

Could Hebrew have been a cultic Esperanto?

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The title and theme are due to Knauf's provocative 1990 „Was 'Biblical Hebrew' a language?"¹. There was a similar 1971 title of Ullendorff. Much of the documentation here was involved in my 1993 *Biblica* research on „brain“ in the Bible². Now will be added chiefly some dialogue with Rendsburg's *Diglossia* and with some insights of Garbini. As for the Esperanto, it will hopefully help toward the solution of a question which was scarcely posed before Philip Davies in 1992: *If biblical Hebrew never existed as a used language, then how and why did it come to originate?*

Knauf's many mini-languages

We may begin with our rendition of this statement of Knauf (p. 11). „It is undeniable that the Hebrew parts of the Old Testament are in a code which has all the earmarks of a natural language: a limitedly-recognizable phoneme system, a grammar, a vocabulary, 'dialects' like hymnic and prosaic, and even a history, from archaic Judges 5, through standard-classical, down to 'sub-classic' Qoheleth, Sirach and Qumran. But an entirely different question is whether that language was ever spoken by anyone ... Indeed even as a *written* language in no time or place did Biblical Hebrew ever serve as a means of communication (letters, permits, receipts)“.

Facile refutation of these bold statements springs immediately to mind. What of the Lachish Letters? the tax-receipt „for the king“ ostraca? the Siloam inscription? the Gezer calendar? and the Deir 'Alla Balaam documents? Knauf is well aware of these, and takes them up one by one, with observations which he claims tend to prove his own thesis.

In general what he aims to show is that these inscriptions were indeed part and proof of genuinely *used* language; but he means by this rather *many* separate languages, *none* of which can be reasonably called „biblical Hebrew“³.

Knauf focuses chiefly the northerly dialects, or what he calls rather „the Israelite languages“ in plural. His clearest case is the word for „year“, which is *št* [*šat(t)*], not *šana(t)* as in what he calls Judaeon (which in this case happens to coincide with

¹ E.A. Knauf, War „Biblich-Hebräisch“ eine Sprache?, ZAH 3 (1990) p. 11-23.

² R. North, Brain and Nerve in the Bible, Bib. 74, 1993, p. 577-587.

³ Note further Knauf's Place Name Provinces in Semitic-Speaking Ancient Near East, PLPS A/8/ii, 1956, p. 83-110; and fn. 53 below. In A. Sáenz-Badillos, A History of the Hebrew Language, tr. J. Elwolde, Cambridge 1993, p. 62-64, The Language of the Inscriptions, is quite updated, including 'Ajrud, Izbet Sart'a, the silver Nm 6:24, and the ivory pomegranate; on p. 42 Meshah is suggested to have used an Israelite scribe; and p. 54 accounts for the obsolescence of greater Akkadian influence demanded by H.P. Bauer (1910; Historische Grammatik with P. Leander, 1922).

biblical Hebrew). This *šat* is one of the only eight real nouns in the Samaria ostraca; and along with more obscure phonemic and grammatical details is said to prove that „Israelite“ at least was a separate language. Knauf invokes here the fact that Phoenician and Ugaritic also use *šat* for year. He thereby seems to make of this fact a criterion of northerly pertinence as distinct from the „Judaean language“. Thus it is a bit surprising that the rest of his article scarcely follows up any relevance of Phoenician or even Ugaritic⁴.

The brief Gezer Calendar, dated around 900 when Gezer was under North-Israel rule as in 1 Kgs 9,15, shows both similarities and differences vis-à-vis the Deir ‘Alla (called here Sukkoth) inscriptions. This fact constitutes the chief basis for maintaining that there was not one but *several* (North-)“Israelite“ languages, none of which was really „standard“⁵.

Knauf’s p. 16 further makes a remarkable statement which we may render „While the profane [Sukkoth] inscriptions of the same stratum already show pure Aramaic, the language of the Bileam inscriptions is *not yet Aramaic, but also no longer Canaanite*“⁶. These last words, which we have italicized, may be taken to mean not of course that the or an Aramaic language was just then first coming into existence, but rather that a local group’s use of Aramaic borrowings was just then becoming so strong that there was question of henceforth calling their language „Aramaic“ instead of whatever it had been called before⁷.

⁴ Knauf p. 13 n. 8 disapproves J.H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods; Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, Harvard SemSt 31, Atlanta 1986, for failing to distinguish north and south in concluding chiefly from theophoric names that polytheism was not as prevalent as the biblical strictures would lead us to think. - Coastal Phoenician lacks the rich Biblical Hebrew Aramaic „substratum“, says I. Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, FAT 5, Tübingen 1992, (p. 63-) 70, adding that Phoenician/Aramaic represent „the battle of two prestige-languages for the role of *lingua franca* in Syria-Palestine“ [p. 203-5 his review of Knauf]; further *The „Northerners“ of the Israelite Narrative in Kgs [1 Kgs 17- 2 Kgs 10]*, ZAH 8 (1995) 63-70. - The „extreme view“ apparently attributed in a note 4 to Garbini, that Phoenician itself was the language used in North-Israel, is concluded to be untenable in a chapter of the 1992 doctorate of Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, *Hébreu du Nord et Phénicien: étude comparée de deux dialectes cananéens*, OLoP 23 (1992) p. 89-126. - Even Punic (as well as South-Arabian) is included by L.C. Scott, *Archaic Features of Canaanite Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible*, HSM 47, Atlanta 1990.

⁵ Note J. MacDonald, *Some Distinctive Characteristics of Israelite Spoken Hebrew*, BiOr 32, 1975, p. 162-175, with whom Y.T. Radday and H. Shore, *Genesis, an Authorship-Study in Computer-Assisted Statistical Linguistics*, Rome Biblical Institute 1985, agree that the language of direct speech differs notably from that of narrative.

⁶ „A stage before definitive separation of Aramaic from Canaanite“ in the view of H.-P. Müller, *Die Sprache der Texte von Deir ‘Alla im Kontext der nordwestsemitischen Sprachen mit einigen Erwägungen zum Zusammenhang der schwachen Verbklassen*, ZAH 4, 1991, (1-)-31. - On „East-Jordan Canaanite“, see K.P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*, HSM 27, Chico CA 1983 (p. 77-80 on Abinadab seal in Knauf 23); W. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*, ANET 4, Lewiston 1989.

⁷ Attention should be called here to the Dan Aramaic inscription then not yet discussed: É. Puech, *La stèle araméenne de Dan*, RB 101, 1994, p. 215-241; H.-P. Müller, *Die aramäische Inschrift von Tel Dan*, ZAH 8, 1995, p. 121-139 [and T. Muraoka there, 11, 1998, p. 74-81]; P.-E. Dion, *Balaam l’Araméen d’après de nouveaux documents du VIII^e siècle*, EeT 22, 1991, p. 85-87.

