

The So-Called Interchangeability of the Prepositions *b*, *l*, and *m(n)* in Northwest Semitic*

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The medieval Hebrew grammarian of the 10th century, Saadia, recognized some biblical passages in which the preposition *b* seemed to appear in a context where he would have expected to find the preposition *min*: for example, Lev. 8:32, *w^ehannōtār babbāsār ūbal-lāḥem*, which may be contrasted to Exod. 29:34, *w^e'im yiwwātēr mibb^ešar hammillū'im ūmin halleḥem . . .*¹ Ibn Janāḥ, of the following century, pointed out additional examples in Exod. 12:19, *baggēr ūb^e'ezraḥ bā'āreš*; Lev. 17:15, *bā'ezraḥ ūbaggēr*; Lev. 22:4, *baqq^odā-šim lō' yō'kal*; Lev. 25:52; and Prov. 9:5.² Other examples were pointed out by A. Ibn-Ezra and David Kimḥi, and in the modern period by F. Delitzsch and S. R. Driver.³ The last two scholars explained the phenomenon as due to scribal errors.⁴

At the turn of the century, a similar phenomenon was pointed out in Phoenician, but the consensus has been that where it occurs, *b* develops from *m* by dissimilation; for example, *KAI* 14:5–6, *w' l y' msn bmškb z*.⁵ Problems raised by this particular solution will be discussed below.

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1 Cited from N. Sarna, "The Interchange of the Prepositions *Beth* and *Min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 (1959), 311, n. 11.

2 Cited from W. Chomsky, "The Ambiguity of the Prefixed Prepositions \beth, ζ, \daleth in the Bible," *JQR* 61 (1970), 87.

3 Sarna, *Interchange*, 311, n. 15; A. C. M. Blommerde, *Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job* (Rome, 1969), 19.

4 Sarna, loc. cit.

5 G. A. Cooke seems to have considered it a scribal error (*A Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions* [Oxford, 1903], 35). Cf. Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, 1936), 84, 120; J. Friedrich and W. Röellig, *Pbönizisch-Punische Grammatik*² (Rome, 1970), § 54. (This will be cited as *PPG*².) H. Winckler argued that through an inner Phoenician development, the preposition *b* expanded its meaning so that it encompassed the range of Hebrew *min* (*Altorientalische Forschung I* [Leipzig, 1893], 66–67).

In 1936, H. L. Ginsberg drew attention to what appeared to be the same phenomenon in Ugaritic, and by 1944, J. H. Patton could write “*b* means both ‘in’ and ‘from’ in Ugaritic. The following occurrences in Psalms should be translated ‘from’: 6:8; 10:1 (LXX read ‘from’); 18:14; 19:5 . . .”⁶ As the situation in Ugaritic became better known, more examples of the Hebrew preposition *b* functioning in contexts where *min* might have been expected were pointed out. In addition, once it became known that Ugaritic *l* could appear in similar contexts, examples of this new prepositional phenomenon were sought and indicated in Hebrew poetry.⁷

In 1959, N. Sarna combined the evidence from Ugaritic, Phoenician, Epigraphic South Arabic, Akkadian and Egyptian and proposed to view the employment of one preposition to mean both ‘in’ and ‘from’ as a feature characteristic of Semitic languages and therefore one naturally to be encountered in Hebrew.⁸ Sarna’s Hebrew examples involved only cases where *b* seemed to replace *min*. M. Dahood, however, in 1965 published the first six of an ever growing list of examples of *min* with the meaning ‘in’.⁹

Sarna’s article must be the point of departure in any discussion of this phenomenon because he was the first to systematically gather the evidence and to advance the claim that it represented a developmental tendency in Semitic languages. A reexamination of the data, however, does not support his conclusion. Sarna’s study assumed incorrectly that if a given preposition in a source language had to be translated by two or more different prepositions in a target language, the reason was to be sought in the source language. Consideration of the relevant prepositions within the structure of the various languages will illustrate this point.

