Bronson Brown-deVost

Commentary and Authority in Mesopotamia and Qumran

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The Republic of San Marino
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Bronson Brown-deVost

"For Sarah, the love of my life,
and our children, Bronson, Wolfe, and Rosalind"

Introduction

Readers of revered books have long felt the necessity to explain how their beloved literary works convey meaning about the past, the present, and even the future. In the world of the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean, this urge to understand and explain literature was a catalyst for the development of interpretational techniques and in turn for the creation of a new literary genre, the commentary.

These commentary traditions convey a wealth of information about the compositions they explain and the communities that read those works. In addition, the close temporal and geographical proximity of the development of commentary writing in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Mediterranean world, and Judea is highly suggestive of some level of contact or influence. These two observations provide the larger context for my research in this book.

More narrowly, I have primarily concerned myself here with the exegetical works that have been uncovered in the caves near Khirbet Qumran. Among these interpretive compositions are a particular subset of commentaries, termed continuous *pesharim* by J. Carmignac,[1] which are largely organized according to the sequence of the composition that they are interpreting (called the base-text) and which frequently employ the technical term *pesher* (פשר) to introduce explanatory remarks. Since their discovery in the middle of the last century, these Qumran *pesharim* (the plural of *pesher*), as they are called, have been the object of sustained scholarly interest both from a comparative perspective and as a phenomenon unique to Qumran.

Comparative approaches to this corpus have generally been focused on the relationship between *pesher* and later Jewish midrash or the New Testament, but this has ultimately done little to explain the nature of the *pesharim* themselves or their peculiarities. Comparisons between *pesher* and Mesopotamian commentary, which are suggested by the etymological derivation of the Hebrew term *pesher* from the Akkadian word *pišru*,[2] are still largely inchoate. My work here seeks to aid in remedying this deficiency, and in so doing to more fully explain the nature and function of the continuous *pesher* commentaries from Qumran as well as the authoritative status of the compositions they comment on.[3]

This comparative study of Mesopotamian commentaries and Qumran *pesharim* has three main and interrelated aims: 1) to determine what direct relationship exists, if any, between commentary writing in Mesopotamia and at Qumran; 2) to discuss

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1 Carmignac, "Le document de Qumrân sur Melkisédek".

2 See my discussion of the term פשר, p. 57.

3 For a similar type of study that examines the relationship between Classical Greek commentary writing and the *pesharim*, see now Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema* and also the earlier works of Bockmuehl, "Origins of Biblical Commentary" and Kratz, "Die Pescharim von Qumran", 101–102 and "Text and Commentary".

how an understanding of the practice of commentary writing in one corpus, whether Mesopotamian commentaries or Qumran *pesharim*, can inspire new questions and suggest new answers for the other; and 3) to determine how commentaries themselves can reveal their ancient authors' attitudes about canon and about the authority possessed by the base-texts they interpret and by the works that they quote.

In order to provide a fair comparison of commentary writing at Qumran (specifically in the continuous *pesharim*) and in Mesopotamia, I begin my investigation in the first two chapters with a careful re-examination of Qumran *pesharim* on their own terms. Since a large scale and detailed survey of the Qumran *pesharim* as a corpus still remains a desideratum for the field of Qumran studies,[4] I have further endeavoured to provide a comprehensive description of the corpus and the genre.

The Mesopotamian commentaries, on the other hand, have recently been the object of two major research projects.[5] These survey studies have enabled me to focus instead on in-depth analyses of a select group of commentaries that are most similar to the Qumran *pesharim* for the sake of comparison. Chapter III provides a detailed and technical analysis of the similarities and differences between the two commentary corpora. Chapter IV explores the implications of the compositional development of Mesopotamian commentaries for explaining the textual history of the *pesharim*. Chapter V provides a discussion of social factors relating to commentary writing in Mesopotamia and at Qumran and concludes with a brief summary of my comparative studies of the two corpora. That summary addresses both the questions of literary dependence and of the value of such a comparative study from a phenomenological perspective – the first two of the three research question posed above.

