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AN ARAMAIC RELIGIOUS TEXT IN DEMOTIC SCRIPT¹

RAYMOND A. BOWMAN

OUT of the past come many challenges to the world of modern scholarship. To the credit of modern scholars it can be said that such challenges often can be met. By laborious study it has been possible to recover much of the ancient languages of the past so that, for example, the Assyriologist can read Akkadian and the Egyptologist can read Egyptian with remarkable facility. The difficulties still encountered in reading ancient languages when written in normal fashion are yet great enough; but, when some ancient person deliberately deviates from the accepted manner of writing, he causes a confusion that puts modern scholarship to the test. Such has been the history of a still unpublished papyrus that has been a tantalizing enigma for some years.²

This papyrus is inscribed both recto and verso in demotic script that is largely alphabetic in character. There are at least twenty-one columns of about nineteen or twenty lines to the column. The right end of the verso is badly damaged through the first five to seven columns. Since there is no photograph of the first sheet of the verso, it is uncertain whether this portion is blank or inscribed. Nor are there photographs of the most damaged portions of

¹ The substance of this article formed the presidential paper read before the Mid-West branch of the American Oriental Society at Evanston, Ill., on April 6, 1943. The title of that paper, "An Aramaic Cryptogram," has here been abandoned to avoid misunderstanding owing to the current narrow connotation of "cryptogram." However, in the original sense of "secret writing," as indicated below, the writer believes the term "cryptogram" is still applicable.

² Formerly in the Amherst collection, this papyrus is now the property of the J. P. Morgan Library. It has not yet come to this country and remains in the British Museum. Our work up to this point has been done from photographs alone.

the verso. These matters will have to be ascertained when the papyrus reaches this country.

Although written in demotic fashion, the text cannot be read as Egyptian. This is the unanimous opinion of the Egyptologists at home and abroad who have examined the papyrus and tried to decipher it. F. Ll. Griffiths, expert in demotic Egyptian writing, has described it as being in "Persian demotic" written "in unintelligible groups of demotic alphabetic characters with the determination 3

One need not exclude Semitic languages from consideration, for there are several examples of them written in abnormal mediums. The phonetic rendering of Phoenician into Latin characters by Plautus in the *Poenulus* produced what appeared in Latin to be gibberish but is now treasured as the principal source of our knowledge of Carthaginian Phoenician.⁴ Graffiti scratched in Latin char-

³ These ideas are expressed by Griffith in a card to a fellow-demotist, Wilhelm Spiegelberg of Heidelberg, dated February 8, 1921, now in the file of Professor William F. Edgerton of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. There, too, is another card from Professor G. Möller of Berlin to Dr. Spiegelberg, in which the former confesses his inability to read the papyrus. Dr. Edgerton acquired this correspondence, along with the photographs upon which this work is based, after the death of Professor Spiegelberg.

⁴ J. J. Bellermann, *Versuch einer Erklärung der punischen Stellen im Pöniulus des Plautus* (Berlin,

acters in the ruins of Pompei and its vicinity have been regarded as being in the Aramaic language.⁵ An Aramaic text of the Seleucid period in Babylonia is written not in Aramaic characters but phonetically, in syllabic fashion, impressed as cuneiform signs into a clay tablet.⁶ Then, too, demotic writing sometimes intrudes into the Aramaic papyri of Egypt, for the languages were used side by side as long as Aramaic was written in Egypt. The normal expectation in the Persian period, to which this perplexing papyrus has been assigned, would be that if the text were not in Egyptian it would be in Aramaic.

In order to test the hypothesis that it was in Aramaic, it was necessary to transcribe the predominantly alphabetic text into the equivalent Hebrew-Aramaic characters. It was natural with such alphabetic material that there should have been sporadic attempts at such transcription, but they produced no successful clue to the nature of the language in which it was written, for the predominance of the letter *paleph* and the presence of some genuine demotic group writing made the transcribed text appear as "gibberish" or an "African form of speech" rather than something more easily recognizable. Since I knew no demotic, Dr. Hughes of the Oriental Institute, who had been working on the papyrus, selected for transcription for me a portion of text that was predominantly alphabetic in character and relatively free from demotic writing for which alphabetic values could not readily be assigned.

The transcription was punctuated fre-

1806), Part I, pp. 14 ff. Cf. L. Gray, "The Punic Passages in the *Poenulus* of Plautus," *AJSL*, XXXIX (1922), 73-88.

⁵ W. R. Newbold, "Five Transliterated Aramaic Inscriptions," *AJA*, XXX (1926), 288 ff.

⁶ C. H. Gordon, "The Aramaic Incantation in Cuneiform," *AFO*, XII (1937), 105-7.

quently by a symbol for a particular Egyptian determinative. Even one who is ignorant of demotic is attracted by the flaglike vertical stroke that occurs at somewhat regular intervals throughout the photographs of the text. This is the demotic equivalent of the hieroglyphic determinative "man-with-his-hand-to-his-mouth" mentioned by Griffith as characterizing the papyrus. Most demotic words conclude with the writing of a determinative, some character that gives a clue to the meaning of the word, indicating category in nouns and class of action in verbs. Among the determinatives discovered with nouns in our papyrus are indicators for "woman," "divinity," and "foreign land," which, for convenience, will be transcribed in this study by the numbers 4, 2, and 9, respectively. The "man-with-his-hand-to-his-mouth" determinative is used in Egyptian to indicate actions involving the mouth, such as "to eat," "to speak," and "to be silent." Normally there is considerable variety in the use of determinatives in demotic, but our scribe, who uses many fewer determinatives than usual, has hit upon the "man-with-his-hand-to-his-mouth" as the determinative to be used in all cases in which no other determinative seemed pertinent to him. In the great majority of cases the determinative is not appropriate to the action or to the category of noun involved. It has become, in effect, merely a word-divider used when no other determinative was deemed necessary. We may conjecture that the choice of this determinative as a general terminator for words is probably due to the association of the determinative with the verbal actions of either "speaking" or "remaining silent."

