

# Hebrew *ma'gāl*: A Study in Lexical Parallelism

MOSHE HELD

Columbia University

For H. L. Ginsberg

מפרס מעשרות במקרא

on his seventieth birthday

The substantive *ma'gāl* denoting 'path, road'<sup>1</sup> is attested thirteen times in biblical Hebrew and is for the most part (eight times) a poetic synonym (B word) of *derek* 'road'<sup>2</sup> and *ōrah* 'path'<sup>3</sup> respectively.<sup>4</sup> It is the purpose of this study to call attention to those biblical verses in which the poetic synonyms of *ma'gāl* appear to be problematic or are even wanting altogether. One such difficult case, Prov. 2:18, involving the pair *bayit*//*ma'gāl*, has recently been studied in detail<sup>5</sup> and need not concern us here. Two other verses in which the B words of *ma'gāl* are somewhat problematic are Ps. 65:12 and Prov. 2:9. The MT of the former verse reads: *ʾiṭṭartā*<sup>6</sup> *šʿnat*<sup>7</sup> *ṭōbātekā*<sup>8</sup> *ūma'gāle(y)kā yir'āpūm dāšen*.<sup>9</sup>

1 Thus *ma'gāl* in 1 Sam. 17:20; 26:5, 7; probably denoting a 'round camp enclosure' (cf. Qimḥi, *Lexicon* [Berlin, 1847], 250b; Driver, *Notes on Samuel* [Oxford, 1913], 142) is not our concern here.

2 Isa. 59:8; Prov. 4:11, 26; 5:21.

3 Isa. 26:7; Ps. 17:4-5; Prov. 2:15; 5:6.

4 The interdialectal distribution for 'road' and its B words is as follows: Akkadian *ḫarrānu* (*girru*)//*urḫu*//*alaktu*//*ṭūdu*; Ugaritic *ntb*//X; Phoenician *drk*//X; Hebrew *derek*//*ōrah*//*nāṭīb*//*ma'gāl*; Aramaic-Syriac *rh'*//*blkt'*//*šbyl'*//*kbś'*; Arabic *ṭarīq*//*sabīl*//*sikka*//*maslak*. Note that the distribution is corroborated by the idiom 'the king's highway': Akk. *ḫarrān šarri* (e.g., KAV 186 r. 3; VAS 3, 153:2; *ibid.*, 156:2-3 = *girri šarri* in OIP 2, 153:15-23); Heb. *derek hammelek* (Num. 20:17; 21:22); Aram.-Syr. '(w)rh' mlk' (Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford, 1923], no. 25:6-7; cf. Targum Onkelos on Num. 20:17; 21:22); Arab. *ṭarīq al-jādā* [*al-malik*] (Saadia on Num. 20:17; 21:22).

5 See the writer's recent study in *The Gaster Festschrift*, JANES 5 (1973), 178-80.

6 One wonders what purpose other than pan-Ugaritic bias is served by Dahood (*Psalms II*, Anchor Bible 17 [N. Y., 1968], 116) comparing our verb with Ugaritic *ṭrṭrm* (IKK 3:11), a still unexplained and most obscure vocable.

7 The emendation of *šnt* to *šnb* (see the note in BH<sup>3</sup>) solves nothing and is gratuitous since *šnt* can be viewed as archaic for *šnb* (cf. e.g., Ps. 16:6; 132:4; and see Ibn Ezra on Exod. 15:2).

8 Dahood, *Psalms II*, 109, 116, renders *ṭōb(āb)* here and elsewhere in the Psalms (cf. e.g., *Psalms I*, Anchor Bible 16 [N. Y., 1966], 22, 25; *Psalms II*, 285, 290) as 'rain'. His alleged Ugar.-Heb. evidence,

The most recent translation of the Book of Psalms, which is much to be commended, renders our verse as follows: "You crown the year with your bounty; fatness is distilled in your paths."<sup>10</sup> The directness and ease of this translation, as well as the silence of a majority of modern scholars in other treatments, however, belie genuine difficulties in this verse. Thus it may be observed that *šnt* 'year' as a parallel to *ma'gāl* is highly problematic<sup>11</sup> and nowhere else attested. Emendations such as *šōšānōt* 'lily flowers'<sup>12</sup> for *šnt* can hardly be termed a solution. So too Dahood's solution, whereby our *šnt* allegedly denotes '(mountain) peaks'<sup>13</sup> carries no conviction whatever and must be rejected for more than one reason. First, by no stretch of the imagination can *šnt* in verse 12 be synonymous with *g<sup>e</sup>bā'ōt* 'hills' in verse 13.<sup>14</sup> Second, Arabic *saniya* means 'to be high