I deal with the third of my research questions in the final chapter, where I proceed with an examination of each commentary corpus as it relates to the stabilization of ancient literary works, the formation of canon, and the particular ways in which compositions are appealed to as sources of authority. This investigation lends itself to a systematized schema for demonstrating textual authority in distinct spheres of influence and at various levels of importance. Such a model presents an important corrective for how we think and talk about compositions as authority bearing instruments and for how we critically evaluate data pertaining to that concept.

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4 Aside from numerous small-scale and survey articles on the topic, Lim, *Pesharim* is the latest and largest of such works, but it is still quite introductory. The introduction to M. Horgan, "Pesharim" (the published form of her Fordham University dissertation) suggests that Horgan had intended to do this work, but the sheer amount of effort required just to establish the text of the continuous *pesharim* apparently precluded the possibility of her carrying out a detailed analysis of them as a group.

5 One study was carried out by E. Frahm (Frahm, "Royal Hermeneutics", "Reading the Tablet, the Exta, and the Body", and most comprehensively *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*) and the other by U. Gabbay (Gabbay, "Akkadian Commentaries", "Actual Sense and Scriptural Intention", and "Specification as a Hermeneutical Technique").

Preliminaries

Selection of Corpus

Since the present study of Qumran *pesharim* and Mesopotamian commentaries is a comparative one, a certain level of iterativity has been involved in the selection of works for in-depth analysis. The small number of continuous *pesharim* at Qumran, especially in comparison to the vast number of Mesopotamian commentaries, has necessitated the selection of particular Mesopotamian commentaries based on the nature of the Qumran *pesharim*. Unfortunately, since no instances of commentaries to technical compositions (e.g., omen, medical, or lexical works) are known to exist at Qumran,[6] this has removed the vast majority of Mesopotamian commentaries from direct consideration.[7] For this reason, the small corpus of Mesopotamian commentaries dealing with literary and religious works – admittedly a minority within its wider corpus, though largely representative of the genre – has come to be the primary focal point of the comparative work that follows. The Mesopotamian texts which I have carefully investigated are as follows:[8]

Enūma eliš Commentary I[9]
The *Enūma eliš*, the Babylonian creation epic, was an important mythological text that played a significant role in both the Babylonian and Assyrian societies.[10] The group of texts that constitute the *Enūma eliš* Commentary I all dealt

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6 Note that 4Q186, 4Q317, 4Q318, and 4Q561 can be classified as scientific texts, but they do not appear to be commentaries.

7 Most Mesopotamian commentaries deal with works of a technical nature (i.e., omen collections, medical manuals, and literary lists). The remaining compositions, commentaries to literary and religious works, constitute only about 3% of all Mesopotamian commentary texts (the most recent calculation is 2.7% [Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*, 405]; the earlier calculation was 3.1% [Frahm, "Royal Hermeneutics"]).

8 The selection of Qumran *pesharim* will be discussed later on pp. 22–25.

9 For the distinction between the *Enūma Eliš* Commentaries I and II, see Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths,* 135–142 and also Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*, 112–116. A synoptic edition and translation of these commentary manuscripts by E. Frahm and E. Jiménez appeared after I had finished my work ("Myth, Ritual, and Interpretation"). Due to the difficult layout of that edition and the tendency to underplay manuscript variation, I have decided to retain my edition and translation of the *Enūma eliš* Commentary I manuscripts in the appendices, pp. 201–224. My edition and translation closely follow Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*.

10 For some of the changes made to the *Enūma eliš* and other Marduk traditions in order to make them more amenable to the state religion of Assyria, see Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*, 345–368 and the literature discussed there, see also von Soden, "Gibt es ein Zeugnis" and Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia", 73–74 and 76.

with the *Enūma eliš* in its entirety.[11] The letter designations for the manuscripts used here follow W.G. Lambert's recent edition,[12] and my translations of the base-text in these commentaries largely follow his. This group of commentary manuscripts represents the distillation of *Enūma eliš* commentary traditions in a variety of tablet styles over a time span of about two-hundred years[13] and in a wide geographical area encompassing Nineveh, Assur, and Sippar.

