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A HEBREW INCANTATION AGAINST NIGHT-DEMONS FROM BIBLICAL TIMES

H. TORCZYNER

ONE of the most interesting "Canaanitic" inscriptions hitherto known was brought to our knowledge by Comte du Mesnil du Buisson in 1939 in *Mélanges Syriens offerts à M. René Dussaud*, I, 421–34. Besides giving photographs and cuts, Du Mesnil attempted to read and explain the text and its contents. The inscription is written on both sides of a gypsum tablet measuring 8.5 × 7 cm. This tablet, together with another smaller one, was found at Arslan-Tash in upper Syria, at the site of the small Assyrian town of Hadattu ("New-Town" in Aramaic), mentioned in Assyrian documents from the seventh century B.C. as lying on the main road from Harran (Abraham's dwelling-place) to Carchemish. A few months later W. F. Albright dealt with this inscription,¹ adding his observations on its background, writing, and date, and correcting some of Du Mesnil's readings, with a new translation of the whole text.²

Unfortunately, however, the readings—and, even more, the interpretation—proposed by both scholars show grave mistakes in almost every line; hence the great importance of this remarkable text for our knowledge of Hebrew and the Bible has not been recognized. A new reading and interpretation are therefore given here. For this attempt I was able to use, besides the publications mentioned, a

¹ "An Aramaean Magical Text in Hebrew from the Seventh Century B.C.," *BASOR*, No. 76 (December, 1939), pp. 5–11.

² Later publications have added nothing to our understanding of this inscription. A copy of *Orientalia*, Vol. XI (Rome, 1942), containing on pp. 41–79 a study of this incantation by Th. Gaster, reached Jerusalem only after this article was written. Gaster recognizes פָּנָן in ll. 9 ff. as "covenant," "bond," but not in the decisive instances of ll. 1 and 3. Otherwise, he follows the mistakes of his predecessors or puts forth suggestions which cannot be accepted.

gypsum copy of the tablet which Dr. A. Reifenberg brought from Aleppo and which (except for the upper and lower edges of the tablet where the two halves were joined together, thus destroying part of the letters) gives a true picture of the tablet in relief. Later, when my observations were almost complete, Professor E. L. Sukenik kindly put at my disposal some additional photographs.

The tablet itself, a rectangle, is rounded above and pierced by a hole through which a string was drawn to hang it up. With its inscription it served as an incantation, not, as Du Mesnil and Albright thought, to assist women in childbirth, but, as will be shown, against night-demons in general. On the obverse, in relief, is represented the figure of a winged lion (called in Hebrew Ariel³ or Cherub) with a human head and a pointed helmet, and below it a she-wolf with a scorpion's tail, devouring what looks like a human figure of which only the legs project from her jaws. "On the reverse stands a marching god, brandishing a small axe in his right hand; he wears the short Assyrian tunic and long cloak, opened so as to leave the left leg free; to his girdle is attached a short sword and on his head is a turban surmounted by a lily. This head-gear is characteristically late Assyrian" (Albright).

On both sides of the tablet a main inscription was first written in the soft gypsum, in large letters, and it is therefore as a whole easily readable. The horizontal lines of this main text leave the figures upon the tablet generally free of writing. Since the writer had something more to

³ See my Hebrew article on "Ariel" in *Leshonenu*, XIV, 111.

say, however, he put some additional matter between the lines of the main text, upon the edges of the tablet, and upon the figures themselves, in smaller and more cursive signs, making the reading of this part of the inscription more difficult; some letters are also partly destroyed, and a small section of the tablet's surface, near the bottom of the obverse, is broken away.

The writing, as Albright correctly observes, shows the same stage of transition from the ancient Canaanitic and Aramaic script in its classic forms to the cursive Aramaic characters (known particularly from Egyptian papyri), as do other Aramaic inscriptions of the seventh or eighth century B.C. from Assur and elsewhere. Here, too, the scribe endeavored to follow the classic forms, but, writing quickly, he used also cursive forms, such as later completely supplanted the fuller classic characters. Albright, therefore, is correct in attributing the inscription approximately to the seventh century B.C.; however, we may have to put the date somewhat earlier or later, possibly even to the extent of a century.

As for the language, both scholars are in error; speaking of a "Hebrew" inscription, they nevertheless explain words and sentences according to exclusively Phoenician or even Ugaritic usage. In reality, however, the language used throughout the inscription is in every particular pure biblical Hebrew.

1. The main inscription opens with the words:

אלתָה	לְהַשְׁתָּא.	לְעַבְתָּא.	לְהַשְׁתָּא.	1
בָּנָ פָּרֶשׁ	סָסָם.			
אלתָה	שָׁא.			
חַנְקָתָה.	וְלָ.			
בָּתָ אַבָּא	מִרָּ.			5
חַבָּאָן	בָּלָ.			
אַדְרָךְ	וְחַצְרָ.			
תְּדַרְכָּנוּ	בָּלָ.			

Even in these few lines it is necessary to rectify some fundamental errors in the publications named.