The determinatives are of great value in this papyrus both for giving some indication of the length of words and, fre-

quently, for giving a clue to the nature of the word to which it is attached. There is no spacing of words in the papyrus. Within the determinatives the writing is predominantly alphabetic, although a generous amount of Egyptian nonalphabetic writing is also encountered.

At first glance the transcribed text looks strange and decidedly unfamiliar, for the words between the determinatives are almost invariably too long to be Semitic and the letter *aleph* is found with distressing frequency. One can understand the epithets "gibberish" and "African form of speech" to designate such a text. A portion of the material so transcribed appears as follows:⁷

*כְּרָנָא 31 קָל וּבְסָמֵי עֲרָבָא חַנְחָל
 בְּנִילָא וּבְנָאָחָךְ וּרְפִיכָא דְּלַהֲבָנָא
 כְּתָחָא מְשָׁחָא עַלְכָא יְשָׁלָת

*כְּרָנָא 31 קָרְבָּסְסָמֵי עֲרָבָא דְּגַדְדָר
 בְּנִילָא וּבְנָאָחָךְ וּרְפִיכָא תְּרָהָאָבָא
 כְּתָחָא מְשָׁחָא פְּאִירָכָא יְשָׁרָת

The use of the gutturals *heth* and *ain* in the transcription suggests that the language is Semitic. The frequency with which the words conclude with the letter *aleph* recalls one of the outstanding char-

⁷ In this transcription furnished by Dr. Charles F. Nims the symbols ¹לָ, ¹נָ, and ¹מָ are mere variant forms of those letters. The ¹רָ, usually to be transcribed as *lamedh*, may sometimes represent *rēsh* (which is usually represented by ¹רָ), as parallels show. In the transcriptions given below, ¹רָ will be represented by ¹לָ, and ¹מָ will indicate ¹רָ unless otherwise specified. The number 31 stands for demotic *bn*, which F. Ll. Griffith (*The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* [London, 1909], p. 25) indicates has the value of ¹מָן in the Alhmimic dialect of Upper Egypt. W. Spiegelberg concurs in his *Demotische Grammatik* (Heidelberg, 1925), p. 100. Since this sign in this papyrus interchanges with the demotic group for the god Min, the reading *mn* here seems to be confirmed. The phonetic peculiarity involved may give some clue to the home of the scribe or the place in which the demotic text was written. The sign functions as the Aramaic preposition ¹מְ, "from," in the papyrus. Asterisks are used to represent the determinative "man-with-hand-to-mouth," which functions as a word-divider in the papyrus. Usage set here will be maintained throughout the paper.

acteristics of Aramaic, the emphatic state of the noun. Observing these phenomena, I at once decided to ignore, temporarily at least, all *aleph*'s other than final ones, in order to see what the result might be. The text so derived looked much more familiar, for a triconsonantal basis for the language was at once apparent, confirming my suspicion that it was Semitic in character. The resultant material had every appearance of being an unvocalized text that would have to be read as Semitic:

וכְּרָנָא 31 קָל וּבְסָמֵי עֲרָבָא חַנְחָל
 בְּנִילָא וּבְנָאָחָךְ וּרְפִיכָא דְּלַהֲבָנָא
 כְּתָחָא מְשָׁחָא עַלְכָא יְשָׁלָת

Later I admitted other than final *aleph*'s to the text to cover the instances in which a truly conconsonantal *aleph* would be expected to stand initially or medially.

As the work progressed, familiar Semitic prefixes and suffixes appeared, all inclining toward those normally associated with Aramaic. The terminations *-in* and *-an*, marking the forms of plural nouns, eliminated from consideration the Canaanite dialects, including Hebrew. Sometimes a *yodh* appeared before the final *aleph* to suggest the emphatic plural form of the masculine noun in Aramaic. When the third-person masculine singular suffix attached to plural nouns was found to be *-ôhî*, a peculiar development of the pronoun that is the exclusive property of Aramaic among the Semitic languages, the identification of the language of the papyrus as Aramaic was conclusive. This pronominal ending can be illustrated in a

"defectively" written near-parallel to the text mentioned above (XXI, 8-10) as follows:⁸

וְכִי * תְּאַרְאָנָה * קָלְ * וְאַבְסָאָמִי * עַרְבָּא * (XX, 8)
 כִּי תְּאַרְאָן * קָלְ * בְּאַסְאָמִי * עַלְבָּא * (XXI, 9-10)
 הַנְּהַל * בְּאַנְכָּא * וְאַ בְּנַחְתָּא * וְרַפִּיכָּא * דְּלַהְאָבָא כָּא * (XX, 8-)
 הַנְּהַל בְּאַנְכָּא * נָא בְּנַחְדָּא * לְלַפְּ[הַ]י * דְּלַהְאָבָא דְּהָא * (XXI, 8-10)
 כָּחַתְּדָאָסָא * מְשָׁהָא * עַלְכָּא * יְשָׁאָלָף (XX, 8-)
 כָּחַתְּדָאָסָא * מְשָׁהָא * עַלְכָּא [?י]שָׁאָלָף (XXI, 8-10)

The first text (Col. XX) is apparently addressed in the second-person masculine singular, while in the near-parallel (Col. XXI) there is an indication that the person mentioned has done as he was bid. Elsewhere the term "his sons," here written defectively, is spelled out as **בְּנָוֹתָךְ** (VIII, 19) for the classical Aramaic form **בְּנָוֹתֶךָ**.

