

Research article

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Loanwords in the Language of Archaic Biblical Hebrew Poetry: A Case for Akkadianisms

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Abstract: The research confirms the highly conservative character of the language of archaic poetry, regarding the influence of Akkadian. The impact of Akkadian on the language of these poems is very slight. However, the attested contact phenomena are not proportionately distributed, attesting to the linguistic heterogeneity of the corpus.

Keywords: Biblical Hebrew archaic poetry, lexicon, Akkadian loan words

1 Akkadianisms in the corpus of old biblical poetry: methodological considerations

Traditionally, the lexicon and phraseology of the “archaic” poems of the Hebrew Bible have been at the center of scholarly interest, yet many topics still await systematic consideration.¹ One of these is the issue of loan vocabulary. Although the Biblical Hebrew lexicon is generally considered conservative,² many items entered the Biblical Hebrew vocabulary from Egyptian, Hittite, Akkadian, Aramaic, and Persian at different historical stages. Loan words are an important tool for historical, areal, and socio-linguistic analysis.³

Akkadian loanwords in Biblical Hebrew (BH) have been the focus of substantial research, but the exact context of the borrowing process remains controversial. First, Akkadianisms do not seem to be proportionally distributed in the corpus. According to data collected by Mankowski, the most explicit

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The corpus of the investigation includes the poetic texts from the Pentateuch and Former Prophets; cf. Notarius 2013, and see Table 1 in section 3. For some milestones in the research on the language of archaic poetry, see Driver 1953, Albright 1968, Cross and Freedman 1975, Cohen 1978, Gevirtz 1984 and other papers. Also see Saén-Badillios 1993: 56–61, and the updated research reviews in Mendel 2013 and Gianto 2016.

² See Kogan 2015a: 45.

³ According to Kogan 2015b: 87: “the chronological distance between the act of borrowing and the written attestation is usually not very broad if compared with the cognate relationship”; therefore “many groups of loanwords are of great extra-linguistic value.” Kaufman 2000 emphasizes the correlation between the linguistic and cultural contacts, p. 301: “Long overdue is a new assessment of the phonology and typology of Ancient Near Eastern culture words of foreign origin in Late Bronze Age Semitic, and how the linguistic evidence all ties in with the textual and archaeological sources to extend our picture of the history of trade, culture, technology, and the like.” On the contribution of Aramaic and Persian loan vocabulary to Late Biblical Hebrew analysis, see Hurvitz 2003; on the relevance of loan vocabulary in linguistic text-dating, see Eskhult 2003 and Joosten and Hendel 2018: 23–28; see also Noonan 2019.

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Akkadian loans are found in Classical BH, namely in the books of Isaiah (17 items), Kings (13 items), Jeremiah (15 items), and Ezekiel (11 items).⁴ Additionally, researchers differentiate between three different layers of borrowing from Akkadian to BH: (1) the heritage of earlier contact with Akkadian, i.e. in West Semitic and Old Canaanite; (2) direct loans from Akkadian during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods; and (3) post-exilic loans, primarily via Aramaic.⁵ Moreover, as the following discussion demonstrates, the contact phenomena attested in the corpus of archaic poetry can vary in nature. To delineate possible Akkadianisms, the following criteria should be considered:

- Even if a word under discussion is rare in BH (e.g. a hapax legomenon in the language of archaic poetry) and is common in Akkadian, if it has well-attested Northwest Semitic (NWS) etymology (such as Amorite, Ugaritic, Aramaic, or Phoenician), or Central Semitic (CS) and West Semitic (WS) etymology (such as Arabic, Old South Arabian, Ethiopic, Modern South Arabian) – in other words, if it is derived from a verbal root or can be related to cognate nominal derivatives – then borrowing is implausible.
- If a lexical item is shared by Akkadian and Hebrew, and it has no good NWS, CS, or WS etymology, *borrowing* becomes more plausible. Borrowing from Akkadian into Hebrew can be *direct* or *indirect*, occurring through vocabulary shared with Old Canaanite or through another intermediate linguistic stage.
- A word without a deep etymology and wide distribution in East-Semitic (ES) – i.e. in different dialects of Akkadian – is not a good candidate to be a source of a lexical borrowing, and may itself be a loan from one of the West Semitic languages into Akkadian.
- There are some consistent sound correspondences in Akkadian > Hebrew borrowings, particularly in the sphere of sibilants and gutturals, that allow one to establish certain borrowings.⁶ However, if an item is an old loan via an ancient West Semitic language, these consistent correspondences can be obscure.
- The words that have explicit Sumerian etymologies could have been borrowed via Akkadian. If a lexical item is spread among different, apparently unrelated languages, and the direction of borrowing is difficult to establish, then a wandering *Kulturwort* (culture word) of unknown origin is to be postulated.
- The semantic aspects of borrowing are equally in need of consideration.⁷ If the NWS, CS, or WS cognates are semantically distinct from their East Semitic (ES) counterparts, while the Hebrew items exhibit the ES usage, *semantic borrowing* is plausible, attesting to more intimate contact between languages.
- Of special interest are loans involving *phono-semantic matching*, a process by which a Hebrew (or other NWS) lexeme acquires the meaning of an Akkadian lexeme to which it is phonetically close and semantically related, but not necessarily genetically cognate.
- Direct or semantic borrowing can be a source of lexical doublets, with one item being a loan (by direct or semantic borrowing), and another a retention inherited from earlier stages.⁸

4 See Mankowski 2000: 173–174; in Psalms, Nehemiah, and Paralipomenon the number of Akkadian loans is also relatively high. According to Mankowski 2000: 175–176, Akkadian loanwords in BH are almost all nouns and belong to the administrative, technical-commercial, cultic, or military semantic spheres. See also Zimmer 1917, Ellenborough 1962, Lipiński 1988, Levine 2008, Peacock 2013; and for the book of Ezekiel, cf. Gluska 2005.

