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## Nabataean in contact with Arabic: grammatical borrowing

M.F. AL-HAMAD

### Summary

This study aims to establish and clarify the influence of Arabic on Nabataean Aramaic in its linguistic context. Less attention is paid to the historical, political, and socio-economic settings of the various contact situations because of their variety. Too often this has been discussed purely in terms of lexica. Well-established in linguistics, lexica can never be decisive in such discussions because of the way that words can easily be borrowed from different languages. Morphology and syntax are far more important and arguably, syntax may tell us most about the linguistic substratum of the writers of the inscriptional material.

**Keywords:** Nabataean, Arabic, grammar, syntax, influence, borrowing

This study subscribes to the well-established conclusion that Nabataean is an Aramaic dialect, in particular Imperial Aramaic,<sup>1</sup> but that Arabic was the daily language of the Nabataeans (Jobling 1983: 38; Negev 1986: 60)<sup>2</sup> or had a clear influence on the Nabataean language itself.<sup>3</sup>

It is essential to refer to Arabic regularly: syntactical and grammatical findings are discussed and studied in the

light of this comparison and doing so reveals the degree of influence of Arabic on Nabataean (Cantineau 1930–1932: 171–172, 177–178; O'Connor 1986: 213–229; Healey 1993: 59–63).

### Domains and regions<sup>4</sup>

A detailed account of where Nabataean inscriptions have been found is not necessary, but it is important to draw attention to the size and diversity of the territories involved. These include four main Nabataean regions: Petra and its immediate area including the southern Dead Sea area; northern Hijaz; Sinai; and southern Syria. Each has a connection with the Nabataeans of Petra through the use of the Nabataean script as well as production thereof in a similar dialect. Notably, the Nabataean kings ruled a wide area and their subjects included people of varied ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Inscriptions taken from Petra, Khirbet et-Tannur, and Wadi Ramm establish the foundation for our understanding of Nabataean, the language of Petra. Unfortunately, Petra and the other central sites have provided limited epigraphic resources for the study of syntax. Relying on Petra provides only two or three substantial inscriptions,

<sup>1</sup> Healey states: 'From the linguistic point of view Nabataean falls into the category of Imperial Aramaic and is little different from Imperial Aramaic' (1993: 55).

<sup>2</sup> Cantineau went further in his analysis of the influence of Arabic on Nabataean, however, when he stated: 'Written by speakers of Arabic, [Nabataean] underwent an extremely strong Arabic influence; it borrowed from that language not only nearly all its proper names and a portion of its vocabulary, but further isolated grammatical forms. Nabataean seems to have emptied itself little by little [semble s'être vidé peu à peu] of the Aramaic elements it had and to have successively replaced them with Arabic loans; this went on up to the time (at the beginning of the fourth century C.E.) when it was decided to write nearly pure Arabic [l'arabe à peu près pur] while preserving Nabataean script.' (cited in O'Connor 1986: 214), although he stated that Cantineau's view should be reconsidered, O'Connor himself reflects this opinion when he talks about the Raqāsh Epitaph inscription: 'but it [Nabataean] absorbed Arabic words and forms... In the course of time, the Arabic elements in the language of the Nabataean inscriptions gradually increased (1986: 222).

<sup>3</sup> In 2000, Macdonald pointed out that the evidence available at that time for the spoken language of the Nabataeans was very slight (2000: 46–48; 73 nn. 134–138). In a more recent article, however, he has suggested that the occurrence of Arabic equivalents of Aramaic legal terms in documents from the Cave of Letters strongly suggests that Arabic was used in the oral legal process, even though the proceedings were recorded in Aramaic, a procedure paralleled in other cultures such as medieval England. He therefore agrees that it is probable that at least some of the inhabitants of the Nabataean realm used Arabic as their spoken language, even though they wrote in Aramaic. See Macdonald 2010: 19–22 for a detailed discussion of the implications of this.

<sup>4</sup> An extensive research by M. Macdonald to draw a linguistic map of North Arabia has provided a few answers in the relationship between the various languages interacted in that sphere in late antiquity. Macdonald tried to subcategorize the inscriptions into language varieties based on their linguistic features; the discussion can be followed in his publications (1998; 2000; 2003; 2004; 2010). See also Healey 2001: 9–12, 33–34; al-Hamad 2005: 35–44.

that is, no longer than six or seven lines of text. There are, of course, many shorter inscriptions, useful for the study of personal names, script-forms, and even religion, but not for higher-level linguistic issues.