The first word, **לְהַשְׁתָּא**, I am inclined to understand as stat. constr. of **לְהַשָּׁה**, according to biblical usage of the stat. constr. before prepositions, e.g., **שְׁבוּחָתָה בְּקַצְבָּרָה** (Isa. 9:2); (**Ps. 58:5**), and many other such instances (cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammatik*, § 130). We should, therefore, have **לְהַשְׁתָּא** and not **לְהַשְׁתָּה**, for, like biblical Hebrew, the inscription differentiates between stat. abs. fem., e.g., **אַלְתָה**, and stat. constr., **אַלְתָה**, etc. One could certainly also understand **לְהַשְׁתָּה** as stat. abs., e.g., **לְהַשְׁתָּה**. In the Bible itself there is no **לְהַשָּׁה** or **לְהַשְׁתָּה**; in talmudic texts we have the *nomen actionis* **לְהַדְשָׁה**, but for the biblical period **לְהַשְׁתָּה**, constr. **לְהַשְׁתָּא**, is most likely, used in the same sense as the masc. **שָׁשָׁ**, pl. **לְהַשְׁתִּים**, this latter mentioned also in Isa. 3:20 among the parts of women's clothing and ornaments. A word such as **לְהַשָּׁה**, "incantation," "conjuration," usually stands at the beginning of Akkadian incantations: *šiptu*, used there also with the verb (*šipta*) *dababu*, or *šudububu*, "to recite an incantation"; this expression occurs in biblical Hebrew, too: **דָּוְבָּב שְׁפָרָה יְשָׁנִים**, "to recite a conjuration of the sleeping" (Cant. 7:10; cf. my Hebrew pamphlet on Canticles, p. 19).

The conjuration, **לְהַשְׁתָּה**, is addressed to the *Ephata*, **לְעַבְתָּא**. This reading, as also further on in the small inscription on the winged lion, is given correctly by Albright, who, however, wrongly translates: "O Flyer." But with this word we have the explanation of a passage in the Bible. *Ephata* is an Aramaic pl. fem., used as a name of the nightly shadows, seen in popular belief as she-demons flying in the dark, and called in targumic Aramaic also **טָלְנִי**, "shadow-demons." These she-demons of the darkness are re-

ferred to in our Hebrew inscription by their Aramaic name, thus showing the Aramaic origin of the idea. Apparently our Hebrew incantation is translated from Aramaic (see further on), and the translator found no adequate Hebrew equivalent for the term *Ephata*. This explains Job 10:21-22, which says, in reference to Sheol, the land of the shadows of death: "Before I go not to return, to a land of darkness and gloom (צָלָמוֹת), a land of *Ephata* (עֲפָתָה) as (in any) darkness; (but) of gloom without arrangements (צָלָמוֹת וְלֹא סָדָרִים)," etc.

In my Hebrew commentary on Job (Jerusalem, 1941) I have already shown that the meaning of the words "gloom without arrangements" is "a gloom against which no arrangements can be made"; this agrees with the parallels in Job 23:17: "Because I had not arranged (read נָצַבְתִּי, from נָצַב, 'to arrange,' as in Arabic نَظَمْ, instead of נָצַבְתִּי) against the darkness, and before my face has covered the gloom"; and 37:19: "Teach us what we shall say unto it (not 'him,' נָמָת נָאכֵר לוֹ), for we cannot arrange (לֹא נָעַרְךָ) against the darkness." But this last verse, placing in parallelism the verbs "to say" and "to arrange," shows that עַרְךָ, "to arrange," is used here as an abbreviation for "to arrange speech, words," as in עַרְךָ מִלְּנִי in Job 32:14, or עַרְךָ alone in Isa. 44:7: "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and arrange (וַיַּעֲרַבָּה) for me." Compare also עַרְכָּן in parallelism to דָבָר, "word," in Job 41:4.

Thus in all these passages it is not the darkness itself against which words are arranged but the darkness filled with evil spirits, against whom such words, such conjurations, are to be arranged. There are, says Job, such incantations to be arranged against the *Ephata*. But the final

darkness of the Sheol is one against whose evil spirits, against whose *Ephata*-demons, no incantation can be of any avail.

The Book of Job, as I have tried to show by many examples in my Hebrew commentary, is translated from Aramaic; here also the evil shadow-demons, *Ephata*, are mentioned by their Aramaic name, as pl. fem. And it is to such Aramaic incantation texts against the *Ephata* that Job actually refers.

The singular of this word must perhaps be recognized in Amos 4:13: **שְׁחָה שְׁזָר** צִיְּפָה, if we are to understand it (according to the other passage in Amos 5:8: "Who turns the gloom into morning [לִזְרָפָךְ לְבָקֵר צָלָמוֹת]") as meaning: "He turns into morning the *Ephata*-demons of the darkness." These shadow-demons themselves are seen in human form, for they are originally the spirits of the dead who, according to popular belief, return into their bodies and haunt the earth in the darkness of the night.