5 See Barr 1968: 101–114, particularly p. 105: “Akkadian words may have come into Hebrew from very early times down to the Babylonian exile.” Different layers of the Akkadian loan vocabulary were also emphasized in Kaufman 1974 and Mankowski 2000; cf. also the discussion in Edzard 2015ab, and Kogan 2006, 2010, 2015b. For theoretical aspects of loan vocabulary, see Haspelmath 2009.

6 See Mankowski 2000: 154–158.

7 Most scholars, including Mankowski (2000), exclude loan-translation and other semantic aspects of borrowing from systematic studies of Akkadianisms in Hebrew.

8 See Edzard 2015ab.

- Phrases, literary similes or idioms can be calqued from Akkadian, giving rise to *loan-translations*.
- In practice, the process of loan-translation is not easily distinguished from so-called *inter-dialectal idioms*. Interdialectal idioms are a kind of *Kulturwörter* of phraseology, wandering similes or fixed phrases of unknown origin.

Based on these criteria, I will collect the relevant cases in the corpus that appear to attest to different types of contact phenomena, such as direct and indirect lexical borrowings, wandering “culture words,” loan-translations, interdialectal idioms, semantic borrowings, and loans by phono-semantic matching (see section 2). The main conclusion of the research, however, is that the language of the archaic poems is characterized by a *high level of lexical conservatism*, at least in relation to potential Akkadian borrowings. The evidenced cases of direct or even indirect borrowing from Akkadian, or of any type of semantic borrowing, are very rare and mostly controversial. Regarding these terms, the lexicon of archaic Hebrew poetry is generally much more conservative than that of the Classical BH poetic material, for example the book of Isaiah.

The distribution of the attested phenomena in the corpus points to a more nuanced picture, however (see section 3). The language of the corpus is not homogeneous, and it reflects different levels of Akkadian language influence. The texts of the Song of Moses (Deut 32), the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33), and the Song of the Sea (Ex 15) demonstrate maximal conservatism, with virtually no traces of Akkadian influence. The Song of Deborah (Ju 5) attests to indirect borrowing, presumably via Old Canaanite, and some texts, such as the Song of David (2 Sam 22) and the Oracles of Balaam (Num 23–24), show several direct borrowings. The main watershed lies between the Blessing of Jacob (Gen 49) and the rest of the corpus. Gen 49 exhibits the most lexical and semantic borrowings, pointing towards a situation reminiscent of Classical BH.

2 Akkadianisms in the corpus of “archaic” poetry: different contact phenomena

2.1 Direct lexical borrowing

Direct lexical loans from Akkadian are extremely rare and uncertain in the archaic BH corpus. The most explicit case seems to be כְּרוּב ‘cherub’ (2 Sam 22: 11) from Akkadian *karūbu/kurību*.⁹ The verbal root with the basic meaning ‘twist, curl, bend’ is reconstructed for Proto-Semitic, but is not attested in NWS, except for one broken and not very clear instance in Ugaritic.¹⁰ A direct loan from Akkadian looks like the best solution due to the term’s technical meaning, which is related to the ritual sphere. Also, morphologically, the item כְּרוּב is reminiscent of the *qutūl* pattern, though this pattern is used in Hebrew for abstract, inanimate nouns like רְכוּש ‘property’, לְבוּש ‘garment’, גְּבוּל ‘territory’, נְאֻם ‘saying’, נְעֻרִים ‘young age’, etc.¹¹

In the verse וּמִסְפֵּר אֶת-רֵבֶעַ יִשְׁרָאֵל (Num 23:10), the unit אֶת-רֵבֶעַ is interpreted in light of Akkadian *turbu’u* ‘dust-cloud’. In this interpretation, the lexeme would be a hapax legomenon in the biblical corpus, while the Akkadian equivalent is widely attested.¹² The loan from Akkadian provides an explanation of the rather untechnical usage of the direct object marker אֶת, turning it into a prefix, but it does not suggest an easy solution for the guttural ו, which would be rather unexpected in a direct

⁹ See HALOT 497; the Akkadian nominals, meaning “honored person, protective genius,” are derived from the root *karābu* ‘pray, consecrate, bless’; see AHW 445–446, 453, 510 and CAD K: 240, 559.

¹⁰ See DULAT 450 and the etymological discussion there.

¹¹ See Fox 2003: 211.

