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Aramaic Scribal Exercises of the Hellenistic Period from Maresha: Bowls A and B

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In the excavations at Maresha, parts of four bowls with 16 inscriptions written on both the interior and exterior were found. This article discusses seven inscriptions written on two bowls by different hands, thus identified as scribal exercises, in a cursive Aramaic script of the late third or the beginning of the second century B.C.E.

The inscriptions on Bowl A include part of a wisdom text, a registration of a daily harvest, and an account. Bowl B includes a blessing of a wise man and part of a marriage contract. While the registration of the harvest, the account, and the marriage contract are related to daily life, the source of what we are calling "wisdom texts" is less clear. In this article we have tried to trace the possible origins of those wisdom texts by looking for parallels and by speculating that they are part of the lost Edomite wisdom tradition.

INTRODUCTION

In the excavations at Maresha (Marisa), parts of four bowls with inscriptions were found, written on both the interior and exterior. The inscriptions were written by different hands, and one bowl includes no fewer than six different inscriptions. All together, these four bowls include 16 inscriptions, from the shortest with only two letters to the longest with 12 lines. In the following, we will discuss seven inscriptions written on two of the Bowls, A and B.

Bowl A was discovered during the excavations conducted in 1992 at the subterranean complex of the lower city of Maresha, Area 61 (Kloner and Arbel 1998). This subterranean complex includes colombarium halls, an olive press, and a network of rooms and cisterns. The bowl was discovered in

Unit 17, Locus 581 (Kloner and Arbel 1998: 158, fig. 6; 160–61), which is a network of cisterns and rooms that was reached from the east through a stepped rock-cut passage, which was found sealed by masonry. A shallow deposit of silt was identified on the floor. Another cistern, found filled almost up to the ceiling, was exposed to the east of the stepped passage. The finds in the cistern include many complete pottery vessels from the Hellenistic period, among them oil lamps and a Rhodian amphora. Also associated with this system were two rooms connected by a short passage with a low ceiling. Most of the ceramic finds in the two rooms date to the Hellenistic period.

The area excavated above the subterranean complex includes an *insula* bordered by two streets on its west and south. The *insula* is divided into three residential complexes, dating to the third and second

centuries B.C.E.: northern, central and southern, and part of another complex. The house structure consists of rooms arranged around a central courtyard. It is clear that maximum use was made of the available surface by quarrying and leveling operations, including the creation of the subterranean complex discussed above (Kloner et al. 1998).

Bowl B was found in Area 100, during the excavations conducted in 1993 (Kloner, Finkielsztejn, and Arbel 1998). It was discovered in Room 5, Locus 53, of Structure C at the lower part of Area 100. This is part of an *insula* comprising five structures aligned roughly east–west. It was unearthed north of the tower and alongside the Iron Age wall. The structures were identified as shops and workshops, built of dressed limestone blocks, with their facades facing north, onto the street. Room 5, where the bowl was found, probably served as the *agoranomos*'s office. In this room, a measuring table made of limestone, inscribed in Greek with names of two magisters and dating to 143/142 B.C.E., was found (Finkielsztejn 1999).¹

Bowl A includes two inscriptions on the exterior (nos. 1–2; figs. 1–3) and one on the interior (no. 3; figs. 4, 5); Bowl B includes two inscriptions on the exterior (nos. 4–5; figs. 6, 7) and two on the interior (nos. 6–7; figs. 8, 9). Bowl C includes four inscriptions on the exterior and two on the interior; and Bowl D includes one inscription on the exterior and two on the interior. The first seven inscriptions—the three inscriptions written on Bowl A and the four inscriptions written on Bowl B—are the subject of this article. The inscriptions on the other two bowls will be published in the future.

The inscriptions were written in a cursive Aramaic script of the Hellenistic period and are dated by means of palaeography to the beginning of the second century B.C.E. (Cross 1998: 383–84, pl. 11).

Scribal Exercise on Bowls

The practice of writing on bowls in ancient times (before the custom of magical bowls was introduced) is known from various places. We know of a

group of Iron Age II bowls engraved with inscriptions that were placed on jars and cooking pots in temples, shrines, or high places, where worshipers seem to have filled them with sacrificial meat or other products. Once the vessels were filled with gifts, they were brought home by the priests to be consumed. On one of those bowls found in the temple of Arad was an inscription written on the exterior, dating to the seventh century B.C.E. The writing comprises a list of family names (Aharoni 1981: 80–84). Other such bowls were engraved with the words שקד , 'holy' or ךתא , 'your (poor) brother' on the inside (Barkay 1990; 1991). The inscriptions were written on the interior or exterior of the bowls depending upon whether the bowls were placed facing up or down as covers on the jars and cooking pots.

Another bowl bearing an inscription in the Jewish script which dates to the first century C.E. was found at Jericho. Written on the bowl's exterior are the names "Yishmael son of Palṭa / Shim'on from Jerusalem," and on the interior "Yisma'el son of Shim'on son of Palṭa [from] Jerusalem" (Hachlili and Killebrew 1999: 155–57). This bowl, like the bowls under discussion, was probably chosen due to its smooth surface, which was easy to write on.

The nature of the inscriptions found on the bowls from Maresha seem to indicate that those bowls were used as practice slates for scribal students, as part of a school practice. Such bowls were ideal for scribal exercises since the surface of the bowls was smooth, and therefore easy to use, and they could be easily washed in water and reused.

Hitherto, few scribal practices of the Hellenistic-Roman period are known. A rare glimpse into such practices includes a group of full or partial abecedary inscriptions written on shards, some including personal names in alphabetic order, including those found at Qumran (Eshel 2000), Masada (Yadin and Naveh 1989: 61, pl. 51, nos. 606, 608–9), Herodion (Testa 1972; Puech 1980; Yardeni 2000b: 214), and Khirbet Qana (Eshel and Edwards 2004). Other abecedaries are written on parchment, such as those found at Qumran (4QExercitium Calami C; Naveh 2000),² and at Wadi Murabba'at (Milik 1961: 91–92).

Scholars have been able to reconstruct the school curriculum of cuneiform scribes in Mesopotamia of

¹ Keeping the format of the preserved letters, the space left allows us to reconstruct $[\text{H}\lambda\iota\omega]\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ as the first patronymic name (see Tomb I, No. 27; Peters and Thiersch 1905: 53; Tomb II, No. 1 (36); Peters and Thiersch 1905: 64), excluding $[\text{Z}\eta\nu\sigma]\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ which is too long. Another possibility is the name $[\Delta\iota\omega]\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ or $[\Theta\epsilon\sigma]\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$.

² Two other texts found at Qumran written in various directions—4Q234 and 4Q360 (= 4QExercitium Calami A-B)—are thus understood by the editor as a scribal practice (Yardeni 2000a).

the first millennium B.C.E. (see Veldhuis 1997; Gesche 2001; Michalowski 2003). For our purpose, the major contribution of the cuneiform evidence is the notion that students of these schools were supposed to memorize and copy short texts of different genres. The inscriptions discussed below include different types of texts, and we may assume that these texts were intended to help students memorize certain expressions or vocabulary belonging to various genres.*

THE INSCRIPTIONS ON BOWL A

Bowl A is a typical Hellenistic “fish-bowl.” It is probable that the scribes began to write the texts on the outside surface, since it is more difficult to write on the inner side of a relatively small bowl. Therefore, the sequence given below starts with the exterior inscriptions. The inscription that goes beyond the base of the bowl (Inscription no. 1) seems to have been written first. In some places the ink was faded, and only with the aid of professional equipment were we able to read them (many of the letters shown on the photos can no longer be seen on the shards).³ The texts copied on this bowl are:

- Inscription no. 1: Part of a wisdom text
- Inscription no. 2: A registration of a daily harvest
- Inscription no. 3: An account

Inscription No. 1: Part of a Wisdom Text

The following inscription was written on the exterior part of the bowl (see figs. 1–3):

1. טוֹבוֹרְהִי אֲנִי נִשְׂא זִי . . .
2. הִן נִפְקֵת מִלְחָא מִן פְּרִימְנָא
3. וְהִתְנַסַּח בְּאִישׁ הִן נִאֲמֵר

* The following critical signs are used:

˘ dot over a letter signifies a partly preserved letter whose reconstruction is certain.

ˆ circle over a letter signifies a reconstructed letter not incompatible with the surviving fragmentary sign(s).

◦ a circle on the line signifies that a sign can be seen but cannot be identified.

{ } correction in text.

< > editor’s emendation of corrupt text.

[] editor’s reconstruction of missing text.

[*italics*] conjectured sense of word lost in a lacuna.

³Special thanks are due to Mr. Z. Radovan, who produced high-resolution photos of the inscriptions of these bowls.

4. הִן אַע יִתְנַאי אִשָּׁה <ה>ן
5. הִן שׁוֹרְשׁוּהִי יִלְחֵן
6. שְׁחַנְנָא הִן כִּיתָא צוֹנֵן
7. הִן [ת]בְּחַשׁ בַּת עִמְמָא אֲנַתְהֵן
8. הִן תִּתְפֹּשׁ עֲלוּהָ תֹאחִי ִן
9. הִן צִמַּת בְּיוֹם חֲגֵן אֲלֵן

Translation

1. Blessed (is) the m[an *who* . . .]
2. If the word [*goes out*] of [*our*] mou[th . . .]
3. and the evil will be rooted out, if we say [. . .]
4. If wood will be suited for fire, <i>f [. . .]
5. if its roots are sap[py . . .]
6. are we (to be) warm, if the house is col[d . . .]
7. If you desire an alien woman, you [. . .]
8. If you despise the burnt offering, then you will live (?) [. . .]
9. If you have fasted during [the] holiday [*you will*] not [. . .]

