

<sup>7</sup> *Das Buch Jeremias* (Göttingen, 1907), p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> *Das Buch Jeremias* (6th edn, Göttingen, 1969), p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> "Jeremiah x.1-16", *JTS* n.s. 14 (1963), pp. 388-9, n. 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Jeremias* 1 (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 225.

<sup>11</sup> *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Sprache des Alten Bundes* (8. Ausgabe, Göttingen, 1870), p. 776, § 307b.

<sup>12</sup> *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), p. 111, n. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *qōl* appears only once as the subject of *ntn*, in Jer. li 55, where the verb is Niphal: *nittan šeʿōn qōlām*.

<sup>14</sup> So far as I can find, no attention is drawn to it in any of the commentaries. The parallel has been cited by: G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 97 (index, but not text); J. C. L. Gibson, *CML* (2nd edn, Edinburgh, 1978), p. 60, n. 7; S. Rummel (ed.), *Ras Shamra Parallels* 3 (Rome, 1981), p. 46; less directly by A. Cacquot, M. Sznycer, A. Herdner, *Textes Ougaritiques, Tome I: Mythes et Légendes* (Paris, 1974), p. 233.

<sup>15</sup> Text and translation are taken from Gibson, pp. 60-1.

<sup>16</sup> Two of the longer texts sharing this motif used of Yahweh are 2 Sam. xxii 8-16 and Job xxxvi 27-xxxvii 6.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Esth. i 7; 1 Chr. xxi 24; 2 Chr. vii 3. These, however, are all joined to the previous clause by *waw*, are hiphil, and are late; cited by A. Rubinstein, "A finite verb continued by an infinitive absolute in Biblical Hebrew", *VT* 2 (1952), p. 363.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Ewald, p. 772, § 285c.2(b).

<sup>19</sup> As I do with McKane, p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> S. A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (Leiden, 1971), I: The Text, cols 65-8; II: The Plates, pl. 28-31 and chart 38. Birnbaum treats the palaeo-Hebrew book-hand of the 1QL<sup>e</sup> fragments which he dates to "about the middle of the fifth century B.C.E." on the basis of his own palaeographic examination. This script is likely the closest we may come to that employed at the stage when our scribal error took place. *Pe* and *mem* are so similar that Birnbaum, instead of the usual detailed description, writes for P: "Cf. M" (Part I, col. 67). For facsimiles see D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave 1 (DJD i)*, Oxford, 1955), pl. VIII-IX (3).

<sup>21</sup> These are culled from Friedrich Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1920); there may be other examples which have I overlooked.

<sup>22</sup> Note also 1 Kings viii 12 (= 2 Chr. vi 1) where the LXX (3 Kingdoms viii 53a) reads two lines to the MT's one: "(The Lord has made known [ἐγνώρισεν; LXX<sup>L</sup> ἔστῆσεν] the sun in the heavens [οὐρανῶ]), but he has said that he would dwell in thick darkness (ἄραpel)."

## BILINGUAL WORDPLAY IN THE BIBLE

The recent article by A. Wolters, "Ὶόπιγγά (Prov 31:27) as Hymnic Participle and Play on *Sophia*", *JBL* 104 (1985), pp. 577-87, which interprets Ὶόπιγγά in Prov. xxxi 27 as a Hebrew pun on the Greek word σοφία is convincing. The word bears two meanings in its present context: "she watches over" (if we parse the word as the feminine singular participle of the Hebrew root Ὶph) and "wisdom"

(if we read the word as Greek). Although Wolters notes the existence of bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian puns in Mesopotamian literature, he suggests that the example of Prov. xxxi 27 is “unique, both in the acrostic song and (as far as I know) in the OT as a whole, [in] that it appears to involve a *bilingual* play on words” (p. 584).

The purpose of the present note is to point out other examples of bilingual wordplay in the Hebrew Bible, specifically, one series involving Hebrew and Egyptian and the other illustration involving Hebrew and Assyrian.

The best example among the former is Exod. x 10 *reʿû kî rāʿâ neged pēnēkem* “see that evil/Ra is before you”. J. Seliger, J. Bloch, S. Rosenblatt, and U. Cassuto all have noted this pun.<sup>1</sup> Pharaoh is telling Moses and Aaron that the day he lets them leave with their women and children, be warned that Ra shall be before you. Or as Cassuto put it: “The sense is: know that the power of my god will oppose you”.<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation is already found in rabbinic literature. Midrash Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 15a-15b reads: “Pharaoh said, ‘I see that the unlucky star of Ra will meet you, and this indicates blood’ ”, a passage which is quoted by Rashi as well.<sup>3</sup> Other instances where *rāʿâ* or *rāʿ* bears double meaning are Exod. v 19, xxxii 12, both noted by Cassuto,<sup>4</sup> and perhaps also Exod. xxxii 22, Numb. xi 1. The former verse continues the pun of Exod. xxxii 12; the latter verse sets the stage for the people’s renewed desire to return to Egypt expressed in Numb. xi 5, 18-20.<sup>5</sup>

A bilingual wordplay involving Hebrew and Assyrian has been pointed out recently by P. Machinist. Isa. x 8 has the prophet quoting the Assyrian king as follows: *halōʾ sārāy yaḥdāw melākīm* “are not my commanders all kings?” Machinist writes: “In light of the irony otherwise evident, one may wonder if this further charge of *hubris* is not based on a conscious play on Hebrew *śār* as ‘subordinate official’ and the cognate Akkadian *šarru* as ‘king’ ”.<sup>6</sup>

It is doubtful that the three examples of bilingual puns discussed herein exhaust the instances of such wordplays in the Bible. We have cited cases involving, respectively, Hebrew and Greek, Hebrew and Egyptian, and Hebrew and Assyrian. One can assume that additional examples are to be found not only with these languages, but presumably with others as well, e.g., between Hebrew and Aramaic.