His p. 20 will insist that when biblical Hebrew came into being after the fall of Judah, Aramaic was not only the official language there but also in part the language of common people's daily use. Moreover already in footnote 4 of his second page he had stated, „Just as the authors of [OT] dissertations today can presume their readers know the main European languages and some Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, so the author of Job expected of his public a good knowledge of Aramaic and a smattering of Phoenician and Arabic“⁸. Though there was no occasion for mentioning Ugaritic here, it is emphasized that Aramaic was more familiar to the biblical people than Phoenician was⁹.

These references to Aramaic are mentioned in passing because of what will concern us farther on. But for Knauf they are not as important as the existence of many mini-languages, including Judaeen and at least two Israelite, amid what is called „Canaanite“ (and by some Moabite, Edomite, Ammonite). His proof that so many mini-languages were in use in the production of the inscriptions which are commonly attributed to Biblical Hebrew, suffices for his forceful conclusion (p. 21) „Biblical Hebrew was not a language that was ever spoken by anyone. ... There was no updating of the spelling of the compositions which had been handed down, other than their definitive literary formulation in the fifth century. ... Not only is Biblical Hebrew no [used] language, but there was also no 'Old-Hebrew' in existence from the 8th to the 6th century; there were just some five languages, distinct though nearer to each other than to Phoenician and the other Canaanite languages“.

Ullendorff's Proto-Mishnaic vocabulary pool

Knauf's p. 11 is satisfied that Ullendorff no less than himself answers with an emphatic No the question „Is Biblical Hebrew a language?“, though he must immediately go on to reject what Ullendorff's answer really means: Biblical Hebrew

⁸ Our Job is a translation from an original Aramaic, according to N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, Jerusalem 1957, xxx; approved by André Lemaire, *Aramaic Literature and Hebrew Literature: Contacts and Influences in the First Millennium B.C.E.*, Ninth Congress C (Jerusalem 1988) 9-24; p. 23; denied by Kaufmann there p. 55; and by G. Rendsburg, „Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign Factor' in the Hebrew Bible“, *IsrOrSt* 15 (1995) p. 179 though A. Ibn Ezra had also favored an Aramaic Job original; advertence by James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Eisenbrauns 1987, p. 226, amid four senses of Aramaism. - Rendsburg's *Israel Oriental Studies* 15,179 also rejects the view that the Job original had been Arabic: F.H. Foster, *Is the Book of Job a translation from an Arabic Original?*, *AJSL* 49 (1932) p. 31-45; A. Guillaume, *The Arabic Background of the Book of Job*, in the S.H. Hooke *Festschrift*, *Promise and Fulfilment*, ed. F.F. Bruce, London 1963, p. 106-127; and *Studies in the Book of Job*, London 1968.

⁹ Little can be added from N.M. Waldman, *The Recent Study of Hebrew: A Survey of the Literature and Selected Bibliographies*, Winona Lake 1989, p. 9-15 cognates, in *Biblical Hebrew* p. 1-78; *Aramaic Influence and Language Change* [2 Kgs 18,26 ..] p. 79-86. - The „common but altogether untenable“ view that Old-Hebrew dialects arose from a post-Exodus Takeover (*Landnahme*) attributed by Knauf p. 13 n. 7 to p. 110 of the Neukirchen 1985 edition of Winfried Thiel's 1976 dissertation *Die soziale Entwicklung Israels in vorstaatlicher Zeit* could not be verified in the 1980 edition available to me.

was a „linguistic fragment“ or *part* of a real language, namely the presumed „Old Hebrew“ which meanwhile continued in use until it was transformed into „Middle“ or Mishnaic Hebrew. Ullendorff reaches his conclusions by an approach very different from Knauf's, inquiring into the total lack in Biblical Hebrew of so many words without which a real *used* language could not exist. One such word, incidentally, was „brain“, which accounted for my interest in the present problem (fn.² above).

Ullendorff says, „I am simply interested to know whether the words, forms, and constructions that *happen* to occur in this corpus of relatively modest size, which we call the Hebrew Bible, would be adequate to serve as a basis for the ordinary day-to-day requirements of a normal speech community”¹⁰. There is no word for „comb“ or „spoon“, though the use of these is firmly attested by archeology.

In our Hebrew Bible there are some 300,000 words in all, but only some 7500 *different* words (p. 253 = p. 5), as compared with 40,000 of a *small* and 500,000 words of a *large* English dictionary. Moreover of the 7500-some words, there is only one single occurrence of at least 1500, or perhaps as many as one-third (p. 262 = p. 14): 2440 in Rabin's estimate¹¹. It seems obvious that only a quirk of chance saved *these* words from perishing in the oblivion which must have been the fate of the other words useful or necessary if Biblical Hebrew had been a real used language.

„To consider that which is preserved in the Masoretic text as sufficient even for the limited needs of daily life in ancient Palestine“ is a fallacy pilloried by G.R. Driver¹². Albright calculates, „the known biblical Hebrew vocabulary cannot represent over a fifth of the local stock of North-west Semitic words in use between 1400 and 400 B.C.”¹³. Ullendorff's footnote purports to give from a letter of Albright some justification for this „gloomy, pessimistic“ calculation. More relevant would it have been to note that the Albright statement glides casually from „Biblical Hebrew“ to „Northwest Semitic“; and in fact appears *not* in the adjacent article on the Biblical Languages (by Ryder), but in a section of the „Archaeology“ article entitled „Light from Ugarit on the Bible“ - almost as if Albright considered it to be obvious that the vocabulary-pool out of which the measly 7500 words of Biblical Hebrew have been saved from extinction *included* also the not-so-different „Ugaritic dialect of Canaanite“¹⁴.

¹⁰ E. Ullendorff, *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?*, BSOAS 34, 1971, p. 241 (-255) = (his) *Studies in Semitic Languages and Civilizations*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 3 (-17).

¹¹ C. Rabin, *Millîm bo'dôt*, in *Ensiqlopediyâ miqra'î't*, Jerusalem 1962, vol. 4, p. 1066-70. Ullendorff attributes his figure of 1500 hapax to a „Jewish Encyclopedia vi, p. 226-9”.

¹² G.R. Driver, *Hebrew Notes*, JBL 68, 1949, p. 58. His *Colloquialisms in the OT*, *Mélanges Marcel Cohen*, Hague 1990, is more relevant to Rendsburg below.