Notes on the Reading

Line 1: The first line is written just below the rim of the bowl and has traces which might be read: טוֹבוֹרְהִי אֲנִי.

Line 2: Before the break on the right, traces of *he* and final *nun* (הִן) can be seen. At the edge of the left break, there are remains of a *taw*, preceded by a line in diagonal to the left, and touching the right downstroke, where only *lamed* is possible. Below are non-distinct traces, possibly of a *mem*, which is read, based on the context, as מִלְחָא. After the word מִן one can see a *pe* with a curled head.

Line 3: The remains seen at the beginning of the line can be read as a *waw*; then before the clear *het*, one can see the bottom of what might be a *samek* preceded by the base of a possible *nun*. The pointed shape at the edge of the right break might be that of a *waw*. Near the break on the left, after the *mem*, the bottom leg of a letter with a rounded head survived, which could be either a *reš* or *taw*. Based on the context, we prefer to read it as a *reš*.

Line 4: After a clear *ʾalep* and *ʾayin*, whose stroke slanting down to the left is quite long (אע), the other letters are less clear. The first two letters seem to be *yod* and *taw*. After the last letter there is a space, but it does not seem to be between words. Following this space is a ligature of what might be a *bet* or *nun*, and then *ʾalep* and *yod* (or *reš*), giving us the reading יִתְנַאי.

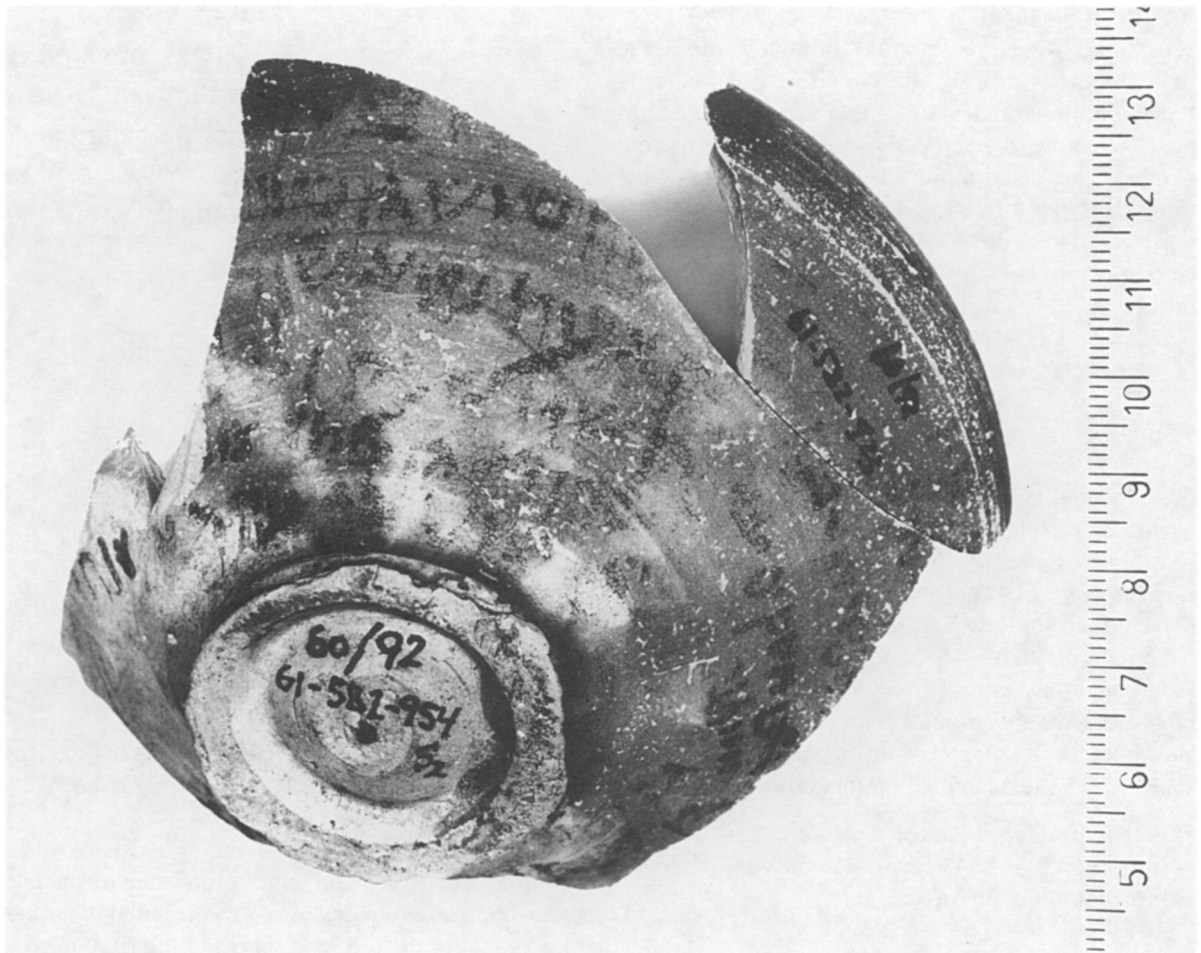


Fig. 1. Bowl A exterior.

Line 5: Starting with a *yod* after the noun *שורשורי*, we might expect a verb in the imperfect. The left leg of the *het* is a bit long and curved, but the curve of the bowl's surface may have contributed to this extension, which is also found on flat surfaces. Thus, we suggest reading *לחן*.

Line 6: The clear *šade* and *waw*, beginning the last word of this line, are followed by the visible right side of a letter, which presents multiple possibilities for reconstruction (*bet*, *kap*, *mem*, *nun*, or *pe*). Based on the context, we suggest reading *nun*, and tentatively reconstructing *נונן*.

Line 7: One can see remains of *he* and *nun*; then later, a clear *bet* can be deciphered. A stroke of a second *mem* of *עממא* is partly visible. The second *'alep* is written in a more cursive hand; then the last stroke might be that of a *he* in the word *אנתה*.

Line 8: After the word *הן*, at the beginning of the line, the next word starts with a *taw*, followed by yet another *taw* of smaller dimension, and is thus read as *תתפש*. In the *'ayin* of the word *עלורה*, one can see an additional stroke in the middle of the letter, which makes it look like a *šin*. Since the stroke slants down to the left, however, and the word *עלורה* fits the context, we prefer to read it as an *'ayin*. The next word starts with a *taw* and *'alep*. Following this we might read a *mem* or *het*, and a *yod*, followed by the start of a cursive stroke, which might read as a *šin* or *'ayin*. Thus, we tentatively suggest the reading *תאחזי*.

Line 9: After the word *צמת*, only the heads of the letters survived. Based on the context, we have reconstructed *ל[א]ג[א] ב'יום חג[א]*.

The text might have continued up to four or five more lines.



Fig. 2. Bowl A exterior.

Commentary

Altogether, there are six sayings included in this fragment of the Maresha text. It starts with ^וטוֹבוֹהִי אִנְשָׁא “Blessed (is) the m[an who . . .],” followed by sayings starting with the word הֵן, meaning “if” in the protasis or “then” in the apodosis.

Having the structure of “if” in some of the cases in the protasis and “then” in some of the others in the apodosis might suggest that this text is an omen.⁴ Although a full edition of the Akkadian omen series *Šumma Alu ina Mēlê Šakin* is still unpublished (but see Freedman 1998), we know that these series include private omens structured in the “if” form,

⁴ The connection of this inscription to the omen texts was suggested to us by Prof. Armin Lange and Prof. Piotr Michalowski, to whom we would like to express our gratitude.

which are “taken from miscellaneous occurrences in people’s everyday life” (Freedman 1998: 2). Therefore, the inscription from Maresha might also originate from such omen series. If the discussed text indeed originated in the omen literature, perhaps some expert of such texts will be able to identify the source of these omens.

A similar pattern of “If” . . . “then,” using הֵן, can be found in the Aramaic Words of Ahiqar. For example, in line 177, we read ^והֵן אִמְחָאֲנִךְ בְּרִי לֹא תָמוּת [. . .] וְהֵן אֲשַׁבְּקֶנָּה עַל לִבְבְּךָ. “If I strike you, my son, you will not die; but if I leave (you) to your heart, (= your own will) [. . .]” (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 48–49; see Puech 2004: 385; cf. lines 171–72). Therefore, this inscription may be a quotation from a wisdom text. We should note that on Bowl B there is another wisdom text, which was completely preserved (Inscription no. 4).

