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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 *bôlés* 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 *palâšu* (*Syr.* *pêlâš*). My explanation was recorded in *GB*¹⁵, xiii, *ad* 100^b, but it is not mentioned in *GB*¹⁶.

We need not regard *bôlés* as an Assyrian loanword (with *s* for Assyr. *š*; cf. *OLZ* 17, 421; *ZDMG* 65, 561, 17). It may be merely an inaccurate spelling, just as *bôsékém*, your trampling, is written in *Am.* 5:11 both with *š* and *s*. Similarly we find in *Am.* 6:11 *rêsisim*, fragments, instead of *rêšišim*, from the same stem from which *Taršîš*, spalling-floor (for the dressing of ores) is derived (*BL* 59). For the *b* in *Heb.* *bôlés* instead of the *p* in Assyr. *palâšu* we may compare *Heb.* *barzél*, iron, Assyr. *parzillu*; *Heb.* *biq'â*, valley, *Syr.* *pêqâ'âtâ*. In *Nah.* 2:4 we find *bêrôšim*, cypresses, instead of *pârašim*, horsemen (*Nah.* 40). Similarly we read in 2 *K* 8:19 *lê-banây*, for his sons, instead of *lê-fanây*, before him (*JBL* 33, 166). On the other hand, we have in *Est.* 1:6 *karpás*, white lawn, for *Aram.* *karbâs* (*Est.* 9) and *Heb.* *palâṭ*, to escape, is the Assyr. *balâṭu*, to survive, recover, live. *Aram.* *hâspâ*, clay, corresponds to the Assyr. *xaçbu*, earthen vessel. These changes are due to partial assimilation (*GB*¹⁶ 79^a, above).

Also in the OT this stem *palâšu*, 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, *Pelištîm*, which means *invaders* (*WF* 200). For *hitpalléš* 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 *palâšu*, 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. *haſán*, bridegroom, means originally *circumcised*, and *hôtén*, father-in-law: *circumciser*. Among the Hebrews young men were originally circumcised by their father-in-law prior to their marriage (AJSL 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. *gamzîjôt*) of the caprifig, *i. e.* the uncultivated male form of the common fig (Hehn⁶ 99). Nor does Talmud. *gamzûz* denote a sycamore-fig, but a *caprified fig* (*épuraστός*) although Syr. *gummîzâ* and Arab. *jummáiz* signify *sycamore-fig*. Lagarde's explanation of *bôlés* as *caprifying* (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 Nimrûd represents the caprification of figs.² Herodotus (1, 193) confuses the caprification (*épuraσμός*) of fig-trees with the artificial fecundation of the female date-palm (Arab. *tâllaqa*, *láqqaha*, *ábara*; Greek *ἀλυνθάζειν*). The Assyrian term is *rukkubu* (MVAG 18, 2, p. 40) = Talmud. *hirkîb* (*e. g.* at the end of *Pes.* 55^b) which does not mean *to graft* (BT 2, 520). Cf. Arab. *râkûb* and Syr. **רְכַבָּתָא**, fecundation, Greek *ἐπιβήτωρ* (BL 72, n. †). This cross-fertilization of date-trees is also referred to in *Pes.* 56^a: **רְבָ אֶחָד בְּרִיה דְּרַבָּא**

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 כּוֹפֶרָא דִּכְרָא לְנוֹקְבָּהָא . *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 שְׁשָׁה דְּבָרִים עֲשׂוּ אֱנֶשִׁי). יַרְחִיחָו .

Amos calls himself a *bôqér u-bôlés šiqmîm*. The last term means *piercer of sycamore-figs*. The Hebrew name of the sycamore trees, *šiqmîm* (Hehn⁶ 375) may be an old causative (AJS 23, 248) derived from the root *qm*; the original meaning may be *statureosa*; cf. *gēbâh qômâ*, lofty of stature, Ezek. 31:3. The *ficus Ægyptia* may reach a height of 50 feet. *Bôqér* in Am. 7:14 is generally regarded as a scribal error for *nôqêd*, shepherd, because we find in the introductory gloss at the beginning of the Book that Amos lived among the *nôqêdim* from Tekoa, and *nôqêd* 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. *Nôqêd* is derived from *naqôd* 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 *nôqêd* in Amos' statement *kî-nôqêd anôkî u-bôlés 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 *nôqêd* 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 anôkî me'tîq* in Am. 2:13 we must read *hinněnî mefig*, and *tafûq* for *ta'îq* in the second hemistich; *ha-mële'â* after *ha-'ağalâ* is

³ The singular of *מִנְחָה* (for *מִנְחָה*) is *מִנְחָה* (not *כְּנָחָה*, Levias, § 519) = Heb. *כְּנָחָה*; cf. Margolis' grammar, p. 135^ab, below, also p. 28.