Early attempts at translation were frustrated by the peculiarities of demotic writing. Demotic determinatives and demotic nonalphabetic groups for which alphabetic equivalents cannot be determined as yet, interspersed among the alphabetic materials, cause many problems. Equally troublesome, however, is the limited character of the demotic alphabet.⁹ Just as most Semitic alphabets are too limited to indicate accurately the full richness of the Semitic phonetic system, so the demotic alphabet, despite its having many variant forms for some letters, is too limited to distinguish properly between all the various sounds represented by the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet. The letters *d*, *z*, and *l* are apparently entirely lacking or, at least, cannot be fully differentiated in

⁸ Brackets inclose material supplied where the papyrus is broken. Since the papyrus has no spacing between words, the spacing here is done merely to facilitate reading and the making of comparisons. As the parallel shows, 33 indicates *waw*. In this and the following transcriptions **נ** is rendered as **ל**.

⁹ Cf. Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

our papyrus, and there is apparently no single letter equivalent to *§*.

The letters *t* and *d*, written much alike

in hieratic, tended to coalesce and were probably both pronounced *t* when the papyrus was written. Further study, however, may indicate that a particular character is used to represent *d*. There was no sign for *l* in the early period of demotic, although the sound was apparently recognized. Where this sound is to be indicated in the papyrus the letter *r* is employed. Two forms of *rēsh* are used. True *rēsh*, derived probably from the hieroglyph "lion" (the *râ* sign), is usually found in the papyrus where we would expect *l*, but some parallels, like that above, indicate that it may also serve as *rēsh*. The other, more complicated, manner of writing *rēsh*, derived from the group writing for "mouth" (Coptic *ro*), is probably always used for true *rēsh*.

The acrophonic principle, here observed in the production of the consonant *rēsh* from the words *râ* and *ro*, has long been recognized as fundamental in the development of the Semitic alphabet. Somewhat in desperation, I have assumed that this principle is operative in all those cases in the papyrus in which nonalphabetic, multiconsonantal groups are to be reduced to simple alphabetic writing. Often the consonantal factor that must be ignored is an obvious intrusion into an otherwise easily recognized Semitic word. Dr. Nims informs me, for example, that

what we transcribe as **ה** would be read as *hn* in demotic, but its consonantal value in the papyrus is definitely that of **ה**. It is still too early to be dogmatic in proclaiming the validity of the principle under discussion in the papyrus, and my colleagues are still conservatively suspicious of it; but so far the principle *seems* to work. Perhaps we shall find later that groups were chosen deliberately and that, as Hughes conjectures, "he [the scribe] was trying to make some distinction with those groups. There must have been sounds he was put to it to represent with his mono-consonantal signs." If this be so, further work on the papyrus may demonstrate this fact, and it will prove of great value in our study of Semitic phonetics.

Sometimes, however, it is necessary to use the entire syllable of a nonalphabetic demotic group in the formation of a Semitic word. There is some indication that under such circumstances a phonetic complement may be written to make this clear. This is apparently true in the name **בְּנֵכְלָה**⁵¹ mentioned below, wherein the group 51 is demotic *sn* and is followed by the letter *n* evidently as a complement. Likewise, the preposition *min*, in the form of group 31, which is to be read as demotic *mn* but interchanges with the demotic writing of the name of the Egyptian god *Min*, is frequently followed by the phonetic complement *n*. But, as can be seen in the parallel presented above, such use of a complement with this word is not an invariable practice.

The manner of vocalizing the words in the papyrus is curious and instructive. Already in the words **בְּנֵכְלָה** and **בְּנֵוֹתָה** above, the possibility of "defective" and "plene" writing has been indicated. There is some use in the papyrus of the consonants *waw* and *yodh* to indicate the long vowels *u* or *ô* and *i*, as in other Semitic alphabetic writing. But the use of *paleph* here is unusual for the early period of

Aramaic. We find "house" written not only as **בֵּית** (XX, 8; XXI, 8) but also as **בְּבֵית** (XI, 5, 17), and the form **בְּבֵיתָה** (IX, 4) indicates how a prefixed form in the emphatic state is written. From the beginning it was apparent that the majority of the *paleph*'s were not consonantal but vocalic. The scribe used the *paleph* to indicate vowels of the -*a* class just as the letter is used later in Jewish Aramaic¹⁰ and Mandaic.¹¹ He did so without a knowledge of any system of written vocalization, for none had yet been established in the period to which the papyrus has been assigned. When I first discovered the significance of the vocalic *paleph*, I suggested that the papyrus was of relatively late date, Roman period or later; but the Egyptologists who have worked on it have all been adamant in supporting Griffith's suggested date, the Persian period. They indicate that the script, while not from the earliest part of the Persian period, is yet unlike the developed style of the Ptolemaic period. Subsequent morphological discoveries confirm this rather early date.

In such a text as this it is difficult to determine whether the writer was an Aramaean who had learned Egyptian, an Egyptian who had a smattering of Aramaic, or a bilingual person who was well acquainted with both languages. It is significant that the material apparently had to be preserved, presumably as a ritual, in the Aramaic language. It now seems clear from parallels that the scribe was not composing in Aramaic but was recording his material phonetically, either as he had learned it by rote or, more probably, as it was dictated to him by an Aramaic-speaking person. A few phonetic difficulties uncovered in the parallel texts, unless they

¹⁰ G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinisch-aramäisch* (2d ed.; Leipzig, 1905), sec. 12, pp. 70 ff. For usage in biblical Hebrew now see the examples cited by A. Sperber, "Hebrew Grammar," *JBL*, LXII (1943), 179-80.

¹¹ T. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle, 1875), pp. 3 ff.

are to be explained as simple errors, may be evidence that we are dealing with Aramaic taken as dictation.¹²

The vocalic *aleph*'s seem always to indicate an -a-class vowel, but it may be either long or short. It is significant that in the cuneiform-Aramaic vocalized text of the Seleucid age, according to Gordon, "long medial -ā is not usually differentiated from short -a."¹³ When a vocalic *aleph* and a consonantal *aleph* would be expected together in the papyrus, as when a word with initial *aleph* appears with a prefixed preposition ending in an -a-class vowel, a single *aleph* may be written. Medial *aleph* sometimes is troublesome since, according to the system of vocalization, the *P̄eal* participle of middle-weak roots, the third-person masculine singular of the *P̄eal* perfect of middle-*aleph* roots, and the third-person masculine singular of the *P̄eal* perfect of middle-weak roots would all be written in identical fashion, as בְּנָה. Final *aleph*, too, can be ambiguous. It not only may be the sign of the emphatic state of masculine nouns but may also represent the concluding vowel sound in the *verba tertiae infirmae* and apparently also, upon occasion, the third-person singular pronominal suffix, in both genders, where -h would normally be expected.

