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Hebrew and Aramaic in Contact

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A COMPANION TO ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES

Edited by

Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee

WILEY Blackwell

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Hebrew and Aramaic in Contact

Aaron Koller

Introduction: Divergence

Canaanite and Aramaic diverged at some point prior to the middle of the second millennium BCE. Distinctively Canaanite features are evident in Amarna Canaanite and in Late Egyptian transcriptions of Canaanite words (Hoch 1994); the split may have been as early as the mid-third millennium BCE (Steiner 2011). Although both Canaanite and Aramaic developed distinctive features (see Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016, and Huehnergard 1995, respectively), of course only one branch had to develop innovative features to effect the split; Canaanite seems to have broken off first from the proto-language, and the distinctive features of Aramaic then developed over the course of the second millennium.

Despite this ancient rift, languages of the two families lived in close proximity for millennia. This chapter will set aside most of the Canaanite languages, such as Phoenician, and concentrate on Hebrew and its relationship with Aramaic. Over the course of the first millennium BCE and into the first millennium CE, mutual influences can be seen in the texts composed in Hebrew and Aramaic.

Because the two languages are both fairly closely related and were in contact for many centuries, it is often difficult to discern what is a shared inheritance and what is a borrowing in one language from the other (see Pat-El 2013, 317 for this methodological problem).

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Contact in Pre-History

We speak of influence between dialects as if we had “pure” examples of each and could then observe “contamination.” Such is rarely, if ever, the case, however.

In fact, there are a number of linguistic features that unite Hebrew and Aramaic, even as opposed to other Canaanite languages. Anson Rainey (2007a, 53–55; 2007b) revitalized this question by drawing attention to a number of features in Hebrew that are shared by Aramaic but not the other Canaanite dialects. The most glaring of these is the use of the prefix preterite (*yaqtul*) for a string of clauses connected by the conjunction in order to express a “sequence of action” in Hebrew, Moabite, and Old Aramaic, but not elsewhere (Emerton 1994; 1997; Muraoka 1995; 1998; Sasson 1997; Muraoka and Rogland 1998; DeCaen 2001). This may be Hebrew influence on certain Old and later Aramaic texts (Zakkur, Dan, Deir ‘Alla, and P. Amherst 63), but it clearly is a feature that was not in the common ancestor of either the Canaanite or Aramaic dialects.

There are also a number of striking lexical isoglosses which unite Hebrew and Aramaic against Phoenician (and Ugaritic). The most basic is perhaps the use of the root *hwy* “to be” in Aramaic, Moabite, and Hebrew, against *kwn* in Phoenician and Amarna Canaanite, but the data also include the standard words for “foot”, “good”, “ox”, to put”, and “to make” (Kogan 2015, 372).

Rainey never makes it explicit what precisely he meant to propose, but the most parsimonious way of dealing with the data he adduced is to assert that although genetically Hebrew is a Canaanite language, through close contact with Aramaic *at an early stage*, the two languages developed in tandem certain usages that are not shared by other dialects.[1] In other words, there was profound influence between the two languages at a stage early enough to affect the basic grammar of the two languages, presumably no later than the Late Bronze Age.

More profound evidence for contact comes from areal features that are innovations of the late second millennium and are found in both Hebrew and Aramaic. The fundamental place that these features hold in the grammars of both languages make these highly significant. These indicate that Hebrew and Aramaic were in close contact for the centuries of their pre-history, when we do not have direct documentation of either dialect.[2] The definite article, which has a different morphology in each language but identical syntax, is clearly an areal feature (Huehnergard 2005, 81–82). The markers of direct objects *ʾt* in Hebrew, *ʾyt* and later *yt* in Aramaic) appears to be another (Rubin 2005, 94–105; Koller 2011, 207–211). Kutscher suggested that אית was in its origins Canaanite, and competed with “native” Aramaic *l-* as a marker of direct objects (Kutscher 1971, 114; compare also Wilson-Wright 2016). The use of the infinitive absolute plus finite verb construction is also worthy of further study in this light: it is attested in Sefire III 2, and possibly elsewhere in that text, and is common in Ugaritic and BH and attested in Phoenician (Kaufman 1985, 50; Morrow 2001; note that it is not the *morphology* of the infinitive absolute that is at issue here, but the *syntax*.)

