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HEBREW *šw/yḥ* AND ARABIC *šḥḥ*

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Among the varied interests of Albert Ehrman was the field of Hebrew lexicology. He contributed a number of studies to this area, increasing our knowledge of the meanings of Hebrew words and explicating difficult passages. Two of his articles dealt with the hapax legomenon *ḥṣṣ* in Mic. 6:14, in which Ehrman demonstrated that the word is to be interpreted on the basis of its Arabic cognates, either *وسخ*, "dirt, filth, soil",¹ or *شخ*, "urinate, defecate", and *شخاخ*, "urine, excrement".²

Either one of these meanings, "filth" or "excrement", fits the context in Mic. 6:14, though naturally the former cognate *وسخ* adheres to the usual correspondence of Hebrew *ṣ* (š) to Arabic *s* (s). Admittedly, however, we may easily repoint MT to *ḥṣṣ* and utilize the latter cognates *شخ*, *شخاخ*; or without altering MT we may posit a rare example of the atypical correspondence between Hebrew *ṣ* and Arabic *š*.³ Regardless of which of these options is pursued, it is evident that Ehrman's interpretation of Mic. 6:14 is sound. Accordingly, it is a fitting memorial tribute to our lamented colleague to offer the present essay which builds on his foundation.

The foundation on which I build is not so much Ehrman's first arti-

¹This cognate is advanced in the first of Ehrman's articles, "A Note on *ḥṣṣ* in Mic. 6:14", *JNES* 18 (1959):156, though he seems to have surrendered this idea fourteen years later (see the following note).

²These cognates are proposed in the second of Ehrman's articles, "A Note on Micah VI 14", *VT* 23 (1973):103-105, presumably superseding his earlier proposal (see preceding note).

³One clear example of *ṣ* = *š* is *שוק* = *شوق*, "desire", for which see J. Blau, "'Weak' Phonetic Change and the Hebrew *š*in", *HAR* 1 (1977):92.

cle, but rather his second article which concluded that the Biblical Hebrew lexicon included a cognate to Arabic شَخَّ, "urinate, defecate", شَخاخ, "urine, excrement". Additional etyma for this root, it should be noted, may also be found in two modern South-East Semitic languages. The first of these is Soqotri *šḥḥ*, "urinate",⁴ where the sibilant correspondence is the expected Modern South Arabian *ś* = Hebrew *š* (*ś*) = Arabic *š* (*ś*).⁵ As far as I am able to determine, the remaining South Arabian languages use different words for this action. In Harari, the nominal form is *šäḥat*, "urine", and the verbal usage is *šäḥat äša*, literally "make urine".⁶ The other Ethiopian languages all use different words for "urine (n.)/-ate (v.)". Accordingly, Harari *šäḥat* could be a borrowing from Arabic, especially since the Harari are Muslims and have many Arabic loanwords in their lexicon. Beyond Semitic we may note the following cognates in Cushitic: Bilin *šaḡ*, *šaḥ*, Qemant *šaḳ*, Khamir *ṣaq*.⁷

We may now proceed to a discussion of those Biblical passages which, in addition to Mic. 6:14, exhibit the Hebrew root שִׁחַ/שָּׁח meaning "urinate, defecate".⁸

Gen. 24:63 Isaac went out *lāšūaḥ* ויצא יצחק לשוּח בשדה לפנות ערב
in the field toward evening.

⁴W. Leslau, *Lexique Socotri*, Paris 1938:427.

⁵Ibid.:15.

⁶W. Leslau, *Etymological Dictionary of Harari*, Berkeley 1963:145.

⁷Ibid.

⁸One might object that our proposed Hebrew root is II*w/y* and its Arabic (and Soqotri) etymon is II *geminatae*. Furthermore, I admit to being unaware of any sure examples, where a hollow verb in Hebrew corresponds to a geminate verb in Arabic. One possible instance is the Hebrew hapax legomenon שָׁנַח in Ps. 99:1. L. Kopf, "Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch", *VT* 8 (1958):183, advanced Arabic شَنَّ, "jump", as a cognate. S. E. Loewenstamm, "Ugarit and the Bible. I", *Biblica* 56 (1975):107, building on the work of A. Schoors, "Literary Phrases", in L. R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels* I, Rome 1972:26-27, connected Ugaritic *ntṭ*, "shake". See further F. E. Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew*, Chico, CA 1984:135. Regardless of this example, it is well known that within Hebrew itself the two verb classes of II*w/y* and II *geminatae* often interchange; cf. P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, Rome 1923:171, 183. Accordingly, there should be no objection to correlating Arabic *šḥḥ* and Hebrew *šw/yḥ*.

