



**UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)**

**Psalm 20 and Amherst Papyrus 63, XII, 11-19**

*A Case Study of a Text in Transit*

van der Toorn, K.

*Published in:*  
Le-maan Ziony

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

van der Toorn, K. (2017). Psalm 20 and Amherst Papyrus 63, XII, 11-19: A Case Study of a Text in Transit. In Le-maan Ziony: Essays in Honor of Ziony Zevit (pp. 244-259). Eugene, Ore: Cascade Books.

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.



Le-ma'an Ziony:  
Essays in Honor of  
Ziony Zevit

*edited by*

FREDERICK E. GREENSPAHN  
& GARY A. RENDSBURG



CASCADE Books • Eugene, Oregon

LE-MA'AN ZIONY

Essays in Honor of Ziony Zevit

Copyright © 2016 Wipf and Stock Publishers. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical publications or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401.

Cascade Books

An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers

199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3

Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-4982-0691-4

HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-1-4982-0693-8

EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-4982-0692-1

*Cataloguing-in-Publication data:*

---

Names: Greenspahn, Frederick E. | Rendsburg, Gary A.

Title: Le-ma'an Ziony : essays in honor of Ziony Zevit / edited by Frederick E. Greenspahn and Gary A. Rendsburg.

Description: Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-1-4982-0691-4 (paperback) | ISBN 978-1-4982-0693-8 (hardcover) | ISBN 978-1-4982-0692-1 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Zevit, Ziony. | Bible. O.T.—Criticism, interpretation, etc.

Classification: DS111 L44 2016 (print) | DS111 (ebook)

---

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

DECEMBER 16, 2016

## Contents

*List of Figures and Tables* | vii

*List of Contributors* | xi

*Acknowledgments* | xiv

*Abbreviations* | xv

*Introduction* | xxi

*Publications of Ziony Zevit* | xxv

### Part 1: History and Archaeology

1. History from Things: On Writing New Histories of Ancient Israel | *William G. Dever* | 3
2. Tel 'Eton Excavations and the History of the Shephelah during the Iron Age | *Avraham Faust* | 21
3. Jerusalem in Rome: Moses Mendelssohn on the Arch of Titus Menorah | *Steven Fine* | 44
4. Ekron of the Philistines: A Response to Issues Raised in the Literature | *Seymour Gitin* | 60
5. Regional and Local Museums for Archaeology in the First Years of the State of Israel | *Raz Kletter* | 77
6. Disks and Deities: Images on Iron Age Terracotta Plaques | *Carol Meyers* | 116
7. An Early Iron Age Phase to Kuntillet 'Ajrud? | *William M. Schniedewind* | 134

### Part 2: Bible

8. Psalm 122: The Idealized Jerusalem | *Adele Berlin* | 149
9. The *Qeré* in the Context of the Masorah Parva | *Michael V. Fox* | 156

10. The Odd Prophet Out and In | *Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman* | 175
11. Canon, Codex, and the Printing Press | *Frederick E. Greenspahn* | 203
12. Piercing God's Name: A Mythological Subtext of Deicide Underlying Blasphemy in Leviticus 24 | *Theodore J. Lewis* | 213
13. Varia on Crowns and Diadems in the Bible and Mesopotamia | *Shalom M. Paul* | 239
14. Psalm 20 and Amherst Papyrus 63, XII, 11–19: A Case Study of a Text in Transit | *Karel van der Toorn* | 244

### Part 3: Hebrew (and Aramaic) Language

15. Two Maskilic Explanations of the Difference between the Causative *Pi'el* and the *Hiph'il* in Biblical Hebrew | *Steven E. Fassberg* | 263
16. Kissing through a Veil: Translating the Emphatic in Biblical Hebrew | *Richard Elliott Friedman* | 281
17. H. H. Rowley's *Aramaic of the Old Testament* after (Almost) a Century | *Lester L. Grabbe* | 294
18. Visual Grammar: An Eye-Tracking Perspective on Cognitive Complexity in Biblical Hebrew Pronunciation | *Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé, Jacobus A. Naudé, Tanya Beelders, and Luna Bergh* | 316
19. Syntactic-Stylistic Aspects of the So-Called 'Priestly' Work in the Torah | *Frank H. Polak* | 345
20. שֵׁמֶן תֹּרֶק *šemen tūraq* (Song 1:3) | *Gary A. Rendsburg and Ian Young* | 383
21. On the Tolerative/Permissive *Hiph'il* | *Jeffrey H. Tigay* | 397

*Index of Scholars Cited* | 415

*Index of Biblical Passages* | 424

## List of Figures and Tables

### Figures

#### *Faust*

- 1 Location Map of Tel 'Eton
- 2 Excavation Areas at Tel 'Eton
- 3 The Assyrian Destruction Layer in Room 101C, Area A
- 4 The Assyrian Destruction Layer in Area B (Square S48)
- 5 Area A—up-to-date plan of the excavations, reflecting the current state of the area
- 6 Part of the 8th-Century Ceramic Assemblage

