THE LACHISH EWER: AN OFFERING AND A TRIBUTE

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Joseph Naveh's *Early History of the Alphabet* is a magisterial survey. I learned an enormous amount from reading it and even more from auditing the author's epigraphy class during a year that I spent at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. It is, therefore, a special privilege to present these modest notes on the Lachish Ewer Inscription as an "offering" (*mtn*) and a "tribute" (*šy*) to the memory of this outstanding teacher and scholar.

1. *Mtn* in the Lachish Ewer Inscription

The Lachish Ewer is a pottery jug discovered in 1933 at the Fosse Temple of Lachish and "dated with much confidence to the second half of the thirteenth century."[1] Naveh's discussion of the inscription painted on it[2] is based on the careful interpretation (and analysis) of Frank M. Cross, which was published fifty years ago in this very series. In this article, I shall discuss that interpretation, together with more recent ones, and offer some suggestions of my own.

According to Cross, the inscription begins with a personal name:

> *mtn: šy ʾlˋ[rb]ty ʾlt*
>
> Mattan. An offering to my Lady ʾElat.[3]

Moreover, "the offering or tribute was no doubt the decorated Ewer itself and perhaps its contents, presented to the temple of ʾElat in Lachish by a certain Mattan."[4] This interpretation of *mtn* is undoubtedly the standard interpretation today; it is quoted without comment by Naveh and many others.[5]

In an earlier article, however, Cross mentioned another possibility: "The inscription could also be read, 'A gift: a lamb for my Lady ʾElat.'"[6] In this interpretation, which had been suggested previously by William F. Albright,[7] the second word is the Canaanite reflex of **śy* "lamb" (more precisely: "sheep/goat").[8] The interpretation is problematic, of course, because ewes and ewers do not go together.[9] Even if the flesh of a sheep were cut up into small pieces, it would hardly be presented in a vessel with such a narrow neck.[10]

It is presumably this problem that has caused later scholars — including Cross himself, as well as Naveh — to tacitly reject the possibility that *mtn* is a common noun in the inscription. One of the few exceptions is Benjamin Sass: "Cross prefers to translate *mtn* as a personal name, though 'giving (of) / gift' are likewise possible."[11]

No one can deny that Cross's preferred interpretation of *mtn* as a Canaanite personal name — derived, of course, from the word for "gift" — is possible.[12] But is it really just a coincidence that, when the first word in the inscription is taken as a common noun, it shares a meaning with the second word?

If *mtn* and *šy* are synonyms or near-synonyms in our inscription, what is the syntactic relationship between them? Brian E. Colless's answer to this question can be deduced from his translation: "A gift: an offering [to] my [la]dy Elat."[13] This translation implies that *šy*[14] stands in apposition to *mtn*. In that respect, it resembles Cross's alternate translation: "A gift: a lamb for my Lady ʾElat."

Another possibility, not previously noted, is that the first two words form a genitive phrase with the

meaning "tribute offering." In Hebrew, we find the noun *mtn* juxtaposed with near-synonyms in genitive phrases such as *trwmt mtnm* "their gift dedication" (Num 18:11) and *mtn śkrn* "their reward gift" (m. Avot 2:1, 16).

The juxtaposition of synonyms in genitive phrases, such as *ʾdmt ʿpr* "dusty earth" (Dan 12:2), was pointed out in the Middle Ages by Jonah Ibn Janāḥ[15] and others. Two views of this construction can be discerned. Judah Messer Leon viewed it as one of many stylistic embellishments (*ypwyym*) in the Bible.[16] Menahem Meiri, on the other hand, took the phrase *śmḥt gyly* "my happiness joy(ful)" (Ps 43:4) as indicating preeminence (*rwmz lhplgh*) — a kind of superlative, comparable to *šyr hšyrym*.[17]

In modern times, we find the same two views. Paul Joüon's view is virtually identical to that of Meiri, although presumably independent of it:

> … a genitival group of two substantives, which are synonyms or have closely related meanings, can sometimes express a superlative nuance: Jn 2.9 הַבְלֵי־שָׁוְא *vanities of nothingness*; Ps 43.4 שִׂמְחַת גִּילִי *joy of my cheerfulness* (= *my overflowing joy*); Is 2.10 הֲדַר גְּאוֹנוֹ *the glory of his majesty*.[18]

By contrast, S.E. Loewenstamm (who cites Hebrew examples of "two synonyms in the construct relation" and possible Ugaritic parallels)[19] and his student, Yitzhak Avishur (in several publications on the subject),[20] appear to take it as a rhetorical device with no semantic content, much like Judah Messer Leon.

At first glance, the three vertically aligned dots or tricolon (⫶) following *mtn* might seem to indicate the presence of a syntactic break there,[21] since no other words in the inscription have such a sign after them. This would support those who insert a punctuation mark— a period (Cross, etc.) or a colon (Colless)—in their translation at that spot. However, the consensus of scholars is that the dotted line is a word divider. According to Naveh, "this word divider was adopted in archaic Greek writing."[22] Edward Lipiński and Émile Puech point to the sporadic use of the tricolon other inscriptions: Tell Fekherye (lines 8 and 23), Khirbet Qeiyafa (line 1), and perhaps even a bowl fragment from Lachish.[23] And according to Sass, the use of only

one word divider in this inscription has a reasonable explanation:

> Three dots arranged vertically on the Lachish ewer have been generally interpreted as a word divider. This sign only appears once, since in the other two cases where it might have been used, details of the scene on the ewer serve to divide the words.[24]

If the vertical dotted line does not signal a syntactic break, there is no obstacle to taking the inscription to mean "a tribute offering to my Lady Elat." And if so, this interpretation can be added to the list of possibilities — to be confirmed or refuted when additional evidence becomes available.

