

CANAANITE *ḥapši* AND HEBREW *ḥofši* AGAIN

The writer's note on "Canaanite *ḥofši*, 'free,' in the Amarna Tablets" (JPOS IV, 169f.) has elicited two interesting communications, one from V. Christian in OLZ XXVIII, 419f., and the other from J. Pedersen, in this number of our *Journal*. Christian accepts the reading of ZAG as *emūqu*, "power," but dissents from the explanation of the gloss *ḥapši* as Heb. *ḥofši*. He would connect it with the stem *ḥpš* (*š* = Ar. *š*, Heb. *š*, Aram. *s*), which appears in Arabic *ḥfš*, "flow, gather," but confuses this stem with *ḥfš*, "peel," and suggests the meaning "be strong," or the like, as the basic sense of the verb. As a result, he combines with it Hebrew *ḥpš*, "search, examine," and also Assy. *epšū* "make, do," hitherto connected with the common Semitic stem found in Arabic *ḥsb*, Heb. *ḥšb*, "reckon." But *ḥfš*, "to gather," is simply partial assimilation (*bš* becoming *pš* > *fš*) of *ḥbš*, "to gather," a very common and well-known stem. Words for "flow, pour" often mean "gather" in Semitic. On the other hand, the meaning "peel" is fundamental in the stem *ḥfš-ḥpš*, both in Arabic and in Hebrew, where *ḥippes* means properly "peel away the covering of something, investigate it;" the development is common. Arabic *ḥašif*, "worn garment," is derived from a transposed doublet of *ḥfš*, meaning "peel off, wear away;" precisely the same natural development is found in *ḥifš*, "used, worn thing." Yemenite *šḥf*, "peel," is another transposed doublet, already combined with Heb. *ḥšf*, "peel," by Fraenkel, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, vol. III, p. 69. There is thus no warrant for assuming a Semitic stem *ḥpš*, "be strong," from which *ḥapši* might be derived.

In the second paper referred to, Pedersen has called our attention very correctly to the word *ḥubšu*, used frequently in the letters of Rib-addi of Byblos. The word is also found in the Late Assyrian texts in the sense of "serfdom, corvée;" *šab ḥubši* means "serf, person subject to a corvée," as shown clearly by Thureau-Dangin, *Huitième campagne de Sargon*, p. 7, n. 10. In view of this use it is evident that the word *awil ḥubši*, plural *awilūt ḥubši*, of the Amarna Tablets has a similar meaning, since all the passages refer to the *awilūt ḥubši* as subjects of the king. It is hardly likely that there were any freeholders, properly speaking, among the Canaanites, who were composed of an aristocracy and a plebs which must have been

practically bound to the soil. It was reserved for the incoming Hebrews to create a nation of yeomen.

There is no difficulty about the etymology of *ḥubšu*, which is clearly derived from the verb *ḥabāšu*, *ḥubbušu*, "to bind," corresponds to Arabic *ḥābasa*, "to seize, capture," Aram. *ḥebās* with the same meaning as the Arabic, and Heb. *ḥabās*, "bind." The Arabic equivalent has generally been regarded as *ḥābasa*, "to imprison," but this word is certainly a loan from Aramaic *ḥebās*, "imprison," just mentioned. The word *ḥubšu* is an abstract, meaning primarily "bondage," or the like. There is, however, no reason to doubt that the *awil ḥubši* of Rib-Addi was on a higher level of independence than the Assyrian *šab ḥubši*, who appears to have been a true serf. Pedersen is probably right in combining *ḥubšu* and Hebrew *ḥofši*, since the vocalization is the same and the *p* (*f*) for *b* is merely a case of partial assimilation, like Heb. *ḥfk* for Assy. *ḥk*, Assy. *dišpu* for Heb. *debaš*. The nisbeh *ḥofši* would then be exactly parallel to *awil ḥubši* and *šab ḥubši*, though with a decidedly meliorative meaning, just as "knight" is much nobler than "Knecht" which also originally meant "youth." I would suggest that *ḥofši* meant primarily "serf or peon, attached to the land," then "peasant landholder" and "freeholder," as distinct from "serf" and "slave." The time at which this alteration of meaning took place is not easy to establish, but it was very possibly at the Hebrew conquest, when the Hebrews may have adopted the word for "peasant" from the Canaanites, and given it a wholly new connotation, in keeping with the complete transformation in social conditions. In the nineteenth century the word "manufacture" made just such an evolution to adapt it to entirely changed industrial conditions.