In comparing the vocalization of the papyrus with that of the corresponding "classical" Aramaic with respect to the relationship between the *aleph*'s and the *sh'wa* sounds, I was at first quite disturbed. Where the "classical" vocalization would demand מִלְבָּחָת the papyrus

¹² A few examples may be cited here: אַלְרָאַתְּנָאַתְּ (VIII, 16, 18) for the familiar אַגְּשָׁאַרְתְּאַתְּ; the preposition מְנָאַתְּ (VI, 10; for *min?*) where the parallel has the expected מְנָאַתְּ (*min*). The false word-divisions mentioned below (e.g., the name Borsippa and the words indicating the shrine of Nanai in the same pericope) are likewise interesting as probable phonetic errors.

¹³ "The Aramaic Incantation" *op. cit.*, p. 110, No. 22.

had בְּנָאַתְּנָאַתְּ (IX, 5). Could *aleph* be used to represent a *sh'wa* as well as a full vowel sound? But what I recognize as the *P̄eal* perfect masculine form of the verb, written קְרָבָּה in "classical" Aramaic, is given as קְרָאָבָּה in the papyrus (VII, 18), with no indication of the initial *sh'wa*. The matter is again clarified by comparison with the practice in the cuneiform-Aramaic text. There vocalic *sh'wa* is represented by *i*,¹⁴ and "short vowels in unaccented open syllables are often, if not usually, retained."¹⁵ The vocalization of the papyrus is thus earlier than that of "classical" Aramaic.

For a long time I sought for the relative particle so frequently met in written Aramaic, but I found no trace of it, neither as *zi* nor as *di*. The construct relationship is generally used where the relative particle might be expected in written Aramaic. Herein, too, is startling agreement with the usage in the cuneiform-Aramaic tablet, for Gordon says: "Another unmistakable sign of age is the expression of the genitive relationship according to the old Semitic pattern of construct genitive instead of the circumlocution with *d(z)* that characterizes the literary dialects."¹⁶ Only recently did I discover the relative particle, expressed by a prefixed *t*, doubtless for *d*, in the passage תְּבָנָה כְּאַבְלָה (VIII, 19), doubtless to be read as פְּבָלָה כְּבָנָה. Here, again, is agreement with the cuneiform-Aramaic manner of writing.¹⁷ So, with

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111, No. 35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115, No. 71.

¹⁷ It seems significant that all known renditions of the sound of the interdental fricative *d* in Aramaic phonetically represent the sound as *d* rather than as a *z*. In alphabetic Aramaic both *d* and *z* are written. Perhaps there had been no shift in pronunciation and the sound was spoken as in Arabic, just as the Hebrews in speech seem to have preserved both *'ain* and *ghain* in pronunciation down to Hellenistic times, although the limitations of the alphabet in use compelled the two sounds to be written with the same consonant, *'ain*. If Aramaeans preserved the interdental fricative

every new bit that is recovered, the earlier conclusion that the text is in Aramaic is confirmed.

There are, however, some noteworthy elements not found in the "classical" Aramaic. There appears to be considerable use of the demonstrative pronouns *hān* and *hānā(h)*, as in Syriac, although the words **תְּנִ** (XIII, 14), **תְּנִאָ** (XIX, 2), and **כְּנִתְנִ** (XVI, 6), presumably for **תְּנִתְנִ**, and **פְּנִתְנִ**, are also found. Some phenomena suggest the language of the Ugaritic texts. An *aleph* standing alone between determinatives (IX, 6) and a similar independently written *yodh* followed by *aleph* (VI, 10) suggest, respectively, the *i* and the *ya* of those texts; while the puzzling form **בְּנִעְנִ** (XV, 10), which is written in a parallel simply **בְּנִי** (XVI, 6), may be the *m^c* of the same epics.

The papyrus is not without the influence of the demotic manner of writing. The ambiguous use of **לְ** for both the preposition "upon" and the third-person masculine singular form of the verb **לָלַ**, "enter," has always caused difficulty in reading Aramaic. The forms might be expected to be identical in the papyrus, too, as **לְ** **עַלְ**, except for the fortunate fact that

pronunciation, they had the choice of representing the sound by either **לְ** or **לָ** in writing, as is done. Apparently local custom determined which of the letters would be written to represent the sound. Since both letters are found in the papyri, the evidence of this papyrus that the letter sounded like *d* to the Egyptian scribe can be but contributory. More significant is the evidence of the cuneiform-Aramaic text wherein it is also represented by *d*, for in alphabetic Aramaic from that area the sound is usually represented by **תְּ**. It is interesting to observe that in the Egyptian papyri the greatest number of occurrences of **תְּ** rather than **לְ** for the sound *d* are found in the copies of the Behistun inscription and in the Ahiqar story, both of which look eastward for their place of origin. Pertinent, too, are the well-known *-idri* names, culled from the cuneiform writings. The significance of these facts for the use of the Aramaic **תְּ** and **לְ** data in arriving at the date of biblical Aramaic is at once apparent. There can scarcely be any question now but that Achaemenid Aramaic, no matter what was written in the alphabetic script, pronounced the sound *d* in a fashion that most closely approximated **תְּ**.

the verb is usually, if not always, accompanied by the "walking-legs" sign, the demotic determinative for motion. Interesting, also, is the curious use of the demotic determinative for divinity appended to a simple pronominal suffix attached to the preposition **כְּלִ** (**כְּלִי**) when the antecedent is a god (VIII, 7).