#### *Fine*

- 1 Spoils of Jerusalem relief, Arch of Titus
- 2 Menorah base of the Arch of Titus Menorah relief
- 3 Drawing of the Menorah from Adriaan Reland, *De spoliis templi Hierosolymitani*, 1716
- 4 Mosaic Pavement from Maon (Nirim), 6th-century
- 5 Raphael, *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple*, 1512, Vatican Museums
- 6 Fountain from the Jewish ghetto of Rome, 1614

#### *Kletter*

- 1 Dan, Ussishkin House: archaeological exhibition
- 2 Letter by Amiran on museums, September 1948, GL44872/4

## 14

## Psalm 20 and Amherst Papyrus 63, XII, 11–19: A Case Study of a Text in Transit

*Karel van der Toorn*

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

It is an honor and a joy to contribute to a Festschrift that celebrates Ziony Zevit, the man and his work. I have chosen to present a study of a text that Ziony has worked on in the past and which is surely still dear to him. As might be expected, there is agreement (very much) and some disagreement (less). That is the way it goes when friends sit together and discuss.

There are not many cases where scholars of the Bible have access to the text behind the text, the text as it was before the editors of the Hebrew Bible transformed it into the received text as we know it from our *Biblia Hebraica*. The rare cases where we can actually compare the pre-biblical shape of a text with its biblical form deserve special attention. Historical-critical studies of the Bible have demonstrated that most books of the Bible have gone through various stages before they reached their present—canonical—form. However, the textual archaeology required to discover earlier textual strands is forced to find its evidence on the surface of the final text. By submitting that text to a close reading, we try to discover inner contradictions and tensions—indications of the distance that separates the earlier from the later textual strand. Obviously, reconstructions of an earlier text on the basis solely of that text in the final stage of its transmission are open to the dangers of

circular reasoning and idiosyncratic presuppositions. So in the interest of methodical rigor of text-historical criticism, the documented cases of textual development must be used to establish a set of rules—rules in the sense of tendencies, patterns, probabilities, observed regularities—that help us understand the logic that commands the scribal editing of texts from the stream of tradition. The two versions of the Book of Jeremiah constitute an outstanding and very helpful instance of documented text revision; the comparison between Psalm 20 and an Aramaic hymn from the Amherst papyrus is another one—not widely known and beset with difficulties of its own, but very illuminating for our understanding of the scribal practice of deliberate text revision.

Since the publication of the Aramaic hymn in the 1980s, there has been general agreement that the correspondences with the biblical Psalm 20 are so striking that we must assume a correlation between the two texts.<sup>1</sup> Their structure is identical, and the similarities of terminology and thought are numerous. In order to grasp the parallels at a glance, it suffices to put the two texts side by side; to facilitate the synopsis, I shall present the Aramaic text in Aramaic characters. I follow, moreover, the poetic structure of the two hymns; on the left side is the Hebrew text, on the right side the Aramaic one; corresponding lines face each other; those parts of the Hebrew text that have no correspondence in the Aramaic one face a blank; the same is true the other way around.

1. The discovery of the parallel between Amherst papyrus 63 XII 11–19 and (parts of) Psalm 20 was made by Richard Steiner and, independently one year later, by Jan Willem Wesselius. Their discovery appeared in print at almost the same time, see Nims and Steiner, “Paganized Version”; and Vleeming and Wesselius, “Aramaic Hymn.”

A	2 יַעֲנֵךְ יְהוָה בְּיוֹם צָרָה יְשׁוּבְךָ שֵׁם   אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:	יעננא יהו במצוריןא עננאי אדני במצוריןא היכשת בשמין סהרא
B	3 יִשְׁלַח עֲזֶרְךָ מִקֶּדֶשׁ וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעֶדֶךָ:	שלח עזירך מן כל רש ומן צפאנא יהו יסעדנא
C	4 זִכֹּר כְּלִמְנַחֲתֶךָ וְעוֹלֹתֶיךָ יִדְשָׁנָה [סְלָה]:	
D	5 יִתְּנֵךְ כְּלָבְבֶךָ וְכָל־עֲצָתֶךָ יִמְלֵא:	ימתן אלנא מרי כבלבן כל יעצת יהו יהמלי
E	6 גְּרַנְגָּה   בְּיִשׁוּעָתֶךָ וּבְשֵׁם־אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגָל	
D'	יִמְלֵא יְהוָה כְּלִמְשֵׁאלוֹתֶיךָ:	יהמלי יהו כל משאל לבנא
F	7 עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ   יְהוָה מִשִּׁיחֹו יַעֲנֵהוּ מִשְׁמֵי קִדְשׁוֹ בְּגִבּוֹרֹת יֵשַׁע יְמִינוֹ:	
G	8 אֱלֹהֵי בְרֶכֶב וְאֱלֹהֵי בְּסוּסִים וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ   בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר:	אל בכשת אל בחנת מרי אלהנא יהו (יהו) תרנא עמננא אר אנחנא
H	9 הִמָּה כָּרְעוּ וְנִפְּלוּ וְאֶנְחֲנוּ קִמְנוּ וְנִתְעוֹדְדוּ:	
I	10 יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה	
J	הַמְּלֹךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם־קִרְאָנוּ:	יענן מחר אלביתאל
K		בעל שמין מרי יברך לחסידך ברכתך

Presented this way, the parallels in structure and terminology are obvious. In their beginning, middle, and end the two texts echo each other. Even when translated into English, the similarities are clear. “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble”// “May Yahu answer us in our anxiety”; “May He give to you according to your heart, and may He fulfill all your wishes”// “May Yahu give to us according to what is in our heart (. . .) may Yahu fulfill all desire”; “Some by chariots, some by horses—but as for us, we will call upon the name of the LORD our God”// “Some by the bow, others by the spear—but as for us, Yahu our Bull is with us”// “The LORD . . . will answer us the day we call”// “The god Bethel will answer us tomorrow.” There can be no doubt that we are in the presence of two versions of what is basically the same text.

