

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php)

## BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

Heb. *rô'*, evil = Arab. 'urr

IN Zeph. 31 Jerusalem is called *filthy and polluted*. RV substitutes *rebellious* for *filthy*, but AV is correct: we must not read *môrě' â*, but *mor' â* = *mor<sup>c</sup> â*, participle Hof<sup>al</sup> of the stem of the post-Biblical *rô'î*, excrement = *rě'î*. Kel. 17, 2 we have *bêt-hâ-rě'î*, commode, close-stool, and in Ber. 25<sup>b</sup>; Shabb. 47<sup>a</sup> (BT 1, 93, l. 2; 424, l. 29)<sup>1</sup> we find *gârâf-šül-rě'î*, chamber-vessel or bed-pan (*gârâf* = *garrâf*). For the spelling of *rě'î* with *îôđ* after the *r* cf. *Levias*, § 13; Margolis, § 3, l; JBL 36, 76, n. 3; contrast 38, 155, n. 3. Instead of *rô'î*, excrement, we had better read *rě'î*. Ἐπιφανίης (S *îđi'tâ*) derived *môrě' â* from *ra' â*, to see (cf. ZAT 29. 283, n. 2). Buxtorf's lexicon<sup>11</sup> (1710) p. 703 states that according to some, *môrě' â* means *inquinata, foedata, monstrosa*. Döderlein remarked in Grotius' *Annotationes* (1776): *Vocem Hebraeam môrě' â a rě'î, stercor* (sic!) *derivat b. Vogel (urbs foeda)*. Graetz stated in his *Emendat.* (1893): *Môrě' â, squalida, immunda, a rô'î = rě'î, stercus; cf. Nah. 36*. Levy (4, 405<sup>a</sup>) had called attention to Rashi's explanation of this passage, but *uě-samtîk kě-rô'î* means *I shall make thee a sight*, i. e. a *gazing-stock* of wretched misery (*Nah. 10*; ZDMG 61, 285, l. 40). Levy (3, 235<sup>a</sup>) derived also *mur' â*, gut, gizzard (*Lev. 116*) from the stem of *rě'î* = *rě'î*, excrement. For the softening of the 'ain see JBL 36, 257; cf. JHUC, No. 316, p. 23.

Also Heb. *ga'âl*, to pollute, is a doublet of *ga<sup>c</sup>âl* which may be connected with Arab. *jú'al*, dung-beetle, plur. *ji'lân* (cf. *abû-ji'rân*). Arab. *ja'r*, excrement; *ja's*, dung; *ja'û*, dung-heap,

<sup>1</sup> For the abbreviations see vol. 38 of this JOURNAL, p. 142, n. 2.

are derived from the same root (JBL 37, 222). *Ju<sup>c</sup>mūs* may be a transposition of *maj<sup>c</sup>ūs*, just as *zūmhara* may be metathesis of *māzhara* (JBL 34, 55, l. 8; 37, 227). We find also the transposed form *ʿajalah*, dirt. In the same way Heb. *gaʿul*, to redeem (originally to *pay an equivalent*) is identical with Arab. *jāʿala*, to bribe, inf. *jīʿal*, pay, wages, bribe (contrast BA 3, 70, l. 36). The primary meaning of *maj<sup>c</sup>ʿul*, salary, is *set*, fixed, stated, stipulated; cf. Assy. *šimu*, price; fem. *šimtu*, fate. In post-Biblical Hebrew we have the Babylonian loanword *šūm* (= *šūjūm*; cf. AJSL 1, 180, n. 1; 32, 67, l. 4; JBL 35, 156; 36, 98) appraisalment, valuation. For Arab. *jāʿala*, to begin, we may compare our *to set on* (German *ansetzen*). In Syriac, *aġʿil* means to *place* for care or custody (*ġāḏ ʿhrên*) i. e. *commit*, intrust.