---

however, is far-fetched and unconvincing in every detail. Here it must suffice to call attention to his untenable rendering of Ps. 85:13, which reads as follows: "With a crash will Yahweh give his rain, and our land will give its produce" (*Psalms II*, 285; cf. *Psalms I*, 25: "with a loud voice"). The following brief remarks may not be out of place: (1) The Ugaritic adverb *gm* 'loudly' can under no circumstances stand alone but must be followed by the verb *šwh/šyb* 'to cry, call out' (cf. e.g., IIAB 7:52-53; IAB 1:10-11; *ibid.* 3-4:22-23; IID 5:15). No such verb of outcry, however, is in evidence in our biblical verse. (2) The word for 'thunder' in Ugaritic is not *g* but *ql* (cf. e.g., IIAB 4-5:70-71; *ibid.* 7:29-31 = Heb. *qôl*, e.g., Exod. 19:16; Amos 1:2; Ps. 29:3-5). Accordingly, one would expect in our verse not *gam* (= Ugar. *gm*) but rather *yittēn qôl* (cf. e.g., Ps. 18:14 = Ugar. *ytn ql*, e.g., IIAB 4-5:70-71; cf. Akkadian *rigma nadû*, e.g., *ACb*. Adad, 24:9). (3) The synonymous parallel of Ugar. *ybl* 'yield, produce' (I\*AB 2:5-6) is neither *mṯr* 'rain' nor *tl/rbb* 'dew/shower' but rather *pr* 'fruit' = Heb. *y<sup>e</sup>bûl/pe'ê* 'produce//fruit' (Lev. 26:4, 20; Ezek. 34:27; Zech. 8:12). Moreover, the pair *tôb/y<sup>e</sup>bûl* in our verse (= *y<sup>e</sup>bûl/y<sup>e</sup>gâ'* 'yield//produce' in Ps. 78:46) as well as the idiom *y<sup>e</sup>bûl bā'āreš* 'yield of the land' (Jud. 6:4) must be viewed as synonyms of the pair *tûb/pe'ê* (Jer. 2:7; Neh. 9:36) and the idiom *tûb bā'āreš* (Gen. 45:18, 20; Isa. 1:19; Ezra 9:12) respectively. (4) Dahood's partial quotation from the Aqht Epic (ID:45-46) omitting the clause *bl tl bl rbb* (ID:44) as well as his rendering of this passage (*Psalms I*, 25-26) are distorted and misleading. For that celebrated passage must be quoted and rendered as follows: *bl tl bl rbb bl šr' tbtm bl tbn ql b'l* "No dew, no rain, no upsurging of the deep (cf. 2 Sam. 1:21 and see Ginsberg, *JBL* 57 [1938], 212-13), no sweetness of Baal's voice" (cf. VAB A:20 *t<sup>b</sup> ql* = Heb. *y<sup>e</sup>pēb qôl* in Ezek. 33:32; Akk. *tābat rigma*, e.g., Gilg. XI:117). In other words, rain is represented here, as elsewhere in Ugaritic (cf. e.g., VAB B 39-41: *ibid.* D:87-88; ID:40-42), by *tl/rbb* while *tbn ql b'l* represents Baal's sweet voice, i.e., his thunder (cf. e.g., the Akkadian *<sup>d</sup>Addu . . . tāba rigmašū* in En. el. VII:119-20), not "rain with Baal's thunder," as erroneously rendered by Dahood.

9 Note the pair *tôb/dešen* in Isa. 55:2 and Jer. 31:14.

10 *The Book of Psalms* (Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1972), 64.

11 The Targum would seem to sense some difficulty in our verse since its rendering *kbšy 'wrhk* at least presupposes the substantive *m<sup>e</sup>sillāb* alongside *ma'gāl*. Some of the medieval commentaries attempt to alleviate the problem by taking *ma'gāl* here to denote 'clouds' (cf. e.g., Qimḥi's commentary on the Psalms [Jerusalem, 1967], 143). Professor Ginsberg calls to my attention an alternative reading for our *ma'gāle(y)kā*, viz., *ma'ūlôte(y)kā* 'your chambers', which may be reflected in the rendering of the medievals; cf. Ps. 104:3, 13, and see the discussion in Ginsberg, *HUCA* 23 (1950-51), 102.

12 Tur Sinai, *Pešûṭô šel Miqrā'* (Jerusalem, 1967), IV/1:135.

13 *Psalms II*, 116.

14 Contrast Dahood, loc. cit.

in rank, to be exalted',<sup>15</sup> but has nothing to do with the physical height of mountain peaks. The notion of '(mountain) peak' is expressed in Arabic by *ra's* or *qimma*,<sup>16</sup> not by *sanā'*. Third, Dahood's rendering of the obscure Ugaritic phrase *tqln/tpln bgbl šntk*<sup>17</sup> as "May your arrogance be humbled on the hill"<sup>18</sup> is a characteristic manipulation whereby one obscure Ugaritic passage allegedly illuminates an equally obscure biblical text. Suffice it to call attention to the fact that no less an authority than H. L. Ginsberg not only leaves the above Ugaritic phrase untranslated but even declares it "unintelligible."<sup>19</sup>

While no easy solution seems to recommend itself, a suggestion more in line with biblical parallelism and poetic usage may be sought in reading *šādōt* 'fields' for *šnt*.<sup>20</sup> At the outset it must be admitted that the paleographic justification for the reading *šādōt* is questionable. Nevertheless, the suggested reading does yield the pair *šādeb//ma'gāl*, a combination analogous to the parallelism of *šādeb//derek* in Jer. 6:25.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in a context involving concrete agricultural terms (for example, *nāweb* in verse 13 and *'emeq* in verse 14), the mention of *šādeb* is most appropriate.

