

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

CRYSTAL-GAZING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

PAUL HAUPT

Johns Hopkins University

In my paper *Babylonian Elements in the Levitic Ritual* (JBL 19, 56; cf. JHUC, No. 163, p. 48^a).¹ I discussed the passage in Ezek. 21:26, *The king of Babylon stands at the fork of the road to practice divination; he shakes the arrows, consults the teraphim,*² *inspects the liver.* The Polychrome Bible says (*Ezekiel*, p. 137, l. 35): Arrows variously inscribed were thrown into a vessel, shaken, and one drawn out, the inscription on which decided the question. This *belomancy*, or divination by means of variously marked pointless arrows, was also practiced by the pre-Mohammedan Arabs and by certain tribes of the North American Indians.

Grotius *ad loc.* (1644) quoted St. Jerome's remarks on this passage: *Ritu gentis suae oraculum consulat, ut mittat sagittas suas in pharetram et commisceat eas inscriptas sive signatas nominibus singulorum, ut videat, cujus sagitta exeat, et quam prius civitatem debeat oppugnare. Hanc autem Graeci βελομαντίαν sive ῥαβδομαντίαν nominant* (cf. also Gesenius' *Thes.* 1224^a). The divinatory shafts (Arab. *azlâm*) used by the ancient Arabs were without pointed heads and without feathers;³ so we can hardly call them *arrows*: we might just as well describe drumsticks or Chinese chop-sticks as pointless arrows. German *Pfeil* is the English *pile*, i. e. the pointed head of an arrow. The gambling game of the North American Indians, played with sticks bearing different marks, is called *stick-dice* (cf. CD s. v. and EB¹¹ 14, 473^b). At the great Prænestine sanctuary of Fortune the oracular replies (*sortes Prae-*

¹ For the abbreviations see above, p. 75, n. 1.

² For *tēraphim*, more correctly *tārafim*, see JBL 33, 166, n. 12; cf. AJSL 33, 48; RE⁹ 6, 9, 11.

³ Cf. E. H. Palmer's translation of the Koran (Oxford, 1880) vol. 1, p. 110, n. 4; Anton Huber's dissertation *Über das Meisir genannte Spiel der heidnischen Araber* (Leipzig, 1883) pp. 9.13-15.27.30-32; Geo. Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben* (Berlin, 1897) p. 110.

nestinae) were transmitted by means of lettered blocks; see *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Series XXVI, Nos. 9-10, p. 45 (Baltimore, 1908).

Herodotus (4, 67) says that the Scythian diviners used large bundles of willow-wands (*μαντεύονται ράβδοισι ιτέηνσι πολλήσι*). Greek *ιτέα* is the German *Weide*, English *withy*, *withe*. German *Buchstabe*, a letter of the alphabet, denoted originally a stick of beechwood inscribed with runes for the purpose of divination; these wands were scattered on a white garment and then picked up and combined.⁴ To *read* is in German: *lesen*, i. e. *to pick up*, to pick out. Also Lat. *legere* means both *to collect* and *to read*. According to Tacitus (*Germania*, 10) the runes were engraved on pieces of the branches of a fruit-bearing tree (*cf.* also Num. 17:24). Beechnuts are edible, and Lat. *fagus*, beech, Greek *φηγός*, Doric *φαγός*, is connected with *φαγάν*, to eat. The nuts of the beech-tree are called *beech-mast* or *buck-mast*,⁵ and *mast* means in German: *fattening*. Tacitus says: *Virgam frugiferae arbori decisam in surculos amputant eosque notis quibusdam discretos super candidam vestem temere ac fortuito spargunt*.

Surculi (or *sorticulae*) would be a more appropriate translation for Arab. *azlām* than *sagittae*. Heb. *ḥiṣṣîm* in Ezek. 21:26, on the other hand, denotes real arrows with pointed metal heads. But Heb. *qîlqâl bah-ḥiṣṣîm* does not mean *he shook the arrows*, although **𐤂** has *τοῦ ἀναβράσαι ράβδον*, **𐤂** *commiscens sagittas*. **𐤂** *qēšēt bē-ḡirraḥiā*, he shot arrows (**𐤂** *šēdā ḡērā*), may have thought of a symbolical act like the one described in 2 K 13:14-19 where Elisha on his deathbed bids Jehu's grandson, King Joash of Israel (798-783 B. C.), shoot an arrow through an open window eastward, calling it *an arrow of Jahveh's victory, an arrow of victory over the Arameans*. Oefeles' explanation (ZAT 20, 314, l. 7) that the King of Babylon shot an arrow at the liver of the sacrificial animal is untenable.