The word **אֱלָתָה** (stat. constr. of **אֱלֹהִים** in l. 3) both Du Mesnil and Albright have understood as **אֱלָהָה**, "goddess"; and since the word recurs many times in our inscription, this mistake in itself prevented a real understanding of the whole text. Actually, there is no such word as **אֱלָהָה**, **אֱלָתָה**, "goddess" (though it occurs in Ugaritic), either in the Bible or in Phoenician inscriptions, where the goddess is called **אֱלֹהִת** or **רְבָת** and not **אֱלָתָה**. In phrases such as **כְּהֵן אֱלָתָה** [אֲשֶׁר נָהָלָץ] (*CIS*, 243) or **עָבֵד** [בֶּן יְתַנְמֵלֵךְ] (*CIS*, 244), this word is a proper name of a person or a place and does not designate "goddess" in general; and on the amulet from Carthage, last treated by Sloush, *Thesaurus of Phoenician Inscriptions*, No. 195, line 1, in **חוֹתָאָלָתָה**, **רְבָתָה** **חוֹתָאָלָתָה** **מִלְכָתָה** **שִׁיסְכָּהָתָה**,

as one word, is a proper name, the name of the queen mentioned. There is no such word as **אֱלֹהָה**, "goddess," in Hebrew, and certainly not here, where, according to the whole context, the biblical word **אֱלֹהָה**, stat. constr. **אֱלֹהָה**, in the sense of "curse," "oath," "conjuration," is meant. The conjuration recited here is "the conjuration of Ssm, the son of Pdrsh (פָּרְשָׁה בֶּן פָּרְשָׁתָה)." The people reciting such conjurations did not rely on their own ability to compile them; they used for their purpose a formula, tried and proved before, spoken long ago by divine figures or the heroes of the past. Thus also, e.g., the conjurer in the Akkadian incantations says: "Incantation of the gods Ea and Marduk, incantation of Damu and Ninkarrak, incantation of Ninahaqudu, the mistress [of incantations]; they said it, I (only) repeat (their words) (*šu-nu iq-bu-nim-ma ana-ku u-ša-an-ni*)."⁴ It is the same word **אֱלֹהָה** which in the meaning of "conjuration" or "curse," "oath," occurs many times in the Bible, e.g.: "Then the priest shall charge the woman an oath of cursing" (**בְּשַׁבְּעָת הָאֱלֹהָה**, Num. 5:21), and which, as in the continuation of our inscription, is used with the verbs **כָּרַת** or **נִשְׁתַּחַת**, e.g.: "Neither with you only do I conclude (**אָנֹכִי כָּרַת**) this covenant and this oath (**אָלֹהָה**); but with him that standeth here with us this day," etc. (Deut. 29:13-14). Or: "If any man trespass against his neighbour and he recites an oath against him (**וְנִשְׁתַּחַת בַּאֱלֹהָה**) to cause him to swear, and the oath (**אֱלֹהָה**) come before thine altar in this house" (I Kings 8:31; II Chron. 6:22). Thus **נִשְׁתַּחַת אֱלֹהָה**, "to recite an oath, curse, conjuration," like **קִינָה**, "to recite," "to take up a lamentation" (Jer. 7:29; Ezek. 19:1, 27:2, 28:12, 32:2, etc.), par-

ticularly as an imperative **שְׁאֵלָה**, "take up lamentation," etc., recurs often enough in the Bible. And thus we have to read also the following words of our inscription simply: **שְׁאֵלָה וְלִהְנְקַת אָמֵר**, "Take up the curse (oath, conjuration) and to the she-stranglers say," where Du Mesnil and Albright carry the imperative **שְׁאֵלָה** to the name Pdrsh, as a part of it (reading Pdrshsh), understand **ל** of **וְ** as an affirmative particle, as in Akkadian or Ugaritic, and explain **אָמֵר** ("say!") as the (Aramaic or Phoenician) substantive **אָמֵן**, "lamb."

The name Ssm, from which are also derived the proper names Shashmai in Akkadian, **שְׁשָׁמֵי** in the Bible, **שְׁשָׁמֵי** in Ugaritic inscriptions (as Du Mesnil and Albright have seen), is therefore the name of a god, and it is he who is represented on the reverse of the tablet, threatening the demons. He is the son of Pdrsh, and to this name Du Mesnil—correctly, as it seems—has compared the name **Pdrtt** in Ugarit. But in this Hebrew inscription only one *sh* is written, and if this is not a contraction of *shsh*, *sh* may represent only the ending of a shorter name. Ssm, the son of Pdrsh, is an ancient deity of non-Semitic origin. For the belief in such a god, powerful enough to threaten the demons, has its root in the ancient past, not in the time of the writer of the inscription.

The spelling *Shashmai* in Assyrian texts, however, shows that the Hebrew *Ssm* may be only the equivalent of the original *Shshm*, pronounced *Ssm* only in Assyrian, according to the pronunciation of *sh* as *s* in that language. And, therefore, this god-name **שְׁשָׁמֵה**, and not the numeral **שְׁשָׁשׁ**, "sixty," may be meant also in the month-name **שְׁשָׁמֵה** in Phoenician inscriptions.

The people, appealing to Ssm ben

⁴ E. Ebeling, *Aus dem Tagebuch eines assyrischen Zauberpriesters*, p. 9.