Fortunately, the discovery of the Cave of Letters of Nabataean papyri in 1960 — published in 2002 — redeems this situation as it provides continuous and coherent Nabataean texts beyond anything Nöldeke and Cantineau could ever had access to. Originally from the southern end of the Dead Sea, they are quite sophisticated official legal documents. Dominated by legal jargon, which was not part of everyday speech, these texts have to be treated with caution. They were probably produced by scribes rather than by the persons conducting the transactions and as such, these scribes may be using a formal register of language. It is noteworthy that there is an unexpectedly heavy Arabic influence in these texts, especially in vocabulary, which suggests the intrusion of everyday speech.

The Hegra texts have a central role in the study of the Nabataean language;<sup>5</sup> their importance was justified and it remains so despite the publication of the papyri. There are two reasons for this: first, the approximately forty tomb inscriptions from Hegra are very well preserved and quite long (commonly ten or twelve lines); second, they are highly repetitive and formulaic. The advantage for this study is that there are reliable texts of clear meaning in which doubtful details can be clarified by referring to one of the other inscriptions.

There is fairly clear evidence of local colouring in the language of these inscriptions, which also requires caution. It is not clear that these texts are wholly representative of Nabataean, where Arabisms have been borrowed rather than considering these features as characteristics of Nabataean.

For long periods, southern Syria was under Nabataean control and there are many Nabataean Aramaic inscriptions covering the religious domain. In contrast, the influence of Arabic seems to extend well beyond the Hijaz and additionally, the assumption that Nabataeans in Petra wrote only in Aramaic while speaking a form of Arabic can be challenged.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Euting's resultant book, published in 1885, included a collection of inscriptions as well as the first grammatical and syntactical remarks in Nabataean, which were written by T. Nöldeke. Euting's copies of the main inscriptions were far superior to those of Doughty (1884) and, along with Nöldeke's comments, the book put the study of the Nabataean language and script on a new footing.

<sup>6</sup> Healey suggests that the Nabataeans spoke some sort of Arabic in their daily life, yet he believed that this assumption of influence should be played down in the absence of contemporary Arabic material (1993:

This hypothesis rests on the supposition that the region of Petra is not a traditional Aramaic-speaking area, whereas the Hauran is, and there is clearly more Arabic-type influence in Nabataean Aramaic than in any other form thereof. Additionally, there is some evidence of Arabic-type influence in the Palmyrene and early Syriac inscriptions, involving people who spoke Aramaic.

In Sinai, hundreds of Nabataean inscriptions and graffiti survive; they are mostly very short and unhelpful for syntax.

### Loanwords

The most prominent topic in the literature is the adoption and adaptation of loanwords, primarily from Arabic into Nabataean<sup>7</sup> but also, in a small number of articles, from other languages into Nabataean (Abu-Qiass 1993: 7–8). The common sub-topics concern the semantic domains of loanwords,<sup>8</sup> particular word classes that are borrowed, and the phonological and morphological nativization,<sup>9</sup> or lack thereof, of the loanwords. This study concentrates on structural interference.

### Structural interference

The grammatical and syntactical influence of Arabic on Nabataean is likely to have occurred within Arabophone areas (Cantineau 1930–1932: 177–178; Healey 1993: 59–63; Littmann 1914: xxiv–xxvii; O'Connor 1986: 213–229).

The major contribution to shed light on syntactical comments and remarks were followed by the enduring grammatical study by Cantineau in the first volume of his *Le Nabatéen* (1930–1932). This is still considered by researchers as the key reliable source on Nabataean language and grammar. All agree, however, that it is now

63). More recently, Macdonald has repeatedly emphasized that it is more likely that the scribes and writers of Nabataean would use their own language (2000: 47–48; 2003: 50).

<sup>7</sup> Abu Qiass's MA thesis (1993) was a good addition to O'Connor's contribution (1986), and gave researchers a better overview of the linguistic relations between Nabataean and the other Semitic languages.