Two versions of basically the same text—putting it that way begs a number of questions. How can two texts that are different nevertheless be qualified as basically the same, and when does one text become a version of another one? I recognize the legitimacy of such questions and will try to answer them. But before I launch into a close analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between our two texts, it is necessary to say a few words about the background and the context of the Amherst papyrus.<sup>2</sup> The scroll owes its name to Lord Amherst of Hackney, a private collector with money to spend and an infatuation for things Egyptian. He acquired papyrus 63—our text—as part of a lot found in an earthen jar in the vicinity of Thebes (Luxor).<sup>3</sup> That lot had papyri written in Greek and in Demotic; for paleographic reasons, papyrus 63 is generally dated to the 4th century BCE. The language of the Demotic papyri is Egyptian—except for number 63. As accurately established by Noel Aimé-Giron in 1923 and—independently—by Bowman in the early 1940s, the script is Demotic but the language is Aramaic.<sup>4</sup> Important sections of the text have been published, transliterated, and translated; a preliminary translation of the entire papyrus into English is available since 1993; but so far there is no scholarly edition of the complete text.<sup>5</sup> Richard C. Steiner has been preparing one for a number of years; Tawny Holm (Pennsylvania State University) is preparing a transliteration and translation for the SBL Writings from the Ancient World series;

2. For an excellent introduction to the Amherst papyrus, see Kottsieper, “Aramaic Literature,” 426–9. Our papyrus is twice referred to erroneously as papyrus Amherst “23.”

3. Newberry, *The Amherst Papyri*, 55.

4. See Nims and Steiner, “Paganized Version,” 261.

5. For treatments of other sections of the manuscript, see Steiner and Nims, “You Can’t Offer your Sacrifice and Eat it Too”; and Steiner and Nims, “Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin.”

in the meantime, scholars interested in the text must work on the basis of photographs or the actual text itself. Nearly all of the text is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York; fragments are kept in the Michigan University library at Ann Arbor; the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago possesses a batch of photographs, taken in 1901, of nearly the complete text.<sup>6</sup>

The Demotic script of the papyrus may seem baffling to Semitic scholars, but is not exceedingly difficult. The scribe has used some 40 consonant signs; some 30 multi-consonantal signs; plus about 5 determinatives as word-dividers. The difficulty is not in the complexity of the script but in the relation between the Demotic graphemes and the Aramaic phonemes, on the one hand, and in establishing the correct reading of those signs that can render related yet distinct consonants. The transposition of the Demotic script into the Aramaic may easily convey the impression of a one-to-one correspondence between the two; such is not the case; in fact, presenting the hymn in the Aramaic script is to a high degree a matter of interpretation.

The relation between Demotic signs as used in the Amherst papyrus and Aramaic sounds is complex because the Demotic makes no distinction between certain voiced and unvoiced consonants. Since not all native speakers of Egyptian heard the difference between *d*, *t*, and *t̄*, the Demotic uses one sign where the Aramaic alphabet has three; the same is true for the distinction between *g*, *k*, and *q*; between *z* and *s*; and there is one sign that can be used to render Aramaic *l* and *r*. Where these Demotic signs occur, the correct Aramaic reading involves choices of interpretation. A second difficulty has to do with the multi-consonantal signs. The reading of most of them has been established on the basis of Demotic usage and the context in which they occur in the papyrus. The reading of some signs, however, is still contested. This is especially true of the sign that has here been rendered as Yahu,<sup>7</sup> but which Richard Steiner reads as Horus<sup>8</sup> and Ingo Kottsieper as El.<sup>9</sup> What's in a name? In this case, it matters quite a bit. So much for the

6. My own work on papyrus Amherst 63 is based on the Chicago photographs of 1901, a copy of which was kindly provided to me by John A. Larson Jr. During a visit at the Pierpont Morgan, John Vincler, Head of Reader Services, gave me access to more recent photographs of the text (2012 or 2013).

7. For the reading of the sign as Yahu see Zauzich, "Der Gott"; Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 39–42; and Rösel, "Israel's Psalmen in Ägypten?" 97–98.

8. Nims and Steiner, "Paganized Version," 265, 271–2.

9. Kottsieper, "Papyrus Amherst 63," 70; Kottsieper, "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63," 385–90; Kottsieper, "El—ferner oder naher Gott," 37–41.

difficulties of rendering the Demotic into Aramaic; there is much that might be added, but this suffices for the present purpose.