This verse is an old crux.⁹ The most popular translation of *hwh* throughout the ages is "to meditate", first evinced in LXX's ἀδολεσχεσαι, Onqelos' *לצלל*, and Vulgate's *ad meditandum*, and lately attested in *JPSV* and *RSV*. The basis for this rendering is comparison with *hwy* with recognition of the not uncommon interchange between *Ihw* and *Ily* verbs. The second commonest translation of *hwh* is "to walk about", seen first in Peshiṭta's *למחלל* and more recently in *NJPSV* (with a footnote "others 'to meditate'; meaning of Heb uncertain"), *JB*, and *TEV*. The basis for this rendering, at least among the moderns, is the Arabic connate *سح*,¹⁰ which, however, entails moving the diacritic in MT to form *š* instead of *ṣ*, to gain the usual correspondence of *š* = *س*. Other exegetes, not willing to accept either of these definitions, have sought other etymologies or have emended the text.¹¹

G. R. Driver rightly questioned all previous interpretations and brought us a step closer to proper elucidation of the verse.¹² He noted that *לשו* also occurs in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Manual of Discipline (1QS) 7:15, amidst a discussion of proper etiquette: *והמוציא את ידו* *לשו* *שמאלו* *לשו* *בה* *ונענש* *עשרת* *ימים* *לשו* *with it shall be punished for ten days*". Driver accepted Ralph Marcus' conclusion that *לשו* should be read with *š*, i.e., *lašūah*, and be translated "to dig a hole" for the purpose of excreting.¹³

⁹See G. J. Spurrell, *Notes on the Text of the Book of Genesis*, Oxford 1896:227; J. Skinner, *Genesis*, Edinburgh 1930:348; B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, Berlin 1934:532; G. R. Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch", in *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert*, Paris 1957:66-68; P. Wernberg-Møller, "A Note on *לשו* *לשו* *לשו* in Gen. XXIV 63", *VT* 7 (1957):414-416; H.-P. Müller, "Die hebräische Wurzel *לשו*", *VT* 19 (1969):368-369; and J. Blau "Etymologische Untersuchungen auf Grund des palaestinischen Arabisch", *VT* 5 (1955):343-344.

¹⁰First Proposed by T. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg 1904:43-44 (unavailable to me, cited from Skinner, Blau, and Müller).

¹¹See the proposals mentioned in the sources cited in note 9 above.

¹²Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch", pp. 66-68.

¹³R. Marcus, "Textual Notes on the Dead Sea Manual of Discipline", *JNES* 11 (1952):209. However, in "On the Text of the Qumran Manual of Discipline I-IX", *JNES* 16 (1957):33, Marcus seems to prefer *lašūah*, though he does note the possibility of *lašūah*.

In light of the aforementioned Arabic cognates شخاخ, شخخ, however, it is better to read לִשׁוּחַ in IQS 7:15 as *lāšūaḥ* and translate it either "defecate" or "urinate". If *yād* meant "penis" here, which additional meaning it bears in Hebrew and Ugaritic,¹⁴ then "urinate" would be the clear choice. However, the passage states specifically "the left *yād*" which rules out this possibility, there being only one penis per male. The explanation for the **left** hand is that this is the hand traditionally used for bodily functions in the Near East. Driver himself noted several passages in rabbinic literature which specifically connect the left hand with excretion (B. Ber. 62a, AdRN 40, etc.),¹⁵ and the same holds true in traditional Arab culture to this day.¹⁶

Marcus and Driver were on the right track, but instead of *lāšūaḥ*, "to dig a hole", we should read לִשׁוּחַ as *lāšūaḥ* in IQS 7:15 and accept MT in Gen. 24:63 without alteration of even the diacritical mark on the ש. Interestingly, a marginal note in *NEB*, a version in the pages of which Driver's influence is strongly visible, suggests "to relieve himself" as a possible translation of לְשִׁיחַ in Gen. 24:63. Did *NEB* adopt this because its translators realized *lāšūaḥ* bore this meaning based on its Arabic cognates, or was it simply easier and shorter than "to dig a hole for excrement"?¹⁷