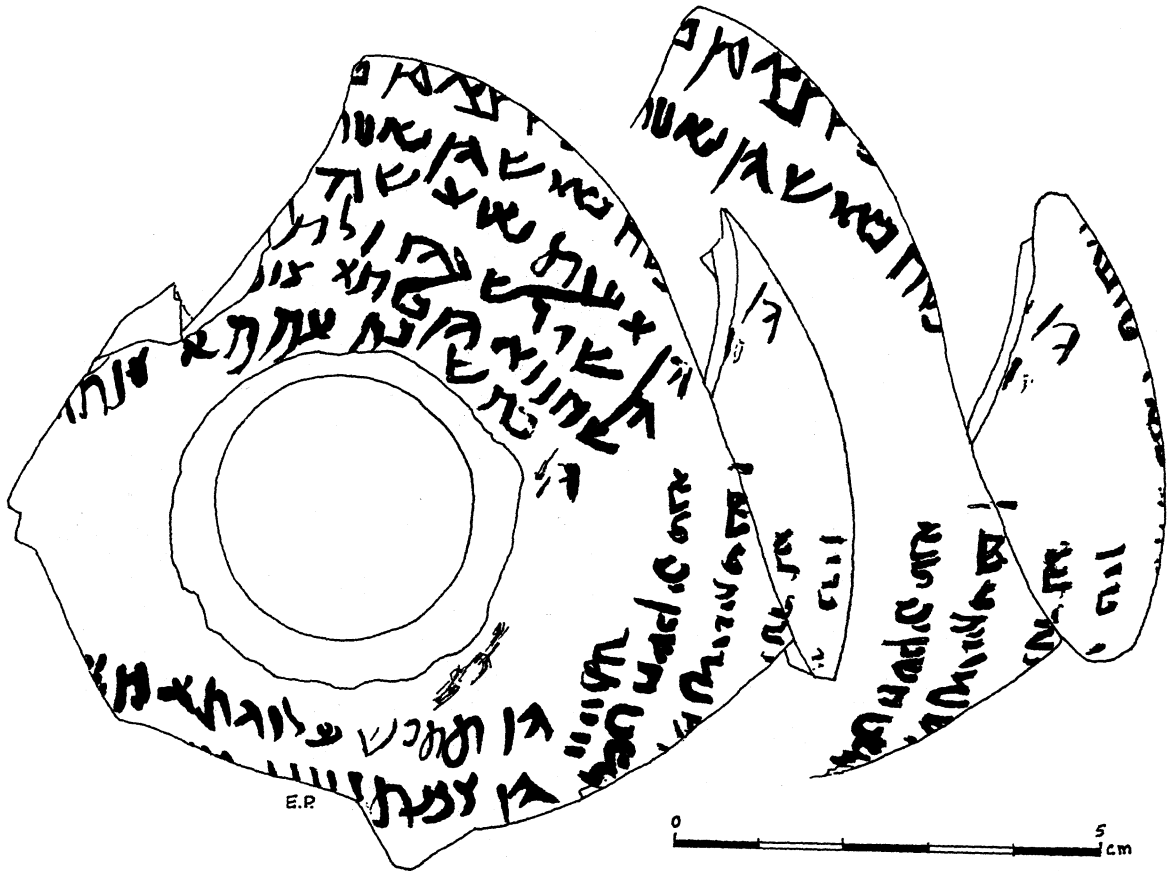


Fig. 3. Bowl A, Inscription nos. 1 and 2 (Emile Puech).

Inscription no. 1 was partly preserved, and in most cases only the protasis, “If something happened” or “If you do something” survived, and the apodosis is missing or only partly preserved. Because no clear parallel text was found, our suggested reconstructions are speculative.

Based on the grammatical subject of the surviving lines, one can divide the text into two main parts: Lines 2–6 are written in the first person plural (נאמר, שחוננא), while lines 7–9 are addressed to a second person, masculine, singular (אנתה, תחפש, צמת) subject. Based on content, each part can then tentatively be further divided into the following subdivisions:

Introduction (line 1)

- I. a. Keeping our mouth shut (lines 2–3)
- b. Wood suitable for heating (lines 4–6)
- II. a. Desiring an alien woman (line 7)
- b. Despising the burnt offering (line 8)
- c. Fasting during the holiday (line 9)

Line 1

טוֹבוֹהִי לְכוֹל אֲנִישׁא “Blessed (or: happy) (is) the m[an who ...]” One should note the resemblance with 4QBirth of Noah^c (= 4Q536) Frag. 2 ii:10–11 (= 4Q534 Frag. 7:0–2):

טוֹבוֹהִי לְכוֹל אֲנִישׁא) [...] ולא ימות ביומי רשעא
וי לכה סכלא די פמך ירמנכה ב[...]

Blessed is every ma[n, who ...] and he will not die in the days of evil. Woe to you, the foolish, because your mouth will throw you in[...]. (Puech 2001: 167–69).

4Q536, like the discussed wisdom text, also combines the words “blessed is (every) m[an who ...],” mentioning evil with the danger of one’s uncontrolled speech. For a biblical usage of “Blessed is ...,” see אשויך ישראל (Deut 33:29), which is translated in *Targum Neofiti* as טוביכון ישראל, “Blessed are you, Israel” (McNamara 1997: 173). A

similar phrase is used in the long addition of *Targum Neofiti* to the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38:25), where Tamar says “Blessed is every man (טובי כל אנש) who reveals his works” (McNamara 1992: 177; see also *Targum Neofiti* to Num 23:23: “Blessed are you, just ones!”). Thus, according to our suggested reconstruction טובי אנשא, the word אנשא might be used as a singular emphatic form, or as a collective form (אנש). Nevertheless, it might also be reconstructed as plural or construct form. The Hebrew parallel of אנשא טובי is אשרי האיש, “Blessed is the man” (KJV; e.g., Ps 1:1). For example, it is found in wisdom texts such as Ben Sira 14:1: “Happy the person whose mouth causes him no grief” (Skehan and Di Lella 1987: 251). It can also be compared with 4Q525 (4QBeatitudes):

אשרי אדם השיג חוכמה ויהלך בתורת עליון

Blessed is the man who attains wisdom, and walks in the Laws of the Most High. (Frgs. 2–3 ii + frag. 3:3–4; Puech 1998:122)

Line 2

הן נפקת מן פ[ומנא] מלֵתָא מן פ[ומנא] מלֵתָא, “If the word [goes out] of [our] mou[th] . . .” For נפק + פם, see *Targum Neofiti* to Deut 23:24. Words that, once said, cannot return is a common topic, to be compared with Aramaic Ahiqar lines 171–72:

הן נפקה טבה מן פם אנשא . . . והן לחיה תנפק מן פמהם אלהן ילחון להם. הן עיני אלהן על אנשא . . .

If good proceeds forth from the mouth of [the] individual . . . but if evil proceeds fr[om] their mouth, gods will deal harshly with them. If the eyes of gods are on [the] individual . . . (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 46–47; slightly revised)

A colorful image of the word coming out of the mouth is part of a comparatively long warning about one’s speech in the Aramaic Ahiqar, line 82:

מן כל מנטרה טר פמך ועל זי ש[מעט] הוקר לבב כי צנפר די מלה ומשלחה גבר לא לב[ב]

More than all watchfulness watch your mouth and over what you h[ear]d harden (your) heart! For a bird is a word and he who sends it forth is a person of no hea[rt] (= sense). (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 36–37)

Although the apodosis of our text is missing, it might be continued with something like the Syriac Ahiqar 2:53: “My son, let not a word go forth from

your mouth, until you have taken council within your heart, because it is better for a man to stumble in his heart than to stumble with his tongue” (Ms A; Charles 1913: 736).

Line 3

The following saying, starting the apodosis וְהַתְּנִיחַ אֶת־הָרָע, “and the evil will be rooted out,” is followed by the incomplete protasis הן נאמר, “if we say[. . .].” Here one would expect a positive aspect, such as “(only) truth,” or the like, to be compared with the Aramaic Ahiqar line 132:

כי חן גבר הימנותה ושנאתה כדבת שפוחה

For the favor of a person is his trustworthiness, and his hatefulness is the lies of his lips. (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 42–43)

If this explanation is accepted, lines 2–3 are to be compared with the first comprehensible unit of column 6 of the Aramaic Ahiqar. As was already noted (Weigl 2001: 38), they “consist of three sayings. . . . All of them caution against unmindful and careless utterances by pointing out the disastrous consequences it may inflict upon a person” who is warned, “Let it not be their prey!” (line 81), or “For mightier is ambush of mouth than ambush of battle” (line 83) (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 36–37).

As observed by J. C. Greenfield (2001: 101–2), the root *nsh* is known in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Official Aramaic with slightly nuanced meanings. The meaning of “tear out” is found in both biblical Hebrew (Deut 28:63) and Official Aramaic (Ezra 6:11; Aramaic Ahiqar lines 156, 210; see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 734). One of the meanings of *nasāhu* in Akkadian is “to expel evil, demons, sickness” (CAD Vol. 11/2: 7, s.v. *nasāhu* 3a). Finally, the closest parallel to our text is found in Prov 2:22: “While the wicked will vanish from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out (יִסְחוּ) of it” (NJPSV).

Having such a severe result, one might wonder if the speaker is God rather than a human (for severe results of God’s saying, see Isa 45:23; 55:11). In this case, the subject of the first saying might be God, and would be reconstructed as something like “Blessed is [the man who follows God . . . , that] if the word [will come forth] from [his (= God’s)] mou[th], something good will happen], and the evil will be rooted out.” If we accept this interpretation, then the next saying starts in the middle of line 3 with the protasis “If we say [. . .].”

Lines 4–6

] הן אע יתנאי אשה <ה>ן] “If wood will be suited to fire, <i>f [. . .]” A possible reconstruction of what follows would be “<i>f [its branches are not dry,] if its roots are sap[py, it will not burn, and how] are we (to be) warm, if the house is col[d . . . ” (lines 4–6). For an alternative interpretation and reconstruction, see below.

Line 4

אע The form אע can be found in the Targums as well as in the Geniza manuscript of the Aramaic Levi Document (7:5–6), while its parallel in 4QLevi^f reads עע (Puech 2000: 609–10; Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel 2004: 25, 78–80). The later form (אע) is to be explained as a dissimilation of the first *‘ayin* (Sokoloff 2000: 749). As for the meaning, it is interesting to note that אע (and its parallel Hebrew עץ) usually means “wood” (Sokoloff 2002: 68), but can also mean “tree.” See, for example, the Hebrew deed of sale from Murabba‘ât (no. 30:18; dated to 69 C.E.), which reads: התאנים הזיתים העץ, to be translated as “the fig trees, the olive trees, the trees” (Milik 1961: 145; Eshel 2002). Since the next line mentions שורשוהי, “his roots,” it seems likely that we should understand this word as both tree and wood.