One word about the nature of papyrus Amherst 63. It is a scroll of considerable size, written in 23 columns, most of which have close to 20 lines. It is not one text but a collection of texts; those texts are separated from each other by a sign that has to be read as *sôph*, "end"; it is a device that allows the scribe to continue on the same line with another composition; in only two instances texts—or text blocks—are demarcated by leaving a space empty (between columns XV and XVI) or by a vertical line of dots (between columns XVII and XVIII). Literary devices such as the refrain confirm the coherence of the single units. It is a matter of debate whether these separate units are part of a coherent whole. Steiner has made a case for interpreting the papyrus as the liturgy of a New Year festival; the arguments he advances are not compelling, however. It is especially difficult to see how the Tale of Two Brothers—which I would prefer to call the Story of the Fall of Babylon—at the end of the text would fit in with an assumed liturgy. The papyrus is more likely to be taken as a selection of individual texts that had significance for the community behind the scroll; the scroll is a container rather than a libretto; it may be compared to a box into which the scribe has piled a number of compositions. In view of the language, the community originally consisted of speakers of Aramaic; in view of the deities that play a role in the papyrus (Bethel, Anat, Yahu, Herem-Bethel, Eshem-Bethel, Baal-Shamayin, Nabu, Nanaya) the community must historically be related to the Arameans and Judeans at Syene and Elephantine whom we know about from papyri and potsherds from the 5th century BCE. As a working hypothesis, I would suggest that the community of papyrus Amherst 63 consisted of the descendants of the Aramean and Judean soldiers who had been forced to leave Syene and Elephantine after the Persians lost their hold on Egypt c. 400 BCE.

The Aramaic hymn that has such a close correspondence to Psalm 20 is part of a section in the papyrus that contains two other hymns that seem to have biblical connections. Column XII 12–19 is the hymn we will be considering; XIII 1–10 and 11–17 are hymns of comparable length and tenor.<sup>10</sup> This is the only section of the papyrus in which the name Yahu occurs, and the same is true for the occurrences of the honorific term Adonay (written as *'dny*); only in VIII 7 do we find another mention of Yahu (possibly with Ashera as his consort), but that is in the context of a hymn that seeks to address all the gods known in the community. The concentration of references

10. For a transliteration, translation and commentary see Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 61–79.

to Yahu in precisely this section is in fact an argument for reading the Demotic sign or sign group as Yahu; Horus makes no sense, and El seems out of place—also in view of the parallelism with Adonay. The three Yahwistic hymns of papyrus Amherst 63 most likely come from the literary legacy of the Elephantine community. That community is called “Judean” in the Elephantine papyri; yet there can be no doubt that it contained an important Israelite component—important and probably older. The North-Israelite origins of a significant part of the military settlement at Elephantine have long been acknowledged by scholars. As we shall see, the analysis of the Aramaic hymn points to the same conclusion.

Let us now pass to the comparative analysis of the two hymns. When Richard Steiner and Charles Nims, on the one side of the Atlantic, and Jan Willem Wesselius and Sven Vleeming, on the other, started their work on the Amherst papyrus in the early 1980s, the Aramaic hymn of XII 11–19 was one of the first texts they chose to publish. And for a good reason; it was relatively unproblematic and the parallel with the Biblical psalm signaled the relevance of their discovery. “Ancient Papyrus a Riddle No More,” claimed *The New York Times* on October 11, 1982; the article was full of quotes by Richard Steiner, several of which were about the “paganized version” of Psalm 20. All subsequent studies of the Aramaic hymn and the Biblical psalm agree about the fact that they entertain a relationship of dependence. Disagreement focuses on the issue of historical priority. Steiner assumes that Psalm 20 is the earlier text and that the Aramaic hymn is an adaptation designed to suit the needs of a pagan audience; only few scholars have followed this view.<sup>11</sup> Most researchers have reversed the proposition; they claim anteriority for the Aramaic hymn and see the biblical Psalm as an adaptation.<sup>12</sup> Most authors choose a position in the middle and speculate about an older hymn—presumably Canaanite—to which both Psalm 20 and pAmh XII 11–19 are indebted.<sup>13</sup> But even if we follow the latter suggestion, we are still faced with the question about historical priority, though it may be formulated in a slightly different way: which one of the two compositions stands closest to the presumed original?

How do we steer clear of private preconceptions in establishing historical priority? The documented cases of texts from antiquity that are extant

11. See Nims and Steiner, “Paganized Version”; for a reasoning along the same lines see Segert, “Preliminary Notes,” 272.

12. Kottsieper, “Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63.” In the same vein, see Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 86.

13. See Weinfeld, “Pagan Version”; Zevit, “Common Origin”; Delcor, “Remarques sur la datation du Ps. 20”; Rösel, “Israel’s Psalmen in Ägypten?” 97; and Heckl, “Inside the Canon and Out.”

in copies from different periods demonstrate the existence of a pattern. The different versions of the Gilgamesh Epic or the Book of Jeremiah show that the longer text is the later text. In the process of transmission and edition, the tendency of scribes is to respect what has been received; adaptation to new circumstances and different tastes takes the form, normally, of textual expansion; scribes find it easier to add a line than to suppress one. If we want to formulate this as a rule of text-historical investigation, we might coin the formula *textus brevior anterior*; or alternatively, and a little less highbrow, brevity is a sign of antiquity in the history of a text; the natural tendency for scribes is to expand the text they are working on.

