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WAS AMOS A SHEEPMAN?

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At the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Philadelphia on December 31, 1907 I presented a paper (see JBL 27, iv)¹ in which I showed that the term *bólés* in the biographical ballad describing Amos' encounter with the priest Amaziah of Bethel (Am. 10:10-17) was not denominative, derived from *bálas*, fig, which we find in Ethiopic, but the participle of the verb *balás*, to pierce, which appears in Assyrian as *palášu* (Syr. *pělás*). My explanation was recorded in GB¹⁵, xiii, ad 100^b, but it is not mentioned in GB¹⁶.

We need not regard *bólés* as an Assyrian loanword (with *s* for Assy. *š*; cf. OLZ 17, 421; ZDMG 65, 561, 17). It may be merely an inaccurate spelling, just as *bôsěkém*, your tramping, is written in Am. 5:11 both with *š* and *s*. Similarly we find in Am. 6:11 *rěšišim*, fragments, instead of *rěšišim*, from the same stem from which *Taršiš*, spalling-floor (for the dressing of ores) is derived (BL 59). For the *b* in Heb. *bólés* instead of the *p* in Assy. *palášu* we may compare Heb. *barzél*, iron, Assy. *parzillu*; Heb. *biq'á*, valley, Syr. *pěqá'tá*. In Nah. 2:4 we find *běrōšim*, cypresses, instead of *párašim*, horsemen (Nah. 40). Similarly we read in 2 K 8:19 *lě-šanánu*, for his sons, instead of *lě-funánu*, before him (JBL 33, 166). On the other hand, we have in Est. 1:6 *karpás*, white lawn, for Aram. *karbás* (Est. 9) and Heb. *palát*, to escape, is the Assy. *balātu*, to survive, recover, live. Aram. *hás pá*, clay, corresponds to the Assy. *xaçbu*, earthen vessel. These changes are due to partial assimilation (GB¹⁶ 79^a, above).

Also in the OT this stem *palášu*, to pierce, break through, is written with *p* in Pss. 58:3; 78:50; it means there *to make way, open a path*. The original spelling with *p* and *š* is preserved in the name of the Philistines, *Pělištim*, which means *invaders* (WF 200). For *hitpallěš* see JBL 29, 98, n. 13; Mic. 77.

¹ For the abbreviations see vol. 34 of this JOURNAL, p. 41.

Balas, sycamore-fig, is not a non-Semitic word (Lagarde, *Mitteilungen* 1, 68) but an intransitive nominal derivative from the stem *palāšu*, to pierce, just as Arab. *xátan*, son-in-law, is an intransitive nominal derivative from the stem *xátana*, to circumcise (ZDMG 63, 515, 9; *Mic.* 53, n. †). Heb. *haṭán*, bridegroom, means originally *circumcised*, and *hōtén*, father-in-law: *circumciser*. Among the Hebrews young men were originally circumcised by their father-in-law prior to their marriage (AJSJL 22, 252, n. 10). The primary meaning of *balas*, sycamore-fig, is *pierced*, *punctured*. To induce earlier ripening, and to improve the flavor, the apex of the fruit of the sycamore-fig is removed, or an incision made in it (EB¹¹ 10, 333^b; EB 4832; RE³ 6, 304, 42). Dr. Post states (DB 4, 635^a) that this puncturing of the sycamore-figs (*scalpendo ferreis unguibus*, Pliny 13, 57) is no longer done in Palestine, but, according to RB 979^b, below, it is still practiced by the gardeners of Cairo.

This puncturing of the sycamore-figs must not be confounded with the so-called *caprification*, which denotes the suspending in the cultivated fig-trees of branches (Talmud. *gamzūjōt*) of the caprifig, *i. e.* the uncultivated male form of the common fig (Hehn⁶ 99). Nor does Talmud. *gamzūz* denote a sycamore-fig, but a *caprifig* (*ἐπινασρός*) although Syr. *gummizā* and Arab. *jummāz* signify *sycamore-fig*. Lagarde's explanation of *bólés* as *caprifig* (see his *Nomina*, p. 108) is unwarranted. In the notes on the translation of *Ezekiel* in the Polychrome Bible (p. 182) I have pointed out that an Assyrian sculpture from the Northwest Palace of Nimrūd represents the caprification of figs.² Herodotus (1, 193) confuses the caprification (*ἐπινασμός*) of fig-trees with the artificial fecundation of the female date-palm (Arab. *ḡallaqa*, *lūqqaḡa*, *úbara*; Greek *ὄλωνθάζεν*). The Assyrian term is *rukkubu* (MVAG 18, 2, p. 40) = Talmud. *hirkīb* (*e. g.* at the end of *Pes.* 55^b) which does not mean *to graft* (BT 2, 520). *Cf.* Arab. *rākūb* and Syr. *רַכְכְּתָא*, fecundation, Greek *ἐπιβήτωρ* (BL 72, n. †). This cross-fertilization of date-trees is also referred to in *Pes.* 56^a: רַב אֶחָא בְרִיהּ דְרַבְנָא

² *Cf.* Duncan S. Johnson's address *The History of the Discovery of Sexuality of Plant* in the Smithsonian Report for 1914 (Washington, 1915) p. 384 (reprinted from *Science*, Feb. 27, 1914).