<sup>8</sup> In his article about the military and state titles in the Nabataean writings, al-Hazeem enlists and discusses the loanwords that reflected the influence of various languages on Nabataean in this field. Al-Hazeem did not, however, refer any of those titles to an Arabic origin (1994).

<sup>9</sup> The present author presented the paper at the 2013 Seminar for Arabian Studies in two parts, the first of which was to list the grammatical borrowing from Arabic, while the second proposed further research into the emergence of Nabataean as a Creole.

seriously outdated. His study included just six pages (107–112) on the topic of syntax.<sup>10</sup>

Cantineau would probably have been delighted to acquire the Cave of Letters papyri, which demonstrate examples of Arabisms. There are other valuable contributions to the study of Nabataean syntax that came after Cantineau.<sup>11</sup> The first attempt to deal specifically with syntax was ‘Nabataean Syntax: with Special Reference to Other Aramaic Dialects and Arabic’ by the present author (2005). This Arabic interference has appeared in a few areas of the Nabataean language.

## Relatives

### Asyndetical relative clause

The asyndetical relative clause is a relative clause where no connecting particle is used.<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon appears in Nabataean (Milik 1976: *mqb[r'] dnh bn[h] 'bdmnkw...'*: This is the tomb (which) ‘bdmnkw built ...’),<sup>13</sup> and the relative clause in all examples is introduced by a verb in the perfect tense (e.g. H 34/3–4: *...dy kpr' dnh hwh l'bd'bdt 'bw[h] 'l' ktyb*: ...since this tomb had belonged to ‘bd’bdt, her father, (who is) mentioned above). The only exception is an example appearing in the papyri where it was introduced by a pronoun (*P.Yadin 2/20–21: [ywm]' hw zbn [rk]ls br... 'srtg' mny*: On that day when he purchased ‘rkl's son of... the commander, from me).

The asyndetical relative clause after a definite antecedent appears in Arabic (e.g. *falam tajid 'illā-'l-ihāba taraknahu bi-'l-marqadi*: And she (the gazelle) found nothing but the hide (which) they (the wild beasts) left (it) in the lair) (Cantarino 1975, iii: 148–154) and in Arabic dialects.<sup>14</sup> Some grammarians insist that such

<sup>10</sup> Under the title ‘Remarques sur la syntaxe’, and he introduces this chapter with: ‘Given the nature of the elements of the information that we have on Nabataean: many very brief graffiti, few continuous texts, and even these are short — it is nearly impossible to bring together all elements of an account of syntax. All we can do is to make remarks on syntax: fragmentary and provisional observations, which can be made more precise only by the discovery of new, more developed texts’ (1930–1932: 107).

<sup>11</sup> Since Cantineau, some comments on grammatical issues have been made in the process of commenting on particular inscriptions. Some of the works that include grammatical comments are O'Connor 1986; Healey 1993; 2002; Levinson 1974; al-Theeb 1993; 1998; 2001; and Yadin et al. 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Some grammarians describe this phenomenon as: ‘Headless Relative Clause’ or ‘Free Relative Clause’ (Andrews 1985: 39, 40).

<sup>13</sup> The asyndetical relative clause appears five more times in Nabataean texts (e.g. JSNab17, LPNab 11, LPNab 42, H 34/4, and *P.Yadin 2/20–21*).

<sup>14</sup> Healey states: ‘Brockelmann informs us that the omission occurs in Classical Arabic and is fairly common in Arabic dialects...’ (2002:

an omission is only permissible for poetic purposes (al-‘Anbārī 1962, ii: 721). Fischer claims: ‘when there is generic definiteness, the attributive clause is not always explicitly defined.’ (2002: 219). This argument may illustrate the problem in accepting the phenomenon of relative pronoun omission in Arabic. The rule of omission of the relative pronoun after an indefinite antecedent is, however, well known in Arabic (Buckley 2004: 650–654).

