

Monophthongization of *aw/ay* > *ā* in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic

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The discovery of hitherto unknown Semitic languages during the 20th century has revolutionized the study and understanding of previously known Semitic languages. This has been most prominent in the case of Ugaritic, the importance of which for Hebrew studies especially is well known. At first glance, one would not expect the discovery of the Ebla tablets and the concomitant recovery of the Eblaite language to have the same impact on our understanding of Biblical Hebrew. The texts from Tell Mardikh date from the mid-third millennium B.C.E. and most of the Bible was written during the first millennium B.C.E. There is also a considerable distance separating Ebla in northern Syria from Israel in southern Canaan (though admittedly no greater a distance than that separating Ugarit and Israel). And yet considerable light already has been shed by Eblaite on problems in Hebrew.¹

In the present article I shall tackle a new problem brought to the fore by the discoveries at Ebla: the treatment of the diphthongs *aw* and *ay* in Eblaite and parallel phenomena in Hebrew and other, especially Northwest, Semitic languages.

aw/ay > *ā* in Eblaite

I shall begin by listing all sure instances of Eblaite words in which the Proto-Semitic diphthongs *aw* and *ay* appear.² In cases where the meaning and etymology may not be immediately recognizable, a Semitic cognate is noted.

<i>a-na-a, a-na</i>	'eyes'
<i>a-wa-mu, a-mu, a-me-mu</i>	'day'

¹ See, for example, C. H. Gordon, "Eblaitica," in *Eblaitica* 1:19–28; and G. A. Rendsburg, "Eblaite *ū-ma* and Hebrew *wm-*," in *Eblaitica* 1:33–41.

² These words, discussion, and bibliographic information concerning them may be found in the following sources: M. Krebernik, "Zu Syllabar und Orthographie der lexikalischen Texte aus Ebla: Teil 2 (Glossar)," *ZA* 73 (1983) 1–47; P. Fronzaroli, "Materiali per il lessico eblaita, I," *SEb* 7 (1984) 145–90; and P. Fronzaroli, "The Eblaic Lexicon: Problems and Appraisal," in *SLE*, 117–57.

<i>ba-du, ba-du-um</i>	'house'
<i>ba-nu, ba-ne-um</i>	'tamarisk' (Akkadian <i>bīnu</i>)
<i>ba-na</i>	'between'
<i>ga-ma-túm</i>	'Pleiades'
<i>ga-sa-tum, ga-sa-du-um</i>	'woodland' (Akkadian <i>qīštu</i>)
<i>da-ne-u[m]</i>	'judgment'
<i>ma-bil-tum, ma-ba-al-tum</i>	'wagon' (root <i>wbl</i>)
<i>ma-da-u₉</i>	'knowledge'
<i>ma-sa-lu-um, ma-sa-lum</i>	'justice'
<i>ma-wu, ma-u₉, ma-a</i>	'water'
<i>ra-wa-bu, la-bu-um</i>	'shiver' (?) (Akkadian <i>rābu</i>)
<i>uš-da-si-ir</i>	'he prepared/released' (Št stem, root <i>yšr</i>)

As the above list indicates, with the exception of a few examples, the diphthongs *ay/aw* are regularly written *a* in Eblaite orthography. How is this to be explained? The first option is that of P. Fronzaroli, who has argued that in Eblaite the Proto-Semitic diphthongs *aw* and *ay* were preserved, but that the cuneiform script of this period had no way of representing these sounds. His clearest statement on the subject is the following:

Il dittongo **ay* è reso qui, come altrove (v. *ba-du*, s.v. /bayt-um/, e *ma-sa-lu-um*, s.v. /mayšar-um/), con un segno (C)*a*. Questo grafico potrebbero essere interpretate sia come un artificio per indicare il dittongo /ay/ sia come la resa di una assimilazione progressiva **ay* > *ā*. Nello stato attuale delle nostre conoscenze appare preferibile considerare queste attestazioni come indizi della conservazione del dittongo originario; si confronteranno anche le grafie (C)*a*-V(C) in casi come *ba-la-um* (s.v. /barāy-um/).³

His opinion has been accepted by the majority of scholars laboring in the field of Eblaite studies, including important contributors such as I. M. Diakonoff and M. Krebernik. The former states the following: "Just as many other archaic systems of writing, Eblaite writing mostly does not reproduce the sonants *y, w, n, m* in In- and Auslaut, thus *la-ḥa* = /laḥān/ . . . , *ba-da-a* = /baytay/. The sign *a* itself can also stand for /²*a, ya, ay*/ etc."⁴ Krebernik states simply: "Durch (K)*a* können die Diphthonge /aw/, /ay/ ausgedrückt werden; daneben existieren jedoch auch die (K)*v*-Schreibungen (K)*a-wa* bzw. (K)*a-a*."⁵

³ Fronzaroli, "Materiali per il lessico eblaita, I," 156.

⁴ I. M. Diakonoff, "The Importance of Ebla for History and Linguistics," in this volume, above, p. 19. This position of Diakonoff updates his earlier statement in "An Evaluation of Eblaite," in *SLE*, 7: "I will not touch upon the difficult question of diphthongs in Eblaite; I do not think that the grammatical and linguistic facts have to date been made sufficiently clear."

⁵ M. Krebernik, "Zu Syllabar und Orthographie der lexikalischen Texte aus Ebla: Teil I," *ZA* 72 (1982) 223.

The second option, which was intimated by Fronzaroli, is that the diphthongs actually shifted to *ā*, that is, the orthographic representation is an accurate reflection of the phonetic reality.⁶ This opinion has been expressed most notably by I. J. Gelb, who compared the situation in Amorite where similar orthographic practices were in use. It is worthwhile quoting Gelb's most complete statement on the matter *in extenso*:

The main difference between Fronzaroli's treatment of the diphthong *aj* at Ebla and mine is that Fronzaroli believes—if I understand him correctly—that the original diphthong *aj* was preserved in Eblaic (even though not written), while I take it to have developed to *ā*. My contention is provable for later Semitic languages, but not necessarily for Eblaic, which is written in a cuneiform system that may be unable to express the diphthongs adequately. The same situation prevails in Old Babylonian Amorite, where there are clear cases of spelling the diphthong *aj* as *ā*, but also cases which may favor the preservation of *aj*. This leads to several possibilities in Amorite and Eblaic: a) The regular shift of *aj* > *ā*, b) the regular preservation of *aj* despite the deficient writing, and c) both the shift of *aj* > *ā* and the preservation of *aj* depending on such unknown factors as the dialectal (areal and temporal) distribution.⁷

At first glance it may seem true that the Eblaite orthography simply may have been unable to represent the sounds *aw* and *ay*. Thus Gelb's caution that he cannot prove absolutely that the diphthongs shifted to *a* at Ebla is admirable. However, let us look at the Eblaite material a bit closer. As noted above, and as recognized by Krebernik, there are some exceptions to the use of *a* signs for the representation of the diphthongs. In several occasions *aw* is represented in the orthography. I refer to *ma-wu* 'water' which is elsewhere written *ma-u*, *a-wa-mu* 'day' which is elsewhere written *a-mu*, and *ra-wa-bu* 'shiver' (?)⁸ which is elsewhere written *la-bu-um*. The only Semitic cognate for this last word, Akkadian *rābu*, does not contain a diphthong in any of its forms, but it is clear that in the Eblaite form the first syllable shows a variation between /*raw*-/ and /*ra*-/. The picture which emerges seems relatively clear: the claim that Eblaite script was inadequate for representing the diphthongs is simply incorrect. In at least three places Eblaite scribes had no difficulty whatsoever.

⁶ I transcribe this phoneme as a long vowel, but actually it is possible that it may have been a short vowel at times. In dealing with the exact realization of this sound, various scholars opt for different transcriptions, including not only [ā] and [a] but also the digraph [æ] and the unique [ǣ]. Obviously, the different scripts used to represent the various Semitic languages do not consistently depict vocalic quantity. But regardless of the length of the vowel, what concerns us more in the present paper is the quality of the vowel, namely, that it is an *a* vowel. See further below, n. 51.

⁷ I. J. Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization," in *Lingua*, 24–25.

⁸ For this definition see J. Krecher, "Sumerische und nichtsumerische Schicht in der Schriftkultur von Ebla," in *Bilinguismo*, 152; and Krebernik, "Zu Syllabar und Orthographie . . . , Teil 2," 11. Krecher, incidentally, also assumes that the diphthongs were preserved.

All three of these involve the diphthong *aw*, so let me limit the discussion to just this phoneme for the moment. If the diphthong *aw* was preserved throughout in Eblaite, then one must wonder why the scribes, who possessed a way of depicting this sound, did not consistently indicate it in their writing system. It is much more logical to assume that the shift of *aw* > $\bar{a}$ had occurred generally in Eblaite, but that in some rare instances the diphthong *aw* remained unchanged. Exactly under what circumstances *aw* was preserved one cannot say, but Gelb was probably correct in assuming various factors such as regional variation. Alternatively, one may always appeal to the idiolect of a particular scribe.

What has just been said concerning *aw* is almost without a doubt true of *ay* as well. Since there are no orthographic representations of a preserved *ay*, monophthongization of this diphthong may have been more complete in Eblaite. Our experience with the treatment of diphthongs in other Semitic languages shows that what transpires with *aw* is generally true of *ay* and vice versa. When the one is preserved, the other is preserved; when the one is reduced, the other is reduced.

In short, in the debate over this issue, I am in agreement with Gelb's overall position that Eblaite does reflect the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift. Gelb put forward some important evidence from Amorite and from occasional texts in other Semitic languages to bolster his opinion concerning the possibility of this shift in Eblaite. In my opinion, the examples he presented are in themselves sufficient to favor Gelb's conclusion over Fronzaroli's. The present paper goes further, however, in that it presents still many more examples of the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift in Semitic languages. The general picture which will emerge is that this shift is more widespread than most scholars have imagined. Moreover, from a geographical standpoint, I will show that the cognate evidence makes Gelb's view concerning *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ at Ebla all the more probable.⁹

aw/ay > $\bar{a}$ in Other Semitic Languages

I will begin with a few general statements, including some very basic ones. The Semitic languages know two diphthongs: *aw* and *ay*. In classical Arabic and in several unique instances in the other Semitic languages, the diphthongs are preserved, that is, they are realized as /aw/ and /ay/. In most of the Semitic languages (including colloquial Arabic), however, monophthongization occurs, usually to $\hat{o}$ and $\hat{e}$ respectively, in Akkadian to $\bar{u}$ and $\bar{i}$ respectively.¹⁰ In rare instances, monophthongization occurs through the loss of the

⁹ My sense is that many Semitists have been unwilling to recognize contraction of the diphthongs to $\bar{a}$ in Eblaite because this type of simplification is considered atypical in Semitic linguistics. To demonstrate that such need not be the case, I append Excursus 3 which places this shift in a broader context, with examples from Indo-European and elsewhere.

¹⁰ For general orientation see S. Moscati, *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden, 1964) 54–55. To the discussion there, add the fact that in Hebrew (at least in Masoretic vocalization) usually an anaptyctic vowel is introduced, thus

consonantal force of *w* and *y*, the result being the remaining vowel *ā*. This is what occurs in Eblaite, as described above, and in other Semitic languages on various occasions, to be detailed above. My presentation of the evidence will follow the chronology of the known Semitic languages, except that the Hebrew material will be withheld until the end.

I begin the survey with Akkadian. The standard form of the prohibitive particle is *ay* (with the diphthong preserved) or *ē* (with the diphthong reduced).¹¹ Before vowels in Old Akkadian, the form *a* appears, for example, *a i-ti-in* = *a iddin* 'may he not give,'¹² presumably through some type of dissimilation. An exceptional case is *a dak-bi* = *ā taqbi* 'do not say', where *ay* > *ā* before a consonant. This passage occurs in a letter of the Akkad period (British Museum no. 121205 obv. 10), written by an individual named Ishkun-Dagan.¹³ The letter includes several other peculiarities, which led S. Smith to state, "The forms are used by a man whose name points to the Middle Euphrates area, judging from the element Dagan, and may be a local dialect."¹⁴ This is an important point to note, and I shall return to it later.

Next I turn to Amorite, which is the language utilized by Gelb to bolster his conclusion concerning the *aw/ay* > *ā* in Eblaite. The evidence is essentially of two types. First there is a series of PNs which are best understood as diminutives of the form *qutayl* which has shifted to *qutāl* in Amorite. Note the following examples: *Hu-za-lum* 'little gazelle', *Zu-na-bu-um* 'little tail', *Bu-qa-qu-um* 'little fly'.¹⁵ The same phenomenon may be witnessed in the common noun *urāšum* 'kid' (written *ú-ra-šum*), which is how this form appears in the Mari texts (contrast standard Akkadian *urīšum*).¹⁶ The former undoubtedly reflects the shift of *ay* > *ā* among the Amorite speakers at Mari, while the latter writing reflects the typical Akkadian shift of *ay* > *ī*.

**bayt* > *bayit* 'house'. For a detailed discussion of the diphthongs in first-millennium B.C.E. Canaanite and Aramaic, see W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia, 1985) 35-41.

¹¹ W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Rome, 1969), p. 14 / §11a, p. 106 / §81i.

¹² See I. J. Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian* (Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary 3; Chicago, 1957) 1-2; idem, *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar* (Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary 2; Chicago, 1961) 126; and von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, p. 106 / §81i.

¹³ S. Smith, "Notes on the Gutian Period," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1932: 295-301.

¹⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁵ Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization," 24. For further details see the entries in Gelb, *Computer-Aided Analysis of Amorite* (Assyriological Studies 21; Chicago, 1980).

¹⁶ Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization," 24; W. von Soden, *AHW* 3:1430b. See also I. J. Gelb *apud* S. Gevirtz, "On the Etymology of the Phoenician Particle 𐤍," *JNES* 16 (1957) 126 n. 22. Gevirtz also discussed the Assyrian negative particle *laššu*, and suggested that it may have arisen from *lā + išu* (thus von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, p. 18 / §17a, p. 161 / §111a). If this derivation is correct, then this may be another instance of *ai* (= *ay*) > *ā*, but this leaves the gemination of the *š* unexplained. It may be simpler to posit an unusual assimilation of the *y* to the following *š*, i.e., *lā + išu* > *laišu*/*layšu* > *laššu*.