יתנאי This hitherto unattested form seems to be an imperfect form of the root *n’y*, which in turn might be a variation of *y’y*, attested in the 1QGenesis Apocryphon XX:3–8:

כמא יאין להון לה עניהא.. כמא יאא לה חדיה.. כמא יאין כפיהא.. ודלידיהא יאא

“How comely are her eyes . . . How lovely is her breast . . . How lovely are her hands . . . and her handiwork is lovely.” (VanderKam 1979: 61–62, n. 16)

See also the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic adjective *y’y*, meaning “fair, comely, suitable” (Sokoloff 2002: 233), or the Syriac *y’y*, which is said to be the “present participle of a verb no longer in use” (Payne Smith 1903: 184).⁵ One should note the lack of the preposition l—preceding the indirect following object אשה, “fire.”

Line 5

שורשוהי ילחן One might reconstruct here ילחן, thus “if its roots are sap[py . . .],” to be compared with biblical descriptions of roots being close

⁵See Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 431 s.v. *y’y* used in Punic as an adjective, meaning “beautiful, good” (said of fruit).

to a water supply (e.g., Jer 17:8 to be compared with Ps 1:3;⁶ Ezek 31:7; Job 29:19), or being disconnected from it (e.g., Ezek 17:9; Hos 9:16; Job 18:16). Nevertheless, the verb לח is unattested in Aramaic.

Another possible reconstruction is הן שורשוהי ילחן, “if its roots will be lick[ed . . .]”; compare 1 Kgs 18:38: “Then fire from the Lord descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it licked up (לחכה) the water that was in the trench” (NJPSV).

Line 6

שחננא הן ביתא צונן It can probably be reconstructed as “how] are we (to be) warm, if the house is col[d . . .” or the like. The first verb, שחננא, a *pe‘al* in the perfect and the conditional phrase introduced by הן, seems to be related to the preceding verb.

The reference to warming houses, probably during the winter, is reminiscent of the saying of Hesiod, in his *Works and Days* 493–563, referring to the winter season and mainly his warning about the consequences of idleness during this season, as well as his instructions on winter tasks, which refer mostly to the proper clothing needed to shield oneself from the cold (see Marsilio 2000: 31–41).

Line 7

הן [ת]בחש The verb *bhš* in Jewish Aramaic means “to search, to examine,”⁷ but in this context we might prefer its Syriac parallel in a metaphoric usage “to excite with desire.” In this case, the discussed saying is to be translated as “if you desire a foreign woman,” or “if you (sexually) arouse to a foreign woman.”⁸

⁶For a proverb of a tree connected with one’s words, see Luke 6:43–45, which was translated into Syriac as *p’r’ byš’* and *’yln’ byš’*. Thanks are due to Dr. Siam Bhyro for these references.

⁷The word *buhusu* meaning “to examine” should probably be identified as an Aramaic loan-word in Akkadian; see von Soden 1977: 185.

⁸For which Payne Smith (1879: 508) quotes a *pa‘el* form, *bhšth hw’ l’dm*, which refers to Bar Ali, a Syriac-Arabic lexicographer of the late tenth century (Oxford manuscript, Huntington no. 25). In this work, Bar Ali probably quoted a work known to him, which refers to Eve exciting Adam. In an oral communication Prof. van Rompay suggested, based on other forms of the same root (e.g., *bhiša*, “veneris avidus,” Brockelmann 1928: 66a; or *bhiša*, “libidinosus”) and the abstract *bahišuta*, which Bar Bahlul (late tenth century; Payne Smith 1879: 508; Duval 1888: 379) explained as “a great leaning towards sexual intercourse,” then one should translate בת עממא [ת]בחש בת עממא as “if you (sexually) arouse to a foreign woman.” We would like to express our gratitude to Professor Lucas van Rompay.

בת עממא “An alien woman” or “of a different ethnic group.” As a construct form, one would expect to find ברת עממא. The phrase ברת עממין, or in plural בנת עממין, is found in a gloss in *Targum Neofiti* to Lev 20:2. The idea of prohibiting connection with a foreign woman is found in Prov 5:20–23: “Why be infatuated, my son, with a stranger? Why clasp the bosom of an alien woman? For the man’s ways are before the eyes of God. . . . He will die for lack of discipline” (NJPSV).

A prohibition to marry an alien woman in a non-Jewish context should not surprise us, since we may assume that it was applied not only to Israelites, but probably to other nations as well. As noted earlier, the prohibition might refer to a woman of a different ethnic group.

Lines 8–9

The last two sayings in this text from Maresha are of a different character. They belong to the realm of cult—the first to sacrifice and the second to holidays. Like the previous saying, these sayings are also written in the second person. Being written under the base of the bowl, the text is also divided physically. A similar combination of so-called secular and religious wisdom is found, for example, in Proverbs 3.

Line 8

הן תתפש עלוה Here the regular meaning of תפש, “to grab, hold, catch,” does not seem to fit; rather, the Hebrew meaning “blaspheme” or “revile” seems better. This meaning is found in Prov 30:9: “and I profane (תפשתי) the name of my God” (NJPSV). This chapter was written, according to Ben Yehudah, in an Edomite dialect (1920: 115), a conclusion that still remains unproven. Such a saying can be compared with Ezek 22:8: קדשי בזית ואת, שבתתי חללת, “You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths” (NJPSV).

עלוה “burnt offering” This word is mentioned a few times in Cowley nos. 30–31. For example, no. 30: 28 says, “you will have a merit before YHW the God of Heaven more than a person who offers him holocaust and sacrifices” (Cowley 1923: 113–14; Porten and Yardeni 1986: 68–71; see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 851; Koehler and Baumgartner 2000: 1947).

The word following עלוה is probably to be read as תאחי, hitherto unattested, and thus its interpretation remains unclear. Being a verb in the imperfect, it might mean something like “you will live.”

Another possible interpretation would be *hyy* in the *af‘el*, meaning “to restore to life” (Sokoloff 2002: 198). If the Hebrew meaning of תפש, “to profane,” is accepted, one would expect a negative apodosis, and therefore the root *hyy* would not fit.

Line 9

צמת See Cowley no. 30:15, 20: אנחנא עם נשיין ורביין שקקן לבשן הויין ורביין ורביין . . . we and our wives and our children were wearing sackcloth and fasting” (Cowley 1923: 112–14; Porten and Yardeni 1986: 68–71).

For the usage of *šwm* in a non-Jewish context, see the Balaam Inscription, Combination XII Frag. c:2 (Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1976: 177, 267).

It seems that this saying established the rule that one should not fast on a holiday. It can be compared to the command in Nah 2:1: “Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, fulfill your vows” (NJPSV), quoted also in the Apocryphal Psalm of 4QPs^f (4Q88) X:9: “Celebrate your feasts, fulfill your vows” (Eshel and Strugnell 2000: 446–49). As is known from Jewish law, it seems that, according to the belief of the author of the source quoted, fasting (and probably mourning) was prohibited during the holy days. We have no information about the holidays of the Edomites or other ethnic groups who lived at Maresha.

If the last two sayings are connected, we might expect some kind of opposition, such as “If you despise the burnt offering, then you will live (?) [short/bad life], (but) If you have fasted during [the] holiday [you will] not [. . .].”

In the study of the remains of this text, we have tried to highlight the possible resemblance between these sayings and those of biblical and non-biblical wisdom texts, such as the Words of Ahiqar and Ben Sira. As a whole, this text has no clear parallel with either of these texts, and thus its source cannot be defined. In the following, we discuss another wisdom saying copied on Bowl B: Inscription no. 4.

The importance of this text is the combination of the cultic realm with what seem to be aspects of everyday life, as well as the usage of some words and forms hitherto unknown. As part of a scribal exercise written on bowls, the inscription gives us another glimpse of what such exercises included.

Inscription No. 2: Registration of a Daily Harvest

Inscription no. 2 (see figs. 1, 3) seems to have been written after the preceding one (see lines 5–6),

for if this inscription had been written first, the scribe would not have carried the rest over to line 6. It has six lines of writing, with the first line written on the rim.⁹

1. [רושם זי . . .] טנא 1
2. [רושם זי פריין] טנא 1
3. [רושם זי תמריא] טנא 1
4. [רושם זי זית טנא] 1
5. רושם חשבן ים טנא
6. תם ||||

Translation

1. [registration of . . .] basket, 1
2. [registration of] fruits [basket, 1]
3. [registration of] dates [basket, 1]
4. [re]gistration of olives basket, 1
5. Registration of the account of a day: baskets
6. 4, (in) sum

Notes on the Reading

Line 1: From what remains in this line, one can see traces of 10 letters, of which only the formula 1 טנא, “basket, 1,” is preserved. Based on the rest of the inscription, the line can be reconstructed as [רושם זי . . .], with possibly an additional word at the beginning of the line.

Line 2: To the left of the break and under the “white” line, there are remains of letters; one possible reading is פריין, with the traces under the recording “60/92” and to its left (1 טנא) which can be completed with רושם.

Line 3: Traces of letters, most likely תמריא, which was preceded by [רושם זי].

Line 4: To the left of the break there is the trace of a lance-shaped mark, which is probably a *waw*, and then the lower part of a *šin* and a final *mem*. At the end there is a small *šet*, leaning to the left of the line, to be reconstructed as [רושם זי זית טנא] 1.

Line 5: The two first letters are quite poorly written, but the reading of the line is certain. The *waw* touches the *šin* and the head of the *reš*. The first final *mem* is very open compared with the second, and

both are the cursive type. As in line 4, the *šet* is traced in two stages, as is attested later in Qumran in the Herodian-period Jewish script.

Line 6: Following the number for four units is a last word most likely starting with *taw* and a final cursive and open *mem*, which is leaning slightly to the left, as happens occasionally.

Commentary

Line 1

טנא, “basket” This Hebrew noun is mentioned in Deuteronomy 26, referring to the First Fruit (verses 2, 4), and in the Blessings and the Curses (28:5, 17), as well as in Ben Sira 31:14 (MS B). It is also known in Phoenician (*KAI* 37A:10; see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 426) and in Samaritan liturgy (Cowley 1909: 2.782).