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi[14]

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi is a theological work dealing with the (perhaps newly) prominent role of Marduk in individuals' cultic life. This work is the subject of one long commentary tablet from Nineveh (K3291) in indentation layout dating to the seventh century BCE.

The Babylonian Theodicy[15]

The Babylonian Theodicy, a text written in Babylonia at the tail end of the second millennium BCE, deals with the issue of theodicy, as its modern name suggests. The text is unusual in that it represents one of the few acrostics in

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11   The *Enūma eliš* Commentary II consists of three tabular layout commentaries from the library of Ashurbanipal that deal only with the names of Marduk in *Enūma eliš* VII (See Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 139–142 and also Kämmerer and Metzler, *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos* Enūma eliš, 38).

12   See Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths.* The manuscript designations are as follows: Z = K 4657+7038+9427+9911+10008+12102+16818+Sm 747, Y = Rm 395, X = K 8585, W = Rm II 538, V = VAT 10616(+)11616, z = BM 54228, y = BM 66606+72033 (82-9-18, 6599+12037), x = BM 69594. For photos of ms. Z = K 4657+7038+9427+9911+10008+12102+16818+Sm 747, see Kämmerer and Metzler, *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos* Enūma eliš, pls. XLIV–XLV. For the tablet K 13866 as another member of this group of commentary texts, see Frahm and Jiménez, "Myth, Ritual, and Interpretation", 297 and 307–309. But note the caution with which E. Frahm and E. Jiménez assign that manuscript to this grouping and that Lambert had not considered it an *Enūma eliš* Commentary I manuscript (*Babylonian Creation Myths*, 485 n. 10).

13   The Babylonian tablets are from Sippar and should not postdate the reign of Xerxes, see Waerzeggers, "The Babylonian Revolts Against Xerxes and the 'End of Archives' ", 50–73, noted in Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*, 287 n. 1362. The Nineveh tablets come from the seventh century BCE.

14   A. Lenzi has prepared an online edition and translation of this commentary as part of the Yale Cuneiform Commentaries Project ("Commentary on Ludlul [CCP no. 1.3]", http://ccp.yale.edu/P394923). See also, Lenzi, "The Commentary to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*" and Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi.*

15   The commentary to the Babylonian Theodicy is published in part in Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature,* 69–89, briefly discussed in Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*, 120–121, and now more fully in Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers*, 440–464. No complete edition of this commentary tablet is yet available, and I have not provided an edition here due to limited access. Images of the tablet including the latest joins

Mesopotamian literature; the first syllable of all eleven lines of each stanza is the same, and when these initial syllables are put together, the acrostic reads: *a-na-ku sa-ag-gi-il-ki-[i-na-am-u]b-bi-ib ma-áš-ma-šu ka-ri-bu ša i-li ú šar-ri* "I, Saggil-kīnam-ubbib, the incantation priest, am adorant of the god and the king".[16] It was the subject of a very sophisticated commentary in cola layout from the Late Babylonian period in Babylon or Borsippa.[17] The commentary is very extensive in its treatment of the poem and provides many different types of commentarial explanations.

Maqlû, Šurpu, and Tummu bītu

These three ritual texts played an important role in the removal of evil forces from individuals. Such rituals would have been an important element in the life of the (mostly wealthy) members of Babylonian and Assyrian society. No commentaries deal with any one of these compositions alone, but they appear together in various configurations: *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* (VAT 8928 [Ass. 13955dq]); *Maqlû* and *Tummu bītu* (A 405 [Ass. 13955ii]); *Šurpu* and *Tummu bītu* (VAT 13846 [Ass. 13956he]); and *Šurpu* and some sort of medical work (K 4320).[18] Such various groupings of *Maqlû, Šurpu,* and *Tummu bītu* – all incantations for warding off and removing evil – are not surprising given the primary role those texts played in the second stage of the incantation priest's (Akkadian *āšipu*) formal education[19] and the presence of short versions of *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* side by

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are available online as part of the Yale Cuneiform Commentaries Project (Frahm, Frazer, and Jiménez, "Commentary on Theodicy [CCP no. 1.4]").

