

New Light on the Biblical *Millo* from Hatran Inscriptions

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Hatran Aramaic ml² occurs in linguistic and archaeological contexts that establish that it corresponds to Hebrew millō⁽²⁾ and targumic Aramaic mlyt², and that it refers to some component of Hatra's circumvallation visible from the forecourts of its gates—possibly a terrace adjacent to the inside of the walls (including the walls of the gates), similar, in some respects, to the one found at Tell el-Hesi. This interpretation of Hatran ml² is supported by the usage of Akkadian tamlû and targumic mlyt². It is virtually identical to an interpretation of Hebrew millo⁽²⁾ put forward in the Middle Ages by Isaiah of Trani. In the appendix, it is argued that Aramaic lgw mn = Mishnaic Hebrew lpnym mn = biblical Hebrew mbyt l- may be translated “inside” when used with nouns denoting perimeters, but that with nouns denoting areas they take on the meaning “behind, inward from.” With nouns of the latter type, “inside” is expressed by bgw = btwk.

Ever since antiquity, translators and exegetes have struggled to determine the precise meaning of biblical Hebrew *millō*⁽²⁾ (lit., “filling”). In more recent times, archaeologists have joined the debate, identifying various structures in Jerusalem with the *Millo* of that city (Stager 1982: 112–13; also, see below). It has not been noted that an Aramaic counterpart of the word in question occurs in two more-or-less identical Hatran inscriptions (336 and 343, both dated A.D. 151–52)—inscriptions whose archaeological context makes it possible to suggest a plausible referent for the word.

The better preserved inscription (343), first published by Ibrahim (1982), reads as follows:

1. *byrh knwn d IIIIC XX XX XX III bmlk² dy*
2. *ʔlh² ʔštbw šmšbrk rbyt[*
3. *whtry² kšyš² wdrdk² wʔrby[*
4. *klhwn wkwl dy ʔmr bhtr² whkyn psk[*
5. *dy kwl dlgnwb lgw mn ml² hdyn*
6. *wlgw mn šwr² bry² ʔyn gbr²*
7. *hw gwy² lktyl bmwt² dy*
8. *ʔlh² wʔyn gbr² hw bry²*
9. *lrgym*

In his more recent study of the inscription, Segal (1986: 73) offers the following translation:

1. In the month of Kanun of [the year] 463 in the rule of
2. the god(s) there agreed ŠMŠBRK *rabbayt(a)*
3. and the Hatrans, old and young, and the ʔArabay(e),
4. all of them, and all who dwell in Hatra, and thus decreed
5. that all who steal inside this store
6. and inside the outer wall, if he is a
7. native he shall be killed by the death of
8. the god(s) and if he is a foreigner
9. he shall be stoned.

The phrase that is the subject of this article is *ml² hdyn* “this *ml²*” (line 5), which obviously refers to something visible to a person reading the inscription in its original location, 1800 years ago. Dozens of similar phrases, composed of a noun modified by a demonstrative adjective, are attested in Northwest Semitic (Aramaic, Phoenician, etc.) inscriptions of all periods, beginning with the very earliest. They include references to stelae and

mosaics, statues and reliefs, sarcophagi and ossuaries, sepulchres and sepulchral chambers, temples and high places, synagogues and churches, palaces and porticoes, pillars and lintels, city gates and cities.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the meaning of the noun is known, and thus there is no problem in identifying its referent. This case, however, is different. Here we do not know the meaning of the word and we are, therefore, faced with a problem familiar to all students of semantics (Palmer 1976: 24):

... to understand an ostensive definition we have to understand precisely what is being pointed at. If I point to a chair and say "This is a chair," it is first of all necessary to realise that I am pointing to the whole object, not to one of its legs, or to the wood it is made of. That may be fairly easily established, but it is also necessary to know what are the characteristics of a chair if the definition is to be of any value. For someone who does not know already what a chair is may well assume from the ostensive definition that a stool or a settee is a chair. He might not even be sure whether the word *chair* applied equally to a table, since the ostensive definition does not even establish that we are pointing at a chair as something to be sat on, rather than as a piece of furniture. Pointing to an object itself involves the identification of the object, the specification of the qualities that make it a chair or a table. It requires a sophisticated understanding, perhaps even the understanding of the entire categorisation of the language concerned. As the philosopher, L. Wittgenstein, commented, "I must already be the master of a language to understand an ostensive definition."