The omission of the relative pronoun appears once in Egyptian Aramaic texts (e.g. *'yš špyr mddh wlbhb tb kqr[y]h hsynh*: a man whose stature is beautiful and whose heart is good is like a strong city);<sup>15</sup> and once in Hatraean (e.g. Hat 20/1–2: *šlm 'd PN 'qym lnpš*: the statue of PN (which) he built for himself).<sup>16</sup> While for the rest of Aramaic dialects Healey states: ‘So far as the Aramaic dialects are concerned, it is harder to find evidence... and it is rare also in Biblical Aramaic’ (2002: 86).

### Relative pronouns

#### *mn*

*mn* appears as an indefinite relative pronoun, which is not common in Nabataean (e.g. JSNab17/6–8: *wl'n mry 'lm' mn yšn' 'lqbrw d*: And may the Lord of the World curse anyone who alters this tomb). This particular inscription contains elements of Arabisms.<sup>17</sup> Another inscription which has evidence of *mn* appearing as a separate relative pronoun is H 16/4, H 16/5, and H 16/6 (*mn yzbn kpr' dnh 'w mn yzbn ... 'w mn yqbr bh...*: Anyone who sells this tomb or who buys it... or who buries in it anyone...).

It is attested that *mn* introduced an indefinite relative without being coupled with *dy* in Nabataean JSNab17;<sup>18</sup> in his discussion of this phenomenon Healey states: ‘Nöldeke regarded this as *unaramäisch* and the result of Arabic influence’.<sup>19</sup> Nöldeke argues elsewhere, however,

87). Ibn Hišām says there must be some other marker in the sentence if the relative pronoun is to be omitted. The attested examples have two relative clauses, the first is introduced by a relative pronoun and the second without a pronoun (e.g. Qur'an 29. 46: *'āmannā billadhī 'unzila 'ilaynā wa 'unzila 'ilaykum*: we believed in what has been sent down to us and [what was] sent down to you). (Ibn Hišām 1992: 815–816).

<sup>15</sup> Muraoka and Porten added that it is rare and occurs only once in Egyptian Aramaic (1998: 171), while Healey says that ‘there are two [examples] of omission in Elephantine Aramaic’ (2002: 86).

<sup>16</sup> Ismā'īl 1998: 110 states that it could be omitted as an abbreviation.

<sup>17</sup> There are other features and loanwords that are borrowed from Arabic and appear in this inscription (Healey 1993: 155–162; 2002).

<sup>18</sup> This inscription is included in many other sources, including Jaussen & Savignac 1909: 172–176: no.17; Cantineau 1930–1932: 38–39; Winnett & Reed 1970: 91; al-Ansārī 1984: 32–33; Healey & Smith 1989; ‘Abābneh 1998: 111–113, 172–176; Healey 2002: 81–89.

<sup>19</sup> Healey also suggests: ‘there is evidence of omission of *dy* in the three cases of *mn* without *dy* introducing indefinite relatives in A: 7–9. This

that the omission of the Syriac *d* ‘occurs perhaps as a Hebraism, in the Old Testament as in *’job šmh* “whose name is Job” Job 1, 1. . . They are, besides, comparatively rare in Syriac’ (1904: 289).

### Resumptive pronoun

Resumptive pronouns appear in the first or second person and are sometimes introduced, echoing the relative pronoun (Greenbaum 1996: 189). They may appear as isolated or suffixed pronouns. In Semitic languages, it is often in the third person even when the antecedent is a pronoun of the first or second person (Wright 1896–1898, ii: 319). The resumptive pronoun appears in Syriac<sup>20</sup> and Arabic<sup>21</sup> in the first and second person, but both prefer it to be in the third person. The only evidence that the resumptive pronoun appears in Nabataean in the first or second person is found in the papyri (e.g. *P.Yadin* 2/10–11: *wdy ’š{p}{’} ’nh ’b{y}{’}{d}n d’zbnny’ ’lh {m}n kl ’nw{š} klh*: And (further) that I, this (same) ’by’dn, will clear these purchases from anyone at all).

The resumptive pronoun can, however, be omitted if it is not a core component of the clause. The resumptive pronoun for the accusative (i.e. object) is more likely to be omitted because it will not affect the meaning of the sentence.<sup>22</sup>

### A resumptive pronoun after an indefinite relative

Neither Nabataean nor Aramaic has a resumptive pronoun added to a verb referring to an antecedent that has preceded an indefinite relative pronoun, as in (JSNab 17/8: *wmn ypthh* . . . : And whoever opens it); where *h* in *ypthh* refers to *’lqbrw* that preceded *mn*.