¹³ W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*², ed. M. Black, London 1962, p. 62. On p. 68 there, E. T. Ryder estimates only some 5000 separate words in the Bible (instead of over 7500, „too low“ says Ullendorff p. 243 = p. 5 n.12).

¹⁴ Stephen A. Kaufmann, *The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof*, *Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1985 - C: panel Hebrew and Aramaic), ed. M. Bar-Asher, Jerusalem 1988, p. 41-55, in a paper aimed to show that the Deir' Alla inscriptions are slightly more Aramaic than Canaanite, begins on p. 41 with Cyrus Gordon's latest ever-changing view: Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew were the same language (in 1965

This view seems shared by the very outset of Ullendorff's paper (p. 241 = p. 3). „The major part of the OT is written in a Canaanite tongue clearly distinguished from [Daniel/Ezra] Aramaic. While we have no knowledge of the precise nature of the language spoken by the Hebrew immigrants into Canaan, it is likely that from a linguistic point of view the OT owes more to the vanquished Canaanites than to the conquering Hebrews“.

Leaving aside the historical presupposition of „immigrants“ (from Egypt? or even ultimately from Ur or Harran) „vanquishing“ Canaanites, which would hardly go unchallenged today, the above citation poses neatly the precise question with which we are concerned. What indeed *was* that language spoken by the so-called „Hebrew immigrants“ (Egyptian (?) if after 400 or even 100 years there; or if not, the Amarna-wise crumbling Akkadian of their „origins“? or more plausibly, the language of their long wandering through Aram, which had somehow meanwhile replaced Amarna-Akkadian as *the* international language?)

In spite of his saying that we do not know, Ullendorff will end up by holding that we know quite well (p. 250 = p. 20): it was a proto-Hebrew language [he seems to require already a „Canaanite“¹⁵ picked up on the fringes of Egypt before the „vanquishing“] out of which Biblical Hebrew drew a relatively small part, but which went on being used until it was transformed gradually into the basically identical Middle Hebrew, a spoken Mishnaic Hebrew¹⁶.

By way of proof, assuming as „obvious“ that the Mishnaic Hebrew so well described by Segal was the „continuation“ of Biblical Hebrew, Ullendorff notes only some few of the 300 roots it „retrieves“ while losing 250¹⁷. The surprising absence of *šā'ā*, „hour“ from the Bible had already been studied by James Barr¹⁸. To this are added chiefly „comb“, „spoon“, and „kitchen“¹⁹. Ultimately Ullendorff seems to be saying:

with M. Dahood he had held that Ugaritic is a Canaanite dialect). But Ugaritic is not even to be classed with Canaanite, held J. Blau *On Problems of Polyphony and Archaism in Ugaritic Spelling*, JAOS 58 (1968), p. 523-6, and *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Wiesbaden 1976, p. 1.

¹⁵ It may be doubted that exegetes commonly make Hebrew the language of Adam and Eve (Knauf ZAH 3, p. 13), but „the language of the Patriarchs was [already] the language of Canaan“, according to Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Storia della lingua ebraica [L'hébreu, trois mille ans d'histoire 1992]*, tr. Vanna Lucattini Vogelmann, Firenze 1994, p. 13.

¹⁶ See also J. Fellman, *The Linguistic Status of Mishnaic Hebrew*, JNWS 5, 1977, 21s; A. Samely, *Is Targumic Aramaic Rabbinic Hebrew? a Reflection on Midrashic and Targumic Rewording of Scripture*, JJS 45, 1994, p. 92-100; D. Goodblatt, *Palestinian Talmud: Language, The Study of Ancient Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner, Hoboken 1982, vol. 2, p. 201-8 (= p. 63-70). G.M. Schramm, *Hebrew Language Scholarship (under Biblical Languages: Hebrew): ABD 4*, p. 211-4, is pretty much limited to Masoretic. - H.-P. Müller, *Zur Theorie der historisch vergleichenden Grammatik dargestellt am sprachgeschichtlichen Kontext des Althebräischen*, in A.S. Kaye, ed., *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau 2*, Wiesbaden 1991, p. 1100-1118; p. 1104 fn. 15 sees Ullendorff's p. 17 (Mishna from a colloquialization of OT diction) as relevant to gradual use of the participle to supply lack of distinction between present and future in the standard-biblical „fientisch“ longform-preformative.

¹⁷ M. H. Segal, *Mishnaic Grammar*, English 1927 reprinted 1958. „but the 1936 Hebrew edition goes far beyond it“; p. 99-134.

¹⁸ J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, London 1969; *Semantics of Biblical language*, Oxford 1962.

¹⁹ So E.Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, Jerusalem/Leiden 1982, p. 135: „Non-

Needful words not found in the Bible must have come from *somewhere*; - *Atqui*: many of them turn up in the Mishnah; - *Ergo*: Mishnah must represent the total and *real* language of which Biblical Hebrew gives us only a fragment.

Rendsburg: Hebrew as mutant, like Egyptian and Arabic

In turning now to Rendsburg's Diglossia, we may note at once that he claims to reach conclusions fully in agreement with this lengthy citation from Ullendorff: „The language of the Mishnah, principally derived from these oral sources, was in fact the product of the colloquial used during the Biblical period; the amalgam of its standard and sub-standard versions ... Perhaps BH, in its Masoretic garb, is simply the literary counterpart to the Mishnaic colloquial“²⁰. To this Rendsburg frankly adds that this view, and also similar insights of Chomsky and Bendavid, have really anticipated the conclusions which he himself will have reached²¹. He points out how he hopes to have gone farther.

The principal base of Rendsburg's Diglossia is Kurt Sethe's 1925 demonstration that we possess literary Egyptian in six successive stages, of which each is the colloquial „used“ form of the preceding one: Old Egyptian becomes Middle Egyptian, New Egyptian becomes Demotic, and especially Demotic becomes Coptic²². This simplified model was used also by Pulgram to show a similar development of Latin²³. Independently but in basic agreement, diglossia has been detected also in Arabic by Corriente and Blau²⁴. Rendsburg maintains (p. 31) „Biblical Hebrew remained relatively stable [while] popular Hebrew underwent the development found in all languages ... finally becoming attested as Mishnaic Hebrew“.

biblical Hebrew Vocabulary: ... 3. New Hebrew elements. Here belong those elements which most probably existed in the original stock of Hebrew, but do not appear in BH [mostly agriculture; no list] but *š'hol* 'spleen' is a good example (Arabic cognate *ṭuḥal*)“. I am grateful for a letter of John Pairman Brown (Nov. 5, 1992) on the „thousands of words“ in Mishnaic Hebrew not in the Hebrew Bible, including „Old Semitic“ *pyl*, „elephant, ivory“ in Kilaim 8,6 for Ezek 27,25 and possibly a *mks* „publican“ of origin different from the „tax“ of Nm 31,28; but the rest he indicates are admittedly post-biblical.