¹² For this reading, see Albright 1944: 213–214 and cf. AHW 1328–39 and CAD T: 485: *turbu’tu tarbu’tu, tarbu’u*. See also Cohen 1978: 37–39, 60–63, and cf. Levine 2000: 175–177.

borrowing from Akkadian to BH in the classical period, but is available in ancient borrowings or may be due to the reanalysis in terms of phono-semantic matching (see also below about עָדִי).¹³

It has been claimed that the lexical unit הִאֲזִינָה עָדִי בְנוֹ צִפּוֹר in עָדִי בְנוֹ צִפּוֹר ‘listen to me (alternatively: to my oath), son of Zippor’ (Num 23: 18) is to be understood in view of Akkadian *adû* ‘oath, promise, treaty’.¹⁴ The addressee, Balaq, is summoned to listen to the divine oath pronounced by the prophet.¹⁵ The lexical item *dy/n* ‘oath, treaty, covenant’ is attested several times in Old Aramaic in Sefire inscriptions, usually in the plural form; cf. תִּשְׁמַעְנָ וְתִשְׁלַמְנָ עֲדֵייהָ אֵלֶן ‘listen and accomplish these oaths’ (KAI 222B 24). The most archaic case of this usage is currently the Tell Shiukh Fawqani tablet (TSF F 204 I/3), which reads חַיִּי מַלְכָּא וְעֵדוּהָ ‘the king’s life and his oaths’.¹⁶ The etymological relationship between the Aramaic and Hebrew item, on the one hand, and its Akkadian parallel, on the other, is controversial. Because the Akkadian item mainly spread since the Neo-Assyrian period, it has been claimed that it was borrowed from Aramaic or even from Old Canaanite, rather than the other way around.¹⁷ Could the item עָדִי with the meaning ‘oath, promise, treaty’ in Num 23:18 be an archaic retention preserved in poetic usage? There are quite clear counterarguments that can be made against this assumption. This lexeme is used only sporadically in classical BH, e.g., Gen 31:44 and Isa 33:8. Furthermore, it is not attested in Ugaritic, Old Canaanite or Phoenician. It remains obscure how Neo-Assyrian could have borrowed such a rare Hebrew or Aramaic word, especially given the cognate and semantically equivalent BH lexeme עֲדוּת, which has a much wider usage (cf. the expression אֲרוֹן הָעֲדוּת ‘ark of the testimony’). There are hundreds of lexical innovations in Neo-Assyrian, many of which have explicit parallels in CS,¹⁸ but it would be quite an exaggeration to consider them loans from Aramaic or Canaanite dialects. The semantic scope of Akkadian *adû* and its distribution in the corpus quite explicitly point to it being a genuine Assyrian political term.¹⁹ It is entirely reasonable to assume that the lexeme עָדִי, in the technical sense of ‘oath, promise, treaty’ as attested in Num 23:18, was an innovation influenced by the Akkadian of the Neo-Assyrian period, as a kind of lexical dou-

13 For this interpretation of the spelling אָת, see Cohen 2012: 365–366. This lexical interpretation is to be coordinated with the Arabic *gubār* ‘dust’ (see Morag 1981: 9–10) with a metathesis, however the latter lexeme is not derived from a verbal root; see Lane 2223 and the discussion in Kogan 2015a: 268. Even if there are etymological links between Arabic, Hebrew, and Akkadian lexemes, this does not explain the prefix *t-* attested in Akkadian and in Hebrew אָת-רָבֵעַ; the connection to Arabic *turāb* ‘dust’ (see Lane 301) is even more obscure.

14 This interpretation was suggested by Albright 1944: 214 (note 31) following the reading in LXX and the Peshitta (see also Morag 1981:10–12 and HALOT 787); the preposition עַד is not used with the verbs of perception, while its use with the verbs of motion, as in וְלֹא-שָׁבָתָם עָדִי ‘you did not return to me’ (Amos 4:6) is not relevant for the discussion. This reading was not accepted by Levine 2000:181 and Milgrom 1990:199.

15 On the discursive structure and the elements of the prophetic speech in this oracle, see Notarius 2008: 62–63.

16 See Fales 1996, Lemaire 2001: 123–126, Bachelot and Fales 2005: 655–661. According to Fales 1996, the spelling of וְעֵדוּהָ with *waw* indicates the plural form, as in other forms of this lexeme in Old Aramaic and also in the case under discussion. I thank Yigal Bloch who drew my attention to this evidence.

17 According to HALOT 786, this lexeme is derived from the root *dy* parallel to the root *y’d* ‘determine’, cf. *w’d* ‘promise’ in Sabaic (Beeston 1982:155) and Arabic (Lane 2952). See also AHw 14 and DNWSI 824; for other cases of these lexemes in BH, see Gen 31:44 and Isa 33:8. See also the discussion in Kaufman 1974:33, Morag 1981:10–12 (he derives the lexeme from the root *wd*), Greenfield 1991:142, Fitzmyer 1995: 58–59, and Tawil 2009: 271–272; Fitzmyer emphasizes: “the term as used here reveals the influence of the Assyrian political order on this Aramean kingdom. If the word itself is borrowed from Aramaic into Akkadian, the institution that it represents is Assyrian.”

18 See the comprehensive review in Kalinin and Loesov 2017.

19 According to Bachelot and Fales 2005: 659, “the institutional feature of the ‘king’s loyalty oath’ represents *per se* a chronological marker, as a *terminus ante quem non* for the reign of Esarhaddon, since it was this king who imposed the swearing of the loyalty oath to the royal dynasty throughout the Assyrian empire.” The borrowing of this Neo-Assyrian lexeme from Aramaic or Canaanite is strongly doubted by Radner 2006; cf. also the comprehensive discussion of this political notion in the Neo-Assyrian period by Fales (2012), who claims (p. 153) that it reflects a “uniquely Assyrian ideological-political development.”

blet of עֲדִית. It is also possible that an indirect borrowing occurred through Old Aramaic, or that a re-analysis took place based on phonosemantic matching (e.g., involving the use of the guttural).²⁰

