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Ancient Hebrew מעצד and עצד in the Gezer Calendar

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Introduction

The Hebrew Bible contains dozens of terms for tools which must have been common words for speakers of ancient Hebrew, but which present particular challenges for lexicographers of this dead language. Since the biblical texts do not include agricultural manuals or craftsmen's catalogs, some words make their only appearances in highly allusive contexts, where there is little to indicate what object the word actually referred to. For example, Isaiah mentions (10:15) the *garzen* in a rhetorical question: "Shall the *garzen* be glorified more than the one who hews with it?" The lexical information which can be gleaned from this verse is quite spare. Fortunately, in this case, we have the use of the *garzen* in the Siloam Inscription as well, which also talks about "hewing" (חצב) with a *garzen*, and that text is so embedded in its physical context that it is possible to infer what tool the text is referring to.[1]

The purpose of the present note is three-fold. First, it argues that the correct meaning of Hebrew מעצד is "adze." Second, it pleads for systematic but judicious use of Mishnaic Hebrew in the lexicography of Biblical Hebrew. Third, it investigates the use of the root עצד in the Gezer calendar and concludes, based on considerations of agricultural practices in antiquity, that Gezer's עצד is better connected with Aramaic חצד than with the Hebrew מעצד; in light of this, it raises once more the long-debated question of the dialect of the Gezer calendar.

* A very early form of some of these ideas was subjected to the critical eye of Richard C. Steiner. A rough draft of the paper was read and thoroughly (and appropriately) criticized by Elitzur Avraham Bar-Asher, to whom I owe a large debt of gratitude, and a later, but still undeveloped, draft was much improved by the comments and advice of Shawn Zelig Aster. At a later stage, Gary Rendsburg attentively read the paper and provided me with valuable feedback and critical comments. Further criticisms and suggestions came from Seth Sanders, who forced me to clarify certain statements and lines of the argument, and finally, an anonymous reviewer for *JNES* challenged some of the basic points in ways which led me to reformulate and sharpen the arguments in what are hopefully more convincing ways. Flaws that remain are likely due to my failure to take the advice of these scholars on some point or another.

[1] The mentions of the *garzen* in Deuteronomy 19 and 20 must be kept separate, since there the term refers to a wood-cutting tool, and apparently a small one; in Isaiah 10:15, the Siloam Inscription, and 1 Kings 6:7, it is a masonry tool. For detailed discussion, see my *The Semantic Field of Cutting Tools in Biblical Hebrew: The Interface of Philological, Semantic, and Archaeological Evidence*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 49 (Washington, D.C., 2012), 27–34, 129–40, and 160–61.

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The biblical lexeme מעצד

After listing cognates in Mishnaic Hebrew, Ugaritic, Arabic, and Geʿez, HALOT defines **מעצד** as "blacksmith's tool." BDB defines the word as "an axe," though the first evidence cited (from Arabic and Geʿez) indicates that the root **עצד** is associated with agricultural work. The contexts of the two biblical attestations of the lexeme, however, show that it was actually the tool of a carpenter. The two uses are in the related passages Jeremiah 10:3 and Isaiah 44:12, both of which belong to the long tradition of mocking idols and their makers by describing the mundane processes by which the idols were made.[2]

The first attestation is in Jeremiah 10:3: **כִּי-חֻקּוֹת הָעַמִּים הֶבֶל הוּא כִּי-עֵץ מִיַּעַר כָּרָתוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי-חָרָשׁ בַּמַּעֲצָד** "For the idol of the nations is worthless: he cut a tree from the forest; it is merely the work of a craftsman with an adze."[3] The passage describes an idol (*ḥuqqōt hā-ʿammīm*[4]) made of wood, which originated as a tree in the forest. After stating that the idol is "worthless" (*hebel*), the process by which the idol was constructed is reviewed, to emphasize the absurdity of worshipping the idol thus produced. The last nominal phrase of Jeremiah 10:3 contains a compound genitive construction (*maʿăśēh yədē ḥārāš*) modified by a prepositional phrase (*bammaʿăṣād*). What exactly *bammaʿăṣād* modifies is ambiguous, but on all readings, the *maʿăṣād* is being used to work on wood.[5]

Further specificity may be gained from the semantics of the word *ḥārāš*. This is a generic word for a "craftsman," one who might work in any medium. Ibn Janaḥ pointed this out, comparing the similarly multi-purpose Arabic term اسكاف.[6] Despite this versatility, the *ḥārāš* is not a woodsman; neither the *ḥārāš* nor the *ʾuskāf* chops down trees in the forest.[7] The *maʿăṣād*, therefore, is not the tool used to chop down a tree, but to work on the wood later, in the shop.[8] It is a carpenter's tool.[9]

The second case is found in Isaiah 44:12: **חָרַשׁ בַּרְזֶל מַעֲצָד וּפָעַל בַּפֶּחָם וּבַמַּקָּבוֹת יִצְּרֵהוּ וַיִּפְעָלֵהוּ בִּזְרוֹעַ כֹּחוֹ** "he makes iron into an adze, working with coal; with mallets he forms it, and works it with the strength of his

[2] This genre of biblical text has been the subject of sophisticated treatments by Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, BJSUCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN, 2008), 40–72, and Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, tr. Robert Savage (Stanford, 2010), 23–30.

[3] For further defense of this translation, see Koller, *Semantic Field of Cutting Tools*, 62–63.

[4] For this phrase and its translation ("idol"), see Sol Cohen and Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "חקות העמים הבל הוא (Jeremiah 10:3) in Light of Akkadian *Parṣu* and *Zaqīqu* Referring to Cult Statues," *JQR* 89 (1999): 277–90.

[5] To be specific about the nature of the ambiguity: the head of the prepositional phrase could consist of (1) the entire genitive construction חרש ידי מעשה, (2) just the final noun, חרש, or (3) the verb כרתו, if חרש ידי מעשה is in apposition to the pronominal object on כרתו and במעצד is adverbial. In other words, the words **כִּי-עֵץ מִיַּעַר כָּרָתוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי-חָרָשׁ בַּמַּעֲצָד** bear three translations: (1) "for (it is) a tree which he cut down from the forest, the work of a craftsman using a *maʿăṣād*"; (2) "for (it is) a tree which he cut down from the forest, the work of a *maʿăṣād*-craftsman"; or (3) "for (it is) a tree which he cut down from the forest with a *maʿăṣād*, the work of a craftsman."

[6] "The Hebrews call every artisan (صانع) a *ḥārāš* just as the Arabs call every artisan an اسكاف (*ʾuskāf*)": Abu ʾl-Walîd Marwân Ibn Janaḥ, *The Book of Hebrew Roots*, ed. Adolph Neubauer (Oxford, 1875), 252. For the latter word, see Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: 1863–93), 1392 (s.v. سكف). Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah Under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, IN, 2005), 58 n. 83 identifies *ḥārāšim* working in stone (Exod. 28:11; 2 Sam. 5:11), wood (2 Sam. 5:11; 2 Kings 12:12; Isaiah 44:13; 1 Chron. 14:1), iron, and copper (2 Chron. 24:12), in contexts of construction (2 Kings 12:12; 22:6; 1 Chron. 14:1), blacksmithing (Isaiah 54:16), metal (iron?) weapons (1 Sam. 13:19), and idols (Deut. 27:15; Isaiah 40:19).

[7] This despite the consonance between *ḥārāš* and *ḥoreš* "wood, wooded height." The latter is said to derive from PS **ḥurš*, "wooded height, mountain," found also in Ugaritic *ḥršn* "Gebirge," Aram חוּרְשָׁא "Gebüsch, dichtes Wald," Akkadian *ḫuršānu* "mountain region," and Egyptian *χ3ś*, "Bergland" (attested from the Pyramid Texts and onwards); Marcel Cohen, *Essai Comparatif sur le Vocabulaire et la Phonétique du Chamito-Sémitique* (Paris, 1969), 108 (no. 152); Aron Dolgopolsky, *From Proto-Semitic to Hebrew, Phonology: Etymological Approach in a Hamito-Semitic Perspective*, Studi Camito-Semitici 2 (Milano, 1999), 39. See also Saul Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The Principal Etymologies, with Observations on Afro-Asiatic*, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science 129 (Amsterdam, 1995), 243–47, whose data is interesting but apparently confused. Note also that Assyriologists have derived Akk. *ḫuršānu* from Sumerian ḪUR.SAG (e.g., CAD Ḫ 253–54; Stephen J. Lieberman, *The Sumerian Loanwords in Old Babylonian Akkadian, Volume One: Prolegomena and Evidence*, HSS 22 [Missoula, MT, 1977], 317), but the existence of a plausible Proto-Semitic etymology may push in the opposite direction. חרש "craftsman" derives from **ḥrš* (as seen from Ugaritic *ḥrš*), and is therefore also not cognate with חרשׁ "to plow," derived from **ḥrt* (Arabic حرث, Ugaritic, ESA "to plow"); cf. Joshua Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction*, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 2 (Winona Lake, IN, 2010), 33.

[8] Garnett Reid, "'Thus Will You Say to Them': A Cross-Cultural Confessional Polemic in Jeremiah 10.11," *JSOT* 31 (2006): 227, detects an "etymological pun with *ʿēṣ* ('tree') and *bammaʿăṣād* ('with an axe')." An "etymological" connection surely does not exist; William Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia, 1986), 331, speaks with more restraint of "assonance."