16 Text and translation follow Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature,* 63.

17 The tablet is composed of BM 66882 + 76506 + 76009 + 76832 + 83044 + 83045 + 83046. Sippar does not appear to be the findspot, as previously thought, see Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries,* 120–121. The fragment BM 40987 may be a second commentary on the Babylonian Theodicy, see Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers*, 168.

18 An edition, translation, and notes to VAT 8928 (Ass. 13955dq) is published in Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries,* 384–396, and a brief discussion of the reverse of A 405 (Ass. 13955ii) is presented there. The *Maqlû* portion of both of these texts is presented in transliteration in Abusch, *The Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû.* The *Šurpu* portions of VAT 8928 (Ass. 13955dq), VAT 13846 (Ass. 13956he), and K 4320 are edited in Reiner, *Šurpu,* 50–51. D. Schwemer has graciously provided me with his handcopy of A 405 (Ass. 13955ii); that handcopy was later published, along with handcopies of all the tablets of *Maqlû* that have not been published to date, in Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû.* The *Tummu bītu* commentary on the obverse of A 405 (Ass. 13955ii) is nearly identical, even to the sign, with the *Tummu bītu* commentary in VAT 13846 (Ass. 13956he) obverse lines 1–21, a full edition of VAT 13846 (Ass. 13956he) can be found in Meier, "Kommentare aus dem Archiv der Tempelschule in Assur", 239–246.

19 For the usage of these compositions in the school setting, see Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien,* 176.

side in the ritual *Bīt rimki*.[20] Three of these commentaries came from the house of an important exorcist family and were written in the seventh century. The colophons to the *Maqlû* and *Tummu Bītu* commentary (A 405 [Ass. 13955ii]) and to the *Šurpu* and *Tummu Bītu* commentary (VAT 13846 [Ass. 13956he]) relate that these manuscripts were copied from older ones for the consultation of the junior exorcist Kiṣir-Nabû, who later went on to become a senior exorcist. The colophon for the commentary to *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* (VAT 8928 [Ass. 13955dq]) is now lost, but that tablet likely also belonged to Kiṣir-Nabû.[21]

Special Conventions

The fragmentary nature of the manuscripts analysed in this book has necessitated the use of a special symbol to mark particular points of data that are equivocal. Following relatively familiar conventions, such cases will be marked with a superscript question mark [?]. This should not be taken as an indicator of doubt, but rather uncertainty. Doubtful data will be marked by an asterisk * and will sometimes be accompanied by comments explaining the specific reasons for doubting the usage of that particular datum.

The denotation of Qumran *pesher* texts has utilized the conventions of the *editiones principes* in the DJD volumes. Thus, when a particular composition is the subject of more than one *pesher* manuscript, superscript letters are used to designate each discrete manuscript, for example, 4QpPs[a] and 4QpPs[b]. This should not be taken as an endorsement of the interpretation that any of these *pesher* manuscripts with the same name but differing superscript letters are copies of the same literary work – the usual connotation of superscript letters in the DJD volumes. In fact, it would be preferable at this stage of *pesher* research to use capital letters to designate each manuscript (i.e., 4QpPs A and 4QpPs B instead of 4QpPs[a] and 4QpPs[b] respectively). But since recent discussions and editions of the *pesher* texts sometimes use designations like Pesher

