BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

THE CURSE ON THE SERPENT

In the third edition of his commentary on Genesis (Gottingen, 1910) p. 20 Gunkel translates the last line of the Curse on the Serpent: He may tread upon thy head, and thou mayest snap at his heel. In the Notes he states, Gressmann had called his attention to the fact that we had here a paronomasia: in the first hemistich the verb šūf meant to tread down; in the second, to snap. I pointed out more than 33 years ago (BAL 102) that we had a play upon words in the last line of the Protevangelium, adding that I failed to see why šūf could not have two different meanings in the two hemistichs; the Heb. verb šūf, to tread under foot, was connected with Assyrian šēpu, foot, and šēšūfēka rōš meant he will crush thy head. My explanation is recorded in n. 157 of Casanowicz's Paronomasia in the OT (JBL 12, 160). In the same year (1893) I published a Note on the Protevangelium in JHUC, No. 106, p. 107. I showed there that we have in Assyrian a Piel ušip, he crushed. In the last line of the additions to iv R* 15, col. 1 (cf. CT 16, 43, 1. 63) we read: nīše māti ušipū, they crushed the people of the land. just as Ṭ has in Ps. 94:5 'ammāk ḫaqyē ṣēšūsūn for ḫammēkā ḫaqyē īḏakkēʾā, they crush Thy people, O JHVH; cf. Lam. 3:34: lēḏakkē tāḥt ṭaglāy ḫol-āsīrē ʾārç, to crush under his feet all the prisoners of the land, and Ps. 143:3: dikkā laʾārç ḫajjāʾi, he crushed my life to the ground.

In the OT the verb šāf, he crushed, is generally spelled plene with an Aleph (GK § 72, p). In the gloss Am. 2:7* we must read: Haš-šāfīm lā-ʾafār dallīm ʿāḏ-ʾarōk ʾānūʾīm la-ʾārç, who crush the poor to the dust, and tread the humble to the ground. Bē-ʾrōš is a gloss to šāfīm as in Gen. 3:15; for the prefixed bē- see JBL 32, 112, n. 19; 113, n. 23; contrast WF 217, iii. For

1 For the abbreviations see vol. 34 of this Journal, p. 41.
'al-afar read lä-afar, and for ärç read la-årç which must be inserted after 'ānayîm (read 'ānû'îm). For lä-afar and la-årç see JBL 29, 97, n. 12; Mic. 77, 1. 6. Iaṭṭû after 'ānayîm in Am. 2:7 is ditto of iaṭṭû in the following verse. In Am. 8:4 we must read: Šimû-zôt haš-šâfîm àbijôn u-maššîkîm la-ānûie 'årç, Hear this, ye who crush the poor, extortioners of the humble in the land! Secondary and tertiary additions to this passage are preserved in 5:10-12 and 9:13-15. The la­of מַעְלִית must be prefixed to the following word (cf. Deut. 23:20). The scriptio plena of šâf, he crushed, must not be confounded with ša'âf, he snapped, snuffed, snorted, panted,uffed, blew. In my paper on the Semitic roots qr, kr, xr (AJSL 23, 248) I explained this stem as an old causative of af, nose. I have sub­sequently noticed that Tuch in his commentary on Genesis (Halle, 1871) p. 70 assumed a connection between ša'af and anaf. In Ethiopian, af means, not nose, but mouth (NBSS 174). The n in Eth. and Arab. anf, nose, may be secondary as it is in Aram. qēnât = Heb. qûc (Nah. 31, below). In Assyrian, appu means, not only nose, but also face, Syr. ápê, Heb. appâim; cf. our to nose = to face. The original meaning of both pa, mouth (AJSL 22, 258) and af, nose, is blower, respiratory organ: pa expresses expiration, and af, inspiration; cf. our exclamations pooh, puff, out, and our privative to blow = to put out of breath. In iv R² 19, 46b we find: nakru danna kîma qani ēdi ušipâni, the mighty foe has crushed me like a single reed (cf. Halévy's translation in RP 11, 160). The reading udišanni (Zimmern, Busspsalmen, p. 57, l. 55) is unwarranted; see Pinches' autographed text in BOR 1, 22. SGI 240 reads instead of šûpu, to crush, šubbu, to knock down, overpower, but GB¹⁶ 815* gives now Assyr. šâpu, to overpower. The inf. Piel is šûpu = šûjûpu, not šûppu or šubbu (AJSL 1, 180, n. 1). Syr. šûf. to rub, is not connected with Assyr. šêpu, foot, but with Assyr. šîpu, grease (cf. BL 128) = Syr. šêjûfâ, salve, paste (AJSL 26, 16). The stem of Assyr. šêpu, foot, would appear in Syriac, not as šûf, but as tûf. Assyr. šîpu, wooden lining or boarding, corresponds to Heb. sahîf (Ezek. 41:16) which means covered, wainscoted (GB¹⁶ 781*). The noun šûbu in
the phrase *kīma šūb e ušnāʿīl* (HW 645v) is the Syr. *šāy bā* in *rūḥā ḏē-šāy bā*, simoom, sand storm (EB11 18, 181a) from *šūb*, to be scorched by a hot wind. A byform of *šāpu*, to tread, is *šuppā* (or *šubbā*, HW 637) from a stem *teṛiī ḫ* , corresponding to Arab. *ṭāfā*. The participle *šāpū* means conqueror.