[9] Thus reading (3) in n. 4 above can be ruled out.

arm." According to some, the word *maʿăṣād* is not supposed to appear in this passage: since at least the time of Bishop Robert Lowth, suggestions have been made to rid the text of the word.[10] The basic problem sensed by many is, as Winton Thomas explained, "if [the phrase חָרַשׁ בַּרְזֶל מַעֲצָד] is to be clothed with meaning, [it] requires a verb, which seems to have fallen out, either before or after חָרַשׁ בַּרְזֶל."[11] This problem results from the fact that the phrase חָרָשׁ בַּרְזֶל is usually taken to be a noun phrase, consisting of חָרָשׁ "craftsman" in the construct, and "iron," thus, "an iron craftsman," or "a craftsman who works in iron."[12] To fulfill the requirement of the verb, therefore, Winton Thomas cited numerous previous suggestions for emending the text and added one of his own.[13]

Of the emendations proposed, the easiest to accept which accomplishes the goal of reconstructing a verb in the clause is to emend ופעל to יפעל. This creates the clause חרש ברזל מעצד יפעל בפחם, which supposedly means "the craftsman makes the iron into a מעצד in the coals,"[14] taking the מעצד to be the object of יפעל. The word order here is quite awkward, however. It would require that יפעל have two direct objects, ברזל and מעצד, and one (מעצד) is supposed to an object of result; this is a common syntactic phenomenon, but nowhere else in classical Hebrew is this construction attested with both direct objects preceding the verb. In other cases, both objects come after the verb, as in וַיִּבְנֶה אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מִזְבֵּחַ "he built the stones into an altar" (1 Kings 18:32).[15] It is true that in Biblical Hebrew word order is rarely a fatal objection, however, and this

[10] Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation, with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes, Critical, Philological and Explanatory*, 12th ed. (London, 1837 [1779]), 329, suggests מְעַצֵּד, and C. C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (New York, 1928), 349, emends to מְעַצֵּב, both allegedly with the meaning "cuts." Deirdre Dempsey, "The Verb Syntax of the Idol Passage of Isaiah 44:9–20," in *Imagery and Imagination in Biblical Literature: Essays in Honor of Aloysius Fitzgerald*, ed. Lawrence Boadt and Mark S. Smith, CBQMS 32 (Washington, D.C., 2001), 147 n. 5, also claims that "מָעַצָּד [sic] seems impossible here," since the idol under discussion is metal, so this cutting tool would be ineffectual. As will soon become clear, however, the idol being described is almost certainly not made of metal.

[11] D. Winton Thomas, "Isaiah XIV.9–20: A Translation and Commentary," *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris, 1971), 324; also E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah* (Dublin, 1943), 2.63, 65, 68. The idea of the missing verb is echoed by many commentators, *ad loc*. Saʿadia demurs from this claim, taking it to be a non-verbal phrase, which nevertheless stands alone since it is specifying one of the craftsmen mentioned in the previous verse; cf. Yehuda Ratzaby, *Tafsir Yeshaya le-Rav Saadia (Kitāb al-Istiṣlāḥ)* (Qiryat Ono: Mekhon Mishnat ha-Rambam, 1993), 98.

[12] This is explicitly the analysis offered by Judah Ḥayyūj, who writes: חָרַשׁ עצים, חָרַשׁ אבן (שמות כח, יא) – אל רא פתוחה לאג׳ל אלאצ׳אפה ואלאצל פיהא אלתשדיד והי מן קביל נָגָב [צ״ל נַגָּב] נַגָּבִים חָרָשׁ חָרָשִׁים, "חָרַשׁ of wood, חָרַשׁ of stone—the *reš* is vocalized with a *pataḥ* since it is in the construct, and its underlying form is with gemination, for it is of the type *gannāḇ - gannāḇīm*, *ḥārāš - ḥārāšīm*" (Aharon Maman and Ephraim Ben-Porath, *Kitāb al-Nutaf: Perušo ha-Diqduqi she R. Yehuda Ḥayyūj le-Sifre Nevi'im, be-ʿIbbud ʿAli b. Saliman – Mavo, Mahadurah, ve-Targum muʿarim* [Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2012], 222 [Judeo-Arabic] and 223 [Hebrew translation]). According to this analysis, which is shared by other medieval exegetes, the phrase and the word חרש are thus closely paralleled at the beginning of the next verse (Isaiah 44:13): חָרָשׁ עֵצִים, "a wood craftsman."

[13] For further and later emendations, see Richard J. Clifford, "The Function of Idol Passages in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 461, who takes the מ as an enclitic belonging to ברזל followed by the verb עצד, and more references in Michael B. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN, 1999), 27 n. *n*. Of the more recent suggestions, that of Karl Elliger, *Deuterojesaja* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978), 407–10, has gained some currency: he suggests that the text originally read חרש ברזל גלם עצד, "Der Handwerker in Eisen schmiedet die Urform aus," and the גל of the original was omitted by haplography, wrongly leaving mention of the מעצד. See, for example, John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, WBC 25 (Waco, TX, 1987), 141. For a good summary, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 177–78, and for further discussion of the verse, including numerous interesting observations, see Knut Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, Beiträge zur biblischen Exgese und Theologie 28 (Frankfurt, 1995), 150–56.

[14] An ancient scribe corrected 1QIsa[a] in this manner: the text reads חרש ברזל מעצד יפעל, but originally read ופועל according to Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron, *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa): A New Edition*, STDJ 32 (Leiden, 1999), 75–76, and cf. John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, ICC (London, 2006), 1.351. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 27 n. *l* prefers this as the "least radical emendation"; see also Levtow, *Images of Others*, 60 n. 46. Shadal does not emend the text, but comments, "The iron craftsman makes the *maʿăṣād* for the wood craftsman" (*Perush Shadal ʿal Sefer Yeshayah* [Tel Aviv, 1970], 324). Michael Rosenbaum, *Word-Order Variation in Isaiah 40–55: A Functional Perspective*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica (Assen, 1997), 38 with nn. 27–28 and 180 with n. 50 deletes מעצד as a gloss, changes ופעל to יפעל, and argues that the direct object is פסל, "gapped from the surrounding context."

[15] For discussion of the double object construction, with examples, see Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. Takamitsu Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14 (Rome, 1991), 453–54 (§125w) and especially Menaḥem Ẓevi Ḳaddari, *Parashiyot be-taḥbir leshon ha-miqra* (Ramat Gan, 1976), 15–23 and 57–59.

suggestion does have the advantage of enhancing the parallelism between Isaiah 44:12 and 44:13.[16]

Even more convincing is the proposal which finds the missing verb in the text itself: some commentators take חָרַשׁ not as a noun in the construct ("a craftsman of"), but a verb in the perfect ("he crafted"). This possibility is attested in medieval texts,[17] but according to one modern scholar, it "found little support,"[18] then or now. It seems to have been revived, however, by the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (*DCH*), which offers the translation, "he has fashioned the iron of an axe or iron into an axe."[19] The analysis of חָרַשׁ as a verb is shared by the New Revised Standard Version, as well. Adopting the second possibility given by the *DCH*, we have again an "object of result," but this time the syntax is similar to that found in sentences such as ויבנה את האבנים מזבח (verb + material + result): חרש ברזל מעצד, "he crafted the iron into a מעצד."

One other possibility, suggested already in medieval times, is to assume that the prophet at this point goes back in time to describe not the construction of the idol itself, but the construction of the tools used to make the idol. Radaq (fl. ca. A.D. 1200) restored the verb to the clause by positing an ellipsis in the first clause of Isaiah 44:12, and rendered חָרַשׁ בַּרְזֶל מַעֲצָד as "the iron-craftsman [makes] a מעצד"; the following clause, וּפָעַל בַּפֶּחָם "and works in the coal," then described how the blacksmith worked to make the מעצד.[20] Indeed, וּפָעַל בַּפֶּחָם וּבַמַּקָּבוֹת יִצְּרֵהוּ (". . . and works in the coal, shaping it with hammers") seems to be a perfect description of a blacksmith hammering a piece of iron into a blade, an action accomplished by repeatedly heating the iron and then hammering on the edge, often followed by cold-hammering.[21]

One might add that the prophet reaches back in time to describe the construction of the tools in order to strengthen his polemic. The Mesopotamian ritual seems to have been anxious about the use of mundane tools in the fabrication of divine images: when a statue was dedicated, the tools used (an adze, a chisel, and a saw) were bound up in the body of a sacrificed sheep and thrown into the river.[22] For the Mesopotamian priests, the fact that mundane tools were used in the process of fabricating the idol was a potential source of embarrassment or confusion: how could everyday tools create a transcendent home for the deity? The Israelite author picks up on just this point, emphasizing that the man-made idol is made with regular tools—which were themselves recently fabricated! This thus furthers his argument that there is nothing divine about the construction of the resulting artifact.

According to all these readings, there is no evidence of the *maʿăṣād* being used in metal work, as is often claimed.[23] Instead, the blacksmith is said to make the *maʿăṣād*, but not use it, and only in the next verse does the wood-craftsman enter the narrative, and begin to create the idol. It is the "wood craftsman" (*ḥāraš ʿēṣīm*) who actually uses the *maʿăṣād*, and so the testimony of this text, sparse though it is, agrees with that of Jeremiah 10:3. In both biblical texts, the *maʿăṣād* is a tool used for woodworking. This conclusion is worth emphasizing: although the data are minimal, they are sufficient to determine that the *maʿăṣād* was a tool utilized by the carpenter, not by the blacksmith or the farmer.

[16] This suggestion has often been criticized on the grounds that on these readings, the text backtracks to the subject of the tool-making after the craftsman's work on the idol itself has already been mentioned; cf. Ed. König, "Isaiah xliv. 12, 13," *ET* 9 (1897–1898): 563–566; Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, 151; Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Minneapolis, 2001), 197b. This does not seem to be a valid criticism, however, since it is clear that, structurally, v. 12 begins a new unit, and whereas 9–11 was a commentary on the futility of idol-manufacturing, 12–17 describes rather dispassionately the manufacturing process itself (Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, 127–30). More importantly, v. 14 unambiguously backtracks to the topic of acquiring the wood for the idol, so chronological sequence is clearly not the ordering principle of this text.

