SHETHAR

no name equivalent to this has thus far been found in the
text extrabiblical literature. Recently, however, on the
basis of the Aramaic transcription of Old Persian vocables
at Persepolis (see Bowman 1970: 64–65), Millard has plau-
sibly suggested an etymology from Old Persian cicā
“bright” (1977: 485). See also Paton Esther ICC, 68 and
Gehman 1924: 324.

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SHETHAR-BOZENAI (PERSON) [Aram śēṯar bōz-
ēnay]. Var. SATHRABUZANES. Persian official
nominated in conjunction with Tattenai as co-senders of correspondence
to Darius I (ruled 521–486 B.C.E.) informing the king of
building activity in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:3; 6:6; 6:13 = 1 Esdr 6:3; 7, 27; 7:1). 1 Esdras renders the name Sathra-
buazanes (Gk Sathrabouzanēs). The texts are unclear as to
the position Shethar-bozzenai holds, unlike the mention of
Shimshai in the correspondence to Artaxerxes in Ezra
4:8–23, where Shimshai is named second after Rehum the
commander, and identified always as “the scribe.” Shethar-
bozzenai is named second after Tattenai in all four instances
suggesting that Shethar-bozzenai may also be a scribe. The
meaning of the name is uncertain. CAP 5:16 (p. 11) has a
related form śēzn. Cheyne (EncBib 4: 4462) presents some
interesting possibilities, one being that Shethar-bozzenai
is a Persian official title (e.g., “chief clerk of the chancery”).
In this case, one might regard it as a title of Tattenai
denoting his role as investigator, rather than the proper
name of another person. The context of the Aramaic
section of Ezra 4:8–6:18, deals with opposition to the
rebuilding of the temple. However, the letter Tattenai sent
to Darius does not have the hostile tone apparent in the
Aramaic letter to Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:11–16. Darius in
turn replies in positive tones and instructs that the Jews
are to be assisted in the building.

Bibliography

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SHIBAH (PLACE) [Heb šîbâ]. The name of a well
bug by Isaac’s servants (Gen 26:33). News of the well’s comple-
tion reached Isaac just as he was concluding a treaty by
making an oath (šōb) with Abimelech, the Philistine king
from Gerrar (Genesis 26). According to the biblical account,
the name “Shibah” (“oath”) was given in honor of this
occasion. The Genesis author identifies the town subse-
sequently built on the site as Beer-sheba, “well of the oath”
(v 33). This incident either is a reopening of a well previ-
ously named by Abraham (Gen 21:25–31), or an alter-
native tradition regarding the nomenclature.
Tell Beer-sheba (Tell es-Saba; M.R. 134072) lies 2 miles
E of the modern town of Beer-sheba (Bir es-Saba; M.R.
130072). The former only shows occupation during the
Israelite period (Aharoni EAEHL 1: 160–68). The latter
site shows a much longer period of settlement, ranging
from the 4th millennium b.c. through the Iron Age and
later. Gophna has proposed that the older settlement
remained occupied on the traditional site of the wells,
while an administrative center was later built at a little
distance on the tell (EAEHL 1: 159). The site in Genesis
would then more likely be identified with Bir es-Saba
rather than Tell es-Saba. See BEER-SHEBA.

DAVID W. BAKER

SHIBBOLETH [Heb sībbōlet]. Word which occurs 20
times in the Bible, most often meaning “ear of grain,” but
in several instances also “flowing stream.” In one of these occurrences, Judg 12:6, the dialectal form sībōlet appears. This verse, which has come to be known as the shibboleth incident, has been the subject of much debate. Regardless of how one interprets it, however, scholars agree that the passage indicates a certain difference in the pronunciation of Hebrew between Ephraimites and Gileadites. Accordingly, it is an important piece of evidence for establishing the fact that regional dialects of Hebrew, at least in regard to phonology, existed in ancient Israel.