Among the less clear cases, one must mention אֶלְלִים (Num 24:6). This might be a loanword from Akkadian *uḫūlu* ‘alkali (a plant and its product)’, or perhaps it can be linked to the ‘aloe-tree’, while parallel lexemes are attested in Arabic and Aramaic.²¹ An additional item is קָרַסְלִי (2 Sam 22:37) ‘ankle, step’, which probably comes from Akkadian *kursinnu*.²²

By contrast, the item שְׁדִים (Deut 32:17), which, following the vocalization, is a loan from the Akkadian *šēdu* ‘spirit, demon’, should rather be revocalized as a plural of the divine title שְׁדִי, related to the parallel usage in the Deir-‘Alla plaster inscription I 5: *šdyn* ‘gods’.²³ The word שְׂרָשָׁם (Judges 5:14) is not a borrowing from Akkadian *ša rēšu* ‘of the head, minister’ (from a Babylonian dialect, according to the rendering of sibilants; cf. the later borrowing סְרִיס ‘minister, eunuch’ via an Assyrian dialect), in view of the well-attested Ugaritic *šrš* in the sense of ‘offspring, family’.²⁴

2.2 Indirect lexical borrowings

From its most ancient period, Akkadian was in adjacent contact with CS and NWS, as evidenced by the Mari, Emar, Ugarit, and other Syrian and Canaanite city archives.²⁵ The Ugaritic corpus attests to several lexemes borrowed from Akkadian.²⁶ Such ancient loans could have entered the Hebrew vocabulary through a process of indirect borrowing, namely via a shared Canaanite heritage.

The item מִנִּי מַכִּיר יָרְדוּ מְהַקְקִים וּמַזְבִּילֵן מִשְׁכֵּם בְּשַׁבָּט סֹפֵר in ‘From Machir the leaders came down, and from Zebulun – those who bear a (scribe)-commander staff’ (Judges 5:14) is an example of this kind of indirect loan.²⁷ BH and Ugaritic dictionaries derive the noun סֹפֵר ‘scribe’ – as well as the noun סֶפֶר ‘message, letter’ – from the root **spr* ‘count, tell’, but equally emphasize the connection to Akkadian *šipru* ‘message’ and *šāpiru* ‘governor’, both derived from the root *šapāru* ‘send’.²⁸ Since these two verbal roots are not etymologically cognate, it has been suggested that Akkadian usages had an impact on the NWS lexemes. It is highly unlikely that the NWS root **spr* ‘count; tell’ would have developed the meaning of ‘writing and sending documents’ without any Akkadian interference.²⁹ It is plausible that the NWS unit **sipr* ‘message, written document’ was borrowed from Akkadian *šipru* at

20 ‘oath’ and אֶת-רִבְעָה ‘dust cloud’ in the Oracles of Balaam, if direct loans, reflect the use of gutturals in spite of the expectation of the Akkadian loans. However, it should be noted that the gutturals appear to have been preserved in the Assyrian dialect, at least until the onset of the Neo-Assyrian period; see Kouwenberg 2019: 70–74 and also Deller 1959, Worthington 2010. (I thank Maksim Kalinin who discussed this topic with me.)

21 See the discussion in Gesenius¹⁸: 21.

22 See AHw 511 and cf. *kašillu* (CAD K: 434–435); Arabic *karsūṣāʔ* and Aramaic *kursūf* complicate the issue. The term may be a wandering culture word.

23 See also Ps 106:37 and cf. Mankowski 2000: 138–140 and Hackett 1984: 134. In Ugaritic, *šd* is a divine name; see DULAT 798.

24 Contra Soccin 1981: 88–89, and cf. DULAT 832.

25 See the overview in Vita 2015; on Emar, cf. Pentiuc 2001.

26 See Watson 2004, 2007: 63–118, but cf. the discussion in Kogan 2015: 365–369.

27 The interpretation of סֹפֵר as ‘chief, commander’ is attested already in LXX; on the Akkadian influence in this case, see Tsevat 1952–1953, Boling 1975: 112, Webb 2012: 197. For the full analysis of this reading, see Notarius 2021.

28 See HALOT 767, DULAT 755, DNWSI 798, and cf. also Kutscher 1974: 67; the Akkadian dictionaries adopt the same view; cf. AHw 1170.

29 Hebrew *s* corresponds to the Semitic *s*₃ as in **sr* ‘to tie’ > Akk. *esēru*, Ugr. *ʾsr*, Hbr. *ʾsr*; while Akkadian *š* is a reflex of the Semitic *s*₁: **šim*- ‘name’ > Akk. *šumu*, Ugr. *šm*, Hbr. *šēm*; see Kogan 2011: 56–57 and cf. Kogan 2015: 305–306: “Contra HALOT 765–766, PC **spr* ‘to count’ is to be strictly separated from the widely attested lexemes with the prototypes **sipr*- ‘writing, inscription, document’ and **sāpir*- ‘scribe’, which are not autochthonous West Semitic, but ultimately go back to Akk. *šipru* and *šāpiru*.”