The preceding remarks do not assist us with regard to the enigmatic Canaanite *ḥap(b)ši* which was the cause of the whole discussion. The *ā* instead of *ō* could be explained on the analogy of the frequent correspondence of old Hebrew *ā* to Masoretic *ō* (e. g., the town-name *Sarḥa* = *Capaa* = *Sor'ah* = modern *Sar'ah*), if it were really equivalent to *ḥofši*, but this suggested combination has now become more than doubtful. If we could render *ḥapši* by "subjection," the etymological side would be satisfied, but the nature of the gloss would become more puzzling than ever. It may be, after all, that Ebeling was essentially right in combining *ḥapši* with Egyptian

*hāpeš*. His mistake was then in taking the meaning "arm" instead of the meaning "*hāpeš* (sword of the king)," a word very commonly used in Egyptian panegyrics of the Pharaoh, and familiar to archaeologists as the name of the Egyptian harpé (*khopesh*). *Emūqu* would then be such a vague equivalent that Abī-milki found it necessary to resort to Egyptian in order to make his stale metaphor thoroughly intelligible.

W. F. ALBRIGHT

*THE CHOOSING OF GIDEON'S 300. Judges 7 5,6*

The very interesting article in the last Journal on the number of Gideon's final army, set up another train of thought, regarding the tests by which those not wanted were eliminated. Gideon's army originally consisted of 32000 men, but when those who were fainthearted were told to go home, there remained only 10.000. These again God said were too many, and the men were taken down to drink at the Well of Harod, the modern Ain Jalud, where the water issues from the hillside in a clear cool stream. The men to the number of 300 who scooped up the water with their hands were chosen, while the others who knelt down and dipped their faces in, were sent home.

As a child the present writer always thought this such an arbitrary and apparently meaningless distinction, that it seemed there must be some good reason for this method of selection. The usual interpretation that those who scooped up the water in their hands were more alert against a possible surprise attack by the enemy, than those who got down to it on their knees, always seemed a somewhat unsatisfying explanation.

Last spring the writer visited the spring Ain Jalud and believes he has got the true explanation. The water is absolutely swarming with leeches, three or four on every pebble, and those who know anything of these creatures will realize the trouble they would be to the body, to say nothing of the intense suffering they would cause inside the nostril or mouth, which latter is what every man would be in danger of, who put his face down into the water to drink. The

men who scooped up the water in their hands would be immune from this danger.

To put it in another way: Gideon's final 300 were men used to a country life, or as an Australian would term it, a bush life, and consequently would be vastly more fitted for Gideon's surprise night attack than the remainder who knew not the danger, and were probably townspeople, who were used to having their water brought to them in a goolah.

The writer suggests this as an adequate explanation of the curious method of eliminating the unwanted.

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*NOTE ON 1 KINGS 18 27 AND 2 KINGS 18 27*

J. STEINBERG (Russian-Hebrew Dictionary, Wilna, 1896) gives as translations of "isprajnenie" (evacuation) *נָצְאָה*, *חָרָא* and *שִׁיג*, supporting this last by reference to 1 and 2 Kings 18 27. The first of these passages runs: And Elijah mocked them and said: Call him louder for he is a god, *כִּי שִׂיחַ לוֹ וְכִי דִרְךָ לוֹ*. The second passage is: But Rabshakeh said unto them . . . hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall *וְלִשְׂתוֹת שִׂינִיָּהֶם* and *לֹאכַל אֶת חֲרָא* Steinberg thus regards *חָרָא* of 2 Kings 18 27 as synonymous with *שִׁיג* of 1 Kings 18 27. What, then, is the significance of the presumably logically related *שִׂיחַ*? It may be presumed that if *שִׁיג* of 1 Kings corresponds with *חֲרִיָּהֶם* of 2 Kings, then *שִׂיחַ* of 1 Kings corresponds with *שִׂינִיָּהֶם* of 2 Kings, and that the Hebrew *שִׂיחַ* is to be explained by the Arabic root *شح* (to make water). This interpretation considerably heightens the contempt implied in Elijah's mockery. That the Jewish commentator Rashi partially perceived this grosser nuance of Elijah's mockery is apparent from his supplementing *לֹאכַל אֶת חֲרָא* with the words *לְבֵית כַּמָּא*, in spite of the fact that his interpretations of *שִׂיחַ* and *שִׂינִיָּהֶם* are not in harmony with his interpretation of *דִרְךָ*; he apparently was following some legend or tradition at which he merely hints.

In support of the nuance given to *שִׂיג*, cf. Ps. 93 4 *כָּל־סֶגֶר יְהוָה נִאֲלָהוּ* and the parallel *הַכֵּל סֶגֶר יְהוָה נִאֲלָהוּ*.

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