Another example which is introduced by *mh dy*, as in (Hammond, Johnson & Jones 1986, i: *mh dy y’ty lh* . . . whatever comes to him). As appears from the example, there is no antecedent included; the inscription begins

omission is not unknown in “classical Nabataean”.’ (2002: 87).

<sup>20</sup> A pronoun in the first person: *’n’ hīb d b’yt ’nny*: I am the beloved whom you were looking for (me); and when it is in the second person: *’nt hw d’wd’tn*: You are who (you) told us. (Rushdī 1972: 112–120).

<sup>21</sup> Arabic is more restricted in this than Syriac, but the resumptive pronoun is brought into agreement with the antecedent, as in: *’anā alladhī sammātī ’ummī haydarah*: I am he whom (my) mother named Haydarah (Wright 1896–1898: 2/ 324). Arab grammarians reject this case of agreement; they suggest the embedded pronoun in the relative pronoun is not referring to the subject *’anā* but to an omitted noun (i.e. the man) (al-Dīkī 1997: 99).

<sup>22</sup> Rushdī suggested three conditions for the deletion of a resumptive pronoun: firstly, if it is not in the accusative case; secondly, if it is a suffix pronoun; and thirdly, if it is to be contextually understood (1972: 117–119).

immediately with the indefinite relative pronoun *mh*. Hammond, Johnson and Jones suggested a missing antecedent, claiming: ‘*LH* presumably a broad sense — “to anyone,” “to a person,” the subject otherwise defined in the missing portions of the inscriptions’ (1986: 78).

## Conditionals

### The conditional particle *hn’*

In the present author’s opinion, *hn’* has gone through an Aramaic modelling of Arabic *’annā* (Sterling 1904: 64–67) meaning ‘whenever’ and ‘wherever’, therefore the Obadas inscription<sup>23</sup> will be translated as follows: (Negev 1986/4–5: *pkn hn’yb’n’ ’lmwtw*→*l’ ’b’h*; *pkn hn’ ’rd grhw*→*l’ yrdn*’: and whenever/wherever death claims us→ let me not be claimed; and whenever/wherever affliction seeks→ let it not seek us).

*hn’* appeared only twice in the Nabataean corpus; both examples occur in the same text which is heavily influenced by Arabic in its syntax and lexicon. The conditional sentences here might be perceived, however, as code switching from Nabataean into Arabic.

### The conditional conjunctions

#### *p*

*p* is a conjunction used to introduce the main clause (i.e. apodosis) after a preceding hypotactic clause (i.e. protasis). Brockelmann regarded it as ‘a definite Arabism’ (Healey 1993: 76). The Nabataean *p* is common in the inscriptions, but it does not appear in papyri.

In the early Nabataean texts it only introduced nominal apodosis, yet in the later texts verbal apodosis appeared with the conjunction *p*.

It has been suggested that *p* was used to introduce the apodosis rather than the *w*, as *p* indicates the succession of time, and the reliance of the apodosis on the protasis (Ḥammūdāh 1985: 151). The Arabic cognate is *fā*, which is common under some specific circumstances (Fischer 2002: 228; al-Ḥamad & al-Zo’bi 1993: 218–219).

<sup>23</sup> Although the conditional sentences appearing in Obadas could easily be classified as Arabic, the inscription itself is Nabataean and therefore was included in this study, assuming that these conditional sentences could be considered an example of code switching in a Nabataean inscription or Arabic sentences in a Mixed Language inscription. Furthermore, *hn’* does not appear in Arabic, and it collates with the Nabataean conditional *hn*, whereas the Arabic equivalents for both of these conditionals are *’annā* and *’in* respectively.

Sībawayh sees that the apodosis must contain a verb or be introduced by *fa* (Shamsān 1981: 277).

