

On the Monophthongization of **ay* to *ī* in Phoenician and Northern Hebrew and the Preservation of Archaic/Dialectal Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization¹

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Until recently, the Phoenician reflex of **ay* did not seem to warrant much attention. Van den Branden, Segert, and Friedrich & Röllig were content to give the reflex as *ē* and supply a few examples². It is only in the last decade that scholars have begun to suggest that the monophthongization of **ay* in Phoenician (or, rather, its ancestor, Old Canaanite) had two outcomes: *ē* and *ī*³.

The two outcomes are, of course, known only from transcriptions. From Neo-Assyrian, PPG³ cites ⁴*Ba-al-sa-me-me* (< **šamaymu*), *Bīt-zi-it-ti* (< **baytu* and **zaytu*), *Bi-ti-ru-me* (< **baytu*), and *In-im-me* (< **aynu*). Most of these cuneiform renderings of monophthongized **ay* can be read with either *e* or *i*⁴, but one is unambiguous: *In*-⁵. From Greek

¹ I would like to express my gratitude for the generosity and patience of the scholars to whom I turned for help: Gary Beckman, Barry Eichler, John Huehnergard, and, last but not least, the esteemed honoree, Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo.

² A. van den Branden, *Grammaire phénicienne* (Beirut 1969) 13; S. Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich 1976) 76; J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik* (2nd ed.; Rome 1970) 32.

³ E. Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (1st ed. and 2nd ed.; Leuven 1997 and 2001) §§ 21.9, 21.13; J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, PPG³ = *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik* (3. Auflage, neu bearbeitet von M. G. Amadasi Guzzo unter Mitarbeit von W. R. Mayer; Rome 1999) 44. The former outcome is the result of reciprocal assimilation of nucleus (*a*) and glide (*y*): the nucleus is raised and the glide is lowered, and they meet somewhere in the middle. The latter outcome reflects total regressive assimilation of the nucleus to the glide. Contrast Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, Connecticut 1936) 25: "In the latest period of Phoenician and Punic a definite tendency toward the close pronunciation of at least the long vowels becomes apparent. The *ē* which had arisen from *aj* and from tone-lengthened *i* came to be pronounced *ī*...". So too C. R. Krahmalkov, *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar* (Leiden 2001) 30: "The Canaanite diphthong *ay* had the reflex *ē*... Sometimes the contracted diphthong *ē* is found lowered [sic!] to *ī*...". According to these accounts, the monophthongization of **ay* originally had only one outcome.

⁴ The *me* of ⁴*Ba-al-sa-me-me* can also be read *mi*. Similarly, the toponym *Bi-ti-ru-me* can be read *Bē-ti-ru-me*, and *zi-it-ti* can be read *ze-et-ti* (personal communication from J. Huehnergard). So too *hi-na-ia* "my eyes" in an Amarna letter from Sidon (144 l. 17), cited by PPG³ 44 n. 5 with a reference to 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* (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984) 13. Sivan, himself, however, has *he-na-ia*. In n. 10 he adds: "In many cases we do not know whether the contraction is to *ē* or to *ī*." For a discussion of the orthograph-

and Latin, *PPG*³ cites only forms with *ēta* and *e*: βῆτα (< **baytu*), ζῆτα (< **zaytu*), Σαμημ-ρουμος (< **šamaymu*), and *iadem* [yadew] “his hands” (< **yadayhū*); however, there are some examples with *iota* and *i* that might be added.

One such example, noted by E. Lipiński, is Βιθια/*Bitia*⁶, the name of a Roman town of Phoenician-Punic origin on the southern coast of Sardinia. A Punic inscription from the town (*KAI* 173), first published by G. Levi Della Vida, gives its name as *Byt'n*⁷. Lipiński assumes that the first component of this name is *būt* < **bayt* “house”. This seems reasonable, especially in view of the name of the modern municipality in which the ruins of Bitia are located: *Domus de Maria*. The latter toponym may derive from an ancient Latin translation of *Byt'n*⁸.

In all likelihood, the toponym *Šdn* “Sidon” also exhibits *ī* < **ay*. The quantity and quality of the first vowel in this toponym are known from Greek, Hebrew, and Hittite renderings. Greek Σῖδών and the adjective Σῖδόνιος are attested already in Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, respectively, where the meter establishes that the first vowel is long⁹. According to

ical ambiguity, see J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta, Georgia 1987) 258 n. 191.

³ The *IN* sign does not usually have the value /en/ (*en*,) (personal communication from J. Huehnergard).

⁶ Lipiński, *Semitic* §§ 21.9, 21.13.