2. *Šy* in the Lachish Ewer Inscription

The second word in the Lachish Ewer inscription is *šy* "tribute, offering." Cross's classic article (1967) on the origin of the Canaanite alphabet contains a laconic footnote that discusses this word.[25] The footnote makes several bold claims, but it contains no references to earlier literature. Thus, those who have quoted or paraphrased those claims, including Naveh,[26] may have been unable to verify them for themselves.

In this section, I would like to reexamine this footnote together with two footnotes from an earlier article by Cross (1954) — footnotes that *do* cite sources. In the quotations below, I have divided the footnotes into sections, each containing a single claim, and I have numbered the claims for further reference below:

> (1) Reading *ṯy*, Heb. *šay*, "offering, tribute." The derivation, *ṯaʿyu* > (by partial assimilation) *ṯayy* > *šay(y)*, has been established by Ginsberg and Albright. The word appears in Proto-Sinaitic and Ugaritic texts in just such contexts as ours. See most recently, Albright, "The Early Alphabetic Inscriptions, *etc*.," p. 15, n. 41.[27]

> (2) As shown by Albright, the old phonemes *ṯ* and *ś* had fallen together in Late Bronze Age Canaanite, as indicated by the transcriptional data (see "The Early Alphabetic Inscriptions, *etc*.," p. 15, n. 41 [sic, for n. 42]).

(3) Later, of course, *š*, *ś*, and *ṯ* fell together in Phoenician as *š* (before the 10th century)."[28]

(4) Etymological *ṯy*, "tribute, offering."

(5) In the fifteenth century the sign in question, *ṯann*, the composite bow, was used for *ṯ* and *ś*;

(6) by the thirteenth century, the shift to *š* had taken place in south Canaanite."[29]

It will be noted that the later claims (4–6) correspond to the earlier claims (1–3). Claim (4) corresponds to claim (1); claim (5) corresponds to claim (2); and claim (6) corresponds to claim (3). In each case, Cross has revised his earlier formulation without contradicting it. Even when he replaces claim (3) with claim (6) there is no contradiction, since anything that took place "by the 13th century" took place "before the 10th century" as well. I shall deal with the claims in pairs.

We may begin with claim (2), which uses Egyptian transcriptions to date a merger. Claims of this type used to be accepted in Semitics, but that is no longer the case. In the words of Joshua Blau: "As to Egyptian transcriptions, ... one can only infer from them that for the Egyptian ear *ś* and *θ* seemed to be close; they do not, however, prove that *θ* had, in fact, shifted to *ś*."[30] As a general rule, transcriptions cannot provide reliable evidence of merger. After all, no one would dream of claiming, based on French transcriptions, that voiced *th* (in *the*) is merged with *z* in English. And no one — including Albright — has argued for a merger of *ġ, *g, and *q in Old Canaanite on the grounds that the Egyptian transcriptions fail to distinguish them.[31] Egyptian was incapable of distinguishing certain Semitic phonemes because it lacked the phones needed for the task. Albright himself appears to allude to this point when he writes that consonants other than sibilants "are seldom to be differentiated, owing partly to the insufficiency of the Egyptian and cuneiform scripts."[32] Leonid Kogan makes the point more clearly:

> Both cuneiform and Egyptian scripts have only two sets of sibilant signs (ŠV vs. SV, *š* vs. *s*). They are, therefore, *a priori* unsuitable for rendering three different sibilant phonemes. These scripts can provide valuable information about the separate existence of certain sibilants, but

they cannot be conclusive concerning sibilant mergers ... .

The Egyptian renderings suggest that **š* (= Eg. *š*) was different from **ṯ* and **ś* (= Eg. *s*) in the second half of the second millennium BC. But they are not helpful in deciding whether **ṯ* and **ś* merged into one phoneme ... .[33]

Claim (5) is equally questionable.[34] It is based on texts whose readings and interpretations are, as noted by Naveh, "very conjectural."[35] Indeed, claim (5) appears to rise or fall with Albright's disputed reading and interpretation of a single damaged inscription from Serābīṭ el-Khādem (no. 353).[36]

Claim (6) may be compared with the claim of W. Randall Garr: "The phoneme **ṯ* had already merged with [š] and had been lost by the time of the earliest Phoenician texts."[37] Cross's claim is clearly bolder, and it raises a perplexing question: What was Cross's basis for claim (6) in 1967, when he published it? Cross does not say, and it is not immediately obvious what he had in mind back then. He cannot have been thinking of the Egyptian transcriptions of Canaanite names and words studied by Albright, because the latter had concluded from them that "Northwest Semitic of the period 1500–1200 B.C. still distinguished ... two different phonemes combined in Hebrew-Phoenician *shin*."[38] This conclusion, of course, stands in contradiction to Cross's claim (6). Nor can Cross have been thinking of column 3 of the Beth Shemesh Ostracon ("about 1,200 B.C."), where some scholars have read the name *Šmʿn* (etymological **ś*),[39] because he himself, in the same 1967 article, read *Gmʿn* with S. Yeivin, Benjamin Mazar, and Albright.[40] So far as I know, it was not until 1980 that Cross published an Old Canaanite inscription containing evidence that he might have considered relevant to claim (6), viz., the personal name *Šmpʿl* on the bowl fragment from Qubūr el-Walaydah ("ca. 1200 B.C.").[41] This name has a reasonably clear etymological **š* represented by the bow sign.