Edward Ullendorff has objected to the *NEB* marginal note on the grounds that Isaac's "relieving himself would not be improper; it would be wholly inappropriate".¹⁸ Ullendorff adduces no empirical evidence, rather he is apparently guided merely by his *Textgefühl*. But as his own article so brilliantly illustrates, there are other instances in the Bible where apparent bawdiness is not easily explained or where the exact intention of the author is not readily apparent. Perhaps irony

¹⁴C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, Rome 1967:409; and M. Delcor, "Two Special Meanings of the Word לִי in Biblical Hebrew", *JSS* 12 (1967): 234-240.

¹⁵Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch", p.67, fn.1.

¹⁶See, for example, E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London 1842:134, 187.

¹⁷Driver's suggestion is also accepted by E. H. Maly, "Genesis", *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968:25.

¹⁸E. Ullendorff, "The Bawdy Bible", *BSOAS* 42 (1979):442.

or "shock value" (to use a contemporary term) was his desire, or perhaps, assuming that the chapter faithfully records the events of the lives of the characters involved, this actually happened, coincidence of coincidences!

Recognition of *lāšūaḥ* = "urinate, defecate" based on Arabic شَخَّ, شَخَّ, also permits us to retain MT. There is certainly no need to emend the consonantal text, nor is it necessary even to move the diacritical mark (as both Nöldeke's and Driver's solutions require). MT may stand as it is. To my knowledge, E. Ben Yehuda's *Thesaurus* is the only work which previously has connected the Hebrew and Arabic roots and properly interpreted both Gen. 24:63 and IQS 7:15.¹⁹ Numerous commentaries and translations of Genesis have neglected this proposal, but in view of the foregoing discussion it should be accorded full consideration.²⁰

I Kings 18:27

When it was noon, Elijah taunted	ויהי בצהריים ויהתל בהם אליהו ויאמר
them and said, "Shout in a loud	קראו בקול-גדול כי-אלהים הוא כי-שיח
voice, for he is a god! <i>kî šīaḥ</i>	וכי-שיג לו וכי-דרך לו אולי ישן הוא
<i>wākî šig lō</i> , or he may be on a journey,	ויקץ:
or perhaps he is sleeping or waking up.	

This verse appears in the story of the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The words left untranslated are apparently a hendiadys, perhaps reflected in the LXX's use of but one word, namely ἀδολεσχεῖα, where MT shows two. This situation led Driver to conclude that *יִשְׁי* was a secondary gloss used to explain the euphemism *יִשְׁי*.²¹ Conversely, Müller proposed that *יִשְׁי* was original and that *יִשְׁי* was included secondarily as an alternative spelling of the same word (presuming early spirantization of /g/ to [v]).²²

¹⁹E. Ben Yehuda, *מלון הלשון העברית*, ed. by N. H. Tur-Sinai. New York and London 1959, Vol. 16:7532.

²⁰Two further points: in light of the conclusion to translate *לְשׁוֹח* as "defecate, urinate", (a) it is ironic that R. Yose bar Ḥanina (B. Ber. 26b) deduced Isaac's institution of the *Minḥah* service from this passage (based on the notion that *לְשׁוֹח* means "to meditate" as reflected in the ancient versions), and (b) it is comical to read E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Garden City, NY, 1964:185: "If we knew the meaning of the key verb in vs. 63 (Heb. *lā-šūaḥ*), we might have a further clue to Isaac's personality".

²¹Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch":67.

²²Müller, "Die hebräische Wurzel *יִשְׁי*":369.

But both of these text-critical solutions may be shelved if we posit $\text{פִּי-שֵׁיחַ וְכִי-שֵׁיג}$ as a hendiadys.²³

The use of this literary device enables us to translate these words. The latter verb, שֵׁיג (usually סִיג) bears the meaning "go aside, move away", and may also be related to the noun שִׁיג , "dross", i.e., that which is removed or set aside. For what purpose would Baal have gone aside? Targum Yonatan renders שִׁיג with $\text{אֶשְׁתַּדֵּף אֶשְׁתַּדִּיף}$ which has been viewed as a euphemism for "eased himself".²⁴ The traditional Jewish exegetes, Rashi and others, concur that Baal's sidetrip is for the purposes of excreting.²⁵ Since פִּי-שֵׁיחַ and כִּי-שֵׁיג are paired in the hendiadys, they should share the same meaning or at least refer to the same happening. Accordingly, פִּי-שֵׁיחַ means "defecate" or "urinate" in this passage,²⁶ especially in light of its Arabic cognates شَخَّخ , شَخَّخ , and the entire expression $\text{פִּי-שֵׁיחַ וְכִי-שֵׁיג לוֹ}$ is to be translated "he went aside to excrete".