In Ugaritic, *b* functions in such contexts that it is rendered in English either by ‘in(to), by, with’, or ‘from’, while *l* is either ‘to, for’, or ‘from’.¹⁰ Noticeably absent from all of the poetic texts and all of the prose texts except one is the preposition *mn*. In UT 1015:10–11, the expression *wum tšmḥ mab* occurs, “and may Mother derive pleasure from Father.” This is usually compared with Prov. 5:18, *ūšēmaḥ mē’ēšet nē’ūrekā*, “and derive pleasure from the wife of thy youth.”¹¹

If the text of UT 1015 does not contain an error, *mab* for *mad*, a biform of *mid*, ‘much’,¹²

6 H. L. Ginsberg, *Kit^ebe Ugarit* (Jerusalem, 1936), 36, n. 33; J. H. Patton, *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms* (Baltimore, 1944), 34.

7 UT § 10.1, 92–93; Patton, *Canaanite Parallels*, 41.

8 Sarna, *Interchange*, 310–11. “This wide-spread and particular usage of the preposition *b* in other Semitic languages should make it highly probable that the same phenomenon is to be found in Hebrew too” (page 311). Cf. also UT, 93 (end).

9 M. Dahood, *Psalms I*, Anchor Bible 16 (Garden City, N. Y., 1965), 106; cf. also idem, “Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography V,” *Biblica* 48 (1967), 427, where 14 examples are presented.

10 UT, § 10.1, p. 92.

11 Loc. cit., n. 1. The translations are Gordon’s.

12 Acceptance of this position necessitates a modification in the semantic analysis of D. Marcus who argues that Ugaritic *mad*, attested only as an adjective, is to be distinguished from *mid*, which is mostly used as an adverb (“Ugaritic Evidence for ‘The Almighty/ The Grand One?’” *Biblica* 55 [1974] 405–6).

resulting from the deletion of a pair of wedges,¹³ and if the above translation be maintained, the following observations are in order: The preposition *m(n)* in *mab* is not a directive or separative used with a verb indicating a point of departure for motion, action, or a source of ideas or action. Here it is used to indicate reason or cause, that is, "may mother derive pleasure by reason of (or, because of,) father" and is paralleled by similar constructions with *min* in biblical Hebrew.¹⁴

Since it may not be assumed that because Ugaritic *m(n)* corresponds to one sense of Hebrew *min* that it will correspond to the other senses, there is no basis on which to hypothesize a Ugaritic *m(n)* 'from'. This does not remove the apparent ambiguity of *b* and *l* in Ugaritic; it does, however, point out that in Ugaritic, only two such prepositions function as directives whereas in Hebrew three do.

Concerning the ambiguity of Ugaritic *b* and *l* with the sense 'from', a preliminary investigation by C. Brekelmans indicates that it is apparently only lexical and not contextual. His research indicates that they are not free variants, but are used systematically:

So for instance *yrđ l* in Ugaritic always means 'to descend from' and *yrđ b* 'to descend into', the contrary not being attested. Likewise *yš' b* always means 'to come forth, to go out from'. The verb *šty* is always constructed with *b*, never with *l*. The implications of such facts are clear: it is impossible to say that *b* and *l* in all situations may be rendered with 'from'.¹⁵

Turning now to Phoenician, the use of prepositions there has, unfortunately, not been adequately described although the data have been collected.

The prepositions *b*, *k*, and *l* occur prefixed directly to the following word or as *bm*, *km*, *lm* either prefixed or independently written: *btkt* (KAI 10:5), *bmtkt* (KAI 24:5) 'in the middle'; *kqdm* (KAI 43:12) 'as aforetime'; *km'š* (KAI 24:6) 'like fire'; *km. nbš* (KAI 24:13) 'like the mind . . .'; *km hkkbm* (KAI² 227:10); 'like . . . stars'; *lpn* (KAI 4:7) 'before'; *lm'l* (KAI 14:12) 'above'; *lmm'l* (KAI 145:14) '(from ?) above'. (The *l* in *lm'l* must be the proclitic preposition *l*. Cf. *lmṭ* [KAI 14:11] and *mt'* [KAI 145:14] 'below'.)

13 Note the two cases of a pair of wedges being added to Ugaritic *d* (UT, § 4.10, p. 20). Cf. J. C. Greenfield, "Lexicographical Notes II," *HUCA* 30 (1959), 144, n. 14; J. Blau-S. E. Loewenstamm, "Zur Frage der Scriptio Plena im Ugaritischen und Verwandtes," *UF* 2 (1970), 22 n. 16. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartín, "Zur ugaritischen Lexicographie (VII)," *UF* 5 (1973), 52-53.