Segal's rendering of *ml^p* as "store" (apparently in the sense of "depot" rather than "shop")¹ is explained in his earlier study (1982: 111): "Aram. *ml^p* is probably to be connected with Jewish Aram. *ml^py*, 'goods, stock'."² However, all of the attestations of *ml^py* in rabbinic literature are, so far as we know, in the Tosefta (Hebrew) and in Hebrew passages of the Talmud. Its pattern is well attested in Mishnaic Hebrew; for example, *l^py* "patch," *in^y* "condition," *dm^y* "doubtfully tithed produce." Accordingly, we must follow Jastrow (1903: 785) and Levy (1924: 120) in classifying *ml^py* as Hebrew rather than Aramaic.

In addition, the meaning of Mishnaic Hebrew *ml^py* does not fit the present context. Since "stock"

has no inside, Segal (1982)—who takes *lgw mn* to mean "inside"—is forced to take *ml^p* in the inscription as referring to a place containing stock, viz., a store. However, even after that reinterpretation, the collocation of *ml^p* with *lgw mn* is still odd, because *lgw mn* does not normally mean "inside" (= *bgw*) with nouns denoting areas, but rather "behind" (and, hence, outside of) or, more precisely, "inward from" (see Appendix). Another collocation that is odd if *ml^p* means "store" is that of *ml^p* with *šwr^p bry^p* "outer wall."

Finally, if *ml^p hdyn* means "this store," it has no obvious referent, given the location of the two inscriptions. H336 is inscribed below the relief of an eagle on a stone slab found *in situ* with a statuette of Heracles in a niche inside the north gate of the main ("inner") city wall (Al-Salihi 1978: 69; 1973a: 99; 1973b: 151; Postgate 1972: 142); H343 is inscribed on a similar stone discovered in a niche in the east gate (Ibrahim 1982: 121, 122).

The "eagle niche" of the north gate is set against the east wall of a small courtyard, dubbed "Heracles Hall" by Al-Salihi (1973b: 151, 1978: 69), the "Entrance Hall" by Postgate (1972: 142), and the "Forecourt" (*Vorhof*) by Andrae (1912: 31). All traffic to and from the northern quarter of the city had to pass through that courtyard. Those coming into the city entered the courtyard from the west, facing the eagle niche. The city fathers obviously wanted to be sure that no one overlooked their grim warning.

The presence of a store in that cramped space (13.70 m × 12.53 m; Andrae 1912: 31) is virtually unthinkable, given the goals of the city fathers. A store would have detracted from the aura of solemnity they wished to create (cf. Aggoula 1983: 36) and perhaps even blocked the edict and its divine enforcer from view. Moreover, it would have interfered with the defense of the city in wartime and created monumental traffic jams in peacetime.

Aggoula has proposed another interpretation of *ml^p*. In his three studies of the inscriptions, he renders the word "tranchée" and "fossé," comparing "le syriaque *mēlā* ou *mel^p* 'tranchée'" and citing "*Thes.*, 2, col. 2125," where "le mot est expliqué par l'arabe *sayl* et *ḡadīr*" (Aggoula 1981: 364, 366, 375; 1983: 35; 1987: 92, 93).

That interpretation is problematic as well. Contrary to the impression created by Aggoula's note, Syriac *ml^p* (vocalized *mele^pā* by Payne Smith and