Nor is this the only reference to Baal and excrement in ancient li-

²³The Hebrew text of Sir. 13:26 reverses the two words with שִׁיג וְשִׁיחַ . J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, Philadelphia 1970:397, claims that the Greek text has one word, $\chi\rho\eta\mu\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$, "to be busy", but frankly I am unable to confirm this lection in any works available to me. The standard editions of the Greek Bible lack said reading and it is wanting in E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, Oxford 1897. Regardless, Gray is correct in treating the two words in I Kings 18:27 as synonyms. In the discussion which follows I make no attempt to interpret in Sir. 13:26; the context suggests something other than "defecate, urinate" for this expression.

²⁴M. Jastrow, *A Dict. of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, New York 1903, Vol. II:1525.

²⁵See the summary statements of Ben Yehuda, $\text{מִלּוֹן הַלְשׁוֹן הָעִבְרִית}$, Vol. 16:7548-7549, esp. note 3; I. W. Slotki, *Kings*, London 1950:132; and J. Robinson, *The First Book of Kings*, Cambridge 1972:209-210. Rashi's interpretation is also noted by J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, *Kings*, Edinburgh 1951:302, 310-311. N. H. Snaith, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of I Kings XVII-XIX and XXI-XXII*, London 1954:46; and C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, Oxford 1903:224, both make mention of the usual explanation of שִׁיג as a euphemism, but do not refer to the medieval Jewish commentators.

²⁶Again this is noted already by Ben Yehuda, $\text{מִלּוֹן הַלְשׁוֹן הָעִבְרִית}$, Vol. 16:7552.

terature. Marvin Pope²⁷ has called attention to the rabbinic description of ceremonial defecation in the cult of Baal Peor (see B. Av. Zar. 44b, B. Sanh. 60b, M. Sanh. 7:6 [cited by Pope], as well as Sifre Numbers 131, Y. Sanh. 10:2, 28d). Pope's caution on whether this detail stems "from direct knowledge of the pagan cult" or "from play on one of the meanings of the word *p^cr*" is admirable. Now, however, recognition of the allusion to excrement in I Kings 18:27 may tilt the scales in favor of Pope's former suggestion (notwithstanding the assumption that Baal worship took on different manifestations in different locales, that is to say, that the worship of Baal on Mt. Carmel need not *a priori* have been the same at Baal Peor in Transjordan). We may even reverse the thinking of Pope's latter suggestion and propose that the name Baal Peor is to be derived from פער (*p^cr*) "excrete".²⁸

Pope raises the issue of ceremonial defecation in the cult of Baal Peor in connection with explicit reference in a Ugaritic tablet (RS.24.258) to El's floundering in excrement and urine. It is interesting to note that El in the Ugaritic texts occasionally corresponds to Baal in the Bible and elsewhere. For example, El is paired with Asherah at Ugarit, but in the Bible Baal and Asherah are collocated in Judg. 6:25-30, I Kings 16:32, II Kings 17:16, 21:3, 23:4, etc. (albeit usually as הבעל (*habba^cal*) and האשרה (*hā^ašērā^h*)). In *UT* Cnt:III:43 we read of *ʾl šbb* = El-zebug, which reverberates as Baal-zebug in the Bible (II Kings 1:2-3, 1:6, 1:16; see also Matt. 12:24 and Mark 3:22 in the New Testament)²⁹ (notwithstanding the use of *zbl*, "prince", as an epithet of Baal in the Ugaritic texts, which may have been corrupted to *zbb* in the Bible). Moreover, studies have shown that Baal-ḥammon and Baal-shamen of Phoeni-

²⁷M. H. Pope, "A Divine Banquet at Ugarit", in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring*, Durham 1972:196-197.

²⁸For this meaning, see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1906:822; and A. Even-Shushan, המלון העברי המרוכז, Jerusalem 1977:571.