In sum, there is strong evidence for intensive contact between Hebrew and Aramaic in the period prior to either language being attested in texts, at some point in the second millennium BCE. We turn now to contacts in historically attested periods, beginning with the Iron Age.

Iron Age Contacts

When we turn to the Iron Age, Hebrew and Aramaic are both attested in large numbers of texts, but in very different corpora. Hebrew is primarily found in the Bible, which contains literary texts originating over the course of a millennium and which were subject to centuries of editorial work and scribal transmission after their composition. The early stages of Aramaic, on the other hand, are far less extensive, and are primarily found in royal inscriptions, and later in letters, contracts, and other quotidian documents, whose dates can generally be established with some certainty, and which were not copied or even seen in the following millennia.

Avi Hurvitz (1968; 2003) has articulated some intuitive methodological strictures regarding the import of Aramaisms within Biblical Hebrew. In the earlier periods, there are examples of contact with Aramaic that appear to be more motivated more by aesthetic concerns than by natural linguistic processes (see Malamat 1958 for relevant political context). These examples are lexical only, and are found in poetic texts, where the need for variety is more pronounced (Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 60–62; see Boyd and Hardy 2015 for another suggested Aramaism in poetry). It is sometimes said that Archaic Hebrew may simply have looked more like Aramaic than later Hebrew (Bar-Asher 2015).

Thus, one reads in Deut 33:2 that "the Lord arrived from Sinai, shining forth from Seʿir; He appeared from Mt. Paran and came (*wə-ʾātā*^{h}) from Ribebot Qodesh." The use of the root *ʾ–t–y*, the common root in Aramaic for "to come" is motivated by the need of the poet to deploy four other verbs of motion to describe YHWH's path from the south (see Cross 1998), in conjunction with the fact that the poet is describing the deity's motion from a foreign country. This root was clearly known within Hebrew-speaking circles, though: it appears another 20 times in the Hebrew part of the Bible.

A more difficult example is the appearance in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) of the verb *m-ḥ-q* in v. 26: "She struck Sisera, she crushed (*māḥăqā*^{h}) his head, she crushed (*māḥăṣā*^{h}) and pierced his temple"). *māḥăqā*^{h} seems to be another form of the Hebrew word *māḥăṣā*^{h} used in the following clause, with a different realization of emphatic fricative lateral. Whereas in Hebrew this phoneme merged with /ṣ/, in Aramaic this phoneme went through a number of changes. In Iron Age Aramaic texts, it was apparently realized as something like /kx'/ (Steiner 1991), and was written as <q>. It later merged with /ʕ/, and later scribes began writing the phoneme with <ʕ>. Thus the cognate of Hebrew *ʾereṣ* was written *ʾrq* in Old Aramaic but *ʾrʕ* in later Aramaic. (Compare Jer 10:11, and TAD B 2.2, lines 14–16, both of which show the two spellings side-by-side.) Thus, the cognate of Hebrew *mḥṣ* would have been written *mḥqh* in Old Aramaic. For this reason, Gzella (2015, 99–101) identifies this word as showing Aramaic influence in an early Hebrew text. However, this particular word is attested in Old Aramaic itself (Zakkur) as *mḥʾ*, with an ad hoc shift of /kx'/ to /ʔ/. It is also not clear if the word would have been borrowed orally, and Hebrew scribes happened to come to the same solution of how to write the phoneme /kx'/ as the Aramaic scribes, or if it was transmitted in writing.

Similarly, the words *yətannū* and *lətannōt* appear in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:11; 11:40). This word seems to derive from a root **ṯny*; since the phoneme /ṯ/ merged with /š/ in Hebrew but with /t/ in most of Aramaic, many have seen this as an Aramaizing or

Aramaic usage in an early Hebrew text (see already b. Baba Batra 8a; Morag 1983–1984, 503; Morag 1983, 53–54). Again, this becomes complicated once one looks at the details. In Old Aramaic, */ṯ/ was still pronounced [ṯ], and written with a <š>. So if the word was borrowed in the Iron Age from Aramaic, we have to assume that the Hebrew scribes simply thought that the /t/ was the closest consonant to the foreign sound they were trying to transcribe, [ṯ], even though the Aramaic scribes chose <š> for this purpose (and the scribes at Tell Fakharya chose <s> for this purpose; see Stadel, this volume). It cannot be proposed that in the dialect of the Song of Deborah */ṯ/ had merged with /t/, or was consistently written with <t>, because there are a number of counter-examples in the text (e.g. *š́əʿārīm*).

