in *-w*, e.g., *ʿdw*, *ʿlw* (Beeston 1984, p. 67).

[9] See also Greenfield (1981, pp. 129-130) for the same technique in the story of Jacob and Laban.

[10] Al Wolters of Redeemer College reached a similar conclusion in his paper "The 'tail' and 'thighs' of Behemoth (Job 40:17)" presented at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Chacago, November 1988. I thank Professor Wolters for permitting me to see the written form of this paper.

noun *bin* (Deut 25:2). But the expression *šebbin-laylāh hāyāh ûbin-laylāh ʾābād* "which arose in a night and wilted in a night" reads better if we understand *bin* not as "son" but as the preposition *b* "in" with suffixed *-n*.

Isolated parallels are to be found in Northwest Semitic texts, e.g., Phoenician *bn* "in" in *KAI* 43:13 and Ugaritic *ln* "to" in *UT* 137:25, 27, 29 (Gordon 1967, pp. 97, 428), as well as in Eblaite where *li-na* "to" occurs (Pennacchietti 1981, p. 301). Accordingly, there should be little objection to positing the uniconsonantal preposition expanded by suffixed *-n* in Hebrew.[11]

Apart from these examples, the best parallel to the preposition *bn* in Jonah 4:10 (2×) comes from South Arabian. Here one finds the common usage of suffixed *-n* attached to prepositions, e.g., *b*/*bn*, *l*/*ln*, *ʿbr*/*ʿbrn*, *ʿm*/*ʿmn*, etc. (Beeston 1984, pp. 53-58). It is true that the simple prepositions *b* and *l* mean "in" and "to" respectively, and that *bn* and *ln* mean "from" (Beeston 1984, pp. 53-56), but in most cases the addition of suffixed *-n* to prepositions appears not to affect the meaning of the word in the least.

In short, *bin* in Jonah 4:10 (2×) should be parsed as the preposition "in", and the Hebraist may look to South Arabian for a standard cognate.[12]

Prepositions in *-mw*

Still another characteristic of Hebrew prepositions is the ability for three uniconsonantals, *b*, *l*, and *k* to be expanded by the addition of enclitic *-mw* (Kautzsch 1910, p. 303; Brown-Driver-Briggs 1906, pp. 91, 455, 518). There are numerous parallels to the Hebrew form *kəmô* "like, as",[13] namely Phoenician *km* (Harris 1936, p. 109; Friedrich-Röllig 1970, p. 127), Ugaritic *km* (Gordon 1967, p. 420), Akkadian *kima* (von Soden 1969, p. 165), Ethiopic *kama* (Dillmann

[11] The standard approach is to explain Phoenician *bn* as dissimilated from *mn* (Harris 1936, p. 120; Friedrich-Röllig 1970, pp. 21, 126). But this fails to take into account Jonah 4:10 and the South Arabian evidence introduced in the next paragraph. Gordon (1952, p. 121) has already shown the weakness of the explanation found in the grammars of Phoenician. Moreover, he has also compared Arabic-Aramaic-Canaanite *mn* "from" with Egyptian *m* "from" as another illustration of this phenomenon (Gordon 1967, p. 110).

[12] Segert (1969, pp. 475-76) does not discuss the Hebrew form at all, but he does treat the prepositions with suffixed *-n* in a general Semitic framework.

[13] Hebrew *kəmô* is also utilized when most of the pronominal suffixes are added, e.g., *kāmônî*.

1907, p. 396), Eblaite *ka-ma* (Pennacchietti 1981, p. 301), Syriac *kmā* (Brockelmann 1955, p. 175*), Arabic *kamā* (Wright 1896-98, II, pp. 177-178), etc.