Line 2

פריין A plural form of פרי, “fruit, produce” (Sokoloff 2002: 446).

Line 3

תמריא, “dates” See Cowley no. 81:49: נחשיא זי יהבו על תמריא זי פחן, “Objects of bronze which they put on the date-palms of *phn*” (Cowley 1923: 195, 197; Porten and Yardeni 1993: 259, 265).

Line 4

[רושם] The spelling רושם is attested in the next line, as well as in 4Q530 2 ii + 6–12(?):19: בכתב כ[תיב וברושם רשים], “[. . .] written [in a book] and sealed in an inscription” (Puech 2001: 28).¹⁰

זית, “olive” Usually משח זית is used for olive oil (see Kraeling 1953: 204–5; Porten and Yardeni 1989:78, line 20), but here it probably refers to olives, especially when using it together with טנא.

Line 5

חשבן, “account” The singular construct is found in Cowley no. 81, which is an account of sales, income, and inventory. For example, see line 1: חשבן ענביא זי כתבת, “Number/Counting of prod-

⁹This inscription was hardly seen when the bowl was discovered and registered. Later, when new photos were taken by Mr. Zeev Radovan, the traces of this inscription were shown; thus, some of the registration numbers cover the inscription.

¹⁰This word occurs in Wadi ed-Daliyeh no. 2:2 לא רושם [זי רושם עליה] dated to 352/351 B.C.E., but with the meaning of “(slave) mark” (Gropp 2001: 46); see the substantive רושמה, “sign, trace” (Koehler and Baumgartner 1994–2000: vol. 5, 1983).

uct written . . . ,” and line 79: חשבן עבורא זי כתבת [ר]נתנת לאבהי [and] gave to Ab(i)hi” (Cowley 1923: 192; Porten and Yardeni 1993: 260, 267). See also 1QS 6:19–20: “They shall also take steps to incorporate his property, putting it under the authority of the Overseer, together with that of the general membership, and keeping an account of it (וכתבו בחשבון בידו)” (Wise, Abegg, and Cook 1996: 135); and in P. Yadin 17: 41: “Yehudah son of Elazar Khthosion: I acknowledge that I have received from Babatha my wife, with acknowledgement of Ya‘aqob, her ‘lord,’ son of Yeshu‘a, on account of deposit (חשבון פקודין), three hundred silver denarii” (Lewis 1989: 73); and the Palmyrene Aramaic text no. C3913, line 115: לכל די עלל לחשבן תגרא, “for anything that comes into the account of the merchants” (Hillers and Cussini 1996: 62, 367).

Ⲁ(ר) Appearing after the word חשבן are what seem to be the ligatures of two or three letters. Reading the second as a *mem* might be problematic, since the word “day” in Aramaic in the absolute form is almost always with a *waw* (but see *RES* 799, 1 dated to the third or second century B.C.E., which might be compared with Phoenician *ym*). If our reading is correct, it seems that this inscription preserves a record or an account of a day’s harvest.

Line 6

ת Based on the context, this word probably means “sum.” Although this meaning is unattested in Aramaic, it is found in both Phoenician and Punic (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 1217), as well as in Ugaritic, where the adjective *tm* means “complete, full” (del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2003: 871). A less probable interpretation would be the feminine name תם (TM) which appears on an ostraccon with a notice of the dispatch of goats and vessels, found in Elephantine and dated to the late third century B.C.E.: תם אנתת מלכיה, “Tam, wife of Malchiah” (line 4; see Porten and Yardeni 1999: 192).

|||| The number 4 would fit well with one basket per recorded line.

Inscription no. 3: An Account

The remains of the ambiguous text of Inscription no. 3 (see figs. 4, 5) seem to document an account, including someone’s payment, with another portion that is probably to be given to a young man or to a servant. It also mentions a treasury and some kind of

a transaction in which three people are involved: ʾBŠLM, YHʾL, and ŠMŠY. Since the text is fragmentary and was written by an unskilled scribe, some of the lines in this inscription are not clear. Due to the fragmentary state, we do not have a clear understanding of this inscription, except that it was used as a scribal exercise.

1. [] ת []
2. [] ק פרסן ° []
3. [] ת ° [] מן שטר לא []
4. [] לק ושפת עלימא אמהם
5. ומן מן תם אוצרא השפלה
6. אבשלם ||| מנה לה אן מן סכם
7. חזר ||| מן זי בעין vacat
8. קנא מן שמשי ליהאל []
9. [] שין אמן []

Translation

1. [. . .]t[. . .]
2. [. . .]q payments [. . .]
3. [.]t[.]t from a document, to [.]
4. [a po]rtion, and I paid the lad ʾMHM
5. And since from the sum of the treasury ABŠLM
6. lower it (by) 3 *mina* for him, that from the total
7. he returned 3, because they were asking for.
vacat
8. he bought from ŠMŠY for YHʾL[. . .]
9. [. . .]šyn ʾm[. . .]

Notes on the Reading

Line 1: On the vertical part of the break, below the rim of the bowl, there is part of a *taw* with a slightly slanting stroke under it. The letter might be part of the first line in a larger script. At the edge of the break, remains of the letter *ayin* or *alep* might be read.

Line 2: Based on the beginning of line 4, we might read a *qop*, thus possibly a tentative reconstruction as ק[חל], “portion.”

Line 3: After the break, one can see the left part of a *taw* followed by מן in cursive writing. The final *nun* is connected on a slant to the head of the *mem* (not a ligature). After the word שטר, there are remains of a curved line which seems to be a *lamed* followed by the base of an *alep*.

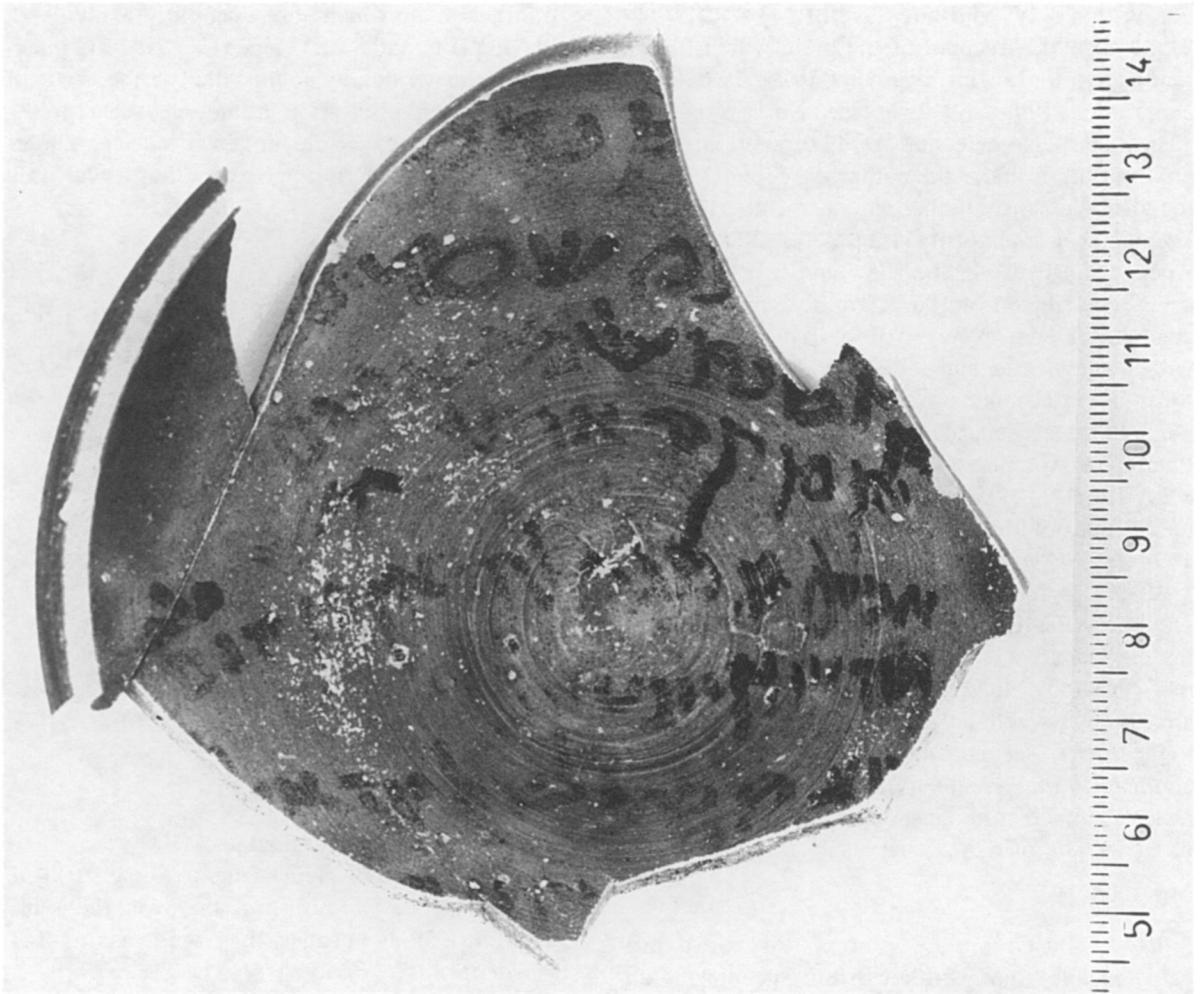


Fig. 4. Bowl A interior.

Line 4: The traces that precede the *qop* might be those of a *lamed*, thus reconstructed as חלק, “portion.” The letter *pe* in the word שפת might also be read as a *nun*, and the letter *waw* may also be read as a *lamed*.