The story of Judg 12:1–6 describes a battle between the tribe of Ephraim and the people of Gilead in Transjordan. The Gileadites were in control of the fords of the Jordan River. When an Ephraimite tried to cross the river to retreat homeward to Cisjordan, the men of Gilead asked him to pronounce the word sībōlet. Typically he was unable to do so and instead said sībōlet, thus revealing his Ephraimite identity.

The simple approach, taking the story at face value, is to assume that at least in some instances the Ephraimites pronounced ʾ as [s] (e.g., GKC 17). But few scholars today would hold to this opinion. Instead, numerous theories have been devised with alternative interpretations.

Marquart (1888) believed that the Ephraimite dialect retained the phoneme ʾ as, but that when the Gileadites heard this it sounded like [s]. Speiser (1942) reversed this hypothesis by suggesting that it was the Gileadite dialect which retained the phoneme ʾ, but that the Ephraimites were unable to render it correctly and thus said [s]. Speiser pointed to the existence of an Aramaic word tāblāʿ “ear of grain” to posit a proto-Semitic root ṣbl for sībōlet.

Subsequently, Marcus (1942) and Kutscher (1967: 173–74), based on the earlier work of Fraenkel (1905), noted that tāblāʿ was actually a ghost word, a doctored form attested only once in the vast Aramaic literary corpus, thus greatly weakening Speiser’s theory. Kutscher’s (1982: 15) final words on the subject represented the common view of about two decades ago: “The riddle remains, therefore, unresolved.”

A spate of recent articles has renewed the debate concerning the shibboleth incident. The first two articles concentrated mainly on the problem of the Hebrew ʾēn, but also commented on the shibboleth incident. Diem (1974: 242–43) accepted Speiser’s interpretation, in spite of Marcus’ and Kutscher’s objections. Blau (1971: 109) opted to return to the simple interpretation mentioned above. A novel analysis was attempted by Beeston (1979), who proposed that the proto-Semitic root of our word is ṣblt, which the Ephraimites preserved, but that in non-Ephraimite Hebrew the pronunciation shifted to sult.

Swiggers (1981) also accepted Speiser’s theory that the Gileadites retained the phoneme ʾ as, but he alleviated the objection raised by Marcus and Kutscher by proposing to distinguish two roots: ṣblt for “ear of grain” and ṣbl for “flowing stream.” The former is based on the cognate Uguritic, Akkad, Arabic, and South Arabian evidence. The latter, unfortunately, has no Semitic etyma to substantiate it. Moreover, Swiggers noted that in the context of Judg 12:6 only the meaning “flowing stream” pertains. Parallel folk stories show that the password used in such incidents always is related to the context. Since the Ephraimites are crossing the Jordan at this point only

“flowing stream” and not “ear of grain” is germane. On the question of how the Ephraimites pronounced the word, Swiggers claimed that they said [sībōlet] as in standard Hebrew, though for graphemic reasons the text of Judg 12:6 uses sblt.

Emerton (1985) dismissed the theories which posit a proto-Semitic ʾ as the first root letter based on the failure to find a relevant cognate. Instead, he advanced the working hypothesis that Ephraimites and Gileadites simply articulated the phoneme ʾ as slightly differently from one another. The realization of individual phonemes is often subject to minor local variation. Thus, in the Ephraimite dialect, the ʾ sound may have been realized as something closer to [s] than to [ʾ], or in the very least the Gileadites may have heard the Ephraimite ʾ as closer to [s] than to [ʾ].

Lemaire (1985), on the other hand, lent support to the possibility that a root with ʾ as is involved. He noted that the Aramaic version of the Tell Fakhariyeh bilingual inscription also represents proto-Semitic ʾ as with s. According to Lemaire, this situation may not only serve as a parallel to the shibboleth incident, but it even may be related historically since a segment of the Israelites undoubtedly hailed from the general region of Tell Fakhariyeh in Aram Naharayim.