Outside of poetry, Aramaic-like words are found in biblical texts set in Aram, or otherwise associated with an Aramean context. The Aramean Laban "overtakes" Jacob, and the narrative says, *wa-yadbēq ʾotō be-har ha-gilʿād* (Gen 31:23), using the root *d-b-q* as opposed to the expected *hiśśig* (a verb in fact found in v. 25 there). J. C. Greenfield (1981, 129–130) drew attention to this and other examples (see also Kaufman 1985); many more examples, some more compelling than others, have been proposed (see Rendsburg 2015a for a summary and further references). This indicates that Hebrew authors were familiar enough with Aramaic to deploy words or grammatical features when the literary context demanded it.

On the Aramaic side, one finds the root *lḥm* "to war", which may be a loanword from Canaanite, in the inscription from Tel Dan, on the Israelite border (see Stadel, this volume). Deir ʿAlla also shows a combination of Aramaic and Canaanite features. Among the most striking Aramaic features is the use of <q> for the emphatic fricative lateral (see above); among the prominent Canaanite features are the *nifʿal* verbal stem. One possible interpretation (Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016) of the messy data is that this is a Canaanite text with features borrowed from Aramaic; another possibility is that it is a text that was originally written in Canaanite that was then translated into Aramaic (Gzella 2015, 87–91). Yet another view is that Deir ʿAlla represents a non-Aramaic non-Canaanite dialect of Northwest Semitic. Most likely is that this is a dialect of Aramaic that has borrowed many Canaanite features (Halpern 1987); phonological features are the most compelling for dialectal diagnosis, as words and even verbal forms may be more easily borrowed across dialectal lines.

In the later Iron Age, the impact of Aramaic on Hebrew began to grow more pronounced and more profound, as the use of Aramaic spread beyond the borders of the Aramean homeland. In the story of the Rabshaqeh at the wall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 = Isaiah 36), the Judean dignitaries request that the Assyrian diplomats speak to them in Aramaic, rather than in "Judean" (= Hebrew), the implication being that at that time in Jerusalem, *only* diplomats and perhaps other high-ranking government officials would be expected to be able to converse in Aramaic (against the doubts of Boyd and Hardy 2015, 44 n. 28).

By the following century, Aramaic had spread deeper in society. An Aramaic sentence is found in the mouth of Jeremiah (10:11; see discussion in Mizrahi 2014). There are numerous Akkadian loanwords in the Hebrew of Ezekiel, who worked in the area of Babylonia in the early sixth century (for a catalog, see Gluska 2005), and it is likely that these were transmitted to the Jews in exile through the medium of Aramaic.

Persian Period

In the Persian Empire, Aramaic served as the language of international communication, not only on the highest diplomatic levels, but also among mid-level diplomats and, it seems, among at least some communities. Aramaic during this period was an international language, utilized by the Persian administration and as a language of law and literature, from central Asia through northeast Africa. The bulk of the corpus available is from texts found in Egypt, and coincidentally, many of these texts were written by Jews who lived in the town of Elephantine in southern Egypt in the fifth century (for a grammar, see Muraoka and Porten 2003, and see Stadel, this volume). Hebrew influence is evident in Elephantine Aramaic in a small number of loanwords that make their appearance in the corpus, such as *ʿdh*, *tkwnh*, *khny*ʾ, *mzrqy*ʾ, and *špṭ* (Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 117–118).

Generally, Aramaic had a more profound impact on Hebrew than the other way around. The status of Hebrew as a spoken language during the Persian period is, unfortunately, less than clear (see Sanders, this volume, for discussion and references). It seems clear that the language was under threat; Nehemiah complains that the children of the people he encountered in fifth-century Jerusalem "half spoke Ashdodite and could not speak Judean" (13:24; see Polak 2006 with references).