What, then, is the origin of claim (6)? At first glance, one might suppose that Cross was merely following Zellig S. Harris, who had dated the merger of **ṯ* with **š* to "before [the] 13th-century."[42] This supposition, too, is impossible.

Harris's dating was based on a single piece of evidence that seemed reasonable enough in 1939: "Phoenician … *mšpṭ* 'rule' < Sem. root *ṯpṭ* (Byblos 13th cent.)."[43] This evidence came from Aḥiram's sarcophagus inscription, which Harris dated to the 13th century.[44] Cross, however, rejected that dating, lowering it to ca. 1000 BCE. He did so in an article published in 1954, and he did so again in his 1967 article — only a few pages away from the footnote containing claim (6).[45] A glance at claim (3) is sufficient to show that, already in 1954, Cross had revised Harris's *terminus ante quem* based on the new dating of the Aḥiram inscription. What was it, then, that led Cross to revise this footnote in 1967, substituting 13th-century South Canaanite for 10th-century Phoenician (Aḥiram) and, thereby, reverting to Harris's original *terminus ante quem*?

After an unexpectedly lengthy search, I believe that I have found the answer to that question in an article published by Albright in 1964:

> For reasons into which I cannot enter here, the three right-to-left tablets from Ugarit presumably date from the middle decades of the 13th century B.C., by which time the five extra graphemes of the earlier script had been lost — or conflated with five surviving graphemes…. We may plausibly conjecture that the extra letters were dropped in Phoenicia in the 13th century B.C.[46]

Albright apparently assumed, like many others,[47] that the right-to-left ("mirror-written") tablets from Ugarit — with their reduced *graphemic* inventory — are evidence for a reduced *phonemic* inventory in (the Old Canaanite ancestor of) Phoenician. Fifteen years later, Cross added new evidence for this assumption:

> The published non-Ugaritic Canaanite cuneiform texts all belong to a style of cuneiform writing shared by three Ugaritic texts inscribed from right to left, which form a separate corpus at Ugarit. Linguistically, these texts are distinct from Ugaritic in sharing a reduced set of graphemes, reflecting the merging of phonemes in the southern Canaanite dialects. There is direct evidence for the mergers of *ṯ* (> *ś*) > *š*, *ḫ* > *ḥ*, *ẓ* > *ṣ*…. Probably all of these

texts in the reduced (22-sign) cuneiform alphabet date to the 13th century B.C. At least those with established dates fall into this century. We can then assert that the phonemic mergers and the reduction of the alphabet took place not later than this time.[48]

This discussion, I believe, reveals the basis for claim (6).[49]

Lastly, let us turn to claims (1) and (4). In my view, these, too, are problematic. Cross's "etymological *ṯy*" has a distinguished pedigree; nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere,[50] it is virtually untenable.

As noted in claim (1), the notion that *šy* derives from **ṯy* can be traced back to H.L. Ginsberg. According to Ginsberg, BH *šy* cannot be separated from (1) the Hebrew verb *š-ʿ-y* "accept (an offering)" (Gen 4:5), (2) the Ugaritic verb *ṯ-ʿ-y* "offer," and (3) the Ugaritic noun *ṯʿ* "offering."[51] Moreover:

> The letter ʿayin is sometimes omitted in *speech* in Hebrew — see Ges.-Buhl, 17. Aufl. s.v. ʾע; in our case it could have been omitted in *writing* through haplography, since ʿayin and *šin* are similar.[52]

At the beginning of this sentence, Ginsberg seems to hint at the possibility of a phonological explanation (elision, i.e., omission in *speech*), but then he abruptly shifts course, switching to a lower-critical explanation (haplography, i.e., omission in *writing*, normally by error). He must have felt that an assumption of /ʿ/-elision would be unconvincing for Canaanite in the second millennium BCE. However, his lower critical explanation is equally unpersuasive. Haplography is a singular event, an accidental omission that occurs in a single context and a single manuscript, but *šy* occurs — without ʿayin — in three different places in the Bible (Isa 18:7, Ps 68:30, 76:12), as Ginsberg himself notes.[53] What is the statistical probability of all three occurrences being corrupted by the same accidental error, leaving behind not a single occurrence of the allegedly correct form anywhere in the Bible? And how is that statistical probability affected by the fact that ʿayin and *šin* are not identical in shape but merely similar? Ginsberg's well-known penchant for emendation appears to have

blinded him to such problems. In addition, thanks to Naveh and his teacher, N. Avigad, the word *šy* (without *ʿayin*) is now known to occur in a Hebrew inscription from Meṣad Ḥashavyahu and a Phoenician votive seal,[54] not to mention inscriptions from Samal[55] and Lachish (our ewer). And there may be a second, even older occurrence of *šy* at Lachish (Bowl No. 2) with the meaning "offering."[56] In these inscriptions, of course, *ʿayin* and *šin* are not even similar.

Later scholars have been unaware of these problems with Ginsberg's brief Hebrew note because they have relied on the inaccurate English summary provided by Albright: "Ginsberg is probably right in deriving Hebrew *šay*, 'gift,' from **t̠aʿy* by partial assimilation."[57] As noted above, Ginsberg speaks of elision and haplography; he says nothing about assimilation. Moreover, the term "*partial* assimilation" makes no sense here. If *šay* were really derived from **t̠aʿy-* (via **t̠ayy-* and/or **šayy-*), the sound change involved would be **ʿy > **yy*, and the correct term for it would be "*total* assimilation."