On the other hand, cognates for Hebrew *bəmô* "in" and *ləmô* "to" are very rare. The exact parallel to the former is common in South Arabian, where both *bm* and *bmw* occur as variants of *b* (Beeston 1984, pp. 47-48; Biella 1982, p. 33). This connection between Hebrew and South Arabian was pointed out more than a century ago by D.H. Müller (1883, p. 344, n. 2) and is noted by Brown-Driver-Briggs (1906, p. 91). An exact parallel to Hebrew *ləmô* may occur in Ugaritic, viz., *lm* in Krt 102 (Gordon 1967, p. 97, n. 1). Notwithstanding, we may speak generally of South Arabian as being germane here due to the common use of the enclitic *m/mw* in these dialects.

Again we may note that these forms appear only in Hebrew poetry, especially in Job. Four of the ten attestations of *bəmô* and all four instances of *ləmô* occur in this book. Thus, we may ask again whether the author of Job did not intentionally employ these forms to add an Arabian flavor to the diction of his characters.

The negative particle *biltî*

The negative particle *biltî* "without" is another Hebrew form with few cognates. The form *blt* occurs in both Phoenician and Ugaritic (Friedrich-Röllig 1970, p. 125; Gordon 1967, p. 373). Further afield but nonetheless related is South Arabian *blty* (Beeston 1984, p. 57).[14]

Of special interest is the syntax of these cognates. One of the commonest usages of Hebrew *biltî*, albeit with prefixed *lə*, is the negation of the infinitive construct (Kautzsch 1910, p. 352; Joüon 1923, p. 493). In Phoenician and Ugaritic this usage is not attested (for discussion see Aartun 1974, pp. 26-27, 66). In South Arabian, however, we do occasionally encounter a parallel to the Hebrew usage. The following passage is illustrative: *blty kwn bmḥrmn kl bʿltm* "without there being in the sanctuary any high-priestess" (Beeston 1952, p. 147). In this instance, South Arabian *blty* negates the following infinitive *kwn* "to be", thus standing as a close parallel to the common Hebrew usage, e.g., *ləbiltî ʾăkol* "not to eat" (Gen

[14] Although vowel letters are not common in South Arabian orthography, they do occur occasionally (Beeston 1984, p. 7). In the present instance, we will assume such for the final letter in *blty*.

3:11).[15] Beeston (1984, p. 57) is correct that syntactically South Arabian *hlty* and Hebrew *bilṭî* are for the most part dissimilar, the former being mainly prepositional and the latter mainly conjunctional. But if we expand the discussion to include *ləbilṭî* followed by infinitive construct (and note that the *lə* is essentially the prefix of the infinitive construct, not of *bilṭî*), we can posit a similar syntactic environment between the Hebrew and South Arabian cognates.[16]

Explicative *w*

The particle *w* has many significations in Hebrew, among them what scholars have termed *waw explicativum*. In such cases the *w* is not to be translated by "and" or some other conjunction, rather it has a copulative force with the meaning "that is, namely". This usage is attested also in Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Akkadian (Baker 1980, pp. 129-130).

D.W. Baker (1980, p. 134) has remarked that "no examples have been found in South Semitic". However, Beeston (1984, p. 49) states that it is attested in Qatabanic and perhaps in Sabaic. An undisputed example from the former is *ldtn ʾbytn wlʾḫtbs¹m wms³wds¹m wṣrḫts¹m* "for these houses, namely for their ground-storey rooms and their guest hall and their upper rooms". An example from the latter, which admittedly is subject to varying interpretation is *ʾnmrm ... wrbʿt ... wʾfṣy ... wgs²m* "some chieftains, consisting of Rābiʿat and Afṣay and Gušam" (for references see Beeston 1984, p. 49).

Broken plurals

Scholars continue to debate the origin of the plural of Hebrew segholates. In my estimation, they are to be analyzed as internal or broken plurals, to which the standard masculine plural ending *-îm* has been added, with the result being a plural of a plural or a double plural (Margolis 1904).

Since the debate still lingers, here I would simply like to call

[15] I am grateful to Fr. Albert Jamme of Catholic University for discussing the South Arabian usage with me (personal letter, 7 June 1986). Although he would prefer treating *kwn* as a perfect here — in which case there would be no parallel to the Hebrew usage — he did confirm for me that Beeston considers the form to be an infinitive.