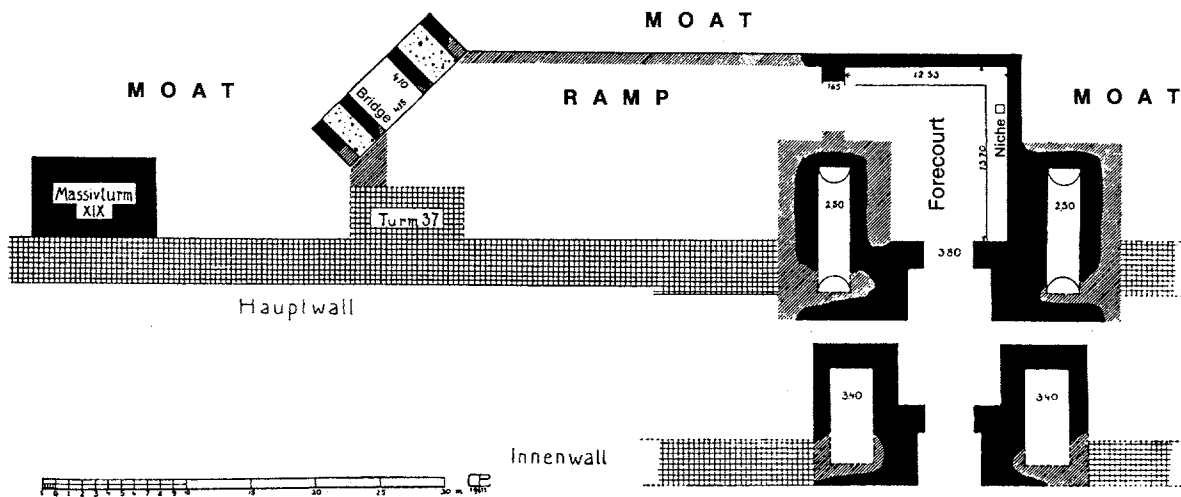


Fig. 1. North Gate of Hatra, Ground Plan (Andrae 1912: 30, fig. 25).

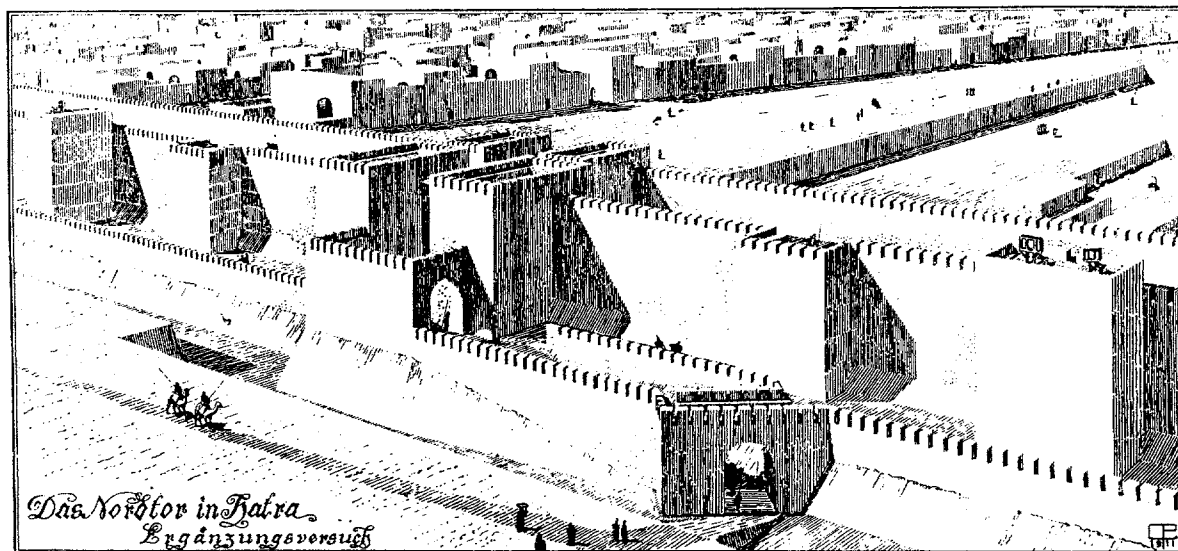


Fig. 2. North Gate of Hatra, Reconstruction (Andrae 1912: 31, fig. 26).

mle²a by Brockelmann) is not glossed as “trench, moat” in the dictionaries. (The real Syriac word for “trench, moat” is *h²ryt²* (*heritā*) < Akkadian *hirītu* with the same meaning [Kaufman 1974: 56]; the native Aramaic word is *hr(y)š²* [Kaufman 1974: 53–54].) Its usual meaning, especially in early texts, is “flood, inundation,” precisely the meaning of the Arabic gloss *sayl*, which Aggoula himself cites. Moreover, the fact that its earliest attestations (Peshiṭta to Luke 6:48 and Syro Hexapla to Job 40:18(23)) are renderings of Greek

πλήμυρα “flood” suggests that it is a loan translation from Greek and thus is unlikely to turn up in a Hatran inscription.