⁷ G. Levi Della Vida, “L’iscrizione punica di Bitia in Sardegna”, *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 70 (1935) 189, 191; M. G. Guzzo Amadasi, *Le iscrizioni fenicie e puniche delle colonie in occidente* (Rome 1967) 133-36. At first glance, the failure to represent the final *nun* of *Byt'n* in Latin *Bitia* seems to have many parallels in Punic personal names, but all of the obvious examples end in *o(n)* rather than *a(n)*; see K. Jongeling, *Names in Neo-Punic Inscriptions* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Groningen 1984) 128 and add *Hanno/Hannon-*, *Sidiatho/Sidiathon-* = *Šdytn* (ibid. 234, 246). The rendering of **ayin* with a vowel is common in the Septuagint and elsewhere, but the vowel is usually *epsilon* (Ελεάζαρ, Γεδεων, etc.) or *alpha* (Βαλααμ, Φαραω, etc.). The use of *iota* for **ayin* is surprising, but cf. Ναχαλιγαιας = *Nahāle'* Ga'aš in LXX to 2 Sam 23:30.

⁸ According to Levi Della Vida (“L’iscrizione” 191), **n* is simply the *-ān* ending. The inscription contains many examples of **ayin* serving as a *mater lectionis* for *a* in both Semitic words and Latin names. Examples with **n* = *an* include *p'ny* “front of it”, **nṯnyh* = *Antonino*, and perhaps **wyṯ'n* = *Avitian(o)*. In this interpretation, it is tempting to compare *Byt'n* to LBH *bītān* “palace”. However, *bītān*, an Akkadian loanword known only from Esther, would seem to be more at home in Achaemenid Persia than in Roman Sardinia. Lipiński (*Semitic* §§ 21.9, 21.13) interprets *Byt'n* as *Bīt-īn* “House of the Spring”, with two contracted diphthongs. A third possibility, suggested by the modern toponym *Domus de Maria*, is that we are dealing with a theophoric toponym. The second component of *Byt'n* could be the divine name **An* (the masc. counterpart of **Anat*), attested in personal names from Ugarit and (according to some) Phoenicia; see F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Rome 1967) 110 and F. L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome 1972) 380 (others read *Bn'n*[t] instead of *Bn'n*) and the literature cited there. In other words, we may be dealing with a toponym meaning “Temple of **An*”, similar to biblical *Be't 'Anāt* and *Be't 'Ano't* – not to mention *Be't Dāgo'n*, *Be't Ho(*)ro(*)n* (*Bythrn* in the Tell Qasile inscription), *Be't Šāmās*, etc.

⁹ See R. Woodhouse, “The Greek Prototypes of the City Names *Sidon* and *Tyre*: Evidence

R. Woodhouse, the adoption of this toponym into the Greek tradition is perhaps to be sought “somewhere in the period of the eleventh to the ninth centuries B.C.E.”¹⁰. BH *Ṣiḏoⁿ*, too, had a long vowel in its first syllable, as shown by the consistent *plene* spelling with *yod*. The quality of the vowel is, of course, known from the Masoretic pointing (Tiberian and Babylonian)¹¹. All of the Hittite spellings of this toponym begin with the ambiguous sign *zi/e*; however, one of them disambiguates through the use of *scriptio plena*: [Z]i-i-du-na-az “from Sidon (ablative)”¹². This spelling shows the quantity (long) as well as the quality¹³. It comes from KBo 2.9 + KUB 15.35 (i 30), a New Hittite copy (late 14th or 13th century B.C.E.) of a ritual for Ishtar of Nineveh (CTH 716)¹⁴. Akkadian forms of the toponym (Amarna and Neo-Assyrian) are less helpful; they exhibit a similar ambiguity in the first syllable, and there are no disambiguating spellings¹⁵.

The original form of this Phoenician toponym was almost certainly **Ṣaydān*. That form became entrenched in Aramaic, apparently at a very early period¹⁶, and from there it spread to other languages. It survives in Syriac *Ṣaydān*, Galilean Aramaic *Ṣyydn*, MH *Ṣyydn* (vocalized *Ṣaydān*)¹⁷, and Arabic *Ṣaydā* (adj. *Ṣaydānī*)¹⁸. It is probably also reflected in the BH

for Phonemically Distinct Initials in Proto-Semitic or for the History of Hebrew Vocalism”, *JAOS* 124 (2004) 240.

¹⁰ Ibid. 238.

¹¹ For the Babylonian pointing, see I. Yeivin, *The Hebrew Language Tradition as Reflected in the Babylonian Vocalization* (Jerusalem 1985) 1097 (Hebrew).

¹² I am indebted to G. Beckman for this information. For an English translation of the text, see *COS* 1, 164-65.

¹³ H. C. Melchert, “Hittite Phonology”, in: A. S. Kaye (ed.), *Phonologies of Asia and Africa* (Winona Lake, Indiana 1997) 2, 557.

¹⁴ Personal communication from G. Beckman.