Finally, Rendsburg (1988a; 1988b) demonstrated that Ammonite preserved the phoneme ʾ as, but that when a Cisjordanian speaker tried to articulate this sound he said [s]. The evidence is the Ammonite royal name bšfyš (the root of the second element in this anthroponym is yš), found on a seal at Tell el-ʿUmeiri, which appears in Jer 40:14 as bsfyš. Thus, we have another, and in fact much closer, parallel to the situation Lemaire described. Accordingly, Speiser and Swiggers are correct concerning the Ephraimite realization of the phoneme ʾ and, we can posit an important phonological feature shared by two neighboring dialects in Transjordan. Swiggers is correct that the Ephraimites generally said [sībōlet] as in standard Hebrew, but Speiser is correct concerning Judg 12:6 specifically. When asked to pronounce ʾ as the Ephraimites were unable to do so and instead articulated an [s], Swiggers is also justified in differentiating two roots, although it is still true that no cognate to Hebrew sībōlet “flowing stream” (derived from proto-Semitic ṣbl) has been found.

Lastly, it should be noted that based on the story in Judges 12, “shibboleth” passed into the English language as a word meaning “password.”

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SHIBBOLETH

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**SHEIOR** (PLACE) [Heb *šikør; šihôr; šîhôr*]. A river or 
body of water in the NE Nile delta region mentioned four 
times in the Bible (Josh 13:3; Isa 23:3; Jer 2:18; 1 Chr 
13:5), the precise identification of which is still uncertain.
Shihor was understood by biblical writers as being part of 
the Nile, if not the Nile itself. If one follows the MT of 
Isa 23:3, Shihor is in parallelism with the Nile (Heb *yḥôr*). In 
Jer 2:18, Egypt and Shihor (RSV "Nile") are counterpoints 
to Assyria and the Euphrates. Josh 13:3 uses Shihor with 
the definite article (Heb *ḥāššihôr*) and refers to the ideal 
or actual southernmost boundary between Egypt and the 
land of Israel, described as opposite or facing Egypt (Heb 
*ḥānî mīṣrayyim*). David assembled all of Israel from Shihor 
of Egypt to the entrance of Hamath to bring up the ark of 
God (1 Chr 13:5).

The name "Shihor" seems to reflect the Eg p1 *š-nr* "The 
waters of Horus" (see Gardiner 1918: 251; 1947: 201; 
Köhler 1936: 289–90; Bietak in LÅ 5: 623–26). The He- 
brew name "Shihor" caused difficulties for the LXX trans-
lators. For example, in Josh 13:5, LXX reads *aōkhētou* 
"uninhabited;" Jer 2:18, *gēn* (see also Gen 2:13 and GL-
HON); and 1 Chr 13:5, *hörion* "boundaries." The Greek 
translation of Isa 23:3 is also problematic (see Wildberger 
*Jeusalem* 856 for discussion of MT).

There has been a great deal of discussion among 
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**SHEIOR** (PLACE) [Heb *šikør lābnāt*]. A 
place mentioned in the description of the S border of the 
territory of the tribe of Asher (Josh 19:26). According to 
this passage, the S border "on the west touches Carmel and 
Shihor-libnah." This name is from the Egyptian 
*sī-hâr* (lake/river of the god Horus) (e.g. *ANET*, 471). In 
the Bible the term *šihôr* either refers to the E arm of the Nile/ 
Delta as the S border of the Holy Land (Josh 13:3; 1 Chr 
13:5) or it is used as a synonym for the Nile (Isa 23:3; Jer 
2:18). See SHIHOR.

Shihor-libnah must then be a river in the vicinity of the 
Carmel. Its identification depends, however, on whether 
or not Mt. Carmel was part of the territory of Asher. 
Scholars who include the Carmel within Asher’s territory 
identify Shihor-libnah with Naḥal Dāyah or with Ḥahal 
Tannim to the S of the Carmel. They see a possible 
connection between the name of the other (“Crocodile 
river”) and the town that was located near its estuary,