The Hebrew biblical texts composed in this period show clear and consistent influence of Aramaic (Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 121–129; Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 120). Most obviously, there are multiple chapters in the books of Daniel and Ezra that are in Aramaic. In Ezra this originates as the quotation of official documents from the Persian bureaucracy (on the structure and eastern dialectal affiliation of these texts, see Steiner 2001, 638–641), but in Daniel the language choice is motivated apparently only by the naturalness of telling Jewish diaspora stories in Aramaic (see below). Furthermore, the Hebrew of these texts, too, contains many loanwords from Aramaic, as well as loanwords from other languages, such as Akkadian and Persian, which were likely mediated through Aramaic (contra Wilson-Wright 2015). A feature as pervasive in everyday life as the names of the months was borrowed by Hebrew speakers from Aramaic in this time, and the borrowed month names (e.g. Nisan, Iyyar, etc.) are in use in Jewish circles since that time.

Such influence reflects extensive and intensive cultural contacts, and indeed the effects of this contact is evident in the realm of literature, as well, as seen in different ways in the stories of Tobit and Ahiqar, Daniel, Enoch, P. Amherst 63, and Job (Lemaire 1985). Linguistically, the influence of Aramaic was indeed profound. Talshir (2003) showed that it was not merely the passage of time that created the differences between Iron Age and Persian period Hebrew (often called Late Biblical Hebrew [LBH]), but the intensive linguistic contact with Aramaic in the Babylonian exile and the subsequent movement of people from the exile to Yehud. Thus, although within the grammar of LBH, the legacies of classical Hebrew and the vernacular dialect of Hebrew are stronger than the overt influence of Aramaic (Polzin 1976, 61–69), the Aramaic influence was pervasive if subtle (Pat-El 2012, 254–259). To take one example of the sort of effects that are visible, the classical relative particle *ʾăšer* is replaced in LBH by *kī*, under the influence of Aramaic *dy*, and many other calques are visible, as well (Greenfield and Naveh 1985, 120–121).[3]

Cook (2016) has argued that Mishnaic Hebrew is the result of interference from native Aramaic speakers (see below), and it is worth considering LBH in this light, as well.

Some books, although written in Hebrew, contain so many Aramaic-like features that scholars have sometimes wondered whether the texts were not in fact written originally in Aramaic and then translated (see Ibn Ezra on Job 2:12; Rashi on Job 36:2). The Hebrew of Qohelet is certainly distinctive, and shows heavy Aramaic influence (for example, Pat-El 2013, 318–321; see also Pat-El 2012, 254–259), and H. L. Ginsberg (1950) argued that the book was originally Aramaic. Although later literature was in fact translated from Aramaic to Hebrew and vice versa (see on Enoch, below), there is no real evidence for the Aramaic influence being any more than interference from Aramaic speakers on Hebrew.

It should also be observed that "Late Biblical Hebrew" is likely not actually a single dialect; linguistic differences can be detected between the texts composed in the province of Yehud, such as Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and those composed in the eastern Diaspora, such as Esther and Daniel – and this despite the fact that the people Ezra and Nehemiah were themselves products of the eastern Diaspora. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all of the developments visible in Late Biblical Hebrew were continued in later dialects (Koller 2012, 270); thus, there must have been areas in which Hebrew was spoken in a form other than that visible to us in LBH. An ostracon from the City of David, dated to the fourth century, reads *kkrn 1 lp lḥnnyh bṣq*. Since *bṣq* and *kkr* are Hebrew, not Aramaic (which uses *lyš* for "dough" and *pt* or *ṭwlm* for "loaf"), this has been said to be a Hebrew ostracon (Naveh 2000, 9–10, against Kottsieper 2007, 112–113). But the ending on the plural noun is /n/, as in Aramaic, against Hebrew /m/, and this has been said to reflect Aramaic influence (Schniedewind 2006, 143). Another view is that in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the difference between word final /m/ and /n/ was neutralized in fourth-century Jerusalem Hebrew, as in other dialects (Koller 2017). When we describe the influence of Aramaic on Hebrew in this period, then, we must be conscious (as always) of the fact that we have access to only one of the versions of Hebrew that was spoken and written during this era.