In addition, the location of the inscriptions does not lend itself to interpreting *m² hdyn* as “this trench.” The inscriptions were set up in the gates of the city—not in its moat. It is true that, according to Andrae (1912: 30, fig. 25; 31, fig. 26; figs. 1, 2 here), the walls of the “Forecourt” overlook the moat on two sides, but the demonstrative adjective seems to imply visibility as well

as proximity, and there is no guarantee that there were windows permitting a view of the moat to a person facing the inscription. Moreover, if Aggoula (1987: 93; contrast Aggoula 1981: 375) is right in identifying the *šwr² bry²* of our inscription with Andrae's (1912: 24–25) *Hauptwall* (i.e., the outer part of the double “Inner Wall”) rather than with Herzfeld's (1914: 669) *ringförmige Umwallung* 300–500 m further out (i.e., the wall normally labeled the “Outer Wall”), a person standing, say, in the north gate in front of H336, would have been no closer to the moat than to the *šwr² bry²*. Why, then, should the demonstrative *hdyⁿ* “this” be used with the former but not the latter?

Those problems make it impossible to accept either of the interpretations of *ml²* proposed previously. Rather, Hatran *ml²* should be connected with biblical Hebrew *millō⁽²⁾* and lines 5–9 of the inscription should be understood as follows:

5. that anyone who shall commit a theft (at any spot) from this *millō⁽²⁾* inward
6. or from the outer wall inward, if that man³
7. is an insider (= one whose home is located at any spot from this *millō⁽²⁾* inward?), he shall be killed by the death of
8. the god(s), and if that man is an outsider (= one whose home is located at any spot from this *millō⁽²⁾* outward?),
9. he shall be stoned.

Even before discussing the identity of the Hatran *millō⁽²⁾*, it is evident that two of the objections raised against the interpretation “store” do not apply to the interpretation “*millō⁽²⁾*.” For the collocation of *ml²* (under the latter interpretation) with *šwr² bry²*, compare the Targum to 1 Kgs 9:15, *wyt mlyt² wyt šwr²* “and the Millo and the (city) wall.” For the phrase *lgw mn ml² hdyⁿ* “inward from this *millō⁽²⁾*,” compare *mn mlyt² wlgyw* “(David built round about) from the Millo inward” in the Targum to 2 Sam 5:9. That the two phrases are equivalent, despite the difference in word order (*lgw mn X* vs. *mn X wlgyw*), is clear from the interchangeability of *lgw mn krks²* “inward from the *kerkis*” and *mn krks² wlgw* “from the *kerkis* inward” in two of the tomb inscriptions (dated A.D. 235 and A.D. 234, respectively) of Julius Aurelius Male in Palmyra (Ingholt 1935: 82, 85; Jean and Hoftijzer 1965: 48 s.v. *gw*)⁴ and the interchangeability of *lpnym mn hmwdy²yt* “inward from Modin” and *mn hmwdy²yt wlpnym* “from Modin inward” in *M Hag*. 3:5.

What did the term *ml²* “*millō⁽²⁾*” designate at Hatra? The collocation of the term with *hdyⁿ* “this” (in inscriptions set up in the city gates) and with *šwr²* “city wall” makes it likely that the word referred to some component of the gates or of the circumvallation as a whole. A more precise answer should, ideally, be based on the results of the Iraqi excavations at Hatra; however, since they are currently unpublished, Andrae's publication must suffice for the moment, with the caveat that any conclusions based on it can only be tentative.

A plausible identification of the Hatran *millō⁽²⁾* is suggested by Andrae's (1912: 31) mention of a 30-step-long ramp running west from the forecourt of the north gate, along the escarpment wall of the moat, to what Postgate (1972: 141–42) has identified as the bridge over the moat (fig. 1). A similar ramp is associated with the forecourt of the east gate and the other gates as well (Andrae 1912: 33–35). It appears, then, that all of the forecourts were above ground level, perched on top of artificial terraces built up out of the debris from the excavation of the moat, located immediately in front of them.

It remains to be seen whether the terrace of the north gate and the terrace of the east gate are discrete entities, each a *millō⁽²⁾* in its own right, or whether they are part of one large terrace built adjacent to the inside of the *Hauptwall* along the whole of its circuit and jutting out into the gates as well. If the first alternative is true, the equivocation of the phrase “(at any spot) from this *millō⁽²⁾* inward or from the outer wall inward” is accounted for. In that case, a designation like “(at any spot) from this *millō⁽²⁾* inward” would not have been sufficient to ensure the conviction of a clever thief, since it could have been construed narrowly as referring only to points along radii ending in a *millō⁽²⁾*.

