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Deal gently with the young man

During Absalom's revolt David told his three generals, Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: *Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.* This rendering is retained in RV¹⁰ and in the new translation issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America. AV puts *Deal* in italics, because **A** has in 2 S 18 5: *Lē'āṭ lî lan-nā'r lē-'Abšalôm.* The first word is supposed to be an adverbial expression meaning *gently*, but we require an imperative. **F** has *Servate mihi puerum Absalom*, and **C**: *Istēmîrû lî lē-'ullēmâ, lē-'Abšalôm*, **GA** *Φείσασθέ μοι τοῦ παιδαριῶν Αβεσσαλωμ.* For the Aramaic *istēmâr* we should expect *istēmâr*, with *š*, because we have *šamâru* in Assyrian and *šamâr* in Hebrew, The *s* instead of *š* is due to the labial.

Heb. *lē'āṭ* is supposed to be a compound of the preposition *lê* and the noun *āṭ*, gentleness; but I showed more than 20 years ago that there is no noun *āṭ*, gentleness; the expression *lē'āṭ* or *lē-'iṭṭî* must be derived from the stem *lûṭ*, to cover, veil; *bal-lâṭ*, secretly, softly (GK²⁸ § 72, p) is synonymous with *bas-sêtr*. My explanation (*Kings* 167, 36) is recorded in GB¹⁶. The Arabic equivalent of Heb. *lûṭ* is *lūṭṭa-ḡalīṭṭu* which is a synonym of *sūtara* and *kâtama*. We have the same root in *lūtara*, to soil, and *lūṭ*, skin, prop. *cover* (OC 33, 86¹). Ass. *lūṭu*, cover, curtain, is recorded in GB¹⁶ 381^b sub *lūṭ*. NE 59, 6 we have *ana lūṭ Ūt-napistim*, to the mysterious place of Ut-napistim. We must read in 2 S 18 5: *lōṭ-lî lan-nā'r lē-'Abšalôm.* The form *lōṭ* < *lâṭ* is the inf. abs. of *lûṭ*, and the inf. abs. may be used instead of the imperative (GK²⁸ § 113, bb).

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¹⁰ For the abbreviations see above, p. 326, n. 2.