The lexica for “counting” and “telling” interact in many European languages; cf. English count–account, Spanish *contar*, Italian *contare–recontare*, German *zählen–erzählen*, Danish *tælle–fortælle*, Russian считать–читать, as already noted by Kutscher 1974: 76; however, the notions of “counting” and “writing” are not trivially combined.

the most ancient stage (attested in Ugaritic; see Notarius 2021, Notarius 2022), but was reanalyzed as a derivative of the NWS root **spr* ‘count; tell’ due to some shared functional properties.³⁰ The Akkadian *šāpiru* ‘governor, ruler’, borrowed into NWS, was similarly reanalyzed as a **spr* derivative and – potentially under the influence of the NWS nominal lexeme **sipr* ‘message, written document’ and in correlation with the Akkadian verbal *šapāru* ‘send in writing, write’, – developed the meaning ‘scribe’.³¹ The usage שָׂפָר שֶׁכֶּט ‘commander’s staff’ in Judges 5:14 attests to an original semantic component characterizing this borrowing process.³² However, given that in Egyptian this word is written with an affricate, a direct borrowing from Akkadian is not possible, Hoch 1994 No 540.

An additional case of indirect lexical borrowing might be אֶמְרֵי-שֹׁפָר (Gen 49:21). According to Gevirtz, it is a loan from Akkadian *immir supūri* ‘sheep of the fold’, which is apparently also attested in Ugaritic.³³ If so, the borrowing would have occurred via Assyrian. An explicit case of indirect lexical borrowing is הֵיכָל ‘palace, temple’ (2 Sam 22:7), which is already attested in Ugaritic (from Akkadian *ekallum* and Sumerian *Ē.GAL*). The latter is also an example of the use of gutturals in ancient loans.

A less plausible case is מְכַרְתֵּיהֶם ‘their tools’ (Gen 49:5); cf. *kirrātum* from El-Amarna and Akkadian *kirru/kīru* (DUG.)KIR ‘vessel, tool’.³⁴ The hapax סוּתָה ‘his garment’ (Gen 49:11) presents a special problem: it is routinely compared to the Phoenician–Punic סוּת/סוּיָה,³⁵ but in Phoenician the lexeme also has an obscure etymology.³⁶ This item was interpreted in light of the Ugaritic hapax legomenon *št* ‘kind of garment’, which is claimed to be borrowed from Akkadian (w)*āšītu*.³⁷ The rendering of Akkadian *š* with NWS *s* is not regular, although there are several examples that support it.³⁸

The origin of the lexeme סֶפֶל (Judges 5:25) ‘bowl’ is debated. It has been claimed that it is a loan from Akkadian that is already attested in Ugaritic and in Egyptian transliteration (Hoch 1994 No 541). The word has a wide distribution in Akkadian, starting from Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian, and is also attested in middle and late Western Aramaic dialects.³⁹

30 For the Akkadian lexeme see CAD Š/3 73, and cf. the Ugaritic *spr* II, DULAT 756–757: (1) “tablet/register, list, inventory; in accounting, record of tribute; of instructions”; (2) “writing, document, warrant”; (3) “letter, missive”; (4) “archival note of reference.”

31 Akkadian uses another word, a Sumerian loan DUB.SAR; see CAT T 151 and CAD Š/1 457. The NWS lexeme *sāpir* ‘scribe’ is attested since the 13th cent. BC (see DULAT 755–756 and DNWSI 798), also loaned in Egyptian (Hoch 1984:364 (540)), and borrowed by Late Babylonian (see AHw 1036, and cf. Bloch 2018: 17–18).

32 Sasson 2014: 298, 500, citing parallels from the Mari archive, made a strong claim for the intermingling of two semantic components relevant for this case – the military leadership and the chancellery.

33 See Gevirtz 1984, see also DULAT 70 *im]r špr* KTU 1.108:1, the case is very obscure and is translated ‘fine lambs (?)’, but on p. 824 the translation is ‘horn’; cf. also Gesenius¹⁸ 1406. The hapax legomenon שֹׁפָר in Gen 49:21 is unlikely to be connected to the Aramaic word in the meaning ‘beautiful’; for the latter lexeme cf. Kogan 2015a:387.

34 Cf. CAD K 408–410 and cf. the discussion in Young 1981; de Hoop: 17–18 does not accept this interpretation and follows Dahood 1961, who revocalized to מְכַרְתֵּי ‘cutting instrument’ – a simplifying interpretation attested already in Samaritan Pentateuch.

35 See Joüon 1940, Kutscher 1974:80, DNWSI 780–781.

36 Cf. Gesenius¹⁸ 701, 881: they compare to Hebrew מְסָחָה ‘Decke, Hülle, (Priestermaske)’ and Punic מְסוּיָאָה, and draw parallel to Arabic *šawāt* ‘Kopfhaut’; see Lane 1625 who translates ‘skin of the head’, but the irregular correspondence between sibilants and a difficult semantic link make this etymology implausible.

37 See DULAT 781–782: *yd šth* ‘he took off his *št*-garment’ (KTU 1.17 I 13–14) and compare AHw1478 (see under 11, ‘Ärmelgewand’) and CAD A/2 355–356. The case is discussed by Watson 2007: 107, who claims that Ugaritic *št* is an Akkadian loan, but Kogan 2015a: 368 is skeptical.

38 Kaufman 1974 presents several loanwords where Akkadian *š* is rendered by Aramaic *š*, and also discusses the apparent exception to this match: *hsp* < *hašbu* ‘clay’ (p. 54) and *kwslt* < *kašillu* ‘scalpel’ (p. 63). Mankowski 2000: 96 is also aware of this regular correspondence, but his unique example contradicts it: מְגִזְרֵיךָ ‘your guardians’ (Nehemiah 3: 17) < Akkadian *maššaru*.