²⁰ G. A. Rendsburg, Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew, AOS 72, New Haven 1990, p. 15-16 from Ullendorff p. 249 = p. 11.

²¹ W. Chomsky, Hebrew, the Eternal Language, Philadelphia 1964, p. 161; A. Bendavid, *Leshon ha-miqra' ʿo leshon hakamim?* Tel Aviv 1951, ²1967-71 (*û-lshon*).

²² K. Sethe, Das Verhältnis zwischen Demotisch und Koptisch und seine Lehren für die Geschichte der ägyptischen Sprache, ZDMG 79, 1925, p. 290-318; his diagram in English in Rendsburg, Diglossia p. 29. - H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, Randnotiz zur spätägyptischen Diglossia (P BM 10298), GöMisZ 127 (1992) p. 44-47.

²³ E. Pulgram, Spoken and Written Latin, Lg. 28, 1950, 458-486.

²⁴ J. Blau, The Beginnings of Arabic Diglossia: a Study of the Origins of Neoarabic, AfAsL 4/4, 1977, p. 1-28; F. Corriente, Marginalia on Arabic Diglossia and Evidence Thereof in the Kitab al-Agani, JSS 20, 1975, p. 38-61; S. Altoma, The Problem of Diglossia in Arabic: a Comparative Study of Classical and Iraqi Arabic, Harvard diss. 1969; B. H. Hary, Multiglossia in Judaeo-Arabic, Cairene Purim Scroll, ÉtJudMédv 14, Leiden 1992.

Though this conclusion does seem to support or coincide with Ullendorff, we may here interpose a caution. Ullendorff supposes a pre-biblical existing proto-Mishnaic language with an extensive vocabulary-pool from which biblical Hebrew then drew the relatively few words it needed. This procedure seems to turn upside-down the Sethe-Rendsburg model, in which biblical Hebrew would be the pre-existing standard, and Mishnaic its colloquial corruption which only later *becomes* standard. This is doubtless the more common view even now. We are familiar with the apparently similar phenomenon of a classical Latin being progressively colloquialized as it continues in use for the preservation of religious traditions.

The bulk of Rendsburg's Diglossia is devoted to enumerating long lists of cases in which our Hebrew Bible is „ungrammatical“ or does not conform to its more commonly attested norms²⁵. These cases for him point up *within* our Bible itself, sometimes but by no means only in reported oral statements, portions of the „second language“ or real *used* language of the biblical people. It must be admitted that much of what we call corruptions or mistakes in the use of a standard language, are in fact elements of the nascent local variations which we call „dialects“. But it is far from clear that a simple tabulation of the ungrammaticalities occurring within the use of a standard language, suffices to prove and constitute a „second language“²⁶.

Moreover Rendsburg is careful to justify the fact that he seeks these evidences solely within the Masoretic text, admitting its inadequacies. And as for the archeologically attested inscriptional materials of the relevant period, which loom so large for Knauf and indeed for most Semitists, Rendsburg courageously maintains (p. 32) „By and large the language [of the small corpus of Iron Age inscriptions from Israel] is identical to BH, and few colloquialisms seem to have penetrated them“²⁷.

Finally we may call attention to an echo of Rendsburg's position in the arresting titles of the two key chapters in A. Sperber's *Historical Grammar*. Under the title „Two Hebrew dialects combined form biblical Hebrew“, he devotes a hundred pages to pre-Masoretic pronunciation, largely preserved from Hebrew in Jerome's commentaries but from Greek in his onomastica. Under a subhead „Two dialects of biblical Hebrew“ he asserts that Israel and Judah are the respective homelands of these dialectal differences. His other key chapter bears the title „The composite character of the Bible“. Sperber's emphatic declarations are supported by very little

²⁵ Rendsburg has published many specialized word-studies in support of his thesis, including *The Northern Origin of „The Last Words of David“*, *Bib.* 69, 1988, p. 113-121; *More on the Hebrew šibbōlet*, *JSS* 33, 1988, p. 255-8; *The Ammonite Phoneme /T/*, *BASOR* 269, 1988, p. 73-79; *Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew*, *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. W.R. Bodine, Winona Lake 1992, p. 65-88; *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms*, *SBL monograph* 43, Atlanta 1990 (p. 29); *Phoenician scribes wrote the account of the Temple-building and dedication*; *Israelian Hebrew Features in Genesis 49*, *Maarav* 8, 1992, p. 161-170.

²⁶ See now D. C. Fredericks, *A North Israelite Dialect in the Hebrew Bible? Questions of Methodology*, *HebStud* 37, 1997, p. 7-20.

²⁷ His p. 23 n. 70 insists that his understanding of „colloquialisms“ differs greatly from that of G. Abramson, *Colloquialisms in the Old Testament*, *Semitics* 2, 1971-2, p. 1-16 meaning rather idioms. Unsupportive of Rendsburg is S. Ólafsson, *On Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew and its Graphic Representation*, in the A. Czapkiewicz memorial, *FoLor* 28, Warsaw 1991, p. 193-205; 3 fig.

prose, but a dense mass of cited cases, which constitute a veritable mine for research-scrutiny, but are hard to use for an evaluation of whether they tend more to favor the Knauf position or its alternatives²⁸.

Naville's ill-starred parallel with Coptic

In view of the importance which Coptic has for the Sethe-Rendsburg model, it seems imperative to dispose of a view understandably passed over in complete silence by modern experts. And in fact despite the prestige of the Schweich Lectures and of himself as excavator of Maskhuta and Yehudiyya, Naville's pronouncements on the origins of biblical Hebrew are embarrassingly mingled with outdated fantasies, immediately and adequately refuted by Gressmann²⁹. What then are we forced to say here of the man who for better or worse pioneered the view that biblical Hebrew was not a „used“ language but an artificial literary creation?

Naville's earlier volume and its subsequent French form start out squarely with the assertion that the Pentateuch was written in an Amarna-style cuneiform, in conformity with Moses' background³⁰. In supporting this view, he admits on p. 21 that if Abram as an Aramean had brought from Mesopotamia any more cursive language than his undoubted cuneiform, it would have been Aramaic and not any Hebrew or *y^hhūdīt*. Also, throughout their Egyptian stay the Israelites always considered themselves Arameans, so that the use of this language in the eventual Elephantine diaspora may not be considered an abandonment of their linguistic tradition.