אמר מִנְחֵי כּוֹפְרָא דִּיכְרָא לְנוֹקְבַתָּא. *they apply³ the male palm-inflorescence⁴ to the female flower* (JBL 32, 116, n. 38). According to the Talmud (*l. c.*) this is one of the six things which the men of Jericho practiced (שֵׁשׁ דְּבָרִים עָשׂוּ אַנְשֵׁי יְרִיחוֹ).

Amos calls himself a *bôqér u-hôlés šiqmîm*. The last term means *piercer of sycamore-figs*. The Hebrew name of the sycamore trees, *šiqmîm* (Hehn⁶ 375) may be an old causative (AJSL 23, 248) derived from the root *qm*; the original meaning may be *stuturosa*; cf. *gēbāh qômā*, lofty of stature, Ezek. 31:3. The *figus Aegyptia* may reach a height of 50 feet. *Bôqér* in Am. 7:14 is generally regarded as a scribal error for *nôqéq̄*, shepherd, because we find in the introductory gloss at the beginning of the Book that Amos lived among the *nôqēq̄îm* from Tekoa, and *nôqéq̄* means *sheepmaster* in 2 K 3:4 where we read that King Mesha of Moab was a sheepmaster who rendered to the King of Israel 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams in fleeces. *Nôqéq̄* is derived from *naqôq̄* which denotes a *spotted sheep* (or *goat*) in the story of Jacob and Laban (Gen. 30:32). The original meaning is *punctured, dotted*. The noun *niqqûd* is the Hebrew term for *punctuation*; the *punctuators* are called *naqdanîm*.

I believe therefore that *nôqéq̄* in Amos' statement *kî-nôqéq̄ anôhî u-hôlés šiqmîm* does not mean *shepherd*, but *puncturer, pricker*: the poet says, *A pricker am I, a piercer of sycamores*.

The statement at the beginning of the Book that Amos lived among the *sheepmen* from Tekoa is due to a misinterpretation of *nôqéq̄* in 7:14, just as the statement that Amos prophesied *two years before the earthquake* is due to a misunderstanding of the final pentastich at the end of c. 2 where the poet says, with reference to the imminent political upheaval which will be brought about by the Assyrians, *I'll shake the earth 'neath your feet as a waggon shakes (on rough ground)*. For *hinné anôhî me'îq* in Am. 2:13 we must read *hinnēnî mefîq*, and *tafûq* for *ta'îq* in the second hemistich; *ha-mēle'â* after *ha-'aḡalâ* is

³ The singular of כִּנְחָ (for כִּנְחָ) is כִּנְחָ (not כִּנְחָ. Levins, § 519) = Heb. כִּנְחָ; cf. Margolis' grammar, p. 135^b, below, also p. 28.

⁴ The original meaning of *kufrâ* (Arab. *kâfâr*, Syr. *gufrâ*; cf. Assyr. *guzlu* = Heb. כַּחַל; see GB⁶ 311^a) is *cover* (BL 127, below) i. e. *spathe* of a palm.

a secondary addition, and *lâh* 'amîr is a tertiary gloss (OLZ 10, 310). After this first line of the final pentastich we must insert 4: 11 (*uě-hafakîti* &c.).

Am. 1: 1 is secondary, and the two statements *who was among the sheepmen from Tekoa* and *two years before the earthquake* are tertiary additions. Earthquakes are so frequent in Palestine that the date *two years before the earthquake* would be very indefinite. This gloss may have been derived also from 8: 8 and 9: 5. The first of these two passages (*ha-'al-zôt lô-tîrgáz ha-'árç*) is genuine, but does not refer to an earthquake; it means simply, *Must not the land be stirred up over this?* The second passage (*who touches the earth that it totters*, lit. *surges, heaves*; Nah. 1: 5; ZDMG 61, 278; Nah. 8) belongs to a Maccabean psalm; 9: 5. 6 must be combined with 5: 8. 9 and 4: 12. 13.

Amos could not have punctured sycamore-figs at Tekoa; this place lies too high for sycamores: it is situated on a detached hill about 2,700 feet above the level of the sea. Nor can we suppose that he was a shepherd at Tekoa, but owned a plantation of sycamores in the foothills leading down to the Philistine coast, where sycamores were common (1 K 10: 27).