The MT of Prov. 2:9 reads as follows: *'āz tābîn šedeq ūmišpāṭ ūmēšārīm kol-ma'gal-ṭōb*<sup>22</sup> "Then will you discern justice,<sup>23</sup> equity, every right path."<sup>24</sup> While textually less problematic, this verse is surely more difficult from the standpoint of meter and parallelism. As noted by many scholars, the sequence *šedeq ūmišpāṭ ūmēšārīm* appears to have resulted from contamination by Prov. 1:3.<sup>25</sup> Yet the emendation of our *mēšārīm* to *tīšmōr* 'you will keep'<sup>26</sup> or its elimination altogether<sup>27</sup> can hardly be viewed as totally convincing solutions.

15 Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1/4:1449-50.

16 Cf. e.g., Saadia on Gen. 8:5; Exod. 19:20; 24:17; 34:2; Num. 14:40, 44; Isa. 2:2; 30:17; Ps. 72:16 *ru'ūs (ra's) al-jibāli (jabali)*; Aramaic-Syriac *ryšy ṭwry*; cf. Akkadian *ubānāt šadī/ḥuršāni*.

17 IJK 6:57-58 = IIIAB B:9 (restored).

18 *Psalms II*, 116. In the main, Dahood follows Driver's interpretation of this obscure passage. It should be noted, however, that Driver's interpretation is somewhat distorted here. For unlike Driver who renders *gbl* as 'peak' and *šnt* as 'loftiness' (*CML*, 47, 79), Dahood would seem to take Heb. *šnt* = Ugar. *šnt* to mean 'peaks'!

19 *The Legend of King Keret*, 32; *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 149a.

20 Tur Sinai (*Pešūtō šel Miqrā'*, IV/1:135) attributes this reading to Graetz. But neither in the latter's commentary on the Psalms nor in his *Emendationes* is such a reading proposed. On the contrary, Graetz would rather eliminate *ma'gāl* from our verse; see his *Psalmen II* (Breslau, 1883), 403.

21 Cf. also the pair *bayit//šādeb* (Isa. 5:8; Mic. 2:2) alongside *bayit//ma'gāl* (Prov. 2:18) and *bayit//derek* (Prov. 5:8; 7:19).

22 Cf. *ma'gal šedeq* in Ps. 23:3 and *ma'gal yōšer* in Prov. 4:11.

23 For this hendiadys cf. the Akk. *kittum u mīšarum*; e.g., CH 5:20-21; *MDP* 24, 348 r. 15-16. For the pair *kittum (kīnātum)//mīšarum*, cf. e.g., *Syria* 32 (1955), 12, 1:4-6 (Yahdunlim).

24 Cf. Akk. *kibsum/rīdum damqum* 'right (lit., good) path', e.g., CH 24:7.

25 See the commentaries.

26 Cf. e.g., Toy, *Proverbs*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1899), 38, 50; Oesterley, *Proverbs* (London, 1929), 16; see also Driver, *Biblica* 32 (1951), 174.

27 Cf. Ehrlich, *Randglossen* (Leipzig, 1913), 6:17.

While there is no denial of the fact that the LXX *katorthōseis* in all probability points in the direction of a reading *t<sup>e</sup>yaššēr* 'you will set aright' for our *mēšārīm*, such a verb cannot possibly be considered a suitable parallel to *tābîn*.

Indeed, one cannot help wondering whether the MT is not the result of a conflation of two versions, the principal one having had an approximate text such as: *'āz tākîn šedeq ūmišpāt ūt<sup>e</sup>yaššēr kol ma'gāl tōb* "Then you will establish justice and equity, and you will set every path aright." This conjecture is based on the following considerations: (1) the idiom *kūn/hēkîn derek* 'make firm the path (that is, behavior)' is encountered in biblical Hebrew<sup>28</sup> and is closely related to the more poetic *kōnēn mēšārīm* (*// 'āsāb mišpāt*)<sup>29</sup>; (2) the *tbyn-tkyn* change is known in the Bible and is even in evidence in the Book of Proverbs itself<sup>30</sup>; (3) the idiom *\*yiššēr ma'gāl*<sup>31</sup> is clearly synonymous with *yiššēr derek*<sup>32</sup> and *yiššēr 'ōraḥ*<sup>33</sup> respectively. Be that as it may, one certainly expects as a parallel to *ma'gāl tōb* a phrase such as *derek/'ōraḥ mišpāt*,<sup>34</sup> *derek/'ōraḥ š<sup>e</sup>dāq(āb)*,<sup>35</sup> *derek/'ōraḥ mēšōr*,<sup>36</sup> or the like. In view of the fact that both *'ōraḥ* and *derek* are attested in the preceding verse (v. 8), it is reasonable to assume that our *šedeq* and *mišpāt* are elliptical for *'ōraḥ mišpāt* or *derek š<sup>e</sup>dāqāb*. This assumption gains somewhat in probability when we bear in mind that the substantives *derek* and *mišpāt* are not infrequently employed as a pair in synonymous parallelism<sup>37</sup> and that the idiom *hēbîn derek/nātib*<sup>38</sup> is not too remote in meaning from *hēbîn mišpāt*.<sup>39</sup>

Perplexing indeed are Ps. 23:3 and 140:6 where, contrary to style and usage, the substantive *ma'gāl* appears to be without any poetic synonym whatever. Once again it must be emphasized that despite the silence of a majority of critics the MT of both of these verses appears to be in disarray. The MT of Ps. 23:3 reads as follows:

---

28 Ps. 119:5; Prov. 4:26; 2 Chr. 27:6 = Akk. *alakta kunnu*; Aram.-Syr. *tqn 'wrḥ'*; Arab. *tabbata ṭariqan*.

29 Ps. 99:4 = Akk. *kiitta/mišara kunnu*; Aram.-Syr. *tqn tryšwt'*; Arab. *hayya'a al-mustaqīm*.

30 Note the Qere-Ketib in Prov. 21:29 and 2 Chr. 33:16. Note also Prov. 8:5, where the LXX correctly reads *hākīnū lēb*; cf. e.g., Ps. 78:8; Job 11:13.