Going by the principle of *brevior anterior*, the Aramaic hymn is older than the biblical psalm—older, that is, in terms of the editorial history of the text. The synopsis of the two texts show that verses 4, 6a, 7, and 9 of Psalm 20 have no equivalent in the Aramaic hymn; conversely, only the last line of the Aramaic hymn (“May Baal Shamayin speak your blessings on account of your acts of generosity”) is without a parallel in the biblical text. By the rule of thumb of text-historical investigation, then, the Aramaic hymn represents an earlier layer of the tradition. We will use this as our working hypothesis and see if the detailed study of the correspondences—or the absence of correspondences—points to the same conclusion. I will endeavor to use this exercise in close reading at the same time to establish a number of corollary principles that can help us as guidelines in text-historical research—also where the older text is no longer extant and, therefore, accessible only through the text-critical scrutiny of the text in its canonical shape.

Let us begin by looking at the evident parallels; they are evident but not for that matter perfect. Every parallel exhibits differences—some of them subtle, others less so. “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble” is not exactly the same thing as “May Yahu answer us in our anxiety.” Where the Aramaic is a prayer for the community, the Hebrew text is a prayer for an individual; a single “you” whom the remainder of the text identifies as “the king.” Another difference is the absence of the parallel line in the Hebrew text; the Aramaic repeats the opening line, substituting Adonay for Yahu: “May Yahu answer us in our anxiety, may Adonay answer us in our anxiety.” The Hebrew only has the variant version of the first part and skips the parallel line. As a matter of fact, on this point the Hebrew text is the briefer one. At first sight, this would seem to run against the *brevior anterior* principle formulated in the previous paragraph. But upon reflection, there is an excellent reason for the scribal editor of Psalm 20 to reduce the parallelism to a single phrase. At the time he was editing the Psalm, the religious taboo against speaking the name of God meant that the four consonants with which the divine name was written (*yhw*)—originally pronounced as Yahua or Yahweh—had come to be read as Adonay, “My Lord.” The later Masoretic vocalization follows that reading. Most English translations of the Hebrew Bible render it as “LORD,” printed in small caps. So the audience of Psalm 20 would hear the first line of the prayer as “May Adonay answer

you in the day of need”—which would make the repetition of the line with Adonay completely redundant.

The absence of repetition in A is an exceptional instance where the biblical psalm is shorter than the Aramaic hymn. In this case, however, that does not point to anteriority; quite the contrary; it is easy to explain why a biblical scribe would turn two phrases into one; for the putative redactor of the Aramaic hymn there would be no reason to elaborate a single line into a parallelism; he would not have added anything of significance to his text. So the one place at which the Hebrew editor of the text actually suppresses a line from the text that he is working from actually supports the hypothesis of the priority of the Aramaic text.

Nearly all the other scribal interventions in the text can be classified as either changes or additions. The additions are obvious; I have pointed them out and will return to their significance shortly. From the perspective of text-historical research the changes made by the scribe are in a sense more interesting than the additions; the changes do show a particular form of respect for the text as the scribe had received it; as he altered the text, he attempted to somehow preserve its original form. A futile attempt in a way, since by changing a text the scribe does in fact depart from what to him was the original. Yet to stay as close to the original as possible, he tried to retain at least the sound of the earlier text. Let me quote a few instances, all from the first lines of the prayer. Aramaic *במצורינא* becomes Hebrew *צָרָה צָרָה*; *מן כל רש* is transformed into *מִקֶּדֶשׁ*; and *ומן צפאנא* is replaced by *ומצִיִּין*. The change in meaning is obvious; the change in sound is subtle. If you speak the words fast enough, the change is almost imperceptible to the ear; but the eye of the reader spots it at once.

While trying to preserve the sound of the original, then, the scribe was changing its meaning. What kind of changes did he perform? There are, first of all, the innocent changes; innocent meaning that they do not imply a complete change of perspective. The innocent changes usually tend to give a more general meaning to the text in order to make it fit a greater variety of situations. “The day of need” is more open as a category than “our anxiety”—especially when we take into consideration that the Aramaic can also refer more specifically to a siege.<sup>14</sup> Toward the end of the Aramaic hymn, there is an expression of hope in the swift deliverance of the community. “May the god Bethel answer us tomorrow.” The Hebrew parallel reads: “May He [i.e., the Lord] answer us the day we call.” “The day we call” takes away the urgency of “tomorrow” and allows the prayer to be recited on any number of occasions.

14. Kottsieper, “Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63,” 241.

Most changes are not so innocent. The disappearance of Resh and Zaphon as places from which Yahu will send his power and lend support to his people has a theological motive; these are place names associated in the mind of the Hebrew scribe with foreign deities; Zaphon is the holy mount of Baal, and Resh of Bethel.<sup>15</sup> The Aramaic text identifies Bethel with Yahu, as is clear from the finale of the hymn; so it sees no objection against the idea that Yahu comes to the rescue of the believers from the mountains where he has his abode. To the Hebrew scribe this notion is unacceptable; he has changed *kol reš*, “all of Resh,” into the very general word *qōdeš*, “sanctuary,” and Zaphon has become Zion—the common designation of the temple mount in Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> The wholesale erasure of the god Bethel from the Hebrew text is in line with the theological revision of the editor.