Hellenistic and Roman Periods

The early Hellenistic period provides us with little evidence for influence of Aramaic on Hebrew or vice versa, since we have very little data with which to work. This period may have seen, however, translations of works from one language to another. Sections of the book of Enoch (in particular the Book of Watchers and the Astronomical Book) were composed in Aramaic no later than the third century BCE and circulated in Jewish Palestine. Tobit, too, was likely originally written in Aramaic, perhaps around the same time or slightly later, and copies of that book in both Hebrew and Aramaic have been found at Qumran (Fitzmyer 1995; Cook 1996). It is likely that the Aramaic stories of Daniel were transmitted to Palestine in this era; the stories were supplemented with a Hebrew introduction (chapter 1) and, probably later, further Hebrew visionary texts (Daniel 8–12), producing a bilingual book.

At Qumran, the majority of the texts are in Hebrew, and there is good reason to think that the sect wrote their own literature in Hebrew exclusively (Dimant 2007; Ben-Dov

2009). This was apparently motivated by an ideology of linguistic purism (Segert 1963; Schniedewind 1999; Weitzman 1999), according to which Hebrew, the language of God and of Creation, would be the only appropriate language in the messianic future or in the utopian Qumran present (so 4Q464 according to Stone and Eshel 1992). The Aramaic texts from the site, therefore, are believed to have been inherited from the broader Jewish Second Temple intellectual life (Bernstein and Koller 2012, 190–191).

Despite the linguistic ideology of the sect, their Hebrew is suffused with Aramaic influences, even when they are copying earlier Hebrew texts, such as biblical books. Kutscher's magisterial study of the Great Isaiah Scroll showed Aramaic influence on every level of the language, and he devoted a chapter to documenting the influences (1959, 141–163). Qimron (1986, 116) argued that Kutscher may have exaggerated the extent of the influence of Aramaic, but concludes that "the fact that Aramaic has succeeded in penetrating even the morphology proves how far reaching its impact was" (see also Greenfield 1995). The Aramaisms in the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls have more recently been studied systematically by Fassberg (2015). It is not clear if there are statistically significant differences between the biblical texts and the original sectarian texts, so the data here are drawn from the entire Qumran Hebrew corpus. In the realm of orthography, the word *mōznayim* "scales" is spelled *mwznym* rather than the usual Hebrew spelling *m’znym*, and final *–ā* is often spelled with <’> instead of <h> (e.g. *hy’* "it was" [MMT]; *htwr’* "the law" [1QSa 1:1]).

Phonologically, there is pre-nasalization or dissimilation in forms such as *yntn* for *ytn* (4Q17 2 ii 14; 4Q175 3) and *tnṣwr* "you will keep" (4Q436 2 i 4), among others (Fassberg 2015, 10–11); this feature is not known elsewhere in Hebrew, but is widespread in Aramaic (Garr 2007). Morphological influences tend to be reflective of the most intensive language contact, and there is Aramaic influence evident in QH morphology, as well. In the verb, the 3fp perfect form *whzyqh*, rather than *whzyqw* (and two other examples of this feature), seems to be Aramaizing. The 3ms suffix on plural nouns sometimes appears as *–why*, e.g. *ʿlwhy* in Pesher Habakkuk, *ydwhy* in the Great Isaiah Scroll, and *rglwhy* in 1QS, among others, and also reflects Aramaic grammar (see, somewhat differently, Fassberg 2015, 24).

The area of the lexicon is perhaps the most interesting. There are numerous calques, including function words such as *l’ḥt* "very," modeled on Aramaic *lḥd’*, *mšktwb* "from what is written," modeled on *mdktyb*, *krṣwnw* "according to his will," modeled on *krʿwtyh*, *btmyd* "always," modeled on *btdyr’* (Qimon 1986, 116). The forms of Hebrew words were also remodeled on the basis of Aramaic: segolate nouns are found in the Aramaic pattern rather than the Hebrew one, such as *bswr* instead of *boser*; the plural of *ywm* appears often as *ywmy(m)* rather than *ymy(m)*; the preposition *tḥt* is attested as *tḥwt*. But actual loanwords are very rare. One of the few is *klyl* "crown," but this is found in biblical Hebrew texts from the early sixth century BCE (Lamentations 2:15 and Ezek 16:14, 27:3, and 28:12), where it has been taken as an Aramaism in BH (Wagner 1966, 64–65; Dobbs-Allsopp 1999, 26–27; differently Tawil 2006, 37–40). The authors and scribes apparently consciously tried to avoid Aramaic loanwords, and by and large did manage to do so to a surprising extent (Rendsburg 2011; Rendsburg 2015b, 156–157). There are, of course, some, such as *srk* and *rz* (which was originally Persian but mediated through Aramaic); the last word in Nahum 3:9 is cited in 4Q385-6 2: 6–7 as *bsʿdk* "with your

help," rather than MT *bʿzrtk*, substituting the Aramaic root for its Hebrew counterpart (Joosten 2010, 358). Overall, the influence on Aramaic is widespread, except for the vocabulary.