In any event, it is this revised version of Ginsberg's suggestion that Cross accepts in claim (1): "The derivation *t̠aʿyu* > (by partial assimilation) *t̠ayy* > *šay(y)*, has been established by Ginsberg and Albright."[58] And it is this version that Gary A. Anderson finds problematic: "[Ginsberg] related this Semitic root [*t̠-ʿ-y*] to Hebrew *šay* by a process of partial assimilation…. The problem with this view is that the assimilation of *ʿayin* is unparalleled."[59]

The problem raised by Anderson is not the only problem with Albright's version of Ginsberg's etymology. A cognate of Hebrew *šay* has been preserved in Aramaic. As we shall see shortly, the cognate proves that we are dealing with etymological **š* rather than **t̠*.

Ginsberg's theory must be viewed as a relic of the time when old assumptions — even totally unproblematic ones — were swept away by pan-Ugaritic exuberance. In this case, the old assumption goes all the way back to the beginning of the 13th century, when David Qimḥi asserted that "the root of the word [*šay*] is *š-y-h* or *š-w-h*."[60] When we substitute the modern designations of these two roots — namely, *š-y-y* and *š-w-y* respectively — it

becomes apparent that there is no need to choose between them. There is good evidence that (a) *šay* is derived from **šayy-* and that (b) **šayy-*, in turn, is derived from **šawy-*.

Evidence for (a) comes from a Semitic text in Greek script. The relevant passage is read by Manfred Krebernik as follows: αμμουδ αμασαι / σεˊιˀαια ιααβνα λα(ι) / ζαβδαια σαυιει / να αμμοδ ζαβ / δαια.[61] In my previous article, I suggested that this is a transcription of Aramaic: *ʿmwd ʿmsy šyyʾ yhbnʾ // lzbdyʾ šwynʾ ʿmwd zbdyʾ* "we donated the pillar[62] of the gift bearers;[63] for the offerings, we bestowed the pillar of offerings." (It is also possible, I would now add, to move the semicolon three words to the right, thereby assigning *lzbdyʾ* "for the offerings" to the first clause, even though that creates a length imbalance.) The double *iota* in σεˊιˀαια "the gifts" shows that Aramaic *šy*, known also from the Old Aramaic dialect of Samal,[64] had a geminated *yod* in suffixed forms. Indeed, the gemination has long been assumed based on the Masoretic vocalization of the noun with *pataḥ* instead of *qameṣ*.[65]

Evidence for (b) comes from the form σαυιει να = *šawwīnā* "we have bestowed" in the passage cited above and from *hwd whdr tšwh ʿlyw* "splendor and majesty You bestowed upon him" in Ps 21:6. As we have already noted, the root of these verbs is *š-w-y*.[66] In Aramaic, that root can be used of imposing tribute: *šwyw ʿlyhwn mdʾ* "they imposed tribute upon them" (*Genesis Apocryphon* 21, 16). Thus, it is unclear, at first glance, whether the original meaning of *šay* < **šayy-* < **šawy-* (a verbal noun that acquired a concrete sense) was "bestowal/presentation (upon/to a recipient by a donor)" or "imposition (upon a donor by a recipient)." In my previous discussion of the matter, I left this question open. At the time, I was unaware that the Katumuwa inscription, published during the year that I wrote my article, contains important new evidence bearing on the question. At the end of that inscription (ll. 8–13), we read: *wlw yqḥ mn ḥyl krm znn śʾ ywmn lywmn wyhrg bnbšy wyšwy ly šq*[67] "let him purchase, out of the yield of this (adjoining) vineyard, a sheep every year and let him slaughter it beside my soul and present me with a thigh."[68] The appearance of *yšwy* here in the sense of "let him present" tips the balance in favor

of "bestowal, presentation" as the original meaning of *šy* (at the time when it was primarily a *verbal* noun) rather than "imposition."

Two facts emerge from this discussion. First, *šay* is derived from **šayy-*, which in turn is derived from **šawy-* (by total assimilation). Second, both the BH noun *šay* and the verb from which it is derived have Aramaic cognates. What was the initial consonant of those cognates? We cannot answer this question based on the Old Aramaic attestations from Samal, because Aramaic *šin* was still polyphonic at the time of those inscriptions. We *can*, however, answer it based on (1) *š-w-y* (*paᶜel* and *itpaᶜal*) "put" in Biblical Aramaic (Dan 3:29, 5:21), Qumran Aramaic, Targumic Aramaic, etc., and (2) σειαια "the gifts" in our Aramaic text in Greek script. Both of them show that the initial consonant was *not t < *ṯ*. They point clearly to **šayy-* rather than the form ***ṯayy- < **ṯaᶜy-* posited by Ginsberg, Albright, and Cross.

This conclusion has important ramifications for the early history of Canaanite. Based on it, we may say that the word *šy* in the Lachish Ewer from the second half of the 13th century BCE is the earliest reliable example of the use of the bow sign to represent the Canaanite reflex of Proto-Northwest Semitic **š*. That sign is also used to represent the Canaanite reflex of Proto-Northwest Semitic **ṯ* in the word *šlšt < *ṯlṯt* "three/third," painted on Lachish Bowl No. 1 in the 13th century BCE.[69] Since I know of no reason to reject the conventional assumption that these inscriptions are free of polyphony,[70] we must conclude that the Canaanite reflexes of Proto-Northwest Semitic **š* and **ṯ* were merged at Lachish by the second half of the 13th century BCE. Although the direction of the merger was presumably **ṯ > *š*, it was the sign of the former (the bow sign) that was used for the merger product.[71]

Ironically, then, the word *šy* in the Lachish Ewer Inscription turns out to be retroactive evidence for claim (6), which was put forward in a discussion of that very inscription: "by the thirteenth century, the shift to *š* had taken place in south Canaanite." Whether or not claim (6) was justified in 1967, it certainly is justified today.