My view that *nôqéd* in Am. 7: 14 does not mean *sheepman*, but *puncturer* seems to be at variance with the first hemistich of v. 15, *the Lord took me as I followed the flock*, but *haç-çôn* in this passage is a corruption of *haš-šôn*, peace, tranquillity, which we have in the place-name *Beth-shean*. The Amarna tablets show that this word was pronounced *šân*, not *š'ân*, about 1400 B. C. (see JBL 29, 97, n. 10; GB¹⁶ 98^a). Afterwards it may have been pronounced *šôn*, so that the difference between *šôn*, peace, and *çôn*, flock, would be slight. Confusion of *š* and *ç* is found in several passages; in Is. 9: 4 e. g. we must read *çërefâ*, smelting, instead of *šërefâ*, burning:

Every clanking shoe	and cuirassed corselet
Will go to the smelter	to feed the fire.

All the weapons will go to pot, i. e. will be sent as old metal to the melting-pot; see *Mic.* 51, below; cf. JBL 32, 113, n. 23). In Syriac, *šâinâ* means *peace* and *tranquillity*, and *hâiîê mēšâiîcne* signifies a *peaceful life*. Heb. *me-'ahrê* before *haç-çôn* in Am. 7: 15 may therefore be a corruption of *me-hâiîê*; the letters *i* and *r* are often confounded (AJSL 26, 10). The phrase *hâiîê haš-*

šân (or šôn) would be synonymous with *haiiê haš-šaluâ*. The Peshita has 'úmrâ šáliâ uê-nîhâ in 1 Tim. 2:2 for ἡρεμος καὶ ἡσυχος βίος. Syr. *min-šiliâ* (or *min-gau-šiliâ*) is used also for *unexpectedly*.

The introductory lines of the ballad describing Amos' encounter with the priest Amaziah of Bethel have 3 + 3 beats, also the last two lines exhibit the same rhythm, but the intervening stanzas have 2 + 2 beats in each line. Similarly the first two couplets and the last two couplets of David's dirge on Saul and Jonathan (JHUC, No. 163, p. 55; cf. AJSL 20, 164 and contrast 32, 124) have 3 + 3 beats, while the intervening three triplets have 2 + 2 beats. According to Duhm, *Die Zwölf Propheten* (Tübingen, 1910) p. 16 (cf. ZAT 31, 15) Am. 7: 10-17 is written in prose. The Hebrew text, however, should be read as follows:

אל-ירבעם מלך-ישראל ^β	7, 10 i	וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲמִצְיָה הַכֹּהֵן ^α
בְּקָרֵב בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל		קָשֶׁר עֵלְיָד עֲמוֹס
לְהַקִּיל אֶת-כָּל דְּבָרָיו:		לֹא תוּכַל הָאָרֶץ
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל גְּלוּהָ יִגְלָהּ:	11	עַבְחָרֵב יָמוֹת יִרְבְּעָם
אל-עמוס החזה	12 ii	וַיֹּאמֶר אֲמִצְיָה
אל-ארץ יהודה		לֶךְ בְּרַח-לֶךְ
ושם תנבא:		וַאֲכַל-שֵׁם לֶחֶם
עוד להנבא	13	וּבבֵּית־אֵל לֹא-תוֹסִיף
ובית ממלכה:		כִּי-מִקְדָּשׁ מֶלֶךְ-הוּא
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲמִצְיָה	14 iii	וַיַּעַן עֲמוֹס
ולא-בן נביא:		לֹא-נִבְיָא אֲנִי
ובולם שקמים:		כִּי-נִקְדָּה אֲנִי
מחיי השאן	15	וַיִּקְחֵנִי יְהוָה
אל-עמי ישראל:		”לֶךְ הַנִּבְיָא

קא תנבא ^θ	ואתה אמר	16 iv
על-בית ישחק:	ולא תטיף	
דבר יהוה:	ועתה שִׁמְעוּ	
ובניך () בחרב יפלוג	אשתך (κ) בעיר תזנה	17 v
וישראל גלה יגלה ^ε :	ואתה על-טמאה תמות	

מיעל אדמתו (θ)	כי כה אמר עמוס (γ)	לאמר (β)	7, 10 (a)
על ישראל 16 (θ)	15 (η) ויאמר אלי יהוה	14 (ζ) אנכי	13 (ε)
ואדמתך בחבל תחלק (λ)	ובנתך (κ)	לכן כה אמר יהוה	17 (ι)
מיעל אדמתו (ν)		ארכה	(μ)

This may be translated as follows:

Amos and Amaziah.