¹⁵ The spelling at Amarna is usually *Zi-du-na* (once *Zi-tu-na* and once *Ṣi-du-na*) (J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* [Leipzig 1915] 1582). In Neo-Assyrian, the most common spellings are *Ṣi-du-nu/ni* and *Ṣi-du-un-ni*; *plene* spelling is uncommon and attested only in the second syllable, viz., *Ṣi-du-u-ni* (S. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms* [Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970] 322-323). All of these forms can be read with *e* instead of *i* in the first syllable (personal communication from J. Huehnergard).

¹⁶ The *terminus ante quem* is the Amarna period, by which time monophthongization and the Canaanite shift had already taken place in Phoenicia. My current work on the Proto-Canaanite spells in the Pyramid Texts raises the possibility that the Canaanite shift took place more than a millennium before the Amarna period. This has important ramifications for historians interested in the origin of the Arameans.

¹⁷ So spelled and vocalized in Codex Kaufmann of the Mishnah in all four occurrences (*Ketubbot* 7:10, *Giṭṭin* 4:7, 7:5, *Abodah Zarah* 3:7). The same vocalization is found in the Babylonian tradition; see Yeivin, *Babylonian Vocalization* 1097.

¹⁸ Note also ESA *Ṣydn* in W. W. Müller, “Altsüdarabische Beiträge zum hebräischen Lexikon”, *ZAW* 75 (1963) 313. However, it is not clear whether the first syllable of this form contains a diphthong or a monophthong; see A. F. L. Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar* (Manchester 1984) 7.

gentilic adjective *ṣedniyyot* < **ṣedāniyyot*¹⁹ (1 Kgs 11:1). We may also compare the cuneiform transcriptions of this toponym occurring two lines apart in the *Esarhaddon Chronicle*: *Ṣi/e-da-nu* and *Ṣa-’-i-du-nu*²⁰. The latter transcription attempts to render the Aramaic diphthong in the first syllable, but gives the Phoenician vowel in the second syllable²¹. The former transcription has a monophthong in the first syllable, but matches the Aramaic form in the second syllable²².

The form *Ṣaydān* has two components: the verbal noun *ṣayd* and the *-ān* ending, which became *-ōn* in languages affected by the Canaanite shift. The verbal noun is used in Syriac and Arabic of (1) the act of hunting, (2) the animals pursued, captured or killed in/through the act of hunting (the prey, quarry; game, venison)²³, (3) the act of fishing, and (4) the fish that are caught through the act of fishing (the catch, the haul of fish)²⁴. The same uncontracted form appears in Βηθσαιδα, the Aramaic name of a village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee believed to have been originally populated by fishermen²⁵. According to Justin (18.3.2-4), the name *Sidon* has a similar etymology: “[The Phoenicians] settled first at the Syrian lake and subsequently on the coastline, where they established a city which they called Sidon because of the abundance of fish in the area (‘sidon’ being Phoenician for ‘fish’)”²⁶. Earlier evidence for fishing in the area comes from Tyre, 25 miles to the south. In the thirteenth century B.C.E., an Egyptian scribe described Tyre as “richer in fish than sand”²⁷. In Nehemiah’s time, Tyrians brought fish to Jerusalem and sold it there on the Sabbath (Neh 12:16).

¹⁹ The reduction of *ā* in this form must be attributed to metanalysis or hypercorrection (of an Aramaic vowel pattern).

²⁰ S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London 1924) 12 ll. 12 and 14; *ANET* 303. For the rendering of Aramaic **ay* with *a* in Neo-Assyrian, cf. *Ša-ma-ra-’-in* (Parpola, *Toponyms* 302) < **Šāmīrayn* “Samaria”.

²¹ For *Ṣaydōn/Ṣaydūn* in Syriac and *Ṣaydūn* in Arabic, see W. Gesenius, *Thesaurus philologicus linguae Hebraeae et Chaldaeae Veteris Testamenti* (Leipzig 1835) 1154 s.v. *Ṣīdo’n*; and S. Wild, *Libanesische Ortsnamen* (Beirut 1973) 154.

²² The Aramaic influence exhibited by these forms is hardly surprising. By the beginning of the seventh century B.C.E., the entire population of Assyria spoke Aramaic including the speakers of Akkadian. See S. Parpola, “National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times”, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18/2 (2004) 5-49 and the literature cited there.

²³ Hebrew *ṣayid*, too, means “game”.

²⁴ R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford 1879-1901) 3377 s.v. *ṣaydān*, *ṣaydānyā*; E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London 1863-77) 1752 s.v. *ṣāda* (inf. *ṣayd*) and 1753 s.v. *ṣayd*.

²⁵ J. F. Strange, “Beth-Saida”, *ABD* 1.692.

