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**A Passage in the Mesha Inscription, and the
Early Form of the Israelitish Divine Name**

By DR. A. COWLEY

Line 18 of the Moabite Stone is frequently quoted as the only early instance of the use of the divine name outside Israel. The sentence runs as follows : **וַאֲקַח מֶשֶׁם א . . לִי יְהוָה** **וַאֲסַחֲבֵם לִפְנֵי כַמֶּשׁ**. By comparison with l. 12 the lacuna was filled by **אֱרֹאֲלִי**, which Mr. Clermont-Ganneau long ago rejected. In l. 12 **אֱרֹאֲלִי** is singular, its meaning is obscure, and it is used with the verb **וַאֲשַׁב** or **וַאֲשַׁבְתִּי**, which is also obscure. Here the verb is **וַאֲקַח** and **אֱרֹאֲלִי** would be plural. The two passages are therefore clearly not parallel and the reading **אֱרֹאֲלִי** is not convincing. Hence it has been proposed more recently to read **אֵת כָּלִי** “the instruments of J.”, a very weak phrase. As a matter of fact I believe that the passage is to be understood in quite a different way, and I suggest the reading **וַאֲקַח מֶשֶׁם אֱנֹשְׁרִי לִי יְהוָה** “and I took from thence what should be for myself (i.e. my own share, as king)”. In order to see if the original would admit of such a reading, I made a careful examination of the stone in the Louvre in April, 1914, when Mr. René Dussaud most kindly put all the material at my

disposal. At the end of l. 17 nothing is left on the stone after **י**. The squeeze supplies **אקה משום**, after which there is a stroke | which may belong to an aleph (usually printed as certain), and with a little good will I thought I could see a trace of its head. The lines are not all of equal length. There would be room for **אשר**, or, if the line is long, **את אשר**. At the beginning of l. 18 **לי יהיה** is clear. The verb “to be” does not occur elsewhere in the inscription, so that we do not know its form in the dialect of Moab. But in Isaiah 16⁴ (“the burden of Moab”) it has been suggested that **יִי** is used in imitation of Moabite speech. If so, the verb was written with a **י**.

As to the rest of the sentence, note first the root **חב**, usually translated “drag”, “I dragged the altar-hearths [whatever they are] before Kemosh” is surely a pointless remark. He would have said what he did with them when he got them there. This translation is generally supported by reference to the Arabic **سحب** to “trail a garment”, etc. The meaning is, however, more likely to be discovered from Biblical Hebrew. The word occurs

(1) in 2 Sam. 17¹³, where perhaps it means “drag”.

(2) in Jer. 15³, where it certainly means “to tear in pieces”. The sentence marks a gradation: to kill, to tear in pieces (LXX *εἰς διασπασμόν*), to eat up the pieces, and so utterly annihilate (LXX *εἰς διαφθοράν*).

(3) in Jer. 22¹⁹, probably “drag”.

(4) in Jer. 49²⁰, “they shall tear them like lambs.”

(5) in Jer. 38^{11, 12}, **בלוי חבבות** and **בלואי החבבות** “torn rags”.

It does, therefore, in three places at least out of five mean to “tear in pieces”. This gives a real, if grim, meaning to its use here. In l. 12, “I took away the **אראל** (of ?) Doda and tore him in pieces before Kemosh.” In l. 17, (of the prisoners) “I took away my share and tore¹ them

¹ I find that Neubauer took the word so in *Records of the Past*, N.S., ii, p. 201 +.

in pieces before Kemosh". This would be as good a spectacle (if that is the meaning of רִית) as the slaying of all the inhabitants of the city in ll. 11, 12. We may compare the treatment of Moab by David, 2 Sam. 8². Still more illustrative is the story of Saul and the Amalekites. In 1 Sam. 15⁹ Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, etc., when they had been commanded to destroy everything (cf. 15²⁰, הַחֲרַמְתִּי as here). In 15³³ Samuel shows Saul his duty by hewing the captive king in pieces before the Lord. The phrase וַיִּשְׁכֵּם אֶת אֲנָנִי לִפְנֵי ה' (LXX ἔσφαξεν, Aq. Sym. διέσπασεν) is exactly parallel to וַאֲסַחְבָּה לִפְנֵי כ'. (The verb שָׁכַם is a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον and it has been suggested to read וַיִּשְׁכֵּם "tore in pieces".)