31 Cf. *pallēs ma'gāl* (Isa. 26:7; Prov. 4:26; 5:21) = Akk. *girra/alakta šušuru/tubbu*; Aram.-Syr. *tqn 'wrḥ'*; Arab. *saqqama maslakan*.

32 Isa. 45:13; Ps. 5:9; Prov. 11:5 = Akk. *ḥarrāna šušuru/šutešuru*; Aram.-Syr. *tkn 'wrḥ'*; Arab. *'ashala ṭariqan*.

33 Prov. 3:6; 9:15 = Akk. *urḥa ešēru/šušuru*; Aram.-Syr. *trš šbyl'*; Arab. *'ashala sabīlan*.

34 Isa. 26:8; 40:14; Prov. 2:8; 17:23 = Akk. *ḥarrān/urub mišari*; Aram.-Syr. *'wrḥ' ddyn*; Arab. *sabīl al-ḥukmi*.

35 Prov. 8:20; 12:28; 16:31 = Akk. *ḥarrān/urub kitti*; Aram.-Syr. *'wrḥ' dšdq'*; Arab. *ṭariq al-a'dli*.

36 Ps. 27:11; Prov. 2:13; 14:12 = Akk. *ṭūdi mišari*; Aram.-Syr. *'wrḥ' dtryš'*; Arab. *ṭariq al-mustaqīmi*.

37 Isa. 40:27; Jer. 5:4, 5; Ezek. 7:27; Ps. 25:9; 119:30 = Akk. *alaktu//dīnu*; Aram.-Syr. *'wrḥ'// dyn'*; Arab. *ṭariq//ḥukm*.

38 Prov. 14:8; 20:24; Job. 28:23; 38:20 = Akk. *urḥa/alakta lamādu/idū*; Aram.-Syr. *'wrḥ' byn*; Arab. *fabima ṭariqan*.

39 Prov. 28:5; Job 32:9 = Akk. *dīna lamādu*; Aram.-Syr. *dyn' byn*; Arab. *fabima ḥukman*.

*napšî yēšōbēb*<sup>40</sup> *yanḥēnî bēma'gēlê-šedeq lēma'an šēmō*<sup>41</sup>

He renews my life; he guides me in right paths as befits His name.<sup>42</sup>

A glance at this widely known and oft-recited verse makes it quite clear that 3a is a metrically defective hemistich.<sup>43</sup> For whether one combines *napšî yēšōbēb* (3a) with verse 2 with Gunkel<sup>44</sup> or considers it an integral part of verse 3 with Kissane,<sup>45</sup> it becomes apparent to the sensitive student of biblical poetry that a clause, immediately preceding *yanḥēnî bēma'gēlê-šedeq* (3b), has accidentally been omitted. The recent suggestion of Dahood<sup>46</sup> whereby *yanḥēnî bēma'gēlê-šedeq* (3b) is allegedly synonymous with *bin'ôt deše' yarbîšēnî* (2a) carries no conviction whatever. Suffice it to call attention to the fact that *ma'gāl* or any of its synonyms is never in parallelism with *nāweb*,<sup>47</sup> nor is the verb *nāḥāb*<sup>48</sup> ever a synonym of *rābaš*. This is equally true of Ps. 65:12-13 where, contrary to Dahood's assertion,<sup>49</sup> the parallel of *nē'ôt midbār* is not *ma'gālîm* but *gēbā'ôt*.<sup>50</sup> In a word, biblical usage itself suggests that as a parallel to our *yanḥēnî bēma'gēlê-šedeq* one could justify a

40 Our clause surely lacks a parallel, but no restoration can be offered with any degree of certainty. Depending on the interpretation of *napšî yēšōbēb* (see the commentaries), one may venture to think of idioms such as *'ēlā(y)w ya'āspēnî* (cf. Isa. 49:5), *'ēlā(y)w yēqabbēšēnî* (cf. Ezek. 38:8; 39:27), or the like.

41 Cf. particularly Ps. 31:4 *ûlēma'an šimkā tanḥēnî ûtēnabālēnî*; 143:11 *lēma'an šimkā YHWH tēḥayyēmî*; cf. Akk. *aššum(i) <ana šum(i)* 'for the sake of'; e.g., VAB 6, no. 110:4-5. Thus a rendering the Hebrew phrase *lēma'an šimkā tēḥayyēmî* into Akkadian yields: *aššumika bulliṭanni*. Observe, however, that the appropriateness of *lēma'an šēmō* in our verse is not without problems; see Ginsberg, *HUCA* 23 (1950-51), 99-100.

42 *The Book of Psalms* (JPS, 1972), 22.

43 See already Briggs, *Psalms I*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1906), 209, 211. However, his suggested reading *yšb šb npsy* for *npsy yšwb* is untenable. Such a phrase is nowhere attested, is metrically unacceptable, and is altogether incompatible with biblical poetic style.

44 *Die Psalmen*, HKAT (1926), 98, 100.