Philologists often point out that the lexicon is the realm most easily affected by language contact, and therefore the first to show influence from other languages. Qumran Hebrew shows a somewhat inverse corollary: linguistic purists such as the Qumran scribes have a relatively easy time purging their language of real loanwords. The more subtle influences of another language are much more difficult for native speakers to perceive, and therefore to prevent. Qumran Hebrew shows influence from Aramaic on all levels of the language – with the major exception being the lexicon, which was kept relatively "pure."

In the other direction, the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls show significant Hebrew influence, too (Fassberg 1992; Stadel 2008; Joosten 2010, 366–367). There are loanwords such as *ʾl ʿlywn* and *hll* "to praise" in the Genesis Apocryphon, and many other words (*ḥms* "violence," *ʾyl* "ram," *yswd* "foundation," and *ʿwr* "blind") appear throughout the corpus. The verb *wywšʿ* "he saved" is attested in one text; the root *yšʿ* is unattested in Aramaic, suggesting that this is a Hebraism (Fassberg 1992, 67). These Hebraisms appear to be from the Bible, rather than from spoken Hebrew, and so reflect literary rather than colloquial influence (Stadel 2008, 131–133). This, coupled with the profound influence of (spoken) Aramaic on the Hebrew of Qumran, may reveal that Hebrew was *exclusively* a literary language there (Steiner 1997, 146; contra Rendsburg 2011, 218–219; see Joosten 2010, 355–356 for discussion).

On the other hand, the texts from Judea from the Great Revolt (67–70 CE) and the period of Bar Koseba (132–136 CE), reveal that Hebrew was a spoken language (this is a very old question; among recent scholars this is with Mor 2016, contra Gzella 2011), but also that it was a language that had been deeply influenced by Aramaic (Kutscher 1962; Mor 2011; Gzella 2007a, 2007b). On the phonological level, we find pre-nasalization/dissimilation reflected in *ḥntyn* "wheat" (Murabbaʿat 24:2). In the lexicon, there are hybrid forms such as *mzbnwt* "sales," a Hebrew pattern built of an Aramaic root, and note the widespread use of *ʾyln* for "tree", rather than BH עץ, which shows that the semantic structure of the language was profoundly affected by Aramaic (Kogut 2007; Koller forthcoming). In syntax, the construction *bšl š-* "in order that," appears to be modeled on Aramaic *bdyl dy* (Murabbaʿat 46:7). The word order of contracts written in Hebrew "blindly follows" the structure of Aramaic contracts (Mor 2009, 251), despite the normal differences between Hebrew and Aramaic in this regard. Hebrew letters, on the other hand, reflect native Hebrew word order.

The Aramaic texts of Bar Koseba show limited but noticeable Hebrew influence. This includes technical terms, such as *šbt* "Sabbath" (rather than *šbh*), *hnsy* "the prince," with the Hebrew definite article, in the official title of Bar Koseba himself, and *mḥnh* "army camp." There is also the repeated use of the conditional particle *ʾm* "if," rather than *hn*, which elsewhere in Aramaic appears only in Targum Onqelos (Kutscher 1961), apparently revealing the influence of spoken Hebrew in the Aramaic texts.

One fascinating text is a deed of sale dated to 134 CE, right in the middle of the Bar Koseba revolt, from Kefar Baru, apparently on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea, which is a double document – a legal document in which one copy of the text is rolled up and

sealed to prevent forgery, and the other is written on the outside, for easy visibility. This interior text is written in Aramaic, which even in those nationalistic days was still the more common language of the law, but on the outside we read a (fragmentary) Hebrew text, including the phrase *tḥdr šptwḥ* "the room that is open," corresponding to *twnh d ptyḥ* in the inside text (Broshi and Qimron 1986).