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20 The grouping of all three rituals – *Maqlû*, *Šurpu*, and *Tummu bītu* – may also be evidenced in the ritual tablet to *Maqlû*. The ritual tablet to *Maqlû* includes instructions to recite *Tummu bītu* in line 137′, then in the next two lines it outlines ritual acts to be performed after *šurpa tašarrapu* "you burn the *šurpu*-fire". This is not to say that the phrase *šurpa tašarrapu* refers to carrying out the long ritual of *Šurpu*. For all that, the phrase *šurpa tašarrapu* does remind one of some form of the *Šurpu* ritual (just as the phrase *ašar maqlâ taqlû* "where you performed the *maqlû*-burning" earlier in the Ritual Tablet calls the *Maqlû* ritual to mind), and the Ritual Tablet of *Maqlû* here demonstrates a particularly close association made between *Maqlû*, *Tummu bītu*, and some type of *šurpu* ritual. For a discussion of the use of other rituals within *Maqlû*, as indicated by the Ritual Tablet of *Maqlû*, see Abusch, "Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature", 253–255.

21 Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries,* 122.

Psalms B (or Pesher Psalms 2) to denote 1QpPs and not 4QpPs[b], it seems that changing 4QpPs[b] to 4QpPs B might cause more confusion than clarity.

Column and line designations for these manuscripts, on the other hand, do not necessarily conform to the *editiones principes* in DJD. Rather, all citations of column and line numbers, as well as manuscript fragment groupings, correspond to my own editions of the Qumran *pesharim* as presented in the appendices, pp. 154–198.

Technical Terms

Several technical terms are used consistently throughout this book to describe specific elements of commentaries in both of the commentary traditions studied here. The term base-text is used to refer to a work that receives a commentary. For instance, Habakkuk is the base-text for *Pesher* Habakkuk (1QpHab), and the *Enūma eliš* is the base-text for the tablet K 4657+7038+9427+9911+10008+12102+16818+Sm 747, which is one of the several *Enūma eliš* Commentary I manuscripts.

In agreement with S. Tzoref[22] and G. Doudna,[23] a "commentary unit" refers to a discrete unit within a commentary text which is composed of both a citation from the base-text and its accompanying interpretational remarks. The terms *lemma* and *comment* refer to the two main portions of a commentary unit and have been italicized to denote their technical connotation. The *lemma* is the excerpt from the base-text and the *comment* furnishes the interpretation of that *lemma*. It is possible to have more than one *comment* on a single *lemma*, each individual *comment* may be referred to sequentially, resulting in a first, second, and even third *comment*, but they can still all be conceived of as a single conflated *comment* and may be referred to in the singular.

Portions of the *lemma* may be repeated within a *comment*. Phrases from the *lemma* that are repeated in the *comment* are called *internal citations*, and the rare cases where a portion of an *internal citation* is repeated in the *comment* are termed *second internal citations*. One particularly common type of *internal citation* is the *keyword*; this is a single word or noun phrase from a *lemma* or *internal citation* that is repeated within the *comment* and followed by an interpretation of its meaning.

Transliteration Conventions

The Mesopotamian commentaries and Qumran *pesharim* presented here have been formatted in such a way as to highlight these compositional elements in

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22 Berrin, *The Pesher Nahum Scroll From Qumran*, 19.
23 Doudna, *4Q Pesher Nahum*, 46.

order to facilitate the reading of their constituent parts. The text of the commentaries and *pesharim* has been divided into commentary units keyed to the line numbers or verses of the base-texts. These units have been numbered sequentially in the *pesharim* for ease of reference.

Lemmas* have been formatted in bold face, and *comments* are presented in regular face. *Internal citations* have been underlined, *second internal citations* have received a double underline, and repetitions of a portion of a *lemma* at the beginning of a following *lemma* have been formatted in bold face and underlined (see, e.g., 1QpMic). Citations of texts other than the base-text are over-lined and their source noted either in a footnote or in the heading to the commentary unit.