Nevertheless, the second alternative seems more plausible. The most natural place for depositing the debris from the excavation of the moat around the city would have been inside the city wall, where it would constitute a strategic asset to the defenders of the city. And if the *ml²* and the *šwr² bry²* were adjacent, the equivocation referred to above is not very serious. It is certainly less puzzling than the parallel equivocation in the famous warning notices posted in Herod's Temple:

No foreigner (ἀλλογενῆ = *bry²*) is to enter within (ἐντός = *lgw mn*) the balustrade (τροφάκτου) and circumvallation (περιβόλου = *šwr²*) around the

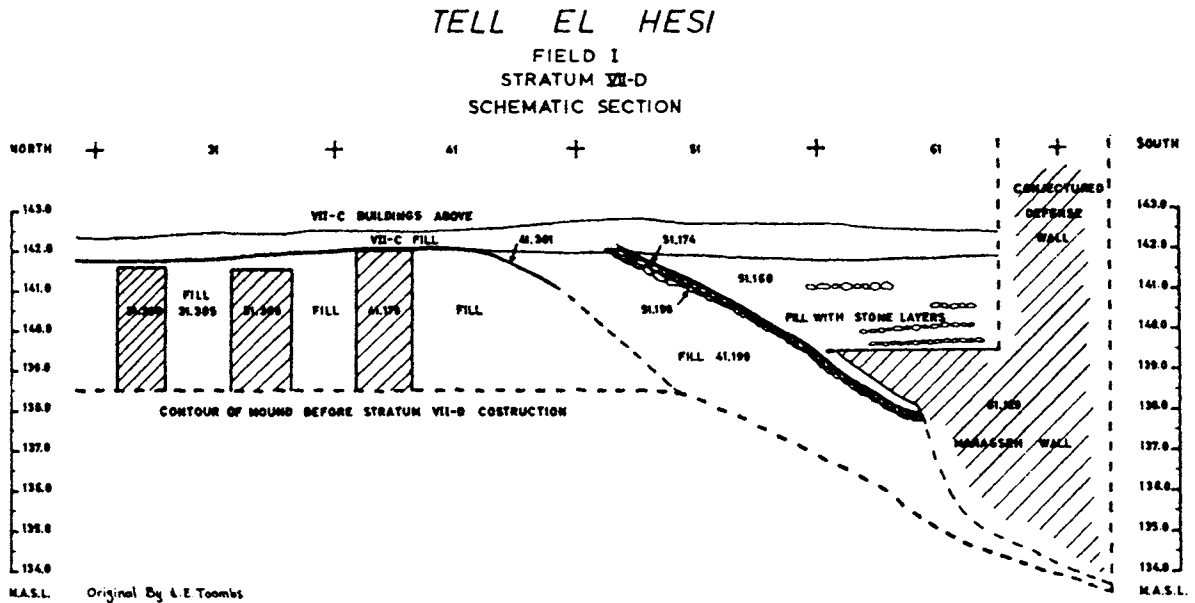


Fig. 3. Platform of fill behind conjectured defense wall (O'Connell, Rose, and Toombs 1978: 83, fig. 5).

sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his ensuing death ($\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu = mwt^{\circ}$) (translation adapted from Marcus and Wikgren 1963: 202–3).

Assuming that Bickerman's (1946–1947: 389)⁵ identification of the two boundaries mentioned in this Greek text is correct, there is no possibility that they were adjacent. Josephus (*War*, V, 193–98; cf. *M Mid.* 2:3) places the wall surrounding the Court of Women and the Inner Court (the Mishnah's *ḥōmat ḥā'āzārāh*)⁶ ca. 20 cubits inward from the balustrade (the Mishnah's *sōrēg*). The Greek warning inscriptions (displayed, like our Hatran ones, at the first of the boundaries they mention) leave a question about the fate of a gentile caught in the area between the two boundaries.⁷ The Hatran inscriptions leave much less room for doubt—assuming, once again, that the *ml^p* was adjacent to the *šwr^p bry^p*.

In any event, the current investigation leads to the conclusion that a *millō*^(?) is an artificial terrace or mound, especially one built adjacent to the inside of a city wall. Support for this conclusion is available from other sources as well. In Akkadian, one of the meanings of *tamlū* is “terrace” (von Soden 1965–1981: 316). That *tamlū* is the Akkadian counterpart of biblical Hebrew *millō*^(?) is suggested by the fact that the other meaning of *tamlū*—“inlay (of stones, etc.), setting” (von Soden 1965–81: 316)—makes it a counter-

part of biblical Hebrew *millū^a(h)* and *millū^zim*, both closely related to *millō*^(?). Indeed, it is even possible that the plural ending of *millū^zim* in the phrase *ʔabnē millū^zim* “stones for setting” is redundant (see Davidson 1901: 18)⁸ and that the singular of the phrase in question is **eḥen millō*^(?).⁹