The other place where reduction of the diphthong to $\bar{a}$ may be seen on a regular basis in Amorite is in the H stem imperfect of *verba primae w/y*; note the following list of examples:¹⁷

<i>ya-ši</i>	/yāšī ² /	'bring out'
<i>ya-bi-il</i>	/yābīl/	'bring'
<i>ya-di-iḥ</i>	/yādī ^c /	'make known'
<i>ya-pí-iḥ</i>	/yāpī ^c /	'shine'
<i>ya-ri-dV</i>	/yārīd/	'bring down'
<i>ya-si-rV</i>	/yāšīr/	'make straight'
<i>ya-ti-ir</i>	/yātīr/	'be excellent'

The next Semitic language to be treated is Ugaritic. Gelb very keenly put forward one example of the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift in this language,¹⁸ namely, the spelling of the personal name ^{md}IGI-at / ^cĀnat/ borne by an individual whose son Šidqana was the governor of the city of Giba^cla.¹⁹ Since the Sumerogram IGI means 'eye', it is clear that in this instance the Semitic equivalent must have been pronounced /^cān/ instead of the expected /^cēn/.

Another example from Ras Shamra is the case of the toponym written alphabetically *Yny* and syllabically either ^{uru}*Ya-na* or ^{uru}GEŠTIN-*na*.²⁰ (For a complete list of all the attestations of these various writings see Excursus 1.) Since the Sumerogram GEŠTIN means 'wine', one assumes that the local pronunciation of the Semitic word was /yān/ instead of the expected /yēn/.

Now it is obvious from many examples of Ras Shamra syllabic writings that at Ugarit the diphthongs normally contracted *aw* > $\hat{o}$ and *ay* > $\hat{e}$.²¹ Never-

¹⁷ I. J. Gelb, "La lingua degli Amoriti," *Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 8th series, 13/3-4 (1958), p. 160 / §3.3.8.1.5; and Gelb, *Computer-Aided Analysis of Amorite*, 21-22.

¹⁸ Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization," 24. See also F. Grøndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Rome, 1967) 111.

¹⁹ The text is RS 11.839, for which see C. Virolleaud, "Cinq tablettes accadiennes de Ras Shamra," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 38 (1941) 7-10; and J. Nougayrol, "Les textes accadiens," *PRU* 3 194-95. These two scholars read the signs ^{uru}KI-dU^{la} as either *Ašri-ba^cla* or *Ašar-ba^cala*, but this is a misreading. The proper reading is ^{uru}Gi₅-dU^{la} = Giba^cla. Elsewhere it occurs as ^{uru}Gi₅-bá-la (*PRU* 4 17.335:19) and ^{uru}Gi₅-ba-²-li-ya (*PRU* 6 79:4) (as a gentilic). This Šidqana of Giba^cla appears in *UT* 64:27 as *šdqn gb^cly*. For all of this information I am greatly indebted to Prof. Michael Astour, letter dated 1 June 1988.

²⁰ See M. C. Astour, "Ugarit and the Aegean," in *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. H. A. Hoffner (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973) 23 n. 76. The former writing is PI-na, but the PI sign can only be read as *Ya* in this case; see the next footnote.

²¹ D. Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis and Glossary of the Northwest Semitic Vocables in Akkadian Texts of the 15th-13th C.B.C. from Canaan and Syria* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984) 12-14. Incidentally, on p. 291, Sivan listed the aforementioned toponym as ^{uru}ye-na, but as far as I know there is no evidence for the PI sign to be read in this manner; see W. von Soden and W. Röllig, *Das akkadische Syllabar* (Rome, 1967) 43. J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta, 1987) 238, also prefers to read PI-na as *ye-na*. On a related matter, see additional discussion below, p. 111.

theless, from the two examples just cited, it seems that dialectally the diphthongs reduced to *ā*. Presumably this feature was native to certain regions in the kingdom of Ugarit, and it is worth an attempt to isolate these areas. Based on the mention of *Yny* = *Ya-na* in various topographical lists, M. C. Astour opines that it "was probably located in the Bargylus District, i.e., in the mountain range Ġebel Anṣariyeh."²² The place named Giba^cla is presumably to be identified with Greco-Roman Gabala, modern Ġebelah, a harbor town south of Latakia.²³

Debate still swirls concerning the character of the Minoan language. My own opinion, which has been expressed in print,²⁴ is to accept C. H. Gordon's interpretation of these inscriptions as Northwest Semitic.²⁵ Accordingly, the current discussion should include a piece of Minoan evidence. On a wine pithos found at Knossos is inscribed the two-syllable word *ya-ne*, clearly the Minoan word for 'wine'.²⁶ Not only does this form exhibit monophthongization of *ay* > *ā*, but perhaps not coincidentally it parallels precisely the syllabic writing *Ya-na* from Ras Shamra referred to above.²⁷

The Amarna letters furnish another example of the shift of *aw/ay* > *ā*, namely, *ya-šī-ni* 'let him [the king] bring me out' in EA 282:24, an H stem of the root *wš*². E. Ebeling attempted to explain this form through orthographic means, stating that apparently it was possible for the sign *ya* to express /yo/, that is to say, the *o* vowel could be expressed by either *u* signs or *a* signs.²⁸ D. Sivan has correctly stated, "[This] is difficult to accept," but added, "I can find no explanation for this phenomenon."²⁹ In light of the current article, I would explain this peculiarity in the Amarna letters as another example of monophthongization to *ā*.³⁰

The provenience of this Amarna letter cannot be determined with absolute certainty, but a general scholarly opinion has developed. EA 282 is an epistle sent from Šuwardata to the Pharaoh. Unfortunately, we do not know his capital, but two towns which are associated with him are Kelte (see EA 280:11) and Ḥarabuwa (see EA 281:13).³¹ The location of these cities is not certain,³²

²² M. C. Astour, letter dated 3 May 1988.

²³ M. C. Astour, letter dated 1 June 1988. More precisely Astour states that "in all probability the modern place only served as the harbor of the original city of Giba^cla, located at the large mound Tuwaini, 2 km inland."

²⁴ G. A. Rendsburg, "On Jan Best's 'Decipherment' of Minoan Linear A," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 14 (1982) 79–87.

²⁵ C. H. Gordon, *Evidence for the Minoan Language* (Ventnor, NJ, 1966).

²⁶ Ibid., 28–29. See also C. H. Gordon, "Introduction," in *Eblaitica* 1:5.

²⁷ C. H. Gordon, "The Decipherment of Minoan and Eteocretan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1975: 157–58.

²⁸ E. Ebeling, "Das Verbum der El-Amarna-Briefe," *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* 8 (1910) 42.

²⁹ Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis*, 175 and n. 8 (see also p. 12 n. 13).

³⁰ In a letter dated 16 October 1985, Sivan informs me that he finds my explanation of this form attractive.

³¹ J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (Leipzig, 1915), 2:1330.

³² Ibid., 1311–12, 1330–31.

and thus a certain amount of debate surrounding the home of Šuwardata has developed. Still, most scholars assume that Kelte is to be identified with biblical Keilah (Josh 15:44, 1 Sam 23:2, etc.), whose name lives on in two sites, Khirbet Qila and Tell Qila, about eight miles northwest of Hebron.³³ This being the case, it is probable that the region of Šuwardata "lay to the south of Jerusalem and east of Lachish."³⁴ Another opinion is that of Y. Aharoni who preferred a location in the Shephelah, with the most likely choice for the capital city being Gath.³⁵ In either case, the approximate location is the region where the territory of Judah and the Negev coincide, another point to which I shall return later.

Next is Aramaic, a language which provides a wide sampling of the shift of *aw/ay* > *ā*. There are, of course, many dialects of Aramaic. In none of them do the diphthongs regularly shift to *ā*, but there are a relatively high number of instances of this phenomenon spread throughout the Aramaic dialects. I begin with a particular example from Biblical Aramaic. The pronominal suffixes which are attached to plural nouns include the following forms with *Qere/Kethiv* variation:³⁶

<i>Kethiv</i>	<i>Qere</i>	
² <i>lhyk</i>	² <i>ēlāhāk</i>	'your (fem. sg.) gods'
² <i>lhyh</i>	² <i>ēlāhah</i>	'her gods'
² <i>lhynh</i>	² <i>ēlāhanā</i> ²	'our gods'

If these *Qere* forms are contrasted with not only their corresponding *Kethiv* forms, but with the forms of the other persons—²*ēlāhay* 'my gods', ²*ēlāhê(y)kōn* 'your (masc. pl.) gods', ²*ēlāhê(y)hōn* 'their (masc. pl.) gods', ²*ēlāhê(y)hēn* 'their (fem. pl.) gods', etc.—it is clear that the diphthong *ay* shifts to *ē* as expected in some cases, but to *ā* in other cases.³⁷

I turn now to the various dialects of Aramaic attested in the first millennium C.E. Here the place to begin is the language of Targum Onqelos, especially since W. R. Garr has recently written an exemplary article on the treatment of the diphthongs (especially *ay*) in this composition.³⁸ The text he utilized is A. Sperber's edition of Targum Onqelos with supralinear Babylonian vocaliza-

³³ P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (Garden City, NY, 1980) 370.

³⁴ E. F. Campbell, *The Chronology of the Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1964) 110.

³⁵ Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible* (Philadelphia, 1979) 174.

³⁶ F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden, 1974) 26.

³⁷ See also W. Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Cambridge, 1890) 90.

³⁸ W. R. Garr, "**ay* > *a* in Targum Onqelos," *JAOS* (forthcoming). I cannot express enough thanks to my good friend for permitting me to cite freely his unpublished manuscript. I should add that our common interest in the subject of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift is a pure coincidence. We came to many of the same conclusions by separate paths, and only through a brief conversation about our current research endeavors did we realize that we had been working on the same problem at the same time, albeit separated by three thousand miles.

tion,³⁹ and all forms cited below may be found therein.⁴⁰ In this text the *ay* either is preserved, shifts to *ê*, or shifts to *a*, depending on a variety of phonetic factors (accentuation, syllabification, etc.). Thus, just as in Biblical Aramaic described above, the contraction of the diphthongs to *ā* is not as pervasive as it is in Eblaite and Amorite. Nevertheless, the fact that it occurs consistently in certain environments indicates that Aramaic phonology incorporated this feature far more regularly than most Semitic languages.

Garr's rule for the shift of *ay* > *a* in Targum Onqelos is as follows: it occurs in tonic, medial, open syllables. In this way one can explain the following representative forms: (a) nouns with certain pronominal suffixes, for example, *bēnakî* 'your (fem. sing.) offspring' (Targum Onqelos Gen 16:10, 24:60), and *bē^cēnakî* 'in your (fem. sing.) eyes' (Targum Onqelos Gen 16:6); (b) dual nouns, for example, the numeral '200' **ma²tayna* > *mā²tan*; and (c) IIIy masculine plural participles, for example, **bā^cayna* > *bā^can* '(you) want' (Targum Onqelos Exod 10:11). (Note that although categories *b* and *c* evolve into final syllables, their reconstructed proto-forms meet the criteria described above, especially the criterion of a medial syllable.)

A form which Garr excludes, but which I would include in this survey, is the numeral *tēmānan* '80' (Targum Onqelos Gen 5:25), and its close relative in Mandaic, *tmanan*. The best explanation for these forms is a derivation from **temanayn*, or perhaps better **temanayna*, with the *ay* > *a* shift occurring.⁴¹

Syriac presents another example of the *ay* > *ā* shift in the word *ʔāk* 'how', to be contrasted with Jewish Aramaic *ʔêk*. These forms are derived from *ʔayk*, with the latter presenting the expected development of *ay* > *ê* and the former witnessing the unusual shift of *ay* > *ā*.⁴²

In Galilean Aramaic the shift of *ay* > *ā* occurs regularly in the second feminine singular forms of IIIy imperfect verbs, for example, *teb^cān* 'she will search' (one expects **teb^cayn* > *teb^cēn* or *teb^cin*). Reduction of the diphthong to *ā* (or *a*) can also be seen in various other forms, for example, the second feminine singular pronominal suffix *-aki* (alternating with *-ayki*).⁴³ Although his work was devoted mainly to the language of Targum Onqelos, Garr noted examples of this type from Targum Yonatan: *bēnakî* 'your (fem. sg.) sons' (Targum Yonatan Isa 62:5), *bē^cēnakî* 'in your (fem. sg.) eyes' (Targum Yonatan

³⁹ A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 1: *The Pentateuch according to Targum Onkelos* (Leiden, 1959).

⁴⁰ Common forms are cited without specific verses given; rarer forms are cited with sample or sole references.

⁴¹ Wright, *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, 90; and R. Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin, 1965) 121. Note, incidentally, that Macuch was keenly aware of monophthongization to *ā* in Aramaic, for he wrote that "the transition of *ay* to *ā*, frequent in other dialects, is rare in Mandaic."

⁴² D. Boyarin, "On the History of the Babylonian Jewish Aramaic Reading Traditions: The Reflexes of *a and *ā," *JNES* 37 (1978) 145 n. 24. The explanation offered by C. Brockelmann, *Syrische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1955) 80–81, seems highly improbable.

⁴³ G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig, 1927) 91.

1 Sam 1:23), etc. This alternation of *-aki* and *-ayki*, incidentally, affords a nice parallel to the aforementioned Syriac vocable ܐܐܟ ʾāk 'how'.

In Babylonian Aramaic the first common plural forms of IIIy perfect verbs also evince the *ay* > *ā* shift.⁴⁴ The form *ḥāzan* 'we saw' is to be contrasted with its Biblical Aramaic counterpart *ḥāzê(y)nā*² and other talmudic forms such as *ḥāzê(y)t* 'you (masc. sg.) saw', *ḥāzê(y)tû* 'you (masc. pl.) saw.' The base form is *CaCayn-*, which in Biblical Aramaic follows the typical development of *ay* > *ê*, but in Babylonian Aramaic the atypical development *ay* > *ā* (or *a*) obtains.