RV renders *qîlqâl bah-ḥiṣṣîm* in Ezek. 21:26: *he shook the arrows to and fro*, but AV has *he made the arrows bright*. This is more correct. In Eccles. 10:10, which is regarded by several exegetes as the most difficult passage of the Book, *qîlqâl* certainly

⁴ See Weigand's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, fifth edition (Giessen, 1909) 1, 299.301; 2, 56.

⁵ The name *Buckingham* was derived by the historian William Camden (c. 1585) from the beeches predominant in the woods of Buckinghamshire.

means, not *to shake*, but *to grind*, polish, whet. The old pessimist (c. 100 B. C.) says:

- 9 He who quarries stones, may be hurt by them;
 he who splits wood, may cut himself.^a
 10 If^β he has not ground the face,
 the hewer must exert great force.⁶

(a) 9 by them

(β) 10 he has dulled the iron, that is,

The Hebrew text should be read as follows:

9 מְסִיעַ אֲבָנִים יַעֲצֹב-בָּהֶם בּוֹקֵעַ עֵצִים יִסְכָּן:^a
 אִם-^βלֹא פָנִים קִלְקַל וְחִילִים יִגְבֵר הַחוֹצֵב:

10 קָהָה הַבְּרוּל וְהוּא (β)

9 כִּם (a)

Bahem after *ie' açêh* is enclitic; it should be read *bahm* = *bâm* (cf. gloss a) and German *lahm*, lame, or Ethiop. *lâhm*, bull, Amhar. *lâm*; Dillmann², p. 80; JBL 34, 49, l. 3). *Issakên* is derived from *sakkîn*, knife (BA 3, 580, l. 26). I published this explanation twenty-six years ago, but I have just noticed that Moses Mendelssohn suggested the same derivation; see *Der Prediger Salomo von dem Verfasser des Phädon* (Anspach, 1771) p. 127. Also Hahn (cf. AJSL 32, 141) said that *sakân* meant *to cut*, wound, hurt; it was connected with *šakāk* from which *šakkîn*, knife (Prov. 23:2) was derived. But *šakkîn* (or *šâkîn*) in Prov. 23:2 means *muzzle* (JBL 33, 290). There is, of course, a post-Biblical word *sakkîn*, knife, Aram. *sakkînâ*, which has passed into Arabic as *sikkîn*.—At the end of the second line we must supply *haḥ-ḥôçêh* which means both *stone-cutter* and *wood-cutter*.—The Piel *qehâ* is not intransitive, but

*Ludwig Levy, *Das Buch Qoheleth* (Leipzig, 1912) renders: *so muss man die Kräfte sehr anstrengen*; E. Pödehard, *L'Ecclesiaste* (Paris, 1912) translates: *Alors on doit redoubler de force*. The second half of v. 10 must be combined with the second half of v. 19; both are misplaced glosses to the secondary (Stoic) passage 7:12; see Haupt, *Koheleth* (Leipzig, 1905) p. 18; *Ecclesiastes* (Baltimore, 1905) p. 25. We need not read *hak-kašîr*, but *hakšêr* should stand at the end of this hemistich: *îṭrôn hoḥmâ hakšêr* means: *The advantage of experience is efficiency; he who has acquired adequate knowledge and skill is efficient*. Syr. *dê-lâ ḡdšêrâ* means *inefficient, ineffectual*; cf. also Assyr. *kušêru* = *kušâru*, fitness (AJSL 32, 66).

means *he blunted*, dulled (so, correctly, Hahn and Graetz).—The *uě-hû* after *qehâ hab-barzél* means *that is*. This was inserted by a tertiary glossator who regarded *im-lô fanîm qilqál* as an explanation of *im-qehâ hab-barzél*; cf. the second *uě-hû* in Kimḥi's comments on Ezek. 21:26, cited below, n. 7, and the translation of Matt. 27:46 in Delitzsch's NT in Hebrew. In Shirwâni's *Agrôn* (a Hebrew-Persian dictionary compiled by Moses of Shirwân in 1459) the Hebrew explanations added to Persian words are always preceded by *šě-hû* (Bacher's *uě-hû*, ZAT 16, 231, l. 2 is due to an oversight).