We may now summarize our findings concerning the use of the bow sign in Old Canaanite inscriptions, adding a detail needed to complete the picture. The bow sign appears in (1) *šlšt < *ṯlṯt* (Lachish Bowl No. 1, 13th century); (2) *šy < *šy* (Lachish Ewer, second half of the 13th century) and *Šmpᶜl < *Šmpᶜl* (bowl fragment from Qubūr el-Walaydah, ca. 1200 BCE); (3) *ʾbškr < *ʾbśkr* (Beth Shemesh ostracon, very beginning of 12th century);[72] and (4) *šy < *šy*, or *šy < *śy*, or *š = šql < *ṯql* (Lachish Bowl No. 2, 14th/15th century?).[73] These forms are evidence that the reflexes of Proto-Northwest Semitic **š*, **ś* and **ṯ* were merged by the very beginning of 12th century BCE (at the latest) in the Canaanite dialect of what was later to be Judah. This evidence is quite compatible with the evidence of the reduced cuneiform alphabet dated by Albright and Cross to the 13th century BCE.

Notes

1 Y. Aharoni, "Khirbet Raddana and Its Inscription," *IEJ* 21 (1971): 132.

2 Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (1st and 2nd eds.; Jerusalem, 1982 and 1997), 33–34.

3 Frank M. Cross, "The Origin and Early Evolution of the Alphabet," *EI* 8 (1967): 16*.

4 Ibid. I have corrected *ᶜElat* to *ʾElat*.

5 Naveh, *Early History*, 33; Emile Puech, "The Canaanite Inscriptions of Lachish and Their Religious Background," *Tel Aviv* 13 (1986): 17; Ruth Hestrin, "The Lachish Ewer and the ʾAsherah," *IEJ* 37 (1987): 214;

P. Kyle McCarter, *Ancient Inscriptions: Voices from the Biblical World* (Washington DC, 1996), 77; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, 2001), 108, 303; Johanna H. Stuckey, "The Great Goddesses of the Levant," *JSSEA* 30 (2003): 145; Christian Frevel, "Gifts to the Gods? Votives as Communication Markers in Sanctuaries and Other Places in the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine/Israel," in *"From Ebla to Stellenbosch": Syro-Palestinian Religions and the Hebrew Bible* (Abhandlungen des deutschen Palästina-Vereins 37; ed. Izak Cornelius and Louis Jonker; Wiesbaden, 2008), 34; and many recent discussions of Asherah.

6   Frank M. Cross, "The Evolution of the Proto-Canaanite Alphabet," *BASOR* 134 (1954): 21.

7   William F. Albright, "The Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from Sinai and Their Decipherment," *BASOR* 110 (1948): 15 n. 43.

8   The term *$\acute{s}y > \acute{s}h$ is remarkably difficult to translate into English. The rendering "lamb" is normally too narrow in terms of both age and species. It is quite clear that, in Biblical Hebrew at least, the noun $\acute{s}h$ is nothing other than the singular of $\d{s}'n$. The latter term, too, is notoriously difficult to translate into English, which lacks a term equivalent to German *Kleinvieh*. The usual English renderings ("sheep and goats," "animals from the flock," "caprovids," etc.) leave much to be desired. For $\d{s}'n$ as the suppletive, suffixless *plural* (not *collective*!) of $\acute{s}h$, see Richard C. Steiner, "Ancient Hebrew," *The Semitic Languages* (ed. Robert Hetzron; London, 1997), 152.

9   The similarity between these two words is, to the best of my knowledge, completely accidental. The former is related to Latin *ovis* "sheep"; the latter, to Latin *aquarius* "pertaining to water."

10 Cf. n. 56 below.

11 Benjamin Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Wiesbaden, 1988), 61. See also William M. Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins through the Rabbinic Period* (New Haven, 2013), 63; and the articles cited in n. 13 below.

12 For this name in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Punic, see G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Leiden, 2003), 600; and Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome, 1972), 143–44. In the Bible (2 Kgs 11:18), it is attested as the name of a priest of Baal.

13 Brian E. Colless, "The Proto-Alphabetic Inscriptions of Canaan," *Abr-Nahrain* 29 (1991): 39. Cf. David T. Sugimoto, "'Tree of Life' Decoration on Iron Age Pottery from the Southern Levant," *Orient* 47 (2012): 132.

14 More precisely: the noun phrase of which $\acute{s}y$ is the head.

15 Jonah Ibn Janāḥ, *Le livre des parterres fleuris* (ed. Joseph Derenbourg; Paris, 1886), 206 ll. 9–12 = ספר הרקמה (ed. Michael Wilensky; 2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1964), 225 ll. 14–16.

16 Judah Messer Leon, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*: Sēpher Nōpheth Ṣūphīm (ed. Isaac Rabinowitz; Ithaca, 1983), 576–77.

17 Menahem Meiri, פירוש לספר תהלים (ed. J. Cohn; 2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1971), 91 ll. 9–10.

18 Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome, 1991), 525 §141m.