14 For causal *min* in Hebrew cf. Gen. 9:11; Exod. 2:23; Deut. 7:7a; 2 Sam. 3:11; Nah. 1:5.

15 C. Brekelmans, "Some Considerations on the Translation of the Psalms by M. Dahood," *UF* 1 (1969), 6. Cf. also the well formulated observations of D. Pardee concerning the inner-language distinctions between different prepositions which must be rendered by the same translation equivalent in a target language (*JAOS* 94 [1974], 508-9.) In a thorough study of prepositions in Ugaritic, Pardee has substantiated the general observation of Brekelmans though he does admit to a small degree of stylistic ambiguity which existed in the language itself. Pardee, however, cites only one certain case of ambiguity in Ugaritic: *nš'l*, 'to lift up from/ to lift up to'. (I thank Dr. Pardee for allowing me to refer to his study "The Prepositions in Ugaritic" which will appear in *UF* 7, 8.)

These prepositions are usually employed in Phoenician in contexts identical to those in which their Hebrew cognates appear.¹⁶ There are, however, a number of texts in which *b* and *l* occur in contexts where *m(n)* might have been anticipated and which are most reasonably rendered in English by 'from'.¹⁷

b

- (KAI 5:1-2), [*mš z y*] *b' 'bb'l* . . . *bmšrm* "This statue/pedestal (?) A. brought . . . from Egypt." (circa 925 B. C.)
- (KAI 14:5-6, 7-8, 21), . . . *y'msn bmskb z* . . . " . . . he will . . . transfer me from this sarcophagus . . ." (circa 500 B. C.)
- (KAI 26:AIII:13-14), . . . *š ymh šm 'ztwd bš'r z* . . . "who will erase the name of A. from this gate . . ." (circa 850 B. C.)
- (KAI 26:CIV:15), *š y'm[r] lmbt šm 'ztwd bsml '[l] m z* "who will think to erase the name of A. from this statue of the gods." (circa 850 B. C.)
- (KAI 60:6), . . . *yš'n bksp 'lm* . . . " . . . let them take from the money of the god (i.e. the temple treasury)." (circa 96 B. C.)
- (BASOR 197 [1970], 46), *bbt lphšt blk* "from the house, O crushers, go forth." (circa 700 B. C.)¹⁸

*lm, lmb <lm + b*¹⁹

- (KAI 24:12), *wmy bl hz ktn lmn'ry* "and whoever had not seen a tunic from (or since) his youth." (circa 825 B. C.)
- (KAI 26:AI:4-5; AII:2-3), *lmmš' šmš w'd mb'y* "from the east to the west." (Cf. *bmb' šmš* [AI:18-19], 'in the west', and *bmš' šmš* [AI:21], 'in the east'; circa 850 B. C.)
- (KAI 81:5), *lmbyrh byr* . . . "from the month of ḤYR . . ." (circa III-II centuries B. C.)
- (KAI 141:4-5), . . . *lmb'bn š 'l bsyw't w'd 't 'bn z* . . . "from the marker which is by the SYW'T to the sign of this marker . . ." (circa 130 B. C.)
- (KAI 145:14), *qr' lmm'l' mt'* "read from above<to>below." (Neo-Punic, date uncertain)

16 PPG², §§ 251-54, 281-85.

17 Only examples from texts whose interpretations are virtually certain will be presented below.

18 Contrast the earlier reading in KAI 27:21: *wmbzt mhšt blk* and the reading of A. Caquot based on an original squeeze: *m̄bz̄l hšt blk* ("Observations sur la Première Tablette Magique d'Arslan Tash," JANES 5 [1973], 50). Final decisions concerning the reading of this inscription must await the publication of a complete set of photographs.

19 Cf. PPG², § 253 where the form *lm* is considered to be a combination of two prepositions. The function and meaning (i.e. translation equivalent) of *lmb* in KAI 124:1, 2 are difficult to determine. Cf. also *lmb'nšm* 'from the fines' (?) (KAI 130:2): If this interpretation is correct, then the preposition *lmb* corresponds in function to the "beth pretii" (of price) in Hebrew (A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* . . . [Oxford, 1910], § 119 p). In KAI 69:5 *b'gl' š qmy lmbhšr* "for a calf whose horns are lacking," the first preposition *b* is described by Cooke as a "beth of reference" which he compares to some usages of Arabic *fī* (*Textbook*, 117). The second preposition, *lmb*, corresponds in function to the "beth essentiae" in Hebrew which introduces a predicate and emphasizes it as being the nature of the subject (P. P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique* [Rome, 1923], § 133c, p. 404; BDB, 88).