The Israelite literati were masters of their craft who could, when necessary, depict life in other lands quite accurately. Without entering into the issue of their historicity, consider, for example, the Joseph Story set in Egypt and the book of Esther set in Persia. It is certainly not beyond belief that these same writers could use bilingual polysemy to enhance the quality of their literary creations.<sup>7</sup> The extent to which educated Israelites were fluent in other Near Eastern languages is a moot point.<sup>8</sup> But it is hard to imagine that, if an Assyrian such as Rabshakeh could speak Hebrew (see 2 Kgs xviii 26; Isa. xxxvi 11; 2 Chr. xxxii 18), there were not some Israelites who knew Assyrian.<sup>9</sup> The evidence assembled by Machinist in the article cited above virtually assures this.<sup>10</sup> Besides, even if one were not conversant in neighboring languages, one could reasonably assume that an educated Hebrew speaker would know the meanings of Greek σοφία Egyptian *r<sup>c</sup>*, and Akkadian *šarru*, just to use the examples presented above. All three are common words in the general cultural, religious, or political spheres.

Moreover, there appear to be instances where biblical writers could color their Hebrew composition sufficiently to reflect the speech of non-Israelites. S. A. Kaufman recently has explained the Aramaic-like language in pericopes such as Isa. xxi 11-14 and Prov. xxxi 1-9 as intentional reflections of the speech of denizens of the Syrian Desert.<sup>11</sup> This technique could also explain the presence of Assyrian elements in Rabshakeh's speech in 2 Kgs xviii 19-25, 27-35 = Isa. xxxvi 4-10, 12-20, as noted by Cohen (see n. 10). In Kaufman's words: "The biblical authors apparently did not hesitate to use 'style switching' to reflect differences in the speech of their characters" (see n. 11).

All this goes to show that it should not be surprising to find bilingual puns in the Bible. Clearly this was another device in the arsenal of techniques available to Hebrew writers. Exegetes should be on the lookout for other such instances.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kiṭve ha-Rav Dr. Josef Seliger*, edited by L. Seliger (Jerusalem, 1930), p. 190 (unavailable to me); J. Bloch, "Is the Egyptian Sun God Re Mentioned in the Bible?", *JSOR* 14 (1930), p. 57; S. Rosenblatt, "A Reference to the Egyptian God Re<sup>c</sup> in the Rabbinic Commentaries on the Old Testament", *JBL* 60 (1941), pp. 183-5; and U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> See also Midrash Leqah Tov on Exod. x 10, where a related legend is recorded.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 72, 126.

<sup>5</sup> See my "The Egyptian Sun-God Ra in the Pentateuch", *Henoah* 10 (1988) (forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> "Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah", *JAOS* 103 (1983), pp. 734-5. See also H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), p. 397.

<sup>7</sup> On polysemy in general, see G. A. Rendsburg, "Double Polysemy in Genesis 49:6 and Job 3:6", *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 48-51, and the literature cited in n. 1 therein.

<sup>8</sup> See E. Ullendorff, "The Knowledge of Languages in the Old Testament", *BJRL* 44 (1962), pp. 455-65.

<sup>9</sup> Thus I disagree with the statement of Ullendorff, pp. 457-8, that "there is no detectable hint in Old Testament literature that the Assyrian language was ever known or understood even by the aristocrats or diplomatists of Israel and Judah".

<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, even if H. Tadmor, "Rabshaqeh", *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Hebrew) 7 (Jerusalem, 1976), cols 323-5; and C. Cohen, "Neo-Assyrian Elements in the First Speech of the Biblical Rab Šaqê", *IOS* 9 (1979), pp. 32-48, are correct in their hypothesis that Rabshakeh was an Aramean or Israelite, it matters not.

<sup>11</sup> "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof", paper delivered to the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 1985. I am grateful to Professor Kaufman for sending me the written version of his presentation, a copy of which will be published in the forthcoming volume of the congress proceedings. For a similar understanding, see N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Aramit: Hashp'at ha-Aramit 'al ha-Ivrit shel ha-Miqra", *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 1 (1965), cols 593-4.

## THE STRUCTURE OF PSALM LXXXVII

In a recent issue of this journal, Th. Booij<sup>1</sup> analyses the difficulties of Ps. lxxxvii. One further feature salient to the interpretation of this psalm is a concentric pentacolon,<sup>2</sup> which creates order and meaning for the whole composition:

- A *bāk*, "in you" (v. 3)  
 B *šām*, "there" (v. 4)  
 C *bāh*, "in her" (v. 5)  
 B' *šām*, "there" (v. 6)  
 A' *bāk*, "in you" (v. 7)

This structure shapes the poem in three ways. First, it ties vv. 3-7 into an integral whole, perhaps indicating that vv. 1-2 function as a thematic preface to what follows. Secondly, the structure balances a three-fold use of the preposition *b-* plus pronominal suffix referring to Zion with the double use of the particle *šām* referring to the nations. These particles not only emphasize Zion; they also place