So that the אֲרַל¹ in l. 12 was a person, for you cannot tear an altar-hearth. From that point of view there would be no objection to the reading אֲרַלִּי יְהוָה "the Arels of J." But is the form יְהוָה possible for the name here? It has been generally assumed that יְהוָה was the original form, of which יְהוּ and יִ were abbreviations. Considered

¹ Burchardt, *Altkananäische Fremdworte*, ii (1910), No. 92, following Bondi, compares with it the Egyptian (?) 'ir'ir in the Anastasi papyrus, which he translates "Held", "Streiter". Cf. also W. Max Müller, *Asien u. Europa*, p. 79. Gardiner in his edition of the papyrus (*Egyptian Hieratic Texts*, i, 1 (1911), p. 25*) thinks the context requires "guide", but Burchardt's meaning would be equally suitable. It is very probable that the two words are the same, and that the meaning is "mighty man", whether regarded as protector or as ruler and oppressor. Mr. Griffith, however, points out that 'ir'ir "is found only in Pap. Anast., i, 23, 9, which is full of foreign (Syrian) words, and this word itself has the foreign determinative, showing that it is not Egyptian". It does not seem to be Semitic, and must therefore be a survival in Syria from some non-Semitic language (Hittite?). In the Bible אֲרַל was evidently a difficulty, and has often been corrupted to אֲרִיאל by a popular etymology, as if "lion of God". In Isaiah 33⁷ מְלָאכֵי שְׁלוֹם אֲרַלִּים is parallel to מְלָאכֵי שְׁלוֹם (R.V. ambassadors) and must mean "champions" or representatives of some kind (cf. 2 Sam. 23²⁰, אֶת שְׁנֵי אֲרַל מוֹאב, plural). Such a meaning is very suitable in l. 12 of the inscription. The King of Israel had built up Aṭaroth (i.e. made a fortified place of it) and the אֲרַל was the governor appointed by him. A discussion of the word יְהוָה would involve too long a digression here.

without prejudice, however, the contrary seems certainly to be the case. The earliest form of the name found in any original document is in the still unpublished ostraka discovered by Reisner at Samaria. It there occurs¹ as יי in the final syllable of proper names, e.g. שמריי.ענליי. Hölscher (following Kittel) has surmised (correctly, I think, though he does not give his reasons) that it is to be pronounced יי Yāv or Yāw. This seems to be the ultimate *Urform* of the name. In similar compounds in the Masoretic text it is written יידי-, and in the Aramaic papyri יידי is the independent form. I suggest that these forms both represent the same pronunciation (Yāw), and that at some time between the date of the ostraka from Samaria (say 900 B.C.) and the Aramaic papyri, the practice arose of writing a ה to represent a long vowel, just as in Arabic and late Hebrew an א was afterwards used. This view is perhaps not easy to accept, but it is worth considering.

At the end of a word (as ברכה ה) ה is admittedly a mere vowel letter, without any aspiration or guttural sound. It seems strange that it should be so used only when final, and not in the middle of a word. Yet according to the Masoretic orthography it never quiesces in the middle of a word.² That it was only a later use of the letter, even at the end of a syllable, is shown by the form נעך (for נעה) in the Pentateuch. But it seems at least probable that similarly אברהם is only a later method of writing אברם, the ה being inserted to indicate the long ā, just as in mediaeval Hebrew, if it were necessary to point out the a as a long vowel, we might write אבראם. The Masoretes, however, have treated the medial ה in all cases as a full consonant and doubled the syllable.

¹ See the account by Hölscher in Mitt. d. Deutschen Pal.-Vereins, 1911, p. 26.

² In names like עשהאל, פדהצור, however, it has been retained from the root, though not sounded.

This view, if accepted, would lead to far-reaching conclusions. I will not apply it now to the many words in the Hebrew lexicon in which it explains difficulties, since such explanations may be regarded as subjective. The case of proper names, however, is different. These presumably had a fixed pronunciation which was more or less accurately represented in writing, at any rate at a time and place at which the name was familiar. In Sachau's papyrus 1¹ the name בְּנֹרִי is generally transliterated as Bagohi. It is evidently a compound of the Old Persian *Baga*, whatever the second part may be, and is the same name (though not necessarily the same person) as the בְּנֹרִי (or בְּנֹרִי) of Ezra 2^{2, 14}, 8¹⁴, and Neh. 7^{7, 19}, 10¹⁶, which appears in Greek under varieties of the form, *Βαγοβαί*, *Βαγοεί*, or Græcized as *Βαγώας*. These forms can only be reconciled if they go back to an OP. *Bagawāiy. The *h* would not have been dropped in Hebrew at the time of Ezra if it had been original. On the other hand, if ה was used to represent long *ā*, it may well have been written in Aramaic, where the necessity was felt of making the pronunciation clear by this device, although the practice had not yet been adopted in Hebrew when Ezra wrote. The *ω* in *Βαγώας*, or the *ο* in *Βαγοεί*, or the *ου* in *Βαγοβαί* was the nearest representation of ו (= English *w*) which was possible in Greek.¹ (The accent was not a stress accent.) In the papyri then the name was pronounced Bagawāi.

