THE RAISED HAND OF THE LORD IN DEUT 32:40
ACCORDING TO MT, 4QDEUT\textsuperscript{Q}, AND LXX

Johan Lust

In 1954 P. Skehan published a preliminary edition of 4QDeut\textsuperscript{Q}. The fragment in question contains portions of Dt 32:37–43, spread over two pages. The second page has 11 hemistichs, one to a line, beginning with 41d. The first page is very fragmentary. As far as one can see, it also has 11 lines, covering vv. 37–41c.

Of the second page the best preserved part is the bottom half. It contains Deut 32:43, the final verse of the ‘Song of Moses.’ In the manuscript the text of that verse has 6 hemistichs, whereas it has 4 in the MT, and 8 in the LXX. Since the preliminary edition several contributions have been written on this state of affairs.\textsuperscript{2} The general tendency leans to an acceptance of the priority of the Qumran text, the MT offering an abbreviation, and the LXX an expansion probably based on a contamination between the Qumran version and that of the MT (O. Eissfeldt; R. Meyer; O. Loretz; A. Van der Kooij). P.-M. Bogaert, on the other hand, defends the originality of the MT.

\textsuperscript{1}P. Skehan, “A Fragment of the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut 32) from Qumran,” BASOR 136 (1954) 12–15.

We do not intend here to prolong that discussion. We rather wish to study the remaining part of the manuscript, more particularly the first page with its fragments of vv. 37–41c. We will first give a tentative reconstruction of the Qumran text, following the suggestions of Skehan. Then we shall compare it with MT and LXX. Finally we will focus on the image of the Lord’s raised hand in verse 40.5

The Qumran Text

The three fragments of the page containing traces of 37–41c, displayed in Skehan’s photograph published in 1956, are in a badly damaged state. In his first comment on the manuscript, Skehan assumed that the page had one hemistich to the line. This presumption was based on the evidence offered by the better preserved second page with its 11 lines, one hemistich to the line. According to a note in a later contribution, Skehan changed his mind due to the discovery of an additional fragment: “Though the new fragment is a small one, it is sufficient to show that the column had some lines with two hemistichs, and others with only one: of an 11-line column, lines 1–4, 9 and 10 each had one hemistich; while lines 5–8 and 11 had two.”4 Skehan admits that there is nothing else quite like this at Qumran. He ascribes it to the scribe’s desire to end his text exactly with the bottom of his final column. In his short statement no picture or transcript was given. Official photographs are now available in The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche.5 A fifth tiny fragment, visible on PAM 42.164, seems also to belong to the same column.

In the following lines we print first the Qumran text of vv. 37–41c, in a reconstructed form. Below it we present MT and LXX.

The Qumran Fragments

In our reconstruction of the Qumran text, the sections visible on the fragments are printed in boldface. The margins of the fragments are indicated roughly by square brackets. The reconstruction is based on the assumption that the right margin of the text was aligned squarely. Uncertain letters are underlined. Due to the damaged state of the material, some of the proposed readings are doomed to remain hypothetical. In our rendition of MT and LXX we have applied the stichometric arrangement of the Qumran fragments.

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5See also our contribution to the forthcoming Festschrift in honor of Labuschagne.
4See VTSup 4 (1957) 150, note 1; compare with JBL 78 (1959) 21–22.
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**The Masoretic Text**

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**The Septuagint**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>καὶ εἶπεν</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>καὶ</td>
<td>ἐπίνετε</td>
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The first hemistic of v. 37 in the Qumran fragment reads הוהי, siding with the Septuagint which has κύριος. The MT does not have an equivalent, leaving implicit the subject of the verb πράτει. Skehan reconstructs the Qumran text as follows:

37a ἀναστήτωσαν καὶ βοσθησάτωσαν ὑμῖν καὶ γεννηθήτωσαν ὑμῖν σκεπαστάι
39a βδέτε βδέτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμί καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ
39c ἐγὼ ἀποκτενώ καὶ ξῆν ποιήσω πατάξω κάγω ἰάσομαι
39e-40a καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃς ἔξελεται ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν μου ὅτι ἁρῶ εἰς τὸν σύραν ν
τὴν χειρά μου
40+ καὶ ὁμοῦμαι τὴν δεξιάν μου
40b καὶ ἐρῶ ζῶ ἐγὼ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα
41a ὅτι παροξυνό ὡς ἀστραπῆν τὴν μάχαιράν μου καὶ ἀνθέξεται κρίματος
41c καὶ ἀνταποδώσω δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς

The Greek translators, or their copyists, often rendered this double name by a simple κύριος. They may have done so here, regarding the title רוחא as an alternative for the tetragrammaton, and not as part of a double name. In Deuteronomy, however, the rare occurrences of the double name are always rendered by a double κύριος. This suggests that in 32:37 the Vorlage read a simple הוהי. If the Qumran fragments contained the said Vorlage of the MT, our hemistic should be reconstrued as follows: 37a And YHWH their God said: ‘where are their gods.’” I accept this reconstruction although it is not the only possible one. It cannot be excluded a priori that the Vorlage of the MT read הוהי or הוהי רוחא, instead of MT’s interrogative adverb רוחא. The problem with this reading is that it postulates an interpretation of the following lines differing from both the MT and the LXX. In passing we note that רוחא in the MT is a hapax. The normal spelling would be רוחא. In poetic texts the suffix רוחא- is an alternative form of the 3rd person pronoun.

In his reconstruction of the second hemistic of v. 37, Skehan seems to suggest that the Qumran text read רוחא where MT has רוחא. This would be in agreement

6On abbreviations see E. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress; Assen: Gortum, 1992) 256, with further bibliography.

with the LXX. Indeed, ירושא corresponds to ἐφ’ ὀλίς at the beginning of the Greek verse. The Qumran fragment, however, preserved a trace of a word belonging to a word at the beginning of the line, preceding ירושא. According to Skehan this letter must have been a σ rather than a ρσ. In so far as the microfiche allows us to see, this σ must have been preceded and followed by one or two more characters. Our suggestion is that it read יאדו: 37b יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדο

The term ‘rock’ is a well known metaphoric appellation of the Lord. In Deut 32:31 it is also applied to the pagan gods. The absence of an equivalent for יאדו in the LXX is not surprising. It does not necessarily imply that, in this matter, the Qumran text agrees with the MT and differs from the LXX. It certainly does not follow that the word was missing in the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX. Indeed, metaphors such as יאדו (‘rock’), used as appellations or titles of the Lord, or of the pagan gods, are hardly ever translated by the LXX. Most often they are replaced by the word θεός which reflects neither the metaphorical nor the literal sense of the Hebrew. Only the referent is marked. 8 In our text the term θεός or κύριος does not need to be mentioned explicitly since it is implied in the subject κύριος of the first line of the verse. 9

38a יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאדו יאدو

8See S. Olofsson, God Is My Rock: A Study of Translation Technique and Theological Exegesis in the Septuagint (CBOTS, 31; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990) esp. p. 35; A. Passoni dell’Acqua, “La metaforica biblica di Dio come roccia e la sua soppressione nelle antiche versioni,” Ephem. liturgicae 91 (1977) 417–453. In Deut 32 the term יאדו occurs 6 times: in vss. 4.15.18.30.31.37. According to Olofsson it is always rendered by θεός in the LXX. One does not see, however, how this applies to verse Deut 32:37, see p. 38. Compare, however, his remark on p. 39 where he notes: “Contrary to the usual technique in LXX ‘rock’ is not given an alternative equivalent here when the ordinary equivalent is already employed.” According to Passoni dell’Acqua it is rendered by κύριος in vs.37 (p. 421). This is a simplification. Κύριος is the subject of the first verb of the verse and does not directly render the term יאדו which belongs to the second line. See also M. P. Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect: Unusual Imagery for God in Deuteronomy xxxii,” VT 39 (1989) 307–322.

9For κύριος as a rendition of יאדו see Isa 26:4.

10Skehan 1954, 14.
forms with a collective meaning to render Hebrew plural forms. Here and in the following colon the verb forms in the Greek differ from those in the MT. They are not preserved in the Qumran fragments. In the reconstruction we opted in favor of the verb forms attested in the MT. A tentative argumentation is given in second section of this paper.

In 38b the word יִשָּׁהוּ is followed by an ample blank space, which makes Skehan wonder whether עלייבס נסכים was actually contained in the copy. We added it with a question mark:

38b נסכים יִשָּׁהוּ “(and) drank the wine of their drink offering.”

Skehan’s remark on the lack of 38d in the Qumran fragment, given in his first comment, appears to be withdrawn in his second note on the subject. In his revised opinion the last line of v. 38 probably had two hemistichs, as in the MT. Although there is no evidence for it in the manuscript, we may assume that the form of the final verb was a plural, as in the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch.