Little may be said about the preposition *m(n)* in Phoenician because it is rarely attested. It occurs in an inscription found at Kition dated 341 B. C.: (KAI 33:2), [s] *mlt* '[z] 'š *ytn wytn' mnḥšt* PN, "this statue of (or from) bronze which PN donated and set up." In Punic, it is attested in the *Poenulus* of Plautus (circa 200 B. C.): Palatine version (reconstructed text), line 939, . . . *ys lymmon choth iusim*, ". . . who are coming out from here"; Ambrosian version (reconstructed text), line 949, . . . *es iusim limin co*, ". . . who are coming out from here."²⁰ The preposition *lymmon/limin* may be parsed as *l + mn* and compared structurally to Hebrew *l^emin* (Exod. 9:18; Deut. 4:23; 9:7).²¹ *m(n)* is also attested in late Phoenician of the fourth century B. C. among the graffiti on the walls of the Osiris temple at Abydos, Egypt: (KAI 49:36), 'nk *mgn bn bd' šḥpšb'l mnp* "I am PN whom Baal desired (?) from Nof (i.e. Memphis)."²²

The Abydos graffito is especially informative because it reflects the Phoenician of a resident of Memphis in Egypt. His graffito may be compared with those of former residents of the Phoenician motherland and Cyprus: (KAI 49:13), *bkty* 'the Kitionite'; (KAI 49:34), 'nk *p'l'bst bn šdytn bn gršd ḥšry yšb d/'ky b'n bmšrm bḫrt 'bdmqrṭ b'n*[y] "I am PN son of PN son of PN the Tyrian dwelling D/'KY in On (i.e. Heliopolis) in Egypt in the clientship(??) of PN the Onite."²³ The Kitionite does not designate himself as *mkty*, nor does the native Tyrian describe himself as *mšr*. This may be contrasted with the Memphite's *mnp*, cited above, and with two other graffiti from Abydos: (KAI 49:26), PN *mšpn*; and (KAI 49:30), PN *mtl. špn* and *tl* have not been located, but presumably they too are in North-Africa.

It is possible to draw some tentative conclusions from these limited data. In Phoenician, *b* was used with verbs as a directive or separative preposition; *lm* in Phoenician and *lmb* in Neo-

20 C. Krahmalkov, "The Punic Speech of Hanno," *Orientalia* 39 (1970), 69–72. The preposition *bod* 'from' (line 939) which Krahmalkov identifies (pages 68, 73) is perhaps to be connected with **biyod* ('by the hand of' >'by means of') >> *bod*, and the expression *bod ily* translated "by means of these." Cf. Hebrew *b^eyad* in 1 Kgs. 8:53; 16:34; Ugaritic *bd*; A. F. Rainey, "Some Prepositional Nuances in Ugaritic Administrative Texts," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies* (Jerusalem, 1969), 207–9.

21 In Punic, *lmn* is employed in a directive or separative sense. In biblical Hebrew, *l^emin* occurs only as a distributive and is usually coordinated with *we'ad*, 'from . . . to/until' (Exod. 9:18; Deut. 4:32; 9:7; 2 Sam. 19:25; Jer. 7:7, 25; 25:5; 32:31; 1 Chr. 5:9—*cad* precedes *l^emin*; 15:13). In 2 Sam. 7:11, the end of the time period which begins in the period of the Judges is the very moment at which David sought out Nathan with his plan to build a temple (cf. 7:11a and 7:1b). In Hag. 2:18, the end of the period which began with the founding of the temple is the very day on which the prophet speaks (cf. 2:19b).