²⁶ Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (transl. J. C. Yardley; Atlanta, Georgia 1994) 154; *M. Iuniani Iustini Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi* (ed. Otto Seel; Stuttgart 1972) 157: *nam piscem Phoenices sidon vocant*. More precisely, *Sidon* is derived from the word for “fish caught by fishermen”.

²⁷ J. P. Allen, “The Craft of the Scribe (Papyrus Anastasi I)”, *COS* 3, 12 § 20.7.

The discovery of Punic theophoric personal names (e.g., *Ṣdytn* = *Sidiathones*) testifying to the existence of a deity named *Ṣid*²⁸ gave rise to a new etymology a century ago. E. Meyer claimed that *Ṣdn* was a theophoric toponym, derived from the name of this deity²⁹. This claim has been accepted by some and disputed by others³⁰. Meyer also hinted at an etymology for the theonym *Ṣid* itself, suggesting that this god “is perhaps identical with Ἀγρεύς the ‘hunter’ or his brother Ἀλιεύς the ‘fisher’” in the primeval history of Philo of Byblos³¹. This idea has been widely accepted; until recently, the theory that the deity in question was a god of fishing and/or hunting³² had no competitor.

According to this theory, it is natural to derive the theonym *Ṣid* (better: *Ṣīd*) from **ṣayd* “fishing, hunting”. Thus, Meyer’s etymology of *Ṣīdōn* (“place of the god of fishing and/or hunting”) is, in the end, not all that different from the old etymology (“place of fishing”). It certainly provides no grounds for doubting that Aramaic *Ṣaydān* preserves the original (pre-Amarna) form of the toponym³³. Finally, it should be noted that the theophoric etymology of *Ṣdn* is not easy to reconcile with the most recent study of Phoenician-Punic personal names containing *Ṣid* as a theophoric element. Lipiński has argued that such names were relatively common in Egypt but rare (“practically absent”) in Phoenicia itself³⁴. In his view, this distribution points to an Egyptian origin for the divine name³⁵. If he is right, the resemblance between *Ṣīdōn* and *Ṣid* is purely coincidental.

In short, there is no reason to doubt that *Ṣīdō^wn* is derived from **Ṣaydān*; it is similar to *Dī^hbo^wn*, for which LXX has Δαιβών and Δηβών. It may also be compared to the handful of examples of *ī* < *ay in open unstressed syllables that appear in the archaic poetic dialect: ‘*īro^h* (Gen 49:11), *šī^to^w* (Isa 10:17), ‘*īno^wṭ tho^wm* (Prov 8:28)³⁶.

²⁸ W. W. Baudissin, “Der phönizische Gott Esmun”, *ZDMG* 59 (1905) 504-505. Cf. Benz, *Personal Names* 398; and Jongeling, *Names* 48-49.

²⁹ E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, vol. 1, part 2 (2nd ed.; Stuttgart/Berlin 1909) 391-392 § 356.

³⁰ See, for example, S. A. Cook’s “Notes to the Third Edition” in W. R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (3rd ed.; London 1927) 578; M. Noth, “Zum Ursprung der phönizischen Küstenstädte”, *WO* 1 (1947-50) 23 n. 10; Wild, *Ortsnamen* 153-54.

³¹ Meyer, *Geschichte* 392.

³² See the literature cited in n. 30 above and in Lipiński, *Dieux et déesses de l’univers phénicien et punique* (OLA 64 / St. Phoen. 14; Leuven 1995) 349 n. 237.

³³ It is difficult to understand the assumption of S. Wild (*Ortsnamen* 153) that *Ṣaydān* is derived from *Ṣīdōn* rather than vice versa. He himself admits that “the change from *Ṣīdōn* to *Ṣaidā* cannot ... be explained on purely phonetic grounds” (Wild, *Ortsnamen* 154).

³⁴ Lipiński, *Dieux* 342, 343, 348.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 334-50.

³⁶ See H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Halle 1922) 575: “wohl dialektisch”. Contrast standard ‘*e^{noṭ mayim}* (Exod 15:27, Num 33:9).

Inspection of all these data reveals that the examples of $\bar{e} < *ay$ differ in stress from those with $\bar{i} < *ay$ ³⁷. It appears that the Phoenician reflex of unstressed $*ay$ was \bar{e} in stressed syllables but \bar{i} in unstressed (or weakly stressed) syllables. This conditioning makes good phonetic sense. It is the nucleus of the diphthong that is stressed or unstressed. An unstressed nucleus (in this case, a) would seem to be more susceptible to being totally assimilated to the glide (in this case, y) than a stressed nucleus. This can be shown more clearly through the use of a slightly different notation: $*a\bar{i} > *i\bar{i} > \bar{i}$.