Our present knowledge of the language of the papyrus is due in a large measure to the cautious scholarship and industry of Dr. Charles F. Nims, who made almost the entire demotic text available for my study. As the conviction grew that the language of the papyrus was Aramaic, it was decided to transcribe and mimeograph the entire papyrus for the compilation of a concordance that would facilitate its study. This laborious and difficult task was undertaken by Nims, in constant consultation with Dr. Hughes. It was Nims who developed our system of numbered letters to indicate the variant ways of representing the recognizable consonants and the numbers now in use to represent the nonalphabetic demotic groups, quite a few of which still remain unidentified.

During the course of transcription and the construction of the concordance, Nims discovered that several sections were exactly parallel and some almost parallel, as in the Ugaritic texts. These parallels usually continue for several lines, sometimes within the same column and sometimes in different columns.¹⁸ A sample of such parallel is presented above. Such material is of great value in reaching an understanding as to the technique of the scribe. Systematic translation of the text began with the recognized parallels in order to learn what degree of variation might be expected in this type of writing.

¹⁸ E.g., VI, 7-8 = VI, 10-11; VIII, 10-11 (which concludes with what appears to be a section divider) = VIII, 15-16 (terminated by the same kind of divider); IX, 14-17 = X, 13-16; etc. These column numbers may have to be revised after inspection of the original papyrus.

We learned, for example, that the determinatives which serve to divide the words are sometimes omitted, so that, with unusually long groups of letters with too many consonants for a Semitic word, one is justified in assuming the omission of the determinative and the long sequence must be broken into smaller units in order to achieve an intelligible text. We discovered, also, that there are variant ways of writing some of the consonants and that these variant writings are readily interchangeable. The exact function of the two *rēsh*'s was discovered by Nims in his work with the parallels. They also have aided us in determining that there is apparently no finer distinction between laryngeals in the papyrus than there is otherwise in Aramaic, despite the fact that there are several variant forms for some of the letters. We learned, too, that *aleph* is sometimes regarded as a silent letter and may be omitted under such circumstances, as when בְּתָלָן (VIII, 9) is written instead of בְּתָלָן (XI, 18) for the name of the god Bethel.

In filing the completed concordance, the material between the determinatives dividing the words normally formed the basis, except when it was obvious that more than one word was included. In these instances familiar prefixes and suffixes and, occasionally, the distribution of consonants into words of triconsonantal character aided in dividing the words for filing purposes, with cross-references in all doubtful cases. With such a concordance and its accompanying key cards, in which the text ran continuously, I had a mass of material with which I, who knew no demotic, could work.

Although considerable effort has been expended on the text, enough to identify its language and determine the general character of the papyrus, not all of this lengthy manuscript has yet been trans-

lated. I present here but a few of the curious and informative phenomena that have been found in the papyrus, for many others are coming to light continually as the work progresses. Since the linguistic details, both demotic and Aramaic, will be published adequately in the future, this introduction must suffice for the present. We can now declare that it is a literary text and not a commercial document like so many of the Aramaic papyri. It is predominantly religious, too, as indicated by one portion which suggests the judgment of the dead, a scene so familiar in the Egyptian religion. This section reads, in part:

The Goddess is good. What is done she will know. The balances of Goddess for the wicked(?) woman are in the hands of Goddess (var. "goddesses"). At his place the judge is set in his. . . . A statement(?) is repeated. With this . . . you will be brought into the inclosure of this chamber . . . [VI, 2-5].

A bit later we read in a passage with parallels (VI, 5-7):

If a person denies, then the slaughterer pierces his flesh; if a person persists in denial, then his blood is shed, and the Chief Goddess is Fire and Flame.

The religion reflected is by no means Egyptian alone but a syncretistic type which suggests that the provenience of the religion, if not of the papyrus, was not Egypt but Syria. A wide variety of divine names is encountered. Prominent is the god Ba'al Shamain, so familiar from the Aramaic inscriptions, written as בָּעֵל שָׁמַיִם (XI, 18), in a variant form as בָּעֵל שָׁמַיִּים (XVII, 3), and also in the Aramaic translation of the name as "The Lord of the Heavens," בָּעֵל שָׁמַיִּים (VII, 17).

The real syncretism of the papyrus is best expressed in concentrated form in the

section (VII, 3-6) wherein three different gods and their consorts are listed.¹⁹

posal of property, to death, and to the entrance into a new and blessed life. All

כָּלְכָלָא * בָּלְלָא⁷ חַסְפָּנָן³¹ 47-
 פָּאַתְּרֵי¹ אַלְלָא⁵⁰ אַחֲרֵי¹ אַבְּרָאַכְּלָא
 בָּלְלָה² 31 אַכְּלָא⁴¹ * בָּלְלָה² 31 בָּאַבְּאַלְלָה⁹
 בָּלְלָה² 31 נְגָנָל⁵¹ * חָא³² אַבְּאַרְאַכְּלָא
 יָאַרְאָלָא⁴¹ * נְבוּרֵי¹³ 31 בָּאַל¹ * סָאָפָּה
 נְאָנָי⁷ * נְאָנָי⁷ * יָאָקָא³² אַבְּאַרְאַכְּלָא

This section can be transliterated as:

יְבָרְכָלָא * בָּלְלָה² בֵּין צָפְנָנָה *
 פָּאַדְרֵן¹ בֵּין אַלְלָא⁵⁰ אַחֲרֵי¹ אַבְּרָאַכְּלָא
 יְבָרְאַכְּלָא⁷ * בָּלְלָה² בֵּין בָּאַבְּאַלְלָה⁹
 בָּלְלָה² בֵּין שְׁנָנָלָה⁵¹ דָא אַבְּאַרְאַכְּלָא
 יְאַבְּרָאַכְּלָא⁷ נְבוּרֵי¹³ בֵּין בָּאַרְאַלְלָה * סָאָפָּה
 נְאָנָי⁷ * נְאָנָי⁷ * יָאָקָא³² דָא אַבְּאַרְאַכְּלָא

Baal of the North²⁰ will bless you²¹
 Padry²² of *par.ah*,²³ This One will bless you²⁴
 Bel of Babylon will bless you.
 Belit²⁵ of Shangal,²⁶ This One will bless you.
 Nabû of Borsippa²⁷ will bless you.
 Nanâ²⁸ of Aiaku (i.e., Eanna),²⁹ This One will bless you.