38cd עלייבס יָּהַהוֹרְסֵב הַעֲלִיָּבֶס המריה “Let them stand up and help you, let them be a shelter over you.” The gods are challenged, and invited to display their power. Their ineffectiveness will demonstrate that they are ‘no gods.’

The first line of v. 39 (line 6) also most likely contained two hemistichs. Displaced entirely to the right, the photograph shows a small fragment containing the letters אָלָה יָד, probably belonging to the word אָלָה in the second hemistich. If so, the fragment should be placed to the left on line 6:

39ab ראא התה קי אֲנִי ראי אֲנִי אֲלָה בֶּעָמִיד “See now that I am he; there is no god beside me.” The personal pronoun אֲנִי in 39a may have occurred only once, as suggested by the LXX. With its repetition the line counts 30 characters. This is probably too long. A comparison with line 8 of the manuscript should make this

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11 In as far as το στέπα is concerned, see, e.g.: Lev 6:5; 8:16,25. Compare the more mechanical translation in 2 Chr 7:7.

12 Compare Skehan 1954, 14 with Skehan 1957, 150 n. 1.

13 The LXX has an additional copula, which might suggest that its Vorlage read ויהי. The translator, however, appears to have inserted the copula rather frequently. In the immediate context see vs. 38b: καὶ ἐστινετε, see also 32:34, 41.

14 The LXX has an emphatic repetition of τοῦτο at the beginning of the sentence rendering יָּהַהוֹרְסֵב. The repeated pronoun תָּהַהוֹרְסֵב or יָּהַהוֹרְסֵב followed by the demonstrative pronoun הוֹרְסֵב is to be found also in Is 43:25; 51:12. The translator of Isaiah renders this with וְהֵא וְהֵא וְהֵא.
clear. The end of that line (39e40a) is visible close to the left hand margin although, as far as one can see, it has only 26 letters.

After 39ab the first fragment, pertaining to the upper half of the leaf, breaks off. A lacuna must be supposed between that fragment and the three remaining fragments containing parts of the bottom half. The lacuna leaves enough space for 39cd.

One of three narrow longitudinal fragments of the bottom half of the column is still connected with the next column. The second fragment belongs to the middle, and the third, newly found fragment, to the right side of the column. The first line on these fragments shows that cols 39e and 40a are combined on one line:

39e40a | וְאָשֶׁר מִיָּדִי מֵאַל שְׁמוֹ אֵל שֵׁיָּם יְזֵיר | "and there is none that can deliver out of my hand, for I lift my hand up to heaven."

On the following line, only the utmost right fragment shows letters, clearly belonging to the pronoun תִּשְׂמֶש. This suggests that the line must have begun with 40b. If so, that line seems to have contained none hemistich only, since the following hemistich, 41a opens the next line:

40b | וָמָרָה עִם אֲדֻמָּי |

41a | לְעֵלָם עַד שְׁמֵהוּ בְּרָם |

According to Skehan’s first publication, the strophic arrangement breaks down in 41a. The photographs with the newly found fragment show that this is not necessarily so. The 10th line of the manuscript appears to have contained 41a, and the 11th line 41bc. The scribe probably took the last word of 40b (לְעֵלָם) with 41a. If not, it is difficult to see how that hemistich, beginning with תִּשְׂמֶש as in MT, would have reached the right margin. Note the defective writing of שְׁמוֹ.

The Qumran Text and the Septuagint

In several instances the fragments found in Qumran reveal affinities with the Septuagint. As noted in the introduction, we do not intend to expand here on 32:43, nor do we wish to discuss the relation between LXX and the Qumran version of 32:8.\(^{15}\) We limit our observations to 32:37–41.

In verse 37, 4QDeut\(^4\) agrees with LXX, reading הָיְתָה as the subject of אִמָרָה. Skehan decided that in both 4QDeut\(^4\) and LXX this variant must be secondary. He refers to v. 36 without further comment. The textual tradition may seem to plead in his

\(^{15}\) According to Skehan a tiny fragment containing parts of Deut 32:8 reads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל where LXX has וְיָוָן theoos differing from MT’s בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
favor. It shows that there was some hesitation concerning the subject of the phrase. The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) has a plural form of the verb (נָאָד) suggesting that the enemies of Israel are the speakers. They belittle Israel’s God: “and they will say: ‘where are their gods,’” or, “where is their god.” The Targum Neophyti (TN) and the fragment targum make this subject explicit: “the nations will say ....”\(^\text{16}\) The Targum Onkelos (TO), on the other hand, follows the MT. The singular form of the verb remains ambiguous. It can be understood as an impersonal form, meaning: ‘one will say.’ It is possible that the Qumran text as well as the Greek translation intended to avoid this ambiguity and therefore explicitly mentioned the Lord as the subject of the phrase.