Pdrsh and asking him to take up his curse against the demons, speak of themselves in the plural (לְנוּ = לְנוּ, l. 9). But in lines 5 ff. one person is speaking (אָדָרְךָ, אָבָא). Therefore the following sentence contains the curse or conjuration which Ssm ben Pdrsh is meant to take up. In his words Ssm addresses the demons, called here חַנְקָתָה, as plural feminine and not as singular. This fact is clear not only from the form of the verbs in lines 6 and 8, חַדְרָכָן, חַדְרָכָן (see further on), but from the very word חַנְקָתָה, the "she-stranglers," which occurs not only here but also in the Aramaic incantation texts from Nippur (J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, p. 148, etc.) in the spelling עַנְקָתָא or אַנְקָתָא, where Montgomery erroneously translates "necklace-spirits" instead of "she-stranglers" (the signs ע, ח, כ, נ are used promiscuously in these late Aramaic texts from Babylonia). As a remote comparison only may be mentioned the modern Arabic name of the feminine demon Qarînah,⁵ *chanouq al-hamal*, "strangler of the lamb," which here induced Du Mesnil and Albright to look for a lamb.

To these stranglers, and not to the alleged deities (אֱלֹהִים) mentioned in the preceding lines, the god Ssm shall speak (ll. 5-8):

The house which I enter
ye shall not enter,
and the court which I tread
ye shall not tread. . . .

The verbs חַדְרָכָן and חַבָּאָן are regular Hebrew pl. fem. forms, spelled as here in Gen. 30:38-39), and in many other instances.

In the following lines (8-12) the con-

⁵ Concerning this demon see T. Canaan, *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin*, pp. 23 ff.

jurers again address Ssm, son of Pdrsh, reminding him of his promises to them:

כ
רְתָהּ לְנוּ אֱלֹהִים.
עַלְמָה אֲשֶׁר כְּרָתָה
לְנוּ וְכָל בָּן אֱלֹם
וּרְבָה וְ[שָׁ]ׁר כָּל קְדָשָׁן

"Thou hast concluded a covenant of eternity with us," כְּרָתָה לְנוּ אֱלֹהִים (not אֱלֹהִים, "goddess"), is used here in the meaning of a covenant confirmed by an oath or curse, as in Deut. 29:11 ff.: "That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath (וּבְאָתָה), which the Lord thy God maketh (כְּרָתָה) with thee. . . . Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath (אֲתָה הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאַתָּה הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת)," and elsewhere. Thus בְּרִית עֲלֹם is the same as אֱלֹם (Gen. 9:16; Exod. 31:18, etc.), "a covenant," valid eternally.

But the inscription continues thus: ("Not only hast thou concluded this covenant for us, but it is a covenant") אֲשֶׁר כְּרָתָה לְנוּ וְכָל בָּן אֱלֹם etc., "which

thou hast made with us and every divine being," etc. Here אֲשֶׁר is simply the Hebrew relative particle (not a mistake for Asherat as another name of the "eternal goddess" found erroneously in ll. 9-10), thus again showing the pure Hebrew character of the inscription. בָּן אֱלֹם, "divine being," or "minor deity," occurs in the same meaning not only in Ugaritic but also in the Bible, particularly in the books of wisdom such as Job. It must be understood here as singular, according to the following words: וּרְבָה וְ[שָׁ]ׁר פָּל קְדָשָׁן, "and every divine being and chief and [pri]nce, all our holy ones." The word בָּן, originally used for (minor) deities in a military sense as

“chief,” “officer,” is well known in the fem. **רַבָּת**, “mistress,” as a title for a goddess in Ugaritic and Phoenician inscriptions (cf. **רַבּוֹן** **תָּבְתָּ**, in Arabic and talmudic use for God himself, and see also immediately). After this word, where Du Mesnil reads **תְּתָ**, and between the feet of the marching god, after the one almost obliterated sign, a clear **ת**, forming the end of a short word, is visible. Here one could think of **שָׂרֵךְ**, “angel” (cf. Isa. 63:9 in the reading of the Septuagint: *οὐ πρέσβυς* (**שָׂרֵךְ**, MT: **שָׂרֵךְ**) *οὐδὲ ἄγγελος*, *ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἔσωσεν αὐτοῦς*). More probably, however, we have to read, in parallelism to **רַבָּת**, **שָׂרֵךְ**, “officer,” “prince,” in the meaning of “angel,” as this word is used in the Book of Daniel: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince (**הַשָּׁר הַגָּדוֹל**) which standeth for the children of thy people (12:1); and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia (**שָׂר פְּרִסָּה**): and when I am gone forth, lo the prince of Greece (**שָׂר יִونָה**) shall come . . . and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince” (**שָׂרָכָם**) (10:20–21, and often in the Talmud). And, indeed, some traces of **ש** may be recognized. For this reading should be quoted also Jer. 11:15: **מֵהֶם לִידֵי בְּבִירֵי עַשְׂוָתָה הַמְּוֹנִיחָה** (**אַשְׁבָּן**) (**שָׂר קְדָשָׁן**) in Phoenician inscriptions and, parallel to it, **רַבָּתָה** (**רַבָּתִים**) (not **רַבָּת**) is the plural of **רַב** in the same sense as in our inscription, “a divine being of minor degree.”⁶

All these divine beings are summed up by the words **כָּל קְדָשָׁן**, “all our holy ones.” In the same sense is the word **קְדוֹשָׁה**, used in the Bible, and

⁶ I intend to deal with this and other passages in a special study.

particularly in the Book of Job (see my Hebrew commentary on 5:1, 6:10, etc.). The spelling **קְדָשָׁנִי** instead of **קְדָשָׁן** is the same as in **לְנָנָה** (l. 9).