[16] This comparison is not to suggest that the infinitives are exactly alike. The South Arabian form would be an infinitive absolute (akin to the Arabic *maṣdar* form), whereas the Hebrew morpheme is an infinitive construct.

attention to the South Arabian evidence. In Beeston's (1984, p. 26) words: "The use of broken plurals is more pervasive in Sayhadic [= South Arabian] than in any other Semitic language". This being the case, anyone investigating the problem in Hebrew should have his eye not only on Arabic and Ethiopic, but on South Arabian as well.[17]

Dual verbs and pronouns

In a recent article I presented the evidence for dual verbs (perfect and imperfect) and dual personal pronouns (independent and suffixed) in Hebrew (Rendsburg 1982b, pp. 38-58). I noted that the cognate evidence stems from Arabic, Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Egyptian. An important lacuna from this list is South Arabian, for this language also widely employs dual forms (Beeston 1984, pp. 14-15, 39, 63-65, 69).[18]

For the verb, South Arabian actually is nearer to Arabic and Egyptian than it is to Hebrew and Akkadian. For the former distinguish gender in the dual verb, whereas Hebrew and Akkadian do not.[19] For the pronoun, as is expected, South Arabian has forms of common gender. The attested forms, all 3rd person pronominal suffixes, are Sabaic *-hmy*, Minaic and Hadramatic *-s¹mn*, and Qatabanic *-s¹my*. All other dual pronouns are wanting.

Imperfect in *-n*

An oddity of the Hebrew verbal inflection is the occasional addition of *-n* to the 2nd person masculine plural, 3rd person masculine plural, and 2nd person feminine singular imperfect. Some scholars have suggested that the imperfect with *-n* marks an emphasis otherwise lacking in the regular imperfect (Kautzsch 1910, p. 128; Driver 1890, p. 23; Hoftijzer 1985). This would agree with the general trend in Semitic toward some semantic or modal distinction between the regular imperfect and the imperfect with *-n* (see Moscati 1964, pp. 135-136; Garr 1985, pp. 126-127). And yet one can hardly

[17] Internal or broken plurals are also extremely common in Modern South Arabian (Johnstone 1975, p. 21).

[18] I should also have included Modern South Arabian where dual verbs and dual pronouns occur (Johnstone 1975, pp. 15-17, 25-26).

[19] For details see Rendsburg (1982b, pp. 48-52). The Ugaritic evidence is ambiguous, since both *yqtln* and *tqtln* seem to be used for both genders.

accede to the notion that the addition of *-n* alters the regular imperfect in any meaningful or significant way. Instead it is better to conclude with grammarians such as E.Y. Kutscher (1982, p. 40), R. Meyer (1969, p. 100), and R.J. Williams (1972, pp. 82-85) who view this ending as purely optional.[20]

Those who accept the first of the above views may have been reticent to admit to the second due to the lack of an appropriate parallel within Semitic. Both Phoenician and Ugaritic most likely parallel the Hebrew usage in this regard, but there are still those who suggest differences between the regular imperfect and the imperfect with *-n* in these two languages.[21] It is, therefore, appropriate to present the South Arabian evidence by quoting Beeston (1984, p. 21) in full:

> An extremely difficult problem is the usage of the simple versus the -N imperfect. A rather general impression is that the simple imperfect occurs in main sentences and the -N imperfect in jussives and subordinate clauses of all kinds, including relative clauses. But there are so many cases controverting such a principle that it is probably unwise to adopt that hypothesis. One may have to admit that the use of the -N imperfect is purely optional: notice the contrast between the two forms [*wyḫmrhmw* ... *wynt'nhmw* "and may He grant them ... and may He deliver them"], where the syntactic status of the two verbs is absolutely the same.

In short, in both Hebrew and South Arabian the imperfect with *-n* is merely optional.