Line 5: The word מן is followed by a *taw* and a *mem*. Following the suggested reading ארצרא, there seems to be a large *he*, followed by what appears to be a *šin*. After the *he* there is a small gap, followed by a *pe*, *lamed*, and *he*.

Line 7: The reading מן זי בעין seems to be the only reading possible: cursive medial *mem*, open and most likely connected (without a ligature) with the final *nun*, and then a *zayin*, in the shape of a Z.

The word בעין is written with a cursive *bet* and an *ayin* as a semicircle.

Line 8: Two heads of letters can be seen before the *alep*, the second of which might be a *nun*, and the first tentatively a *qop*, which reaches to the right margin.

Line 9: The letter *šin* is followed by a *waw* or a *yod*, and the last letter is a medial *mem*.

Commentary

Line 2

At the beginning of this line as well as that of line 4 are words ending with a *qop*, which might tenta-



Fig. 5. Bowl A, Inscription no. 3 (Emile Puech).

tively be reconstructed as חלק, possibly the noun “portion, share,” or the verb “to share, distribute”; see 1QGenAp XVI:12: חלק בעדב ליפת ולבנוהי, “He apportioned by lot for Japheth and for his sons” (Fitzmyer 2004: 94–95).

פרסן, which means “treatment, salary, payment,” is here in the absolute masculine plural. See Cowley no. 11: 6: מן פרסי זי ינתנון לי מן אוצרא, “my portion (i.e., my payment) that they will give me from the treasury” (Cowley 1923: 33; Porten and Yardeni 1989: 104–5); and Cowley no. 2: 16: ואנת שלט בפרסן זי בית מלכא, “And you have the right to our allotment from the (store-) house of the king” (Cowley 1923: 4–5; Porten and Yardeni 1989: 110–11).

Another meaning of פרסן is the dry measure *peras*; see Kraeling no. 11:3: ויהבת לי כנתן פרסן 2

“And you gave me emmer, 2 *peras*” (Kraeling 1953: 260–62; Porten and Yardeni 1989: 98–100). However, this meaning seems less suitable in this context.

Line 3

ת[.]ת[.]ת[.] A tentative reconstruction may be ת[.]ת[.]ת[.]

לאן May be the beginning of a proper name.

Line 4

חלק It can be either the noun “portion” or the verb from *hlq*, meaning “he divided.”

ושפת This is probably from the root *ṣḡy*, meaning “to pay, settle” (Sokoloff 2002: 563), in the first singular perfect, used in the Judaean Aramaic in the meaning of “to clear or satisfy a claim” (Sokoloff

2003: 83; P. Yadin 45, line 27; Yadin et al. 2002: 58). Another possible reading is *nun* instead of the *pe*, **ושנת**; it would be a construct form, meaning “and a yearly (part) for the lad.”¹¹

עלימא “lad, servant” (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 854–55).

אמהם The meaning of this word is unclear. In this broken context, one would expect the lad’s personal name, but we could not find such a name.

Another possible interpretation is as follows: As suggested above, the letter *waw* of the word **ושפת** might also be read as a *lamed*. If we read the following letter as a *nun* (as suggested above), we get **לשנת**, which in turn can be translated as “a portion for the annuity of.” If we understand **אמהם** as “their mother” and reconstruct **לאן[בא]**, “to the father,” at the end of line 3, then the 3 *minas* were first kept by the father for himself, but later he was asked to give them back “because they (that is, the mother and children) were asking for (it as a due)” (line 7).

Line 5

ומן Another possible, less probable reading is **והן ומן** might be explained as an abbreviated form of **ומן זי**, meaning “and since.”

תם, “from the total” For the usage of **תם**, see Inscription no. 2, line 6, above.

מן פרסי זי ינתנון לי See **אוצרא**, “treasury” **מן אוצרא**, “my portion (i.e., my payment) that they will give me from the treasury” (Cowley no. 11: 6), mentioned above.

השפלה We might consider connecting this form with the Akkadian *šuppulu*, meaning “to lower price.” This word is used in Akkadian in a similar context—for example, *kaspam 1 mana nu-ša-pi-lá-am*, “we reduced the price by one mina of silver” (CAD vol. 17, Š/I: 426, s.v. *šapālu* 4; and Sokoloff 2003: 83).

Line 6

אבשלם This name is known from the Bible as well as from various inscriptions of the Second Temple period. It is also mentioned in another Ara-

maic ostracon from Idumaea (Lozachmeur and Lemaire 1996: 129) and in an Edomite ostracon from Tell el-Kheleifeh (Naveh 1966: 27, obverse, line 3).

מנה This word can be interpreted in various ways: either as a coin, mina (“penny”; Sokoloff 2002: 317); as “portion” (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 657); as the preposition *m* + third-person suffix, “from it”; or as a verb from the root *mny* meaning “to count” (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 660).

אן מן The word **אן** in this case could mean “if, whether”; compare 1QGenAp XXII:21–22: **אן מן חוט עד ערקא דמסאן אן אסב מן כול די איתי לך**, “whether (= that) I will not take so much as a thread or a sandalstrap from anything that is yours” (Fitzmyer 2004: 110–11, 296); and see Bowl B, Inscription no. 4, line 4. (Another possibility is to connect **אן** to the preceding word **לה**.)

סכם The substantive **סכם** means “number, total”; see Exod 5:8: **וואת מתכנת הלבנים**, “But impose upon them the same quota of bricks as they have been making heretofore” (NJPSV), translated by *Targum Onqelos* as **רית סכום לבניא**. Thus, the phrase **סכם** can be translated as “but from the total,” or the like.

Line 7

חור Probably interpreted as an imperative: “Return!” or else, the perfect form, “he returns,” most likely referring to ABŠLM.

Line 8

קנא From the root *qny* meaning “to possess, to acquire.” This verb is used in property deeds, especially with the preposition **מן**. This line seems to document a transaction of some kind of goods.

שמשי An Aramaic proper name, Shimshai (see Ezra 4:8). The name also occurs in an ostracon found in Egypt, dated to the fifth century B.C.E. (Porten and Yardeni 1999: 217).

The preposition **מן** is usually followed by *l* + PN. In this case it is **האל**, a theophoric form identical to **אליה(ו)**, or **יואל**.

The object being acquired (portions or other) has not been preserved.

THE INSCRIPTIONS ON BOWL B

Bowl B includes four inscriptions: nos. 4–5 were written on the exterior, and nos. 6–7 were written on

¹¹ Since this word is followed by **עלימא**, “the lad, servant,” we might explain it in connection with the verb *šnt*, meaning “to brand”; see Kraeling no. 8:7: **זי יקום על ידניה זך למשנתה**, “Whoever shall stand up against that Yedaniah to brand him or make him slave” (Kraeling 1953: 226–27, 229; Porten and Yardeni 1989: 84–85).



Fig. 6. Bowl B exterior.

the interior. The content of these inscriptions is as follows:

- Inscription no. 4: A blessing of a wise man
- Inscription no. 5: Too small and fragmentary to be identified
- Inscription no. 6: Part of a marriage contract
- Inscription no. 7: Too small and fragmentary to be identified

Inscription No. 4: A Blessing of the Wise Man

This text of only four lines is completely preserved (figs. 6, 7). Horizontal strokes precede the beginning of lines, most probably to distinguish between the two texts. Similar strokes appear in Aramaic Ahiqar (lines 142, 144–46, 190).

Based upon its content, the text seems to belong to the popular wisdom literature, composed with sti-

chos like biblical poetry. This short text can be compared with Proverbs 31:10–31 and Ben Sira 26:1–3 (MS C) and is comparable with Inscription no. 1 on Bowl A. It reads as follows:

1. — בְּנוּי לַחַיִּין דָּאֲרָה לַחַיִּיא
2. — לוֹתָהּ יִקּוּם שְׁלָלָהּ לְטַב {א} ה
3. — עֵתְקִי וְתוּמִי לְבִינַת {ט} ה
4. — {טְבָה} וְחִילָה אֵן כְּלָה

Translation

1. His sons (are blessed) with life, (so) his household (is blessed) with life;
2. For him his property will be preserved for his goodness;
3. Old and perfect is his wisdom;
4. {His goodness} And his wealth (is) without ceasing.

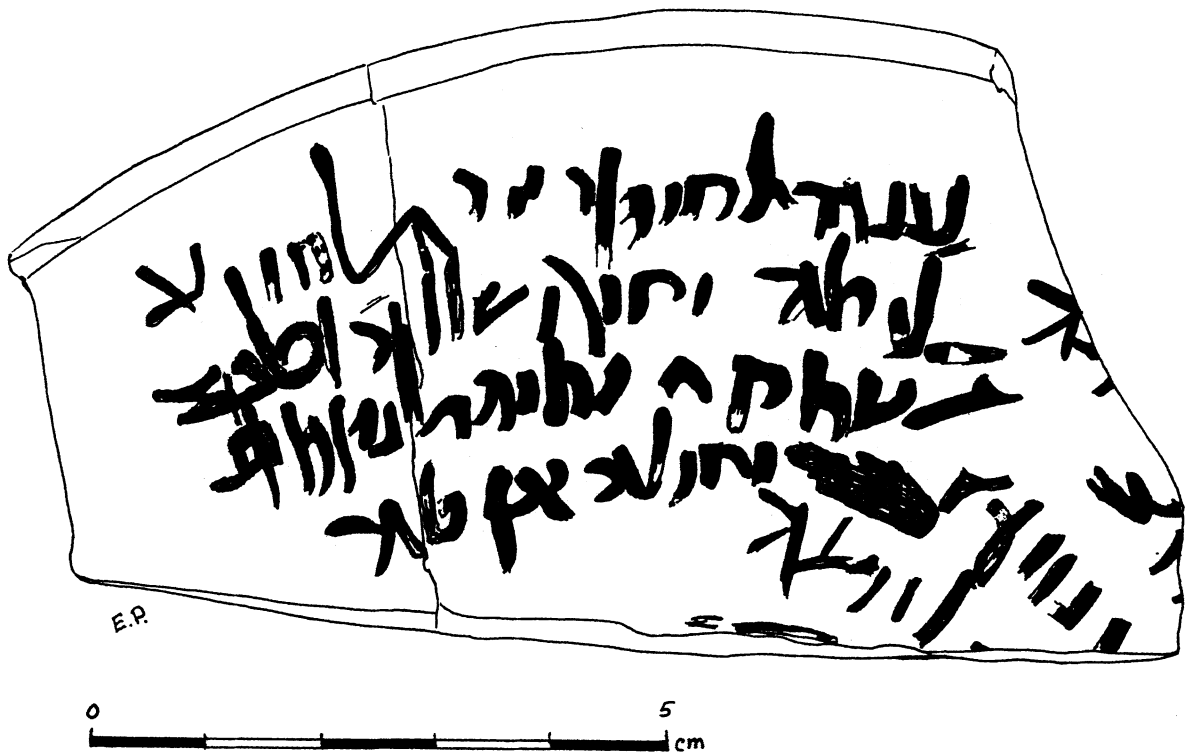


Fig. 7. Bowl B, Inscription nos. 4 and 5 (Emile Puech).