The Roman-era texts just discussed – the Bar Koseba texts and the Kefar Baru deed – along with other texts not discussed in detail all fundamentally keep the two languages separate. There may be Hebrew influence in the Aramaic and Aramaic influence in the Hebrew, but it is evident at any given time what language the text is in. This is not the case for the very intriguing document from Beit ʿAmar. This text reads, in part: *btryn ʿśr lksylw šnt ʾrbʿ lḥrbn byt yśrʾl…mwdh ʾny lk hymh hzh bkwlmʾ š́ʾhyh lk ʿl yd š́ʾwl ʾḥyk š́ʾhyh bʿly qwdm kk…mytwk htqblt…wkl ʾdm š́ʾywhb ršty lydk*…. The form *š́ʾywhb* seems to be from the Aramaic root *yhb*, in a Hebrew qal participle form; in *htqblt*, the verbal stem may be Hebrew, but the verbal ending Aramaic; and *hymh* may show both the Hebrew and Aramaic definite articles on the noun. There are other quirks, as well, such as the spelling *š́ʾ*- (pronunciation uncertain) for the relative particle and the phrase *lʿmt kk* (Bar-Asher 2014a; Eshel, Eshel, and Yardeni 2011; Fraade 2011; Gross 2012; Fassberg 2017). This text reflects, among other things, a reality in which a scribe may be fluent in speaking Hebrew, but be trained only in writing Aramaic. When called upon to write a document in Hebrew, presumably for nationalistic reasons – note the date, "fourth year to the destruction of the House of Israel," apparently after the fall of Bar Koseba – he struggles to write with any fluency.

Indeed, it can be argued that Roman-era Hebrew and Aramaic formed a Sprachbund in the area around the Dead Sea. As opposed to what is found in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, Mishnaic Hebrew and most other dialects of Aramaic, *hitpaʿel* verbs from roots with initial sibilants do *not* show the expected metathesis of the infixed *-t-* and the first root letter in Qumran Hebrew, the Yadin papyri, the Bar Koseba letters, and Nabatean Aramaic (Folmer 2003, 241; Koller 2011, 203–204; Fassberg 2012). Thus, we find forms such as *htšdr* (P. Yadin 53:3), *ytškḥ* (P. Yadin 54:10), and others in the Great Isaiah Scroll and Hodayot. According to Fassberg (2012, 32), the form is explicable within Aramaic, and the Hebrew forms are the result of Aramaic influence (possibly orthographic, rather than phonological influence). This feature is only found in these dialects, within 50 miles of each other, pointing to the tight connection between the dialects of Hebrew and Aramaic (Jewish and Nabatean) spoken in the region.

Early Rabbinic Literature

Mishnaic Hebrew (MH) is the language of the literature of the Tannaim, the rabbis whose era ended in the early third century. Named for the Mishna, the central literary work from the period, MH was thought by many in the nineteenth century to be an artificial language like medieval Latin – used for written composition, and perhaps learned conversation, among the scholastic elites, but not anyone's native language. This view was contested by M.Z. Segal (1908, 1927) in the early twentieth century, and especially since the discovery of the Bar Koseba texts, the view that MH was a spoken dialect at some point has been

the dominant one (for orientation, see Fassberg 2012; for a recent survey with copious bibliography, see Ong 2015, 32–53). There is no doubt, however, that it was profoundly affected by Aramaic (Bar-Asher 2014b, 250–251; Pérez Fernández 1997, 5–6; for a maximalist catalogue of Aramaic lexical influences, see Gluska 1987, 122–1282), which was also spoken, and presumably more often spoken by the Jews of Roman Palestine. Cook (2016) argues that MH is a dialect born of native speakers of Aramaic learning Hebrew as adults, probably following the Hasmonean conquests in the first century BCE. Others argue that the dialect has roots much earlier (Koller 2017), but the two approaches may in fact be complementary.

The influence is sometimes obvious to the eye, such as loanwords, but the more interesting signs of influence are more subtle. In the realm of morphology, the 2ms pronominal suffix in BH was *–əḵā*, and *–aḵ* in pause, but in MH *–aḵ* is the standard form. The specifics of this development and the environments in which it is found point to internal Hebrew changes, but there is no doubt that these were helped along by Aramaic, where *–āḵ* had long been the form (Steiner 1979, with references). The 2fs, too, shifted to *–īḵ*, again on the pattern of Aramaic. This is a good example of the types of effect Aramaic had on MH: features that were rare in earlier Hebrew are promoted to more prominent status within the later strata of the language under the influence of Aramaic. These are not elements foreign to Hebrew, then, and yet they are an effect of Aramaic.