Lines 11:17–12:10 of 1QpHab comprise commentary unit 33 of *Pesher* Habakkuk, and serve as a good example of this terminology and formatting (see pp. 107–108 and pp. 120–121, for the $^{\times}$ sign in 12:2 see p. 38):

lemma–	11:17 [... כ(י)א חמס לבנן יכסכה ושׁוד בהמות]	
	12:1 **יחתה מדמי אדם וחמס ארץ קריה וכול**	
	יושבי בה	
unit–	12:2 פשר הדבר על הכוהן הרשע לשלם לו את $^{\times}$	
	12:3 גמולו אשר גמל על אביונים כיא ה<u>לבנן</u> הוא	← *internal citation*
		(*keyword*: abbreviated *kw*)
	12:4 עצת היחד וה<u>בהמות</u> המה פתאי יהודה עושה	← *internal citation* (*kw*)
comment–	12:5 התורה אשר ישופטנו אל לכלה *vacat*	
	12:6 כאשר זמם לכלות אביונים ואשר אמר <u>מדמי</u>	← *internal citation*
	12:7 <u>קריה וחמס ארץ</u> פשרו ה<u>קריה</u> היא ירושלם	← *internal citation* (cont.)
		+ <u><u>second internal citation</u></u> (*kw*)
	12:8 אשר פעל בה הכוהן ^{הרשע} מעשי תועבות	
	ויטמא את	
	12:9 מקדש אל <u><u>וחמס ארץ</u></u> המה ערי יהודה אשר	← <u><u>second internal citation</u></u> (*kw*)
	12:10 גזל הון אביונים ...	

unit—

   lemma—

11:17 [... **Indeed the violence of Lebanon will cover over you and the destruction of beasts**]

12:1 **will terrify, because of the human bloodshed and violence against land, city, and all dwelling in it.**

   comment—

12:2 The interpretation of the passage concerns the wicked priest, to give to him ×

12:3 his recompense for how he repaid the   ← *internal citation (kw)*
     poor, because the <u>Lebanon</u> is

12:4 the council of the community, and the   ← *internal citation (kw)*
     <u>beasts</u> are the simple–minded ones of
     Judah each of whom performs

12:5 the instruction; whom[24] God will judge
     for destruction *vacat*

12:6 just as he schemed to destroy the poor.   ← *internal citation*
     And when it says: <u>because of</u>

12:7 <u>the bloodshed of the city and violence</u>   ← *internal citation* (cont.)
     <u>against land.</u> Its interpretation is: the   + <u>second internal citation</u>
     <u>city</u> is Jerusalem,   (*kw*)

12:8 in which the wicked priest did abomi-
     nable deeds and defiled the

12:9 temple of God; and <u>violence against</u>   ← <u>second internal citation</u> (*kw*)
     <u>land</u> are the cities of Judah, where

12:10 he stole the wealth of the poor. →

Lines rev. 4′–6′ form commentary unit 2 of the *Maqlû* commentary A 405 and provide a good cuneiform example of this terminology:

unit—

   lemma—

4′ [*a*]*l*-⌜*si-ku-nu-ši* DINGIR.MEŠ *mu-ši-tú*⌝ ⫶ →

   comment—

4′ (cont.) <u>DINGIR.MEŠ *mu-ši-tú*</u> MU[L].ME[Š] DINGIR.MEŠ   ← *internal citation*
GAL.MEŠ   (*kw*)

5′   [*šá*]-*niš ana* MUL.MUL ^mul^GU₄.AN.NA ^mul^SIP.ZI.AN.NA
i-qab-bi

6′   [*š*]*al*-⌜*šiš*⌝ *ana* MUL.MEŠ *ka-a-a-ma-nu-ti i-qab-bi*

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24 The antecedent of the relative pronoun appears to be the wicked priest of 12:2.