There is one other change I wish to highlight. It is an intriguing one because it throws into relief one of the characteristics of the poetic methods employed in the composition of the psalms. In the middle of the hymn the text opposes those who put their trust in bow and spear to those who put their confidence in Yahu. “Some by the bow, others by the spear—but as for us, the Lord our God, Yahu our Bull is with us.” Bow and spear have disappeared in the Hebrew text, but the thought the poet advances is very much the same. “Some in chariots, others in horses—but as to us, we shall be strong in the name of Yahu our God.”<sup>17</sup> The reference to Yahu as a bull (*tr < tār*, cf. the Ugaritic expression *tr il*, “Bull El”) has been suppressed for theological reasons; but the choice to put chariots and horses in the place of bow and spear is more in the nature of a free variant. Steiner has nicely drawn attention to the parallel with Psalm 46:10 “He shatters the bow and chops up the spear,” followed in verse 12 by the expression “The LORD of Hosts is with us.”<sup>18</sup> It demonstrates that “bow and spear” was just as conventional a pair as “chariots and horses.”<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the Hebrew scribe preferred “chariots and horses” because of their repeated occurrence in the

15. The connection between Baal and Zaphon is very strong; so strong, in fact, that Baal is often referred to as Baal-Zaphon, also in places that are far from Syria. Note the place Baal-Zaphon in the Nile delta, see Eissfeldt, *Baal Zaphon*. It is less known that the combination Baal-Zaphon also occurs as a designation of Mt Zaphon, see, e.g., Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II*, 38, line 230, kur[superscript kur]ba-’i-il-ša-pu-na šadû rabû. See also Niehr, “Zaphon צפון.”

16. Though see Ps 48:3, where the poet simply equated Zaphon and Zion.

17. Read *nagbîr* instead of *nazkir*, in view of LXX and Syr.

18. Steiner and Nims, “You Can’t Offer your Sacrifice and Eat it Too,” 113.

19. For the pair “bow and spear” elsewhere see Jer 50:42. Compare the more frequent pairing of “bow and sword,” as in Ps 44:7 “For I do not put my trust in my bow, nor will my sword save me.”

books of the prophets.<sup>20</sup> That explanation, however, is not necessary. The use of standard formulas is common procedure in the Psalms; it reflects their origin in an oral culture.<sup>21</sup> So the choice of a variant expression may have been without ulterior motive.

The most obvious interventions of the Hebrew poet are extant in the expansion of the text through additions. Most of these additions are part of the editorial strategy to put an existing text in a new frame. Two aspects of this reframing stand out: the new perspective is Judean, and the new focus is on the king. The transformation of Zaphon into Zion (and of Resh into the more neutral “sanctuary”) produces a Jerusalem perspective on the text; the transformation of the “we” into the singular “you” puts the king in the center of the text. The earlier text had no reference to the king; it was a prayer for and by the community. The singular “you” of Psalm 20 refers to the king throughout the text. The Lord will “answer you,” “exalt you,” “send your help,” “support you,” etc. It is only at the end that the word *melek*, “king” falls; but *mašialḥ*, “the anointed one,” mentioned in verse 7 is another indication of the identity of the “you” who is addressed throughout the Psalm. Verse 4 is an addition stressing the king’s generous performance of his cultic duties; verse 7 expresses confidence in the divine salvation of the king; a similar idea, this time formulated as a prayer, is interpolated in the last verse.

With the exception of verse 9, which reads like a commentary on the “chariots and horses” statement of the preceding verse, all the additions serve to emphasize the pivotal role of the king in the salvation that will accrue to the community. The mere fact that the royal focus derives primarily from additions proves that it is secondary. Because of the new focus the scribal editor had to adapt the earlier text by substituting “you” for “us” and “we.” But the substitution has not been complete. The last line of Psalm 20 remains very close to the finale of the Aramaic hymn, disregarding for a moment the change of “tomorrow” into “the day we call.” “He shall answer us”—“us” rather than “you”; it is striking precisely because of the poetic technique of the *inclusio*—the end rhymes with the beginning. It does rhyme in the Aramaic hymn; it does not rhyme exactly in the Hebrew text. This, it seems to me, is one of the tensions a close reading of Psalm 20 without knowledge of the Amherst papyrus 63 would be able to spot. We now know that the tension is the result of an imperfect adaptation of a traditional text to a new perspective.

20. See, e.g., Isa 31:1; Jer 17:25; 46:9. See also Ps 76:6.

21. See van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, esp. 110–15; and, with a focus on the book of Psalms, Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language*.