The gender of certain words changed between BH and MH, apparently again under the influence of Aramaic. For example, *kōs* was feminine in BH, but is masculine in MH, as is Aramaic *kās* with the same meaning, and BH *śādeh* is masculine, but MH *śādeh* is feminine, presumably because Aramaic *ḥql* "field" is feminine (Bar-Asher 2014, 251–252). Also in the realm of syntax, the common reciprocal constructions in BH are *ʾīš ʾet rēʿēhū* or *ʾīš ʾet ʾaḥīw*, but in MH reciprocals are usually expressed as *ze*^{h} *ʾet ze*^{h} or *ze*^{h} *la-ze*^{h}. This, too, seems to be Aramaic influence; compare *wə-ʾarkubbatēh dā lə-dā nāqšān* (Daniel 5:6) and *wə-lā lehĕwōn dāvəqin dənā*^{h} *ʿīm dənā*^{h} (Daniel 2:43) (Bar-Asher Siegal 2012).

In the realm of the lexicon, besides loanwords, deeper effects are found as well. The word *ʾḥz* developed the meaning "to close," alongside "to grasp," under the influence of the Aramaic cognate *ʾḥd*, and there are many other similar calques (Bar-Asher 2014b, 251). The semantic structure of words and of semantic fields was reorganized because of Aramaic, as well. Thus, BH *bwʾ* meant both "to arrive" and "to enter," but under the influence of the contrast between *ʿll* and *ʾty*, MH distinguished between *nkns* and *bwʾ* (Koller 2013).

It should be noted that the same Rabbis, when they formulated the liturgy, apparently made a conscious effort to keep all foreign influences, including Aramaic, out of the formulations (Bar-Asher 2007). In all of the liturgical formulae known to us, Bar-Asher found only two foreign words, and neither of these was Aramaic: the Latin *lgywnwt*, used in a technical sense to refer to the Roman legions in the blessing said on the ninth of Av in commemorating the destruction of the Temple, and *mprns*, from Greek, "to support," apparently because it was felt to be Hebrew (Bar-Asher 2016, 33–35). According to Bar-Asher, this linguistic feature is a reflex of a linguistic ideology that privileged Hebrew – and biblical Hebrew – above all else when it came to prayers to God. As Bar-Asher notes, there is explicit mention of this ideology in the Talmud, which reports: "Rav Judah said: A person should never request their needs in Aramaic; R. Yoḥanan said: Anyone who requests

their needs in Aramaic, the ministering angels do not help them, because the ministering angels do not know Aramaic" (b. Shabbat 12a; b. Soṭah 33a).

NOTES

1 Hackett and Pat-El 2010 offer a rebuttal of Rainey's view that is uncharitable in the extreme, even granting that they thought he would be alive when it was published. They correctly note (as Rainey did not) the evidence for the Canaanite affiliation of Hebrew, but then over eight pages go on to systematically misconstrue, or at least construe uncharitably, Rainey's arguments. For example, Rainey never actually wrote that Transjordanian is a branch of the NWS tree, but that the language was brought in from the Transjordan, and Rainey's point seems to exactly be that הוי is an innovation whereas כון is a retention, so listing other languages that use כון only proves the point; he also did not assert that אשר על הבית is bad grammar in Hebrew, but that the term is not the native Canaanite one for administrator (that would be סכן), and that *in that function* it was calqued from Akkadian. Further discussion would be out of place here; see also the criticism of both the substance and the tone of Hackett and Pat-El's article in Kogan (2015, 369-375).

2 It should also be noted that Hebrew did not participate in a sound change – the merger of *ś*, *š*, and ṯ – that took place not only in Phoenician, but in Lachish Canaanite of the thirteenth century BCE; see Steiner 2016, 108*.

3 Ian Young and his colleagues have argued in recent years that Aramaisms cannot be used to date biblical texts (Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd 2008, 1.220–221). We will not discuss this issue here, beyond noting that their suggestions have been rightly rejected by numerous researchers on well-founded methodological grounds. See, for example Pat-El 2012, 247–248.

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