If *lô-fanîm qilqál* were not preceded by *im*, the *lô* before *fanîm* would be strange (2 S 3:34; Num. 16:29 are different). Hahn's explanation that *lô-fanîm* means *non-face = back* is, of course, impossible. Scholz (1901) renders: *Er, der Nicht-Erste schüttelt (die Loose) und ermutigt die Scharen* (cf. JBL 32, 111, n. 13). In my translation of *Ecclesiastes*, published (1891) in JHUC, No. 90, I regarded *uě-hû lô-fanîm qilqál* as an explanation of *im-qehâ hab-barzél*, but I am now convinced that *im-lô fanîm qilqál* is the original reading. *Panîm* is a double plural derived from *pâni*, an old plural of *pû*, mouth (AJSL 22, 258). Also Syr. *pâtâ*, face, and *pûmâ*, mouth, are used of the edge of a sword (Heb. *pî-hârḥ*, but *pēnê-hârḥ* in Ezek. 21:21). The *face* of the ax-head is the front part in contradistinction to the back. The *face* of a hammer is the striking surface of the head, and the same term is used of the edge of a cutting-tool. To *grind* means to *smooth* or *sharpen* by friction, give a smooth surface or edge to a thing. The intransitive adjective *qalál* means *smooth* and *glossy*, polished, burnished. We find *něḥóšt qalál*, burnished bronze, in Ezek. 1:7 and Dan. 10:6. After the edges of tools have been ground on a revolving grind-stone a whetstone may be used for sharpening and polishing them. In Arabic we have the causative *čáqala*, to grind, polish, with partial assimilation of the causative *s* to the *q* (see *Mic.* 98). In 1 S 13:21 *qillěšôn* seems to be a corruption of *qalqél šinnôt*, sharpening of the teeth (of a saw).

Qilqál certainly means *he ground, he polished*. Also *heç barûr* (Is. 49:2; cf. Jer. 51:11) is not a *smooth arrow*, or a *sharpened arrow*, but a *polished shaft* (so Cheyne in the Polychrome Bible). The king of Babylon did not shake the arrows, but he polished them for the purpose of scrying. You can induce pic-

torial hallucinations by gazing into a glass or crystal sphere or some equivalent medium such as a sword-blade, or a polished arrow-head, or a polished finger-nail. Crystal-gazing is practiced all over the world; it has been used for the purpose of divination from times immemorial (EB¹¹ 7, 567). In his article on Ink-, Oil- and Mirror-gazing Ceremonies in Modern Egypt (JAOS 36, 40) Worrell cites David Kimḥi's (c. 1200) remarks on Ezek. 21:26. Kimḥi says of the acts performed by the king of Babylon: *All this belongs to acts of divination, and the interpretation of qilqāl is as in uē-hū lô-fanīm qilqāl, that is, they grind and polish the surface of the iron of the arrow until it is very bright; then the diviners gaze on it, just as they gaze on the thumb of the hand, on the nail, because of the brightness of the nail; so they gaze on a sword, and so also on a mirror, and so they gaze on the liver because it has brightness (possesses gloss or a reflecting surface).*⁷ Kimḥi's explanation is quoted by Worrell from Daiches' interesting monograph on *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the later Jewish Literature*, printed in the publications of the Jews' College, London, 1913.

The liver could be used for this purpose just as well as a hand painted with black soot and oil, as described in the Hebrew magical texts Nos. 2-4 and 6, published by Daiches. EB¹¹ 7, 567^a states that the tribes of the Northwest-Indian frontier use the liver of an animal for serying. Gazing on the smooth shiny surface of a liver is no doubt a more primitive form of divination than the elaborate system of hepatoscopy which we find in the cuneiform omen-tablets (contrast EB¹¹ 20, 103; JBL 35, 46). The primary connotation of Heb. *rô'ê*, the older name (1 S 9:9) for *nabî*, prophet (TOCR 1, 271) may have been *gazer*, crystal-seer (contrast JBL 28, 53; 35, 56. 126/7. 223). Grotius (1644) concluded his remarks on *ra'û bak-kabêd* with the statement: *Nec dubitandum puto quin artes illae a Chaldaeis ad Lydos, a Lydis ad Hetruscos venerint* (cf. JBL 19, 57). Marcus v. Niebuhr remarked at the end of the preface to his *Geschichte Assurs und Babels* (Berlin, 1857) with reference to

⁷ Kimḥi says: וכל זה ממעשי הקסם ופירוש קלקל כמו והוא לא פנים קלקל והוא שמחודרין ומלטשין פני ברזל החץ עד שיהיה בהיר כאד ורואין בו בעלי הקסם כמו שרואים בכוחן היר בצפרן לבהירות הציפורן וכן רואים בסוף וכן במראה וכן רואים בככר שיש לו בהירות.

the *Turanian* population between the Euphrates and the Indus: *Das nächste ist eine gründliche Erforschung des Baskischen. Schwieriger, aber wichtiger, ist der Versuch, ob dieser Schlüssel das Rätsel des Etruskischen löst* (cf. *op. cit.* pp. 144. 423).