45 *Psalms* (Dublin, 1964), 103, 104.

46 *Psalms I*, 146.

47 Note the following parallels of *nāweb*: *'ōbel* (Isa. 33:20; Job 5:24; 18:15); *bayit* (Prov. 3:33); *mīškān* (Isa. 32:18); *mirbāš* (Isa. 65:10; Ezek. 25:5; Prov. 24:15); *ḥāšēr* (Isa. 34:13; 35:7, where read *ḥāšēr!*); *mir'eb* (Ezek. 34:14); see also n. 50 below.

48 Observe that *nāḥāb* is attested in parallelism with *nībēl* (Exod. 15:13; Ps. 31:4); *hōbīl* (Ps. 60:11 = 108:11); *hēbīl* (Ps. 43:3); *rā'āb* (Ps. 78:72); *lāqah* (Ps. 73:24); *hōrāb* (Ps. 27:11).

49 *Psalms I*, 146; cf. *Psalms II*, 116.

50 Note that it is precisely on such grounds of synonymous parallelism that Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 272, 275, emends *yir'āpû* in Ps. 65:13a to *yārî'û(//gîl)*. It should also be noted that *nē'ôt midbār* is in one instance (Jer. 9:9; cf. Amos 1:2) in synonymous parallelism with *hārîm*. This is significant in view of the fact that the most common B word of *hārîm* is indeed *gēbā'ôt* (at least twenty-seven times in biblical Hebrew!; cf. e.g., Deut. 33:15 = Gen. 49:26, where read *bar'erê 'ād//gib'ôt 'ōlām*; see already R. Samuel ben Meir's commentary on the Torah, ed. Rosin [Breslau, 1881], 76; Isa. 30:17; 41:15; 54:10; Jer. 4:24; Joel 4:18; Amos 9:13; Mic. 6:1; Nah. 1:5; Hab. 3:6; Ps. 114:4, 6; Prov. 8:25; Cant. 2:8; 4:6); note also the parallelism of *nāweb//bar* in Jer. 31:23.

clause such as *b<sup>e</sup> 'ōrah ḥayyîm/b<sup>e</sup> derek 'emet/b<sup>e</sup> derek 'ôlām/b<sup>e</sup> 'ōrah mîšôr y<sup>e</sup> nabālēni/y<sup>e</sup> nabāgēni/yôbîlēni*,<sup>51</sup> or the like.

The MT of Ps. 140:6 reads as follows:

*tāmēnū-gē'im paḥ lî waḥbālîm pārēšû rešet le'yad-ma'gāl mōqēšîm šātû-lî.*

A recent rendering of this difficult verse (a truly valiant effort of translating!) reads: "Arrogant men laid traps with ropes for me; they spread out a net along the way; they set snares for me."<sup>52</sup> It surely comes as no surprise to note that we are here confronted with a case where the divergent approaches of modern critics range from blind adherence to the MT<sup>53</sup> to its drastic dissection and rearrangement.<sup>54</sup> As far as can be ascertained, Kissane<sup>55</sup> alone among modern scholars seems to have adopted a sober middle road by emending *ḥābālîm* 'snares' (6b) to *šēbîlîm* 'paths'.<sup>56</sup> Dahood<sup>57</sup> likewise perceives *ḥābālîm* as a difficulty in our problematic verse. Following a suggestion by Driver<sup>58</sup> he vocalizes the vocable in question as *ḥabbālîm*, allegedly denoting 'villains'. This interpretation, which goes back to Gunkel,<sup>59</sup> is doubtful on several counts.

First, a substantive *ḥōbēlîm* (Gunkel) or *ḥabbālîm* (Driver) denoting 'villains' or 'scoundrels' is nowhere in evidence in biblical Hebrew. It hardly comes as a surprise, therefore, to note that Driver<sup>60</sup> was at one time toying with the idea of equating our Hebrew vocable with the Akkadian *ḥābilu*,<sup>61</sup> which he incorrectly rendered as 'hunter with a net'.<sup>62</sup> There is no denial of the fact that a lexical text<sup>63</sup> has a *ḥābilu* apparently denoting 'trapper' or 'hunter', but the latter can have nothing to do with *ḥōbēlîm* 'villains'. Gunkel<sup>64</sup> attempted, in what seems to have been an act of desperation, to find corroboration for his *ḥōbēlîm* in such verses as Job 34:31. But the latter, where neither *ḥōbēlîm* nor *ḥabbālîm* as such is

51 Cf. particularly such verses as Gen. 24:27; Isa. 26:7; Ps. 5:9; 27:11; 31:4; 139:24; 143:10 (where read *b<sup>e</sup> 'ōrah mîšôr!*).

52 *The Book of Psalms* (JPS, 1972), 144.

53 Cf. e.g., Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible 17A (N. Y., 1970), 300, 302.

54 Cf. e.g., Buttenwieser, *Psalms* (Chicago, 1938), 721, 722.

55 *Psalms* (Dublin, 1964), 619, 620.

56 While from the standpoint of both context and parallelism Kissane seems to be on the right track, the emendation as such is difficult to maintain. For it is a fact that the substantive *šēbîl* is very rare in biblical Hebrew (being attested only in Jer. 18:15 and Ps. 77:20), is only a B word of *derek*, and is not employed in any trap or snare metaphor.

57 *Psalms III*, 302.

58 *JBL* 73 (1954), 136.

