

Oxford Hebrew Bible

Sample of Deuteronomy 32:1-9

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- 1 האַזינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבְּרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי:
 2 יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטֵר לִקְחֵי תַגְל כַּטָּל אִמְרֵתִי
 כִּשְׁעִירִים עָלֵי־דָשָׁא וְכַרְבִּיבִים עָלֵי־עֵשֶׂב:
 3 כִּי יִשֶׁם יִהְיֶה אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ:
 4 הַצּוֹר תָּמִים פָּעֵלוּ כִּי כָל־דְּרָכָיו מִשְׁפָּט
 אֵל אֲמוֹנָה וְאֵין עֹל צַדִּיק וַיִּשֶׁר הוּא:
 5 ׀ שְׁחַתּוּ ׀ לוֹ לֹא בָנִיו ׀ ׀ דּוֹר עַקְשׁ וּפְתִילָתַל:
 6 ׀ הִלְיָהוּהָ תַגְמְלוּ־זָאת עִם נָבֵל וְלֹא חָכָם
 הַלּוֹא־הוּא אַבִּיךָ קָנְךָ הוּא עֲשֶׂךָ נִיכְנְךָ:
 7 זְכַר יָמוֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שָׁנוֹת דּוֹר־וְדוֹר
 שְׂאֵל אַבִּיךָ וַיְגַדֶּךָ זְמַנְךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָךְ:
 8 בְּהִנְחַל עֲלֵינוּ גוֹלָם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בֵּנֵי אָדָם
 יֵצֵב וְגִבְלוֹת עַמִּים לְמִסְפָּר בְּנֵי אֵל׀:
 9 כִּי חִלַּק יִהְיֶה עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נִחְלָתוֹ:

32:2 תזל M] ותזל SP G (καὶ καταβήτω) sim T¹ S (+ conj, assim v 1a) § || שם M G
 (ὄνομα) SP T (בשמוא) (theol) § || והבו M 4QDt^c G (δότε) SP (+ conj) ||
 גדל M SP] גדוליהו 4QDt^b (syn) § || פעליו G (*פעליו) SP] פעלו 4
 (τά ἔργα αὐτοῦ) (assim gram) || כי M SP] כי? G (καί) (gram) || 5 שְׁחַתּוּ SP G (ἠμάρτοσαν) T (חבילו) S (سحل) V
 (peccaverunt)] שְׁחַתּוּ M (assim num) § || לוֹ לוֹ לֹא SP G (οὐκ αὐτῶ) T (לא
 S (حصه) (gram) § || בניו M בניו SP G (τέκνα) T (בניא) S (metath) § || הִלְיָהוּהָ M^{ms} SP] הִלְיָהוּהָ M^{ms} SP] הִלְיָהוּהָ M (cf Ps כימות Ps 90:15) G (μωμητά) (explic) § || 6
 M (gram); יהוה M^{ms} (gram); cf ταῦτα κυρίῳ G (prps explic) § || עשך M SP] זכרו M זכרו SP G (μνήσθητε) (assim num) § || 7 ועשך G (καὶ ἐποίησέν σε) (+ conj) || 8 אֵל 4QDt^e (אלוהים) G (θεοῦ) M SP (theol) § || 9 כי M SP] וכי? G (καὶ ἐγενήθη) (+ conj) || fin] + ישראל SP G (Ἰσραήλ) (explic)

Text-Critical Commentary

The most ancient manuscript evidence for this passage, 4QDeut^c and 4QDeut^d, indicates that by the second century BCE the Song of Moses was arranged on the scroll stichometrically.

32:2 תּוֹלַם M] וְתוֹלַם SP G (καὶ καταβήτω) sim T^J S (+ conj, assim v 1a)

The textual history of Deuteronomy tends toward expansion, especially in the addition of the conjunction. This type of expansion also occurs in verses 3, 6, and 9.

32:3 שֵׁם M G (ὄνομα)] בְּשֵׁם SP T (בְּשֵׁמָה) (theol)

The addition of the preposition בּ in SP distances the speaker from the deity.

גִּדְלָה M SP] גִּדְלוּלָה 4QDt^b (syn)

גִּדְלוּלָה in 4QDeut^b is a more common synonym of גִּדְלָה; the less common form is preferable.

32:4 The G translation makes two theological changes from its Hebrew *Vorlage*, substituting θεός for הַצִּוֹר and κύριος for הוֹאֵה. The latter is also an explication.