22 The Egyptian name of Memphis was *mn-nfr*, while in Aramaic papyri from Egypt it is called *mnpy* (A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford, 1923], 37:11; 42:7, 11; 83:2). In Hos. 9:6 it is referred to as *mōp*, but in other prophetic books it is called *nōp* (Isa. 19:13; Jer. 2:16; 44:1; Ezek. 30:13, 16). If Phoenician *mnp* should be compared to the Aramaic form of the name, *mnpy*, then a final *yod*, a gentilic ending, might have been expected as in KAI 49:13 *bkty* and KAI 49:34 *ḥšry*. It therefore appears that Phoenician *mnp* is to be explained as originated from *m(n) + np*. Thus the name of the city in Phoenician goes along with the southern Hebrew form and against that of northern Hebrew and Aramaic.

23 The restoration, *b'n*[y] is suggested by M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik III* (Giessen, 1915), 110–11. On the various possible interpretations of *pḫrt*, cf. *DISO*, 227, ll. 4–7. I have accepted Z. Harris' suggestion (*Grammar*, 137).

Punic were used to indicate limitation, 'from . . . (to)', both in expressions involving time and space. *m(n)* as a directive or separative is first attested in late Phoenician inscriptions of the fourth century B. C. among Phoenician speakers in Egypt and may be seen as an innovation of the language of the colonies. This is not to deny that *m(n)* was employed in the language of the motherland or the adjacent islands. The expression *smlt* '[z] . . . *mnḥšt* 'this statue. . . of bronze', indicates that it was used, but in a rare syntactic construction in which it precedes the substance out of which an object was composed.²⁴

In Phoenician and Punic, this relationship between object and material was expressed by a bound form: (KAI 10:4), *hmzbbḥ nḥšt zn*; (KAI 60:3), *'ṯrt ḥṛṣ*.²⁵ In late Phoenician and Neo-Punic, it was expressed by a genitive construction with *š*: (*Le Muséon* 51 [1938], 286, l. 4), *qb 'm šlksp*,²⁶ (KAI 122:2), *dlbt šnḥšt*.²⁷ The relationship could also be indicated with the preposition *b*: (*Le Muséon* 51 [1938], 286, l. 2), *sml mš z bnḥšt*,²⁸ (KAI 43:7, cf. l. 14), *mšpn 'by bnḥšt*.²⁹

These conclusions are supported by numismatic evidence. Coins from the Phoenician motherland and from Cyprus from the fifth century B. C. on bear inscriptions with *l*: *lgbl*,³⁰ *lšdnm*,³¹ *lšr*,³² *ll'dk' 'm bkn'n*,³³ *lb'lmlk*,³⁴ and *l'zrb'l*.³⁵ Coins from North Africa and Spain, however, bear inscriptions with *m*: *mb'l*,³⁶ *mb'l šqš*,³⁷ and *mb'l 'gdr*.³⁸ A comparison

24 Cf. Exod. 39:1; Num. 6:4; Ps. 16:4.

25 PPG², § 309, page 155.

26 A. M. Honeyman, "Larnax Tēs Lapēthou: A Third Phoenician Inscription," *Le Muséon* 51 (1938), 286. Cf. in the same inscription *qb' ksp* (l. 7).

27 PPG², § 309, note 1, p. 155; § 310.2, p. 156.

28 Contrast KAI 119:4 *m š bnḥšt*, and CIS i, 3777:1, *mš 'bn*.

29 The *b* in KAI 60:3 *'ṯrt ḥṛṣ bārknm 20*, probably does not belong with these examples. The *b* should be compared to the *beth essentiae* in Hebrew. Cf. 2 Chr. 9:18 and the end of note 19 above.

30 E. Babelon, *Catologue des monnaies grecques de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Les Perses Achéménides, les satrapes et le dynastes tributaire de leur empire. Cypre & Phénice* (1893), 196f., no. 1372 f. These are found through the reign of Augustus.

31 Ibid., 236 f., no 1619 f. and G. Macdonald, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection*, (1905), 3:250 f., (from the second century B. C. to 35 A. D.).

32 Babelon, *Catologue* 301 f., no 2056 f.; Macdonald, *Catalogue* 264f. (from the second century B. C. to 116 A. D.).

33 Babelon, *Catologue.*, 166 no. 1180, "De Laodicée métropole de Canaan"; Macdonald, *Catalogue*, 49, 96, 236. A similar inscription is reported by G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum* (1910), 1:52 (quoted by Harris, *Grammar*, 111).