Jensen combines Assyrian *šēpu*, foot, with Hebrew *pasāʾ*, to step (GB16 664a). This is possible from a phonetic point of view: Assyrian *šēpu* could stand for *šaʾpu*, with transposition of the 'AIN, just as Assyrian *zenū*, to be angry (≈ *zanāʾu*) corresponds to Hebrew *zaʾām*, the 'AIN being transposed, and *n* representing a partial assimilation of *m* to *z* (AJSL 26, 3, below). I prefer, however, to adhere to Guyard’s combination of Assyrian *šēpu*, foot, with Arabic *uṭṣīḥ or ʿuṭṣīḥ*, tripod, or *ṣānū* set upon a fire, especially the stones on which a pot is set (ZDMG 58, 632). They were regarded as the feet of the caldron. In the Song of Deborah we find this stem in the form *miṣpaṭāim* which does not mean sheepfolds, but hearths (WF 204, n. 44; JAOS 34, 422): *Reuben dwelt at the fire-places to listen to pastoral flutes.*

W. R. Smith showed in his Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (1894) p. 377 that *Top heth*, the place of sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom, represented an Aramaic form of this stem, with the vowels of *boṣṭ*, shame (Kings 294, 28). The original pronunciation may have been *ṭēfāt*, and the genuine Hebrew form would have been *šēfāt*, a form like *mēnāt*, part, or *qēṣāt*, end. In Syriac, *ṭēfāʾīā* (or *ṭēfēʾā*; Nöldeke, Syr. Gr.2 § 79, A) denotes a three-legged caldron or kettle, or hearth; this cannot be derived from *ēfā*, to bake. The Hebrew verb *šafāt*, to set a pot on the fire, is denominative.2 Also the noun *ašpōt*, which is generally mistranslated *dung-hill*, belongs to the same stem; the correct meaning is *ash-heap*, and the primary connotation is *fire-place*. In the Song of Hannah (ZDMG 58, 621) we must translate:

> From dust He raises the lowly, from the ash-heap He lifts up the needy.

In nomad life the fire place of one day is the ash-heap of the next (W. R. Smith, l. c.).

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2 The feminine ʿ (JAOS 28, 115) appears here as third stem-consonant as in Aram. *biṯ*, to spend the night, from *biṯ*, house (AJSL 22, 259) and *qāṣātā*, archer.
This root appears in Arabic, not only as táfá with final y or i, but also as yátafa and átafa. The second form áttafa signifies to set a pot on a tripod or three stones, like Heb. šafāt and Arab. yátafa, but the first form means to persecute. Also the stem táfá (with final y or i) has the same meanings in the first and second forms. The original signification is to foot. This may mean to strike with the foot, to kick, or to fix firmly on the feet, to set up, or to go on foot, to walk. In Bavaria the reflexive sich fuss en is used for to be nimble-footed, to run with speed. In the same way ištaqšeqūn, they speed, race, rush, run (Nah. 25) is connected with šōq, leg, and Heb. pārd, mule, is derived from a denominative verb parādu, to leg = to run nimbly, from Assyr. purēdu, leg, originally fork, crotch (HK 130) from the stem parad, to part (cf. the Chaucerian cleft). Assyr. purēdu, leg and runner = messenger, is the prototype of our palfrey = German Pferd (cf. Nah. 41; GB 16 657a). In Assyrian we have both parādu and rapādu, and in Syriac and Hebrew this stem appears as raqaf (AJSL 32, 64). Cf. Syr. iḫraddāf, to be hurried and to be put to flight, lit. to be caused to run; cf. Lev. 26: 36: yē-raqaf ôtām qāl ‘alē niddaf, the sound of a shaken leaf will chase them. Heb. raqaf means to chase, pursue, persecute, but the original meaning is to run; therefore raqaf is often construed with ahrē, after. See the fourth paragraph of my paper on Shalman and Beth-arbel in BA 10, part 2.