[20] In his treatment, Williams merges the two forms which other scholars tend to distinguish, the paragogic *nun* and the energic *nun*. I am inclined to agree with him in considering these two *nun*'s as ultimately of the same origin. A single morpheme may appear in more than one guise during the historical development of a language. Another example in Hebrew is the volitive ending *-āh*, suffixed to most cohortatives and some imperatives (Rainey 1986, p. 8). An English example is the genitive singular ending *-s*. This morpheme lives on not only in the possessive form, e.g., "mother's", "father's", etc., but also in such words as "Sundays", "Mondays", etc. In sentences such as "Sundays I play football" and "Mondays I go to the library", the *-s* ending is not the nominative plural but a survival of the genitive singular.

[21] For Phoenician, Friedrich-Röllig (1970, p. 62) and Garr (1985, p. 126) see no distinction, but Harris (1936, pp. 40-41) and Williams (1972, p. 81) claim that the regular imperfect is precative and that the imperfect with *-n* is indicative, paralleling Aramaic usage. For Ugaritic, Gordon (1967, p. 73) concludes that the forms with *-n* are only stylistic variants of the forms without the suffix. Segert (1984, p. 62), on the other hand, writes that "the function of these forms [i.e., with *-n*] is mostly volitive", though he adds that "some probably do not differ in meaning from corresponding indicative forms".

Pentateuchal *hw'*

Recently I have investigated the use of consonantal *hw'* for the 3rd person singular independent pronoun in the Pentateuch, vocalized *hû'* for the masculine and *hî'* for the feminine (Rendsburg 1982a, pp. 351-369). The conclusion reached was that the form is not a scribal convention,[22] rather it should be viewed as a genuine epicene form. The earliest layer of Hebrew, that represented in the Pentateuch, did not distinguish gender for the 3rd person singular independent pronoun, apparently the result of Hittite and Hurrian influence. Only later, after said influence waned and after Israel became an international state under David and Solomon, did Hebrew join the rest of Semitic in distinguishing gender.

Although I noted a similar situation in Old Babylonian, where the 3rd person singular oblique pronouns, genitive/accusative *šuāti* and dative *šuāšim*, are also of common gender (Rendsburg 1982a, pp. 363-364; see von Soden 1969, p. 41), I suggested that the Hebrew phenomenon was otherwise unique. However, I overlooked the South Arabian evidence which once again exhibits something similar to Hebrew. The usual 3rd person singular pronominal suffixes are *-hw* for the masculine and *-h* for the feminine, but the use of the former for the feminine "is extremely prevalent in the middle period" (Beeston 1984, pp. 39-40). Although his recent grammar offers no explanation for this usage, Beeston's earlier treatment proposes three possible interpretations (1962, p. 44):

> One could envisage alternatives: (a) that the examples are simply due to lax concord; (b) that in certain stages of the language the third person singular pronoun affix was a common-gender form; (c) that this form with feminine antecedent was vocalized differently from the same graphic form with masculine antecedent.

If the second of these alternatives is accepted, we would have the exact corollary to my explanation of the Hebrew crux. But regardless of how one interprets the South Arabian usage, one can no longer claim that the Hebrew usage is *sui generis*. Indeed, as A. Capuzzi (1968, pp. 455-459) has pointed out, there are even examples of the same phenomenon in Nabatean and Palmyrene Aramaic. Any further

[22] This is the standard explanation, for which see Kautzsch (1910, p. 107), Brown-Driver-Briggs (1906, pp. 214-215), Bauer-Leander (1922, p. 248), and many others.

attempts to elucidate this problem should bring all this evidence to bear on the subject.[23]

Post-scriptum

While this article was in press, Prof. Muraoka discovered the following bibliographic information, which he kindly brought to my attention. The issue of *bin* in Jonah 4:10 was treated by H. Yalon in "La-Millon ha-'Ivri", *Melilah* 3-4 (1950) 111-112. His material appears in slightly revised form in H. Yalon, *Pirqe Lashon* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1971) 156. For related matter from rabbinic literature, Yalon cited S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942) 175-176.

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UT = Gordon 1967.

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