The verb forms in v. 38ab are interesting. Whereas the MT uses the 3rd person plural the Septuagint prefers the 2nd person plural. In the MT the Lord mockingly refers to the other gods who ate and drank the offerings brought to them. Allusion is made to vv. 17–18 where it is said that Israel sacrificed to strange gods and were unmindful of their own ‘Rock.’ The LXX seems to distinguish between the pagans and the Israelites. The former are spoken about as ‘they’ and ‘their’ gods, whereas the latter are addressed directly as ‘you.’ It seems to have been the intention of the translator to dissociate the Israelites from the pagans. Although the chosen people participated in the cult of the foreign gods, they did not invent it.\(^\text{17}\) It is not excluded that the same intention was already present in the Qumran text. The preserved fragments, however, do not give any information about this.

The affinities between the Qumran text and the Septuagint continue with the end of v. 39 and the beginning of v. 40. The LXX has a ‘plus’ in verse 40, making it a tricolon. This is unusual in a poem constituted of parallel bicola. The disturbance disappears if one takes the first hemistich with the foregoing verse. Both in MT and in LXX verse 39 has five hemistichs. The first four form perfect bicola. It has often been observed that the fifth hemistich breaks the parallelism of the verse. In the Septuagint the parallelism is restored if one takes the first hemistich of verse 40 with the last of verse 39:

\(^\text{16}\)In fact, TN has a pleonastic translation: “and he will say, those nations are to say...” See note 107 on p. 287 in I. Drazin, Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy (New York: Ktav, 1982).

\(^\text{17}\)See C. Dogniez & M. Harl, Le Deutéronome (La Bible d’Alexandrie 5; Paris: Cerf, 1992) 338. In the final sections of Deuteronomy the translator appears to have intervened more frequently than in the other chapters. He accentuated the love of the Lord for his people and attenuated its guilt; see Dogniez & Harl, Le Deutéronome, 37.
The lay-out of the Qumran text favors the same parallelism. Its 8th line clearly shows 39e followed by 40a. Of course, not too much weight should be given to this purely formal aspect. Nevertheless, it makes one wonder whether the lifting up of the hand to heaven has not been too easily interpreted as an oath gesture. When the hemistich in 40a is aligned as a parallel element with 39e it has nothing to do with an oath. It rather refers to God’s action: when he holds somebody in his hand and lifts it up to heaven, nobody can reach that far to deliver out of God’s hand. Note that the expression is exceptionally augmented with the complement לְשֵׁמִים: ‘to heaven.’ This motif stands very close to that expressed in Am 9:2 “Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them, though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down.” In so far as the verbs are concerned a more literal parallel can be found in Hos 5:14, where the Lord says, “I will lift up (or ‘carry off’), and none shall rescue (אָשָׁא אַזִּים בְּצֵל).” Both here and in Deut 32:39e–40a the verb נָשָׁה expresses a divine action and the verb בָּצֵל is used to make it clear that none will be able to undo that action.

The Qumran document does not, however, seem to have an equivalent for the ‘plus’ of the Septuagint in verse 40. The only letters preserved in the fragment show that it read אַנְכֶּם towards the beginning of the line following upon 39e–40a. This suggests that 40b followed immediately after 40a, without the ‘plus’ in the LXX:

39e–40a 8 אֵאָזְי מָדְרִי מִצִּי כִּי אָשָׁא אֲלָ שֶׁמִּים יָד
40b 9 אָמְרוּתָא וּמְאָכִי לְעָלָם

Theoretically, a retroversion of the ‘plus’ might agree with the Qumran scroll, if one assumes that the subject of the verb was made explicit in the Hebrew although it is not in the Greek: וּכְבָּטֵאת אֲכָלִי בְּרֵמיָה. The remaining space could then have been filled up with the text of 40a. This solution, however, forces the evidence. Normally, one or two characters should have been displayed on the middle fragment of the bottom half. None are visible. One might perhaps suggest that two words in 40a were separated by larger spaces than usual and compare this situation with line 4, where the presence of a similar long space is to be assumed. Without indicating the longer blank spaces the text could then be retroverted as follows:
In fact this is impossible. Even without additional spaces, the line with the ‘plus’ is longer than the preceding one. The last characters of the latter are preserved on the left fragment displaying the left margin. On the same fragment no letters of the supposedly longer line are visible. This leaves us with the conclusion that verse 40 in the Qumran fragments contained two hemistichs only, as in the MT. The first one (40a) is to be taken with v. 39e, and the second (40b) functions as an oath formula introducing the following vv. (41–43) which give the contents of the oath.