Another illustration is the name Darius as it appears in the Elephantine papyri. In his own inscription at Behistun, where presumably his name would be spelt correctly, he is called (taking Weissbach's transcriptions) in O.P. *Dāraiauaš*, in Elamite *Dariamauiš*, and in Babylonian *Dariamuš*, where the last *a* is absorbed in the

¹ Similarly in pure Greek words an *ο* often represents *F* (= *w*), as in *οἶκος*, *οἶνος*, for *Fikos*, *Fivos*, not for *Foikos*, *Foivos*. Cf. *Οαδδω* = *ו* in the Minæan-Greek inscription from Delos, *Rev. Sem.* 1909, p. 402.

u (the *m*, of course, in Babylonian represents also the sound of *w*). In the Biblical texts it is consistently spelt דָּרִיּוֹשׁ (Hebrew, Hag. 1¹, 2¹⁰; Zech. 1^{1,7}, 7¹; Dan. 11¹, 9¹; Ezra 4⁵; Neh. 12²². Aramaic, Dan. 6^{1,29}; Ezra 4²⁴, 5⁵⁻⁷, 6^{1,12-15}). Probably the original vowels were דָּרִיּוֹשׁ, agreeing with the Babylonian form with which Ezra was familiar. It was afterwards corrupted to the present easier form, and the spelling made consistent by the Masoretes in all passages.

If the form דָּרִיּוֹשׁ was used by Ezra, it would be current till at least 450 B.C. It is noticeable that of the three spellings occurring in the papyri, this form is found only once, in a document (Sachau No. 30) dated by Sachau (and, I think, rightly) in 494 B.C., i.e. it is copied, like that in Ezra, from the Babylonian pronunciation. It is the earliest attempt at representing the sound of the name. The next extension of the spelling in the papyri is דָּרִיּוֹשׁ, in the Aramaic version of the Behistun inscription, which appears on several grounds to have been written down in its present form about 430–420 B.C. I take this spelling to represent the same (Babylonian) pronunciation, since the Aramaic follows closely the Babylonian version throughout, viz. Dariyawuš, the ה being simply inserted to show that an *a* is to be sounded after the י, since otherwise the name might be read Dariyûš (much as it was in Greek).

The third form of the name, and the commonest, is דָּרִיּוֹשׁ, which I take to represent the real Persian pronunciation, Darayawauš—the ה again being used to indicate the *a*, the first י consonantal and the second י vocalic.

Thus: דָּרִיּוֹשׁ = Bab. Dariyawuš

occurs once (pap. 30¹) in 494 B.C.

דָּרִיּוֹשׁ = Bab. Dariyawuš

occurs 4 times (pap. 62, ii⁵) c. 430 B.C.

(pap. 1^{19,21,30}) in 407 B.C.

דריהוש = O.P. Darayawauš

occurs 13 times (pap. 1^{2,4}) in 407 B.C.
 (pap. 2^{2,4,19}) in 407 B.C.
 (pap. 3⁷) c. 407 B.C.
 (pap. 6³) in 419 B.C.
 (pap. 29^{1,5}) in 409–405 B.C.
 (Strasb. A²) in 410 B.C.
 (Sayce-Cowley H¹) in
 420 B.C.
 (S.C. J¹) in 417 B.C.
 (S.C. K¹) in 411 B.C.

There are also three places (9²⁸, p. 204 and p. 222) where the reading is uncertain.

It must not be forgotten, of course, that *u* and *hu* are not distinguished in O.P. That question¹ need not be discussed here. Though the pronunciation *hu* might be supposed (wrongly) to explain the spelling דריהוש, as if it were Darayawahuš, it could not explain דריהוש (as Darayahuš), since a syllable would then be wanting. The view that ה is used as a vowel letter does explain both spellings.

Putting aside, then, the doubtful readings, all the cases in which ה is so used in this name occur from about 430 B.C. onwards. It is not so used in papyrus 30 (494 B.C.), so that the practice would seem to have been introduced between 494 and 430 B.C.

Other instances of the same use of ה in the version of the Behistun inscription are אהורמזד = Auramazda, and ורומיס = Vaumisa.²

If a case has been made out for this use of ה in Aramaic, we may reasonably assume that it was also employed in the same way in Hebrew of the same date, at any rate

¹ See Weissbach, *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, 1911, p. lxxv.