[17] This position was argued by Ibn Balʿam (Moshe Goshen-Gottstein and Maʿaravi Peretz, *Perush R. Judah ibn Balʿam le-Sefer Yeshayahu*, Texts and Studies 5 [Ramat Gan, 1992], 186), but Ibn Janah explicitly objected to this interpretation (Abu 'l-Walîd Marwân Ibn Janaḥ, *The Book of Hebrew Roots*, ed. Adolf Neubauer [Oxford, 1875], 252). Centuries later, Joseph Strauss, "Isaiah xliv. 12, 13, 14, etc.," *ET* 9 (1897–1898): 425–26 made the same suggestion, and it was rejected quickly by König, "Isaiah xliv. 12, 13."

[18] Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, 150 n. 49.

[19] *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, ed. David J. A. Clines (Sheffield, 1993–2011), s.v. מעצד The two suggestions reflect different interpretations of the string בַּרְזֶל מַעֲצָד: the first possibility is to take it as a construct chain ("iron of an axe"); the second is to take them both as objects of the verb, the second being the object of result, thus: "iron into an ax."

[20] Radaq himself then explained, "he works with coals (to heat up the iron)," וּבַמַּקָּבוֹת "and (he makes) the מקבות" with which יִצְּרֵהוּ "the (other craftsman will) make the idol."

[21] Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah 3/1: 40–48* (Kampen, 1997), 388, objects to this type of analysis.

[22] See Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," 40; the relevance of this for the understanding of Isaiah 44:12 arose as the result of a conversation with Barry Eichler.

[23] See recently Levtow, *Images of Others*, 60: "An ironsmith with an adz works over the coal." See also Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, 151 n. 52; Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," 27 n. *n*; cf. Yeivin, "מלאכה, כלי מלאכה," *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, 4.1018.

The Mishnaic Hebrew data

Confirmation that the *maʿăṣād* was a carpenters' tool, and further details of its morphology and function are provided by rabbinic literature. In both legal and midrashic texts within this corpus, the *maʿăṣād* is a tool regularly used by the carpenter for carving wood. Mishnah ʿArakhin 6:3 rules:

> אף על פי שאמרו חייבי ערכין ממשכנים אותן, נותנין לו מְזוֹן שלשים יום וכסות שנים עשר חודש, מיטה מוצעת, סנדליו ותפיליו . . . אבל אם היה אומן, נותנין לו שני כלי אומנות מכל מין ומין: חָרָשׁ נותנין לו שני מַעְצָדִין ושתי מגירות. . . .
>
> Although they said that we seize the property of those liable for evaluations, we give them thirty days' worth of food and twelve months' worth of clothes, a made bed, his shoes and his *tefillin*. . . . But if he was a craftsman, we give him two of each of his tools of trade: we give a carpenter two *maʿăṣād*s and two saws. . . .

All indications are that the *maʿăṣād* was the adze, which was certainly the standard operating tool of a carpenter.[24] Sifre Deuteronomy §308 relates this parable:[25]

> [אמר] להם משה לישראל, "עקמנים אתם! פתלתנים אתם! ואין אתם הולכים אלא לאור!" למה הדבר דומה? לאחד שהיה בידו מקל מעוקם, ונתנו לאומן לתקנו, מתקנו באור, ואם לאו מכוונו במעגילה, ואם לאו מפסלו במעצד ומשליכו לאור. וכן הוא אומר וּנְתַתִּיךְ בְּיַד אֲנָשִׁים בוֹעֲרִים חָרָשֵׁי מַשְׁחִית (יח׳ כא, לו).
>
> Moses said to the Israelites, "You are crooked! You are perverters! You are going nowhere but the fire!" To what is this comparable? To one who had a curved staff in his hand, so he gave it to the craftsman to fix. He fixes it in the fire, and if not, he straightens it with a lathe,[26] and if not, he cuts it up with the *maʿăṣād* and tosses it into the fire. And thus it says, I will give you to burning people, destructive craftsmen (Ezekiel 21:36).

According to this text, the *maʿăṣād* was a tool used for carving up wood.[27] The adze was used for carving up wood, and served as the primary tool for this purpose until the plane was introduced by the Romans.[28]

More details of the tool's use arise from the discussion in the Mishnah and Tosefta Baba Qamma, regarding the rights to ownership of waste products created in the context of a carpenter's work. The Mishnah elsewhere (Baba Qamma 10:10) ruled:

> מה שחרש מוציא בַּמַּעְצָד הרי אלו שלו, ובכשיל הרי אלו שלבעל הבית. אם היה עושה אצל בעל הבית, אף הנסורת שלבעל הבית.
>
> What a craftsman produces [as waste] with the adze (*maʿăṣād*) is his, but [that which he produces] with the ax (*kaššīl*) belongs to the owner; if he was doing [the work] in the house of the owner, even the sawdust belongs to the owner.

The ruling was based on the fact that the *maʿăṣād* "adze" produced finer cuttings than the ax (*kaššīl*). If

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[24] That the *maʿăṣād* was in common use is implied also in Mishnah Šabbat 12:1: הבונה כמה יבנה ויהא חייב הבונה כל שהוא המסתת והמכה בפטיש ומעצד הקודיח כל שהוא חייב. זה הכלל כל העושה מלאכה ומלאכתו מתקיימת בשבת חייב: "One who builds – how much must he build to be liable? One who builds at all, or carves stones at all, or who strikes with a hammer or a *maʿăṣād* or who bores at all. This is the rule: anyone who does constructive work which is permanent on the Sabbath is liable."

[25] The text is cited from Louis Finklestein (ed.), ספרי על ספר דברים: עם חלופי גרסאות והערות (New York, 2001), 348. The passage is also found in Midrash Tanna'im *ad* Deut. 32:5.

[26] The translation of מעגילה in this context is uncertain, but I owe the attractive suggestion of "lathe" to Shawn Zelig Aster, who noted that with a lathe a carpenter turns the piece round and round, trimming until it is smooth.

[27] The verb used is *psl* in the Piʿel, which normally means "to carve" (denominative from פֶּסֶל). Shmuel Yeivin, "*Kelē Melākā*," *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, 4.1018, suggests reading this as מפצלים אותו במעצד, which he glosses as "smoothes it out with a *maʿăṣād*." This is not an attested meaning of פצ״ל, and he ignores the fact that the craftsman is not *correcting* the staff—that was tried already—but rather about to use it as fuel in a fire; Yeivin's basic suggestion that פס״ל here is a biform of פצ״ל "to split" is attractive, although the word is attested far more often in the Hiphʿil than the Piʿel (compare the Puʿal in Tosefta Menaḥot 11:4 with the Hophʿal in the parallel Mishnah Menaḥot 11:6). Binyamin Goldstein suggested that the text may be talking about a *metal* staff, rather than a wooden one. In MH, however, מקל seems to always indicate a wooden staff, as can be seen especially in Mishnah Kelim, where a מקל is assumed to be a "wooden implement that does not 'hold' anything" (פשוטי כלי עץ), and therefore not susceptible to impurity. In some texts this is explicitly contrasted with similar metal implements, which are susceptible to impurity; see, for example, Mishnah Kelim 11:6, 14:2, 17:16, and 20:3. The prooftext cited from Ezekiel may have been chosen to identify the people utilizing the *maʿăṣād* "adze" as the craftsmen (*ḥārāšīm*), but given the longer passage, this identification is uncertain; my thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the complications here.

[28] See, for example, John M. Whelan, *The Wooden Plane: Its History, Form, and Function* (Mendham, NJ, 1993), 1–7; R. A. Stewart Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer, 1902–1905 and 1907–1909* (London, 1912), 2.244.

a man brought a block of wood to the carpenter to be carved into something, the waste produced by the *maʿăṣād* was ruled to be fine enough that it need not be returned to the owner of the wood; the ax, on the other hand, severed pieces that were worth saving, and so that waste was to be returned to the wood-owner.[29] Certainly the adze was used at later stages of the work than the ax, and produced finer waste. Thus the rabbinic evidence confirms what is evident from the biblical data alone—that the *maʿăṣād* was a tool of carpentry—and augments it, allowing us to conclude with confidence that ancient Hebrew *maʿăṣād* referred to the adze. Although lexicographers should combine data from different eras with caution, in this case the data are in agreement, supporting the claim that the meaning of the word did not change between the late Iron Age and the Roman period, and that the Mishnaic texts are relevant for the lexicography of the biblical word.

Cognates elsewhere in Semitic

Given this relative plethora of evidence, one may rightly wonder why lexicographers have not consistently defined the *maʿăṣād* as an adze. The explanation for this is that cognates in other Semitic languages do not share this meaning. Verbs and nouns derived from the root עצד elsewhere seem to mean "to cut" and "a cutting tool," but are not otherwise related to carpentry. Instead, the evidence in other languages points to different types of activities, especially agriculture, and this has misled Hebraists into importing an agricultural meaning into definitions of the Hebrew word as well.