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

a secondary addition, and *lāh ‘amîr* is a tertiary gloss (OLZ 10, 310). After this first line of the final pentastich we must insert 4:11 (*yě-hafak̄tî* &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-zôṭ lô-tîrgâz ha-’ârg*) 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 *nôqêd* 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’âñ*, 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 *çerefâ*, smelting, instead of *šerefâ*, 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, *šâñâ* means *peace* and *tranquillity*, and *hâjjé mëšâjjénê* signifies a *peaceful life*. Heb. *me-’ahrê* before *haç-çôn* in Am. 7:15 may therefore be a corruption of *me-hâjjé*; the letters *j* and *r* are often confounded (AJSL 26, 10). The phrase *hâjjé haš-*

šān (or *šōn*) would be synonymous with *hajjē haš-šalūā*. The Peshita has ‘úmrâ šáliâ uě-níhâ in 1 Tim. 2:2 for ἡρεμος καὶ ἥσυχος βίος. Syr. *min-súliâ* (or *min-gaû-šúliâ*) 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-ירכעם מלך-ישראל בקרב בית-ישראל להכיל את-כל דבריו: וישראל נלה גלה:	י. 7. וישלח אמץיה הכהן ^a קשור עלייך עמוס לא תובל הארץ עברוב ימות ירכעם
אל-עמוס החזה אל-ארץ יhortה ושם תנבא: עור להנבא ובכיתאל לא-תוקיף כי-מקדש מלך-הוא	י. 12. ii ויאמר אמץיה לד ברח-ילך ואכל-שם ללחם וככיתאל לא-תוקיף כי-מקדש מלך-הוא
ויאמר אל-אמץיה ולא-בן נבייא ובולם שקבים: מהי השן אל-עמי ישראל:	י. 14. iii ויען עמוס לא-נביא אنبي כי-נקר אنبي ויקחני יהוה "לך הנבא"
	י. 15. "לך הנבא"

לֹא תִנְבֹּא^θ
עַל־בֵּית יְשָׁחֹק:
דָּבָר יְהוָה:
} אַתָּה אָמַר
וְלֹא תִטְבִּיף
וְעוֹתָה שָׁמַע

וּכְנִיר^ו בְּחֶרֶב יְפֻלוּג
וְאַתָּה עַל־עַטְמָה תִּמְוֹת
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל גָּלָה יִגְלֹה:^ו

7 בִּיהְאֵל ^(β)	10 (a)
הָוֹ ^(γ)	13 (ε)
וְיִאמְרֵאלִי יְהוָה ^(θ)	14 אֲנָכִי
וּבְנִתִּין ^(α)	16 עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְכַן כָּה אָמַר יְהוָה ^(δ)	17 (ι)
אֲדָכִיה ^(ν)	אֲדָמָתוֹ ^(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,
 a national temple.
- iii 14 Then answered Amos,
 and said to Amaziah :
 No prophet I,
 nor prophet's son ;^ξ

- A pricker I,
a piercer of syeamores.
- 15 JHVH 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 Isaae.
 Now therefore hear thou
 the word of JHVH: }
- v 17 iThy wife(κ) will be made a harlot,
 thy sons () will fall by the sword;λ
 'Mong strangersμ 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 | (ξ) I (η) 15 JHVH said to me |
| (θ) 16 against Israel | | (ι) 17 therefore thus said JHVH |
| (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. נִתְפָּה does not mean simply to drop, as we say to drop a remark (contrast Mic. 7:6) but to asperse with reproach or calumny. Arab. nátfáfa means to denounce, accuse (of wickedness, qádafa bil-fujári).

(read *iam* for *nahl*). Am. 6:2 is secondary, and *rabbâ* after *Hamât* is a tertiary gloss. The Galilean *Irbid* or *Arbela* (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 *Einl.*⁷ 192) are not Hoseanic, nor is Am. 5:5 Amosian. I believe that Amos' patriotic poems were composed about 740-735 (according to Valeton, *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; Valeton, 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 Valeton, 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 dairy-man (cf. *Mic.* 62, l. 9).