² So in O.P. cf. Elam. Maumišša, not for Vahumithra, as Sachau (and Justi), since Mithr- is found in the papyri, so that the change had not yet taken place. Greek Ὀμσος.

for a time. This explains the later form אברהם (in P!) for אברם. It was merely another way of writing the name (as later we might have had אבראם) in certain documents. A reason for the sudden change had to be found by the compiler of Genesis, but there is no need for us to speculate on רהם as a weakening of רהם.¹ It also explains the development of NH מהל from BH מל, and other forms of the kind. The 3rd sing. perf. Kal was מל. This was written מהל, the ה representing the long vowel, and was then (later) treated as a trilateral, the ה artificially becoming the second radical. Hence the participle מהל, not found in BH.

Now to return to the form of the divine name. As found in the papyri ידו on the above theory is only another way of writing י, the Urform appearing on the ostraka from Samaria. It is therefore not Semitic in origin, and the attempt to explain it as derived from דוה or דיה as in Exod. 3¹⁴ is no more to be taken as serious etymology than the derivation of מן "manna" in Exod. 16¹⁵.

The further development of the name by the addition of a final ה requires some discussion. Cuneiform evidence would here be of the greatest value, if it were certain, but experts differ so much in their conclusions that they cannot be used with confidence.² I will only quote the opinion of Ungnad (in the preface to his edition of Sachau's papyri, pp. iii, iv): "The fullest form of the name . . . occurs in Babylonian documents of the fifth century [B.C.] from Nippur, in which numerous Jewish names appear compounded with Yâma (pronounced Yâwa)." ³ He then compares such forms as שחזו, which

¹ Even if a name Abaraham be found in Babylonian. See Clay, *The Empire of the Amorites* (1919), p. 41.

² e.g. S. Daiches in ZA. 1908, p. 136, sums up the results of his inquiry in the statement "that the Tetragrammaton יהוה has so far not been found in cuneiform inscriptions".

³ But even this does not necessarily represent the form יהוה. The

he assumes to be shortened from **śahwa*. But the opposite is really the case. The ground-form of שָׁחַו, as Ungnad very well knows, is **sāḥw* (Kautzsch, Heb. Gram., §§ 84^a, c, e, 93 *x-z*, 95 *d-f*). This was difficult to pronounce, and so became either **śahwa* or שָׁחַו. Similarly the Urform י came to be written ייה, and then the pronunciation was eased by the addition of a final vowel (י = *a*) as in Babylonian, but whether on the analogy of שָׁחַו, etc., or not, does not matter. No wonder that the true pronunciation of the name was regarded as a mystery! Meanwhile in compound names, which could not be altered in form, the original י and ייה were preserved, though variously vocalized as יי, ייה, ייה. The tetragrammaton itself is never found in compounds, since later names (i.e. those formed after the tetragrammaton came into existence) are all made on the early models. If the long form were original, one cannot imagine a people habitually shortening the name of their deity, especially as it was regarded with such special reverence. Such a practice would be contrary to all experience.¹ Note also that the revelation of the tetragrammaton in Exod. 6² (like the change of אברם to אברהם) belongs to the document P.

If, then, everything seems to show that the early (or at least pre-Exilic) form of the name was Yāw, we are not justified in assuming that the longer form could be used by Mesha in 850 B.C. without very strong evidence—and if ייה in Mesha l. 18 is not the Name, it can only be the verb “to be”. In that case the proposed restorations

addition of the final vowel may be simply a device to ease the pronunciation of Yāw in Babylonian.

¹ The termination ייה in names is not to be regarded as a shortening of ייה, but simply as a *Koseform*, perhaps derived from Hittite usage. It may have been due to a desire to avoid pronouncing the divine name, just as ייה is entirely dropped, e.g. in הוֹשַׁעִיהֶן for הוֹשַׁעִיהֶן, cf. Bab. Mannuki for Mannu-ki-ilu. The form ייה, used independently or in הוֹלִלִייה, is purely orthographic (like the later יי, etc.), the mappik being the mark of abbreviation.

אֶרְאֵלִי and אַתְּ כָלִי are alike impossible, and אֶשֶׁר or אַתְּ אֶשֶׁר seems to be necessary. "But I took away that which should be for myself and tore them in pieces before Kemosh." Whether "them" means the rest of the 7,000 men, etc., or those whom he took for himself, is not clear. Probably the latter. It is a *constructio ad sensum*.