39 See HALOT 764; the item is attested twice in the biblical corpus – the present case and in Judges 6:37. Watson 2007: 106 argues for its Akkadian origin; see also DULAT 754–755, but, again, Kogan 2015: 357–358 is skeptical: “In view of Hbr. *sēpāl* (HALOT 764) and comparable WS terms listed *ibid.*, we do not see any compelling reason to

2.3 Wandering culture words

Many words of foreign origin in the corpus remain of unknown origin, and the direction of their borrowing continues to be discussed. Some of them can be characterized as wandering culture words (*Kulturwörter*). For example, the term מַס 'corvee work' (Gen 49:12) is apparently inherited from Old Canaanite, and its distribution in Akkadian is limited to the archives of El-Amarna and Alalakh, suggesting a possible borrowing from West Semitic into Akkadian.⁴⁰ However, this word does not have a clear etymology in West Semitic either, and it is not attested in Ugaritic (the Hurrian loan *unt* is used instead).⁴¹

The following are other cases of apparent wandering culture words: סוּס 'horse', used several times in the corpus (Gen 49:17, Ex 15:1, Judges 5:14), is parallel to Akkadian *sisû* and Ugaritic *s/šs/šw*, and the word is of Indo-European etymology; cf. Old Indian *ásva-h*, Avestian *aspa-*, Old Persian *asa-*.⁴² The item שָׁלִישִׁי 'chariot officer' (Ex 15:4) is a parallel to the Akkadian *tašlišu*, but it is unlikely to be borrowed from it (compare also Ugaritic *tl̥t*). A borrowing from Hittite LÚ *šalašha* has also been suggested.⁴³

Hebrew עוֹפֶרֶת (Ex 15:10) 'bronze' has a contested etymology. The derivation from עָפָר 'dust' looks very doubtful (cf. also to *šprt* in Ugaritic and Phoenician),⁴⁴ especially in view of Akkadian *abāru* and Sumerian A.GAR₅/A.BĀR/A.LU, which may be an ancient loan with a guttural spelling.⁴⁵ The item חֶלְמִישׁ 'flint' (Deut 32:13) poses a similar problem. It looks like a borrowing from Akkadian *elmēšu*, spelled with a guttural;⁴⁶ compare the lexical doublet חֶשְׁמֶל 'ember' (Ezek 1:4, also in 1QHodayot^a 11:32 and 16:24), Arabic *almās* 'diamond' and *ḥalbanūs/ḥalanbūs* 'flint'.⁴⁷

The lexeme טִיט 'mud' (2 Sam 22:43) is parallel to Akkadian *ṭīdu*, *ṭītu*, *ṭiddu*, *ṭiṭtu*,⁴⁸ and also to Ugaritic *tt* and Arabic *ṭīn*. It could be a culture word of ambiguous origin.⁴⁹

consider Ugr. *spl* (*sa-ap-lu*) 'platter, tray' (DUL 766) a borrowing from Akk. *saplu* 'a bowl' (CAD S 165), *contra* Watson 2007: 106." Contrary to what Kogan claims, this word does not have deep West Semitic etymology. It is not derived from a consonantal root, and Arabic *sifl*, routinely quoted in this connection, is itself a hapax in *Risāla* of *Juda ibn Quryish* (thus in Dozy I 659) and apparently is a loan. The distribution in Western Aramaic dialects (Qumran, Galilean, Palestinian Targumic, Christian Palestinian, and Late Jewish Literary, cf. CAL) does not prove deep WS etymology. Still, according to Huehnergard 1987: 158, "Akk. *saplu*, attested only beginning with MB and MA ... may itself be a WSem. loan."

⁴⁰ See AHW 619.

⁴¹ See DULAT 81–82.

⁴² See DULAT 760.

⁴³ See AHW 1339 and CAD T 29; cf. also DULAT 897 "member of the team in a war-chariot" and the discussion there. The Hebrew–Akkadian parallel is discussed at length in Cohen 2015a. He emphasizes the lack of a formal and semantic match between the terms and is doubtful about the borrowing. For the Hittite term see CHD Š/1 88–89 and HEG S/1 762.

⁴⁴ See Gesenius¹⁸ 997, HALOT 863. DULAT 172 emphasizes that the etymology is not clear and connects it to *šprt* 'dust, earth'; cf. also DNWSi 879.

⁴⁵ According to AHW 4, the item *abāru* is borrowed from Sumerian; see CAD A/1 36–37; SD A/1 81–93103 discusses the Sumerograms A.GAR₅, A.BĀR, A-LU⁵-LU⁵; cf. also Landesberg 1965. At later stage, the Akkadian/Sumerian lexeme was borrowed into Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic אַבְרָה. If עוֹפֶרֶת is an earlier borrowing of the Akkadian/Sumerian term, then אַבְרָה is its lexical doublet.

⁴⁶ See HALOT 321, which also makes a possible connection to the Arabic root *ḥmš* 'be strong'; see also Landesberg 1967: 190–198.

⁴⁷ See Gesenius¹⁸ 357; cf. Lane 2744.

⁴⁸ According to Mankowski 2000: 57–58, the Hebrew lexeme is borrowed from Akkadian, but he does not discuss the case in 2 Sam 22; cf. the critical remark of Fleming 2001:528: "a poetic text that probably predates late eighth century"; cf. AHW 1391 and CAD T 104.

⁴⁹ See DULAT 877. The borrowing from Akkadian into Hebrew is debated; cf. Clemens 2003: 293: "Usages of Hebrew *ṭiṭ* appear too diverse to support the idea that this form derives from the Akkadian cognate by virtue of the latter's 'technical or commercial importance' (p. 58), particularly since it scarcely possessed such importance in Israel."