Ugaritic

Consonantal *mʿṣd* appears in a few lists of implements. For example, KTU 6.632, a record of silver and tools owned by various individuals, mentions that a certain AGDTB owned *ḫmšt. ʿšr*[*t*] */ ksp*, *w nit w mʿṣd / w ḫrmṯt*, "15 silvers, and a *niʿt* and a *mʿṣd* and a *ḫrmṯt*."[30] The same *mʿṣd* tool appears in syllabic texts, as well. PRU 6 157, a list of implements, includes "1 *ma-ṣa-du*" (l. 15); another list, PRU 6 142, includes [x] $^{\text{URUDU.MEŠ}}$*ma-ṣa-du-ma*$^{\text{MEŠ}}$ (l. 3). Although the *ʿayin* is not written in either attestation, the ending *-ūma* makes it clear that the word is Ugaritic, and not Akkadian, and that it should be equated with consonantal *mʿṣd*.[31]

The meaning of the term within Ugaritic is debated. John Healey writes that "[t]he cognates suggest *mʿṣd* is a cutting-tool used on trees or plants";[32] Jonas Greenfield argues that Ugaritic *mʿṣd* is an axe or an adze, and adds, "This is based on the use of *mʿṣd* in Bib. Heb."[33] Based on the presence of the undoubtedly agricultural *ḫrmṯt* (cognate with Hebrew חרמש, "sickle"), the entire list has sometimes been taken to be agricultural in nature; Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín's *Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language* offers "agricultural cutting tool, 'sickle(?)'."[34] This text therefore suggests that the Ugaritic *mʿṣd* was an agricultural implement, although even this is not certain. Certainly no semantic information about the Hebrew word is to be gleaned from the Ugaritic,[35] and utilizing the Ugaritic word for help in defining the Hebrew word would be an example of what the Talmud called "making the known be dependent on the unknown."[36]

Arabic

A similarly close cognate to Hebrew *maʿăṣād* is Arabic مِعضَد (*miʿḍad*),[37] defined by E. W. Lane as:

[29] The Tosefta (B.Q. 11:15), however, flatly contradicts this ruling, stating that מה שחרש מוציא במעצד ונפסק במגרה הרי אילו של בעל הבית; מתחת המקדח ומתחת הרהיטני והמגרר [ארפורט ודפ"ר: נגרר] במגרה הרי אילו שלו: "What the carpenter produces with the adze (מעצד), and what is cut off with the saw (מגרה), belongs to the owner [of the wood]; [what comes from] under the awl(?) or from under the plane, and what is sawed off by the saw (= sawdust), these are his." But the Tosefta agrees with the basic legal principle, to wit, there are some waste products that are significant, and others that are not, based on size, and that larger waste products must be handed over to the owner of the wood while smaller waste products could be kept by the artisan. The only difference is where to draw the line: the Mishnah draws it between the כשיל and the מעצד, whereas the Tosefta draws it between the מעצד and the מקדח.

[30] KTU 4.632.1–4; see also 4.625 1–3.

[31] John Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription*, HSS 32 (Atlanta, 1987), 162.

[32] John F. Healey, "Swords and Ploughshares: Some Ugaritic Terminology," *UF* 15 (1983): 52.

[33] Jonas C. Greenfield, "Ugaritic Lexicographical Notes," *JCS* 21 (1967): 92.

[34] Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, tr. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Leiden, 2003), 523.

[35] The agricultural pun is thanks to Gary Rendsburg (who would, however, prefer that I gleaned *more* information from the Ugaritic text).

[36] Rav Joseph objected in this way (תלי תניא בדלא תניא) a number of times; see BT Ketubbot 2a, Shabbat 22a, and Baba Batra 134b.

[37] Although when dealing with the Hebrew graphemes ע and צ, it is not possible to be certain of their etymons and therefore of their cognates, the semantic connection with Arabic معضد and

> an instrument with which trees are cut, or lopped. . .; anything with which this is done; described by an Arab of the desert as a heavy iron instrument in the form of a reaping-hook, with which trees are cut, or lopped . . . also . . . signifies an iron instrument like a reaping hook without teeth, having its handle bound to a staff or cane, with which the pastor draws down the branches of trees to his camels or his sheep or goats and a sword which is commonly, or usually, employed for cutting, or lopping, trees.[38]

What the tools mentioned and described have in common, to the extent specified, is their shape: they all are, or contain, a hook. Beyond that, there is variety among these tools regarding their purposes (cutting, pulling) and morphologies (with or without teeth, or the presence or absence [or mere insignificance?] of a handle). But Lane offered no pictures in connection with this lexeme,[39] and the various tools he mentions seem to vary widely in their forms and functions, so further specificity is not possible.[40]

This word is plausibly related semantically to Hebrew *maʿăṣād*, since the adze, after all, does have a shape somewhat like a hook. It may well be that the variety preserved in the diverse Arabic evidence reflects an early stage of the word's referential range, which became narrowed in Hebrew until it referred only to the adze, or, alternatively, that an originally narrowly-defined word had its reference broadened to include all tools with a hooked shape. But these possibilities are irrelevant to the meaning of the word *within* Hebrew. Regarding lexicography (as opposed to lexical history), the Arabic data is useful only to the extent that it confirms what is known already from the Hebrew sources; nothing further can be said about Hebrew *maʿăṣād* based on Arabic *miʿḍad* alone. It is likely, however, that lexicographers of Hebrew have illegitimately imported the semantics of the Arabic lexeme into their definitions of the Hebrew cognate.[41]

Geʿez

Geʿez has a verb *ʿaḍada*, defined by Leslau as "reap, mow," and a derived noun also exists, in the forms *māʿĕḍad* and *māʿĕḍĕd* (plural *maʿāḍĕd*), with the meanings "sickle, scythe, pruning hook."[42] Geʿez /ḍ/ is the reflex of Proto-Semitic /ṣ́/, which merged with /ṣ/ in Hebrew, so *ʿṣ́d would be עצד in Hebrew and *ʿaḍada* in Geʿez; thus the cognate status of these words seems assured. As with the Arabic data, however, it would be illegitimate to utilize the semantics of the Geʿez word to interpret the Hebrew word.

Conclusions on cognates

In sum, the cognates of Hebrew *maʿăṣād* in Ugaritic, Arabic, and Geʿez[43] all refer to cutting tools. The Geʿez word and possibly the Ugaritic word refer specifically to agricultural tools; the Arabic word is defined by a form rather than by a function. Among the various cognates, then, only the Hebrew term refers to a carpenter's tool, and none of the others are semantically close to the Hebrew.

The Gezer calendar

Relevant to this discussion is l. 3 of the tenth-century B.C. text known as the Gezer calendar. Most interpreters agree that the tablet identifies the agricultural activities of all twelve months, although Seth Sanders has pointed out that intended are "loose, colloquial

Geʿez *ʿaḍada* (below) is compelling evidence that these are, in fact, cognate. The Arabic cognate was noted already by König, "Isaiah xliv. 12, 13," 563.

[38] Lane, *Lexicon*, 2073.

[39] For part of the history of illustrations in dictionaries, see Anne McDermott, "Johnson's Definitions of Technical Terms and the Absence of Illustrations," *IJL* 18 (2005): 173–87. Illustrations were included in a monolingual dictionary already in 1538.

[40] None of the dictionaries of post-classical or colloquial Arabic that I checked had any relevant data.

[41] For this methodological problem in the lexicography of Biblical Hebrew, see John Kaltner, *The Use of Arabic in Biblical Hebrew Lexicography*, CBQ Monograph Series 28 (Washington, D.C., 1996), 88–92.

[42] Both definitions are from Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez (Classical Ethiopic): Geʿez-English, English-Geʿez* (Wiesbaden, 1987), 58.

[43] Other cognates have sometimes been invoked. Some have compared Aramaic חצד and Akkadian *eṣēdu* (on which see below). An even less credible claim has been made in the new edition of *Gesenius*, which cites the South Arabian name for the harvest month, *dmḫẓdm*, as a cognate for עצד (Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 18th edition, directed by Udo Rüterswörden, edited by Rudolf Meyer and Herbert Donner [Berlin, 1987–], s.v. *dmḫẓdm*; for the South Arabian name itself, cf. G. Ryckman, *Les Noms Propres Sud-Sémitiques* [Louvain, 1934], 1.379). The consonant *ḫ* makes this impossible (Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran* [originally Baroda, 1938; repr. Lahore, 1977], 109). A connection of the South Arabian name with Aramaic חצד "to harvest" (see below) is also problematic, for two reasons: ESA /ẓ/ should correspond to Aramaic ט (or צ in Old Aramaic), and Aramaic חצד is etymologically related to *eṣēdu* (again, see below), so the ח was most likely a pharyngeal /ḥ/ rather than a uvular /ḥ̣/.

month[s]," rather than formal months,[44] by which he means that they need not be precise periods of 29 or 30 days, and need not begin or end at any set time; "months" here are, rather, a means of approximating the units comprising the annual agricultural cycle. Within this text, the line of interest to us reads ירח עצד פשת; the graphemes עצד have often been seen as a verbal noun derived from the same root that produced the noun מעצד, with a meaning such as "the cutting." On the further assumption that the following string, פשת, is the direct object of the verbal noun עצד and a form of the Hebrew word for "flax,"[45] it is concluded that עצד means "harvest" or something similar.[46]

The reality of flax harvesting militates against understanding עצד פשת as "cutting of the flax," however.[47] This is because flax is not cut when it is harvested like standing-grain crops, but is rather uprooted.[48] The purpose of this is to avoid creating a blunt end (which reduces the quality of the flax for spinning) produced by cutting the stalk in the middle.[49]

That uprooting the flax was the practice in antiquity across the Near East is clear from both visual and philological evidence. One scene in the Egyptian tomb of *Iri.n-kꜣ-ptḥ* shows four workers harvesting grain and six harvesting flax.[50] The four grain-harvesters each hold sickles, but the six flax-harvesters are shown working only with their hands, plucking bunches of flax from the ground.[51] A scene from the tomb of *Nfr-sšm-ptḥ* and *Sḫntiw* is well preserved enough to provide further details.[52] Two workers hold down the bottoms of the sheaves with their feet and bind the tops; three others grasp the sheaves (two just below the blossoms, one lower down) and pull them out of the ground. Again, this is adjoined by a depiction of four workers harvesting wheat, and again these men, as opposed to the flax-harvesters, utilize sickles to perform their task.[53] Contrasting scenes such as these are

[44] Seth L. Sanders, "Writing and Early Iron Age Israel: Before National Scripts, Beyond Nations and States," in *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context*, ed. Ron E. Tappy and P. Kyle McCarter, (Winona Lake, IN, 2008), 100–102. For more conventional discussions of the months, see the discussions in Daniel Sivan, "The Gezer Calendar and Northwest Semitic Linguistics," *IEJ* 48 (1998): 101–105, J. A. Emerton, "How Many Months are Mentioned in the Gezer Calendar?" *PEQ* 131 (1999): 20–23, and Shmuel Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem, 2008), 252–58, with clear photo. Early views and arguments, especially the provocative ones of Naftali Tur-Sinai (Torczyner) and H. L. Ginsberg, were reviewed by W. F. Albright, "The Gezer Calendar," *BASOR* 92 (1943): 16–26. Albright's own views, especially on the morphological analysis of the word ירחו in the first two lines, were very influential. This last issue is the most debated in the text; for a summary of the views, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven, CT, 2005), 157–58. Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Oxford, 1996), 45–47, analyzes the agricultural cycle in the Gezer text, as compared with other relevant texts; I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of this reference. A good listing of the early studies of this text can be found in Mark K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 2 (Atlanta, 2009), 95 n. 22.