Almost everywhere the sense of the text is funereal. Much of it is addressed in the second-person masculine singular. There are frequent references to the dis-

this has led me to the bold but, as yet, tentative conjecture that in this papyrus we may have preserved a deliberate cryptogram, some secret work of an early

¹⁹ In this transcription the following additional identifications are probably to be made: No. 47, according to Nims, is "probably בָּלְלָה"; No. 41 is "ir (ερε)"; הַנְּ is used in demotic principally as the definite article *ta* or *na*,⁶ and this very passage would demonstrate that its alphabetic value is הַנְּ; the value of 50, found only here, is uncertain; the written form of הַנְּ⁷, a single short, oblique stroke, suggests to Nims "the demotic-Coptic ε" which seems in this papyrus to be "in about 90 per cent of the cases. . . . initial,"

but the parallel passages (VI, 10)*תְּהַנְּנָא³² *תְּהַנְּנָא¹ (VI, 4) seem to indicate that its phonetic value is הַנְּ; No. 9 is the Egyptian determinative for "foreign land"; 13, found only in several occurrences of this word (VII, 5, 9; XIV, 9; XV, 2, 4) is probably a determinative but is yet unidentified; No. 51 is demotic *shin*.

²⁰ The word is difficult at the beginning because of the הַנְּ. The other consonants and association with Ba'al suggest that the word is *ṣapān*, "North." Dr. Hughes has suggested that the combination הַנְּ and *s* represent the pronunciation of the sound *s*. The vocalization is supported by the *ṣapānu* of the Amarna Letters (J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* [Leipzig, 1907 ff.], No. 147, l. 10) and is what might be expected in Aramaic.

²¹ All verbs in this passage agree as to the final consonant of the root, but only the feminine forms give all the consonants clearly. However, the probable identifications for Nos. 47 and 41 mentioned above (n. 21) indicate that all verbal forms are parallel. Comparison indicates a permissible variation in spelling; taken to-

[Footnotes 22 to 29 on following pages]

mystery cult. Perhaps it is like one of the books in hieroglyphs or strange cursive writing which Lucius Apuleius mentioned as being in existence in Cenchreæ in Greece and in use in the mysteries there. He writes:

After the morning sacrifice was over, he [the priest] brought out from the secret places of the inner sanctuary certain books prepared in strange characters; partly expressed by pictures of every kind of beast, representing words of speech in shorthand fashion, and partly like a string of knots with the apices of the characters twisted and thick, in a winding fashion, in the manner of a wheel; made secure in its reading from the curiosity of the uninitiated.³⁰

[Footnote 30 on facing page]

gether the verbs seem to be masc. **רַבָּרָתְּכָנָן** and fem. **תַּבָּרָתְּכָנָן**.

The suffixes and the vowel of the preformativ syllable indicate that the verbs are active, although the absence of a vowel between the first two root letters in the masculine and in the first feminine forms might suggest passives. The root **רַבָּרָתְּ**, "bless," is usually rendered in an intensive stem and is probably to be so understood here. The forms are probably masc. *jabār(r)akākā* and fem. *tabār(r)akākā*. If this be so, there is interesting variation from the classical vocalization. It is noteworthy that the vowel of the preformativ syllable is not yet reduced and is a rather than *u*, just as in the Ugaritic inscriptions (cf. Gordon, *Ugaritic Grammar* [Rome, 1940], p. 59, sec. 8.31). Note, too, that the stem vowel, between *r* and *k*, is not *i*, as in classical Aramaic, but *a* and is unreduced before the suffix. Furthermore, a more primitive form of the suffix is preserved against the shortened one found in biblical Aramaic.

³¹ Although the name is incomplete, its association with Ba'al at once suggests that his consort is his "daughter" *PDRY BT ְAR* now known from the Ugaritic inscriptions (cf. C. Viroleaud, *La Déesse Anat* [Paris, 1938], Pl. I, ll. 23 ff.; Pl. III, ll. 3-5; Pl. V, ll. 49-51).

³² A break in the papyrus causes some uncertainty here. By comparison with the other lines, which are parallel, the **תְּ** seems certain, but there is difficulty in the spelling of the beginning of the name. This word should indicate the sanctuary at *Sapān*, just as *Šngal* is that of Babylon and *Ajikku* is Nanai's abode. It may be significant that ¹*ar* appears both in the beginning of this word and in the epithet of *PDRY* and that a parallel in the Ugaritic material links a place ¹*arr* and *Sapān*; e.g., "and so she goes up into ¹*arr* and into *Sapān*" (cf. Gordon, *Ugaritic Grammar*, p. 66, sec. 8.48, quoting text 62:I, 10 [= Bauer A]). Akkadian *ūru*, *urru*, "light," if cognate to Hebrew **שָׁמֶן**, would seem to indicate that the Ugaritic ¹*ar* used in the epithet of *PDRY* cannot be the word "light," for there is

If this conjecture proves to have merit and the text is a cult ritual, we might be able to explain why the work came to be written in its unusual fashion—in demotic characters but in the Aramaic language. If it were dictated by an Aramaean or, at least, by one speaking Aramaic, and written down by an Egyptian scribe who made use of demotic groups and determinatives in the same way that the Persian scribes used Aramaic words in the Pahlavi writing, there would have been great security in the text in ancient times. It would be "gibberish" to Egyptians who would attempt to read it in normal fashion, just as it has made nonsense to mod-

apparently no rounding of *a* to *o* involved in Hebrew **תְּנִינָה**. Hence the translation "daughter of Light" for the epithet of *PDRY* is incorrect. Can the **תְּ** of the epithet introduce a gentilic expression (such as the bath *Šiyyōn*, "Daughter of Zion," bath *Sōr*, Daughter of Tyre," or possibly even the *bēth kallākamī*, "the Bethlehemit," in Hebrew) and the second element, ¹*ar(r?)* (or *a?*) **תְּ** may be a geographical name. It is also possible that the 50 ¹ (or *a?*) **תְּ** may be a second word and that the two together would then designate the sanctuary. For the Ugaritic ¹*arr* mentioned above, Gordon (*ibid.*, Glossary, No. 107) suggests "a mountain?" and compares Latin *Arra*, which he conjectures "may possibly be of the same derivation."