19 S.E. Loewenstamm, "Ugaritic Writings," in *Patriarchs* (The World History of the Jewish People, 2; ed. Benjamin Mazar; New Brunswick, 1970), 16 = אבות ההיסטוריה של עם ישראל, 2; Jerusalem, 1967), 13; idem, "*mṣd*," *UF* 3 (1971): 357–59.

20 Yitzhak Avishur, "Pairs of Synonymous Words in the Construct State (and in Appositional Hendiadys) in Biblical Hebrew," *Semitics* 2 (1971/72): 17–92 (citing Loewenstamm and Joüon on p. 18 n. 10); idem, סמיכויות הנרדפים במליצה המקראית (Jerusalem, 1977); idem, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (Kevelaer, 1984).

21 Is Cross ("Evolution," 20) hinting at this possibility when he calls the dotted line a "division marker" rather than a "word divider"? Punctuation marks in Northwest Semitic inscriptions are typically paragraph/section dividers (e.g., in Ugaritic letters, the Aramaic proverbs of Aḥiqar, and the Aramaic text in Demotic script). However, the vertical strokes in the Mesha inscription separate smaller units, viz., sentences (usually) and even parts of sentences (occasionally). If the tricolon of the Lachish Ewer had a similar function, it may be compared to the dicolon (:) used to mark the ends of biblical verses in medieval manuscripts—Samaritan as well as Jewish. That sign is not a medieval innovation. It appears already at the ends of verses (and some half-verses) in 4QtgLev (4Q156). For this and other aspects of the history of biblical verse division, see Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Leiden, 2004), 127–34.

22 Naveh, "Word Division in West Semitic Writing," *IEJ* 23 (1973): 206.

23 Edward Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Leuven, 1997), 97; Émile Puech, "L'ostracon de Khirbet Qeyafa et les débuts de la royauté en Israël," *RB* 117 (2010): 166. The usual word divider in the Tell Fekherye inscription is the dicolon; see Ali Abou-Assaf, Pierre Bordreuil, and Alan R. Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* (Paris, 1982), 38.

24 Sass, *Genesis*, 134; see also p. 61.

25 Cross, "Origin," 16* n. 48.

26 Naveh, *Early History*, 33–34.

27 Cross, "Evolution," 21 n. 19.

28 Ibid., 20 n. 13.

29 Cross, "Origin," 16* n. 48.

30 Joshua Blau, "'Weak' Phonetic Change and the Hebrew $\acute{s}\hat{i}n$," *Hebrew Annual Review* 1 (1977): 105 = idem, *Topics in Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics* (Jerusalem, 1998), 88. Cf. Leonid Kogan, "Proto-Semitic Phonetics and Phonology," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook* (Berlin, 2011), 92: "Egyptian and Jerusalem Amarna renderings may suggest that reflexes

of *$\underline{t}$ and *$\acute{s}$ [= $\acute{s}$] were phonetically similar, but tell nothing about their merger (Blau 1977, 105; Marrassini 1978, 174)."

31 For the evidence, see James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, 1994), 411–12 and 436 (q) and (g).

32 William F. Albright, "The Northwest-Semitic Tongues Before 1000 B.C.," in *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti: Roma, 23–29 Settembre 1935–XIII* (Rome, 1938), 448.

33 Kogan, "Proto-Semitic Phonetics," 97. Cf. E.Y. Kutscher, "Contemporary Studies in North-Western Semitic," *JSS* 10 (1965): 39; and Werner Diem, "Das Problem von ש im Althebräischen und die kanaanäische Lautverschiebung," *ZDMG* 124 (1974): 228.

34 Kogan, "Proto-Semitic Phonetics," 92–93.

35 Naveh, *Early History*, 33.

36 William F. Albright, *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Cambridge, MA, 1966), 21–22. According to Albright, the verb $\acute{s}m$ "present (imper.)" occurs twice in the inscription (column 2 and column 3) written with the bow sign. For other readings and interpretations of this obscure text, see Sass, *Genesis*, 23–25; Brian E. Colless, "The Proto-Alphabetic Inscriptions of Sinai," *Abr-Nahrain* 28 (1990): 31–32; and Gordon J. Hamilton, *The Origins of the West Semitic Alphabet in Egyptian Scripts* (CBQMS 40; Washington DC, 2006), 347–49. According to Sass (*Genesis*, 24): "The proposed *mem* in this column [column 2], to the left of *alep*, does not exist, and with it disappears the proof Albright (1966, 32) sought for the rendering of $\acute{s}$ and $\underline{t}$ by the same letter, though theoretically this is not impossible."

37 W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia, 1985), 28.

38 Albright, "Early Alphabetic Inscriptions," 8; cf. p. 15 n. 42, where Albright makes clear that the "two different phonemes" were South Canaanite $\underline{t}$-$\acute{s}$ and $\check{s}$.

39 Theodor Gaster, "The Chronology of Palestinian Epigraphy," *PEQ* 69 (1937): 57; Émile Puech, "Quelques remarques sur l'alphabet au deuxième millénaire," in *Atti del I Congresso internazionale di studi fenici e punici* (Rome, 1983), 568; idem, "Origine de l'alphabet: Documents en alphabet linéaire et cunéiforme du IIe millénaire," *RB* 93 (1986): 175 with n. 41.