Just as Heb. *morʿā*, filthy, is connected with *rēʿi*, excrement, so Heb. *ġoʿi*, soiled, is derived from *ġoʿā* = *ġēʿā*, excrement (Assyr. *ġū*). *Mōġoʿōl*, latrines (2 K 10 27) is a formation like *mōbā* (Ethiop. *mūbā*; AJSL 2, 6, n. 1) for *mabō*, entrance (Ethiop. *mebuā*). The stem of *ġoʿi* has a  $\zeta_2$  (cf. Syr. *ġi* = *ġēʿi* and Arab. *yāġiʿa*, to be soiled; also *caġġaʿa*, to leave the head in a soiled condition; to clean it slightly, but not thoroughly): it is therefore different from *jaġā*, to go out, which has a  $\zeta^3$  (BAL 96; JAOS 28, 115). In vulgar German, *beschissen* (cf. our *dungy* = *dungy*, French *merdeux*, Ital. *merdoso* or *merdellone*, and the Catullian *caecata charta*) is used for *soiled* (AJP 27, 160). I have shown there that our *cheated* had originally the same meaning (cf. also AJSL 22, 254, †). In Ethiopic, *ġēʿa* means *to stink*.

German *Dreck*, excrement, filth, is used as a contemptible expression for something *bad* or *worthless*, and *Dreckkerl* (or *Drecksecke*; cf. French *âme de boue*) denotes a *foul* or *low fellow* (Span. *cagado*). Shakespeare uses *filth* (cf. Lat. *lutum*) in the same sense, and *filthy* for *low*, mean, contemptible, just as we use *dirty* for *base*, low, groveling. Arab. *juʿsās*, mean, contemptible, is derived from *jaʿs*, dung, filth (for the form cf. Barth, § 144,  $\gamma$ ; ZDMG 61, 714, l. 13). *Dungy* is also the primary connotation of Heb. *raʿ*, evil, which appears in Assyrian as *ruggu*, with *g* for *ʿ* as in Syr. *ġĥik* for *ʿĥik* = Arab. *qāḥika*,

to laugh (AJSL 22, 253, †; JAOS 32, 12, n. 18). Heb. *raʿ*, evil, means originally *excrementitious*, fecal, ordurous, filthy, dirty, nasty, foul, vile, offensive, fetid, noisome, disgusting, loathsome. On the other hand, our *ordure* is the Ital. *ordura*, filth, which is connected with *orrido*, nasty = Lat. *horridus*. Luther has *scheusslich* for *môrèʿâ*, Zeph. 3 1. The primary connotations of Assyr. *bîšû*, bad, and *ʔâbu*, good, are *fetid* and *fragrant*, respectively (ZA 30, 61). The he-goats, which have a strong and offensive odor, are the emblems of evil (Matt. 25 23, 41). According to CD, *bad* seems to be of nursery origin, viz. a dissimilated form of *ba-ba*, German *bäbii* (both vowels very short and the last syllable strongly accented) which is used as an exclamation to warn infants not to touch something nasty: when an infant tries to touch *e. g.* the excrements of a dog, the nurse will say, *Bebbéh!* Zupitza derived *bad* (= *bad-de*) from OE *bæddel*, hermaphrodite, applied contemptuously (see the new Oxford dictionary).