³³ The **תְּ** before this verbal form causes difficulty. For the feminine verb one expects simply **אֲבָרָתְּכָנָן**³² or, more fully, **אֲבָרָתְּכָנָן**³² by comparison with the equivalent masculine verbs. At first I tried to read these as *Ithpa^{al}* forms with an infix *-ta-* completely preserved, but this is very unlikely. Such verbs are not so written in the cuneiform-Aramaic text from Uruk (Gordon, "Incant.," p. 115, sec. 68), and the context, the use of suffixes, and the masculine parallels all bespeak a masculine form. The **תְּ** must be a proclitic particle. It is likely that it is

the feminine demonstrative pronoun written **תְּ** for **תְּ**, "this one," and it is so translated here tentatively. It is significant that the element is found only with the feminine verbs, probably because in the masculine sentences the word order is regular, subject immediately after the verb; but in the balanced feminine parallels, where the subject is first, at some distance from its verb which concludes its line after much intervening material, the pronoun is helpful in referring to the subject in close association with the verb.

³⁴ Ba'al and Bel are here differentiated through spelling. The *b2231* I at first read as Bel followed by an epithet *tmin*, owing to the position of the determinative and the lack of a word-divider. When I found that parallelism of construction required the preposi-

ern Egyptologists, even though they knew both Egyptian and Aramaic. The peculiarity of the script might be expected to hinder its being read by Aramaic-speaking folk accustomed to reading the Aramaic alphabet. Even a bilingual person who knew both script and language would have difficulty with the papyrus, for such writing is unusual, and the normal expectation is that a text is to be read in the language of its script. It would only be when the key to the manner of writing was known that the text could be translated. If all the values of the demotic characters were known and the text were read aloud, translation would be relatively easy for an

tion מְנַנְּיָה and that the verb was feminine, it was clear that the group indicated the goddess. I am informed that such placement of determinative is acceptable in demotic.

²⁶ I first tried to read this as the divine name Šngl found in the Teima inscriptions (*CIS*, Vol. II, No. 113, Pl. IX, 1, 16), but the word must represent the sanctuary of the goddess at Babylon, which was called *Esaggila*. An Aramaic notation on a cuneiform tablet shows that the name could be written in Aramaic without the initial element *E*, "House," for the name *m Mar-Esaggil-lumur* is written as מְרָגְגָלְמָר during the reign of Nabonidus (L. Delaporte, *Epigraphes Araméennes* [Paris, 1912], p. 53, No. 41). Dr. Thorkild Jacobsen has called my attention to the fact that the name could be abbreviated to *Saggil* or *Šaggil* in Akkadian (cf. B. Landsberger, "Die babylonische Theodizee," *ZA*, XLIII [1936], 34, and J. J. Stamm, *Die akkädische Namengebung* [*MVAG*, Vol. XLIV (Leipzig, 1939)], p. 85, n. 1). Another Aramaic docket (Delaporte, *op. cit.*, p. 80, No. 99) clearly presents a nasalized form of this word by writing it רִיסְגָּלְל. In this instance Clermont-Ganneau believed that a slight scribal error had been made and that the reading should be דְּרִסְגָּלְל, "Of (E)saggila," which would present a reading close to that of our papyrus.

²⁷ The name of Borsippa, the home of Nabû, is sometimes written *bar-sap̄ki* in cuneiform sources (cf. E. Unger, "Barsippa," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* [Berlin, 1932], I, 405a). The determinative written in the middle of this name is certainly evidence of false etymology and of transmission by dictation, for it must have been the sound of the familiar and much used Aramaic word *bar*, "son," in the first syllable that suggested the division. It indicates that the scribe knew something, at least, of Aramaic.

²⁸ *N-ni* is doubtless the goddess Nanai, whose name is written in cuneiform as *fNa-na-a*. In an Aramaic magic text (J. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* [Philadelphia, 1913], No. 36, 1. 3; cf. p. 240) the name is spelled נְנָנָה. Dr. George Cameron has drawn my attention to the fact that

Aramaic-speaking individual. We have found the key to the manner of writing and are using such co-operative effort in unlocking its mysteries as was once used to make them secure. We have found that the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago is an excellent place in which to undertake such an enterprise.

The papyrus is of great significance. As an example of Aramaic literature of the pre-Christian period, probably from Syria, it is very important. As a religious text, concerned with ritual, it will shed light on the religious thought and practices in the syncretistic milieu of late Achaemenid or early Ptolemaic times. From the stand-

sacrifices were made to "the great god Zeus," "Nanai the great goddess of all the earth," and the "mighty gods Bel and Nabû" as late as Sassanid times (cf. G. Hoffmann, "Auszüge aus syrischen Erzählungen von persischen Märtyrern; Mär Mu'ain," *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Vol. VII, Part 3, p. 29; cf. pp. 130 ff.).