40 Cross, "Origin," 17* and 18* n. 63. For the dating, see ibid., 19*.

41 Frank M. Cross, "Newly Found Inscriptions in Old Canaanite and Early Phoenician Scripts," *BASOR* 238 (1980): 1–4. Later in this article, he discusses the ʿIzbet Ṣarṭah Ostracon, whose "twenty-two-sign alphabet is clear proof that the merger of phonemes which reduced the Canaanite stock of consonantal phonemes … has

taken place" (ibid., 12–13); however, this inscription is less relevant to claim (6) since Cross assigns it to the 12th century (ibid., 12). According to Hamilton (*Origins*, 243), "the earliest solid evidence of this merger [*$\underline{t}$ and *$\check{s}$] in South Canaanite comes from two inscriptions," viz., the ʿIzbet Ṣarṭah Ostracon and the Qubūr el-Walaydah Ostracon.

42 Zellig S. Harris, *Development of the Canaanite Dialects: An Investigation in Linguistic History* (New Haven, 1939), 40–41.

43 Ibid., 40.

44 So already in Zellig S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, 1936), 158.

45 J.T. Milik and Frank M. Cross, "Inscribed Javelin-Heads from the Period of the Judges: A Recent Discovery in Palestine," *BASOR* 134 (1954): 9; and Cross, "Origin," 9*–10*, 11*. I am indebted to Jo Ann Hackett for both of these references. See also William F. Albright, "The Phoenician Inscriptions of the Tenth Century B.C. from Byblus," *JAOS* 67 (1947): 153–54; and Naveh, *Early History*, 53.

46 William F. Albright, "The Beth-Shemesh Tablet in Alphabetic Cuneiform," *BASOR* 173 (1964): 53.

47 Only a small sample of the literature on this subject can be given here: Charles Virolleaud, "L'alphabet sénestrogyre de Ras-Shamra (Ugarit)," in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 104 (1960): 85–86; Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome, 1965), 16; J.C. Greenfield, "Amurrite, Ugaritic and Canaanite," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies Held in Jerusalem, 19–23 July 1965* (Jerusalem, 1969), 96; Edward L. Greenstein, "A Phoenician Inscription in Ugaritic Script?" *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 8 (1976): 49–57; M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, "The Cuneiform Alphabets of Ugarit," *UF* 21 (1989): 109 §2.2.2.4.

48 Frank M. Cross, "Early Alphabetic Scripts," in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, (ed. F.M. Cross; Cambridge, MA, 1979), 102–103.

49 See also Frank M. Cross, "The Canaanite Cuneiform Tablet from Taanach," *BASOR* 190 (1968): 42 n. 5; idem, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 52–53 nn. 36–37; idem, "Newly Found Inscriptions," 13.

50 Richard C. Steiner, "Poetic Forms in the Masoretic Vocalization and Three Difficult Phrases in Jacob's Blessing: יֶתֶר שְׂאֵת (Gen 49:3), יְצוּעִי עָלָה (Gen 49:4) and יָבֹא שִׁילֹה (Gen 49:10)," *JBL* 129 (2010): 222–23 with n. 74. For the convenience of the reader, I shall repeat my earlier discussion here, with revisions and expansions.

51 H.L. Ginsberg, נוספות לעלילת אלאין בעל, *Tarbiz* 4 (1933): 384 with n. 16.

52 Ibid., n. 16. The translation of Ginsberg's Hebrew is mine. The first clause is admittedly odd, since *letters* cannot be omitted in *speech*, but that is what the original Hebrew says.

53 Ibid. For a fourth occurrence of *šy* in the Bible, see Steiner, "Poetic Forms," 219–24.

54 Joseph Naveh, "More Hebrew Inscriptions from Meṣad Ḥashavyahu," *IEJ* 12 (1962): 30–31; and N. Avigad, "Two Phoenician Votive Seals," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 243–47.

55 *KAI* 214, 18; *DNWSI* 1125 s.v. *šy*₁. For the debate about this word, see Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 46.

56 Puech, "Canaanite Inscriptions of Lachish," 15–17; Colless, "Proto-Alphabetic Inscriptions of Canaan," 38–39. Puech gives a number of possible readings. One of them is]*šy ʿbr lll*["an offering/sheep, he had offered to *ll*?" Here he takes ʿbr to be a verb, without explaining how it can mean "offered" or mentioning the possibility that it is a personal name (cf. the name Eber, borne by five individuals in the Hebrew Bible) with *šy* in construct to it. Another of Puech's readings is]*š 30 ʿbr lll*[, offered without any translation or discussion. In later times, we find *š* commonly used as an abbreviation for "shekel(s)." For example, the phrase *š 30* itself is attested with the meaning "30 sh(ekels)" in an ostracon from Tell Qasîle; see Benjamin Maisler (Mazar), "Two Hebrew Ostraca from Qasîle," *JNES* 10 (1951): 265–67; and Joseph Naveh, "Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century B.C.E. Philistia: The New Evidence from Tell Jemmeh," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 16–17. Moreover, Cross ("Newly Found Inscriptions," 3–4) has raised the possibility that a similar phrase is found already in the Qubūr el-Walaydah inscription. Interpreted in this way, the reading *š 30 ʿbr lll* is, we may add, reminiscent of the phrase *ʾrbʿ mʾwt šql ksp ʿbr lsḥr* in Gen 23:16. Colless reads *šy ʿdr lll* "an offering of the flock (or: of ʿAdr) to Lel (Night)." In this reading, the first two words could be translated "a sheep/goat of the flock" and compared to *wnśʾ śh mhʿdr* "and carried off a sheep/goat from the flock" in 1 Sam 17:34. Note that a bowl, unlike a ewer, can be used to present meat; cf. at n. 10 above. As for the date of this inscription, Puech (pp. 16–17) writes: "If the readings were more certain, we would suggest a date for this fragment in the 14th century or even in the 15th century B.C."