The 1915 Schweich Lectures start out with a chapter on the deficiencies of the Higher Criticism, which as noted from A. van Hoonacker in the preface shows no approval for Naville's view³¹. Cuneiform is discussed in the second lecture, and Aramaic in the third. Thus in none of these books does he get around to explaining his view of what Biblical Hebrew really was, and how it arose.

That task was left for his 1920 French volume on the evolution of Egyptian and its relation to the Semitic languages³². His essential claim is that the biblical books, including now the Prophets written mostly in Aramaic, were transcribed after 176 B.C. into an entirely new alphabet invented for that purpose; and that just as in the case of Coptic so sweeping a change could not remain merely a matter of external form, but involved a revision of the language of composition itself. On the analogy with Coptic, Naville claimed that square-script Hebrew was invented to utilize and unite the various Aramaic-related dialectal differences actually in use³³.

²⁸ A. Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew: A Presentation of Problems with Suggestions to their Solution*, Leiden 1968.

²⁹ H. Gressmann, *L'archéologie de l'Ancien Testament*, RThPh 48 (NS 4/18), 1916, p. 26-53; p. 36 on Naville's tracing of the early Arameans, starting from Mesopotamia.

³⁰ É. Naville, *Archaeology of the Old Testament: Was the Old Testament Written in Hebrew?*, Library of Historical Theology, London 1913, p. 11 = *L'Archéologie de l'AT: l'AT a-t-il été écrit en Hébreu?*, tr. A. Segond, Paris/Neuchâtel sans date.

³¹ É. Naville, *The Text of the Old Testament*, Schweich Lectures 1915, London 1916.

³² É. Naville, *L'évolution de la langue égyptienne et des langues sémitiques*, Paris 1920; p. 152-178, *L'hébreu*; his p. 154 proceeds chiefly from the fact that Coptic was a new writing-system based on a principle absolutely different from that previously in use; this change to writing *yehūdīt* in the new (Biblical Hebrew) alphabet was made by „the rabbis“ near the Christian era (p. 158) though Ezra had „united“ the whole Bible in Aramaic (p. 191).

³³ É. Naville, *La Haute Critique dans le Pentateuque*, Paris/Neuchâtel 1921, further answered the „courteous“ P. Humbert, *M.É. Naville et la critique du Pentateuque*, in RThPh NS 9 N° 38, 1921, p. 59-88, citing E. Doumergue, *Moïse et la Genèse d'après .. Naville*, Paris 1920. - See recently D. van

Rab-Shaqeh Speaking Yehudit and Aramaic

We will return now to a point which we have seen varyingly emphasized by all the above scholars, the prominence and indeed dominance of Aramaic among the various dialects claimed to be identifiable in the background of the biblical Hebrew record³⁴. This situation is most vigorously and picturesquely exemplified in the episode of 2 Kgs 18,26. Sennacherib's official, called the Rab-Shaqeh, came and stood before the walls of Jerusalem, and called for the king to come and hear him. The king, Hezekiah, sent instead the minister Eliakim and two assistants³⁵. To them, ostensibly, is addressed the lengthy and eloquent speech of verses 19-25. Only with verse 26 we learn two items of great importance. The Rab-Shaqeh's words were really intended not for the king or his three officials but for the beleaguered population of Jerusalem who were listening. And the harangue has been, thus far at least, in what is called *y^ehūdīt*, „the language of Judah“. Clearly dismayed by the force of his arguments, the trio ask him to continue in Aramaic instead.

This episode raises issues enormously momentous for our present discussion: issues which are passed over with surprising brevity and assurance by almost all the commentators. Like Begg in the New Jerome Commentary, they mostly say that *y^ehūdīt* was just a word for (biblical) Hebrew as in Neh 13,24, and that Aramaic was known only by the highly educated³⁶. Hobbs adds that only with the Persian period Aramaic had become the language of the general population³⁷. Specialized studies by Ben-Zvi and others point up the greater complexity of the situation³⁸.

The more recent researches which we have been citing above tend to regard the *y^ehūdīt* of 2 Kgs 18,26 as a term for the language actually spoken in daily use, *differing* from biblical Hebrew and varyingly akin to neighboring language-uses like Ammonite and Aramaic itself. The case of Job is especially noticed (fn.⁸ above). Garbini's brief advertence in the English volume of his ever-forceful and original

Berchem, L'égyptologue genevois Édouard Naville, Genève 1989, cited by J. Leclant in the CRAI (1991) 126-7.

³⁴ Chaim Rabin, „The Emergence of Classical Hebrew“, The World History of the Jewish People I/V (The Age of the Monarchies II. Culture and Society, ed. A. Malamat) 71-78, begins by calling this origin „surrounded by mystery“, but cites with approval the role of Aramaic in S. Moscati, *Il semitico di nord-ovest*, in the *Festschrift* for G. Levi della Vida, *Studi orientalistici*, Roma 1956, vol. 2, p. 202-221. Note W. von Soden, *Gab es bereits im vorexilischen Hebräisch Aramaismen in der Bildung und der Verwendung der Verbalformen?*, *ZAH* 4, 1991, p. 32-45: No!; also his *Sprache, Denken und Begriffsbildung im AT*, *Mainzer Akademie geist./soz. Abh. N° 6 für 1973*, p. 34-40.

³⁵ P. Bordreuil, F. Israel, [Isa 22,20] 2 Rois 18,18; 19,2] À propos de la carrière d'Elyaqim: du page au majordomo (?): *Sem. 4ls* (1991s) 81-87; 2 fig.

³⁶ C. T. Begg, 2 Kings, New Jerome Biblical Commentary, ed. R. E. Brown, *al.*, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1990, p. 182.

³⁷ T. R. Hobbs, 2 Kings, Word Comm. 23, Waco 1985, p. 258.

³⁸ E. Ben-Zvi, Who Wrote the Speech of Rabshakeh and When?, *JBL* 109, 1990, p. 79-92 [much later than the three current views: an Assyrian / an Aramean or Judahite called Assyrian / a real Judean]. - See also A. R. Millard, Please speak Aramaic: Buried History 25, 1989, p. 67-73 [and his The Knowledge of Writing in Iron Age Palestine, *TynB* 46, 1995, 207-217].

attacks on biblical cruces, insists that *yehûdî* „was certainly not used in the monarchical period to denote the language of the Israelites of the two kingdoms“, and considers anachronistic in 701 B.C. an international („imperial“) Aramaic³⁹.