²⁹ In the *בָּאָנָּיִרְאָנָּא I first sought an epithet for Nanai, but without success. Some part must be equivalent to the preposition *min* found in each of the preceding parallel lines. This, too, must be concealed in the first syllable, בָּאָנָּ, which is written with an -a vowel, perhaps under the influence of the preceding name Nanai. The words are doubtless a phonetic error and further evidence for dictation. What the scribe heard was apparently *manajak(k)a*, a sandhi form which the scribe, who was inexperienced in Akkadian terminology, resolved incorrectly as *manai*jak(k)a* for *min aijak(k)a*, "of *Ajak(k)u*." For the doubled *i* in the name see A. Poebel, *Studies in Akkadian Grammar* ("Assyriological Studies," No. 9 [Chicago, 1939]), p. 128. *Ajak(k)u* means "shrine" or "temple." Dr. Jacobsen informs me that *aja(k)ku* occurs as an Akkadian rendering of the Sumerian temple-name *Eanna(k)* (cf. T. J. Meek, "Some Bilingual Religious Texts," *AJSL*, XXXV [1919] 134 ff., and the pleonastic rendering of *Eanna(k)* as *bit ajak* in P. Haupt, *Akkadische und sumerische Keilschrifttexte* [Leipzig, 1881-82], No. 21, p. 127, ll. 29-30). Although *Ajak(k)u* or *Eanna(k)* is rightly the temple of Ishtar or Inanna(k) in Uruk, it is also mentioned by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal as the abode of Nanai, the spouse of Nabû (cf. A. Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum* [Rome, 1914], No. 2264, II, 7-8). It is interesting to note that Nanai is properly of Uruk and not of Borsippa, where *Ezida* was the name of the shrine. Nor is she normally the consort of Nabû; but Shalmaneser encountered her at Borsippa with Nabû (D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria* [Chicago, 1927], I, 231, sec. 624), and, as indicated above, the pair is found together as late as Sassanid times.

³⁰ Lucius Apuleius *The Golden Ass* xi. 22.

point of language, too, it is of great value, for it promises much. Through its unique attempt at vocalization and its phonetic writing we now have what is, aside from a few proper names preserved in cuneiform, the earliest known vocalized Aramaic text. It preserves for us the language of the Achaemenid age, about a millennium earlier than the vocalization represented by the "classical" Aramaic of the Bible.

It was some time after I had recognized the system of vocalization in the papyrus and had noted the deviations from "classical" Aramaic that I checked my work with the admirable summary of the language of the cuneiform Aramaic tablet of the Seleucid age at ancient Uruk, as published by Cyrus Gordon. I was delighted to discover that, in almost every respect wherein these texts deviated from the norm of "classical" Aramaic, they moved together and agreed. Missing, of course, were the definitely Babylonian phenomena of the cuneiform writing, but there were instead Egyptian peculiarities as evidence of local origin. These two texts, from opposite ends of the Fertile Crescent, certainly prove that we have preserved phonetically the Aramaic language of the late Achaemenid period and that the cuneiform text is not a local dialect of Aramaic, as Gordon suggests.³¹

The extent of the text and the variety of its vocabulary hold forth considerable promise for increasing our knowledge of the Aramaic of the Achaemenid period. Much has been learned from the cuneiform-Aramaic tablet, but its forty-one lines of material are equal to only about two of the many columns of the papyrus. In the grammar, masculine and feminine genders and almost all persons are encountered. The variety of verbal forms found is really remarkable. It is quite probable

that rather full morphological tables for late Achaemenid Aramaic will be available when this papyrus is fully understood.

Much remains to be done. Most of the difficulties now encountered lie in the field of transcription from the demotic to the Aramaic alphabets rather than in the translation of established text. Such difficulties can be overcome only through patient work and intensive co-operative study. The demands of Aramaic morphology, as directed by the context, sometimes furnish valuable clues, but some of the "unknowns" may resist yet for a long while. The war, too, by taking a heavy toll of my colleagues who have been working on the demotic aspect of the papyrus, also serves to delay the decipherment.

Even when the text is correctly transcribed, without any unknowns, there is sometimes still difficulty, for, as experience with the cuneiform-Aramaic tablet has shown, phonetic rendering is often ambiguous. This is particularly true when the alphabet itself is limited and ambiguous, as in demotic. Such a combination of difficulties, it must be confessed, does make for at least a temporary uncertainty in some of the translation. Lacking context, one is conscious of the fact that the very selection of consonants from among the ambiguous possibilities serves to direct the thought and to develop the context. I am all too aware of this problem and its dangers for the translation. It is, however, pre-eminently a problem of lexicography. Proper identification of as yet unrecognized demotic groups will serve to check the tendency to lead the translation. I have already had to re-translate some passages, changing their meaning considerably, when difficulties of demotic transcription have been cleared up. Sometimes my suggestions, based on possible Aramaic forms, have been over-

³¹ "The Aramaic Incantation," *op. cit.*, p. 106.

ruled by my colleagues, the Egyptologists, when further consideration of the demotic writing involved would rule out such conjecture. That the translation of what has already been done will be improved is certain. Hence there is hesitation at this time to project even tentative translations. I have been content here merely to introduce the papyrus and to outline the procedure in determining that it is in the Aramaic language. The conclusions here presented rest not upon a perfectly translated work but largely upon individual words many of which, however, can be read in intelligible sequence in passages of some length, as demonstrated in the examples above.

There is need of caution and conservatism in such work as this. Ever before me is the glaring bad example from the past. The first cuneiform Babylonian boundary stone to come to Europe, the Caillou de

Michaux, arrived as ballast in a boat in A.D. 1800. Three years later it was translated by the German professor A. A. H. Lichtenstein of Helmstadt, who read it from right to left as Aramaic, declared it to be a dirge addressed by a certain Archimagus to wailing women at an annual mourning festival, and rendered it in a Latin poem by way of translation.³²

I am confident that no such error has been made with this papyrus. My colleagues among the Egyptologists will not permit such liberties. We have the key. We know the language. When we have completed our task, some years hence perhaps, we shall have recovered from this papyrus an ancient literary text of greatest value religiously, linguistically, and historically.

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³² W. J. Hinke, *A New Boundary Stone of Nebuchadrezzar I* (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 1.