This covenant which Ssm, the son of Pdrsh, and all the other holy ones are quoted to have made with the conjurers, was made (ll. 13–15)

בְּאֵלָה שְׁמָנִים וְאַרְצָן
בְּעַלְלָה בְּאֵלָה בְּגַלְלָה
חַדָּה אַרְצָה בְּאֵלָה

i.e., “including (*lit.*: with) a curse (put upon) heaven and earth,” etc. Thus we have to compare not only such passages as Deut. 4:26 and 30:19, where heaven and earth are invoked as warning witnesses, but preferably such as Hos. 2:20: “And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.” Thus here also heaven and earth, etc., are forced by the covenant not to touch those protected by it, and such covenant included even the spirits descending from heaven or arising out of Sheol to haunt the earth. After line 13 the earth, **וְאַרְצָן**, is once more mentioned in line 15; and according to the partition usual in the Bible, summing up everything which is *above* the earth and *below* the earth, and taking into consideration the letters visible and the traces partly recognizable, no other reading than the following fits the text:

בְּאֵלָה שְׁמָנִים וְאַרְצָן With the cursing by heaven and earth
מַעַלְלָה בְּאֵלָה בְּגַלְלָה **מַעַלְלָה** above (or: **בְּגַלְלָה**, above and) with the cursing by Ba'al
חַדָּה אַרְצָה below the earth.

Ba'al here seems to be the master of the underworld, unless we have to translate:

"with the cursing by the master(s) of what is below the earth," referring to some unspecified deities of the underworld—which is unlikely. After this, **בָּאֵלָתָה**, "with the cursing," is written once more in line 15, but there is no continuation for it. If we do not assume that some word may have been written out of its proper place on the broken bottom of the obverse, which seems unlikely, there are two other possibilities: either the word **בָּאֵלָתָה** is written by mistake or—what to me seems more probable—the Hebrew scribe, who as it seems merely translated an incantation originally written in Aramaic, did not find it necessary for the benefit of his public to copy the whole of the original text and stopped at the bottom of the reverse. Such tablets may also have been made wholesale and not too conscientiously copied in each case.

To this main inscription, addressing Ssm, son of Pdrsh, and asking him to curse the she-stranglers, according to the covenant concluded with the conjurers, in connection with the figure of the god on the reverse of the tablet, are added some more short legends, those tried and proved formulas against the same evil spirits but connected with the figures on the tablet's obverse.

2. Inscription in a line running on the edges of the tablet, rising (seen from the obverse) from the left, below, turning above to the right and descending there. Du Mesnil here reads: **קְשָׁתָה הָוָרָן.** **קְשָׁתָה** **דְּתָם.** **פִּי וְשְׁבַעַת** **צְרָחָה וְשְׁמַנְהָה אַשְׁתָּה.** **דְּתָם.** **פִּי וְשְׁבַעַת** **צְרָחָה וְשְׁמַנְהָה אַשְׁתָּה.** **בָּעֵלָי** **קְשָׁתָה** and translates: "Épouse de Horon Qš (celle) dont la bouche est intègre (disant): 'Sept (sont) mes rivales, mais sa (ou: la) huitième femme est l'épouse legitimate de mon Seigneur (= mon mari) Qš!'" It is, however, impossible to accept **דְּ** as a relative particle (like **דְּ**, **דְּ** in Aramaic, **וְ** in Hebrew) in Hebrew,

or **פִּי** instead of **הָוָרָן** as stat. abs. And the sentence as a whole does not say anything fitting the purpose of the conjuration.

On his part, Albright reads: **אַשְׁתָּה[אַשְׁתָּה]** **הָוָרָן.** **אַשָּׁה.** **[תָּמָם.** **פִּי וְשְׁבַעַת** **צְרָחָה** **[?]** **וְשְׁמַנְהָה אַשְׁתָּה בָּעֵלָי** and translates: "Wives of Haurôn, whose utterance is true, and his seven concubines and the eight wives of Baal [??]." There is, however, no such form as **אַשְׁתָּה אַשָּׁה** instead of **נְשָׁהָם**, etc., as plural of **אַשָּׁה**, "wife," in any Semitic language. The relative particle in this inscription is **אַשְׁר**, as in the Bible, not **אַשָּׁה**; **פִּי** cannot stand instead of **הָוָרָן**; **צְרָחָה** can only mean: "my co-wife," "my husband's other wife," or "other wives," not "concubines." Only the wife and not the man has a **צְרָחָה**, or **ضَرَّة** in Arabic, as in I Sam. 1:6: "And her co-wife **צְרָחָה** (not: adversary), provoked her," not **צְרָחָה** ("his other wife"!). As for the contents, why should all these persons be named in this incantation?