57 Albright, "Early Alphabetic Inscriptions," 15 n. 41.

58 Cross, "Evolution," 21 n. 19.

59 Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel* (Atlanta, 1987), 34 n. 18.

60 David Qimḥi, ספר השרשים (s.v. ש׳, Berlin, 1847), 383, ed. J.H.R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht.

61 Manfred Krebernik, "Ein aramäischer Text in griechischer Schrift?" in *"Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es!" ... Festschrift für Otto Jastrow zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. W. Arnold and H. Bobzin; Wiesbaden, 2002), 427. The slashes indicate line breaks. For another Aramaic text in Greek script, see Jonathan J. Price and Shlomo Naeh, "On the Margins of Culture: The Practice of Transcription in the Ancient World," in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (ed. Hannah M. Cotton, et al.; Cambridge, 2009), 269.

62 See LaMoine F. DeVries, "Cult Stands: A Bewildering Variety of Shapes and Sizes," *BAR* 13.4 (July/August 1987): 29: "Sometimes the pedestal has a pillar-like appearance with decorated registers at various levels on the pedestal; the bowl on top may be decorated with petals to resemble the capital of a pillar." The donation of pillars (ʿmwdyn) is memorialized in five Aramaic synagogue inscriptions from ancient Israel and in a dozen Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions from the Temple of Baalshamin at Palmyra, but, in all of these cases, we seem to be dealing with load-bearing columns. For the Jewish inscriptions, see Dan Urman, כתובות יהודיות מן הכפר דבורה שבגולן, *Tarbiz* 40 (1970–71): 401 (with literature); and Joseph Naveh, על פסיפס ואבן: הכתובות הארמיות מבתי־הכנסת העתיקים (Jerusalem, 1978), nos. 7, 12, 18, 40, 71. The Jewish Aramaic verb predicated of the donor is either ʿ-b-d "made" (nos. 7, 12, 18, 40) or z-b-n "bought" (no. 71). For the Palmyrene inscriptions, see Delbert R. Hillers and Eleonora Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore, 1996), 45–46 (nos. 0164–0176). The Palmyrene Aramaic verbs used in these inscriptions are q-r-b "offered and ʿ-b-d "made"."

63 The phrase *ʿmsy šyyʾ* is reminiscent of BH *nśʾy mnḥh* (Jud 3:18, 2 Sam 8:2, etc.).

64 See n. 55 above.

65 See Anderson, *Sacrifices*, 34 n. 18. The transcription *šāy* given by Colless ("Proto-Alphabetic Inscriptions of Canaan," 39) is an error, presumably based on the pausal form in Ps 68:30.

66 It may well be related to the root *š-w-y* meaning "be equal." If so, it is worth noting that, from the cognate root in Arabic, *s-w-y* "be equal," we find two forms of the verbal noun: *siyyun* < **siwyun* and a dialectal variant *sayyun* < **sawyun*; see E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863–77), 1478b s.v. Lane, presumably following one or more of the native Arabic dictionaries, gives *siwyun* as the underlying form of *siyyun*, making it clear that the geminated *yy* in these forms is the product of total assimilation. Cf. Arabic *riyyun* "the state of having drunk enough to quench ... thirst" (ibid., 1195b bot. s.v.) and its Hebrew cognate *ry* (*rî*) "saturation, abundance of moisture" in Job 37:11 (alongside *rwyh* in Ps 23:5). Both Arabic *riyyun* and Hebrew *ry* (*rî*) are verbal nouns derived from the root *r-w-y* via **riwy-*.

67 Dennis Pardee, "A New Aramaic Inscription from Zinc-irli," *BASOR* 356 (2009): 53.

68 For this translation and discussion, see Richard C. Steiner, *Disembodied Souls: The* Nefesh *in Israel and Kindred Spirits in the Ancient Near East, with an Appendix on the Katumuwa Inscription* (Ancient Near East Monographs, 11; Atlanta, 2015), 129, 143–50.

69 Albright, "Early Alphabetic Inscriptions," 15; Cross, "Evolution," 19; Puech, "Origine," 179; and Colless, "Proto-Alphabetic Inscriptions of Canaan," 39–40. For the 13th century date, see Cross, "Origin," 10*; and Puech, "Canaanite Inscriptions of Lachish," 18.

70 Polyphony typically arises in borrowed alphabets or syllabaries, especially when the lending language lacks certain phonemes possessed by the borrowing language; see Diem, "Das Problem von ש," 237; Joshua Blau, *On Polyphony in Biblical Hebrew* (Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 6.2; Jerusalem, 1982), 3; idem, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake IN, 2010), 74–75; Kogan, "Proto-Semitic Phonetics," 97; and Steiner, *Disembodied Souls*, 154–56 with n. 130. These inscriptions do not make use of a borrowed alphabet; they are written in Old Canaanite, the language of the inventors of the alphabet.

71 In other words, "inverse spelling" became the norm. For this phenomenon, see Henry M. Hoenigswald, *Language Change and Linguistic Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1960), 9–10; and Joshua Blau, *On Pseudo-Corrections in Some Semitic Languages* (Jerusalem, 1970), 21 §11. For our case, see ibid., 44 §3.

72 Cross, "Origin," 17*,18* n. 62. For the etymological *ś, cf. Hebrew *ś-k-r* "reward" and the Arabic expression *šakara llahu šaʿyahu* "may God … reward his work" (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1584b bot.).

73 See n. 56 above.

ERETZ-ISRAEL

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