2.4 Loan-translations and wandering interdialectal idioms

Direct and indirect lexical loans are not the only ways by which Hebrew could have been impacted by Akkadian. Loan-translations or other types of semantic borrowing potentially indicate much closer contact between languages.

The expression *וְהָיָא יָתֵן מַעֲדָנֵי מֶלֶךְ* ‘he will serve the king’s delicacies’ (Gen 49:20) is an example of such a loan-translation. The phrase *מַעֲדָנֵי מֶלֶךְ* ‘king’s delicacies’ is to be understood in correlation with another BH idiom – *אֲכָלִי שֶׁלֶחַן הַמֶּלֶךְ* ‘those who eat at the king’s table’.⁵⁰ The expression refers to a royal meal, supplied through taxes, that is also an expression of the king’s beneficence towards his vassals and servants; see also the Ugaritic *tlḥn mlk* (KTU 1.161:15),⁵¹ and cf. the Akkadian source expression *a-ka-lu ina pani šarri ik-ka-al* ‘he will eat food in the king’s presence’ (CT 22 247:39).⁵² I claim that the expression *מַעֲדָנֵי מֶלֶךְ* is a loan-translation of the expression *na-ap-ta-an* LUGAL ‘king’s meal’; cf. also *naptan šarrūtija* (Esarh. 106 iii 35), NĠ.DU LUGAL, and *naptanu ša šarri*,⁵³ and compare also *פֶּת־בֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ* ‘portion/meal of the king’ (Daniel 1:15). The latter is a lexical loan of Persian *pati-baga*, which is probably a loan translation of the same Akkadian expression.⁵⁴

By contrast, the expression *אָרִיק חֶרֶב־יִי* ‘empty out/draw a weapon’ (Ex 15:9) is unlikely to be a loan-translation of *kakkē tabāku* ‘to throw down a weapon; submit’. These two idiomatic expressions are formally similar but have opposite semantic interpretations.⁵⁵

Hebrew expressions frequently allude to Akkadian expressions, but the type of their formal and semantic equivalence does not allow for proposing a loan-translation in the full sense of the word. It may be an interdialectal literary expression, a simile that wanders within certain cultural environments, but its source is not easy to establish. Such interdialectal idioms are an important part of biblical stylistic studies.⁵⁶

The poetic expression *עֵינַיִם מִיַּיִן* ‘with eyes darker than wine’ (Gen 49:12) is unlikely to be a borrowing or a loan-translation of the Akkadian root *ekēlu* ‘be dark’ (compare also Arabic *hkl* ‘be confused, unclear’ and to *hkl* ‘be dark’),⁵⁷ even though the Akkadian root in the Gtn-stem can be used about eyes, as demonstrated in the research of the late Chaim Cohen.⁵⁸ Also, the expressions *כְּחוֹעֶפֶת רֹאם* ‘like a wild ox’s eminence’ (Num 23:22; 24:8) and *קַרְנֵי רֹאם* ‘horns of a wild ox’ (Deut 33:17) can be compared to the Akkadian *kīma rimi* ‘like a wild ox’, but these are not loan-translations.⁵⁹

2.5 Semantic loans and phono-semantic matching

Although there are no cases of verbal borrowing from Akkadian, Hebrew verbs can borrow meanings under the influence of Akkadian verbs. One example of such a semantic borrowing is the phrase *פָּחוּז כַּמַּיִם אֶל-תּוֹתֶר* ‘reckless like water, you shall not remain over’ (Gen 49:4), used in the

⁵⁰ See 2 Sam 9:7, 19:29; 1 Kings 2:7, 18:19 and cf. also the expression *מֶאֱכָל שֶׁלֶחַן* (הַמֶּלֶךְ) (1 Kings 10:5 // 2 Chron 9:4).

⁵¹ See DULAT 892–893 and cf. also *mlk šr šrt* (// *dbḥ*) ‘the king gives a banquet’ in KTU 1.16 I 40.

⁵² See CAD A/1 248; for other expressions of “eating in front of the king”, cf. CAD P 262.

⁵³ See CAD N 249, CAD A/1 271, and CAD N 320–321; see also AHw 741.

⁵⁴ See Collins 1993: 139–140; he does not discuss Akkadian, Ugaritic, and classical BH parallels.

⁵⁵ Contrary to the interpretation discussed in HALOT 1228; cf. AHw 1295, CAD T 6 (3a).

⁵⁶ This is a known phenomenon in biblical lexicography; see the review in Smith 2015; cf. also the research of Shalom Paul, e.g. Paul 2005.

⁵⁷ The etymology of the lexeme is debated in HALOT 313, 469. It refers to the Hebrew root *חכ"ל*, points to the Arabic root *hkl* in stem IV *ʾhkl* ‘be dubious, vague’ (see also Lane 631), draws parallels to Tigrinya ‘hide oneself’ and Akkadian *ekēlu* ‘be dark’, but gives preference to the Hebrew root *כה"ל* ‘paint eyes’, apparently a loan from Akkadian *guhlu* ‘eye paint’ (CAD G 125), or considers it a result of the metathesis. See also AHw 193, and in particular Bulakh 2005:148–150.

⁵⁸ See Cohen 1989:15–16; cf. also de Hoop 1999: 142.