I accept the reading and interpretation of Horôn as the name of this ancient deity (cf. Albright's studies on this god in *AJSL*, LIII [1936/37], 1–12, and *BASOR*, No. 70 [1938], p. 23, mentioned in his article on our incantation, to which new material could now be added). But I find in Horôn the name of the deity represented in our tablet in the figure of the winged lion. And it is to Horôn that the she-wolf (below him) turns in this passage. For the she-wolf is not one of the demons threatened by our incantation; those figures represented on incantation texts or amulets are intended to show the *hopeful* outcome of the conjuring and not the evil threatened by the spirits. If such a demon or evil spirit is shown in the drawing, he (as on Aramaic incantation bowls) is bound and fettered hand and foot and thus made incapable of harming

anybody. And if here, along with the helmeted Ḥorōn and with the god threatening the demons with the ax, the she-wolf is shown in the act of devouring other beings, she is a helpful deity, devouring the evil spirits, and not herself one of them. For, as I have said before, these evil spirits are seen as fitted with human bodies, actually as the spirits of the dead, reinvested in their bodies, and visiting the earth in the darkness.

And thus the she-wolf addresses the god Ḥorōn: **שַׁת חֹרֶן** **שַׁש** [בְּתַתְּךָ]
שִׁי וְשַׁבַּע **צְרָתִי וְשַׁמְנָה אֲשָׁת בָּעֵל**
"Put, Ḥorōn, six (of the strangling *Ephata*) into my mouth (and I shall devour them), and (if I can devour only those six,) seven (will) my co-wife (devour), and (even) eight (will) the wife of my holy husband (eat)."

Here **שַׁת** is imperative of **שִׁתָּה**, "to put," "to lay"; cf., e.g., such phrases as Ps. 141:3: "Set (שִׁתָּה) O Lord a watch to my mouth"; Ps. 139:5: "and thou hast laid (שִׁתְּךָ) thine hand upon me"; Ruth 4:16: "And Naomi took the child and laid it (שִׁתְּךָ) in her bosom," etc. The expected reading before "seven" and "eight" is **שַׁש**, "six," not **שָׁנָה** or **שָׁבַע**; the reading **שְׁבַע** or **בְּשְׁבַע** fits the traces; **שִׁי** naturally means "my mouth." The clause "and seven my co-wife" is naturally abbreviated, instead of "and seven put into my co-wife's mouth," or "and seven will my co-wife devour," and similarly in the next clause.⁷ The feminine forms **שַׁבַּע**, **שַׁש**, **שִׁי**

⁷ Such abbreviation of a clause, following another in shortened parallelism, is not infrequent in the Bible. Thus the famous passage in Amos 3:12, misunderstood and ill treated by commentators and translators, simply means: "As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria (only) with the end of a bed (from all their beds of state), and (that dwell) in Damascus (בְּדָמָשָׁק) (with the end of) a couch (שְׁרַעַת)." On Israelites dwelling in Damascus cf. I. Kings 20:34.

and **שִׁמְנָה** are used in accordance with the feminine character of the stranglers or *Ephata*-demons. Ḥorōn and the she-wolf are helping each other to destroy the demons. Ḥorōn kills them, according to his military character as shown by his helmet, while the wolf-goddess devours their slain carcasses. The wolf speaks modestly about herself in comparison with the other wives of her husband. Such modesty befits not only human beings (cf. Judg. 6:7: "Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house") but also the demons. Thus, for example, the bereaved husband in *The Arabian Nights*, seeking his lost beautiful wife throughout the seven seas, when he at last reaches the home of the old demon and asks him whether he has seen his wife, receives the answer: "I myself never saw her, but beyond seven mountains you will find my brother, older in age than I by a day, but in wisdom by years, who may well know more than I."

In the last line we shall have to read **שִׁבְעַת קָדְשִׁי וְשִׁמְנָה אֲשָׁת בָּעֵל**, though the signs **קָדְשִׁי** are written above the line, for lack of space. **בָּעֵל קָדְשִׁי** means "my holy husband," as **הָר קָדְשִׁי** means "my holy mountain," etc. The whole expression "the wife of my holy husband" is synonymous with **צְרָתִי**, "my co-wife."

The short address of the she-wolf to Ḥorōn is given not only in poetical style but with a clear and apparently intended rhyme at the end of each of the three sentences. This is the first such clear example of rhymed poetry in ancient Hebrew. The rhyme here serves magical purposes, and in magical use the rhyme certainly has its origin.

On the name of the she-wolf, see further on.