The modern Aramaic dialects are surprisingly void of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift.⁴⁵ The sole example which I am able to cite is the shift of *(h)wau* 'they are' > *wā* (as opposed to expected *wō*) in Neo-Syriac.⁴⁶

My survey of Aramaic ends here.⁴⁷ In sum, I state that throughout its diverse dialects, Aramaic includes a relatively large number of instances where the diphthong is reduced to *ā*. As far as I am aware, only Garr has attempted to explain systematically under what conditions a diphthong will contract to *ā*, and of course he has done so only for one text. It is clear that more work needs to be done along these lines, but it is also clear that Aramaic provides an excellent illustration of a Semitic language where the contraction of the diphthongs (or at least *ay*) to *ā* is amply attested.

I move now to Arabic. Examples such as **alay* > *alā* 'on', **ilay* > *ilā* 'to', and *matā* 'when' (compare Hebrew *māṭay*) readily come to mind. However, in all these cases, the diphthong occurs at the end of the word, and it is clear that a different phonological transformation is occurring in them.⁴⁸ Accordingly, I would omit them from this discussion. With these forms excluded, one can thus say that in classical Arabic the diphthongs *aw/ay* are preserved throughout.

⁴⁴ Y. Kara, *Kitve ha-Yad ha-Temaniyim shel ha-Talmud ha-Bavli: Meḥqarim Bi-Lshonam ha-ʿAramit* (Jerusalem, 1983), 126.

⁴⁵ Is it possible that the dominant colloquial Arabic monophthongizations of *aw* > *ô* and *ay* > *ê* have effected the phonology of the various Neo-Aramaic dialects? On Arabic influence on the Neo-Aramaic spoken in Aradhin in Iraqi Kurdistan, see G. Krotkoff, *A Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Kurdistan* (New Haven, 1982) 64–65. On the influence of the Arabic adstratum on the Aramaic of Maʿlūla, Ġubbʿadin, and Baḥʿa, see C. Correll, *Untersuchungen zur Syntax des neu-aramäischen Dialekts des Anti-Lebanon* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 44/4; Wiesbaden, 1978) 135–53. I am indebted to Prof. Robert Hoberman of the State University of New York at Stony Brook for this reference.

⁴⁶ R. Macuch and E. Panoussi, *Neusyrische Chrestomathie* (Wiesbaden, 1974) 45. I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Rudolf Macuch for his very detailed letter dated 17 May 1988, in which he points out this example.

⁴⁷ Garr's article contains copious bibliography which will refer the interested reader to additional literature on the subject. For the nonce I limit myself to repeating just one of these sources due to its importance and clarity: A. Dodi, "Li-Tṣurat ha-Poʿalim ha-ʿAlulim be-Targum ʾOnqelos," *Lešonenu* 47 (1983) 187–207, in particular pp. 203–4.

⁴⁸ M. Bravmann, *Studies in Semitic Philology* (Leiden, 1977) 103–4.

In colloquial Arabic, monophthongization usually occurs, with the shifts of *aw* > *ô* and *ay* > *ê*.⁴⁹ In certain areas in the Levant, however, the diphthong *ay* shifts to *ā*. This is attested to in Tripoli and Kfar-^cAbida in Lebanon, in several small towns in Syria, among the Bedouin and Druze of northern Israel, and among the Negev Bedouin.⁵⁰ In these places one finds words such as *bāt* 'house', *ān* 'spring', *hār* 'good', *yām* 'day', *šāh* 'chief', *zāt* 'olive', *gār* 'except', *ḡā^cān* 'hungry', etc.⁵¹ Note that, with the exception of Tripoli, this shift occurs mainly in very rural areas, a point to which I shall return below. Also, with the exception of the Negev Bedouin, the areas where *ay/aw* > *ā* occurs are northern Israel and the general region of the Syrian-Lebanese border, another point which will reverberate below.⁵²

Before I move to Hebrew, let me just comment that I have searched the South Semitic languages, namely Ethiopian and South Arabian, for examples of the passing of *aw/ay* to *ā*, but I have produced no evidence. I must conclude, not surprisingly in view of the conclusions to be reached in this paper, that this process simply did not occur in South Semitic.⁵³

⁴⁹ Although I disagree with its conclusions, an important article on this subject is C. A. Ferguson, "Two Problems in Arabic Phonology," *Word* 13 (1957) 460–78.

⁵⁰ G. Bergsträsser, "Sprachatlas von Syrien und Palästina," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 38 (1915) 193 and map 11 = pl. xxxi; M. Feghali, *Le parler de Kfar^cabîda (Liban-Syrie)* (Paris, 1919) 85; G. R. Driver, *A Grammar of the Colloquial Arabic of Syria and Palestine* (London, 1925) 21; J. Vilenčik, "Zur Behandlung der Diphthongen im Syroarabischen," *Le Monde Oriental* 31 (1937) 16–17; H. el-Hajjé, *Le parler arabe de Tripoli* (Paris, 1954) 23–24; H. Blanc, *Studies in North Palestinian Arabic* (Jerusalem, 1953) 46–47; H. Blanc, *The Arabic Dialect of the Negev Bedouins* (Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 4/7; Jerusalem, 1970) 119; H. Fleisch, *Études d'arabe dialectal* (Beirut, 1974) 133, 137, 227; Bravmann, *Studies in Semitic Philology*, 43; M. Barbot, *Évolution de l'arabe contemporain* (Paris, 1981) 499; and J. Rosenhouse, *The Bedouin Arabic Dialects* (Wiesbaden, 1984) 11.

⁵¹ Some record these forms with long vowel *a* and others record them with short vowel *a*; see the sources in the preceding note. (Actually el-Hajjé and Fleisch transliterate the reduced diphthong as *ā*. I assume they have in mind something very similar to if not the same vowel transliterated by others as *ā*.) This illustrates well the problem referred to above (n. 6) concerning the length of the *a* vowel resulting from monophthongization of *aw/ay*. Blanc, *Arabic Dialect of the Negev Bedouins*, 119, states that the sound is "*ā* when stressed and *a* when unstressed."

⁵² Actually, the contraction of the diphthong *ay* to *ā* is mentioned by several ancient sources for the Harith dialect of northern Yemen, and there are also some examples of this shift in modern Hadramaut Arabic and in the Arabic spoken by Yemenite Jews. For complete discussion and full citation of sources see C. Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian* (London, 1951) 65–67. I am indebted to E. Lipiński (personal letter dated 10 May 1988) for calling this to my attention. Within the context of the present article, as will become clear below, I am inclined to treat the presence of this shift in the aforementioned varieties of spoken Arabic as an isolated occurrence. Moreover, it appears to effect only the diphthong *ay* and not *aw*, and it also appears not to operate across the board, at least in the case of Jewish Yemenite Arabic. Another isolated instance is the Moroccan pronunciation of *ʔayš* 'what?' as *ʔāš/ʔaš*; see C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin, 1908), 1:191, and A. Willms, *Einführung in das Vulgararabische von Nordwestafrika* (Leiden, 1972) 49.

⁵³ See, for example, A. Dillmann, *Ethiopic Grammar* (London, 1907) 39–40.

An Interim Summary

With this survey of the Semitic languages (except Hebrew) completed, it is an opportune time to summarize the material garnered thus far and to arrive at an interim conclusion. The shift of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ appears regularly in Eblaite, Amorite, and the colloquial Arabic of various Levantine communities, next most commonly in Aramaic, in an isolated case in an Akkadian letter which appears to originate in the Middle Euphrates region, and in isolated instances in Ugaritic, Minoan, and Amarna.

I anticipate one of the conclusions of this paper with the following statement: apparently the shift *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ in the Semitic family of languages was native to northern Syria. This is the homeland of Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic, representing the known languages of the region in the third, second, and first millennia respectively. This will explain the case of *a dak-bi* in an Akkadian letter written by a man with a Dagan theophoric name, and it will also account for the Ugaritic examples (or at least the case of *Yny* = *Ya-na*). Above (p. 97) I quoted Astour's opinion that this town is located in the Ġebel Anṣariyeh mountain range, which places this town considerably inland; in fact it is approximately equidistant between Ugarit and Ebla. Even the scant Minoan evidence might fit into this picture, for there are some important linguistic features bridging Minoan and Aramaic.⁵⁴

In addition, the Syrian hypothesis will explain the persistence of the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift in the colloquial Arabic of the Levant. With the possible exception of the attestation of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ among the Negev Bedouin, the places where this shift occurs in Levantine Arabic are specifically those areas where Aramaic had at one time been the dominant language, namely, northern Israel and the general region of the Syrian-Lebanese border. Indeed H. el-Hajjé and H. Fleisch have already proposed that monophthongization to $\bar{a}$ is due to Aramaic influence.⁵⁵

Above I noted that with the exception of Tripoli, the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift occurs mainly in rural areas. There is every reason to believe that when Aramaic was replaced by Arabic in the first millennium C.E. it died out last in

⁵⁴ I have in mind the masculine plural ending *-in(a)* and several lexical items, e.g., *saym* 'silver'. See further C. H. Gordon, "*Ki-de-ma-wi-na* (HT 31:4)," *Kadmos* 8 (1969) 131-33; and R. J. Richard, "HT 31—An Interpretation," *Kadmos* 13 (1974) 6-8.

⁵⁵ El-Hajjé, *Le parler arabe de Tripoli*, 23-24; and Fleisch, *Études d'arabe dialectal*, 133, 237. El-Hajjé refers the reader to T. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1898) 34, for examples of this type of diphthong simplification in Aramaic. However, there is nothing in Nöldeke which is germane to the shift of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$. Indeed the only Syriac example is *ʔayk* > *ʔak* 'how' cited above. (My thanks to Prof. Hoberman for reviewing the pertinent literature with me and for confirming my suspicions about El-Hajjé's citation of Nöldeke.) El-Hajjé would better have cited other Aramaic dialects, e.g., Galilean Aramaic, for examples of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$. Nevertheless, his overall conclusion that reduction of the diphthongs to $\bar{a}$ (or $\bar{ä}$ [see above n. 51]) in Tripoli Lebanese Arabic is the result of Aramaic substratum is still undoubtedly correct.

the rural areas. This is a phenomenon well known in linguistic science,⁵⁶ and it is confirmed by the fact that the only place where (Western) Aramaic may still be heard today is in Ma^clūla, Ġubb^cadin, and Baḥ^ca in an isolated valley in Syria. And although the dialects of these villages do not contain the shift of *aw/ay* > *ā*, it is not improbable that other local varieties of Aramaic did include this type of monophthongization.⁵⁷ It is widely recognized that the Aramaic substratum has affected the spoken Arabic of Syria, for example, the use of the third common plural personal pronoun *henne* 'they', in contrast to other Arabic colloquials where gender neutralization occurs (in which case *hum* is used).⁵⁸ El-Hajjé and Fleisch are undoubtedly correct that the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift is part of this picture.

aw/ay > *ā* in Hebrew

I shall return to this theory later and will develop it further,⁵⁹ but with this background material I am now ready to turn to the Hebrew evidence.⁶⁰ Gordon has already put forward one example of a Hebrew diphthong shifting to *ā*, namely the case of *m^ʔn* (= *mē^ʔān*) 'whence' in the *Kethiv* of 2 Kgs 5:25 (the *Qere* is the standard *mē^ʔayin*).⁶¹ The Arabic cognate *ʔayna* 'where?' supplies the form with the diphthong preserved. But the picture can be expanded. There are other examples of the use of *ʔān* instead of *ʔayin*, namely 1 Sam 10:14 *ʔān ḥālaktem* 'where did you go?' and Job 8:2 *ʔad ʔān tēmallēl ʔēlleh* 'how long will you say such things?'

These three usages share something very important: none of them is in a Judahite context. The example from 2 Kings is spoken by Elisha, a prophet

⁵⁶ By comparison, note that when Coptic was replaced by Arabic as a living language in Egypt, it breathed its last breath in rural Upper Egypt, centuries after it died out in more urban Lower Egypt. For details see J. H. Greenberg, "Were There Egyptian Koines?" in *The Fergusonian Impact: In Honor of Charles A. Ferguson on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. J. A. Fishman et al. (Berlin, 1986), 1:273. In the European world note the persistence of Basque in rural Spain, Gaelic in the rural regions of Scotland, etc.

⁵⁷ Alternatively, see the discussion in n. 45 above.

⁵⁸ H. Grotzfeld, *Syrisch-arabische Grammatik* (Wiesbaden, 1965) 18. For additional material see J. Parisot, "Le dialecte de Ma^clūla," *Journal asiatique*, 9th series, 11 (1898) 246-49. I also owe this reference to Prof. Hoberman.

⁵⁹ I will also account for the two instances of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift which have not been explained, namely, the one Amarna occurrence and the speech of the Negev Bedouin (see below pp. 109-10).

⁶⁰ The following discussion is based on my firm acceptance of the conclusions reached by J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1968) 221; and S. Morag, "On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible," *JAOS* 94 (1974) 307-15. These two scholars have argued, in my opinion successfully, that the Masoretic vocalization of the Hebrew Bible is a reliable guide to the historical development of the Hebrew language. Accordingly, peculiarities are not to be considered automatically corrupt and then whimsically emended to conform with the norms of Hebrew grammar. Unusual forms can be explained when the factor of linguistic diversity is taken into consideration.

⁶¹ Gordon, "Introduction," in *Eblaitica* 1:5.

who hailed from northern Israel, probably Transjordan to be more specific.⁶² The example from 1 Samuel is spoken by Saul's uncle, presumably a Benjaminite. The passage from Job is in a speech of Bildad the Shuhite, though regardless of who was speaking the setting would be Transjordanian or North Arabian since all the characters hail from that region.

The overwhelming percentage of the Hebrew Bible was undoubtedly written in Jerusalem and/or by exiles from Jerusalem. Accordingly, what is called standard Biblical Hebrew is nothing more than the Jerusalem dialect of ancient Canaanite.⁶³ However, it has also been demonstrated that the Bible includes compositions which originate in areas other than Judah, and moreover that these chapters often witness a disproportionate number of grammatical forms divergent from standard Biblical Hebrew.⁶⁴ These atypical usages are to be explained as non-Judahite or non-Jerusalemite Hebrew. Over eighty-five years ago C. F. Burney showed this to be the case in the cycle of stories concerning the northern kingdom in 1 and 2 Kings,⁶⁵ with many instances occurring specifically in the Elisha episodes. The case of 2 Kgs 5:25 *Qere* may now be added to the evidence garnered by Burney.