But as for the diffusion of *some* kind(s) of Aramaic around Jerusalem, already in 1957 we had occasion to point out that a diagram of the distinguished expert Haiim Rosén, aimed primarily to show the divergences of other West-Semitic dialects from Moabite, really proves biblical Hebrew more different from Moabite than from biblical Aramaic⁴⁰. Several experts today maintain that the various speech-usages attested in the biblical homeland all form a „linguistic continuum“ with Aramaic⁴¹.

We must here take into account the historical connections previously always assumed to exist between the Aramaic-speaking „Arameans“ and the biblical people from beginning to end of what the Bible tells us about them. It has been generally agreed from Deut 26,5 that their „father“ was called an Aramean at one of the earliest stages at which they are encountered. Even if Abraham, and with him the racial group of which he formed a chief part already (allegedly) in Mesopotamia, is called Aramean, it is far from clear that these „earlier Arameans“ are identical with or even related to the racial entity which much later became prominent there⁴². It is these „later Arameans“ whose Aramaic language from roughly the Iron Age became the extremely important medium of communication throughout the whole Middle East as far as Elephantine.

And even if Abraham is called by the same name Aramean which later became common as an *ethnic* designation in the same area, it is not an attested fact that the Aramaic *language* was spoken by any „Abrahamic clan“. Still it is likely that such a migratory group would carry with them some language or dialect *of their own*, and to that extent (ambiguously) „Aramaic“. The attested fact of proto-Hebrews as some kind of Arameans could retain its validity even in the recently-burgeoning supposition that the biblical people never had any roots *inside* Mesopotamia at all, and that their „remembrance“ of them is mythical⁴³.

³⁹ G. Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, London/Philadelphia 1988, 46.

⁴⁰ H. B. Rosén, *Ha- 'Ivrit še-lānū*, *Our Hebrew Language in the Light of Linguistics*, Tel Aviv 1955, diagram p. 22; my review in *Or.* 25, 1957, 388-391.

⁴¹ Notably W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine 1000-586 B.C.E.*, Philadelphia 1985, p. 205, Canaanite Hebrew was rather near to Aramaic; rejected by Knauf, *ZAH* 3, p. 13 n. 8.

⁴² R. A. Bowman, *Arameans, Aramaic, and the Bible*, *JNES* 7, 1948, 65-90; J. C. Greenfield, *Aramaic Studies and the Bible*, 1980 Vienna Congress, *VT.S* 32, Leiden 1981, 111-130; H. Tadmor, *On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire*, in the *Festschrift for Prince Takahito Mikasa*, ed. M. Mori, *al.*, Wiesbaden 1991, p. 419-423; p. 422 accepts „the ability of an Assyrian envoy to deliver an eloquent speech in the ‘Judean tongue’“.

⁴³ R. North, *Symposium on the Mythic in Israel's Origins* (Roma Accademia dei Lincei, Feb. 10-11, 1986), *Bib.* 67, 1986, 440-448. In acceptance of this report of a meeting in which he had played so large a part, along with an inquiry as to his views on our present topic, Professor Giovanni Garbini under date of January 30, 1994, kindly informed me he feels that „brilliant“ approaches (Knauf, Ullendorff) tend to obscure the real problem of the origins of biblical Hebrew, namely „the artificiality of the Masoretic interpretation and the corruption of our biblical text“, comparing the vowels of Origen's *Secunda* which force a complete rewriting of the Joüon and Gesenius-Kautzsch grammars.

Also being redimensioned nowadays is the far more emphatic biblical „remembrance“ of a liberation from Egypt, after a sojourn there of some hundred(s of) years, by Abraham himself briefly and then by all his descendants. Some take the „400 years“ as a mystical number or a typical number-exaggeration, or as meaning really „4 generations“. But even this minimum is a decisive period of time in which the use of their own language by a minority group would be likely to have given way to the use of (or notable contamination by) the official local language.

Acts 7,22 says, possibly as a literary flourish, that Moses was given an education in Egyptian scholarship. Some exegetes have noted that an Egyptian court-training would have included also Mesopotamian laws and language⁴⁴. The Amarna letters show that cuneiform was indeed then a chancery language for Egypt's dealing even with nearby Canaan. And despite Naville there remains food for thought in the question, „What language *did* the (wandering?) biblical people use?“, and in the fact that biblical Hebrew shows virtually no trace of Egyptian influence in grammar or vocabulary.

These few historical facts (or largely *possibilities* opened out by the biblical text) tend perhaps to support the „linguistic continuum“ view. Aramaic itself, or some Canaanite dialect-variant of it, was already the likeliest „used“ language of the biblical people at the time of their installation in Canaan. This was the beginning of their history anyway, according to a currently popular view; but the same judgement holds in any plausible interpretation of their „recorded“ history. The question thus becomes, not so much when or where, but rather *how* and *why* „Biblical Hebrew“ was invented to be the vehicle of their traditions.

Philip Davies' solely socio-political origins of Hebrew

Precisely to this question a head-on answer has now been offered, not on any linguistic grounds at all, by a highly original and thought-provoking little volume which risks being rejected out-of-hand as destructive of the whole basis of both the Jewish and the Christian religions⁴⁵. It in fact holds that the *whole* of our Hebrew Bible *and* its language, with purely *civil* aim having nothing to do with religion except slightly as part of a unitive general culture, were created out of nothing (though incorporating scraps of tradition) by scribes paid by the Persian government to support their takeover of administration in Judah⁴⁶.

These (heuristic) scribes were organized in four main „colleges“, named for (1) Moses, the legal documents; (2) David, the liturgical poetry; (3) Solomon, wisdom; (4) dizzily named for W. F. Albright, because it had (not „would have had“

⁴⁴ H. Cazelles, *Études sur le Code de l'Alliance*, P 1946, has thoroughly studied these problems.

⁴⁵ Philip R. Davies, *In Search of „Ancient Israel“*: JSOT.S 143, Sheffield 1992: Ch. 6, „Who Wrote the Biblical Literature, and Where?“, ch. 7, „How Was the Biblical Literature Written, and Why?“, p. 120 „an exercise in imagination whose purpose is purely heuristic .: not to be taken as a hypothesis“, but really set forth (p. 130-3) as not merely a hypothesis but a fact.