There is some evidence that Ephraimite Hebrew had a similar alternation³⁸. In the Samaritan reading tradition, $*ay$ is normally monophthongized in all states of the noun³⁹. In closed syllables that do not begin with a guttural, the usual outcome is e or i ⁴⁰. At first glance, these two reflexes of $*ay$ appear to be in free variation. For example, the word *byt* “house” is read *bet*⁴¹ or *bit*⁴² in the absolute state (with no prefix) and *bet*⁴³ or *bit*⁴⁴ in the construct state. On the other hand, the words *mym* “water” and *byn* “between” are invariant. For the former, we find only the reading *mem*⁴⁵ (never $*mim$); for the latter, only *bin*⁴⁶ (never $*ben$). The invariance of these forms must be due to the fact that *mym* always occurs in the absolute state (the construct is *my*) and hence is normally stressed, while *byn*, being a preposition, is normally unstressed. In these non-

³⁷ As is well known, nouns in the construct state were originally unstressed (or weakly stressed) in Hebrew, so that the reflex of $*ay$ in *be't Dāwīd* is the same as that in *be'to*.

³⁸ Another apparent phonological similarity between Ephraimite Hebrew and Phoenician is the merger of \acute{s} with \grave{s} . See my discussions in *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic* (New Haven 1977) 43; “Semitic Names for Utensils in the Demotic Word-List from Tebtunis”, *JNES* 59 (2000) 191; and “On the Dating of Hebrew Sound Changes ($*H > \acute{H}$ and $*G > \acute{G}$) and Greek Translations (2 Esdras and Judith)”, *JBL* 124 (2005) 237 n. 43.

³⁹ The main exceptions are the dual ending (occasionally $-\acute{a}^*am$ or $-\acute{a}^*am$) and, surprisingly, the noun *yyn* (*yayyan* in Gen 49:11, 12, Num 6:3 [2×], 4, Deut 14:26, 28:39, 29:5, and even 32:38 [construct!]). All Samaritan forms in this footnote and the ones that follow are from Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans* III/1 (Jerusalem 1961) (Hebrew).

⁴⁰ Z. Ben-Hayyim, *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Indiana 2000) 65. In an open syllable or in a closed syllable after a guttural, the outcome is always \bar{i} , but that is dictated by general phonological rules of the language unrelated to monophthongization; thus, we shall ignore those environments in our discussion. We shall also ignore the outcome \bar{a} .

⁴¹ Lev 14:42 (*bēt*), Deut 28:30.

⁴² Deut 20:5, 22:8.

⁴³ Lev 22:13, Deut 3:29, 4:46, 25:9, 34:6 (*bēt*).

⁴⁴ Num 25:15, Deut 5:18(17), 23:19, 25:10.

⁴⁵ Exod 15:8, 22, 27, Lev 14:5, 6, 9 (*mēm*), 50, Num 5:17, 21:5, 16 (*mēm*), 22, 24:6, 7, Deut 2:6, 28, 8:7, 15, 9:9, 18, 10:7. The Phoenician-Punic word for “water” appears with e in all periods. An Amarna letter from Tyre (EA 148,31) has *mē-e-ma*. In *Poenulus* 1142, the response to *neste ien* “let us drink wine” is *anec este mem* “I shall drink water” (Krahmalkov, *Dictionary* 292 s.v. *mm*). Cf. the Hebrew letter-name *mem*, derived from the word for “water”.

⁴⁶ Gen 49:14, Exod 26:33 (2×), 29:39, 41, 30:8, Num 21:13 (2×), Deut 1:1 (2×), 16 (4×), Deut 5:5 (also *binkimma*), 6:8, 11:18, 14:1, 17:8 (3×), 25:1, 33:12.

alternating words, at least, *e* is associated with stress, and *i* is associated with the absence of stress — just as in Phoenician. This suggests that the free variation *bet/bit* is due to analogical leveling of an original conditioned alternation: *bet* (abs.) ~ *bit* (cstr.).

The similarity between Phoenician and Ephraimite Hebrew in this respect is perhaps also shown by two personal names in the Bible that have *īy* in an unstressed syllable instead of the standard *e^y* “where”: *īy^yzābāl* “Jezebel” and *īy^ykābo^wd* “Ichabod”⁴⁷. One is the infamous wife of Ahab from Sidon, whose name means “Where is the Prince?” (referring to Baal’s absence, as in *KTU²* 1.6 IV 5,16: *iy zbl b’l arš* “Where is the Prince, lord of the earth”). The other is the grandson of Eli born at Shiloh in Ephraim, whose name means “Where is the Glory?” (referring to the capture of the ark of God, according to 1 Sam 4:21-22). At Ugarit, we find similar names, e.g., *iyb’l* “Where is Baal” and *I-ia-um-mi* “Where is my mother?”⁴⁸. Biblical *īy* and Ugaritic *iy* are believed to be derived from **ayy*-⁴⁹.