The question of the language of Job is an extremely complicated one and this is clearly not the forum for a detailed investigation of this issue. Suffice it to say that all scholars recognize the fact that the book is laden with numerous Aramaic traits. My own explanation for these is as follows: it is probable that the dwellers of the Syrian Desert to the east of Canaan spoke a language closely resembling Aramaic. There is no inscriptional evidence to demonstrate this, but I think that a passage such as Isa 21:12, in which the prophet reproduces the speech of a watchman of Dumah, is most revealing. Here Isaiah utilizes several Aramaic grammatical features and lexemes in a type of code-switching. That is to say, although he is writing Hebrew, he has laced his verbiage in a conscious effort to depict the language of Dumah.⁶⁶ I believe that the same is true of the Book of Job. The numerous Aramaisms are to be explained by the poet's attempt to color his Hebrew to mimic the speech of an Uzite, Temanite, Shuhite, and Naamathite. Incidentally, here I should also mention that on other grounds D. N. Freedman has argued that the Book of Job is of northern provenance.⁶⁷ He is clearly on the right track.

⁶² G. A. Rendsburg, "A Reconstruction of Moabite-Israelite History," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 13 (1981) 67-73, esp. p. 71.

⁶³ Z. S. Harris, *Development of the Canaanite Dialects* (New Haven, 1939) 23.

⁶⁴ See most recently G. A. Rendsburg, "The Northern Origin of 'The Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23,1-7)," *Biblica* 69 (1988) 113-21, and the extensive bibliography cited there.

⁶⁵ C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford, 1903) 208-9.

⁶⁶ S. A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Panel Sessions, Hebrew and Aramaic Languages* (Jerusalem, 1988) 55. See also N. H. Tur-Sinai, "ʿAramit: Hashpaʿat ha-ʿAramit ʿal ha-ʿIvrit shel ha-Miqraʿ," *Ensiqlopediya Miqraʿit* (Jerusalem, 1965), 1:593-94.

⁶⁷ D. N. Freedman, "Orthographic Peculiarities in the Book of Job," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (W. F. Albright volume) (1969) 35-44.

As for the third instance of *ʔān*, in the mouth of Saul's uncle, while it is true that Benjamin is not very far from Judah and Jerusalem, one must still contend with the fact that the stories concerning Saul include several grammatical peculiarities which are best explained as northern features. Here I would note the use of *meh* 'what?' before non-laryngeal consonants in 1 Sam 15:14, 29:4, and the non-elision of the definite article after the prefixed preposition in 1 Sam 13:21 *lehaqqardummîm* 'for the axes'.⁶⁸ In light of all this, the conclusion to be reached is that *ʔān* in particular and the shift of *aw/ay* > *ā* generally is a feature of northern Hebrew. As such, it links Israelian Hebrew⁶⁹ with Aramaic, and can thus be added to a relatively long list of isoglosses bridging the two speech communities.⁷⁰

I also need to say a word about *lēʔān* 'whither', a form which occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew and which evinces the same *ay* > *ā* shift. All are agreed that the language of the Mishnah is a spoken variety of Hebrew which continues the colloquial speech of biblical times. But there is also some evidence which may allow refinement of that statement, in that many Mishnaic Hebrew forms seem to be of northern origin. The demonstrative pronoun *zô* and the relative pronoun *še* are two clear examples of this. Accordingly, one may wish to add *lēʔān* to this group of data and assume that its emergence in Mishnaic Hebrew is due to its having been a feature of northern spoken Hebrew in biblical times.⁷¹ (On the biblical form *ʔānāh* 'whither', which also exhibits reduction of the diphthong to *ā*, see p. 112 below.)

The conclusion that the *ay/aw* > *ā* shift was characteristic of northern Hebrew (but not necessarily of Judahite Hebrew) is borne out by other attestations of the phenomenon in the Bible. An interesting illustration is the name of a certain constellation in the Book of Job, called *ʕāš* in Job 9:9 but *ʕayiš* in Job 38:32. The exact identification of this group of stars has been the subject of some debate by scholars, but I follow the majority in calling it Ursa

⁶⁸ See further G. A. Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (ed. W. Bodine; Winona Lake, IN, forthcoming); and Rendsburg, "Northern Origin," 116.

⁶⁹ For the term "Israelian," see H. L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York, 1982).

⁷⁰ On this issue see C. Rabin, "The Emergence of Classical Hebrew," in *The Age of the Monarchies: Culture and Society*, ed. A. Malamat (World History of the Jewish People 4/2; Jerusalem, 1979) 71–78, 293–95; and C. F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (London, 1918) 171–76.

⁷¹ The question of the exact antecedents of Mishnaic Hebrew has never been fully investigated, apart from the general conclusion that it arose out of the spoken Hebrew in biblical times. (On this see now G. A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* [Ann Arbor, MI, forthcoming].) The only statement regarding the possible northern origins of Mishnaic Hebrew of which I am aware is that of C. Rabin, "Hebrew," in *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 6: *Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (The Hague, 1970) 323, who referred to various forms which "may be due to a northern origin of the parent dialects of Mishnaic Hebrew." On the other hand, see more recently C. Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen/Philadelphia, 1976), 2:1015: "The basis of mishnaic Hebrew . . . was the spoken language of the Judaeen population."

Major.⁷² G. R. Driver connected this word with Arabic *ḡayl* 'rain',⁷³ for reasons which I do not find particularly sound. Nevertheless, I accept his identification of Hebrew *ʿayiš/ʿāš* and Arabic *ḡayl*, but for different reasons altogether. I would rather appeal to the demonstrated connection between rain and the stars among people of antiquity, as evidenced in passages such as Judg 5:20 and *UT* *ʿnt:ii:41*, Greek and Roman texts, and early Arab beliefs.⁷⁴

Thus, based on both the Arabic cognate and on inner-Hebrew analysis, this term must have included the diphthong *ay*. This phoneme was retained with the help of an anaptyctic vowel in the case of *ʿayiš*, but it shifted to *ā* in the case of *ʿāš*. The distribution of these two forms is of interest. The form *ʿāš* is spoken by Job in one of his speeches during the dialogue, and the form *ʿayiš* is spoken by God during his majestic challenge to Job at book's end. One wonders if this is not coincidental and rather deliberate. That is to say, the poet has placed the dialectal form in the mouth of Job, as a way of code-switching once more, to highlight the regional idiom of Job and his friends, but God speaks standard (=Judahite) Hebrew in his address. I cannot claim to have done an exhaustive study of this issue, but I will state that a first reading of God's speeches in chaps. 38–41 indicates that they are remarkably free of grammatical peculiarities, especially when compared with the numerous difficulties of the bulk of the Book of Job.

My next example is the word *yānî* in Ps 141:5. This is an old crux. The usual interpretation is a Hiphʿil jussive of the root *nw*⁷⁵ 'hinder, restrain', with the ²*aleph* not written.⁷⁵ But most scholars recognize that this hardly solves this difficult passage. M. Bittenweiser's statement that "the third stich of verse 5 of Psalm 141 is so hopelessly corrupt that it does not admit of either translation or emendation"⁷⁶ is probably more representative of the scholarly literature on the subject. I cannot solve all the problems of this verse,⁷⁷ but I do propose to read *yānî* as 'my wine' reflecting monophthongization of *ay* > *ā*. Note that this vocable is parallel to *šemen* 'oil', as is also the case in Amos 6:6; Mic 6:15; Ps 104:15; Cant 1:2–3, 4:10. The nouns *yayin* and *šemen* appear as a syndetic parataxis in Prov 21:17 and 2 Chr 11:11, and they are also collocated

⁷² M. H. Pope, *Job* (Garden City, NY, 1973) 68, 71; and R. Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York, 1978) 96, 104.

⁷³ G. R. Driver, "Two Astronomical Passages in the Old Testament," *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1956) 2.

⁷⁴ T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (New York, 1961) 237; and J. Blenkinsopp, "Ballad Style and Psalm Style in the Song of Deborah: A Discussion," *Biblica* 42 (1961) 73.

⁷⁵ C. A. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh, 1907), 1:510; F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1907) 626; L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Leiden, 1958) 600.

⁷⁶ M. Bittenweiser, *The Psalms* (Chicago, 1938) 738.

⁷⁷ A potential problem is the use of the negative particle ²*al* before a substantive. This particle almost always appears only before various verbal forms. Nevertheless, there are examples in the Bible, especially in poetry, of ²*al* occurring before nouns. A celebrated example is 2 Sam 1:21 ²*al ṭal wē²al māṭār* 'no dew and no rain'.

in Deut 28:39–40. In Ugaritic poetry *yn* and *šmn* are parallel in *UT* 126:iii:15–16, 128:iv:4–5, 128:iv:15–16.⁷⁸ Accordingly, *yayin* and *šemen* may be considered a parallel word pair, with a further example of this pairing in Ps 141:5.

Psalm 141 is perhaps the best example in the entire Book of Psalms whose northern provenience may be clearly established on linguistic grounds. M. Dahood noted that this poem uses *dal* 'door' (v. 3), *ʔišīm* 'men' (v. 4), and *man^cammêhem* 'their delicacies' (v. 4), which are all rare or unique in Hebrew but are common or standard in Phoenician.⁷⁹ In addition, the negative particle *bal* is used in v. 4, and this too is the standard Phoenician form. Furthermore, elsewhere I have demonstrated that the root *lhm* 'eat' is characteristic of northern Hebrew compositions but is wanting in demonstrably Judahite works.⁸⁰ All of this goes to show that Psalm 141 is an Israelian poem and thus it is not surprising to find *yānî* 'my wine', instead of the expected standard form *yēnî*.

Incidentally, the reading *yn* on the Samaria ostraca has always been taken by scholars as proof of monophthongization in northern Hebrew.⁸¹ Obviously this is correct, but the assumption that it must be read *yēn* may have to be rethought in light of the fact that *yān* actually occurs in an Israelian psalm in the biblical canon. A more neutral approach on this issue is that of H. Bauer and P. Leander, who noted that the spelling *qṣ* in the Gezer Calendar, line 7, "ist zweideutig: man lese entweder *qāṣ*, wie *𐤒𐤕*, oder *qēṣ*."⁸² On the other hand, the prophet's wordplay in Amos 8:2 between *qayis* 'summer-fruit' and *qēṣ* 'end' works even better if one assumes that the former was pronounced *qēṣ* with monophthongization of *ay* > *ē*.⁸³ Thus one probably should conclude that in certain locales in the north the shift of *ay* > *ē* took place while in other places the shift of *ay* > *ā* occurred. Needless to say, we lack sufficient evidence at present to draw the isoglotic lines distinguishing the two pronunciations.

I proceed now to the evidence of place-names. The Bible records several variants which are germane to this discussion. In Gen 38:14, 21 the action occurs at a place called *ēnayim*. In Josh 15:34 this place is called *ēnām*, and

⁷⁸ See M. Dahood, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs," in *Ras Shamra Parallels*, ed. L. R. Fisher (Rome, 1972), 1:210; and Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Languages* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984) 367–68.

⁷⁹ M. Dahood, *Psalms III* (Garden City, NY) 309–11.

⁸⁰ Rendsburg, "Northern Origin," 117 and n. 32.

⁸¹ See, for example, J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 1: *Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1971) 8; and Z. Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs* (Cambridge, MA, 1980) 13.

⁸² H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Halle, 1922) 202.

⁸³ Although many scholars have realized that the words in Amos's pun would have been spelled the same in a north Israelite context, I am not sure that anyone has ever come to the obvious conclusion that they would have been pronounced very similarly if not exactly alike. For discussion of the verse see H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia, 1977) 317 n. d, and the literature cited there.

the Septuagint has either *Aynan* or *Ainan* in Genesis 38,⁸⁴ forms which reflect *ay* > *ā*.⁸⁵ (In Joshua 15 the Septuagint reads something quite dissimilar: *Maiani*.) This town is to be located in the Shephelah, which runs counter to the northern theory, but below (pp. 109–10) I shall deal with this matter further.

In Gen 37:17 while searching for his brothers Joseph is told by an anonymous individual that they went *dōtāynāh*, and then the narrator informs the reader that Joseph caught up with them in *dōtān*.⁸⁶ The latter form occurs again in 2 Kgs 6:13, which, by the way, is in the Elisha cycle. This locale is in northern Israel, in the territory of Ephraim to the north of Shechem and Samaria.⁸⁷

Another toponym which evinces reduction of the diphthong to *ā* is *qiryātayim*, which actually is the name of two separate cities. One of these is a town in the territory of Naphtali, mentioned in 1 Chr 6:61. In Josh 21:32, however, the variant *qartān* occurs.⁸⁸ The Septuagint transcriptions are similar: *Kariathaim* in Chronicles and *Karthan* (Lucianic) in Joshua. The form in Joshua is of interest for several reasons. First, the main part of the word *qart*-reflects Phoenician pronunciation,⁸⁹ which is not surprising since Naphtali borders on Phoenicia. The suffix *-ān* represents the shift of the diphthong *ay* > *ā*, a point which has been made by several scholars in the past.⁹⁰

The better known *qiryātayim* is in the territory of Reuben, mentioned in Gen 14:5; Num 32:37; Josh 13:19; Jer 48:1, 23; Ezek 25:9.⁹¹ This last attestation has a *Kethiv* and a *Qere*, the former being *qrytmh* and the latter *qiryātaymāh*. Based on the analogies of *ēnayim*/*ēnām*, *dōtāynāh*/*dōtān*, and *qiryātayim*/*qartān*, I would be inclined to vocalize the *Kethiv* in Ezek 25:9 as *qiryātām*.⁹² In the Mesha Stele, line 10, the form *qrytn* occurs. In light of the evidence adduced thus far, it is possible that this form is to be pronounced with *-ān*. Similar instances, although no proof may be adduced in either direction, are Jer 48:22 *bēt diblātāyīm* versus Mesha Stele, line 30 *bt dbltn*, and Jer 48:34

⁸⁴ On the separate issue of final *n* in the Septuagint versus final *m* in the Masoretic Text, see E. Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan, 1976) 58–67; and E. Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem, 1982) 121–22.