32:5 שָׁחַתוּ SP G (ἠμάρτοσαν) T (חִבִּילוּ) S (سحل) V (*peccaverunt*)] שָׁחַת M (assim num)

לֹא לֹו M V (*ei non*)] לֹא לֹו SP G (οὐκ αὐτῶ) T (לֹא לִיה) S (לא לא) (metath)

בְּנֵי M V (*filius eius*)] בְּנֵי SP G (τέκνα) T (בְּנֵיָא) S (بنه) (gram)

בְּנֵי] + מוֹמָם M sim SP (מוֹם) G (μωμητά) S (مومته) T (לְטַעוּתָא) V (*in sordibus*) (explic)

Verse 5 presents a text-critical challenge: its first clause is almost hopelessly corrupt. The reading of each version displays different errors and subsequent attempts to make sense of the result. M reads: שָׁחַת לֹו לֹא בְּנֵי מוֹמָם, literally “He has dealt corruptly with him, not his sons their blemish.” G reads: ἠμάρτοσαν οὐκ αὐτῶ τέκνα μωμητά, indicating a *Vorlage* שָׁחַתוּ לֹו לֹא בְּנֵי מוֹם, “They have sinned (dealt corruptly), not his, blemished children.” SP also has שָׁחַתוּ לֹא לֹו בְּנֵי מוֹם, “They have dealt corruptly, not his, blemished children.” The minor versions attempt to make sense of this. The commentaries all make suggestions, reaching no consensus. The following examples give an indication of the variety of proposed solutions.

Dillman proposes שחתו לו בניו מום בם, “His children have dealt corruptly towards him; there is a blemish in them.”¹ He has chosen the plural verb of G and SP. Deciding that לו לא, in whatever order, is a dittography, he chooses the preposition as a complement to the verb. Last, he tries to sort out the corruption at the end of the phrase by positing the loss of *waw* on the end of בני in G and SP, and the loss of a *bet* in all three versions, with subsequent loss of *mem* in G and SP.

Tigay suggests two possibilities:²

1. שחתו לו בניו אמן, “His children violate against him loyalty.”
2. שחתו לוא בניו אמן, “His non-children violated loyalty.” Both these possibilities posit an *aleph-mem* confusion, with further corruption, including dittography.

Craigie offers an imaginative reconstruction:³

שחתו לו לאבני מרמה, “They destroyed him! Treacherous stones!” He suggests that “stones” as a metaphor for Israel contrasts with “Rock” in verse 4 as a metaphor for God.

I have adopted the reading suggested here—שחתו לו לא בניו—for the following reasons, the order of which is important. The phrase לו לא בניו, “not-my-children,” echoes similar phrases throughout the poem: לא חכם, “not-wise” (v. 6), לא אלה, “not-a-god” (v. 17), and לא אל, “not-god” (v. 21). Once that phrase is retained, the verb must be plural (שחתו); the singular of M is assimilation to other singular verbs nearby (e.g. v. 7) or is a case of haplography. Since לו לא בניו is a “frozen phrase,” the order לו לא must be correct; the order לו לא displayed by SP G T S is the result of metathesis. Finally, the word מום or a form thereof is an explicating plus added to clarify the corruption; once it was added the construct phrase בני מום (SP G S) crept in, brought about by loss of ך by haplography (perhaps), then retained because it made better grammatical sense. There is, however, no versional support for the omission of מום.

32:6 הליהוה M^{mss} SP] ה-ליהוה M (gram); הל יהוה M^{mss} (gram); cf ταῦτα κυρίῳ G (prps explic)

Verse 6 presents differences in letter spacing; I have selected the one that represents ancient practice.

¹ As quoted by S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy (International Critical Commentary)*; 3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 352.

² J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy (The JPS Torah Commentary)*; Philadelphia/Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 301.

³ P. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament)*; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976), 377, n. 15.

32:7 זכר M] זכרו SP G (μνήσθητε) (assim num)

In verse 7 we have a difference in number in the verb in the various versions; the singular and plural alternate throughout this passage, and in this case I have retained the reading of the copy text, suggesting that the secondary reading is by assimilation.⁴

32:8 אל 4QDt^f (אלוהים) G (θεοῦ)] ישראל M SP (theol)

In 1954 Patrick Skehan revealed בני אלהים as a Hebrew variant found at Qumran in 4QDeut^f (the correct reading is בני אלוהים), and suggested that this reading was the probable *Vorlage* for the Septuagint variant.⁵ The reading given here, בני אל, while not occurring in any extant Hebrew witness, is preferred as making the best sense of the evidence. My reconstruction of what took place in the transmission of the text, resulting in the present variants, is as follows. First, the G reading, υἱὼν θεοῦ, may be retroverted as either בני אל or בני אלוהים (= 4QDeut^f). If the former is chosen, then it is easy to suppose that the *Vorlage* of M SP, wishing to change a polytheistic text to monotheistic orthodoxy, inserted the consonants ישר before אל, thus creating the reading בני ישראל. Finally, 4QDeut^f's אלוהים is simply a scribal change, employing the more common term for “God.”

⁴ For the definition of a copy text and a defense of its use, see R. Hendel, “The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition.”

⁵ P. Skehan, “A Fragment of the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut. 32) from Qumran,” *BASOR* 136 (1954), 12-15.