Notes on the Readings

Line 1: The reading is not quite certain in the second part of the line. Another, less possible reading would be *ואנה*, “and I,” unexpected in a series of sayings written in the third person.

Lines 2–3: The scribe seems to have written *לטבא* first, with the emphatic singular ending, correcting it to *לטבה* with the suffix form of the masculine (or feminine) singular ending by adding a vertical stroke.

Line 3: The last word is to be read as *לבינתה* with a kind of final *nun* instead of a medial one, and then a correction of the first part of a *tet* into a *he*. Only in this line the *yod* is written in an inverted V shape.

Line 4: At the beginning of the line, the scribe wrote *טבה* first, a reading which is quite clear, and then he deleted it intentionally with horizontal strokes.

The reading *וחילה* is clear.

Commentary

Line 1

The first two sentences are abbreviated, with both missing the predicate, which allows us, based on the

context, to add “(are/is) blessed.” The first word is the definite plural noun *בניא* with the masculine suffix, followed by an indeterminate plural noun with the preposition in a nominative sentence, *לחיינ*. The second part of the line is in a similar construction, with the probable reading *דארה* and then a determinate substantive with the preposition *לחייא* (see Prov 3:22).

דארה This probably should be analyzed in connection with the noun *דר* with the masculine suffix, “his household,” where the *’alep* represents the vowel /a/. *דר* meaning “circle of relatives and friends” is found in Ugaritic (del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2003: 279–80).¹²

For a blessing of long life for the son who accepts his father’s or teacher’s words, see Prov 4:10: *שמע בני וקה אמרי וירבו לך שנות חיים*, “My son, heed and take in my words, and you will have many years of life” (NJPSV).

¹² For the occurrence of the word in Phoenician, see Hof-tijzer and Jongeling 1995: 1:258–59; compare the Neo-Punic *sk(‘)r dr’ l’(w)lm*, “a memorial of (i.e. dedicated by) his family forever” (KAI 128:2; 165:7–8).

Line 2

לוחה The suffix of the particle לוח can be masculine or feminine, but based on the context, we might prefer the masculine, referring to the wise man (see לחילה, לכינתה וחילה).

שללה, “his property, gain” This word seems to be a Hebraism (see *Targum Rishon* to Esther 3:13) because the other Aramaic instances or meanings (“chain, baste”) do not fit the context. Compare בטח (Prov 31:11), where שלל means “acquisition, gain” (Toy 1899: 543; Koehler and Baumgartner 1994–2000: vol. 4. 1532). Another possible support to the meaning of שלל as “possession” is found in Ben Sira 37:6, where Hebrew MS B reads:

אל תשכח חבר בקרב
ואל תעזבוהו בשללך

“Forget not your comrade during the battle, and neglect him not when you distribute your spoils” (Skehan and Di Lella 1987:425); the Greek translates this as:

μη ἐπιλάβῃ φίλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ σου
καὶ μη ἀμνημονήσῃς αὐτοῦ ἐν χρήμασίν σου

Forget not your friend in your mind
And be not unmindful of him in your riches. (translated by Brenton 1851)

Here שלל was translated as χρῆμα in plural, meaning “property, possession” (Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1940: 2004). This should be compared with Ben Sira 14:15: הלוא לאחר תעזב חילך, “Will you not leave your riches to others” (Skehan and Di Lella 1987: 257), which uses *zb + hyl* (for the last parallel with *šll*, see below).

לטב{א}ה Compare Prov 31:11–12.

Line 3

עתקי ותומי These two coordinate words seem to be parallel adjectives describing the noun בינה. One would expect here the feminine forms. Perhaps the scribe had a metathesis in the word עתקי from עתיק, and then wrote the same ending to תומי.

עתקי This word probably comes from the adjective עתיק meaning “old,” or the verb עתק meaning “to be old” (Sokoloff 2002: 422); see *Targum Onqelos* to Deut 4:25):

כי תוליד בנים ובני ובני ובני ובני ובני—ארי תילדון
בניך ובני בניך ותתעתקן בארעא

“When you have begotten children and grandchildren and have been in the land for a long time.” (Grossfeld 1988: 29)

תומי Probably a form of *tmm*, “to be perfect, to end.”

לבינת{ט}ה The word בינה means “wisdom, understanding, intelligence.” The idea of wisdom being old is known from biblical and nonbiblical sources; see Prov 8:22–23, where wisdom is quoted saying: “The LORD created me at the beginning of his course as the first of his works of old” (NJPSV); see Wisdom of Solomon 9:9: “And with you is wisdom, who has known your works, and was present when you created the world” (Winston 1979: 203, 205). The man who was blessed with wisdom is said to be perfect, in the Arabic version of Ahiqar 7:4: “Blessed be God who had made you *perfect* in wisdom and had adorned thee with philosophy and knowledge” (Charles 1913: 762).

Note the preposition *l-* which precedes the subject, of which no parallel was found. Since this text includes many scribal errors and corrections, we tend to explain the usage of such a preposition as a scribal mistake.

Line 4

חילה The word חיל here means “wealth,” as is found in Deut 8:17: את לי עשה לי את החיל הזה, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me” (NJPSV), where *Targum Onqelos* translates חיל as נכסיא, “possession”; Ben Sira 5:1: אל תשען על חילך, “rely not on your wealth” (Skehan and Di Lella 1987: 179), where the Greek and Syriac translate this term as “possession”; cf. also Ben Sira 14:15 discussed above. The word חיל is also found in Aramaic Ahiqar line 137, reading:

[אל תהשגא ראל חיל ואל תהשגא לכבא]

“[Do not multiply/amass] wealth and do not lead astray the heart.” (Porten and Yardeni 1993: 42–43)

אן As noted above, Inscription no. 3, line 6, the sense of אן seems to be in the Official Aramaic “whether, if”; but here it seems that this particle is used for negation, as the Hebrew word אין. The form אן for negation is found also in Moabite (KAI 181:24; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 46).

כלה From כלי, this means “to ward off, cease” (Sokoloff 2002: 259) in the perfect or past

participle forms. Thus, here we may translate it as “his wealth will not cease.”

This short text looks like a description of a wise man, whose entire family is blessed with life (probably long or good); his possessions are collected for good (purposes), and his wisdom is old and perfect; thus his strength will never end. The vocabulary is clearly taken from wisdom literature, and its shared elements with Proverbs 31 are significant, especially the usage of שלל and חיל.

Inscription No. 5

Inscription no. 5 is small and fragmentary (see figs. 6, 7). It reads:

1. [ה°
2. [א°
3. [° ביום
4. [° לזרעה

Translation

1. [. . .]°*h*
2. [. . .]°°
3. [. . .] at a day
4. [*of* . . .]to his offspring

Notes on the Readings

Line 1: The first letter might be a *taw*, *qop*, or *lamed*; the second might be a *nun*, *bet*, or *qap*; thus the line might tentatively be read as לבה, “his heart.”

Line 2: Here are the remains of two or three letters. The first might be a *yod*, followed by another *yod* or *het*.

Line 3: The sequence of strokes is best read as ביום; or וביום, with the *bet* having a short base.

Line 4: Below there is a horizontal stroke at the end of the line. The very cursive *reš* might also be read as a *yod*.

Commentary

Line 3

ביום° [See the defective orthography of the same word in Inscription no. 2, line 5, but see Inscription no. 6, line 2, below, reading ליומא.

This text could be identified with various genres, e.g. a contract, a wisdom text, etc. See, for example, 1QGenAp XIV:12: כול יומוהי לא יפרש מנך ובוזעה

יתקרה ש[מ]ך, “will not part from you all his days, and among his descendants your n[am]e will be called” (Fitzmyer 2004: 90–91).

Inscription No. 6: Part of a Marriage Contract

Of this text, the left part of the first lines is preserved (see figs. 8, 9).

1. [] ת מה אנה למנסב
2. [] אנתה כאנתתי ליומא
3. [] °° שיך מנך ת°
4. [] ° ען ו°° אש°
5. [] ° עד [עלם°

Translation

1. [. . .]*t* so that I am [. . .], to take
2. [. . .]you as my wife this day
3. [. . .]š^{yn} from you *t°m*
4. [. . .]‘*n* and °°š°
5. [. . . for]ever

Notes on the Readings

Line 2: The cursive oval *mem* of ליומא is touching the *waw*.

Line 4: This line is difficult to decipher. A possible reading at the beginning of the line would be *ayin* and *nun*. The next word begins with either *yod* or *waw*. After two additional unclear letters there is a *šin*.