The conjunction *p* in Nabataean precedes nominal apodoses, and is always followed by the existence particle 'yty, although a negative particle could separate them (see H 3/6 above). Therefore, the apodosis nominal sentence does not appear in the Nabataean texts without the conjunction *p*, except in the papyri.<sup>24</sup>

In a late inscription, Nabataean introduces a verbal apodosis with the conjunction *p*.<sup>25</sup> Hammond, Johnson and Jones, however, describe the influence in this inscription by stating: 'The phraseology employed would also suggest that a system had been borrowed from neighboring cultures for the legal process.... Other phraseology seems more Nabataean' (1986: 79).

Syriac, uncommonly, uses 'p as one of the conjunctions to introduce the apodosis, but 'ap does not have a specific pattern or introduce certain types of the apodosis.<sup>26</sup> Comparatively, the other Aramaic dialects do not use *p* or any close cognate.<sup>27</sup>

## dy

The conjunction *dy* is a common Nabataean conjunction particle and pronoun. It appears six times in the Nabataean texts (e.g. *P.Yadin* 1/39–40: *whn yhšh 'l pr'wnh lq{b}{l} h→ dy {y}{p}{r}' tlt šl'wn'*: And if its payment is required in advance→ repayment shall be made (in the amount of) one-third of the asset; H 34/10–11: *wmn y'bd k'yr dy 'l'→ dy 'yty 'lwhy hty'h hty'h*....: And whoever does other than what is above→ will be liable to a fine....)<sup>28</sup> This usage of *dy* does not appear in the other Aramaic dialects, except Syriac where it appears occasionally.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Arabic

uses the possible cognate of *dy*, 'idhā 'al-fujā'iyah, which behaves in the same way as the Nabataean *dy*, as it mainly introduces the verbal apodosis.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that this conjunction is closer to Arabic in usage and role than the other Aramaic dialects, since most seem to avoid using conjunctions.

## The conditional patterns: protasis (perfect) → apodosis (imperfect)

This pattern represents another level of the conditional sentence that contains a perfect tense verb in its protasis. This involves the backshift of the tense (e.g. a formal perfect tense with present time reference) (Comrie 1986: 77–99 cited in Traugott et al. 1986). The apodosis appears as a verbal sentence using an imperfect tense verb. The examples of this pattern in Nabataean begin the protasis with a conditional particle and may use a conjunction to introduce the apodosis.

This pattern appears only twice in Nabataean (Hammond, Johnson & Jones 1986/3: *'lwhy dy 'bd k'yr dy 'l' ktyb→ p'ypr' mh dy yštkh*: Concerning the one who did other than all of that which is written above→ then shall he repay that which was discovered, and Negev 1986/5: *pkn hn' 'rd grhw→ l'yrdn'*), but neither example represents the general grammatical or syntactical rules of Nabataean.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, this pattern is not common in other Aramaic dialects,<sup>32</sup> including Syriac.<sup>33</sup> There are some Aramaic dialects that do not use this pattern at all in the known texts.<sup>34</sup> Examples from the Qur'ān show that Arabic begins with a perfect tense protasis and concludes by using an imperfect tense apodosis.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The nominal sentence apodosis appears twice without been preceded by the conjunction *p* as in *P.Yadin* 1/43–44, 51–52.

<sup>25</sup> The only example where *p* precedes a verb is in Hammond, Johnson & Jones 1986/3, which was described there as follows: '... but [it] also introduces new nuances to previously known ones in a highly sophisticated way.' (1986: 78).

<sup>26</sup> 'p in Syriac introduces all verb tenses and nominal sentences representing the apodosis, as in the following examples: 1. apodosis as an imperfect verb: Luke 12: 8: *dki dnwd' by qdm bnyšā→ 'p brh d'nš' nwd'*....: everyone who acknowledges me before men→ the son of man will acknowledge....; 2. apodosis as a nominal sentence.; Matthew 6: 22: *'n dyn l' tšpqwn...→ 'pl' 'bwkwn šbq lkwn*: If your eyes are sound→ the whole body shall be full of light; and 3. apodosis as an perfect verb.; John 14: 7: *'lw ly ydynn hwthwn→ 'p l' by ydynn hwthwn*: If you knew me→ you would know my father too.

<sup>27</sup> 'p- is peculiar from an Aramaic point of view. It is connected ultimately with the Ugaritic *p*-... the Hebrew 'p, the Syriac 'p, but most closely with the Arabic *fa*....It appears doubtfully also in Palmyrene.' (Healey 1993: 76).

