"THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY GLORY"

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The verse שֵׁיָּמֶה יִרְאֶה יִדְוָה appears for the first time in the Song of Moses (Ex. xv 2), a psalm of thanksgiving. It reappears verbatim in Ps. cxviii 14, a psalm of the same literary genre and again in Is. xii 2, a chapter recognized for its hymn-like quality, with the secondary addition of the Tetragram after בְּיוֹן). Therefore the formula seems to be a standard feature of hymn writing which has been in existence from very early times since the fossilized pair of words שֵׁי יִדְוָה has been preserved in this set context only.

The interpretation of this expression is known to present difficulties. Prima facie שֵׁי means 'my strength', יִדְוָה 'song' (not my song!), the suffix of the first person found in יִדְוָה being conspicuously absent in יִדְוָה. Moreover the ideas of strength and song seem to be utterly disparate: they are neither synonymous nor even congeneric.

To a certain extent the solution of this second problem depends upon the solution of the first. Scholars emending יִדְוָה to read יִדְוָה maintain the traditional rendering of שֵׁי as 'my strength' and its derivation from the well-known root יָדָע, 'to be strong'. On the other hand those who would retain the suffixless form יִדְוָה, deny that the יָדָע in שֵׁי is suffixed personal pronoun, and consequently explain this יָדָע, as the third radical of a supposed Hebrew root יִדְוָה, relating שֵׁי to Arabic גָּזְרִין 'warrior', גָּזָר 'go forth to war' or to Arabic 'אָזָר 'patience, consolation' 4)

A higher degree of unanimity has been reached in the interpretation of the root of the noun יִדְוָה. The opinion clearly prevailing to-day

1) The tetragram may have been here a varia lectio of the less usual divine name בְּיוֹן. MT is probably a conflation of both readings.
is that Hebrew תורה represents two different proto-Semitic roots, viz.
proto-Semitic כמר 'to sing, to play upon an instrument' and כמר, various-
ly explained as 'strength' \(^1\) or 'protection' \(^2\) both interpretations re-
sorting to different meanings of the Arabic root כמר. It is further
claimed that proto-Semitic כמר, 'protection' is attested in South-Arabian,
Amorite and Hebrew personal proper names \(^3\). The choice is then
between the following interpretations.
1) My strength and my might.
2) My strength and my protection.
3) Warrior and protection.
4) Consolation and protection.

The basic assumption here is that in Hebrew תורה we are to dis-
tinguish between two proto-Semitic stems, viz. כמר and כמר. For
proto-Semitic כמר 'to sing, to play upon an instrument' BAUMGARTNER\(^4\)
adduces Ugaritic כמר. There is an Ugaritic word but its inter-
pretation is entirely obscure and GORDON \(^5\) quite correctly leaves it
untranslated. Furthermore BAUMGARTNER quotes Arabic כמר and
BARR \(^6\) stresses that "Arabic words cognate with 'make music' have
the first consonant /z/ not /d/". This evidence for proto-Semitic כ in
however overlooks SCHWALLY'S \(^7\) argument that Arabic כמר
'to play the flute' is a loanword from Syriac, where כמר is attested in
this special sense in addition to its general meaning known from
Hebrew. Therefore Syriac כמר (not כמר!) remains as the only indication
for proto-Semitic כמר. But even this should not be considered as a
conclusive evidence because the Syriac verb כמר might in turn have
been borrowed from Hebrew or Canaanite like the Syriac noun
מגמר.

It can now be convincingly shown that this is in fact the case: in an
Ugaritic hymn in praise of El we read: דקמר ודייר bknr zvtlb btp
wmsltm \(^8\) 'who sings and plays upon harp and... upon timbal and
cymbals.' This text admits a thoroughly verbal rendering into the
language of the Hebrew psalms, which would read:

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\(^1\) Cross-Freedman, loc. cit.; W. Baumgartner, Hebräisches und Aramäisches
Lexikon, Leiden 1967 s.v. II תורה.
\(^2\) Gaster, loc. cit.; Winton Thomas, loc. cit.; Barr, op. laud., p. 29.
\(^3\) G. Ryckmans, Les noms propres sud-sémitiques I, Louvain 1934, pp. 70, 85,
222, 260; D. Diringer, Le Iscrizioni Anticho-Ebraiche, Firenze 1934, pp. 43, 211 f;
H. B. Huffman, Amorite Personal Names, Baltimore 1965, pp. 187-8; Barr,
op. laud., p. 182.
\(^4\) Baumgartner, op. laud., s.v. I תורה.
\(^6\) Barr, op. laud., p. 29.
\(^7\) F. Schwally, ZDMG, LII 1898, pp. 133-4.
\(^8\) RS 24, 252 R° 11. 3-4, Ugaritica V, Paris 1968, p. 552.

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