²⁹C. H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations*, New York 1965:191.

cian and Punic religion are not to be identified with Baal of Ugarit, rather with El of Ugarit.³⁰ All of this goes to show that what we know of El in the Ugaritic texts may be associated with Baal further south, e.g., among the Canaanites with whom Elijah tackled atop Mt. Carmel.³¹ We know that El defecates at Ugarit, and now we can confirm the same for Baal in I Kings 18:27.

Again Driver was on the right track but again he concluded that שׁיח in I Kings 18:27 should be repointed to שׁיח, with the meaning "to dig a hole", used euphemistically for defecating.³² The correspondence of שחך, שחך, and שׁיח/שׁיח, however allows us to retain MT. We need simply posit a Ilw/Ily interchange as occurs commonly in Biblical Hebrew.

Thus in Gen. 24:67 the root שׁיח is used and in I Kings 18:27 the root שׁיח is used.³³

Isa. 5:25 Thus YHWH's anger was
roused against his people, and he stretched out his arm
against them and struck them; so
that the mountains quaked, and their
corpses became like *sûhāh* in the middle
of the streets; and with all this, his
anger is not turned back and his arm is still outstretched.

על-כן חרה אף-יהוה בעמו ויט ידו עליו
ויכהו וירגזו ההרים ותהי נבלתם כסוּחָה
בקרב חוצות ובכל-זאת לא שב אפו ועוד
ידו נטויה:

The word סוּחָה, which occurs only here in Biblical Hebrew, is usually

³⁰For Baal-Hammon see W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, London 1968:233-234; and F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge, MA 1973:24-36. For Baal-Shamen see R. A. Oden, "*Ba'al Šamēn* and 'Ēl", *CBQ* 39 (1977):457-473.

³¹Cf. Oden, "*Ba'al Šamēn* and 'Ēl":473.

³²Driver, "Problems of Interpretation in the Pentateuch":67. Driver's position is accepted by Gray, *I & II Kings*:398. See also L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, Leiden 1953:919, who define שׁיח in I Kings 18:27 as "has to relieve himself/hat ein 'Geschäft' (Notdurft)". Oddly, *NEB* reads "it may be he is in deep thought, or engaged", with apparently no recognition of Driver's proposal.

³³This entire line of argumentation is wanting in the brief note by L. Heyman, "A Note on I Kings 18:27", *JNES* 10 (1951):57-58. Heyman translated שׁיח as "vegetation" (cf. Gen. 2:5) and considered it a reference to Baal as the god of fertility. But this approach does not fit the context, which has Elijah mocking the deity and not recounting his attributes.

translated "refuse, filth".³⁴ The etymon cited in the standard dictionaries is Arabic سحا, "scrape off, clear away".³⁵ The connection between the two notions is spurious, however, and in light of our discussion so far it is more appropriate to connect סִנְהָה with שִׁח/שׁוּח and its Arabic cognates شخاخ, شخخ. Accordingly, in סִנְהָה the ס stands for original, i.e., etymological or historical, ש, as occurs frequently enough in Biblical Hebrew.³⁶ Furthermore, notwithstanding the common metaplasism between IIw/y and IIIy (=IIIh) roots, סִנְהָה is the feminine nominal formation expected from a IIw/y Qal root such as שִׁח/שׁוּח.³⁷ Additional support for סִנְהָה = "excrement" is forthcoming from the LXX which renders the term with κοπρῖα "dunghill" and the Vulgate which renders it with *stercus* "dung". Moreover, Targum Yonatan renders סִנְהָה with the cognate סחיתא, which is elsewhere utilized to translate Hebrew גללים, "dung", in Zeph. 1:17 (Vulg. *stercora* [pl.], LXX βόλβυλα, "cow-dung" [pl.]).³⁸ As an aside, mention should be made of the attempt by some exegetes to repoint or emend שִׁח in Job 9:31 to שִׁחָה or שִׁחָה, the presumed plural of סִנְהָה in Isa. 5:25 (with ש, not ס).³⁹ This alteration

³⁴Although סִנְהָה occurs only in Isa. 5:25, it is not generally classified as a hapax legomenon (note its absence from the study of H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic*, Missoula, Mont. 1978, including his "Composite List of Biblical Hapax Legomena Isolated in the Middle Ages", :101-105) because most scholars connect it with forms from the root שחח; cf., e.g., Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*:691; and Rashi, ad loc.