34 Babelon, *Catologue*, 95 no. 647, 648; 98 no. 678. Both these and the following series are dated 479–400 B. C.

35 Ibid., 97 no. 670.

36 Macdonald, *Catalogue*, from Lix, 617; from Tingis, 618. These coins from sites not far from Tangier are dated to the first century B. C.

37 Ibid., 659. These coins from Sexi in Spain date from the second–first centuries B. C.

38 Ibid., 663. This inscription is found on two coins from Gades, modern Cadiz in Spain, is also dated to the second–first centuries B. C.

of the two types of legends, the western ones with *l*, and the eastern ones with *m(n)* supports an interpretation that both *l* and *m(n)* were intended to indicate whence the coin originated and that the two prepositions are therefore functional and semantic equivalents. This interpretation assumes, of course, that both types of legends, which were contemporary, were intended to convey similar information.

A number of coins from Aradus, to the north of Byblos, which are dated 400–351 B. C., bear the legend *m'* which is taken to be an abbreviation of *m(n)* 'rd 'from Aradus'.³⁹ If this interpretation is correct, it attests to the employment of *m(n)* as a directive or separative preposition in the motherland by the beginning of the fourth century B. C. The fact that it is not attested in inscriptions from other cities of the region may indicate that it was a peculiarity of the Aradian dialect. The interpretation of the legend itself is not, unfortunately, certain. After 350 B. C., the following legends appear on Aradian coins alongside *m'*: *m'k*, *m''*, *šgm*, *m'q*, *bw*, 'n.⁴⁰ Not all of these may be explained as mint marks and their interpretation is uncertain.⁴¹ The relationship of *m'* to the other legends must, it seems, be determined before *m'* may be interpreted confidently 'from Aradus'.

Thus it seems that Phoenician, or minimally Phoenician up to the fourth century B. C. like Ugaritic, functioned with only *b* and *l/lm* (and *lmb*) as separative, directive, and limiting prepositions in contexts where Hebrew would usually employ *min* and English "from." Moreover, these two prepositions functioned in distinct contexts and there is no evidence of confusion or of interchange between them.

An explanation which claims that *b* as a directive or separative preposition is a dissimilated */m/* must confront the following objections: 1) While */m/* > */b/* before a following */m/* as in *bmšrm* and *bmškb* may be called dissimilation, there is no phonetic explanation for the same phenomenon before a consonant which is not homorganic, for example, *bš'r*, *bsml*, or *bn* (KAI 14:5; 26:AIII:8; 43:13). 2) Why didn't */m/* > */b/* before */m/* in *mmlkt* if it was a conditioned change?⁴² If it was not a conditioned change, but one which affected the preposition *m(n)* alone, then for all practical purposes, from the 10th century B. C. on, there was no *m(n)* in Phoenician. Such an explanation must then confront the reappearance (or preservation) of *m(n)* in Phoenician (KAI 33:2; 49:36) and in Punic (*Poenulus*). It is much simpler to explain that Phoenician, like Ugaritic, employed prepositions differently from Hebrew rather than to force the Phoenician material into a Hebrew Procrustean bed.

In Epigraphic South Arabic (ESA) the picture is less complex than in Phoenician. Sarna implied that in ESA *b* is used for both 'in' and 'from' and cited the grammar of Maria Höfner

39 Babelon, *Catologue*, 123 f., no. 832, 841, 842, 886, 894. This interpretation is accepted by Harris, *Grammar*, 120.

40 Babelon, *Catologue*, 130 no. 907, 908; 136 no. 954, 958; 137 no. 961, 962.

41 Loc. cit.

42 PPG² which accepts the dissimilation hypothesis also explains the form *bn* (KAI 43:13) as being a dissimilated form of *mn* (§ 54b, p. 21). How is this to be explained phonetically? Should **nm* have not then become **bnm* and *mnḥt*, **bnḥt*? The explanation that *lm* < *l + m* (PPG² § 253, p. 127) is incompatible with the dissimilation hypothesis. If *m > b* then *lmmš'* (KAI 26:AI:4) should have become **lmmš'*.