The root of both *millō*^(?) and *tamlū* is *m-l-^p* “be full”; indeed, the D-stem of that root is used, in Akkadian, of constructing a *tamlū* (Oppenheim and Reiner 1977: 185). Thus it is reasonable to assume that those terms originated in an area where cities were built on hills (Oppenheim 1977: 130–31), and where, consequently, construction of a terrace behind the city wall (or a retaining wall) involved filling in rather than heaping up. Such a terrace was elevated with respect to the area outside the wall but not the area inside the wall. A good example is the elaborate fill platform that O'Connell, Rose, and Toombs (1978: 82–84)¹⁰ discovered behind the (admittedly conjectural) upper extension of a wall defending the southern flank of the Iron II acropolis at Tell el-Ḥesi, as shown in fig. 3 (cf. also O'Connell and Rose 1980: 80–82; Toombs 1983: 25–33). Indeed, the excavators wrote that “such a monumental filling and capping operation could aptly be described as a *millō*. . .” (O'Connell, Rose, and Toombs 1978: 84).

If there was a terrace behind the wall of Hatra it probably was not of that type, but rather a mound heaped up on level terrain, dominating the

area inside the city as well as outside. The use of the word *ml²* to refer to such a terrace represents a shift in the meaning of the term. An additional semantic shift seems to be attested in the Targum to the Prophets, where Aramaic *mlyt²* renders not only *millō⁽²⁾* but also biblical Hebrew *sōlālā(h)* “siege ramp.” In the dialect of the translator, then, the term could refer to a mound heaped up on either side of a city wall, by either defenders or attackers.

How well do the conclusions reached here fit the evidence of biblical usage? It has frequently been noted that two biblical passages (1 Kgs 11:27 and 2 Chron 32:5) show that the *Millo* was part of the fortifications of the city of David (Simons 1952: 131–44); beyond that, the evidence is open to varying interpretations.¹¹ Nevertheless, it was sufficient to lead at least one medieval exegete,

Isaiah of Trani (13th century Italy), to a conclusion remarkably similar to the one presented here:

II Sam 5:9. *Millo* is what they call the dirt which they place next to the (city) wall on the inside, making it level with the top of the wall so that they can easily go up from the city to the wall. On that mound of dirt inside the wall, (*kibbūš* *‘āpār mibbiṣnīm laḥōmāh*) he (= David) built towers round about. . . . (Isaiah da Trani 1977–78: 57–58).

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NOTES

¹Ibrahim (1982: 123, n. 23) bases his translation of *ml²* as *maxzan* “depot” on a personal communication from Segal. If, however, the intended sense is “shop,” cf., BT *Pes.* 31b.

²Segal’s interpretation, like mine and those of Aggoula, presupposes *ml²* < *ml²²*, via either haplography or glottal-stop elision (cf. *m²* < *m²²* “a hundred,” attested in most of the Late Aramaic dialects and *mh* < *m²h* already in the El-Mal dedicatory inscription of 7–6 B.C.; Steiner 1990: 104, 106).

³We take *hw* as a demonstrative adjective modifying *gbr²*, *gbr² hw* “that man” being the subject of the clause and *gwy²*, the predicate. This is a usage paralleled in Egyptian Aramaic, biblical Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene (Tal 1975: 11–12), and Hatran itself. The Hatran parallel occurs in a very similar context: *bmwt² dy² [l]h² lmwt hw [g]br²* “by the death of the god(s) shall that man die” (H342:10–11; Aggoula 1987: 95–96). Segal, on the other hand, takes *hw* to be the subject of the clause and *gbr² gwy²* to be the predicate—or so it seems from his earlier translation (1982: 110):

6. . . . *yn gbr²* . . . if he is a man
7. *hw gwy²* . . . of the community . . .

⁴I follow Jean and Hoftijzer (1965) in taking *mn kṛkṣ²* *wlgw* as a phrase, and I separate it from the preceding phrase, *l smlk* “on your left.” O’Connor’s paraphrase, “on your left as you face the *kerkis*” (1988: 366), suggests that he agrees on the first point but not on the

second. Ingholt (1935: 821) separates *mn kṛkṣ²* from *wlgw* and attaches it to *l smlk*, rendering: “to your left of the *kerkis* and within.”