The Heb. verb šūf is derived from a noun for foot corresponding to Assyr. šēpu. In the last line of the Curse on the Serpent this denominative verb does not mean to tread under foot, to crush, but to tread on the heels of, i.e. to track, stalk, hunt down, waylay, seek to injure, persecute. ḫ has correctly in the last hemistich insidiaberis. P. v. Bohlen, Genesis (Konigberg, 1835) p. 42 rendered in both hemistichs trachten nach (so, too, Dillmann, Gen.²). J. D. Michaelis (1775) translated: dieser wird deinem Kopfe, und du wirst seinen Fersen nachstellen.

The meaning to persecute (Arab. áttafa, táffā) suits not only the last two hemistichs of the Protevangulum, but also the two other passages in which this verb occurs. In Job 9:17 we must read:

אשך בשתור השפונים וה рынке פצני תבש: לא-אראים כיוון טלי, לא-אראים דוהנין קול.
If I called, would He answer my call?
I trow not He would heed my voice;
For He would pursue me with a storm,
and increase my wounds without cause.

In Ps. 139:11 we have:

If I thought that darkness would stalk me,
night would be daylight about me.

The translation to fall on, to assail, suggested in Friedrich Delitzsch's Hiob, p. 150, is inaccurate.

The Curse on the Serpent consists of two triplets with $2 + 2$ beats in each line. Skinner, Genesis (1910) p. 78, says, The form of the oracle is poetic; but the structure is irregular, and no definite metrical scheme can be made out. In the second line $u$-mik-köl haįjāt haš-šaḏē after mik-köl hab-bēhemā is scribal expansion based on the first line of the chapter, yē-hannaḥāš haįā ‘arūm mik-köl haįjāt haš-šaḏē. Stade (ZAT 17, 209) advocated excision of mik-köl hab-bēhemā u; but mik-köl hab-bēhemā includes all animals, both wild and domestic. The preposition min in this case does not mean more than all, but singled out from, i. e. thou alone of all animals; cf. my translation of Am. 3:2 in TOCR 1, 269. The phrase thou wilt eat dust (bite the dust) means thou wilt be prone on the ground or thou wilt grovel. We use to bite the dust for to fall, be thrown,

The view that not only the poetical and prophetic books, but also the historical books of the OT were metrical was advanced more than sixty years ago by Archdeacon Leopold Haupt, of Görlitz. An abstract of his investigation Über die Metrik und Musik der Gesänge des Alten Testaments is printed in vol. 54 of the Neue Lausitzische Magazin, but the manuscript was completed in 1853; see p. 5 of Leopold Haupt's preliminary publication (Leipzig, 1854) cited by Franz Delitzsch in his Psalmen, p. 28, n. 1. The report on the fiftieth meeting of the Oberlausitzer Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Feb. 5, 1861, states that vol. 31 of the Neue Lausitzische Magazin (Görlitz) records the fact that during the winter 1853/4 Archdeacon Haupt delivered some lectures on ancient Hebrew poetry, in which he tried to show that the historical books of the OT were metrical. See now Sievers, Metrische Studien (Leipzig, 1901) p. 379, § 249 (cf. also p. 78) and Die hebr. Genesis (Leipzig, 1904) p. 163 (cf. IX vii; TLZ 32, 630; Cornill's Einleitung, p. 15, be
vanquished. J. D. Michaelis compared the German phrase *ins Gras beissen* = to fall, to die. Grotius (1644) cited Mic. 7:17; Ps. 72:9; Is. 49:23, and Vogel (1775) added: *Haec loca clarissime docent dictionem terram comedere nil aliud significare quam toto corpore in terram projectum esse* (cf. Mic. 42, n. 10).