as his source.⁴³ What Höfner actually says is that *bn*, and not *b*, has a basic sense of 'from' and that it contrasts in meaning with *b*.⁴⁴ In his grammar of ESA, A. F. L. Beeston lists the usages of *b*, none of which calls for an English translation 'from'. *bn* is the preposition used in most ESA dialects to indicate motion away from a point of departure, but in the Harami dialect where *bn* does not occur, *mn* does.⁴⁵ In another dialect, Sabean, *ln* occurs with the sense 'from' in the stereotyped expression *ln . . . 'd(y)*, 'from . . . to',⁴⁶ while in Hadrami, the corresponding expression is *bn . . . 'd*.⁴⁷ Beeston explains that *bn*, *ln*, and *bn* are morphologically enlarged forms of *b*, *l*, and *b* to which the differentiated meaning 'from' has been attached.⁴⁸ It may be concluded, then, that in attested texts of ESA, within the dialect of a given speech community, the prepositions are morphologically, functionally, and semantically well differentiated.

The Aramaic evidence for the interchangeability of *b* and *m(n)* consists of a single passage discussed in a 1941 study by C. H. Gordon.⁴⁹ The passage under discussion is the following, *w'pyqw bsyptthwn wlṭw*, which Gordon translates, "and they brought out from their lips and cursed." In the following discussion, Gordon refers to Ugaritic *b* meaning 'in' and 'from' and writes "*b* 'from' which is preferable to 'in' (or even 'with')." ⁵⁰ Gordon's recourse to Ugaritic stems from his inability to find a suitable English translation for the idiomatic Aramaic. His translation does not constitute evidence that Aramaic *b* means 'from'; it indicates only that the hypothesis that there must be a one to one correspondence between prepositions in source and target languages is incorrect.⁵¹

Finally, although both Akkadian *ina* and Egyptian *m* occur in contexts where they must be rendered in English by both 'in' and 'from'⁵² the exact nuance of direction is governed not by the preposition itself but by the semantic component of the syntactic construction of which it is an element.⁵³ However, even if the lexical information about *ina* and *m* is taken at face value, the preceding discussion of *b*, *l*, and *m(n)* in Ugaritic, Phoenician, ESA, and Aramaic

43 Sarna, *Interchange*, 310; M. Höfner, *Altsudarabische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1943), 143.

44 Höfner, loc. cit.; D. W. Goodwin, *Text-Restoration Methods in Contemporary U. S. A. Biblical Scholarship* (Naples, 1969), 68, n. 85; G. Schmuttermayr, "Ambivalenz und Aspectdifferenz: Bemerkungen zu den hebräischen Präpositionen ך, ם und ן," *BZ* 15 (1971), 37–39.

45 A. F. L. Beeston, *A Descriptive Grammar of Epigraphic South Arabian* (London, 1962), 53–54, 56.

46 *Ibid.*, 56; Höfner, *Grammatik*, 148.

47 Beeston, *Descriptive Grammar*, 53–54, 56.

48 *Ibid.*, 57.

49 C. H. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls (continued)," *Or.* 10 (1941), 341, 358. Cf. also *Or.* 20 (1951), 507. This is cited again by Gordon in *UT* § 10.1, p. 93.

50 Gordon, *Or.* 10 (1941), 358.

51 Cf. Schmuttermayr, *Ambivalenz*, 39 note 69.

52 Cf. *CAD* and *AHW*. s. v. *ina*; A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (London, 1927), s. v. *m* in the glossary.

53 "Die Grundbedeutung ist 'in, an' (lokativisch) . . . und ablativisch 'von, aus', wenn der Sprecher den Blick auf den Ausgangspunkt einer Bewegung richtet" (W. von Soden, *GAG*, § 114c, p. 164); Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 124; Pardee discusses the non-directionality of prepositions (cf. above note 15).

indicates that it may no longer be maintained that the use of one preposition to mean both 'in' and 'from' is a *common* feature of Semitic languages.