The Targums are divided in their interpretation of 40a. TO has a free translation that does not allow any reference to an oath: “For I have established in the heaven the house of my Shekinah.” Taken with the foregoing verse it explains why there is no one who can deliver from the Lord’s hand. TN and the Fragment Targum on the other hand add נבואותה (‘in an oath’), definitely interpreting the lifting up of the hand as an oath gesture. A similar gesture, explicitly referring to an oath (נשבותה) is to be found in Gen 14:22 and at the end of the Book of Daniel (12:7).

The Oath Gesture

In General

It is generally taken for granted that the raising of the hand is a very common gesture for an oath. In this context reference is often made to Deut 32:40 as well as to Gen 14:22 and Dan 12:7. On the other hand, it is also recognized that, when a oath gesture is described explicitly, it is completely different. When Abraham’s servant makes an oath he puts his hand under the thigh of his master: Gen 24:2–9. The same is true for Joseph when he promises to deal loyally with his father Jacob.

The interpretation of the sign of the raised hand as an oath gesture is visible in most biblical translations. The expression יְשַׁבֵּא which literally means: ‘to raise the hand,’ is frequently translated as ‘to swear.’ This happens exclusively when the Lord is the subject of the verb. The majority of the passages in question deals with delivery from oppression, or with the gift of the promised land: Exod 6:8; Ezek 20:5,6,15,23,28,43; Num 14:13; Ps 106:26. An example may illustrate this. In Ezek 20:6 the Jerusalem Bible has: “On that day I raised my hand over them and swore to

lead them ...;” the RSV and the NRSV are even more interpretative: “On that day I swore to them that I would lead them ...” Elsewhere we demonstrated that these and similar translations are probably wrong. The main reasons are as follows:

1. The pictures of the Ancient Near East hardly show any evidence in favor of the raised hand as a gesture of an oath. In as far as texts are concerned, the best parallel for the biblical דאשנ אל נוש (Dאשנ אל נוש) expressions are to be found on the stela of king Zakir of Hamath. The king is menaced by his enemies. He turns to his god in prayer. He describes his behavior and the divine reaction as follows: “And I raised my hands to (ל אל אשנ) Ba’alsamayin, and Ba’alsamayin answered.” This Aramaic text uses the expression דאשנ not in the context of an oath, but rather in that of a prayer.

2. If the biblical authors had intended to use the expression דאשנ in the description of the Lord’s swearing as a synonym for נוש, then one should expect to find the same locution in the context of human oaths. A brief investigation demonstrates that this is not the case. Men lift up their hands (דאשנ) to pray: Ps 28:2; 63:5; 134:2, or to bless: Lev 9:22. In two texts only it is said that men raise (דאשנ) ‘the’ or ‘a’ hand: Rebels raise their hand to attack David: 2 Sam 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kgs 11:26.27. Nowhere is it said that they lift up (דאשנ) their hand to swear.

3. In several cases the expression דאשנ with the Lord as subject, appears to refer to divine intervention. In this context Ps 10:12 is most significant. The Lord is urged to stand up and to ‘raise his hand’ in order to intervene in favor of the oppressed. Obviously in this context the raising of the hand has no connection with an oath. The prayer clearly asks for an active intervention. The Lord is asked to raise his hand to do something.

4. The Greek renderings in Ez 20:5,6 clearly indicate that the translator understood דאשנ as an expression indicating action: ἀνεταλβομένη γὰς χειρί μου αὐτῶν: “I helped them with my hand (to bring them out of the land of Egypt...).” In the Bible,

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19 See J. Lust, “Une parodie de l’histoire religieuse d’Israël,” ETL 43 (1967) 517–524; compare G. Bettenzoli, Der Geist der Heiligkeit (Quaderni di Semitistica 8; Firenze, 1979) 201.

20 KAI 202 A 11.

21 For Gen 14:22 and דאשנ see further.
the verb ἀντιλαμβάνομαι usually means ‘to help’ (for Ezekiel see 12:14; 16:49),
ever ‘to swear.’