⁵⁹ See the discussion in Cohen 2015b, and cf. Ugaritic *k ibr ... w rūm* ‘for a bull (was born to DN)... a wild ox’ (KTU 1.10 III 35). Ugaritic *ynghn k rūmm* ‘they butted each other like wild bulls’ (KTU 1.6 VI 17) uses the same idiom as in Deut 33:17; see DULAT 11–12, 712.

sense of “to have preeminence, superiority, firstborn privilege.” The phrase was interpreted by Speiser in correlation with the Akkadian cognate *šūturu* (Š-stem of *atāru/watāru* ‘exceed’) that has an elative function.⁶⁰ The root **wtr* is attested in all the branches of Semitic, but with a semantic split. While in Akkadian the comparative and superlative component is explicit, ‘exceed in number, surpass’, in West Semitic it is a verb of restriction, ‘remain one’.⁶¹ The usage in Gen 49:4 that explicitly attests to an elative rather than a restrictive meaning is due to semantic borrowing from Akkadian. Also, עָלִיתָ (Gen 49:9) in the sense ‘grown up, advanced in age’ may be a semantic loan of Akkadian *elû* ‘grow’.⁶²

Phono-semantic matching between lexemes of languages in contact is a common mechanism of semantic borrowing. Some elements of this development have been discussed above (for example the case of סָפַר; Judges 5:14). Another possible case is יָדָן (Gen 49:16), if this should be interpreted in light of Akkadian *danānu* ‘be strong’.⁶³

3 The Akkadianisms in the language of archaic poetry: the distribution of contact phenomena

The present research suggests a typology of contact phenomena attested in the language of BH archaic poetry. Lexical loans comprise only substantives and can be direct or indirect (via another language), and the origin of some culture words remains obscure. Cases of loan-translation (calque), phono-semantic matching, and semantic borrowing were identified as well. Some interdialectal idioms and similes are not necessarily semantic calques from Akkadian.

In general, the research confirms the highly conservative character of the language of archaic poetry, at least with regard to the influence of Akkadian, the impact of which on the language of these poems is minimal. Some putative cases remain contested.

More interestingly, the contact phenomena are not proportionally distributed in the corpus under discussion, attesting to its linguistic heterogeneity.⁶⁴ In Deut 32 and 33, no significant traces of Akkadian influence were found, except for one culture word and one literary simile, respectively (see Table 1 below). On the surface, Ex 15, Judges 5 and 2 Sam 22 have three items each, but their status differs. While Ex 15 has only three culture words, Judges 5 has two indirect lexical loans (via Old Canaanite heritage) and one culture word, and 2 Sam 22 has two direct lexical loans from Akkadian and one indirect loan.

The Blessing of Balaam (Num 23-24) attests to more obvious direct lexical loans (three loans and also two interdialectal idioms). The Blessing of Jacob (Gen 49) diverges from the rest of the corpus with greater number of phenomena that can be attributed to the influence of Akkadian. In addition to several indirect lexical loans and wandering culture words, there are a number of phenomena associated with phraseology that have an impact on the level of semantics – a loan-translation, semantic loans, and borrowing through phono-semantic matching. The latter phenomena attest to closer contact between the Hebrew and Akkadian languages, setting the Blessing of Jacob apart within the corpus.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ See Speiser 1952, cf. CAD A/2 491.

⁶¹ See HALOT 452. In Arabic, the basic meaning is “make one, odd” (see Lane 2917) and in Classical Ethiopic “do something with attention, be assiduous” (see Leslau 1989: 163). The usage in the Aramaic dialects is in general consistent with Arabic, but the usage “to be an advantage” is also attested, apparently due to a similar process of semantic borrowing; see Sokoloff 2009: 590.

⁶² Compare HALOT 828-829 and CAD E 120; see also the discussion in de Hoop 1999: 140, 335.

⁶³ Cf. the discussion in Emerton 1968.

⁶⁴ Cf. Robertson 1972, Notarius 2013.

⁶⁵ In some interpretations Gen 49 has even more Akkadianisms. The verse בֵּן פֶּתַח יוֹסֵף בֵּן פֶּתַח עֲלִי-עֵין בְּנוֹת צִעְדָּה עַל-שׂוֹר (Gen 49:22) suggests a number of Akkadianisms: בְּנוֹת ‘terebinth tree’ (Akkadian *bīnu*) and שׂוֹר ‘garden’ (Akkadian *musarū*, Sumerian SAR/SAR); see Allegro 1952 and cf. de Hoop 1999: 186–197.

Table 1: Archaic Hebrew and Akkadian: contact phenomena

	Gen 49	Num 23-24	2 Sam 22	Judges 5	Ex 15	Deut 32	Deut 33
Direct lexical loans		אֶת-רִבְעָה (?) עֲדֵי (?) אֲהֵלִים (?)	כְּרוֹב קֶרְסָלִי (?)				
Indirect lexical loans	אֲמָרִי-שָׁפָר (?) מִכְרֵיָהֶם (?) סוּתָה (?)		הִיכָל	סִפֵּר סִפָּל (?)			
Wandering Kulturwörter	מָס סוּס			סוּס	סוּס שָׁלְשִׁי עוֹפֶרֶת	חֶלְמִישׁ	
Loan-translations	מַעֲדָנֵי-מֶלֶךְ						
Interdialectal idioms	חֲכִלִּי עֵינַיִם	כְּתוּעַפֶּת רָאֵם x2					קֶרְנֵי רָאֵם
Semantic loans	תוֹתֵר עֲלִיתַּ						
Semantic loans through phono-semantic matching	יָדִין						
TOTAL	10	5	3	3	3	1	1

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