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        ┌   lemma─  ┌   4′ [I] call on you, O gods of the night, ⁝ →
        │           └
        │
        │                  ┌   4′ (cont.) The gods of the night are the stars  ← internal citation (kw)
unit─   │                  │   of the great gods.
        │   comment─       │
        │                  │   5′      A [se]cond interpretation: it refers to the Pleides, Taurus, and Orion.
        │                  │
        └                  └   6′      A [th]ird interpretation: it refers to the regular stars
```

The *comment* in this commentary unit is a conflated *comment*; it consists of three
independent interpretational remarks or *comments*: the first in line 4′, the sec-
ond introduced by *šanîš* "secondly" in line 5′, and the third introduced by *šalšiš*
"thirdly" in line 6′.

Qumran Texts

The system of transcription used here differs slightly from the standard conven-
tions due to the literary nature of this study. Letters that are significantly dam-
aged are marked as usual by either a raised dot or a raised circellus. The raised
dot indicates a high level of certainty regarding the reading of the letter either
based on palaeographic or on contextual evidence, the raised circellus indicates a
low level of certainty regarding the reading of the letter. This often corresponds
to the more conventional raised dot for damaged letters where the ink traces can
be read with a high degree of confidence and the raised circellus for indetermi-
nate ink remains, but in several instances the reading of indeterminate ink re-
mains is nevertheless established with greater certainty than other letter remains
which have suffered less. In such cases a raised dot is used where a circellus would
have been more appropriate on purely palaeographic grounds. Similarly, some
letters that are partially, or even heavily, damaged may be left without any mark
indicating damage in those cases where the ink remains are in my opinion en-
tirely diagnostic. I have tried to represent marginal markings in a manner similar
to their appearance in the original manuscripts

Sigla

vacat Indicates an indent, line break, or midline space in the manuscript.

[...] Ellipsis in square brackets indicates missing text of an indeterminate
         length.

[ ]   Square brackets with a single intervening space indicate a small break.

« »   Guillemets are used when a letter has been overwritten or altered; the letter that has been overwritten or altered is directly to the right of the guillemets and the letter that replaces it is placed within the guillemets.

( )   Parentheses indicate highly conjectural material.

{ }   Curly braces indicate a scribal omission ameliorated by the modern editor.

←   Arrows indicate that the current line continues.

°   A large raised circellus indicates a broken letter that cannot be identified.

א̣̇   A dot above and below a letter reflects the ancient manuscripts' indication that a letter is to be deleted.

א̄   A dash above (and sometimes below) a letter reflects the ancient manuscripts' indication that a letter is to be deleted.

?   A raised question mark indicates that the reading is one of several possibilities.

א̶   A letter with a strikethrough indicates a scribal erasure.

ᵃ   Superscript letters indicate raised scribal interventions in the manuscript.

×   This sign marks the marginal *x*'s used in 1QpHab (see p. 38).

Mesopotamian Texts

The system of transliteration employed here should be familiar to most Assyriologists. Akkadian text is written in lower case italic face, Sumerian text is in lower case regular face, heterograms (or logograms) are written in small caps, and markers of semantic domain (or determinatives) and phonetic guides are written in superscript. I have not always used the most up-to-date readings of heterograms, and in cases where a reading is contested I have endeavoured to use that value which should be most easily recognizable to those in the field. Raised question marks indicate that the precise identification of a sign is uncertain. Quarter brackets indicate that some part of the sign is damaged in such a way that its identification is not certain. Signs with minor damage that can be identified with a high level of certainty have not been placed in quarter brackets so as to avoid overburdening the presentation of the text. An arrow (→) is used to indicate that although a line break has been inserted in my presentation of a line of text (or its translation), the text of that line in the manuscript is continuous.

When discussing the cuneiform texts, I have used the convention of regular caps to refer to particular cuneiform signs, for instance the sign 𒌓 would be referred to as UD irrespective of whether the sign is read in the current text as UTU, *tam*, *tú*, *pir*, *liḫ*, or any other possible syllable, heterogram, or semantic determining value. I have also adopted the common convention of enclosing phonemic transcriptions of a sign between front slashes. For instance, the signs 𒌅 (TU) and 𒌓 (UD) can both have the phonemic value /tu/, 𒌅 (TU) has this phonemic