³⁵Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*:691, 695; Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 651, 654.

³⁶J. Blau, *On Pseudo-Corrections in Some Semitic Languages*, Jerusalem 1970:114-120.

³⁷Note the following feminine nouns derived from IIw roots: פִּיחָה (Neh. 3:36) from פוּח, נִיחָה (Prov. 23:21) from נוּח, פִּיחָה (I Sam. 25:31) from פוּח, צִיחָה (Ezek. 43:11 [tris]) from צוּח, שִׁיחָה (Isa. 30:15) from שׁוּח, and שִׁיחָה (Jer. 2:6, 18:20, 18:22, Prov. 22:14, 23:27) from שׁוּח.

³⁸On גללים see already R. Nathan, ערוך:59b, sub סח II. Cf. A. Kohut, *השלט*, reprint: Jerusalem 1970, Vol. 6:31.

³⁹Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*:651; and the authors cited by R. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, New York 1978:110.

of MT is forwarded on the basis of LXX's ἐν βύπτῳ and Vulgate's *sordibus*. This is conceivable, but one must concur with those commentators who reject the proposal as gratuitous.⁴⁰

A second aside is the use of קָחַ in Lam. 3:45, which is often connected with סָחַ.⁴¹ The word is paired with מָאִס "refuse", so it could feasibly be related to שָׁחַ/שָׁחַ and شَخَّخ/شَخَّخ. However, I am inclined to derive the noun from סָחַ, "scrape away" (cf. Arabic سَحَا) as is customary. Etan Levine has called attention to the LXX's ἀπαμύτσειν at Lam. 3:45, which he suspects "is a euphemism, rather than a scribal error".⁴² But this odd Greek expression can be seen as a clumsy rendering of "refuse/rejection", the literal meanings respectively of קָחַ and מָאִס.

From a formal perspective, whereas סָחַ is to be derived from a IIw/y Qal root such as שָׁחַ/שָׁחַ, קָחַ is the nominal formation expected from a IIly (= IIIh) root such as סָחַ.⁴³

Prov. 23:29:

Who cries "woe!" who cries "alas!",	לְמִי אוֹי לְמִי אֲבוֹי
who has strife, who has <i>śāḥ</i> ,	לְמִי מְדוֹנִים לְמִי שִׁיחַ
who has wounds for naught,	לְמִי פְצָעִים חֲנָם
who has darkness of eyes?	לְמִי חֲכָלָלוֹת עֵינַיִם:

The questions asked in this verse are answered in the following verse:

They who linger over wine,	לְמֵאֲחֵרִים עַל הַיַּיִן
they who experiment with mixed wine.	לְבָאִים לְחֻקּוֹר מִמֶּסֶךְ:

Clearly Prov. 23:29 is a poetic description of the effects of too much alcohol. The word left untranslated, שִׁיחַ, is usually rendered "com-

⁴⁰Gordis, *The Book of Job*:110; and M. H. Pope, *Job*, Garden City, NY 1973:75.

⁴¹So already Rashi, commentary of Isa. 5:25.

⁴²E. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations*, NY 1976:150.

⁴³Compare פָּרַי from פָּרַה, חָלַי from חָלָה, and שָׁכַי from שָׁכָה. Of course, IIIy and IIw/y verbs interchange quite frequently (see the impressive compilation by A. van Selms, "The Etymology of *yayin* 'Wine'", *JNSL* 3 [1974]:77-79), so this by itself would not disprove a connection between קָחַ in Lam. 3:45 and סָחַח in Isa. 5:25. But in view of the different Arabic cognates, سَحَا and شَخَّخ respectively, our conclusion is sound.

plaint, raving, anxiety" or the like. While any of these may possibly result from drunken stupor, I would propose that "excrement" is more fitting. One should note that the first three cola deal with psychological effects of inebriation. Since the final two cola deal with physical effects, *hly* should be similarly interpreted to give balance to the verse, with "defecation, urine" the most logical choice. The association between intoxication and excrement was known to the ancients, as evidenced by RS.24.258 from Ugarit (discussed above) and Isa 28:7-8 where *šḥḥ* "excrement", results from drunkenness.⁴⁴