This development is not identical to the monophthongization we have been discussing, but it is clearly related to it. Other examples of *īy* < **ayy*- are *īy* “ruin-heap” < **ayy*- < **awy*-⁵⁰, *kiy* “burning” (Isa 3:24) < **kayy*- < **kawy*- (cf. *kwiyyā^b* and Arab. *kayy*- “burning”), and *riy* “saturation” (Job 37:11) < **rayy*- < **rawy*- (cf. *rwāyā^b* and Arab. *rayy*-/*riyy*- “saturation”). All of these are attested exclusively in poetry; in prose, we find *day* “sufficiency, enough” < *dayy*- < *dawy*- (cf. Arab. *dāwī* “much, abundant [food]”⁵¹) and *hay* “alive” < *hayy*- < *hawy*- (cf. Arab. *hayy*- “alive”)⁵².

The Masoretic vocalization is very instructive here. It gives us a glimpse of two distinct monophthongizations yielding *īy*: (1) **ay* > *īy* (*īy^{ro}*^h, *šīy^{to}*^w, *īy^{no}*^w*ī*) and (2) **ayy*- > *īy* (*īy^y*, *kiy^y*, *riy^y*; *īy*-). The distribution of the vestiges is of particular interest. Vestiges of both (1) and (2) are preserved in poetic passages, and additional vestiges of (2) are preserved in the names of individuals from Phoenicia and Ephraim. According to the Masoretic data, (2) differs from (1) in not being restricted to unstressed syllables. This makes good phonetic sense. We would expect the raising effect of geminated *yy* to be stronger than that of simplex *y*; its greater

⁴⁷ See R. Zadok, *The Pre-hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography* (Leuven 1988) 58 and the literature cited there.

⁴⁸ F. Gröndahl, *Personennamen* 93-94; cf. Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis* 200 s.v. *īyya*-; Lipiński, *Semitic* § 21.9.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary* 276.

⁵⁰ From the root *‘-w-y* “become corrupted”; cf. *š-ḥ-l* and postbiblical *s-r-ḥ*, also used of both physical and moral corruption, especially offense against a king.

⁵¹ Lane, *Lexicon* 941 s.v. *dāwī*.

⁵² Contrast Lipiński, *Semitic* § 22.6: “In Masoretic Hebrew, the diphthongs *aw* and *ay* remain generally unreduced when the semivowel was originally long or geminated (e.g. *hay* < **hayy*, ‘living’).”

mass allows it to exert a stronger gravitational pull. We may conjecture that this difference goes back to Old Canaanite. It appears that, in Old Canaanite *stressed* syllables, *a* was raised to *i* by a following *yy* but only to *e* by a following *y*.

Finally, we should also mention the absolute form *leʿl* “night” (*//laylāh*) in Isa 21:11. According to I. Young:

... it would seem likely that the prophet is characterizing foreigners by the use of peculiar linguistic expressions considered typical of them. The form that is of particular interest ... is the absolute singular *lēl* ‘night’, used here in parallelism with the Standard Biblical Hebrew *laylāh*⁵³.

In other words, *leʿl* is used here deliberately (instead of *layil*) to create local color — and, we may add, perhaps also to pun on the verb *millel* “spoke”. If so, we have another dialect in which stressed **ay* contracts to *ē*. Young believes that the dialect in question is Edomite, based on the reference to Seir. In fact, spellings like *yn* “wine” in Ugaritic, Ammonite, and Northern Hebrew and *//llh* “night” in Phoenician and Moabite testify to the monophthongization of stressed *ay* in virtually every Northwest Semitic language other than Standard Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.

As Young notes, it is not uncommon for biblical authors to draw upon geographical and social dialects to make their writing more vivid⁵⁴. In my view, this is one of the most significant discoveries of recent research into Biblical Hebrew. It is no longer possible to claim that “it is well known that in biblical dialogue all the characters speak proper literary Hebrew, with no intimations of slang, dialect, or idiolect”⁵⁵.

Another important point made by Young concerns the reliability of the Masoretic reading tradition in such cases:

Firstly, the validity of the Masoretic vocalization as historical evidence of a period well before the Masoretic period has been demonstrated in recent scholarship. Secondly, it is the tendency of both reading traditions, and of language in general, to level anomalous forms. Therefore the retention of such forms can be taken with caution as survivals of earlier or divergent linguistic systems⁵⁶.

⁵³ I. Young, “The Diphthong **ay* in Edomite”, *JSS* 37 (1992) 29.

⁵⁴ See R. C. Steiner, “A Colloquialism in Jer. 5:13 from the Ancestor of Mishnaic Hebrew”, *JSS* 37 (1992) 20; id., “The ‘Aramean’ of Deut 26:5: *Peshat* and *Derash*”, in: M. Cogan – J. H. Tigay – B. L. Eichler (eds.), *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (Winona Lake, Indiana 1997) 137; and the literature cited in both.