59 *Die Psalmen*, 594.

60 *HTR* 29 (1936), 192.

61 Gilg. I, ii:42.

62 Note that the exact meaning of the phrase *šayyādu ḥābilu amēlu*, which is nowhere else attested in Akkadian literature, is uncertain; see *CAD H*, 16b; cf. *AHW.*, 305b.

63 See Meissner, *MAOG* 13/2 (1940), 43:18 GU.LÁ = *ḥābilu*.

64 *Die Psalmen*, 594.

attested, is on all sides recognized as one of the most obscure verses in the entire book of Job.<sup>65</sup> Dahood now claims to have discovered the much sought after vocable *ḥabbālīm* in Job 21:17c, which he renders, allegedly on the basis of Ugaritic, as follows: "Or has he destroyed villains in his anger?"<sup>66</sup> It must be candidly stated that of this translation only the rendering of *b<sup>e</sup>appô* 'in his anger' seems acceptable. The remainder, revealing an overabundance of ingenuity but at the same time an alarming want of philological sobriety, must categorically be rejected. It will suffice to call attention to the fact that the root *ḥlq* 'to vanish, disappear'<sup>67</sup> is very rare in Ugaritic, is attested in the Baal Epic only in the G stative, and serves exclusively as a B word of the verb *mwt* 'to die'.<sup>68</sup> It is remarkable to note that the highly poetic and archaic *ḥlq* of the Baal Epic is replaced in the younger and much less archaic legend of King Keret<sup>69</sup> by *abd* 'to perish',<sup>70</sup> while the B word of *mwt* 'to die' is likewise no longer *ḥlq* but rather *l + ḥyy*, literally 'not to live'<sup>71</sup> = Hebrew *lō' + ḥāyāb*.<sup>72</sup> Thus it is methodologically unsound and misleading to adduce the archaic and isolated *ḥlq* as sole evidence for such fanciful renderings of Hebrew *ḥlq* as: 'to destroy', 'to slay', 'to make perish', 'to bring death'.<sup>73</sup> To be sure, the notion of 'to slay, cause to perish' is not unknown in Ugaritic; but the latter is, for the most part, expressed by *mḥṣ/kly*,<sup>74</sup> not by *ḥlq*.<sup>75</sup>

65 Note that no less an authority than Tur Sinai (*Job* [Jerusalem, 1957], 484) labels this verse "obscure."

66 *Psalms III*, 302; cf. idem, *Biblica* 44 (1963), 548.

67 Note that the primary meaning of Akk. *ḥalāqu* is 'to be lost, vanish, disappear; to escape, flee'. It is only in derived conjugations and in poetic and figurative usage that the verb may come to connote 'to destroy, to annihilate'; see *CAD H*, 36f.; *AHW.*, 310f.; contrast Dahood, *Psalms I*, 99. It is worth noting that the distribution for 'destroy, annihilate' is as follows: Akk. *abātu* (*ubbutu*); Ugar. *mḥṣ//kly*; Heb. *be'ēbūd*; Aram.-Syr. *b'bd*; Arab. *'abāda*.

68 I\*AB 6:9-10 = IAB 1:41-43; cf. *ibid.* 3-4:1 (in broken context).

69 See most recently Ginsberg in *The Gaster Festschrift*, *JANES* 5 (1973), 131-32.

70 IK:7-8!, 24-25 = Phoenician, Moabite, Heb., and Aram. *'bd*; cf. EA 288:52, where Akk. *ḥalqat* 'lost' = Canaanite *abadat*; cf. also EA 244:42, for which see the writer in *Studies Landsberger*, AS 16 (Chicago, 1965), 399; see also *CAD A*<sup>1</sup>, 45 sub *abātu* B, lexical section (note however that the entry is misplaced and should be transferred to *CAD A*<sup>1</sup>, 42 sub *abātu* A, lexical section).

71 IIK 1-2:22-23, 105-6.

72 2 Kgs. 20:1 = Isa. 38:13; Ezek. 18:13; cf. 1 Kgs. 21:15. The pair is rare in biblical Hebrew. Note, however, the antonymy of *ḥāyāb//lō' + mūt*; e.g., Gen. 42:2; 47:19; Deut. 33:6; 2 Kgs. 18:32; Ezek. 18:17; Ps. 118:17. For the phenomenon as a whole, see Held, *JBL* 84 (1965), 275, 282, n. 71.

73 Dahood, *Psalms I*, 28, 35, on Ps. 5:10 *ḥlq* 'to bring death'; *ibid.*, 72, 73, on Ps. 12:3,4 *šepat ḥālāqôt* 'pernicious lips'; *ibid.*, 93, 99, on Ps. 17:14 *ḥlq* 'make perish'; *ibid.*, 207, on Lam. 4:16 *ḥlq* 'to destroy (with the face)'; *ibid.*, 208, 211, on Ps. 35:6 *ḥālaqlaqôt* 'destruction'—a noun!; *ibid.*, 217, 218, on Ps. 36:3 *heḥēlūq* 'to destroy (with the eyes)'; *Psalms II*, 187, 192, on Ps. 73:18 *ḥālāqôt* 'perdition'—a noun!; see also idem, *Biblica* 45 (1964), 408.