All the evidence we have passed in review proves to corroborate the hypothesis we formulated at the outset: since the Aramaic hymn is the shorter text, it is indeed likely to be earlier than Psalm 20; the so-called *brevior anterior* principle. It is true that the Aramaic text has one repetition that has vanished from the Hebrew; but the only viable explanation for its disappearance actually proves the developmental order earlier assumed. There is one single exception, though. The very last line of the Amherst papyrus hymn has no corresponding part in the biblical Psalm. “May Baal Shamayin pronounce your blessings on account of your acts of kindness.” Kottsieper thinks this is addressed to an unnamed human being; it falls out of line with the general structure of the hymn and must therefore be considered an addition.<sup>22</sup> I agree that the line has all the appearances of an addition; not because it addresses a human being, though, for the “you” (singular) who is the object of the blessing could be Bethel/Yahu; after all, gods do bless one another—not only humans. But the request for a divine answer in the preceding line serves as a poetical form of closure of the prayer: it opens and ends with the hope for an answer. Psalm 20 has preserved this stylistic device. So I would assume that the reference to Baal Shamayin has been added. Why? I can only guess. Let us be content by observing that this addition makes the hymn more inclusive and therefore better suited to a community that was ethnically and religiously mixed.

If we do assume that the last line of the Aramaic hymn is a later addition, we must conclude that neither the Aramaic nor the Hebrew text is the original one—whatever is actually meant by the word “original” in this context. At the same time, though, there is no denying the fact that the Aramaic version represents a stage in the literary transmission of the prayer that precedes the version as we know it from Psalm 20. The biblical poem is a Judahite revision of an existing text, reframing it in such a way that it focuses on the figure of the king. The prayer thus became a document of the royalist Zion theology. Since the Aramaic hymn stands closer to the text as it was in the initial stages of the tradition, we may peruse it for evidence of the time and the milieu in which the prayer did earlier circulate.

On the assumption that Yahu is the correct reading of the multi-consonantal sign Steiner reads as Horus and Kottsieper as El, the Aramaic hymn is a document of a religion in which Yahu and Bethel are identified. So much can be deduced from the fact that the invocation addressed to Yahu at the beginning corresponds with a similar invocation addressed to Bethel at the end; the stylistic device implies that Bethel is used as another name of Yahu. The mention of Resh as the place from where Yahu comes in action has

22. Kottsieper, “Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63,” 240.

similar implications. Throughout Amherst papyrus 63, Resh is the abode of Bethel; Bethel, moreover, is also associated with such mountains or mountain ranges as the Lebanon, Siryon, and Zaphon. So if Yahu is pictured as acting from Resh and Zaphon, the implication is that Yahu and Bethel are different names of one God. Now the identification of Bethel and Yahu is not unique to the Amherst papyrus. We also find it in the papyri of the Judean community at Elephantine. The goddess Anat-Bethel (*TAD C3.15:123–125*) occurs also under the name Anat-Yahu (*TAD B7.3:3*); there are references to Herem-Bethel (*TAD B7.2:7–8*) and Eshem-Bethel (*TAD C3.15:123–125*) but never to Bethel as such—except as an element in theophoric personal names. The most likely explanation of the phenomenon is to suppose that Yahu had taken the place of Bethel through identification. The fact that Anat-Bethel and Eshem-Bethel shared in the contributions to the temple of Yahu (*TAD C3.15:123–125*) points to the same conclusion. On the strength of this evidence I suggest that the Aramaic hymn we have been looking at was brought to Egypt by Israelite migrants who ended up—or whose offspring ended up—serving in the Persian army.

I assume, then, that the Aramaic hymn has its origins in the religion that was practiced in the northern kingdom of Israel. That Bethel was venerated as a god in the north is clear from Jeremiah 48:13 (“And Moab shall be shamed because of Chemosh, as the House of Israel were shamed because of Bethel, on whom they relied”). After the Assyrians resettled the populations of conquered territories in Samaria, we also find people from the northern region of Syria who stay loyal to the worship of their gods; inhabitants of Babylonia bring their gods with them. Most of the gods we encounter in Amherst papyrus 63 are known from biblical description of the religious situation in Samaria under the impact of the Assyrian empire (2 Kgs 17:24–33); Yahu is venerated as the god of the land; but his worship took place in a context of religious pluralism. The identification of Yahu and Bethel is one of the northern characteristics of our hymn. Another one is the reference to Yahu as “our Bull”; the worship of Yahu in the shape of a calf (1 Kings 12) is hard to understand if there were a general aversion to bull imagery for Yahu.<sup>23</sup>

After the fall of Samaria (722 BCE), groups of inhabitants from the north sought refuge in the south. Cult personnel from such places as Bethel and Samaria brought the pre-biblical version of Psalm 20 to Judah; there it found its way to the scriptorium of the Jerusalem temple where a scribe edited it to bring it in line with the tenets of the Judean theology; hence the focus on Zion and the royal dynasty. Other northerners found a safe haven

in Egypt; they too had the pre-biblical psalm as part of their religious tradition. With its explicit references to battles and armed encounters, the hymn would have a natural place in the cult performed in the temple of Yahu in Elephantine; this was a military colony. When the community was forced to leave Elephantine, the Persians no longer being around to offer their protection, some members of the colony moved up north, probably in the company of Aramean colleagues from Syene. The forced migration reinforced the hybrid nature of the community; these were descendants of Arameans and Israelites, possibly of Judeans as well, but it is unclear whether they observed strict ethnic boundaries among them. It seems unlikely—to say the least. Papyrus Amherst 63 is a selection of the traditional texts that had importance to them; as such, it is a statement of identity of sorts. That identity is hybrid; each group added elements of their tradition to the whole. The Israelites from the former northern kingdom brought in three Aramaic hymns to Yahu, parts of which are very close, in either spirit or phraseology or both, to the Hebrew Bible. They can be considered as a legacy of the Elephantine soldiers of the 5th century BCE.

