

Abstracts

Roey Schneider

Etymological Proposals for Hebrew from Modern South Arabian

The paper proposes new etymological comparisons between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew and Modern South Arabian languages, a small group of Semitic languages spoken by approximately 200,000 individuals in Yemen and Oman. These languages have no writing tradition and were not known to researchers until the mid-nineteenth century. Since that time, many scholars have drawn comparisons between these languages and ancient Semitic languages such as Hebrew. The goal of this paper is to make several fresh proposals in this field. The paper focuses on Hebrew words for which a cognate has yet to be found or which was found only in a very limited number of Semitic languages.

Yuval Weiss

כסיה כי יד על כס יה (Exod 17:16): The Appearance of כסיה as a Single Word in the Aleppo Codex

The masoretic category of biblical words to be written as one or two words forms a fruitful field of investigation. Many masoretic controversies are attested regarding these words; it is not always possible, however, to establish to whom to attribute each stance. Such words pose a halakhic problem in Torah scrolls, because the halakhah mandates a clear physical separation between words.

The current paper treats one such word, כסיה (Exod 17:16). Previous studies attributed the opinion that כסיה was to be written as one word to the Tiberian masoretic tradition, and as two words to the Babylonian one.

However, investigation of the text and the masoretic notes in scores of medieval manuscripts suggests that there were internal disputes regarding word division within each of these schools. Also discussed here are the punctuation and accentuation of כְּסִיָּה, which seemingly support writing it as two words. In order to explain the opposing opinion, a new perspective is offered on the nature of the combination of two words into one, as compared to words that are written as one but pronounced as two.

An interesting question is how כְּסִיָּה was written in the Aleppo Codex. According to several nineteenth-century testimonies it appeared there as one word, as opposed to all current Jewish communal traditions, including the Yemenite one. Did the Yemenites, who consistently adhere to the Aleppo Codex writing tradition in the Pentateuch, introduce a change to their tradition? I argue here for the opposite, that the Aleppo Codex underwent a late modification in the writing of כְּסִיָּה. Backing for this claim is provided by presenting three similar cases, in which a late modification — clearly not by Ben Asher — was introduced as well. I conclude by suggesting who and what motivated the modification of the text.

Yochanan Breuer

Duality: A Unique Feature of Agnon's Style

Long praised for its distinctive excellence, relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to the concrete generative mechanisms fueling Agnon's unique literary style. Two foundational principles shape Agnon's linguistic method: (1) his deliberate reliance on Mishnaic rather than Biblical or Modern Hebrew, which sets his prose apart from mainstream Hebrew literary conventions; and (2) his distinctive mode of sentence construction, which is grounded in systematic pairing that creates a characteristic rhythmic musicality, examined here in depth.

This principle of duality takes four main forms: (1) duplication of equivalent parts: clauses, phrases, and syntactic units frequently appear in pairs; (2) binary expressions: many phrases contain two coordinated elements; (3) ongoing comparisons: sentences or sentence segments are constantly juxtaposed in parallel relations; (4) structural pairing: larger narrative units are arranged as dyadic sequences. The affinity between paired elements is

emphasized through repeated words, recurring syntactic patterns, and often an equal number of words. When multiple pairs appear in succession, they generate continuous rhythmic repetition. The frequency, consistency, and distribution of these paired structures in Agnon's work far exceed those found in other writers, indicating a deliberate stylistic strategy.

Two explanations are proposed for this pervasive duality. First, binary patterning operates not only at the linguistic level but throughout Agnon's narrative architecture — shaping plot development, character relationships, and thematic constructions. Second, duality is a hallmark of poetry. Agnon, who viewed himself not just as a storyteller, sought to infuse his prose with poetic qualities. His style most closely resembles biblical parallelism. In addition, the cantillation system for the public reading of the Bible which divides verses into paired units, giving biblical prose a quasi-poetic texture, further informs Agnon's rhythm and structure. Thus, whereas Agnon draws much of his vocabulary and idiom from rabbinic literature, the musical and structural foundations of his prose are modeled on biblical patterns. The result is a unique synthesis whose pervasive duality creates the distinctive cadence that readers often perceive as a melodic chant (*nigun*) underlying his narratives.

Yael Reshef

Adverb Formation in Modern Hebrew: New Research Directions

Adverbs are generally recognized as a highly diverse category in both form and function. In Hebrew, a morphologically rich language, adverbs differ from the other major parts of speech, since dedicated strategies specifically associated with adverb formation never developed. As a result, studies attempting to comprehensively account for all the strategies found in contemporary texts vary considerably in their analyses. A central debate is whether Modern Hebrew adverbs should be defined as an open- or closed-class category.

Based on preliminary examination of data from a relatively small corpus of contemporary journalistic texts, the current study suggests that the historical origins of adverbial elements may offer valuable insights into

their present usage. Elements attested in Hebrew texts from antiquity through the end of the emergence period of Modern Hebrew are best characterized as forming a closed-class category. In contrast, the limited number of formation strategies still used productively in present-day language are best defined as open-class. These two groups differ not only in productivity but also in their distribution and the breadth of adverbial functions they perform.

The suggested division, which effectively accounts for the actual operation of adverbs in Modern Hebrew, appears to provide a simpler explanation as compared to those found in the current scholarship. This proposed classification reflects the structural complexity of Modern Hebrew, which stems from the coexistence of inherited and new grammatical features, due to the unconventional sociolinguistic circumstances of its emergence.

Ohad Abudraham

Hsin-Chih Perng, *The Aramaic Targum to Canticles: Annotated Critical Edition, Annotated Hebrew Translation with Textual and Linguistic Studies*, Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2026, 418 pp.

This review surveys Hsin-Chih Perng's *The Aramaic Targum to Canticles*, which provides an annotated critical edition of the Targum, a modern Hebrew translation, and extensive textual and linguistic analysis. The review devotes special attention to Perng's sophisticated model for a critical edition based on a broad manuscript corpus. The review also discusses the textual witnesses to the Targum and their various branches, its unique linguistic character, and its vocalization traditions.

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