74 See Held, *JAOS* 79 (1959), 170-71.

75 A similar case in point, involving yet another attempt to equate Heb. *ḥlq* with Ugar. *ḥlq*, relates to the idiomatic expression *l<sup>e</sup>šōnām yaḥālūqūn* (Ps. 5:10), which in Dahood's translation reads: "with

Second, Dahood's rendering of *ḥābbālīm y<sup>e</sup>ḥallēq* in Job 21:17c in general and his attempt to relate our Heb. *ḥlq* to Ugar. *ḥlq* in particular become untenable once it is recognized that we are here confronted with an idiomatic expression *ḥillēq ḥābbālīm* denoting 'to apportion lots',<sup>76</sup> which has in our verse the more specific connotation 'to mete out sentences'.<sup>77</sup> Thus the idiom *ḥillēq ḥebel* = *ḥillēq b<sup>e</sup>ḥebel*<sup>78</sup> must be viewed as a synonym of and in no way different in meaning from *ḥillēq b<sup>e</sup>gōrāl*<sup>79</sup> and *ḥillēq b<sup>e</sup>qaw*.<sup>80</sup> This assumption gains much in probability when we note the pair *ḥēleq//ḥebel*<sup>81</sup> alongside *ḥēleq//gōrāl*<sup>82</sup> and *ḥebel//gōrāl*<sup>83</sup> respectively.

Third, and of no less importance, neither *ḥābbālīm* nor any derivative from *ḥbl* is ever found in parallelism with *gē'īm* or with any derivative from *gē'eb*.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, as a synonym of *gē'īm* one would expect in Ps. 140:6 a vocable such as *r<sup>e</sup>šā'īm* 'wicked',<sup>85</sup> *rā'īm* 'evil men',<sup>86</sup> *ša'ānannīm* 'complacent men',<sup>87</sup> *'anšē ḥāmāsīm* 'lawless men',<sup>88</sup> hardly *ḥabbālīm*.

their tongue they bring death" (*Psalms I*, 28). This far-fetched rendering (note verse 10a *kî 'ên b<sup>e</sup>pîbû n<sup>e</sup>kônāb!*) is based, in Dahood's own words, on "deriving *yahālīqūn* from *hālaq*, 'to die, perish', Ugar. *ḥlq*, parallel to *mt*" (ibid., 35). Observe, however, that the philological structure supporting this manipulation collapses once we realize that we are confronted with a well-known idiom *beḥēlīq lāsōn/šepāyīm/peh/āmārīm* denoting 'to flatter (lit., 'to make smooth') with the tongue/lips/mouth/words', and the like. Moreover, not only is the meaning of *beḥēlīq lāsōn* universally recognized, but the idiom itself is attested, in a variety of forms, not less than fifteen times in biblical Hebrew; Isa. 30:10; Ps. 5:10; 12:3, 4; 36:3; 55:22; Prov. 2:16; 5:3; 6:24; 7:5, 21; 26:28; 28:23; 29:5; Job 17:5. In his pan-Ugaritic machinations Dahood even claims to have discovered the pair *mūt//ḥālaq* (= Ugar. *mw/ḥlq*) in Hebrew; *Psalms I*, 93, 99; cf. idem, *Biblica* 47 (1966), 405. This discovery needs no refutation, but the locus of it speaks volumes since it is made in Ps. 17:14, one of the most difficult, obscure, and hopelessly corrupt verses in the entire Psalter.

76 Cf. Targum 'dbyn *yplg* 'He apportions lots' and see the commentaries of Rashi (*ḥebel* = *gōrāl* 'lot') and Serachia (*ḥebel* = *mānāb w<sup>e</sup>ḥēleq* 'portion and lot'; *Tikvath Enosh*, ed. Schwartz [Berlin, 1868], 241).

77 See Tur Sinai, *Job*, 328. Note the comment of Ibn Ezra: "*ḥblym yḥlq b'pw* is the opposite of *ḥblym nplw ly bn'mym* (Ps. 16:6); some think (that *ḥblym* here) = *ḥbly ywldb* (Hos. 13:13), but the first (interpretation) is the correct one."

78 Amos 7:17 (= Akk. *isqa zāzu*; Aram.-Syr. *plg 'db'*; Arab. *qasama sabman*); cf. Mic. 2:5; Ps. 78:55 (= Akk. *isqa nadû*; Aram.-Syr. *rm' 'db'*; Arab. *'awqa'a sabman*); Ps. 16:6 (= Akk. *maqātu ša isqi*; Aram.-Syr. *npl 'db'*; Arab. *waqa'a as-sahm*).

79 Num. 26:55; 1 Chr. 24:5.

80 Isa. 34:17.

81 Deut. 32:9.

82 Isa. 17:14; 57:6; Ps. 16:5.

83 Josh. 17:14.

84 Contrast Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 594; Dahood, *Psalms III*, 302.

85 Job 40:12; cf. Ps. 36:12; 94:2-3.

86 Prov. 8:13; cf. Job 35:12.

87 Ps. 123:4.

88 Ps. 73:6; cf. 140:5.

Be that as it may, it is disturbing to note that the real problems of Ps. 140:6 involving structure, meter, and parallelism, in part noted already by such scholars as Briggs, Gunkel, and Kissane, have completely escaped Dahood's attention. This is unfortunate since it is in these areas that Ugaritic can and should make a real contribution to Bible scholarship. A study of Ps. 140:6 in every detail cannot be undertaken here. However, a perusal of the pertinent texts dealing with the trap-snare metaphors would seem to call for some such restoration as follows:

*ṭām<sup>e</sup>nû gē'im < badderek > 89 paḥḥ< im > lî //*  
*pār<sup>e</sup>śû rešet< likōd > 90 p<sup>e</sup>'āmay <*  
*ḥābālîm < nāt<sup>e</sup>nû > 91 'ālê 'orḥōtay > //*  
*l<sup>e</sup>yad ma'gāl mōq<sup>e</sup>śîm šātû lî*

The arrogant ones concealed trap<s > < in the road > for me;  
 They spread out a net < to catch my feet > .  
 < They placed > snares < across my paths > ;  
 By the road they set traps for me.