Just as *rô'ê*, seer, is connected with *mar'â*, mirror (Ex. 38: 8; Arab. *mir'ât*) so we have from the stem of *hózê*, seer (Arab. *hâzî*) in Syriae the noun *mahzîtâ*, mirror (cf. ZAT 34, 144) = Ethiop. *mahçêt* (with partial assimilation of the *z*). The ancient mirrors were of polished metal, so there was no essential difference between a polished arrow-head and a speculum. We have small looking-glasses with long handles (*e. g.* laryngeal mirrors and dentists' mirrors). Also Heb. *mĕ'ônén*, diviner, may be a synonym of *rô'ê* and *hózê*, gazer, scryer, crystal-gazer; it is a Pi'lel from the stem of '*áin*, eye (*Mic.* 48, l. 5). In Text 2 published by Daiches *š'ajjén* is used for *scrying*.⁵ In Text 1 the nail of the right thumb of a boy is polished and rubbed with pure olive oil, and the boy gazes on this polished nail (cf. PSBA 20, 85). The spirits conjured by this crystal-gazing are called *šârê bóhn*, the princes (or *angels*; cf. Dan. 10: 13. 20) of the thumb, or *šârê çippórn*, princes of the nail. In the euneiform ritual texts (ZR 216, 44; 218, 2) the *barû* = seer (JBL 19, 57) is called *bêl çupur ubâni annî*, the master of the nail of this finger (Daiches, *op. cit.* p. 29). The explanation of Ezek. 21:26 given by Kimḥi and preserved in AV is undoubtedly correct; so there is no reference to *belomancy* in OT.

Nor is there any allusion to *rhabdomancy*, *i. e.* divination by a rod or wand, especially a dousing- or divining-rod. It is true, AV renders Hos. 4: 12^a (cf. JBL 35, 185/6, also 180): *My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them*, but the meaning of this line, at the end of which we must supply *qāsm*, oracle, is:

My people consult their tree,
its branches give answers to them.

עַמִּי בַעֲצוֹ יִשְׂאֵל וּמִקְלוֹ יִגִּיד-לוֹ קֶסֶם:

The oracular answer was given by the rustling of the branches of the tree (cf. JBL 35, 24. 45. 67; contrast *ibid.* 47). At the

⁵ *Thereupon the boy shall gaze steadily at the palm* (lit. *inside*) of the hand (וְיִבֶּן הַנַּעַר תְּמִיד תּוֹךְ יָדָיו). Also Syr. '*ajjén* means to *eye*, to look.

ancient sanctuary of Dodona in Epirus the interpreters of the oracles listened to the rustling of an old oak tree. Also the Borussians had oracular oaks. Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* says (l. 2584): *Hätt' es nie in deinen Zweigen, heil'ge Eiche, mir gerauscht*; cf. l. 1065: *Und eine heilige Eiche steht daneben, durch vieler Wunder Segenskraft berühmt*; l. 407: *Er sprach zu mir aus dieses Baumes Zweigen*; l. 100: *Seltsamer Stimmen wundersamen Klang vernimmt man oft aus seinen düstren Zweigen*.

In Gen. 12:6 and Deut. 11:30 an oracular tree is called *elôn môrê*, tree of an oracle-giver, and in Jud. 9:37 we find *elôn mē'ônēnîm*, tree of the seers (cf. above, p. 89). *Môrê* appears in Ethiopic as *mârî*, diviner (ZAT 29, 283, n. 2; contrast NBSS 38, n. 2). Certain Jews in Arabia say *mêrî* instead of *môrê*, just as Russian Jews pronounce *ô* as *ê*, e. g. *Mêšê* for *Môšê*, Yiddish *rêt* for German *rot* (AJSL 19, 234). In Ethiopic we find *â* for *ê* in several foreign words, especially before a following *r*, e. g. *Ualârîôs* = Valerius (or Valerianus).

Heb. *maqqél* (from *qalâl*) means a switch or twig. Heb. *qalá'*, to sling, and *saqál*, to stone, are derived from the same root (JBL 34, 184; 35, 323). We use *to sling* also in the sense of *suspending loosely* (cf. Arab. *istaqállu bi-'l-hámli* and Assyr. *šugallulu*, JBL 35, 322). The original meaning of *maqqél*, twig, is *hanging loosely*; cf. the German *schwanken*, *schwenken*, *schwingen* = to swing; also *Schwuppe*, switch (contrast ZAT 11, 170). For forms of the *verba mediae geminatae* conformed to the stems *primae n* cf. my remarks on Syr. *máršá*, pestle (for *marrčšá*, from *rašáš*) in VHOK 232, n. 4.