[45] In which case, the vocalization can be debated: it may be pointed פִּשְׁתָּ, and understood to be the feminine form attested in the Bible, written here defectively; or it may be a masculine form פֶּשֶׁת* or the like (cf. Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 256, and Amikam Gai, "הערות לשוניות על כתובות עבריות," *Tarbiz* 65 [1996]: 532, arguing for the latter and pointing to Hosea 2:7,11 in support). For the form פֶּשֶׁת, see further Richard C. Steiner, "On the Monophthongization of **ay* to *ī* in Phoenician and Northern Hebrew and the Preservation of Archaic/Dialectal Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization," *Orientalia* 76 (2007): 81–83, and below.

[46] For example, Albright, "Gezer Calendar": 22; Mark Lidzbarski, "An Old Hebrew Calendar-Inscription from Gezer," *PEQQS* 41 (1909): 26–29 at 28; G. B. Gray, "An Old Hebrew Calendar-Inscription from Gezer, 2," *PEQQS* 41 (1909): 31; and Umberto Cassuto, "The Gezer Calendar and Its Historical-Religious Value," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies by Umberto Cassuto*, tr. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1973–1975), 2.214. More recently, see Jayoung Peter Kang, *A Dictionary of Epigraphic Hebrew* (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 2006), 216 (s.v. עצד) and 227 (s.v. פשת) who has no comment on either word, and simply glosses the phrase as "cutting flax."

[47] See, e.g., Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake, IN, 1987), 34–35.

[48] See also Albright, "Gezer Calendar": 22 n. 35; Asriel Siegelmann, "Flax Growing and Processing in Roman Palestine," *Israel – Land and Nature* 9 (1984): 145: "the plants [are] pulled up with their roots (not cut) around Passover."

[49] See, e.g., H. R. Carter, *Flax: Its Cultivation & Preparation for Market* (London, 1918): 13. Albright, "Gezer Calendar": 22 n. 35, gives a different explanation: to maximize the length of the stem removed. Botanists report that this is not a serious consideration, however, since the fiber contained in the roots is minimal.

[50] Ahmed M. Moussa and Friedrich Junge, *Two Tombs of Craftsmen*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 9 (Mainz am Rhein, 1975), Plate 9, second register.

[51] See the comments in Ibid. 38, as well.

[52] Ibid., Plate 4b, bottom register; see also the descriptions on p. 21.

[53] More pictures of the process can be seen in Norman de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Deir el-Gebrâwi: Part I—Tomb of Aba and Smaller Tombs of the Southern Group* (London, 1902), plate XII and the comments on p. 18; cf. the more general discussion in Mary Anne Murray, "Cereal Production and Processing," in *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, ed. Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw (Cambridge, 2000), 522. For the situation in medieval Egypt, see

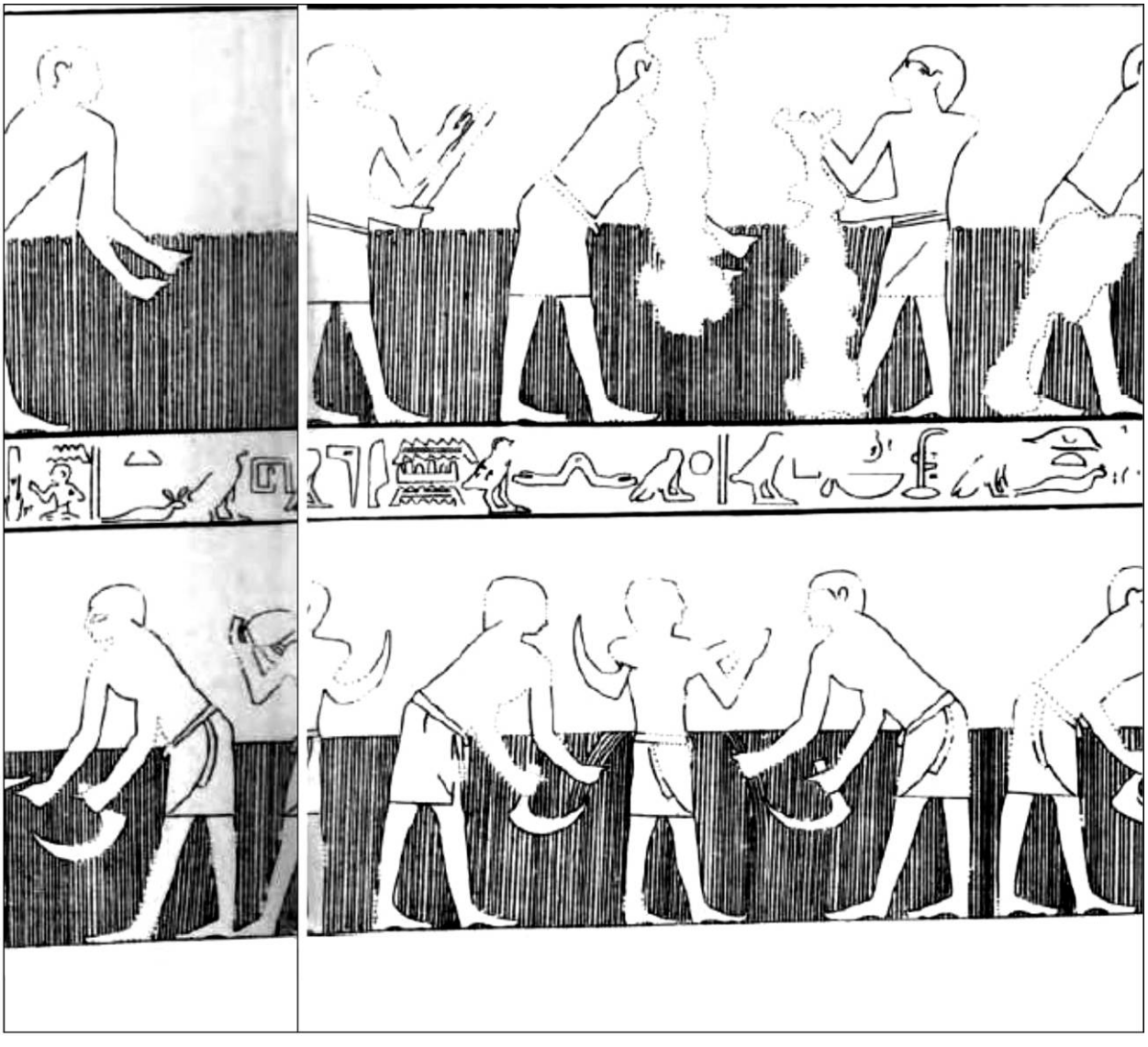

Figure 1—Harvesters of flax (top) and wheat (bottom), from the Old Kingdom tomb of Zau.[54]

known from as early as the Old Kingdom, such as the one from the tomb of Zau (Fig. 1):

On the philological side, we may note that in a number of Near Eastern languages the word used to refer to harvesting flax is different from that used to harvest grain. In Sumerian this different method of harvesting used for flax is lexicalized: "BU-(R) is used especially for those plants that have bulbs such as onions. . .or those pulled out along with their roots such as flax."[55] Gustaf Dalman writes, "Auf dem Felde wird des ausgereifte Flachs nicht geschnitten, sondern ausgerissen (*tālaš*)," and he refers to passages in rabbinic literature (e.g., Mishnah Baba Batra 5:7 [see n. 59 below]), in which the verb used for harvesting flax is תלש.[56]

the almanacs cited by Daniel Martin Varisco, *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science: The Almanac of a Yemeni Sultan*, Publication on the Near East 6 (Seattle, 1994), 202. R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1964), 4.28–32, notes that even in the twentieth century, flax was pulled by hand in northern Ireland.

[54] Norman de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Deir el Gebrâwi: Part II—Tomb of Zau and Tombs of the Northern Group* (London, 1902), pl. 6; cf. also the comments on p. 7.

[55] Miguel Civil, "Notes on the 'Instructions of Šuruppak'," *JNES* 43 (1984): 293 n. 17.

[56] Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (Hildesheim, 1964 [originally 1928–1939]), 5.26

Also used for the process, in Mishnaic Hebrew and many of the Middle and Late Aramaic dialects, is the root עקר "to uproot"; the Bavli mentions, for example, למיעקר כיתנא "to uproot flax" (Bavli Moed Qaṭan 12b).[57] Hebrew descriptions of flax harvesting in rabbinic sources also speak of עקר "uprooting" the flax, and the tool used for this job is the קורדום. For example, Mishnah Pe'ah 4:4 rules, "*Pē'āh* (the corner of the field set aside for the poor): [the poor] may not harvest it with sickles or uproot it with mattocks (*qordom*), so that people do not strike each other."[58] Other sources, such as Mishnah Baba Batra 5:7, use תלש "to pick," as noted by Dalman;[59] no source talks about harvesting flax with a tool, or cutting the flax, and there is no evidence that Hebrew עצ"ד or any of its cognates can mean "to uproot."[60]

Indeed, partly based on this, some have argued that the Gezer Calendar does not refer to flax at all,[61] and that flax may never have been cultivated in Iron Age Israel.[62] But after weighing the various possibilities, Frederick Dobbs-Allsopp et al. write that the understanding of פשת as a word for "flax" is the "most natural," although they agree that even the "more natural" solution is "far from ideal."[63]

It is my contention that the Gezer Calendar does in fact refer to flax, and that it was the word עצד that was preventing a proper understanding of this line. The problem, in other words, is not with taking פשת to refer to flax, but that flax is not "cut." The root עצד may have meant "to cut" but there is nothing to suggest that עצד can refer to "uprooting" flax, and therefore עצד פשת is problematic.