The title of this contribution promises a case study of a text in transit. The discovery of papyrus Amherst 63, in the first place, and no less important the solution to the riddle of the language, in the second, has added another documented case of textual correction and expansion. As argued above, these cases offer precious data that can help us in the historical analysis of texts for which we have no physical evidence of any forerunners; and yet we know that at one time they existed. The comparison between Psalm 20 and the Aramaic hymn has yielded evidence of patterns in the process of scribal editing and revision that may illuminate, too, the many cases of scribal expansion of texts for which we have no hard evidence. To summarize: there is the *brevior anterior* principle: shorter means older; the rule that changes in the text will tend to respect the acoustic image of the earlier text: it sounds almost the same but means something different; the tendency to change the text in order to make it applicable to a wider variety of situations: the general displaces the particular; and the attempt to put another perspective on an existing text: revision is reframing.

23. For the bull imagery, see Wyatt, “Calf עגל.”

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Culley, Robert C. *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms*. Near and Middle East Series 4. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.
- Delcor, Mathias, "Remarques sur la datation du Ps. 20 comparée à celle du psaume araméen apparenté dans le papyrus Amhrst 63." In *Mesopotamica—Ugaritica—Biblica. Festschrift für Kurt Bergerhof zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 7. Mai 1992*, edited by Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, 25–43. AOAT 232. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993.
- Eissfeldt, Otto. *Baal Zaphon, Zeus Kasios und der Durchzug der Israeliten durchs Meer*. Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums 1. Halle/Saale: Niemeyer, 1932.
- Heckl, Raik. "Inside the Canon and Out: The Relationship between Psalm 20 and Papyrus Amherst 63." *Semitica* 56 (2014) 359–79.
- Kottsieper, Ingo. "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63, I: 12,11–19—Eine aramäische Version von Ps 20." *ZAW* 100 (1988) 217–44.
- . "Aramaic Literature." In *From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, edited by Carl S. Ehrlich, 393–444. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.
- . "El—ferner oder naher Gott." In *Religion und Gesellschaft*, edited by Rainer Albertz, 25–74. AOAT 248. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997.
- . "Papyrus Amherst 63—Einführung, Text und Übersetzung von 12,11–19." In Oswald Loretz, *Die Königspsalmen: Die altorientalisch-kanaanäische Königs-tradition in jüdischer Sicht. Teil 1. Ps 20, 21, 72, 101 und 144. Mit einem Beitrag von I. Kottsieper zu Papyrus Amherst*, 55–75. Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur 6. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1988.
- Lie, Arthur Godfred. *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria*. Part I: *The Annals*. Paris: Geuthner, 1929.
- Newberry, Percy E. *The Amherst Papyri, Being an Account of The Egyptian Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney F.S.A., at Didlington Hall, Norfolk*. London: Quaritch, 1899.
- Niehr, Herbert. "Zaphon צִפּוֹן." In *DDD*<sup>2</sup> 927–29.
- Nims, Charles F., and Richard C. Steiner. "A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2–6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script." *JAOS* 103 (1983) 261–74.
- Rösel, Martin. "Israel's Psalmen in Ägypten? Papyrus Amherst 63 und die Psalmen xx und lxxv." *VT* 50 (2000) 81–99.
- Saur, Markus. *Die Königspsalmen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie*. BZAW 340. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004.
- Segert, Stanislav. "Preliminary Notes on the Structure of the Aramaic Poems in the Papyrus Amherst 63." *UF* 18 (1986) 271–99.
- Steiner, Richard C., and Charles F. Nims. "You Can't Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script." *JNES* 43 (1984) 89–114.
- . "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script." *RB* 92 (1985) 60–81 & pls I–IV.
- Toorn, Karel van der. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Vleeming, Sven P., and Jan W. Wesseliuss. "An Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C." *BO* 39 (1982) 501–9. [N.B. The issue actually appeared Spring 1983.]

- . *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63. Essays on the Aramaic Texts in Aramaic/Demotic Papyrus Amherst 63*, vol. I. Amsterdam: Juda Palache Instituut, 1985.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. "The Pagan Version of Psalm 20:2–8: Vicissitudes of a Psalmic Creation in Israel and Its Neighbors." *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985) 130–40 (Hebrew) 70\* (English summary).
- Wyatt, Nicholas, "Calf עֵגֶל." In *DDD*<sup>2</sup> 180–82.
- Zauzich, Karl-Theodor. "Der Gott des aramäisch-demotischen Papyrus Amherst 63." *Göttinger Miszellen* 85 (1985) 89–90.
- Zevit, Ziony. "The Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20." *JAOS* 110 (1990) 213–28.