<sup>28</sup> See also H4/6; 9/6; 26/4; 31/3.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 18: 15: *'n dyn 'skl bk 'hwk→ dl' 'ksyhy bynyk wlh blhw'd*: If your brother commits a sin→ go and take the matter up with him.

<sup>30</sup> In spite of the suggestion that 'idhā 'al-fujā'iyah is mainly used to introduce a nominal sentence word order, it rarely acts in a different way, but by checking the Quranic examples of its occurrence, it has been found that most of these nominal sentences contain verbs which are late in the sentence order.

<sup>31</sup> It has been suggested in Hammond, Johnson and Jones's (1986) study of the inscription that: 'The phraseology employed would also suggest that a system had been borrowed from neighboring cultures for the legal process involved ... Other phraseology seems Nabataean (e.g. line 3)' and they continue to say 'The use of certain words and phrases ... not only introduces new words and verbal forms to the Nabataean lexicon, but also introduces new nuances to previously known ones in a highly sophisticated way' (1986: 79). While Negev describes the second example by stating: 'These two lines [referring to lines 4–5] are in Arabic....' (1986: 58).

<sup>32</sup> This pattern appears twice in Old Aramaic, and it also appears in Egyptian Aramaic (Muraoka & Porten 1998: 324).

<sup>33</sup> This pattern appears in Biblical Syriac only nine times.

<sup>34</sup> This pattern does not appear in Palmyrene, Hatrean, and Official Aramaic inscriptions.

<sup>35</sup> Out of the 106 times where this pattern is used, Quranic Arabic uses this pattern eighteen times with 'idhā independently (Masdī & Tarābulstīn [n.d.]: 73, 120).

### Disagreement of verb in number to its following subject

This phenomenon appeared in H 19/8–9: *wyl'n dwšr' wmnwtw kl mn dy y'yr mn kl dy 'l'*: And may Dwšr' and Mnwtw curse (inflected in singular) anyone who alters anything of what is above);<sup>36</sup> an almost identical example in H 8/5–6: the verb *l'n*, however, was followed by a plural pronoun to introduce the plural subject (*wl'nw dwšr' wmnwtw... kl mn dy...*).

From Hauran, this phenomenon appeared in a recently discovered inscription (Said & al-Hamad 2002/1–2: *dy 'bd tħn' wmnwħ bnwh*: which Tħn' and Mnwħ his sons made (inflected in singular). It also appeared in LPNab2.

Nabataean tends to show agreement of verb in number to its following subject, however, except on certain occasions where Arabic influence is expected.

### The definite article 'l-

It is obvious that the appearance of 'l- in Nabataean (e.g. LPNab 24/6: *'l'tr*; JSNab 17/4, 7: *'lħgrw*, *'lqbrw*)<sup>37</sup> is not a mere phonological part of the noun in Nabataean as

<sup>36</sup> For more examples see H 11/6 and H 16/3.

<sup>37</sup> The definite article 'l- is attested a few times with nouns. It also commonly appears when introducing personal and deity names, but this could be considered as a loanword rather than a syntactical influence.

the borrowing language, but the author of the inscription is pointing to a productive use of the Arabic article as a separate morpho-syntactic element in Nabataean; moreover, originally, a borrowing from Arabic consisting of an incorporated Arabic article 'l- plus a nominal stem, is a single Nabataean morpheme.

Finally, the long-established view, first represented by Nöldeke (1885: 78–79), that Nabataean Aramaic displays Arabic-type influences is thus confirmed. While these Arabic-type influences are most obvious in vocabulary, and these lexical intrusions can be detected all over Nabataea, far more linguistically significant are the syntactical influences. These influences, confirmed by this article, give strength to the view that Nabataeans actually spoke some form of Arabic on an everyday basis.

Note: [ ] indicates missing letters; { } indicates uncertain readings of letters.

### Sigla

H	Nabataean inscriptions in Healey 1993.
Hat	Hatran inscriptions, see for instance Beyer 1998.
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909.
LPNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Littmann 1914.
<i>P.Yadin</i>	Nabataean papyri in Yadin et al. 2002.

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