3. The inscription on the winged lion, also directed against the she-stranglers,

and perhaps put into the mouth of the winged lion:

לעפתא בחרד חשך
עבר פעם פעם ללי

The first words give the heading: “(Thus shalt thou speak) to the *Ephata* in the chamber of darkness.” The next line first gives an imperative: **עבר**, “Go away!” as Albright correctly reads instead of **עבד** (Du Mesnil). But since **עבר** is a masculine form, the addressee of this imperative must be mentioned within the sentence itself, summing up the shadow-demons, *Ephata*, by one other term, in the singular. Therefore, we have to pronounce not **פעם**, either as a proper name (Du Mesnil), or as an adverb meaning “at once” (Albright), which does not exist in Hebrew, but **פעם** in a substantive meaning: “the terror, trouble (of the night),” derived from the verb used in this sense in Gen. 41:7–8: “And Pharaoh awoke. . . . And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled (וְתַעֲלֵם);” Dan. 2:1–3: “And . . . Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, where-with his spirit was troubled (וְתַעֲלֵם), and his sleep brake from him. . . . And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled (וְתַעֲלֵם) to know the dream”; Ps. 77:5: “Thou holdest mine eye waking: I am troubled (נִפְגַּשְׁתִּי) and I cannot speak”; and also Judg. 13:25: “And the spirit of the Lord began to trouble him (לִפְגַּבֵּר) in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaoel.” The “trouble” caused a man by a spirit until his mind is troubled by the “terror of the nights” (Cant. 3:8) or “of the night” (Ps. 91:5), is here called **פעם**, or more fully, **פעם ללי**, “the trouble of my night,” “my nightly trouble”; it is not Lilith who is mentioned here (Albright).

Therefore, the incantation as a whole serves not as a help in childbirth but as a means of destroying the strangling spirits of the night, the shadows flying at dusk in the chamber of darkness.

4. The inscription on the she-wolf, a divine creature helping to destroy the nightly spirits. Du Mesnil reads here: **מִבְוָתָה מִחְצָתָה הַלְּךָ**. But if we recognize that the two letters **זה** mean (according to biblical spelling) **זִית**, “olive” (cf. the analogous spelling **בֵּית** for **בַּת**, “house”), it is easy to recognize the correct reading: **שְׁמַן זִית רְחַצֵּת חַלְקָה**, i.e., “Thou (who lieth here in the chamber of darkness) hast washed (thy body) with (cleansing) olive oil, (and already the nightly terror) has gone.” Thus this passage gives the continuation to the preceding short legend. Compare the expression recurring throughout the Akkadian incantations: *ina šamni tapašaš*, “with oil shalt thou wash,” and the expression occurring many times in the Samaria ostraca: **שְׁמַן רְחַזָּע**, “oil for washing.”

5. The inscription beginning on the breast of the marching god on the reverse, continuing on his left side, and between the lines of the main inscription.

Albright reads:	Du Mesnil reads:
ס. זה. ל' ר' (?)ת	ס. זה. ל'
פתחה [רְחַמָּן] (?)	פתחה
ר. ות.	ר. ות.
ל (?) ד. (-) ל	ל
ס. זה. י' צא. שְׁמַן	ס. זה. י' צא. שְׁמַן
ח'ל. ו' לד	ח'ל. ו' לד

Albright's emendation **רְחַמָּן** is without foundation, and there is no room for it on the tablet. We have to read simply **רְחַזָּע**, addressing a feminine being. And, of the two words **ס. זה** (according to Du Mesnil's correct read-

ing), the second, **זָה**, again certainly must be understood simply as **זָה**, “olive”; the remaining *Sz* alone must be the name of the feminine being addressed, which apparently is no other than the she-wolf represented on the obverse of the tablet. *Sz*, a non-Semitic, perhaps a Hurrian, name may be the feminine counterpart of the masculine *Ssm*, who may be her holy husband, mentioned in her address to Ḥorōn. *Sz* is asked to open an olive; and since the whole incantation is invoked against the spirits of the darkness, and since in the continuation the rising of the sun (**שְׁבָנָת** **בָּנָת**) is mentioned, the opening of an olive certainly serves to make oil and light; kindling a lamp filled with olive oil until the sun rises expels the spirits of the night, which are not allowed to remain after daybreak (cf. Gen. 32:26: “And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh”). Until then, the lighting of such a magic lamp has the power to drive away the evil demons. With this in mind, we recognize also for the last lines the traces of the simple reading: **סָז. זָה. לִי**. **פְתַחְדִּי**. **וְאָרוֹר. לְנָה.** **עַד יִצְאָה. שְׁמַשׁ הַלְּדָךְ**, “*Sz*, open an olive for me, that we shall have light, until the sun rises, the morning shines!”

In this interpretation we have to reject the reading **חַלְדָּךְ** in the last line, understood as “travail thou and give birth” by both scholars, and inducing them to find here an incantation for childbirth. Not only should we expect in this case the feminine forms **הַלְּדִי** and **וְלִדִּי**, as in **פְתַחְדִּי**; but also there is no connection between sunrise and childbirth. Graphically, however, no other reading than **חַלְדָּךְ** or **חַלְדָּה** is possible, and, of these, only the former, using the same root paronomastically, is at all likely. And here again our inscription gives us the explanation of a difficult passage in Job 11:17: “And

more than the noon will rise a morning (**חַלְדָּה**), thou shalt shine (vocalize **תְּעַפֵּה** and see my commentary), as the morning (**בְּבָקָר**) shalt thou be.” Here we must read **חַלְדָּה** as a verb with the noun derived from it: “the sun has risen, the morning shines.” Also **חַלְדָּה** in other passages of the Bible, such as **יְרַשְׁבֵי הַלְּדָךְ** as a designation of the living in general, may originally have meant “(the dwellers in) the light of life.”