A different possibility regarding עצד in the Gezer calendar may therefore be considered: rather than connecting Gezer's עצד with Hebrew עצד, we may perhaps connect it with Aramaic חצד. This root is attested in Aramaic as early as the Tell Faḥariya inscription.[64] In ll. 18–19, that text offers the curse, ולזרע:ואל:יחצד "May he sow, but not reap."[65] The root appears in participial form often in seventh-century Aramaic texts, as part of the "harvester clause" (a clause found in contemporary contracts in Akkadian as well).[66] For example, one contract reads, 2. שערנ זי סלמסר עלוה בפלגהנ ירבינ. חצדנ 2. לאדר יתננ. "Barley of Šulmu-šarri owed(?): 2. It will accrue interest at 50%; 2 harvesters. It will be returned to the threshing floor."[67] A noun חצד apparently meaning "harvest" appears in the Tell Šiouḫ Fawqani inscription: . . . ?מן יהב מגל בחצד י?נ?פ "whoever gives a sickle at the harvest will. . . ."[68]

[57] This was pointed out by Jehuda Feliks, *Agriculture in the Land of Israel in the Days of the Mishnah and the Talmud*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1990), 202 (Hebrew), and Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 255. For כיתנא "flax" in JBA, see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan, 2002), 579.

[58] Cf. Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Fshutah* (New York, 1955–1988), 1.140. The rationale given for the law shows clearly that the tools were singled out simply as the ones normally used for the tasks at hand.

[59] Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (Hildesheim, 1964 [1928]), 26. The mishnah in Baba Batra reads: הלוקח פשתן מחברו, הרי זה לא קנה עד שיטלטלנו ממקום למקום. ואם היה מחובר לקרקע, תלש כל שהוא, קנה, "one who purchases flax from his fellow, does not acquire it until he has lifted it from one place to another; if it was still attached to the ground, as soon as he plucked (תלש) any of it, he has acquired [all of it]."

[60] Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Gezer Calendar and the Seasonal Cycle of Ancient Canaan," *JAOS* 83 (1963): 178.

[61] Ibid., 178–79, and Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 34–35, derive פשת from פש"ה "to spread."

[62] This is the argument of Talmon, "Gezer Calendar," 179–82. It should be noted that flax was cultivated millennia earlier in Egypt. For the history of flax cultivation, see A. Judd, "Flax – Some Historical Considerations," in *Flaxseed in Human Nutrition*, ed. S. C. Cunnane and L. U. Thompson (Champaign, Illinois, 1995), 1–10, and Marion Vaisey-Genser and Diane H. Morris, "Introduction: History of the Cultivation and Uses of Flaxseed," in *Flax: the Genus* Linum, ed. Alister D. Muir and Neil D. Westcott (London, 2003), 1–21.

[63] Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 160–61.

[64] This Aramaic root has been invoked by others to explain עצד in the Gezer text; cf., for example, Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 255.

[65] Of the studies of this text, the most useful regarding the curse-traditions are Stephen A. Kaufman, "Reflections on the Assyrian-Aramaic Bilingual from Tell Fakhariyeh," *Maarav* 3 (1982): 169; Jonas C. Greenfield and Aaron Shaffer, "Notes on the Akkadian-Aramaic Bilingual Statue from Tell Fekherye," *Iraq* 45 (1983): 115; J. Greenfield and A. Shaffer, "Notes on the curse Formulae of the Tell Fekherye Inscription," *RB* 92 (1985): 53. As noted by Greenfield and Shaffer, the idea of the curse is paralleled in Micah 6:15; they point, too, to Hag 1:16 and Deut. 28:38, as well as Bavli Moʿed Qaṭan 9b.

[66] Cf. Edward Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics, Vol. I*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 1 (Leuven, 1975), 90–91; J. N. Postgate, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents* (Warminster, 1976), 44–45; F. M. Fales, *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, Studi Semitici Nuova Serie 2, Materiali per il lessico aramaico 1 (Rome, 1986), texts 3:5; 9:r1; 47:r1; 49:6, see especially the comments on p. 227.

[67] André Lemaire, *Nouvelles Tablettes Araméennes*, Hautes Études Orientales 34 (Geneva, 2001), 94–97. See also texts 7:3; 8:5; 10:5; 11:v6, r4; 12:5; 13*:7; 21*:9 in that collection.

[68] The text is in F. M. Fales, "An Aramaic Tablet from Tell Shioukh Fawqani, Syria," *Semitica* 46 (1996): 91, and his comments on the passage (ll. 14–15) on pp. 102–104.

The verb is found later in Middle Aramaic dialects,[69] and the noun חצד "harvest" is found borrowed into post-biblical Hebrew. The contract Naḥal Ḥever 46 reads, in part:

> תללו חכרתי מ<כם> תדקלים ותשאר האילן שבהם ותעפר הלבן ותדקל הטוב ותחצד שבכפר <ת>כל שהחזיק חנניה בן חיטא מלפני מזה
>
> These I have leased from you: the date palms and the rest of the trees in them, the "white dust" and the good palm and the harvest (חצד) that is in the village—everything that was in the possession of Ḥananiah b. Ḥayyāṭa until this point.[70]

The verb was apparently borrowed into Arabic, as well.[71]

The suggestion is, then, to translate Gezer's עצד פשת as "harvesting flax," taking עצד to be related not to Hebrew מעצד, "adze," but to Aramaic חצד "to harvest." Since flax was not harvested by cutting it with a sickle or other tool, but pulled up by hand, this text would show that חצד (> עצד) could refer also to harvesting done that way.

Related to Aramaic חצד—but not, etymologically, to Hebrew עצד—is Akkadian *eṣēdu*. Although *a priori* derivable from a root **ḥṣd* or a root **ʿṣd*,[72] Healey pointed out that the meaning is precisely that of Aramaic חצד, and that there is no reason to doubt that equation from an etymological or semantic perspective.[73] It is worth noting, too, that the Akkadian text of the Tell Faḫariya inscription has *līriš lū lā eṣṣede* where the Aramaic has ולזרע ואל יחצד.[74] This semantic correspondence says nothing directly about the etymological question, but this Akkadian cognate is important because it establishes that the ח in חצד is the pharyngeal /ḥ/, not the uvular /x/.

It may be suggested that the scribe of the Gezer calendar may have written ע for etymological ח, and thus עצד for etymological חצד. The *ʿayin* and the *ḥet* share a place and manner of articulation—they are both pharyngeal fricatives—and differ only in the voicing. Is it possible that the scribe simply wrote עצד because that is what the word sounded like to him?

If it could be established that the writer of the Gezer calendar was not a professional scribe, or that he spoke a dialect in which /ḥ/ and /ʿ/ had merged—or both—this suggestion would be plausible. Both options are, in fact, possible. Even to the untrained eye, the scribe of the text does not seem to have been professional: note, for instance, that the stance of the *ḥets* varies widely throughout the inscription, and the

[69] For a contrary view—that the Aramaic word actually represents a variant spelling of older Hebrew עצד—cf. Yeḥezkel Kutscher, *Words and their Histories* (Jerusalem, 1965), 81 (Hebrew), as well as Feliks, *Agriculture in the Land of Israel*, 201.

[70] See Yigael Yadin et al., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean-Aramaic Papyri* (Jerusalem, 2002), 66, and the comment on p. 69, where they also propose an alternative interpretation that to my mind is far less likely (חצב > חצד "date"). G. Wilhelm Nebe, "Die Hebräische Sprache der Naḥal Ḥever Dokumente 5/6 Ḥev 44–46," in *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at Leiden University, December 1995*, ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (Leiden, 1997), 150–57, notes, "Das verwendete Vokabular geht deutlich über das biblische Hebräisch hinaus." The use of חצד is not among his examples.

[71] Arabic حصد "to reap" is found, e.g., in the Qūrʾān (12:47), where Yūsuf tells the Egyptians, تزرعون سبع سنين دأباً فما حصدتم فزروهُ في سنبل الا قليلا مما تاكلون , "Sow for seven years as you usually do, and the harvests that you reap, leave in the ear, except a little, of which you shall eat." For this being a loanword from Aramaic, see Siegmund Fraenkel, *Die Aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (Hildesheim, 1962 [orig. Leiden, 1886]), 132–33, who argues that the noun حصاد was borrowed, and the verb حصد is actually a denominative within Arabic; also Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, 109. Jeffery claims that the proper Arabic cognate of Aramaic חצד is خضد "to cut," which is semantically attractive but phonologically problematic: an Aramaic cognate of that Arabic root should have been written חקד in Old Aramaic and חעד in later Aramaic, not חצד, which in Aramaic can only derive from **ḥ/ḫṣd*.

[72] At various times, Albright compared the Akkadian root to both חצד and עצד. First he held ("Gezer Calendar": 22 n. 33): "[עצד] is not found in the Bible. . . . The cognate Accadian word (*eṣêdu*) means 'to reap,' whereas in Arabic the verb (*ʿḍd*) means 'to cut, prune, etc.'" However, later he stated (*apud* Louis Finkelstein, "A Talmudic Note," *BASOR* 94 [1944]: 28 n. 2): "After studying the data again, I think that it is preferable to return to the etymology of Delitzsch and his successors, namely that Accad. *eṣédu* is Aram. *ḥaṣád* and Arab. *ḥáṣada*, both of which have the same meaning, 'to reap (grain),' whereas the basic meaning of *ʿaṣád* and Arab. *ʿáḍada* is 'to lop off,' or the like."