- i 7, 10 The priest Amaziah reported
to King Jeroboam of Israel;β
Amos conspires against thee
in the midst of the House of Israel.
The land is not able to bear
all his denunciations:
- 11 γ“By the sword Jeroboam will die,
and Israel will be deported.”δ
- ii 12 Amaziah said
to Amos, the seer:
Go, flee thee away
to the land of Judah;
There eat (thy) bread,
and there prophesy!
- 13 But prophesy not
any more at Bethel!
’Tis a royal sanctuary,
εa national temple.
- iii 14 Then answered Amos,
and said to Amaziah:
No prophet I,
nor prophet’s son;ζ

- A pricker I,
a piercer of sycamores.
- 15 JHWH took me
from the peaceful life:
η "Go, prophesy
to my people Israel!"
- iv 16 } } Thou sayest to me:
Thou must not prophesy,^θ
Thou must not bespatter⁵
the House of Isaac.
Now therefore hear thou
the word of JHWH: }
- v 17 Thy wife(κ) will be made a harlot,
thy sons () will fall by the sword; λ
'Mong strangers^μ wilt thou die,
and Israel will be deported.^ν

(α) 7, 10 of Bethel	(β) saying	(γ) 11 for thus said Amos
(δ) 11 from her land	(ε) 13 it is	(ζ) I (η) 15 JHWH said to me
(θ) 16 against Israel		(ι) 17 therefore thus said JHWH
(κ) 17 and thy daughters		(λ) thy land will be allotted
(μ) land		(ν) from her land

Amos' expulsion from the Northern Kingdom after his encounter with the priest Amaziah of Bethel may have taken place about the end of the reign of Jeroboam, *i. e.* prior to 743, but his patriotic denunciations of Israel may have been composed in Judah after Tiglath-pileser IV had captured Arpad (*i. e.* Irbid SW of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee) in 740, and after the Assyrian king had annexed 19 districts of Hamath (the ancient capital of Galilee at the hot springs S of Tiberias) in 738 (ZDMG 69, 170, 35; *cf.* 64, 706, 33; ZAT 34, 144. 231). The *Entrance to Hamath*, mentioned in Am. 6: 14, is the *Wady al-Hammâm* N of Irbid. *From the Entrance to Hamath to the River of the Wilderness* means From the northern end of the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea

⁵ Heb. נָפַטַח does not mean simply *to drop*, as we say *to drop a remark* (contrast Mic. 76) but *to asperse* with reproach or calumny. Arab. *nāṭṭafa* means *to denounce, accuse* (of wickedness, *qāḍafahu bil-fujāri*).

(read *iam* for *nahl*). Am. 6:2 is secondary, and *rabbâ* after *Hamât* is a tertiary gloss. The Galilean *Irbid* or *Arbelu* (EB 291) appears in the OT also as *Beth-arbel* and *Riblah* (see my paper on *Shalman and Beth-arbel* in BA 10, part 2). The fall of the Galilean stronghold in 740 and the deportation of the Galileans in 738 opened Amos' eyes; he foresaw the fall of Samaria.

There is no evidence that Amos began to prophesy in 760, nor are we justified in assuming that Amos preceded Hosea (cf. JBL 34, 43). Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5 (cf. AJSL 32, 74) which are supposed to be derived from Am. 5:5 (cf. Cornill's *Eint.* 192) are not Hoseanic, nor is Am. 5:5 Amosian. I believe that Amos' patriotic poems were composed about 740-735 (according to Valetton, *Amos und Hosea*, 1898, p. 12: 745-741). His predictions were fulfilled: Ammon (cf. AJSL 32, 71) and Moab (cf. KB 2, 21, l. 61) were subdued by Assyria in 734; Damascus fell in 732, Samaria in 722 (cf. *Mic.* 58).

Both Hosea and Amos were Israelitish poets, but Amos was an Israelitish gardener living in Judah after he had been banished from the Northern Kingdom (cf. EB 147, n. 3; Valetton, n. 86).

The biographical ballad in 7:10-17 certainly does not show that Amos was a farmer, just as 3:12 (cf. ZDMG 69, 168, 26) cannot prove that he was a shepherd (contrast Valetton, p. 93). Nor can we draw any conclusions as to Amos' occupation from 2:13; 3:4. 5; 4:1-3 (cf. JBL 32, 117); 5:11. 17. 19; 6:12; 7:1. 2 (*Joel*, n. 94) and 4. 5; 8:1. 2; 9:3. 13. 14, especially as several of these passages are secondary (contrast Marti's commentary, p. 146; Nowack², p. 120). We might just as well say that Schiller's statement, science is to some *eine tüchtige Kuh, die ihn mit Butter versorgt*, shows that the poet was a dairyman (cf. *Mic.* 62, l. 9).