Summing up the results of our study, we have here an incantation against the feminine demons of the darkness which strangle sleeping men in the terror of the night, the nightmare threatening them in every dark chamber, especially on the wedding night.⁸ These demons are also called *Ephata*, and in Job 10:22 such incantations against the *Ephata*-demons are actually referred to. Against these stranglers three divine beings are invoked: *Ssm*, son of Pdrsh, whose curse is valid against everything in heaven and upon earth, threatening the demons with his ax; the god Ḥorōn, destroying the demons by fighting them and giving their carcasses to the wives of a holy being (perhaps *Ssm*, son of Pdrsh); and *Sz*, one of the wives, represented as a she-wolf, devouring the slain demons.

Linguistically, all the forms occurring in the inscription are pure biblical Hebrew, enlarging our knowledge of it by new words, and explaining difficult passages, particularly in the Book of Job, of which the biblical text is only a translation of an Aramaic original composed during the exile in Babylonia. Thus also our incantation apparently is translated from an Aramaic original. The spelling is nearer the more defective usage of the Samaria ostraca than the Judean usage in the

⁸ Cf. S. Krauss, *Gaster Anniversary Volume*, pp. 323–30.

Lachish letters and fits in with such a dating as the eighth or seventh century B.C., as indicated by the form of the signs. As for the contents, we have in the inscription a hitherto unique literary document, written in poetic style, and showing the beauty of biblical Hebrew even through the background of popular superstition. And, lastly, we have here the first example of real end-rhyme in biblical Hebrew.

Apparently a son of Israel, perhaps one of those sons of the northern kingdom driven into exile by Tiglath-pileser III or his successors, translated the Aramaic in-

cantation. The original of the inscription, copied and translated certainly in many specimens, may have been of local origin, though Palestine itself surely was not free from such documents of underground religion, the heritage of nations, dwelling in Palestine before Israel, and unconquered by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam up to our very day.

A full copy of this interesting inscription is given here, vocalized, for better understanding, with modern interpunctuation, as if it were a chapter of biblical or modern Hebrew, and with an English translation:

1. *The main inscription:*

לְחַשְׁתָּה לְעִזְבָּתָה אֱלֹהִים	Incantation for the <i>Ephata</i> -demons, the curse of
סָםְ בָּן פָּרְשָׁה:	Ssm, son of Pdrsh:
שָׁא אֱלֹהִים	Take up the curse
וְלִתְנַקֵּת אֵלֶּה	and to the she-stranglers
מִרְיָה בֵּית אָבָא	5 say: The house which I enter
בְּלִתְבָּאָן,	ye shall not enter,
וְתִּצְּרֵר אַדְּרָאָה	and the court which I tread
בְּלִתְתְּרַבְּקָה,	ye shall not tread; thou
רַקְעַת לְכָא אֱלֹהִים	hast concluded for us a covenant
עַלְמָם, אֲשֶׁר קָרְבָּה	10 of eternity, which thou hast concluded
לְנָה וּכְלָבָן אֱלֹהִים	with us, and (so) every divine being
וּרְבָּה וּשְׂרָה, פָּל קָדְשָׁה	and chief and officer, all our holy ones:
בְּאָלָה שְׁמִים וְאָרֶץ	With the curse by heaven and earth
מִעְלָה, בְּאָלָה בָּעֵל	above, with the curse by Baal
פְּתַחַת אָרֶץ, בְּאָלָה . . .	15 below the earth, with the curse. . . .

2. Spoken by Sz to Horôn:

שְׁתָה, חֹרֶן, שֵׁשׁ בְּתַהֲ פֵּי,

וְשְׁבַע אֶרְחָה,

וְשְׁמַנְתָּה אֶשְׁתָּ בְּצַל קָדְשָׁי.

Put, Horôn, six [*Ephata*] into my mouth,
and seven (into that of) my co-wife,
and eight (into that of) the wife of my holy husband!

3. Spoken by the conjurer to the demons:

לְגַפְתָּא בְּחַדְרֵר חַשְׁקָה:

עַבְרָ, פָּעָם, פָּעָם לִלְיָה!

To the *Ephata*-demons in the chamber of darkness:
Go away, terror, my nightly terror!

4. The god's reply to the conjurer:

שְׁמַנְתָּה רְחַצְתָּה, הַלְּךָ!

With olive oil thou hast washed, and it is gone.

5. Spoken by the conjurer to the she-wolf:

סִז, זֹה לִי פְּתַחְיָה

וְאֹור לְגַנְבָּה

שְׁדָר יְצָא שְׁמַנְתָּה

חַלְדָּה חַלְדָּה.

Sz, open an olive for me,

that we shall have light,

until the sun rises,

the morning shines.

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