[73] Healey, "Swords and Ploughshares," 52. Healey notes that it is possible that *eṣēdu* conceals both roots, which would have merged into a single lexeme within Akkadian, but concludes that there is no hint of this.

[74] Chaim Cohen and Yaakov Klein, "*Ḥermēš* and *maqqāl* in the Bible and their Parallels—Ugaritic *ḫrmtt* and Akkadian *niqqallu*," in *Teshurah li-Shmuel: Studies in the World of the Bible*, ed. Zipora Talshir, Shamir Yonah, and Daniel Sivan (Beer-Sheva, 2001), 245 n. 1 (in Hebrew), cite this semantic equivalency and write, "Here is the unambiguous proof that Aramaic חצד = Akkadian *eṣēdu* both semantically and etymologically." (Note that they conflate semantic and etymological relationships also in their discussion of מגל and *niqqallu*.)

ḥet in l. 5 is actually sideways; the *yods*, too, are notably heterogeneous. Albright already pointed out that "in favor of the exercise-tablet interpretation is the scribe's hand, which is slow and extremely awkward."[75] Indeed, in Macalister's original publication of the text, he described it as "rudely scratched."[76] Although a trained scribe might simply have lousy handwriting, this particular paleography may suggest that the writer was not a professional scribe. This text is not a type we would expect a professional scribe to have written at all: it seems, on the contrary, to reflect the emergence of scribal practices outside of the professional bureaucracy.[77]

As for the origin of the text, there are good reasons to associate the text with Phoenician rather than Hebrew.[78] It is well-known that in northern Israel of later centuries, either the ח was sometimes realized with voicing and written as ע or, conversely, ע was occasionally de-voiced and written as ח—or both. These phenomena, referred to in the literature on occasion as the "weakening of the gutturals," are attested in both Galilean and Samaritan Aramaic,[79] and according to Rabbinic sources (Yerushalmi Berakhot 4d), this phenomenon was most prominent in the lower Galilee.[80]

In order to be relevant for the Gezer Calendar, of course, it would have to be shown that ח and ע had merged much earlier than it is usually said to have

[75] Albright, "Gezer Calendar": 21. G. R. Driver, "Brief Notes. II. Notes on Old Inscriptions. I. Hebrew," *PEQ* 7 (1945): 5–9, concurred with Albright's assessment; see further references in George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*, 96 n. 23.

[76] R. A. Macalister, "Twentieth Quarterly Report on the Excavation of Gezer: Seventh of the Second Series, 11 August – 10 November, 1908," *PEFQS* 41 (1909): 13–25, at 16.

[77] Sanders, "Writing and Early Iron Age Israel," 101.

[78] This is now argued most fully by Dennis Pardee, "A Brief Case for the Language of the 'Gezer Calendar' as Phoenician," in *Linguistic Studies in Phoenician Grammar*, ed. Robert Holmstedt and Aaron Schade (Winona Lake, IN, 2013); my thanks to Prof. Pardee for sharing a draft of the paper with me. Epigraphers have often associated the text with the Phoenician script rather than with a putative Old Hebrew script; see Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem, 1982), 76; André Lemaire, "Phénician et philistine: paléographie et dialectologie," in *Actas del IV congreso internacional de estudios fenicios y púnicos*, ed. M. E. Aubet and M. Barthélemy (Cádiz, 2000), 1.247; and Benjamin Sass, *The Alphabet at the Turn of the Millennium: The West Semitic Alphabet ca. 1150–850 BCE: The Antiquity of the Arabian, Greek and Phrygian Alphabets*, Tel Aviv Occasional publications 4 (Tel-Aviv, 2005), 84. This is against, e.g., Frank Moore Cross, "Newly Found Inscriptions in Old Canaanite and Early Phoenician Scripts," *BASOR* 238 (1980): 14, who suggests that the Gezer text shows rudimentary forms of what later became the hallmarks of the Hebrew script. It is not clear if there was a separate Old Hebrew script in the tenth century. Evidence from the Tel Zayit abcedary suggested to McCarter that indeed there was a distinctive Hebrew ("South Canaanite") script in the tenth century, but this was contested by Rollston, who concluded that "the evidence suggests that during the 10th century the ancient Israelites continued to use the prestige Phoenician script": compare Ron E. Tappy, P. Kyle McCarter, Marilyn J. Lundberg and Bruce Zuckerman, "An Abcedary of the Mid-Tenth Century from the Judaean Shephelah," *BASOR* 344 (2006): 5–46 (esp. 25–41), with Christopher A. Rollston, "The Phoenician Script of the Tel Zayit Abcedary and Putative Evidence for Israelite Literacy," in *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan*, 61–96 (quote from p. 89). (Note that Rollston's position is self-contradictory: if there was no separate Hebrew script, the use of the Phoenician script has nothing to do with "prestige.") Cf. Amihai Mazar, "Three 10th–9th Century B.C.E. Inscriptions from Tēl Reḥōv," in *Saxa Loquentur: Studien zur Archäologie Palästinas/Israels: Festschrift für Volkmar Fritz zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Cornelis G. den Hertog, Ulrich Hübner and Stefan Münger, AOAT 302 (Münster, 2003), 182, on the difficulties of distinguishing Hebrew from Phoenician in Iron IIA inscriptions.

[79] In one case, interestingly, it even appears that Hebrew חצד was written עצד!: Louis Finkelstein, "A Talmudic Note," 28–29, pointed to a passage in the Sifra (Qedošim §1.1), which (in the text cited by R. Samson of Sens) reads, אין לי אלא קוצר, תולש מנין? תלמוד לומר לקצור. עוצד מנין? תלמוד לומר קצירך, "I only know about one who harvests (קוצר)—whence one who plucks (תולש), as well? It teaches it by saying 'to harvest' (לקצור). Whence one who reaps (עוצד)? It teaches it by saying 'your harvest' (קצירך)." However, testifying to this reading is a single, not particularly reliable, witness. Far more and better witnesses testify to the reading חוצד: this is the reading in Codex Assemani 66 of the Sifra and the Leiden manuscript of the Yerushalmi Peah 1:4, where this passage is quoted, and this is the reading adopted in the databases of the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language project (Ma'agarim), as well. Rather than positing עוצד as the ur-form from which the various readings descended, it would appear to be simpler to posit an original חוצד, "reaps," which was mistakenly written as עוצד. This would then simply testify to the tendency to interchange ח and ע. See also Jonas C. Greenfield's review of Gibson's *TSSI* 1 in *JAOS* 94 (1974): 510.

[80] See the discussion in Yehezkel Kutscher, הלשון והרקע הלשוני של מגילת ישעיהו השלמה ממגילות ים המלח (Jerusalem, 1959), 42–44. In Hellenistic and Roman times, the phenomenon is not restricted to northern dialects—the dialects of Hebrew found at Qumran and in the Mishnah also show examples; for discussion, see especially E. Y. Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic*, tr. Michael Sokoloff (Ramat Gan, 1976), 70–78; for references to examples from Qumran Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew and the secondary literature regarding them, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, SJLA 16 (Leiden, 1975), 32–33 n. 73. The interchanges of ע and ח were earlier discussed by Nahmanides in his commentary on Deut. 2:23 (regarding the word עורים). Although this merger is sometimes seen as the result of Greek influence (for example, Gary Rendsburg, "Ancient Hebrew Phonology," in *Phonologies of Asia and Africa*, ed. Alan S. Kaye [Winona Lake, IN, 1997], 74), it is suggested here that this is in fact a much older phenomenon.

done. Indeed, there is evidence for the interchange of ח and ע in Late Bronze Age Semitic already, which has for the most part gone unremarked in the Semitic literature. To be specific, there is evidence from Late Egyptian transcriptions of Semitic words that in some cases, etymological /ḥ/ was realized with voicing, as an /ʿ/. For example, the word חטין "wheat" was written *ʿa-di-na(-ya)* in three Late Egyptian texts, and בחר "sea" (known from Arabic بحر) was written *b-ʿ-r(a)*.[81] The word חִיפּוּשִׁית "beetle, grasshopper," was written *ʿ-p-ši-ya-t* (and with other comparable spellings).[82]

The Egyptian transcriptions of Semitic words have proven to be invaluable to Semitists for the reconstruction of the phonology of Northwest Semitic dialects in the Late Bronze Age. Although long available, these transcriptions became eminently more useful after they were systematically collected and judiciously analyzed by James Hoch, as emphasized by Hoch himself as well as some of the reviewers of his book and more recent scholars.[83]

The examples just seen suggest that sometimes Semitic /ḥ/ was voiced, and heard as an /ʿ/ by the Egyptian scribes. Locating this phonetic development is less simple. As Hoch points out, בחר (بحر) is attested only in South Semitic (South Arabian, Ethiopic, and Arabic),[84] but the other two are plausibly Aramaic: חיפושית seems to be a native Aramaic word, and the plural ending *-īn* on the word for "wheat" suggests that it, too, is Aramaic or Arabic in its origins. No single locale suggests itself as the origin for all of these words, but the northern part of the Levant is a strong candidate for at least two of them.

It should be emphasized, of course, that this evidence does not stand alone. The partial merger of ח with ע is well-known from a millennium or so later. The value of the Egyptian transcriptions is to enable us to move back the date of the beginning of that process to the Late Bronze Age, rather than seeing it as a new phenomenon in Hellenistic or Roman times. It is the combination of the early and late evidence that makes this suggestion worth entertaining.