⁸⁵ This example of the *ay* > *ā* shift has been noted previously by H. Bauer, "Die hebräischen 'Duale' *ʿrbyim* und *ʿshrym*," *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 17 (1914) 7–8; and was also incorporated into Bauer and Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache*, 202.

⁸⁶ This example was noted by Bauer, "Die hebräischen 'Duale,'" 7; and R. Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making* (New York, 1971) 100.

⁸⁷ B. Mazar, "Dotayin, Dotan," *Ensiqlopediya Miqraʿit* (Jerusalem, 1954), 2:772–73.

⁸⁸ On the contrast between final *m* and final *n* in these two forms, see the references in n. 84 above.

⁸⁹ See the Greek and Assyrian transcriptions of Phoenician place-names with this element listed by Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, 1936) 144. The most celebrated example, of course, is the Punic capital Carthage.

⁹⁰ Gordis, *Biblical Text in the Making*, 100; and D. Amir, "Qiryatayim, Qartan," *Ensiqlopediya Miqraʿit* (Jerusalem, 1976), 7:273.

⁹¹ B. Oded, "Qiryatayim," *Ensiqlopediya Miqraʿit* (Jerusalem, 1976), 7:272–73.

⁹² See Gordis, *Biblical Text in the Making*, 100.

hōrōnayim versus Mesha Stele, line 31 *hwrnn*.⁹³ (On the situation in Moabite, see Excursus 2.)

The last example of a place-name which exhibits the *ay* > *ā* shift is 2 Sam 8:8 *bērōtay* and Ezek 47:16 *bērōtāh*, an Aramean city belonging to Hadadezer king of Zobah. It is generally identified with Bereitan, in the Beqa^c south of Baalbek.⁹⁴ This name would also preserve a shift of *ay* > *ā*, with the addition of a suffixed *-n*. Moreover, this is once more in Aramean territory. It may even be possible that Ezekiel in Aramaic-speaking Babylon and the modern name reflect the proper Aramaic pronunciation with *ay* > *ā*, whereas the Jerusalemite scribe responsible for 2 Samuel utilized the typical Hebrew pronunciation with the diphthong *ay* preserved in final position.

To summarize this portion of my presentation, it is to be emphasized that the biblical toponyms which reflect reduction of the diphthong to *ā* are, with one exception, in non-Judahite territory. Thus, Dotan/Dotayin is in Ephraim, Qartan/Qiryatayim is in Naphtali, Qiryatam/Qiryatayim is in Reuben or Moab, and Berotah/Berotay is in Aram. The one exception, Enam/Enayim, is technically in Judah, but it is in a remote corner of the territory, in the Shephelah to the west of the Judean hill country.

Next I would like to present the evidence from a personal name in the Bible, although it does not necessarily support my hypothesis for the shift of *aw/ay* > *ā* being a characteristic of Israelian Hebrew as opposed to Judahite Hebrew. The name I refer to is that of *ʾābîgayil* 'Abigail', wife of Nabal and David, which in one instance in 1 Sam 25:32 appears as *ʾābîgal* and in another instance in 2 Sam 3:3 *Kethiv* appears as *ʾbygl*.⁹⁵ Interestingly, another 'Abigail' appears in 2 Sam 17:25, where she must be the sister of David. There the form is also *ʾābîgal*.⁹⁶ These two individuals⁹⁷ must both be Judahites, so to some extent this upsets my hypothesis that the shift of *ay/aw* > *ā* was a feature of only northern Hebrew.

However, the following should be noted. Abigail wife of Nabal the Carmelite hails from a place which can be identified with modern Tell el-Kirmil, about seven miles south of Hebron.⁹⁸ Accordingly, one may wish to establish another small pocket where reduction of the diphthongs to *ā* occurred, namely, the area where the territory of Judah and the northern Negev coincide.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ M. Avi-Yonah, "Berotah, Berotay," *Ensiqlopediya Miqrāʾit* (Jerusalem, 1954), 2:341; Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 73, 431; and P. K. McCarter, *II Samuel* (Garden City, NY, 1984) 250.

⁹⁵ Gordis, *Biblical Text in the Making*, 100.

⁹⁶ The following statement by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 392, runs counter to the evidence compiled in the present article: "The spelling of MT, *ʾbygl* (vocalized *ʾābîgal*, 'Abigal,' by the Masoretes), reflects a pronunciation with contraction of the diphthong, *-gêl*." As stated earlier (n. 60), studies such as those by Barr and Morag have shown that the Masoretic vocalization is historically valid and cannot be dismissed in such a glib manner.

⁹⁷ Or are they one and the same? See J. D. Levenson and B. Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 511.

⁹⁸ McCarter, *I Samuel*, 267.

In this general region one may place the sole Amarna example, the personal name Abigail/Abigal, and the place-name Enaim/Enam, and one may thus explain the continuation of this phenomenon among the Negev Bedouin to the present.⁹⁹

Because of various complications, it is with some hesitation that I raise the issue of the name of Sarai/Sarah, but since it may evince reduction of the diphthong to $\bar{a}$, I would be remiss if reference to this name were not made. The ending *-ay* is apparently an old Canaanite suffix for feminine names. This can be illustrated by various Ugaritic feminine personal names: *pdry*, *ṭly*, and *arṣy*, the three daughters of Baal, *ḥry* the wife of Kret, *dnty* the wife of Danel, etc.¹⁰⁰ The usual opinion concerning the relationship of the names Sarai and Sarah is illustrated by the following statement by E. A. Speiser: "Linguistically, *šārā* embodies the common feminine ending (Sem. **-at*), whereas *šāray* preserves an old and specialized feminine form."¹⁰¹

In light of the evidence put forward in the present article, I wonder if another factor is not at work here, namely the shift of *ay* > $\bar{a}$. To bolster this suggestion, note that the name change of Abram to Abraham involves transforming a typical Canaanite construction into one which resembles an Aramaic one. Speiser himself noted this: "Linguistically, the medial *-ha-* is a secondary extension in a manner common in Aramaic."¹⁰² Compare, for example, the hollow roots Hebrew *bwš* = Aramaic *bht* 'ashamed', Hebrew *rwš* = Aramaic *rhṭ* 'run', etc. By analogy, Abram reflects Hebrew *rwm* and Abraham reflects Aramaic *rhṃ*. Perhaps, then, a parallel development should be postulated: just as Abraham's new name reflects a shift of Canaanite form to Aramaic form, so does Sarah's. I have already discussed the Aramaic evidence and other data from Syria which demonstrate that *ay* > $\bar{a}$ was at home in that region. Thus *šāray* is to *šārāh* as *ʔabrām* is to *ʔabrāhām*. Now I have no explanation as to why the author of the Genesis material should wish to indicate a shift in this direction (especially since a shift in the other direction might be more expected).¹⁰³ But the fact remains that this is exactly what has been done in the case of Abram/Abraham, so it is not too bold a suggestion that such is also the case with Sarai/Sarah.

There is still another Israelite personal name which requires discussion. The northern king Jehoash (800–784)¹⁰⁴ appears in the Bible as either *yěhōʔāš*

⁹⁹ Of course Abigail/Abigal the sister of David, who presumably would hail from Bethlehem, would be a bit too far north. On the other hand, Bethlehem is still desert fringe, and/or one can appeal to the suggestion of Levenson and Halpern (n. 97 above) that the two Abigails are actually one and the same woman. I plan to return to this latter point in a future article.

¹⁰⁰ UT 62.

¹⁰¹ E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY, 1964) 125.

¹⁰² Ibid., 124.

¹⁰³ Unless, of course, these name changes are part of the anti-Canaanite polemic of virtually all biblical literature.

¹⁰⁴ I follow the chronology of H. Tadmor, "Kronologiyah," *Enṣiqlopediya Miqraʔit* (Jerusalem, 1962), 4:301–2.

(2 Kgs 13:10, etc.) or $y\hat{o}^{\text{2}}\bar{a}\check{s}$ (2 Kgs 13:9, etc.). The best explanation for the dichotomy of these two names (and all others with the same variation) is an original **yahu-*, which becomes *yěhō-* in Masoretic Hebrew, versus **yahu* > **yau* (with elision of the *he*) > $y\hat{o}$ (with monophthongization to $\hat{o}$). The name of king Jehoash/Joash appears in Assyrian transcription in a stela of Adad-Nirari III (810–783)¹⁰⁵ found at Tell al-Rimah as *Ia-²a-su*.¹⁰⁶ Scholars have debated how to explain this form, in particular the question of what vowel is represented in the first syllable IA.¹⁰⁷

A. Cody offered the following view. “It must be an open back vowel of some sort, and the fact that it results from a contraction of *-aw* suggests that it approaches the sound [ɔ] found in English as the *o* in ‘orb’ or the *a* in ‘all’.”¹⁰⁸ To defend his suggestion, Cody pointed to a similar variation in the cuneiform spellings of the name Moab, which appears sometimes as *Mu-²a-a-ba*, etc., and sometimes as *Ma-²a-ab*, etc. If anything, however, these Assyrian transcriptions may point to a shift of *aw* > *ā* in Moabite as well, a point to be taken up below in Excursus 2.

A. Malamat offered the view that the IA sign in *IA-²a-su* should be assigned the value *iu*, which would thus yield a reading *Iu-²a-su*, the expected Assyrian equivalent of $y\hat{o}^{\text{2}}\bar{a}\check{s}$.¹⁰⁹ Malamat claimed that IA bears this value in Akkadian, including various Neo-Assyrian examples. However, what he failed to notice is that IA can be read as *iu* only in medial and final position. If an Akkadian scribe wished to indicate *iu* in initial position he used the PI sign (transliterated *iú*). Or in other words, when the IA sign occurs in word-initial position, it can only be read *ia*.¹¹⁰ Accordingly, the only possible reading for *IA-²a-su* is *Ia-²a-su*, corresponding to the shorter biblical variant Joash.

In light of this, I would propose the Assyrian form *Ia-²a-su* = Joash as additional evidence for the shift of *aw* > *ā*. Jehoash/Joash was a northern king, and one will have to assume that the Assyrian scribe of the Tell al-Rimah stele

¹⁰⁵ J. A. Brinkman, “Appendix: Mesopotamian Chronology of the Historical Period,” in A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1977) 347.

¹⁰⁶ For the complete inscription see S. Page, “A Stela of Adad-Nirari III and Nergal-Ereš from Tell al Rimah,” *Iraq* 30 (1968) 139–53.

¹⁰⁷ The use of an *s* sign (SU) to represent the *šin* in the Hebrew royal name is not problematic. This corresponds to the well-known rule whereby Assyrian *s* signs regularly represent West Semitic *š* and vice versa. See H. Tadmor, “The Campaign of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 12 (1958) 39–40; Page, “Stela of Adad-Nirari III,” 148; and A. Millard, “Assyrian Royal Names in Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 21 (1976) 4.

¹⁰⁸ A. Cody, “A New Inscription from Tell al-Rimah and King Jehoash of Israel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 339.

¹⁰⁹ A. Malamat, “On the Akkadian Transcription of the Name of King Joash,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 204 (1971) 39.

¹¹⁰ For discussion and examples of the foregoing, see von Soden and Röllig, *Das akkadische Syllabar*, 19, 43; I. J. Gelb, “Comments on the Akkadian Syllabary,” *Orientalia* 39 (1970) 536–40; and E. Reiner, “The Phonological Interpretation of a Subsystem in the Akkadian Syllabary,” in *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim* (Chicago, 1964) 174.

heard the name of this monarch from an Israelian individual whose speech contained the dialectal feature of *aw/ay* > *ā*.

Thus far I have been emphasizing those examples of Hebrew vocables which indicate the reduction of the diphthong to *ā* to be characteristic of regional variation, most prominently in the north but with a small pocket in the south also. I should mention, however, that there are also some examples of *aw/ay* > *ā* which appear in words distributed throughout the Bible. One such example was alluded to earlier, the word *ʔānāh* 'whither'. One may posit a development of this word from dialectal *ʔān* (versus standard *ʔayin/ʔēn*) in northern Israel, after which it spread throughout the country including Judah. In this one may explain its presence throughout all strata of Biblical Hebrew. There are other examples of such vocables and formations in Biblical Hebrew which apparently originated in the north but which spread to Judah, for example, segolates of the type *dēbaš* 'honey', *sēbak* 'thicket', etc.¹¹¹

Another instance of a common word which exhibits reduction of the diphthong to *ā* is the word *raq* 'only, solely', which was proposed by Meir Bravmann several decades ago.¹¹² His argument goes as follows. In modern Omani Arabic the word *raiq* > *rēq* means both 'empty' and 'only'. In Hebrew **raiq* is the original form as well, but it develops in different ways to yield two separate words. Through the standard shift of *ay* > *ē* the form *rēq* 'empty' results; via the atypical shift of *ay* > *ā* (or *a*) the form *raq* 'only, solely' results. The former presumably occurred in southern Judah, while the latter arose in northern Israel. Through a mixing of the two dialects, a phenomenon well established in linguistic science,¹¹³ the two forms interpenetrated throughout Israelian and Judahite speech communities, with the result being that the language which we call Biblical Hebrew utilizes the two through and through.

My last illustrations from Hebrew are the third masculine plural and third feminine plural pronominal suffixes *-ām* and *-ān*, respectively. More than a century ago B. Stade recognized that these suffixes must originate in **-ahim* and **-ahin*, that is, an accusative ending and the proto-form of the pronominal suffix. Through elision of the *he*, these forms become **-aim* (**-aym*) and **-ain* (**-ayn*). Monophthongization of *ay* > *ā* then yielded the current forms *-ām* and *-ān*.¹¹⁴ Again, these suffixes become standard in Hebrew, so they cannot be adduced as evidence for the northern Hebrew hypothesis. But presumably they originate in a Hebrew regional dialect which did contract the diphthong to *ā*, after which time the suffixes spread to other Hebrew-speaking areas.

¹¹¹ J. L. Malone, "Wave Theory, Rule Ordering, and Hebrew-Aramaic Segolation," *JAOS* 91 (1971) 56. I am grateful to Prof. Joseph Malone for bringing this important article to my attention.

¹¹² Bravmann, *Studies in Semitic Philology*, 548.

¹¹³ See E. H. Sturtevant, *An Introduction to Linguistic Science* (New Haven, 1947) 82–83.