A corollary to this conclusion is that evidence of the interchangeability of the proclitic prepositions *b*, *l*, and *min* in Hebrew must be evaluated on its own merits.⁵⁴ Since there is no tendency within the Semitic languages in general and among those of the Canaanite group in particular to confuse them,⁵⁵ there is no *a priori* reason to suspect this phenomenon in Hebrew.⁵⁶

What is desiderated is an inner Hebrew study along lines initiated by N. Sarna and G. Schmuttermayr.⁵⁷ All verbs which are coordinated with at least two of the proclitic prepositions should be isolated and their semantic and syntactic contexts described, catalogued, and compared.⁵⁸ (Although the major focus of such a study is biblical Hebrew, Qumranic

54 Evidence relating to the prepositions *l* and '*al*' has been summarily discussed by E. F. Sutcliffe with whose conclusion I am in general agreement: "... neither preposition 'means' *from*, but... both are so used in certain collocations of words that the context suggests the idea of removal or separation and must or can be replaced in English by *from*"; "A Note on '*Al*, *L*^c, and *From*," *VT* 5 (1955), 439. Pardee's discussion serves to clarify the Ugaritic evidence relative to these prepositions, but the situation in Phoenician (*KAI* 1:2) and Moabite (*KAI* 181:14) in comparison to Hebrew are in need of additional study.

55 The Mesha inscription in Moabite, *KAI* 181, follows the common Hebrew pattern. For *b* cf. ll. 5, 6, 7, etc.; *l* occurs in ll. 3, 12, 21, 24; *m(n)* occurs in ll. 10, 12, 15, 17. Schmuttermayr considers *b* in l. 26 to mean 'from' and hence to function in place of *m(n)*; *Ambivalenz*, 37, citing F. I. Anderson, "Moabite Syntax," *Or.* 35 (1966), 95. There is no basis for this interpretation of the preposition other than the assumption that *b* can be translated 'from'. His suggestion that *m(n)* means 'in' on l. 11 must also be rejected (*Ambivalenz*, 37). The *m* is a restored letter. Nevertheless, granting the restoration, why cannot '*hrg*... [*m*] (l. 12) *hqr* be translated "I killed <all the people > from, i.e. who were at, the city"?

The recently published Ammonite texts contain no "irregular"—I employ the term guardedly—uses of the prepositions. Cf. S. H. Horn, "The Ammān Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 193 (1969), 8; H. O. Thompson and F. Zayadine, "The Tell Siran Inscription," *BASOR* 212 (1973), 7–9.

56 Schmuttermayr claims that a certain ambivalence in the meaning of *b* and *l* as well as the notion of aspect explain the so-called overlap in meaning between the prepositions (*Ambivalenz*, 44, 49). I do not understand how there can be ambivalence in so highly structured an area of the language as that of prepositions; cf. E. Haugen, "The Analysis of Linguistic Borrowing," *Language* 26 (1950), 224. In languages with which I am familiar, there is usually a great deal of seeming confusion and apparent ambiguity in the use of some prepositions, but once mastered, despite the complexity of the situation, the contexts in which a given preposition has a given meaning are rigidly determined. Consider the following utterances in English: Turn off the lights. Turn off the road. Turn off! Some of these might seem ambiguous to a person not too familiar with the language, but actually the function of the preposition is well-defined within the context of each utterance by the speech community. The same must have been true for biblical Hebrew unless we assume that the native speakers were linguistically incompetent. Cf. J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1968), 176–77.

57 Sarna, *Interchange*, 312–13; Schmuttermayr, *Ambivalenz*, 42–44.

58 Cf. Sutcliffe, *Note on 'Al*, and C. F. Whitley, "Some Functions of the Hebrew Particles Beth and Lamedh," *JQR* 62 (1972), 199–206, in which a fair presentation of evidence that in some contexts *b* and *l* seem to function in a similar way, is to be found. The article is somewhat spoiled by the uncritical and at times undocumented turn for supporting evidence to other languages, e.g. "But *l* too has this meaning 'from' in Ugaritic, Proto-Sinaitic, and Hebrew" (p. 205).

and Mishnaic Hebrew should also be consulted because they too contain traces of phenomena which might be considered the interchange of prepositions.)⁵⁹ Once collected, the data should be analyzed with an eye to the synchronic and diachronic distribution of the phenomena insofar as this is possible.⁶⁰ Only when the results of such a study, based on a body of texts whose interpretation is agreed upon, is available, can the analysis of difficult and poorly understood texts be undertaken.

59 A. Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* (Israel, 1967), 142–43, 188, 197, 201, 233; E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (IQ Isa^a)* (Leiden, 1974), 403–10.

60 Cf. Beeston's description, cited above, of the synchronic distribution of the prepositions within the various ESA dialects which resolved what otherwise might be considered a classical case of interchangeability.