⁴⁶ See however D.W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Israel, a socio-archeological approach*: JSOT.S 109, Sheffield 1991.

p. 121) „a highly optimistic view of what was historical“. Actually the role assigned to the scribes is not so different from that filled by Albright in his century: „preserving, annotating, amplifying“ and eruditely making acceptable to a conservative populace the older traditions. „The production of a large-scale and complete history from the creation to the beginning of the [Persian-era: p. 117] society of Yehud was not the primary task“ (p. 132), but rather classifying, copying, and filling the gaps of scraps of various existing fragmentary scrolls. However, these salaried scribes (far different from Albright) had to *invent* the overall tradition. „There *was* no pre-existent history to be written about, no ‘tradition’, and so various accounts had at first to be invented ... Such an absence follows from what I have said [in chapters 1-5] about the non-existence of ‘ancient Israel’,, (p. 132; note further p. 119 on the „non-Exodus“ and Egypt).

We have perhaps been unfair in thus leaping to the „colleges“ and their function without first following the sociological presentation of why such scribes *must* have existed in the allegedly Ezra’s day⁴⁷. We begin with the arresting statement of p. 107, „Even in modern societies with 90% literacy, fewer than 1% write books“. No source is indicated for this plausible-enough statistic, nor is it implied whether or not another percent or more write for periodicals. And as for the likely „reading public“ of the 95% *non-literate* societies, readers must have been mostly among those who *wrote* the books: surely much less than the above 1%, though p. 108 seems to admit as many as 5% of Judah as scribal. „Writing is an economically supported activity .. [arising] from ideological, economic, and political preconditions (p. 106). ... The origin of biblical literature [is] certainly within the temple and court“, cooperating even if possibly as two separate power-centers suggested in the Ezra books⁴⁸. In any case, despite their non-religious aim, the Temple would have been the depository of scribal products (p. 111)⁴⁹.

Finally (though already p. 102), „Biblical Hebrew“, despite exegetes’ claims of early and late and Knauf’s north and south, was an „artificial scribal language“ (p. 104), created by scribes partly (pure) Aramaic-speaking, partly („colloquial/oral“) „Hebrew“-speaking. This *Bildungssprache* is a post-Iron-Age-Judah scholarly construct, scarcely differing from that claimed by Knauf. *Why* this creation of the scribes was necessary for embodying their socio-political *content* is not made clear and is ultimately not the focus of Davies’ interest. His later chapters will go on to explain how the purely civil-political („Bible“) books produced by the (heuristic!)

⁴⁷ The „lien social“ plays no relevant role in C. Fontinoy, *La langue, lien social; ombres et incertitudes concernant les origines de l’hébreu biblique*, in the *Festschrift for É. Lipiński, Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East*, ed. K. Van Lerberghe & A. Schoors, OLA 65, Louvain 1995, p. 65-77; perhaps more in S.B. Noegel, *Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24-27*, *Aula Orientalis* 12, 1994, p. 177-192.

⁴⁸ Intriguing though not mentioned here is the Temple of Haggai explained as a bank in operation: David Clines at Rome SBL meeting.

⁴⁹ „The Significance of the Temple Archive“ is a subtitle on p. 40 of Roger T. Beckwith, „Formation of the Hebrew Bible“, in J. Mulder, ed., *Mikra*, CRINT 2/1, Assen/Philadelphia 1988, p. 39-86; but despite Beckwith’s titles, his whole article is really only about the Canon, with no hint of scribal activity or the origins of Biblical Hebrew (nor is there anything here relevant on p. 21-23, „The Scribes“ by M. Bar-Ilan).

scribal colleges later became sacred (Scripture) and canonical. If he has given us a challenging model for the How and Why of the *content* of the books, we must still seek a model for the How and Why of the origin of „Biblical Hebrew“.

The Esperanto model

It does not seem unreasonable to seek in modern experience a parallel for the alleged ancient creation of an artificial language. The best known is Esperanto, with two million users (2000 within the USA: wherefore the prestigious Modern Language Association offered in Chicago a seminar in Esperanto, but no one showed up)⁵⁰. The language was invented in 1877 by the Polish oculist and linguist Ludovic L. Zamenhof. He combined Indo-European elements chiefly of western Europe, „hoping“ (*esperanto*) that it would become an easily-learned second language for international use.

It did in fact have relatively quick and wide acceptance chiefly in Europe; and its universal organization founded at Rotterdam in 1908 has received recognition from UNESCO. It is used at least once each week for a Vatican newscast; and its *Biblia Revuo* published at Ravenna since 1964 has only recently been renamed. How many Esperanto users have found it to be of genuine practicality rather than just a fad or „hope“ is of course hard to decide.⁵¹

In any case, the word and concept of Esperanto as an artificial language made up by combining elements of the actually used languages in its nearby background, is now widely understood and utilized. As thus defined, it is evidently applicable to the situation which has been claimed for the late origins of biblical Hebrew. But almost equally instructive may prove to be the *differences* in concept between the two, and the question of *why* such an artificial language should be invented.

All the recent researches which we have been investigating, though often using a sensational title or approach, ultimately claim chiefly that biblical Hebrew was a literary or even poetic *language*, something beyond the easily-recognized fact that *no* literary writing is identical with oral use in common daily life by the relevant people⁵². And this claim really is acceptable to *all* who have seriously studied biblical Hebrew and have some acquaintance with the inscriptional materials of the cognate then-contemporary languages and especially of Aramaic.

Doubtless most of those who have dedicated their lives to the study of the Bible tend to think of its language as *the* real vital existing reality, in comparison with which all

⁵⁰ Martin Marty, M.E.M.O.[-random], CCen 108 (1991) p. 471.

⁵¹ S. Levin, Can an Artificial Language be More than a Hobby?, *Aspects of Internationalism, Language and Culture*, ed. I. Richmond (8 papers on Esperanto from 1985-90 conferences of the Center for World Languages), NY 1993, p. 1-8.

⁵² In tacit opposition to Davies' purely secular-political not religious origin, Garbini's letter (fn. 43 above) still holds the (virtually universal) majority opinion that our biblical Hebrew involves a limited number of texts, „all of religious origin“ and of postexilic redaction, hence does not represent the literarization of the „whole“ of the language commonly spoken at Jerusalem before the exile.

those cognates are mere shadows or spinoffs. But a moment's reflection would force these scholars to agree that in the known historical background it was rather Aramaic which held the position of the most important and real widely used and influential language. Moreover the Canaanite inscriptional materials in part show closer relations with Aramaic than with biblical Hebrew.

It nevertheless would have been a rather colossal achievement, far surpassing Zamenhof's, to have invented out of the whole cloth a brand-new language for a very restricted literature destined to have the importance of biblical Hebrew in world history. Those who maintain, or are at least not unfavorable to, such a hypothesis, seem to have given but little attention to the concrete physical circumstances in which such a change would have been made.