⁵⁵ R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York 1996) xxiv; one exception is noted. Cf. id., *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York 1981) 44; “Biblical Hebrew, as far as we can tell, does not incorporate in direct speech different levels of diction, deviations from standard grammar, regional or class dialects.”

⁵⁶ Young, *JSS* 37, 29. See also S. Morag, “On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible”, *JAOS* 94 (1974) 307-15, cited by Young.

In my view, examples of *ī* < *ay and *ī* < *ayy- in the Masoretic vocalization of biblical poetry should indeed be viewed as survivals from Old Canaanite, no different from many other archaisms that have been noted in the poetic dialect.

I would like to conclude with another illustration of Young's point, viz., the vocalization of *pištī* in Hos 2:7, 11. This form is usually revocalized to *pištay* based on two arguments: (1) only *pištā^h* and *pištīm* are attested elsewhere in the Bible, never *pāšāt* or *pištā^h*, and (2) Hos 2:7 exhibits an alternating rhyming pattern of *-ī* (sing.) and *-ay* (plur.) that requires *pištay*. As noted by W. Rudolph⁵⁷, these arguments were first adduced by A. B. Ehrlich in 1912⁵⁸. Ehrlich was followed by P. Joüon, W. F. Albright, D. N. Freedman, H. W. Wolff, Rudolph, W. Kuhnigk, F. I. Andersen & A. D. Forbes, and Andersen & Freedman⁵⁹.

The main opponent of this revocalization is K. A. Tångberg⁶⁰. He notes that "the m. sg. of this word is unambiguously attested as an old Canaanite form by Ugaritic *pīt* and very likely by Phoenician and Punic too"⁶¹. For Tångberg, the genre of Hosea 2:7b is crucial:

As Wolff (pp. 41-2) has pointed out, Hosea ii 7b is characterized by hymnic style. Here the prophet may have adapted a fragmentary quotation of some poem from the syncretistic cult of the North Israelites. As one of the differences between poems and prose is that poems more often contain unusual forms (archaic, dialectal or otherwise rare formations), this may very well be the case in Hosea ii 7b. *Pištī* is probably a rare, perhaps dialectal form (representing a North Israelite isogloss?) or an already archaic word form⁶².

After casting doubt on the importance of the alleged rhyming pattern, Tångberg concludes:

In any case, the Massoretic punctuation of *pištī* is *lectio difficilior*. It could well be *lectio probabilior*⁶³.

Tångberg's short note has had little impact, perhaps because it stresses the temporal aspect of the problem at the expense of the geographical

⁵⁷ W. Rudolph, *Hosea* (Gütersloh 1966) 63.

⁵⁸ A. B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* V (Leipzig 1912) 167.

⁵⁹ P. Joüon, "Notes philologiques...", *Biblica* 10 (1929) 417; W. F. Albright, "The Gezer Calendar", *BASOR* 92 (1943) 22, fn. 34.; D. N. Freedman, "Pšty in Hosea 2:7", *JBL* 74 (1955) 275; H. W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten* 1: *Hosea* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1961) 36; Rudolph, *Hosea* 63; W. Kuhnigk, *Nordwestsemitische Studien zum Hoseabuch* (Rome 1974) 13; F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea* (New York 1980) 227, 232; F. I. Andersen and A. D. Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome 1986) 56.

⁶⁰ K. A. Tångberg, "A Note on *Pištī* in Hosea II 7, 11", *VT* 27 (1977) 222-24.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 223.

⁶² *Ibid.* 223.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 224.

aspect. Significantly, the note contains no explicit statement that Hosea is a northern author and that, with such an author, Phoenician-Punic parallels must be given special weight. Instead, it blurs the issue by focusing on the genre of Hosea 2:7b and the allegedly archaic character of masc. sing *pšt*. Since the goal is to prove that this is “an old Canaanite form” rather than a northern Israelite form, the Punic evidence is never presented explicitly. Instead, we are sent to *DISO*, where we read that some of the Punic evidence is only probable⁶⁴. It is therefore not out of place to provide a fuller discussion of the evidence.

There is remarkably little uncertainty surrounding the masc. sing. form *pišt* in Punic⁶⁵. It occurs in at least one of the “African” (i.e., Carthaginian) plant names found in some manuscripts of Dioscorides’ *De Materia Medica*⁶⁶. The form ΖΕΡΑΦΟΙCΤ can only be a transcription of a Punic word for “flax seed, linseed” (**zr’ pšt*), inasmuch as it is presented as the “African” equivalent of Greek λίνον “flax”⁶⁷. Nor is there any question concerning the reading; all witnesses recorded in the critical edition of Wellmann have this reading⁶⁸. The use of Greek οι to render Semitic *i* is found in other plant names in the same work⁶⁹. We should also mention the form ΧΟΥΦ’ΦΟΙCΤ, the “African” equivalent of Greek ἀνεμώνη ἢ φοινικῆ⁷⁰. Although the first element remains obscure, the second component provides further evidence for the form ΦΟΙCΤ.