Commentary

Line 1

[] ת מה אנה One of the meanings of the word *מה* is “so that” (although one would expect *d-* following); see *מה דיסב חד אנתה דחבריה*, “so that one could marry the other’s wife” (Margulies 1973: 66; T-S N.S. 95.1 [b], line 18; Sokoloff 2002: 293). Based on the context, one would expect the preceding word to be that of a will, e.g., *b^{cy}*. Thus we might tentatively reconstruct בעית מה אנה למנסב, “. . . I requeste]d, so that I will take . . .” (or אמרת). Nevertheless, the syntax is problematic.

למנסב The infinitive *pe^{al}*, “to marry, to take PN as a wife”; see in the Antinopolis ketubba: אמרת: “I said and requested . . . to take Mitra, the maiden, as my wife” (Sirat et al. 1986: 20–21, lines 6–8).



Fig. 8. Bowl B interior.

Lines 2–3

ליומא We might reconstruct [הדין] as
“at this day (namely: today).”

Line 5

עלם, “eternal” The remains could also be read as שלם, “well-being, peace,” a greeting formula. However, in a marriage context, one might prefer the reading עלם, tentatively reconstructing it as עד, “for]ever”; see Kraeling no. 7: 4, reading: “She is my wife and I a]m [her husband from this day forever (מן יומא זנה עד עלם)” (Kraeling 1953: 204–5; Porten and Yardeni 1989: 78–83).

The remains of this inscription seem to be an abbreviated form of a marriage contract, to be compared with the other marriage contract found in Maresha (Eshel and Kloner 1996). The inscription mentions the willingness of the groom to take the bride as his wife. Following, one might expect men-

tioning the bride’s dowry, but unfortunately, the remains of these lines are unclear.

Inscription No. 7

Only parts of two lines are preserved in Inscription no. 7 (see figs. 8, 9):

1.]ע כל בניה]
2.]מלחא]

Translation

1.]‘ all the sons [
2.] the word [

Notes on the Readings

Line 1: At the last word, the *yod* touches the right arm of the *'alep*.

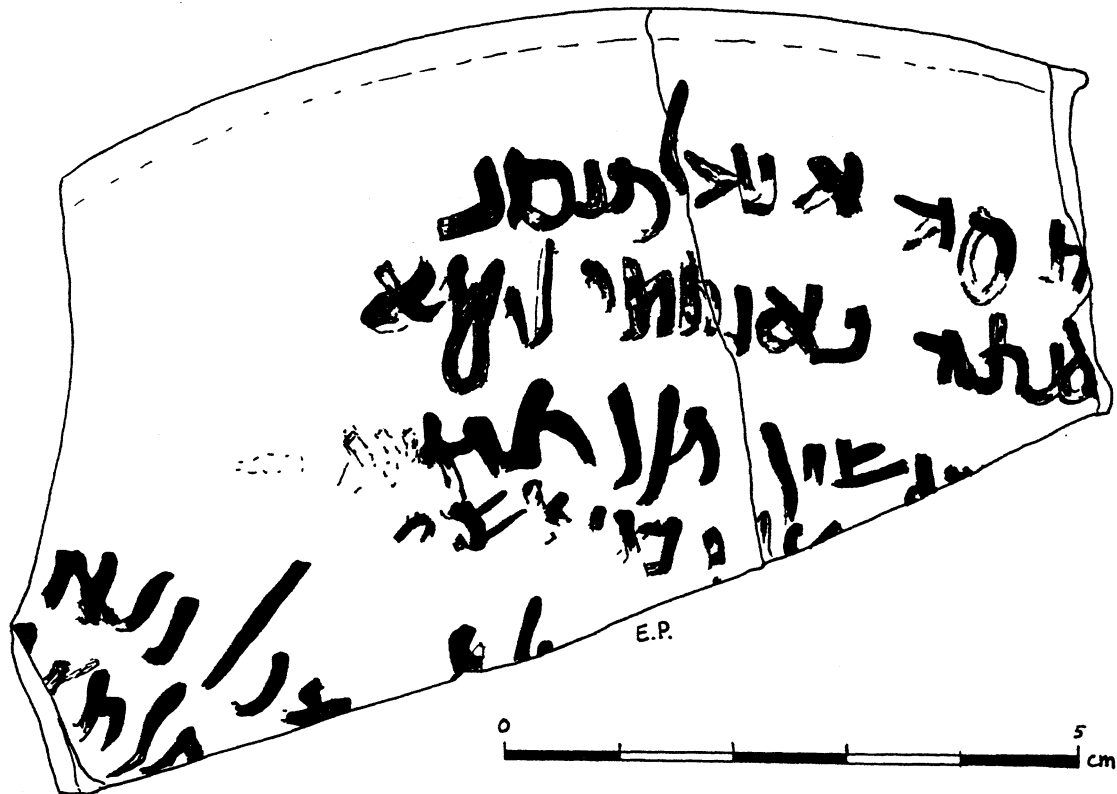


Fig. 9. Bowl B, Inscription nos. 6 and 7 (Emile Puech).

Line 2: Only the upper part of the *'alep* is preserved.

CONCLUSIONS

As demonstrated above, these two bowls include seven texts of various genres, written by different hands, which are identified as scribal exercises. The origins of the registration of harvest (no. 2), the account (no. 3), and the marriage contract (no. 6) are related to the daily life of Maresha. The abbreviated marriage contract, although fragmentary, is a welcome addition to the Edomite contract found at Maresha. Unfortunately, the sources of the wisdom texts (nos. 1 and 4) are less clear.

In our study of the wisdom inscriptions, we have tried to trace the possible origins of these texts by highlighting several literary parallels. It should be noted, however, that although we were able to point to some possible parallels in other wisdom literature, such as the biblical wisdom texts, Ahiqar, and Ben Sira, no exact parallel of the Maresha wisdom texts

has been found. While no clear source was identified, the closest to the first wisdom text (no. 1) is the Aramaic Words of Ahiqar.¹³ The Aramaic version of the Words of Ahiqar was found in Elephantine, and was dated, based on palaeography, to the end of the fifth century B.C.E., although its composition was dated earlier, possibly to the sixth or seventh century B.C.E. (Lindenberger 1983: 19–23). The place of origin is uncertain, but based on the Aramaic dialect and the Pantheon ŠMŠ, ʾL, and BʿL QDŠN (= BʿL ŠMYN), Lindenberger suggested that it was written in North Syria (Lindenberger 1983: 20). Although there are some shared ideas between the wisdom text from Maresha and Ahiqar, the texts from Maresha do not seem to be quotations from Ahiqar. Another partly related text, also written in Aramaic, is 4Q536 (= 4Q534), which resembles the beginning of Inscription no. 1 from Maresha.

¹³For an important study of the development of the various recensions of Ahiqar, see Strugnell 1999.

It is difficult to draw definite conclusions on the origin of the two wisdom texts. The population of Maresha during the Hellenistic period was mostly Edomite (below), but some other ethnic groups lived there as well, such as Phoenicians and Greeks. Although the first wisdom inscription refers to religious practices, such as a sacrifice and the observance of holidays, the precise origin cannot be absolutely determined since there is no reference to any god.

Of course, one possibility, based on our knowledge of the Edomite wisdom tradition evident in the Bible, is that these texts originated within the main ethnic group of Maresha. Nevertheless, this suggestion is speculative and cannot be proven. During the Hellenistic period, Maresha was the capital of Idumaea, as evident in the Zenon Papyri dated to 259 B.C.E. Checking the prosopography of the Maresha population reveals that about 20 percent of the personal names found at Maresha contain the Edomite theophoric element QWS.

As a whole, our knowledge of the Edomites is very fragmentary. We know of the Edomites in the sixth century B.C.E. from the Bible and from some archaeological finds (Bartlett 1989; Beit Arieh 1995a; 1995b). Recently, more information on the Edomites in the second half of the fourth century B.C.E. was discovered (Eph'al and Naveh 1996; Lemaire 1996; 2002), and we also know about the population of Idumaea during the second century B.C.E. (Kasher 1988).

Already in ancient times, wisdom was connected with Edom. Jeremiah prophesies, "Concerning Edom. Thus said the Lord of hosts: Is there no more wis-

dom in Teman?" (Jer 49:7, NJPSV). Obadiah says, "In that day I will make the wise vanish from Edom" (verse 8, NJPSV). Concerning the wisdom of King Solomon, it says that "He was the wisest of all men: [wiser] than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman . . ." (1 Kings 5:11, NJPSV). These two people are said to be the authors of Psalms 88 and 89, respectively, presumably related to Zerah, who was from an Edomite clan (Genesis 36). R. H. Pfeiffer suggested (1926) that the origin of these psalms is Edomite. Furthermore, E. Ben Yehudah argued (1920) that Proverbs 30–31:9, ascribed to Agur the son of Jakeh, and Lemuel, were written in the Edomite dialect, but this has still to be proven. Finally, scholars have suggested that the hero of the book of Job was Edomite, since he was from Uz, a city in Edom (Day 1994; Reed 2001: 42–48).

John R. Bartlett noted (1999) that one should not use the term Edomite for the inhabitants of Idumaea in the Hellenistic period. Therefore, he suggested using the title "Idumaeian marriage contract" instead of "Edomite marriage contract" for the document dated to 176 B.C.E. (Eshel and Kloner 1996). The fragments of wisdom texts found at Maresha correspond with the tradition we have in the Bible about the wisdom of the Edomites. Therefore, although we do not have data about the Edomites from the sixth century B.C.E. to the early Hellenistic period, it is possible that the population of the Idumaeian region preserved some Edomite traditions, including some knowledge of wisdom texts. Nevertheless, these wisdom texts might also have belonged to another ethnic group who dwelt in Maresha at that period.

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