¹¹⁴ B. Stade, *Lehrbuch der hebräischen Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1879) 84, 94. (Stade similarly explained third masculine singular *-aw*, but I would not include this form.) See also Bauer, "Die hebräischen 'Duale.'"

As far as I am aware, this exhausts the examples of *aw/ay* > *ā* in the Hebrew vocabulary.¹¹⁵ I trust that as a whole they form a sufficient body of evidence to prove that reduction of the diphthong to *ā* occurred in ancient Hebrew. The data are not large in number, but I believe that these examples also demonstrate that this shift was characteristic of northern Hebrew and as such form an important isogloss with speech communities to the northeast of Israel. The home of this shift, as noted above, is clearly Syria, with Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic all exhibiting monophthongization to *ā*. From there it spread into neighboring areas, as reflected by its presence in northern Hebrew in ancient times and in the colloquial Arabic of various communities in Syria-Lebanon in modern times.

A Syrian Sprachbund

I have just mentioned Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic in one breath. As I noted earlier, these represent the three known languages of Syria during the third, second, and first millennia B.C.E. Is the presence of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift in these three languages simply coincidental? Or is this fact to be seen as part of a larger picture which permits a general conclusion regarding the character of Eblaite and the later attested tongues Amorite and Aramaic? In these days of the infancy of Eblaite studies, it may be premature to answer this question, but as a working hypothesis I would like to propose that Eblaite, Amorite, Aramaic form a *Sprachbund*, which I call Syrian Semitic.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Three other words which might be explained in this manner are *qešet* 'bow', the plural *yāmîm* 'days', and the plural *bāttîm* 'houses'. (1) Comparison with Arabic *qaws* suggests that the Hebrew *qešet* is to be explained as **qawš* > **qaš* (with the diphthong shift *aw* > *a*) > **qašt* (with the addition of the feminine *-t* > *qešet* (with segolation)). However, this example is complicated by the fact that the cognates are Ethiopic *qast*, Aramaic *qašta*, Akkadian *qaštu*. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, 190, explained this instance by appealing to a reduction of *aw* > *ā* already in Proto-Semitic times. But it is probably simpler to assume the development of a secondary diphthong in the Arabic cognate, a phenomenon known from elsewhere in Semitic; see Moscati, *Comparative Grammar*, 55. I recognize, however, that this does not solve the problem as to why the Arabic form, unlike the other Semitic etyma, lacks the ending *-t*. (2) Some scholars have assumed a doublet in Proto-Semitic or in Proto-Hebrew **yawm* and **yam* to account for the assumed difficulty represented by singular *yôm* 'day' and plural *yāmîm* 'days', with the possibility that either the former developed from the latter or that the latter developed from the former. For brief discussion and bibliography see Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs*, 20–21 and nn. 19–21. It seems much simpler, however, to defer to the theory of internal plurals with an *a* vowel, to which the *-îm* ending was added secondarily by analogy; see J. H. Greenberg, "Internal *a*-Plurals in Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic)," in *Afrikanistische Studien*, ed. J. Lukas (Berlin, 1955) 198–204. (3) What has just been said for *yôm/yāmîm* holds as well for the otherwise unique pair singular *bayit* 'house' and plural *bāttîm* 'houses'. This problem, however, is further complicated by the presence of the *dagesh* in the *taw* and by the Ugaritic plural *bhtim*. In sum, none of the forms discussed in this footnote can be used as evidence for the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift in Hebrew.

¹¹⁶ Semitists generally are not in the habit of reckoning with *Sprachbund* relationships. For an exception see Krotkoff, *Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Kurdistan*, 63.

It is an oversimplification to state that Gelb called attention to a number of nexuses between Eblaite and Amorite,¹¹⁷ and that M. Noth¹¹⁸ and various other scholars have pushed for a connection between Amorite and Aramaic,¹¹⁹ and thus through the law of transitivity one may establish an Eblaite-Amorite-Aramaic continuum. Obviously, Eblaite is not identical to Amorite and Amorite is not identical to Aramaic, but there are a number of features which these languages share. It is worth quoting G. Garbini on this issue: "The linguistic milieu in which the Amorite innovations occurred could not have been any other than the Eblaite one. . . . Structurally Amorite is a new language, of course, but historically it is only a kind of modernization of a language of Eblaite type."¹²⁰

Gelb has conveniently compiled the shared features of Eblaite and Amorite, and earlier work on Amorite and Aramaic connections is readily available, so I will forego any discussion of these relationships. Instead, I would like to discuss the characteristics common to Eblaite and Aramaic.¹²¹ Notwithstanding the fact that about two-and-a-half millennia separate the attestations of these two languages, and notwithstanding the fact that we are leaping over the intervening Amorite material, I am still able to present an interesting list of grammatical points shared by third- and first- millennium Syrian Semitic.¹²²

1. Eblaite and Aramaic both lack an N stem in the verb, a point made by Diakonoff.¹²³
2. The passive participle in Eblaite is apparently of the type *qatīlu*. E. Lipiński has pointed to the variants *wa-ti-nu* and *yi-ti-nu* 'given' and to the variants *wa-ti-ru*₁₂ and *yi-ti-ru*₁₂ 'excelling'.¹²⁴ The type *qatīl* appears in Aramaic as well.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ See already I. J. Gelb, "Thoughts about Ibla: A Preliminary Evaluation, March 1977," *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 1:1 (1977) 3-30; and the last words penned by the great master: "The Language of Ebla in the Light of the Sources from Ebla, Mari, and Babylonia," in *Ebla 1975-1985*, 49-74.

¹¹⁸ M. Noth, *Die Ursprünge des alten Israel im Lichte neuer Quellen* (Cologne, 1960).

¹¹⁹ See the discussion and bibliography in R. de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (Philadelphia, 1978) 200-209. The most important voice in opposition to the Amorite-Aramaic connection is D. O. Edzard, "Mari und Aramäer?" *ZA* 56 (1964) 142-49, which is a direct response to Noth's book cited in the previous footnote.

¹²⁰ G. Garbini, "Considerations on the Language of Ebla," in *Lingua*, 81-82.

¹²¹ Diakonoff, "Importance of Ebla for History and Linguistics," p. 29 above, states that E. Lipiński has also argued for an ultimate relationship between Eblaite and Aramaic. Unaware of any publications by Lipiński to this effect, I posed this question to him in a letter. He replied that he has discussed this with Diakonoff in conversation in Leningrad, but that he has "never tried to put the evidence together in the form of an article" (personal letter dated 10 May 1988). However, see below n. 124. I take this opportunity to thank Prof. Lipiński for responding to my query.

¹²² For general discussion see F. Vattioni, "L'aramaico è attestato a Ebla?" in *Bilinguismo*, 257-66.

¹²³ Diakonoff, "Evaluation of Eblaite," 8 n. 1.

¹²⁴ E. Lipiński, "Formes verbales dans les noms propres d'Ebla et système verbal sémitique," in *Lingua*, 209.

¹²⁵ S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1975) 262.

3. The first common singular personal pronoun in Eblaite is *a-na*, *an-na*, which accords with Aramaic ʔānāh (and Amorite *a-na*).¹²⁶
4. The Eblaite personal pronouns second masculine singular *an-ta* and second masculine plural *an-ta-nu* dovetail with the Aramaic forms ʔant and ʔantûn in the non-assimilation of the *n* before *t*.¹²⁷
5. The interchange between *l* and *r* in the Ebla texts is widely recognized. Although there are examples of this phenomenon throughout Semitic, I do not think I am incorrect in stating that it occurs more frequently in Aramaic dialects than in other languages. It is extremely common in Mandaic especially.¹²⁸
6. At Eblaite the word for 'go' is usually spelled ʔā-a-gúm or ʔā-a-gú-um, exceptionally ʔā-la-gúm. The majority of scholars has assumed that in all these cases the root *hlk* is to be understood, regardless of the fact that generally the *l* is not indicated in the writing. Gordon, however, has pointed out that this need not be the case, because in many dialects of Aramaic the word for 'go' is *hāk*.¹²⁹

The data available are extremely limited, but I believe my hypothesis of a Syrian Semitic *Sprachbund* is a workable one. I hasten to add that I am not necessarily arguing for a genetic relationship among Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic, that is to say, that second-millennium Amorite is descended from third-millennium Eblaite and that first-millennium Aramaic is descended from second-millennium Amorite. This remains possible, but it certainly cannot be proved at the present state of knowledge.

A *Sprachbund* can take a variety of forms, and in the present instance we may be dealing with what linguists call a convergence area.¹³⁰ In this model, Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic need not be genetically related (apart from all being Semitic languages), rather they may simply share isoglosses which spread over a significant part of the territory of present-day Syria. Among these would be the contraction of the diphthongs *aw* and *ay* to *ā*.

Earlier I noted that Fleisch and el-Hajjé ascribed the presence of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift in Syro-Lebanese Arabic to Aramaic substratum. This presents another possibility concerning the ancient languages of Syria. Regardless of how this *Sprachbund* is to be realized, it is possible that the presence of this shift in Aramaic is in turn due to Amorite substratum and that the Amorite situation is in turn to be explained by Eblaite substratum. This would be a most remarkable phenomenon and one probably unparalleled in the annals of linguistic science. But the chronological depth of the attestation of Semitic

¹²⁶ Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization," 26; and Lipiński, "Formes verbales dans les noms propres d'Ebla," 209.

¹²⁷ For the Aramaic evidence see Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik*, 165–66.

¹²⁸ Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic*, 52–55. See also K. Butz, "Bilinguismus als Katalysator," in *Bilinguismo*, 138.

¹²⁹ Gordon, "Eblaitica," 19.

¹³⁰ For this term see U. Weinreich, "On the Compatibility of Genetic Relationship and Convergent Development," *Word* 14 (1958) 379.

languages presents the linguist with a unique opportunity to uncover such phenomena, so the scenario just posited cannot be dismissed outright.¹³¹

Such machinations bring us into the world of reconstruction and perhaps even speculation. I am content merely to mention the above possibilities without investigating them further.¹³² Regardless of this larger picture, then, I hope to have demonstrated that in Eblaite the diphthongs did shift to $\bar{a}$ and that this has far-reaching ramifications for the study of other Semitic languages.

Excursus I

The Toponym Yny = Ya-na = GEŠTIN-na at Ugarit

Above (pp. 96–97) I discussed the town named Yana mentioned relatively frequently in the Ras Shamra texts. I append here a complete list of the references to this locale. They have been supplied most kindly and most generously to me by Prof. Michael C. Astour of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.¹³³

In the alphabetic texts the spelling *Yny* occurs in the following instances:

UT 309:30

PRU 5 71:5–6, 76:20

Ras ibn Hani 77/27:11' (*Syria* 56 [1979] 313)

KTU 4.693:43, 4.696:9

A reconstructed *Yn[y]* or *Y[ny]* appears in three texts:

PRU 5 58:ii:18 (compare *KTU* 4.610)

KTU 4.610:9

KTU 4.765:9

A place called *Gt Yny* appears in the following text:

PRU 2 43:10

Also, in *KTU* 4.696:9 (cited above) a *gt* occurs in connection with *Yny*.

The pronunciation of the name of the town is established through its appearance in syllabic texts, in particular the reading ^{uru}*Ya-na* (the first sign is *PI* = *ya*)¹³⁴ which occurs once in the corpus:

¹³¹ I am happy to report that Prof. Macuch (letter dated 17 May 1988) writes the following: "There can hardly be a doubt that the Aramaeans took it [the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift] over from earlier Semitic languages spoken in the area."

¹³² I do, however, append a rather lengthy Excursus 3 with general linguistic discussion covering a variety of issues raised in this article.

¹³³ Personal letter dated 3 May 1988.

¹³⁴ Both Sivan (*Grammatical Analysis*, 291) and Huehnergard (*Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription*, 238) preferred to read this sign as *ye*, but as noted earlier (see above n. 21), the *PI* sign never bears this value. See von Soden and Röllig, *Das akkadische Syllabar*,

PRU 6 119:2

Elsewhere in syllabic texts this toponym is written ^{uru}GEŠTIN-*na*. Thus in the following texts, which are quoted by J. Nougayrol in *PRU* 6:163 n. 2, but which as far as Astour and I have been able to determine remain unpublished:

RS 22.233:4

RS 25.132:rev.ii:12'

Finally, in *PRU* 6 144:4 Nougayrol tentatively read ^{uru}*Kur*[?]-^ṛ*ni*^ṛ-[?]*a*, but Astour is inclined to read these signs as ^{uru}GEŠTIN^ṛ-[?]*a*.

In the main body of the article, I quoted Astour's opinion on the location of Yana. I here reproduce his full statement: "The town certainly belonged to the kingdom of Ugarit and, according to its contexts in lists of localities, was probably located in the Bargylus District, i.e., in the mountain range Ġebel Anṣarīyeh, rather in its northern part, south of the Bdama Pass."

Excursus 2

The Treatment of the Diphthongs in Moabite

On two occasions in the body of the article (see above pp. 108–9 and 111), I suggest the possibility that also in Moabite the diphthongs *aw* and *ay* may have contracted to *ā*. The evidence for this is solely indirect, and cannot be established beyond doubt, and thus I relegate this issue to this excursus. The reason one cannot prove with any certainty how the Moabite diphthongs were pronounced is obvious: Moabite texts are not vocalized. The sole guide must be the few clues provided by the appearance of Moabite toponyms in the Bible and in Akkadian texts.

To begin, let me note that the one lengthy Moabite inscription, the Mesha Stele, provides conflicting information.¹³⁵ The general rule was for diphthongs to contract, as is evident from spellings such as *llh* 'night' (line 15), *m[?]tn* '200' (line 20), *bt* 'house' (lines 7, 23), *qrytn* GN (line 10), *dbltn* GN (line 30), etc. The standard opinion, expressed by Garr and others, is to vocalize these forms with the monophthongized vowel *ē*.¹³⁶ The picture is complicated, however, by the presence of three other forms: *dybn* GN (lines 1–2), *hwrnn* GN (lines 31–32), and *byt* 'house' (line 25). In these cases it is apparent that the diphthongs were preserved. Accordingly, in Garr's words, "although the Mesha inscription reflects a dialect in which diphthongs had, for the most part, contracted, vestigial uncontracted forms do appear."¹³⁷

43. Interestingly, Sivan was cognizant of the opinion to read this place-name as *Yana*, because he lists it as such on p. 287 with a note to see *Yenu*.