⁵I owe this reference to L. H. Feldman. I am grateful to H. Z. Dimitrovsky, S. Z. Leiman, and M. Smith for answering my questions concerning Bickerman’s discussion.

⁶This is what the term *περίβολος* denotes in the inscriptions, according to Bickerman (1946–47: 389). Another possibility is suggested by Symmachus’ use of that term to render biblical Hebrew *ḥēl* “rampart” in Ps 48:14 and 122:7. The Mishnaic Hebrew counterpart of the word (vocalized *ḥayil* in reliable manuscripts) denotes the ten-cubit-wide platform inside the balustrade, connected to it, according to Josephus (*War*, V, 193–197), by a flight of 14 stairs.

⁷The Mishnah does not address the question directly. It notes that gentiles were forbidden to enter the area of the *ḥayil* (*Kel.* 1:8), but it says nothing about the penalty inflicted on those who did. Josephus, on the other hand, writes that the Romans had granted the Jews permission to put to death anyone (= any gentile) who went beyond the balustrade (*War*, VI, 124–26).

⁸Even uncountable (mass) nouns like *ḥayil* “valor” (2 Kgs 25:23, 26) and *kele⁽²⁾* “imprisonment” (Isa 42:22) may take a plural ending when they function as *nomen rectum*.

⁹Note that when *ō* loses its stress as a result of suffixation, it has a tendency to shift to *ū* (see, for example, Bergsträsser 1918: 145).

¹⁰I thank L. E. Stager for this reference.

¹¹Thus, 1 Kgs 11:27 frequently has been taken to mean that the *Millo* repaired a specific breach in the circumvallation and, hence, that it was located at a specific spot (Simons 1952: 133–44). However, it is possible to take the word *peres* in that verse as a

collective (better, mass) noun meaning “breaches, dis-repair” rather than a singular-count noun meaning “breach.” Indeed, this interpretation appears preferable in light of 2 Sam 5:9, which seems to imply that the *Millo* circled the acropolis, serving as its outer limit in every direction.

APPENDIX: ARAMAIC *LGW MN* AND ITS HEBREW COUNTERPARTS

The phrase *lgw mn* in the inscription is semantically equivalent to biblical Hebrew *mbyt l-* and Mishnaic Hebrew *lpnym mn*. Indeed, the Mishnaic Hebrew phrase is, in all likelihood, nothing more than a calque of the Aramaic phrase.¹ It exhibits the Aramaic construction “*l-___mn*” used for giving the location of one object relative to another, rather than the original Hebrew one, “*m-___l-*” (below). Moreover, its usage matches that of the Aramaic phrase rather closely. Thus, corresponding to the collocation *lgw mn šwr²* (*bry²*), we find *lpnym mn hhw²mh* five times in the Mishnah (*Meg.* 1:11, *B.B.* 14:8, *Arakh.* 9:5, *Kel.* 1:8, *Neg.* 14:2). And in *Midrash Rabba*, we find Aramaic *lgw mn šb²h knklyn* = Hebrew *lpnym mšb²h knkny²m / knkly²m* “behind seven *cancelli*—a reference to the latticed screens used to set apart the judges’ area in the Roman basilica (Sperber 1984: 192).

That *mbyt l-* is the biblical Hebrew counterpart of Aramaic *lgw mn* is clear from Syriac renderings in the Peshiṭta like *lgw mn prs²* = *mbyt lprkt* “behind the curtain” (Exod 26:33) and *lgw mn s²tw²* = *mbyt l²wlm* “behind the portico” (1 Kgs 7:8). Biblical Hebrew *mbyt l-* exhibits the same construction as *m²qdm l-* “east of,” *mšm²l l-* “north of,” *mm²l l-* “on top of,” *msbyb l-* “around,” *mhl²h l-* “beyond,” etc.

Segal (1982: 110; 1986: 73) translates *lgw mn* in our inscription as “inside.” That is acceptable in the case of “inside the outer wall” but not in the case of “inside this store.” The two phrases exhibit different uses of the English preposition *inside*, one with nouns denoting perimeters (more precisely, nouns denoting objects which surround an area without denoting the area itself), and the other with nouns denoting areas (with or without the objects that surround them). In English, we may describe the location of, say, a royal palace as “inside the city wall” (perimeter) or as “inside the city” (area). In Aramaic and Hebrew, those uses of *inside* are normally distinguished, the former appearing as *lgw mn* = *lpnym mn* = *mbyt l-*, the latter as *bgw* = *btwk*.