Heb. *raʿ*, bad, appears in Arabic in the transposed form *ʿarr*. We must assume that the biconsonantal roots were transposed, and that *r* became *raʿá*, while *ʿr* became *ʿarar*. Similarly *raʿáʿah*, female ostrich, is a transposition of *ʿarârah*, fem. of *ʿarâr* which denotes the cry of the male ostrich (cf. *ruʿâb* and *ráʿabat al-ḥamâmah*; see also AJSL 32, 143). We have the same root *ʿr*, to cry, in *ʔâʿira*, to bleat, and *nâʿara*, to low, bellow. Heb. *nâʿr* means originally *cry-baby*, bawler; cf. *nâʿr bôkê*, Ex. 2 6; French *enfant criard* (GB<sup>16</sup> xviii, ad p. 510<sup>b</sup>). I do not believe that Assyr. *nâru*, singer, is a Sumerian loanword (ZA 31, 119). Cf. my remarks on Heb. *šîr*, song, in JHUC, No. 316, p. 23. Just as Assyr. *šêru*, song, is connected with *šâru*, wind, so Arab. *sajʿ*, rimed prose, is derived from *sâjâʿa*, to coo, *i. e.* to utter a low, plaintive, murmuring sound. The American turtle-dove is called *mourning-dove*; cf. *Nah.* 46; ZDMG 61, 296, l. 6, and l. 64 of the cuneiform psalm addressed to Istar, which is translated in the appendix to Delitzsch's third lecture on Babel and Bible (Stuttgart, 1905) p. 68; Zimmermann, *Babyl. Hymnen und Gebete* (Leipzig, 1905) p. 21.

Arab. *ʿarra* is used of the fecal evacuations of a bird, but it means also *to harm* (*ʿarrahu* = *sâʿahu*). *ʿArrara* signifies *to*

manure, and *á'arra*: to be filthy. The twelfth form, *í'rárrá* (*ámran qabíhan*) corresponds to Heb. *heré'*, to do evil, commit moral wrong. *Tá'arra mina-'l-lá'ili* must be connected with Heb. *ne'ór miš-šənaṭō* (GB<sup>16</sup> 573<sup>b</sup>). *'Urrah* means *dung*, filth, vice, and *ma'arra*: crime, sin, harm. *Á'árru* signifies *more evil*, worse, and *'árrá* is a *bad woman*. *'Arr* is synonymous with *šarr*, evil (JBL 36, 141): we find *laqitu minhu šárran qa-'árran*, I experienced from him evil and mischief; *ánta šárru minhu qa-'á'árru*, thou art worse than he and more evil. Syr. *'ar'ár*, to wash out the mouth, to clean the teeth, is privative (to unsoil; cf. Lat. *labrinas stercorare*; German *misten*, to clean the stable; see *Est.* 35, below; *Mic.* 105, n. \*). A causative (ZDMG 64, 706, l. 36; JBL 35, 320) derived from *'ar* is *sá'aru*, to infect (with itch, Arab. *'arr*, *'urúr*). The original meaning of Arab. *'arra*, to be itchy, mangy, scabby, is *to be filthy*, loathsome. On the other hand, our *shabby*, mean, base, scurvy, meant originally *scabby*, mangy, and the primary connotation of *scurvy*, vile, mean, worthless, offensive, malicious, is *scorbutic* (for scurvy in AV see DB 3, 329<sup>b</sup>). *Shab* is merely an assimilated form of *scab*, and *scab*, which was formerly used as a term of contempt for a mean, shabby fellow, and which denotes now especially a workman who takes the place of a striker, meant originally *affected with scabies*.

Vollers' combination of Heb. *rá* with Arab. *ra'á'*, vicious young men, dregs of the people, rabble (syn. *rusi'ah*; cf. Lat. *faex populi, sentina urbis, caenum plebejumi*) was more correct than the view of Gesenius, Fürst and König, that Heb. *rá á'*, to be evil, is identical with *ra'á'*, to break, which is the Aramaic form of Heb. *raçáç*. Fürst even believed that *rá'*, evil, might be connected with Arab. *dá dá'a*, to shake, scatter, squander. For *rá'*, evil, prop. *mangy*, we may compare the French phrase *être méchant comme la gale*, and for *rá'á'*, excrement, from a stem *ra'á'* = *ra'á'* cf. Arab. *járá*, *jájrí* = Assy. *garáru*, to run (JBL 32, 141, n. 14) and Syr. *márrí*, to make bitter, as Pael of *mar* (= *marar*) to be bitter (see AJSJL 32, 75 and JBL 38, 163).

Johns Hopkins University

Paul Haupt