¹³⁵ See Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine*, 37–38.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 38.

Actually, the problem just described is only of tangential interest. For regardless of why certain forms preserved the diphthongs while others evince reduced diphthongs, my interest lies solely in determining how the latter were actuated. The standard approach, as noted above, and with no evidence to the contrary, would be to assume shifts of *aw* > *ô* and *ay* > *ê*.

However, based on the parallels of the biblical variations between *dôtān* and *dôtāynāh*, *qartān* and *qiryātayim*, R. Gordis proposed that the contrasts between Mesha Stele line 10 *qrytn* and Jer 48:1 *qiryātāyim*, line 30 *dbltn* and Jer 48:22 *diblātāyim*, and lines 31–32 *hwrnn* and Jer 48:34 *hōrānayim* be explained by a shift of *ay* > *ā* in Moabite.¹³⁸ Gordis also cited the *Kethiv* of Ezek 25:9 *qrytm*, which based on the above analogs would be vocalized *qiryātām*.

Some scholars have opined that the evidence of these place-names is irrelevant because the ending is not the dual ending at all, rather some sort of "local ending [ēn] (possibly [ān])."¹³⁹ If this be so, then the evidence of the endings on these geographical names is not germane. On the other hand, if they truly are dual forms¹⁴⁰ and thus diphthongs in origin, I am inclined to agree with Gordis's position, but not with any strong conviction to be sure.

When one moves to the evidence provided in Akkadian texts, one again encounters nothing definite, but there is one set of spellings which might indicate that *aw* contracted to *ā*. I refer to the Assyrian transcriptions of the name Moab (see above p. 111). On two occasions the Assyrians wrote the expected form: *Mu-²a-a-ba* and *Mu-²a-a-ba-a-a* (the latter is a gentilic form), which correspond nicely to the biblical vocalization *mô²āb*. More commonly, however, the first vowel in Assyrian transcriptions is *a*, for example, *Ma-a-bi*, *Ma-²a-a-bi*, *Ma-²a-ab*, etc.¹⁴¹

If the name Moab is derived from a root *m²b*,¹⁴² then these Akkadian spellings are again not germane. If, however, the name Moab derives from a root *w²b*,¹⁴³ then one must reconstruct an original **maw²ab*. The shift to the biblical vocalization *mô²āb* is perfectly normal, but the variant Akkadian spellings would require explanation. Cody's view has already been discussed (see above p. 111). He believed that this variation between signs with *u* vowels and signs with *a* vowels indicates that the Moabite phoneme was "an open

¹³⁸ Gordis, *Biblical Text in the Making*, 100. Prof. Gordis recently confirmed for me that this is indeed his interpretation of the material (personal conversation, 17 April 1988).

¹³⁹ Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, 1:79. See also A. H. van Zyl, *The Moabites* (Leiden, 1960) 74.

¹⁴⁰ Pointing in this direction may be the recovery of a few "double cities" in excavations in Moab. See van Zyl, *The Moabites*, 73–74.

¹⁴¹ For a complete list and references see S. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970) 230.

¹⁴² So van Zyl, *The Moabites*, 180.

¹⁴³ For discussion see J. Liver, "Mo²ay," *Ensiqlopediya Miqra²it* (Jerusalem, 1962), 4:708. S. Segert, "Die Sprache der moabitischen Königsinschrift," *Archiv Orientalní* 29 (1961) 247, is non-committal: "Die Etymologie bleibt noch immer unsicher."

back vowel of some sort" approximating [ɔ̄].¹⁴⁴ While this option must remain a possibility,¹⁴⁵ it is still an *ad hoc* explanation. I am inclined, again with caution given the small amount of data to work with, to suggest that in Moabite, or at least in certain local varieties of Moabite, the diphthongs contracted to *ā*.

Another Akkadian transcription may also be pertinent, again depending on one's interpretation. In a Nimrud letter concerning Moab (ND 2773), a certain individual is called a ^{kur}*Da-ab-i-la-a-a* (line 5), a gentilic form. H. W. F. Saggs was of the opinion that this is to be understood as "the Dibonite." He postulated an original *Da-ab-an-a-a* which was misread by a copyist as *Da-ab-il-a-a*, which eventually yielded our *Da-ab-i-la-a-a*.¹⁴⁶ This is more imaginative than one can accept. Still, Saggs's reading may be accepted if one more simply assumes an interchange between the consonants *n* and *l*. This toponym may have been susceptible to such interchanges in light of the spelling *dîmôn* in Isa 15:9 (notwithstanding the prophet's desire to pun on the word *dām* 'blood').

If *Da-ab-i-la-a-a* does refer to Dibon, then it is apparent that *ay* did shift to *ā*. The original form of this place-name is *Daybon* (the Septuagint renders it *Daibon* at Josh 13:17).¹⁴⁷ Thus, the Masoretic vocalization *dîbôn* and the Arabic form of the name *Dhîbān* reflect reduction of the diphthong to *î* (attenuated from *ê*?), while the Assyrian form would reflect reduction of the diphthong to *ā*. This would also help explain how the Hebrew prophets were able to transform the name of Dibon into *madmēn* 'dunghill' (Isa 25:10 and Jer 48:2).¹⁴⁸ If the vowel in the first syllable were *ā*, at least in some local pronunciations of Moabite, it would be easier for the Israelites to develop this ignoble appellation for the major city of the Moabites.

Unfortunately, the story is not that simple. There is good reason not to accept the above understanding of *Da-ab-i-la-a-a* as a reference to Dibon. The problem of the consonants aside, there would be no explanation for the vowel *i* in the second syllable. All representations of Dibon (Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, etc.) agree that *ā/ō* is to be read. An alternative interpretation of the Assyrian form was put forward by W. F. Albright¹⁴⁹ and accepted by B. Mazar.¹⁵⁰ These two scholars read the Assyrian form as *Ṭa-ab-i-la-a-a* (the DA sign can be read as either *da* or *ṭa*) to be translated as 'the one of Tabeel' (see Isa 7:6 and Ezra 4:7). Although they differed on the particulars, Albright and Mazar

¹⁴⁴ Cody, "New Inscription from Tell al-Rimah," 339.

¹⁴⁵ See further S. Morag, "Mēša^c," *Eretz-Israel* 5 (Benjamin Mazar volume) (1958) 141 n. 23, and the literature cited there.

¹⁴⁶ H. W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters, 1952—Part II," *Iraq* 17 (1955) 132.

¹⁴⁷ See Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, 1:77.

¹⁴⁸ See van Zyl, *The Moabites*, 80; J. Bright, *Jeremiah* (Garden City, NY, 1965) 319; and M. Broshi, "Madmen," *Ensiqlopediya Miqra'it* (Jerusalem, 1962), 4:694.

¹⁴⁹ W. F. Albright, "The Son of Tabeel (Isaiah 7:6)," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 140 (1955) 34–35.

¹⁵⁰ B. Mazar, "The Tobiads," *Israel Exploration Journal* 7 (1957) 237–38.

agreed that Tabeel refers to a Transjordanian area (the former located it in "northeastern Palestine" while the latter preferred an area which "bordered on Moab"). Either location presumably would dovetail with the content of the Nimrud letter. If this understanding of DA-*ab-i-la-a-a* is accepted, then once more an Akkadian transcription has no bearing on the problem of the Moabite diphthongs.

To sum up, through various avenues it is possible to demonstrate that in Moabite (or at least in some local variety or varieties of Moabite) the diphthongs *aw* and *ay* contracted to $\bar{a}$. In each case, however, the evidence is either inconclusive, spurious, or subject to different interpretation. I content myself with the above presentation of the evidence without reaching a definitive conclusion. I will add, however, that if Moabite phonology did include the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift, this would not be totally surprising. First, there is some biblical evidence pointing to the presence of this shift in Transjordanian dialects (see above pp. 103-4). Second, Garr concluded that of all the Canaanite dialects only Deir 'Alla surpassed Moabite in the number of isoglosses linking it to Aramaic.¹⁵¹ Since the *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift was shown to be quite frequent in Aramaic, its presence in Moabite would fit into this general picture.

Excursus 3

The Syrian Semitic Shift of AW/AY > $\bar{A}$ in the Light of Linguistic Science

The main article raised a number of issues which require additional discussion to place them in the larger background of linguistic science. The first of these is monophthongization to $\bar{a}$. As I intimated earlier (n. 9), Semitists generally have not been trained to think along these lines. When one mentions contraction of diphthongs to a Semitist, the shifts of *aw* > $\hat{o}$ (or $\bar{u}$ in Akkadian) and *ay* > $\hat{e}$ (or $\bar{i}$ in Akkadian) automatically come to mind. The *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ shift either is seen as atypical or is not treated at all. It is hoped that the present essay will alter this line of thinking.¹⁵²

I shall begin this presentation by first discussing the shift of *ay* > $\bar{a}$, both because it is easier to explain phonetically and because it is more common in world languages. The phonetics behind *ay* > $\bar{a}$ are as follows.¹⁵³ The diphthong *ay* is comprised of a low central vowel *a* and the equivalent of a high front vowel *i*. When the sound *ay* (*ai*) simplifies, theoretically it can resolve itself into any sound on the continuum between low central *a* and high front *i*. The

¹⁵¹ Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine*, 229-31.

¹⁵² For much of the material in this excursus I have benefited greatly from discussions with my colleagues Leonard H. Babby, E. Wayles Browne, George N. Clements, Jay Jasanoff, and Alan Nussbaum, all of Cornell University, and with Saul Levin of the State University of New York at Binghamton and George Jochnowitz of the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York. Their assistance, especially regarding bibliography, is gratefully acknowledged. They are absolved, however, of any matters of interpretation, for which I alone remain responsible.

¹⁵³ Garr, "**ay* > *a* in Targum Onkelos," also includes discussion on the phonetic interpretation of *ay* > $\bar{a}$.

standard Semitic contraction results in something approximately midway between these two vowels, a mid-front vowel *ê*. In the case of *ay* > *ā*, however, the result is a vowel not very distant from low central *a*, namely *ā* (often indicated by the digraph *æ* by linguists).¹⁵⁴

Another way of interpreting this sound shift is through the rule of compensatory lengthening. B. de Chene and S. R. Anderson presented numerous examples of this phenomenon in an article several years ago.¹⁵⁵ They concluded that in languages in which length contrast exists—as in the case in Semitic—diphthongs often reduce to monophthongs through loss of a semi-vocalic glide (*w*, *y*) and subsequent compensatory lengthening of the adjacent vowel. This is exactly what transpires in the shift of *ay* > *ā*.

Examples of *ay* > *ā* in Indo-European languages are actually quite common. The most familiar example of this shift (at least to Americans and other speakers of English) is what transpires in local varieties of Southern American English in the pronunciation of words such as 'life', 'wife', 'five', 'nine', 'I', 'my', 'time', 'nice', etc.¹⁵⁶ The same monophthongization has been observed in certain environments among South African speakers of English,¹⁵⁷ and it even has been heard in parts of northern England.¹⁵⁸

A similar regional variation is observable in local pronunciations of German. Although the diphthong is preserved in standard German, for example, *mein*, *sein*, *reich*, *Kleid*, etc., in Hesse, southern Bavaria, much of Austria, and isolated pockets elsewhere, monophthongization to *ā* occurs.¹⁵⁹ Thus, for example, *meiner* "may sound very much like English *manner*."¹⁶⁰ No doubt related to this phenomenon in regional varieties of German is the more widespread shift of *ay* > *ā* in Western Yiddish. This characteristic is one of the major determinants for distinguishing Western Yiddish from Eastern Yiddish. In M. Weinreich's words, "the /a:/ is so widespread that it is taken as a hallmark of all western Yiddish from northern Italy to the North Sea, from Alsace to the remains of western Yiddish in the regions of Kielce and Cracow."¹⁶¹ Thus, for example, the word for 'meat' is pronounced *flāš*, the word for 'small' is pronounced *klān*, etc.

¹⁵⁴ See the helpful discussion and clear illustration in P. Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics* (New York, 1975) 74–77.

¹⁵⁵ B. de Chene and S. R. Anderson, "Compensatory Lengthening," *Language* 55 (1979) 505–35.

¹⁵⁶ J. S. Kenyon, *American Pronunciation* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1950) 211; J. C. Wells, *Accents of English* (Cambridge, 1982), 3:537–38; and M. Onishi, ed., *A Grand Dictionary of Phonetics* (Tokyo, 1981), 350–51.

¹⁵⁷ Wells, *Accents of English*, 3:614, who labeled this process "Glide Weakening."

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:208–9, 239.

¹⁵⁹ See the extremely detailed study by P. Wiesinger, *Phonetisch-phonologische Untersuchungen zur Vokalentwicklung in den deutschen Dialekten* (Berlin, 1970), 2:90–232 and map 15.

¹⁶⁰ P. MacCarthy, *The Pronunciation of German* (London, 1975) 59.

¹⁶¹ M. Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* (Chicago, 1980) 445. See also S. Lowenstein, "Results of Atlas Investigations among Jews of Germany," in *The Field of Yiddish*, ed. M. I. Herzog, W. Ravid, and U. Weinreich (The Hague, 1969), 3:18.

If one looks at the historical development of the English language another example of *ay* > *ā* presents itself. The Proto-Germanic diphthong *ai* (I use here the transliteration commonly utilized by Indo-Europeanists) is preserved in German to the present day, for example, *heil*, *Stein*, *ein*, etc. But in Old English this sound shifted to *ā*, for example, *hāl*, *stān*, *ān*, etc.¹⁶² (Eventually these words emerge in Modern English as 'whole', 'stone', 'one', etc., through a shift of *ā* to *ō* [in the case of 'one' an additional transformation has occurred because it is initial vocalic].)