Punic *pšt* also occurs on the stela of a certain Baliahon (*B’lyhn*), who was a flax merchant (*mkr hpšt*)⁷¹. This is clearly a masc. sing. form; a fem. sing. form would be written *pšt* or (in late Punic only) *pšt’/pšt’* with a final *mater lectionis*⁷². M. G. Amadasi was kind enough to inspect the photograph of the inscription and to inform me that “after the final *taw* there

⁶⁴ C. F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’ouest* (Leiden 1965) 238 s.v. *pšt*: “*pšt* Phén., cf. prob. Diosc. ii 103: (ζερα)φοιστ”.

⁶⁵ Unless the final *t* of *pšt* was originally a feminine ending!

⁶⁶ For the origin and date of these “synonyms”, see R. C. Steiner, “*Albounout* ‘Frankincense’ and *Alsounalph* ‘Oxtongue’: Phoenician-Punic Botanical Terms with Prothetic Vowels from an Egyptian Papyrus and a Byzantine Codex”, *Orientalia* 70 (2001) 98-99.

⁶⁷ Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* ii 103 (ed. Wellmann I 177 l. 20).

⁶⁸ This includes the seventh-century Codex Neapolitanus (f. 110), a facsimile of which I checked myself. As for Codex Constantinopolitanus (before 512 C.E.), Wellmann writes “om. C”, but the form is quite clear in the facsimile (*Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex Medicus Graecus* I, f. 206a l. 6). I also checked a facsimile of Codex Phillippicus 21975 (c. tenth century C.E.), now Codex M. 652 of the Pierpont Morgan Library, but the folio on which our term would have appeared is missing.

⁶⁹ See Steiner, *Or* 70, 102 n. 44.

⁷⁰ Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* ii 176 (ed. Wellmann I 244 l. 18). C (f. 26r) reads ΧΟΥΦ’ΦΟΙCΤ and N (f. 12) reads ΧΟΥΦΦΟΙCΤ, possibly corrected from ΚΟΥΦΦΟΙCΤ. The folio in M on which it would have appeared is missing.

⁷¹ *CIS* I 4874 l. 2.

⁷² For the latter spellings, see *PPG*³ 150.

is enough space and there is no trace of another letter (the stone is well preserved at the end)”⁷³.

It is true that the Punic evidence is late⁷⁴, but the Ugaritic evidence compensates for that defect. Together Punic *pšt*/ΦOICT and Ugaritic *ptt* make a reasonably strong case for the presence of a masc. sing. form *pišt* in Phoenicia in Hosea’s time⁷⁵. Indeed, even before the discovery of Ugaritic, BDB gave the Hebrew word for “flax” as *pešāt* and compared it to Punic ΦOICT. Thus, the failure of most students of Hos 2:7, 11 (including eminent Northwest Semitic epigraphers) to mention any of this evidence is striking. It is more than a little ironic that a book entitled *Nordwestsemitische Studien zum Hoseabuch* should make no mention of Punic ΦOICT or Ugaritic *ptt*. And it is perplexing that two distinguished scholars, after emending away a vocalization that connects Hosea with Punic and Ugaritic, would turn around and write:

It has been supposed that, as the only prophet native to the northern kingdom, Hosea’s language is regional, with peculiarities of the dialect of Samaria (or Ephraim). While our knowledge of the dialects of Hebrew spoken in Israel during the monarchical period is still meager, epigraphic materials such as the Samaria Ostraca give some controls; knowledge of ancient neighboring cognate languages, notably Phoenician and Ugaritic, adds a further perspective. The supposition that Hosea is written in a distinctive dialect of Hebrew has not been confirmed, and the hope that light from Ugaritic would illuminate dark places in the text has been fulfilled only to a limited degree...⁷⁶.

One cannot help but be reminded of the proverbial parricide who bemoans his orphaned state.

In my view, such anomalies are the reflection of an attitude that is still far too common. Bias against the Masoretic reading tradition is so strong that scholars are led to ignore evidence that is staring them in the face. I hope that I have succeeded in showing that this bias is unhealthy. Even after centuries of study, the Masoretic vocalization still has much to teach us, but only if we are willing to listen.

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⁷³ Email communication.

⁷⁴ The stela is “perhaps 3rd century” according to M. G. Amadasi.

⁷⁵ Moreover, as noted by Tångberg, many scholars disagree with the view that the form *pšt* in the Gezer calendar is to be read as the fem. sing. *pišta*.

⁷⁶ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea* 67.