The point is not that *lgw mn* = *lpnym mn* = *mbyt l-* cannot be used with nouns denoting areas, but rather that, when used with such nouns, these phrases are not normally to be translated as “inside.”² Thus, when the

Mishnah (*B.B.* 4:1) states that the sale of a house does not automatically include *h²dr šlpnym mmmw*, no one will imagine that the phrase means “the room inside it” (= *h²dr šbtwk²w*). The usual rendering of the phrase is “the (store) room behind it” or the like (Danby 1933: 370; Blackman 1963: 186; Neusner 1988: 565). This rendering is a good approximation, but it misses the mark in two respects. It fails to convey the implication that the only access to the store room is through the house, and it adopts the front-back point of view of an observer facing the house from the outside, rather than the outer-inner frame of reference of an observer walking through the house from the entrance to the store room. When greater accuracy is needed, one may translate instead: “the (store) room inward from³ it.”

The same goes for the phrase *šty ḥšrw² zw lpnym mzw* in *M Maas.* 3:5 and *Erub.* 6:9. The translation “two courtyards, one behind the other” (Goldwurm 1986: 147) is not quite as accurate as “two courtyards, one inward from the other.” That refers, of course, not to a configuration of nested courtyards (bizarre if not impossible), but to a configuration of adjacent courtyards, one of which (the “inner” courtyard) does not open onto a street and hence must be reached via the other (the “outer” courtyard), which does.

Similar configurations exist in burial caves, and Aramaic (*l*)*gw mn* occurs several times in inscriptions describing such caves. The editors of two of those inscriptions explain the phrase very much as I do. Thus, a Palmyrene tomb inscription speaks of some burial niches (*gwm²hyn*) as being *lgw mn krks²*. Ingholt (1935: 85) comments:

The expression *lgw mn krks²* “within from the kerkis” must here be taken as meaning farther inside than the kerkis, that is, deeper into the tomb. Against the translation of *lgw mn krks²* as “inside the kerkis” argues the fact that the niches in question in the preceding inscription were located in the “street to the left after the first kerkis,” then they cannot very well have their place inside the kerkis, at the same time.

A Nabataean tomb inscription refers to a large sepulchral chamber (*sryh²*) and a small sepulchral chamber (*dy gw² mn^h*). Milik (1959: 556) comments, “*gw² mn* ‘further inside, behind (plus à l’intérieur, derrière)’ and not *bgw²* ‘inside, within (à l’intérieur, dedans)’.”

Although the rendering “behind” usually can be used as an idiomatic substitute for “inward from” when absolute precision is not required, there is one attestation of *lpnym mn* for which that is not possible. The phrase *lpnym mn hmwdy^cyt* in Mishnah Hag. 3:5 can only be translated “inward from Modin” or the like. “Behind” does not fit, and “inside” is clearly wrong.

(Note the contrast between *nkns lpnym mn* “enter [the area] inward from” in this mishnah and *nkns ltwk* “enter [the area] inside” in the next.) This phrase is one of many in the Mishnah for which “inward from” is equivalent to “closer to the Holy of Holies than.”

In summary, Mishnaic Hebrew *btwk h^cyr* “inside the city” (*Sot.* 9:14) is roughly equivalent to *lpnym mn h^hwmh* “inward from the city wall” (*Kel.* 1:8, etc.) but very different from (indeed, incompatible with) *lpnym mn h^cyr* “inward from the city” (cf. *Hag.* 3:5). The same goes, in all likelihood, for the Aramaic counterparts of those phrases.

NOTES

¹Similarly, Qumran Hebrew *lhws m-* (e.g., Temple Scroll 46:5), alongside *m^hws l-*, is probably a calque of Aramaic *lbr mn*.

²The clearest exception is *lgw mn ^cyynh* “inside the eye” in PT *Shab.* 14d and *A.Z.* 40d (= Ginzberg 1909: 273) instead of *bgw ^cyynh*, perhaps due to contamination with *lbr mn ^cyynh* “outside the eye” in the same sentence. In addition, the phrase *lpnym mn bytw* in

M.B.B. 3:7, unlike the virtually identical phrase in the next mishnah (*B.B.* 4:1; see below), is interpreted by R. Huna (BT *B.B.* 60a top) to mean “inside the house” (but cf. Kehati 1966–67: 271 and references).

³The preposition *mn* is probably directional (“from”) rather than comparative (“to a greater extent than”) after adverbs like *lgw = lpnym*.

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