Another language which exhibits the same historical development is Latin. The inherited Indo-European diphthong *ai* appears unchanged in the oldest Latin inscriptions, for example, *aidilis*, *aide*, *Gnaivod*. Early in the second century B.C.E. this diphthong contracted and was thereafter spelled *ae*, presumably pronounced *ā* or *æ*. Thus one encounters such spellings as *aedes*, *Gnaeo*, *laevus*, etc.¹⁶³

My last example comes not from Indo-European, rather from an ancient Near Eastern language, namely, Urartian. Here too there is evidence for *ay* > *ā*.¹⁶⁴ Note the following interchanges: *Biainaidi* 'toward the Bia lands' with *Bianaidi* and *Biainadi*, *ainiei* 'someone' with *aniei*, *aišei* 'sometime' with *ašei*, *uluštaibi* 'he went ahead(?)' with *uluštabi*, etc. It hardly needs to be stated that current knowledge of Urartian is imperfect, so one cannot isolate the factors which actuate *ay* > *ā*. They may be historical, regional, diglossic, etc., or the interchange could even be facultative.

Briefly I also should mention that according to A. Dodi the shift of *ay* > *ā* is also to be found in Indo-Iranian dialects,¹⁶⁵ but I have been unable to verify this. Similarly, decades ago J. Friedrich opined that in Hittite there was an interchange between *ai* and *ā*, specifically in the case of verbs of the type *paiši* 'you go' and its byform *paši*.¹⁶⁶ Now, however, knowledge of Hittite has advanced, so that forms such as *paši* are to be explained as analogic constructions¹⁶⁷ with no phonological causation whatsoever.

As implied earlier the shift of *aw* > *ā* is a bit more difficult to explain phonetically and it is also somewhat rarer in other languages. The diphthong *aw* is comprised of a low central vowel *a* and the equivalent of a high back vowel *u*. When the sound *aw* (*au*) simplifies, in theory it should resolve itself

¹⁶² H. Sweet, *A History of English Sounds from the Earliest Period* (Oxford, 1888) 70. Sweet referred to this as "'smoothing,' or the levelling of the two elements of a diphthong under a monophthong."

¹⁶³ F. Stolz, *Historische Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1894), 1:34–35, 208–9; F. Sommer, *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre* (Heidelberg, 1914) 39, 70–71; and L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London, 1954) 217.

¹⁶⁴ J. Friedrich, *Einführung ins Urartäische* (Leipzig, 1933) 4; J. Friedrich, "Urartäische," in *Altkleinasiathe Sprachen (Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abteilung 1, Band 2, Abschnitt 1–2, Lieferung 2; Leiden, 1969)* 37–38; G. A. Melikišvili, *Die Urartäische Sprache* (Rome, 1971) 27; and I. M. Diakonoff, *Hurrisch und Urartäisch* (Munich, 1971) 56.

¹⁶⁵ Dodi, "Li-Tšurat ha-Po^c alim ha-^c Alulim be-Targum ³Onqelos," 204 n. 108.

¹⁶⁶ J. Friedrich, *Hethitisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg, 1940), 1:4; and J. Friedrich, "Die hethitischen Bruchstücke des Gilgameš-Epos," *ZA* 39, n.s. 5 (1929) 58.

¹⁶⁷ See N. Oettinger, *Die Stammbildung des hethitischen Verbuns* (Nürnberg, 1979) 388–92.

into any sound on the continuum between low central *a* and high back *u*. The standard Semitic contraction results in something approximately midway between these two vowels, a mid-back vowel *o*. The reduction to $\bar{a}$, however, remains slightly removed from the continuum between *a* and *u*.

One possible explanation is that the diphthong reduced to short *a*, that is, it resolves itself to the very bottom of the continuum. Obviously, in the cases of Eblaite, Amorite, and the other Semitic languages, the writing systems do not always distinguish vowel quantity. That is to say, perhaps *ay* contracted to $\bar{a}$ but *aw* contracted to *a*, although the writing systems use the same symbol(s) to reproduce these sounds since only vowel quality generally is indicated. On the other hand, there is the evidence of the local varieties of colloquial Syrian Arabic today which indicates that this vowel is pronounced long, for example, *yawm* > *yām* 'day'. One may, therefore, have to assume a secondary development of short *a* > long $\bar{a}$, perhaps based on analogy or the workings of polarity. None of these explanations is particularly attractive, and thus I would prefer once more to invoke the concept of compensatory lengthening developed by de Chene and Anderson. In this way, *aw* > $\bar{a}$ is a simple procedure which does not require linguistic gymnastics to account for it.

Examples of *aw* > $\bar{a}$ are not quite as common as those of *ay* > $\bar{a}$, presumably for the very reason that the phonetic development runs counter to expectations. Nevertheless, I am able to cite three additional illustrations of *aw* > $\bar{a}$. The first of these again comes from English, specifically the local varieties spoken in the parts of the north Midlands and in areas of Kent and Surrey in the south. In these locales "sometimes the reduced second element or glide disappears altogether," yielding forms such as [ka:] = *kā*, [a:s] = *ās* (with loss of initial *h*), etc., corresponding to standard English 'cow', 'house', etc.¹⁶⁸

My second example is another regional variation, this time in German. Standard German phonology includes the diphthong *aw* in such words as *kaufen*, *laufen*, *Auge*, etc. In dozens of small geographical areas, though mainly in Hesse and Silesia, the diphthong is reduced to $\bar{a}$. The result is pronunciations such as [kāfen], [lāfen], [āg] (with loss of the final vowel), etc.¹⁶⁹

The third example is again from the ancient Near Eastern language of Urartian. Here too there is an apparent interchange between *aw* and $\bar{a}$, although it is not commonly attested. Two examples are *Biainawe* 'of the Bia lands' alongside *Biainae* and ^d*Haldinawe* 'of (the god) H.' next to ^d*Haldinae*.¹⁷⁰ Again, exactly what factors effect this shift cannot be determined.

In sum, there are diverse illustrations for monophthongization of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ in various world languages, including several well-known examples from the Indo-European family. The phonetics behind this diphthong contraction are explicable as well. Accordingly, the Semitist is able to place the shift of *aw/ay* > $\bar{a}$ in the Semitic languages into this larger framework.

¹⁶⁸ M. F. Wakelin, *English Dialects: An Introduction* (London, 1972) 88.

¹⁶⁹ Wiesinger, *Phonetische-phonologische Untersuchungen zur Vokalentwicklung*, 2:90–232 and map 16.

¹⁷⁰ See the sources cited in n. 164 above.

The other major issue which I wish to take up in this excursus is the problem of the relationship among the Syrian Semitic languages. Various models, briefly described at the end of the main article, present themselves. The simplest is to posit a genetic relationship among Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic. Parallels from the Indo-European world would be the relationship of Latin, Old French, and Modern French, and of Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. In these latter examples, however, there is an unbroken chain of documentation which permits establishment of genetic descent from older levels to younger levels. This is specifically what is lacking in the case of Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic. With these languages one is dealing with samplings frozen in time, especially for the first two. Thus it becomes exceedingly difficult to argue for a genetic relationship among the three main members of what I have called Syrian Semitic.

A better Into-European model would perhaps be the case of Albanian and Illyrian.¹⁷¹ The former is attested only since the 15th century C.E.; the latter is known from various glosses and onomastic entries in Greek texts from a period two millennia earlier. The two languages cover virtually the same territory in the northwest Balkans and share various linguistic features. The approach of most scholars, accordingly, has been to assume an Albanian descent from Illyrian, although all admit that there is insufficient evidence to establish this as a proven fact. If Semitists wish to argue for a genetic relationship between Eblaite and Amorite or between Amorite and Aramaic or among all three, a comparison with the Illyrian-Albanian connection might be helpful.

The second possible relationship to consider is to classify the three languages as members of a convergence area. The classic example of this kind of *Sprachbund* returns again to the Balkans. It is a well-established fact that the various languages of the Balkan peninsula, representing no less than four separate branches of Indo-European, share about a dozen linguistic features (phonological, morphological, syntactic, etc.).¹⁷² The four branches and their representatives are Albanian, Greek, Romance (Romanian), and Slavic (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian). These languages have developed similar characteristics not from a common heritage, rather from constant contact over time. This could be an effective model for understanding how Eblaite, Amorite, and Aramaic share similar characteristics, including the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift. The difference, of course, is that unlike the Balkan area where one can demonstrate the coeval usage of the various languages for many centuries, in the Syrian area there is no real proof that Eblaite speakers were in contact with Amorite speakers or that Amorite speakers were in contact with Aramaic speakers for

¹⁷¹ For a clear and concise statement of the entire problem, see R. Katičić, *Ancient Languages of the Balkans* (The Hague, 1976) 154–88.

¹⁷² The best book on the subject is H. W. Schaller, *Die Balkansprachen* (Heidelberg, 1975); a list of common features is to be found on pp. 101–2. Of course, *Sprachbund* relationships may even supersede the boundaries of language families. For an interesting example see A. Timberlake, *The Nominative Object in Slavic, Baltic, and West Finnic* (Slavistische Beiträge 82; Munich, 1974).

any length of time, if at all. It would be difficult to imagine this not to be the case, but caution is required here. On the other hand, future discoveries may begin to fill in some of the gaps, so it is helpful to keep the concept of convergence area in mind.

The final point I wish to expand upon is the substratum concept mentioned at several points in the main body of the article (pp. 103, 115). Before proceeding further, a definition of "substratum language" and its influences should be given. I quote from H. J. Izzo:

The substratum language of a given social group is the language which that group used as its native language before its adoption of some other language, which later became the group's native language. *Substratum influence* and *substratum survival* refer to any features of the substratum language which the said group (and, originally, that group alone) retained and continued to use after the change of languages was otherwise complete. Substratum influence, then, is the result of the imperfect learning, and substratum survivals are mistakes, not different in kind from the mistakes made by a foreign-language student. Substratum influence on pronunciation consists of the specific features that constitute a foreign accent.¹⁷³

Let me work backward from the present-day situation to antiquity. I have shown that the presence of the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift in local varieties of colloquial Syro-Lebanese Arabic was attributed by el-Hajjé and Fleisch to Aramaic substratum. Historically, before the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 7th century C.E., the residents of the area spoke mainly Aramaic. As Garr and others have shown, Aramaic phonology includes the *aw/ay* > *ā* shift in a number of environments and forms. If I may be permitted some speculation, let me further assume that in some locales the Aramaic dialect(s) in use evinced monophthongization to *ā* throughout. Thus, for the sake of simplicity, assume that these Aramaic speakers pronounced the word for 'day' as *yām* and the word for 'house' as *bāt*. When the speakers of Aramaic exchanged their language for the new superstratum language of Arabic, they continued articulating such words in their former manner, without adopting the standard Arabic pronunciations, either classical *yawm*, *bayt*, etc., or colloquial *yôm*, *bêt*, etc. As I noted above (p. 103), other examples of Aramaic influence over Syrian Arabic have been noted by scholars. Indeed this is quite a common phenomenon with the various Arabic colloquials. Other instances are the influences of Berber over Moroccan Arabic¹⁷⁴ and of Coptic over Egyptian Arabic.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ H. J. Izzo, *Tuscan and Etruscan* (Toronto, 1972) 109.

¹⁷⁴ For general discussion see G.-S. Colin, "Les parlers: l'arabe," in *Initiation au Maroc* (Paris, 1945) 231–33. For additional specific examples see F. Guay, "La forme féminine berbère a Salé," *Archives berbères* 3 (1918) 31–51; and N. A. Stillman, *The Language and Culture of the Jews of Sefrou, Morocco: An Ethnolinguistic Study* (Manchester, 1988) 39, 41, 58. My thanks to Prof. Norman Stillman of the State University of New York at Binghamton for sharing his expertise on Berber and Moroccan Arabic with me and for providing me with these references.

¹⁷⁵ See the following articles, all by W. B. Bishai: "Notes on the Coptic Substratum in Egyptian Arabic," *JAOS* 80 (1960) 225–29; "Nature and Extent of Coptic Phonological Influence

Working further back into history, I would posit that the speakers of Aramaic were at one time speakers of Amorite (the change would have been effected, say, about 1500 B.C.E.), and still further into antiquity, that the speakers of Amorite had previously been speakers of Eblaite. Above I stated (pp. 115–16) that such an example of substratum upon substratum upon substratum would be unparalleled in the annals of linguistic research. But I repeat here what I said there: the chronological depth of the attestation of Semitic languages presents the linguist with a unique opportunity to uncover such phenomena, so the scenario just posited cannot be dismissed outright.

The best example of a modern dialectal usage resultant from an ancient substratum language in the Indo-European world used to be the case of the *gorgia toscana*. This refers to the “aspiration” of certain intervocalic stops in the Tuscan dialect of Italian, which many scholars have attributed to the influence of an Etruscan substratum in this region of the Italian peninsula.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately for my purposes, this example can no longer be utilized because Izzo has effectively demolished the hypothesis.¹⁷⁷ The phonetic force involved is not aspiration, rather spirantization; there is no evidence for such a sound shift in Etruscan; and the area where Etruscan was used does not correspond perfectly to the area of the *gorgia toscana*. Nevertheless, I mention this theory because it is quite familiar to linguists, notwithstanding Izzo’s demonstration of its falsity.

More cogent examples of substratum, especially regarding phonology, are various Celtic influences on regional dialects of English. In Monmouthshire, aspiration of initial [p], [k], and [t] in words such as ‘pigeons’, ‘carrots’, and ‘toes’, and gemination of medial consonants in words such as ‘apples’ and ‘rabbits’, is assumed to be the reflex of “Welsh phonetic influence.”¹⁷⁸ A unique instance is the pronunciation of ‘plaice’ (a type of fish) as *plaeth* by the fisherman of Cornwall, preserving the [u] ending of Cornish.¹⁷⁹

All of this goes to show that substratum influences can be of various types and that substratum survivals can be preserved in unlikely ways over centuries. The case of *aw/ay* > *ā* in Syrian Semitic, if it indeed be the result of several layers of substratum and superstratum, would be a remarkable illustration of this phenomenon.

on Egyptian Arabic,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6 (1961) 175–82; “Coptic Grammatical Influence on Egyptian Arabic,” *JAOS* 82 (1962) 285–89; and “Coptic Lexical Influence on Egyptian Arabic,” *JNES* 23 (1964) 39–47.

¹⁷⁶ The theory was originated by C. L. Fernow, *Italienische Sprachlehre* (Tübingen, 1804) 267.

¹⁷⁷ Izzo, *Tuscan and Etruscan*.

¹⁷⁸ Wakelin, *English Dialects*, 128.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

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