The last clause of v. 14, *kol-jemmā haʾiṣēkā*, should stand at the end of the second line, not at the end of the third. For *u-ḥēn haʾiṣṣā* in the fourth line we must read *u-ḥēnāh*; *rōš* and *ʿaqēḇ* in the last line (GK28 § 117, 11) are secondary additions. There is no connection between the verb *ṣūf* in this passage and the noun *ṣēfīfōn* in Gen. 49:17; this word must be derived from Aram. *ṣōf*, to crawl; cf. Delitzsch, *Gen.* (1887) p. 106, n. 1.

The two triplets should be read as follows:

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<td>נָוֵּה תֶשֶׁקף</td>
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This may be translated as follows:

14 **Jūnna** said to the Serpent:

Since thou hast done this
Of all the beasts\(^9\)
Thou shalt crawl on thy belly,

15 I'll put enmity
Between thy progeny
They will persecute thee,\(^5\)

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\(^{a}\) **14 God**

\(^{b}\) **15 woman**

\(^{c}\) **head**

\(^{d}\) **beak**

\(^{e}\) **beel**

The persecution of serpents on the part of man is supposed to be due to an atavistic belief that snakes lie in wait for all
human beings, although very few poisonous snakes will follow a man and attack him when he retreats (EB\textsuperscript{11} 25, 287\textsuperscript{a}).\textsuperscript{4} Dangerous snakes generally keep away from inhabited places. Most people have an instinctive dread of snakes and a longing to destroy them, even if they are harmless. Some people in Europe even think that the small lizard, commonly known as blind-worm or slow-worm, is noxious. The Hebrew name of the gecko, sēnamīṣ (more correctly sammamīṣ) means poisonous; the geckos are commonly regarded as poisonous, although they are harmless and useful; see my paper on Arab. samm poison = Sumer. šēm, āpūma in BA 10, part 2.

A communication (by T. G. Dabney) to Science (reprinted in the Literary Digest, Feb. 19, 1916, p. 431) states that the great majority of the snakes to be encountered in this country are entirely innocuous, yet any intelligent person when unexpectedly brought into close proximity to any kind of snake, large or small, venomous or non-venomous, or even a semblance of a snake, is suddenly seized by a panic of horror and fear, with an impulse to spring away out of the serpent’s reach as quickly as possible in a sort of blind terror. According to Mr. Dabney the probable origin of this instinctive horror of serpents, that still dominates the mind of civilized man, was during the countless generations when early man was slowly climbing up from his animal ancestry to his present eminence as Homo sapiens. Being without fire, and without clothing and shelter, he was peculiarly defenseless in an environment beset by deadly serpents against this, probably the greatest danger and greatest menace to racial survival that he had to encounter. Hence his instinctive horror of the serpent form. Among the inhabitants of India at the present time the annual mortality from attacks of serpents exceeds 20,000, notwithstanding the efforts of the British authorities to suppress the evil (EB\textsuperscript{11} 25, 287).

Mr. Dabney’s theory has been contested by the director of the International Herpetological Society, Allen S. Williams, who states that he can refer to tests innumerable with small children from two years of age upwards who showed no signs

\textsuperscript{4}EB\textsuperscript{a} 22, 920\textsuperscript{a} states, Every snake prefers being left alone to being forced to bite.
of fear of serpents, but readily handled them, and were loath
to part with pets which evidently pleased them. Mr. Williams
thinks that the fear of serpents cherished by many adult human
beings in the temperate zone on this hemisphere is chiefly due
to the absorption of misinformation imparted to them in child­
hood by their elders who in turn were similarly misled (see Lit.
Digest, April 8, 1916, p. 966).

This is no doubt true to a certain extent, but the fear of ser­
pents is evidently based on the experience that the bite of some
serpents is fatal. In a recent letter to the New York Times Mr.
Williams emphasizes the fact that the average serpent is the
most gentle and timid animal alive. Of all wild creatures ser­
pents of most species are more quickly tamed and accustomed
to proximity of human beings and contact with them than any
creature, whether it wears scales, fur, fins, or feathers (cf. the

Serpents abound in Palestine, and several species are highly
venomous, but deaths from snake-bites are rare (cf. Bädeker's
Palästina, 7 p. liii). In the Story of Paradise the serpent sym­
bolizes carnal desire, sexual appetite, concupiscence (see JBL
34, 75).

Johns Hopkins University.                  Paul Haupt.