Davies is an audacious exception, though focusing the content rather than the language-origination itself. A fuller exception, though a totally uninfluential one, was Naville. He maintained that it was about the time of Christ when some important Jewish authorities turned to putting their religious traditions into the new language of their own creation. „Creation“ of course here can only mean as in the case of Esperanto, recombining elements of familiar existing languages. Naville was quite explicit in claiming that the emergence of the Coptic language was an example of similar procedure, though the „whodunit?“ remains obscure. He further claimed that in the case of Coptic this was done for greater convenience and accessibility, since the new language would have been more easily used than its Egyptian predecessor subject to so much corruption and divergence. This would be true also of the Sethe model which we noted as used by Rendsburg.

But it seems likelier that the motive for introducing the new and invented Biblical Hebrew language would have been just the opposite. The aim was not wider accessibility, but the preservation of sacred traditions in an arcane and ritual language, which the common people would recognize as only vaguely familiar. To this extent Biblical Hebrew was something like medieval Latin, understood and even used with great facility by the clergy (scribal schools!), but chiefly for the perpetuation and discussion of religious traditions. It is thus in fact that most scholars both Jewish and Christian doubtless regard the origins of Mishnaic Hebrew, rather than as the ampler preexisting language from which Biblical Hebrew was drawn according to Ullendorff.

As for the date of this great changeover, the Ezra-period seems to be agreed by all who do not offer any other specific proposal. For the implantation of a new language, the need of civil authority postulated by Davies seems agreed by Knauf⁵³. Exegetes in general relate this period, as culmination of immediately-preceding scribal activities in Babylon, to the actual formulation and ordering of our Pentateuch (-Kings). Jerome wrote „I have no objections whether you wish to call Moses the author of the Pentateuch or Esdras the reviser (*instaurator*) of the same

⁵³ Knauf, ZAH 3, p. 12: „a standard language presumes specific social and political conditions, notably an administration that can establish and impose it“, invoking his Haben Aramäer den Griechen das Alphabet vermittelt?, WO 18, 1987, 45-48 [now see B. Sass, Studia alphabetica, OBO 102, Fribourg/Wiesbaden 1991]; further Knauf's Midian, Wiesbaden 1988, 137.

work⁵⁴. Thus also Robert Bellarmine: „Until the time of Esdras, the Scriptures were not edited in the form of books available in easy and convenient form, but were dispersed among various annals and papers [4 Kgs 22 ...]. But it was Esdras who after the Captivity collected and edited them in a single corpus, adding to Deuteronomy the last chapter concerning the life of Moses, and various other transitional remarks⁵⁵.

It remains significant and in need of explanation that amid the lavish praise of Nehemiah and others in Sirach 49,11 (180/130 B.C.) Ezra is totally unmentioned. This leads Garbini and others to maintain that Ezra never existed and is a mythic fabrication of scribes to impose authority upon their tampering with received texts: In 159 B.C., „with this name, which no one ever bore, there really came into being that ‘Judaism which, through Pharisaism, has come down to our own days’, Dead Sea Scrolls included⁵⁶. Admitting that much of his argumentation is plausible, we have maintained that it would still hold good in the likelihood that Ezra really existed in more or less the functions his books attribute to him, but was „mythologized“ by later scribes.⁵⁷

That this could have occurred for the imposition of their „newly created“ biblical Hebrew near the time of Sirach cannot be altogether excluded. But we remain always speaking of a „hypothetical construct“ which despite the erudite reasonings we have surveyed above retains a chiefly „heuristic“ value.

⁵⁴ *Adversus Helvidium*, ch. 7: Migne PL 23 (Hieronymus 2), 190; *Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, ed. J. N Hritz, *Fathers of the Church* 53, Washington 1965, p. 19 with no note; the edition of M. Ignazia Danieli, *La perenne verginità di Maria*, CTePa 70, Roma 1988, p. 40 adds a note on the proliferation of Jewish tradition regarding Ezra’s „funzione restauratrice“; and her p. 43 notes that she there uses a *7bis* (and an *8bis* but with no 8, though Migne has 8 as well as 7 twice) „to avoid confusion with the usual citation of Migne“. Her *7bis* is 9 in H. Hurter’s ²1894 p. 264, her *8bis* is his 10, her 9 is his 11 and so on to her final number 22, his 24 (though he has a 45 by misprint for 15 p. 274).

⁵⁵ R. Bellarmine, *Controversiae: the 1721 Milan edition* (I, p. 166) cited in A. van Hoonacker, *De compositione litteraria et de origine mosaica Hexateuchi disquisitio historico-critica*, posthumously published by J. Coppens, *Verhandelingen der Vlaamse Academie Letteren* 11/11, Brussels 1949, p. 78; the text does say „life“ (*vita*) of Moses rather than „death“ as some exegetes think more relevant.

⁵⁶ G. Garbini, *History and Ideology* (fn. 39 above) p. 169; the citation is from the outset of the article p. 153, P. Sacchi, *Storia del mondo giudaico*, Turin 1976, 51. But Garbini’s p. 155 admits the parallel of Ezra with the Moses of J.A. Soggin, *A History of Israel, from the Beginnings to the Bar Kochba Revolt*, London/Philadelphia ¹1984, p. 133-7: a „historically elusive“ figure „put to use“ only in the exilic period. (In relation to Soggin’s p. 276 is mentioned his privately expressed agreement with Garbini).

⁵⁷ R. North, *Ezra (person)*, *ABD*, NY 1992, vol. 2, p. 727.

Abstract:

There have been five approaches to show that the *Vorlage* of our Masoretic Hebrew Bible was written in a language invented for that purpose, not ever anywhere in actual use. Knauf's claim is based on linguistic analysis of the inscriptions discovered by archeology, among which he finds five dialects close to Aramaic but none identical with Biblical Hebrew. Ullendorff shows that the small vocabulary of Hebrew was insufficient for the needs of a used language, and was drawn from the larger vocabulary pool of an existing proto-Mishnaic. Rendsburg's *Diglossia* aims to find within the ungrammaticalities of the Hebrew Bible evidence of existing separate dialects. He, like the understandably forgotten pioneer Naville, bases himself chiefly on a comparison with the transit from Demotic Egyptian to Coptic. No one of these really faces the question of when and how such a significant change would likely have been made, until Davies locates it by entirely politico-economic and not linguistic analysis in the Ezra-era. Conclusion: the alleged change would have been similar to the creation of Esperanto out of neighboring languages but to facilitate wider use, whereas Biblical Hebrew would have been rather an arcane medium to protect sacred writings.

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