In 2 S 5:22-25 we read that when David enquired of JIVII, he was told, *When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the baca^o trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then Jahveh has gone out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines* (cf. EB 3:353, § 2, *ad fin.*). The rustling of the trees was regarded as the sound of the march of JIVII and His host; cf. Josh. 5:14; 1 K 22:19; 2 Macc. 2:25, 10:29; Matt. 26:53, and the quotation from Doughty in EB 166: *The melaiika are seen in the air like horsemen tilting to and fro*. We find similar ideas in connection with the Germanic *raging host* which is called in Sweden

* The translations *mulberries*, *balsam-trees*, *poplars*, *asps* (EB¹¹ 2, 766^a) are unwarranted.

Odens Jagt. The Wild Huntsman is a reflex of Odin or Woden, the chief god of the Northern pantheon. In Lebrecht Dreves' poem *Waldandacht* (set to music by Franz Abt) the conclusion of the first stanza *Früh morgens, wenn die Hähne kröhn* is *Der liebe Gott geht durch den Wald.* This is also the refrain of the third stanza (cf. Gunkel, *Genesis*³, p. 19; BL 74, n. 24). Pope says that the poor Indian *saw God in clouds or heard Him in the winds.*

The two triplets in Hos. 4 should be rendered as follows:

- 4, 16 Like a recalcitrant heifer { } is Israel,
 like a {refractory} ram in the pasture;
 17 Wedded to idols is Ephraim,
 resting in a company of tipplers.
 18 They are wanton, [departing from me,]
 preferring [] disgrace to their glory.
- 14^b They go aside with the harlots,
 they lie with the hierodules;¹⁰
 13^a On the tops of the mountains they sacrifice,
 on the hills they bring fragrant offerings.¹¹
 12^a My people consult their tree,
 its branches give answers to them.

I have published a translation of the following two triplets in AJSL 32, 72, and the Hebrew text is given there on p. 69. The two secondary pentastichs in Hos. 4: 1-5, which should be prefixed to the genuine triplet in 4: 16-18, are translated in AJSL 32, 73 (Hebrew text on p. 72). Also 6: 4^a (*What shall I do to thee, O Ephraim? What shall I do to thee, O Israel?*) is a gloss to 4: 16. The Hebrew text of Hos. 4: 16-18+14^b. 13^b. 12^a, apart from the secondary and tertiary additions, should be read as follows:

¹⁰ Cf. Am. 2: 7; Herod. 1, 199 (ἐξα τοῦ ἰποῦ) and Strabo 272; Martin Hartman, *Der islamische Orient* (Berlin, 1909) 2, 7.203.211.

¹¹ Cf. Driver's notes on the translation of *Leviticus* in the Polychrome Bible, p. 63, l. 10; see also JBL 35, 205.214. Heb. *qētōrt*, sweet vapor of sacrifice (German *Opferduft*; cf. Ps. 66: 15) corresponds to the Greek κῆσα, Lat. *nidor* (= *cnidos*). The meaning of the verbs *qit̄tēr* and *hiqt̄r* is not to burn incense, but κῆσᾶν.

כַּבֵּשׁ {מָרָה} בַּמְרֵעָה :	כַּפְרָה סוֹרְרָה { יִשְׂרָאֵל	4, 16
הִנָּח-לוֹ אֶבְסוֹד סַבְאָם :	חֲבוֹר עֲצָבִים אַפְרַיִם	17
אֲהָבוּ □ קִלּוֹן מִגְאוּנָם :	הִזְנָה הִזְנוּ [מֵאַחֲרַי]	18
וְעַם הַקִּרְשׁוֹת יִשְׁכְּבוּ :	כִּי-הֵם עַם-הַזְּנוּת יִפְרְדוּ	14 ^b
וְעַלִּי הַגְּבַעוֹת יִקְטְרוּ :	עַל-רֵאשֵׁי הַהָרִים יִזְבְּחוּ	13 ^a
וּמִקְלוֹ יִגִּיד-לוֹ קֶסֶם :	עַמִּי בַעֲצוֹ יִשְׁאֵל	12 ^a

The OT contains some allusions to divinations by means of listening to the rustling of trees or serying and crystal-gazing, but no reference to rhabdomancy and belomancy (contrast DB 3, 152^b; 4, 598^b; EB 1117; JBL 35, 225, below).