This restoration, intended to be nothing more than a conjectural semblance of an original probably never to be retrieved, is based on the following considerations: (1) Context, meter, and parallelism would seem to indicate that the substantive *derek* or *'ōrah* has accidentally been omitted from 6a. Particularly relevant here is Ps. 142:4 where the idiom *ṭām<sup>e</sup>nû paḥ lî* is indeed preceded by the clause *b<sup>e</sup>'ōrah-zû 'āballēk*. Also worthy of note is the fact that similar idioms employing *derek* alongside *paḥ* are known in biblical Hebrew.<sup>92</sup> (2) The restoration of *p<sup>e</sup>'āmay* or *raglay* in 6b seems fully corroborated by the rendering *posim mou* of the LXX.<sup>93</sup> Note further the idiom *lākad regel* in sequence with *ṭāman rešet* in Ps. 9:16.<sup>94</sup> Our restoration would seem to gain somewhat in probability when viewed in the light of similar idioms involving *rešet* and *regel*,<sup>95</sup> *rešet* and *pa'am*,<sup>96</sup> respectively. (3) The retention of the Septuagint's *raglay* or *p<sup>e</sup>'āmay* at the end of 6b would seem to alleviate the problem of *ma'gāl* lacking an A word. For this would provide a parallel for *ma'gāl* without presupposing that a clause with *'ōrah* was necessarily present in the *Vorlage* of the LXX. It should be borne in mind that *regel/pa'am* may be employed in parallelism with *ma'gāl*, as is clearly indicated by the attestation of *derek//regel*<sup>97</sup> and

89 Alternate reading: *b<sup>e</sup>'ōrah*.

90 Alternate reading: *liḥōt raglay*.

91 Alternate reading: *ḥābālîm ṭām<sup>e</sup>nû*.

92 Hos. 9:8; Prov. 22:5. Equally possible, though less probable, would be the reading *ṭām<sup>e</sup>nû gē'im paḥḥîm l<sup>e</sup>raglay* for which see Jer. 18:22.

93 See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 593, 594; cf. Buitendijk, *Psalms*, 725.

94 Cf. also Ps. 35:8; Prov. 3:26. Another possible restoration would seem to be *pār<sup>e</sup>śû rešet liḥōt p<sup>e</sup>'āmay/raglay* for which see Ps. 56:14; 116:8; 140:5.

95 Ps. 25:15; Job 18:8-9; Lam. 1:13.

96 Ps. 57:7; Prov. 29:5.

97 Nah. 1:3; Ps. 119:59; Prov. 3:23; Job. 23:11.

'ōrah (*n<sup>e</sup>tîbāh*)/regel<sup>98</sup> respectively. (4) Problematic indeed is *ḥābālîm* in 6b. However, there would seem to be no escape from the conclusion that, contrary to Gunkel, Driver, and others, it must denote here 'snares'<sup>99</sup> and be equated with Heb. *ḥebel*<sup>100</sup> and Akkadian *naḥḥalu*.<sup>101</sup> While it is obvious that *ḥābālîm* is out of place in 6b, it must be admitted that neither its original position in the verse nor the clause to which it belonged can be restored with any degree of certainty. However, the simile in Job 18:10<sup>102</sup> would seem to point in the direction of some such clause as *ḥābālîm nāt<sup>e</sup>nû/ṭām<sup>e</sup>nû 'ālê 'orḥôtay*. In view of the pairs *paḥ/rešet*<sup>103</sup> and *ḥebel/môqēš*,<sup>104</sup> it stands to reason to assume that the pair 'ōrah//ma'gāl was also present and that the proposed clause originally preceded 6c *l<sup>e</sup>yad ma'gāl mōqēšîm šātû lî*.

---

98 Ps. 119:105; Job 13:27; 30:12; 33:11.

99 See the commentaries. Observe that most scholars (cf. Briggs, *Psalms II*, 502, 503; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 594) render *ḥābālîm* here incorrectly as 'cords'. Note, however, Saadia's rendering of our vocable as *šarak ka-l-aḥḥālî* 'snares like cords!' See also Tur Sinai, *Job*, 290, in line 3 (correct the misprint to read 140:6!).

100 Job 18:10 *ḥebel/malkōdet* 'snare/trap'.

101 Cf. e.g., Ludlul II:84 (Lambert, *BWL*, 42); see also von Soden, *AHw.*, 714a.

102 Read *b<sup>e</sup>'ōrah* for *bā'āreš* (//*nātîb*). cf. Jud. 5:6; Ps. 142:4; Prov. 8:20; 12:28; Job 19:8; note also Ps. 143:10 (*b<sup>e</sup>'ōrah mîšôr!*).

103 Hos. 5:1.

104 2 Sam. 22:6 = Ps. 18:6.