value with the conventional reading *tu* (i.e., *tu* number one), and ⊬ (UD) has this phonemic value with the conventional reading *tú* (i.e., *tu* number two).

Transliterations and Translations

For the reader's convenience, I have provided translations of all modern quotations alongside the quote in its original language. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of ancient languages in this volume are my own. Transliterations of all the Qumran continuous pesharim and also of the *Enūma eliš* Commentary I manuscripts can be found in the Appendices, pp. 154–222.[25] The editions of texts there are provided with limited notes concerning difficult readings and other issues with respect to establishing the text and form of the ancient manuscripts.

A Note on Working with Manuscripts

It has been impossible to work entirely with actual manuscripts in the preparation of this study. Nevertheless, hand copies have been consulted for the Mesopotamian texts in addition to good quality photographs for the two tablets bearing *Maqlû* commentary. The Cuneiform Commentaries Project at Yale University (http://ccp.yale.edu) came online just as I was completing my research in March 2015, which made it possible for me to make at least a cursory consultation of high quality photographs of several *Enūma eliš* commentaries,[26] of the *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* commentary, and of the Babylonian Theodicy commentary. High quality photographs have been used to examine the Qumran texts: both from The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library website (http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive) and The Israel Museum website (http://dss.collections.imj.org.il). Pnina Shor and her assistants Orit Rosengarten and Beatriz Riestra kindly arranged for me to visit the IAA Dead Sea Scrolls lab on 13 April, 2015 to inspect fragments of 4QpappIsa[c], 4QpHos[b], and 4QpPs[a] in person.

The nature of the older Dead Sea Scrolls photos merits a word of caution. As is well known, these photos were taken in such a way that a dark shadow appears offset underneath each manuscript fragment. This shadow may at times look like ink, which explains, for example, the small dark circle on the first line of 4QpIsa[d] f1 between the *lemma* and the *comment*. While this looks very much like a delim-

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25 For editions of the other cuneiform commentaries see the bibliography provided in the footnotes of pp. 15–17.

26 Manuscripts K 4657+7038+9427+9911+10008+12102+16818+Sm 747, Rm 395, K 8585, Rm II 538, BM 54228 (82-5-22, 379), BM 66606+72033 (82-9-18, 6599+12037), and BM 69594 (82-9-18, 9591).

iting dot in all of the photographs of this fragment, it is nothing more than a hole in the manuscript with a dark shadow underneath.[27]

This phenomenon is also responsible for G. Doudna's mistaken assertion that the scribe placed an interlinear insertion between lines 3 and 4 in 4QpHos[b] f2,[28] as well as G. Snyder's incorrect proposal of a series of vertically arranged dots between the *lemma* and *comment* in 4QpPs[a] f1–2 ii 13.[29] In both of these cases, what has been observed as ink is in fact a tear in the manuscript, again with a dark shadow underneath it.[30]

Abbreviations and Citations

While most references receive a proper bibliographic citation (author's last name and short title), such a system is ill-suited to modern lexical and ancient textual references, where it would be cumbersome for the reader. For Hebrew, Greek, and Latin lexical and grammatical resources as well as ancient texts, see the abbreviations in the SBL manual of style. For references to Mesopotamian lexical and grammatical resources, see the abbreviations in the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (*CAD*); references to cuneiform texts are done either by museum number or in the simple style of the *CAD*, which generally refers the reader to the *editio princeps* with modifications to accommodate the organizational structure of the work in which the text is edited.

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27 Pnina Shor, Head of Dead Sea Scrolls Projects at Israel Antiquities Authority, graciously offered her assistance in visually inspecting this fragment and confirming that the spot in question is a hole in the parchment and not an ink mark (personal communication, Jan 30, 2014).

28 Doudna, *4Q Pesher Nahum*, 558.

29 Snyder, "Naughts and Crosses", 36–37.

30 I first came to this conclusion after very careful review of the photographs, and it was easily confirmed by my personal inspection of the fragments in question.