It may also be worth considering the suggestion, then, that the form עצד in the Gezer text represents *חצד rather than *עצד. It has long been noted that the Gezer text reflects northern Hebrew (or Phoenician); the clearest evidence for this is the contracted diphthongs in the words כֶּל "measuring" (SBH כֵּיל) and קֵץ "summer" (SBH קַיִץ).[85] On the lexical level, the use of ירח rather than חֹדֶשׁ also provides an isogloss between this text and Phoenician (and Proto-Hebrew) against standard Biblical Hebrew.[86] (This is a result of an inner-Hebrew development, in which the term for "new moon," חדש ירח*, spread to mean "month" through abridgement and synecdoche.)[87] The form פשת for flax is also a marker of the northern Hebrew

[81] For these examples, see James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, 1994), 85 (no. 104) and 92–93 (no. 114). I am indebted to Gary Rendsburg for reminding me to check Hoch for relevant data.

[82] Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts*, 66–67 (no. 72), with a discussion of the many phonological problems this word raises within Semitic. See also Hoch's summary statements of the ע for ח interchanges on p. 413.

[83] See, for instance, Gary Rendsburg, "Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts," *JAOS* 116 (1996): 508–511; Ronald S. Hendel, "Sibilants and šibbōlet (Judges 12:6)," *BASOR* 301 (1996): 69–75; Richard C. Steiner, "Semitic Names for Utensils in the Demotic Word-List from Tebtunis," *JNES* 59 (2000): 191–94; ibid., "On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes (*$\dot{H}$ > H and *$\dot{G}$ > ʿ) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith)," *JBL* 124 (2005): 229–67; Robert Woodhouse, "The Biblical Shibboleth Story in the Light of Late Egyptian Perceptions of Semitic Sibilants: Reconciling Divergent Views," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 271–89; Michael O'Connor, "The Onomastic Evidence for Bronze-Age West Semitic," *JAOS* 124 (2004): 439–70.

[84] Despite the restriction of the lexeme to South Semitic in what is known to us, the second-millennium Egyptian evidence suggests that it was known in the Levant at that time. My thanks to Prof. Aaron Demsky for his comments in this regard.

[85] See again Albright, "Gezer Calendar": 24–25; W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia, 1985), 37–38. Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 256. It seems to me that the starting point of the yearly cycle—at the counter-intuitive "two months of ingathering"—was chosen to allow a pun on קֵץ "summer" and קֵץ "end." This seems to me preferable to George's suggestion (*Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*, 100 n. 34) that the structure of the text reflects an alternative way of ordering time, in which the harvest was naturally first. See also Pardee, "A Brief Case for the Language of the 'Gezer Calendar' as Phoenician," n. 36. For the pun, compare, of course, Amos 8:2. A note of uncertainty should be injected here, since SBH does have some lexemes (e.g., חֵק) in which the diphthong is contracted; but קַיִץ is an attested SBH form.

[86] Seth L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Urbana, IL, 2009), 111.

[87] Richard C. Steiner, "Vowel Syncope and Syllable Repair Processes in Proto-Semitic Construct Forms: A New Reconstruction Based on the Law of Diminishing Conditioning," in *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, ed. Rebecca Hasselbach and Na'ama Pat-El, SAOC 67 (Chicago, 2012), 372–73 and nn. 39–40.

dialect: it is paralleled in Phoenician and Ugaritic, as well as in Hosea 2:7, 11.[88]

Now perhaps we can add that the scribe pronounced the ח in the root חצד with voicing, thus yielding a sound equivalent to that of the ע. This, too, was not a feature of the dialect of the south which became Classical Biblical Hebrew, but of certain dialects to the north and east, as seen in the Egyptian transcriptions of the words *baḥr*, *ḥiṭṭīn* and *ḥīppūšīt* discussed above. This voicing may also have been a feature of the dialect in Gezer (or wherever the writer of the text came from).

Some linguists have suggested on the basis of other data (such as the use of the anticipatory pronoun in ירחו) that the text is Phoenician.[89] Regarding the issues at hand, however (the contractions of the diphthongs and the lexical form פשת), the Northern dialect of Hebrew shared these isoglosses with Phoenician; therefore, distinguishing between those two options is not possible on the basis of either of these features, and indeed, Dennis Pardee indicated that it may be "early Samarian Hebrew."[90] Some have argued for the Israelite identity of the scribe on the basis of his name, which is often reconstructed as [ו]אבי on the bottom left corner of the text,[91] but it is obviously hazardous to put too much weight on a conjectural restoration, and, indeed, no restoration may be necessary, as the name אבי by itself is actually found on an Iron Age papyrus.[92] The phonetic realization of */ḥ/ as /ʿ/ is known from loanwords, possibly from Aramaic, in the Late Bronze Age, and then from Galilean Hebrew and Aramaic a millennium later, but not in Phoenician. In my view, then, aligning the Gezer text with Northern Hebrew best accounts for all the data. Indeed, it seems intuitive to expect a text found at Gezer to be in northern Hebrew than to be in Phoenician.[93]

Conclusions

Within the Gezer Calendar, it seems likely that the scribe transcribed the word *ḥāṣīd* "harvest" as עצד.[94] This reflected the phonetics of the word as he pronounced it and heard it. Perhaps because he not a classically trained scribe, he did not learn to compensate for his own pronunciation by writing the "proper" form.[95]

[88] See above, n. 39; for the distribution of this form, see Steiner, "On the Monophthongization of **ay* to *ī*," 81–83.

[89] For one example, cf. Eduard Yehezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, ed. Raphael Kutscher (Jerusalem, 1982), 67 (see also the next note, below). Sivan, "Gezer Calendar," showed, however, that anticipatory pronouns are attested with some frequency in standard biblical Hebrew as well. Ian M. Young, "The Style of the Gezer Calendar and Some 'Archaic Biblical Hebrew' Passages," *VT* 42 (1992): 362–75 has argued that the language is in fact Hebrew, and that its language is simply a particular literary style—the one commonly known as "archaic biblical Hebrew," but his comparisons are not compelling. P. Kyle McCarter, "Gezer Calendar," *COS* 2.85 (p. 222), concludes that "Hebrew" is too specific a label, and "South Canaanite" should be used to describe the dialect of this text; for a fuller defense of this neologism, see McCarter, "Paleographic Notes on the Tel Zayit Abecedary," in *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan*, 50–53. I am not sure if he intends this to be both a linguistic and a paleographical term.

[90] Dennis Pardee, review of *Proche-Orient ancient,* ed. Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet and Hélène Lozachmeur (Paris, 1998), in *JAOS* 121 (2001): 136–37 n. 5, and "A Brief Case for the Language of the 'Gezer Calendar' as Phoenician"; also Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 37–38, and, earlier, Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence*, AOS 36 (New Haven, 1952), 47.

[91] As Gary Rendsburg pointed out (personal communication), the restoration is not certain, although if the *yod* is not to be taken as a *mater lectionis*, it is most likely.

[92] The papyrus, published by J. T. Milik in *Les grottes de Murabbaʿat*, DJD 2 (Oxford, 1961), 97, is apparently just a list of names.

[93] This adds to Gary Rendsburg's argument that "northern Hebrew" is attested just to the north of Jerusalem itself. Recently, Rendsburg has made the case that in the late eighth and seventh centuries, the Benjaminite dialect of Hebrew shared certain features with northern Hebrew and Phoenician. See Rendsburg and William M. Schniedewind, "The Siloam Tunnel Inscription: Historical and Linguistic Perspectives," *IEJ* 60 (2011): 188–203, and the dissertation written by Rendsburg's student Colin Smith, "'With an Iron Pen and a Diamond Tip': Linguistic Peculiarities in the Book of Jeremiah" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 2003). Ideally, dialectal conclusions should not be based on a single text alone; numerous scenarios could be imagined to account for one tablet found at Gezer composed in a northern dialect. But it is possible that the Gezer dialect really was different from the Jerusalem-based dialect known as "standard biblical Hebrew," and it may indeed be that it is Jerusalemite Hebrew that is the enigma, differing as it does from all its neighbors in basic phonological features such as the non-contraction of diphthongs. See the striking map provided by Garr in *Dialect Geography*, 40.

[94] The vocalization, which is obviously speculative, is based on the assumption that the noun is the *qātīl* type common for agricultural activities, a possibility suggested to me by Gary Rendsburg. For the data, see John Huehnergard, "*Qātîl* and *Qətîl* Nouns in Biblical Hebrew," in *Shaʿarei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher*, ed. A. Maman, S. E. Fassberg, and Y. Breuer (Jerusalem, 2007), 1.*3–*45. Huehnergard notes that the *qātīl* pattern "came to be associated with . . . agricultural terms and other terms for various plants" (*5).

[95] For this critical skill learned by scribes, see the examples and discussion in Richard C. Steiner, "Papyrus Amherst 63: A New Source for the Language, Literature, Religion, and History of

To summarize, therefore, it has been seen that the Hebrew noun מעצד refers to the "adze" throughout the history of ancient Hebrew: it is found twice in the Hebrew Bible, in relatively unrevealing contexts, and often in rabbinic literature, in contexts that make the identification clear. Hebrew is unique among the Semitic languages in having a noun from the root עצד which refers to a carpentry tool; in other languages, cognates refer to agricultural tools and other cutting tools, but not to the tools of the carpenter.

Although the literary corpus of Hebrew (Biblical through Mishnaic) does not contain any attestations of the verbal root עצד, this root is attested in the Gezer calendar. Since flax (פשת) is "uprooted" rather than "cut," however, the use of עצד in the Gezer calendar does not match the data regarding the semantics of the root within Hebrew. Instead, I have suggested the connection of Gezer's עצד with Aramaic חצד, and posit that in the dialect of the scribe, the ע and the ח were indistinguishable, at least in some contexts.

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the Aramaeans," in *Studia Aramaica – New Sources and New Approaches: Papers Delivered at the London Conference of the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College, 1991*, ed. M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman (Oxford, 1995), 199–207.