Versional support for *hly* in Prov. 23:29 meaning "excrement" is forthcoming from the Targum in the Complutensian Polyglot which reads סוּחָ (swḥ'), interpreted by M. Jastrow as "dirt, disgusting matter".⁴⁵ Although this polyglot dates from 1514-1517, it is surmised that its editors utilized ancient manuscripts as they so claim.⁴⁶ Other manuscripts and editors read סוּרָא (swyr'), which Jastrow translates "nasty secretion, vomit", based on Syriac *swyr*.⁴⁷ J. Levy is more noncommittal in translating סוּרָא simply as "Schlechtes",⁴⁸ apparently based on the Peshiṭta's *byšt* at Prov. 23:29.⁴⁹ But regardless of how סוּרָא is to be understood, it is clear that the Targumists recognized that *hly* in MT has no connection with its usual meaning of "converse" (as the extended meanings "complaint, raving, anxiety" noted above purport) and that it should not be seen as parallel to מְדַבְּרִים (Qdr̄), "contentions" either. On the contrary, סוּרָא may intend a physical function, which is certainly the case with Aramaic סוּחָ (with ס for etymological *š*, as with Hebrew סוּחָ in Isa 5:25), cognate to Arabic شَخْخ / شَخَاخ.

⁴⁴Pope, "A Divine Banquet at Ugarit":196.

⁴⁵Jastrow, *A Dictionary* ...:962.

⁴⁶See E. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, NY 1957:164.

⁴⁷Jastrow, *A Dictionary* ... 963.

⁴⁸J. Levy, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim*, Leipzig 1866-1867, Vol. II:152.

⁴⁹Scholars agree that the Targum to Proverbs is based on the Peshiṭta; cf. C. H. Toy, *Proverbs*, NY 1899:xxxiv.

SUMMARY

With the exception of a brief note in Ben Yehuda's *Thesaurus*, it was Albert Ehrman who first proposed that the ancient Hebrew lexicon included a cognate to Arabic شَخ, "urinate, defecate", and شَخ "urine, excrement". Apart from גָּשַׁח in Mic. 6:14, which Ehrman analyzed, there are four instances in the Bible which affirm this conclusion. לָשַׁח in Gen. 24:63, שָׁח in I Kings 18:27, שָׁח in Isa. 5:25, and שָׁח in Prov. 23:29, are to be clarified on the basis of the above Arabic cognates. Additionally, לָשַׁח in IQS 7:15 is to be understood as "to urinate, to defecate". The interpretation of these passages is defended in each case by the context, and in three instances there is additional support from the ancient versions.

EXCURSUS: An Egyptian Cognate to Hebrew שָׁח/לָשַׁח, Arabic شَخ/شَخ؟

Egyptian *wsš* is another possible cognate to our Hebrew and Arabic words, but there is one phonetic difficulty. Egyptian *š* corresponds to Arabic ح and hence to Hebrew ח in several instances,⁵⁰ so this is unproblematic. The difficulty lies in equating Egyptian *s* with Arabic ش and Hebrew ש, there being no parallel in all of Egypto-Semitic. Egyptian *š* (sign S29, the folded cloth) can correspond to Arabic ش and Hebrew ש (e. g., *špt* = שפה = شفة, "lip"), but Egyptian *s* (sign 034, the bolt) usually corresponds to Semitic δ (e. g. *sšb* = ذئب, "wolf").⁵¹ Without a suitable *s* = ש = ش parallel, one must conclude that *wsš* = שָׁח/לָשַׁח = شَخ/شَخ either represents a sui generis correspondence or that the similarity is coincidental.

If the three are related, the different forms of the verbs present no problem. We may simply propose an original biliteral which appears with initial *w* in Egyptian, as a so-called hollow root in Hebrew, and as a geminate in Arabic. Egyptian initial *w* roots can correspond to so-called hollow roots in Semitic, e. g. Egyptian *wsb* = וַב (Hiph^cil), "answer", or to geminate verbs, e. g., Egyptian *w^ab* = Akkadian *ebēbu*, "pure, clean".

If the three are not related, then we may wish to defer to Otto Rössler's suggestion which compares *wsš* and Arabic وشخة, "wetness, moisture".⁵²

⁵⁰See O. Rössler, "Das Ägyptische als semitische Sprache" in F. Alt-heim and R. Stiehl, eds., *Christentum am roten Meer I*, Berlin 1971:303.

⁵¹Sign numbers are according to the system of A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford 1957.

⁵²Rössler, "Das Ägyptische als semitische Sprache":303.