5. The expression דָּעַשׁ is frequently used as an alternative for the verb יָשֵׁב
(‘to swear’). This does not mean, however, that both terms have exactly the same
meaning. The contrary is more plausible. It should be noted that the first is used in
priestly traditions, in contexts where Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomist portray
the Lord as taking an oath. The priestly traditions wished to avoid the mention of a
divine oath, because, according to their view, the Lord cannot be said to swear
taking the ‘gods’ as witnesses. They replaced the oath by a sign that indicated
action.

Exceptions?

In the cases mentioned above the expression דָּעַשׁ was most often followed by
the particle ב introducing the action: “I lift up my hand to them to (ָ) lead them ...”
(Ez 20:6). In three instances the subject of the verb seems to lift up his hand, not to
(ָ) do something, but rather towards (ָא) something or somebody, more specifically,
towards heaven: Deut 32:40; Dan 12:7, or, towards the Lord of heaven: Gen 14:22.
In this context we should recall the Stela of Zakir. He also lifts up his hand towards
(ָא) his god. The context is that of a prayer, not of an oath. Each of the three
biblical instances has a different subject: in Deuteronomy it is the Lord, in Daniel it
is an angel, and in Genesis it is a man, Abraham. Both in Gen 14:22 and in Dan 12:7
the ‘lifting up’ is rendered by the verb is תָּנָה and not by דָּעַשׁ.

In Dan 12:7 the angel raises both his right and his left hand and ‘swears’ (נָשַׁבַע) by
the living God. The phrasing is unusual. Does he lift both hands to add greater
solemnity to his oath?23 This interpretation is doubtful. The gesture of the two
raised hands usually indicates prayer. The angel probably prays to God and then
takes an oath.

Gen 14:22a is usually understood as follows: Abraham lifts up his hand (swearing)
to the Lord God Most High, maker of heaven and earth24 that he would not take
anything from the king of Sodom. The expression רָצוֹן יָד אֵל is understood as
describing an oath gesture. It may be worthwhile to observe that this is not the

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22 In most of the other instances the Greek is less relevant since it tends to translate
literally.

24 RSV and NRSV “But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn’ to ...”
only interpretation of the phrase. Targum Onkelos recognizes in it a gesture of prayer: “I lift up my hand in prayer (ברך).” Jewish tradition preserved another interesting interpretation, connecting the hiph’al of וקוני with the notion of הרומח. Abraham separated a ורומח (sacred gift) of the spoil for the Lord.25 When one accepts this option one may perhaps read דע as ‘my part’ and translate: “I separated my part as a gift to the Lord....”26

Dt 32:40a is different from the two other cases in its use of the expression נַשָּׁא דע, and not דע ורומח as in Gen 14:22 and Dan 12:7. It is usually taken together with 40b where one reads the oath formula יִגַּן דע וי ‘as I live.’ The question is whether these two expressions really belong together. Both are attested most frequently in Ezekiel.27 They are, however, never directly combined. When the Lord lifts up his hand, he never swears saying ‘As I live,’ and vice versa: when he swears ‘As I live’ he is never described as lifting up his hand. This supports our suggestion that in Deut 32:40 these two formulas should also be kept separate. The sign of the raised hand belongs to the foregoing verse: “There is none that can deliver from my hand, for I lift up my hand to heaven.”

Conclusions

We have presented here a tentative reconstruction of 4QDeut89 32:37–41a based on Skehan’s preliminary publication and on the photographs published on microfiches. Although the fragments in question are tiny and badly preserved, they seem to display some affinities with the Septuagint. The main points in common are the explicit mention of the Lord as the subject of the verb in v. 37, and the combination of vv. 39e with 40a. In v. 40a we found the gesture of the ‘raised hand’ disconnected from the oath in 40b. On the other hand, the ‘plus’ which in the Septuagint follows upon v. 40 does not seem to have a counterpart in the Qumran manuscript. Our observations about the similarities and differences between the Qumran text and the Septuagint are in agreement with earlier conclusions based on the better preserved part of the manuscript, 4QDeut90 32:41b–43. Due to the highly fragmentary character of the Qumran witnesses these conclusions have a hypothetical character.

25See e.g., Midrash Genesis Rabbah 43:9.
26For דע meaning ‘part’ see Jer 6:3; Gen 43:34; 2 Sam 19:44; 2 Kgs 11:17; Neh 11:1; Dan 1:20.